

The Examination of the Verse Order in the Noble Qur'ān Chapters

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Abstract

The topic of the Mawqūfiyyat of the verse order (i.e., their original, divine order) in the noble Qur'ān chapters has always been discussed by the scholars of the Qur'ān sciences and has had proponents and opponents during the history. In this discussion, which has roots in the historical-narrative and sometimes in the theological sources, the role of narrations is highly significant, and the independent examination of the related narrations might have a significant effect on the clarification of its various dimensions. Therefore, in this study we did not take into account the other evidences presented by the proponents and opponents of the originality of the verse order, and only collected and evaluated the chains of transmission and indications of the narrations related to the manner of ordering the qur'ānic verses during the lifetime of the noble Prophet (s). Moreover, the narrations about the ordering of the verses in Imām 'Alī's (a) manuscript and his stance to this issue are also examined. At the end, it is concluded that from the viewpoint of the narrations, the original order of the qur'ānic verses is their very revelation order, and the changes made in the order of some verses did not come from the actions of the Prophet (s).

Keywords: The Prophet (s), Revelation order, Originality of the verse order, Imām 'Alī (a), Narrations on changing the order of the qur'ānic verses

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the majority of the noble Qur'ān chapters – especially the shorter ones – were revealed completely and in one occasion, and the verse order in these chapters was determined during their revelation time. However, it is also known that the existing order of a considerable number of the verses in some chapters is not according to their revelation order, because sometimes the Meccan verses are inserted into the Medinan chapters or, conversely, the Medinan verses are put in the Meccan chapters, as the revelation dates of suchlike verses (that have been revealed in certain times such as the conquest of Meccan, Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya, battles, etc.) are not congruent with the revelation dates of the other verses of these chapters (Bābā'ī, 2009: 129-133; Majlisī, 1983, vol. 89: 66-74; Ma'rifat, 1995, vol. 1: 278-280). In other words, the definitive historical and narrative themes and evidences in some verses indicate that the verses of these chapters are not revealed all at once, and when ordering them in the verses, their revelation order has not been taken into account.

For instance, in the Qur'ān 60, the verses that have been revealed in the year 8 LH right before the conquest of Mecca are placed at the beginning of the chapter, but the verses related

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to the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya that are revealed in the year 6 LH are recorded as the 10th and 11th verses of this chapter, the verse related to the women's oath of allegiance after the conquest of Mecca is given as the 12th verse of this chapter, and the meaning of the last verse of this chapter is congruent with the early verses of this chapter (Ṭabrisī, 1993, vol. 9: under the entry for the Qur'ān 60:1-3 & 10-13).

The existing place of the verses such as the Iblāgh verse (Qur'ān 5:67), the Ikmāl verse (Qur'ān 5:3), and the Taḥhīr verse (Qur'ān 33:33) are the other clear examples of the changes made in the order of the verses (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 16: 311-312; vol. 5: 167-168).

Taking into account this issue, the question that comes to mind is that if these displacements have been done by the Prophet (s) or the Companions. In other words, if the existing order of the Qur'ānic verses is original or is the result of ijtihād (personal effort)?

The originality discussion is disputed only with regard to the verse order, and the non-originality of the chapter order is mostly agreed upon by the researchers (Ma'rifat, 1995, vol. 1: 282). Moreover, the narrations related to this discussion mostly concern the order of the verses. Therefore, this study focuses only on the order of the verses of the Qur'ān.

It is noteworthy that many Shī'a Ḥadīth transmitters and exegetes such as 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm Qumī (Qumī, 1984, vol. 1: 118 & 324), Sharīf Lāhījī (Sharīf Lāhījī, 1994, vol. 4: 651), Fayḍ Kāshānī (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1995, vol. 1: 49), Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī (Baḥrānī, 1996, vol. 1: 74), Sayyid Ni'matullāh Jazā'irī (Jazā'irī, 1984: 262), Muḥaddith Nūrī (Nūrī, 1881: 144), and 'Allāma Majlisī (Majlisī, 1983, vol. 89: 67-70) have not accepted the originality of the verse order. Moreover, as an example of the later Shī'a exegetes, 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, vol. 12: 125-127) has elaborately criticized the evidences for the originality of the verse order and has deemed the order of some verses to have been based on the actions and opinions of the Companions.

The purpose of this study was to collect and evaluate the chains of transmission and evidences of the narrative documents related to the manner of ordering the verses in the noble Qur'ān chapters during the lifetime of the Prophet (s) and the Imāmat period of Imām 'Alī (a). Therefore, the discussions of this article are based on two sources.

The narrations related to the order of verses during the lifetime of the Prophet (s)

One of the main discussions about the manner of the collection and compilation of the Qur'ān is the development of the noble Qur'ān chapters during the lifetime of the Prophet of Allāh (s). Here, the question is that if the chapters of the noble Qur'ān were known during his lifetime as complete and finalized or were deemed as capable of being complemented later, the boundary of every chapter was not yet determined, and it was possible that the verses that might be revealed later would be added by the Prophet of Allāh (s) to these chapters.

It is evident that the way to answer this question is through referring to the valid historical narrations.

The narrations on the revelation of new chapters with the revelation of "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate"

There are narrations in the Shī'a and Sunnī sources that state that the Prophet (s) and the believers were informed about the ending of a previous chapter and the beginning of a new chapter with the revelation of "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." This implies that the revelation of every chapter started with Basmala and ended with the revelation of the Basmala of the next chapter (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, vol. 12: 127-128).

