

The Variant Readings and its Implication on Qur'anic Recitation of Different Muslim Society

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Abstract: Although the Uthmanic master codex became the official copy of the Muslim countries during the rule of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (d. 35/656) who abrogated all the personal codices which were kept by some companions, the modes of reading continued to be in circulation during and after his rule. The companions and the successors continued to read some Qur'anic expressions with different modes of reading from the official canonical codex. Variant readings were either phonetically oriented which involved within-the-text exegetical expression. The variant readings had become one of the vital techniques of Qur'anic exegesis and played a role in substantiating an ad hoc theological exegetical point of view. In view of this precedent, this study seeks to analyse the variant readings and its effects on Qur'anic recitation of different Muslim society. To reach representative conclusions, this study undertakes an analysis of scholars view and venerated exegesis as the main sources of reference by adopting the document analysis method. The study found that a different reading can lead to a divergent exegetical view. This however, applies primarily to the phonetically oriented mode of reading, since the semantically oriented mode of reading is a disambiguating mechanism. In addition, the benefit of the Muslim society deriving from the revelation of the Qur'anic message in several modes. Among these, the following are most important to make the reading, pronunciation and memorisation more easy, as many people were illiterate in the Prophet's time and to explain a legal ruling in more detail.

Key words: Uthmanic codex • *qirā'at*, rhetoric • Exegesis • Arabic

INTRODUCTION

The *qirā'āt* (sg. *qirā'a*) represent the vast corpus of Qur'anic readings that are traditionally linked to the textual transmission and recitation of Islam's sacred book. It is to the skeletal text (*rasm*) of the Qur'an that all of these readings are ultimately bound, reflecting subtle variations in the linguistic features of the text. The nature of variance among these readings ranges from differences and distinctions which occur at the morph syntactic and morph phonological levels of the Qur'anic text and are seemingly of an infinitesimal countenance, to those in which the nature of variance is more pronounced and reflected in consonantal variants and manifest instances

of exegetical interpolation. These readings were the subject of critical grammatical analysis and scrutiny by the earliest Arabic grammarians as they attempted to accommodate their grammatical features within the confines of a general theory of language. Naturally, the *qirā'āt* not only serve as important sources for the linguistic situation in early Islam, but they also provide insights into attitudes toward the language of scripture and developments in grammatically thinking during the early periods. Modern scholarship has often referred to readings under the rubric Qur'anic variants, although, theoretically speaking, many of them are not deviations from the standard text but rather encapsulate intrinsic facets of its articulation [1].

Hence, in this vein, this article focuses on the study of science of rhetoric. This science describes a great, clear meaning which can exert such a beautiful influence in the soul and its every verse relevant with the context and also suitable to be used for the addressees [2]. The Qur'anic rhetoric can deliver noble values to mankind appropriate with the place and times, so much so that their wit and conscience succumb to the values. It encompasses three important sciences, namely *al-Ma'ānī* (word of order), *al-Badī* (embellishments) and *al-Bayān* (figures of speech). For purposes of focus, this article focuses solely on a discussion of *qirā'at* which is included in the substantial discussion in the science of *al-Ma'ānī*. In this context, an elaboration of the notion of *qirā'at* will be made, followed by its history, the interrelated between tradition on variant readings and the implication of differential reading into the muslim society.

The Notion of *Qirā'at* in Qur'anic Rhetoric: The science of *al-Ma'ānī* examines the state of the word or utterance in terms of the suitability with the purpose intended [3]. It is based on the policies and the rules of utterances conveyed according to the suitability to the public as the recipients. The purpose is to avoid committing errors of meaning the way it is intended to be delivered by the addresser until it becomes understandable to the addressee [4]. In brief, it can be concluded that *al-Ma'ānī* means knowledge which discusses the position of the utterance that is in line with a given situation.

One of the important debates in this knowledge is *qirā'at* which means readings from the Qur'an readers associated with indigenous cities developed syntheses (*ikhtiyārāt*) of readings which were sourced to luminaries among the companions. They were identified as having derived their readings from the Prophet, defining a theoretical hierarchy of authority for the transmission of *qirā'at* [5]. The *qirā'at* issue has become one of scholars' important debate in literary of the Qur'anic science. In fact it was supported by the diversity of authentic *qirā'at* which is sourced from the Prophet (pbuh). Thereby the scholars have established that if found the *qirā'at* from him, then it is recognized as authentic and of itself can be used as an argument.

