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Critique and Analysis of James Bellamy's Views in the Article "Some Proposed Amendments to the Text of the Koran"

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Abstract

James Bellamy is one of the contemporary Orientalists in Quranic studies who, considering the Qur'an as a historical text, attempts to recognize some problematic Quranic phrases and suggests their corrections by using the textual criticism method. Analyzing the textual difficulties of the Qur'an, he points out that the Holy Prophet did not cause these errors, but based on some traditions, he believes that the scribes of revelation made mistakes while copying the text of the Qur'an. Referring to twelve of these mistakes, he tries to indicate that the scribes might have made mistakes in every period, and by exemplifying such cases, he proposes their corrections. This article intends to critically analyze the first six proposed corrections of James Bellamy's article entitled "Some Proposed Emendations to the Text of the Koran" published in 1993. A serious critique of Bellamy's view is the neglect of frequency in the written quotation of the Quranic text and the dominance of reading over writing. Furthermore, many of his inscriptional claims are inconsistent with ancient manuscripts of the Qur'an dating back to the early centuries of Islam.

Keywords: James Bellamy, Scribes' Mistake, Drawing of the Qur'an.

Introduction

Someone with limited familiarity with the Quranic text, translations, and commentaries figures out that many verses of the Quran are contentious due to the literary and semantic challenges of some of its words. This leads to diverse interpretations and extensive disagreements among scholars. According to Allamah Tabatabai, some verses have over a million possible meanings. Consequently, Quranic interpreters strive

to align their perspectives with their foundational principles, ensuring harmony with the context of the verses and avoiding contradictions with their presuppositions.

In addition to Muslim scholars, Western researchers have increasingly focused on this issue recently, leading to fresh research avenues centered around the Quran. Therefore, the most serious subject for them is the language of the Quran. James Bellamy, born in 1925, a professor of Arabic literature at the University of



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Michigan, USA, in his article "Some Proposed Emendations to the Text of the Koran" published in 1993 in the Journal of the American Oriental Society, assumes errors in the Uthmanic codex made by the scribes of revelation, aiming to identify and correct them to bring the Quranic text as close as possible to what was initially revealed by the Prophet. He employs a distinctive method in his Quranic studies, previously utilized for the Holy Scriptures. Due to various reasons, the Holy Scriptures have changed, either accidentally or deliberately, including the deletion or addition of words, changes in verb tense, word combinations, and sentence rewriting. These changes significantly contributed to the divergence of versions of the Holy Scriptures. Consequently, theologians of Christian theology pondered the application of textual criticism methods to improve the text of the Holy Scriptures, aiming to draft the closest possible version to the original. This method, referred to as textual criticism, is employed in Bellamy's critique of the Quranic text, where he defines it as the art of discovering textual errors and rectifying them. The process of finding and rectifying these errors involves two stages:

1. Demonstrating the linguistic appropriateness of the term.
2. Demonstrating the correctness of the proposed replacement for it.

However, Bellamy's views have not been comprehensively addressed thus far; instead, some of his textual corrections have been sporadically critiqued. For instance, Seyed Babak Farzaneh in his article "The Inheritance of Hell: A Semantic Study of the Word 'Inheritance' in the Quran" and Abdul Hadi Fiqhizadeh and Hessam Emami Danalou in their article "Musajjil; A Proper and Unscientific Proposal" have endeavored to explain and critique some of Bellamy's proposals.

1. Critique of James Bellamy's

Perspectives in the Article "Some Proposed Emendations to the Text of the Koran"

In this article, utilizing the method of textual criticism, the author evaluates 12 words and phrases from the Quranic text, proposing revisions for each, and believes that the suggested words or phrases originate from the language of the Prophet. However, this claim may be biased, as indicated by the author's statement at the end of the article: "This collection is hoped to play a role - albeit small - in reducing the credibility and prestige of the Prophet in the West" (Bellamy, 1996, p. 203). It was expected that the author's textual criticism of the Quran would involve examining and comparing ancient Quranic versions, or at least considering various recitations, but this was not the case. Instead, the author critiqued the text based on a specific version, adopting a predetermined stance.

Bellamy, by referring to some narrations attributed to Imam Ali (AS), Uthman, Aisha, and Ibn Abbas, raises the existence of tone in the Quran. For instance, he cites Ali (AS) regarding the word "talh" in verse 29 of Surah Al-Waqi'ah, "and talh manzud," who says: "This is the same as tal' found in verse 148 of Surah Ash-Shu'ara, 'and crops and palm trees whose branches are broken.'" When asked if he wouldn't correct it, he replied, "The Quran cannot be changed" (Tusi, n.d., vol. 9, p. 495). Therefore, assuming the authenticity of the narration, its content can be attributed to a kind of derivation in the Arabic language. In this derivation, the letters of synonymous words are transformed into each other. Ibn Jinni extensively discusses this phenomenon in his work *Al-Khasais* in a chapter titled "Al-Tasaqub al-Alfaz li-Tasaqub al-Ma'ani" (Ibn Jinni, 1371 AH, vol. 2, pp. 145-152). In some reports attributed to Ibn Abbas, he accuses the scribes of revelation of erroneous writing; for example, he reads verse 31 of Surah Ar-Ra'd, "Do they not

despair of ever meeting their Lord?" as "Do they not consider?" When confronted that the Quran mentions "Do they not despair," he responds, "I think the scribe of this verse was half asleep at the time of writing it" (Suyuti, 1394 AH, vol. 2, p. 327). However, elsewhere, Ibn Abbas interprets "Do they not despair" as "Do they not know" and considers it related to the language of Banu Malik (Suyuti, n.d., vol. 4, p. 654). According to the author's belief, the difference between "despair" and "consider" is due to the differences in recitations, and Imam Ali (AS), Imam Sajjad (AS), Imam Sadiq (AS), Zayd ibn Ali, and others have also read this verse as "Do they not consider" (Tabarsi, 1372 SH, vol. 6, p. 449). Therefore, when these different aspects of the word are established in recitations, the correctness of one does not necessarily entail the incorrectness of the other.

In addition to this, Ibn Abbas is reported to have read verse 23 of Surah Al-Isra as "And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him" instead of "and your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him," attributing the reason for this change to the scribe's error in excessive use of the substance, causing him to add the word "not" and thus transform "and has decreed" into "and wills" (Suyuti, 1394 AH, vol. 2, p. 328). Aisha is also reported to have said regarding the reason "Sabaen" is written instead of "Sabeion" in the Quran, that the scribe of revelation made a mistake and wrote it while he was joking (Hirawi, 1426 AH, p. 161).