It is narrated from Imām Ṣādiq in (a) *Tafsīr 'Ayyāshī*,

God did not reveal any book [chapter] from the heavens unless there was “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” at its beginning, and the ending of the chapter and the beginning of another chapter was known only with the revelation of “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.” (‘Ayyāshī, 1961, vol. 1: 19)

Although the narrations of *Tafsīr ‘Ayyāshī* are loose, the theme of this narration is also reported in the Sunnī Ḥadīth collections, too, and we might deem its content as agreed upon by the Sunnī and Twelver Shī‘a narrations.

Ḥākim Nayshābūrī (Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, n.d., vol. 1: 231-232), the Sunnī Ḥadīth transmitter, has mentioned the following narration from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr from Ibn ‘Abbās using three different chains of transmission, and has stipulated at the end of each of them that its chain of transmission is sound based on Bukhārī and Muslim principles,

Sa‘īd b. Jubayr has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās that when Gabriel came to the Prophet and recited “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,” the Prophet (s) figured out that it was a [new] chapter.

Sa‘īd b. Jubayr has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās that the Prophet (s) did not know a chapter was ended until “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” was revealed.

Sa‘īd b. Jubayr has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās that Muslims were not aware of the ending of a chapter up until “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” was revealed. When “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” was revealed, they knew that the previous chapter was over.

Abū Dāwūd Sajistānī (Abū Dāwūd Sajistānī, n.d., vol. 1: 136) and Bayhaqī (Bayhaqī, n.d., vol. 2: 42) have mentioned another narration whose theme is similar to the foregoing narrations. In addition, Abū Bakr Bazzār (Bazzār, 1998, vol. 11: 218) has mentioned another more elaborate narration from Ibn ‘Abbās whose theme is similar to the abovementioned narrations.

‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī in *Tafsīr al-mīzān* calls these narrations as equivalent and writes, These narrations clearly indicate that the Qur’ānic verses were ordered in the presence of the Prophet (s) based on their revelation order, with the Meccan verses in the Meccan chapter and the Medinan verses in the Medinan chapter ... this requires that the differences we see in the location of the verses has been due to the personal efforts of the Companions. (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1997, vol. 12: 127-128)

Similarly, ‘Allāma Ja‘far Murtaḍā ‘Āmilī writes in this regard,

It is not reasonable that the revelation of a chapter begins and some verses of it are revealed, it is stopped and tens of chapters are revealed, and then after many years He returns to the first chapter to complete it.

Similarly, it is not reasonable that a verse or some verses are revealed today, and the Prophet of Allāh abandons them for some years and many chapters are revealed. Then he puts those verses in the chapters that are newly revealed. (‘Āmilī, 1992: 143-144)

Therefore, what is difficult to believe is to deem many verses revealed during the lifetime of the Prophet (s) without any specific place in the chapters and many revealed chapters without verses that would be attached to them later, as some Meccan verses are located in the Medinan chapters and some Meccan chapters entail some Medinan verses. Moreover, the revelation dates of many Medinan verses do not agree with their host chapters.

When these implausible scenarios are put next to the foregoing Sunnī and Shī‘a narration, it can be ensured that the original order of the verses intended by the Prophet (s) is the same as their revelation order, and every chapter ended with the revelation of “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” of the new chapter.

It is noteworthy that some researchers accept the theme of this narration as the main principle in the recordation of the verses, but deem it possible that the place of verses might have been changed by the Prophet (s); however, they consider the confirmation of such cases as conditioned by the accuracy of the narration reported about that verse (‘Āmilī, 1992: 144). Therefore, it is necessary to examine a number of the narrations that claim for the displacements in the revealed order of the verses and the soundness of their chains of transmission.

Narrations on changing the revealed order of the verses by the Prophet (s)

The narrations that have been used to support the claim that the order of verses has been changed by the Prophet (s) is limited to two cases related to two specific verses as well as two general narrations. All these four narrations are mentioned only in the Sunnī Ḥadīth collections, and there is no trace of suchlike narrations in the Twelver Shī‘a Ḥadīth sources. These four narrations are as follows.

- *‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ*

‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ narrates from the Prophet (s), and the believers in the originality of the verse order generally rely on it (Ma‘rifat, 1995, vol. 1: 279; Suyūṭī, 2001, vol. 1: 215).

Layth b. Abī Sulaym narrates from Shahr b. Ḥawshab from ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ, “I was sitting next to the Prophet (s) when he brought his head up and then brought it down so far that he was close to put it the ground. He then brought his head up and said, ‘Gabriel came to me and ordered me to put this verse in this part of this verse “God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition”[Qur’ān 16:90].” (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1999, vol. 4: 218)

However, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal has mentioned the text of this narration with significant changes via another transmission path from Shahr b. Ḥawshab from Ibn ‘Abbās from ‘Uthmān b. Maz‘ūn. Its text is as follows:

Shahr b. Ḥawshab has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās who said, “The Prophet of Allāh was sitting near his house in Mecca. ‘Uthmān b. Maz‘ūn passed by him and smiled at him. The Prophet of Allāh told him, ‘Don’t you sit?’ He said, ‘yes.’ Then the Prophet of Allāh sat facing him and started talking with him. Suddenly the Prophet of Allāh looked up to the sky and continued to look there for a while. Then he looked down and then moved his sight to the right side and on the ground. After that, the Prophet of Allāh passed by ‘Uthmān to the place he had landed his sight on and took his head down, as if he were thinking about what he had been told, while ‘Uthmān b. Maz‘ūn was watching. When he finished this and reflected upon what had been told to him, the sighting direction of the Prophet of Allāh went toward the sky, just like the first time it did. He continued looking to the sky until it [his looking direction] disappeared in the sky. He then sat by ‘Uthmān. ‘Uthmān asked, ‘O Muḥammad! With regard to what came to you when I was sitting by you, [I should say that] I have never seen you like this.’ He said, ‘What did you see in me?’ He said, ‘I saw that you looked at the sky, then you moved your sight to your right side, moved there, and left me. You then brought your head down as if you were thinking about something that had been told to you.’ The Prophet said, ‘Did you figured it out?’ ‘Uthmān said, ‘Yes.’ The Prophet of Allāh said, ‘At the time you were sitting, the Messenger of Allāh came to me.’ ‘Uthmān asked, ‘The Messenger of Allāh?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ ‘Uthmān said,

‘What did he tell you?’ The Prophet said, ‘God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition’ [Qur’ān 16:90]. ‘Uthmān said, ‘At that time faith was inscribed in my heart and I got interested in Muḥammad’ (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1999, vol. 1: 318).

In addition to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the text of this narration is mentioned also by Ibn Sa’d (Ibn Sa’d, 1997, vol. 1: 83), Bukhārī (Bukhārī, 1989, vol. 2: 481-482), Ibn Abī Ḥātam (Ibn Abī Ḥātam, 1999, vol. 7: 2297-2298), and Ṭabarānī (Ṭabarānī, 1984, vol. 9: 39-40) through Shahr b. Ḥawshab from ‘Uthmān b. Maz’ūn.

The evaluation of the chain of transmission

Layth b. Abī Salīm – the narrator of the first narration who has narrated it from ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ – is not trustworthy based on the principles of the rijāl science, because he suffered from mental derangement in the later years of his life (Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī, 1995, vol. 2: 48). As Dhahabī says, at the end of his life, his mental derangement was so severe that he did not know what he was narrating; therefore, he changed the chains of transmission, turned the loose narrations into supported ones, narrated from trustworthy people things that they had not said, and all these were due to his mental derangement (Dhahabī, 1990, vol. 6: 182). However, some have called the chain of transmission of this narration to be good simply because he is one of the narrators of Bukhārī and Muslim (Suyūṭī, 2001, vol. 1: 215).

At any rate, with the conditions that Layth had, it is natural that he imagined ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ instead of ‘Uthmān b. Maz’ūn, did not mention Ibn ‘Abās in the narration, and reported the text of the narration differently. These issues show that Layth has narrated this narration during his mental derangement time.

The evaluation of indications

In the original text of the narration mentioned from ‘Uthmān b. Maz’ūn, there is no reference to the replacement of the verse by the Prophet (s), and the other version of this narration that is reported by Layth from ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ is not confirmable and trustable. Moreover, even if we accept the second version, the narration only mentions the revelation of the verse along with the determination of its location by Gabriel (which is in fact the same revealed order of the verse). Therefore, even the second version does not refer to the change in the location of the verse.

- *The narration by Ibn ‘Abbās*

There are several narrations related to the determination of the location of the verse “And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to God” (Qur’ān 2:281) in the Qur’ān. Some of these narrations point out that the location of this verse is revealed by Gabriel onto the Prophet (s), or that the Prophet (s) has determined its location.

It seems that the main source of this narration is the book *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān* by Farrā’ (d. 823), and it has found its way to other sources from there. The narration reads,

Abū Bakr b. ‘Ayyāsh has narrated from Kalb from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās who said, “The last verse Gabriel revealed was the verse ‘And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to God’ [Qur’ān 2:281]. He then said, ‘Put this verse after the verse 280 of the Cow chapter.’” (Farrā’, n.d., vol. 1: 183)

Likewise, Shaykh Ṭūsī (Ṭūsī, n.d., vol. 2: 399), Ṭabrisī in *Majma‘ al-bayān* (Ṭabrisī, 1993, vol. 2: 979), and some Sunnī exegetes (e.g., Abū Ḥayyān Andalusī, 2000, vol. 2: 719;

Qurṭabī, 1985, vol. 3: 375; Tha‘ālibī, 1998, vol. 1: 544) have mentioned this narration from Ibn ‘Abbās without mentioning its chain of transmission.

As it is evident from the appearance of the narration, it is narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās, and he has not attributed it to the Prophet (s). However, some have inferred from the statement “Ibn ‘Abbās who said, ‘The last verse Gabriel revealed’ ... He then said, ‘Put this verse after the verse 280 of the Cow chapter’” that the subject of the second “said” is Gabriel. As a result, some have transmitted this conclusion and have attributed the statement to Gabriel. An example is Ibn Ḥamza Kirmānī in the book *Al-Burhān fī mutashābih al-Qur’ān* who presents a paraphrased quotation of this narration. Without mentioning the chain of transmission, he narrates it this way,

The last verse revealed was this verse, “And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to God.” Therefore, Gabriel ordered him to put it between the Usury and Debt verses (Kirmānī, 1998: 102)

After him, Suyūṭī narrated his statement in the book *Al-Itqān* (Suyūṭī, 2001, vol. 1: 221) and entered this narration in the books of the qur’ānic sciences. Following him, other books of the qur’ānic sciences such as *Al-Tamhīd fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* (Ma‘rifat, 1995, vol. 1: 279) also presented it with the same wording.

