

The Seventh Study

**The Science of Qirā'at Between The Scholars of
Qirā'at and Orientalists' Views**

By

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Abstract

This research investigates, in elaborate detail, the question of the *Qirā'at* (modes of recitation) which is a very crucial one since it deals directly with the Glorious Word of God. Although some orientalist held the view that the *Qirā'at* is humanely assigned, Muslim scholars view that it is divinely originated and it is not allowed for any person to read the Qur'an as his mood takes him. This is attributed to the idea that the *Qirā'ah* is sunnah that must be followed. We have learned it from our scholars and they learned it from their Sheikh until we go back to the companions, the Prophet, Jibrīl and then Allah (Glory be to Him). The study addresses, and falls under, three important parts. The first part deals with the definition the origin of *Qirā'at*. The second looks into the history of *Qirā'at* and the conditions that the scholars laid down for accepting the *Qirā'ah*. The third part investigates the transmission of *Qirā'at* and the orientalist's views regarding the *Qirā'at*. Then the study ends with a conclusion that there was no freedom in reading the Qur'anic text and the Arabic script, by which the *maṣāḥif* was written, was not the main reason for the variety of *Qirā'at* as many orientalist allege.

ملخص :

تتناول هذه الدراسة بشيء من التفصيل، مفهوم القراءات القرآنية التي لها بالغ الأثر نظرًا لقدسية النص القرآني. وعلى الرغم من أن عددًا من المستشرقين يعتقدون أن القراءات القرآنية ليست توقيفية ولكنها اصطلاحية، إلا أن جمهور العلماء من المسلمين يعتقدون، بما لا يدع مجالًا للشك، أن هذا القراءات القرآنية توقيفية وهي سنة متبعة، وكيف لا وقد تعلمناها من علماء القراءات وتلقاها علماءنا الكرام جيلًا بعد جيل عن شيوخهم حتى وصلنا إلى التابعين ثم الصحابة الكرام رضوان الله عليهم عن رسول الله ﷺ عن جبريل عن المولى عز وجل . تقع هذه الدراسة في ثلاثة مباحث. المبحث الأول يتناول الحديث عن معنى ونشأة القراءات وهل هناك فارق بين القرآن والقراءات أم لا. أما المبحث الثاني فإنه يبرز الشروط الواجب توافرها في قبول القراءات القرآنية، بالإضافة إلى تاريخ القراءات. أما المبحث الثالث فإنه يتناول بعضًا من الشبهات التي دائماً ما يرددها المستشرقون من حين لآخر حول القراءات القرآنية. ثم تخلص الدراسة إلى أنه لم يكن هناك حرية في قراءة النص القرآني ولم يكن الخط العربي سبباً رئيساً في تعدد القراءات القرآنية كما يعتقد عددًا من المستشرقين.

كلمات مفتاحية: القراءات القرآنية ، الخط العربي، الحرية، سنة متبعة .

The definition of *Qirā'āt*:

Linguistically, the word *Qirā'āt* is the plural of the Arabic word *Qirā'ah* “reading”, which is a derivation from the Arabic trilateral stem *q-r-a* meaning “to read”, or to recite”. Al-Zabīdī explains that “*Qirā'ah*” is derived from the Arabic verb *Qara'a* the stem of “to read”, thus *Qirā'āt* means readings. He added other derivations including *Qāri'* “reader”, *Qurrā'a* and *Qāri'ūn* “readers”.¹ According to him and Ibn Manzour, *Qarā'a* literally has another meaning that is, “to gather the parts of something together”. Arabs used to say “*Qar'atu al-Maā'a fī al ḥaūḍ*”; “I gathered it”. The holy Qur'an was called Qur'an as its verses and surahs are collected and gathered. Therefore, *Qar'a al Qur'an* means “to gather it by his tongue”.²

However, Ibn al-Qayyim³ (d 751 AH) differentiated between *Qar'aa* which means gathering and *Qar'aa* which means reading. He quoted the verse: “(inna ‘alaynā jam ‘ahu waqur'ānahu),” Indeed, upon Us is its collection [in your heart] and [to make possible] its recitation.”⁴ He stated that the letter (*wa*)”and” in this verse denoted the notion of difference.

With regard to the technical meaning of *Qirā'at* one cannot find a single and a standard definition that had been universally accepted. However, there is a variety of definitions that were given to the term by the scholars of *Qirā'at*.

¹ See Al-Zabīdī, al-Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī (d. 1205 AH), *Taj al- 'Arūs Min Jaūāhir al-Qaūms*, ed. 'Abd-al-Sattār Aḥmad Farag (Kuwait, Dār al-Turāth al- al-'Arabī, , 1965 A D, 1385, A H), vol-1, p 370.

² See Ibn Manzūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Alī Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Manzūr al-Ansārī al-Ifrīqī, d. 711 A H), *Lisān al- 'Arab*, (Beirut: Dār ṣadr,^{3rd} edition, 1414 A H), vol-1, p 128.

³ See Ibn al-Qayyim, Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Ayyūb, *Zād al-Ma'ad fī Hady Khair al-'Ibād*, (Beirut: al-Resalah foundation, 14th edition, 1407 A H), vol-5, p.635.

⁴ The Qur'an; 75:17.

Al-Zarkashī, for example, (d. 794 AH) differentiated between the definition of Qur'an and that of *Qirā'āt*. He defined the Qur'an as “the revelation that was sent down on the Prophet (PBUH) as an everlasting miracle”,⁵ while, “*al-Qirā'āt*” is the variations in the words and utterances of this revelation. Thus, the *Qirā'āt* are the verbalisation of the Qur'an, and the Qur'an is preserved in the *Qirā'āt*.⁶

However, Ibn al-Jazarī (d 833 A H) defined *Qirā'āt* as a science by which one knows how to recite Qur'anic words as well as their variations and how to refer to each *Qirā'ah* or narration to its transmitter.⁷ According to al-Qasṭallānī (d.923 A H) *Qirā'āt* is a science through which the points of agreements disagreements are identified among the transmitters of the Glorious Qur'an in terms of dialects, syntax, deletion, insertion, connecting and disconnecting.⁸

Al-Dumyattī (d 1117 A H) defined it as a science whereby we can know the points of agreement and differences among the transmitters in terms of deletion or insertion. Actually, this definition is similar to the previous one.⁹ However, 'Abd-al-Faṭṭāḥ al-Qāḍī, (d 1403A.H) defined it as “a science by which one knows how to pronounce and perform Qur'anic words revealing areas

⁵ See al- Zarkashī, Abū 'Abdullāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Abdullah Ibn Bahādir, *Al Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'an*, ed., Muḥammad Abū al Faḍl Ibrahīm, (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 3rd edition, 1984), vol-1, p 318.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See Ibn al-Jazarī, Abū al-Khaīr Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Ali Ibn Yūsūf, *Munqid al-Muqr'aīn wa Murshid al Tālbīn*, ed, 'Ali Ibn Muḥammad al 'Umrān (Dār al Kotoob al 'Ilmyah, 1st edition, 1999 A D, 1420 A H,) p 49

⁸ See al-Qasṭallānī, Abū al-'Abbās Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr al-Qutaybi, *Latā'if al-ishārāt li fnūn al-qirā'āt*, ed, 'Abd al Ṣabūr Shāhīn, (Cairo, House of Islamic Heritage, vol-1, 1972 A D, 1392 A H), p 172

⁹ See al-Dumyatti, Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī, *Ithaf Fuḍala' al-Bashar fī al-Qirā'āt al-Arba'at 'Ashar*, (Cairo: Muḥammad 'Ali Subih & his Sons for Publishing, 1st edition-1998), p 6

of agreement and differences among the various recitations and how to refer each *Qirā'ah* (reading) to its reader.¹⁰

Frederik Leemhuis defined readings of the Qur'an as a term that is generally used to denote the *Qirā'āt*, the different ways of reciting the Qur'an. According to him, *Qirā'āt* includes many elements such as differences concerning length of a syllable, when to assimilate consonants to following ones, and where to pause or insert verse ending.¹¹

The researcher thinks that the definition of al-Qāḍī, is considered one of the most comprehensive and appropriate ones. By investigating these definitions, we may note some fundamental common elements therein. These elements are the notion of variety (variance), the examples of variety (variations), the authentic reference and the transmitters.