Generally, in Islamic sources, various reports have been narrated regarding the differences in manuscripts and recitations, including the differences in the manuscripts of Sham, Hijaz, and Iraq authored by Ibn Amir Yahsubi in the year 118 AH, the differences in the manuscripts of the people of Madinah, Kufa, and Basra authored by Kisa'i in the year 189 AH, the differences among the people of Kufa,

Basra, and Sham in the manuscripts written by Farra' in the year 207 AH, the differences in manuscripts authored by Khalaf ibn Hisham al-Bazzar in the year 229 AH, the books of manuscripts and recitations written by Mada'ini in the year 231 AH, the book *Differences in Manuscripts* by Abu Hatim al-Sijistani in the year 248 AH, the books *Manuscripts and Eloquence* authored by Muhammad ibn Isa Isfahani in the year 253 AH, the book *Manuscripts* by Ibn Anbari in the year 327 AH, the book *Manuscripts* by Ibn Ishteh Isfahani in the year 360 AH, and the book *Manuscripts* by Ibn Maqsum in the year 362 AH (Ibn Nadim, 1417AH, p. 56). Although these books have not reached us, their traces can be found in works such as *The Virtues of the Quran* by Abu Ubayd al-Hirawi, *Manuscripts* by Ibn Abi Dawood al-Sijistani, and *The Covered in Illustrating the Manuscripts of the Capitals* by Abu Amr Dani. These works have paid attention not only to the differences in manuscripts but also to the errors of scribes.

Although Muslim commentators centuries before Orientalists have discussed errors in the manuscript writing of the Quran, primarily related to spelling variations or differences in the accents of the companions (Ma'rifat, 1415 AH, vol. 1, pp. 365-403), according to Muslim scholars, the discrepancy between the spoken form of a word and its written form does not necessarily indicate its error or the incorrectness of its calligraphy. This phenomenon exists in many languages; for example, the word "wrist" is pronounced as /rist/ while its written form starts with "W" with the sound /w/, or the word "sister" where the "waw" is not pronounced, or the word "jazi" written with "ya" but pronounced with "alif." None of these cases indicate misspellings of these words, as their forms have conventionally evolved in this manner. Therefore, spelling mistakes in the Quranic text will not lead to incorrect recitation

(Ma'rifat, 1415 AH, vol. 1, p. 368).

However, all these issues stem from the manuscript writing of the Quran, which, as James Bellamy points out in his article, differs significantly in many cases. He discusses errors that require changes in calligraphy. On the other hand, his speculative errors are not mentioned in any previous or subsequent sources and are merely his conjectures. He attributes the main cause of errors in the Quranic text to the mistakes of the scribe or the seller due to poor initial handwriting, damage to papyrus or parchment paper, inability to understand the meaning, or simply carelessness (Bellamy, 1996, p. 196). He also believes that its calligraphy is another reason for errors in the Quranic text. In his view, because the Arabic alphabet does not have vowels and vowels are indicated by Arabic diacritics, the scribe may have been forced to copy hastily to avoid falling behind in dictation (McAuliffe, 2006, p. 238), leading to errors in writing.

Bellamy regards the differences among interpreters in explaining a word as a clue to identifying textual issues in the Quran. While it is evident that the companions did not all hold the same level of scholarly status, their disagreements on the meanings of certain words and interpretations of Quranic concepts never indicate an error in the Quranic text. This is because the companions varied in their expertise in language, their companionship with the Prophet, and their knowledge of the occasions of revelation. However, despite these differences, most companions contented themselves with a general understanding of the verses and did not consider themselves obliged to comprehend the detailed meanings of the verses. For instance, Ibn Abbas's uninformed statement about the meaning of the word "Fāṭir" in verse "Praise be to Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who appointeth the angels' messengers having wings two, three and four." is a prominent example of this claim

(Zamakhshari, 1407 AH, vol. 3, p. 39; Ibn Athir, 1399 AH, vol. 3, p. 457).

Another example is the word "kalalah," which is used in verses 12 and 176 of Surah An-Nisa: "They request from you a [legal] ruling. Say, 'Allah gives you a ruling concerning one having neither descendants nor ascendants [as heirs].' If a man dies, leaving no child but [only] a sister, she will have half of what he left. And he inherits from her if she [dies and] has no child. But if there are two sisters [or more], they will have two-thirds of what he left. If there are both brothers and sisters, the male will have the share of two females. Allah makes clear to you [His law], lest you go astray. And Allah Knows of all things." (Quran 4:176). Concerning the meaning of "kalalah," Abu Bakr was asked, and he said, "I will state my opinion, and if it is correct, it is from Allah, and if it is wrong, it is from Satan and me." When this statement reached Ali, he said, "Did he not know that kalalah applies to paternal and maternal uncles and aunts separately?" (Mufid, 1413 AH, vol. 1, p. 201; Darimi, 1349 AH, vol. 2, p. 365). Masruq wrote about this: Knowledge extended to three individuals: an expert in Medina named Ali ibn Abi Talib, an expert in Iraq named Ibn Mas'ud, and an expert in Syria named Abu Darda. Scholars from Syria and Iraq would go to the expert in Medina for inquiries, but he would not ask them (Ibn Asakir, 1415 AH, vol. 42, p. 410). It is narrated by Imam Ali addressing the people: "Ask me about the Quran, for I know all its verses, whether they were revealed during the night or day, in the mountain or desert." (Ibn Hajar Asqalani, n.d., vol. 11, p. 249).

Furthermore, the compilation of books on this subject indicates that sometimes words are used in the Quran that were less common among Arabs, and only a few individuals were aware of their meanings. Therefore, the use of such words in the Quran does not prove the authenticity of those words, and the rarity of usage does

not necessarily imply that a word is fabricated. In the Quran, there are about 400 unique words that may become subject to semantic ambiguity over time. Therefore, it should not be expected that all Arabs, simply by being Arabs, should be familiar with every word and its meanings in detail; rather, a general understanding suffices. For this reason, the companions of the Prophet, based on their levels of knowledge, memory capacity, and intelligence, were knowledgeable about the meanings of words (Tabrani, 2008 AD, vol. 1, p. 42).