Some scholars have attempted to make a distinction between a variety of modes (*aḥruf*) and a variety of readings (*qirā'at*), both having settled at the number seven with the idea that modes related to interpretation and *qirā'at* to recitation [6]. The immediate impact that

any change in recitation has on the meaning of the verse, though makes such a distinction rather futile. In most earlier writings the two words were used interchangeably alongside *wujūh* (facets) and *lughāt* (dialects/languages), suggesting that Qur'an had several facets to it. All of this seems to point to the fact that Qur'an was read in a variety of ways and its meanings were seen as multifaceted before the subsequent more rigid ways inherent in canonization [7].

Ibn al-Jazārī [8] states that all of *qirā'at* which is in correct Arabic, even in only one aspect; and which agrees with the standard codex (*Muḥḥaf of Uthmānī*), even just barely; and its chain of narration is authentic – then it is an irrefutably correct recitation. In fact, it is one of seven modes in which the Qur'an was revealed; it must be accepted by everyone, whether it stems from one of the seven Readers, or from the ten, or from authoritative *imams* (archetypes) other than them. If one of these pillars is removed, then one lets loose a recitation which is weak (*ḍa'īf*), problematic (*shādhā*), or invalid (*bāḥilā*). Whether it is related on the authority of the seven, or even one greater than them. This is the correct view as held by most meticulous *imams* from among the predecessors (*Salaf*) and their followers (*Khalaf*); it is the fixed view to which no one can make objection.

This Ibn al-Jazārī view is supported by al-Zarqānī [9] was cited al-Dānī opinion stating that the *imams* of recitation of the Qur'an are not concerned at all with the most common of the languages nor analogies with the Arabic, but rather with the soundest of traditional recitations and those most reliable in transmission. If a narration is considered to be sound, it cannot be refuted by resort to analogous Arabic readings nor by popular usage; these are readings of the accepted *sunnah* (a custom); one must accept and follow them.

Based on the definitions, it can be understood that what is implied by *qirā'at* does not necessarily to follow the requirements of the Arabic grammar, but the most important thing to be noted in this issue is whether it is sourced from the Prophet authentically or not. As a result, al-Suyūṭī [10] said that Sa'īd ibn Manḥūr narrated in his *Sunan* from Zayd Ibn Thābit that “*qirā'at* is accepted *sunnah*”. Moreover, al-Bayhaqī said, “Our predecessors wanted to follow the letters of the accepted *sunnah*; one may not differ from the fixed codex which is the *imams*, nor can one differ from the generally accepted reading even if the alternative is of correct speech and is more clarity”.

Moreover, al-Suyūṭī [10] said the readings are various types, namely: (i) the *mutawāṭir*, which transmitted by a group of men when there is no possibility of their conspiring to lie about their authority and by the likes of them to the end of transmission. Most readings are of this type. (ii) The *mashūr*, where the chain of narrators (*isnād*) is sound, but it does not reach the rank of a *mutawāṭir*; the Arabic agrees with the writing; it is common among the readers and is not considered ungrammatical nor peculiar. This is recitable according to the conditions. (iii) the *āḥād*, which the recitations transmitted from too few transmitters to make them *mutawāṭir*. Which are those readings supported by a sound *isnād*, but whose Arabic and writing conflict; or it was not accepted by a sufficient number of authorities and these are not to be recited.¹ (iv) the *shādh* (peculiar), in which the *isnād* is unsound.² (v) the *al-mawḥū* or the fabricated type.³ (vi) the *mudraj* (recitation with unacknowledged insertions into the text or *isnād*) class of *ḥadīth* (prophetic tradition). These consist of additions to gloss the text as a hermeneutical strategy⁴.

History of *Qirā'at*: During the early formative phase of Qur'anic exegesis which began during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), there were no modes of reading. There was no need for a master codex, since the spokesman of revelation, Muhammad (pbuh), was still alive. During the last decade of the first half of the first/seventh century, the two major cities which were concerned with the teaching of modes of reading were Madinah and Kufah. The phase of scholarship in and recording of the modes of reading began during the second half of the first/seventh century. Among the first scholars who wrote on the modes of reading were: Yaḥyā ibn Ma'mūr (d. 90/708), Abān ibn Taghlūb (d. 141/758), Muqātil ibn Sulaimān (d. 150/767), Hārūn ibn Mūsā al-A'wār (d. Around 170-180/786-796), Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrā' (d. 207/822) and Abū 'Uбайд al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224/838). It was during the last half of the first/seventh century that the differences among modes of reading began to emerge [11].

