Abstract

One of the most principal sources of Sunni-Shia conflict is the claim about the presence of ‘tahrīf Al-Qur’an’, or the distortion in the Qur’an, in many Shia literatures of Qur’an exegesis books. The claim ends in causing many Shia Muslims to suffer discrimination. For example, they are believed to have a different version of the Qur’an and the doctrin of taqiyyah with which they the true nature of their belif. This study focuses on the works of Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi which are considered to be the main reference for accusing Shia Muslims of distorting some Qur’anic verses (tahrīf). This study aims to review the thought of al-Qummi about tahrīf Al-Qur’an as he claimed. This is library research using content analysis. The research found that al-Qummi when developing the concept of ‘tahrīf Al-Qur’an’ focused on exegetical exercises, not on actual distortion of the Qur’anic texts. This finding was based on the fact that the term ‘tahrīf’ which that some classical ulama (figures) of Shia Muslims made did not deal with distortion of the Qur’anic verses (the corruption of texts), but with Qur’an interpretations which contradict the ‘intended meaning’ of the Qur’anic verses (the corruption of meaning).

Keywords: Syiah, tahrīf al-Qur’an, Abu al-Hāṣan ‘Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi, Tafsir al-Qummi

**Kata Kunci:** Syiah, *tahrif* al-Qur’an, Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi, Tafsir al-Qummi

**Introduction**

The vast majority of Muslim people believe that the authenticity of the Qur’an is guaranteed by the God Himself. In this regard, believing that the Uthmanic codex has contained all the God’s revelation to the Prophet Muhammad without any addition, reduction, or even a small change is considered to be a part of Islamic doctrine. However, an Islamic sect cast a doubt on the authenticity of the Uthmanic codex (Amal, 2013: 262). The sect was Shia Islam\(^1\) (Hasjmy, 1983: 39) (Tijani, 2007: 29). The sect

\(^1\) Etymologically, the term Shia is a group or a faction. From the historical perspective, the term Shia referred to a group of Muslims who loyally supported the fourth caliph Ali ibn Abi Thalib in the political context. The group later joined theological debate and ended up being a sect with a particular ideological standpoint, namely the idolization of Ali and all his descendants by considering them to be the true successors to the Prophet Muhammad as the Prophet himself appointed. They believed that the caliphs before Ali had deprived him of his political rights for leadership. With the passage of time, the sect split up, with each faction having its own concept of imāmah (the leadership of faith). As a matter of fact, of all the branches of Shia Muslims who manage to survive and constitute the largest group is who is called Shia Ithna ‘Asyariyah (Twelver Shi’ism). The group is also known as Imami or Ja’fari. They are defined as the Muslim
believes that the process of the Qur’an codification initiated by Uthman ibn ‘Affan made a change from the authentic Qur’an and excluded a large portion of it, be it a word, a sentence, a verse, or even an entire chapter (surah). Such change is usually referred as to *tabdil* or *tabrif* (Amal, 2013: 262). Many leading figures of Shia Muslims claimed that there is distortion in the Qur’an (*tabrif*). One of them was Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi, who made such claim in his work, entitled *Tafsir al-Qummi*.

Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi, in the introduction of his book, explicitly mentioned that there is distortion (*tabrif*) in some parts of the Qur’an, which he called *ma huwa mubarraf minhu* (something excluded from the Qur’an) (Qummi, n.d.: 10). Some of the Qur’anic verses which he claimed to be distorted include the Qur’an 4: 166 and 167, the Qur’an 5: 70, the Qur’an 26: 227, and the Qur’an 6: 93 (Qummi, n.d.: 10-11). Besides, in order to mention another form of the distortion in the Qur’an, al-Qummi also used a phrase *ma huwa kana ‘ala khilafi ma anzalallahu* (something that contradicts what the God revealed). Included in this category are the Qur’an 3: 110, the Qur’an 25: 74, and the Qur’an 13: 10 (Qummi, n.d.:10). At first glance, the two phrases he used indicate the existence of textual evidences within the Uthmanic codex which do not resemble what was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Such claims should surely not be considered to be baseless accusations taking into the fact that some reports (*riwāyat*) stating that a number of God’s revelations were not officially recorded in the Utmanic text type. Many Muslim scholars expatiated upon those extra-scriptural materials in their description about *nasîkh-mansûkh* (*nasîkh*: a ruling which abrogates; *mansûkh*: a ruling which was abrogated by another ruling). Some of those materials were categorized into a collection of Hadith Qudsi which since the early period of Islam has not been seen as parts of the Qur’an despite its divine attribute (Amal, 2013: 251).
In general, there are three main types of naskh (abrogation): (1) the God’s revelation whose ruling and verse are abrogated (naskh al-hukm wa al-tilawah); (2) the God’s revelation whose ruling is abrogated, but whose verse is still included in the Uthmanic codex (naskh al-hukm duna al-tilawah); and (3) the God’s revelation whose verse is abrogated, but whose ruling is still functional (naskh al-tilawah duna al-hukm) (Suyuti, 2012: 340-345).

Of the three types, the second is what draws the attention of Ulema (Muslim scholars) the most as it is directly related to the process of interpreting Qur’anic verses, especially in interpreting apparently contradictory verses. Al-Suyuti even regarded knowledge about nasikh-mansukh as an essential requirement for Qur’an interpretation (Suyuti, 2012: 339). However, in the meantime, the first and third types raise an issue concerning the authenticity and integrity of the Uthmanic codex because both types indicate the existence of some God’s revelations which were not included in the codex, and instead the “obrigated” revelations managed to be recorded in some Hadiths and some other reports (Amal, 2013: 252).

In this concern, Sunni Muslim scholars see the concept of naskh al-tilawah helps alleviate the problem of the exclusion of some verses in the codex. They believe that existing codex of the Qur’an is the final version of the Qur’an and has contained the entire revelations to the Prophet Muhammad without any addition, reduction or change. From the perspective of Sunni Muslim scholars, the occurrence of Shia Muslim’s claim mentioned in some their classical literatures about the presence of distortion (tahrif) in the Qur’an is indicative of their refusal to recognize the status of the Uthmanic codex as the representative of God’s speech by accusing the codex of causing distortion of the Qur’an.