The claim of proving errors in the Quran due to the differences among the companions in understanding its meanings is also inconsistent with the presumption of faultlessness. Zaid bin Thabit is believed to have compiled the Quran (Bellamy, 1993 AD, p. 566). How is it possible that the suggestions presented by Bellamy existed in the language of the people before the Prophet's death and then, due to the lack of clarity in handwriting or the smudging of ink by one or more scribes of revelation, everything that had been established in the memory of Muslims became lost and disrupted?

Bellamy overlooks in his analysis the fact that in the early days of Islam, recitation was dominant over writing, and the Quran during the time of revelation was primarily transmitted orally in a continuous manner. This means that Muslims learned and memorized the Quran from their teachers, who in turn had learned from their predecessors, passing down the recitation of the Quran exactly as they had learned it. This oral transmission continued from generation to generation, and the writing of the Quran was only to aid memory and did not have independence (Blachère, 1996 AD, p. 17). Even now, after centuries have passed, Quran recitation instructors still maintain their chain of transmission back to the Prophet, preserving their authority, and they pass on their recitation to their Quran

students, who then hand over their recitation to their students, receiving written authorization for their recitation. However, in Bellamy's view, the final form of the Quran is derived from a written source (Bellamy, 1996, p. 199). However, in another place, he says that oral transmission of the Quran was common at the beginning of the era of revelation, and later during the time of Uthman, the written Uthmani script was published. Andrew Rippin also raised these issues and said that Bellamy does not provide any specific evidence for his assumptions about the tradition of Quranic text transmission and easily bypasses the tradition of oral transmission of the Quran (Kariminia, 2003, p. 6). William Graham considers this belief prejudiced and emphasizes the importance of oral transmission of the Quran, stating that one should not expect the same function from the oral tradition at the beginning of Islam as occurred in the written cultures of Greece and Rome (ibid).

Historical studies show that Muslims, especially the companions of the Prophet, emphasized the preservation and protection of the Quran from distortion (Feqhizadeh, 1995, pp. 29-34). It is narrated from Obadah ibn Samit that whenever someone arrived from another place in the presence of the Prophet, one of them would be assigned to teach him the Quran. The eagerness to learn and listen to the Quran was such that Muslim women would offer to learn a chapter or more of the Quran as part of their dowry (Kulayni, 1407 AH, vol. 5, p. 380; Khu'i, n.d., p. 254). Scholars such as Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Dani, Ibn Najah, Jazari, Demiati, Abu Hayyan al-Andolosi, Ibn Khaldun, Tabarsi, Ayatollah Ma'rifat, and Ayatollah Jawadi Amoli have defended the preservation of the Quran from distortion, citing verses such as "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, we will be its guardian" (Quran 15:9) and "Indeed, those who disbelieve in the message after it has come

to them... It is an honored Book. Falsehood cannot approach it from before it or from behind it; [it is] a revelation from a [Lord who is] Wise and Praiseworthy" (Quran 41:41-42), as well as narrations like "Verily, the Quran today is unaltered and unchanging" (Tabarsi, 1372 SH, vol. 9, p. 330), and also providing rational arguments that if the Quran were to be distorted, guidance for humanity would be incomplete from the seal of the prophets (Jawadi Amoli, 2002 AD, p. 315).

From the Shia perspective, the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet Muhammad) emphasize adherence to the common practice of reciting the Quran in society, and they assert that there is no authorization for making changes or corrections to alleged errors in the Quranic text (Tabarsi, 1372 SH, vol. 9, p. 330). Furthermore, any alteration contrary to the established script of the Quran is considered distortion, especially linguistic distortion, and the sanctity of the Quran is preserved from any form of distortion.

However, the correction of Quranic vocabulary, as long as it does not conflict with the established script, has not been hindered by the absence of diacritics and vowel markings in the early manuscripts. We witness the diligence of exegetes, especially scholars of Quranic recitation throughout Islamic history, including Ibn Khalawayh (d. 370 AH) in his work *Al-Hujjah fi al-Qira'at al-Sab'ah*, Ibn al-Faris (d. 377 AH) in his work *Al-Hujjah li'l-Qurra' al-Sab'ah*, Abu Amr Dani (d. 444 AH) in his works *Jami' al-Bayan fi al-Qira'at al-Sab'ah* and *Kitab al-Taysir fi al-Qira'at al-Sab'ah*, and Ibn Jazari (d. 833 AH) in his work *Tahbir al-Taysir fi al-Qira'at al-'Ashr* and *Nashr fi al-Qira'at al-'Ashr*. These scholars have contributed significantly to the elucidation and preservation of the Quranic recitations.

In summary, the main challenge to James Bellamy's approach and similar ones lies in the issue of the Quranic transmission and the variation in

recitations. It was expected that he would refine this basis in his argument and provide evidence, as opposing the amendment of the text would inherently deny the consistency of Quranic transmission.

2. Critique of Bellamy's Perspective on the term "Ummah"

"UmAmah" in verse 8 of Surah Hud and verse 42 of Surah Yusuf refers to time and period: "And if We hold back from them the punishment until a specified time, they will surely say, 'What has detained it?'" and "The one who had been saved of them, after a time, said."

The author of the article refers to the interpretations of translators such as Part and Balashir regarding the meaning of the term "Ummah" and considers the context of the phrase as evidence for the inclination of Quranic interpreters towards the meaning of time and duration. The author argues that this meaning does not correlate with the root of the word and is far-fetched. He mentions alternative readings for this term such as "Lutf" (kindness), "Ama" or "Emmah" (forgetfulness), and dismisses all of them as unsuitable because the linguistic context evokes the meaning of time and duration. Bellamy believes that by changing the letter "ه" (ha) to "د" (dal), "Ummah" can be read as "Umadd" meaning time (Bellamy, 1993 AD, p. 564). Thus, in justifying the mention of the feminine marker "ta" for "ma'doodah," he says it is natural for whoever reads "Umadd" as "Ummah" to also read "ma'dood" as "ma'doodah." He refers to the repetition of the word "Umadd" nine times in the Quran to support his proposal. However, as observed, the writing of the feminine letter "ta" in "Ummah" in the Hijazi script also differs from "dal."¹

On the other hand, linguists explicitly and independently enumerate the meanings

¹ Figure 1-1

of present and time for "Ummah" (Zubaidi, n.d., vol. 16, p. 27; Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 12, p. 27; Raghīb Isfahani, 1412 AH, p. 86). Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah, Zajjaj, and Fara' also understood "Ummah" in the sense of present and time (Tusi, n.d., vol. 5, p. 453; Tabarsi, 1372 SH, vol. 5, p. 218). Allama Tabatabai also believes in the same meaning for "Ummah" (Tabatabai, 1417 AH, vol. 10, p. 155), and some consider this meaning to be correct in the lexicon (Ibn Hayyan, 1423 AH, p. 188).

