



The Concept of *I'jaz* al-Qur'an: Reassessing the Dimensions of Qur'anic Inimitability in the Modern Scholarly Discourse

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<p>Abstract: The doctrine of <i>I'jaz al-Qur'an</i> (the inimitability of the Qur'an) has historically occupied a central place in Islamic theological and literary thought, serving as a foundational proof of the Qur'an's divine origin. This paper reassesses the classical and contemporary dimensions of Qur'anic inimitability within modern scholarly discourse. The study aims to examine how traditional formulations centered on linguistic excellence, rhetorical uniqueness, and prophetic authenticity interact with emerging perspectives shaped by advances in linguistics, literary theory, and digital analysis. Adopting a qualitative and analytical methodology, the paper engages both classical works of scholars such as al-Bāqillānī and al-Jurjānī, alongside contemporary academic contributions that explore structural, semantic, and interdisciplinary dimensions of the Qur'an. It further investigates how modern challenges, including secular critiques and orientalist approaches, have necessitated a rearticulation of <i>I'jaz</i> beyond purely philological arguments. The findings reveal that while the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'an remain central, modern discourse increasingly emphasizes its coherence, thematic unity, ethical depth, and transformative impact on human civilization. The study argues that <i>I'jaz</i> al-Qur'an is not a static doctrine but a dynamic, multi-dimensional concept capable of engaging diverse intellectual contexts. The paper concludes that a holistic reassessment integrating classical insights with contemporary methodologies offers a more robust and accessible framework for understanding Qur'anic inimitability in the modern age, particularly in addressing both faith-based and academic audiences.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>I'jaz</i> Al-Qur'an, Qur'anic Inimitability, <i>Tahaddī</i>, <i>Nazm</i>, <i>Balāgha</i>, Islamic Theology, Qur'anic Studies, Modern Islamic Scholarship.</p>	<p>Research Paper</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an declared its own inimitability with a directness unparalleled in any scripture. In several verses, it issued what scholars later termed the *tahaddi*, the challenge calling upon all of humanity and the jinn together to produce even a single chapter comparable to it. The verse is unequivocal:

Say: If mankind and the jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it, even if they backed one another.' This challenge was not a polemic device but a theological cornerstone, for it grounded the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a perpetual, verifiable sign [¹].

From the moment the Qur'an was recited in Mecca and Medina, its language produced an effect that no rival composition could replicate. The Arabs, who took enormous pride in their poetic tradition, found themselves unable and, in the view of the believers, constitutionally incapable of meeting the challenge. This incapacity was not merely literary; it was, in the understanding of Muslim theologians, a miracle continuous through time, as enduring and demonstrable in the twenty-first century as it was in the seventh. The classical scholars named this phenomenon *I'jaz* al-Qur'an, the rendering incapable, or the inimitability of the Qur'an [²].

The concept has, over fourteen centuries, attracted some of the most rigorous minds in Islamic

¹ Qur'an, 17:88

² A.H. al-Baqillani, *I'jaz* al-Qur'an, Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1954, p. 15

intellectual history: theologians, grammarians, rhetoricians, philosophers, and jurists have all contributed to its elaboration. In the modern period, the discourse has expanded further, incorporating comparative literary theory, linguistics, biblical studies, and cognitive science. Yet the core question remains as potent as ever: In what precise sense is the Qur'an inimitable, and how are we to articulate that inimitability to a world shaped by secular academic conventions? This paper addresses that question by moving from the classical foundations to the contemporary debates, seeking to show that the doctrine of *I'jāz* al-Qur'an is not a relic of medieval apologetics but a living and developing field of inquiry [3].