Furthermore, Shia Muslims are believed to have their own official codex of the Qur’an, which they hide and only after the occurrence of Imam Mahdi will their codex be made publicly available. Actually, some of
Shia Muslims confirm the authenticity of the Uthmanic codex and deny the existence of distortion in it. Nevertheless, Sunni Muslim scholars see the statement as no less than an action of taqiyyah⁡² (Shihab, n.d.: 199) (Saduq, n.d.: 107-108) as stated by Muhammad bin Abdurrahman al-Sayf (Sayf, n.d.: 74-78), which is in line with the statement of Ignaz Goldziher in his Mazahib al-Tafsir al-Islami. He said that although some of the Shia Muslim have dismissed a notion held by their fellow Shia Muslims that the existing Qur’an cannot be seen as an authoritative source of Islam in the light of doubts on its authenticity and originality, the adherants of Shi’ism in general question the validity of the Uthmanic codex of the Qur’an. They believe that the Uthmanic codex in its association with the true revelation to the Prophet Muhammad contains as many additions and significant changes as reductions (Goldziher, 2010: 324). In their belief, the Qur’an is much more and longer than the version widely shared and distributed today. Garcin de Tassy and Mirza Kazhim Ahmad showed for the first time in Journal Asiatique (1842), one of the Quranic chapters widely spread in Shia Muslim community which was not included in the Uthmanic codex. Soon afterwards, in the Bankipore library in India was found a manuscript of the Qur’an containing two chapters called “al-Nurain” and “al-Wilayah”, consisting of 41 and 7 verses respectively (Goldziher, 2010: 324).

However, some Shia Muslims denied that they accused the Uthmanic codex of making distortion of the Qur’an. They argued that the term tahrif mentioned in classical literatures of Shia Muslim scholars refers not to the distortion of the Qur’anic texts in the Uthmanic codex, but to the distortion of meaning, i.e, deviation from the original, intended

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¹ Taqiyyah is etymologically protection or prudence, and it is terminologically an action of ignoring an obligation for life safety or avoiding any threat endangering one’s life. Al-Sayykh al-Sjaduq said that taqiyyah is obligatory: abandoning taqiyyah is as bad as abandoing the five prayers. He further stressed that taqiyyah is an action obligatory for Shia Muslims to take until the occurrence of who is called al-Qaim. In this sense, abandoning taqiyyah means abandoning Allah, the Prophet, and Imams.
Muhammad Itsbatul Haq, Abd. Halim

meaning of a Qur’anic verse. Abu al-Qasim al-Musawi al-Khu’i, in his *al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, said that the world *tabrif* is meant by al-Qummi to point toward the action of distorting the true meaning of the Qur’an – what is known as *ta’wil batil*. According to al-Khu’i, this is a common phenomenon happening in many Islamic sects (Khu’i, 1981: 197). He stated further that Sunni Muslims admitted the existence *tabrif* in the sense of the distortion of Qur’anic texts within the Uthmanic codex by their developing the two aforementioned categories of *nasikh-mansukh* (Khu’i, 1981: 201).

Considering both sides of the arguments, it can be said that a more comprehensive study on the issue of *tabrif* in the Qur’an is still relevant to be carried out amid the social discord always involving the two sects of Islam, Sunni and Shia. This research is focused on the tought of Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi about *tabrif* in the Qur’an. Besides the reason that al-Qummi clearly stated that there is a distortion in the Qur’an, the research gave the focus on al-Qummi’s thought for some other reasons. *First*, Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi was among Shia Muslims’ leading figures and his Qur’an exegesis book, *Tafsir al-Qummi*, is an excellent reference for the adherents of Shi’ism. In the community of Shia Muslims, Al-Qummi was an intellectual famous for his wealth of knowledge. His father made a close friendship with Imam al-Ridha, and al-Qummi himself was a grand master to whom al-Kulaini frequently referred in writing his masterpiece, Shia’s number-one hadth collection book: *al-Kafi*.

Al-Qummi’s Qur’an exegesis book belongs to the category of *tafsir bi al-ma’tsur* with a chain of transmission close to Imams, considered to be well-respected authorities on the valid interpretation of the Qur’an. Besides, this book is the primary information source of the next generation of the Shia Qur’anic exegesis such as *al-Shafi, Majma’ al-Bayan*, and *al-Burhan*. *Second*, Al-Qummi’s Qur’an exegesis book is the focal point of the
disagreement between Sunni and Shia concerning the issue of *tahrif*. On the one hand, Sunni Muslims accused Shia of questioning the authenticity of the Uthmanic codex of the Qur’an on the basis of the content of this book. On the other hand, besides refuting Sunni’s accusation against this book, Shia Muslims regard the book of al-Qummi as a great legacy from the earliest generation of Shia Muslim community.

**The Terms Tahrif and the Qur’an**

Etymologically, the term *tahrif* is derived from an Arabic word consisting of three base letters: *ha’*, *ra’*, and *fa’*. According to *Lisan al-‘Arab*, the word *al-Harf* literally means *al-tarf dan al-Janib*, namely a point or a verge. The following is the example of the Qur’anic use of the word *al-Harf*, namely in the Qur’an 22: 11.

There are among men some who serve God, as it were, on the verge (*‘ala harfin*): if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content; but if trial comes to them, they turn on their face: they lose both this world and the Hereafter: that is loss for all to see! (RI, n.d.: 333).

Al-Zamakhshyari interpreted the word *harf* in the Qur’anic verse mentioned above as the verge of religion, not its central or focal point. He said that the verse utters a parable of those people who embrace a religion with hesitation, not firmness. They are like soldiers at the edge of the line, as it were: if they feel the will win the war and obtain *ganimab* (wealth tkaen by force from an enemy in times of war), they will feel happy; if they feel otherwise, they will turn on their face and leave the the battlefield (Zamakhshyari, 1998: 179). The word bears different new manings, some of which are fissures or cracks, thin camels, a tendency to turn away, and different styles of reading al-Qur’an just as mentioned in a hadith report that the Qur’an was revealed in seven *aburu’,* namely seven ways of reciting the Qur’an (Ansari, 2009: 50-51).
Meanwhile, the verb *harafa* means ‘adala, that is, to deviate. The word *tahrif* is a verbal noun (*masdar*) derived from the verb *barafa* meaning moving something from its original place to a verge. In this sense, *tahrif al-kalam* is to move a meaning from a word to which it is attached. To put it simply, *tahrif al-kalam* can be defined as interpreting a sentence with other meanings than its literal (*zahir*) meanings without any reliable indicator (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 8). Therefore, the use of the term *tahrif* in the context of a word or sentence points towards the change of the word’s or sentence’s intended meaning.

In Qur’anic studies, *tahrif* can terminologically receive five definitions. In his book, entitled *Tahrif al-Qur’an Usturah am Waqi’*, Hasan Tahiri al-Kharram Abadi mentioned all the five definitions (Abadi 2006, 25-28) which will be described in the following paragraphs.

a. *Tahrif fi al-alfaz*

*Tahrif fi al-alfaz* is a change in Qur’an narrations. It can take the form of changing a word into another word, whether or not they are synonymous. For example, the report from Ibn Mas’ud said that he allowed to change a word of the Qur’an into another word synonymous to it, like the use of “*al-‘alim*” in place of “*al-hakim*”.

However, both Sunni and Shia Muslims deny the existence of this type of tahrif in the Qur’an because the miraculous quality (*i’jaz*) of the Qur’an lies in both its narrations and the meanings attached to them (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 12).

In addition to deliberately changing a word into another word, this type of *tahrif* may take another two forms. The first is the *tahrif* in the form of variant readings of the Qur’an (*qira’at*). According to Abu al-Qasim al-Musawi al-Khu’i, no *qira’at* has the status of *mutawatir*, which means that only one variant of *qira’at* represents God’s revelation to the Prophet Muhammad, while other variants contain changes and reductions to the al-Qur’an (Khu’i, 1981: 198).
Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifah stressed that other variants of *qira’at* al-Khu’i meant include the ones that occurred and spread widely after the death of the Prophet, namely the variants of *qira’at* which do not resemble the widely-known variant most Muslims recite mentioned in *al-Kafi* (Kulaini, 2005: 583). He called this type of *tabrīf* *tabrīf* *qira’i* (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 11)

The second is the change (*tabrīf*) resulting from different ways of uttering a word or sentence due to dialectical variations (variant accent or pronunciation). It is popularly known that each tribe of the Arab nation – probably it happens not only in the Arab nation but also in all nations in the world that each tribe speaks in its local accent - has different ways of uttering a word. This type of *Tabrīf* is acceptable, even in the case of non-Arabic accents, as long as it keeps the form of the Qur’anic word and its meaning perfectly intact and does not break any of the existing linguistic rules (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 11)

b. *Tabrīf* *fi al-ma’na*

*Tabrīf* *fi al-ma’na* is to alter the meaning of a particular text or narration. Such alteration is caused when a word is understood in a meaning different from the original meaning literally or metaphorically, whether or not the alteration is made by considering the word formation (*wad‘*) or other indicators allowing the alteration. This type of *Tabrīf* is the most frequently occurring one. *Tabrīf* in this sense refers to a product of interpretation. In this regard, one will automatically consider an interpretation to be a *tabrīf* if it challenges his/her ideology and belief. According to Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifah, there is no *tabrīf* in the Qur’an except in this sense (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 10)

c. *Tabrīf* *fi al-tartib* (Ma’rifah, n.d., 11)

*Tabrīf* *fi al-tartib* is the change in the chronological order of the verses and chapters in the Qur’an. The best example of this type of *tabrīf* is to arrange the Qur’an not in the chronological order of revelation, by placing the chapters revealed in Mecca (Meccan
chapters) after those revealed in Medina (Medinan chapters). This type of *Tahrif* is found in the Uthmanic codex in which, the arrangement of the Qur’anic verses and chapters is not based on the chronological order of their revelation.

As quoted by Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifah quoted, al-T‘abataba‘i stated that the effort and thought (ijtihad) of the Prophet’s companions went into the chronological order of the chapters in the Qur’an - in the Uthmanic codex of the Qur’an, to be precise, meaning that the arrangement is not considered to be determined by the Prophet under divine guidance, or what is known as *tawqifi* (Ma’rifah 2011, 285). Meanwhile, the first man of all the Prophet’s companions to complete the codification of the Qur’an by order of the Prophet was Ali ibn Abi Talib. The codex of Ali was arranged on the basis of the chronological order of revelation (Ma’rifah, 2011: 286).

d. *Tahrif bi al-ziyadah*

The term *tahrif bi al-ziyadah* presumes that within the existing codex of the Qur’an are some foreign materials, i.e., some narrations, believed not to be parts of the Qur’an. Some reports said to be taken from Ibn Mas’ud and some early Muslim figures state that they added a particular word or sentence to the Qur’anic narrations for the purpose of explaining the meaning of a verse or removing ambiguity from it without believing that the added word or sentence is a part of the Qur’an (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 13).

However, in fact, there is no claim about the existence of the added narrations in the Qur’an except from the followers of Abdul Karim bin ‘Ajrad (an adherant of Kharijith). They denied the fact that the chapter Yusuf is a part of the Qur’an, while both Shia and Sunni Muslims agreed to refute the existence of this type of *tahrif* in the Uthmanic codex of the Qur’an. Indeed, Ibn Mas‘ud was reported to claim that the codex of the Qur’an includes two chapters that were
not found in the days of the Prophet, but were instead written in his period: al-Falaq dan al-Nas. Nevertheless, the authenticity of the report is questionable (Abadi, 2006: 27)

e. Tahrif bi al-nuqsan

The term tahrif bi al-nuqsan presumes that the existing codex of the Qur’an does not completely represent all the revelations to the Prophet, which means that some chapters are not included in it. Sometimes, the term nuqsan is meant to point towards the Qur’an recitation with a small reduction of its parts, just like a report from Ibn Mas’ud that he recited the first three verses of the chapter al-Layl without mentioning ma khuliqa: he recited wa al-layli izā yagsya wa al-nahari izā tajalla wa al-zākaru wa al-unsā. Likewise, Al-A‘masy recited حم سق, excluding the letter ع (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 13). Besides, the nuqsan (reduction) is said to be based on a belief that the existing codex of the Qur’an does not completely cover the revelation to the Prophet: there is a word, a verse or even a whole chapter excluded from the codex, whether the reduction was made deliberately or forgetfully. Such report can be detected in the major hadith collection books. It is the type of Tahrif of which Sunni Muslims accused Shia Muslim; conversely, Shia Muslims did the same to Sunni Muslims concerning this type of tahrif.

Tahrif (Distortion) in the Qur’an

In the Qur’an, the word tahrif used in the form of fi’l mudari’ (a verb indicating an action at the present and future time) is mentioned four times, namely in the Qur’an 2: 75, the Qur’an 4: 46, and the Qur’an 5: 13 and 41. The Qur’anic verses mentioning the word are as follows:
The four verses point towards the tahrif made by the Jews to their sacred text, Taurat. In both 4: 46 and 5: 13, the Qur'an use the same narrations: ِّمِّذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْ. In relation to the phrase ِّمِّذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْ. Shia Muslims believe that tahrif is made after a word or a sentence is understood in its original meaning, but is then understood in a meaning different from the original one for the sake of benefit. Meanwhile, the Qur'an 5: 41 help stress this interpretation by stating ِّمِّذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْ. The word ِّمِّذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْ. is zaraf zamani (an adverb of place); thus making it impossible to say that the term tahrif point towards the distortion of the text (lafzi), or, to be precise, the Qur'anic narrations.

In addition, the Qur'an 2: 75 mentions ِّمِّذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْنِّمْذِّرْصَغَّرَةَمْعَلَّمْ. This means that the tahrif by Jewish leaders was made after they comprehend and master the Torah completely. In this regard, the tahrif in relation to its existence in sacred scriptures refers to a distortion of the scriptures’ meaning, not to a corruption in their texts.
On another occasion, tahrif is made by pronouncing a word using a particular accent (lahjah) in order to change its meaning from the intended one (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 15). In other words, the Jews altered the meaning of some words or sentences of their sacred scripture for the purpose of hiding the truth in it. This analysis is in line with the Qur’an 3: 78.

Therefore, according to Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifah, it is by no means that the term tahrif mentioned in those four verses are believed to have anything to do with the change of a word or sentence into another word or sentence (tahrif lafzi); rather, it concedes two possibilities: erroneous interpretation and intentional misspelling of a particular word or sentence (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 16).

However, Sunni Muslim scholars have different interpretation of the aforementioned verses. Fakhruddin al-Razi said herein that the term tahrif just as mentioned in the previously mentioned Qur’anic verses includes both tahrif lafzi and tahrif ma’nawi (Razi, 1981: 121). The example of tahrif lafzi which Jews made is that they replaced the word ربع the أدم طويل الحدد in place of (Razi, 1981: 121). Al-Razi explained that the tahrif lafzi is possible to be found in Torah although I had been spread from the East to the West in the way called mutawatir. This was because of the limited number of Jewish people, and at this rate, the number of Jewish scholars is much more limited, who were unfortunately the only group of Jewish communities to have knowledge of their sacred scriptures (Razi, 1981: 121).

Furthermore, according to al-Razi, the tahrif occurring in the Qur’an is related more to the distortion of its meanings (ma’nawi). The phenomenon of tahrif in Torah can be seen as a distortion of its meanings by giving it false interpretation; similarly, some Muslims often impose their

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7The verse states: وَإِنَّ مَلَكَمُ لَفَرَقَاءٌ يُؤْلُونَ أَلسَنَتَهُمْ بِالْكِتَابِ لِلْخَسْبَيْهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيُقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عَدْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عَدْدِ اللَّهِ وَيُقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكِتَابُ وَهُمْ يَغْلُبُونَ
views, namely their interpretation of the Qur’an, to other Muslims in order to justify the belief of their sects (Razi, 1981: 121)

Besides the two forms of tahrif mentioned above, al-Razi suggested another form of tahrif. Jewish scholars may not have changed the narrations of the Torah, nor may they have made interpretations which contradict their knowledge of divine teachings and rulings in it for the sake of worldly success; but they may rather have made false statements which they said to be taken from the Prophet after visiting him and asking him some questions (Razi, 1981: 121).

**An Overview on al-Qummi and His Qur’anic Exegesis Book**

The Profile of Abu Al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim Al-Qummi

He was Abu Al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Hasyim Al-Qummi. There is no data about the date of his birth or his death, only that he was said to live in 307 H, the same era as imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari (Teherani, 2009: 302). This data was gained from the book of al-Saduq entitled ‘Uyun Akhbar al-Rida stating that he took a report (riwayat) on a hadith from Hamzah bin Muhammad al-‘Alawi who took the report from ‘Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi in 307 H (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 423). Al-Qummi was an expert in interpretation of the Qur’an (mufassir), the Prophet’s hadith, and Islamic laws (Ma’rifah, n.d.: 423). Al-Qummi was the greatest master of al-Kulaini. The majority of hadith reports in al-Kafi by al-Kulaini were taken from ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi.

‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi was popularly known as the greatest master al-Kulaini ever had, but in fact, he was a source of information and leading figure from whom many Shia Muslim scholars learned. Among those scholars were al-Syarif Hamzah ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Sikkin, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Safwani (w. 358 H.), Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Hamzah al-Thabari, Abu al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Babawaih (who was the father of al-Shaduq), Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Majilawaih, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Mutawakkil, ‘Ali ibn Abdullah al-Warraq, Ahmad ibn Ziyad ibn Ja’far al-Hamdani, al-Husain ibn Ibrahim ibn Nataneh. These ten students of al-Qummi were also the masters of al-Saduq (Teherani, 2009: 167-168).


Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi was among well-respected figures of Shia Muslim scholars who produced many works. Besides his
Muhammad Itsbatul Haq, Abd. Halim


Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi was a community member of Qum, Iran. Shia Muslim community considers this region to be one of Shia Muslims’ sacred sites. Al-Musawi al-Jazairi, in his introduction to *Tafsir al-Qummi*, quoted a report from al-Gaibah written by al-Syaikh al-Thusi that imam al-Shadiq said: “Qum is our country and the sacred country of Shia Muslims.” (Al-Jazairi, n.d.: 9). The residents of Qum are showered with extravagant praise in Shia Muslim community because in Qum were born many great figures of Shia Muslims like Abu Jarir, Zakariyya bin Idris, Zakariyya bin Adam, among others, and those figures’ contribution to the religion was so great. One of the grand masters of Muslim community in Qum was Ibrahim ibn Hasyim, who was the father of Abu al-Hassan ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi. Migrating from Kufah to Qum, he was considered the first person to report hadiths widely spread in Kufah to Muslim community in Qum.

**The Profile of Tafsir al-Qummi**

The Qur’anic exegesis book whose editorial process (tahqiq) was guided by Thayyib al-Musawi al-Jazairi consists of two volumes. The book was named Tafsir al-Qummi. Actually, Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi never wrote the book by himself, but he dictated his thoughts about the interpretations of Qur’anic verses to his disciple Abu al-Fadl al-‘ Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn Qasim ibn Hamzah ibn Musa ibn Ja’far. It was his disciple who reported all Quran interpretations of his master for the first time and wrote them down in this book; therefore, he deserved great credit for compiling this book.
The reports from Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi are in fact not the only reports quoted in this book, because Al-‘Abbas also provided other reports from other lines of transmission, namely the lines of Abu al-Jarud and his other masters. The addition of those reports amid the interpretation of al-Qummi was to complete and enrich the contents of his interpretation. Those reports were added to Tafsir al-Qummi from the beginning of the chapter Ali Imran to the last chapter of the Qur’an (Teherani, n.d.: 303). This book was named after al-Qummi and was known as Tafsir al-Qummi because most of the reports (riwayat) were taken from Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi.

This Qur’anic exegesis book falls into the category of tafsir bi al-maṣūr, which can be simply defined as the interpretation based on reports (riwayat). In the tradition held by Shia Muslims, reports on which an interpretation can be based should be the ones taken from the Prophet Muhammad and one of the twelve imams (Hakim, 2006: 482-483). In this Qur’anic exegesis book, the reports given were taken from the fifth and sixth imams, namely Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Baqir and Abu ‘abdillah Ja’far ibn Muhammad al-Shadiq.

