

The Qur'an and Arab Cultural Transformation: A Dialectical Study on Women in Pre-Islamic Society

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Abstract

The Qur'an was revealed in a social context heavily influenced by patriarchal traditions and gender inequality. This research explores how divine revelation responded to these traditions through three main approaches: abrogation (*tabrīm*), alteration (*taghyīr*), and preservation (*tabmīl*). Through a historical approach and textual analysis of key verses such as Surah An-Nisa: 3, Surah An-Nahl: 58-59, and Surah Al-Baqarah: 228, it was found that the Qur'an gradually abolished practices such as female infanticide, modified traditions of polygamy and inheritance, and perfected cultural values that align with the principles of monotheism and justice. This finding confirms that the Qur'an is not only a normative text, but also an agent of social transformation that interacts critically with culture. This research contributes to a more contextual understanding of the relationship between sacred texts and culture, and opens up space for comparative studies on women and culture outside the Arab world.

Keywords: Culture; Pre-Islamic Arabia; Qur'anic Dialectic; Tradition; Women

Abstrak

Al-Qur'an diturunkan dalam kondisi sosial yang kental dengan tradisi patriarkal dan ketimpangan gender. Penelitian ini menelusuri bagaimana wahyu ilahi merespons tradisi-tradisi tersebut melalui tiga pendekatan utama: penghapusan (*tabrīm*), perubahan (*taghyīr*), dan pelestarian (*tabmīl*). Dengan pendekatan historis dan analisis tekstual terhadap ayat-ayat kunci seperti Surah An-Nisa: 3, Surah An-Nahl: 58-59, dan Surah Al-Baqarah: 228, ditemukan bahwa Al-Qur'an secara bertahap menghapus praktik seperti penguburan bayi perempuan, memodifikasi tradisi poligami dan waris, serta menyempurnakan nilai-nilai budaya yang sesuai dengan prinsip tauhid dan keadilan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa Al-Qur'an bukan hanya teks normatif, tetapi juga agen transformasi sosial yang berinteraksi kritis dengan budaya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih kontekstual terhadap relasi teks suci dan budaya, serta membuka ruang untuk studi komparatif dalam isu perempuan dan budaya di luar Arab.

Kata Kunci: Budaya; Arab Pra-Islam; Dialektika Al-Qur'an; Tradisi; Perempuan

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an was revealed in the context of pre-Islamic Arab societies that had deeply rooted customs, traditions, and social structures. Before Islam came, *Jabilyah* Arabs had a value system that included idolatry, a rigid tribal system, slavery, as well as social practices such as burying baby girls and restricting inheritance rights for women. When the Qur'an began to be revealed, there was a dialectical process between the new teachings of Islam and the existing culture. The Qur'an does not necessarily erase all traditions, but transforms gradually, some are completely abolished, some are modified, and some are maintained, with the adjustment of the values of monotheism and justice.¹ This phenomenon shows that the Qur'an serves not only as a theological clue, but also as an agent of social change that interacts dynamically with cultural reality.

Meanwhile, Toshihiko Izutsu in *“Ethhico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an”* (1966) as quoted by Siti Fatimah (2020) analyzes the shifting meaning of key concepts in pre-Islamic Arabic which was then filled with Qur'anic values.² Previous studies of this kind have shown that the Qur'an does not work in a cultural vacuum, but rather in a critical dialogue with the reality of the society of the time, changing what is contrary to monotheism and universal morality, while accommodating cultural elements that can be harmonized with Islamic values.

Studies on the relationship between the Qur'an and pre-Islamic Arab culture have been conducted by many scholars through various approaches (linguistic, theological, and historical). Akhmad Muzakki, using a sociolinguistic perspective, revealed that the Qur'an's linguistic style (rich in metaphors, symbols, and figurative expressions) serves as a communicative strategy adapted to the imaginative and literary nature of Arab society.³ Ibnu Ali, Moh. Soheh, and Mujiburrohman emphasized that Islam and culture are not contradictory entities but engage in a dynamic interaction that shapes a distinctive civilization.⁴ Similarly, D.I. Ansusa Putra demonstrated that the rhythmic and poetic elements found in Makkiyah chapters represent a form of dialectic between divine revelation and the Arabic verbal tradition.⁵

However, previous studies rarely address how this dialectical process unfolds in the context of women's issues, particularly in examining how the Qur'an responds to, transforms, or adjusts Arab customs that were harmful to women. Most existing research has focused on gender readings or legal outcomes, rather than on the socio-cultural mechanisms underlying Qur'anic transformation. Therefore, a study is essential to fill this gap by analyzing the interplay between revelation and patriarchal Arab traditions within the broader process of social transformation.