Classical Foundations: The Emergence of a Doctrine a. The Qur'anic Tahaddī and Its Early Reception

The tahaddī passages of the Qur'an constitute the textual basis of the entire doctrine. They appear in stages, moving from a challenge to produce a work comparable to the whole [4], to ten chapters [5], to a single chapter [6]. Muslim exegetes interpreted this progressive reduction as both a pedagogical mercy and a rhetorical escalation: the impossibility of meeting the minimal challenge one chapter was all the more devastating to the credibility of the Qur'an's opponents. The earliest Muslim community understood this not as a literary boast but as a sign embedded in history, one that history was invited to disprove [7].

The first generation of Muslims did not feel the need to theorise what they experienced directly, the overwhelming effect of the Qur'an's recitation. It was only as the Islamic intellectual tradition matured, and as debates with Mu'tazilite rationalists, Christian theologians, and Arab literary critics intensified, that scholars began to ask: What precisely is the basis of this inimitability? Is it the language alone? The meaning? The legislation? The combination of all of these? These questions drew the best minds of the third and fourth Islamic centuries into one of the most sophisticated literary-theological debates in human history [8].

b. The Ṣarfa Theory and Its Rejection

One of the earliest positions was that of ṣarfa the theory that Allah had averted human capacity to produce the like of the Qur'an, not because the Qur'an itself was objectively beyond human reach, but because He had, by an act of divine will, removed the ability from human beings for the duration of the prophetic mission.

This view, associated with the Mu'tazilite theologian al-Nazzam (d. circa 231H/845 CE), preserved the logical possibility of human literary achievement while maintaining the miraculous nature of the Qur'an's historical immunity from imitation [9].

The majority of Sunni scholars rejected ṣarfa with considerable force. Al-Baqillani (d. 403H/1013 CE), in his landmark work *I'jāz* al-Qur'an, argued that the theory was both theologically unnecessary and logically weak: if the Qur'an's inimitability were merely a matter of divine suppression of human capacity, the miracle would be in Allah's act of restraint, not in the text itself. The Qur'an, he insisted, is objectively unlike anything produced by human beings before or after, and this objective superiority in its linguistic texture, its structural coherence, its stylistic range, and its sublimity of meaning is itself the miracle [10].

c. The Doctrine of Naẓm: Al-Jurjāni's Contribution

The most philosophically sophisticated classical account of *I'jāz* al-Qur'an came from 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani (d. 471H/1078 CE), whose twin works *Asrar al-Balagha* (The Secrets of Rhetoric) and *Dala'il al-Ijaz* (The Proofs of Inimitability) remain the high-water mark of classical Arabic literary theory. Al-Jurjani argued that the inimitability of the Qur'an does not lie in any single element not in its vocabulary, nor in its individual grammatical constructions, nor in its imagery in isolation but in the *naẓm*, the compositional ordering, by which all of these elements are woven together into a unified whole that transcends what any of its parts, however excellent, could produce separately [11].

For al-Jurjani, meaning and expression are inseparable: the greatness of the Qur'an is not that it says fine things in fine words but that the very manner of saying the selection, arrangement, and interconnection of words constitutes a new kind of meaning that could not be achieved by any rearrangement or substitution, however slight. This theory transformed the debate from a quantitative exercise comparing the Qur'an's vocabulary with that of the Mu'allaqat into a qualitative one, attending to the dynamic interplay of structure and signification. Al-Jurjani's *naẓm* theory has proved so durable that modern scholars, including those trained in Western literary theory, continue to engage with it as a serious account of textual excellence [12].

³ M.M. al-A'zami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text*, UK Islamic Academy, Leicester, 2003, p. 1

⁴ Qur'an 17:88

⁵ Qur'an, 11:13

⁶ Qur'an, 10:38; and Qur'an, 2:23–24

⁷ F. al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, vol. 2, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 1420H, p. 214

⁸ 'A. al-Jurjani, *Dala'il al-Ijaz*, ed. M. Shakir, Maktabat al-Khanji, Cairo, 1984, p. 4

⁹ I. al-Nazzam, cited in A. al-Ash'ari, *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin*, ed. H. Ritter, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1963, vol. 1, p. 229