Classical Muslim sources relate that in the lifetime of the Prophet was not collected together in a single document but was partly preserved on sheets of parchment, the ribs and shoulder blades of animals, the stalks of palms and above all memorized in the hearts of men. Despite the suggestion that following the Wars of Apostasy in 633 a collection of the Qur'an was sanctioned by the second caliph Abū Bakr, it is the third caliph, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān who is formally credited with having commissioned an official collection of the Qur'an. This version was imposed as the standard codex (*Musḥaf*) throughout the territories of the state. It was in these regions that tradition of reciting and preserving the sacred text had been established by the Companions who settled there. Tradition states that differences and disagreements regarding the recitation of the sacred text led to 'Uthman's intervention. He appointed an editorial committee that was led by a scribe of the Prophet, Zayd ibn Thābit. An official codex comprising the skeletal text of the Qur'an was produced and four recensions of this master copy were sent to major cities and garrison towns, including Mecca, Kufa, Basra and Damascus; a further copy was retained in Medina. None of these original codices has survived, although genres of writing devoted to collecting the orthographical features of indigenous codices do refer to instances of their being used as prototypes for the transcription of further copies [12].

The Arabic script consisted of 15 basic graphemes which, through the addition of diacritic dots, produced the 28 characters required for its phonemic repertoire, allowing single homographs to represent more than one phoneme. There has been suggestion that the proliferation of Qur'anic readings was the result of ambiguities created by the incipient nature of the Arabic script. However, within the reading tradition it was always maintained that oral mechanisms for the transmission of readings retained overall hegemony, essentially governing the articulation of the written text, which served as a mnemonic aid [1].

¹ For example, in Qur'an 32:17 which read in a plural noun: *min qurrāti a'yun* (...comforts for eyes...) instead of the standard reading *qurrati* (comfort) in the singular.

² For example, in Qur'an 1:4 which read in past tense: *malaka yawm al-dīn* (He possessed/reigned on the Day of Judgement) instead of the accepted *mālīki yawm al-dīn* (Sovereign of the Day of Recompense).

³ For example, in Qur'an 35:28 where *Allah* is rendered in the nominative case and *al'ulamā'* is rendered in the accusative case: *innamā yakhsa allahu min 'ibadihi al'ulamā'a*. Instead of the accepted reading is *Allah* should be accusative and *al'ulamā'* in the nominative case: *innamā yakhsa allaha min 'ibadihi al'ulamā'u* (...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...).

⁴ For example, in Qur'an 4:12, Sa'īd ibn Manṣūr report of Sa'ad ibn Abī Waqqāṣ reading at *walahū akhun aw ukhtun min ummi* (...but has left a brother or a sister from the same mother...), adding the last four words to the text.

The term of mode was used to designate a reader's specific reading. Minor variations among these readings were said to be sanctioned in a prophetic tradition which refers to the Qur'an being revealed in several modes and declares that each of these modes was liturgically valid. One reason given by the traditional scholarship for the existence of so many Qur'anic variants was that they were partially a reflection of the dialectical diversity of the indigenous Arab tribes, who were granted a measure of latitude in their recitation of the sacred text. Their syntactic, phonological and morphological conventions and idiosyncrasies were enshrined within the corpus of readings [13]. Hence, the legitimacy for the variety of modes can, in fact, be tracked back to several traditions of the Prophet through a number of Companions which suggest that these various readings are an expression of the Divine will. 'Umar is said to have complained to the prophet that Hishām ibn Ḥakīm recited *sura al-Furqān* (the Criterion) in a way different from what he had heard from the Prophet. The Prophet sent for ibn Hishām and after the latter read the text that 'Umar has disputed, the prophet told 'Umar "... thus Qur'an has been revealed in seven different ways, so recite of it whatever is easier for you" [14].

