

The Concepts of 'Ilm and Wahy: A Lexicographic and Epistemological Analysis of al-Khalīl's Kitāb al-'Ayn and Their Implications for Islamic Education

Konsep 'Ilm dan Wahy: Analisis Leksikografis dan Epistemologis atas Kitāb al-'Ayn Karya al-Khalīl serta Implikasinya bagi Pendidikan Islam

¹Sumartono Rono Pawiro, ²Farida Othman, ³Mohd Hilmi Ramli

University Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

e-mail: sumartonorp@gmail.com

Abstract: This article presents a brief analysis of al-Khalīl's definitions of the terms 'ilm and wahy in Kitāb al-'Ayn. Studies on these terms in Kitāb al-'Ayn remain limited due to the book's complex structure and rare availability. The study examines al-Khalīl's methodological approach in Kitāb al-'Ayn, focusing on the lexical and conceptual treatment of 'ilm and wahy and their relevance to Islamic education. The study applies qualitative methods, including content analysis of the lexicon's organisational structure and textual analysis of selected entries. The findings show that al-Khalīl presents wahy through related meanings, including revelation, inspiration, indication, and swiftness, while 'ilm encompasses meanings related to knowledge, signs, and guidance or direction. These meanings demonstrate the semantic breadth of both terms and their conceptual significance. By preserving the original, ontologically grounded meanings of wahy and 'ilm, the lexicon safeguards the conceptual foundations of the worldview of Islam. The study also highlights the educational value of classical Arabic lexicography for Islamic education. This article positions Kitāb al-'Ayn as a work of continuing scholarly and educational value, significant for understanding the origins of Arabic lexicography and the preservation of early Islamic epistemological concepts.

Keywords: 'Ilm, Wahy, Kitāb al-'Ayn, Al-Khalīl, Lexicon

Abstrak: Artikel ini menyajikan analisis singkat tentang definisi istilah 'ilm dan wahy menurut al-Khalīl dalam Kitāb al-'Ayn. Kajian mengenai istilah-istilah ini dalam Kitāb al-'Ayn masih terbatas karena struktur buku yang kompleks dan ketersediaannya yang jarang. Studi ini juga mengkaji pendekatan metodologis al-Khalīl dalam Kitāb al-'Ayn, dengan fokus pada perlakuan leksikal dan konseptual terhadap 'ilm dan wahy, serta relevansinya dengan pendidikan Islam. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif, yaitu analisis isi terhadap struktur organisasi leksikon dan analisis teks terhadap entri-entri terpilih. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa al-Khalīl menyajikan wahy melalui serangkaian makna yang saling berhubungan, termasuk wahyu, inspirasi, isyarat, dan kecepatan, sementara 'ilm mencakup makna yang berkaitan dengan pengetahuan, tanda-tanda, serta bimbingan atau arahan. Makna-makna ini menunjukkan luasnya cakupan semantik kedua istilah tersebut serta kontribusi struktur leksikalnya terhadap signifikansi konseptualnya. Dengan mempertahankan makna asli wahy dan 'ilm yang berdasar secara ontologis, leksikon ini

menjaga fondasi konseptual dari pandangan alam Islam. Studi ini juga menyoroti nilai pendidikan leksikografi bahasa Arab klasik bagi pendidikan Islam. Dengan demikian, artikel ini menempatkan Kitāb al-‘Ayn sebagai karya yang memiliki nilai akademik dan pendidikan berkelanjutan, penting untuk memahami asal-usul leksikografi bahasa Arab serta pelestarian konsep epistemologis Islam awal.

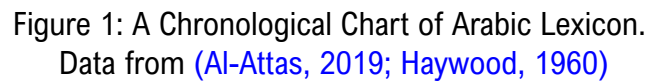
Kata kunci: *‘Ilm, Wahy, Kitāb al-‘Ayn, Al-Khalīl, Leksikon*

Introduction

Language functions as the primary instrument of communication, enabling individuals to share ideas, transmit knowledge, and organise social life. It also offers a window into a culture's intellectual development at every stage of civilisation. The complexity, structure, and vocabulary of a language reflect how a society thinks, records experience, and advances knowledge. In Islam, it is even more important that language reflect reality and play an important role in conveying meaning. The Revelation (*wahy*) by God was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in Arabic. All the key words from the Arabic language are preserved in lexicons. Lexicographical works also reflect this intellectual tradition, as dictionaries systematise linguistic knowledge and preserve a community's conceptual and scientific heritage. Haywood (1960) observed that, the Arabs were among the world's leading compilers of dictionaries and lexicons until the Renaissance, rivalled perhaps only by the Chinese. Their numerous general and specialised dictionaries reflect a remarkable scholarly tradition at a time when such works were rare in Western Europe.

It was not until 1704 that Harris (1704) was credited with introducing the alphabetic format with his book, *English Lexicon Technicum: Or, a Universal English Dictionary of Arts and Sciences: Explaining Not Only the Terms of Art, but the Arts Themselves*. However, in the Islamic world, several notable lexical works and dictionaries have played a significant role in preserving the Arabic language, which is essential to the Islamic scientific tradition (Acikgenc, 2014)

Kitāb al-‘Ayn which translates to *The Book of the Letter ‘Ayn*, is generally regarded as the earliest extant Arabic lexicon and one of the earliest surviving lexicographical works in the world. Compiled during the eighth century, it is the first Arabic dictionary. It was arranged according to phonetic articulation rather than alphabetical order (Darwish, 1955). Al-Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad, the renowned philologist, is credited with its authorship (Sellheim, 1997). The lexicon introduces an outline of the phonetics of the Arabic language. It defines all permutations and combinations of possible Arabic words. According to al-Attas (2023a) To this day, it remains one of the authoritative works that scholars consult for the definitive meanings of Arabic words. Al-Attas (2019) notes that Muslim lexicologists were highly conscious of the scientific character of the Arabic language and were the first in history to compile comprehensive lexicons of their language. Figure 1 illustrates the chronological progression of Arabic lexicography from the 2nd to the 12th century Hijra, showcasing the intellectual evolution of the society.



