

Historical Criticism or Political Tendency? Reassessing Early Critiques of the Uthmanic Mushaf

Muhammad Alan Juhri

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim, Riau, Indonesia

muhammad.alan.juhri@uin-suska.ac.id

Muhammad Nasir

Rice University, Houston, Texas, United States of America

mn103@rice.edu

Article Accepted: May 5, 2026, Revision: July 29, 2026, Approved: July 30, 2026

Abstrak

Perdebatan mengenai keutuhan dan keotentikan Mushaf Utsmani telah berlangsung sejak periode awal Islam. Namun, sebagian besar kajian terdahulu cenderung memperlakukan kritik-kritik tersebut sebagai fenomena yang tunggal dan seragam, tanpa membedakan secara memadai motif-motif ideologis yang mendasarinya di antara berbagai komunitas Muslim pada masa awal. **Tujuan**, mengkaji kritik terhadap Mushaf Utsmani pada periode awal Islam (abad ke-1 hingga ke-4 H/abad ke-7 hingga ke-10 M) dengan menelusuri dasar argumen serta kecenderungan ideologis yang melatarbelakangi kritik tersebut di kalangan komunitas Muslim pada masa awal. **Metode**, pendekatan historis-kritis yang dipadukan dengan analisis komparatif terhadap sumber-sumber klasik Sunni, Syiah, dan heresiografi Islam. **Hasil**, kritik terhadap Mushaf Utsmani berangkat dari dasar yang sangat berbeda-beda antarkelompok. Di kalangan sebagian sahabat Nabi, kritik terutama didasarkan pada keberatan historis terhadap proses kodifikasi dan keabsahan para pengumpul Mushaf. Di kalangan sebagian kelompok Khawarij, penolakan terhadap sebagian Mushaf Utsmani didorong oleh prasangka etis-dogmatis terhadap ayat-ayat yang dianggap tidak selaras dengan kesucian wahyu. Sementara itu, di kalangan Syiah Imamiyah pada awalnya, penolakan mencerminkan kecenderungan politik yang kuat, terutama melalui narasi pendelegitimasi kekuasaan yang berkuasa dan klaim mengenai penghilangan ayat-ayat yang menegaskan keutamaan Ali dan *Ahl al-Bayt*. **Kontribusi**, kajian ini menawarkan tipologi kritik-kritik awal, yaitu historis, etis-dogmatis, dan politis, sekaligus menegaskan bahwa wacana mengenai keutuhan Mushaf Utsmani tidak dapat dipisahkan dari dinamika kekuasaan, otoritas keagamaan, dan identitas sektarian pada periode formatif Islam.

Kata Kunci: *Mushaf Utsmani, Kritik Tekstual Al-Qur'an, Tahrif, Sejarah Islam Awal, Identitas Sektarian*

Abstract

Debates over the integrity and authenticity of the Uthmanic Mushaf have persisted since the early period of Islam. However, much of the existing scholarship tends to treat these critiques as a singular and uniform phenomenon, without adequately distinguishing the underlying ideological motives across different early Muslim communities. **Purpose**, to examine critiques of the Uthmanic Mushaf during the early period of Islam (1st–4th centuries AH/7th–10th centuries AD) by tracing the basis of

arguments and the ideological tendencies underlying these critiques among early Muslim communities. **Method**, a historical-critical approach combined with comparative analysis of classical Sunni, Shia, and Islamic heresiographical sources. **Result**, critiques of the Uthmanic Mushaf stemmed from fundamentally different bases across groups. Among some of the Prophet's companions, critiques were primarily grounded in historical objections to the codification process and the validity of the Mushaf collectors. Among certain Khawarij groups, rejection of parts of the Uthmanic Mushaf was driven by ethical-dogmatic prejudices against verses considered incompatible with the sanctity of revelation. Meanwhile, among the early Imami Shia, rejection reflected strong political tendencies, particularly through narratives delegitimizing ruling authority and claims regarding the removal of verses affirming the superiority of Ali and Ahl al-Bayt. **Contribution**, this study offers a typology of early critiques, namely historical, ethical-dogmatic, and political, while affirming that discourse on the integrity of the Uthmanic Mushaf cannot be separated from the dynamics of power, religious authority, and sectarian identity in the formative period of Islam.