Likewise, Qurṭabī (Qurṭabī, 1985, vol. 3: 375) narrated this narration in his commentary with the foregoing changed wording, and after him figures such as Abū Ḥayyān Andalusī (Abū Ḥayyān Andalusī, 2000, vol. 2: 719) and Tha‘ālibī (Tha‘ālibī, 1998, vol. 1: 544) presented it in their commentaries. Nonetheless, Qurṭabī and figures following him such as Abū Ḥayyān and Tha‘ālibī have given in a third version of this narration in a completely loose manner from Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib (5th century LH), as follows, “Makkī b. Abī Ṭālib has narrated that the Prophet (s) said, ‘Gabriel came to me and said “Put this verse after the 280th verse.””

The evaluation of the chain of transmission

The only chain of transmission found for this narration is the one mentioned by Farrā’ (d. 823 CE), and the other narrations are the transmission of the paraphrased version of this narration, although they have been mentioned without any chain of transmission. Of course, the narration by Farrā’ is deemed weak even from the viewpoint of the Sunnī rijāl scholars, because in addition to Abū Bakr b. ‘Ayyāsh who got mental derangement in his later adulthood (Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī, 1995, vol. 2: 366), Abū Ṣāliḥ is also considered as weak and deceitful (ibid, vol. 1: 121). Therefore, this narration is not valid, too, due to its chain of transmission.

The evaluation of indications

Since the presentation of this narration in the books of exegesis and qur’ānic sciences has been done using paraphrased quotation method, only the original text of this narration is important and the other texts paraphrasing it are worthless. Therefore, the evaluation of indications is done only based on the narration of Farrā’.

First, the appearance of the narration “... Ibn ‘Abbās who said, ‘The last verse Gabriel revealed’ ... He then said, ‘Put this verse after the verse 280 of the Cow chapter’” shows that the second “said” returns to the first “said” and so the articulator of both sentences is Ibn ‘Abbās. Therefore, according to this narration, the placement of the foregoing verse in the foregoing location has been done based on the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās. Hence, the changes made to meaning of the original narration in different versions of it and the attribution of this placement to the Prophet (s) or Gabriel is explained.

Second, the narration that introduces “And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to God” (Qur’ān 2:281) as the last revealed verse of the Qur’ān is in conflict with other narrations that introduce other verses as the last revealed verse (Nikūnām, 2003: 203). As a critique of suchlike narrations, Qāḍī Abū Bakr Bāqilānī suggests:

None of these assertions is attributable to the Prophet (s), and each has been stated as a result of a kind of personal effort and under the shadow of hunches. It is possible that everyone has deemed the last verse he had heard from the Prophet (s) as the last verse (Suyūṭī, 2001, vol. 1: 117; Zarqānī, n.d., vol. 1: 93).

Therefore, this narration does not attribute the changing of the revealed location of a verse to the Prophet (s), either. Moreover, the argumentation based on this narration and the narration before it to prove the originality of the order of other verses whose location is different from their revealed order is also under question. The reason is that even if we deem the acceptability of the implications of these two narrations, the displacement of only two specific verses are verified, and this does not imply the generality of the displacement of the revealed order of other verses at all, because the induction of a general rule based on a specific case is not acceptable.

- *‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān narration*

Another narration that has been used by the believers in the originality of the order of the Qur’ānic verses is the one from ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, the third caliph. This narration is mentioned in some Sunnī Ḥadīth books, including Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi‘* (Tirmidhī, n.d., vol. 2: 780), Ḥākim Nayshābūrī’s *Mustadrak* (Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, n.d., vol. 2: 221), and Abū Ḍavūd’s *Sunnān* (Abū Ḍavūd Sajistānī, n.d., vol. 1: 135). The complete text of this narration is as follows:

Yazīd Fārsī has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās, “I asked ‘Uthmān, ‘What made you to deliberately juxtapose the “Repentance” chapter that is one of the Mi’rān (100-plus-verse) chapters and the “Spoils of War” chapter that is one of the Mathānī (secondary) chapters without writing “In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” between them, and to put them among Sab‘ Ṭiwāl (the Seven Lengthy) chapters? What did move you to do so?”

‘Uthmān answered, “Sometimes some verses of the chapters were revealed to the Prophet (s), and whenever something was revealed to him, he summoned one of his scribes and told him, ‘write this in a chapter in which such and such has been mentioned.’” And when a verse was revealed, he said, ‘Put this verse in the chapter in which such and such is mentioned.’ The Spoils of War chapter was one of the first chapters revealed in Medina, and the Repentance chapter was one of the last chapters of the Qur’ān. The story of that chapter was similar to this story of this chapter, and I thought that that chapter is [part of] this chapter. The Prophet of Allāh passed away and did not determine that if that chapter is [part of] this chapter. Therefore, I juxtaposed the two, did not write “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful” between them, and put it among the Seven Lengthy chapters.

It is noteworthy that this narration is mentioned in a segmented manner in some narration books, and some have come wrongly to believe that this text is the words of Ibn ‘Abbās. Āyatullāh Ma‘rifat has mentioned the narrations this way,

It is narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās who said, “Sometimes some verses of the chapters were revealed to the Prophet (s), and when something was revealed onto him, he called forth one of his scribes and said, ‘Put this in the chapter in which such and such is mentioned.’” (Ma‘rifat, 1995, vol. 1: 277)

The source of this truncation is Zarkishī's *al-Burhān* at the beginning of which he mentions this narration in its complete form (Zarkishī, 1990, vol. 1: 329), but some pages later, segments the narration and just mentions Ibn 'Abbās' quotation (ibid: 334). This brings about the foregoing mistake for some to deem this segmented quotation as an independent narration by Ibn 'Abbās. Then, this truncation has been used by some to rule for the originality of the qur'ānic verses order, while the original narration evidently demonstrates the free effort and opinion of the Companions in ordering the qur'ānic verses.