Recent research on *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* has focused on its authorship, manuscript history, and its organisation of sounds (Amru & Kholiq, 2025; Inayatullah, 2020). Scholars widely recognise *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* as the earliest systematic Arabic dictionary and a foundational work in Arabic linguistics. Wan Abdullah (2022) examined *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* primarily in relation to the history and methodology of Arabic lexicography. Similarly, Zaini (2004) discussed al-Khalīl's methodology in compiling *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* including his systematic collection of Arabic vocabulary and the distinctive organisation of the dictionary. Dollah et al. (2015) examined Arabic-Malay dictionaries and highlighted the importance of lexical, syntactical, and morphological considerations in determining the meanings of Arabic terms, as well as the role of Arabic lexicography in facilitating access to Qurʾānic and Islamic texts. In contrast, Ismail et al. (2024) examined the semantic relationship between *ʿilm* and *wahy*, particularly in relation to Islamic knowledge and education, however it was not in relation with al-Khalīl's *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*. Taken together, these studies indicate that scholarship has examined *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* primarily from lexicographical and methodological perspectives, while studies of *ʿilm* and *wahy* have approached the terms from broader semantic and educational perspectives. The intersection between these two areas, particularly al-Khalīl's treatment of *ʿilm* and *wahy* and the conceptual significance of his lexical definitions, therefore remains insufficiently examined.

This study addresses this gap by analysing how al-Khalīl defines these terms and relates their meanings within the lexical and intellectual context of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*. Accordingly, the article analyses al-Khalīl's lexicographical methodology through these two selected terms. The selection of *wahy* and *ilm* is deliberate because of their close conceptual relationship within the Islamic understanding of knowledge. *Wahy* represents divine revelation and serves as a primary source of knowledge in Islam, providing guidance that informs belief, law, and ethics. *ʿIlm*, in

turn, encompasses the concept of knowledge and its acquisition, understanding, and transmission within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Examining these terms together therefore provides a basis for investigating how al-Khalīl's lexical definitions and their relationships within the Arabic root system preserve and convey concepts of revelation and knowledge. The contribution of this study lies in bringing the lexical analysis of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* together with the conceptual dimensions of *waḥy* and *ʿilm*. In doing so, the study contributes to the understanding of al-Khalīl's lexicographical methodology while highlighting the relevance of classical Arabic lexical analysis to the study of knowledge and revelation in Islamic education.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on textual and content analysis to examine the lexicographical treatment of the Qurʾānic terms *waḥy* (revelation) and *ʿilm* (knowledge) in al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad's *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*. The primary source used is *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* edited by Maḥdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī, as it preserves al-Khalīl's original phonetic arrangement of lexical entries, which is fundamental to understanding his lexicographical methodology. Secondary sources include classical and contemporary studies on Arabic lexicography, Qurʾānic studies, and the philosophy of language. The terms *waḥy* and *ʿilm* are selected because of their central significance in the Qurʾānic conception of revelation and knowledge.

The analysis is conducted in four stages. First, the lexical entries are examined within al-Khalīl's phonetic and root-based system of classification. Second, the lexical definitions, morphological structures, and semantic derivatives of each term are analysed. Third, Qurʾānic verses, *ḥadīth*, and classical Arabic poetry cited by al-Khalīl are examined to identify the semantic range of each root. Relevant classical and contemporary works are also consulted to provide additional perspectives on the meanings and semantic relationships identified in *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and transparency of the analysis. Finally, the findings are synthesised to evaluate how *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* preserves the conceptual relationships between *waḥy* and *ʿilm*, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of key Qurʾānic concepts and their significance within the worldview of Islam.

Background

Biography of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad

His full name is Abū Abd al-Rahman al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad ibn Amr ibn Tammām al-Farāhīdī (or al-Furhūdī) al-Azdi al-Yahmādī, born in Oman in 718/719 C.E. and died in Basra, Iraq, around 786-791 C.E. Al-Khalīl was known as the shining star of the Basra school; a renowned expert in lexicography, grammar, the *sharīʿa*, mathematics, music, and poetry. He is a pioneer in Arabic linguistics, having made significant contributions to the field and authored the first lexicon (Haywood, 1960). He arranged the dictionary according to the points of articulation of Arabic letters, beginning with the letter *ʿayn*, from which the work derives its title.

Al Khalīl's contributions are felt in many fields, producing four eminent pupils: Sībawayh on grammar, al-Naḍr ibn Shumayl on poetry, Muʿarrij al-Sadusi, on philology and Naṣr ibn ʿAlī al-Jahḍamī on *ḥadīth*. These are testimonials of his expertise in a wide range of fields of the Arabic language (Darwish, 1955). Among his works mentioned by Haywood (1960) are:

1. *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* (the first Arabic dictionary)
2. *Kitāb al-ʿArud* (the book of prosody)
3. *Kitāb al-Shawāhid* (a book of poetical quotations)

4. *Kitāb al-Nuḡaṭ* (the book of diacritical points)
5. *Kitāb al-Nagham* (a book on music)
6. *Kitāb al-Jumal* (book of sentences, on syntax)
7. *Kitāb al-Iqa* (the book of tuning, on music)

Among these works, only *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* has survived (Haywood, 1960). Although some early scholars questioned al-Khalīl's authorship, subsequent manuscript discoveries and modern scholarship have provided strong evidence supporting his authorship (Darwish, 1955).

Al-Khalīl is also credited for several linguistic innovations, including the introduction of the short vowel in the current Arabic writing system. His *Kitāb al-Nuḡaṭ*, in which he wrote about "dots" and "diacritical signs" such as *Damma*, *Fatha*, and *Kasra*. His methodology simplified the writing system so effectively that it has remained unchanged to this day. His contribution to the development of Arabic diacritics has been widely accepted and remains largely undisputed (Darwish, 1955).

The History of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*

Al-Khalīl's original manuscript of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* was initially kept in a library of the Tahirid dynasty and eventually made its way back to Basra, roughly seventy years after al-Khalīl's death (Haywood, 1960). Quoting from *Fihrist*, Darwish (1955) wrote that a scribe from Khurasān brought the manuscript of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* to ibn Duraid, a prominent grammarian from Basra, to Baghdad around the year 864 C.E. Despite a few copies being made available for sale, the dictionary remained a rare find for much of the medieval period. While the work circulated in al-Andalus, it did not attract sustained scholarly attention until its rediscovery in the early twentieth century.

