

## ABDUL QĀHIR AL-JURJĀNĪ AND HIS THOUGHT

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### ABSTRAK

Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani, yang hidup pada 471 H/1078 M, adalah salah satu tokoh yang paling signifikan dalam sejarah keilmuan Islam klasik, terutama dalam bidang balaghah dan linguistik Arab. Memahami bahasa Al-Qur'an sangat bergantung pada pemikirannya, terutama dalam teori nazm, yang menjelaskan bagaimana struktur dan makna terintegrasi dalam susunan bahasa. Melalui karya-karyanya seperti *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* dan *Asrār al-Balāghah*, al-Jurjani menekankan bahwa keindahan bahasa terletak pada hubungan dan susunan antar kata dalam konteks, bukan pada kata secara terpisah. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mempelajari lebih lanjut tentang peran intelektual al-Jurjani dalam perkembangan ilmu balaghah dan analisis stilistika Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran al-Jurjani tidak hanya relevan dalam konteks klasik, tetapi juga memberi kontribusi besar dalam.

**Kata Kunci:** Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani, balaghah, nazm, linguistik Arab, stilistika Al-Qur'an.

### ABSTRACT

*Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani, who lived in 471 AH/1078 AD, was one of the most significant figures in the history of classical Islamic scholarship, especially in the fields of balaghah and Arabic linguistics. Understanding the language of the Koran is very dependent on its thinking, especially in nazm theory, which explains how structure and meaning are integrated in the structure of language. Through his works such as Dalā'il al-I'jāz and Asrār al-Balāghah, al-Jurjani emphasized that the beauty of language lies in the relationship and arrangement between words in context, not in the words separately. The aim of this research is to learn more about al-Jurjani's intellectual role in the development of the science of balaghah and stylistic analysis of the Al-Qur'an. This research shows that al-Jurjani's thinking is not only relevant in a classical context, but also makes a major contribution in.*

**Keywords:** Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani, balaghah, nazm, Arabic linguistics, Al-Qur'an stylistics

### INTRODUCTION

In the development of contemporary scholarship, research on classical figures within the Islamic intellectual tradition remains a significant focus, particularly in the fields of linguistics, rhetoric, and Qur'anic exegesis. One notable figure in this regard is 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471 AH/1078 CE), who made substantial contributions to these areas. He is renowned as a master of *balāghah* (Arabic rhetoric) and the originator of the theory of *nazm*—a theory concerning the syntactic arrangement of words in Arabic and its relation to the beauty and meaning of the Qur'an. His ideas have been referenced not only by classical scholars but also by modern Muslim thinkers and Orientalists in the study of language.

Al-Jurjānī's two major works, *Asrār al-Balāghah* and *Dalā'il al-I'jāz*, offer deep insights into his intellectual thought. In both writings, he rejected purely grammatical or semantic approaches and emphasized the importance of the relationship between linguistic form and meaning. His *nazm* theory serves as a foundation for analyzing the

stylistics of the Qur'an, demonstrating that the eloquence of the Qur'anic language lies not merely in individual words, but in their arrangement and interconnectedness. This methodology reflects al-Jurjānī's profound understanding of linguistic structure and its relevance to Arabic literary analysis.

Research on al-Jurjānī's thought is crucial for enriching the vast intellectual heritage of Islam and for reinforcing linguistic approaches within Islamic studies. His ideas can serve as a bridge between contemporary academic needs and classical traditions, particularly as modern linguistic and discourse analysis continue to evolve. Furthermore, exploring his thought can shed light on the contributions of Islamic civilization to the science of language—contributions that are often overlooked in the global history of linguistics. Accordingly, this study aims to further explore the figure of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī and his significant ideas on Arabic linguistics and rhetoric.

## DISCUSSION

### Biography of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī

The full name of al-Jurjānī is 'Abd al-Qāhir Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī. He was born and died in Jurjān, a city located between Ṭabaristān and Khurāsān in Iran. His family lineage is not known to be prominent, so little is found in historical sources about his ancestry except for his grandfather, Muḥammad.

