


A Critique of the Notion of Quranic Distortion by Shi'a in the book

Tārīkh al-Qur'an 'Inda al-Ithnā 'Ashariyah

Bahman Hadilo ¹  Mohammad Alimohammadi ² 

1. Assistant Professor at the University of Quranic Sciences and Teachings, Qom, Iran (Corresponding Author).

2. MA in Quran and Hadith Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University.

Corresponding Email: hadilo@quran.ac.ir

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Introduction

The issue of the distortion (*Tahrif*) of the Holy Quran is a sensitive and controversial topic in Quranic studies, which has always been of interest among Islamic sects, especially between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. In this context, the book *Tārīkh al-Qur'an 'inda al-Ithnā 'ashariyah: Dirasah Naqdīyyah* (History of the Quran among the Twelvers: A Critical Study) by Abd al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman al-Dhamir, has been written with a critical and accusatory approach towards the Shi'a school of thought. The author of this book, by selectively citing certain sources and statements of Shi'a scholars, attempts to attribute the belief in Quranic distortion to the Imami Shi'a. Since this work makes baseless accusations without a thorough examination of the interpretive principles and doctrinal tenets of Shi'ism, its scientific and documented critique is an undeniable necessity. This research aims to examine and critique Al-Dhamir's viewpoints on Quranic distortion by analyzing the documented content of his book based on authentic Shi'a and Sunni sources.

Methodology

This research is qualitative and conducted using a descriptive-analytical method. Initially, key concepts, including *Tahrif* and its types, were explained from lexical and terminological perspectives. Subsequently, by studying the book *Tarikh al-Qur'an 'inda al-Ithna 'ashariyah*, Al-Dhamir's views on the issue of distortion were extracted. Following this, the claims were comparatively critiqued using authentic Shi'a sources (such as the works of Allameh Tabataba'i, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Ayatollah Ma'refat) as well as Sunni sources (like the books of Al-Suyuti and Al-Zarqani). Rational and traditional (naqli) reasoning was employed for data analysis and to assess the credibility of narrations and chains of transmission. Furthermore, to evaluate the reliability of the narrators of hadiths cited by Al-Dhamir, the perspectives of Rijal scholars were utilized to clarify the validity or falsehood of the claims.

Findings

The findings of the investigation indicate that the majority of Al-Dhamir's citations from Shi'a sources lack scientific accuracy and are primarily based on the selection and fragmentation of quotations. Al-Dhamir claims that Shi'a believe in the distortion of the Quran, citing the introduction to *Tafsir al-Qummi* and Nuri al-Tabarsi's book *Fasl al-Khitab*. However, a thorough



examination of the texts reveals that the narrations cited in these sources are either weak in their chain of transmission or open to interpretation, and do not indicate literal distortion of the Quran. Regarding *Tafsir al-Qummi*, it was found that this commentary is not entirely by Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi; a portion is attributed to Abu al-Jarud, who is considered weak by Rijal scholars. On the other hand, prominent Shi'a scholars such as Allameh Tabataba'i, Sheikh Tusi, and Ayatollah Khomeini have explicitly rejected any distortion in the Quran with clear rational and traditional proofs, emphasizing its preservation based on the verse, "Indeed, it is We who sent down the message, and indeed, We will be its guardian" (15:9). According to these scholars, what some have presented as distortion is, in reality, *Tafsir* (exegesis), *Ta'wil* (esoteric interpretation), or providing contextual explanations of verses, rather than adding to or subtracting from the Quranic text. In contrast, a comparative analysis shows that even some Sunni scholars have acknowledged the existence of inaccurate narrations regarding distortion within their own sources, while simultaneously, like the Shi'a, affirming that the Quran remains protected from any alteration. Ultimately, the findings indicate that Al-Dhamir's claims are not only devoid of scientific support but are also built upon misinterpretations and sectarian prejudice, rendering them devoid of any research value.

Conclusion

Upon careful examination and study of the book *Tarikh al-Qur'an 'inda al-Ithna 'ashariyah*, it becomes evident that the author has attempted to find evidence for the distortion of the Quran by citing various sections of the Quran and statements of some Shi'a scholars. However, his citations are mostly based on misinterpretations and distorted renditions of Shi'a sources, and he has not provided any definitive proof for the distortion of the Quran from the perspective of Shi'a scholars. Furthermore, Al-Dhamir's claims in this book are not only lacking in scientific validity but are also based on the distortion and fragmentation of Shi'a statements and sources. Among the inaccuracies in this book are citations of weak-narrated hadiths, the failure to distinguish between interpretive statements and the Quranic text itself, and the misuse of book titles to substantiate the claim of distortion. The present article, through a precise examination of Shi'a sources such as *Tafsir al-Qummi*, hadith collections, and the views of Allameh Tabataba'i and Ayatollah Khomeini, has demonstrated that the fundamental belief of Imami Shi'a is the incorruptibility of the Quran. Even some Sunni scholars have emphasized this reality. This analysis can also serve as a model for a scholarly and fair engagement with sectarian doubts, thereby preventing conflict and division among Muslims.

Keywords

Distortion, Holy Quran, Shi'a, Abd al-Aziz al-Dhamir, *Tārīkh al-Qur'an 'inda al-Ithnā 'asharīyah*.

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

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