As mentioned before, the majority of the reports quoted in this book were taken from al-Qummi. Most of the interpretations of al-Qummi were based on those of imam al-Sadiq he took from his father, Ibrahim bin Hasyim. Nevertheless, al-Qummi also took reports from other masters, who numbered about 60 masters. Most of his father’s reports were taken from Muhammad ibn Abi ‘Amir. In addition to imam al-Shadiq, al-Qummi also took the reports from imam al-Baqir, although the reports from the latter were limited. Meanwhile, the reports from the line of Abu al-Jarud contain interpretations of imam al-Baqir.

In general, Qur’an interpretation in tafsir al-Qummi is divided into two parts. The first part is the introduction by ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi. In this part, ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi gave an overview on the purpose,
function, role of the Qur’an in human life. One important thing in his introduction of the book is that the imams occupy an important position in relation to the Qur’an. It is popularly known in Shia Muslim community that the Prophet was reported to leave a legacy in the forms of the Qur’an and his households (ahlul bait), who were then interpreted as the twelve imams. Both the Qur’an and the Prophet’s household will never contradict each other and on the Judgment Day, they will come to the Prophet as the two closed index fingers, as it were. The Prophet stressed that both are not like the index and middle fingers, but both are equal: none of them is superior to the other (Al-Jazairi, n.d.: 4). Subsequently, he classified Qur’anic verses into many categories, which are shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansukh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Al-Muhkam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Al-Mutasyabih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ma lajzubu ‘amm wa ma’nahu khash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ma lajzubu Khashsh wa ma’nahu ‘amm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Al-Taqdim wa al-ta’khbir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ayat munqathi’ ma’tuh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Ma buwa harfim makanah harfin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ma buwa ‘ala khilafi ma anzala allah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Ma buwa mubarraf minhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Ma lajzubu jam’un wa ma’nahu wabidun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ma lajzubu wabidun wa ma’nahu jam’un</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Ma lajzubu madin wa buwa mustaqbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Al-Ayat allati biya fi suratin wa tamamub fi suratin ukhra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Al-Ayat allati nisfuh mansukhab wa nisfuh matsukhab ‘ala baliba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Ma ta’wiluhb fi tanzilibi</td>
</tr>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Ma ta’wiluhb ma’a tanzilibi</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Ma ta’wiluhb qabla tanzilibi</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Ma ta’wiluhb ba’da tanzilibi</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Ma buwa murrtaqaf al-lajz wa mukhtalaf al-ma’na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Al-Rukhsah allati biya ba’da al-‘azimah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, there is no conceptual framework set in detail for every single category mentioned above: Each category is given only a brief explanation, and even some categories receive no explanation at all. The only clues about what Al-Qummi actually wanted to say are some examples in the form of Qur’anic verses along with their brief interpretation related to the defined categories. Such categorization convincingly shows that al-Qummi was not free from the political bias of his sect, namely Shia Islam. He used the Qur’an to legitimate the opinions of his sect and criticize other sects with contrary opinions, just like the category of Al-Radd 'ala al-Mu’tazilah (Qur’anic verses to defy the beliefs of Mu’tazilah). This is understandable taking into consideration the fact that al-Qummi lived in the era when Qur’an interpretation was influenced by a conflict of
many interests, usually know as the interpretation of affirmative era with ideological reason.

The second chapter of *tafsir al-Qummi* is its focal point, namely the interpretation of al-Qummi. The interpretation in this book was arranged in the chronological order of the Uthmanic codec of the Qur’an, only that the interpretation was given to only particular words he considered to need interpreting, not to the Qur’an as a whole. The interpretation method used in this book is *ijmali* (the global method), in which Qur’anic verses are given global interpretations instead of detailed ones, and some verses are not mentioned as they are considered to need no interpretation.

As for its writing system, the book is begun with mentioning complete lists of the chain of report (*riwayat*) transmission from the first to the last transmitters in the beginning of each chapter, followed by its interpretation. The phrase *qawluhu* (God’s word) is used rightly before mentioning verses to be interpreted to mark the beginning of an interpretation of a group of verses and the end of the previous group.

**Al-Qummi and The Accusation of Tahrif Al-Qur’an Against Him**

The discussion about the accusation of *tahrif al-Qur’an* against al-Qummi based on his statement in the introduction of his book will be preceded by the exploration and analysis of his interpretation of some Qur’anic verses containing the word *tahrif*. As mentioned earlier, used in the Qur’an always in the form of *fi’il mudari’* (a verb form indicating present and future actions), the word *tahrif* can be found only in four verses, namely the Qur’an 2: 75, the Qur’an 4: 46, and the Qur’an 5: 13 and 41. The interpretation of the word in those verses has provoked intense debate between Sunni and Shia Muslims. The majority of Shia Muslims interpreted the word merely as the distortion of meaning; meanwhile, Sunni Muslims opened up the possibility of the distortion of both meaning and text.
Actually, al-Qummi made no difference to the interpretation of the word *tabrīf* except in his interpretation of the Qur’an 5:13. In which he interpreted the sentence من نجى أمير المؤمنين عن موضعه (those who toppled Amirul Mukminin (the leader of Muslim community) from his throne). Meanwhile, this verse is by no means about Ali or everything related to Shia; instead, it was addressed to the Jews living in the era of the Prophet Muhammad. Al-Qummi made such interpretation just because he saw a similarity between the Jews’ distorting the Torah from what the Torah should have been and the action of violating Ali’s legal rights over the leadership of Muslim community after the death of the Prophet. Such interpretation is an example of Shia Muslims’ concept of hidden meanings (*ta’wil*) of Qur’anic verses. That is the meaning and interpretation of the word *tabrīf* according to al-Qummi.

As for the concept of *tabrīf* al-Qur’an, in his introduction of his book, al-Qummi simply confirmed the existence of the distortion (*tabrīf*) of some verses in the Qur’an. As mentioned before, al-Qummi divided Qur’anic verses into some categories, one of which will be discussed more comprehensively, namely the category of *ma huwa muharraf minhu* (distorted verses of the Qur’an). However, this discussion will not be limited in exploring the category alone; it will also involve some other categories, especially those of which some Sunni Muslim scholars accused al-Qummi, as did Muhammad bin Abdurrahman al-Sayf in his work (Sayf, n.d.: 12). Other categories involved in this discussion include *ma huwa harfun makana harfin* (Qur’anic verses in which a letter was changed into other letters) and *ma huwa ‘ala khilafi ma anzala allah* (Qur’anic verses which contradict what God actually revealed to the Prophet Muhammad).