¹⁰ A.H. al-Baqillani, *I'jāz al-Qur'an*, Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1954, pp. 25–30

¹¹ A. al-Jurjani, *Asrar al-Balagha*, ed. H. Ritter, Dar al-Masira, Beirut, 1983, p. 7

¹² A. al-Jurjani, *Dala'il al-Ijaz*, ed. M. Shakir, Maktabat al-Khanji, Cairo, 1984, pp. 54–58

d. Al-Khattabi and the Dimension of Uslub

Before al-Jurjani, Abu Sulayman al-Khattabi (d. 388H/998 CE) had already pointed in a similar direction when he identified the Qur'an's *uslub*, its inimitable style or manner of discourse as the seat of its miracle. Al-Khattabi noted that the Qur'an occupies a mode of speech that is neither the prose of ordinary speech nor the verse of poets nor the measured rhythms of the *saj'* (rhymed prose) of soothsayers. It is something new, a form that did not exist before it came and has not been replicated since. The Arabs, he argued, were the most qualified judges of language the world had known, and their failure was a forensic verdict, not a cultural preference [13].

Medieval Systematisation: Expanding the Dimensions of Inimitability

By the fifth and sixth Islamic centuries, the doctrine of *I'jāz* al-Qur'an had acquired a settled taxonomy. Scholars recognised multiple dimensions or *wujuh* (aspects) of inimitability, each defended with its own arguments and evidences. The most commonly enumerated included: the linguistic and rhetorical dimension (*balagha*), the structural dimension (*naẓm*), the news of the unseen (*akhbar al-ghayb*), the internal consistency despite revealed piecemeal over twenty-three years (*'adam al-ikhtilaf*), the legislative perfection (*tashrī'*), and the psychological effect (*al-ta'thir al-nafsi*) [14].

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606H/1210 CE), in his monumental *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, expanded the dimensions further, arguing that the Qur'an's inimitability also lies in the extraordinary density of its meaning that its shortest passage contains layers of legal, ethical, cosmological, and spiritual significance that no human composition could compress into so brief a form without becoming obscure or contradictory. Al-Razi's approach was explicitly philosophical, employing the tools of Aristotelian logic and Islamic theology (*kalam*) to defend the classical doctrine against rationalist objectors [15].

Ibn Atiyya al-Andalusi (d. 541H/1147 CE) added a dimension that is sometimes overlooked in later summaries: the Qur'an's balance between accessibility and depth. Any human text, he observed, tends toward one of two extremes either simplicity that risks shallowness or complexity that risks obscurity. The Qur'an alone addresses the unlettered shepherd and the

master jurist simultaneously, each receiving what they need without the text becoming either elementary or esoteric. This observation anticipates what modern linguists would call register versatility, and it remains one of the most practically observable features of the text [16].

The Scientific Dimension: A Modern Addition and Its Controversies

The twentieth century introduced a dimension of *I'jāz* al-Qur'an that the classical scholars had noted but not systematically developed: the scientific. A generation of Muslim scholars and scientists, responding to the intellectual prestige of modern natural science and to the secularist claim that religion and science are incompatible, began to argue that the Qur'an contains references to phenomena embryology, cosmology, oceanography, geology that could not have been known to a seventh-century Arabian. The most prominent work in this genre, that of Maurice Bucaille, argued that the Qur'an's descriptions of natural phenomena are not merely accurate but anticipatory of modern scientific discoveries [17].

This claim has attracted both enthusiastic support and serious scholarly criticism, from within Islamic scholarship as well as without. Critics have pointed out that many alleged instances of scientific *I'jāz* depend on reading modern meanings back into ancient Arabic words — a form of eisegesis that, if applied consistently, would produce equally plausible 'scientific miracles' in other ancient texts. The Egyptian Azharite scholar Muhammad al-Ghazali argued with characteristic directness that making the validity of the Qur'an dependent on contemporary scientific theories is a theological and methodological error: science changes; the Qur'an does not, and to tie one to the other risks the Qur'an's credibility as each theory is revised [18].