According to most scholars, al-Jurjānī died in 471 AH (1078 CE), although some reports suggest 474 AH (1081 CE). The exact year of his birth remains uncertain, with no historical record confirming the day, date, or year of his birth. Ahmad Maṭlūb estimates that al-Jurjānī was born at the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the 5th century AH, but this remains speculative.

As a child, al-Jurjānī lived in Jurjān and pursued the study of Islamic sciences and Arabic, like other children of his time. One of the most influential texts in shaping his thought was *al-Idāḥ* by Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī. He studied this work under Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wāris al-Fārisī, a grammarian and nephew of the author. Al-Jurjānī's *al-Maghna* is a commentary on *al-Idāḥ* in 30 volumes, later abridged into *al-Muqtaṣad* in three volumes. Thus, although he did not study directly under Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, he learned from his student.

The identity of al-Jurjānī's other teachers remains debated. According to Yāqūt, al-Jurjānī was a student of al-Qāḍī al-Jurjānī. However, in *Bughyat al-Wu'āḥ*, al-Suyūṭī cites Yāqūt's statement about the biography of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, claiming that Muḥammad was al-Jurjānī's only teacher. This view is considered more reliable, given reports that al-Qāḍī died in 366 AH or 392 AH, making it unlikely they interacted.

Al-Khwānsārī suggests that al-Jurjānī also studied under Ibn Jinnī and al-Ṣāḥib ibn 'Abbād al-Wazīr, but this is also doubtful, as both had died—al-Ṣāḥib in 378 AH and Ibn Jinnī in 392 AH—before al-Jurjānī would have been of age to study with them.

In his writings, al-Jurjānī never explicitly names his teachers, instead using phrases like *qāla shaykhunā raḥimahullāh* ("our teacher said, may God have mercy on him"), which scholars believe refer to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn due to the context involving grammatical knowledge.

Al-Jurjānī never left his hometown in pursuit of knowledge. His humble financial condition likely prevented him from traveling. His teacher, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, came to Jurjān, allowing him to study locally.

Beyond his formal studies, al-Jurjānī gained much knowledge from books. His works include citations from renowned Arabic linguists and scholars such as Sībawayh, al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Mubarrad, Ibn Durayd, al-ʿAskarī, al-Marzbānī, al-Fārisī, al-Āmīdī, and al-Qāḍī al-Jurjānī.

Due to his diligence, al-Jurjānī became a prominent figure in Jurjān, especially in Arabic linguistics. Many students sought him out, including:

1. Abū Naṣr Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Shajjārī, a scholar focused on Arabic grammar who studied *al-Muqtaṣad* under al-Jurjānī. He died in 490 AH.
2. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Muhābazī al-Ḍarīr al-Naḥwī, known for his *Sharḥ al-Lumaʿ*. Little else is known about him.
3. Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Khaṭīb al-Ṭabarīzī, from Baghdad, a recognized expert in Arabic grammar and literature.
4. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Abī Zayd ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Faṣīḥī, a distinguished student who studied grammar and died in Baghdad in 516 AH.
5. Abū al-Muẓaffar Muḥammad ibn Abī al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Abūrdī, a scholar of language, poetry, and history, known for works like *Tārīkh Abūrdī*, *al-Mukhtalif wa al-Muʿtalif*, and *Naḥrah al-Ḥāfiẓ*. He died in Isfahan on 25 Rabīʿ al-Awwal, 507 AH.

Al-Jurjānī's thoughts on Arabic linguistic disciplines remain foundational and influential. His reputation as a grammarian preceded his later contributions to *balāghah*. He is regarded not only as one of the greatest grammarians (*akābir al-naḥwiyyīn*) and masters of Arabic rhetoric (*aʿimmah al-ʿArabiyyah wa al-bayān*) but also as a follower of the Shāfiʿī school in jurisprudence and the Ashʿarī school in theology. Historians honor him with the title *al-Imām* for his scholarship and piety.

