



THE INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTIONS OF QUR'ANIC STUDIES IN THE WORK «THE SCIENCES OF THE QUR'AN» BY SHAYKH MUHAMMAD SODIQ MUHAMMAD YUSUF

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Abstract. *This paper provides a scholarly investigation into the questions of Qur'anic studies as presented in the work «The Sciences of the Qur'an» (Qur'on ilmlari) by Shaykh Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf. In particular it examines the concept of «the sciences of the Qur'an», the history of this discipline, its introduction into the region of Uzbekistan, and its significance in the understanding of the Noble Qur'an. Proceeding from a textual analysis of the work, the research sets out to elucidate the interrelations among these questions, to examine the scholarly and educational contribution of the author to Qur'anic studies, and to show the academic importance of studying his views for countering and dispelling the doubts that arise in regard to the Noble Qur'an.*

Keywords: *sciences of the Qur'an, Qur'anic studies, exegesis (tafsīr), revelation (wahy), Noble Qur'an, Makkan, Madinan, verses, occasions of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl), history of the Qur'an, scholarly heritage, Shaykh Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf.*

INTRODUCTION

At the present day religious information is spreading rapidly through the digital media. In such circumstances it is of great importance to study the questions relating to the Noble Qur'an upon the basis of reliable sources, to apprehend the verses in their historical and scholarly context, and to distinguish the concepts of Qur'anic studies from one another. The study upon a scholarly foundation of such questions as revelation, the Makkan and Madinan verses and the occasions of revelation in particular assists in understanding the verses of the Qur'an and in correctly evaluating exegetical information (Abdullayev et al., 2016). From this point of view the study of the interpretation of these questions in the work «The Sciences of the Qur'an» by Shaykh Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf possesses both a theoretical and a practical importance.



In the study of the sciences of the Qur'an in the Uzbek language and in conveying them to a wide readership, the work «The Sciences of the Qur'an» ('Ulūm al-Qur'ān) of Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf is the first work in the field of Uzbek Qur'anic studies. The work of the author embraces various questions relating to Qur'anic studies. In its first part a place is given to the definition, the importance and the history of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, to revelation, to the relation between ḥadīth and the Qur'an, to the sending down of the Noble Qur'an, to the Makkan and Madinan verses, to the occasions of revelation and to subjects relating to the wordings of the Qur'an. The general form of the work was set out by the author in four parts, twenty-five divisions and fifty-four subjects within those divisions, systematically and in a theoretical and analytical exposition founded upon the criteria of historicity and of impartiality (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:3-6). The present paper analyses only four of the twenty-three subjects that enter into the twelve divisions of the first part of the book.

The bringing together of these subjects affords the opportunity of studying the principal questions of the sciences of the Qur'an in their mutual connection. For this reason the analysis of this work, the disclosure of the content of the scholarly questions treated in it and the demonstration of their importance in the understanding of the Qur'an are reckoned an actual scholarly task. The work is a rich source not only for the study of the formation of the classical Islamic sciences upon the foundation of the Qur'an, but also for giving a scholarly solution to the spiritual, ideological and methodological problems that stand at the present day before society and before the scholarly community (Muratov et al., 2017).

The aim of the research is to analyse the content of the questions of Qur'anic studies treated in the work «The Sciences of the Qur'an» of Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf and to determine their importance for the understanding of the Qur'an and for the science of exegesis.

MAIN PART

In the introductory and prefatory parts of the work it is emphasized that the first books written upon the history of the formation of the sciences of the Qur'an as a distinct discipline in the region of Uzbekistan likewise belong to the pen of the author himself. The earliest and the principal of these is the sixth volume of «Tafsīri Hilol», in which a division of nearly a hundred pages entitled «To the reader of Tafsīri Hilol» sets out systematically the history of the sciences of the Qur'an and the works composed in



this field by the scholars who arose from among the Uzbek people (Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf, 2009:VI). The next work of the author in this field is the volume «The Excellences of the Qur'an» of the series «Ḥadīth and Life», in which ḥadīths relating to the sciences of the Qur'an, among them the ḥadīths concerning the excellences of the sūras, are likewise commented upon; and this introduced into the discipline of Uzbek Qur'anic studies a distinctive method in harmony with the science of ḥadīth (Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:3-6; Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf, 2023).

The sciences of the Qur'an embrace the various scholarly questions connected with the study of the Noble Qur'an, with its sending down, and with the apprehension of its text and of its content. The determination of the compass of this field is important for understanding the mutual relation of the particular questions pertaining to Qur'anic studies (Abdullayev et al., 2016).

It is known that the books composed in the field of Qur'anic studies are of two kinds, books of compilation (jam') and books of verification (taḥqīq), the latter being those in which the various books of a single field are compared with one another, their errors corrected, and a conclusion given as to the most excellent or the most correct information. Books written by the method of compilation bring together, within the compass of each subject, the information given in the books that preceded them. The most celebrated of the books written by this method is «al-Itqān» of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, a work that brings together eighty chapters relating to the sciences of the Qur'an (al-Suyūṭī, 2019:I-II). In books written by the method of verification, by contrast, that assembled information is compared, its proofs are established, and it is likewise set forth which of them is the more excellent or the more correct. The work «The Sciences of the Qur'an» of Shaykh Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf is a work written by the method of verification, and a number of examples of this may be adduced from the work itself.

