

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE QUR'ANIC INIMITABILITY (I'JĀZ AL-QUR'ĀN) FROM ISSA J. BOULLATA'S PERSPECTIVE

Sofia Mawaddah Al Insyirah¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin, Indonesia

Email: sofiamawaddah@uin-antasari.ac.id

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Abstract:

The orientalists are skeptical about the originality of the Qur'an. Still, it turns out that Issa Joseph Boullata has another view by proposing the *i'jaz* (inimitability) as an indicator of the originality of the Qur'an. This study is important considering that the discourse of *i'jaz* Al-Qur'an has been studied theologically, which has made it more engaged by insiders. The purpose of this article is to explain how Boullata, as an outsider, also built his system in the *i'jaz* study. This research employs the library research method to gather data, which is then described and analyzed using epistemological theory to provide an overview and focus for the research. Boullata formulated the idea of rhetorical arrangement (*balagy*) in the Qur'an, which shows a very high literary taste. To find the rhetorical and aesthetic side of literature in the Qur'an, Boullata began *i'jaz*'s study by considering the Qur'an as a literary text, so that it would be separated from the theological realm. So, with this, Boullata confirmed the authenticity of the Qur'an based on the equality of the literature contained in it and made *i'jaz* an indicator of the originality of the Qur'an. This article focuses on the *i'jaz* aspect of the Qur'an from Boullata's perspective. Further investigation regarding the impact of *i'jaz* on the originality of the Qur'an, according to Boullata, can be carried out to enrich the discourse on the study of the Qur'an and Orientalism.

Keyword: epistemology, inimitability, *i'jaz* al-Qur'an, Issa J. Boullata

INTRODUCTION

Most Orientalists generally doubt the originality of the Qur'an; however, Issa J. Boullata offers a different view by presenting the aspect of *i'jaz* (inimitability) as one of the indicators of the Qur'an's originality. For him, *i'jaz* is an essential aspect that must be studied in the Qur'an, as explained in his book *I'jaz al-Qur'an al-Karim 'Abra at-Tarikh*. Boullata's thought becomes particularly interesting because discussions of *i'jaz* are typically explored by insiders. This is evident from the major works he refers to in his study of Qur'anic *i'jaz*, all of which come from insider scholars, such as *Dalā'il al-I'jaz* by al-Jurjānī and the works of al-Bāqillānī (Boullata, 2008). This is because the aspect of Qur'anic *i'jaz* is not something that emerges on its own; rather, it must be uncovered through *istidlāl* (careful examination and study). Since the Qur'an is revealed in Arabic, non-Arabs (particularly Orientalists) do not immediately recognize the aspect of *i'jaz* in discussions of the Qur'an's originality, unless they engage in *istidlāl* such as that undertaken by Boullata.

Several previous studies related to *i'jaz* al-Qur'an and Orientalism have focused on several aspects. First, studies on the types of Qur'anic *i'jaz* and their associated problems in the Western scholarly world (Jafar, 2001). One such study



explains various forms of *i'jāz*, such as numerical *i'jāz* and scientific *i'jāz*, along with the debates surrounding them in the West. Second, thematic studies of *i'jāz* based on Orientalist interpretations of certain words or verses in the Qur'an. For example, Abbas's research on Qur'anic *i'jāz* focuses on Noldeke's views regarding the *hurūf muqatta'ah*, which he considers part of the discussion of *i'jāz*. Third, studies of Qur'anic *i'jāz* based on Boullata's thought (Addim, 2021). In this regard, Ulumuddin concentrates on the historical aspects of *i'jāz* according to Boullata, while Addim attempts to identify elements of the Qur'an's "miraculousness" from Boullata's perspective. From the available studies, no research has yet been found that specifically discusses the epistemology of Qur'anic *i'jāz* from Boullata's perspective.

The purpose of this paper is to address the gaps in previous studies, which have tended to overlook how Boullata, as an outsider, constructs his own epistemic framework in the study of Qur'anic *i'jāz*, a field predominantly shaped by insiders. This paper aims to demonstrate how Boullata positions *i'jāz* as a significant aspect in Orientalist discussions concerning the originality of the Qur'an. In line with this objective, the paper seeks to answer three points. First, it describes Boullata's thought regarding Qur'anic *i'jāz*. Second, it critiques the epistemological factors underlying Boullata's approach to *i'jāz*. Third, it analyzes the implications of Boullata's concept of *i'jāz* for Qur'anic studies within the field of Orientalism, which has often been subject to negative stigma from various circles.