In 1914, a Lebanese Iraqi monk named Anastas al-Karmali rediscovered it and brought the manuscripts back into the limelight (Haywood, 1960). However, the onset of the First World War interrupted his effort. Al-Karmali, who was engaged with editing the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, was arrested, and his library, along with the manuscripts, was plundered. Despite these difficulties, he managed to publish a first fascicule of the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* under the title, *al-Layth b. al-Muzaffar, Kitāb al-ʿAyn fi 'l-lughā*, in Baghdad, 1914, consisting of 144 printed pages (Darwish, 1955). Another significant edition, prepared by ʿAbd Allāh Darwish, was published in Baghdad in 1967 under the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn awwal mu'djam fi 'l-lughā al-ʿarabiyya li 'l-Khalīl b. Ahmad al-Farāhidī*. Among the later versions of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, the abridgement prepared by al-Zubaydī (d. 1001 CE) is widely regarded as the most successful (Darwish, 1955). In addition to the original listing style developed by al-Khalīl, Abdel al-Hamid al Hindhawī reorganised the entries alphabetically, making the work considerably more accessible to readers unfamiliar with the original phonetic arrangement (Al-Khalīl, 2003). According to Darwish (1955), a copy of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* manuscript and digital copy can be found in the Iraq Museum and the University of Tübingen in Germany.

Methodology of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*

Lexicographical works can generally be classified into three categories: a dictionary, a general classified vocabulary, or a brief specialised vocabulary. According to Haywood (1960), Arabic scholars excelled in all three forms of lexicography. This study focuses on the first category, namely *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, which represents the earliest systematic Arabic dictionary.

Modern editions of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* are generally available in two forms. The edition prepared by ʿAbd al-Ḥamid Hindhawī, rearranges the entries alphabetically to facilitate consultation by

modern readers (Al-Khalīl, 2003). By contrast, the edition edited by Mahdi Al Makhzūmi and Ibrāhīm Al Sāmīrāi preserves al-Khalīl's original phonetic organisation (Al-Khalīl, 1988). Accordingly, this study adopts the edition edited by Mahdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāī, as it preserves al-Khalīl's original phonetic arrangement and therefore provides the most appropriate basis for examining his lexicographical methodology.

Unlike modern dictionaries which are arranged alphabetically, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* organises words according to the phonetic points of articulation of Arabic consonants. The sequence begins with the deepest sound produced in the throat, the letter 'Ayn (ع), and proceeds gradually towards the lips, ending with the labial and weak letters (Darwish, 1955). This phonetic arrangement reflects al-Khalīl's linguistic understanding, that the organisation of sounds provides the natural foundation for organising vocabulary.

The twenty-nine Arabic letters that form the basis of Arabic lettering system, arranged according to their places of articulation are as follows: 'ayn (ع), ḥā (ح), hā (ه), kha (خ), ghain (غ), qāf (ق), kāf (ك), jim (ج), shin (ش), dād (ض), sād (ص), sin (س), zāy (ز), tā (ط), dāl (د), tā (ت), zā (ظ), dhāl (ذ), thā (ث), lām (ل), rā (ر), nūn (ن), fā (ف), bā (ب), mim (م) and the weak letters: waw (و), ya' (ي), alif (ا) and hamza (ء). See Figure 2 for illustration of the Arabic points of articulation.

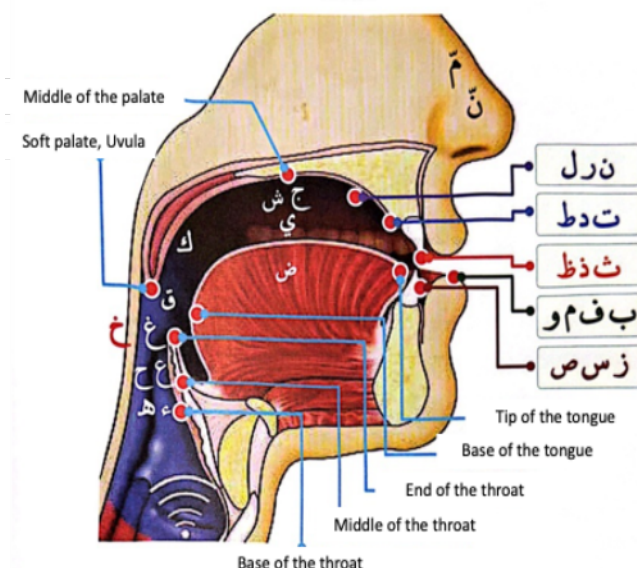


Figure 2 - Location of Articulation of Arabic Sounds (Zubair, 2024)

As a phonetician and grammarian, al-Khalīl established several principles governing the formation of Arabic words (Darwish, 1955). These principles demonstrate that al-Khalīl's lexicon was not merely a collection of vocabulary but a systematic description of the structure of the Arabic language. According to Darwish (1955), al-Khalīl's identified three principles governing Arabic word formation:

- 1) In Arabic words, letters from labials (lips) are never found together; therefore, even if three letters of the alphabet are articulated from the same spot, they do not unite as radicals in one word (e.g., ف ب م). The same applies to letters from dentals and gutturals (produced in the throat).
- 2) There are six possible permutations of the trilateral, some of which are ر ه د, ه ر د, د ه ر, and continue till complete all the six forms. From these combinations, if the combination is not used in Arabic, it is termed '*muhmal*' (unused) by al-Khalīl. The same applies to 4, 5 and 6-letter combinations.

- 3) Al-Khalīl groups the consonants according to the location of articulation of the Arabic sounds as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Location of articulation of the Arabic Letters (Darwish, 1955)

Location of articulation:	Letters
Throat (pharynx):	i. 'Ayn (ع) ii. Hā' (ح), iii. Hā' (ه), iv. Ghain (غ), v. Khā' (خ),
Soft palate (uvula):	i. Qāf (ق), ii. Kāf (ك),
Palate	i. Jīm (ج), ii. Shīn (ش), iii. Ḍād (ض),
Teeth and tip of the tongue	i. Sād (ص), ii. Sīn (س), iii. Zāy (ز),
Prepalate	i. Ṭā' (ط), ii. Ṭā' (ت), iii. Dāl (د),
Gums	i. Zā (ظ), ii. Thā' (ث), iii. Dhāl (ذ),
Apex of the tongue	i. Rā' (ر), ii. Lām (ل), iii. Nūn (ن),
Lips (labials)	i. Fā' (ف), ii. Bā' (ب), iii. Mīm (م),
Palate with the emission of air	i. Yā' (ي), ii. Wāw (و), iii. 'Alif (ا), iv. Hamzah (ء).

