

Reconfiguring Pre-Islamic Arab Cosmology: A Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text Analysis of the Qur'anic al-Layl Verses

Rekonfigurasi Kosmologi Arab Pra-Islam: Analisis Pre-Text, Text, dan Con-Text terhadap Ayat-Ayat al-Layl dalam Al-Qur'an

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Abstract

This study examines Qur'anic verses containing the term *al-layl* (night) through a historical-hermeneutical approach that moves beyond the tendency to read natural phenomena primarily through scientific exegesis (*tafsir 'ilmi*). While contemporary discussions of the Qur'an and nature have extensively addressed the relationship between revelation and scientific knowledge, less attention has been paid to how Qur'anic discourse engaged with and reconfigured the cosmological imagination of pre-Islamic Arabian society. This article therefore investigates how the *al-layl* verses transformed existing perceptions of nature and articulated a new theological understanding of the cosmic order. Using the conceptual framework of pre-text, text, and con-text, the study analyzes thirty-four Qur'anic verses containing the term *al-layl* as its primary textual corpus. The verses are examined through thematic classification, semantic relations, and contextual interpretation, with particular attention to their predominantly Makkiyah setting and to their theological, cosmological, and eschatological functions. The findings show that the *al-layl* verses do more than describe the observable phenomenon of night. They reconfigure its symbolic significance within a tawhīdic cosmology by relocating night, the alternation of night and day, and the wider celestial order from a sacralized cosmological framework into a Qur'anic discourse of divine signs (*āyāt*). Natural phenomena thus become signs of divine sovereignty, objects of contemplation, and reminders of eschatological accountability. The study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic scholarship by reading *āyāt kauniyyah* as historically situated and transformative discourse that reshaped the cosmological consciousness of the Qur'an's earliest audience.

Keywords: *al-layl* verses; Qur'anic cosmology; pre-Islamic Arabia; pre-text, text, and con-text; *āyāt kauniyyah*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an yang memuat term *al-layl* (malam) melalui pendekatan historis-hermeneutis yang melampaui kecenderungan membaca fenomena alam terutama melalui kerangka tafsir ilmiah (*tafsir 'ilmi*). Meskipun diskursus kontemporer mengenai Al-Qur'an dan alam telah banyak membahas hubungan antara wahyu dan pengetahuan ilmiah, perhatian terhadap cara diskursus Al-Qur'an berinteraksi dengan sekaligus merekonfigurasi imajinasi kosmologis masyarakat Arab pra-Islam masih relatif terbatas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana ayat-ayat *al-layl* mentransformasikan pemaknaan terhadap alam serta membentuk pemahaman teologis baru mengenai tatanan kosmik. Dengan menggunakan kerangka konseptual pre-text, text, dan con-text, penelitian ini menganalisis tiga puluh empat ayat Al-Qur'an yang mengandung term *al-layl* sebagai korpus tekstual utama. Ayat-ayat tersebut dianalisis melalui klasifikasi tematik, relasi semantik,



dan interpretasi kontekstual, dengan memberikan perhatian khusus pada karakter Makkiyah yang dominan serta fungsi teologis, kosmologis, dan eskatologisnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ayat-ayat *al-layl* tidak sekadar mendeskripsikan fenomena malam yang dapat diamati, tetapi juga merekonfigurasi makna simboliknya dalam kerangka kosmologi tauhid. Malam, pergantian malam dan siang, serta keteraturan benda-benda langit ditempatkan kembali dari kerangka kosmologis yang disakralkan ke dalam diskursus Al-Qur'an mengenai tanda-tanda Tuhan (*āyāt*). Melalui rekonfigurasi tersebut, fenomena alam dihadirkan sebagai tanda kedaulatan Tuhan, objek refleksi kontemplatif, dan pengingat akan pertanggungjawaban eskatologis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian Al-Qur'an kontemporer dengan menunjukkan bahwa *āyāt kauniyyah* tidak hanya dapat dibaca dalam kaitannya dengan penjelasan ilmiah, tetapi juga sebagai diskursus historis dan transformatif yang membentuk kembali kesadaran kosmologis audiens awal Al-Qur'an.

Kata kunci: ayat-ayat *al-layl*; kosmologi Al-Qur'an; Arab pra-Islam; pre-text, text, dan con-text; *āyāt kauniyyah*

Introduction

One of the most persistent debates in contemporary Qur'anic studies concerns whether Qur'anic verses on natural phenomena should primarily be understood as scientific propositions or as theological and historical discourse shaped by the sociocultural environment of revelation. Since the late nineteenth century, scientific exegesis (*tafsīr 'ilmī*)¹ has emerged as a dominant interpretive tendency attempting to reconcile Qur'anic revelation with modern scientific discovery.² Within this framework, the Qur'an was frequently positioned as a text containing scientific truths that could only be fully understood through contemporary scientific knowledge.³ Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, for instance, interpreted Q. 96 through biological concepts such as spermatozoa and leeches, while Muḥammad Raḥīm approached Q. 79:1–5 through evolutionary theory.⁴

1 Sana Munawar, "Exploring Scientific Exegesis (Al-Tafsīr Al-'Ilmi) of the Quran: Merits, Challenges, and Interpretive Boundaries," *Journal of Religion and Society* 3, no. 02 (May 2025): 414–24.

2 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Syukron Affani, and Zaenatul Hakamah, "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions by Scholars, Institutions, and the Government," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (December 2021): 25–46, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i4.401>.

3 Mohammad Ali, "The Qur'an and Modern Science Discourse in Contemporary Islam," *Zygon* 58, no. 2 (2023).

4 Johannes Marinus Simon Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 1; Ahmad Khan, "Principles of Exegesis," in *Muslim Self Statement in India and Pakistan 1857–1968*, ed. Aziz Ahmad and Gustave Edmund von Grunebaum (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), 35.