The Origin of the *Qirā'āt*:

As *Qirā'āt* is the various authentic modes of reciting the Glorious Qur'an and the Qur'an is the revelation of Allah (Glory be to Him), then, *Qirā'āt* are certainly the variants of revelation, i.e., the date of birth of *Qirā'āt* is exactly the time when this divine revelation was sent down on the Prophet (PBUH).

Knowledge of correct *Qirā'at* (modes of recitation) comes from the Prophet himself, a *Sunnah*, which dictates the manner of reciting each verse. Aspects of this are intrinsically linked with the Qur'anic revelations: the text was revealed verbally, and by promulgating it verbally the prophet simultaneously provided both text and pronunciation to his community. Neither can be divorced

¹⁰See al-Qāḍī, 'Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī ibn Muḥammad, *Al-Budūr al Zāhrah fī al Qirā'at al- 'Ashr al-Mutawātirah*, (Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al- 'Arabī), p 7

¹¹ See Frederik Leemhuis, *Readings of the Qur'an*, (encyclopedia of the Quran, Brill, Leiden–Boston–Köln, 2001), Vol-4, p 354

from the other. ¹²Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and Hishām Ibn Ḥakīm once differed in reading a verse from surah al-Furqān; having learned this passage directly from the prophet, 'Umar asked Hishām who had taught him. He replied, "the Prophet". ¹³

In this connection, it is appropriate to indicate that some grammarians such as Ibn Shanbūz (d. 328 A.H) declared that certain words in this or that fashion was grammatically preferable in his opinion, through alteration of diacritical marks which bore no weight on the meanings. Yet scholars held steadfast to the manner of recitation that arrived through authoritative channels, refusing his innovation and insisting that *Qirā'at* is a Sunnah which no one has the authority to change. ¹⁴

Ibn Shanbūz admitted the mistake that he made as he said: "I used to read some words of the Glorious Qur'an in a manner that is contrary to the *Muṣḥaf* of 'Uthmān, then after a period of time I found that I am mistaken and now I am repenting to Allah. Ibn al-Nadīm commented saying, "Ibn Shanbūz was put to trial and asked to repent and finally he received ten lashes as punishment. ¹⁵

Another scholar, Ibn Miqṣam (d 354 A H) who, is described as an authority on kūfan grammar by his contemporary Ibn al-Anbārī, accepted that a reading had to be in accordance with the consonantal outline of at least one of

¹² See al-'Azamī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, *The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation*, (Leicester, England, UK Islamic Academy), p 152

¹³ See al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mughīrah ibn Bardizbah, d 256 A H, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Beirut, Dar Ibn Kathīr, 1st edition, 2002), *The Book of Monotheism* 97, chapter, 53, Hadith 7550

¹⁴ See al-'Azamī, *The History of Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation*, p 152

¹⁵ See al-Nadīm, Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *al-Fihrist*, ed., Reda Tajdud, (Tehran Publication, 1971), p 35

the ‘Uthmānic codices; he also accepted that a reading should be harmonious with an aspect of Arabic language; however, he rejected the importance of Isnād. He deemed that his readings were Qur’anic and valid in acts of devotional worship, namely congregational and other ritual prayers.¹⁶ The account of Ibn Miqsam’s trial is preserved in a text entitled *al-Byān wa al-Faṣl* composed by a companion of Ibn Mujāhid, Abū Ṭāhir ‘Abd al-Wāhidī. Abū Ṭāhir is quoted as saying “During our own life time a character has stood out claiming that if a feature of Arabic language correlating with *the ḥurūf al-Qur’an* were to be appropriately reconciled with the consonantal outline of the *muṣḥaf*, then according to him, its recitation is valid in terms of prayer”.¹⁷

The aforementioned incident that took place between ‘Umar and Hishām clearly indicates that *Qirā’ah* is Sunnah. None of these companions were innovating so much as a syllable: all minutiae of recitation had been inherited from the prophet (PBUH).

The History of Qirā’āt:

Allah (Glory be to Him) has commanded the archangel, Jibrīl to come down to the seal Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) with the Glorious Qur'an. It is historically known that the Qur'an was revealed twice. **First**, it was revealed totally in one time, on the night of Decree as stated by the Glorious verse "*innā anzalnāhu fī laylati l-qadri*", "verily, We have sent it (this Qur'an) in the night of Decree".¹⁸

¹⁶ See Mustafa Shah, *The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qur'anic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujahid's Kitāb al-Sab'a*, (SOAS, University of London, nd), p 79.

¹⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁸ The Qur'an: 97:1

Second, it was revealed separately in a span of 22-23 years (from about 610-632 A.D.) in response to actual life incidents. Allah (Glory be to Him) says: "*waqur'ānan faraqnāhu litaqra-ahu 'alā al-nāsi 'alā muk'thin wanazzalnāhu tanzīlan*",¹⁹ "We have apportioned the Qur'an that you (O Muhammad) may recite it to men at intervals, and We have revealed it in stages".²⁰

The Qur'an was not only transmitted orally by many Muslims who had memorized the entire Qur'an or parts of it, but it was also written down during the lifetime of the Prophet. It is widely known that when the *Wahī* came, the Prophet asked the companions to place the divine message in a particular area. The scribes who wrote down the revelation, were especially appointed to write the divine message and were guided by the Prophet about inserting the new verses into certain places of the *Sūrahs*.²¹

Furthermore, the Prophet used to ask certain companions to recite the Qur'an to him. In this connection it is attributed to 'Abdullah Ibn. Mas'ūd that he was asked by the Prophet to recite from the Qur'an before him and that he recited. The prophet praised his recitation as he said: "Whoever would like to recite the Qur'an as fresh as when it was revealed, let him recite it like Ibn Umm 'Abd".²²

¹⁹ The Qur'an: 17:106

²⁰ See Aḥmad al-Byalī, *al-Ikhtilāf Bayn al-Qirā'at*, (Beirut: Dar al-Jabal, 1st edition, 1988). p 29

²¹ See 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ī Doi, *The Sciences of the Qur'an: A Study in Methodology and Approach*, (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1st edition, 2000), p 31

²² See Ibn Mājah, Abū 'Abdullah Muḥammad Ibn Yazīd al-Qazwinī, *Sunnan Ibn Mājah*, ed Muḥammad Fou'ad 'Abd al-Bāqī, (Cairo: Dar Iḥiā'a al-Kutob al-'Arabyah), Ḥadīth, 138, p 49

Ubay Ibn.K'ab is also reported to have said that the Prophet asked him to recite some of the Qur'an before him and that he recited. In addition, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, one of the greatest scholars, had such good voice that the prophet loved listening to his recitation. The prophet said to him; "O Abū Musa! You have been given one of the *mazāmir* (sweet melodious voices) of the family of David".²³

It is known that the Muslims used to study and read the Qur'an from the very early Makkan era. For example, it is reported by Ibn Ishāq that when 'Umar visited his sister and her husband, he found them with their teacher Khabbābb.Ibn al-Araṭṭ reading and studying from the *ṣahīfah sūrah Ṭaha*.²⁴

At the very beginning, the Glorious Qur'an was revealed according to one *ḥarf*, this Qur'anic term will not be translated now as it is very controversial and will be discussed in detail later. The Prophet (PBUH) was ordered to recite to people this revelation with this single *ḥarf*. Arabs, in the Arabian Peninsula, were from several tribes, and different places. Their customs and traditions usually vary according to environmental change. Their language similarly has this aspect of change, i.e., each dialect, under certain circumstances has some unique linguistic features that might not be used in other dialects, although all these variations fall within the frame of Arabic.