The Four Organisational Principles of Kitāb al-'Ayn

The internal organisation of *Kitāb al-'Ayn* according to Darwish (1955) is governed by four major principles:

- 1) Words are arranged according to their radical letters, disregarding the weak letters. Words are derived from the root, such as غ ف ر e.g. غَفُور (*ghafūr*), غُفْرَان (*ghufrān*), تَغْفِير (*taghfir*), اِسْتِغْفَار (*istighfār*) are grouped.
- 2) Words beginning with weak letters are grouped into their radical letter, e.g. عَلَا ('*alā*), وَعَدَ (*wa'ada*), وَعَى (*wa'ā*) are grouped under 'ع'. Please see the analysis on وَحَى (*wahy*) under the section word analysis.
- 3) Depending on the number of radicals, the words are categorised as biliteral هَلْ (*hal*), trilateral دَرَبَ (*daraba*), quadrilateral جَعْفَر (*ja'far*), quinqueliteral سَعَرَجَل (*sagharjal*)

- 4) All the words that have the same roots are grouped together. The order of listing is according to the phonetic arrangement.

Al-Khalīl arranged the words together with their definitions for all possible permutations and combinations of Arabic words in the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*; for example, the letter *Hāʾ* (هـ), is listed here. The words *hadaraʾ*, *ʿdaharaʾ*, *ʿrahadaʾ*, *ʿharadaʾ*, *ʿradahaʾ* and *ʿdarahaʾ* are listed together as shown in the Figure 3 and Figure 4 below:

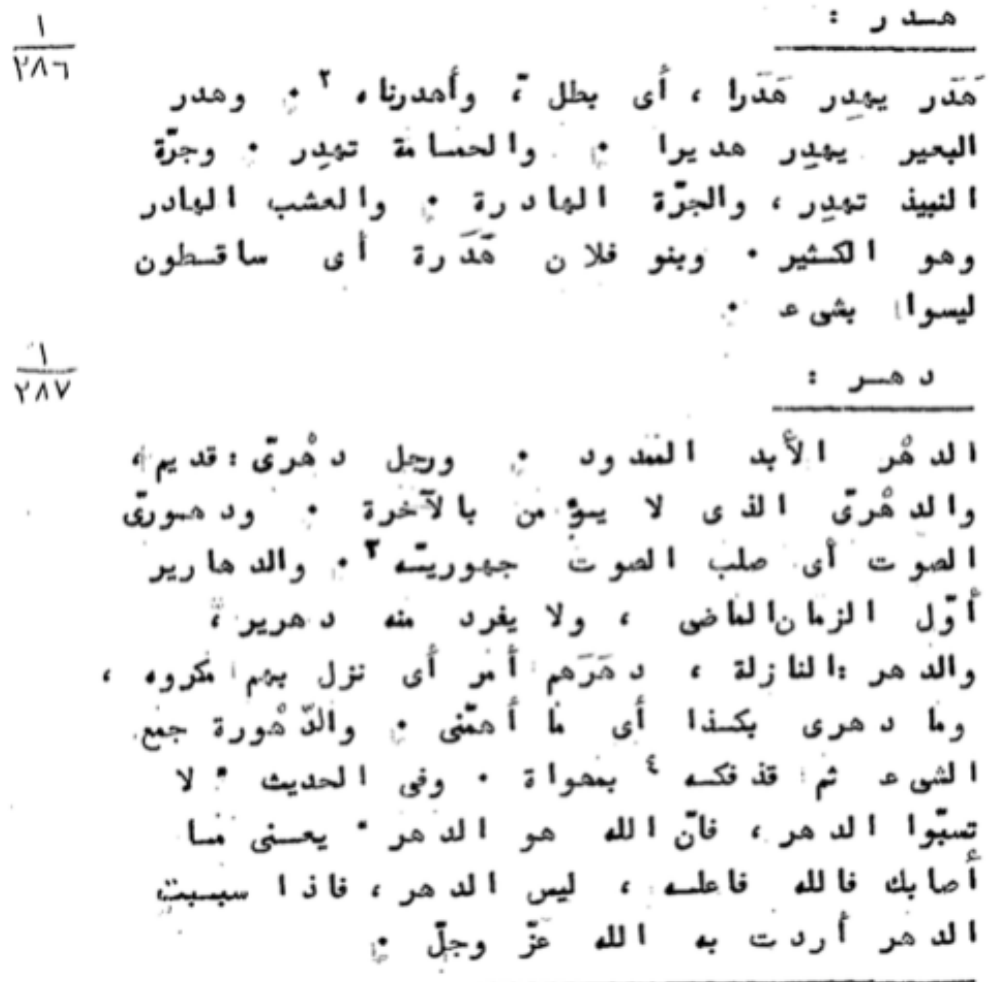


Figure 3: Sample Manuscript of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* (Darwish, 1955)