Contemporary scholarship on the Qur'an and science encompasses a range of interpretive orientations rather than a simple progression of opposing approaches.⁵ Scientific-concordist readings, represented prominently by Maurice Bucaille and Zaghlul al-Najjar, seek to demonstrate the compatibility between Qur'anic revelation and empirical science.⁶ At the same time, a substantial body of critical scholarship has questioned the methodological assumptions underlying such readings, particularly their tendency to subordinate Qur'anic meaning to changing scientific theories and modern epistemological categories.⁷ More recent studies have further widened this discussion by approaching Qur'anic discourse on nature through historical, contextual, and hermeneutical perspectives.⁸ These critical developments have significantly expanded the study of Qur'anic representations of nature; however, comparatively less attention has been given to the ways in which specific natural phenomena functioned within the cosmological world of the Qur'an's earliest audience and were subsequently reconfigured through revelation.

Building on this broader critical conversation, this article examines the Qur'anic *al-layl* verses from a historical-hermeneutical perspective rather than asking whether Qur'anic references to natural phenomena anticipate modern scientific discoveries. Specifically, it explores how the discourse of night and the alternation of night and day functioned within, and contributed to the reconfiguration of, the cosmological imagination of pre-Islamic Arabian society. While existing scholarship has extensively examined the epistemological relationship between Qur'anic revelation and scientific knowledge, comparatively less attention has been given to the Qur'an's dialogical engagement with the cosmological meanings embedded in the socio-religious world of its earliest audience. This article therefore redirects attention from questions of scientific correspondence toward the historical-hermeneutical reconstruction of meaning, examining how familiar cosmic phenomena were rearticulated within a tawhīdic framework of divine sovereignty, contemplation, and eschatological accountability.

5 Muqowim Muqowim and Zulkipli Lessy, "Augmenting Science in the Islamic Contemporary World: A Strategic Attempt at Reconstructing the Future," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 57, no. 1 (2019): 197–230, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2019.571.197-230>; Mohammad Ali, "The Qur'an and Modern Science Discourse in Contemporary Islam," *Zygon* 58, no. 2 (2023); Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Syukron Affani, and Zaenatul Hakamah, "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions by Scholars, Institutions, and the Government," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021): 25–46, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i4.401>; Ayman Shabana, "In Pursuit of Consonance: Science and Religion in Modern Works of Tafsir," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 7–31, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2019.0397>.

6 Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1978).

7 Nidhal Guessoum, *Islam's Quantum Question* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

8 M. Daneshgar, "The Qur'an and Science," *Zygon* 58, no. 4 (2023).

The rise of *tafsir 'ilmī* was also rooted in the Qur'an's frequent engagement with natural phenomena (*āyāt kauniyyah*),⁹ including celestial bodies, rainfall, the alternation of day and night, and cycles of life and death. These verses often conclude with exhortations to think, reflect, and contemplate, thereby encouraging interpretive engagement with the natural world.¹⁰ However, prior to the dominance of scientific interpretation, classical Muslim exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, and Ibn Kathīr generally approached verses concerning natural phenomena as signs of divine majesty, ethical reflection, and faith reinforcement rather than as scientific predictions.¹¹ Their interpretive orientation was closely related to the Makkiyah character of many *āyāt kauniyyah*, which were revealed within a socio-religious environment shaped by cosmological beliefs, mythological imagination, and polytheistic traditions.

This interpretive pattern potentially encouraged exploratory readings of *āyāt kauniyyah* through more humanistic approaches attentive to the temporal, spatial, and socio-historical dimensions of the Makkiyah period. Within this framework, natural phenomena were understood not merely as empirical realities but as symbolic and communicative signs embedded within the religious consciousness of Arabian society.¹² However, as modernity increasingly demanded compatibility between religion and science, interpretive attention gradually shifted toward identifying the “scientific content” of Qur'anic verses. Consequently, the scientific lens, originally intended to enrich Qur'anic understanding, often narrowed the interpretive horizon by privileging empirical verification over historical, theological, and cosmological dimensions of meaning.

9 Norain Azlan, Mohd Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff, and Sedek Bin Ariffin, “Towards a Holistic Framework for Scientific Exegesis: A Comparative Methodological Study of Elmalili M. Hamdi Yazir and Tantawi Jawhari,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (April 2026): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.T2026052100003990489829818>.

10 Abdul Mustaqim, “Kontroversi Tentang Corak Tafsir Ilmi,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 7, no. 1 (January 2006): 24.

11 Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 2001), 10:467–68; Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa-'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rīfah, 2009), 747–48; Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: al-Risālah, 2006), 15:449–50; Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993), 6:460–65; Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṭayyibah, 1999), 6:116.

12 Ted Peters, Muzaffar Iqbal, and Syed Nomanul Haq, *God, Life, and the Cosmos: Christian and Islamic Perspectives* (Taylor & Francis, 2017); Azlan, Yusoff, and Ariffin, “Towards a Holistic Framework for Scientific Exegesis”; Mohamed Bourbab, “العلم والاعجاز القرآنية اللغة ضوء في تحليل تاريخية قراءة : الغربي و التطور الاسلاميه الحضارة العلمي الاسهام بين الارض : كروية : The Sphericity of the Earth: Between the Scientific Contributions of Islamic Civilization and Western Development— A Historical-Analytical Study in Light of the Qur'anic Language and Scientific Miracles.” *مجلة اعجاز لشمال المغرب البولية للبحث والتأمل العلمي*, no. 10 (December 2025). <https://doi.org/10.34874/PRSM.iennmpjap-vol10iss10.63068>.

This article argues that Qur'anic verses concerning natural cycles should not primarily be understood as anticipatory scientific propositions but rather as theological and cosmological interventions responding to the sacred worldview of pre-Islamic Arabia. The Qur'an did not merely describe nature; it reconstructed its symbolic meaning by transforming celestial bodies, cycles of day and night, and other cosmic phenomena from sacralized entities into signs (*āyāt*) of divine unity, ethical contemplation, and eschatological consciousness.

