

## What the Qur'an Rules Out: *Mā Kāna* Constructions and the Rhetoric of Restriction in the Qur'an

*Apa yang Ditolak Al-Qur'an: Konstruksi Mā Kāna dan Retorika Pembatasan dalam Al-Qur'an*

Muhammad Shohib\*<sup>(a)</sup>, Muhammad Azizan Fitriana<sup>(b)</sup>, Ade Naelul Huda<sup>(b)</sup>, Sabri bin Mohamad<sup>(c)</sup>

\* Corresponding Author: [shohib@unkafa.ac.id](mailto:shohib@unkafa.ac.id)

(a) Universitas Kiai Abdullah Faqih Gresik, Jl. KH. Syafi'i No. 07, Suci, Manyar, Gresik, East Java 61151, Indonesia

(b) Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta, Jl. Ir. H. Juanda No. 70, Ciputat Timur, South Tangerang, Banten 15419, Indonesia

(c) Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

### Abstract

A translation that treats every Qur'anic *mā kāna* clause as a report that something “did not happen” misses the work performed by many of these passages. Some rule out conduct, others deny a right or autonomous power, and still others reject claims about God or the course of divine action. This article examines these differences across the Qur'an. A search of a verse-indexed Arabic text identified 213 candidate sequences; morphological and syntactic screening narrowed them to 127 negative clauses and a core of 37 instances in 36 verses. Close reading of clause structure, subject, complement, exceptions, local argument, classical grammar, *i'rāb*, and *tafsir* reveals no single meaning of prohibition or impossibility. Instead, the clauses restrict propositions on different grounds: communal norm, prophetic office, legitimate standing, created agency, divine permission, doctrinal propriety, divine justice, and a narrated history of refusal. Grammatical form guides these readings but does not determine them apart from context. Repeated *mā kāna* clauses therefore form a rhetoric of restriction: they mark what may not properly be done, claimed, attributed, or expected within Qur'anic discourse.

Keywords: Qur'anic Arabic; *mā kāna*; restriction; formulaic rhetoric; classical *tafsir*

### Abstrak

Penerjemahan yang memperlakukan setiap klausa *mā kāna* dalam Al-Qur'an sebagai laporan bahwa sesuatu “tidak terjadi” mengabaikan fungsi yang dijalankan oleh banyak ayat. Sebagian klausa menutup suatu tindakan, sebagian menolak hak atau kekuasaan otonom, dan sebagian lain menolak klaim tentang Allah atau pola tindakan ilahi. Artikel ini menelaah perbedaan tersebut di seluruh Al-Qur'an. Penelusuran terhadap teks Arab Al-Qur'an berindeks ayat menemukan 213 urutan kandidat; penyaringan morfologis dan sintaksis mengurangnya menjadi 127 klausa negatif dan korpus inti yang terdiri atas 37 data dalam 36 ayat. Pembacaan terhadap struktur klausa, subjek, komplemen, pengecualian, argumen lokal, tata bahasa klasik, *i'rāb*, dan *tafsir* tidak menemukan satu makna tunggal berupa larangan atau ketidakmungkinan. Klausa-klausa itu membatasi proposisi atas dasar norma komunal, jabatan kenabian, kelayakan, agensi makhluk, izin Allah, keputusan doktrinal, keadilan ilahi, dan sejarah penolakan. Bentuk gramatikal mengarahkan penafsiran, tetapi konteks menentukan dasar pembatasannya. Pengulangan *mā kāna* dengan demikian membentuk retorika pembatasan yang menandai apa yang tidak patut dilakukan, diklaim, dinisbahkan, atau diharapkan dalam wacana Al-Qur'an.



Kata Kunci: bahasa Arab Al-Qur'an; *mā kāna*; pembatasan; retorika formulaik; *tafsīr* klasik

## Introduction

In Q 4:92 the Qur'an states that it is not "for" a believer to kill another believer except by error; in Q 13:38 no messenger brings a sign except by God's permission; in Q 19:35 the taking of a son is excluded from proper speech about God; and in Q 2:143 God is said not to let the believers' earlier prayers go to waste. Each clause is built around negative *mā kāna*, yet each rules out something different. The first regulates conduct, the second limits prophetic agency, the third rejects a theological attribution, and the fourth corrects a feared account of divine action. A flat rendering such as "it was not" obscures these differences, while a universal gloss such as "impossible" or "prohibited" collapses them into one category.

The difficulty is partly grammatical. Some clauses place a person or group marked by *lām* before an overt infinitival clause, as in *wa-mā kāna li-mu'minin an yaqtula mu'minan* (Q 4:92). Others negate an imperfect predicate through the form traditionally discussed as *lām al-juhūd*, as in *wa-mā kāna Allāhu li-yuḍī'a imānakum* (Q 2:143). Q 10:37 presents a rarer form in which an infinitival clause is predicated directly of "this Qur'an". The problem is therefore not solved by replacing *mā kāna* with a stronger English equivalent. The related forms must first be distinguished, then read within the arguments in which they occur.

Modern scholarship has already established that selected *mā kāna* clauses can carry prohibitive force and that literal translation may conceal it. Younes's study, however, examines five translation cases; it neither reconstructs the wider Qur'anic family nor explains why closely related forms yield different kinds of restriction.<sup>1</sup>

Research on Qur'anic formulae offers a second point of departure. Recurrent expressions can move across contexts without becoming semantically inert: repetition may guide evaluation, position an audience, and stabilise a rhetorical operation. Work on Qur'anic cohesion and Semitic rhetoric likewise requires claims about

1 Essam Abdelanby Younes, "A Critical Comparative Study of the English Renderings of the Prohibitive Construction 'Ma Kana' in the Qur'an: A Functional Equivalence Perspective," *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 9, no. 4 (2025): 150–161, <https://doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol9no4.12>. The study examines five selected cases. See also Sawsan Kareem Al-Saaidi, Ghayth K. Shaker Al-Shaibani, and Hashim A. Mohammed Al-Husseini, "Speech Act of Prohibition in English and Arabic: A Contrastive Study on Selected Biblical and Quranic Verses," *Arab World English Journal* 4, no. 4 (2013): 95–111, <https://awej.org/speech-act-of-prohibition-in-english-and-arabic-a-contrastive-study-on-selected-biblical-and-quranic-verses/>; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, "The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2018): 47–66, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2018.0320>; Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001); and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

repetition and structure to be traced through identifiable textual units. The *mā kāna* formula must therefore be studied through its distribution, grammatical variation, and immediate discourse rather than assigned a fixed meaning in advance.<sup>2</sup>