The first of these concerns the definition of the sciences of the Qur'an. In the first part of the work a separate subject is allotted to the definition, the importance and the history of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān. In studying this subject attention must be directed to the manner in which the author defined the concept of the sciences of the Qur'an, to the questions that he included within its compass, and to the manner in which he set out the importance of this science. In defining the name 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān the scholar first expounds the lexical meaning of each word and then its technical meanings in the view of the scholars of several disciplines, and thereafter adduces a number of celebrated definitions given to



the general name of the discipline, for example the definition of Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Zurqānī, the author of the book «Manāhil al-‘irfān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān», and that of the celebrated professor Ibrāhīm ‘Abd Allāh Rufayda, teacher of the sciences of the Qur’an in the Faculty of the Call to Islam in Libya. At the last he gives a definition that accords with the method of definition and that embraces all the definitions adduced (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:9).

According to that definition, ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān embraces many fields, among them the history of the Noble Qur’an; the causes of the sending down of the verses; the collection of the Noble Qur’an; the arrangement of the Noble Qur’an; the recitation of the Noble Qur’an; the orthography of the Noble Qur’an; the number of the verses of the Noble Qur’an; the inimitability of the Noble Qur’an; the clear and the ambiguous in the Noble Qur’an; the abrogating and the abrogated in the Noble Qur’an; the exegesis of the Noble Qur’an, and others besides. Because many sciences are contained within this exceedingly important and honourable science, it took shape as a distinct field and was named ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān, that is to say «the sciences of the Qur’an» (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:9).

Upon the basis of the definition adduced, the compass of the sciences of the Qur’an, their relation to the other Islamic sciences and their tasks in the study of the Qur’an are analysed. In particular it is possible to show the connection between the questions adduced in the work and the subjects recorded in its table of contents, and thereby to set out that the sciences of the Qur’an, while consisting of particular questions, also embrace mutually connected scholarly directions. The order of the subjects in the work is moreover composed in a form proportionate to the historical development of the sciences of the Qur’an, and this shows that the author did not depart from the exceedingly precise scholarly and academic method that he had set himself, but adhered to it strictly. This academic method is applied in the writing of textbooks of the various disciplines in most countries of the world: the study of the definition, the importance and the history of a discipline before the study of the discipline itself is a scholarly method that gives a preface to that discipline, or a historical, theoretical and analytical introduction to it, and thereby affords the opportunity of studying its foundation (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:9).

The second concerns revelation and the questions relating to the sending down of the Noble Qur’an. Revelation is one of the principal concepts connected with the sending



down of the Qur'an and with its conveyance to the Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace. The study of the question of revelation serves the apprehension of the source of the Qur'an, of the process of its being sent down, and of the foundation of the questions connected with prophethood. In the case of revelation also the author first gives the lexical and then the technical definitions in the manner set out above, and thereafter gives the lexical and technical definitions of ḥadīth, of the sacred ḥadīth and of the Qur'an, which enter into the composition of revelation; for although these three different concepts are distinct from one another, their being reckoned certain degrees of revelation is explained in the work in a scholarly manner, with proofs drawn from the verses and from the ḥadīths (Muhammad Sodiḳ Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:15-44).

By a precise scholarly analysis of the stages of the sending down of revelation, of the beginning of revelation, of the Prophet and revelation, of the states of Qur'anic revelation and of the concepts of the Prophet and the Qur'an, the author set out the aspect in which these concepts bear upon contemporary problems. He thereby disclosed that the removal of the doubts that arose, and that exist even now, as a result of a failure to understand revelation depends precisely upon a person's being able to apprehend revelation in its true reality; for a firm conviction that the Qur'an is the divine speech is formed precisely through a correct apprehension of revelation, and this is attained through a profound study of these subjects (Muhammad Sodiḳ Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:15-44). The inclusion of subjects relating to the first and the last verses of the Qur'an to be sent down shows that particular attention was directed to these questions.

In analysing this subject it is necessary to study how the concept of revelation is explained, what information is given concerning the process of the sending down of the Qur'an, and in what manner the question of the first and the last verses to be sent down is treated. The disclosure of the relation of these questions to the history of the Qur'an and to the science of exegesis is likewise reckoned an important aspect of the research (al-Ṭabarī, 1988:I). Through these subjects the scholar also set out the serious errors that are being committed in contemporary translation studies, among them that it is scholarly incorrect to express revelation by such words as inspiration or imagination, and that as a result of this and of similar incorrect renderings a distortion of the true essence of revelation is arising; he thereby disclosed that specialists in the field of translation must likewise be informed of the sciences of the Qur'an and must conduct deeper researches (Muhammad Sodiḳ Muhammad Yusuf, 2024).



