



## **The Transformation of The Word: Literary Activities and Works During the Apostolic Period of Prophet Muhammad SAW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research explores the sociolinguistic and aesthetic paradigm shift in Arabic literature during the Apostolic period of Prophet Muhammad SAW (7th century CE), marking the transition from Jahiliyyah tribal oral traditions to centralized Islamic monotheism. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method with a stylistic (uslub) approach, the study deconstructs ten core verses of Hassan bin Thabit's monumental poem, *Burikta Ya Qabra Ar-Rasuli*. The primary analytical focus lies on Thabit's rhetorical sophistication—including alliteration, metaphor, personification, and silepsis—in mediating profound grief over the passing of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Findings indicate that the Apostolic period did not erase past poetic traditions but rather revolutionized their essence and function. Literature was transformed from an instrument of tribal fanaticism (ta'asub) into a medium for social, moral, and political transformation fundamental to state-building in Medina. Furthermore, the *Ijaz al-Qur'an* served as a linguistic anchor that standardized Classical Arabic (Fusha), providing a new rhetorical framework for poets such as Hassan bin Thabit. This study concludes that the literary transformation of this period laid the eternal foundation for all future global Arabic literary developments .

**Keywords:** *Hassan bin Thabit, Rhetoric Analysis, Apostolic Period, Burikta Ya Qabra Ar-Rasuli, Ijaz al-Qur'an, Arabic Literature.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The advent of the 7th century in the Arabian Peninsula did not merely herald a religious awakening; it orchestrated a profound ontological and semiotic restructuring of the Arabic word. To comprehend the magnitude of the literary metamorphosis during the Apostolic period, one must first descend into the complex socio-literary landscape of the *Jahiliyyah* (pre-Islamic) era. In this desert-bound world, the spoken word was not a mere medium of utility; it was the ultimate cultural currency, a sovereign power that dictated the rise and fall of tribal empires.

### The Lexical Depth of 'Adab' and 'Al-Lugah'

In the pre-Islamic consciousness, language (*al-lugah*) functioned as a sophisticated system of signs representing the very quintessence of the Arab soul. As noted by modern linguists like Widada (2009), language is a "sign system" where diverse signs intertwine within a set of rules to facilitate communication and representation. For the *Jahiliyyah* Arab, however, this representation was deeply tied to the concept of *signifie*—the concepts existing within the speaker's mind that sought externalization.

Intertwined with this linguistic mastery was the concept of *adab*. Lexically, *adab* in this era was a multidimensional term, encompassing not only literature but ethics, etiquette (*sopan santun*), philology, and the humanities. As argued by Al-Hasyimi (1999), *adab* represented a nation's cultural identity and persona. It was the mirror of a society's refinement, its intellectual depth, and its moral code. In the desert, a man's mastery of *adab* was as critical as his mastery of the sword; it was the mechanism through which the "humanity" of the tribe was articulated and preserved.

### The Pillars of Tribalism: Fakhr and Ta'asub

The engine of pre-Islamic literary production was fueled by two potent socio-psychological forces: *fakhr* (pride) and *ta'asub* (fanaticism). *Fakhr* was the manifestation of a tribe's collective ego—an intense, often aggressive pride in one's *qabilah* and ancestry. This identity was reinforced through poetic declarations that glorified tribal heroes, ancestors, and the lineage's perceived purity. Closely linked to this was *ta'asub*, a rigid adherence to tribal norms and values, which Ibnu Khaldun identified as the bedrock of desert survival.

These pillars drove the creation of the *Mu'allaqat* (The Suspended Odes), legendary works that represented the absolute zenith of *Jahiliyyah* linguistic brilliance. These poems were famously "suspended" in the collective memory of the Arabs—and, as tradition holds, on the walls of the Ka'bah—because they were the socio-political manifestos of the tribes. They were not mere aesthetic exercises; they were instruments of psychological warfare and social cohesion. A tribe without a poet was a tribe without a history, a tribe destined for oblivion.

### The Role of the Poet in the Desert

In the pre-Islamic milieu, the poet (*sha'ir*) occupied a position of unparalleled social importance. The poet was the "fierce defender" of the tribe's honor, its primary "historian," and its most effective diplomat. In a culture where oral tradition was the ultimate societal currency, the poet's words were weapons more potent than the spear. A poet could elevate a tribe's status through *madh* (praise) or utterly

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annihilate its reputation through *hija* (satire).

The pre-Islamic poet focused on themes dictated by the harsh desert environment: heroism, tribal pride, tragic romance, and the brutal reality of survival against nature. Poetry was the medium through which the "heroic age" of the Arabs was recorded. It was the *diwan* (record) of their deeds. This role meant the poet was the custodian of the tribe's legacy, ensuring that the virtues of the ancestors remained eternal in the ears of the nomadic nation.