The study of the epistemology of Qur'anic *i'jāz* from Boullata's perspective is important because it offers a new space of understanding directly connected to the issue of the Qur'an's originality, a topic frequently discussed among Orientalists. Research on the originality of the Qur'an is often viewed as the source from which various sub-issues concerning the Qur'an and Orientalism emerge (Batool & Sabiha, n.d.). Thus far, the Muslim claim of the Qur'an's authenticity has rested primarily on theological foundations, which has led to skepticism in the Western scholarly world. Ideally, explanations regarding the Qur'an's originality should be accompanied by a study of the aspect of *i'jāz* within it, especially when approached through Boullata's fresh perspective as a Western scholar himself. Without an understanding of *i'jāz*, discussions about the Qur'an's originality will remain problematic for non-Arab audiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

The relationship between *i'jāz* as one branch of Qur'anic sciences and the epistemology of Issa J. Boullata's thought as an Orientalist serves as the focus of this study, given the limited number of studies that address this topic. Existing research on Boullata tends to examine only the external aspects of his thought, without considering how one's understanding of *i'jāz* shapes a commentator's perspective on the Qur'anic text. In fact, it is extremely rare for an outsider to engage in the study of *i'jāz*, largely because of the strong theological elements embedded within its discourse. This paper, therefore, emphasizes the epistemological dimension of Qur'anic *i'jāz* from Boullata's perspective.

The method employed in this research is library research. The data were collected through a qualitative study of Boullata's writings on the theme of Qur'anic *i'jāz*. The primary data consist of Boullata's own work, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm 'Abra at-Tārīkh*. Additional supporting (secondary) data were gathered from his articles and journal publications, such as *The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an: I'jāz and Related Topics*, as well as other sources relevant to the theme of this study. Information obtained from both primary and secondary sources was then synthesized into core notes as the foundation for further analysis.

The research begins with a review of secondary data and earlier studies on Qur'anic *i'jāz* and Boullata. This is followed by mapping previous scholarship to identify gaps that can be addressed by the present study. After completing this mapping, the author examines primary sources to trace the epistemology of Qur'anic *i'jāz* as proposed by Boullata. The data are then presented in a classified and narrative form to provide an overall picture. This picture is subsequently described and analyzed using epistemological theory to obtain a clearer understanding of the research focus (Hikmawati, 2020).

The data analysis follows the three stages outlined by Huberman: data reduction, data display, and data verification. Data reduction involves identifying key points that are essential to the study or extracting a single relevant piece of information. Data display is carried out by presenting an organized set of information that facilitates the drawing of conclusions in accordance with the research problem. Data verification is conducted by comparing the statements of the research subject with the meanings contained in the fundamental concepts of the study. Verified data are then analyzed interpretively through three stages: restatement, description, and interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Literature Review

a. Epistemology

Linguistically, epistemology is a combination of two words: *episteme* and *logy*. In Latin, *episteme* means knowledge, while *logy* comes from *logia* or *logos*, which carries the meaning of speech, words, reason, or rationale. When combined, epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge. (Pari, 2018). Terminologically, epistemology is a field of study that examines the sources of knowledge, its methods, structure, and the validity of that knowledge (Utama, 2021). In other words, epistemology seeks to explain the origins, sources, structure, methods, processes, and procedures through which knowledge can be acquired (Abidin, 2013). Epistemology is also referred to as *reason*, because it serves as an intellectual tool for scientific disciplines. Therefore, epistemology is considered to have a significant influence on producing knowledge that is true, valid, and useful (Becker et al., 2005).

The material object of epistemology is knowledge, while its formal object is the nature of knowledge itself. The object of knowledge in epistemological discussions refers to reality, which can be known by humans as the subjects of knowledge through certain methods or processes (Kania, 2018). The basic

framework of epistemological inquiry relates to four core issues: the sources of knowledge, the instruments for attaining knowledge, the methods of acquiring knowledge, and the limits or classification of knowledge (Sopyan, 2010). To construct a concept epistemically, three steps are undertaken. First, research is conducted by observing both direct experience and existing opinions. Second, the concept derived from these experiences or opinions is expanded in its scope of use. At this stage, personal creativity is required to formulate a tentative system of concepts. This conceptual system should aim to be coherent and logically consistent. Third, the concepts within the system are tested by applying them to experience.