This study aims to understand how the Qur'an responds to Arabic customs about women when they are revealed, by looking at the three ways of the Qur'anic dialectic. First, removing

1 Septi Aji Fitra Jaya, “Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis Sebagai Sumber Hukum Islam,” *Jurnal Indo-Islamika* 9, no. 2 (2020): 204–16, <https://doi.org/10.15408/idi.v9i2.17542>.

2 Siti Fahimah, “Al-Quran Dan Semantik Toshihiko Izutsu,” *Jurnal Al-Fanar* 3, no. 2 (2020): 113–32, <https://doi.org/10.33511/alfanar.v3n2.113-132>.

3 Akhmad Muzakki, “Dialektika Gaya Bahasa Al-Qur'an Dan Budaya Arab Pra-Islam: Sebuah Kajian Sosiologi Bahasa,” *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 2, no. 1 (January 22, 2014): 55, <https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2007.2.1.55-70>.

4 Ibnu Ali, Moh. Soheh, and Mujiburrohman, “Dialektika Islam Dan Budaya Dalam Pendekatan Teologis-Historis Dan Filosofis,” *Kariman: Jurnal Pendidikan Keislaman* 11, no. 1 SE-Articles (June 2023): 79–98, <https://doi.org/10.52185/kariman.v11i1.275>.

5 D I Ansusa Putra, “Sajak Al-Qur'an: Potret Dialektika Al-Qur'an Dan Budaya Verbal Arab Pra-Islam” (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2011).

(*tabrim*) bad traditions (such as the prohibition of burying baby girls). Second, modifying (*taghyir*) customs that can be improved (such as regulating polygamy on fair terms). Third, recognizing (*tahmil*) customs that are in accordance with Islamic values (such as respecting women's rights in marriage).⁶ This research uses a historical approach and the explanation of related verses to explain the Qur'an's strategy in gradually changing Arab society, especially in terms of behavior towards women. The results are expected to show a balance between Islamic teachings and local culture in shaping more just social norms.

This research departs from the assumption that the Qur'an does not come to deny the entire culture of Arab society, but rather to conduct a critical dialogue to direct it to the principles of monotheism and justice. The main argument put forward is that the Qur'an uses a contextual and gradual approach in transforming Arab customs, with varying degrees of change depending on the degree of its deviation from Islamic values. The hypothesis of this research is that the dialectical process of the Qur'an with Arabic culture is selective and gradual, where Islamic teachings change things that are destructive, modify what can be improved, and maintain traditions that are in harmony with divine and human values. These findings are expected to provide a new perspective in understanding the relationship between sacred texts and social reality.

Method

This study examines Qur'anic verses that interact directly with pre-Islamic Arab culture about women. His main focus is to analyze verses such as Qur'an Surah An-Nisa, verse 3 about polygamy, QS. An-Nahl: 58-59 about the prohibition of burying baby girls, and Qur'an Surah An-Nisa, verse 11-12 about inheritance rights. The research will also trace the historical context of Arab society at that time to understand the background of the descent of these verses. This study uses a qualitative approach with text analysis methods and historical studies. The research design is descriptive and analytical to describe the dialectical process between sacred texts and Arabic culture. This approach was chosen because it was able to reveal the meaning of the text in depth while seeing its relationship with the social reality of the time of revelation.

The main data sources are of three types. *first, the* verses of the Qur'an related to Women. *Second,* classical and contemporary tafsir books such as Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir Al-Misbah. *Third, the* historical literature of the Arab society that explains the pre-Islamic Arab society. These resources will provide a comprehensive understanding of the interaction of texts with cultural contexts. Data was collected through literature studies by examining various written sources. The techniques used include an in-depth reading of the Qur'anic text and its interpretation, recording important findings, and grouping data based on the research theme. This process is carried out systematically to ensure the completeness of the data.

Data analysis uses content analysis and contextual analysis techniques. First, the researcher identified and classified the related verses. Then analyze it by considering the *asbabun nuzul* and the socio-cultural context at that time. Finally, the researcher concluded the dialectical pattern of the Qur'an in responding to the Arabic tradition about women. This technique was chosen because it was able to uncover the dynamic relationship between sacred texts and the reality of society.