The prophet (PBUH) has recited the Qur'an in all of these *aḥruf* on the hearings of his companions, i.e., with all possible ways of recitation suitable for each of them. The companions have learned them accordingly. They have typically imitated what the prophet (PBUH) taught them. Some of them

²³ See Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book Virtues of the Qur'an, Chapter: To recite the Qur'an in a charming voice, Hadith, 5048

²⁴ See 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ī Doi, *The Sciences of the Qur'an*, p 31

mastered only one *ḥarf*, others more. The prophet was also very keen on teaching his companions the readings of Qur'an.²⁵

Shaqiq Ibn Salama narrated: "Once 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'aūd delivered a sermon before us and said, "By Allah, I learnt over seventy Surahs direct from Allah's Messenger (PBUH)" By Allah, the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) know that I am one of those who know Allah's Book best of all of them, yet I am not the best of them." Shaqiq added: I sat in his religious gathering and I did not hear anybody opposing him (in his speech).²⁶

'Alqama Narrated: While we were in the city of Ḥims (in Syria), Ibn Mas'aūd recited some verses of Surah Yusuf, then a man said to him, "It was not revealed in this way." Ibn Mas'aūd replied saying, "I recited it in this way before Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and he confirmed my recitation by saying, 'Well done!'. At this time, Ibn Mas'aūd detected the smell of wine from the man's mouth, so he said to him, "Aren't you ashamed of telling a lie about Allah's Book and (along with this) you drink alcoholic liquors too?" Then he lashed him according to the law.²⁷

The Glorious Qur'an has been sent down to address all. Hence, the caring prophet (PBUH), who is very considerate of this notion and the different dialects and accents of his people, kept asking Allah (Glory be to Him) his mercy until Jibrīl taught him seven "*aḥruf*" plural of "*ḥarf*". Al-Bukhārī narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās that the prophet (PBUH) said: "Jibrīl taught me one

²⁵ See Abu Ammar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, p 184

²⁶ See Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book Virtues of the Qur'an, Chapter: The Qurra'a from among the Companions of the Prophet, Ḥadīth 5000

²⁷ See Sahih al-Bukhari, Book Virtues of the Qur'an, Chapter: The Qurra'a from among the Companions of the Prophet, Hadith, 5001

ḥarf. I reviewed him, then, he taught me one more *ḥarf*. I kept asking him again and again for more until he finally gave me seven *ahruf*.

A group of the companions had memorised the Qur'an entirely or partially. Those companions who completed memorising the Qur'an in the life of the prophet, recited it on his hearings were: 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib, Ubay Ibn K'ab, Zayd Ibn Thābit, 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'aūd, Abu-al-Dardā'a and Abū Mūsa al-'Ash'arī. Those companions taught other companions who were younger or had not had as much exposure to the prophet's recitation, such as Abū Hurayrah and Ibn 'Abbās who learned from Ubay.²⁸

When Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) died in 11 A.H. / 632 A.D., the Qur'an had already been wholly memorised by a large number of his companions and recorded on parchments, stones, camel bones and other available writing materials of the time. Among those companions Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Zayd Ibn Thābit, 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'aūd and the *ashāb al-Ṣuffah*.²⁹

Furthermore, the companions were ordered by the prophet (PBUH) to read the Qur'an to each other. 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr Ibn al-'Aāṣ narrated that the prophet (PBUH) said: "Convey from me even an *ayah* of the Qur'an; relate traditions from Banū Israel, and there is no restriction on that; but he who deliberately forges a lie against me let him have his abode in the Hell."³⁰

²⁸ See Abu Ammar Yasser Qadhi, *An introduction to the sciences of the Qur'an*, p 185

²⁹ See 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ī Doi, *The Sciences of the Qur'an*, P 32

³⁰ See al-Nawawī, Abū Zakarīa Yaḥya Ibn shraf al-Ḥizāmī, *Riyāḍ al-Sālḥīn Min Ḥadīth Sayed al-Mursalīn*, ed. 'Alī Ibn Ḥassan al-Ḥalabī, (Saudi Arabia: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1st edition, 1421 A H), Ḥadīth, 1388

When the companions were travelling throughout the Muslim lands, they took with them the Qur'anic reading variations that they had learned from the prophet (PBUH). They understood the importance of the oral transmission of the Qur'an. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, during his caliphate, sent several prominent companions, memorising the Qur'an by heart, to various cities to teach the people the Qur'an; 'Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit was sent to Ḥims, Ubay ibn Ka'ab to Palestine, and Abū al-Dardā'a to Damascus.³¹

Likewise, during his caliphate, 'Uthmān also realised the importance of the proper recitation of the Qur'an, and sent memorisers of the Qur'an all over the Muslim lands, each with a copy of his official "*mushaf*" one of the seven scripts copied for the Holy Qur'an during the caliphate of 'Uthmān. He kept Zayd Ibn Thābit in al-Madinah and sent 'Abdullah Ibn Sa'ib (d. 63 A.H.) with the *mushaf* to Mecca. Al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'abah (d. 50 A.H.) was sent to Syria while Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 70 A.H.) was sent to Kufa and 'Amīr ibn 'Abd al-Qays to Basrah (d. 55 A.H.).³²

Once the reciters of the companions have spread over the various parts of the Muslim world, each region started developing a specific type of recitation. Again, all of these various recitations had originated from the mouth of the prophet (PBUH). As we said earlier, the companions cared for teaching the Qur'an to their Successors, *al-tabi'een* "the followers" who, in turn, taught it other followers.

³¹ See Abu Ammar Yasser Qadhi, *An introduction to the sciences of the Qur'an*, p 185

³² See al-Zurqānī, Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm, *Mnāhil al-'irfān fī Ulūm al Qur'an*, ed., Fawāz Aḥmad, (Beirut, Lebanon, Dar al Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1st edition, 1995), p p 336-337

Among the followers were a number of reciters whose fame has widely spread across the Islamic cities. For example: In *Madinah*, S‘aīd Ibn al-Musayyib (d. 90 A.H.), ‘Urwah Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 94 A.H.), and ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz (d. 103 A.H.); in *Makkah*, Ṭāūs (d. 106 A.H.), Mujāhid (d. 103 A.H.) and ‘Ikrimah (d. 104 A.H.); in Kufa, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 70 A.H.), Ibrāhīm al-Nakh‘aī (d. 96 A.H.) al-Sh‘abī (d. 100 A.H.); and Masrūq. In Baṣra, Naṣr Ibn ‘Aāshim al-Laythī (d. 89 A.H.), Qatādah (d. 110 A.H.) and Ibn Sirīn (d. 110 A.H.) and in Syria (Damascus), al-Mughirah Ibn Abī Shihāb and Khālid Ibn S‘ad.³³

