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Original Research

Combining the Izutsu Semiotic Method and the Shahid Sadr Interrogation Method with Application to the Story of Moses (PBUH) and Pharaoh in the Quran

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Introduction

The use of extra-religious methods such as the semiotic method in combination with intra-religious methods of understanding the interpretive text is a step towards designing a novel method and completing and developing previous methods of understanding the verses of the Quran. In order to complete and develop the thematic interpretation method of Shahid Sadr, this research has investigated the “thematic-semiotic interpretation modeling method”, which ultimately led to the integration of the process of discovering the conceptual signifiers of coexistence and substitution relations with the thematic interpretation method. The integration was carried out at the stage of the ijthad method as part of the process of the inquiry method. To explain the nature and outcome of this integration, the Izutsu Quranic semantics method was used, which, in combination with the thematic interpretation method, provides a mechanism for the multiplication and discovery of deep layers of meanings, including: a developing worldview, cultural subsystems, approaching the central signifier, and intertextuality. To objectify the application of this model, we began to construct examples of coexistence and substitution relations in verses related to the story of Moses and Pharaoh. By analyzing the signs, a series of co-occurring and substitutive relationships and the deep layers of meanings resulting from these relationships were revealed.

Research background

In the field of semiotics of Quranic words, several articles and books have been published so far, for example, an article titled "Analysis of the semantic components of truth in the Holy Quran using the method of association and substitution" by Sasani and Azadi (2012). The article "Semantics of the word in the Holy Quran with an emphasis on association and substitution relations" by Shafizadeh and Baharzadeh (2014). Both studies seek to understand the association and substitution relations in the concepts of the Holy Quran using the technique of semiotics. The two books *Biology of the Text* by Alireza Ghaeminia and the book *God and Man in the Quran* by Toshihiko Izutsu were among the sources that have studied the semiotics of Quranic words and have been helpful in this research. The distinction of the present study from previous studies on semiotics in the verses of the Quran is the innovative approach of this study in focusing on the methodology that presents the "method of modeling thematic interpretation - cognitive semiology" that has been achieved through a systematic process of discovering conceptual models through understanding the relationships of association and substitution and combining it with the concepts of the Quranic verses, which is the method of thematic interpretation of Martyr Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr; it seeks to complete and develop the method of thematic interpretation using the semiotic method. In the searches that were conducted in relation to the background of the subject, none of the sources related to semiotics, including books and articles related to Quranic research, have addressed the subject of the present study.

Research method

This research, which was conducted using an analytical-descriptive method and is considered a second-level study in the field of methodology, has examined the "method of modeling thematic-semiotic interpretation" in order to open a way to complete and develop Shahid Sadr's thematic interpretation method.

Result

The semiotic method provides a mechanism for multiplying meanings for the thematic interpreter. The characteristics of the interpretative method of Shahid Sadr include the areas of the target, the subject, the active role of the interpreter, and the method in the thematic interpretation. The thematic interpretation method is an empirical method of understanding the subject, and in collecting verses, it is an inductive method, in analyzing verses, it is an *ijtihad* method, and in extracting theory, it is an interrogative method. The conceptual arguments discovered through the association and substitution relationships in the *ijtihad* method stage of the thematic interpretation of Shahid Sadr can be combined. After explaining the method of "modeling thematic-semiotic interpretation", we sought to show how the combination of the semiotic method with the thematic interpretation method creates a structural and systemic approach and attitude to the arguments of the verses of the Holy Quran and opens wider horizons for the thematic interpreter. To outline this process, we used the theoretical foundations of Izutsu, who has presented detailed analyses in the semiotics of the Holy Quran. Izutsu shows how semiotics leads to the

discovery of deeper layers of meaning, including the recognition of a living and developing ethnic worldview, cultural subsystems, approaching the central signifier of the text, and discovering the level of intratextuality. Semiotics, in combination with the thematic interpretation method, not only provides the interpreter with a mechanism for the plurality of meanings, but also opens up the aforementioned layers in the recognition and understanding of the meaning of the Holy Quran. In the final part of the research, we applied the “method of semiotics-thematic interpretation” to the interpretation of the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh in the Holy Quran, and by designing models of co-occurring and substitutive relationships in the verses of the Quran, we outlined the functions of these concepts. The results of these relationships objectively, in addition to showing the system of multiplication of meanings, also revealed deep layers of meaning and showed how each model can reflect the ethnic worldview in the text of the verses and discover cultural subsystems that, by combining them, can achieve a structural and systemic understanding of the divine and material worldview. Each model is able to bring us closer to the central meaning of the text, and the intratextuality in each of the models shows that the key words together organize a specific semantic system; perhaps if the same word is placed in another text or in another semantic field; it may not have such a meaning.

Keywords

Semiotics, thematic interpretation, martyr Sadr, Izutsu, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh.