

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPT OF “HOMELAND” IN THE QUR’AN (A LINGUOSEMANTIC AND LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS)

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Abstract

The concept of homeland is a complex cognitive and linguocultural structure encompassing space, memory, belonging, security, social solidarity, and spiritual values. This article examines the representation of the concept of homeland in the Qur’anic text through a linguosemantic and linguocultural analysis of spatial, social, and axiological units. Particular attention is devoted to the lexical units “balad”, “ard”, “dār”, and “qarya”, as well as the concepts of “hijra” and “muhājirūn”. The analysis demonstrates that the Qur’an does not represent homeland through a single direct lexeme corresponding to the contemporary Uzbek term “vatan”; rather, the concept is distributed across a network of lexical and semantic relations. The study identifies such semantic components as space, residence, belonging, security, sacredness, stability, community, separation, migration, and responsibility. The analysis also distinguishes the central and peripheral layers of the concept and proposes a linguocultural model in which homeland is understood as a space integrating geographical, social, spiritual, and axiological dimensions.

Keywords: Homeland; Qur’anic discourse; concept; linguosemantics; linguoculturology; conceptual field; spatial belonging; collective identity; axiological semantics; sacred space; security; migration.

Introduction

The concept of homeland is one of the complex concepts in human cognition that integrates space, memory, belonging, security, social solidarity, and spiritual values. This concept manifests itself differently in the historical experience, religious views, national values, and artistic thought of different peoples. Therefore, interpreting “homeland” merely as the name of a geographical territory does not fully reveal its semantic and linguocultural content. In the Qur’an, the lexeme “homeland” is not used as a central unit in the ready-made terminological form found in contemporary Uzbek. However, the concept of homeland is conceptualized in the Qur’anic text through a number of lexemes and semantic relations expressing space, country, city, land, dwelling, place of residence, expulsion from one’s homeland, migration, a secure territory, and belonging to a particular community. In particular, “balad” (بلد), “ard” (أرض), “dār” (دار), “qarya” (قرية), as well as units associated with “hijra” and “muhājirūn”, play an important role in forming this conceptual field.



When studying the linguistic features of the Qur'an, it is important to distinguish the lexical meaning of an individual lexeme from its conceptual function in context. For example, "balad" denotes a city or territory in some verses, while in other contexts it expresses the security and sacredness of a particular homeland. "Ard", in its broad meaning, denotes earth and land; however, in uses conveying the meaning "our land", it approaches the concepts of the living territory of a particular community, spatial-political belonging, and homeland. According to the Quranic Arabic Corpus, "balad" is used in the Qur'an in meanings close to city, land, or country, while "ard" occurs in contextual meanings such as "earth", "land", and "territory". The aim of this study is to identify the constituent features of the concept of homeland on the basis of spatial and socio-semantic units in the Qur'an, demonstrate their interrelationship, and develop a linguocultural model of the concept. The analysis distinguishes the following senses of the concept of homeland: space, residence, belonging, security, sacredness, stability, homeland, community, separation, forced displacement, and return.

A concept is regarded as a cognitive and cultural structure expressed through linguistic units but not confined to lexical meaning alone. It incorporates the historical experience, values, associations, and worldview of a particular people. The concept of "homeland" likewise has such a multilayered structure. At its core is a person's connection with a particular space, while its peripheral layers contain meanings such as security, native land, birthplace, ancestral land, collective memory, loyalty, longing, and separation.

From a linguocultural perspective, "homeland" can be divided into three principal components. The first is the spatial component, which denotes the territory in which a person lives or to which they belong. The second is the social component, referring to a person's connection with family, clan, people, and society. The third is the axiological component, in which homeland is evaluated as security, sacredness, value, and spiritual belonging.

In studying the concept of homeland in the Qur'an, precisely these three components manifest themselves in an interconnected manner. "Balad" and "ard" constitute the spatial basis; units such as "qawm", "ahl", and "muhājirūn" express social belonging; and concepts such as "amn", "baraka", and "haram" reinforce security and sacredness. Consequently, homeland is formed not as a mere geographical coordinate, but as a space in which human life and values are embodied.

The concept of space in the Qur'anic text has a very broad semantic network. "Ard" denotes earth and land, "balad" a city or territory, "qarya" an inhabited settlement, and "dār" a house, dwelling, or space. It would not be correct to translate all these units automatically as "homeland". However, their combination in particular contexts forms the semantic field of the concept of homeland. For example, in the prayer of Prophet Abraham, the security of the city is explicitly mentioned: "أَمِنَّا بَلَدًا هَذَا اجْعَلْ رَبِّي" ("My Lord, make this city a place of security"). Here "balad" is not merely a geographical designation; it is associated with security, stability, and a space conducive to human life. This semantic association reveals the "secure space" component of the concept of homeland (Al-Baqarah, 2:126). Uses of the lexeme "balad" with this meaning are also recorded in the Qur'anic corpus.

Likewise, the form "arḍinā", meaning "our land", directly indicates territorial belonging. In Surah Ibrahim, verse 13, the disbelievers are described as threatening the prophets with



expulsion from their homeland: “أَرْضِنَا مِنْ لُحْرَجْنُكَ” — “We will surely drive you out of our land”. In this context, “ard” is not the planet Earth in general, but is understood as the particular territory belonging to a community.

The lexeme “balad” is one of the most important units for analysing the concept of homeland in the Qur’anic text. It is used in meanings close to “city”, “land”, “territory”, and “country”. According to the Quranic Arabic Corpus, the form “balad” and its derivatives occur in several verses. In particular, different contextual aspects of this lexeme can be observed in Al-Baqarah 2:126, Ibrahim 14:35, An-Nahl 16:7, Al-Balad 90:1–2, and At-Tin 95:3.

The aspect of “balad” that is closest to the concept of homeland is its representation of a secure space associated with human life. In the prayer of Prophet Abraham, “balad” is combined with “āmin”, meaning secure and peaceful. Thus, it is not space itself, but its security for human beings that brings the axiological layer of the concept to the foreground. The use of the lexeme “balad” in the sense of a “sacred city” is also particularly significant. At the beginning of Surah Al-Balad, the expression “الْبَلَدِ بِهَذَا أَقْسَمُ لَا” conveys the meaning “I swear by this city”. The following verse emphasizes that the Prophet is in this city. The Quran.com commentary and translation page associates this “balad” with Mecca.

Thus, conceptually, “balad” integrates the following semes: 1) geographical space; 2) city or homeland; 3) inhabited territory; 4) security; 5) sacredness; 6) a person’s connection with that space. “Arḍ” is one of the most active spatial units in the Qur’an. Although its basic meaning is “earth” or “land”, depending on the context it approaches the meanings of “territory”, “place of residence”, and “country”. In the Qur’anic corpus, “arḍ” is recorded in hundreds of contexts and is associated with the universe, the human living environment, a particular territory, and a political-social space.

One of the most important forms through which “arḍ” approaches the concept of homeland is the construction “arḍinā” — “our land”, formed with a possessive pronoun. In Ibrahim 14:13, the meaning “we will drive you out of our land” is present. Here, “land” is used as a socio-spatial unit indicating belonging to a community. Therefore, in conceptual analysis, “arḍinā” can be identified with the semantic feature of “territorial belonging”. The form “arḍinā” also occurs in Al-Qasas 28:57: the idea is expressed that “if we follow the guidance, we will be carried away from our land”. In this example, the security of the homeland and the fear of losing territory are interconnected. Thus, the negative pole of the concept of homeland also contains the semes “separation from one’s homeland” and “loss of territory”.

“Arḍ” is also connected with human responsibility on the earth. Ownership of territory is not merely a right of use; it also entails the responsibility to cultivate it and avoid causing corruption therein. In this respect, the concept of homeland in the Qur’anic worldview is also enriched by an ecological and ethical dimension.

The word “dār” expresses the meanings of house, dwelling, place of residence, or space, and conceptually defines a person’s residence in a particular place. The relationship between the concept of homeland and “dār” consists in the fact that a larger space — the homeland — becomes concrete for a person as a “place of residence”.

In the Qur’anic text, “dār” occurs not only in the context of worldly residence but also as part of religious concepts such as “ākhirā dār” — the abode of the Hereafter. This demonstrates that



in Qur'anic thought the notion of space is not merely geographical but also a spiritual category. Depending on the context, the meaning of “dār” may expand to “house”, “dwelling”, “place”, or “eternal abode”.

From this perspective, the “dwelling” component of the concept of homeland has two levels: the first is the real space in which a person lives; the second is the spiritual space to which a person considers themselves to belong. These two layers form a broad cognitive model of the concept of homeland.

“Qarya” is used in the Qur'anic text as a unit denoting a village, city, or inhabited settlement. This lexeme does not directly mean “homeland”, but it demonstrates the relationship between a community of people and the space in which they live. Therefore, it can be regarded as an auxiliary unit in analysing the socio-spatial layer of the concept of homeland.

The concept of “qarya” combines space and the human factor. A geographical territory becomes a “homeland” precisely through the fact that people live there, engage in activities, and develop social relations. In this respect, “qarya” expresses the seme of a “space filled with community” within the concept of homeland.

In Qur'anic thought, the flourishing or destruction of a particular territory is also associated with the behaviour and activities of its inhabitants. Thus, homeland is not merely a natural geographical space; it is a space shaped by human activity, ethical choice, and social relations. In the Qur'an, Mecca is described as a space of special status. In the prayer of Prophet Abraham, the security of the city is requested. In Surah Al-Balad, “this city” is addressed with an oath. In Surah At-Tin, the expression “al-balad al-amīn” — “the secure city” — is also found. These uses of the lexeme “balad” strengthen the security and sacredness semes of the concept of homeland.

On the basis of the Mecca model, the “sacred space” component of the concept of homeland can be distinguished. Unlike an ordinary residential territory, sacred space is associated with religious memory, worship, historical heritage, and collective identification. Therefore, “sacredness” emerges at the highest axiological layer of the concept of homeland.

Furthermore, the prominence of security demonstrates the connection between the concept of homeland and a fundamental human need. For a person, the value of a homeland lies not only in its being the place of birth or residence, but also in its providing the possibility of living a peaceful and secure life.

One of the important semes of the concept of homeland is security. In Qur'anic material, this seme is clearly expressed through “amn” and related units. In Ibrahim 2:126 and 14:35, prayers are made for the security of the city. In these examples, space and security combine to create the image of a “peaceful homeland”.

The security seme gives the concept of homeland a positive axiological evaluation. A secure homeland is a space in which human life, property, faith, and family are protected. Therefore, in the Qur'anic worldview, the concept of homeland is directly associated with peace and tranquillity.

This aspect leads to an important theoretical conclusion in dissertation research: if the spatial core of the concept of homeland is “place”, its evaluative layer is dominated by the model of a

“secure place”. Thus, the cognitive prototype of “homeland” answers not only the question “where?” but also the question “what kind of space?”

The opposite pole of the concept of homeland is separation from it. The Qur’an contains accounts of certain prophets and believers being expelled from their homelands, being forced to migrate, or leaving their territories. Such contexts reveal peripheral senses of the concept of homeland such as “separation”, “loss”, “forced displacement”, and “longing”. In Ibrahim 14:13, the threat “we will drive you out of our land” directly denotes deprivation of territory. In this case, “ard” expresses territorial belonging, while “expulsion” represents the disruption of that belonging. Thus, the concept of homeland can also be defined through its negation — the condition of being without a homeland or being expelled from one’s land.

In Al-Qasas 28:57, the fear of being carried away from one’s homeland is described. This example demonstrates the psychological dimension of attachment to homeland: a person fears losing their homeland because it serves as a foundation of security and collective belonging. The concept of hijra demonstrates that homeland is not static but dynamic. A person may leave a particular territory, while their memory, belonging, and values continue in a new space. Therefore, hijra can be analysed not merely as geographical movement but as spatial and identificational transformation.

In the Qur’anic text, the concept of “muḥājirūn” denotes people who left their homeland and moved to another space for the sake of faith and community. In this case, a complex relationship arises between the concept of homeland and religious belonging. A person may become physically distant from their homeland, while spiritual belonging continues within a new community and a new space.

Hijra reveals two poles of the concept of homeland: on the one hand, the space in which a person was born or has lived; on the other hand, a new space corresponding to the person’s values and faith. Therefore, the concept of homeland is related not only to geography but also to social and spiritual identification.

The social component of the concept of homeland can be viewed in relation to “qawm”, “ahl”, and other communal units. A person’s belonging to a homeland is often concretized through their belonging to a particular community. In this sense, homeland means not only “the place where I live” but also “the community to which I belong”.

In Qur’anic narratives, prophets address their respective peoples. This form of address demonstrates that geographical space and social community are inseparable. The territory inhabited by a community constitutes the spatial basis of its everyday life, economic activity, historical memory, and social relations.

In this respect, the social model of the concept of homeland can be expressed as follows: space → population → community → belonging → identity. In this chain, space itself does not fully acquire the status of homeland without the human factor.

In the Qur’anic worldview, the use of land and space is associated with responsibility. While living on the earth, human beings are expected to avoid corruption, preserve justice, and contribute to prosperity. Therefore, the axiological layer of the concept of homeland contains not only love but also responsibility.