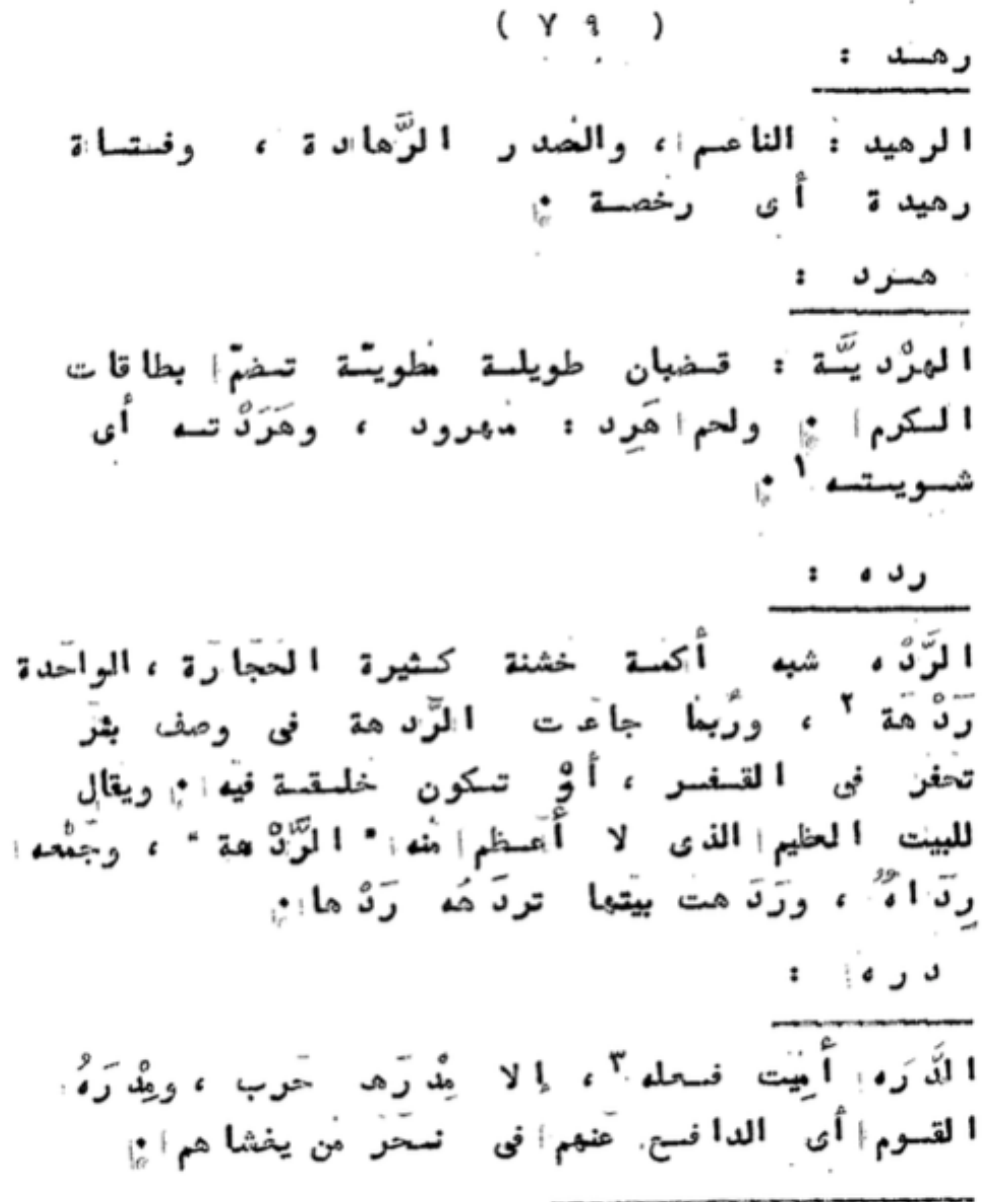


Figure 4: Sample Manuscript of *Kitāb al-Ayn* (Darwish, 1955)

This root-based arrangement represents one of al-Khalil's greatest innovations. Every lexical item is traced back to its original root before its derived forms are examined. As a result, the dictionary reveals not only the meanings of individual words but also the semantic relationships that connect members of the same lexical family (Darwish, 1955). The lexicon presents each word in the following sequence based on its roots: bi-, tri-, quadri, and quinque-radical, respectively. Al-Khalil arranged the structure with bi-radical roots, then tri-radical roots, then roots containing weak letters, and finally quadriliteral and quinqueliteral roots. For easy understanding, the structure is listed in the Table 2 below.

Table 2: Sequence of Word Structures by Radical Composition (Al-Khalīl, 1988)

S/N	Sequence of Words Structure
1	2 radical letters
2	3 radical letters
3	2 radicals with weak letters
4	1 radical with 2 weak letters
5	4 radical letters
6	5 radical letters

One important application of this methodology concerns the identification of non-Arabic words. According to Haywood (1960), Al-Khalīl argues that quadriliteral and quinqueliteral words lacking lingual or labial consonants should generally be regarded as later innovations rather than genuine Arabic expressions. This criterion illustrates that *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* serves not merely as a descriptive dictionary but also as a critical linguistic framework for evaluating the authenticity of Arabic vocabulary.

Results and Discussion

An Analytical Study of the Word “Wahy” and its Usage

The word *wahy* (وَحْي) conveys divine communication and guidance. It represents the primary source of knowledge for Muslims and provides the foundation for Islamic belief, law, and ethics. The word *wahy* is derived from the root letters of *wāw*, *hāʾ* and *yāʾ*. According to al-Khalīl's classification, both *wāw* and *yāʾ* are weak letters. Consequently, the word *wahy* is classified under the consonant *hāʾ* (Al-Khalīl, 1988, Vol.3)

Al-Khalīl's organisation of this root illustrates the systematic structure of his dictionary. In summary, the listing within the chapter on *hāʾ* follows the following sequence; 1) biliteral roots 2) trilateral roots without weak letters, 3) trilateral roots containing one weak letter, 4) trilateral roots containing two weak letters, 5) quadriliteral roots, and finally 6) quinqueliteral roots. The root *wāw*, *hāʾ* and *yāʾ* appears within the category of trilateral roots containing two weak letters, consistent with the organisational principles discussed in the previous section. The following provides a detailed explanation of his categorisation.

- 1) Within the chapter on *hāʾ*, he first lists the 15 combinations of biliteral words starting with the combination of the letter *hāʾ* with *kāf* and ending with the combination of the letter *hāʾ* with *mīm*. For every combination, it contains two permutations, such as *hāʾ* with *kāf* and *kāf* with *hāʾ*.
- 2) After the biliteral words, al-Khalīl proceeds to list trilateral root words that do not contain weak letters of *wāw* (و), *yāʾ* (ي), *alif* (ا) and *hamzah* (ء). A total of 11 combinations were listed, starting with the combination of the letters *hāʾ*, *qāf* and *shin*, followed by *hāʾ*, *qāf* and *sin* and ending with the combinations of the letters of *hāʾ*, *qāf* and *bāʾ* (see Table 3).