6 Ali Sodikin, *Antropologi Al-Qur'an Model Dialektika Wahyu & Budaya*, ed. Abdul Qodir Shaleh, ke-2 (Jogjakarta: AR-RUZZ MEDIA, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Deleted Customs (*Tahrim*)

The Qur'an revolutionarily abolishes the heinous practices of *Jabilyyah* society that have been deeply rooted in relation to women. Some of the following are customs that have been removed by the Qur'an, including:

1. Marriage of *Syighar* (exchanging women without dowry)

In terms, marriage of *syighar* is a marriage in which a man marries his daughter to another man on the condition that the man also marries his daughter to him, and this marriage is carried out without giving a dowry.⁷ The Qur'an cancels this marriage system that degrades the dignity of women and replaces it with a more humane concept of marriage through Qur'an Surah An-Nisa, verse 25 on the obligation of dowry.

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنْكَحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيَاتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُمْ بَعْضُكُم مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَاَنْكِحُوهُنَّ بِإِذْنِ أَهْلِهِنَّ وَأُنُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مُحْصَنَاتٍ غَيْرَ
مُسْفِحَاتٍ وَلَا مُتَّخِذَاتِ أَخْدَانٍ فَإِذَا أُحْصِنَ فَإِنَّ أَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلِمْنَ نِصْفَ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنَاتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ
ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

“But if any of you cannot afford to marry a free believing woman, then (let him marry) a believing bondwoman possessed by one of you. Allah knows best (the state of) your faith (and theirs). You are from one another. So marry them with the permission of their owners, giving them their dowry in fairness, if they are chaste, neither promiscuous nor having secret affairs. If they commit indecency after marriage, they receive half the punishment of free women. This is for those of you who fear falling into sin. But if you are patient, it is better for you. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

2. *Adat Al-Tabarruj*

Tabarruj is the behavior of a woman who shows her jewelry and body parts to a man who is not a mahram, even though according to the *Shari'ah* these parts must be covered. In other words, *tabarruj* is the act of opening and highlighting jewelry and limbs that can arouse orgasm, such as the arms, calves, chest, neck, and face.⁸ Among the Arab customs that have been canceled, the custom of women to wear *tabarruj*, or to show their jewelry, including their *awrah*, to foreign men. Allah says in Qur'an Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 33:

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا
يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

7 Fauhan Thirafi and Muhammad Rizki Firmansyah, “Studi Komparatif Tentang Nikah Syighar,” *Hukum Inovatif : Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Sosial Dan Humaniora* 2, no. 1 SE-Articles (December 24, 2024): 237–43, <https://doi.org/10.62383/humif.v2i1.1139>.

8 Aflah and Ahmad Hafid Safrudin, “Analisis Hukum Islam Tentang Tabarruj Pengantin Wanita Di Pesta Pernikahan Di Desa Bukaan Keling Kepung Kediri,” *El-Faqih : Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 SE-Articles (April 30, 2021): 141–66, <https://doi.org/10.29062/faqih.v7i1.276>.

“Settle in your homes, and do not display yourselves as women did in the days of (pre-Islamic) ignorance. Establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only intends to keep (the causes of) evil away from you and purify you completely, O members of the (Prophet’s) family!”

3. *Adat Wirāsat Al-Mar'ah*

During the period of ignorance, the Arabs had a habit of treating women like property that could be inherited. When a man dies, his heirs, especially sons or relatives, have the right to “inherit” the wife or woman who is in his care, as if she were part of a material legacy. This tradition degrades the dignity of women, because they are seen not as independent human beings, but as objects of possession.⁹ Islam came to abolish and strictly prohibit this custom. This is mentioned in Qur’an Surah An-Nisa’, verse 19:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

“O believers! It is not permissible for you to inherit women against their will or mistreat them to make them return some of the dowry (as a ransom for divorce), unless they are found guilty of adultery. Treat them fairly. If you happen to dislike them, you may hate something which Allah turns into a great blessing.”

In this verse, Allah SWT emphasizes that it is not halal for believers to inherit women forcibly and unjustly. This verse is the basis that women must be treated with respect, have personal rights, and should not be made part of the inheritance.