Keywords: *Uthmanic Mushaf, Qur'anic Textual Criticism, Tahrif, Early Islamic History, Sectarian Identity*

Introduction

The Uthmanic Mushaf, the codex accepted by the overwhelming majority of Muslims today, is generally understood as the product of a historical process of Qur'anic canonization through which the revelation was memorized, recorded, transmitted, and ultimately consolidated into an authoritative written text (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Kaplony & Marx, 2019; Little, 2025). Within Muslim orthodoxy, this process is regarded as divinely protected in accordance with the Qur'anic promise that God Himself will preserve the revelation (QS. Al-Hijr [15]: 9), thereby underpinning the doctrine of the mushaf's integrity and completeness (*ṣiḥḥah wa kamāl*) (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Little, 2025). Historical evidence preserved within the Islamic tradition, however, reveals that the canonization process was neither entirely uncontested nor immediately accompanied by universal agreement. Reports transmitted in early Sunni literature attribute reservations regarding the completeness, readings, or compilation of the Qur'an not only to groups later regarded as heterodox but also to several prominent Companions (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Little, 2025). Rather than undermining the eventual authority of the Uthmanic Mushaf, these reports indicate that the emergence of *ijmā'* itself constituted a historical process in which competing understandings of textual authority were progressively negotiated and ultimately reconciled (Kaplony & Marx, 2019; Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Little, 2025).

Recent scholarship has renewed debate concerning the historicity of the Uthmanic canonization, particularly the questions of when the Qur'anic text became effectively closed

and which forms of authority determined its canonical status. Although Little (2025) defends the traditional attribution of canonization to Caliph Uthman against revisionist interpretations, Sinai (2017) reconstructs the compilation of the Qur'an through a broader historical approach that emphasizes the gradual formation of the Qur'anic corpus. Déroche (2022), by contrast, foregrounds manuscript transmission and codicological evidence, while Kaplony and Marx (2019) argue that radiocarbon dating, despite its value, remains insufficient for establishing a definitive chronology of textual standardization. These studies differ in their methods and evidentiary priorities, yet they converge in approaching canonization primarily as a problem of textual history. Consequently, the relationship between textual canonization, communal authority, and sectarian contestation has received comparatively limited analytical attention (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Kaplony & Marx, 2019; Little, 2025).

A similar tendency characterizes scholarship on early Muslim responses to the Uthmanic Mushaf. Faisol Nasar Bin Madi (2023) demonstrates that the Imami Shi'i doctrine of *tahrīf* was shaped principally by disputes over succession (*khilāfah*) and the authority of the Imams (*imāmah*), rather than by textual criticism alone. Nevertheless, his analysis remains confined to a Sunni–Shi'i comparison and does not incorporate Kharijite perspectives (Faisol Nasar Bin Madi, 2023; Sinai, 2017). Studies of the Khawarij likewise focus predominantly on communal identity, martyrdom narratives, and doctrines of *takfir*, leaving their understanding of the Uthmanic recension only marginally explored (Gaiser, 2016; Al Maawali, 2019). Consequently, existing scholarship has not adequately explained why three early Muslim communities that each articulated criticisms of the Uthmanic Mushaf ultimately generated markedly different doctrinal trajectories. Whereas Sunni scholarship incorporated Companion reports into an emerging communal consensus, Imami Shi'ism elevated its critique into the doctrine of *tahrīf*, while the Khawarij directed their criticism primarily toward the political legitimacy of those responsible for codification rather than toward the integrity of the Qur'anic text itself (Faisol Nasar Bin Madi, 2023; Gaiser, 2016; Al Maawali, 2019; Little, 2025).

Addressing this gap, the present study provides a systematic comparative analysis of Sunni-transmitted Companion reports, early Imami Shi'i writings, and Kharijite perspectives on the integrity of the Uthmanic Mushaf across the first through fourth centuries AH. Rather than treating these traditions in isolation, this article argues that the differences among their critiques cannot be explained solely by divergent assessments of textual evidence. Instead, they reflect fundamentally different conceptions of religious authority, political legitimacy,

and the relationship between scripture and communal leadership. Accordingly, this study addresses three questions: (1) What objections did Sunni-transmitted Companion reports, early Imami Shi'a, and the Khawarij raise regarding the completeness or accuracy of the Uthmanic Mushaf? (2) On what theological, historical, and political grounds were these objections advanced? (3) Why did only the Imami Shi'i critique develop into a formal doctrine, whereas comparable Sunni and Kharijite critiques did not? (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Faisol Nasar Bin Madi, 2023; Little, 2025).