The primary dataset of this research consists of Qur'anic verses related to natural cycles, particularly verses containing the term *al-layl* (night). Based on thematic investigation using *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, this study identifies thirty-four verses containing the word *al-layl* that are relevant to cosmological and natural-cycle discourse.¹³ These verses discuss themes such as the alternation of day and night, celestial movement, divine order, contemplation, and eschatological awareness. The verses were analyzed through thematic classification, semantic relations, and contextual interpretation in order to identify their cosmological, theological, and rhetorical functions within Makkan discourse. Of the thirty-four verses, twenty-seven belong to the Makkiyah period, while seven belong to the Madaniyah period. The focus on *al-layl* verses is based on the assumption that the alternation of night and day represented one of the most fundamental cosmological experiences within pre-Islamic Arab society and therefore became an effective medium for Qur'anic theological transformation.

Methodologically, this article employs a thematic and historical-hermeneutical approach using Shahab Ahmed's framework of pre-text, text, and con-text.¹⁴ In operational terms, the "pre-text" in this study refers to the cosmological beliefs, sacred symbols, and mythological assumptions that formed the background of Qur'anic verses on natural cycles within pre-Islamic Arab society, including beliefs concerning celestial bodies, stars, seasonal cycles, and supernatural forces associated with nature. The "text" refers to Qur'anic verses concerning natural cycles, particularly the *al-layl* verses analyzed in this study, while the "con-text" refers to the socio-religious transformation generated through the Qur'an's reinterpretation of natural phenomena within the emergence of Islamic monotheism.¹⁵ This study operationalizes the categories of pre-text, text, and con-text to examine how pre-Islamic cosmological beliefs shaped the symbolic language of the *al-layl* verses,

13 Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li-Alfāz al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1364 AH), 657.

14 Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 405.

15 Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic*, 405.

how the Qur'an reconstructed these meanings within revelation, and how this reconstruction transformed Arabian religious consciousness.¹⁶

This process is what Halliday and Hasan describe as *meaning-making*,¹⁷ in which meaning is produced through the interaction of language and its social context.¹⁸ The concept therefore reinforces the pre-text, text, and con-text framework by highlighting how the Qur'anic *al-layl* verses function as communicative interventions within the cosmological world of pre-Islamic Arabia. By situating the Qur'anic *al-layl* verses within the cosmological worldview of pre-Islamic Arabia, this study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies in two ways. First, it extends the discussion of *āyāt kauniyyah* beyond questions of scientific correspondence by foregrounding their historical and cosmological dimensions. Second, it demonstrates how Qur'anic discourse on night operates dialogically and transformatively, reconfiguring familiar cosmic phenomena as signs of divine sovereignty and redirecting their significance toward tawhīdic and eschatological reflection.

Reading the Pre-Text: Pre-Islamic Arab Cosmology and Qur'anic Natural-Cycle Verses

Within Shahab Ahmed's hermeneutical framework, the pre-text of Qur'anic natural-cycle verses can be understood through the cosmological beliefs and sacred imagination of pre-Islamic Arab society. In the Meccan milieu before Muhammad's prophetic mission, natural cycles formed a practical foundation of everyday life.¹⁹ In a harsh environment where water, food, and shelter could be limited, close observation of natural phenomena was essential. The alternation of day and night, seasonal changes, and the appearance and disappearance of rain clouds provided important markers for caravan schedules, nomadic movement, and survival strategies.²⁰ Desert travel also depended on the stars for navigation, weather prediction, and timekeeping,²² a practice alluded to in the Qur'an (Q. 16:16). The pressures of nomadic and tribal

16 Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic*, 405–8.

17 James E. Alatis, ed., *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1992: Language, Communication, and Social Meaning* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1993).

18 Michael A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1976), 5.

19 Muqowim and Lessy, "Augmenting Science in the Islamic Contemporary World"; Mahmud Salim Al-Hut, *Mitologi Arab: Kepercayaan Kuno Bangsa Arab Sebelum Islam* (Tangerang Selatan: PT. Pustaka Alvabet, 2024).

20 Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and The Rise of Islam* (USA: Princeton University Press, 1987), 149–50.

21 Valentina A. Grasso, "Historicizing Ontologies: Qur'anic Preternatural Creatures between Ancient Topoi and Emerging Traditions," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 16, no. 1 (2023): 160–88.

22 Al-Hut, *Mitologi Arab: Kepercayaan Kuno Bangsa Arab Sebelum Islam*, 87.

life also sustained poetry as a major medium of expression. Verse could arouse tribal solidarity, satirize enemies, commemorate warriors, lament the dead, or express the loss of a beloved. Such poetry frequently drew on flora, fauna, the desert landscape, and social experiences characteristic of mobile life.²³

Beyond its practical functions, nature also carried symbolic meanings within mythology, belief, and cultural expression. These meanings were often associated with celestial bodies—the sun, moon, stars, and planets.²⁴ In this framework, nature could serve both as a practical guide and as a locus of sacred significance.²⁵ The veneration of Sirius (*al-Shi'ra*), for example, indicates that some pre-Islamic Arab communities regarded celestial objects as intermediaries of divine power capable of influencing human life.²⁶

Within their system of belief, the stars functioned not only as guides for travelers and seasonal markers, but were also thought to bring fortune or misfortune. According to the research of Mahmud Salim and Amir Ali, such beliefs were strongly influenced by interaction with the Sabians, a group whose teachings were based on the worship of spirits.²⁷ For the Sabians, the Creator was too exalted to be approached directly, so intermediaries were required—spirits, regarded as pure and holy. These spirits were believed to have received authority from the Creator to govern all things in the cosmos, including the movement of planets and stars. Because human beings required tangible symbols, the Sabians studied the rising and setting of stars and planets, and when the light of certain celestial bodies was no longer visible in the sky, they created idols to substitute for and represent their presence. In this way, the images of those stars remained constantly before their eyes, maintaining their conviction in the need for intermediaries between humans and the Creator. From this root, star and planet worship became deeply ingrained, including within Jahiliyyah Arab culture.²⁸

Arab knowledge of the stars, however, was not solely the product of interaction with the Sabians; it also grew out of their own traditions. One example lies in the Jahiliyyah Arabs' veneration of Sirius as a sacred being believed to exert a strong influence on the seasons, agriculture, and everyday life. Special reverence was also

23 Carl Brockelman, *Tārikh al-ʿAdab al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, trans. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār (Kairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 44.