b. *I'jāz Al-Qur'an*

I'jāz al-Qur'ān is one of the key topics discussed within the sciences of the Qur'an (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*). It is also referred to as the "miraculousness of the Qur'an," or in English, "the inimitability of the Qur'an." A miracle (*mu'jizah*) is commonly understood as something beyond ordinary human capability (Yazicioglu, 2013). Since the emergence of Islam, Muslims have believed in the miraculousness of the Qur'an as evidence (*burhān*) of the prophethood of Muhammad (Esack, 1993). The term *i'jāz* is a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) of *a'jaza*, meaning "to incapacitate" or "to render incapable" (Shihab, 2007). Manna' al-Qaththān explains that *i'jāz* signifies the establishment of incapability, with incapability being the opposite of *qudrah* (power or capacity). Meanwhile, according to al-Suyūṭī, a miracle is something that departs from the ordinary, accompanied by a challenge (*tahaddī*), and cannot be matched. The phrase *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* is a genitive construction (*iḍāfah*), which, according to Imām al-Zarqānī, means that the Qur'an has been affirmed as something that incapacitates anyone who attempts to rival it (Sauqi, 2021).

I'jāz can be understood as knowledge of the distinctive and extraordinary characteristics of the Qur'an as a holy scripture. The aspects of *i'jāz* found within the Qur'an include linguistic (*lafẓiyyah*), semantic (*ma'nawiyyah*), and spiritual (*rūḥiyyah*) dimensions (Aziz & Abidin, 2021). These aspects have been widely discussed among insider scholars. Some argue that the Qur'an's miraculousness lies in its content. For instance, Ibn 'Aṭiyyah views the Qur'an's *i'jāz* as rooted in its structure, the truthfulness of its meanings, and the coherence and eloquence of its expressions. Others attribute the miraculousness primarily to its linguistic features (*i'jāz lughawī*). Al-Fakhrudīn, for example, asserts that the inimitability of the Qur'an lies in its eloquence, the beauty of its style, and its freedom from any flaw (As-Suyūṭī, 2005). As for al-Suyūṭī, he describes the Qur'an as an intellectual miracle (*mu'jizah 'aqliyyah*) due to the advanced rational and cognitive capabilities of humanity, and because intellectual miracles are continuous and not bound by time (Qulubi & Fuad, 2022).

c. Issa J. Boullata

Issa Joseph Boullata was a Catholic scholar born in Jerusalem, Palestine, on February 25, 1929 (Boullata, 2001). He was a thinker, writer, and translator of works related to contemporary Arab and Islamic studies (Arablit, 2019).

His grandfather, Issa Hanna Boullata, was a master builder who, in the 19th century, constructed monumental buildings in Jerusalem, including the Grand Mar Mitri School beside the Greek Orthodox Monastery and the *Dabbāghah* Commercial Complex Adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. His father, Joseph Boullata, worked for the British Mandate's Department of Posts, Telegraph, and Telephone in Palestine. Both his father and his mother (Barbara Atallah) were members of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, where they raised Issa and his five siblings (Abdel-Malek, 2000).

After graduating from secondary school in 1947, Boullata initially intended to pursue a career in law by enrolling in evening classes at the Law School of Jerusalem. However, his plans were disrupted when the law school was closed in 1948. He then continued his career as a teacher of Arabic literature at several schools, including De La Salle College in Jerusalem, Ahliyya College in Ramallah, and St. George's School in Jerusalem. Boullata was among those affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict. As a Palestinian, the Arab defeat in 1967 brought immense turmoil. In 1968, when he received an academic offer in the United States, he quickly accepted the opportunity. He completed his Ph.D. in Arabic literature at the University of London in 1969. Before that, he had already been teaching in Hartford, Connecticut, from 1968 to 1975. In 1975, he joined McGill University in Montreal as a professor of Arabic language and literature at the Institute of Islamic Studies. Boullata taught Arabic, conducted seminars on various topics such as Arabic literature, modern Arab thought, and the Qur'an (Boullata, 2008). After retiring from McGill University in 2004, he was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus in 2009. Ten years later, he passed away at the age of 90 on May 1, 2019.

His expertise in Arabic literature made him a highly productive scholar, publishing numerous books in both Arabic and English. In addition, Boullata authored over 80 articles and more than 250 reviews in academic journals related to Arabic literature and Islam (Boullata, n.d.). Some of his works on the Qur'an were collaborative projects with other Orientalists, including Andrew Rippin. Boullata contributed to the book *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, in which he wrote "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an: I'jāz and Related Topics," a comprehensive study of the Qur'an's linguistic *i'jāz*.