This study therefore examines early critiques of the Uthmanic Mushaf during the first through fourth centuries AH, the formative period in which debates concerning taḥrīf assumed their classical expression within Imami Shi'i thought (Faisol Nasar Bin Madi, 2023; Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Little, 2025). Empirically, it brings together primary materials that have rarely been examined within a single comparative framework. Theoretically, it contributes to the historiography of scriptural canonization by demonstrating that disputes over the integrity of a supposedly “closed” canon function simultaneously as disputes over communal authority, political legitimacy, and collective religious memory (Youngman, 2024; Powrie & Zak, 2023; Sinai, 2017; Little, 2025).

The analysis is informed by Max Weber's typology of legitimate authority traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational, which is particularly suited to this study because each of the three communities grounded its claims regarding the Qur'an in a distinct source of religious legitimacy (Weber, 1978; Rahmawati & Ikramatoun, 2025). Sunni Companion reports are interpreted as expressions of traditional authority rooted in proximity to the Prophet, explaining why their criticisms were ultimately absorbed into the developing Sunni consensus. By contrast, the Imami Shi'i critique reflects charismatic-hereditary authority centered upon the infallible Imam, enabling criticism of the Uthmanic Mushaf to develop into a formal doctrine of taḥrīf. The Kharijite position represents an anti-hierarchical conception of authority in which the Qur'an itself functions as the exclusive source of legitimate judgment, directing criticism primarily toward the political authority of the compilers and interpreters rather than toward the text itself.

This Weberian perspective is complemented by the concept of the “textual community,” which explains how shared understandings of scripture become markers of communal identity (Powrie & Zak, 2023), and by cultural memory theory, which conceptualizes canon formation as the social construction of authoritative memory and legitimate silence (Youngman, 2024). Together, these perspectives provide an integrated framework for explaining why disagreements concerning the Uthmanic Mushaf

simultaneously became disagreements over religious authority, sectarian identity, and the boundaries of the Muslim community.

This historical-critical study argues that the divergent Sunni, Imami Shi'i, and Kharijite critiques of the Uthmanic Mushaf were shaped primarily by each community's distinctive conception of religious authority and its relationship with political power during the first four centuries AH, rather than by unequal access to historical information or fundamentally different standards of textual criticism (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022; Little, 2025; Faisol Nasar Bin Madi, 2023). The following sections evaluate this argument through a comparative analysis of textual, theological, and historiographical evidence drawn from the three traditions.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in a historical-critical approach to examine early Islamic discourses on the integrity of the Uthmanic Mushaf. The context of this study focuses on the intersection of textual transmission, sectarian formation, and religious authority within early Islamic history. The research covers the historical period from the first through the fourth centuries AH (7th to 10th centuries CE), a formative era during which canonical boundaries, doctrines of scriptural authority, and communal identities were actively negotiated and consolidated (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022).

The research objects consist of textual accounts, variant readings (*qirā'āt*), and theological arguments regarding the codification, completeness, and transmission of the Qur'anic text. Data for this study are drawn from primary classical Islamic literature representing three distinct intellectual and sectarian traditions: Sunni, Imāmī Shī'ī, and Khārījī (including early Ibādī) perspectives. Key primary sources encompass foundational works on Qur'anic sciences (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, e.g., Ibn Abī Dāwūd's *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*; see Jeffery, 1937), major *ḥadīth* compilations (e.g., al-Bukhārī; al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*), exegetical literature (*tafsīr*), and early historiographical and theological treatises (Bar-Asher, 1999; Gaiser, 2016). Secondary literature from modern Qur'anic scholarship is also integrated as contextual information to critically assess the primary materials (Kaplony & Marx, 2019; Little, 2025).

