

A Comparative Analysis of the Foundational Principles of Jurisprudential Interpretation Regarding the Meaning of “Al-Salat al-Wusta” (The Middle Prayer) Among Fariqayn (Sunni and Shia Schools)

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Background and Objective: The long-standing dispute over identifying the specific instance of “Al-Salat al-Wusta” (Quran 2:238) is a prominent example of an interpretive crisis in the history of jurisprudential exegesis. Previous research has predominantly adopted an instance-focused approach, seeking to prove the validity of one specific opinion. Moving beyond this approach, this article conducts a comparative-methodological analysis of the strategies employed by the Fariqayn (Sunni and Shia schools) in confronting the conflict of evidence. The primary objective of this research is to reconstruct and compare the “systems for prioritizing evidence” within different Islamic schools of thought to understand the fundamental roots of this disagreement.

Method: This is a qualitative study employing a comparative-methodological analysis. The data collection tool was library research and qualitative content analysis of primary exegetical, narrative (hadith), and legal-theoretical (usul al-fiqh) texts from both schools. Relying on the analytical framework of “extra-textual approaches” (based on external texts) and “intra-textual approaches” (based on internal evidence), this research studies the “phenomenon of disagreement” itself, rather than defending a particular view, in order to reconstruct the logic of inference governing each perspective.

Findings: The findings indicated that the root of the disagreement over the specific prayer (Asr, Dhuhr, or Fajr) is less a result of differing data and more a consequence of distinct foundational principles of interpretation and systems for prioritizing evidence. Each viewpoint is the product of a different hermeneutic logic: the logic of the “supremacy of the explicit interpretive text,” which prefers the clear prophetic hadith, among the Sunni majority; the logic of the “supremacy of the infallible’s explanation,” which gives primacy to narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt, among the Imamiyyah; and the logic of the “supremacy of contextual coherence,” which prioritizes the internal evidence of the text, among the Shafi’is.

Conclusion: The process of jurisprudential exegesis is not a neutral, mechanical

