



THE QUR'AN WITHIN THE SHI'A TRADITIONS

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This paper will discuss the issue of the authenticity of the Quran from the perspective of the Shi'a Ithnā'asharī Imāmī tradition henceforth referred to as Shi'a. The discussions will focus on the thought of two renowned near contemporary authorities within the Shia school of thought: Ayatulla Abu al-Qasim al-Khui' (1992 CE) and Ayatulla Muhammad Hadi Ma'rifat (2007 CE) who represent the views of the sect and of its scholars from the time of the grand Shaykh al-Saduq (991 CE) till the present.

The paper will commence with quoting verses against any form of distortion within the Qur'an. This will then be further emphasised by citing reports (*aḥādīth*) from the Prophet till Imam Sadiq (765 CE) together with pointing at certain Shi'a practice to demonstrate that this is the only and complete Qur'an among the Shi'a.

Thereafter it will briefly look at the history of the compilation of the Qur'an and the Qur'an compiled by Imam Ali and certain companions (*ṣaḥāba*). This in order to demonstrate that the Qur'an at present is the complete Qur'an as revealed upon the blessed Prophet and that the Quranic arrangement of chapters (*sūra plural-suwar*) that we find at present may be as dictated by the Prophet himself. Following this there is a discussion that at the most the only problem historically is with the order of compilation of chapters not the words of the verses or the arrangement of the verses in chapters. The discussion of the compilation of Imam Ali and arrangement of the chapters is then used in interpreting and resolving the problem of distortion of the Qur'an as mentioned within certain Sunni-Shi'a hadith literature.

This will be followed by pointing at the definition of *tahrīf* (distortion) and the category of *tahrīf* that is problematic. In light of this there will be an examination of the *tahrīf* literature and how the Shi'a scholars have interpreted and refuted such claims. The paper will conclude with statements of the renowned Shi'i scholars disclaiming any form of change and distortion in relation to the Qur'an.

By providing statements of the Prophet and the Shi'i Imams from Imam Ali onwards together with the statements of the Shia scholars who have defined the sect from the time of the minor occultation (873 CE) to the present day, it is hoped that the paper will dispel any confusion about the authenticity of the present Qur'an and of the baselessness of the claim of Shi'a having another Qur'an.

Verses stating the complete and uncorrupted nature of the Qur'an

- ﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ﴾

“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).” (Q. 15:9)

- ﴿إِنَّا عَلَيْنَا جَمْعُهُ وَقُرْآنُهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ﴿

“It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear):” (Q. 75:17-19)

- ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ﴾ لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

"Those who reject the Message when it comes to them (are not hidden from Us). And indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise." (Q. 41:41-42)

Selection of reports indicating at the authenticity of the Qur'an

The Prophet:

إذا التبست الامور عليكم كقطع الليل المظلم عليكم بالقرآن فإنه شافع مشفع

"When matters become unclear to you like the dark night, adhere to the Qur'an for it is an intercessor and an admonisher."¹

The Prophet:

اشراف أمتي حملة القرآن

"The most noble of my people are the bearers of the Qur'an."²

Imam Ali:

تعلموا القرآن فإنه أحسن الحديث و ابلغ الموعظة و تفقهوا فيه فإنه ربيع القلوب

"Learn the Qur'an, it is the best of speech and the most eloquent advice. Understand it for it is the spring of the hearts."³

Imam Sadiq:

الحافظ للقرآن العامل به مع السفارة الكرام البررة

"The retainer of the Qur'an and one who acts by it is with the noble righteous envoys."⁴

(*Mizan al-Hikma*)

Shi'a Practice acknowledging the present Qur'an as the complete Qur'an

1- Daily Prayers

The Shi'a *Ithnā'asharī Imāmī fiqh* (jurisprudence) requires the recitation of a full chapter aside from *al-Ḥamd* in the first two units of the prescribed daily prayers (*ṣalāa*). Accordingly, any chapter of the Qur'an will suffice aside from those consisting of the verse of obligatory prostration according to the scholars, not because such chapters are incomplete but because the prostration falters with the continuity of the *ṣalāa*.⁵

¹ M Muhammadi Rayshahri, *The Scale of Wisdom: A Compendium of Shi'a Hadith* (ICAS Press: London, 2009) p. 893, rep.5150

² *Ibid*, p.897, rep.5173

³ *Ibid*, p.895, rep.5159

⁴ *Ibid*, p.897, rep.5176

⁵ Muhammad Kazim Tabataba'i Yazdi, *Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa* (Muasasa al-A'lami: Beirut, 1988) v.1, p.644, edict.3,

2- Voluntary Devotions

The devotions of the month of Ramadan require opening the Qur'an, looking into it and reciting:

اللهم اني أسئلك بحق هذا القرآن ...

Which translates "O Allah I beseech You through the truth of this Qur'an"⁶

Compilation of the Qur'an during the lifetime of the Prophet

The belief of the Shi'a scholars is that the Qur'an may have been compiled during the lifetime of the Prophet based on traditions stating the following:

- 1- The companions compiling the Qur'an and reading from it in the time of the Prophet.⁷
- 2- The exhortations to memorise the Qur'an.⁸
- 3- To read the Qur'an by looking into it.⁹

In addition to the reports from the Shi'a Imams until as far as the sixth Imam; that the Qur'an in written form was placed in the *masjid al-Nabī* on leaves and other scrolls by the pulpit and people used to come and learn it and write it to the extent they required.¹⁰

Ayatulla al-Khui', one of the most renowned authorities within the *Imāmī* tradition, in his *al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* quotes traditions from Sunni sources in relation to the gathering of the Qur'an in the time of the first Caliph Abu Bakr and the compilation of the Qur'an in the time of the third Caliph 'Uthman to demonstrates the inconsistencies and contradictions among the reports. He then argues against the validity of such reports through other evidences from the Qur'an, hadith, reason (*'aql*) and *ijmā'* (consensus). Al-Khui' concludes that the Qur'an was compiled in the time of the Prophet.