Among the next generation of Muslims referred to as *al-tabi‘een*, there arose many scholars who learned the various methods of recitation from the companions and taught them to others. Centres of Qur’anic recitation developed in Medina, Makkah, Kufa, Basrah and Syria, leading to the evolution of Qur’anic recitation into an independent science.³⁴

Around the turn of the first century of the *hijra* appeared the ten scholars of the *Qirā‘āt* and two students for each, after whom *Qirā‘āt* and *riwayat* of today are named. At that time, along with many other sciences of Islam, the sciences of *al-Qirā‘āt* were codified. Thus, members of that generation took from the Successors the various recitations that they had learned from the companions, and adopted a specific way of reciting the Qur’an, and this is what is called a *Qira‘ah* “reading”. Each of these persons is called a *Qari*’ “reader”. These readers were the most famous reciters of the Qur’an in their time, and

³³ See Ibn al-Jazarī, *al Nashr fī al Qirā‘at al-‘Ashr*, p 8

³⁴ See Philips, R, *Qur’anic recitations*. (Oxford University Press, 1990), P 32

people from all around the Muslim lands would come to them to learn the Qur'an.³⁵

Those ten *qurrā'a* were Nāfi', Ibn Kathīr, Abū 'Amr, Ibn 'Amir, 'Aṣim, Ḥamzah, Al-Kisā'aī, Abū J'afar, Y'aqūb and Khalaf the tenth. Each Imam had at least two direct or indirect students. Each of the two direct students is called *rāwī* "narrator". For example, Warsh and Qālūn have narrated their recitation from their Imam Nāfi' whereas Ḥafṣ and Shu'abah are narrators of 'Aṣim.³⁶

The Transmission of Qirā'āt:

Transmission of the Qur'an has usually depended on a combination of writing and audition. Writing was not necessary, hence the fairly large number of blind Qur'an reciters (perhaps 10% in the middle ages_ there had to be far fewer deaf Qur'anic reciters, such as Qālūn, the transmitter from Nāfi', who corrected students on the basis of lip-reading).³⁷

The primary method of the transmission of the *Qur'an* has always been and will always be hearing and imitation. Each generation of Muslims learns the Qur'an orally from the lips of the previous generation. This chain can be traced backwards to the time of the companions, who learned the Qur'an from the prophet (PBUH) himself.³⁸

Although the Qur'an has had a rich and central role in the history of Muslim piety and faith as a "sacred book", it has always been pre-eminently an oral, not a written text. The role of the written scriptural text has always been secondary to the dominant tradition of oral transmission and aural presence of

³⁵See Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an.*, P 185

³⁶See Ibn al-Jazarī, *al Nashr fī al Qirā'at al-'Ashr*, p 54

³⁷See Christopher Melchert and Asma Afsaruddin, "Reciters of the Qur'an", Encyclopedia of the Qur'an, vol-4, p 391

³⁸See Abu Ammar Yasser Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, p 184

the recited text. This underscores the centrality of the oral dimension of the Qur'an in the Muslim tradition. In addition, the only way to understand the Qur'an and its place in Muslim history and contemporary life is to grasp the centrality of its role as oral text par excellence.³⁹

Muslim children have normally learnt the Qur'an from around seven years of age but naturally there is much variation; for example, Khalaf, the tenth, on the list of reciters, memorized the Qur'an at ten, while the biographer Ibn al-Jazari memorized the Qur'an at thirteen.⁴⁰

Bazmül observed that: 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb used to say, "The recitation of the Qur'an is a *sunnah* "a religious ritual"; the later generations must take it from earlier ones. Therefore, recite the Qur'an only as you have been taught".⁴¹ The aforementioned phrase indicates that it is not allowed for anyone to recite the Qur'an as his mood takes him.

This is the fundamental principle in the preservation of the Qur'an. Early readers and transmitters of the Qur'an were known for their knowledge as well as their piety. There are reports that Prophet Muḥammad dispatched readers "*Qurrā'a*" in order to teach the Qur'an to others. Such figures held an important position throughout the earliest period of Islam. According to some historical narratives, the death of many of prophet Muhammad's companions in the wars of apostasy, along with the spread of Islam to non-Arab areas, hastened the

³⁹ See William A. Graham, "Orality, (*encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2003, vol-3), p 584

⁴⁰ See Christopher Melchert and Asma Afsaruddin, "Reciters of the Qur'an", *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, vol-4, p 391

⁴¹ See Bazmül, Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar Ibn Sālim, *al-Qira'at wa 'Atharuha fi al-Tafseer wa al-'Ahkam*, ((kingdom Of Saudi Arabia, Umm al-Qurra university, 1413 A.H). p 244

standardization of the text of the Qur'an, as well as the beginning of the development of the Qur'anic sciences.⁴²

Memorising the Qur'an by heart and, then, its oral transmission among generations was and continues to be the primary method in the preservation of this Glorious Book with its various authentic readings. Each Islamic generation had in its rank among those who were famous for their knowledge of the memorisation of the Qur'an by heart. This memorisation, supported by the compilation of the Qur'an and Qur'anic orthography later, was a miracle, in the sense that it is unique to the Qur'an only not to any other book.

Oral transmission was the norm and the oral tradition dominated until the 'Uthmānic Muṣḥaf was produced. But even thereafter, the oral tradition remained of primary importance. Readers reciting in public, whether they were dependent on the 'Uthmānic Muṣḥaf or not, could not simply omit ambivalent words, nor could they recite one or two variants of a single *rasm*. They had to make choices.⁴³

The Conditions for an Authentic *Qirā'ah*

The companions and their followers used to read the Qur'an as they had been taught by the Prophet and by those who were authorised by him to teach others. The only condition for the authenticity and acceptability of a *Qirā'ah* was that it should be read in accordance with *riwāyah*, since whenever they differed in reading, they used to refer it back to the *riwāyah*, stating that they had been taught it by the Prophet. We also find the followers referring their readings to prominent *Qurrā'a* of the companions such as 'Ubay Ibn K'ab,

⁴²See Anna M.Gade, "Recitation of the Qur'an", Encyclopedia of the Qur'an, vol-4, pp 371-372

⁴³ See James A. Bellamy, Textual criticism, encyclopedia of Qur'an, Vol-5, p 238

‘Abdullah Ibn.Mas‘aūd and Zayd Ibn.Thābit. ⁴⁴Therefore, Tthe well-known scholar of the *Qirā'āt*, Ibn al-Jazarī had laid some rules for accepting the *Qirā'ah* as he said,

Every *qirā'ah* that conforms to the linguistic Arabic rules, even by one manner, and matches with one of the scripts of 'Uthmān, even if such a match is not an obvious one, and has an authentic chain of narrators back to the prophet (PBUH), is an authentic *qirā'ah*. Such a *qirā'ah* cannot be refuted or denied, but rather must be believed in, and is amongst the seven *aḥruf* that the Qur'an was revealed in. Therefore, the people must accept it, whether it be from the seven *Qirā'āt*, or from the ten *Qirā'āt*, or even other than these. And whenever any *Qirā'ah* fails to meet one of the above mentioned three conditions, then it will be labelled (according to which of the conditions is not met) either *Ḍ'aīf* "weak", *shāḍḥah* "irregular", or *bāṭil* "false". And this is the strongest opinion among the scholars of the past and the present. ⁴⁵

One can observe from the above quotation that Ibn al-Jazarī mentioned three basic conditions for accepting a particular *qirā'ah* “reading” as authentic.