The evaluation of the chain of transmission

Although 'Uthmān b. 'Affān is not deemed an authoritative transmitter in the Twelver Shī'a school, the chain of transmission of this narration is considered valid by the Sunnī scholars. As a result, Ḥākim Nayshābūrī has introduced this narration as "sound based on the conditions set by the two great scholars" [i.e., Muslim and Bukhārī] (Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, n.d., vol. 2: 221), and Trimidhī has called its chain of transmission "good and sound" (Tirmidhī, n.d., vol. 2: 780). Nonetheless, some researchers have questioned the chain of transmission of this narration due to the shakiness in some paths of this narration and the disputed validity of Yazīd Fārsī (Nikūnām, 2003: 201-202).

The evaluation of indications

First, this narration at most implies that the location of groups of verses that were revealed in different times was expressed by the Prophet (s) when they were revealed, and it is clear that this does not mean changing the place of verses by the Prophet (s).

Second, the outer appearance of Ibn 'Abbās' question in this narration implies that the Seven Lengthy, 100-plus-verse, and Secondary chapters had been clarified by the Prophet (s), and Ibn 'Abbās has asked 'Uthmān about his opposition to the Prophet's (s) determined verse order, i.e., why 'Uthmān has changed the place of the Spoils of War chapter (which is one of the Secondary chapters) and the Repentance chapter (which is one of the 100-plus-verse chapters) and has set them among the Seven Lengthy ones.

It is interesting that in response, 'Uthmān refers to his lack of knowledge about the location of the verses of the Repentance chapter as well as his own opinion in combining both possibilities (the distinctiveness of the Repentance chapter and its being a successive part of the Spoils of War chapter) where he has juxtaposed the two chapters without having "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Companion" between them!

- *Zayd b. Thābit narration*

Another narration based on which the change in the revealed order of the verses in the general manner is attributed to the Prophet (s) is the one by Zayd b. Thābit, which is narrated by Ibn Ḥabbān as follows:

Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb has narrated from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Shamāsa from Zayd b. Thābit who said, "We were writing the Qur'ān in the presence of the Prophet of Allāh from ruq'as [slips of paper, animal skin, or leaf]." (Ibn Ḥabbān, 1994, vol. 1: 320)

The examination of this narration shows that its text is also segmented. Its complete text as narrated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1999, vol. 5: 185), Tirmidhī (Tirmidhī, n.d., vol. 2: 994), and Ḥākim Nayshābūrī (Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, n.d., vol. 2: 229) is as follows:

Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb has narrated from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Shamāsa from Zayd b. Thābit who said, "We were writing the Qur'ān in the presence of the Prophet of

Allāh from ruq‘as when the Prophet (s) said, ‘How lucky you are!’ We said, ‘For what O the Prophet of Allāh?’ He said, ‘Because the angels of God have opened their wings on it.’”

However, in addition to this narration, Ṭabarānī has narrated another text with two different chains of transmission from Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb once with the statement “We were writing the revelation” and once without referring to the writing of the revelation (Ṭabarānī, 1984, vol. 5: 158). Ibn Ḥanbal, too, has narrated the text without referring to the writing of the revelation using another chain of transmission (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1999, vol. 5: 184). Similarly, in addition to his previously mentioned segmented narration, Ibn Ḥabbān has also presented this text without referring to the writing of the revelation (Ibn Ḥabbān, 1994, vol. 16: 293).

The evaluation of the chain of transmission

Although the chain of transmission of this narration is considered by the Sunnī scholars as valid, there is no doubt that the Twelver Shī‘a does not deem Zayd b. Thābit as an authoritative transmitter at all, because he was one of the people who attended Saqīfa after the demise of the Prophet (s) and helped change the conditions in favor of Abū Bakr, and was later one of the people who attacked the house of Lady Fāṭima (s). During the caliphate of ‘Umar, Zayd was his temporary successor in Medina three times when he was absent (Subḥānī, 1998, vol. 1: 96). He was favored by ‘Uthmān, too, was set as the head of public treasury during his reign, and achieved a lot of properties. Moreover, when ‘Uthmān went for Ḥajj, he was his deputy in Medina (ibid). Zayd never pledged allegiance to His Highness ‘Alī (a); contrarily, he encouraged people to curse the Commander of the Faithful (a) and never attended any battles fought by His Highness ‘Alī (a). Zayd b. Thābit is reproached in a narration by Imām Bāqir (a) (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 7: 407).

The evaluation of indications

First, this narration does not prove the writing of the Qur’ān in the presence of the Prophet (s) due to the existence of disagreement and shakiness in its text; rather, there are signs for the fictitiousness of the original version of this narration. On the one hand, praising the Levant and generating virtues for the areas governed by Mu‘āwiya indicates the political intentions behind this narration. On the other hand, If Zayd b. Thābit had written the Qur’ān in the presence of the Prophet (s), then how did he collected it from the wood, animal skin, pieces of stone, and people’s memories without mentioning its written text at all! (Nikūnām, 2003: 194-198).

Second, even if we prove the claim on the writing of the Qur’ān by Zayd in the presence of the Prophet (s), this narration does not imply at all that the noble Prophet (s) changed the place of the verses when he was rewriting the verses from pieces of paper or skin.