Table 3: Permutations of the Roots *ḥā'*, *qāf*

S/N	3 rd Radical letter	2 nd Radical letter	1 st Radical letter	Permutations
1	ش	ق	ح	6 possible permutations
2	س	ق	ح	
3	ز	ق	ح	
4	ط	ق	ح	
5	د	ق	ح	
6	ذ	ق	ح	
7	ر	ق	ح	
8	ل	ق	ح	
9	ن	ق	ح	
10	ف	ق	ح	
11	ب	ق	ح	

- 3) The next category are words consisting of three letters, including one weak letter, waw (و), yā' (ي), 'alif (ا) or hamzah (ء). It begins with the combinations of the letter *ḥā'*, *qāf* with a weak letter and ends with the combinations of the letter *ḥā'*, *mīm* with a weak letter, as listed in Table 4:

Table 4: Permutations of the 2 radicals with Weak Letter (*wāw*, *yā'*, *alif*, *hamza*)

S/N	3 rd Radical letter	2 nd Radical letter	1 st Radical letter	Permutations
1	و, ي, ا, ء	ق	ح	24 possible permutations
2	و, ي, ا, ء	ك	ح	
3	و, ي, ا, ء	ج	ح	
4	و, ي, ا, ء	ش	ح	
5	و, ي, ا, ء	ض	ح	
6	و, ي, ا, ء	ص	ح	
7	و, ي, ا, ء	س	ح	
8	و, ي, ا, ء	ز	ح	
9	و, ي, ا, ء	ط	ح	
10	و, ي, ا, ء	د	ح	
11	و, ي, ا, ء	ت	ح	
12	و, ي, ا, ء	ظ	ح	
13	و, ي, ا, ء	ذ	ح	
14	و, ي, ا, ء	ث	ح	
15	و, ي, ا, ء	ر	ح	
16	و, ي, ا, ء	ل	ح	
17	و, ي, ا, ء	ن	ح	
18	و, ي, ا, ء	ف	ح	
19	و, ي, ا, ء	ب	ح	
20	و, ي, ا, ء	م	ح	

- 4) The next category is the listing of trilateral words that contain two weak letters, *wāw* (و), *yā'* (ي) or *'alif* (ا), and the word *wahy* was placed in this category. It contains a total 5 possible combinations.
- 5) Quadrilateral words can be found in the next category, and since quadrilateral words are rare, al-Khalīl arranges these words according to the two letters that they contain. For example, under the sub-section of *ḥā'* (ح) with *shīn* (ش), we can find the words *ḥarshafa* (حَرْشَف), *sharmaha* (شَرْمَح), *farshaḥa* (فَرْشَح). See Table 5.

Table 5: Permutation of four-letter words with “ḥā”

S/N	Category of four-letter words with “ḥā”			
1	Any letters	Any letters	ق	ح
2	Any letters	Any letters	ك	ح
				
14	Any letters	Any letters	ر	ح
15	Any letters	Any letters	ل	ح

- 6) Finally, words containing five letters, where there are no specific sub-chapters; instead, all five-letter words that contain the word ḥā’ are listed together.

Al-Khalīl's arrangement of the root provides the lexicographical framework, within which its semantic range may be understood. To appreciate the conceptual significance of *wahy*, however, the lexical analysis must be considered alongside its Qur’ānic usage, since the Qur’ān constitutes the primary context from which al-Khalīl derives and illustrates its meanings.

Al-Bāqī's (1945) *Al-Mu’jam*, therefore serves as a useful reference for identifying the distribution and forms of the root in the Qur’ān. He listed 78 verses containing the word *wahy* (وَحْيٍ) in the Qur’ān, and some of the common derivatives used in the Qur’ān are as follows:

أَوْحَى (awḥā), أَوْحَيْتُ (awḥaytu), أَوْحَيْنَا (awḥaynā), نُوحِي (nūḥī), نُوحِيهِ (nūḥīhi), نُوحِيهَا (nūḥīhā), يُوحُونَ (yūḥūna), يُوحِي (yūḥī), يُوحِي (yūḥiya), أَوْحَى (ūḥiya), يُوح (yūḥa), يُوحَى (yūḥā), وَحْيٍ (wahyun), وَحْيًا (wahyan), وَحَيْنَا (wahyinā), وَحْيُهُ (wahyuhu).

In *Kitāb al-Ayn*, al-Khalīl (1988, Vol. 3) lists *wahy* under the category of roots containing two weak letters with ḥā’. The sequence begins with حَيَّ (ḥayy), حَوَّ (ḥaww), حَيَّو (ḥayaw), يَحْيَى (yahyā), حَوِيَ (ḥawiya), وَحَّ (wayḥ), and ends with وَحْيٍ (wahy). And the word *wahy* is derived from the pattern of كَتَبَ / يَكْتُبُ / كَتَبْنَا, giving the verbal paradigm وَحَّيَ / يَحْيِي / وَحْيًا. He defines *wahy* as that which Allah reveals, teaches, conveys, or communicates, and as inspiration. These meanings are supported by citations from the Qur’ān, indicating that al-Khalīl grounded his lexicographical definitions in scriptural usage rather than in abstract linguistic speculation.

Although al-Bāqī (1945) identifies 78 Qur’ānic verses containing forms derived from the root *wa-ḥa-ya*, this study selected two verses that illustrate the range of meanings and uses in al-Khalīl’s lexical treatment. The selection therefore focuses on Qur’ānic occurrences that illustrate distinct functions of the root, particularly divine communication, inspiration, and communication directed beyond the prophets. The selected verses are treated as representative examples of these semantic uses rather than as an exhaustive analysis of all 78 occurrences. This approach allows the lexical discussion to remain focused while demonstrating how the semantic range identified by al-Khalīl is manifested in Qur’ānic usage.

Among the Qur’ānic examples cited by al-Khalīl is:

﴿وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ﴾

Which means “And thy Lord taught the Bee to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men's) habitations;” (Al-Qur’ān. Al-Naḥl: 68, Yusuf Ali, 1989)

In another semantic usage, al-Khalīl cites Al-Zalzalah 99:5, where *awḥā* refers to divine inspiration, he cites:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ هَٰذَا﴾

Which means “For that thy Lord will have given her inspiration.” (Al-Qur’ān. Al-Zalzalah: 5, Yusuf Ali, 1989).