First: The *Qirā'ah* must conform to Arabic grammar. It is not essential, however, that the grammar used be agreed upon by all Arabic grammarians, or that the *Qirā'ah* employs the most fluent and eloquent phrases and expressions. This is the meaning of the phrase, “...even if by one manner.” The basic requirement is that it does not contradict an agreed upon principle of Arabic grammar.

⁴⁴See Aḥmad ‘Ali Muḥammad ‘Abd Allah, *The Variant Readings of the Qur'an*, A critical Study of Their Historical and Linguistic Origins, (university of Edinburgh, 1984) p 186

⁴⁵See Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā'at al-'Ashr*, p 9

Some scholars, however, do not agree to this condition. They argue that, “If a *Qirā'ah* is proven to have originated from the prophet (PBUH), then we cannot apply the rules of grammar to it. If we were to do this, and presumed an error in the *Qirā'ah*, then we would be implying that the prophet (PBUH) made mistakes (Allah forbid!). Therefore, an authentic *Qirā'ah* overrides a rule of Arabic grammar”⁴⁶ Imam al-Şfāqīsī (d. 1181 A H) commented saying: "the *Qirā'ah* does not follow Arabic language, yet Arabic language is the thing that follows the *Qirā'ah*, as the *Qirā'ah* is heard from the most eloquent one of the Arabs; our prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), his companions and those who followed him".⁴⁷

What this is implying is that it is the Qur'an, through any of its *Qirā'āt*, is given precedence over any rule of grammar, for the Qur'an is the speech of Allah, the most eloquent of speeches, and the rules of grammar must be based on this. Among the scholars of the Qur'an who held this view are Makkī Ibn Abī Tālib (d. 437 A.H.) and Abū ‘Amr al-Danī. According to them, the conditions for an authentic *Qirā'ah* are two conditions only.⁴⁸

The rules of eloquent Arabic and proper grammar are major sources for al-Ṭabarī to establish the validity of the Qur'anic variants. Proper *'arabiyyah* comprises an additional argument to accept or reject certain variants. A valid reading should exhibit eloquent syntax and not only show acceptable Arabic

⁴⁶ See al-Zurqānī, *Mnāhil al-'Irfān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'an*, p 343

⁴⁷ See Musā'id bin Sālim al-Ṭyār, *Fuṣūl fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, (Riyadh, Dar al-Nashr al-Dawlī, 1st edition, 1993), p 126

⁴⁸ See Abu Ammar Yasser Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, p 188

grammar based on some obscure tribal dialect, as later readers and scholars have suggested.⁴⁹

Therefore, one can observe that the condition of a conformity of *Qirā'ah* with Arabic grammar is in reality a necessity by product of the other two conditions, and is not a 'condition' i.e., there has never existed any *mutawātir Qirā'ah* that contradicted any rule of Arabic grammar.

Second: The *Qirā'ah* must conform to one of the *maṣāhif* of 'Uthmān. On the compilation of the Qur'an, 'Uthmān sent out a number of *maṣāhif* around the Muslim world. All of them were written down without dots or diacritical marks. Also, these *maṣāhif* had minor variations among them.⁵⁰

As long as a *Qirā'ah* matches any one of these *maṣāhif*, which 'Uthmān distributed, it was considered to have passed this condition, even if it slightly deviated. For example, the Qur'anic word "*Mālik*", "owner"⁵¹ as it is recited according to the narration of *ḥafṣ*, was written in all the '*Uthmānic maṣāhif* as "*Malik*, 'king', which allows for the variation found in the other readings. The conformation in this example is "partial one". An example of an explicit conformation is in the verse where one recitation is "*Nunshizuhā*"⁵² 'to cause to rise', as it is recited according to the reading of Ibn 'Amir, 'Aṣim, Ḥamzah and al-Kisā'aī. Without a dot over one letter, it becomes "*Nunsheruhā*", 'resurrect them', by Abū 'Amr, Nāfi' and Ibn Kathīr. An example of a *Qirā'ah* that is conforming to one of the *maṣāhif* of 'Uthmān not to the others is the *Qirā'ah* of

⁴⁹ See Shady Hekmat Naser, *The Transmission of the Variant readings of the Qur'an*, (Brill, Leiden, Boston university, 2013), p 46

⁵⁰ See Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā'at al-'Ashr*, p 11

⁵¹ The Qur'an, 1:4

⁵² Qur'an, 2:259

Ibn ‘Amir, in the verse as "*wa bi al-Zubur wa bi al Kitāb*"⁵³ instead of "*wa al-Zubur wa al-Kitāb*" since the *maṣāḥif* that 'Uthmān sent to Syria had the two modes of recitations; by adding letter *bā'a* to *al-zubur* and removing it.⁵⁴

Thus, it has become clear that the condition of conformity with the '*Uthmānic Maṣāḥif*' for accepting any *Qirā'ah* is agreed upon unanimously. Mālik Ibn Anass is reported to have said that anyone who reads according to personal codices not corresponding with the '*Uthmānic Maṣāḥif*' should not lead prayer, as they were written down according to the final revealed version.⁵⁵ According to al-Ṭabarī, regardless of how many sound and well-circulated accounts exist documenting a certain reading that does not agree with the current *rasm* of the *muṣḥaf*, such accounts will never establish that reading as valid and acceptable. Unlike later scholars who relentlessly tried to interpret, reinterpret and re-evaluate those accounts, especially the ones about Ibn Mas‘ūd.

Third, the *Qirā'ah* must have an authentic chain of narrators back to the prophet (PBUH) in which the chain of narrators was continuous; the narrators were all known to be righteous and they were all known to possess good memories.⁵⁶ Therefore, this is the most important condition, and guarantees that the variations that occur in the *Qirā'āt* have all been sent down by Allah as part

⁵³ Qur'an, 3:184

⁵⁴ See Ibn Khalāwiyah, al-Ḥussīn Ibn Aḥmad, *al-Hujjah fī al-Qirā'at al-Sab'ah*, ed. 'Abd al- 'Aāl Sālīm Makram, (Cairo, Dar al-Shrūq, 3rd edition, 1979), p 118

⁵⁵ See Aḥmad 'Alī Muḥammad 'Abd Allah, *The Variant Readings of the Qur'an: A Critical Study of their Historical and Linguistic Origins*, (University of Edinburgh, 1984), p 194

⁵⁶ See Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā'at al-'Ashr*, p 13

of the Qur'an, recited by the prophet (PBUH), and passed down to the Muslim *ummah* (nation) without any addition or deletion.⁵⁷

‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Zaid Ibn Thābit and many other companions used to say “The recitation of the Qur’an is a *sunnah*, later generations must take it from the earlier ones. Therefore, recite the Qur’an only as you have been taught.” Thus, a lot of *Qurrā’a* as Nāfi‘ and Abū ‘Amr used to say if I had not been allowed to read according to what I learned, I would have read some verses of the Qur’an it in a different way.⁵⁸ As for the narrations which did not even have an authentic chain of narrations, they were classified as *bāṭil* and rejected totally. Thus, every reading which does not correspond to the orthography of the ‘Uthmanic *maṣāḥif* was not accepted and was regarded as *shādhah* even if its *isnād* was authentic and its language was sound.⁵⁹

