




An Analytical Study of the Institutionalization and Consolidation of Prayer in Society Based on the Chronological Order of Quranic Surahs


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Introduction

The teachings and ordinances of the Qur'an were gradually revealed to the Muslims and went through distinct phases within the Islamic society of Mecca and Medina. Studying the historical sequence of these revelations helps to establish clear developmental models for each subject. One of the major benefits of identifying the timing of Qur'anic verses-whether pre- or post-Hijrah-is gaining a more accurate understanding of early Islamic events and the proper contextualization of the Prophet's Sunnah.

In this regard, the present study seeks to examine the verses related to prayer in the Qur'an according to the chronological order of revelation and to analyze the process by which prayer was institutionalized and consolidated in the Muslim community. These verses were revealed under varying circumstances-some during the early Meccan phase, others during the establishment of Islamic governance in Medina. A close reading of this chronological trajectory in light of the diverse social and cultural contexts of Mecca and Medina enables us to identify a structured, phased process of how prayer became a social institution.

Methodology

The study uses a descriptive-analytical approach to investigate the institutionalization of prayer based on the chronological descent of Qur'anic sūrah. Data were gathered through library and citation-based research. The primary data for analysis consist of Qur'anic verses, with secondary support from tafsīr literature.

The research method is rooted in content analysis using a tanzīlī (chronological revelation) framework. In the first step, verses related to prayer were identified; in the second, they were arranged according to the order of revelation. Then, based on thematic axes and situational context, their content was analyzed and interpreted. To understand the sequence of revelation, the study relies on classical reports about sūrah chronology-mainly attributed to Ibn 'Abbās and transmitted through figures like Abū Ṣāliḥ and Muḥammad ibn Sā'ib al-Kalbī-as cited in works such as al-Ya'qūbī's Tārīkh. According to these reports, 82 sūrah were revealed in Mecca and 32 in Medina, and their order is marked using the particle thumma (then), which this study uses as a basis for analysis. The research also incorporates Muhammad Hādī Ma'rifat's critical arrangement of sūrah chronology, which draws upon versions by both Ibn 'Abbās and Jābir ibn Zayd.

Findings

Analyzing the prayer-related verses in chronological order reveals a structured model for the institutionalization and consolidation of prayer within the Islamic society. The Qur'an initially emphasizes the individual dimension of prayer. It then gradually introduces its familial and social aspects, eventually embedding it into the community through a five-stage process:

1. Introducing prayer as a spiritual-ethical and ritual practice.
2. Cultural normalization of prayer at both individual and social levels.
3. Discourse formation and functional framing centered on prayer.
4. Religious and ethical community-building through prayer.
5. Diagnosis and removal of challenges, including answering objections and criticisms.

The spiritual and ritual nature of prayer was established from the earliest Meccan revelations. The stages of cultural normalization and discourse formation unfolded during the middle and late Meccan periods. The phase of ethical and religious community-building was initiated as Muslims prepared to emigrate to Medina and establish an Islamic polity, and it continued into the early Medinan period. Finally, during the later Medinan phase, a comprehensive process of diagnostic reflection and critique was developed, reinforcing the foundations of religion—particularly the central role of prayer.

Conclusion

The Qur'an presents a developmental framework for prayer that begins with individual engagement, then expands to familial and societal dimensions, followed by outlining its functional roles in the community. It concludes by addressing the potential harms and objections surrounding prayer. Even after the institutionalization of prayer, the Qur'an continues to highlight its significance, benefits, and to refute adversarial narratives.

From the outset of the Meccan period, prayer was introduced as a defining ritual. The cultural normalization and discourse formation phases followed in mid- and late-Meccan stages. Community-building efforts began during the preparatory phase for the Hijrah and continued into the early Medinan stage. Finally, the phase of critical analysis and consolidation was articulated in the late Medinan period, culminating in a firm Qur'anic emphasis on prayer as the cornerstone of *dīn qayyim*—the upright religion.

Keywords

Cultural Normalization of Prayer, Institutionalization of Prayer, Religious Community-Building, Chronological Revelation, Meccan and Medinan Phases.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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