Here we quote two categories of the reports and their conflict with the other evidences as presented by al-Khui' in the section of the compilation of the Qur'an¹¹:

1- First Category

By Zayd bin Thabit:

"Abu Bakr sent for me after the battle of Yamama, 'Umar was with him, Abu Bakr said: 'Umar came to me and said the battle of Yamama killed many of the reciters of the Qur'an, I fear the deaths of the reciters of the Qur'an at different occasions will lead to the loss of a lot of the Qur'an, I feel you should command the gathering of the Qur'an. I said how can I do what the Prophet hasn't done? 'Umar said by Allah this is *khayr*. The hadith goes on until Zayd ibn Thabit said he began to gather the Qur'an from leaves and hearts of men..."

⁶ Abbas Qummi, *Mafatih al-Jinan*, (Dar Raul al-Akram: Beirut, 2001) p.307

⁷ Ali Asghar Nasihiyan, *'Ulum Qurani dar Maktab Ahle Bayt*, (Danishgha 'Ulume Islami: Mashad, 1389 AH) p.261, rep 1-4

⁸ *Ibid*, p.269

⁹ *Ibid*, p.266, rep.1-8

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.263, rep.6

¹¹ See Abu al-Qasim al-Khui, *Al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Muassasa al-A'lami: Beirut, 1974) pp.199-259

By Ibn Shihab 'an Salim ibn 'Abd Allah al-Kharija:

“Caliph Abu Bakr gathered the Qur'an and then asked Zayd b. Thabit to look into it.”

By Hisham ibn 'Urwa 'an Abihi:

“Caliph Abu Bakr instructed that if a verse is mentioned by anyone then find [two] witnesses to verify it.”

By Muhammad ibn Sirin:

“Caliph 'Umar was killed and the Qur'an had not been compiled.”

2- Second Category

By Ibn Shahab who was informed by Anas ibn Malik:

“Huthayfa ibn al-Yaman came to 'Uthman at a time when he was on expedition with the people of Iraq against Armenia and Azerbaijan. Hudhayfa mentioned their differences in recitation of the Qur'an, Hudhayfa said to 'Uthman , “O commander of the faithful save this *umma* before they fall in dispute regarding the Qur'an similar to the problems of the Jews and Christians.” Until the hadith states that: “'Uthman asked for the Ṣuḥuf from Hafsa to be copied into numerous *maṣāḥif* by Zayd ibn Thabit, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zubayr, Sa'id ibn al-'As, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Hisham...” it ends with: “the *maṣāḥif* were sent to major cities and instructions were given to burn all the other copies of the Qur'an...”

By Harith al-Hasibi:

“It is popular the Qur'an was compiled in the time of 'Uthman, this is not true 'Uthman merely made the people read in a single *qirā'at*... When he feared the differences in recitations of the Sham and Iraq.”

Al-Khui' points out that the above in addition to internal inconsistencies is conflicting with:

1- Reports of the compilation of the Qur'an during the lifetime of the Prophet

Such as a report from Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummal where Tabrani and Ibn 'Asakir narrate from al-Sha'bi:

“The Qur'an was compiled during the lifetime of the Prophet by six people from the *Anṣār*: Ubay ibn Ka'b, Zayd ibn Thabit, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Abu al-Darda', Sa'd ibn 'Ubayd and Abu Zayd.”

2- With the Qur'an

The Qur'an challenges through production of chapters like it and verses like it. The verses designate the Qur'an as the Book, the Prophet said:

“I leave two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my progeny.”

This means the Qur'an was in complete compilation.

3- With reason

- i- The Arabs used to memorise and retain eloquent poems, thus they were retaining the Qur'an as a whole.
- ii- The Prophet used to exhort the memorization of the Qur'an and there were many *qurrā* (reciters of the Qur'an) who according to the previous reports that were killed during battles.

This means that the Qur'an was in a compiled form and retained by memory by many.

4- With Consensus (*Ijmā'*)

There is *ijmā'* of the Muslim that the Qur'an is *mutawātir* (i.e. reported in such abundance in every era that satisfies its authenticity). If this is the case how can Caliph Abu Bakr say to Zayd ibn Thabit that:

“Find two witnesses to support the claim that the verse is from the Qur'an.”

Two witnesses would render the Qur'an not *mutawātir* but supplied by *khbar wāhid* (solitary narration).

In conclusion it seems from al-Khui' that the Qur'an was in the present arrangement during the prophetic times and therefore the unification of the Qur'an at the time of Caliph 'Uthman was in relation to its recitation only.