A third body of scholarship explains why grammatical differentiation should precede thematic classification. Studies of Qur'anic exceptive phrases and emotion verbs demonstrate that complement type, prepositional marking, and syntactic environment can correlate with distinct semantic and pragmatic values. Digital annotation is useful for checking forms, but it cannot replace philological judgement or contextual reading.<sup>3</sup>

This article asks how the related negative forms built around *mā kāna* restrict what may be done, claimed, attributed, or expected. More specifically, it examines the

- 2 Johanne Louise Christiansen, "The Educational Qur'an: 'Maybe You Will Understand' (la'allakum ta'qilūn)," *Numen* 66, nos. 5–6 (2019): 550–579, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685276-12341554>; Johanne Louise Christiansen, "God Loves Not the Wrongdoers (ẓālimūn): Formulaic Repetition as a Rhetorical Strategy in the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2020): 92–132, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0413>; Salwa El-Awa, "Repetition in the Qur'an: A Relevance-Based Explanation of the Phenomenon," *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 4 (2003): 577–593; Kate Zebiri, "Towards a Rhetorical Criticism of the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2003): 95–120, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2003.5.2.95>; Thomas Hoffmann, "The Appealing Qur'an: On the Rhetorical Strategy of Vocatives and Interpellation in the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2020): 5–30, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0409>; Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Husein Aziz, and Achmad Murtafi Haris, "Investigating Cohesiveness of QS. Al-Mā'idah: A Review on Michel Cuypers Implementation of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 23, no. 1 (2022): 49–68, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-03>; Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Mahmud Rifaannudin, Deki Ridho Adi Anggara, and Oky Ayu Agustin, "Rhetorical Coherence and Eco-Theological Meaning in Qur'anic Water Verses: A Disciplined Semitic Rhetorical Analysis," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 27, no. 1 (2026): 273–302, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v27i1.6716>. See also Salwa M. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (London: Routledge, 2006); Michel Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis*, trans. Jerry Ryan (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Issa J. Boullata, ed., *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'an* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000); Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004); Karim Samji, *The Qur'an: A Form-Critical History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110580884>; and Marianna Klar, ed., *Structural Dividers in the Qur'an* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).
- 3 Yehudit Dror and Eyhab Abdulrazak Bader Eddin, "Qur'anic Exceptive Phrases: The Case of the 'in ...'illā Construction," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 174, no. 1 (2024): 133–150, <https://doi.org/10.13173/ZDMG.174.1.133>; Yehudit Dror, Salam Saied, and Bayan Amara, "The Grammar of Emotion Verbs in the Qur'an: A Case Study of the Verb Xāfa," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 69, no. 2 (2024): 869–896, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgae021>; Kais Dukes, Eric Atwell, and Nizar Habash, "Supervised Collaboration for Syntactic Annotation of Quranic Arabic," *Language Resources and Evaluation* 47, no. 1 (2013): 33–62, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-011-9167-7>. See also Wolfdietrich Fischer, *A Grammar of Classical Arabic*, 3rd rev. ed., trans. Jonathan Rodgers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004149489.i-1069>; Marijn van Putten, *Quranic Arabic: From Its Hijazi Origins to Its Classical Reading Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004506251>; Kais Dukes and Nizar Habash, "Morphological Annotation of Quranic Arabic," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'10)* (Valletta, Malta: European Language Resources Association, 2010), <https://aclanthology.org/L10-1190/>; and Kais Dukes, Eric Atwell, and Abdul-Baque M. Sharaf, "Syntactic Annotation Guidelines for the Quranic Arabic Dependency Treebank," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'10)* (Valletta, Malta: European Language Resources Association, 2010).

grammatical forms that constitute the family, the grounds on which their propositions are ruled out, the role of subject, complement, exception, and discourse context, and the ways classical grammarians and exegetes described their force. The argument is that the family has a recognisable architecture but no single invariant meaning.

The study combines qualitative corpus analysis with close reading. It retrieved every sequence in which *mā* precedes a perfect form of *kāna* from a locally archived, verse-indexed Unicode text of the Qur'an. The candidates were screened morphologically and syntactically, checked against the Quranic Arabic Corpus, and read in relation to their verse context, Arabic grammar, works of *i'rāb*, and classical *tafsīr*. This procedure produced 37 core instances in 36 verses. It made it possible to test relations among grammatical form, the grounds of restriction, and rhetorical function without allowing thematic expectations to determine the corpus.<sup>4</sup>

The opening examples reveal why this procedure matters. In Q 4:92 a believer remains physically capable of killing, but intentional killing is removed from conduct proper to a believer. In Q 13:38 signs remain possible, but not as products of autonomous prophetic initiative. In Q 19:35 the issue is whether a predicate may be attributed to God, not whether an event occurred in the past. In Q 2:143 the clause reassures its audience that a feared account of divine governance does not apply. The move from non-occurrence to restriction is therefore neither arbitrary nor uniform.

The article approaches these clauses as acts of Qur'anic discourse rather than as examples for an abstract semantic rule detached from argument and exegesis. Corpus reconstruction guards against selective citation; close reading explains what frequency alone cannot. The term "restriction" names the local act of ruling out a proposition on a recoverable ground. The phrase "rhetoric of restriction" refers to the cumulative effect of those acts across the corpus.

### ***Mā Kāna between Grammar and Tafsīr***

An account of the construction family must avoid two reductions. A lexical account treats *mā kāna* as no more than past negation and leaves every stronger reading to unrestricted contextual inference. A unitary modal account assigns the whole corpus one meaning, usually prohibition or impossibility. The first cannot explain why translators and exegetes repeatedly hear a stronger force; the second cannot distinguish restrictions on conduct, office, standing, agency, theological attribution, and divine action. The family proposed here is narrower: it comprises three defined grammatical forms while allowing their grounds of restriction to differ.

<sup>4</sup> Quranic Arabic Corpus, "Word by Word Grammar, Syntax and Morphology of the Holy Quran," accessed July 17, 2026, <https://corpus.quran.com/>; Dukes, Atwell, and Habash, "Supervised Collaboration," 33–62.