4. *Adat Murāja'ah Al-Mar'ah Istikhfāfan Biha*

During the period of *jahiliyah*, one of the customs practiced by the Arabs was for the husband to divorce his wife, then refer her back not with the intention of rebuilding the household, but solely to hurt or degrade her. This action is a form of injustice against women, because it is referred to not for good, but as a form of arbitrary treatment.¹⁰ In this case, Allah rebukes these deeds through His words in the Qur’an Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 231:

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِيَتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوعًا وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ بِعَظْمِكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣١﴾

“When you divorce women and they have (almost) reached the end of their waiting period, either retain them honourably or let them go honourably. But do not retain them (only) to harm them

9 R Magdalena, “Kedudukan Perempuan Dalam Perjalanan Sejarah (Studi Tentang Kedudukan Perempuan Dalam Masyarakat Islam),” *Harkat An-Nisa: Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Anak* 2, no. 1 (2017): h. 22-26-27.

10 Zamakhsyari Bin Hasballah Thaib, *Adat Kebiasaan Bangsa Arab Dalam Pembahasan Al-Qur’an*, ed. Aulia Akbar (UNDHAR PRESS, 2020). p.88

(or) to take advantage (of them). Whoever does that surely wrongs his own soul. Do not take Allah's revelations lightly. Remember Allah's favours upon you as well as the Book and wisdom He has sent down for your guidance. Be mindful of Allah, and know that Allah has (perfect) knowledge of all things."

5. *Adat 'Adhl Al-Mar'ah*

One of the habits that developed among the Arabs before the advent of Islam was the tendency of the *wali* (family) to make it difficult for women who wanted to remarry their ex-husbands. Although the woman and her ex-husband have agreed to refer and rebuild the household, the guardians often block such goodwill, both for personal reasons and tradition. Islam came to straighten out this behavior and give women the right to make choices in marriage, including the right to return to their ex-husbands if the two indeed want each other.¹¹ This is affirmed by Allah in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 232.

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضُوا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
ذَلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَمْ آزْكِي لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٢﴾

"When you divorce women and they have reached the end of their waiting period, do not (let the guardians) prevent them from re-marrying their ex-husbands if they come to an honourable agreement. This is enjoined on whoever has faith in Allah and the Last Day. This is purer and more dignifying for you. Allah knows and you do not know."

6. *Adat Zawāj Ar-Rajul min Imra'at Abihi*

One of the traditions that was common to some Arabs in the pre-Islamic period was the custom of a boy marrying his father's ex-wife (i.e. stepmother), after his father died. This was seen as commonplace and not taboo at the time, even considered a form of "inheritance" to the property rights and family relationships from the father.¹² However, this custom is then strictly forbidden by Allah SWT in the Qur'an, precisely in Surah An-Nisa verse 22, which reads:

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَمَقْتًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٢﴾

"Do not marry former wives of your fathers, except what was done previously. It was indeed a shameful, despicable, and evil practice."

7. *Adat Al-Jam'u Bayn Al-Ukhtayn*

One of the customs that was once done by the ancient Arabs was to marry two women who were siblings and make them as wives (honey). In the pre-Islamic Arab tradition, the practice of polygamy was common, including marrying two women who were close blood relations, such as two biological sisters. This creates potential conflicts in the household because of the close blood relationship between the two wives. Islam then came with rules to maintain harmony and

11 Thaib. p.89

12 Jati Pamungkas, "Bentuk Pernikahan Arab Quraisy Pada Masa Jahiliyah Dan Perubahan Bentuk Pernikahan Di Masa Awal Islam," *Empirisma: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 31, no. 2 (2022): 205–28, <https://doi.org/10.30762/empirisma.v31i2.255>.

justice in the family.¹³ This dialect is in Qur'an Surah An-Nisa' verse 23:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ الَّتِي
 أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَائِبُكُمُ الَّتِي فِي حُجُورِكُمْ مِّن نِّسَائِكُمُ الَّتِي دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ
 فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا
 مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾

“(Also) forbidden to you for marriage are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your paternal and maternal aunts, your brother’s daughters, your sister’s daughters, your foster-mothers, your foster-sisters, your mothers-in-law, your stepdaughters under your guardianship if you have consummated marriage with their mothers (but if you have not, then you can marry them) nor the wives of your own sons, nor two sisters together at the same time, except what was done previously. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

In this verse, Allah expressly forbids marrying two biological sisters at the same time, as it can cause enmity and rifts in family relationships.

8. *Adat Akl Mahr Al-Mar'ah*

One of the traditions that developed in Arab society before Islam was the habit of guardians or husbands taking wives dowries arbitrarily. In many cases, the dowry that should be the full right of the wife is actually confiscated and used by the husband or guardian without the consent or willingness of the woman. This practice is clearly unfair because dowry is a form of respect and gift that must be handed over to the wife as part of the marriage contract.¹⁴ Allah says in Qur'an Surah An-Nisa', verse 4:

وَأْتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ سَائِرِ مِمَّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَاكْلُوهُ هَيْنًا مَّרِيًّا ﴿٤﴾

“Give women (you wed) their due dowries graciously. But if they waive some of it willingly, then you may enjoy it freely with a clear conscience.”