**Ma Huwa Harfun Makana Harfin**

Simply put, this category presumes that in the Qur’an some letters or words are put in place of other letters or words, whose meanings
are considered to be more suitable. Some examples of Qur’anic verses mentioned in al-Qummi’s introduction to contain a distortion of this category include the Qur’an 2: 150, the Qur’an 4: 91, the Qur’an 9: 111, and The Qur’an 27: 10.

The first example is the Qur’an 2: 150, which is as follows.

In this verse, the word *illa* (English: except), which is actually used to express exception or exclusion, is considered to replace *wa la* (nor). Therefore, in this case, the word *illa* does not mean “except” as it is usually used as a word indicating exception (*istisna’*), but instead is used as a conjunction (*atl*) which relates the meaning of the structure following it and that of the structure preceding it (Qummi, n.d.: 63).

The second example is The Qur’an 4: 91 which is as follows.

When interpreting this verse, al-Qummi did the same way as he did in the Qur’an 2: 150: he considered the word *illa* mentioned in the initial part of this verse not to express the meaning of exception (*istisna’*). According to Al-Qummi, the phrase *illa kbata’a* should be interpreted as *la ‘amdan wa la kbata’an* (not intentionally nor accidentally). In this regard, the verse states that believers (*mu’min*) are not allowed to murder their fellow believers, whether or not the murder is intentional (Qummi, n.d.: 147).
Subsequently, another example is the Qur’an 9:110, stating:

لا يَزَالُ بَنيانِهمَّ الَّذِي بَنُوا رَبِّهِنَّ فِي قَلْوُبِهِمِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَقْطَعُ قَلْوُبُهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

Al-Qummi considered the word *illa* in this verse to mean *batta* (until). Just like its use in the two previously mentioned verses, the word *illa* is not used to indicate an exception (*isti
 na*), but an adverb of time instead (Qummi, n.d.: 305)

The last example is the Qur’an 27:10-11, as what follows.

وَأَلَقَ عَصَاكَانِ فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا تَهْيَّرَ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌ وَلَيْنَ مُذْرِرًا وَلَمْ يُعْظَبْ بَيْنَ مُوسَى لَا تَخْفَى إِلَى لَا يَخافُ لْدَيْ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (10) إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَتَلَ حَسْنًا بَعْدَ سَوَاء فَإِلَيْهِ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Just as in the Qur’an 2:110, al-Qummi considered the word *illa* to mean *wa la*, a combination of a conjunction (*atf*) “*wa*” – meaning ‘and’ – and a negative word (*nafi*) “*la*” – meaning ‘not’: *wa la* means ‘and not’ or ‘nor’ (Qummi, n.d.: 126).

From those examples, it can be concluded that what al-Qummi meant by *harfum makana harfin* (a word used in place of other words) is the Qur’anic use of the word “*illa*”, an Arabic word to show the meaning of exception. According to al-Qummi, the word *illa* in the contexts of the aforementioned Qur’anic verses will lose logical coherence within the whole verse if it is understood in its original meaning, which make it necessary to understand the word in a totally different meaning. However, in those contexts of Qur’anic verses, al-Qummi did not recognize the use of the word *illa* as a mistake in the Qur’an.

**Ma Huwa ‘Ala Khilafi Ma Anzala Allah**

This category presumes that some verses in the Qur’an are not exactly the same as what God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. To illustrate this point, al-Qummi showed some examples of some verses, including the Qur’an 3:110, the Qur’an 25:74, and the Qur’an 13:11.
The Qur’an 3: 110 is the following.

Al-Qummi took a report from his father who received it from Ibnu Abi ‘Amir taking it from Ibnu Sinan, who said, “a Qur’anic verse stating “kuntum khaira ummatin ukhrijat li al-nas” was recited before Abu Abdillah, who then replied: it was “khair ummah” that made the leader of believers (amir al-mu’minin), namely Ali, along with al-Hasan and al-Husain murdered?”. Then the reciter (qari’) asked: “I am ready to sacrifice myself for you, how was the verse revealed?”. Abu Abdillah replied: “kuntum khaira aimmatin ukhrijat li al-nas. Did you see that Allah praised them by His words ta’muruna bi al-ma’ruf wa tanhawna ‘an al-munkar wa tu’minuna billab’ (Qummi, n.d.: 110).

In this verse, al-Qummi changed the word ummah (community) into aimmab (imams/leaders). The way of recitation was based on the report form imam Abu ‘abdillah (imam Ja’ar). The report of this recitation (using the word aimmab) is considered to be one of the official qiraab of the Qur’an, namely from the chain of transmission form Imam Ja’far Sadiq, as mentioned by al-Tabrisi in Majma’ al-Bayan (Tabrisi, 2006: 288) and by Hayim al-Bahrani in al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an (Bahrani, 2006: 89). These two Qur’anic exegesis books also mention the Qur’an 3: 104, in addition to the Qur’an 2: 110, as the Qur’anic verse in which the word aimmab is used in place of the word ummah.

The following is the Qur’an 25: 74.

Al-Qummi said, “A Qur’anic verse, namely “wallan yaquluna rabbana hab lana min azwajina wa zurrayatina qurrata a’yun waj’alna lil...”
was recited before Abu Abdillah, who then said, “They (anti-Shia Muslims) did ask Allah to give them a great thing, that is, to make them the leaders of those who fear God (righteous/muttaqin)”. He was asked: “Then, what should we do, oo the descendant of the Prophet?”. He replied, “What Allah actually revealed to the Prophet is like this: allaz\ina yaquluna rabbana hab lana min azwajina wa \z\urriyyatina qurrata a\'yn waj\'al lana min al-muttaqina imama. Another interpretation quoted by al-‘Abbas from his master Muhammad ibn Ahmad, who took the report from al-Hasan ibn Muhammad receiving it from H\ammad taking it from Aban ibn Tagallub, who asked Abu Abdillah about a verse of the Qur’an: “allaz\ina yaquluna rabbana hab lana min azwajina wa \z\urriyyatina qurrata a\'yn waj\'alna lil muttaqina imama”. Abu Abdillah replied, “It is we who are called the household of the Prophet (ahlul bait)”. Another report interprets the verse by making specific, explicit references to some words in the verse: what is meant by “azwajina” is Khadijah, \z\urriyyatina is Fatimah, qurrata a\'yn are al-Hasan and al-Husain, and waj\'alna li al-muttaqina imama is Ali ibn Abi Talib (Qummi, n.d.: 117)

In general, there are two reports (riwayat) al-Qummi quoted for this category. The first report is the report of imam Ja’far which offers a variant of or a correction to Qur’an narration: waj\'al lana min al-muttaqina imama (grant unto us (the righteous people) a leader/imam) instead of waj\'alna lil muttaqina imama (give us (the grace) to lead the righteous). This report actually contains an interpretation of the verse. Al-T\{abatabai explained thereof that this variant of qira\ab is not popular among Muslims (Al-Tabatabai, 1997: 247). The second report, meanwhile, offers no other variant of or a correction to Qur’an narration, but it interprets some constructing words of the verse by mentioning particular names of the household of the Prophet.