A more measured position, articulated by scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and, in a different idiom, by Nidhal Guessoum, holds that the Qur'an does indeed encourage reflection upon the natural world and that many of its descriptions are consonant with, or at least not contradicted by, the findings of modern science but that this consonance is not itself the locus of the Qur'an's inimitability. The miracle, on this view, is not predictive scientific knowledge but something of a higher order: the transformation of human souls and civilisations over fourteen centuries [19].

¹³ A.S. al-Khattabi, *Bayan Ijaz al-Qur'an*, in *Thalath Rasa'il fi Ijaz al-Qur'an*, ed. M. Khalaf Allah and M. Zaghul Sallam, Dar al-Maarif, Cairo, 1976, pp. 22–23

¹⁴ B. al-Zarkashi, *al-Burhan fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, ed. M.A. Ibrahim, Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, Cairo, 1957, pp. 93–100

¹⁵ F. al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, vol. 2, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 1420H, p. 218

¹⁶ I. Atiyya al-Andalusi, *al-Muharrar al-Wajiz*, vol. 1, Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 2002, p. 37

¹⁷ M. Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*, trans. A.D. Pannell and M. Bucaille, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, 1978, p. 120

¹⁸ M. al-Ghazali, *Kayfa Nata' amal ma'a al-Qur'an*, IIIT, Herndon VA, 1992, p. 65

¹⁹ S.H. Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, HarperCollins, New York, 2002, p. 25

The Linguistic and Literary Dimension in Modern Scholarship

Modern Western Arabists and Qur'anic scholars have approached the question of inimitability from a variety of disciplinary angles, though few have accepted the theological framework in which the doctrine is traditionally embedded. Angelika Neuwirth, whose decades of work on Qur'anic composition have been among the most rigorous in the Western academy, has argued that the Qur'an must be understood as a literary event of the first order — a text that not only engaged the existing poetic and scriptural traditions of late antiquity but transformed them into something genuinely new. While Neuwirth does not use the language of *I'jāz*, her analysis of the Qur'an's intertextual richness, its liturgical architecture, and its reworking of Biblical and Arabian narrative traditions implicitly supports the classical intuition of the text's extraordinary singularity [20].

From within the Islamic tradition, Mustansir Mir has engaged with the literary dimensions of *I'jāz* through the tools of Western literary criticism, arguing that Qur'anic coherence — the thematic and structural unity of individual chapters and of the text as a whole — constitutes a dimension of inimitability that classical scholars recognised but did not fully develop. His work on *nazm* as applied to particular chapters demonstrates that the Qur'an's compositional structure is far more deliberate and unified than Western form-critical approaches have typically allowed [21].

The Egyptian literary critic Sayyid Qutb, whose *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* remains one of the most widely read Qur'anic commentaries of the twentieth century, approached *I'jāz* from the standpoint of aesthetic experience. For Qutb, the inimitability of the Qur'an is felt before it is argued: the reader or listener encounters a text that produces effects of beauty, solemnity, urgency, or peace that no human composition can replicate, and this aesthetic experience is itself a form of evidence. While Qutb's approach was criticised by some traditional scholars for privileging subjective experience, it has resonated powerfully with Muslim readers who encounter the Qur'an as a living oral and aesthetic reality [22].

The Psychological and Transformative Dimension

Perhaps the most persuasive argument for the inimitability of the Qur'an that does not depend on specialist linguistic training is the argument from effect what classical scholars called *al-ta'thir al-nafsi*, the

psychological impact. The Qur'an has, over fourteen centuries, transformed individuals of vastly different cultural, linguistic, and intellectual backgrounds, softening the hardest hearts, redirecting the most dissolute lives, and sustaining communities under conditions of extreme oppression. No human literary or oratorical tradition has achieved a comparable scale of transformative effect sustained across so many centuries and cultures [23].

The sociologist of religion Robert Bellah, reflecting on the early Islamic community without adopting Islamic theological commitments, described the transformation wrought by the Qur'an as 'the most radical restructuring of human society in the name of a transcendent moral imperative' before the modern era a judgment that, whatever its secular framing, acknowledges the extraordinary power of the Qur'anic call. For Muslim scholars, this transformative power is not separable from the text itself: it is, in the words of Ibn al-Qayyim, a sign that the speech comes from the One who fashioned the human heart [24].

Contemporary studies in cognitive science and the psychology of religious experience have begun to investigate the mechanisms by which the Qur'an produces its effects upon listeners particularly the effects of its sound structure, its internal rhythms, and its patterns of assonance and repetition. While these studies do not, and in principle cannot, establish anything about the text's divine origin, they do confirm what Islamic tradition has always maintained: that the Qur'an operates upon the human being at multiple levels simultaneously cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and moral in ways that no other text replicates [25].

The Legislative and Ethical Dimension

Classical scholars also cited the legislative perfection of the Qur'an as a dimension of its inimitability. The Qur'an's legal pronouncements, embedded within a text of soaring literary quality, exhibit a consistency, equity, and comprehensiveness that, its defenders argued, no human legislator individually or collectively could have produced in the conditions of seventh-century Arabia. Ibn Khaldun, writing in the fourteenth century CE, observed that the Qur'anic legal framework was not merely adequate for its time but contained principles of such generality and

²⁰ A. Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, p. 4

²¹ M. Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an*, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, 1986, pp. 1–10

²² S. Qutb, *al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an*, Dar al-Shuruq, Cairo, 1993, p. 12

²³ M. al-Ghazali, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an*, trans. A. Shamis, IIIT, Herndon VA, 2000, p. xxi

²⁴ I. al-Qayyim *al-Jawziyya*, *al-Tibyan fi Aqşam al-Qur'an*, Dar Ibn Kathir, Damascus, 1988, p. 5

²⁵ A. Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p. 2

depth that each generation of jurists found new applications within them [26].

Modern scholars of comparative law, including those without theological commitments, have noted that the Qur'anic approach to law grounding legal obligation in divine command while simultaneously appealing to human reason, welfare, and conscience anticipates debates in jurisprudence that Western legal philosophy arrived at only in the modern period. The Qur'anic insistence that law must serve justice, and that justice is knowable both by revelation and by sound reason, is a position that contemporary legal theorists in the tradition of natural law continue to defend [27].

The Qur'an's Self-Referentiality: A Structural Argument

One dimension of *I'jāz* that has attracted increasing attention in modern scholarship is the Qur'an's self-referentiality its habit of commenting upon its own nature, manner of revelation, and relationship to previous scriptures from within the text itself. No other scripture is so extensively occupied with defining and defending its own status. The Qur'an describes itself as a book that distinguishes (*furqan*), that heals (*shifa'*), that guides (*huda*), that is a reminder (*dhikr*), and that is in a preserved tablet (*lawh mahfuz*). This network of self-descriptions is not inconsistent or contradictory but constitutes a coherent theology of revelation, elaborated across the text's multiple voices and modes [28].

Muhammad Abdullah Draz, whose *al-Naba' al-Azim* remains one of the finest modern Arabic treatments of *I'jāz*, argued that the Qur'an's internal self-consistency is itself miraculous: a text revealed over twenty-three years, in varying circumstances of joy, grief, war, peace, exile, and triumph, and yet displaying not a single genuine contradiction in theology, ethics, law, or narrative. The consistency is not that of a carefully edited literary corpus the Qur'an was not revised by its author but of a revelation whose source is beyond the conditions of human experience [29].

