

THE STUDY OF AL-ZAMAKHSARI IN EXPLAINING I'JAZ QUR'AN

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Introduction

When al-Qur'an was sent down to the Arab people, the bigger part of them did believe in it, while some did not believe that it is the revelation from God Himself. Amongst those who disbelieved actually they did know the aspects of i'jaz al-Qur'an. This was proved by the when they tried to match the eloquency of al Qur'an, wich then occured to be a failure.

After Islam expanded out of the Arabian peninsula, came a demand to defend the miraculousness of the holy book through scientific study. Heated debates occuring at that time was focussed on the two main problems, i.e. whether the i'jaz al-Qur'an was laid on *nazm* or on *sarfah* (the turning away), or both occuring in complete togetherness.

Departing from the above problems, excitements aroused amongst ulamas to search and to formulate the Quranic miraculousness theory. Many theories of i'jaz were voiced by the ulamas. One ulama appeared by the name of al-Zamakhsari who tried to combine the theories of i'jaz al-Qur'an described by the early ulamas and then to give explanation in exegesis al-Qur'an, which is then become famous as the *al-Kassyaf an Haqaiq al-Tanzil wa 'uyun al-Aqawil fi wujuh al-Ta'wil exegesis*. The writer of this paper is aiming to try to understand how the study of al-Zamakhsari is done in explaining i'jaz al-Qur'an.

It is within the writer's awareness that his literature for this study may be still very

limited to cover all the necessary aspects and also of the limited time given to gain a deep understanding on this very important phenomena.

Biography of Al-Zamakhsari

His full name is Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Khawarizur al-Zamakhsari. He got the title *Jar Allah* (God's neighbor). He was born in Zamakhsyar, Khawarizur in the year of 467 H/1074. He was born during the ruling periode of Sultan Jalal al-Dunya wa al-Din Abu al-Fath Malik Shah and his Wazir, Nizam al-Mulk, who were well-known of their religiousness and love of scientific things.¹

He is a great Ulama in exegesis, tradition, grammar, literature and linguistics. He was also a fanatic follower of the Mu'tazilite Sect. That is why in his exegesis, he always sticked strongly to the basic teachings of Mu'tazilite. This fact is inseparable from his living environment, khawarizin, where the majority of its people come from the Mu'tazilite Sect, even the place is identical to the Mu'tazilite people. His strong attachment to the Sect is shown in the opening of his book *al-Kassyaf*, by saying; praise be to God, who has created al-Qur'an. He also used to call himself as Abu al-Qasim al-Mu'tazily.

He has written fifty books, which cover many aspects of scientific searches. Amongst them are: *Asrar al-Balaghah*, *Ruus al-Masa'il* and *al-Kassyaf 'an haqaiq al-Tanzil wa uyun al-Aqawil fi 'al-wujuh al-Ta'wil*.

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¹ Dr. M.H. *al-Zahabi, Al-Tafsir wa al-Mufasssirun*, I, Dar al-Maktab al-Hadisah, 1976, page 430-431

His last book, which is the topic of discussion here, is monumental achievement, consist of four volumes. This exegesis book was written when he was in the age of sixty, in the form of answer-question-method in short term (*fatqalah*).

The book *al-Kassiyaf* was written under the Request of his friends from Mu'tazilite sect, who wanted to have the exegesis in the method of combining Arabic language ability and theology.

At the beginning, he was reluctant to do that, but then due to heavy requests, at last he endeavored to finish the exegesis Mu'talite's book of exegesis which come to us to data. It has become the essential reference to be consulted by any exegesion works to date.²

The special values of the al Kassiyaf exegesis book could be concluded as follow:

1. This exegesis book is able to open our vision to the theoretical secrets contained in al-Qur'an, its i'jaz aspects and the meanings involved within the words arrangement (*nazm*).³
2. There is no Israiliyat stories in this exegesis. The same attitude also found in the Mu'tazilite Sect's behavior.⁴
3. This book is not putting too much emphasis on story telling and it often quote the *fadhail al-suwar*'s tradition, which generally considered as false things.⁵
4. This book is using reason as the dominant factor in the verse-making, and if there is any tradition from shahabat and tabi'in which contradicts with the Mu'tazilite Sect, it is then has to be rejected.⁶
5. If any contradiction does between the Quranic tenets and the principles of Mu'tazilite teachings, he would do the adjust-

ment effort by bringing back the verse which he considered as *mutasyabihat* (having two different meanings) to the *muhkamamat* (having absolute meanings).

6. This exegesis book often quoted poetry in order to strengthen the exegesis in accordance with the Mu'tazilite teachings.

The Study of Al-Zamakhsari in Explaining I'jaz Al-Qur'an

In his writing of al-Kassiyaf exegesis, al-Zamakhsari is not only showing his vast knowledge on the deep meaning consist in the al-Qur'an, but he also able to digup further the secrets contained in i'jaz al-Qur'an.

I'jaz al-Qur'an, according to al-Zamakhsari, is indeed in the form of *nazm*. *Nazm* should be regarded as the mother of i'jaz al-Qur'an. The *nazm* could be seen in the form of wordings eloquency in ordered arrangement of phrasing and highly selected words in its revelation. More then that, he also following the azioms of grammatical meanings. This method was practised by al-Zamakhsari in explaining al-Qur'an from the aesthetical aspects.⁸

In his exegesis, al-Zamakhsari was much influenced by the theories of al-Jurjani's *nazm*. As for the theory of *nazm* al-Jurjani said that single words as such have no specific distinction over one another and that ideas as don't exist without words, hence they cannot be judged separately. It is *nazm* that creates distinctive style by the choice and arrangement of words to bring out meaning. Words arranged differently convey different meanings. Thus that best style is one which has the best construction possible for the expressive words for the purpose and placing them in the most lakily

³ Al-Zahabi, *op-cit.*, page 443

⁴ *Ibid.*, page 442.

