



The Centre for Intra-Muslim Studies (CIMS)

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# AL-QURAN IN THE LIGHT OF SUNNI AND SHIA PERSPECTIVES

31<sup>st</sup> January 2015

*The Quran is the basis of all guidance for Muslims and is deemed as untainted since revelation. However there do exist narrations in both Sunni and Shia hadith literature that indicate to the Quran being distorted or parts of it lost<sup>1</sup>. The Centre for Intra-Muslim Studies convened to discuss the very topic of the Quran from both Shia and Sunni Perspectives. The Sunni perspectives was presented by Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, and the Shia presentation by Shaykh Arif Abdulhussain.*

For Hafiz Saeed, the Quran's preservation is argued via the existence of a consensus (*ijmā'*) amongst the Muslims regarding its preservation in addition to God's promise of preservation in the verse "*Indeed We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it*"<sup>2</sup>. The compilation of the Quran according to him was done at the time of the Prophet evidenced by the Quran referring to itself as 'the Book'<sup>3</sup> indicative of the existence of it in a book manner. What is well-known as the compilation of the Quran by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Caliph Uthman bin Affan was indeed a mere unification of the recitations according to him, as the Quran was already compiled in his view.

Shaykh Arif outlined the views of Shia scholars on the preservation and compilation of the Quran, who argue that the claims of distortion of the Quran are based on isolated narrations (*khabar wāhid*) whilst the Quran is at the level of *tawātur*<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, many other

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<sup>1</sup> See Sunan ibn Majah, Vol. 3, Book 9, Hadith 1944; Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafī, vol. 2, Kitab Fadl Al-Qur'an, Ch. Rare Traditions, pg. 634, hadeeth # 28

<sup>2</sup> Quran 15:9

<sup>3</sup> Quran 2:2

<sup>4</sup> i.e. it is so widely transmitted that it is inconceivable that it could be fabricated.



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narrations bestow the standard of reference being the Quran itself<sup>5</sup>, in addition to God describing the Quran as untouchable by falsehood in the verse “*falsehood cannot approach it*”<sup>6</sup>. Based on this the Shia scholars are emphatic that the Quran was compiled at the time of the Prophet and remains unchanged in its original form. This however does not detract the possibility of difference of opinions regarding the order of the chapters in the Quran according to Hadi Ma’rifat, as pointed out by Shaykh Arif<sup>7</sup>.

Of the points raised in the discussion was the narrative that the Shia have a different Quran, sometimes referred to as the copy of Fatima (*muṣḥaf fatīma*). In response to this, the Shia scholars mentioned that narrations referring to the existence of a different Quran are isolated and weak, in addition to the multitude of narrations explicitly mentioning that the Quran at the time of the Imams as being the same Quran as the one at the Prophet’s time. Furthermore, all major Shia theologians such as al-Tusi, al-Kulayni, Khui and others, are all unanimous that the Shia believe in the same Quran held by other Muslims, which would further push out any doubt that the Shia have a different Quran.

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<sup>5</sup> Such as the Prophetic narration: “Whatever comes to you from me and is in accordance to the Quran then I said it, and whatever comes to you from me which is in opposition to the Quran then I didn’t say it” Kulayni, Muhammad bin Yaqub, al-Kafi 1:69, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiya 1985

<sup>6</sup> Quran 41:42

<sup>7</sup> See Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifat, *Mukhtasar al-Tamhid fi ‘Ulum al-Qur’an* (Dar al- ‘Ilm: Qum, 1374AH) pp.179-197