In addition to this narration, there are other narrations that imply the compilation of the Qur’ān by some Companions, but none of them are deemed as an evidence for the displacement of the verses by the Prophet (s) or the originality of the existing order of the Qur’ānic verses. ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī writes in this regard,

The utmost indication these narrations make is merely the collection of the revealed chapters and verses by them, but they do not favor the existing order of the chapters and verses or any other order. (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1997, vol. 12: 121)

The examination of the narration related to His Highness ‘Alī (a)

The narrations that express the stance of His Highness ‘Alī (a) to the order of the verses in the Qur’ānic text can be put into two major groups.

1.1. The narrations about the order of verses in His Highness ‘Alī’s (a) manuscript

Undoubtedly, the first scribe of the divine revelation in Mecca is His Highness ‘Alī (a) who continued to write down the revealed verses up until the last day of the Prophet’s (s) life. The Prophet (s) greatly insisted that ‘Alī (a) write and record what was revealed so that nothing from the Qur’ān and the divine revelation would get hidden from ‘Alī (Ma‘rifat, 2003: 27; id., 2002: 43). It is stipulated in many narrations that His Highness ‘Alī (a) learned all qur’ānic verses and chapters directly from the Prophet (s) and through his dictation. It is mentioned in a narration from the Commander of the Faithful (a),

Ask me about God’s book, because by God, no verse of God’s book was revealed – at night or during day, while [we were] travelling or not – unless the Prophet of Allāh (s) recited it to me and taught me its interpretation. (Ṭabrisī, 1983, vol. 1: 261)

It should be noted that the daily writing of the manuscript by His Highness ‘Alī (a) naturally requires that the order of verses in his manuscript be the same as the revealed order of the verses, as in many narrations, this has been mentioned using the clause “the way God has revealed.” For instance, Ṣaffār narrates from Imām Bāqir (a) who said,

There is no one who says that he has collected all the Qur’ān the way God has revealed unless [he is] a liar, and no one collected and kept it the way God revealed it other than ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Imāms after him (Ṣaffār, 1984, vol. 1: 193).

At any rate, there is no disagreement among the Twelver Shī‘a notables that His Highness ‘Alī’s (a) manuscript was collected according to the revealed order, although there is disagreement among them that if the revelation order was merely limited to the order of chapters in the manuscript or it also included the order of verses, too. Āyatullāh Khu‘ī has stated that His Highness ‘Alī’s (a) manuscript entails the original order of chapters (Khu‘ī, n.d.: 223), while ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā‘ī (Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, 1997, vol. 12: 128), ‘Allāma Balāghī (Balāghī Najafī, 2000, vol. 1: 18), and Āyatullāh Ma‘rifat (Ma‘rifat, 2003: 86; Id., 2002: 121) deem both the chapter and verse order of this manuscript to be the same as the revealed order.

It should be noted that scholars’ viewpoint in this regard is affected by their viewpoint to the originality or non-originality of the existing order of the chapters and verses of the noble Qur’ān. That is to say, those who deem the order of verses as original but the order of chapter as non-original have taken the statement “the way God has revealed” in the narrations about ‘Alī’s (a) manuscript to be about the order of chapters. On the contrary, those who do not deem the existing order of the verses and the chapters as original have interpreted the description of his manuscript as “the way God has revealed” as considering the order of both verses and chapters. As a result, the people who have come to believe in the originality of the existing order of the qur’ānic verses and chapters have rejected this quality of the manuscript of His Highness ‘Alī (a), and have taken statements such as “the way God has revealed” to mean the interpretation and esoteric interpretation of the verses (Mahdawīrārd, 2003: 100-103; Nāṣiḥiyān, 2010: 82).

In any case, the daily writing of His Highness ‘Alī’s (a) manuscript and the outer appearance of the description of his manuscript in many narrations as “the way God has revealed” shows that the order of his manuscript has been according to the revealed order of the verses. This implies that changing the revealed order of the verses is not original and attributable to the Prophet (s), because if this were the case, he would not object to that order when writing his own manuscript.

The narrations about the stance of His Highness ‘Alī (a) to the ‘Uthmānic manuscript order

Some researchers of the Qur’ānic sciences have relied on the stance of His Highness ‘Alī (a) during his caliphate to the ‘Uthmānic manuscript, and have taken his avoidance of changing that manuscript as a kind of tacit approval by him (Mīr Muḥammadī Zarandī, 2000: 150-151; Sayyid b. Ṭāwūs, n.d.: 278). Some narrations have been used to support this claim.

- *Ṭalḥa’s narration*

A narration from Ṭalḥa is mentioned in the Twelver Shī‘a sources, and the related part of this lengthy narration is as follows:

Ṭalḥa told His Highness ‘Alī (a): “O Abal-Ḥasan! Why didn’t you answer my question about [your manuscript of] the Qur’ān ‘Why don’t you present it to people?’” His Highness ‘Alī (a) said, “O Ṭalḥa! I refrained to answer you deliberately. Tell me if all of what ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān have written is Qur’ān or there is non-Qur’ān in it, too.” Ṭalḥa said, “Of course all of it is Qur’ān.” His Highness said, “If you cling to what is in this Qur’ān, you will be saved from Fire and will go into Paradise, because our authority, the expression of our right, and the necessity of obeying us is in it” (Sulaym b. Qays, 1985, vol. 2: 659; Ṭabrisī, 1983, vol. 1: 154).