The clearest grammatical tradition concerns the form in which negated *kāna* is followed by *lām* and an imperfect verb. Sībawayh places the *lām* in a construction where overt *an* is not normally expressed and associates it with a stronger negation of an intended future act. Al-Zajjājī identifies the *lām* through the negation that precedes it, citing Q2:143 and Q3:179. Al-Murādī records both the Basran analysis, which posits an omitted predicate such as *murīdan*, and the Kufan analysis, which treats the *lām*-marked verb as the predicate. Ibn Hishām explains the emphatic force differently under the two accounts: the Kufans take the *lām* to reinforce negation, while the Basrans understand the negation of intention as stronger than the negation of the act alone.<sup>5</sup>

A different form places *lām* before a noun or pronoun—*li-basharin*, *li-nabiyyin*, *lakum*, or *lanā*—and follows it with an overt *an*-clause. Here the *lām* marks the person or sphere in relation to which the proposition is assessed. On Q3:79 Ibn ‘Āshūr calls it *lām al-istiḥqāq*: the verse denies that the disputed claim properly belongs to any human who has received scripture and prophethood. His analysis relates the form to the emphatic logic of *lām al-juhūd* without treating the two surface structures as identical.<sup>6</sup>

Q10:37 stands at the edge of the family: *wa-mā kāna ḥādihā al-Qur’ānu an yuftarā min dūni Allāh*. Its direct infinitival predicate generated genuine grammatical disagreement. Khālīd al-Azhārī rejects the claim that the verse licences the general omission of *lām* while retaining overt *an* in ordinary *lām al-juhūd* constructions. Ibn ‘Āshūr, by contrast, treats it as equivalent in force to *mā kāna li-yuftarā*. The verse is therefore retained as a peripheral member, not as proof of a productive subtype.<sup>7</sup>

Classical grammar explains structure and the intensification of negation; *tafsīr* supplies a richer historical vocabulary for the kinds of restriction at work. Exegetes speak of *istiḥqāq*, of what does or does not *yaṣīḥḥ* or *yanbaghī*, of divine *idhn* and *mashī’a*, and of *tanzīh* from an attribution incompatible with divine majesty. These terms are not interchangeable, nor do they amount to a premodern theory of modality. They do establish that classical readers did not hear one undifferentiated

5 Sībawayh, *al-Kitāb*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 3rd ed., 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988), 1:408: “لِيفْعَلْ كَانَ مَا : وَذَاكَ الْإِظْهَارُ. فِيهِ يَجُوزُ لَا مَوْضِعٌ فِي تَحْيِ قَدْ الْإِمَامُ أَنْ وَاعْلَمْ”; Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ishāq al-Zajjājī, *Kitāb al-Lāmāt*, ed. Māzin al-Mubārak, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1985), 69: “جاء يسبقها بأن.....تعرف انما”; al-Ḥasan ibn Qāsim al-Murādī, *al-Janā al-Dāni fī Hurūf al-Ma’āni*, ed. Fakhr al-Dīn Qabāwa and Muḥammad Nadīm Fāḍil (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1992), 118–119; ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī, *Mughnī al-Labīb ‘an Kutub al-A’arib*, ed. Māzin al-Mubārak and Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥamd Allāh, 6th ed., 2 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1985), 1:211.

6 Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 30 vols. (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1984), 3:294: “كان ما لاستحقاق فيه واللام القول لذلك أحد لاستحقاق نفي للبشر”.

7 Zayn al-Dīn Khālīd al-Azhārī, *Sharḥ al-Taṣrīḥ ‘alā al-Tawḍīḥ*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2000), 2:372; Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 11:167–169: “الجود بلام ليفتري. كان ما يقال أن بمنزلة يفتري أن كان ما مركب”.

negative force across the passages.<sup>8</sup>

The research gap, therefore, is not that *mā kāna* has never been studied. Selected cases have been discussed as prohibition and as translation problems; formulaic studies have established that repeated expressions can organise Qur'anic evaluation; and construction-based research has shown that syntactic environment matters for interpretation. What remains insufficiently explained is how the internal grammatical variation of the *mā kāna* family relates to its range of restrictive functions across a corpus defined from the whole Qur'an.

The sources are used according to their evidentiary strengths. Grammatical works clarify the status of *lām*, the predicate of *kāna*, and the role of *an*; works of *i'rāb* are consulted where a verse permits competing parses or readings; and *tafsīr* is used for contextual accounts of entitlement, fittingness, authorisation, and *tanzīh*. A commentator's paraphrase cannot settle a disputed syntax, just as a grammatical label cannot determine a verse's discourse function. The argument depends on their convergence.

### Defining the *Mā Kāna* Corpus

The corpus was built from a locally archived, verse-indexed Unicode text of the Qur'an. The search covered every sequence in which *mā* precedes a perfect form of *kāna* as a separate token, including *kāna*, *kānat*, *kānū*, *kunta*, *kuntum*, and *kunnā*. The source text was preserved, while normalisation was applied only to a derived search field. The Quranic Arabic Corpus was used to check morphological forms and selected syntactic relations; every candidate was then examined manually.<sup>9</sup>

The broad search returned 213 candidate sequences in 201 verses. Eighty-six were excluded because *mā* was relative, *maṣdariyya*, locative, or embedded in a prepositional expression rather than functioning as the negative particle before *kāna*. Of the remaining 127 negative clauses, 37 instances in 36 verses met the core structural criteria; Q 3:179 contains two distinct clauses. Nine additional clauses were retained as comparisons because they negate authority, knowledge, entitlement, or a participial state through different predicative structures.

The core corpus contains three related forms. Nineteen clauses place a *lām*-marked noun or pronoun before an overt *an*-clause. Seventeen use negated *kāna* with *lām al-juhūd* and an imperfect verb. Q 10:37 alone has a nominal subject followed

8 See, for example, Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 3:294; 16:102–104; 25:140–142; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *al-Durr al-Maṣūn*, 3:466–468.

9 Quranic Arabic Corpus, "Word by Word Grammar"; Dukes, Atwell, and Habash, "Supervised Collaboration," 33–62.

directly by an infinitival predicate. Grammatical form was established before thematic interpretation, so that the apparent legal, prophetic, or theological content of a verse could not decide whether it belonged to the corpus.