24 Al-Hut, *Mitologi Arab: Kepercayaan Kuno Bangsa Arab Sebelum Islam*, 90–91.

25 Abeer Abdullah Al-Abbasi, "The Arabs' Visions of the Upper Realm," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 22, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.17192/mjr.2020.22.8301>.

26 Abū al-Munzīr Hisyām al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Aṣnām* (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1995), 41.

27 Al-Hut, *Mitologi Arab: Kepercayaan Kuno Bangsa Arab Sebelum Islam*, 86.

28 Al-Hut, *Mitologi Arab: Kepercayaan Kuno Bangsa Arab Sebelum Islam*, 84–85.

directed toward al-‘Uzzā, understood as the representation of Venus, one of the three celestial bodies worshipped in Mecca during the Prophet’s time.²⁹ In the mythology of the Arabs, stars and other celestial objects were often linked with destiny, supernatural powers, and the orientation of one’s life journey, thereby occupying an important place within the wider system of polytheism.³⁰

The sun and moon likewise occupied important places in the religious imagination of Arabs and other Semitic peoples. The sun’s intense light, which obscures other celestial bodies during the day, contributed to its association with daylight, strength, endurance, and life.³¹ The moon’s nocturnal radiance also made it an object of veneration in several ancient Near Eastern settings, including Ur, Harran, and Babylon, where it was believed to influence humans, animals, plants, and other parts of the natural world.³² Langdon describes an early Semitic configuration in which the sun, Venus, and moon formed an astral triad.³³ The sun could be associated with fertility and protection from drought, while the moon was linked to life cycles, timekeeping, and fortune. Lunar calendars reflected practical dependence on the moon and could also acquire religious significance. Some communities used lunar symbols such as the crescent (*hilāl*) as religious emblems. These traditions suggest that celestial bodies occupied differentiated roles within the religious and cultural worlds of Arab and other Semitic societies.

Furthermore, idols such as Hubal and al-‘Uzzā illustrated the connection between natural elements and supernatural powers. Many of these idols were inspired by features of nature; al-‘Uzzā, for example, was associated with sacred trees in an oasis. These idols were regarded as physical representations of supernatural forces believed to govern the universe. Another sacred tradition in Jahiliyyah culture was the practice of swearing oaths by invoking elements of nature. It was common for them to swear by the sun, the moon, the stars, or other cosmic entities in order to affirm the truth of a statement or to strengthen an agreement.³⁴ This tradition was rooted in the conviction that nature possessed sacred power; involving nature in an oath was thought to confer magical potency. Interestingly, when Islam came, the Qur’an

29 De Lacy O’Leary, *Arabia before Muhammad*, trans. Khusnul Harsul and Natalisa Krisnawati (Yogyakarta: Forum, 2024), 312.

30 Edith Jachimowicz, “Islamic Cosmology,” in *Ancient Cosmologies*, ed. Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975); Christopher Evan Longhurst, “Islamic Cosmogony according to Sūrah al-Hashr Verse 24: ‘He Is Allāh, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner of Forms,’” in *Eurasian Multidisciplinary Forum Proceedings*, vol. 2 (Tbilisi, 2013).

31 Al-Hut, *Mitologi Arab: Kepercayaan Kuno Bangsa Arab Sebelum Islam*, 95.

32 Al-Hut, *Mitologi Arab: Kepercayaan Kuno Bangsa Arab Sebelum Islam*, 100.

33 S. H. Langdon, *Mythology of All the World (Semitic)* (Norwood: Plimpton Press, 1931), 5:25.

34 M. M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

did not immediately abolish this deep-rooted tradition of swearing oaths, but rather accommodated it in a transformed form that reaffirmed the oneness of Allah.³⁵

Theological interpretations of nature in pre-Islamic Arabia were diverse and were not organized around the Qur'anic doctrine of *tawhīd*. Natural phenomena could be associated with local deities, cult objects in or near the Ka'bah, and spirits linked to particular places. Nature was also understood through the immediate demands of survival rather than consistently as an *āyah* inviting reflection on one sovereign Creator. Qur'anic revelation introduced a more integrated theological discourse in which natural phenomena functioned as signs of divine power and unity.³⁶

A prominent point of Qur'anic dispute with Meccan polytheists concerned resurrection after death. Several verses portray interlocutors asking how they could be raised after becoming bones and dust (Q. 17:49; Q. 23:82). Such statements suggest that the Qur'an addressed audiences without a strong, systematic doctrine of bodily resurrection. The cited studies likewise show that Islamic teaching about the Last Day and physical resurrection generated conceptual dispute within this setting.³⁷

Belief in the unseen was nevertheless not absent from pre-Islamic Arabia. Some communities recognized ancestral spirits or invisible beings, although these localized beliefs did not necessarily form an integrated eschatological doctrine of Paradise, Hell, and final judgment. The veneration of idols in the Ka'bah and other sacred objects indicates a spiritual world populated by multiple agents, but not a unified theology of resurrection and accountability. By emphasizing *yawm al-ḥisāb* and bodily resurrection, the Qur'an introduced a major reorientation of this religious imagination and sharpened the contrast between fragmented polytheistic beliefs and an integrated monotheistic worldview.

35 Al-Abbasi, "The Arabs' Visions of the Upper Realm."

36 Michael Lecker, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521838238.006>; Sedat Tuna, "İslâm Öncesi Cāhiliye Şiirinde Din Olgusu," *Trabzon İlahiyat Dergisi* 11, no. 1 (2024): 7–34, <https://doi.org/10.33718/tid.1432120>.