It is noteworthy that some Quranic interpreters did not initially consider the term "Ummah" to have the meaning of present but later believed it acquired this meaning over time. For instance, Tabari considered the original meaning of "Ummah" to be a group with a common belief and religion, which later came to be used in other meanings such as present and time (Tabari, 1412 AH, vol. 12, p. 5). He argues that the term "Ummah" in the sense of present came into being when it was pronounced as "Ummah," but if read as "Amah," it is derived from the verb "Amiha Yama" meaning forgetfulness (Tabari, 1412 AH, vol. 12, p. 135). Ibn Ashur writes in explaining the meaning of "Ummah": "Ummah refers to a group of people gathered under a single command, then applied to time, as if it is a period in which a generation of people is formed, and later it has been used in the absolute sense of duration" (Ibn Ashur, n.d., vol. 11, p. 212). Similarly, Ibn Qutaybah explains the semantic development of "Ummah": "Initially, 'Ummah' was applied to a group of people, and when they disappear at a certain time, it is replaced by 'Hin' (Ibn Qutaybah, n.d., p. 249). According to Fakhr Razi, when many days are gathered together, "Hin" emerges, just as when a large group comes together, "Ummah" is formed. Therefore, "Hin" is a collection of days and hours (Razi, 1420 AH, vol. 18, p. 464).

In addition to these meanings, other interpretations of "Ummah" have been

mentioned. For example, in verse 8 of Surah Hud, it is said that "Ummah" refers to a group of disbelievers who will perish due to their disbelief. It is also narrated from Imam Sadiq (AS) that the intended 313 individuals among the supporters of Imam Mahdi (AS) will gather in one hour like the companions of Badr (Tabarsi, 1372 SH, vol. 5, p. 218). Some have interpreted "Ummah" in verse 45 of Surah Yusuf as "Ni'mat" (blessing) and "Ummah" as "Nisyan" (forgetfulness) (Razi, 1420 AH, vol. 18, p. 464).

Therefore, contrary to Bellamy's perspective, the meaning of "Ummah" should be studied and analyzed separately in the two mentioned verses. Thus, in verse 8 of Surah Hud, both meanings of "a group of people" and "time" can be correct, as lexical sources and reports emphasize this. It is compatible with the context of the verses. However, in verse 42 of Surah Yusuf, in addition to the meaning of time, the meaning of forgetfulness can also be accepted. Therefore, when there are indeed correct meanings or interpretations for a word, what reason is there to reject them and insist on changing them in writing, and instead endeavor to understand them?

3. Critique of Bellamy's Perspective on the Term "Abba"

The esteemed author finds the term "Abba" (meaning fodder and pasture) in verse 30 of Surah Abasa ambiguous and attributes the differences among interpreters in explaining this term to the mistake of scribes in writing it (Bellamy, 1993 AD, p. 565).² According to him, such a word has not been used before or after Islam, and the references cited by Muslim interpreters to prove the correctness of the term have been fabricated, and falsely attributed to Ibn Abbas. However, he does not provide any evidence for the fabrication of this poetic evidence (Ibid). He attempts to resolve this problem not through the

² Figure 2-1

etymology of the word in the style of Suyuti or Arthur Jeffrey, who consider it to mean "kernel" to match his assumption with the blessings mentioned in the preceding verses, such as olives, grapes, etc.

However, lexicographers mention the meaning of this word. Ibn Manzur lists the meanings of plants, herbage, pasture, and anything that grows from the ground for this word and refers to various Arabic poems (Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 1, p. 204). Additionally, the rarity of a word is not evidence of its fabrication. There are about 400 words in the Quran that have only one usage and may have become ambiguous over time.

Contrary to James Bellamy's claim, the term "Labb" is also incompatible with the context of the verse. In verses 27 to 31 of Surah Abasa, the term "Habb" is used to mean grains, making the repetition of it as "Labb" unnecessary. Moreover, the phrase "Mat'an lakum wa li-an'amikum" (a provision for you and your cattle) in verse 31 refers to the blessings provided to humans and animals. Zubaidi writes: "The fodder of quadrupeds is like fruit for humans" (Zubaidi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 293). Labb is the food of quadrupeds, just as fruit is the food of humans. The poem reflects this (Zubaidi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 293): "Jazmunā Qaysun wa Najdun Dārunā Wa lanā al-Abu bihi wa al-Makrā'i" In pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, Labb has been used to mean fodder as well. Ibn Abbas in the Masail Ibn Azraq states that Labb is something that quadrupeds eat and cites this poem: "Tara bi al-Abi wa al-Iqfīn mukhtaltīn 'Alā al-Sharī'ati yajrī tahta-hā al-Gharbu" (Suyuti, 1394 AH, vol. 2, p. 100). Regarding the term "Ab," there is no difference in its recitation (Ibn Khalawayh, 1413 AH, vol. 2, p. 441), but various interpretations have been mentioned for it. Some interpreters consider it as the food of quadrupeds and attribute this view to Ibn Abbas (Farra, n.d., vol. 3, p. 238). Others consider "Ab" as dry fruit, as quoted from

Kalbi: "Every vegetation is divided into moist and dry fruits" (Andolosi, 1420 AH, vol. 10, p. 410; Qurtubi, 1364 SH, vol. 19, p. 223). Zamakhshari writes that the context of the verse indicates that "Ab" is a plant that God has provided for humans and quadrupeds so that we may be grateful for it, not that we should be busy finding the exact meaning of "Ab" (Zamakhshari, 1407 AH, vol. 4, p. 705). Some interpreters have also mentioned that "Ab" was a forgotten Arabic word that the Quran revived (Alusi, 1415 AH, vol. 15, p. 250; Ibn Ashur, n.d., vol. 30, p. 117). Therefore, it should not be expected that just because Arabs are Arabs, they should be fully aware of all words and their meanings. General knowledge of vocabulary suffices. This is why the companions of the Prophet, based on their levels of knowledge, memory, and intelligence, knew the meanings of words (Tabrani, 2008 AD, vol.1, p. 42). It is true that according to traditions, Abu Bakr and Umar were not aware of the meaning of this word, but Bellamy's narrative research is incomplete because he does not refer to reports indicating that other companions were aware of the meaning of this word, including a report from Imam Ali, who, after hearing Abu Bakr's explanation of the meaning of "Ab," addressed it and said: "Glory be to Allah! Did he not know that Ab means pasturage and fodder? And the saying of Allah Most High, 'and fruit and pasture,' is a count from Allah of His blessings upon His creatures in what He feeds them with and creates for them—both what revives their souls and sustains their bodies" (Mufid, 1413 AH, vol. 1, p. 200; Tabatabai, 1417 AH, vol. 20, p. 212).