Compilation of the Qur'an post prophetic period

a- Imam Ali 's Qur'an and the compilations of certain Companions (*Ṣaḥāba*)

The notion of the Shia having another Qur'an often stems from the whole issue of the Quran compiled by Imam Ali. This section will discuss the Shia understanding of the compilation of Imam Ali and place us in a position of clarity regarding the whole issue of a different Quran and of distortion within the Quran (*tahrif*). In what follows are selections from several works of Muhammad Hadi Ma'rifat whose names are referenced at the end of the section.

According to Ayatullah Muhammad Hadi Ma'rifat the Qur'anic words, verses (*āyāt*) and chapters with their names had been completed in the time of the Prophet. This is because the Qur'an is and was considered a miracle not only in its meanings but also in its eloquence (*al-faṣāḥa wa al-balāgha*). He quotes from Imam Sadiq the sixth Imam that whenever *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* would be revealed the people would understand that a chapter had completed and another had begun. He also quotes Imam Sadiq as saying that the Prophet would instruct certain verses to be placed in other chapters by the direction of Jibra'il. Due to this some Meccan verses were placed by the Prophet in Madinian chapters and vice versa. However according to Hadi Ma'rifat the Qur'an had not been compiled in one book form in the life of the Prophet. Imam Sadiq has said the Prophet prior to his death instructed Imam 'Ali to collect the Qur'an from behind his bed that was written on palm leaves, skin, bones, scrolls and silk to gather it in one compilation.

According to Shi'a Imami, based on historical sources, Imam 'Ali was the most notable scribe of the revelation (*waḥī*) from Makkah till the end of the Prophet's life in Madina and therefore one most qualified in being given the task of arranging its compilation as per the instructions of the Prophet.

The first compilation was performed by Imam 'Ali by the instruction (*waṣīyya*) of the Prophet. The Imam sat in his house and compiled the Qur'an in accordance with how the Prophet had told him. He compiled the chapters (*sura/suwar*) according to chronological sequence of revelation and recited them in accordance with the recitation (*qirā'at*) of the Prophet adding the commentary, cause and occasion of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the abrogating and the abrogated verses (*nāsikh wa mansūkh*).

Imam 'Ali said:

"The Prophet made me read and write every verse and taught me its real interpretation (*ta'wīl*), its exegesis (*tafsīr*), the abrogating and the abrogated verses (*nāsikh wa mansūkh*), the decisive and ambiguous (*muḥkam wa mutashābih*). I wrote everything the Prophet taught me."

Imam Baqir states:

"Imam 'Ali took the Qur'an after it was compiled to Caliph Abu Bakr but Caliph 'Umar opened it looked inside then said: "O 'Ali take it back we already have a Qur'an!"

During the time of Caliph 'Uthman when there was a lot of confusion about the Qur'an, Talha went to Imam 'Ali and said:

"Why didn't you give your Qur'an to 'Uthman?" The Imam said to Talha: "Tell me have the people written the whole Qur'an, is there addition in there?" Talha said: "They have written the whole Qur'an and no addition." Imam 'Ali said: "If you take that Qur'an you will be saved from fire and enter paradise." Talha said: "*Ḥasbī*" "Thus the Qur'an is enough for us."

The point here is that Imam 'Ali's Qur'an consisted of *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* which are not a part of the Qur'an. The only possible difference between Imam 'Ali's compilation and that of Zayd is the chronological order of the chapters however the Shi'a scholars are of differing opinions: some say that the order may be different whilst others say otherwise, however all unanimously maintain that the Qur'an in its content is exactly the same.

The order of chapters being different was not considered a problem during the time of the companions since we have compilations that differed in chapter positioning within the Qur'an. Some other compilations whose chapter arrangements listed here are an evidence of this, these are:

Zayd bin Thabit who headed a team of 25 people and collated the Qur'an but did not compile it until the time of Caliph 'Uthman where he through contrasting the different copies compiled the Qur'an in the present day format.

Ibn Mas'ud had a compilation which was in order of: *Sab'a tiwāl*, *Ma'in*, *Mathānī*, *Ḥawāmīm*, *Mumtaḥanat* and *Mufaṣṣalāt*. His compilation has 111 chapters with the exclusion *al-Fātiḥa* and *Ma'ūdātayn*.

Ubay ibn Ka'ab, his compilation was similar to Ibn Mas'ud with the exception of the position of the chapter of *Anfāl* which was after the chapter of *Yunus* and before the chapter of *Barā'a*.

In conclusion here, according to Hadi Ma'rifat, at most the only historical discrepancy is within the order of the chapters but the verses, the arrangement of the verses in [within the] chapters and the names of the chapters are as they were in the time of Prophet without addition or omission.

b- Unity of the Qur'an (*Tawḥīd al-Maṣāḥif*)

Due to the differences of the collections and the compilations of Hudhayfa and other notables, certain companions expressed concerns to the third Caliph who in response initiated the project of unifying the *maṣāḥif*. In the process there was dissent and disagreement from certain renowned companions with regard to the sequence and certain verses. Again pointing out that the chapter arrangement was always a dispute but did not amount to any form of distortion and corruption (*tahrīf*) of the Qur'an.

The Recitation of the Qur'an (*Qirā'a*)

a- Dots (*Nuqat*) and Vowel Symbols (*Ḥarakāt*) and Arabic script

The Qur'an in its present state with its dots, vowel symbols and parts (*juz/ajza*) developed historically; it began with revelation until the unity of the *masaḥif* and ended with Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Nahwi. In this period proper Arabic script was developed, dots were added to assist the non-Arab known as the '*ajam*', hence the description of the dots as '*ajamī nuqta/nugat* and the vowel symbols *ḥarakāt* were added to assist accurate recitation.