### **The Apostolic Shift: From Bloodline to Monotheism**

The arrival of the Islamic message initiated a tectonic shift in this landscape. This transformation was not an erasure of the past but a re-orientation of its linguistic energy. The shift was driven by dual pressures: internal spiritual awakenings and external state-building requirements.

Internally, there was a transition toward monotheism and universal ethics. The Qur'an challenged the very foundations of *fakhr* and *ta'asub*, asserting that morality (*taqwa*) took precedence over bloodlines and tribal lineage. This was a radical democratization of the Arab social order. Externally, the establishment of a functioning state in Medina under the Prophet Muhammad SAW necessitated a transition from decentralized oral traditions to a unified, message-driven literary culture.

The "Apostolic Shift" saw the rise of a new literary purpose. Literature was no longer a tool for tribal ego but a medium for divine truth and social transformation. The emergence of figures like Hassan bin Thabit, who transitioned from being a tribal poet for the Khazraj to the *Syairur ar-Rasul* (the Prophet's Poet), exemplifies this shift. He utilized the same linguistic rigor of the *Jahiliyyah* period but infused it with a new, spiritualized lexicon. Poetry became a "weapon" to defend the *Ummah* and a vehicle to eulogize the Prophet's legacy, marking the transition from desert survivalism to the establishment of a global civilization.

### **METHOD**

This study employs a rigorous **Library Research** and **Qualitative Descriptive** approach to analyze the rhetorical transformation of the Apostolic period. The fundamental methodology is rooted in **Stylistics** (*uslub*), a branch of linguistics that deconstructs how a speaker or writer expresses thoughts through specific meaning effects based on the intersection of feeling and intellect. As defined by Ahmad (2016), *uslub* represents the speaker's success in precisely communicating with their target audience through the harmony of emotion and reason.

The primary data source for this research is the *Diwanu Hassan ibn Tsabit* (Beirut: Daar el-Kutub el-Ilmiyah, 1994). While the original poem *Burikta Ya Qabra Ar-Rasuli* consists of 46 verses, this analysis focuses on a purposive sample of 10 core verses that encapsulate the rhetorical complexity of the era's transition. Data collection utilized the **Simak** (listening/observing) technique, involving a meticulous, multiple-reading process to identify specific rhetorical tropes. This was followed by a note-taking and classification process where data was categorized into rhetorical dimensions such as alliteration, metaphor, personification, erotesis, and silepsis, ensuring an exhaustive analysis of the text's structural and semantic layers.



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hassan bin Thabit's *Burikta Ya Qabra Ar-Rasuli* stands as the quintessential literary bridge between the pre-Islamic past and the Islamic present. Thabit, having honed his craft in the courts of the Ghassanids and the tribal rivalries of Medina, brought a veteran's precision to the eulogy of the Prophet. His style represents a revolutionary application of *Jahiliyyah* meters to a monotheistic and personal grief.

### 1.1 Alliteration (Sound Repetition)

Thabit employs alliteration not merely for rhythm, but to create a sensory atmosphere of lingering divinity.

**Verse:** بِطَيْبَةٍ رَسْمٍ لِلرَّسُولِ وَمَعْهَدٌ مُنِيرٌ وَقَدْ تَعْفُو الرُّسُومُ وَتَهْمَدُ

**Translation:** "In Tayba (Medina), there is a trace for the Messenger and a shining residence (source of light); though traces typically fade and ruins decay."

**Analysis:** The repetition of the 'mim' (م) sound in *ma'hadun munir* (shining residence/source) is a masterclass in acoustic rhetoric. The 'mim' is a labial, nasal sound that requires a closure of the lips, creating a resonant, humming effect that echoes the lingering presence of the Prophet.

This alliteration creates a rhythmic anchor, suggesting a "cahaya" (light) effect that emanates from the Prophet's residence. Thabit contrasts the "shining source" (*ma'hadun munir*) with the *rusum* (decaying ruins) of classical *Jahiliyyah* poetry. In pre-Islamic odes, the poet traditionally mourned the physical decay of a lover's campsite. Thabit subverts this trope; while the *rusum* of others may "fade and decay" (*ta'fu... wa tahmadu*), the Prophet's residence remains a permanent, illuminating source for the universe.

### 1.2 Metaphorical Depth (Majaz)

The use of *Majaz* in this poem bridges the chasm between the physical loss of a leader and the eternal survival of his message.