If we ponder over this issue, and reflect over these conditions, we find that the first condition is, in reality, not a ‘condition’ in the sense of the word, meaning that if this ‘condition’ is not met, the *Qirā’ah* is rejected, for two reasons: **First**, such a case has never occurred, meaning that there is no authentic, *mutawātir Qirā’ah* that conforms to the ‘Uthmānic *maṣāḥif* that has no basis in Arabic grammar. **Second**, even if we allow for the possibility that there exists such a *Qirā’ah*, then this, also, does not imply the rejection of the *Qirā’ah* “reading”. This is because our ignorance of such a grammatical basis does not rule out the possibility of such a basis; since no matter our knowledge encompasses; it will still be limited. Moreover, whenever a *Qirā’ah* has a *mutawātir* chain of narrators and conforms with the ‘Uthmānic script, this is

⁵⁷See Qadhi, A.Y. *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’an.*, P 189

⁵⁸See Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā’at al-‘Ashr*, p 17

⁵⁹*Ibid.*,

unequivocal proof that it is a part of the Qur'an, and therefore there cannot be any argument against it.⁶⁰

It should be mentioned, however, that there has never existed any Mutawāter Qirā'ah that contradicted any rules of Arabic grammar. Therefore, we can say that conformity with Arabic grammar is in reality a necessary by-product of the other two conditions and is not a condition in itself. In conclusion, the condition for an authentic *qira'ah* is that it must be *mutawātir*, and conforms to at least one of the codices of 'Uthmān. Any time such a *Qirā'ah* exists, it overrides any rule of Arabic grammar as Ibn al-Jazarī said, if a *Qirā'ah* is transmitted in an authentic *isnād* and corresponds with the orthography of one of the 'Uthmānic *maṣāḥif*, then it is acceptable if its language is acceptable whether or not another reading may be more fluent.⁶¹

It is appropriate to mention that the seven *Qirā'at* that al-Shāṭbī compiled along with the other three *Qirā'at* are all authentic *mutwātirah*. This has been recognized by all, and every letter that any of these *Qirā'at* have differed with the others in, is recognized to have been revealed to the Prophet (PBUH). No one can reject this fact except the ignorant.⁶²

The Qirā'at between the Scholars of Qirā'at and Orientalists' Views:

Scholars of *Qirā'at* unanimously agree that the *Qirā'at* (modes of recitation) is divinely originated and that the *Qirā'ah* should go back to the Prophet (PBUH), while a group of orientalist argued that it is humanely

⁶⁰ See al-Qāri'a, 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn 'Abd al-Fattāh, *Hadīth al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah*, (Beirut, Dār al-Resālah, 1st edition, 2002), p p 106-107

⁶¹ See Ibn al Jazarī, *al Nashr*, Vol-1, p 15

⁶² See Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an.*, P 191

originated and consequently it is not necessary to follow the mode of recitation.

The following pages discuss this topic in detail.

a- **The *Qirā'at* is divinely originated (*Tawqīf*):**

The majority of scholars held the view that the *Qirā'at* is divinely originated and there is no room for reasoning or analogy in it. They based their view on the following points:

It is known that the word and the meaning of Glorious Qur'an is from Allah (Glory be to Him) and no one, even the Prophet himself or the archangel Jibrīl, can interfere in replacing a letter with another one. Thus, if the *Qirā'āt* is a part of the Glorious Qur'an, then the *Qirā'āt* is also from Allah (Glory be to Him).⁶³ In addition, there are many verses of the Glorious Qur'an clearly indicates that the Prophet cannot exchange a word with another one or even a letter with another one.

Allah (Glory be to Him) says: "*wa-idhā tut'lā 'alayhim āyātunā bayyinātin qāla alladhīna lā yarjūna liqānā i'ti biqur'ānin ghayri hādihā aw baddil'hu qul mā yakūnu lī an ubaddilahu min til'qāi nafsī in attabi'u illā mā yūhā ilayya innī akhāfu in 'aṣaytu rabbī 'adhāba yawmin 'azīmin*", "When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet with Us say, 'Bring [us] a different Quran, or change it.' [Prophet], say, 'It is not for me to change it of my own accord; I only follow what is revealed to me, for I fear the torment of an awesome Day, if I were to disobey my Lord'"⁶⁴ From the Sunnah, there are many *aḥadīth* indicating that the *Qirā'at* is divinely originated.

⁶³ See Ismā'īl, Sh'abān Muḥammad, *al-Qirā'at Ahkāmuhā wa Maṣḍruha*, (Cairo, Dar al-Salām for publishing and translation, 4th edition, 2008), p 157

⁶⁴ The Qur'an: 10: 15

Ubay Ibn K‘ab reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was near Banū Ghifār that Jibrīl came to him and said: Allah has commanded you to recite to your people the Qur'an in one dialect. Upon this he said: I ask from Allah pardon and forgiveness. My people are not capable of doing it. He then came for the second time and said: Allah has commanded you that you should recite the Qur'an to your people in two dialects. Upon this he (the Holy prophet) again said: I seek pardon and forgiveness from Allah, my people would not be able to do so. He (Gabriel) came for the third time and said: Allah has commanded you to recite the Qur'an to your people in three dialects. Upon this he said: I ask pardon and forgiveness from Allah. My people would not be able to do it. He then came to him for the fourth time and said: Allah has commanded you to recite the Qur'an to your people in seven dialects, and in whichever dialect they would recite, they would be right. 65. In addition, Ibn 'Abbās narrated: Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "Jibrīl read the Qur'an to me in one way (i.e. dialect) and I continued asking him to read it in different ways till he read it in seven different ways". 66

Ubay Ibn K‘ab narrated that: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) met Jibrīl and said: 'O Jibrīl! I have been sent to an illiterate nation among whom are the elderly woman, the old man, the boy and the girl, and the man who cannot

⁶⁵ See Sahih Muslim, The Book of Prayer-Travelers, Chapter: The clarification that the Qur'an was revealed in seven *ahruf* (modes of recitation), and clarifying its meaning, Ḥadīth, 821, p 562

⁶⁶ See al-Bukhārī, Abū ‘Abdullah Muḥammad Ibn Ismā‘īl, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari, (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1st edition, 2002), The book of the Beginning of Creation, Chapter of The reference to angels, Ḥadīth, 3219

read a book at all.' He said: 'O Muhammad! Indeed, the Qur'an was revealed in seven modes" ⁶⁷

In addition, when Umar and Hishām Ibn Ḥakīm differed in the recitation, both of them went to the main source, the Prophet, who replied saying to 'Umar "it was revealed in this mode of recitation", and he, the Prophet did the same thing with Hishām. We have to realize that the Prophet said to both "*ha kaza un zelat*". These are some of the *ahādith* indicating that the primary source for *Qirā'āt* is the Prophet (PBUH).