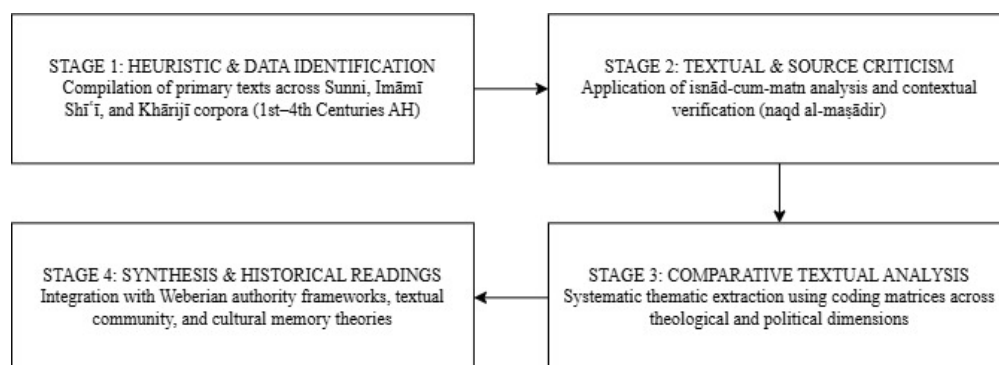
The research process was carried out through four sequential implementation stages. First, the heuristic stage involved identifying and compiling relevant primary texts and reports containing critiques or discussions of the Uthmanic codex across the three traditions. Second, the textual verification stage applied source criticism (*naqd al-maṣādir*) to evaluate

the transmission contexts, layers of redaction, and historical contexts of the selected reports (Motzki, 2002; Schoeler, 2006). Third, the comparative analytical stage evaluated how each tradition framed these accounts based on their theological, political, and hermeneutical assumptions (Modarressi, 1993; Wilkinson, 2010). Fourth, the synthesis stage integrated these findings with sociopolitical frameworks specifically Weberian typologies of authority and cultural memory theory to explain the divergent doctrinal trajectories among the three groups (Dakake, 2007; Youngman, 2024).

Data collection was conducted using non-interactive documentary analysis (library research) focusing on classical manuscripts and printed critical editions. The primary instruments used were textual extraction matrices and thematic coding frameworks, which were designed to systematically categorize reports based on their attribution (e.g., Companion reports, Imams' sayings, or Khārijī polemics), content themes (e.g., alleged omissions, variant readings, or political motives), and doctrinal implications (Bin Madi, 2023; Kohlberg & Amir-Moezzi, 2009). These instruments facilitated the rigorous comparison of textual elements across different sectarian corpora.

Data analysis was carried out using a combination of historical-critical text analysis and comparative qualitative analysis. The analytical procedure combined *isnād* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (content) analysis to reconstruct the historical layering of the reports, strictly situating them within their respective socio-political contexts (Motzki, 2002; Schoeler, 2006). A comparative analytical framework was subsequently applied to identify thematic patterns, conceptual divergences, and structural reasons why only the Imāmī Shī'ī tradition developed a formal doctrine of *tahrīf*, whereas Sunni and Khārijī traditions absorbed or redirected their critiques differently (Wasserstrom, 1995; Bin Madi, 2023).

Figure 1. Flowchart of the Historical-Critical and Comparative Research Procedure.



Result Finding

1. Questioning the Validity of Textual Committees: Companions' Critiques as Pedagogy of Critical Literacy

Literature generally agrees that the Qur'an was not compiled into a single authoritative codex (*muṣḥaf*) until years after the Prophet's death, as early learning and transmission relied primarily on oral recitation (*qira'ah*) and pedagogical memorization within prayer communities (Sinai, 2017; Déroche, 2022). Following the death of numerous memorizers at the Battle of Yamamah, Caliph Abū Bakr commissioned Zayd b. Thābit to gather the textual fragments from palm leaves, stones, and memory. This compilation (*ṣuḥuf*) passed to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and later to Ḥafṣah bint 'Umar. During Caliph 'Uthmān's reign, dialectal variations in recitation prompted the creation of a standardized codex based on the Quraish dialect, after which alternate codices were ordered to be destroyed a narrative widely accepted in Sunni scholarship (Zarkashī, 1957; Jeffery, 1937).