37 Ahmed Oulddali, "Que deviennent les martyrs ? Débats eschatologiques soulevés par l'exégèse de Coran II, 154 et III, 169," *Annales islamologiques*, no. 56 (juin 2022): 56, <https://doi.org/10.4000/anisl.10924>; Qais Alma'aitah, "The Rational Evidence That the Holy Qur'an Used to Prove Physical Resurrection and Respond to the Doubts of the Deniers," *Jordan Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 2 (June 2023): 333–56, <https://doi.org/10.59759/jjis.v19i2.30>.

Al-Layl and Qur'anic Discourse on Natural Cycles

The study of natural cycles in the Qur'an may be approached through various thematic keywords related to cosmological phenomena, including *al-layl* (night), *an-nahār* (day), *as-samā'* (sky), and *al-ard* (earth). However, this study specifically focuses on verses containing the term *al-layl* (night) as the primary dataset. The selection of *al-layl* verses is based on both thematic and methodological considerations.³⁸ First, the alternation of night and day represents one of the most fundamental and repeatedly experienced natural cycles within human life, particularly within the desert environment of pre-Islamic Arabia. Second, the Qur'anic discourse on *al-layl* frequently intersects with themes of divine order, contemplation, eschatological awareness, and cosmological signs (*āyāt kauniyyah*), making it particularly relevant for examining the relationship between nature, theology, and religious transformation. Third, the concept of night in the Qur'an possesses not only temporal significance but also symbolic and rhetorical dimensions connected to transcendence, reflection, and divine power.

The dataset was collected through thematic investigation using *al-Mu'jam al-Mufabras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān* by identifying verses containing the term *al-layl* that are contextually related to natural-cycle discourse. Based on this investigation, thirty-four relevant verses were identified, consisting of twenty-seven Makkiyah verses and seven Madaniyah verses. The verses were subsequently analyzed through thematic classification, semantic relations, and contextual interpretation in order to identify their cosmological, theological, and rhetorical functions within Qur'anic discourse. The predominance of Makkiyah verses within the dataset is particularly significant, as Makkiyah revelation frequently engaged with cosmological themes in response to the religious imagination and theological assumptions of pre-Islamic Arab society.

The resulting distribution is presented in Table 1.³⁹

Table 1: Distribution of *al-layl* Verses

Period	Number of Verses	List of Verses
Makkiyah	27 Verses	Q. 7:54; Q. 36:40; Q. 25:47, 62; Q. 35:13; Q. 27:86; Q. 28:71–73; Q. 17:12; Q. 10:6, 67; Q. 6:13, 60, 96; Q. 31:29; Q. 39:5; Q. 40:61; Q. 41:37–38; Q. 45:5; Q. 16:12; Q. 14:33; Q. 21:33; Q. 23:80; Q. 78:10; Q. 30:23

³⁸ al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufabras Li Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, 657.

³⁹ al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufabras Li Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, 657.

Period	Number of Verses	List of Verses
Madaniyah	7 Verses	Q. 2:164; Q. 3:27, 190; Q. 57:6; Q. 13:3; Q. 24:44; Q. 22:61

Three points warrant emphasis. First, most *al-layl* verses present the alternation of night and day as evidence of natural order. The cycle is not portrayed as accidental but as governed by Allah for human benefit—as a time for rest, reflection, or particular forms of activity. Second, the verses relevant to natural cycles are predominantly Makkiyah. Third, alongside creation and the rhythm of night and day, these verses carry strong eschatological associations, indicated by terms such as *yaʾum al-qiyāmah* (Day of Resurrection), *ajalin musammā* (an appointed term), *marjiʿukum* (your return), *baʿth* (resurrection), *al-mawt* (death), and *yuhyi wa-yumit* (He gives life and causes death).

Within the pre-textual cosmology of pre-Islamic Arabia, celestial and natural phenomena were frequently associated with sacred power, supernatural agency, and mythological imagination. Cycles of night and day, celestial movement, rainfall, and other natural phenomena were not understood merely as physical realities, but as elements embedded within the religious consciousness of Arabian society. In this context, the Qurʾanic discourse on *al-layl* reconstructs existing cosmological imagination by redirecting the meaning of natural cycles toward tawhīdic consciousness, theological reflection, and eschatological awareness. Consequently, Qurʾanic references to night should not be understood merely as descriptive cosmological statements, but as transformative discourse that re-signifies nature within a monotheistic worldview.

Table 2: Relational Indicators of *al-Layl* Verses

Period	Main Verse	Relational Indicators	Relational Position (Syntagmatic)	Relational Discourse
Makkiyah	Q. 7:54	(1) liqā'a yawmikum, meeting of this day (Resurrection); (2) Aṣḥāb al-nār, the inhabitants of Hellfire	Q. 7:50–51	Eschatology
		lahu al-khalq, to Him alone belongs all creation	Q. 7:54	Theology
Makkiyah	Q. 36:40	al-wa'd, the promise (of resurrection)	Q. 36:48	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 25:47	li-yadhhdhakkarū	Q. 25:50	Contemplation
Makkiyah	Q. 25:62	Li man arāda an yadhhdhakkara aw arāda shukūran	Q. 25:62	Contemplation
Makkiyah	Q. 35:13	ajalin musammā, yawm al-qiyāmah	Q. 35:13–14	Eschatology
		lahu al-mulk	Q. 35:13	Theology
Makkiyah	Q. 27:86	yawma naḥshuru	Q. 27:83	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 28:71–73	yawm al-qiyāmah, ilaihi turja'un	Q. 28:70–72	Eschatology
		tashkurūn	Q. 28:73	Contemplation
Makkiyah	Q. 17:12	yawm al-qiyāmah	Q. 17:13	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 10:6	liqā'anā	Q. 10:7	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 10:67	marji'ukum	Q. 10:70	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 6:13	yawm al-qiyāmah	Q. 6:12	Eschatology