9. *Adat Wa'd Al-Banāt*

One of the dark traditions practiced by the Arabs during the *jabiliyah* period was the custom of burying girls alive after they were born. This action is usually driven by fear of shame or shame that is thought to befall the family for having a daughter. They see women as a burden or a source of humiliation that must be removed.¹⁵

However, the teachings of Islam brought by the Prophet Muhammad Saw. strongly oppose this cruel practice. In the Qur'an, Allah condemns such acts and describes them as very heinous and inhumane. In fact, the Qur'an describes that on the Day of Resurrection, the girls who are

13 Muhammad Jafar Shiddiq, “SEJARAH TRADISI BUDAYA POLIGAMI DI DUNIA ARAB PRA ISLAM (PERSPEKTIF TRADISI COOMANS MIKHAIL),” *Titian: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora* 7, no. 1 (June 5, 2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.22437/titian.v7i1.23588>.

14 Thaib, *Adat Kebiasaan Bangsa Arab Dalam Pembahasan Al-Qur'an.*, pp.93-94

15 Mardinal Tarigan et al., “Peradaban Islam: Peradaban Arab Pra Islam,” *Journal on Education* 05, no. 04 (2023): 12821–32.

buried alive will be given the opportunity to demand justice for what they have experienced, as mentioned in Qur'an Surah At-Takwir, verses 8-9:

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءِدَةُ سُئِلَتْ ﴿٨﴾ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ﴿٩﴾

“and when baby girls, buried alive, are asked (8) for what crime they were put to death, (9)”

10. *Adat Tahrīm ba'dh Al-Aṭ'imah 'ala An-Nisā'*

That is the custom of forbidding some types of food for women. One of the traditions that developed among Arab societies during the period of *jabilīyah* was to establish a prohibition for women to eat certain types of food. In fact, the food is actually halal or allowed to be eaten by men. That is, they make unfair rules when it comes to food consumption, by distinguishing the law between men and women without a legitimate basis.

وَقَالُوا مَا فِي بُطُونِ هَذِهِ الْأَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِلذَّكَورِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلَىٰ أَرْوَاجِنَا وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مَيْتَةً فَهُمْ فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ

سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصَفِهِمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾

“They (also) say, “The offspring of this cattle is reserved for our males and forbidden to our females; but if it is stillborn, they may all share it.” He will repay them for their falsehood. Surely He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.”

Allah SWT rebukes this habit in His words, Qur'an Surah Al-An'am, verse 139, which explains that such actions are a form of lying against Allah because they forbid something without His permission. This shows that only Allah has the right to determine halal and haram, not humans who make rules based on incorrect traditions or cultures.

Cultural Modification (*Taghyir*)

The revelation of the Qur'an to pre-Islamic Arab culture includes changing periodically. By providing an acceptable understanding and providing new solutions to the culture it has changed. Below are some of the customs of the pre-Islamic Arabs that have been changed.

1. *Adat Al-Hirmān Min Al-Mīrats*

In the pre-Islamic period, Arab society had an unfair habit of distributing inheritance. One form of this injustice is by not giving inheritance rights to some family members, especially women such as daughters, wives, or mothers. They were considered unworthy of receiving inheritance because they did not participate in the war or earn a living. In fact, humanely and familiarly, they still have the right to family inheritance.¹⁶ Allah says in Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 180:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا ۖ الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَىٰ

الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

16 Isniyatin Faizah, Febiyanti Utami Parera, and Silvana Kamelya, “Bagian Ahli Waris Laki-Laki Dan Perempuan Dalam Kajian Hukum Islam,” *The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law and Civil Law* 2, no. 2 (December 28, 2021): 152–69, <https://doi.org/10.51675/jaksya.v2i2.166>.

“It is prescribed that when death approaches any of you (if they leave something of value) a will should be made in favour of parents and immediate family with fairness. (This is) an obligation on those who are mindful (of Allah).”

In this regard, Allah emphasizes the importance of justice in the distribution of inheritance through His words in the Qur’an. Al-Baqarah verse 180, which emphasizes the obligation to make a will for parents and close relatives before the inheritance law is revealed in detail. This verse is the beginning of the improvement of the inheritance system that prevailed at that time, in order to be more fair and recognize the rights of all heirs, including women.