Due to its historical nature many forms of recitations (*qirā'at*) occurred among the Muslims even after the *tawḥīd al-maṣāḥif*. These *qirā'at* were confined to seven in the fourth century and the whole process was joined with the notion of seven letters (*sab'ata aḥruf*) but according to *Imāmī* scholars the two are unrelated. The *Imāmī* see the validity of all the seven *qirā'at*, however they prefer 'Asim ibn Abi al-Najud al-Asadi because it was based on popular recitation and he was a second generation student of Imam 'Ali.

The masters of four among the seven *qirā'at* were openly Shi'a, these were: 'Asim ibn Abi Najud, Abu Umar ibn al-'Ula, Hamza ibn Habib and 'Ali ibn Hamza al-Kisa'i.

b- *Qirā'at* and the two surviving

The recitation that has survived from the beginning till now is that of 'Asim from his teacher Hafs who learned it from Imam 'Ali.

***Tahrīf al-Qur'an* (Distortion of the Qur'an)**

The literal meaning of *tahrīf* is to turn something away from its place.

Technically *tahrīf* can mean any of the following:

- 1- *Tahrīf bi madlul al-kalam*: To explain something contrary to its meaning, this is a form of *al-ta'wīl al-bāṭil* (sinful distortion).
- 2- *Tahrīf mawḍi'ī*: To place something in another place such as a verse or a chapter in other than the place of its revelation. In relation to the verses this happened with the instruction of the Prophet. The majority of the chapters are not in chronological order but the present order, as with al-Khui' above, may have been ordained by the Prophet.
- 3- *Tahrīf fī lahjat al-ta'bīr*: To mispronounce words, this is allowed so long as the meaning doesn't change.
- 4- *Tahrīf al-qirā'ī*: To read a word not according to majority. This was witnessed and common at the time of the different *qirā'at*.
- 5- *Tahrīf bī tabdīl al-kalim*: To change a word with another. Ibn Mas'ud allowed this in case of synonyms.
- 6- *Tahrīf bi al-ziyāda*: To add something to the Qur'an.

7- *Tah rīf bi al-naqs*: To remove something from the Qur'an.

The problematic forms of *tahrīf* are the last three but most accurately the last two, i.e. addition and deletion are forms of problematic *tahrīf*. This problem is faced by both the Shi'a and the Sunni school of thought by their narrations.

The Shi'a scholars are of the opinion that *tahrīf* of the last three categories has not occurred within the Quran. They evidence their claim by following evidences:

- 1- Historically we find the same Qur'an in every era.
- 2- The abundant continuity (*tawātur*) of the Qur'an is a clear evidence that it is the same Qur'an from the time of the Prophet.
- 3- The miraculous nature of the Qur'an in its meanings and its words is an evidence against *tahrīf*.
- 4- The verses that talk of Allah protecting the Qur'an is the biggest and most significant evidence of no distortion having taken place. Verses such as: "*lā ya'tīhi al-bāṭil*" and "*innā lahu lahāfīzun*" demonstrate the point adequately.
- 5- The body of hadith of the Shi'a Imams talking of no distortion having taken place within the Qur'an are further evidence that the Qur'an has been preserved in its original form. Both Imam Ali and other Imams have said that the Qur'an is what is between the two covers (*mā bayn al-dafatayn*).

In conclusion to this section, according to the deliberations of Hadi Ma'rifat the Shi'i scholars without ambiguity are of the belief there has occurred no addition or omission within the Qur'an until present day save for the historical discrepancy of the arrangements of chapters.¹²

Let us now consider the literature that talks of *tahrīf* within the Shi'a sources and see how the scholars have unanimously responded to it. We will examine the variety of reports on the subject from al-Kafi here due to restriction of space, however the debates are the same wherever such reports are found.

Al-Kulayni and the literature on *Tahrīf*

The following section is taken from an online source that is quoted at the end of the sections.

Al-Kulayni (939 or 940 CE) has both sets of reports: those that clearly talk of the Qur'an having no addition or deletion and those that say otherwise. The reports that talk of forms of *tahrīf* can be placed in the five following categories:

1-Reports in which the word *Tahrīf* has appeared

بالاسناد عن علي بن سويد، قال: كتبْتُ إلى أبي الحسن موسى (عليه السلام) وهو في الحبس كتاباً - وذكر جوابه (عليه السلام)، إلى أن قال: "أؤتمنوا على كتاب الله، فخرّفوه وبّدّلوه".

¹² Muhammad Hadi Ma'rifat, *Mukhtasar al-Tamhid fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Dar al-'Ilm: Qum, 1374AH) pp.179-197; also see Muhammad Hadi Ma'rifat, *Tarikh Qur'an* (Sazman Mutalae: Tehran, 1375) pp. 85-93; Muhammad Hadi Ma'rifat, *Tahrif Napazir Qur'an* (Muassat Faranghi: Qum, 1379) pp.41-51

Report from the seventh Imam in which he said:

“They were given the custody of the Book of Allah, they distorted it and changed it.”

It is clear that the meaning of *tahrīf* is in the sense of changing the meanings and is a sinful form of changing as pointed to in point 1 of *tahrīf* above, but not in the meaning of distortion of the content of the Qur’an.