Period	Main Verse	Relational Indicators	Relational Position (Syntagmatic)	Relational Discourse
Makkiyah	Q. 6:60	ajalin musammā, marji'ukum	Q. 6:60	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 6:96	yukhrij al-ḥayya min al-mayyiti wa mukhrij al-mayyiti min al-ḥayy	Q. 6:95	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 31:29	ajalin musammā, ba'th	Q. 31:28–29	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 39:5	ajalin musammā	Q. 39:5	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 40:61	yashkurūn	Q. 40:61	Contemplation
		Jahannam	Q. 40:60	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 41:37–38	lā tasjudū li-l-shamsi wa-lā li-l-qamari wa-sjudū lillāh	Q. 41:37	Theology
Makkiyah	Q. 45:5	ya'qilūn	Q. 45:5	Contemplation
Makkiyah	Q. 16:12	ya'qilūn	Q. 16:12	Contemplation
Makkiyah	Q. 14:33	maṣīrakum	Q. 14:30	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 21:33	al-mawt	Q. 21:35	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 23:80	yuhyī wa-yumīt	Q. 23:80	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 78:10	yawm al-faṣl	Q. 78:17	Eschatology
Makkiyah	Q. 30:23	yukhrij al-ḥayya min al-mayyiti wa yukhrij al-mayyita min al-ḥayyi wa yuhyi al-arḍa ba'da mawtiḥā	Q. 30:19	Eschatology
Madaniyah	Q. 2:164	mātū	Q. 2:161	Eschatology
Madaniyah	Q. 3:27	Tukhrij al-ḥayya min al-mayyiti wa tukhrij al-mayyita min al-ḥayyi	Q. 3:27	Eschatology
Madaniyah	Q. 3:190	'adhāb al-nār	Q. 3:191	Eschatology
Madaniyah	Q. 57:6	turja'	Q. 57:5	Eschatology

Period	Main Verse	Relational Indicators	Relational Position (Syntagmatic)	Relational Discourse
Madaniyah	Q. 13:3	yatafakkarūn	Q. 13:3	Contemplation
Madaniyah	Q. 24:44	maṣīr	Q. 24:42	Eschatology
		Ūlī al-abṣār	Q. 24:44	Contemplation
Madaniyah	Q. 22:61	mudkhalan yarḍawnahu	Q. 22:59	Eschatology

The syntagmatic relationship between *al-layl* verses and eschatological, theological, and contemplative indicators demonstrates that Qur'anic discourse on natural cycles functions within a broader symbolic and theological narrative rather than as isolated cosmological observation. The recurrence of these relational patterns suggests that natural phenomena in the Qur'an are consistently re-signified as communicative signs directing human consciousness toward divine sovereignty, eschatological awareness, and contemplative reflection.

Table 3: Thematic Classification of *al-Layl* Verses

Theme	Sub-Theme	Indicators
Eschatology	Death	ajalin musammā, al-mawt (and its derivations)
	Day of Judgment	yawm al-qiyāmah
	Life after death	liqā' (and its derivations), turja' (and its derivations), maṣīr, naḥsyuru, yukhrij al-ḥayya min al-mayyiti wa yukhrij al-mayyita min al-ḥayyi, al-ba'ṭh, al-wa'd, yaum al-faṣl
	Hell	Aṣḥāb al-nār, jahannam, 'adhāb al-nār
Theology	Existence of God: <i>Rabb</i>	lahu al-khalq, lahu al-mulk
	Existence of God: <i>Ilah</i>	lā taṣjudū li-l-shamsi wa-lā li-l-qamari wa-sjudū lillāh
Contemplation	Reflection	ya'qilūn, yatafakkarūn, ūlī al-abṣār
	Remembrance	yadhdkharū (and its derivations)
	Gratitude	yashkurūn (and its derivations)

The three major themes—theology, eschatology, and contemplation—intersect dynamically in the Qur'anic representation of *al-layl* (night) and natural cycles. Although the alternation of day and night appears routine, the verses present it as a divine sign: it affirms Allah's absolute power, supports the certainty of life after death, and calls humankind to reflection and gratitude. Within this interpretive framework, *al-layl* becomes a key to recognizing cosmic order and the sovereign

power that sustains it.

A concrete example of how the Qur'an connects natural cycles with these three themes is found in Q. 25:45–53, which presents a narrative rich in the nuances of natural cycles. Although the word “night” is not always explicitly mentioned throughout these verses, the entire passage depicts the regulation of time, including day and night along with other natural processes such as the movement of shadows, the descent of rain, and the meeting of two bodies of water. By examining these verses, it becomes clear that the Qur'an embeds a deep understanding that every change in nature carries profound meaning, pointing to the greatness of Allah and the perfect order of His creation. This exposition functions as a “bridge” for comprehending the divine dimension behind daily routines.

Q. 25:45 highlights the phenomenon of the lengthening of shadows (*madda al-zill*), inviting humans to “look and reflect” (*tarā*) upon how Allah stretches out the shadow, a process that seems ordinary but in reality contains a sign of His power. If He had willed (*shā'a*), the shadow could have remained static (*sākinan*). Yet in reality, shadows shift and shorten with the movement of the sun until sunset. The core messages here are that the motion of shadows is set forth by Allah as an object for human contemplation, and that their very movement demonstrates divine freedom of will, proving that such phenomena are governed by divine command rather than mere physical process.

The following verse, Q. 25:46, adds the counterpart: Allah “withdraws” (*qabd*) the shadow, an implicit reference to the transition of time as the sun sets and shadows vanish. Just as easily as He extends the shadow, He can retract it. Ibn 'Āshūr explains this with the analogy that all created things, including time, light, darkness, and shadow—may eventually cease and return to the Creator. This conveys an eschatological awareness: just as shadows are withdrawn, so too will all creatures ultimately be drawn back for reckoning. Q. 25:45–46 constructs the movement of shadows not merely as a physical phenomenon but as a rhetorical sign of divine sovereignty. The dynamic extension and withdrawal of shadow symbolize a cosmological order governed by divine will rather than autonomous natural causality.