These examples illustrate that the Qur’ān employs forms derived from the root *wa-ḥa-ya* in more than one context. While revelation to prophets represents its most significant theological application, the root is also used for divine communication or inspiration directed towards other creatures and the created order. Al-Khalīl's lexical treatment therefore recognises the broad conceptual range while maintaining its fundamental association with divine communication.

Al-Khalīl also provides the linguistic meanings of *wa-ḥa-ya* from other sources, such as a Ḥadīth and al-‘Ajā’i’s poet (Al-Khalīl, 1988, Vol. 3). He quoted a hadith reported by al-Tahdhīb “*Inna al-rajulu layus’alu ‘an kulli shay’ ḥatta ‘an hayyati ahlihi*” (Indeed, a man will be asked about everything, even about the well-being of his family). The word *hayyati* (حَيَاتِي), according to al-Khalīl, means “life”. Therefore, the root word *wa-ḥa-ya*, from which it is derived, could also mean something which is enlivening or enlightening. This is true of the nature of the *al-waḥy* by God that His Revelation enlivens the soul of the human being and all the creations. This association suggests that the root *wa-ḥa-ya* may also convey meanings related to vitality and enlivenment. Such an interpretation accords with the theological understanding that divine revelation gives life to the human soul by directing it toward truth. From the poet al-‘Ajā’i, al-Khalīl quoted several lines from his poetry on the usage of *wa-ḥa-ya*, which gives the meaning of “in need” and “gives a sign”.

From al-Khalīl's brief linguistic meanings of the word *wa-ḥa-ya* derived from the Qur’ān, ḥadīth and poets, he also provides the accumulated meaning of it indicated in the form of noun, *al-waḥy*, which means *al-sur’ah* (speed, velocity, pace, rapidity, or quickness). This association is also reflected in Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-‘Arab*, (1985b) where *al-waḥy* is described as *al-sarī‘*, meaning ‘swift’ or ‘rapid.’ In a contemporary semantic study, Nursihah (2016) similarly identifies rapid disclosure as a meaning that connects the various derivatives of *waḥy*, while describing *waḥy* as a form of communication that may be verbal or non-verbal and involves an element of secrecy. This is consistent with Izutsu's (2002) semantic analysis, which highlights communication and concealment as important features of *waḥy*. Taken together, these perspectives support and illuminate al-Khalīl's lexical treatment, revealing a semantic field that encompasses revelation, communication, inspiration, indication, and rapid disclosure. Thus, *waḥy* cannot be reduced simply to the English term ‘revelation.’ While ‘revelation’ captures its primary theological sense, al-Khalīl's treatment preserves a broader linguistic field rooted in the distinctive nature of rapid and often concealed communication.

An Analytical Study of the Word ‘Ilm and its Usage

The word *‘ilm* goes beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge. It denotes an understanding that is connected with recognition, awareness, and ultimately divine knowledge. It is derived from the trilateral root *‘ayn-lām-mīm* (ع-ل-م). According to al-Bāqī (Al-Bāqī, 1945) derivatives of this root occur 854 times in the Qur’ān, making it one of the most frequently

occurring conceptual terms in the Qur'ānic vocabulary. Some of its derivatives include *'alima* (to know), *'allama* (to teach), *ya 'lamu* (he knows), *a 'lam* (more knowing), *'alīm* (All-Knowing), *'allām* (All-Knowing), *'ālim* (one who possesses knowledge), and *'ilm* (knowledge). Although al-Bāqī records 854 Qur'ānic occurrences of derivatives from the root *'ayn-lām-mīm*, two verses are selected to illustrate the range of meanings and uses in al-Khalīl's *Kitāb al- 'Ayn*. The selection therefore gives attention to occurrences that exemplify distinct aspects of the root's semantic field, particularly knowledge, recognition, and the relationship between knowledge and signs or created reality. The selected verses serve as representative examples of these semantic dimensions rather than as an exhaustive analysis of all 854 occurrences. This approach also maintains consistency with the analysis of *wahy*, where Qur'ānic examples are selected according to the semantic distinctions reflected in the classical lexicographical treatment.

In *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, the root is classified under the letter *'ayn*, which occupies the first position in al-Khalīl's phonetic arrangement because it is articulated from the deepest part of the throat. Within this categorisation, roots are organised according to their second and third radicals, following the sequence of Arabic articulation discussed earlier. Thus, the root *'ayn-lām-mīm* appears among the group of roots beginning with *'ayn* followed by *lām* (Al-Khalīl, 1988, Vol. 2) as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6: Permutations of the Roots *'ayn* and *lām*,

S/N	3 rd Radical letter	2 nd Radical letter	1 st Radical letter	Permutations
1	ن	ل	ع	6 possible permutations
2	ف	ل	ع	
3	ب	ل	ع	
4	م	ل	ع	

Al-Khalīl defines *'ilm* primarily as knowledge or awareness, with its opposite as *jahl* (جهل, ignorance). His definition extends beyond the possession of information to include recognition, certainty, and discernment. He also discusses derivatives of the same root including *'ālim* (عالم, knowledgeable person) and *'alāmah* (علامة, sign or indication) thereby illustrating how related meanings emerge from a common lexical origin. Among the Qur'ānic examples cited by al-Khalīl is Yūsuf, 12:55, which provides a relevant example of *'ilm* in the sense of knowledge associated with competence, discernment, and responsibility:

﴿قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْهَا﴾

Which means “Set me over the storehouses of the land: I will indeed guard them, as one that knows (Their importance). (Al-Qur'ān. Yūsuf:55, Yūsuf Ali, 1989).