However, numerous early Sunni narrations record that senior Companions raised serious reservations regarding the completeness and standardization of the 'Uthmānic text. Prominent Companions including Ubayy b. Ka'b, 'Ā'ishah bint Abī Bakr, Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, Ibn Mas'ūd, and Ibn 'Abbās transmitted reports indicating missing verses or variant lengths of *sūrahs* such as *al-Aḥzāb* (33) and *al-Barā'ah* (9) (Suyūṭī, 2008; Modarressi, 1993). Ibn 'Abbās explicitly questioned certain scribal choices, stating "*akḥṭa'a al-kātib*" (the scribe made an error) regarding specific orthographic renderings (Suyūṭī, 2008). Furthermore, individual codices belonging to Ubayy and Ibn Mas'ūd contained variations in *sūrah* selection, such as the inclusion of *Sūrah al-Ḥafd* and *al-Khal'* or the omission of the *Mu'awwidhatayn* (Amal, 2011).

In the context of early educational formation, these Companion critiques reflect what modern educational theory terms "critical textual literacy" and pedagogical engagement based on firsthand learning from the Prophet (Sirry, 2024). Rather than seeking to undermine the revelation, early learners evaluated the written text against their personal educational memory and pedagogical experiences. The eventual universal acceptance of the 'Uthmānic text was driven not merely by textual consensus, but by political authority and administrative standardization imposed through educational and state apparatuses (Sirry, 2024).

2. Political-Theological Resistance: Early Imāmī Shī'ī Rejections as Counter-Educational Memory

Unlike the Companions' historical-methodological criticism, early Imāmī Shī'ī critiques treated the 'Uthmānic codex as politically motivated. Imāmī scholars argued that references to the divine authority of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the *Ahl al-Bayt* were intentionally altered or omitted by early caliphs following the succession disputes after the Prophet's death (Bin Madi, 2023; Modarressi, 1993). This narrative gained foundational expression in early literature, such as *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* (d. 74 AH), which records that 'Alī compiled an exhaustive codex containing both the text and its authoritative exegesis (*tafsīr*), which was rejected by the ruling authorities (Sulaym b. Qays, 1999).

During the 3rd and 4th centuries AH, major Imāmī scholars systematized these accounts into a formal theological framework. In *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH) recorded traditions asserting that full knowledge and compilation of the revelation resided exclusively with the Infallible Imams (Kulaynī, 2005). Similarly, al-Qummī (d. 307 AH) in his *Tafsīr* claimed specific textual alterations (*mā huwa muḥarraf minhu*), such as the omission of phrases like “*fi 'Alī*” in Q. 4:166 or the reading of “*khayra a'immatin*” instead of “*khayra ummatin*” in Q. 3:110 (Qummī, 1984; Haq & Halim, 2021). Similar claims of *tahrīf* were articulated by al-'Ayyāshī (d. 320 AH) and other contemporary scholars (Kohlberg & Amir-Moezzi, 2009).

From a socio-educational perspective, the widespread campaign for *tahrīf* among early Imāmī Shī'ī communities functioned as an alternative educational framework designed to preserve sectarian identity and communal memory under political marginalization (Bar-Asher, 1999; Momen, 1985). Under Umayyad and Abbasid rule characterized by strict state oversight and persecution the doctrine of *tahrīf* served as a counter-hegemonic pedagogical strategy. By maintaining that the true understanding of scripture required the guidance of the Imam, the Imāmī community constructed a distinct “textual and educational community” centered on charismatic authority rather than state-sponsored codices (Amir-Moezzi, 1994; Dakake, 2007).

3. Ethical Prejudice and Theological Rigor: Khārijī Critiques of Scriptural Narratives

A third distinct form of critique emerged from minority factions within the Khārijī movement, notably the Maymūniyyah and Ajaridah sects. Rather than focusing on scribal competence or political succession, their rejection centered on ethical and theological presupposition (Gaiser, 2016). Classical heresiographical works by al-Ash'arī (d. 324 AH) in *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* and al-Shahrastānī in *al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal* record that these groups

rejected *Sūrah Yūsuf* (12) as an authentic part of the Qur'anic canon (Ash‘arī, 1980; Shahrastānī, 1992).

These factions argued that the inclusion of romantic narratives and sensual passion within *Sūrah Yūsuf* contradicted the divine sanctity and moral purpose of scriptural revelation (Sirry, 2024). Medieval commentators such as al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH) noted that these groups accused early compilers of introducing non-revelatory literary accounts into the text (Qurṭubī, 1964).