The evaluation of the chain of transmission

The foregoing narration from Ṭalḥa is reported in only two books, i.e., *Iḥtijāj* and Sulaym’s book. Both books are weak from the viewpoint of the chain of transmission. In addition to the ambiguities that exist about its author (i.e., Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ṭabrisī), the narrations of *Iḥtijāj* are all without chain of transmission and are loose and invalid from the viewpoint of Rijāl. On the other hand, in addition to the weakness of the narrator of the Sulaym’s book (Abān b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh) (Ṭūsī, 1994: 109), there are doubts about the books itself and its attribution to Sulaym b. Qays, as well (Jalālī, 2003: 13-16; Jawādī, 2005: 163-179).

The evaluation of indications

The main point in Ṭalḥa’s narration is merely the confirmation of the authoritativeness of the existing Qur’ān rather than its congruence with the original order. In other words, the narration intends to assert that the existing manuscript of the Qur’ān can lead the human to blissfulness. However, it has nothing to say about the question that if the existing manuscript is congruent in all its qualities – including the order of the verses – with the originality order given by the Prophet (s) or not. The reference to the complete text of the narration (Sulaym b. Qays, 1985, vol. 2: 659; Ṭabrisī, 1983, vol. 1: 154) clearly confirms this issue.

- *The narration of Suwayd b. Ghafla*

According to the narration of Suwayd b. Ghafla in Sunnī Ḥadīth collections, the ‘Uthmānic manuscript has been approved by His Highness ‘Alī (a), too. This narration is narrated here from Suwayd through two similar chains of transmission:

Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālīsī has narrated from Muḥammad b. Abān from ‘Alqama b. Marthad from ‘Ayzār b. Jarwal Ḥaḍramī, “When Mukhtār Thaqaḥī started his uprising, we were among the first people to accompany him from Ḥaḍramūt. At

that time, Suwayd b. Ghafla came to us and said, ‘We are indebted to you and you are our neighbors. I was informed that you are rushing to this man [Mukhtār]. Therefore, by God I should tell you what I heard from him. One day a man called upon me from behind. I returned and saw Mukhtār. He said, “O Shaykh! Is there anything remaining from the love of this man [‘Alī (a)] in your heart?” I said, “I take God as witness that I love him by my heart, ear, eye, and tongue.” Mutkhār said, “But I take God as witness that I am his enemy by my heart, eye, ear, and tongue.”’”

‘Ayzār b. Jarwal says, “I told Suwayd, ‘I swear by God you want to dissuade [people] from The Family of Muḥammad and persuade them to defend ‘the one who burned the manuscripts.’” Suwayd said, “By God I should tell you what I heard from His Highness ‘Alī (a). I heard that ‘Alī said, ‘Be pious about ‘Uthmān, do not go beyond due bounds about him, and do not say ‘the one who burned the manuscripts.’ By God, he did not do this without consulting us, the Companions of Muḥammad (s). ‘Uthmān called us forth and said, “What do you say about this reading? I have heard that someone tells another ‘My reading is better than yours,’ but this is close to disbelief. If you have disagreement today, it will be worse tomorrow.” We said, “What is your opinion?” ‘Uthmān said, “I say we should bring people to a unique manuscript so that there remain no disagreement and disunity.” We said, “Your idea is good.” ... ‘Alī (a) said, “If I were incumbent, I would do the same thing ‘Uthmān did.’”’” (Ibn Abī Dāwūd Sajistānī, 2003: 96-98; Numayrī, 1979, vol. 3: 994-995).

The second version of this narration is reported from Suwayd b. Ghafla with some truncation and addition as follows:

Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālīsī has narrated from Muḥammad b. Abān and Shu‘ba, both narrating from ‘Alqama b. Marthad from Shu‘ba from another person from Suwayd b. Ghafla who said, “I heard from ‘Alī who said, ‘May God have mercy on ‘Uthmān! If I was incumbent of it [the Qur’ān], I would do the same things to the manuscripts that ‘Uthmān did.’” (Ibn Abī Dāwūd Sajistānī, 2003: 98)

The evaluation of the chain of transmission

Although the second version of the narration from Suwayd b. Ghafla is weak due to the existence of an unknown transmitter immediately after Suwayd, since the second version is not independent of the first version (although it has had truncation and addition in text), the narration from Suwayd is deemed by Sunnī scholars as valid.

However, the examination of the conditions and other narrations of Suwayd b. Ghafla based on the Twelver Shī‘a principles reveals that he forged traditions and attributed them to the Companions – especially Ahl al-Bayt (a) – to justify the actions or opinions of the caliphs. Some of these forged narrations include stating that Bilāl said “Prayer is better than sleeping” in the morning prayer call (Bayhaqī, n.d., vol. 1: 424), expressing that Imām Ḥasan (a) thrice divorced his wife in one occasion and then narrated the acceptability of thrice divorcing from the Prophet (s) (Bayhaqī, n.d., vol. 2: 336; Dār Qur’ānī, 1998, vol. 4: 18; Ṭabarānī, 1984, vol. 3: 91), stating a sermon from His Highness ‘Alī on reprimanding the Shī‘a and praising two caliphs using utterances such as “No one likes those two people other than the pious believer and no one despises those two people other than the mean wrongdoer” (Maqdisī, n.d.: 49-52), suggesting ‘Alī’s volitional pledge of allegiance with Abū Bakr while Abū Bakr disliked accepting the caliphate (ibid). Therefore, it is not unlikely for him to forge a narration to confirm ‘Uthmān’s burning of the manuscripts. Pertaining to this discussion is the fact that

‘Ayzār b. Jarwal’s did not accept his statement about Mukhtār and accused him of trying to dissuade people from the Family of Muḥammad and to defend ‘Uthmān.