Boullata Conception of *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*

Boullata's observations on *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* begin with his attention to the powerful impact the Qur'an had on the Arabs who first heard it. Not all Arabs were masters of *balāghah* (rhetoric) nor literary critics, yet they possessed an instinctive ability to grasp what was recited to them and a natural capacity to sense its eloquence. Since the early 3rd century AH / 9th century CE, the phenomenon of human inability to match the Qur'an—whether in meaning or structure—appeared in Islamic literature under the term *i'jāz*. The various definitions of *i'jāz* compiled by Boullata from Islamic sources indicate that,

religiously, this phenomenon reflects a unique superiority of the Qur'an. It is considered superior because humans cannot truly produce anything comparable to it, whether in the form of the Qur'an as a whole or even a single *surah*.

However, according to Boullata, this understanding of *i'jāz* remains highly theological, which has led to extensive criticism of Qur'anic *i'jāz* studies in the West. Due to its theological character, Western scholarship has tended to approach *i'jāz* merely through the lens of the historical development of Islamic theology. Western studies on *i'jāz* have rarely gone beyond textual criticism and the examination of dialectical developments within early Muslim communities. Boullata argues that ideally, the study of *i'jāz* should begin by considering the Qur'an as a literary text rather than as a sacred object, since sacralization renders the text inaccessible to critical engagement. Viewing the Qur'an as a work of literature allows one to step outside theological constraints and instead focus on its aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions.

For Boullata, *i'jāz* opens a vast horizon for every person who interacts with the Qur'an. Its conceptual development across generations represents a continuous effort to understand an ever-evolving phenomenon. Through their instinctive sensibilities, the early Arabs recognized that the Qur'an was no ordinary speech, whether in wording or meaning. Boullata argues that the Qur'an's superiority lies in its rhetorical structure (*balāghī*) that reflects an exceptionally high literary taste. His reasoning for the Qur'an's unmatched literary quality rests on several points: first, human knowledge does not encompass all Arabic nouns and expressions, which serve as the vessels of meaning; second, humans are incapable of fully grasping all the meanings embedded in these words; and third, human knowledge is insufficient to apprehend all dimensions of structure that bind and harmonize one part of the discourse with another, making it impossible to produce a composition comparable to the Qur'an.

Factors Underlying Boullata's Concept of the Qur'anic *I'jaz*

Boullata began focusing on the theme of *i'jaz* based on his expertise in Arabic literature. His concern over the aspect of the Qur'an's "miraculousness" being overly centered on religious creed prompted him to look more deeply into its literary dimension. By emphasizing linguistic aspects, Boullata sought to position *i'jaz* as a scholarly field that could continue to be developed, regardless of the assumption that such an approach might diminish the "sacred" impression of the Qur'an as a holy scripture. For Boullata, the discourse on *i'jaz* would remain insufficient without literary analysis, as this is essential to explaining the nature of the Qur'an's miraculous qualities.

Although linguistic *i'jaz* was not first introduced by Boullata, his work—coming from an outsider—became one of the most noteworthy contributions. Without disregarding Islamic literary sources, Boullata referred to several classical and modern scholars' concepts of *i'jaz*. Among them were al-Jahiz, al-Khattabi, al-Rummani, al-Jurjani, al-Baqillani, al-Qadhi Abu al-Hasan, 'Abd al-Jabbar al-Asad al-Abadi, al-Suyuti, al-Rafi'i, Bint al-Shati', and Sayyid Qutb. Through his study of these scholars' ideas on *i'jaz*, Boullata produced a book

titled *I'jaz al-Qur'an al-Karim 'abra al-Tarikh*, which was later translated into Indonesian under the title *Al-Qur'an yang Menakjubkan* ("The Amazing Qur'an"). Boullata's works on Qur'anic *i'jaz* are particularly compelling considering that he was a devout Catholic who nonetheless engaged seriously with the Islamic holy scripture.

In addition to classical and modern Islamic sources, Boullata stated in his article *The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an: I'jaz and Related Topics* that similar studies had been carried out by other Orientalists. However, their analyses were conducted partially, focusing on small thematic areas that indirectly belonged to the broader discourse of Qur'anic *i'jaz*. Some of the Orientalists mentioned by Boullata examined the Qur'anic text for specific purposes, including Richard Bell, John Wansbrough, and Blachère, who conducted textual criticism of the Qur'an much like they did with the Bible. Others, such as Arthur J. Arberry, offered aesthetic and rhetorical appreciation of the Qur'anic text, while Angelika Neuwirth analyzed the rhythmic structure of the Qur'an (Boullata, 2013). These various studies formed the basis of Boullata's effort to compile the entire spectrum of discussions into a single theme: the *i'jaz* of the Qur'an.