4. Critique of Bellamy's Perspective on the Term "Hitta"

The author of the article focuses on the word "Hitta" in verse 58 of Surah Al-Baqarah: "Enter the gate bowing humbly and say, 'Relieve us of our burdens.' We will forgive your sins for you." He

recounts the various meanings presented by translators and Quranic interpreters for this term and then, by referring to the weakness of the writing system of that time in indicating omitted hamzas in the Hijazi dialect, corrects "Hitta" to "Hitta" which is, in reality, "Hitta" (Bellamy, 1993 AD, p. 566). "Hitta" is equivalent to saying "We have committed sins." He justifies the omission of the hamza in "Hitta" by saying that during that period, "Hitta" was pronounced like "Hitta," just as readers pronounce "mara'i" as "mari" and "juz" as "juzz"³ (Ibid). Contrary to "Hitta," which is only a derived word from "Hitta," 22 words derived from "Khata" have been used in the Quran.

The term "Hitta" in authentic linguistic sources means coming down from above, and in verse 58 of Surah Al-Baqarah, it means "remove our burdens and forgive our sins" (Ibn Faris, 1399 AH, vol. 2, p. 13; Raghīb Isfahani, 1412 AH, p. 242). It has been said about this word: "Hitta al-haml 'an al-ba'ir: Anzalahu 'a zahrih," meaning that "Hitta" is equivalent to bringing down (Farahidi, n.d., vol. 3, p. 19; Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 7, p. 273). In the discussed verse, the determination is on the phrases "Mas'alatuna Hitta" or "Amruna Hitta," and they seek forgiveness through these expressions. Ibn Arabi is quoted as saying that "Hitta" is equivalent to "La ilaha illallah," which means it washes away sins (Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 7, p. 273). But Quranic interpreters have detailed discussions on this word. Fakhr Razi quotes various views on "Hitta" as follows:

Qadi Baydawi: They sought forgiveness by saying this word until their language was accompanied by bodily submission and heartfelt remorse.

Asim: He believes this word is not Arabic and is from the words of the People of the Book.

Zamakhshari: "Hitta" is a nominal

sentence with an omitted predicate, and the determination of the phrase "Mas'alatuna Hitta" is a command. Although initially it was with the determination of "Hitta 'Anna Dhanubana," it was raised to emphasize its certainty. It's like saying "beautiful patience" when the original is "Sabran" with the determination "Asbir Sabran." However, Ibn Abi 'Ubayda considered "Hitta" as the subject (Razi, 1420 AH, vol. 3, p. 524; Alusi, 1415 AH, vol. 1, p. 266). Hasan, Qatada, and most scholars also consider "Hitta" as "remove our sins" (Tusi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 264). Therefore, the concept of "Hitta" is related to repentance. A'ban has composed the following verse for this meaning of "Hitta:"

"Faza bi al-Hitta al-lati ja'ala Allahu Biha dhanba abdih maghfura"

(Alusi, 1415 AH, vol. 1, p. 266).

It is also narrated from Imam Baqir (AS) that he said: "We are the gate to your repentance" (Tabarsi, 1372 SH, vol. 1, p. 247). However, Ibn Ashur believes that "Hitta" does not mean seeking divine forgiveness, but according to its meaning of coming down, it is issued from the Foreknowledge of God. In other words, in this verse, individuals, by saying this word, indicate their helplessness and inadequacy in front of the people of their town (Ibn Ashur, n.d., vol. 1, p. 498). Moreover, the recitation "Raf" with the meaning of seeking forgiveness through it is also incompatible, as the verbal noun is not raised in the verse. Unlike "Hitta," which is raised, in the noble verse, like "Saqiya and Ra'iya," which have not been raised, but when they are raised, it is to praise or marvel at them (Ibn Ashur, n.d., vol. 1, p. 498).

Given the meaning of "Hitta," which is descent, and its expansion to mean the collapse of sins, the probability of this word being addressed is very weak. Furthermore, even if "Hitta" is assumed to be incorrect, "Hitta" will not be correct. How is it possible to assume that the scribe made a mistake in verse 58 of Surah Al-

³ Figure 3-1

Baqarah by writing "Hitta" instead of "Hitta," but he wrote "Hitta" correctly in verse 161 of Surah Al-A'raf, which is very similar to verse 58 of Surah Al-Baqarah? In other words, the coexistence of "Hitta" with the words of verse 58 of Surah Al-Baqarah has already been established in verse 161 of Surah Al-A'raf, which itself is the best evidence for the invalidity of the author's opinion about the error of "Hitta." The author explains the reason for changing "Hitta" to "Hitta" by saying that "Hitta" is more consistent with the phrase since admitting to sins is necessary for forgiveness (Bellamy, 1993 AD, p. 566). However, in Islamic thought, unlike Christianity, this notion that admitting to sin is necessary for forgiveness is fundamentally false, and it seems that the author has taken this assumption from Christian sources and sought to apply it in Islamic sources. Therefore, the contextual suitability of "Hitta" with the phrase of the verse will also be disrupted.

5. Critique of Bellamy's Perspective on the Phrase "Fasurhunna Ilayka"

James Bellamy, after mentioning verse 260 of Surah Al-Baqarah: "Then take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them—they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise," discusses the recitations and meanings given by translators and interpreters for the phrase "Fasurhunna Ilayka." Then, emphasizing the differences in meanings of this phrase and their inconsistency with the verse, he corrects "Fasurhunna Ilayka" to "Fasurhunna ila juz'ihinna wa al-buk" (Bellamy, 1993 AD, p. 567). "Juz'ihin" means to break into pieces, and "al-buk" means to mix.