2-Reports stating certain verses consisted of the names of the Imams

عن منخل، عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام)، قال: "نزل جبرئيل على محمد (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) بهذه الآية هكذا
"يا أيها الذين آمنوا الكتاب آمنوا بما أنزلنا - في علي - نوراً مبيناً"

The sixth Imam:

“Jibra’il came to the Prophet with this verse: O people who have been given the Book, bring faith in what we have revealed- regarding ‘Ali - the evident light.”

Such reports are refuted by the statements of the likes of ‘Allama al-Majlisi who states that they are weak (*ḍa‘īf*) in his *Mira’at al- ‘Uqul*. Similarly Muhaddith al-Kashani has categorically categorised them as weak. Shaykh al-Baha’i states: “The assertions of common people that the names of the Imams have been deleted from certain places is unacceptable among the Shi’a scholars.” Al-Khui’ states: “Certain portion of the revelation were not the Qur’an but explaining the meanings of the Qur’an. If this satisfies as an explanation then we can accept such reports otherwise these sort of reports will have to be rejected outright due to their conflict with the Qur’an, the Sunna and all the other evidences on the lack of *tahrīf* within the Qur’an.”

In addition the above category of reports are in direct conflict with an authoritative report from the sixth Imam quoted in al-Kafi:

عن أبي بصير، قال: سألت أبا عبد الله (عليه السلام) عن قول الله تعالى: ((يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم)) (النساء 4: 59). قال: فقال: "نزلت في علي بن أبي طالب والحسن والحسين عليهم السلام". فقلت له: "إن الناس يقولون: 'فما له لم يسمّ علياً وأهل بيته في كتاب الله؟' قال (عليهما السلام): "فقولوا لهم: إن رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) نزلت عليه الصلاة ولم يسمّ لهم ثلاثاً ولا أربعاً، حتى كان رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) هو الذي فسّر لهم ذلك".

Abu Basir states: “I asked the sixth Imam of the verse: ‘O you who believe, obey Allah, His Messenger and those vested with authority among you’ the Imam said, “It was revealed for Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Hasan and al-Husayn!” I said, the people are saying why aren’t Ali and his children mentioned in the Book of Allah? The Imam replied: “Tell them the Messenger was instructed by the revelation to command prayers (*salah*) [only] without clarifying three or four units; it was the Messenger who clarified it to the people”

Such narrations aptly clarify that the names of the Imams were not mentioned in the Qur’an.

3-Reports gesturing forms of addition and omission

عن جابر، قال: سمعت أبا جعفر (عليه السلام) يقول: "ما ادعى أحد من الناس أنه جمع القرآن كله كما أنزل إلّا كذاب، وما جمعه وحفظه كما أنزله الله تعالى إلّا علي بن أبي طالب (عليه السلام) والأئمة من بعده (عليهم السلام)".

The fifth Imam:

“No one can make a claim that he has compiled the entire Qur’an as revealed save a liar; no one has compiled it or retained it as Allah has revealed it except Ali ibn Abi Talib and the Imams after him.”

The scholars have undermined this report due to one of its reporters, ‘Umr ibn Abi Miqdam, who has been deemed as weak.

At most what can be said about this report is that no one other than Ali ibn Abi Talib and the Imams after him have the knowledge of the Qur’an’s *tafsīr* and *ta’wīl*.

4-Reports stating that the Qur’an consisted of names of people that have been omitted

عن البرنطي، قال: دفع إليّ أبو الحسن الرضا (عليه السلام) مصحفاً، فقال: "لا تَنْظُرْ فيه". ففتحته وقرأت فيه (لم يكن الذين كفروا...) (البينة 98: 1) فوجدت فيها اسم سبعين رجلاً من قريش بأسمائهم وأسماء آبائهم. قال: فبعث إليّ: "ابعث إليّ بالمصحف".

Bazanti states: “The eight Imam gave me a Qur’an and said, “Do not look inside it!” I opened it and read the first verse of *al-Bayyina* and found in it names of 70 people and their fathers among the *Quraysh* thereafter the Imam sent message to me, “Return the Qur’an to me.””

Such reports are either weak, hurried or elevated. In addition such reports can also be considered a clarification (*tafsīr*) of certain verses.

5-Reports citing certain recitations of the Imams

عن أبي بصير، عن الصادق (عليه السلام) أنه قرأ: "هذا كتابٌ يُنطقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بالحقِّ" (الجاتية: 29) ببناء الفعل للمفعول، والقراءة المشهورة (يَنْطِقُ) بالبناء للفاعل،

Abu Basir reports:

“The sixth Imam read: “This book has been recited (*yuntaq*) upon you with Truth (*al-Jāthiya* 45:29) in a passive participle case as opposed to the popular recitation which is in the active participle (*yantiq*).”

Such reports do not amount to *tahrīf*. The Qur’an is other than its recitation. The Qur’an is reported through continuity (*tawātur*) whilst the recitation are through solitary narrations. In addition, the sixth Imam himself exhorted the people to read the Qur’an in accordance with popular recitation.

"اقرأوا كما يقرأ الناس"

In summary as stated, al-Kulayni’s work consists of both types of reports of no *tahrīf* and of *tahrīf*. The scholars and the commentators of *al-Kafi* have said that those reports of *tahrīf* are talking about Imam Ali’s commentary on the verses, or different esoteric interpretations (*ta’wīlāt*) which has no connection with *tahrīf*. They reject other reports by consensus (*ijmā’*) and maintain there is no *tahrīf* in the Qur’an.