2. *Adat At-Ta’addud Fi Az-Zawāj*

One of the traditions of the Arab society before the advent of Islam was the custom of unlimited polygamy, where a man could marry many women at once without a specified number. This habit was later corrected by the Qur’an. Islam still allows the practice of polygamy, but with clear limits. A man is only allowed to marry a maximum of four wives, and even that on the condition that he is able to act fairly between them.¹⁷ This limitation is explained in the Qur’an Surah An-Nisa’ verse 3, which means:

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلثَ وَرُبْعًا فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ﴿٣﴾

“If you fear you might fail to give orphan women their (due) rights (if you were to marry them), then marry other women of your choice – two, three, or four. But if you are afraid you will fail to maintain justice, then (content yourselves with) one or those (bondwomen) in your possession. This way you are less likely to commit injustice.”

This verse emphasizes that Islam does not abolish polygamy completely, but regulates it so as not to harm the wife and still maintain justice in the household.

3. *Adat Al-Īla’*

The custom of *Al-Īla’* was a custom among the Arabs before Islam, in which a husband swore not to associate with his wife for an indefinite or very long time. This vow is not due to the intention of divorce, but as a form of emotional pressure or punishment for the wife. This practice ultimately makes the wife stuck, not divorced so that she is free, but also does not get her rights as a wife.¹⁸ Allah says in Qur’an Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 226:

لِّلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِن نِّسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

“Those who swear not to have intercourse with their wives must wait for four months. If they change their mind, then Allah is certainly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

17 Danu Resfi Naldi et al., “Sejarah Bangsa Arab Pra Islam,” *Historia Madania* 7, no. 2 (2023): 265–81, <https://doi.org/10.15575/hm.v7i2.30915>.

18 Asep Mahbub Junaedi and Wasman, “PELANGGARAN HUKUM DALAM KELUARGA ISLAM: KAJIAN TENTANG ZHIHAR, ILA’, DAN LPAN,” *MUSHAF JOURNAL: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Hadis* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1–14.

4. *Adat Al-Zihār*

One of the bad habits that some husbands have done among Arabs during the period of ignorance is the act of *zihār*, which is when a husband equates his wife's body, especially the back, with the body of his biological mother. Expressions like this are used as a form of rejection or expulsion of the wife, as if the wife is no longer worthy of being touched or considered a legitimate partner, as is the haram of the relationship with the biological mother.¹⁹ This habit is very detrimental to the wife, because they are not divorced clearly but are also not socialized like wives. Thus, the Qur'an came to abolish this practice and replace it with a more just and humane rule. Allah affirms in Qur'an Surah Al-Mujadilah, verse 2:

الَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْكُم مِّن نِّسَائِهِمْ مَا هُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِهِمْ إِنْ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّيُّ وَلَدَتْهُنَّ وَأَيُّهُنَّ لِيَقُولُونَ مُنْكَرًا مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ وَرُؤُوسًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوفٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢﴾

“Those of you who (sinfully) divorce their wives by comparing them to their mothers (should know that) their wives are in no way their mothers. None can be their mothers except those who gave birth to them. What they say is certainly detestable and false. Yet Allah is truly Ever-Pardoning, All-Forgiving.”

5. *Adat Al-Ṭalāq*

One of the traditions that developed among Arab society during the period of *jahiliyah* was the habit of husbands imposing *talaq* (divorce) on their wives arbitrarily, without any clear rules or limits. A husband may mentally cheating on his wife many times, and then refer her back to him at will, without considering the wife's rights or the purpose of the marriage itself. This practice is certainly detrimental to women, because it makes their status uncertain.²⁰ To put an end to this unjust custom, Allah has revealed the provisions in Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 229:

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَيْنِ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾

“Divorce may be retracted twice, then the husband must retain (his wife) with honour or separate (from her) with grace. It is not lawful for husbands to take back anything of the dowry given to their wives, unless the couple fears not being able to keep within the limits of Allah. So if you fear they will not be able to keep within the limits of Allah, there is no blame if the wife compensates the husband to obtain divorce. These are the limits set by Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah, they are the (true) wrongdoers.”