Works of al-Jurjānī in addition to *Dalāʾil al-Iʿjāz* and *Asrār al-Balāghah*, his other works include:

1. *al-Madkhal fī Dalāʾil al-Iʿjāz*
2. *Ārāʾ al-Jurjānī*
3. *al-Iʿjāz*
4. *al-Maghna*
5. *al-Muqtaṣad*
6. *al-ʿAwāmil al-Miʾah*
7. *al-Jumal*
8. *al-Talkhīṣ*
9. *al-ʿUmdah fī al-Taṣrīf*
10. *al-Iqnāʿ fī al-ʿArūḍ wa Takhrīj al-Qawāfiʾ*
11. *Mukhtār Ikhtiyār*
12. *al-Tadhkirah*
13. *al-Miftāḥ*

Unfortunately, some of these works are known only by title, as the original manuscripts have been lost or destroyed.

One of al-Jurjānī's most remarkable and influential ideas concerns the inimitability (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'an, which he locates in its *naẓm* and *ta'līf*—that is, in its structure and composition. His concept of *naẓm* includes a profound analysis of the nature of language itself. According to al-Jurjānī, language is not merely a collection of individual words but a system of interrelated elements. He argued that a person cannot truly understand or explain the excellence and perfection of the Qur'an's language and literary quality without examining its syntactic construction. In his view, it is *naẓm* that fundamentally distinguishes the Qur'anic discourse from other literary genres such as poetry, prose, and other forms of expression.

The Concept of *Naẓm* (Linguistic Structure) in the *I'jāz al-Qur'an* Definition of *Naẓm*. Etymologically, *naẓm* means *at-ta'līf* (composition, arrangement, structure). As stated in *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, "*naẓm al-Qur'ān*" refers to the expressions contained in the Qur'an, which encompass various forms of words and linguistic elements (عبارته التي تشتمل عليها المصاحف صيغة ولغة). In other words, *naẓm*, as explained by Prof. Dr. D. Hidayat, means *at-tarākīb al-lughawīyyah* (linguistic structures or arrangements). Al-Jurjānī's Theory of *Naẓm* in the Discourse of *I'jāz al-Qur'an* In general, al-Jurjānī's thought regarding the theory of *naẓm* in relation to the Qur'anic inimitability (*i'jāz*) is summarized in three main points:

1. The Qur'an exhibits its inimitability through its rhetorical and literary eloquence (*balāghah*),
2. This eloquence lies specifically in the *naẓm*—its linguistic structure—which forms the essential basis of the Qur'an's inimitability,
3. The characteristics and essence of this *naẓm* are unique and unparalleled.

The Qur'an's Inimitability Lies in its *Balāghah* Al-Jurjānī elaborates this aspect through two major proofs:

- a. *Dalā'il aḥwālīhim* – the historical inability of the Arabs to respond to the Qur'an's challenge, even to produce a single surah comparable to it, no matter how short.
- b. *Dalā'il aqwālīhim* – testimonies and acknowledgments from the Arabs themselves, recorded in historical accounts during the Qur'an's revelation, such as:
  1. The report concerning 'Utbaḥ ibn Rabī'ah: he once approached the Prophet Muhammad with arguments intending to silence him and dissuade him from his message. However, after hearing the Prophet recite Sūrat Fuṣṣilat, 'Utbaḥ was astonished. He returned to his people and admitted that he had heard words the likes of which he had never encountered before, declaring: "*It is neither poetry, nor sorcery, nor soothsaying.*"
  2. The account of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī's conversion to Islam: his brother Anīs once visited Mecca and listened to the Prophet's recitation. Upon returning, he informed Abū Dharr that he had compared the Prophet's words with those of

poets and soothsayers, and found that the Qur'an stood entirely apart. He affirmed the Prophet's truthfulness and accused his opponents of falsehood.