Table 1. Grammatical forms in the core corpus

| Construction                                 | n  | Representative verses              |
|----------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| mā kāna + li-X + an-clause                   | 19 | Q 3:79; 4:92; 13:38; 19:35; 42:51  |
| Negated kāna + lām + imperfect verb          | 17 | Q 2:143; 3:179; 9:115; 29:40; 30:9 |
| mā kāna + nominal subject + direct an-clause | 1  | Q 10:37                            |

Source: corpus reconstruction by the authors.

Each instance was then read by examining the relations among its form, subject, proposition, limiting expression, local discourse, and relevant grammatical or exegetical evidence. The comparative vocabulary of norm, office, standing, agency, permission, doctrinal propriety, divine action, and historical refusal was developed from repeated contrasts within the corpus. These are analytical descriptions of the grounds on which propositions are ruled out; they are not presented as a fixed lexical taxonomy encoded by the Qur'an.<sup>10</sup>

The minimal unit of interpretation was the target clause together with the full verse and as much adjacent discourse as was needed to recover the addressee, polemical claim, legal condition, narrative sequence, or scope of an exception. Expressions such as *illā*, *idhn*, *mashī'a*, *hattā*, *lawlā*, *wa-lākin*, and circumstantial clauses were treated as part of the construction's force rather than as secondary details.

The wider candidate pool was necessary because a search limited to the literal string *mā kāna* would miss inflected forms such as *wa-mā kunnā li-nahtadiya* in Q 7:43 and would conflate negative *mā* with relative or *maṣdariyya mā* in forms such as *bi-mā kānū*. Inclusion therefore followed an explicit grammatical rule rather than the relevance of a verse to a preconceived theme.

The comparison set marks the limit of the claim. Clauses such as *wa-mā kāna lī 'alaykum min sulṭānin* (Q 14:22) and *mā kāna lī min 'ilmin bi-l-mala'i al-a'lā* (Q 38:69) also restrict authority or knowledge, but their predicates are nominal. They confirm that restrictive effects are not exclusive to the core family. What distinguishes the 37 core instances is a recurrent infinitival or *lām*-marked architecture that makes the relation between a subject and a ruled-out proposition especially explicit.

10 Johan van der Auwera and Vladimir A. Plungian, "Modality's Semantic Map," *Linguistic Typology* 2, no. 1 (1998): 79–124, <https://doi.org/10.1515/lity.1998.2.1.79>. The modal vocabulary used here is comparative and corpus-specific; it does not reproduce that map as a fixed Qur'anic taxonomy.

Analysis proceeded from form to context, not from form alone. The grammatical relation was identified first; the verse and its local discourse were then used to determine what proposition was at issue and on what ground it was unavailable. Where more than one reading remained plausible, parallel clauses and classical evidence were used to preserve rather than suppress the ambiguity. The counts reported below are descriptive, not statistical claims.

This procedure produces a small but exhaustive corpus. Its value lies less in numerical scale than in the possibility of comparing every relevant instance using the same set of questions. The three forms are summarised in Table 1; their interpretation is developed through representative verses rather than through a succession of codes or isolated mini-commentaries.

The distribution already cautions against a single gloss. The *lām*-marked subject form is the most varied: it can regulate conduct, define an office, deny standing, limit agency, or exclude a theological attribution. The *lām al-juhūd* form frequently appears in claims about divine action and historical response, but it also occurs in communal regulation and in events made dependent on divine will. Q10:37 remains too isolated to support a distributional generalisation.

Across the corpus, three features repeatedly shape the local reading. The first is the subject: believers and communities tend to raise questions of conduct or standing; prophets and messengers raise questions of office and delegated agency; and a divine subject requires a distinction between an inadmissible attribute and a contextually imagined course of action. The second is the proposition itself—an act, right, power, form of access, attribution, or event. The third is the limiter: *illā bi-idhni Allāh*, *hattā*, *lawlā*, and *wa-lākin* may redirect the force of the negative by stating the condition, threshold, or alternative that remains available.

These relations are tendencies rather than rules. The form narrows plausible readings but does not determine them independently of subject, predicate, and context. Q13:38 restricts a messenger's autonomous production of a sign; Q10:100 makes the occurrence of belief dependent on divine permission; Q35:44 denies any power to frustrate God; and Q2:143 reassures believers after the change of *qibla*. Their grammar is related, but the grounds of restriction are not interchangeable.

The following sections therefore proceed through the kinds of judgement made in the verses rather than through technical labels. They move from conduct, office, and standing to created agency and divine permission, and finally to attribution, divine justice, and historical refusal.

## Conduct, Office, and Legitimate Standing

One set of verses concerns acts that remain physically possible but are ruled out as proper for a believer, prophet, or community. Other verses deny rights to subjects who lack legitimate standing. The shared negative form does not erase these differences. It shifts attention from bare capacity to the normative or institutional relation between the subject and the proposition.

Q 4:92 is the clearest normative case: *wa-mā kāna li-mu'minin an yaqtula mu'minan illā khata'an*. The exception does not imply that intentional killing is physically impossible for a believer. It establishes a norm of conduct for believers and distinguishes accidental killing as a legally and morally different event. Q 9:113 similarly rules out seeking forgiveness for polytheists after an epistemic threshold has been reached; Q 9:120 excludes remaining behind the Messenger or preferring one's own safety; and Q 33:53 excludes injuring the Messenger and marrying his wives after him. In these verses, declarative negation regulates conduct without adopting imperative form.

Q 9:122 explains why this force cannot be reduced to blanket prohibition. *Wa-mā kāna al-mu'minūna li-yanfirū kāffatan* rules out total mobilisation and preserves a division of communal labour in which some acquire religious understanding and later warn their people. Read beside Q 9:120, the clauses correct opposite imbalances: abandonment of the Messenger and indiscriminate departure. The construction does not encode a single policy; it removes the alternative made disorderly by the immediate argument.

The relation to office is clearest in Q 3:79. A human granted scripture, judgement, and prophethood is not properly describable as calling people to become his servants apart from God. Ibn 'Āshūr's language of *istiḥqāq* is precise: the verse denies that such a claim belongs to anyone who occupies prophetic office, then replaces it with the fitting call to become *rabbāniyyūn* through teaching and studying scripture.<sup>11</sup>

Q 3:161, *wa-mā kāna li-nabiyyin an yaḡhulla*, requires philological caution because the active and passive readings distribute agency differently. Under the active reading, fraudulent appropriation is incompatible with prophethood; under the passive reading, the clause may deny that a prophet should be betrayed or accused of betrayal. Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī records both possibilities and glosses the active reading as an incompatibility between the act and the office. The variant is therefore part of the interpretation, not a dispensable detail.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 3:294.