**Verse:** وَلَا تَنْمَحِي الْآيَاتُ مِنْ دَارِ حُرْمَةٍ بِهَا مَنِيرُ الْهَادِي الَّذِي كَانَ يَصْعَدُ

**Translation:** "And the signs are not erased from the house of honor, wherein stands the pulpit of the Guide which he used to ascend."

**Analysis:** Thabit employs the metaphor of the "house of honor" (*dar hurmatin*) to transmute the physical architecture of Medina into a metaphysical sanctuary. The home is not merely a structure of clay and palm; it is the locus of divine immanence.

The *Minbar* (pulpit) of the "Guide" (*al-Hadi*) serves as a metonymy for the Prophet's authority and leadership. By referencing the act of "ascending," Thabit creates a vertical metaphor for spiritual elevation. The house and pulpit are presented not as historical artifacts but as living symbols of blessing (*barakah*). This elevates the Prophet's physical surroundings into a spiritual geography that remains "un-erased" (*la tanmahi*), contrasting the transience of all other worldly power.

### 1.3 Personification of Knowledge

Thabit attributes a living agency to the signs of prophecy, suggesting they possess an ontological life of their own.

**Verse:** مَعَارِفٌ لَمْ تُظْمَسْ عَلَى الْعَهْدِ أَيُّهَا أَتَاهَا الْبَلَى فَأَلْيَ مِنْهَا تُجَدَّدُ

**Translation:** "Knowledge whose signs have not been obliterated over time; even when decay approaches, the signs from it are renewed."



**Analysis:** Here, Thabit personifies the *Ayat* (signs/knowledge) as entities capable of resisting "obliteration" (*tumis*). The use of the term *ayyuha* (O you who...) suggests a direct address to these prophetic traces as if they possess human existence and volition.

This personification introduces the concept of *tajaddud* (renewal). Unlike the static ruins of the desert that are slowly reclaimed by the sands, the Prophet's knowledge has a life that is constantly refreshed through generations of the *Ummah*. It suggests that Islamic wisdom is a living entity that undergoes a perpetual rebirth, remaining relevant across different epochs despite the physical "decay" (*bila*) of the world.

#### 1.4 Erotesis (Rhetorical Tragedy)

The poet utilizes the rhetorical question to emphasize the cosmic scale of the tragedy.

**Verse:** **وَهَلْ عَدَلَتْ يَوْمًا رَزِيَّةَ هَالِكِ رَزِيَّةَ يَوْمِ مَاتَ فِيهِ مُحَمَّدٌ**

**Translation:** "And has there ever been a day of calamity for any who perished equal to the calamity of the day Muhammad died?"

**Analysis:** This erotesis (rhetorical question) is not intended to elicit a response; it is a linguistic device meant to force the reader into a state of philosophical reflection on divine fate. By asking if any "justice" or "balance" (*'adalat*) exists for such a loss, Thabit highlights the incomparable nature of the Prophet's death.

The term *riziyah* (calamity/loss of a beloved) is used to anchor the grief in the personal, yet the scale is universal. This question forces the reader to confront the spiritual vacuum left by the Prophet. It argues that the death of Muhammad SAW was not a standard historical event but an ontological rupture that defies comparison. This rhetorical strategy serves to establish the Prophet as the center of the spiritual universe.

#### 1.5 Silepsis (Dual Meanings)

Thabit uses silepsis to pack multiple theological layers into single descriptors, a hallmark of the new Islamic rhetoric.

**Verse:** **عَطُوفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ لَا يَنْتِي جَنَاحَهُ إِلَى كَنْفٍ يَحْنُو عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَمَهْدُ**

**Translation:** "Most compassionate toward them, never folding his wing; toward a gentle side, he showed them mercy and guided them."

**Analysis:** The word *atwafun* functions as a silepsis. Lexically, it means "compassionate," but in the context of "never folding his wing" (*la yuthanni janahu*), it evokes the physical image of a bird of prey protecting its young.

This dual meaning creates a powerful image of the Prophet as both a gentle guide and a fierce protector. The "wing" represents his *Rahmah* (mercy) extended over the believers. Furthermore, Thabit uses silepsis with the word *faqada* (loss) in subsequent verses, contrasting the "general loss" felt by all mortals with the "permanent, irreplaceable absence" of the Prophet. This emphasizes that while the world experiences many losses, the loss of the Prophet is a unique void that will not be filled until the Day of Judgment.

#### 1.6 Prolepsis and Hyperbole in Eternal Devotion

To conclude his rhetorical tapestry, Thabit utilizes preemptive defense and dramatic exaggeration to cement his loyalty.