At the same time, the power of Allah is highlighted in theological terms. The attribute *al-Qābiḍ* is also known among His names, indicating His power to take away and withhold souls both at death and in sleep.⁴⁰ The alternation of shadows naturally leads to the alternation of night and day, as described in Q. 25:47. Night is designated as a time of rest (*subāt*) and a “garment” (*libās*), while day is made for “rising” (*nushūr*). This portrays the divine scenario in which night provides

40 M. Quraish Shihab, ed., *Ensiklopedia Al-Qur'an: Kajian Kosakata*, vol. 3 (Ciputat: Lentera Hati, 2007), 745.

repose and day provides brightness for labor and activity. On the one hand, this carries a contemplative message: humans are reminded of their fragility and their dependence upon rest to restore strength. On the other, the imagery of *nushūr* conveys eschatological meaning: waking from sleep mirrors resurrection after death. Sleep is likened to a “minor death,” while waking is an analogy for the resurrection of the Hereafter.

An interesting point is that two of the five verses mentioning *nushūr* are directly linked to verses describing the rain process (Q. 35:9 and Q. 25:47). As the *Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān* notes,⁴¹ this comparative imagery was accessible to the Qurʾān’s earliest audience: barren land is a metaphor for death, for it cannot sustain growth; but once rain descends, it becomes fertile and life-giving. This “revival of dead earth” is a parallel for human resurrection on the Day of Rising.

Q. 25:48–49 then shift to the phenomena of wind and rain. Allah sends the wind as glad tidings preceding His mercy, bringing down pure water from the sky. Through this water, dead lands are revived and both livestock and humans are sustained. The eschatological connotation is clear: just as dead earth is revived, so too will humans be resurrected after death.

Q. 25:50 stresses that these signs—rain and other natural processes—are provided so that humans might remember (*li yadh dhakkarū*). Yet the verse laments that many persist in denial (*kufūran*). This contrast illustrates a historical reality: despite manifest signs of divine power, many rejected faith. The Qurʾān insists that the failure lies not in a lack of signs but in the hardness of human hearts. Here lies the link to contemplation: the receptive heart sees divine greatness in the world, while the closed heart squanders the signs.

Q. 25:51 conveys a hypothetical: had Allah willed (*law shāʾa*), He could have raised up a warner (*nadhīr*) in every town. This rhetorical mode, intensified by the particle *la*, underscores Allah’s full ability to act. Yet in reality, the mission of Prophet Muhammad was solitary, a heavy burden of warning amidst widespread disbelief. Ibn ʿĀshūr,⁴² following al-Zamakhsharī, interprets this hypothetical statement as divine consolation, lightening the Prophet’s burden by affirming that his mission was not by deficiency but by divine design.

This encouragement continues in Q. 25:52, where Muhammad is commanded not to follow the disbelievers but to struggle against them with a “great jihad” (*jihādān kabīran*). The signs of nature may be abundant, yet disbelief persists; the Prophet is warned not to be swayed but to persevere in steadfast struggle.

41 Shihab, *Ensiklopedia Al-Qurʾān: Kajian Kosakata*, 3:738.

42 Muḥammad al-Tāhir ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, vol. 19 (n.p., n.d.), 52.

Finally, Q. 25:53 presents the striking image of two seas—one fresh and sweet, the other salty and bitter—that meet yet do not merge entirely. A barrier (*barzakh*) is set between them, ensuring they remain distinct. Interpreters have read this literally (estuaries of fresh and saltwater) or metaphorically (believers and disbelievers), but in either case, the point is the same: Allah alone establishes and maintains the boundary.

Taken together, Q. 25:45–53 represent a quintessential example of how the Qur'an weaves natural cycles into a greater spiritual discourse. The theological dimension underscores Allah's sovereignty over even the smallest phenomena, from the movement of shadows to the descent of rain. The eschatological dimension illustrates how analogies of life and death, sleep and waking, barren land and revival, point to the certainty of resurrection. The contemplative dimension calls humanity to reflection and gratitude, recognizing in the rhythms of creation the signs of divine power. The passage therefore frames disbelief not as the absence of cosmological signs, but as the inability of human consciousness to interpret natural phenomena as theological and existential indicators. Within this framework, Qur'anic discourse transforms observation of nature into a process of contemplative engagement directed toward divine sovereignty and eschatological awareness.

The Con-Text of *al-Layl* Verses: Reconstructing Cosmological Consciousness in Early Islam

The predominance of Makkiyah verses in the thematic corpus situates the discourse on natural cycles largely within the Qur'an's early work of warning (*indhār*) and reorienting religious consciousness. The rhetoric of *warning* identifies a condition that requires change, whereas many Madaniyah passages place greater emphasis on forming and directing a new community. From the movement between pre-text and text, three interrelated transformations can be identified:⁴³

Re-Signifying Natural Cycles in the al-Layl Verses

A central question in the study of religion is how sacred texts guide shifts in patterns of thought. In the Qur'anic context, the *al-layl* verses redirect aspects of the pre-Islamic religious imagination from attributing cosmic agency to deities and cult objects toward recognizing an ordered universe created and governed by one God. The sun, moon, stars, and other phenomena could be invested with sacred agency and understood as forces shaping human destiny. Qur'anic discourse criticizes the

43 Naṣr Ḥamid Abū Zayd, *Tekstualitas Al-Quran*, trans. Khoiron Nahdliyyin (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2016), 86–90; Aksin Wijaya, *Arab Baru Studi Ulum Al-Quran: Memburu Pesan Tuhan di Balik Fenomena Budaya*, ed. Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009), 123.

worship of such entities while drawing attention to their regularity, createdness, and dependence. The rising and setting of the sun, the orbit of the moon, and cosmic order are contrasted with the powerlessness of idols. The resulting transition is not a simple opposition between irrationality and reason; rather, it is a theological reorientation in which *tadabbur* (contemplation) of nature becomes a means of recognizing *tawhīd*. Later proponents of scientific *tafsīr* would develop a different, modern form of this emphasis on reflection.