The third concerns the place of the Makkan and Madinan verses in the sciences of the Qur'an. The division of the verses of the Qur'an into Makkan and Madinan is one of the important questions of the sciences of the Qur'an. This classification is bound up with the history of the sending down of the Qur'an and is of importance in the study of the historical context of the verses. In the work it is emphasized that the division of the verses of the Qur'an into Makkan and Madinan constitutes a separate subject; and by investigating this question it is possible to determine how the author defined the concepts of the Makkan and the Madinan, how he explained the criteria for distinguishing them, and in what manner he set out the importance of this classification for the study of the Qur'an (al-Qurṭubī, 1987).

The author writes: «The sole way leading to the knowledge of which of the verses of the Noble Qur'an are Makkan and which Madinan consists of the reliable reports transmitted from the Companions and the Successors, since nothing was transmitted in this regard from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace. For in his time the Muslims had no need of information of this kind: they lived in one breath with revelation, and saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears when, where and for what cause the verses of the Noble Qur'an were sent down» (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:156). By this definition the scholar disclosed that certain of the definitions given to the concepts of the Makkan and the Madinan are not correct. It was thereby made known that the concept of the Makkan and Madinan verses is bound up with the history of the Qur'an and constitutes an aspect that must be taken into account in the process of exegesis; and where criteria of classification or corresponding examples are given in the work, the contribution that they make to the understanding of this question is likewise shown. Analysis in this direction serves to disclose the necessity of studying the verses of the Qur'an not merely as a text, but in connection with the history of their being sent down and with their scholarly context.

The fourth concerns the importance of the question of the occasions of revelation for the understanding of the Qur'an. The occasion of revelation is a concept connected with the study of the event or the circumstance that was the cause of the sending down of the verses of the Qur'an, and this question occupies an important place in apprehending the historical situation of the verses and in correctly interpreting their content. The separate treatment of the subject of the occasions of revelation in the first part of the work affords the opportunity of studying the place of this question within the compass



of the sciences of the Qur'an. In analysing this subject the author first explained how he interprets the concept of the occasion of revelation, in what manner he sets out its office in the understanding of the Qur'an, and how he made use of the corresponding reports (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:160-184).

The science of the occasions of revelation likewise has a number of kinds, and upon the basis of the difference between those kinds and of examples given for each of them, the effect of the knowledge of the cause of the sending down upon the apprehension of the content of the verse is analysed. Where a particular event or report is given in the work by way of example, its office in explaining the subject is shown; and the necessity of evaluating the reliability and the content of the report must not in this remain outside consideration (al-Suyūfī, 2019:I-II).

Thus the study of the question of the occasions of revelation assists in apprehending the verses of the Qur'an in connection with their historical context and in understanding the scholarly foundations of the use of exegetical information. Through a profound study of this subject it becomes known that it is not possible to state the meaning of a verse decisively without knowing the cause of its being sent down, and that otherwise error may occur in the understanding of the verse and in the derivation of a ruling from it. The author moreover concluded this subject by drawing out a number of benefits of the knowledge of the science of the occasions of revelation (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:160-184).

When these four subjects of the first part of the work are studied in a general manner, the opportunity arises of determining the connections between the various questions of the sciences of the Qur'an. The concept of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān determines the general compass of the field; the questions relating to revelation and to the sending down of the Qur'an disclose its historical foundations; and the sciences of the Makkan and Madinan verses and of the occasions of revelation serve the study of the verses of the Qur'an in connection with the circumstances of their being sent down. The treatment of these questions within the compass of a single part affords the opportunity of considering them not separately, but as mutually connected directions of the study of the Qur'an. In the course of the research the content, the proofs and the offices in Qur'anic studies of the selected questions were compared with one another, and it became known that the place that they occupy in the understanding of the Qur'an and in exegetical investigations is a common one.



CONCLUSION

The first part of the work «The Sciences of the Qur'an» of Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf embraces the important questions of Qur'anic studies, among them the concept of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, revelation, the sending down of the Noble Qur'an, the Makkan and Madinan verses and the occasions of revelation. The study of these questions affords the opportunity of apprehending the content of the sciences of the Qur'an more deeply and of determining their relation to the science of exegesis (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:9).

In the scholarly analysis of this work it is important to determine the content of each question, its importance in the understanding of the Qur'an, and its relation to the other questions of Qur'anic studies. The analyses made it known that this work fulfilled the office of a foundation stone in Uzbek Qur'anic studies. Taken as a whole, the study of the questions treated in the first part of the work is of importance for the systematic assimilation of the knowledge pertaining to Qur'anic studies, for the apprehension of the verses of the Qur'an in their historical and scholarly context, and for a deeper investigation of the important questions of the science of exegesis. In this work Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq presented Qur'anic studies not merely as a science pertaining to theology, but as an integral scholarly system bound up with linguistics, history, sociology and anthropology (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:3-6).

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