Contemporary Challenges and the Future of the Discourse

a. The Challenge of Historical Criticism

The most sustained challenge to the doctrine of *I'jāz* al-Qur'an in the modern period has come not from rival literary compositions but from the methods of historical criticism as applied to the Qur'anic text. Scholars working within the tradition of Nöldeke,

Goldziher, and Wansbrough have questioned not only the theology of inimitability but the historical and textual claims upon which the classical doctrine rests in particular, the date and manner of the Qur'an's collection and standardisation. If, on the Wansbrough hypothesis, the Qur'an reached its present form only in the second or third Islamic century, then the historical *taḥaddī* the challenge issued to the contemporary Arabs loses much of its evidential force [30].

Muslim scholars have responded to these challenges with growing sophistication. Al-A'zami's *The History of the Qur'anic Text* marshalled textual, manuscript, and historical evidence to demonstrate the early collection and preservation of the Qur'an with a rigour that earned respect even from some non-Muslim reviewers. The broader field of Qur'anic manuscript studies, centred on collections such as those at Sanaa, Istanbul, and Birmingham, has confirmed the essential stability of the text from an early period and significantly undermined the maximalist positions of the Wansbrough school [31].

b. The Challenge of Comparative Literature

A different and subtler challenge comes from comparative literary scholarship. If the Qur'an's excellence is to be defended on literary grounds, it must be shown that its literary qualities are not merely a function of the reader's prior theological commitment that a disinterested and competent reader of Classical Arabic would recognise the text as extraordinary even without believing in its divine origin. This is a difficult empirical claim to verify, and some scholars have noted that aesthetic judgments are always culturally embedded and that the Qur'an's reputation for inimitability has been sustained within a tradition that regards it as divine [32].

The counter-argument, made by scholars such as Abdel Haleem, is that the testimony of non-Muslim Arabists who have expressed admiration for the Qur'an's literary qualities and they are not few, from Carlyle to Arberry to Neuwirth provides at least some evidence that the aesthetic experience of the text is not purely a function of belief. Moreover, the very persistence of the *taḥaddī* the fact that no rival text has been produced across fourteen centuries of Arabic literary production is

²⁶ I. Khaldun, *al-Muqaddima*, trans. F. Rosenthal, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1967, vol. 1, p. 196

²⁷ W. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 3

²⁸ M.A. Draz, *The Qur'an: An Eternal Challenge* (*al-Naba' al-Azim*), trans. A. Khalil, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 2001, p. 78

²⁹ M.A. Draz, *The Qur'an: An Eternal Challenge*, trans. A. Khalil, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 2001, p. 94

³⁰ J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, p. 1

³¹ M.M. al-A'zami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text*, UK Islamic Academy, Leicester, 2003, pp. 78–90

³² G.R. Hawting and A.A. Shareef, eds., *Approaches to the Qur'an*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 3

itself a historical datum that the comparative literary critic must account for [33].

c. The Digital Age and New Dimensions of Inquiry

The twenty-first century has opened new fields of inquiry that were unavailable to earlier generations of scholars. Computational linguistics has made it possible to analyse the Qur'an's lexical range, syntactic patterns, and semantic networks with a precision that confirms many of the classical intuitions about its extraordinary density and coherence. Corpus linguistic studies have demonstrated that the Qur'an's vocabulary, while drawing on the Arabic lexicon available in seventh-century Arabia, uses that vocabulary in configurations semantic, syntactic, and phonological that have no precedent in the pre-Islamic corpus.

The study of the Qur'an's recitation tradition its multiple *qira'at* and the elaborate science of tajwid has also attracted renewed scholarly attention as a dimension of *I'jāz*. The fact that the Qur'an was preserved not only in writing but in an elaborate, rule-governed oral tradition that has been transmitted without break from the Companions to the present day is itself a form of textual miracle, one that no other ancient document can match³⁴. The science of *qira'at*, far from being a source of textual uncertainty (as historical critics sometimes claim), is evidence of an extraordinary cultural investment in the precise preservation of the text's sound, meaning, and variant readings: a preservation consistent with the Qur'anic promise:

Indeed, it is we who sent down the Reminder, and indeed, it is We who will be its guardian [35].