The Inimitability of the Qur'an Lies in its Naẓm (Linguistic Structure) Al-Jurjānī discusses this in detail in his seminal work *Dalā'il al-I'jāz*, where he puts forth the following core ideas:

1. The Qur'an challenges the Arabs to produce something similar to it, even a single short surah. This indicates that its *naẓm*—linguistic structure—is a core aspect of its inimitability, particularly given the Arabs' mastery of language and rhetoric at the time. The challenge would have been meaningless if it addressed something beyond their capacity or unfamiliar to them.
2. The Qur'an employs the same Arabic vocabulary that the Arabs themselves used in daily life. Yet its superior structural composition makes it inimitable, even to native speakers.
3. The Qur'an's precise and harmonious use of vocalized letters (*ḥarakāt*), silent letters (*sukūn*), pauses (*waqf*, *maqāṭi'*, *fawāṣil*) surpasses the prosodic techniques of Arabic poetry, particularly *qawāfī* (rhyme patterns).
4. Even the selection and arrangement of letters—some of which were typically avoided in Arabic poetry due to difficulty in pronunciation—are rendered in the Qur'an in ways that are light, eloquent, and beautiful to recite.
5. The placement of words (e.g., prioritizing one term over another), and the syntactical construction (*i'rāb*), are done with such precision that they reflect a level of linguistic sophistication unmatched by any human effort.

These features present compelling, rational, and evidentiary support for the claim that the Qur'an's *naẓm* is a unique and inimitable linguistic miracle. Characteristics and Essence of Naẓm in the Qur'an Al-Jurjānī outlines several key points regarding the nature of *naẓm*:

- a. *Naẓm* is, in essence, the ability to formulate expressions that fully and eloquently convey the speaker's intent, while ensuring that the listener can clearly comprehend the message. This is only possible when the speaker has complete mastery over the intended meaning and arranges linguistic elements accordingly.
- b. In al-Jurjānī's framework, *naẓm* includes two levels: *naẓm al-ḥurūf* (arrangement of letters forming words), and *naẓm al-kalimāt* (arrangement of words forming sentences). *Naẓm al-ḥurūf* primarily concerns phonetic order and does not inherently affect meaning. It is only when words are combined meaningfully (*naẓm al-kalimāt*) that meaning emerges, which is why precise syntactic structure is crucial.
- c. To illustrate the Qur'an's superior use of *naẓm al-kalimāt*, al-Jurjānī analyzes Qur'anic verses, such as Sūrat al-An'ām: 100: "*Wa ja'alū li-Llāhi shurakā'a al-jinna*" (And they made the jinn partners with Allah). Al-Jurjānī explains:
  1. The verb *ja'alū* requires two direct objects, which in this verse are *shurakā'a* and *al-jinna*. Common Arabic syntax would typically render this phrase as: "*Wa ja'alū al-jinna shurakā'a li-Llāh*". However, the Qur'an deliberately deviates from this conventional structure to express a richer set of meanings through its unique arrangement.
  2. If the more familiar structure were used, the meaning would be narrower—suggesting that Allah is associated with the jinn only. However, the Qur'an's

chosen structure emphasizes the total falsity and magnitude of the claim, maintaining the transcendence of Allah from all forms of association.

## CONCLUSION

Based on al-Jurjānī's concept of *nazm*, words alone are insufficient to convey meaning. Rather, words inherently require structure, relational coherence, and harmony among the constituent elements of a verse. The interrelation between words, along with their respective positions and functions within a given context, generally forms a meaning (*tawakkhkhī ma'nā al-naḥw*) that generates the beauty and perfection of the divine speech (*kalām Allāh*). This, according to al-Jurjānī, is what constitutes the concept of *al-naẓm*—the theory of construction or linguistic structuring. It is through this concept that al-Jurjānī reveals that one of the fundamental aspects of the Qur'an's inimitability (*i'jāz*) lies in its unique *nazm*.

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