This Khārijī perspective illustrates an early form of “ethical-rationalist censorship” in scriptural interpretation. Their critique demonstrates how rigid ethical assumptions regarding what constitutes “edifying” or “instructional” religious content can lead to the rejection of canonical texts. In terms of educational philosophy, the Khārijī approach represents a hyper-puritanical hermeneutic where moral presuppositions dictate the boundaries of sacred scripture, contrasting sharply with the holistic narrative pedagogy of the mainstream Qur'anic text.

4. Comparative Synthesis: Textual Canonization, Communal Authority, and Educational Transformation

A comparative analysis reveals that the divergent critiques of the ‘Uthmānic Mushaf were driven primarily by contrasting models of religious authority and educational transmission rather than unequal access to historical facts.

Table 1. Comparative Matrix of Early Qur’anic Critiques Across Sectarian Traditions

COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF EARLY QUR'ANIC CRITIQUES			
Sectarian Tradition	Primary Focus of Critique	Underlying Basis/Authority	Educational Function
Early Companions (Sunni Literature)	Scribal accuracy, variant readings, omitted verses	Traditional / Firsthand pedagogical experience	Critical text literacy
Early Imāmī Shī‘a	Omission of Ahl al-Bayt virtues & Imamate legitimacy	Charismatic-Hereditary / Infallible Imam's authority	Counter-canon identity

COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF EARLY QUR'ANIC CRITIQUES			
Sectarian Tradition	Primary Focus of Critique	Underlying Basis/Authority	Educational Function
Khārijī Factions (Maymūniyyah)	Moral/ethical suitability of narratives (Sūrah Yūsuf)	Anti-hierarchical / Strict moral-rationalist dogma	Ethical censorship

This comparative framework demonstrates that early debates over scriptural integrity were fundamental struggles over how the Qur'an ought to shape the moral community, guide educational authority, and transform society, aligning directly with contemporary inquiries into the Qur'an's role in ethical and social transformation (Youngman, 2024).

Discussion

This study demonstrates that early historical critiques of the ‘Uthmānic Mushaf during the first four centuries AH (7th–10th centuries CE) were neither monolithic nor driven by a uniform theological motive. Instead, as synthesized in Table 2, these critiques represent three distinct paradigms: historical-scribal, political-tendentious, and ethical-dogmatic, each originating from specific socio-political conditions, pedagogical experiences, and ideological agendas within early Islamic communities.

Table 2. Comparative Analytical Framework of Early Critiques of the ‘Uthmānic Mushaf

Sectarian / Group Tradition	Primary Focus of Critique	Underlying Basis & Authority	Socio-Religious & Political Function
Senior Companions (Sunni Literature)	Scribal errors (akḥṭa’a al-kātib), variant readings, omitted verses/surahs, and non-canonical chapters.	Firsthand pedagogical experience and direct oral recitation memory with the Prophet.	Resistance to centralized state standardization; preservation of individual scholarly memory.

Sectarian / Group Tradition	Primary Focus of Critique	Underlying Basis & Authority	Socio-Religious & Political Function
Early Imāmī Shī‘a	Deliberate omission and censorship (<i>tahrīf</i>) of verses mentioning the virtues of ‘Alī and the <i>Ahl al-Bayt</i> .	Charismatic-hereditary divine authority of ‘Alī and the Infallible Imams.	Counter-hegemonic identity construction; delegitimization of Umayyad/Abbasid ruling power.
Khārijī Factions (<i>Maymūniyyah / Ajaridah</i>)	Incompatibility of human narrative and sensual love stories (<i>Sūrah Yūsuf</i>) with sacred revelation.	Hyper-puritanical ethical rationalism and dogmatic prejudice.	Ethical censorship; defining strict theological boundaries regarding divine revelation.

The empirical findings regarding Companion narratives challenge the post-eventum normative assumption of immediate, absolute consensus (*ijmā‘*) during the codification process. Classical reports preserved in authoritative collections by Ibn Abī Dāwūd (2002), al-Zarkashī (2006), and al-Suyūṭī (2008) reveal that senior Companions evaluated the standardized text through historical-scribal criticism. Ibn Mas‘ūd’s refusal to surrender his codex and Ibn ‘Abbās’s remarks on copyist errors (*akhṭa’a al-kātib*) reflect an early horizon where human scribes were viewed as fallible agents. These patterns align with modern critical insights by Modarresi (1993), Amal (2011), and Sirry (2024), who argue that early variations stemmed from personal pedagogical memory, and that the ultimate dominance of the ‘Uthmānic codex was enforced primarily through Caliph ‘Uthmān’s state authority rather than immediate theological unanimity.