<sup>12</sup> Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *al-Durr al-Maṣūn fī 'Ulūm al-Kitāb al-Maknūn*, ed. Aḥmad

Q 8:67 is more narrowly conditioned: *mā kāna li-nabiyyin an yakūna lahu asrā ḥattā yuthkkinā fī al-arḍ*. The threshold introduced by *ḥattā* prevents the clause from becoming a timeless statement about every prophetic treatment of captives; it excludes a policy at a particular stage of conflict. Q 12:38 moves from office to confessional identity: Joseph's *mā kāna lanā an nushrika bi-llāhi min shay'* places association with God outside the inherited religious orientation through which he identifies himself and his forebears.

Legitimate standing differs from both norm and identity. In Q 2:114 those who obstruct God's name in the mosques and strive for their ruin are denied unqualified entry except in fear; the exception excludes physical impossibility and points to the loss of secure or honourable access. Q 9:17 denies polytheists the legitimate *'imāra* of God's mosques while they bear witness against themselves through unbelief. Q 33:36 denies a contrary *khiyara* to a believing man or woman once God and the Messenger have decided a matter. Practical capacity remains, but recognised occupancy, custodianship, or choice is withdrawn.

"Prohibition" is therefore applicable but insufficient. Some clauses act as indirect prohibitions; others define what coheres with an office or identify who possesses a right. Their common effect is to remove a proposition from the legitimate options of a named subject, while the reason for its removal remains contextually specific.

Explicit thresholds sharpen several of these restrictions. In Q 9:113 the ban on seeking forgiveness follows *min ba'di mā tabayyana lahum annahum aṣḥābu al-jahīm*. Kinship is acknowledged—*wa-laʿw kānū ulī qurbā*—but no longer supplies a legitimate ground once the verse's eschatological judgement has become clear. In Q 8:67, *ḥattā yuthkkinā fī al-arḍ* confines the treatment of captives to a stage before sufficient consolidation. Such expressions show why the construction should not be paraphrased as timeless incapacity.

Q 9:120 and Q 9:122 also form an internal contrast. The first rules out withdrawal from the Messenger and self-preference over him; the second rules out the departure of all believers together. The material actions are opposite, yet each clause removes the locally disordered alternative. The force cannot be inferred from the lexical action alone. It emerges from the communal subject, the discourse need, and the organisation of responsibility.

The sacred-space cases make the same distinction between material possibility and recognised standing. Those who obstruct or seek to ruin mosques may still enter

---

Muḥammad al-Kharrāt, 11 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1986–1994), 3:466–468: "لناهيها غلول النبي من يقع أن يصح لا"; the same passage also records the passive reading and its different construal.

them in fear, and polytheists remain physically capable of serving at a sanctuary. What the verses withhold is secure occupancy or legitimate custodianship of *masājid Allāh*. Entitlement is not a weaker synonym for prohibition; it identifies the precise object of the restriction.

### Agency, Permission, and the Limits of Created Power

A second set of verses distinguishes the denial of autonomous agency or access from events that occur only under a stated divine condition. Both may mention God's permission or will, but they answer different questions. The first asks whether a created subject controls an action in its own right. The second asks under what condition an event becomes actual.

The clearest repeated formula appears in Q 13:38 and Q 40:78: *wa-mā kāna li-rasūlin an ya'tiya bi-āyatin illā bi-idhni Allāh*. The exception does not cancel the negative; it states the authorised mode of the event. Messengers do bring signs, but not as self-authorising producers responding at will to hostile demand. Q 14:11 voices the same principle in the first-person plural: *wa-mā kāna lanā an na'tiyakum bi-sultānin illā bi-idhni Allāh*. Prophetic authority is maintained by locating evidentiary action within delegation rather than independent power.

Q 27:60 removes creative efficacy from the human addressees after attributing the creation of the heavens and earth, rain, and luxuriant gardens to God: *mā kāna lakum an tunbitū shajarahā*. The point is not that humans are forbidden to cultivate plants; the predicate under dispute is the creative efficacy established by the preceding rhetorical questions. Q 42:51 concerns access rather than power. Divine communication with a human occurs only as revelation, from behind a veil, or through a messenger. Ibn 'Āshūr accordingly reads the verse as a strongly restrictive formulation whose alternatives define the authorised modes of revelation.<sup>13</sup>

Dependence on a divine condition is clearest in Q 3:145 and Q 10:100: no soul dies except by God's permission, and no soul believes except by God's permission. Both use *li-nafsin* and *illā bi-idhni Allāh*, but their contexts keep the claims distinct. Q 3:145 prevents flight or exposure from becoming sovereign causes of the appointed death. Q 10:100 follows the question whether the Prophet could compel belief and places its actualisation beyond prophetic coercion, while the continuation concerning those who do not reason preserves the text's register of responsibility.

13 Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tahrir wa-l-Tanwīr*, 25:140–142: “النفي مبالغة المفيدة المجود بصيغة مفتوحة حصر بصيغة غي.”

Q 6:111 invokes divine willing rather than permission: *mā kānū li-yu'minū illā an yashā'a Allāh*. Even an accumulation of extraordinary signs is denied automatic efficacy. Q 7:43 states the dependence retrospectively—*wa-mā kunnā li-nahtadiya lawlā an hadānā Allāh*—and *lawlā* identifies divine guidance as the counterfactual enabling condition. Q 12:76 embeds the same logic in Joseph's strategy: retaining his brother under the king's law becomes possible only through the divine ordering marked by *illā an yashā'a Allāh*.

The difference between agency and occurrence prevents a broad theological label from doing too much work. A messenger's relation to a sign concerns delegated power; a soul's death or belief concerns the condition under which an event takes place. The complete clause, not *mā kāna* in isolation, determines the relation that is being restricted.

### Divine Attribution, Justice, and Historical Refusal

The remaining verses distinguish three operations that a broad label such as “providential impossibility” would conceal: the categorical rejection of an attribution, the exclusion of a particular account of divine action, and a historically narrated narrowing of response to revelation.