According to some lexicographers, "sawwara" means inclination or tendency towards something (Ibn Faris, 1399 AH, vol. 3, p. 320). "Sawwara" means inclination (Farahidi, n.d., vol. 7, p. 150;

Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 4, p. 474); "Rajul aswara ila al-shay" means he inclined towards it. Ibn Manzur has provided numerous poetic evidence for this meaning of "sawwara" (Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 4, p. 474). "Fulan yasuru 'anqah ila kathalik" means he inclined his neck towards it (Farahidi, n.d., vol. 7, p. 150). However, the word "surh" has multiple contradictory meanings (Ibn Faris, 1399 AH, vol. 3, p. 320). It has been said that "surat al-shay" means cutting and separating it. If this meaning is confirmed for "Fasurhunna Ilayka," it implies a delay and deferment, and in essence, it was "Khuz ilayka arba'atan fasurhunna" (Zubaidi, n.d., vol. 7, p. 112; Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, vol. 4, p. 474). Also, "surhun" means to cut and separate; Ammiyah has composed:

I cut them into pieces and then called them; they came flying to you, O Zahra, keeper of birds" (Farahidi, n.d., vol. 7, p. 150).

Quranic interpreters have mentioned both meanings of "Fasurhunna," namely, cutting and inclining. "Surat al-shay" means inclining it towards it, and "rajul aswara" means inclined towards it (Razi, 1420 AH, vol. 7, p. 37). Allama Tabatabai also believed in this view and considered "Fasurhunna Ilayka" to mean "awjada milaha ilayka," and he believed that if "surhun" meant to break into pieces, it would not be compatible with "ila" (Tabatabai, 1417 AH, vol. 2, p. 368). Another meaning, according to the views of Ibn Abbas, Saeed ibn Jubayr, Hasan, and Mujahid, is to cut into pieces (Razi, 1420 AH, vol. 7, p. 37). It is worth mentioning that "Fasurhunna" has been recited differently, including recitations from the readers of Medina, Mecca, and Basrah, who have recited "Surrhunna" with a silent "mim," which means to incline or face towards you (Tabari, 1412 AH, vol. 3, p. 35), and Hamzah and Ya'qub have recited "Sirhunna" with a broken "mim" (Alusi, 1415 AH, vol. 2, p. 28).

Furthermore, Akrama considered this word to be Nabati, Qatada considered it to be Habashi, and Wahb considered it to be Roman (Ibn Ashur, n.d., vol. 2, p. 513). As mentioned, "Fasurhunna" has been recited with various meanings, including cutting and inclining, but since the meaning of cutting requires deferment and delay and is not consistent with the context of the phrase, only the meaning of inclination is specified for it. However, the problem with the meaning of inclination is that there is no mention of cutting the birds into pieces in the verse, but this concept can be inferred as a tacit implication from the statement of the verse because it says, "Then put on each hill a portion of them," which implies breaking them into pieces. Moreover, Bellamy's correction by adding "wa" in the manuscript is accompanied by no explanation, leaving no justification, and it is seen in this old version of the Quran. He has not provided any reason for adding "wa"⁴ (Bellamy, 1993 AD, p. 567).

Conclusion

James Bellamy has attempted to correct the Quranic text using the text-critical method, just as the sacred texts have been modified throughout history, whether intentionally or unintentionally. He considered the reason for the error in the Quranic text to be the inadvertence of the scribes and narrated various narrations from the companions of the Prophet indicating that these mistakes occurred from the scribes of revelation. However, the fundamental critique of this view can be disregarding the textual consistency of the Quran and the uncertainty of the recitation in the writing of the manuscript. Moreover, many of the words he has mentioned as errors are simply due to differences of opinion among the companions and commentators in interpreting them. It is clear that the companions did not have the same level of knowledge, and their differences of

opinion cannot alone determine the error of a phrase. Therefore, many of the author's justifications, which he has raised as the occurrence of errors by the scribes, have been rejected by comparing them with ancient manuscripts of the Quran, some of which date back to the first century AH.