Furthermore Shaykh al-Kulayni’s *al-Kafi* is seen by the Shi’a ‘*ulama*’ as his personal endeavour (*ijtihād*) with regard to the selection of reports (*aḥādīth*) and hence it is not a proof (*ḥujja*) on others. This is why it is not called *Sahih al-Kafi* and this is why the ‘*ulama*’ and *shuyūkh* argue against *aḥādīth* in *al-Kafi* from time to time. Even the *akhbārī*, like the great Muḥaddith Mulla Fayd al-

Kashani and Muḥaddith al-Hurr al-Amuli compilers of *al-Wafi* and *Wasa'il al-Shi'a* who place great value to hadith literature maintain that there is no *tahrīf* in the Qur'an.

Al-Kulayni termed every acceptable hadith as *ṣaḥīḥ*, it was not until the grand 'Allamah al-Hilli (1325 CE) that we found the quadruple division of hadith. 'Allama al-Hilli, the most renowned of the *Imāmī* scholars categorised *khavar wāḥid* or solitary narration as:

Ṣaḥīḥ, muwaththaq, ḥasan, and ḍa'īf.

General principle when solitary narrations conflict with the Qur'an

The Shi'a Imami have two principles in their understanding of the reports that talk of *tahrīf*:

- 1- Reports of *tahrīf* are all solitary narrations (*akhabar aḥad*) and according to all of the Shi'a Imami with consensus (*ijmā'*), the Qur'an is continuous (*mutawātir*) in its words, verses (*ayat*) and chapters (*suwar*), so solitary narrations conflicting it mean nothing. Consensus (*ijmā'*) according to the Shi'a means the inclusion of the view of the Prophet or one of the twelve Imams, thus its authenticity is unequalled.

- 2- The Prophet had said and later on repeated by Imam Ali and other Imams that:

“A report (*hadith*) should be contrasted to the Qur'an and if it does not fall in line with the Qur'an then...” according to the Prophet, “...it should be thrown against the wall.”

In other words such reports (*aḥādīth*) should be rejected flatly and totally. In conclusion therefore, the reports that talk of *tahrīf* are in conflict with the above mentioned verses and should be rejected outright.

In conclusion to this section we can see clearly that the issue of *tahrif* within the Shi'a literature has been refuted as unauthentic or understood as meaning inaccurate interpretation of the meanings or omissions of clarifications that were not Qur'an in the first place.¹³

The views of the Shi'a scholars

The views of the Shi'a Imami scholars who are considered final authorities in defining Shi'a Imami beliefs about the Qur'an, both the pre *Uṣūlī-Akḥbārī* and post *Uṣūlī-Akḥbārī* split are in concurrence regarding the authenticity and preservation of the Qur'an from the time of the Prophet till the present.

The giants of the Shi'a after al-Kulayni onwards till the present day, in every era, have explicitly stated against any *tahrīf* of the Qur'an, these are people with ultimate authority regarding the Shi'a Imami faith and belief, some of these are:

Sh. Saduq, Sh. Mufid, Sayyid Murtada, Sh. Tusi, Sh. Tabrasi, 'Allama al-Hilli, Muhaqqiq Ardabili, Sh. Ja'far Kashif al-Ghita', Sh. Muhammad Hasan Kashif al-Ghita', Sh Baha'i, Mulla Fayd Kashani, Sh. Hurr Amuli, Muhaqqiq Tabrizi, Hujjat Balaghi, Muhaqqiq Baghdadi, Muhaqqiq Karki, Sy. Sharafuddin Amuli, Sy. Muhsin Amin, 'Allama Amini, 'Allama Tabatabai', Imam Khumayni, Ayatulla Khui'.

Below are selected texts from renowned Shi'a sources:¹⁴

¹³ *Patterns in the Traditions of the Shia regarding Tahrif in Quran*. Available: www.holyquran.net/books/tahreef/6.html. Last accessed 14th April 2015

الشيخ الصدوق

هجري 381متوفى

الاعتقادات - الشيخ المفيد ص 84، 88:

اعتقادنا أن القرآن الذي أنزله الله تعالى على نبيه محمد صلى الله عليه وآله هو ما بين الدفتين، وهو ما في أيدي الناس، ليس بأكثر من ذلك، ومبلغ سوره عند الناس مائة وأربع عشرة سورة.

1- Al- Itiqadat of Shaykh al-Mufid (1022 CE)

“Our belief about the Qur’an revealed by Allah upon His Prophet is what is between the two covers and that is the one within the hands of the people, it is no more than that. The number of the chapters are 114.”

الشيخ الطوسي

هجري 460متوفى

النبيان - الشيخ الطوسي - ج 1 - ص 4-3

وأما الكلام في زيادته ونقصانه فما لا يليق به أيضا، لان الزيادة فيه مجمع على بطلانها والنقصان منه، فالظاهر أيضا من مذهب المسلمين خلافه، وهو الأليق بالصحيح من مذهبنا وهو الذي نصره المرتضى (ره)، وهو الظاهر في الروايات.