In contrast, early Imāmī Shī‘ī rejections operated as a politically tendentious strategy. Foundational texts such as *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* (1420 AH), *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī (2005), *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, and *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī* (1421 AH) focused on alleged deletions of phrases affirming the leadership (*imāmah*) of ‘Alī and the *Ahl al-Bayt*. As Momen (1985), Amir-Moezzi (1994), Kohlberg & Amir-Moezzi (2009), and Bar-Asher (2021) observe,

under severe Umayyad and Abbasid persecutions following Karbala, accusations of scriptural censorship served a vital dual function: delegitimizing imperial authority while consolidating a counter-hegemonic communal identity anchored in the Infallible Imams.

Meanwhile, the rejection of *Sūrah Yūsuf* by Khārijī sub-sects (Maymūniyyah and Ajaridah) introduces an ethical-dogmatic dimension. Classical records by al-Ash‘arī (1980), al-Shahrastānī, al-Qurṭubī (1964), and Ash-Shafdiy (2000) confirm that these groups excluded the chapter because its romantic narrative conflicted with their hyper-puritanical view of divine sanctity. As noted by Setiawan (2005), Haq & Halim (2021), Madi (2023), and Sirry (2024), this illustrates how rigid dogmatic presuppositions can lead reading communities to enforce ethical censorship over canonical boundaries.

Synthesizing these findings establishes the novelty of this study by replacing monolithic assumptions with a triadic typology: historical-scribal (Companions), political-tendentious (early Imāmī Shī‘a), and ethical-dogmatic (Khārijī). Furthermore, tracing this historical evolution shows how early political polemics eventually shifted during the Buwayhid era through figures like Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH) and Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413 AH) from claims of textual deletion (*tahrīf al-lafẓ*) toward interpretative distortion (*tahrīf al-ma‘nā*). Ultimately, this demonstrates that scriptural integrity in early Islam was an interactive process continuously negotiated across political power, scribal practices, and sectarian identity.

Conclusion

In response to the research questions posed at the outset, this article concludes that critiques of the Uthmanic Mushaf's integrity among early Muslim communities cannot be reduced to a single, monolithic phenomenon, but instead reflect three fundamentally distinct bases of argument shaped by the historical, theological, and socio-political position of each community: a historical critique among the Companions concerning the accuracy and authority of the codification process, an ethical-dogmatic critique among certain Khawarij groups concerning the compatibility of specific content with the sanctity of revelation, and a predominantly political critique among the early Imāmī Shia rooted in the unresolved succession dispute and subsequent persecution under the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. This comparative typology offers a corrective to earlier scholarship that has tended to treat critiques of the Uthmanic Mushaf either as a uniform body of material or as isolated case studies confined to a single sectarian tradition, and it suggests that debates over scriptural integrity in early Islam are best understood not merely as philological disputes but as sites

where religious authority and political legitimacy were actively contested; accordingly, future research would benefit from situating this typology within manuscript-based and codicological evidence and from extending the comparative framework to other early currents, such as the Mu'tazila and Zaydi Shia, as well as to later periods in which these critiques were reinterpreted, softened, or revived.