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⁴ Figure 4-1

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Notes

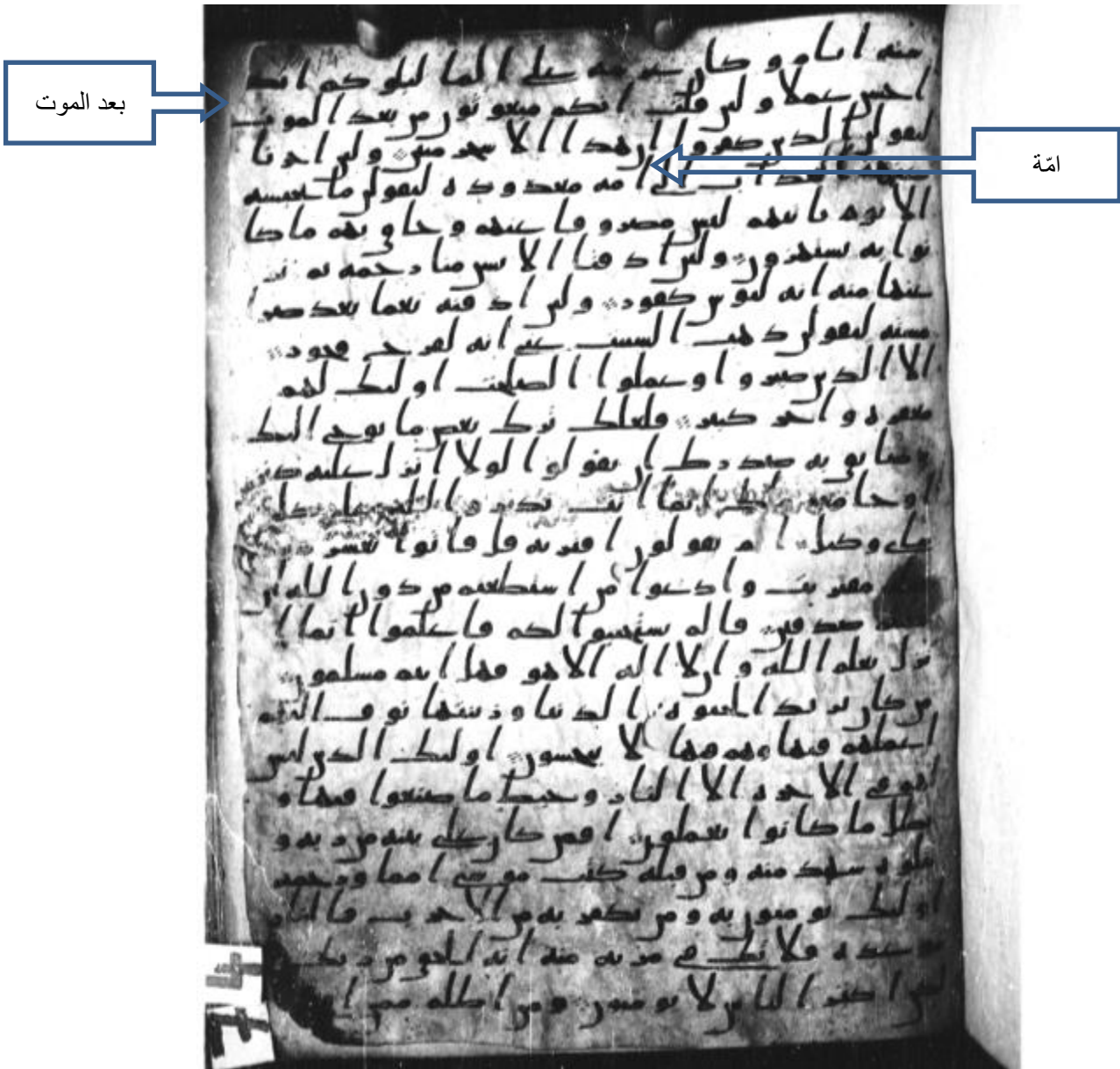


Figure 1-1: A very old manuscript of the Quran in the Hijazi script preserved in the National Library of France. According to radiocarbon dating tests, the age of this manuscript is estimated with a 95.4% probability to be between the years 568 and 645 CE. (www.corpuscoranicum.de)

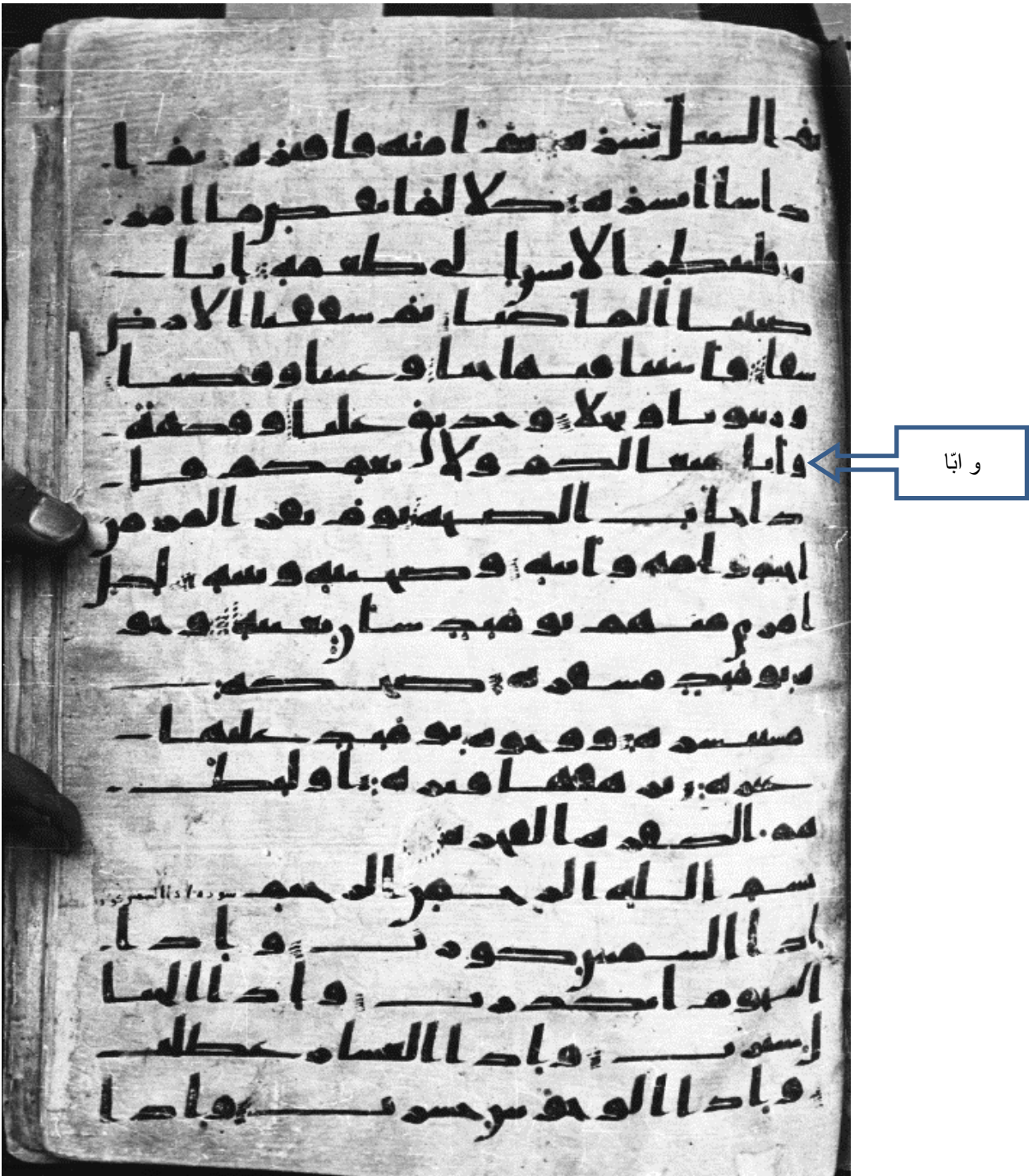


Figure 2-1: An ancient manuscript of the Quran in the Kufic script dating back to the 8th century CE, preserved in the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul. (www.corpuscoranicum.de)