Subsequently, the Qur’an 13: 11 is as follows:

لَهُ مَعْقُدَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَاهُ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَخْفَطُونَهُ مِّنْ أَمَّرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغْيِبُ مَا يَقُومُ حَتَّى يُغْيِبُوا مَا بَلَغَهُمْ وَإِذَا أُرَادَ اللَّهُ بَقُومَ سَوَاءً فَلَا مَرْدَةً لَّهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِّنْ وَالِيٍّ
It was reported that the verse was recited before Abu Abdillah, who then asked to the reciter: “Are you an Arab, aren’t you? How can a follower be before who he/she follows? A follower must be behind who is followed!”. The reciter then asked him: “I am ready to sacrifice myself for you, so how is this?”. Abu Abdillah replied, “The verse was actually revealed in this way: lahu mu’aqibatun min khalfihi wa raqib min baini yadaibi yahfazunabu bi amrillah. Who can guard something by command of Allah? They are angels assigned to guard humans and record their deeds.

In the report by Abu al-Jarud who received it from Abu Ja’far al-Baqir about this verse, “Those angels protect humans, for example, from falling into wells, being hit by collapsing walls, or other dangers until fate takes a hand. Each person is guarded by two angels by day, and by two other angels at night. They guard humans in shifts (Qummi, n.d.: 360)

Those examples of Qur’anic verses given by al-Qummi help raise some points which can clarify the meaning of what is called Ma Huwa ‘Ala Khilafi Ma Anzala Allah (Qur’anic verses which are different from what Allah revealed to the Prophet. First, the verses considered to belong to this category begin with a version of Qur’an narration from a school of qira’ah, a variant readings of the Qur’an, recited before an imam (a notable reciter of the Qur’an) and was corrected by the imam. All of those qira’ah mentioned bby al-Qummi were based on the report by imam Ja’far Sadiq. Second, the word used by the imam when correcting the readings is nuzzilat (brought down), which can etimologically be understood as an action of moving somthing from higher place to the lower one. In the context of Qur’anic verses, the word nuzzilat is meant to point toward the process of revelation of the Qur’an from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril). Third, some reports quoted by al-Qummi contain interpretations of the corrected verses.
Ma Huwa Muharraf Minhu

The phrase used to name this category literally contains a word mubarrad derived from the word tabrif. Qur’anic verses al-Qummi deemed to fall into this category are the Qur’an 4: 166 and 168, the Qur’an 5: 67, and the Qur’an 6: 93.

The Qur’an 4: 166 and 168 are as follows.

لَكُنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ أنْزَلَهُ بِعَلْمِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ يُسَبِّحُونَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا
إِنَّ الْمَلِيْكَيْنَ كَفَّرُوا وَظَلِمَوا لَمْ يُكَانِ اللَّهُ لِيُغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيُبِينَيْهِمْ طَرِيقًا

Al-Qummi took a report from his father who took it from IbnAbi ‘Amir taking it from Abi Basir who received it from Abu ‘Abdillah, who said, “The verse, the Qur’an 4: 166, was actually revealed in this way: “لَكَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ أنْزَلَهُ بِعَلْمِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ يُسَبِّحُونَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا” And Abu ‘Abdillah recited the Qur’an 4: 168 in this way “يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلْغَ ما أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتُ رسَالَةَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يُعَمِّدُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقُوُومَ الْكَافِرِينَ” (Qummi, n.d.: 159)

Subsequently the Qur’an 5: 67 is what follows.

أَيَأُبَا الرَّسُولُ بَلْغَ ما أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتُ رسَالَةَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يُعَمِّدُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقُوُومَ الْكَافِرِينَ

Abu ‘Abdillah stated that the verse begins with a part concerning something about ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib which is followed by a mention about the Prophet’s journey to perform the Farewell Pilgrimage (haji wad). In the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet gave his last, long sermon on the event of Gadir Khum, which is considered to be the moment in which Ali was appointed as the successor of the Prophet (Qummi, n.d.: 171-175)
The last example is the Qur’an 6: 93, which is as follows:

وَمَنْ أَظَلَّ مَنْ أَفَقَّرَ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَتَبًا أَوْ قَالَ أُوَلِي الْأَمْرِ إِلَيْهِ وَلَا يَوْحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَمِنْ قَالَ سَأَنْزِلَ مَثْلًا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تُرِى إِذِ الْقَالِمُونَ فِي غُمُّ رَبِّهِمْ وَالْمُلْكَةِ نَاسِطًا إِنِّي ذِي الْقُرْءَانِ أُخْرُجْنَا أَنْفَسَتُكُمُ الْيَوْمُ نَجِزُونَ عَذَابَ الْحُقَّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنِ الْآيَاتِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

The revelation of this verse concerns Abdullah bin Sa’d bin Abi Sarh, a milk brother of Usman. A report by al-Qummi receiving it from S’afwan taking it from Ibnu Miskan who received it from Abi Basir who took it from Abi ‘Abdillah tells that the milk brother of Usman left for Mecca and then embraced Islam. He has such good handwriting that the Prophet asked him to write down God’s revelation. However, his writing differed from what the Prophet dictated to him, but the Prophet did not deny the validity of his writing. He then had a conclusion that the Prophet did not know what he himself dictated. As a consequence, he returned to his apostasy and left Mecca. After the Conquest of Mecca, the Prophet ordered him to be killed, but Uthman persuaded the Prophet to cancel his order. To make a long story short, Uthman’s milk brother was freed. Subsequently, the verse concerns the condition of those hostile to the househole of the Prophet Muhammad by saying, “wa law tara iz\ al-zalimuna ala Muhammad baqqabum fi gamarat...”, with an additional phrase ala Muhammad baqqabum (Qummi, n.d.: 210-211)

