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Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī and his *al-Masābīḥ fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*: Missing Episode in the History of Shīʿa Tafsīr

The earliest compilations of Shīʿa *tafsīr*, coming from early 4th century are selective and based only upon Shīʿa traditions. The traditions of the Shīʿa Imāms constituted their main body. The exegetes dealt selectively only with some verses of the Qurʾān. They rarely show any interest in rationalistic theological discussions that became common from the 2nd/9th century in the Islamic society, i.e. those of muʿtazilite concerns. Furthermore, they placed no importance on citing variant readings, or discussing syntactic [*iʿrāb*] or etymological details, philology, or evidence from pre-Islamic poetry. Their main concern was collecting the exegetical legacy (real or attributed) of the Shīʿa Imāms, and that too in an era when there were serious theological polemics between the Sunni and Shīʿa.

By mid-5th century, we find a completely different *tafsīr* called *al-Tibyān* written by al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 H), in which a new and comprehensive approach has been taken. This method, followed later by al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548 H) in his *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, became the standard *tafsīr* through the history of Shīʿa *tafsīr*, except for the Safavid era (10-12th/16-18th). The article shows that prior to al-Ṭūsī, Shīʿa *tafsīr* has been changed partially by an unknown Shīʿa poet-theologian called Abul Qāsim Ali b. al-Ḥussain (370-418 AH), known as al-Wazīr al-Maghribī. His work, *al-Masābīḥ fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, may be considered as landmark, contains some new elements in Shīʿa *tafsīr*, all of which has been taken by al-Ṭūsī in his *al-Tibyān*. He reduced citation of narrations from Shīʿa Imāms significantly in his exegesis and completely omitted traditions suggestive of textual falsification in the Qurʾān or censure of the caliphs. He has also cited sayings of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and the Followers (*tābiʿūn*) from al-Ṭabarī. In addition, he has widely cited Muʿtazilite theological views, either endorsing or refuting them. Issues relating to syntactical details, etymology, philology, and alternate readings, as well as pre-Islamic poems are replete in his exegesis. This approach may be considered a comprehensive one in the interpretation of the Qurʾān (which includes citations of exegetical *ḥadīths*, occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), philological issues, literary matters, theological controversies, etc.)

The present article gives a detailed description and analysis of the unedited *al-Masābīḥ fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, written by Abul Qāsim Ali b. al-Ḥussain (370-418 AH), known as al-Wazīr al-Maghribī.



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