FINDINGS

The Following Ten Findings Emerge from this Investigation:

1. The doctrine of *I'jāz* al-Qur'an is rooted in the Qur'an's own *tahaddī* challenges, which classical scholars systematised into one of the most rigorous literary-theological debates in intellectual history.
2. The *ṣarfa* theory, while it preserved the divine miracle, was rejected by the majority of Sunni scholars for displacing the locus of the miracle from the text to an external act of divine restraint.
3. Al-Jurjāni's *naẓm* theory remains the most philosophically sophisticated classical account of Qur'anic inimitability, grounding it in the inseparability of compositional structure and meaning.
4. Medieval scholars recognised multiple dimensions of *I'jāz* linguistic, structural, legislative, predictive, psychological, and ethical each with its own mode of demonstration.

5. The scientific dimension, though popularised in the twentieth century, remains methodologically contested and should not be made the primary or foundational argument for inimitability.
6. Modern Western scholarship, while generally declining to accept the theological framework of *I'jāz*, has confirmed through rigorous literary and historical analysis the textual singularity and literary excellence of the Qur'an.
7. Historical-critical challenges to the doctrine have been substantially met by Muslim scholars working with manuscript evidence and historical sources, demonstrating the early stability and preservation of the text.
8. The psychological and transformative dimension of *I'jāz* the Qur'an's effect upon individuals and civilisations constitutes one of the most historically verifiable arguments for the text's extraordinary nature.
9. Computational and corpus linguistic analysis has begun to provide quantitative confirmation of the classical intuitions about the Qur'an's lexical and syntactic uniqueness.
10. The *qira'at* tradition represents an under-explored dimension of *I'jāz*, demonstrating an unparalleled investment in the precise oral-textual preservation of the sacred text across fourteen centuries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following ten recommendations arise from the foregoing analysis:

1. Muslim scholars should engage more directly and confidently with modern literary theory, using its tools to illuminate the classical *naẓm* tradition rather than treating Western scholarship as an adversarial force.
2. Academic programmes in Islamic studies should restore the systematic study of classical *balagha* and its connection to *I'jāz* as a core component of Qur'anic studies curricula.
3. The scientific *I'jāz* genre should be approached with greater methodological caution, prioritising consonance over equivalence and avoiding the error of making the Qur'an's authority dependent upon provisional scientific theories.
4. Muslim institutions should invest in manuscript studies and early Qur'anic document research as a strategic response to historical-critical challenges, building on the work of al-A'ẓami and others.
5. Scholars should develop more rigorous cross-cultural and comparative accounts of the Qur'an's transformative psychological effects, drawing on cognitive science, sociology, and religious studies.
6. The study of *qira'at* should be integrated into discussions of *I'jāz* as a dimension of textual and

³³ M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1999, p. 2

³⁴ F. al-Jazari, *al-Nashr fi al-Qira'at al-Ashr*, vol. 1, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, n.d., p. 3

³⁵ Qur'an 15:9

oral preservation, particularly in dialogue with biblical studies and textual criticism.

7. Muslim universities should establish dedicated research centres for Qur'anic inimitability, bringing together specialists in Arabic linguistics, Islamic theology, comparative literature, and digital humanities.
8. Scholars should produce accessible, rigorous English-language works on *I'jāz* al-Qur'an that neither condescend to non-specialist audiences nor sacrifice scholarly integrity.
9. Interfaith and inter-civilisational dialogue should include serious engagement with the Qur'an's literary and ethical dimensions, moving beyond polemical apologetics to genuine scholarly exchange.
10. Future research should give sustained attention to the legislative and ethical dimension of *I'jāz*, exploring the Qur'an's jurisprudential coherence through the methods of comparative law and political philosophy.

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