Within the different versions of the codex in circulation there were also a diversity of readings in particular verses and this has been acknowledged by Sunni classical commentators and scholars of the Qur'an. The systematization of the various readings and a significant stage in its more definite canonization was achieved by ibn Mujāhid, the Baghdad linguist who fixed a single system of consonants and placed a limit on the variations of vowels which were employed in the text. His systematization resulted in the acceptance of seven variant readings with each of the seven being traced through two chains of narrators and where the reading through the one chain may have differed somewhat from that of the other. These seven variant readings are as follows:

- Nāfi' from Medina (d. 785) as transmitted through Warsh and/or Qālūn
- Ibn Kathīr (d. 737) from Mecca as transmitted through al-Bazzā and/or Qunbul
- Ibn 'Āmir (d. 736) from Damascus as transmitted through Hishām and/or Ibn Dhakwān
- Abū 'Āmir (d. 770) from Basra as transmitted through al-Durrī and/or al-Sūsī
- 'Āḍim (d. 744) from Kufa as transmitted through Ḥafḥ and/or Abu Bakr

- Ḥamza (d. 772) from Kufa as transmitted through Khalaf and/or Khallād
- Al-Kisā'ī (d. 189) from Kufa as transmitted through al-Durrī and/or Abū al-Ḥārith.

With the passing of time three variants predominated: those of Warsh transmitted via Nāfi', Ḥafḥ transmitted via 'Āḍim and al-Durrī transmitted via Abū 'Āmir. Currently, with the exception of large parts of West and Central Africa where the reading of Warsh is widespread, elsewhere in the Muslim world, the reading of Ḥafḥ, popularized during the reign of Egypt's King Fu'ad and first printed in 1925, are still studied and practiced by the readers (*Qurrā'*), those who specialize in the reading of the Qur'an. Given the Qur'an is not only a recited scripture but also one that forms the basis of Muslim philosophy and law, the variant readings are also significant for exegesis and more so for Islamic law [7]. In general, it is widely assumed that the text of the Qur'an has remained remarkably stable and that it has been more or less free from scribal insertions of the kind that crept into the manuscripts of the New Testament [15].

Given that the vast majority of *qirā'at* reflected differences concerning vocalic values, consonantal variants and the appendage of conjugational markers, the skeletal text promulgated by 'Uthmān accommodated a large number of these readings. However, contraventions of the skeletal boundaries seen by the Uthmanic codices were not permitted, despite the fact that eminent companions of the Prophet such as 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, Ubay ibn Ka'b, Abū Mūsā al-As'arī and Ibn 'Abbās all possessed personal codices which retained exegetical interpolations and consonantal variants inconsistent with the standardized text. A consensus of readings gradually developed, with different cities adopting *qirā'at* identified with individual readers who sourced their readings to earlier authorities. It is apparent that when Ibn Mujāhid composed a work collecting seven Qur'anic readings associated with seven distinguished readers, he was guided to a large extent by the preeminent status these readings had already acquired in their indigenous cities (Fig. 1). Besides, earlier figures had already collated collections of readings which served as the principal sources for his work [1].

Wansbrough [16] holds that the 'companions codices' which contained the variant readings were really manufactured from exegetical material in support of an argument central to the traditional account of canonization, namely the Uthmanic recension. Much of