**Verse (Prolepsis):** أَقُولُ وَلَا يُلْفَى لِمَا قُلْتُ عَائِبٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ إِلَّا عَازِبٌ الْعَقْلِ مُبْعَدٌ

**Translation:** "I speak, and none among men shall find fault in what I say, except for the one whose mind is insane and far (from guidance)."

**Analysis:** Thabit employs prolepsis by preemptively identifying any critic of his praise as "insane" (*'azib al-'aql*). This rhetorical strategy effectively shuts down opposition by framing dissent as a lack of intellectual and spiritual clarity. It establishes his poem not as a subjective opinion, but as an absolute, undeniable truth.

**Verse (Hyperbole):** لَعَلِّي بِهِ فِي جَنَّةِ الْخُلْدِ أَخْلَدُ

**Translation:** "...so that perhaps through him, I may live eternally in the Garden of Immortality."

**Analysis:** The hyperbole of seeking "eternal life" in *Jannatul Khuld* alongside the Prophet serves as the ultimate expression of devotion. It signals that the poet's identity—once tied to tribal glory—is now entirely subsumed by his spiritual yearning. The hyperbole serves to transform the eulogy into a prayer, anchoring the poet's future in the afterlife.

### Comparative analysis: Tribal sy'ir vs. Isamic rhetoric

The transition from the *Jahiliyyah* to the Apostolic period was characterized by a fascinating dialectic of continuity and transformation.

**Continuity:** Apostolic poets did not discard the technical mastery of their predecessors. They preserved the classical **Wazan** (meter), **Bahr** (rhythm), and **Qafiyah** (rhyme). The linguistic brilliance and the rigorous, expansive vocabulary of the desert heritage remained the "body" of the literature.

#### **Transformation:**

**Shift in Values:** The primary shift was from tribal identity (*fakhr*) to spiritual and collective values (*ummah*). The poet was no longer defending a bloodline but a universal moral framework.

**Thematic Redefinition:** While traditional themes like *Ritsa* (lament) and *Madh* (praise) remained, their objects were redefined. *Madh* was no longer for tribal chieftains but for the Prophet and the divine. *Ghazal* (romance) was largely replaced by themes of piety and theological defense.

**Function:** Literature became a tool for moral and social change. The poet evolved from a tribal spokesperson into a "weapon for Islam," using the sword of the tongue to meet the administrative and spiritual needs of the new state in Medina.

### Ijaz Al-qur'an: The Standardization of fusha

The Qur'an fundamentally revolutionized and standardized the Arabic language, serving as the "Linguistic Anchor" for all subsequent generations. It presented a **Stylistic Miracle** (*Ijaz*)—a form that was neither pure poetry nor pure prose, yet possessed a rhythmic depth and rhetorical power that surpassed both.

By introducing a new standard of **Balaghah** (eloquence), the Qur'an standardized **Fusha** (Classical Arabic), preserving linguistic consistency across the diverse tribes of the peninsula. Its thematic depth—covering theology, morality, law, and the ultimate purpose of human existence—shifted the Arab intellectual focus from mere survival to spiritual and intellectual growth. This "impossible to imitate" standard influenced poets like Hassan bin Thabit and Ka'ab bin Zuhair, providing them with a new, sophisticated rhetorical toolkit to express spiritual truths that were previously beyond the reach of the desert



tongue.

### Evolution of prose: Sermons, Epistile, and Wisdom

The establishment of a functioning state in Medina required literature to expand beyond the rhythmic confines of poetry.

**Khutbah (Sermons):** Elevated public speaking became the primary tool for spiritual, civic, and political guidance. The *Khutbah* was utilized to communicate the laws and ethics of the new society to a unified audience.

**Epistles (Letters):** The necessity for formal diplomatic interactions with neighboring empires (such as the Byzantines and Sassanids) led to the development of concise, formal prose. These letters represented the birth of Arabic statecraft and diplomacy.

**Wisdom Literature (Ahadith):** The sayings of the Prophet set a new standard for eloquence and clarity. The *Ahadith* became a secondary linguistic reference, providing "wisdom sayings" that balanced depth of meaning with simplicity of expression.

### CONCLUSION

Literature during the Apostolic period of Prophet Muhammad SAW did not experience a decline; rather, it underwent a profound redefinition. By preserving the linguistic brilliance of the *Jahillyyah* past and elevating it with a unified moral framework, the period forged an eternal foundation for global Arabic literature. The form of the word—its meters and rhythms—remained, but its content was transmuted into Islamic values. Through the rhetorical mastery of figures like Hassan bin Thabit, literature was transformed from a tool of tribal pride into a medium for divine truth and state-building, anchored forever in the linguistic miracle of the Qur'an.

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