Implications of Boullata's Concept of Qur'anic I'jaz

The implications of studying Qur'anic *i'jaz* through Boullata's perspective offer a distinctive contribution to the discourse on the Qur'an and Orientalism. The way one approaches the Qur'an within the study of *i'jaz* greatly determines the direction of the scholarship—whether it becomes theological or rhetorical. According to Boullata, the skepticism shown by Western scholars toward this field largely stems from their differing perspectives on the Qur'an. Boullata's unique approach—viewing the Qur'an as a literary text and setting aside theological dimensions in examining its linguistic features—is what distinguishes his conclusions from those of other Orientalists.

Boullata's literary approach to the Qur'an naturally derives from his expertise as a literary scholar. For him, an understanding of *i'jaz* based on linguistic aspects highlights the beauty of the Qur'an's language and the structure of its verses. By contrast, *i'jaz* that relies solely on theological claims invites numerous questions and criticisms from other perspectives, because the conclusions drawn are based merely on what is believed. Most insider-oriented discussions of Qur'anic *i'jaz* focus only on theological aspects without deeper explanation, which often renders them problematic. It is within this context that Boullata offers a new direction for the study of *i'jaz*, providing an initial step toward understanding the Qur'an's miraculous aspects through its linguistic excellence.

Boullata's openness to both classical Arabic and Western literature allows his study of Qur'anic *i'jaz* to avoid being confined to either traditionalist or revisionist agendas. More than that, for Boullata, this study represents a profound exploration of Arabic literary scholarship. As a specialist in language and literature, he acknowledges that the Qur'an's verses surpass ordinary human speech (Mistar, 2015). Classical and contemporary Arabic literature is essential for uncovering the depth of the Qur'an's diction and vocabulary, while Western literature is needed to examine the critiques offered by non-Arab readers of the

text. The combination of these two bodies of scholarship results in Boullata's conception of *i'jaz*, which affirms the linguistic and literary excellence of the Qur'an as well as the originality of its source.

Summary of Findings

In examining the aspect of *i'jaz* in the Qur'an, Boullata situates the Qur'an – as the object of study – as a literary text. This perspective is necessary to free the researcher from the theological dimensions inherently attached to a sacred scripture. By foregrounding the linguistic dimension, Boullata seeks to position *i'jaz* as a scholarly field focused solely on the aesthetic and rhetorical domains within a literary text. His core approach to *i'jaz* responds directly to the skepticism expressed by Western scholars, who often reject *i'jaz* due to its theological framing. Meanwhile, the Arabic composition of the Qur'an represents a solid and irreplaceable structure, one that cannot be substituted with alternative diction because it contains an exalted aesthetic quality of expression.

Analysis/Reflection

As an outsider, Boullata produced a universal perspective on the concept of Qur'anic miracle. Beyond relying on his expertise in Arabic literature, his thought is shaped by formative experiences rooted in his background as a Palestinian Catholic. In his youth, Boullata witnessed intense political and military conflict that forced him, along with thousands of other Arabs, into exile. Such experiences contributed to shaping his open-minded character and his profound theological understanding (Abdel-Malek, 2000). This character enabled him to recognize the Qur'an's rhetorical dimension through linguistic inquiry. Because he detached himself from theological commitments from the outset, Boullata did not hesitate to acknowledge the rhetorical superiority of the Qur'an. Thus, the position of a researcher – whether insider or outsider – in Orientalist studies does not determine the objectivity of the conclusions as long as the researcher does not rely on personal theological inclinations.

Interpretation

The epistemology of Qur'anic *i'jaz*, according to Boullata, is rooted in his expertise and scholarly background as an Arab literary scholar. Equipped with mastery of linguistic and literary tools, he explored the aesthetic and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'an. This inquiry was carried out by viewing the Qur'an purely as a literary work, without considering it as the sacred scripture of a particular religion. His identification of *i'jaz* through rhetoric led him to classical and contemporary Muslim sources such as al-Jurjānī, al-Bāqillānī, and Bint al-Shāṭi'. Rhetoric is crucial because the historical context of the Qur'an among the Arabs is deeply intertwined with their rhetorical culture. The innate linguistic sensibility of the Arabs accounts for their recognition of the Qur'an's unmatched eloquence. The careful selection of diction, the arrangement of letters, and the cohesive structure of each surah represent the most expressive, efficient, and elevated form of rhetoric. For native speakers with an intuitive sense of eloquence, it is evident that human rhetoric is limited, fluctuating in quality, whereas Qur'anic rhetoric remains consistently aesthetic and literary, with a stable *balāghī* quality in every verse.