Transmission of the *qirā'at*: Principal Companions

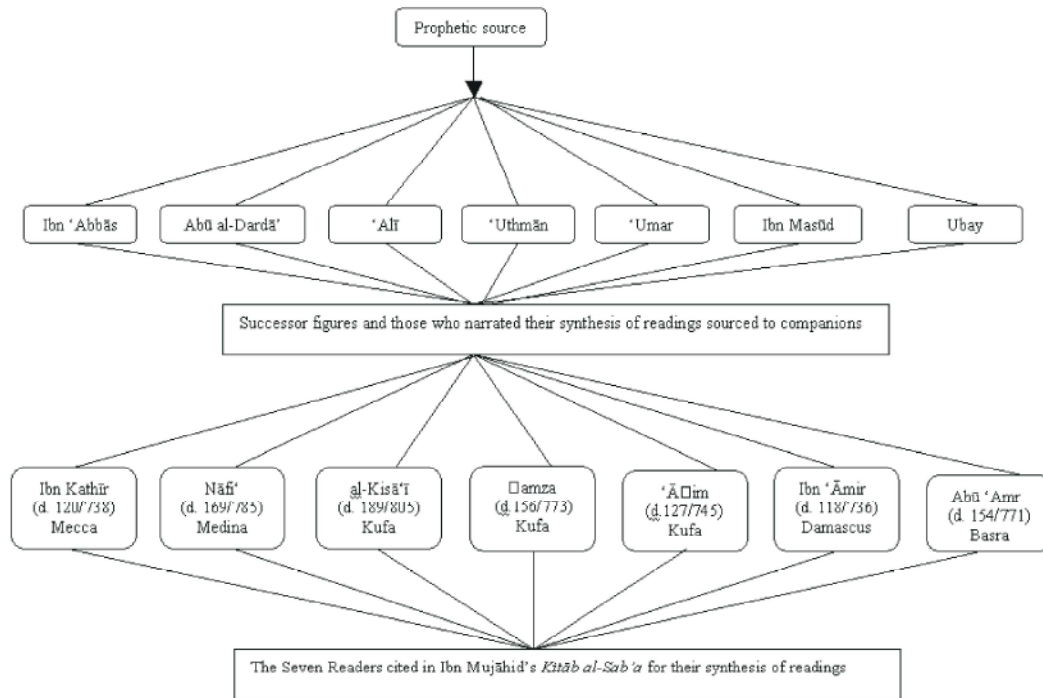


Fig. 1: The Seven Readers selected by Ibn Mujāhid

the material persisted anyway in the form of standard deviations from the canon, accommodated by the *al-qirā'at* (modes) doctrine.

Nevertheless, al-Suyūṭī [10] said there is no disagreement that Qur'an must be *mutawātir* in its foundation and all its parts. As for its *maḳāl* (desinential inflection; case ending) and its *waḳ'* (position in the text) and its *tariḳ* (arrangement), these are also so determined by the people of the *sunna*'s verifiers. It is because this being the glorious miracle which is the foundation of the Eternal religion and the straight path all conditions were created concerning its transmission totally and in detail. Whatever was transmitted as an *āḳād* not having the status of a *mutawātir* was excised as being not part of the Qur'an at all. Moreover, al-Zarkashī [17] said that the Qur'an and the readings are two discrete truths: the Qur'an is the way revealed to the Prophet for clarity and inimitability. The readings are the expressions of the above-mentioned inspiration in view of its letters and quality, e.g. pronouncing a consonant as single or doubled etc. The consensus of the community is that the seven readings have the status of *mutawātir*, or as others claim *mashhūr*.

Traditions on the Seven *Qirā'at*: While Muslims believe that the canonical written text has been significant factor in the preservation of the Qur'an and that no corruption has be fallen that text, they believe just as steadfastly that the Qur'an has been transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth and that the actual recitation of the Qur'an therefore constitutes an autonomous oral tradition which has perpetuated itself quite independently of written texts. This oral tradition embraces seven, ten, or fourteen distinct system of recitation, or as they are generally called among scholars, *qirā'āt* (readings), each transmitted by a school of Quran-readers deriving its authority from a prominent reader of the second or early third century of the Islamic era. This slight variation among the ten readings is attributable to the dialectical variation in the original revelation. Although this variation had been greatly reduced through the promulgation of a canonical text based mainly on Qurayshite material, a degree of variations was still possible even within the limits of canon. Hence the continued existence of authentic variants and the eventual emergence of distinct schools of recitation. It should be emphasized that all of the readings were

transmitted orally from the Prophet himself and that the role of the canon in their transmission was in large part a limiting one [18].

On various occasions the Prophet is supposed to have taught his followers on particular wording of a Qur'anic fragment at one time and at other times other wordings, concluding: "... recite it in the way that is easiest for you." This course of events is reflected in a *matn* (text) cluster in the canonical collections concerning the seven readings. When 'Umar was once reported to have voiced his anxiety as to what is truly Qur'anic and what not, the Prophet is said to have reassured him with the words: "Every phrase that is purported to be part of the Qur'an is correct as long as forgiveness is not confused with chastisement, or chastisement with forgiveness," and "Each of the seven readings is 'sufficient and restores health' (*kāfin shāfin*)" [14]. But this is a late report, in which the lexible attituded vis-a-vis Qur'anic variant readings is presented in florid terms. It had many precursors [19].

The number seven for the different readings is not to be taken literally, but rather as conveying an undefined number of units under ten, as seventy is often used to convey an undefined number of tens under one hundred. As long as the inner meaning is preserved, there is no harm in variants. The number seven, mostly interpreted as representing a number of ways of placing, or deleting, variable diacritics and vowels in verbs and nouns, especially in their endings, or the metathesis of letters, whole words, or phrases, etc., is occasionally assumed, wrongly in the opinion of most medial scholars, to point to the different dialects the Arabs spoke, when the Qur'an was in the process of being revealed. There are otherwise very few phrases in the Qur'an that actually allow recitation in seven ways, the classic examples being: *abada al-āghūt* in *sura al-Mā'idah* (The Table Spread) verse 60 and *falā taqul lahumā uff* in *sura al-Isra'* (The Night Journey) verse 23 [20].