19 Andi Ridwan, Saude, and Rusdin, “Konsep Zihhar Dalam Pandangan Hukum Islam,” *Kiies* 1, no. 0 (2022): 323–324.

20 Ali Sodikin, “REFORMASI AL-QUR'AN DALAM HUKUM PERCERAIAN: Kajian Antropologi Hukum Islam,” *Al-Mazaahib: Jurnal Perbandingan Hukum* 2, no. 2 (December 1, 2014): 259–84, <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-mazaahib.v2i2.1369>.

6. Adat Al-'Iddah

What is meant by *Al-'Iddah* is a custom or tradition related to the *'iddah* period (waiting period) for a woman who is divorced by her husband. Before the advent of Islam, the Arabs had certain customs in treating divorced women, including in terms of determining the period of *'iddah* and women's rights during this period.²¹ Islam came to straighten and perfect this custom to make it more just and humane. One form of refinement is to set clear and fair rules about the period of *'iddah* in the Qur'an, including those found in the words of Allah SWT in Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 228:

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنْنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبِعُوْلَتِهِنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلِمْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلِيمٌ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٨﴾

“Divorced women must wait three monthly cycles (before they can re-marry). It is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they (truly) believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands reserve the right to take them back within that period if they desire reconciliation. Women have rights similar to those of men equitably, although men have a degree (of responsibility) above them. And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.”

This verse explains that a divorced woman must wait for three holy periods before she can remarry. This verse also affirms that they still have rights and positions during the *'iddah* period, and provides an opportunity to refer if the husband wants to improve the domestic relationship. Thus, Islam not only corrects old habits that are detrimental to women, but also provides clear guidance on how the *'iddah* period should be lived fairly and responsibly.

7. Adat Al-Ihdād

In the pre-Islamic period, Arab society had a special custom in dealing with the death of a spouse, especially a husband. If a woman is left to die by her husband, she will undergo a very long period of mourning, which is for a whole year. During this time, the woman is forbidden to wear makeup, wear perfumes, and look attractive in front of others as a form of respect for her deceased husband.²² However, after the arrival of Islam, the sharia rearranged these customs to be more humane and balanced. Allah SWT sets a period of mourning for a woman who is left behind by her husband for four months and ten days. This provision is stated in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 234:

وَالَّذِينَ يَتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٤﴾

“As for those of you who die and leave widows behind, let them observe a waiting period of four months and ten days. When they have reached the end of this period, then you are not accountable

21 Tajul Iflah and Raihan Putri, “IDDAH BAGI PEREMPUAN PASCA PERCERAIAN DALAM AL-QUR’AN(Kandungan Surah Al-Baqarah Ayat 228 Tentang Masa Iddah Bagi Perempuan),” *Jurnal Syariah Dan Ekonomi Islam* 2, no. 1 (June 18, 2024): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.71025/qz0yce26>.

22 Thaib, *Adat Kebiasaan Bangsa Arab Dalam Pembahasan Al-Qur’an*. pp.51-52

for what they decide for themselves in a reasonable manner. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.”

With this stipulation, Islam abolishes the excessive tradition of *jabiliyah* in mourning and replaces it with lighter rules while still maintaining honor and peace of mind for women left behind by their husbands.

Preserved Cultural Practices (*Tahmil*)

The examination of *tahmil* (the category of preserved cultural practices) reveals that not all Arab traditions were negated or modified by the Qur'an. Instead, certain customs that aligned with the moral and theological foundations of Islam were maintained and reoriented under divine guidance. This preservation demonstrates that revelation did not operate as an agent of total cultural rupture, but rather as a transformative dialogue that filtered existing norms through the lens of *tawḥīd* (monotheism) and *'adl* (justice). In this sense, *tahmil* becomes evidence of Islam's cultural elasticity: its ability to recognize goodness within human traditions and elevate them to the level of sacred values.

Although many pre-Islamic customs concerning women were abolished or revised, some aspects of social practice retained continuity with divine revelation. However, distinguishing which traditions were truly cultural and which were inherited from the *shari'ah* of previous prophets is crucial. For instance, the practice of *ḥijāb* or female modesty is often mistakenly viewed as a pre-Islamic Arab custom, when in fact it has theological roots that trace back to earlier Abrahamic revelations. As Syafi'in Mansur (2007) asserts, the obligation of veiling and modesty existed across monotheistic faiths as part of a universal ethic of chastity and dignity, not as a localized Arab tradition.²³ Therefore, rather than being a cultural residue, the *ḥijāb* represents the continuity of divine law perfected through Islam.