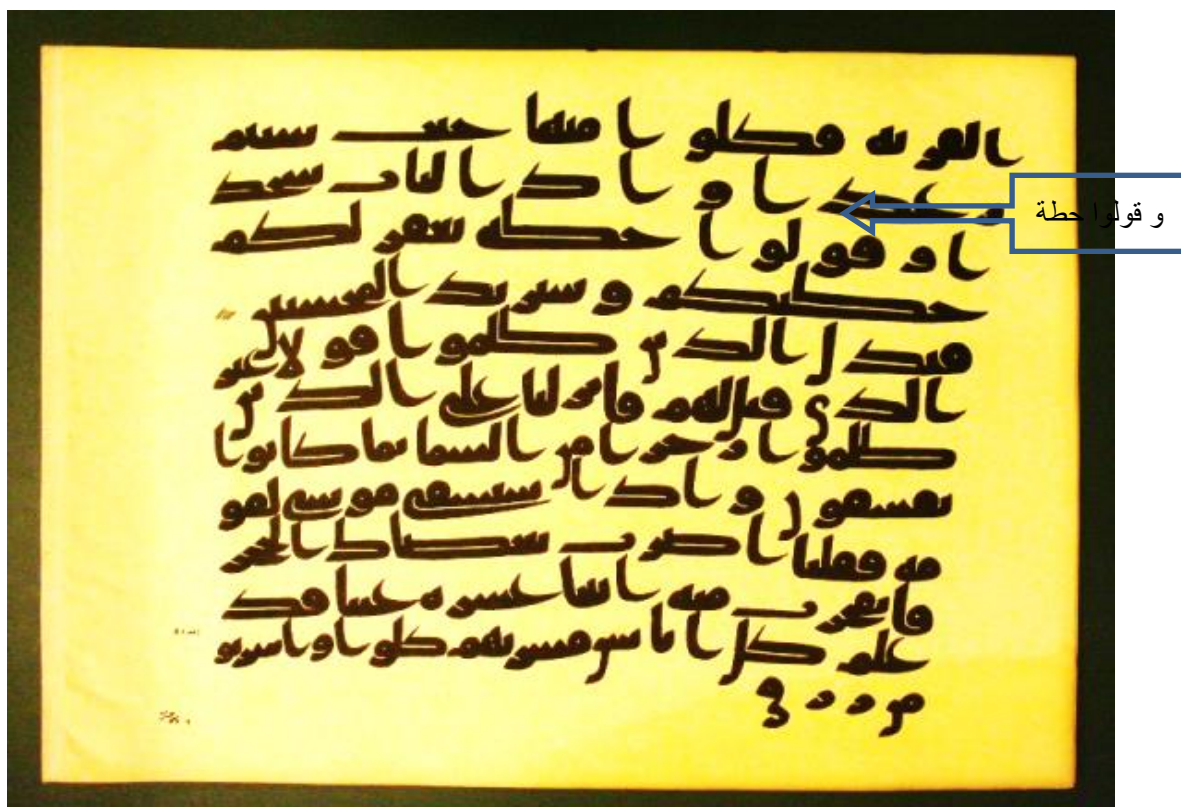
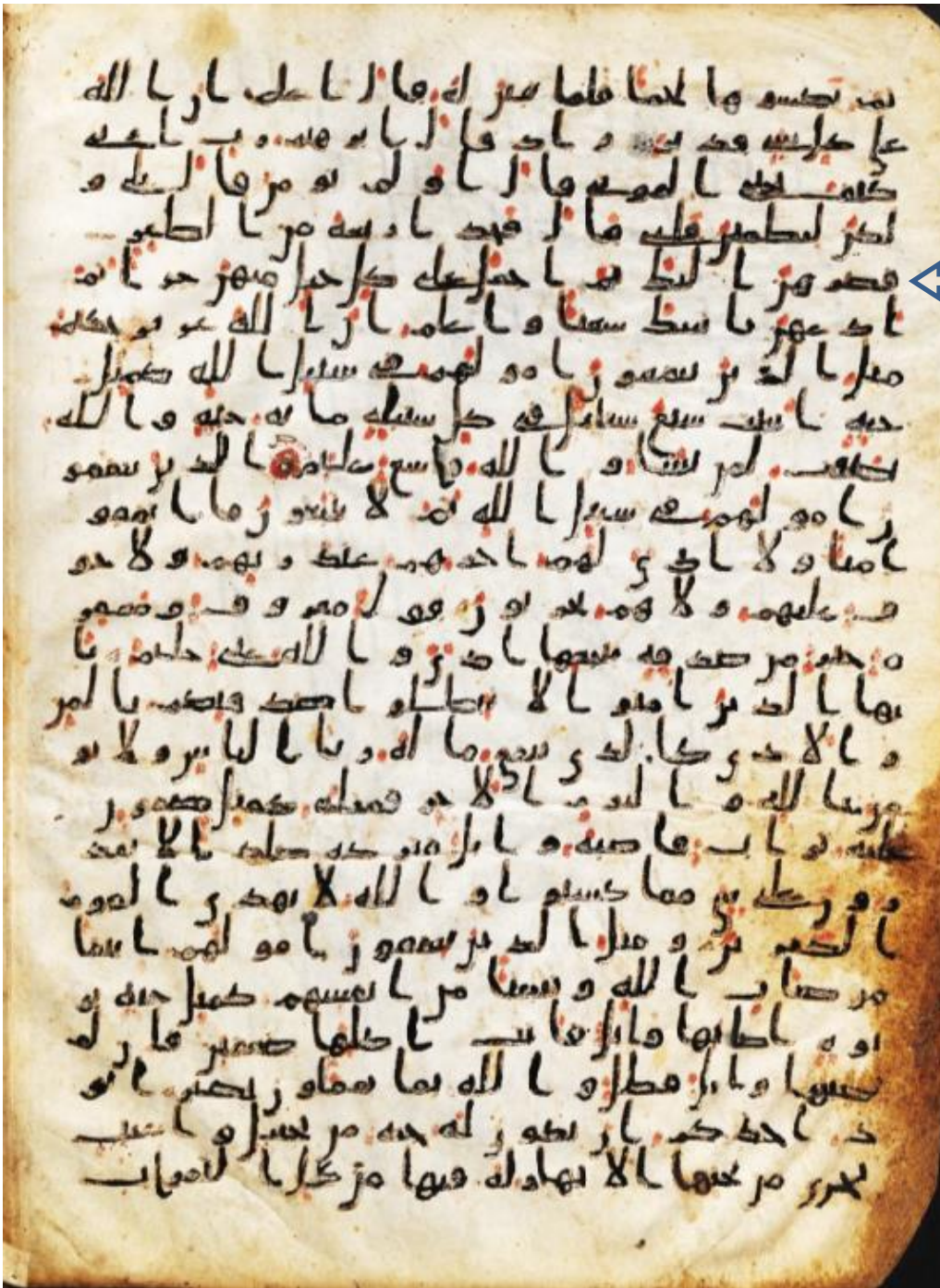


Figure 3-1: An ancient manuscript of the Quran in the Kufic script dating back to the 8th century CE, preserved in the State Library of Berlin. (www.corpuscoranicum.de)



فصرهن اليك

Figure 4-1: A manuscript of the Quran in Kufic script, housed in the State Library of Berlin. According to carbon dating tests with a 95.4% probability, its origin dates back to 662 to 765 CE. (www.corpuscoranicum.de)