Moreover, there are some words of the Qur'ān were written in the all Codices in the same orthography. Nevertheless, scholars differed in its recitation. There are many examples indicating this case. The word *Mālik* "Master" was written in three verses (1: 4, 3: 26 and 114: 2) in the same orthography. However, scholars of the Qur'an agreed about its reading in "*quli al-lahuma mālika al-mulki*", "Say, "O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty" ⁶⁸ by adding the letter *alif* and omitting the same letter in "*maliki al-nāsi*", Sovereign of mankind"⁶⁹, and differed in "*māliki yawmi l-dīni*", "Sovereign of the Day of Recompense"⁷⁰ as some Qurā'a read it by adding *Alif* and others omitted it. ⁷¹In addition, the verse where Allah (Glory be to Him) says: "*yukhādi 'ūna allaha wa-alladhīna āmanū wamā yakhda 'ūna illā anfusahum wamā yash 'urūn*"⁷², "They seek to deceive God and the believers but they only deceive themselves,

⁶⁷ See al-Tirmidhī, Abū 'Issa Muḥammad Ibn 'Issa Ibn Saurah, Sunnan al-Tirmidhī, ed., Aḥmad Muḥammad Shauḥammad Shāker, (Cairo, al-Ḥalabī sons for publication, nd), Chapters on Recitation, Vol. 5, Book 43, Hadith 2944

⁶⁸ The Qur'an: 3; 26

⁶⁹ The Qur'an: 114: 2

⁷⁰ The Qur'an: 1: 4

⁷¹ See al-Khaṭīb 'Abd al-Laṭīf, Mu'ajam al-Qirā'āt, (Damascus, Dār S'ad al-Din, 1st edition, 2002), Vol-1, p 8

⁷² Qur'an: 2: 9

though they do not realize it". and "*inna al-munāfiqīna yukhādī'ūna allaha wahuwa khādi'uhum*", "The hypocrites try to deceive God, but it is He who causes them to be deceived".⁷³, the word *yukhādī'ūna* was written in all *Maṣāḥif* without the letter *alif* after the letter *khā'a* and all the *Qurā'a* read it with *alif*. There are many examples indicating that oral transmission was the primary cause of different modes of recitation not the Arabic script.⁷⁴

It is thus clear that the main reason behind the presence of these various readings is the oral reception of these readings from the Prophet (peace be upon him).⁷⁵ Also, Abū Wā'ail Narrated that 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd recited "*haita laka* (Come you)," and added, "We recite it as we were taught it."⁷⁶

Imam Ḥamzah, one of the well-known reciters for the Glorious Qur'an, used to say: "I have never read a verse or a word from the Glorious Qur'an without *athār*, authentic chain of narration back to the Prophet".⁷⁷ Khārjah Ibn Zayd Ibn Thābit said: *Qirā'ah* is Sunnah, so we have to read the Qur'an as we have learned it from the mouth of the Prophet. Besides, 'Urwah Ibn al-Zubir said: "Reading the Glorious Qur'an is one of the Sunnan, thus read it as you have been taught" Ibn Mujāhid is reported to have said: "reciting the Glorious Qur'an is Sunnah, the latter takes it from the former".⁷⁸

Sībawayh said: "it is not allowed for anyone to read some verses of the Qur'an as he likes. This is due to the fact that it is not permissible to contradict

⁷³ The Qur'an: 4: 142

⁷⁴ See Jabal, Muḥammad Ḥassan, *al-Rad 'ala al-Mustashrik al-yahūdī goldziher*, (Cairo, 2nd edition, 2002), p 44

⁷⁵ See Mutwalī, Gamāl 'Abd al-Fattāh, *T'amulāt fī Tārīkh 'Ilm al-Qirā'at*. (Cairo, 1st edition, 2102), p 68

⁷⁶ See Saḥīḥ al-Bukharī, *The Book of Tafseer*, Book 65, Hadith 4692

⁷⁷ See Ibn Mujāhid, Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ibn Mussa Ibn al-'Abāss, *al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'at*, ed. Shawqī Daif, (Cairo, Dār al-M'aārif, 2nd edition, 1980), p 76

⁷⁸ Ibid., p 50

the *Qirā'ah* as it is Sunnah"⁷⁹. In addition, Abū Zaid al-Anṣārī, the student of Abū 'Amr al-Baṣrī, one day asked him, did all you read with today have already heard it from someone? 'Abū 'Amr replied saying, "if I had not heard it, I would not have read it, as the *Qirā'ah* is Sunnah".⁸⁰ al-Aṣm'aī said: "I heard imām Nāfi' reading the verse "He, Allah, (Glory be to Him) tells the truth,"*yaquṣṣu al-Ḥaq*"⁸¹, then I said to him 'Abū 'Amr read it in a different way; "*yaqḍī al-Ḥaq*", he replied saying oh! to the people of Iraq, you use analogy in *Qirā'at*"⁸².

Furthermore, the canonical Reader Hamzah al-Zayāt used to sell oil for a living, hence his nickname "al-Zayāt". However, one tradition claims that when Hamzah started reading the Qur'an before receiving a formal education in recitation, he read at the very beginning of the Qur'an "*dhālik al-kitābu la zayta fihī*" (This is the Scripture whereof there is no oil) instead of *rayba* (doubt). Realizing his grave mistake, Ḥamzah decided to learn the Qur'an properly with the experts until he perfected his reading. Regardless of the authenticity of this account, the message is clear: one cannot read the Qur'an without proper and formal training even if he is one of the seven canonical Readers of the Qur'an. The Qur'an should be recited according to the teachings of the Prophet and his Companions; it must be read according to sunnah and never according to *ijtihād*.

B- Orientalists' Views Regarding the Qirā'at:

Many orientalist have voiced their opinions about the Qur'anic *Qirā'āt*, including Ignac Goldziher and others.

⁷⁹ See Ibn Sībawayh, Abū Bishr 'Amr Ibn 'Uthmān Ibn Qanbar, *al-Kitāb*, ed., 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo, al-Khāngī publishing house, 3rd edition, 1988, vol-1), p 148

⁸⁰ See Ibn Mujāhid, *al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'at*, p 48

⁸¹ The Qur'an: 6:57

⁸² See al-Skhāwī, Abū al-Ḥassan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Amad, *Gamāl al-Qurrā'a wa kmāl al-Iqrā'a*, ed., 'Abd al-Ḥaq Saif al-Qaḍī (Cairo, al-Kutoob al-Thaqāfiyah bookshop, 1st edition, 1999), p 577

1- Goldziher⁸³ argued that a large part of the differences about the *Qirā'at* goes back to the specific nature of Arabic script with which the Holy Qur'an was written, as it was written without dots or diacritical marks above or beneath the different letters.⁸⁴ He supported his argument by citing some examples. The Holy Qur'an says: "*qālū mā aghnā 'ankum jam'ukum wamā kuntum tastakbirūn*", "What use were your great numbers and your false pride?"⁸⁵ Goldziher argued that the word "*tastakbirūn*" was recited in another way as "*tastakthirūn*". He also gave another example, "*wahuwa alladhī yur'silu l-riyāḥa bush'ran bayna yaday raḥmatihī*", "It is God who sends the winds, bearing good news of His coming grace", the word "*bush'ran*" was recited "*nush'ran*".⁸⁶ According to Goldziher, the main reason behind these differences in *Qirā'āt* is that the Glorious Qur'an was written without dots or diacritical marks, as a result when the different reciters recited the Qur'an, the skeletons produced these different *Qirā'āt*.

Discussing the assumption:

The history of the compilation of the Qur'an tells us that the Qur'an along with its various *Qirā'āt* were memorized in the hearts of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions years before the writing of the codices. This indicates that Goldziher has committed a methodological mistake. This is because his argument requires that the Qur'an was written in the codices first and then the

⁸³ Ignác Goldziher, (22 June 1850–13 November 1921), was a Hungarian scholar. Along with the German Theodor Nöldeke, he is considered the founder of modern Islamic studies in Europe.