⁵ Subhi al-Salih, *Mabahis fi Uluim al-Qur'an*, Dar Ilm li al-Malayin, Beirut, 1977. page 345

⁶ Mahmoud Ayyoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, I, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1984, page 5.

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Al-Zamakhsari, *op-cit.*,

arrangement. According al-Jurjani, the Qur'an uses the best nazm which, when the Arabs heard it, they realized they were unable to match. Because degrees of stylistic excellence are subtle, only taste and sensibility based on long aesthetic experience and literary knowledge can help one achieve discernment.⁹

J.J.G. Jansen sees al-Zamakhsari's work is not a dogmatical commentary. It is essentially philological and syntactical. Al-Zamakhsari analysed the stylistic peculiarities in the text; this made his commentary famous and valuable. He also included the Traditional material and the pre-Islamic verses usually employed to attest the meaning of certain words.

From his *readersal*-Zamakhsari expects a certain familiarity with the classical rules of Arabic grammar, without which the remarks are sometimes difficult to follow. For example, in Qur'an 6:(2) 2 "And a term is stated in his Skeeping (wa ajal musamma 'indahu) the word-order of this phrase goes against the rule that in a nominal phrase in which the predicate consists of a preposition (h.l. 'inda, "with") and a noun or pronoun (h.l. hu, "him"), and in which the subject (h.l. ajal, "term") is under determined, he predicate precedes the subject. The normal order of the word would thus be *Wa-'indahu ajal*. To view this as a problem and to understand the terminology of al-Zamakhsari's explanation, it is necessary to know the rules governing the word order as formulated by the grammarians of Arabic. Any deviation from what is regarded as normal according to these rules is noticed and explained by al-Zamakhsari.¹⁰

In his exegesis, al-Zamakhsari gave some examples by showing the high style of Quranic verses. Amongst them is the i'jaz

style example of verse described by al-Zamakhsari is as follows:

"Guidance for those who belong to the God-fearing".

Al-Zamakhsari's comments to this verse is given in the form of dialogue saying that: If you say, why God was not talking about guidance to these who are astray instead.

I say, because those who astray are divided into two. First, one group known as the ones choose to stick to their being astray. Second, is the group known as those choose to renewing their mental attitude, behavior and their world view toward gaining the right guidance. In other words, guidance is not purposely aimed to those who astray in the meaning that for them they will stay in their status in astray. Whilst for those who wish to change their attitude could be categorized as those who are seeking God's guidance.¹¹

Another example is in the form of the repetition

There are verses showing this repetition style in the same meaning as shown in the following:

Usage of the repetition style in the same meaning according to al-Zamakhsari, is to gain ever renewing and refreshing meaning whenever one hears every news revealed before as a warning which aimed at raising up consciousness on certain event. In other word, one should not fall into the same hole more than once. Another example of the same verse shown in

⁹ Dr. M.S. al-Djuwaini, *Manhaj al-Zamakhsari fi Tafsir al-Qur'an wa bayan I'jazih*, Dar al-Maarif, Cairo, page 299

¹⁰ Issa J. Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an I'jaz and Related Topics" in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, page 146.

¹¹ J.J.G. Jansel, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, page 63

"What is your other ways in making lies to God from all of the goods God has given you" -as mentioned in al-Rahman surah. The same happened also in the same repetition style through the revelation of stories and events all aimed to act as teaching examples for mankind and as mirror for man's every action.¹²

Another example took form in al-Badal. In this form the phrase contained the beauty of its eloquency. The aim of al-Badal is to confirm and to repeat.

The example of this is as follows :

Other verse example is as follows:

This verse shows the existence of "Badal" from the straight path and that shows the existence of repetition of one's own doing. It seems as if the verse is saying "Show us the straight path, the path that Thy favours. The same also happens in the phrase "O Thou" as the calling phrase which meant to confirm the statement. The following is a sample in verse :

Besides *nazm* to prove i'jaz al-Qur'an, al-Zamakhsari also mentioned the aspect of information of the unknown. He explained these two verses.

"Says: if the last Abode with God is yours exclusively, and not for other people, then

long for death - if you speak truly. But they will never long for it, because of that their hands have forwarded"¹³ (Al-Baqarah 94-95). These two verses contain miracles because they contain information of the unknown, as God told that they will never do and the next verse :

"Who have broken the Koran into fragments" (al-Hijr 91), this is from i'jaz, since it gives the information on what are going to be happened.

Another example which contain unknown information is in Ar-Rum which tells about the fall of the Roman kingdom within not more than nine years. This then occurred to be true. The same also happened with the information that the Prophet and his followers will enter the city of Mecca as the glorious end of his mission. This unknown information then proved to be true in reality later.¹⁴

Conclusion

Al-Zamakhsari's description in exegesis of al-Qur'an is not only revealing the meaning contained in al-Qur'an, but he also disclosed the secrets of i'jaz al-Qur'an. The method used by al-Zamakhsari in explaining this by practising theories by the earlier ulamas which condensed in the method of *nazm*. With *nazm*, word, meaning and axioms of the grammatical rules orderly organized which then manifest themselves in ultimate unimitative beauty of eloquency, highest composition, perfect style and depth of meanings.

¹² Al-Zamakhsari, *op-cit*, I, page 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, page 422.

¹⁴ A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, I, Macmillan Company, London, 1971, page 156