Nevertheless, the spirit of *tahmil* can still be observed in the Qur'an's approach to values such as hospitality (*karam*), family solidarity (*silat ar-rahim*), and the protection of lineage (*ḥijz an-nasab*). These were long-standing social virtues among Arabs that Islam did not abolish, but sanctified. For example, the strong tribal sense of kinship, though often a source of bias and conflict, was redirected toward the moral principle of brotherhood in faith (*ukhūwah islāmiyyah*). Likewise, generosity, which had been a mark of tribal pride and social prestige, was refined into the spiritual virtue of *infaq* and *sadaqah*. This selective preservation underscores how Islam embraced and spiritualized positive cultural elements, transforming them from social customs into acts of worship with eternal value.

In the context of women, *tahmil* manifests less in ritual practices and more in the moral respect accorded to motherhood and family.²⁴ The pre-Islamic Arab notion that mothers deserve reverence and obedience was retained but elevated to a religious duty. The Qur'an explicitly connects service to one's parents with worship of God (Qur'an 31:14), framing maternal respect as a moral constant across human history. This example shows that Islam did not seek to replace

23 Syafi'in Mansur, "Berjilbab Dalam Tiga Tradisi Agama Samawi," *ALQALAM* 24, no. 1 (April 30, 2007): 109, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alqalam.v24i1.1658>.

24 Zennanta Agustia Iswahyudi, Muhammad Rohman Rifai, and Rinda Puspita Purnamasari Ayu, "Contextualizing the Qur'an on Contemporary LGBT Issues: Applying Fazlur Rahman's Double-Movement Hermeneutic," *DAQIYAH: Dirasat Qur'aniyyah Wa Hadithiyyah* 1, no. 1 (2026): 1–20, <https://doi.org/14804/daqiyah.v1i1.036>.

the cultural ethos of honor, but to universalize it through revelation. Thus, *tahmīl* here functions as theological affirmation: a validation of moral instincts already inscribed in human conscience.

From a hermeneutical perspective, the category of *tahmīl* enriches our understanding of Qur'anic anthropology. It shows that Islam views human culture not as a threat to revelation but as its dialogical partner. What the Qur'an does is to preserve and purify, acknowledging human customs as part of divine pedagogy. This method reinforces the idea that revelation interacts with time and place, guiding rather than erasing the social memory of a people. By preserving ethical traditions, the Qur'an fosters civilizational continuity while orienting humanity toward transcendence.

In conclusion, *tahmīl* illustrates the Qur'an's profound respect for the constructive elements of pre-Islamic culture. It recognizes that divine revelation works through cultural realities, reforming what is unjust, moderating what is excessive, and affirming what is noble. Through this balanced process, Islam positions itself not as an antagonist to culture, but as its moral culmination, preserving human wisdom while infusing it with divine purpose.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Qur'an engages in a dialectical interaction with pre-Islamic Arab culture through three main approaches: abolition (*tabrīm*), modification (*taghyīr*), and affirmation (*tahmīl*). By analyzing key verses such as Qur'an [16]: 58–59, [4]: 3, and [4]: 4, the findings demonstrate that the Qur'an did not seek to dismantle existing traditions abruptly but rather transformed them gradually and contextually. Practices that contradicted human dignity were abolished, customs that could be refined were modified, and cultural values consistent with monotheism and justice were affirmed and elevated. Through this process, the Qur'an emerges not merely as a normative text but as a transformative force that reconstructs social order and restores the moral and human dignity of women within Arab society of that era.

The main contribution of this research lies in presenting the Qur'an as a text that does not operate in a cultural vacuum but rather engages in a critical dialogue with its surrounding social realities. This study enriches the discourse of contextual Qur'anic interpretation by emphasizing that understanding revelation must take into account the socio-historical conditions in which it was revealed. By mapping the Qur'an's responses to patriarchal practices, this work offers a hermeneutical approach that promotes gender justice within Islamic thought. Furthermore, it broadens the understanding of how sacred texts can act as moral reformers, shaping human civilization through the principles of equality, compassion, and justice embedded in divine revelation.

Given that this study focuses primarily on the pre-Islamic Arab context, future research is encouraged to explore the dialectic between Qur'anic values and modern cultural frameworks concerning gender equality. Such exploration is vital to assess how the Qur'an's ethical and humanistic principles can be applied within contemporary societies characterized by cultural pluralism and global interaction. A comparative approach could investigate how Qur'anic moral teachings interact with different cultural systems, including Western and non-Arab Muslim societies. This direction will not only deepen the understanding of the Qur'an's social relevance but also highlight its timeless potential to guide humanity toward justice and moral balance across diverse civilizations.

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