Comparison

This study presents Boullata's epistemology of Qur'anic *i'jaz*, offering a comprehensive analysis of his conceptualization from the factors influencing its formation to its broader implications. This contrasts with other studies on Boullata, which tend to describe *i'jaz* mainly from a historical perspective, outlining its development from the classical period to the present. Likewise, comparative studies often contrast the views of Boullata as an outsider with those of insiders, or identify distinctive features of Boullata's contribution to *i'jaz* studies. The present research, however, aims to explain the origins, methods, processes, and procedures through which Issa J. Boullata arrived at his understanding of Qur'anic *i'jaz*.

Implications/Recommendations

Issa J. Boullata was a Catholic scholar with a high degree of tolerance toward the religious texts of other traditions. The engagement of Orientalists with Qur'anic studies—despite lacking theological motives—often contributes significantly to internal Muslim scholarship by providing broader perspectives. Boullata's work on *i'jaz* reflects his expertise in Arabic literature and Islamic studies. The factors shaping his thought stem not only from his scholarly journey but also from his lived experience as a Palestinian expelled from his homeland. Losing one's native land opened his perspective toward religion, emphasizing that the humanitarian dimension is no less important than theology. Through this lens, Boullata did not hesitate to relate his literary findings to the debate on the Qur'an's originality, a topic widely discussed among Orientalists. According to Boullata, studying a text without considering theological elements is the best way to achieve objective research, since discourse on Qur'anic originality has long been confined to textual criticism framed by theological biases, without acknowledging other dimensions of the text. Therefore, further exploration of the originality of the Qur'an from Boullata's perspective is important to enrich the discourse on Qur'anic studies and Orientalism.

CONCLUSION

The skepticism expressed by many Orientalists regarding the originality of the Qur'an prompted Issa J. Boullata to shift his perspective and produce a different line of inquiry. Boullata recognized that there was a missing dimension in the Orientalist discourse on the Qur'an's originality—namely, the aspect of *i'jaz* (inimitability), which ideally should play a significant role in such discussions. Given the Qur'an's highly sophisticated literary quality, its aesthetic value cannot be fully appreciated without thorough investigation (*istidlāl*). Boullata's exploration led him to formulate the idea that the superiority of *i'jaz* lies in the Qur'an's rhetorical (*balāghī*) structure, which demonstrates an exceptionally high literary taste. As a literary scholar, he argued that human rhetorical abilities are incomparable to the Qur'an; human beings cannot consistently maintain such elevated levels of diction and linguistic construction. Through this line of reasoning, Boullata affirmed the authenticity of the Qur'an's source by emphasizing the unparalleled literary excellence embedded within it.

I'jaz, defined as the knowledge of the Qur'an's unique and extraordinary characteristics as a sacred text, continues to develop over time. Most existing definitions of *i'jaz* tend to highlight theological claims of truth without offering detailed explanations. Here, Boullata, positioned as an outsider, fills an important gap in the ongoing discourse concerning the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. The Qur'an's prominent rhetorical features possess an aesthetic value that cannot be readily grasped by non-Arab speakers. This linguistic barrier explains why discussions of *i'jaz* have long been dominated by insiders, primarily native Arabic speakers, resulting in a discourse heavily influenced by theological concerns. Consequently, Boullata's approach, treating the Qur'an as a literary text independent of its sacred status, marks a new starting point for the field, enabling its development beyond strictly theological boundaries.

This study focuses specifically on Issa J. Boullata's thought concerning Qur'anic *i'jaz* as one of the indicators of the Qur'an's originality. The investigation aims to uncover Boullata's epistemology of *i'jaz* through an examination of his ideas, the factors influencing his perspective, and the implications of his work within Orientalist scholarship. The limitation of this study lies in the depth of discussion concerning the Qur'an's originality, which ideally should be addressed more comprehensively based on Boullata's formulation of *i'jaz*. Since the primary objective was to reveal Boullata's epistemic framework of *i'jaz*, the issue of originality does not become the central object of analysis. In this study, the Qur'an's originality functions as a concluding synthesis that frames the broader issues under discussion, while *i'jaz* serves merely as one of the pathways toward it. It would therefore be more effective to present the two topics in separate, dedicated studies.

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