The permission to resort to as many as seven variant readings is thought to have come forth from God's desire to facilitate mastery in Quran recitation for those Arabs who were to embrace Islam at a large stage, especially after the emigration. Following the early conquests, in particular after the completion of the Qur'an redaction that reportedly came to be organized as that of 'Uthmān, with the consolidation of the empire and the proliferation of Qur'an instruction, the study of the variants began to constitute a separate Quranic discipline, even if some

scholars hold the view that the so-called 'Uthmān Musṣaf' represents just one of the seven permissible readings, making the other six obsolete [19].

While the choice between several possible variants reading was made at first according to traditions, later the variants of *imāms* became more influential and a choice was made from among them. Gatje [21] explains that criteria for the reliability of a variant were correct language, assurance based on tradition and the view of the majority, that is, a kind of consensus of the majority. The result was similar to that of law: one did not propagate the exclusivity of a single form of the text, but rather permitted different canonical groups of variants to be valid alongside each other, the knowledge of which belonged to the armour of the Qur'anic *imām*. A saying of Prophet was referred to in this connection, according to which God's word had been revealed to the Prophet himself in several ways.

The Implication of Variant Readings on Muslim Society:

One distinctive benefit of the revelation according to seven readings, as explained by scholars, evolved around the fact of making the Qur'an a divine book and guidance for everyone. This objective according to Zarzūr [22] cannot be achieved unless the revelation is accessible to everyone. Though generally the Arabs can recite the Qur'an, however, this recitation is not without great difficulties. They have been living their lives with their communal or tribal dialects and the requirement to recite the Qur'an in one particular dialect overnight is merely unattainable. If they were forced unwilling to master of the Qurayshite dialect, this might just chase them away from learning the Qur'an. It is thus very obvious that the concept of easiness (*taysīr*) and exemption (*rukḥāh*) had been practiced with regard to the revelation. Indeed, Islam is based on the foundation of easiness and exemption for everyone.

In Islamic literature, to denote a person who recites the Qur'an in its different readings skilfully, beautifully, fluently and, which is particularly important, correctly according to *tajwīd*, one says that such a person is readers, meaning an expert in Qur'anic recitation, in which seven (or ten) *mutawātir qirā'at* are recognized. *Qirā'at* are the different linguistic, lexical, phonetic, morphological and syntactical forms permitted when reciting the Qur'an. The origin of these refinements lies in the fact that the linguistic system of the Qur'an incorporates the most familiar Arabic dialects and vernacular forms in use at the

time of revelation. What is more, *qira'at* may be seen as the pieces of a single mosaic, each fitting perfectly into the supernatural text of the Qur'anic expression. Then again, *mutawātir qirā'at* may be recited both during and independently of *salat* (prayers), while others that are not of this degree may be used only for the purposes of commentary/exegesis [23].

Furthermore, some scholars such al-Zarkashī [17] holds that the Qur'an currently with Muslims comprises only one of the seven modes; this being the last repeated reading done by the Prophet in the presence of Gabriel and which served the purpose for abrogating the rest. Others argue that the current codex is capable of bearing a seven modes. In an attempt to make a distinction between the 'divinely sanctioned' various modes and the later developed 'readings', Von Denver [24] concludes his discussion on the seven modes by saying that "They are the basis of several distinct ways of reciting the Qur'an, reflecting the different usage at the time of revelation, comprising variations on pronunciations and even minor differences in wording". Although much of what the seven contain is also found in the seven modes they are not identical and came about at 'a later stage'. In a description of the seven variant readings, in which there are hardly any significant deviations from the seven variant modes, Von Denver [24] explains the readings as different forms of oral recitations of the Qur'an as well as punctuation of the written text which corresponds to the oral recitation.