غير أنه رويت روايات كثيرة، من جملة الخاصة والعامة، بنقصان كثير من آي القرآن، ونقل شيء منه من موضع إلى موضع، طريقها الآحاد التي لا توجب علما ولا عملا، والأولى الإعراض عنها، وترك التشاغل بها، لأنه يمكن تأويلها ولو صححت لما كان ذلك طعنا على ما هو موجود بين الدفتين، فان ذلك معلوم صحته، لا يعترضه أحد من الأمة ولا يدفعه ورواياتنا متناصرة بالحث على قراءته والتمسك بما فيه، ورد ما يرد من اختلاف الأخبار في الفروع إليه.

وقد روي عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله رواية لا يدفعها أحد، أنه قال: (إني مخلف فيكم الثقلين، ما إن تمسكتم بهما لن تضلوا: كتاب الله، وعترتي أهل بيتي، وإنهما لن يفترقا حتى يردا علي الحوض) وهذا يدل على أنه موجود في كل عصر، لأنه لا يجوز أن يأمر بالتمسك بما لا نقدر على التمسك به. كما أن أهل البيت، ومن يجب اتباع قوله حاصل في كل وقت. وإذا كان الموجود بيننا مجمعا على صحته، فينبغي أن نتشاغل بتفسيره، وبيان معانيه ونترك ما سواه.

¹⁴ Unknown. (2012). *The Opinions of Scholars on the Tahrif of the Quran*. Available: <http://palshia.com/showthread.php?3164>. Last accessed 1st April 2015; Also see *Summary of Opinions of Shia Ulama on Tahrif*. Available: <http://www.mezan.net/radalshobohat/26RavelShia.htm>. Last accessed 12th April 2015

2- *Al-Tibyan* of Shaykh Tusi (1067 CE)

“The discussion of addition and omission of the Qur’an does not befit the Qur’an. This is because addition and deletion are tantamount to its invalidity. The apparent view of the mainstream Muslims is against such a belief and that is in accordance with the accurate understanding within our sect. This view of accuracy is supported by Murtadha and is in accordance with our reports.

There are reports with Shi’a and Sunni regarding the omissions and misplacing of verses through solitary narrations that do not yield knowledge nor can they be acted upon. It is best to reject them and not be occupied by such reports. Even if they are true they can be interpreted to mean other things and do not undermine the Qur’an which is between the two covers. The Qur’an between the two covers is accurate, accepted by all. Our reports repeatedly encourage its recitation and action in accordance with it [and] to contrast the conflicting hadith with the Qur’an (in order to determine which of it is accurate through the Qur’an).

The Prophet had said “I leave with you two things, you will never be misguided so long as you hold on to them: the Book of Allah and my progeny the members of my household.”

This demonstrates the presence of the Qur’an in every era, otherwise there is no meaning in upholding something that is not there.

الشيخ كاشف الغطاء

هجري 1373 متوفى

أصل الشيعة وأصولها - الشيخ كاشف الغطاء - ص 220

وإن الكتاب الموجود في أيدي المسلمين هو الكتاب الذي أنزله الله إليه للإعجاز والتحدي، ولتعليم الأحكام، وتمييز الحلال من الحرام، وأنه لا نقص فيه ولا تحريف ولا زيادة، وعلى هذا إجماعهم، ومن ذهب منهم أو من غيرهم من فرق المسلمين إلى وجود نقص فيه أو تحريف فهو مخطئ يرده نص الكتاب العظيم [إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر وإنا له لحافظون]. والأخبار الواردة من طرقنا أو طرقهم الظاهرة في نقصه أو تحريفه ضعيفة شاذة، وأخبار آحاد لا تفيد علماً ولا عملاً، فإما أن تأول بنحو من الاعتبار، أو يضرب بها الجدار.

Asl al-Shi’a wa Usuliha of Shaykh Kashif al-Ghita’ (1953 CE)

“The Book within the hands of the Muslims is the Book that Allah has revealed to the Prophet as a miracle and a challenge, a source of teaching the laws, distinguishing the permissible from the prohibited. There is no omission, distortion or addition in it and that is a point of consensus within the Muslims. Whoever among the Muslims states deficiency or distortion within the Qur’an is at fault and stands refuted by the explicit text of the Qur’an: “Indeed We have revealed the Dhikr and We are its protectors.” The reports that appear from among the Sunni and the Shi’a about the deficiency and distortion of the Qur’an are weak and random solitary narrations that do not assure knowledge nor can they be acted in accordance with. They are either to be interpreted or thrown against the wall.”

السيد الخوئي

ومما ذكرناه: قد تبين للقارئ أن حديث تحريف القرآن حديث خرافة وخيال، لا يقول به إلا من ضعف عقله، أو من لم يتأمل في أطرافه حق التأمل، أو من ألجأه إليه حب القول به، والحب يعمي ويصم وأما العاقل المنصف المتدبر فلا يشك في بطلانه وخرافته.

Al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an of al-Sayyid al-Khu'I (1992 CE)

“From what we have stated it becomes clear for the reader that the assertion of distortion of the Qur'an is fanciful and a form of corruption; no one asserts such things save the weak in intellect or one unable to reflect accurately or one drawn to such a view through love of it: love makes blind and deaf. As for an intelligent person who is just, he cannot doubt of the invalidity and corrupt nature of such views.”