References

- Al-Ash'arī, A. al-H. (1980). *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*. Al-Maktabah al-'Ashriyah.
- Al-'Ayyāshī, M. bin M. (1421 AH). *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*. Muassasah al-Bi'tsah.
- Al-Kulaynī, A. J. M. bin Y. (2005). *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*. Muassasah Ansariyan.
- Al Maawali, A. M. S. S. (2019). A multidisciplinary approach to the distinguishing features between Ibādīs and Khārijītes. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 9(2), 116–133.
- Al-Qummī, A. al-H. 'A. bin I. (n.d.). *Tafsīr al-Qummi*. Muassasah Dar Al-Kitab li Al-Taba'ah wa Al-Nasyr.
- Al-Qurṭubī. (1964). *Al-Jāmi' li ahkām al-Qur'ān* (Vol. 1). Dar el-Kutub Al-Mishriyyah.
- Al-Ṣafadī. (2000). *Al-Wāfi bil waḥyāt*. Dār ihyā al-Turāts.
- Al-Shahrastānī. (n.d.). *Al-Milal wa al-nihal*. Muassasah Al-Halbi.
- Al-Suyuti, J. al-D. (2008). *Al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Ar-Risalah.
- Al-Zarkasyi, B. al-D. (2006). *Al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Dār el-Hadīs.
- Amal, T. A. (2011). *Rekonstruksi sejarah Al-Qur'an*. Yayasan Abad Demokrasi.
- Amir-Moezzi, M. A. (1994). *The divine guide in early Shi'ism*. State University of New York Press.
- Bar-Asher, M. M. (1999). *Scripture and exegesis in early Imāmī Shiism*. Brill; Magnes Press.
- Dakake, M. M. (2007). *The charismatic community: Shi'ite identity in early Islam*. State University of New York Press.
- Déroche, F. (2022). *The one and the many: The early history of the Qur'an*. Yale University Press.
- Gaiser, A. R. (2016). *Shurāt legends, Ibādī identities: Martyrdom, asceticism, and the making of an early Islamic community*. University of South Carolina Press.
- Haq, M. I., & Halim, A. (2021). Abu Al-Hasan 'Ali Bin Ibrahim Al-Qummi and the accusation of tahrīf al-Qur'ān in books of Shia Muslims: A study on the book Tafsir Al-Qummi. *DINIKA: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6(1), 131–150. <https://doi.org/10.22515/dinika.v6i1.3629>

- Ibn Abī Dāwūd. (2002). *Kitāb al-Mashāhif*. Dār al-Basyāir al-Islāmiyyah.
- Jeffery, A. (1937). *Materials for the history of the text of the Qur'ān: The old codices*. Brill.
- Kaplony, A., & Marx, M. J. (Eds.). (2019). *Qur'ān quotations preserved on papyrus documents, 7th–10th centuries: And the problem of carbon dating early Qur'āns*. Brill.
- Kohlberg, E., & Amir-Moezzi, M. A. (2009). *Revelation and falsification: Kitāb al-qirā'āt aw al-tanzīl wa-al-tahrīf*. Brill.
- Little, J. J. (2025). On the historicity of 'Uthmān's canonization of the Qur'an, Part 1: The state of the field. *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association*, 10(1), 102–172. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jiqsa-2025-0016>
- Madi, F. N. B. (2023). The authenticity of the Quran: Theological views on the tahrif among Sunni and Shia scholars. *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 15(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.2023.4114>
- Modarressi, H. (1993). Early debates on the integrity of the Qur'ān: A brief survey. *Studia Islamica*, 77, 5–39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595789>
- Momen, M. (1985). *An introduction to Shi'i Islam: The history and doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*. Yale University Press.
- Motzki, H. (2002). *The origins of Islamic jurisprudence: Meccan fiqh before the classical schools*. Brill.
- Powrie, S., & Zak, G. (Eds.). (2023). *Textual communities, textual selves: Essays in dialogue with Brian Stock*. Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.
- Rahmawati, M., & Ikramatoun, S. (2025). Charisma, tradition, and rationality: The authority of Teungku in maintaining social order. *BELIEF: Sociology of Religion Journal*, 3(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.30983/belief.v3i1.9526>
- Schoeler, G. (2006). *The oral and the written in early Islam* (U. Vagelpohl, Trans.; J. E. Montgomery, Ed.). Routledge.
- Setiawan, M. N. K. (2005). Book review: Syi'ah dan wacana perubahan mushaf al-Quran, tahrif al-Qur'an. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 43(1), 241–254. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2005.431.241-254>
- Sinai, N. (2017). *The Qur'an: A historical-critical introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Sirry, M. (2024). *Think outside the box: Membebaskan agama dari penjara konservatisme*. Sukapress.
- Sulaym bin Qays al-Hilālī. (1420 AH). *Kitāb al-Saqīfah*. Nasr al-Hadi.

- Wasserstrom, S. M. (1995). *Between Muslim and Jew: The problem of symbiosis under early Islam*. Princeton University Press.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). University of California Press.
- Wilkinson, J. C. (2010). *Ibādism: Origins and early development in Oman*. Oxford University Press.
- Youngman, T., Modrow, S., & Meth, I. (2024). Deceiving dichotomies: On the interrelation of the archive and the cultural memory canon. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 61(1), 697–702.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pa2.1082>