The numerous verses conveying the meaning “Do not cause corruption on the earth” demonstrate the ethical status of space. From this perspective, homeland may be interpreted as a value that requires loyalty, care, cultivation, and consideration of the interests of society. Thus, within the concept of homeland, “rights” and “responsibility” complement each other. A person benefits from the prosperity of the homeland while also contributing to its development and peace. This aspect can provide a basis for the formation of the seme of “patriotism” in contemporary linguocultural studies.

Main Semantic Features of the Concept of Homeland

No.	Conceptual Seme	Principal Unit	Qur’anic Meaning
1	Space	balad, ard	territory of residence or belonging
2	Place of residence	dār, qarya	a place in which a person resides
3	Belonging	arḍinā, qawm	“our land”; belonging to a community
4	Security	balad + āmin	a peaceful and protected homeland
5	Sacredness	al-balad	a space of special status, such as Mecca
6	Stability	the meaning of sakan/dār	a person’s permanent place of residence
7	Separation	uxrāj / expulsion	deprivation of one’s homeland
8	Migration	hijra / muhājirūn	leaving one’s homeland and moving to another space
9	Collective identity	qawm, ahl	unity of homeland and community
10	Responsibility	ard	cultivating the land and refraining from corruption

A Brief Linguosemantic Analysis Based on Qur’anic Verses

Verse	Arabic Unit/Context	Semantic Translation	Key Unit	Conceptual Seme
Al-Baqarah, 2:126	رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا	“My Lord, make this city secure.”	balad, āmin	secure homeland / peaceful space
Ibrahim, 14:35	رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا	“My Lord, make this city secure.”	balad, āmin	sacred and secure space
Ibrahim, 14:13	لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا	“We will drive you out of our land.”	arḍinā	territorial belonging and separation from the land
Al-Qasas, 28:57	نُتَخَطَّفُ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا	“We fear that we will be carried away from our land.”	arḍinā	security of homeland and fear of separation
Al-Balad, 90:1	لَا أَقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ	“I swear by this city.”	al-balad	sacred city of special status
Al-Balad, 90:2	وَأَنْتَ حِلٌّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ	“You are in this city.”	al-balad	direct relationship between person and space
At-Tin, 95:3	وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ	“And by this secure city...”	al-balad al-amīn	security and sacredness

Note: The Uzbek translations in the source table were presented as semantic translations for the convenience of scholarly analysis. For the final dissertation version, the publication details of the Uzbek Qur’an translation used should be given separately, and all verses should be reproduced consistently with that edition.

On the basis of the above analyses, the linguocultural model of the concept of “homeland” in the Qur’an can be divided into centre and periphery. The central layer contains the semes of space, residence, and belonging. The first peripheral layer contains the semes of security, stability, and community. In the subsequent layer, complex conceptual features such as sacredness, responsibility, separation, and hijra emerge.

This model can be expressed as follows: $\text{HOMELAND} = \text{SPACE} + \text{RESIDENCE} + \text{BELONGING} + \text{SECURITY} + \text{COMMUNITY} + \text{VALUE} + \text{RESPONSIBILITY}$. In this formula, “space” represents the geographical basis, “residence” the space of everyday life, “belonging” identification, “security” positive evaluation, “community” the social component, “value” the spiritual component, and “responsibility” a person’s ethical relationship to the homeland.

An important feature of the Qur’anic text is that the concept of homeland is not limited to positive feelings. It also contains dynamic situations such as expulsion from one’s homeland, loss of territory, migration, and adaptation to a new space. This demonstrates the procedural nature of the concept: a person’s relationship with space may change over time, while belonging and memory remain preserved in their identity.

Conclusion

Analysis of the Qur’an demonstrates that the concept of “homeland” is not confined to a single direct lexeme but constitutes a complex conceptual structure expressed through numerous interconnected spatial, social, and axiological units. “Balad” represents a city or homeland, “ard” land and territory, “dār” a dwelling and place of residence, and “qarya” an inhabited space; together, these units form different parts of the conceptual field.

The analysis makes it possible to distinguish space, residence, belonging, security, sacredness, community, separation, hijra, and responsibility as the principal semes of the concept of homeland. In particular, the combination of “balad” with “āmin” produces the model of a secure homeland; the form “arḍinā” represents territorial belonging; and contexts concerning expulsion from the land produce the model of separation from one’s homeland.

Thus, in the Qur’anic worldview, homeland is not merely the geographical space in which a person lives. It is manifested as a complex concept integrating human security, belonging to a community, historical and spiritual memory, ethical responsibility, and values associated with a particular space.

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