السيد شرف الدين الموسوي

هجري 1377متوفى

الفصول المهمة في تأليف الأمة

وكل من نسب اليهم تحريف القرآن فإنه مفتر عليهم ظالم لهم، لأن قداسة القرآن الحكيم من ضروريات دينهم الاسلامي ومذهبهم الامامي، ومن شك فيها من المسلمين فهو مرتد باجماع الامامية. وظواهر القرآن فضلا عن نصوصه من أبلغ حجج الله تعالى واقوى ادلة أهل الحق بحكم البداهة الاولى من مذهب الامامية، ولذلك تراهم يضربون بظواهر الاحاديث المخالفة للقرآن عرض الجدار ولا يأبهون بها وان كانت صحيحة، وتلك كتبهم في الحديث والفقه والاصول صريحة بما نقول.

والقرآن الحكيم الذي لا يأتيه الباطل من بين يديه ولا من خلفه إنما هو ما بين الدفتين، وهو ما في أيدي الناس لا يزيد حرفا ولا ينقص حرفا، ولا تبديل فيه لكلمة بكلمة ولا لحرف بحرف، وكل حرف من حروفه متواتر في كل جيل تواتراً قطعياً الى عهد الوحي والنبوة، وكان مجموعاً على ذلك العهد الأقدس مؤلفاً على ما هو عليه الآن، وكان جبرائيل عليه السلام يعارض رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم بالقرآن في كل عام مرة وقد عارضه به عام وفاته مرتين. والصحابة كانوا يعرضونه ويتلونه على النبي حتى ختموه عليه صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم مرارا عديدة، وهذا كله من الامور المعلومة الضرورية لدى المحققين من علماء الامامية، ولا عبرة بالحشوية فإنهم لا يفقهون. والباحثون من اهل السنة يعلمون أن شأن القرآن العزيز عند الامامية ليس إلا ما ذكرناه والمنصفون منهم يصرخون بذلك.

Al-Fusul al-Muhimma fi ta'lif al-Umma of Al-Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi (1957 CE)

“Whoever attributes the Shi‘a with the belief of the distortion of the Qur’an has fabricated and been oppressive to them. This is because the sacredness of the wise Qur’an is among the necessity of their religion of Islam and their sect of *Imāmi*. Whoever among the Muslims doubts regarding the Qur’an is an apostate according to the *Imāmi* consensus. The apparent verses of the Qur’an leaving aside the explicit ones are the most eloquent proofs of Allah and the strongest demonstrations of the people of the truth by virtue of primary self-evident axioms of the *Imāmi* faith. It is because of this we see them (i.e. the *Imāmi* scholars) casting the apparent reports that conflict with the Qur’an to the wall and not being concerned with them even if they are authentic. Their books of hadith, *fiqh* and *uṣūl* clearly state what we have said.

The wise Qur’an to which no falsehood reaches from before it or behind it, is what is between the two covers. That is the one within the hands of the people. There is no letter added to it nor a letter omitted from it, no word of it or letter of it has been changed with any other word or letter. Every letter of it is reported through *tawātur* bearing certitude since the era of revelation and prophethood. The Qur’an was compiled in that venerable era as it is now. Jibra’il would present the Qur’an to the Prophet once in a year and twice in the year of his demise.

The companions would present the Qur’an and read it in front of the Prophet and complete it many times. All of this is known as a matter of necessity among the researchers of the *Imāmi* scholars. There is no merit to the *Hashawi*, indeed they do not understand.

Those who study the matter among the *Ahl al-Sunna* know that the status of the Qur’an among the *Imāmi* is what we have stated and the just among them scream out to this effect.”

A great number of Sunni researchers have also witnessed that the Shi‘a categorically believe there is no *tahrīf* or any other form of Qur’an, such as:¹⁵

Abu al-Hasan Ashari, Rahmatullah Hindi, Dr Muhammad ‘Abd Allah Daraz, Sh. Muhammad Muhammad Madani.

Conclusion

In conclusion according to Shi‘a: This is the Qur’an revealed to Prophet Muhammad (s) in its complete form without addition or deletion. There is no other Qur’an and no form of *tahrīf* has occurred in the Qur’an. In addition there is a strong opinion as with al-Khui’ that the present order of the Qur’an is one given by the holy Prophet (s) himself and that *Khalifa* ‘Uthman merely brought unity in terms of the *qirā’at* in his time.

At the most the only issues are:

- 1- The order of the compilation of the chapters; this has been a matter of historical dispute among the companions.
- 2- The *qirā’at*, again the historical existence of the variety of recitations is something the Shi‘a and Sunni agree on.

Both of the above are not considered forms of *tahrīf* by the Muslims.

The most renowned scribe of the Quran from the commencement of the revelation was Imam Ali. Its four main reciters (*qurrā*) were Shi‘a, the *qirā’at* that is most popular is that of ‘Asim who was a student of Hafs who was the student in *qirā’at* of Imam Ali. From Imam ‘Ali onwards the Shi‘a Imams have stated that the Qur’an is what is between the two covers.

¹⁵ Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifat, *Tahrif Napazir Qur’an*, 87-107

The *Imāmī* scholars from the end of the minor occultation until the present day have maintained that the Qur'an we have is the Qur'an revealed upon the blessed Prophet. The scholars have examined the reports of *tahrīf* and have interpreted them to mean deletion of the *tafsīr* and the *ta'wīl* or have consistently and outright rejected them on the basis of being weak solitary narrations (*ḍa'īf akhbār āḥād*). Therefore according to the Shi'a, their Imams, their scholars and the practice of the people (*awwām*); this is the Qur'an without any addition, without any omission, without any word replacing another word, that was revealed to the blessed Prophet of Islam (s).

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