Divine Sovereignty and Cosmic Order in the al-Layl Verses

In the early Meccan phase of Islam, Muhammad attracted followers from varied social locations, including young people and members of marginalized groups.⁴⁴ According to Karen Armstrong's account, the initial proclamation did not immediately produce the level of conflict that emerged later.⁴⁵ Tensions intensified when Muhammad explicitly rejected the worship of other deities and asserted monotheism. The resulting opposition reflected not only doctrinal disagreement but also a wider challenge to inherited religious and social arrangements. Within this context, the Qur'an presents *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) as a fundamental theological error and calls for a decisive shift from polytheism to *tawhīd*.

The Qur'an reinforces this transition through at least two related strategies. First, it depicts pagan deities as powerless while presenting Allah as the sovereign reality. This pattern of negation and affirmation appears, for example, in Q. 53:19–26.

Second, the Qur'an rejects the concept of *banāt Allāh* (the daughters of Allah) associated with al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā, and Manāt in the Hijaz. These deities could be represented through aniconic stones that served as cultic focal points. Kinship terminology expressed their imagined relationship to God: they were called *His* "daughters." By denying this doctrine, the Qur'an challenged a religious order in which devotion to multiple intermediaries remained compatible with acknowledgment of a high God. Its response emphasizes that Allah is al-Ṣamad and neither begets nor is begotten (Q. 112:1–4).

The Qur'an's interlocutors should therefore not be described as irreligious. They participated in polytheistic traditions and could regard the rejection of ancestral deities as a rejection of the established religious order itself. The move from multiple divine intermediaries to exclusive devotion to one God demanded a difficult transformation of consciousness and contributed to the perception of Muhammad as a threat. The encounter thus became a theological dispute between

⁴⁴ Karen Armstrong, *Sejarah Tuhan* (Bandung: PT. Mizan Pustaka, 2013), 232.

⁴⁵ Armstrong, *Sejarah Tuhan*, 232.

Qur'anic monotheism and the inherited polytheistic order.

From Fragmentary Beliefs to an Integrated Eschatological Doctrine

Through the framing of Q.25:45–53, the Qur'an presents a compressed image of human existence: life (*ḥayāh*), death (*marwt*), and resurrection (*nushūr*). Life is evoked through the extension (*madda*) of shadows while daylight remains; death through their withdrawal (*qabd*) and the onset of al-layl (night), when activity ceases in repose (*subāt*); and resurrection through the transition from night to al-nahār (day), when people rise from sleep and resume activity. All three phases—the extension and withdrawal of shadow and the restoration of activity—are *presented* as acts of Allah and therefore as objects of reflection.

These stages do more than explain natural phenomena. Earlier parts of Q. 25 refer to judgment, punishment, and recompense, so cosmic order also functions rhetorically as evidence of divine power and the Hereafter. Muhammad appears as a *nadhīr* (warner) charged with conveying the message despite rejection. The image of two seas that meet yet remain distinct through a barrier (*barzakh*) extends the passage's reflection on boundaries, order, and divine governance. Thus, the sequence presents the alternation of day and night not only as a physical process but also as a persuasive and metaphorical discourse about resurrection and faith in the sovereign regulator of the cosmos.

In this transformation, Qur'anic verses about nature became instruments of da'wah that redirected cosmological interpretation from multiple divine agents toward tawḥīd. Natural phenomena formerly associated with local deities and rituals were presented as evidence of the oneness of Allah, removing the need for divine intermediaries. The cycles of nature thus became a means of cultivating faith in divine unity, cosmic order, and eschatological accountability.

This shift—from treating natural phenomena as independently sacred entities to reading them as signs of one sovereign God—also helped reconfigure communal identity in Islam's formative period. The theological, moral, and spiritual meanings assigned to natural cycles expanded the horizon of faith and integrated cosmology with worship and accountability.

During the Makkiyah phase, Qur'anic discourse repeatedly addressed audiences who disputed bodily resurrection and final recompense. Pre-Islamic beliefs about postmortem existence were diverse and often lacked the systematic integration of resurrection, Paradise, Hell, and judgment found in Qur'anic teaching. The conjunction of *tawḥīd* and belief in the Hereafter therefore marked a major transition from localized and fragmented beliefs toward a more integrated

monotheistic framework.

Through this process, Qur'anic discourse combined theological affirmation with disciplined reflection on nature. Two elements are especially important. First, it desacralized celestial bodies once treated as deities or sacred agents by presenting the sun, moon, and stars as creatures of Allah. Second, it made rational and contemplative attention to natural cycles a medium of moral-theological formation. Tadabbur (reflection) on celestial motion and seasonal change becomes a means of cultivating awareness of the Hereafter, human accountability, and the consequences of action.

Conclusion

Reading the verses through the categories of pre-text, text, and con-text reveals a shift away from approaches dominated by scientific validation toward an interpretation attentive to historical and intellectual contexts. This reading opens a wider horizon for appreciating the theological, eschatological, and contemplative dimensions of Qur'anic references to natural phenomena.

At the level of pre-text, the study shows that natural phenomena were indispensable to survival in pre-Islamic Arabia and could also carry sacred and mythological meanings, yet they were not consistently integrated into a systematic doctrine of tawhīd and final judgment. Qur'anic discourse reconfigured this worldview by presenting nature as a field of divine signs (*āyāt*) that affirm God's sovereignty and direct attention to eschatological accountability. At the textual level, the term *al-layl* demonstrates how the Qur'an uses natural cycles as an analogy for human existence—life, death, and resurrection. These cycles function not merely as observable events but as occasions for spiritual reflection and reinforcement of eschatological conviction. At the level of con-text, revelation appears in dynamic engagement with its sociocultural environment, redirecting diverse and fragmented beliefs toward a more integrated eschatological paradigm. The Qur'an thus functions as a historically engaged discourse rather than as a static text detached from context.

Approaches that seek primarily to correlate Qur'anic verses with scientific discoveries can narrow the interpretive horizon of the text. By contrast, the descriptive and historical-hermeneutical approach developed here broadens the field of interpretation by reading verses on natural cycles not merely as empirical proofs but as revelation conveying spiritual, moral, historical, and theological significance.

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