⁸⁴ See Ignac Goldziher, *Mdhāhib al-Tafsīr al-Islāmī*, Trans., 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Naggār, (Cairo, al-Sunnah al-Muḥamadiah Publishing house, 1955), p 8

⁸⁵ The Qur'an: 7: 48

⁸⁶ Qur'an: 7: 57

various *Qirā'āt* appeared among the companions as a result of reading the written copies of the Qur'an in different ways.⁸⁷

Moreover, 'Uthmān ordered the copying of authoritative codices and sent them to different provinces. Each of these codices was sent with a reciter including Zayd Ibn Thābit to Madinah, 'Abdullāh Ibn al-sā'ib to Makkah, al-Mughīrah Ibn Shihāb to Syria, 'Amir Ibn 'Abd al-Qays to Baṣra, and Abū abd al-Raḥman al-Sulamī to kufa. Sending reciters with the codices was a clear indication that recitation was dependent on learning through direct contact and reception from the Prophet.⁸⁸

In addition, if it was true that Arabic script was the main reason for having different modes of recitation, then it would become necessary to accept all the recitations that can be deduced from the script.⁸⁹ It seems that Goldziher ignored the tradition of oral scholarship, the mandate that only through qualified instructors could knowledge be gained. A great many Qur'anic phrases contextually allow the inclusion of more than one set of dots and diacritical marks, but in the lion's share of cases, scholars recite them in just one way. With this in mind, we can easily dispel the notion of each reciter whimsically supplying their dots. Had this been the case, we would have had tens or hundreds of thousands of variant *Qirā'āt*.⁹⁰

As for the examples that Goldziher mentioned, it is important to note that the second recitation "*tastakthirūn*" is not an authentic recitation as it did not

⁸⁷ See 'Abd al-Faṭṭāḥ al-Qāḍī, *al-Qirā'āt fī Naẓar al-Mustashriqīn wa al-Mulḥidīn*, (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1st edition, 2005), p 28

⁸⁸ See Abu Ammar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, p 185

⁸⁹ See 'Abd al-Faṭṭāḥ al-Qāḍī, *al-Qirā'āt fī Naẓar al-Mustashriqīn wa al-Mulḥidīn*, p 49

⁹⁰ See al-'Azamī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafa, *The History of the Qur'anic text from revelation to compilation*, A comparative study with the Old and New Testaments, (UK Islamic Academy-Leicester) p 156

occur in the ten *mutawātir* readings. On this basis, we can safely state that there is only one *mutawātir* recitation which is "*tastakbirūn*"⁹¹ To prove that this recitation is not authentic, it is sufficient to state that this recitation was not attributed to a specific or a well-known reciter. This clearly indicates that oral transmission, rather than script, was the primary criterion for the authenticity of *Qirā'āt*. As for the second example that Goldziher cited, in fact, the word "*bush'ran*" has four different modes of recitations, and they are *mutawātir* readings as follows: *bushran*, *nushran*, *nashran* and *nushuran*.⁹²

Freedom in Reading the Qur'ānic Text:

2-Goldziher argued that we can conclude from experiences at the early stage of Qur'ānic exegesis in the early days of Islam that there was a spirit of absolute freedom in handling the sacred text.⁹³ He added that this phenomenon is epitomized by the report indicating that Caliph 'Uthmān himself sometimes read the Qur'ān in a way that is different from the original Codex prepared under his supervision.⁹⁴ He tried to prove his view with many examples; as the Qur'anic verse: "*waltakun minkum ummatun yad'ūna ilā al-khayri wa yamurūna bi al-ma'rūfi wayanhawna 'ani l-munkari*"⁹⁵, "And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong" Goldziher argued that 'Uthmān added to the previous verse the following phrase which were not part of the 'Uthmānic Codex: "*wa yast'aīnūn*

⁹¹ See 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Khāṭib, *Mu'ajam al-Qirā'āt*, Vol-3, p 61

⁹² See Ibn Khalawayh, *al-Hujjah fī al-Qirā'at al-Sab'ah*, p 157

⁹³ See Goldziher, *Madhāhib al-Tafsīr al-Islāmi*, p. 48.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p 48

⁹⁵ The Qur'an: 2: 104

bi lah 'ala' Mā aṣābahum", "and they seek the help of Allah against what has afflicted them".⁹⁶

Discussing the Assumption:

As for the main argument advanced by Goldziher that some Qur'anic readings appeared as a result of a state of freedom in reading the Qur'anic text, the following points indicate that this argument is based on two highly unlikely assumptions that cannot be substantiated:

There is no authentic tradition narrated from the Prophet or from any of his Companions indicating that it is permissible to read the Qur'an according to its meaning and not its wording. On the contrary, scholars of the Qur'an assert that the Qur'an cannot be narrated or recited in one's own meaning. Had there been a state of freedom in reading the Qur'anic text, we would have had thousands of Qur'anic readings narrated from the Companions and the Successors and this is not the case.⁹⁷ Moreover, Had there been a state of freedom in reading the Qur'anic text, scholars would not have stipulated that the different readings must have an authentic and uninterrupted chain of reporters extending back to the Prophet (PBUH). Ibn al-Jazarī said,

“The Companions used to insert some explanatory notes in their recitation by way of explanation and clarification because they were not worried about confusion. Some of them might write some explanatory notes along with

⁹⁶ See Goldziher, *Madhāhib al-Tafsīr al-Islāmi*, p. 48.

⁹⁷ See Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zamī, *The History of the Qur'anic text*, p. 156.

the Qur'anic text. However, those who argue that some Companions permitted reading the Qur'an according to its meaning are indeed telling lies".⁹⁸

When 'Umar heard Hishām Ibn Ḥakīm reciting the surah of al-Furqān in a way that is different from the way he heard from the Prophet, he took him and went to the Prophet who explained to him that the surah was revealed in two different readings. Had there been a state of freedom in reading the Qur'anic text, 'Umar would not have objected to the reading of Hishām and would have let him read as he wished. As for the example that Goldziher mentioned, it is important to note that this *Qirā'ah* is not included in the ten authentic readings of the Qur'an, but the companions added the previous phrase as an explanation for the verse and it is not a part of the Qur'an at all⁹⁹.

Ibn al-Baqillānī is concerned that certain ignorant people might misinterpret the differences between the *Qurrā'a* as meaning that they were absolutely free to choose whatever way of reading they desired. He asserts that this view is groundless and that it is unanimously agreed that no single reading should be accepted unless it has been transmitted with authentic chains. The condition of *riwāyah* is most essential and obvious from the practice of all *Qurrā'a* of the Qur'an, since they used not to react immediately themselves by rejecting any reading they heard from each other for the first time, fearing that it might be authentic and based on the *riwāyah* according to the other readers. In this connection al-'Amash is reported as having said that when he used to read

⁹⁸ See Muḥammad Ḥassan Jabal, *al-Rad 'Ala al-Mustashriq al-Yahūdī* Goldziher, p. 98

⁹⁹ See 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Khāṭīb, *Mu'ajam al-Qirā'at*, vol-1, p 553

in a different way from what he had been taught by his teacher Ibrahim al-Nakh'ai the latter used not to say "it is wrong" but said "read so and so".¹⁰⁰

To conclude, it is clear that adding an explanatory note has nothing to do at all with the various Qur'anic readings because all the reports that were narrated in this regard are odd reports. Some Companions used to have their own Codices where they used to add some notes to explain the meanings of some Qur'anic words and phrases. Even though these words and phrases are beneficial in Qur'anic exegesis and in extracting rulings, it is not permissible to recite these explanatory notes as Qur'anic readings. The owners of the Codices considered these notes as an explanation to some difficult or ambiguous words and phrases and not as parts of the Qur'anic text.

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¹⁰⁰ See Aḥmad 'Alī Muḥammad Abdallah, *The Variant Readings of the Qur'an*, p p 223,224

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