Q 19:35 is a clear case of doctrinal exclusion: *mā kāna li-llāhi an yattakhidha min waladin subhānahu*. The accompanying formula of *tanzih* confirms that the clause does not merely deny a past event. Ibn 'Āshūr reads it as the strongest exclusion of an attribution that does not befit divine majesty. The subject changes the ground of restriction: a form that elsewhere judges conduct or office here marks the limits of proper speech about God.<sup>14</sup>

Q 35:44 is categorical in another respect: *wa-mā kāna Allāhu li-yu'jizahu min shay'in fī al-samāwāti wa-lā fī al-ard*. The indefinite *min shay'* and the cosmic scope exclude the possibility that anything could frustrate God. Q 10:37 rejects fabrication apart from God as an admissible account of the Qur'an and immediately replaces it with confirmation of earlier revelation and exposition of the Book. Ibn 'Āshūr connects its strong force to *lām al-jubūd*; Khālid al-Azhari's objection explains why the verse remains a peripheral grammatical case.<sup>15</sup>

Q 11:117 contains the most consequential ambiguity in this part of the corpus: *wa-mā kāna rabbuka li-yublika al-qurā bi-zulmin wa-abluhā muṣliḥūn*. The scope of *bi-zulmin* supports more than one construal, and translation should not conceal that

14 Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 16:102–104: “الْأُلُوهِيَّةُ بِجَلَالِ يَلِيقُ لَا عَا تَعَالَى اللَّهُ تَزْنِيهِ” and “وَجْهٌ يَأْبُلُغُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ الْوَادِ انْتِفَاءً تَقِيدَ”.

15 Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 11:167–169; Khālid al-Azhari, *Sharḥ al-Taṣrīḥ*, 2:372.

fact. Ibn 'Āshūr reads the prepositional phrase as a circumstantial qualification of the Lord: destruction does not occur as an act of injustice against a reforming people. Whatever wider theological conclusions are drawn, the verse's immediate structure relates destruction, injustice, and the reforming condition of the community.<sup>16</sup>

These passages cannot be translated through one formula. "It does not befit" may suit Q 19:35; "nothing could frustrate God" suits Q 35:44; and "God would not" often better conveys a situated assurance or correction. The shared grammar establishes a restrictive relation, but the proposition, qualification, and local argument determine whether the verse excludes an attribute, rejects an account of divine governance, or describes a historically formed refusal.

Q 2:143 displays the reassuring force of this rhetoric. The change of *qibla* raises a question about earlier acts of obedience, and *wa-mā kāna Allāhu li-yuḍī'a imānakum* rejects the feared account that those acts have been lost. The clause is categorical within its context, but its object is a particular account of divine treatment rather than a free-standing definition of the divine essence. The verse's conclusion, which invokes compassion and mercy, reinforces its pastoral force.

The two clauses in Q 3:179 display a procedural logic. The first denies that the community will remain undifferentiated and supplies *hattā yamīza al-khabītha min al-ṭayyib* as the threshold. The second denies general access to the unseen but immediately prevents an absolute reading through *wa-lākinna Allāha yajtabī min rusulihī man yashā'*. The adversative clause preserves selective disclosure. Restriction therefore works with a positive allocation of knowledge rather than producing total epistemic closure.

Q 8:33 and Q 9:115 likewise state conditions of divine dealing. In the first, the Messenger's presence is a circumstance under which punishment is withheld; the neighbouring clause about seeking forgiveness reinforces the conditional argument. In Q 9:115 clarification precedes adverse judgement: the verse excludes the account that a guided people are treated as astray before what they must avoid has been made clear. Strong negation here articulates procedure, not an abstract claim that punishment or judgement can never occur.

The repeated non-wronging formula in Q 9:70, Q 29:40, and Q 30:9 most clearly governs historical attribution: *fa-mā kāna Allāhu li-yazlimahum wa-lākin kānū anfusahum yazlimūn*. Each passage recalls destroyed peoples, rejects the attribution of wrongdoing to God, and follows it with the claim that they wronged themselves. Repetition stabilises a moral and causal grammar for reading catastrophe. *Wa-lākin* does not merely add information; it replaces the rejected allocation of responsibility.

16 Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, 12:186–187: "مصلحين لقوم ظالما الله اهللك يقع لا...للملاسة يظلم في و الباء".

The cluster in Q 7:101, Q 10:13, and Q 10:74 poses a different problem. The verses relate later non-belief to what communities had previously rejected, and two continue with the language of sealing. Their responsiveness to revelation is narrated as historically narrowed through repeated refusal. The clauses should be reduced neither to physical incapacity nor to a command not to believe. They describe a disposition formed within the history told by the text, while leaving the larger theological relation between will, sealing, and responsibility to the surrounding argument.

### The Rhetoric of Restriction

The findings require a distinction between semantic unity and rhetorical unity. The corpus does not share one modal meaning, yet its members repeatedly perform a recognisable act: they present a proposition as unavailable to a subject on a recoverable ground. The unavailable proposition may be an action, claim, right, power, form of access, event, or account of history. What joins the clauses is the relation they establish, not a concealed lexical meaning common to every instance.

The phrase “modal-discursive restriction” gives a compact name to this local act. “Modal” indicates that more is at stake than factual non-occurrence; “discursive” indicates that the ground of restriction comes from the complete clause and its setting, not from *mā* or *kāna* alone. Some propositions are categorically excluded, some cease to be legitimate options, some are withheld until a threshold, and some become actual only under an express condition. The term is comparative, not a claim that the Qur’an lexicalises a formal theory of modality.

Repeated subseries test this account. The messenger-sign-permission formula defines prophetic authority without turning it into autonomous miraculous power. The non-wronging formula regulates how historical judgement may be described. The prior-rejection cluster relates later non-belief to a history of refusal. The sacred-space verses distinguish physical access from legitimate custodianship, while clauses about death and belief make occurrence dependent on divine permission. Repetition gives these local restrictions a cumulative rhetorical force without erasing their differences.<sup>17</sup>

That cumulative force is the rhetoric of restriction. The phrase does not name the lexical meaning of *mā kāna*, nor is it a label attached mechanically to each verse. It describes how repeated negative predications establish limits around proper conduct, office, standing, created agency, theological attribution, and accounts of divine governance. The Qur’an frequently removes an apparent option or explanation

<sup>17</sup> Compare Christiansen, “God Loves Not the Wrongdoers,” 92–132; Christiansen, “The Educational Qur’an,” 550–579.

and then, through an exception, threshold, or adversative clause, states what remains available.

This process positions the audience without allowing an empirical reconstruction of how every historical listener responded. The text supplies distinctions through which claims and actions can be judged: physical capacity is not legitimate conduct; presence in sacred space is not custodianship; prophetic office is not autonomous control of signs; and historical destruction is not evidence of divine injustice. The construction organises evaluative alternatives within the discourse.<sup>18</sup>

Classical grammar and *tafsīr* remain indispensable because they preserve distinctions that a modern umbrella may flatten. The grammatical tradition explains intensified negation and competing accounts of the predicate. Ibn 'Āshūr's *istihqāq* at Q 3:79, al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī's language of incompatibility at Q 3:161, *tanzīh* at Q 19:35, and authorisation through *idhn* in the sign formula are not interchangeable. Modern terminology offers a way to compare them; it should not replace the historical evidence.<sup>19</sup>

Translation provides a practical test of the distinctions. A uniform "it was not" is too descriptive for conduct, standing, or doctrinal attribution; "cannot" may wrongly imply physical incapacity; and "impossible" overstates contextual assurances or events dependent on permission. Normative clauses may require "it is not for" or "must not"; role-based clauses, "it does not befit"; agency clauses, wording that denies autonomous power; permission clauses, "only by God's permission or will"; and clauses about divine action, often "God would not". These are diagnostic choices rather than a new uniform translation.<sup>20</sup>

The study has clear limits. It does not provide a semantic history of *kāna*, an exhaustive account of Qur'anic negation, or a formal theory of Arabic modality. The corpus is small, Q 10:37 remains a single peripheral form, and several verses permit more than one defensible emphasis. The categories serve accountable close reading rather than statistical inference. The argument would need revision if a substantial number of the core clauses proved to be ordinary descriptive negatives with no relation between a subject and a ruled-out proposition.

18 Hoffmann, "The Appealing Qur'an," 5–30. Here, "audience positioning" refers to textual roles and evaluative options, not to an empirical reconstruction of reception.

19 M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, "Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: *Iltifāt* and Related Features in the Qur'an," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 3 (1992): 407–432, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00003621>; Ulrika Mårtensson, "Prophetic Clarity: A Comparative Approach to al-Ṭabarī's Theory of Qur'anic Language, Rhetoric, and Composition," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2020): 216–268, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0417>.

20 Younes, "A Critical Comparative Study," 150–161.

Three elements provide the most economical account of the pattern: a subject, a proposition, and the ground on which that proposition is restricted. The first grammatical form marks the subject overtly through *li-X*; the *lām al-juhūd* form strongly negates the realisation of a verbal predicate; and Q10:37 occupies the edge of the family. The ground may be a norm, office, right, limitation of created agency, divine permission, doctrinal propriety, a stated course of divine action, or a narrated history of refusal.

The comparison clauses are important here. *Wa-mā kāna lī ‘alaykum min sulṭānin* (Q14:22) and *mā kāna lī min ‘ilmin bi-l-mala’i al-a‘lā* (Q38:69) also restrict authority or knowledge, although they fall outside the core forms. Their presence prevents the article from claiming a monopoly for the selected family. The distinctive feature of the core corpus is the recurring architecture that makes the relation between subject and proposition directly comparable across verses.

The rhetoric is clearest when the negative clause is followed by a replacement. Q3:79 rejects self-directed prophetic worship and calls instead for *rabbāniyyūn*; Q3:179 denies general access to the unseen and affirms the selective election of messengers; the non-wronging formula replaces blame of God with self-wronging; and permission clauses replace autonomous efficacy with authorised occurrence. Restriction is therefore not merely negative. It orders a field of explanation by closing one relation and leaving another open.

The method has implications beyond this corpus. Repetition need not entail invariant semantics, and variation need not dissolve a formula into unrelated examples. A defensible account identifies a formal nucleus, maps its distribution, preserves the force of complements and exceptions, and only then asks what repeated local acts do at the level of discourse. That sequence keeps rhetorical interpretation accountable to grammar without reducing the Qur’an to a catalogue of forms.

## Conclusion

The Qur’anic *mā kāna* clauses examined here do more than report non-occurrence, but they do not encode one uniform impossibility. Thirty-seven instances in three related forms restrict propositions through the interaction of grammar, subject, predicate, limiting expression, and discourse. The form with a *lām*-marked subject is especially open to judgements of conduct, office, standing, and agency; the *lām al-juhūd* form often shapes claims about divine action and historical response; Q10:37 remains a peripheral extension.

Their common operation lies in ruling out a proposition on a stated or recoverable ground. An act may be illegitimate, incompatible with an office, unavailable

as a right, beyond autonomous created power, dependent on divine permission, doctrinally improper, excluded from an account of divine justice, or narrowed by a history of refusal. Classical grammar and *tafsīr* support this differentiated reading through a vocabulary of intensified negation, entitlement, fittingness, permission, and *tanzīh*.

The broader rhetorical effect follows from these local judgements. Recurrent *mā kāna* clauses mark the limits of proper conduct, prophetic authority, institutional standing, created agency, theological attribution, and historical explanation. The result is a rhetoric of restriction grounded in grammatical form but completed by context. This sequence—from form, to the ground of restriction, to rhetorical effect—offers a way to study other Qur'anic formulae without choosing between philological precision and humanistic interpretation.

## Supplementary Materials

## Acknowledgements

The authors have no acknowledgments to declare.