The evaluation of indications

The content of Suwayd’s narration is that taking measures to bring about the unity of manuscripts and remove disagreements from among Muslims is a correct action. However, this narration does not reject or approve all aspects of ‘Uthmān’s actions – including burning the other manuscripts, the order of the verses of the Qur’ān, etc.

The performance of His Highness ‘Alī (a) during his caliphate

The examination of the role of His Highness ‘Alī (a) during his caliphate clearly shows that the majority of people in that era knew him only as a political leader rather than a religious leader and the successor of the Prophet of Allāh (s), as when he opposed the observation of the conduct of the two first caliphs in the six-member committee held for the determination of caliph after ‘Umar, he was not appointed as caliph. It was for the same reason that after he became caliph later, his actions to prevent the religious innovations of caliphs such as Tarāwīḥ prayer and returning the pulpit of the Prophet of Allāh to its original place after being displaced by the first and second caliph (Ṣāni‘ī, 2006: 155) did not succeed. Similarly, other innovations of the caliphs such as replacing the utterance “Rush for the best deed” with “Prayer is better than sleep” to the Morning Prayer, prohibiting Mut‘a al-Ḥajj (the intermediary pleasure time during Ḥajj), prohibiting temporary marriage, saying prayers with crossed arms, changing the location of the Station of Abraham, maintaining Shurayḥ in the judgment seat, etc. remained in effect during ‘Alī’s (a) caliphate, too. In order to understand that His Highness ‘Alī (a) was not generally known as a religious leader, it is sufficient to note that during his four years of caliphate, many Muslims formally fought against him in three battles, sometimes called him a disbeliever, and accused him of cooperation in the murder of ‘Uthmān, accusations that were frequently rejected by His Highness ‘Alī (a) (Sayyid Raḍī, 1994: 63, 103, 249, 367, 446, 448). The examination of part of this trend shows that during his reign, he was not known among people as the successor of the Prophet of Allāh, but rather he was considered as merely a political leader with little religious and caliphate-bound aspects.

Therefore, since His Highness ‘Alī (a) was not deemed generally as a religious authority during his caliphate, it was not possible for him to make changes in the order of the verses, as it was the case with other religious innovations. Therefore, since not changing the other religious innovations during his reign does not show his confirmation of them, not changing the order of the verses also does not mean he confirmed that order. Ibn Shahr Āshūb’s narration in this regard corroborates this point:

It is narrated from His Highness ‘Alī (a) who said, “If I was provided with a cushion and my right was recognized, I would definitely present them with the manuscript the Prophet (s) dictated to me and I wrote.” (Ibn Shahr Āshūb, 1960, vol. 2: 41)

This reveals that the changes made in the revealed order of some verses in some chapters of the Qur’ān is not original and their attribution to the noble Prophet (s) or His Highness ‘Alī (a) is not supported by narrations. Therefore, we might accept the content of the narrations on changing the order in the manuscript during the time of Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 2: 619; Nu‘mānī, 1960: 317-318) – even though they have weak chains of transmission. In fact, we should deem this change a necessary action, especially because it is noted in some of these narrations that the manuscript of His Highness

‘Alī (a) will be used during the advent of Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance). Pertaining to this discussion is a narration from Imām Ṣādiq (a) presented by Shaykh Kulaynī:

Sālim b. Salama narrates, “Someone was reciting before Imām Ṣādiq (a) parts of the Qur’ān that was not similar to the people’s reading, and I was hearing it. Imām Ṣādiq (a) said, ‘Stop this reading. Recite [it] similar to the way people recite up until the uprising of the Riser [may God hasten his reappearance]. Then, when the Riser rises, he will read the Book of the Sublime Allāh based on its boundaries and will present the manuscript written by ‘Alī [a]’” (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 2: 633; Ṣaffār, 1984, vol. 1: 193).

Although some narration transmitters have included this narration among the narrations on the differences of the Readings, it is clear that the use of the term “reading” in this narration does not intend its modern terminological meaning – i.e., the reading difference originating from the diacritics of the words. The reason is that the manuscript that was written by His Highness ‘Alī (a) did not have diacritic signs and letter dots, and these signs and letter dots were innovated many years after the martyrdom of His Highness (Ma‘ārif, 2004: 190; Zanjānī, 2012: 135-136). Therefore, the assertion of Imām Ṣādiq (a) about reading the Qur’ān based on its boundaries and basing it on the presentation of His Highness ‘Alī’s (a) manuscript by Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) implies that this difference is not merely about diacritic signs of the words. That is, the term “reading” in this narration includes the differences of reading derived from both the order of the qur’ānic verses and the diacritic signs of the words.

Conclusion

The examination of the narrations about the order of the qur’ānic verses during the revelation era (that are mentioned in both Twelver Shī‘a and Sunnī tradition books) shows that the determination of the boundary of every chapter was done merely by the revelation of “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.” The revelation of this statement showed the ending of the previous chapter and the beginning of the new one. Therefore, the qur’ānic verses were put into each respective chapter based on their revelation order.

The inspection of the verses that claim for the change in the revealed order of the verses by the Prophet (s) demonstrated that in addition to the weak chains of transmission, these narrations have so weak indications that they could not confirm their claim. It was shown that what has made these narrations have such implications is the segmentation or paraphrased quotation that has been done by some people when transmitting these narrations. Therefore, it can be said that changing the place of verses by the noble Prophet (s) is not proved for any verse.

Pertaining to this discussion is the point that the content of the narrations related to Imām Mahdī’s (may God hasten his reappearance) advent era – which promise the returning of the Qur’ān to its revealed order – can be accepted, even though the majority of them have weak chains of transmission.

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