Those aforementioned verses are examples of Qur’anic verses considered to contain *tabrif*. Those examples of Qur’anic verses given by al-Qummi help raise some points which relate all those examples. **First**, there are some words used to indicate distortion (*tabrif*) in Qur’anic verses, including *nuzzilat* (the verse was reeviewed), *qara’a* (an imam recited the verse), an *qala* (Allah says). **Second**, Qur’anic verses considered to contain *tabrif* concern Ali, the Prophet’s household (Ahlul bait), and those hostile to them. **Third, tabrif** takes the form of adding words or phrases in a Qur’anic verse.
The three categories under discussion create an immediate impression that al-Qummi doubted the authenticity of the Qur’an narration in the Uthmanic codex of the Qur’an. Nevertheless, taking the overall categories into careful consideration will help correct the mistaken impression. Al-Qummi developed forty-one categories of Qur’anic verses. If carefully considered, each of the categories will share a particular similarity, which in turn builds up a comprehensive picture of the construction of al-Qummi’s though on the categorization of Qur’anic verses by meaning. In this respect, considering those three categories explored above to deal with distortion of texts, not of meanings, will lead to internal inconsistency and imbalance. In contrast, understanding the three categories in the same context as the rest of the categories will help clear al-Qummi’s thought. Therefore, what al-Qummi meant to say in the introduction of his Qur’an exegesis is to say that the Qur’an contains rich contents; some are abrogated (mansukh), some are decisive (mubkam), and some are allegorical (mutasyabib). Moreover, some Qur’anic verses consist of a word used out of its original function, some verses communicating particular meanings different from literal meanings of their constructing words, and some verses are given distorted meanings.

It is clearly understood that the first category does not concern linguistic errors of Qur’an narration; rather, it concerns functions of words, in this case the function of the word َيلَا, which in some particular contexts cannot be understood in its intended meaning as shown by its functions. In this case, a word can be considered to for the meaning of other words. Such case often occurs, even among Sunni Muslims. For instance, in Tafsir al-Jalalain, the word لا يطبقونه is interpreted as لَأ يطبقونه with an addition of لَأ al-nafiyab. Another example is the use of the word

4 As mentioned before, Shia Muslims deny the concept of naskh al-tilawah. For them, naskh al-ayat, or abrogation of text, occurs only in a verse containing legal rulings, so that what is obligated and replaced by a new one is the legal status of its implication.
man, originally functioned as a question word (istifham). In some Qur’anic verses, man istifham is frequently used to express the meaning of negation, which can be found in the Qur’an.

Besides, based on Lisan al-’Arab, the word illa basically functions as a word of istis’na’, meaning exception or exclusion, and as a word of ja’za’ which literally a combination of in (if) and la (not) – illa can mean if not, or unless. However, the word illa can be used in place of a conjunction (‘aff) wawu (Ansari, 2009: 50-51)

Likewise, the second category, although seeming to criticize a reading or a way of recitation, is meant to criticize a meaning carried by the narration of a verse. This is confirmed by the mention of another report along with its chain of transmission which does not make an issue of the Qur’an narration under discussion; as a matter of fact, the report offers an interpretation as is.

As for variants of qira’ab, there are two points to be taken into consideration. First, the difference in the way Qur’anic verses are recited indeed comes from different schools of qira’ab of the Qur’an based on a report by an imam, which is in this case the report by Imam Ja’far. This has received confirmation from some literatures of Shia Muslims as mentioned before, but this variant of qira’ab is not popular among Sunni Muslims. Imam Ja’far was one of the masters of Imam Hamzah al-Kufi, who was one of the notable imams of qiraah sab’ah acceptable among Sunni Muslims (Sindi, n.d.: 237). Through in-depth exploration, this research found that in the case of the three Qur’anic verses discussed above (the Qur’an 3: 110; the Qur’an 25: 74; and the Qur’an 13: 11), Imam Hamzah took another report of qira’ab different from that of Imam Ja’far. This data can be found in Rif’ah al-Darajat fi Qiraah Hamzah al-Zayyat written by Taufiq Ibrahim Damrah (Damrah, 2008). Second, such qira’ab is called qira’ab mudrajah, the one containing non-Qur’anic words used to give an interpretation of a verse. In qira’ab terminology, such qira’ab belong to the category of qira’ab syadzdzah (Bayly, 1988: 112)
As is known thus far, Shia Muslims believe that the Qur’an has two shades of meaning, namely literal (zahir) meanings, also known as tanzil and hidden (batin) meanings, or ta’wil. They also believe that all Imams are able to grasp both meanings, and therefore mentioning words or phrases to be used in place of Qur’anic words and phrases left an impression that those imams fully understand both literal and hidden meanings of the Qur’an, as if God Himself gave them such understanding.

Meanwhile, it is clear that the meaning of tahrif in the third category is the distortion of meaning of Qur’anic verses. This is indicated by the fact that the Qur’anic verses considered to be in this category concern Shia and anti-Shia groups. In the belief of Shia Muslims, al-Qur’an contain many verses concerning Shia and those hostile to them (Kulaini, 2005: 583). At this rate, it is understandable that al-Qummi stated that distortion can be found in many verses of the Qur’an.

This category differs from the previous categories, in which Qur’anic verses deemed to contradict God’s true revelation may carry both tanzil or ta’wil, namely literal and hidden meanings (Ma’rifah, 2011: 270). On the contrary, this category involves decisive (mubkam) verses which contain only tanzil meanings, and therefore everyone can understand their meanings. As mentioned before, the verses considered to belong to this category are the ones with specific social context behind their revelation. With such clear meanings and social contexts, it is surprising that only Shia Muslims interpret the Qur’an, especially the Qur’anic verses mentioned in discussion above, in the way they did; therein the distortion (tahrif) lies.

Literal meanings are called tanzil, while hidden meanings are called ta’wil. The tanzil meaning deals with social contexts or cases to which the revelation of the Qur’an responded, while ta’wil meaning refers to the universal meaning of the Qur’an with spaceless and timeless qualities. Unlike tanzil or literal meanings which can be understood by humans in general, ta’wil or hidden meanings can be understood only by al-rasikhuna fi al-‘ilmi, just as God’s statement in the Qur’an 3: 7. Shia Muslims believe that the word al-rasikhuna refers to the Prophet Muhammad and the imams. Based on a report, Imam Abu Ja’far said, “We understand it (ta’wil) – other reports says, “The imams understand it (ta’wil)”.

5
CONCLUSION

The result of the research shows that the accusation against Shia Muslims of distorting or changing the Qur’an naration written in the Uthmanic codex of the Qur’an to the extent it differs from the one God revealed to the Prophet proves true. The term *tahrif* al-Qummi used does not point towards the distortion of texts, but the distortion of meanings.

However, the concept of *tahrif* advanced by Shia Muslims should receive critical evaluation. The concept was presumably popularized to legitimate any belief and doctrine to which they are committed because this concept was introduced in an era with high political and ideological fanaticism of Islamic schools of thought. Moreover, Shia Muslims possess a poor record in their relationship with other Muslim groups and with the rulers of Islamdom. Therefore, they need to establish a firm foothold, and the introduction of the term *tahrif al-Qur’an* is one of their ways to struggle for their existence.

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