## Authors' contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Muhammad Shohib, Muhammad Azizan Fitriana, Ade Naelul Huda and Sabri bin Mohamad. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Muhammad Shohib and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript

## Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Conflicts of Interest

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

## Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for profit sectors

## References

- Abdel Haleem, M.A.S. "Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: Ittifāt and Related Features in the Qur'an." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 3 (1992): 407–432. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00003621>.
- Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. "The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2018): 47–66. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2018.0320>.
- Abdel Haleem, Muhammad. *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.
- Abdul-Raof, Hussein. *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*. Richmond: Curzon, 2001.
- Al-Saaidi, Sawsan Kareem, Ghayth K. Shaker Al-Shaibani, and Hashim A. Mohammed Al-Husseini. "Speech Act of Prohibition in English and Arabic: A Contrastive Study on Selected Biblical and Quranic Verses." *Arab World English Journal* 4, no. 4 (2013): 95–111.
- An, Andri Nirwana, Yeti Dahliana, Ainur Rhain, Kharis Nugroho, Ahmad Nurrahim, Alfiyatul Azizah, and Zainora Daud. "Mapping Quranic Exegesis Research: Trends, Contributions, And Future Directions." *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 1 (January 2025): 319–50. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i1.1250>.
- Asnawi, Aqdi Rofiq, Husein Aziz, and Achmad Murtafi Haris. "Investigating Cohesiveness of QS. Al-Mā'idah: A Review on Michel Cuypers Implementation of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)." *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 23, no. 1 (2022): 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-03>.
- Asnawi, Aqdi Rofiq, Mahmud Rifaannudin, Deki Ridho Adi Anggara, and Oky Ayu Agustin. "Rhetorical Coherence and Eco-Theological Meaning in Qur'anic Water Verses: A Disciplined Semitic Rhetorical Analysis." *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 27, no. 1 (2026): 273–302. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v27i1.6716>.
- Badawi, Elsaid M., and Muhammad Abdel Haleem. *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*. Leiden: Brill, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004149489.i-1069>.
- Boullata, Issa J., ed. *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'an*. Richmond: Curzon, 2000.
- Christiansen, Johanne Louise. "The Educational Qur'an: 'Maybe You Will Understand' (la'allakum ta'qilūn)." *Numen* 66, nos. 5–6 (2019): 550–579. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685276-12341554>.

- Christiansen, Johanne Louise. "God Loves Not the Wrongdoers (ẓālimūn): Formulaic Repetition as a Rhetorical Strategy in the Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2020): 92–132. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0413>.
- Cuyppers, Michel. *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis*. Translated by Jerry Ryan. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Dror, Yehudit, and Eyhab Abdulrazak Bader Eddin. "Qur'anic Exceptive Phrases: The Case of the 'in ...'illā Construction." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 174, no. 1 (2024): 133–150. <https://doi.org/10.13173/ZDMG.174.1.133>.
- Dror, Yehudit, Salam Saied, and Bayan Amara. "The Grammar of Emotion Verbs in the Qur'an: A Case Study of the Verb Xāfa." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 69, no. 2 (2024): 869–896. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgae021>.
- Dukes, Kais, and Nizar Habash. "Morphological Annotation of Quranic Arabic." In *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'10)*. Valletta, Malta: European Language Resources Association, 2010. <https://aclanthology.org/L10-1190/>.
- Dukes, Kais, Eric Atwell, and Abdul-Baqee M. Sharaf. "Syntactic Annotation Guidelines for the Quranic Arabic Dependency Treebank." In *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'10)*. Valletta, Malta: European Language Resources Association, 2010. <https://aclanthology.org/L10-1192/>.
- Dukes, Kais, Eric Atwell, and Nizar Habash. "Supervised Collaboration for Syntactic Annotation of Quranic Arabic." *Language Resources and Evaluation* 47, no. 1 (2013): 33–62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-011-9167-7>.
- El-Awa, Salwa. "Repetition in the Qur'an: A Relevance-Based Explanation of the Phenomenon." *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 4 (2003): 577–593.
- El-Awa, Salwa M. *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence and Structure*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Fischer, Wolfdietrich. *A Grammar of Classical Arabic*. 3rd rev. ed. Translated by Jonathan Rodgers. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Hoffmann, Thomas. "The Appealing Qur'an: On the Rhetorical Strategy of Vocatives and Interpellation in the Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2020): 5–30. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0409>.
- Ibn 'Āshūr, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir. *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*. 30 vols. Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1984.
- Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf. *Mughnī al-Labīb 'an Kutub al-A'arīb*. Edited by Māzin al-Mubārak and Muḥammad 'Alī Ḥamd Allāh. 6th ed. 2 vols. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1985.
- Khālid al-Azharī, Zayn al-Dīn. *Sharḥ al-Taṣrīḥ 'alā al-Tawḍīḥ*. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000.

- Klar, Marianna, ed. *Structural Dividers in the Qur'an*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021.
- Mårtensson, Ulrika. "Prophetic Clarity: A Comparative Approach to al-Ṭabarī's Theory of Qur'anic Language, Rhetoric, and Composition." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2020): 216–268. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2020.0417>.
- Al-Murādī, al-Ḥasan ibn Qāsim. *Al-Janā al-Dānī fī Hurūf al-Ma'ānī*. Edited by Fakhr al-Dīn Qabāwa and Muḥammad Nadīm Fāḍil. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992.
- Quranic Arabic Corpus. "Word by Word Grammar, Syntax and Morphology of the Holy Quran." Accessed July 17, 2026. <https://corpus.quran.com/>.
- Robinson, Neal. *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004.
- Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf. *Al-Durr al-Maṣūn fī 'Ulūm al-Kitāb al-Maknūn*. Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Kharrāṭ. 11 vols. Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1986–1994.
- Samji, Karim. *The Qur'ān: A Form-Critical History*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110580884>.
- Sibawayh, 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān. *Al-Kitāb*. Edited by 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. 3rd ed. 4 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988.
- Van der Auwera, Johan, and Vladimir A. Plungian. "Modality's Semantic Map." *Linguistic Typology* 2, no. 1 (1998): 79–124. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lity.1998.2.1.79>.
- van Putten, Marijn. *Quranic Arabic: From Its Hijazi Origins to Its Classical Reading Traditions*. Leiden: Brill, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004506251>.
- Wathani, Syamsul, Habib Ismail, and Akhmad Mughzi Abdillah. "Reconstruction of Women's Fiqh: An Analysis of Muhammad Shahrūr's Contemporary Reading in a Hermeneutic Perspective." *Journal of Islamic Law* 3, no. 2 (August 2022): 159–75. <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v3i2.860>.
- Younes, Essam Abdelanby. "A Critical Comparative Study of the English Renderings of the Prohibitive Construction 'Ma Kana' in the Qur'an: A Functional Equivalence Perspective." *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 9, no. 4 (2025): 150–161. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol9no4.12>.
- Al-Zajjājī, Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ishāq. *Kitāb al-Lāmāt*. Edited by Māzin al-Mubārak. 2nd ed. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1985.
- Zebiri, Kate. "Towards a Rhetorical Criticism of the Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2003): 95–120. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2003.5.2.95>.