Hence, Muslim scholars have put forward a number of explanations for the benefit of the muslim society deriving from the revelation of the Qur'anic message in several modes. Among these, the following are most important: to make the reading, pronunciation and memorisation more easy, as many people were illiterate in the Prophet's time. And to explain a legal ruling in more detail [25]. Apart from that, the revelation in seven modes shows the inimitability and unique nature of the Qur'an in terms of its meanings in the realm of language and legal rulings. It further facilitates memorization of the Qur'an by the unlettered community [26]. It is also in recognition of the linguistic nature and constitution of the Arabs. The concept of seven modes is to unite the new Muslim community on the basis of the common language with minor variations [27].

In an interesting example of how non-confessional scholarship would see confusion at best and contradiction at worse and confessional scholarship sees

the uniqueness of the Qur'an, Shihab [28] uses two texts from the Qur'an to show how different readings, in fact, elucidate the meaning of the text. The word *maliki* in *sura al-Fātiḥah* (The Opening) can be read with or without prolonging the 'a' sound. Without a prolongation the word means 'sovereign' and by prolongation it means 'master' or 'owner'. Shihab concludes that there is no contradiction between the two. Thus, Wansbrough [16] states the origin of the readings was not textual but doctrinal, despite the apparatus of transmission, might be inferred from the juridical as well as liturgical significance.

al-Suyūṭī [10] states that from differences in recitations there may occur difference in religious laws. Thus the jurists allowed a man who had recently had intercourse not to perform the partial ablution before prayer, or to do so based on *sura al-Nisā'* (The Women) verse 43:

... *aw lamastum / lāmastum alnisā'a* ... (...or you have contacted women...)

They also allowed coitus with a menstruating woman at the end of her period before the completion of her purification with *ghusl* (total ablution), or without it based on *sura al-Baqarah* (The Cow) verse 222:

"... so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not approach them until (*yaḥurna / yaḥharna*) they are pure..."

They told of a strange difference concerning a verse which can be recited with both forms.

Eloquently, some of the later Traditionists according to al-Suyūṭī [10] said that there are benefits from the differences and types of variant readings: (i) For the Nation's simplification, facilitation and ease in recitation. (ii) The demonstration of its excellence and nobility to the other nations, because no scripture had ever been revealed to any of them, but that it had only one permissible reading. (iii) Increasing their reward, for they expand their energies to realize this and to strive for rigour word by word, to the extent of determining the true execution of a long *a* vowel, or the attenuation of the vowel (*imāla*) *a* tending toward *i*, then pursuing the implications of these and deriving the lessons (*ḍikām*) and rules (*aḥkām*) from the definition of each expression and research to discover their validation, reasoning and preference in judgement. (iv) The demonstration of God's

secret in His Book and his protecting it from arbitrary change or meaningful differences, despite its variant outward aspects. (v) Increasing its inimitability by means of its succinctness, for the variations in its readings have the status of verses; if each definition of each word was made discrete verse, one would have to feel the resulting exaggeration. (vi) some of the readings clarify what may be unknown from others, e.g. at ibn Mas'ūd reading of *Sura al-Jumu'ah* (The Congregation, Friday) verse 9:

... *famāw ilā dhikri Allah*... (... then proceed to the remembrance of Allah ...)

This reading clarifies that the intention of the standard reading: ... *fas'aw ilā dhikri Allah*... (... hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah ...) is 'earnestly going' and not merely 'ambling quickly'.

CONCLUSION

The *qirā'at* is the field of Qur'anic studies that concerned with the study of the various dialects spoken by the Arab tribes in the Arab peninsula before and after the revelation of the Qur'an. A mode is, therefore, a prestigious form of Arabic and the dialect of Quraysh was the standard one. For muslim scholars, the Qur'an was revealed in seven different forms of language spoken by the major Arab tribes.

Since the Qur'an is the main source of all Islamic teaching and doctrine, this was the reason for the evolution of *qirā'at* discipline and the fact that many works were written including works on the recitation of the Qur'an in seven or ten ways. The *qirā'at* are the different linguistic, lexical, phonetic, morphological and syntactical forms that are permitted in reciting the Qur'an and are not in any sense 'variants'. The source of these diverse refinements is the fact that the Qur'an incorporates into its linguistic system the most familiar Arabic dialects and vernacular forms in use at the time that Qur'an was revealed.

Finally, for the convenience of his people the Prophet begged from Allah that the recital of the Qur'an may not be limited to one system, but permission be granted to recite it in different ways. Hence the Qur'an was revealed on seven modes. And the correct meaning of revelation on seven modes is that seven variations were allowed in recital. As a result several readings came to be used.

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