Here, knowledge is presented not as an abstract quality but as a prerequisite for responsibility, judgement, and trustworthy action. Al-Khalīl also records the root's extended semantic fields. *Al-a 'lam* (الأعلم) refers to one whose upper lip is split, and also to a person or people who possess extensive knowledge. A second example is al-Raḥmān 55:24, which illustrates another lexical form within the same root, *al-a 'lām*, referring to mountains:

﴿وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنشَآتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ﴾

Which means “And His are the ships sailing smoothly through the seas, lofty as mountains.” (Al-Qur’ān. Al-Raḥmān:24, Yusuf Ali, 1989)

Other derivatives include *al-‘alāmah* (sign), *al-mu‘allim* (instructor), *al-‘ālam* (the world or creation), *al-mu‘lam* (marked place), and *al-‘aylam* (the sea or primordial waters). These examples demonstrate that the semantic field of the root extends far beyond intellectual knowledge. Rosenthal (2007) observes that *‘ilm* in Islam denotes a broad form of knowledge grounded in both divine revelation and human understanding, not merely secular information. The lexical treatment of *‘ilm* in *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* shows a broad semantic range that extends beyond epistemic knowledge. This finding is consistent with the broader Islamic understanding of *‘ilm* reflected in classical and contemporary scholarship. Ibn Manẓūr (1985a) for example, relates *‘ilm* to the root *‘alima*, meaning ‘he knew,’ and highlights al-‘Alīm as one of the Divine Names, referring to Allah as the All-Knowing. This association places knowledge within a theological framework and distinguishes its Islamic conception from a purely human acquisition of information. Similarly, al-Attas (2023b) maintains that *al-‘ilm* is closely related to *ma‘rifah* and occupies a central position in the Islamic conception of knowledge. These perspectives support the finding that *‘ilm* carries a meaning broader than the act of knowing alone. At the same time, the lexical evidence from *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* contributes an early linguistic dimension to this discussion by showing how the semantic range of *‘ilm* is articulated within the classical Arabic lexicographical tradition.

Al-Khalīl links the root to cognition, signs, geography, and cosmology, reflecting an early Arabic conception of knowledge as the recognition, distinguishing marks, creation, and the order of reality itself. Knowledge therefore functions not merely as cognition but as the means by which reality is recognised, distinguished, and understood. A particularly significant feature of al-Khalīl’s analysis is the semantic relationship between *‘ilm* and the term *‘ālam*, meaning ‘sign’ or ‘mark’. While a sign points the way, *‘ilm* directs one’s life. It serves as a marker that differentiates those who comprehend from those who do not. Thus, *‘ilm* goes beyond mere knowledge, embodying meaning, purpose, and guidance for human existence.

In addition to it, the word *‘ayn-lam-mim* (ع-ل-م) and *‘ayn-mim-lam* (م-ع-ل) can also be used in the sense of *mim-‘ayn-lam* (م-ع-ل). According to al-Khalīl (1988, Vol. 2) *ma-‘ā-la* means “snatched away, hurried away from, or separated”. Based on the meanings of the word *‘ilm* and its usage in other forms, such as *‘alam* and *ma‘al*, even though each of these words connotes different meanings, they are not totally separated and isolated, but they are interrelated if they are to be understood in a coherent manner. Knowledge (*‘ilm*), as such, is knowing of something that gives signs (*‘alamat*) about the Omniscient, God, and it is separated (*ma‘al*) from ignorance and not of the same category as them.

The analysis of *‘ilm* in *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* therefore demonstrates that early Arabic lexicography understood *‘ilm* as a comprehensive concept encompassing cognition, recognition, signs, creation, and guidance. Rather than reducing *‘ilm* to a technical or scholarly discipline, al-Khalīl preserves its wider conceptual framework, in which knowledge is inseparable from the order of creation and ultimately points to God as the source of all knowledge.

Educational and Lexicographical Implications of al-Khalīl’s Method

Through its systematic arrangement of roots according to their points of articulation and morphological structure, al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad established a comprehensive lexicographical framework that explains how Arabic words are formed, related, and distinguished. Moving from bi-radical to tri-radical, weak-letter roots, quadriliteral, and quinqueliteral forms, he showed an understanding of how Arabic words are built and expanded. This organisation provided criteria

for linguistic authenticity. For example, he noted that quadriliteral or quinqueliteral words lacking lingual or labial letters are likely modern and not truly Arabic. His method, therefore, combines both descriptive analysis and evaluative judgment, reinforcing *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*'s role as a foundational work in Arabic lexicography and linguistic theory. This structural system was closely linked to his phonetic conception of language, which shaped his overall lexicographical method. From an educational perspective, this systematic organisation offers an early model of structured language learning, in which students can understand vocabulary through relationships among sounds, roots, morphology, and meanings rather than through isolated word memorisation.

The Arabs' passion for poetry in the early period may have led al-Khalīl to organise his lexicography by method of articulation rather than by alphabetical order. Listing words according to the point of articulation will help writers compose poetry using similar words with the same articulation points. Despite the difficulties in using *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, lexicographers incorporated his methodology into their work. In doing so, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* laid the foundations of Arabic lexicography and exercised a lasting influence on subsequent lexical works.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that al-Khalīl's treatment of *ʿilm* and *wahy* in *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* reflects a systematic semantic approach in which meanings are understood through relationships within the Arabic root system and supported by authoritative linguistic and textual evidence. These semantic relationships reveal the conceptual richness preserved within the Arabic root system and demonstrate how meaning develops through interconnected lexical families. The analysis also provides insight into early Islamic ideas about knowledge and reality, as expressed in Arabic. Thus, the study fulfils its objective of examining how al-Khalīl's semantic organisation of foundational terms contributes to the understanding of Arabic and Islamic thought. The findings further suggest that the investigation of early Arabic lexicons should extend beyond historical-linguistics analysis to include conceptual and epistemological analysis. Examining the semantic organisation of foundational terms enables a deeper understanding of how language conveys the worldview of Islam and preserves its intellectual tradition. In this respect, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* remains not only a milestone in Arabic lexicography but also a significant source for understanding the conceptual foundations of Islamic thought.

Future research can extend this approach by examining other foundational Islamic terms and comparing their semantic organisation across other early Arabic lexicons. The present study is limited to two terms, *ʿilm* and *wahy*, and focuses on *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* as its primary source. It also does not attempt to examine all Qur'ānic occurrences of the relevant roots in detail. These limitations suggest the need for broader studies that include additional foundational terms and other early Arabic lexicons. Such studies may further clarify how the Arabic root system preserves conceptual meanings and contributes to the understanding of Arabic and Islamic thought.

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