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The problem of tawatur and the emergence of Shawādh**

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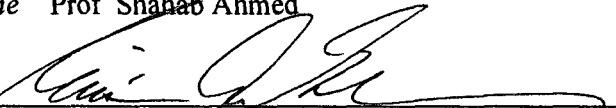
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The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qur'ān
The problem of *tawātur* and the emergence of *Shawādh*

A dissertation presented
by

Shady Hekmat Nasser

to
The Department of the Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of
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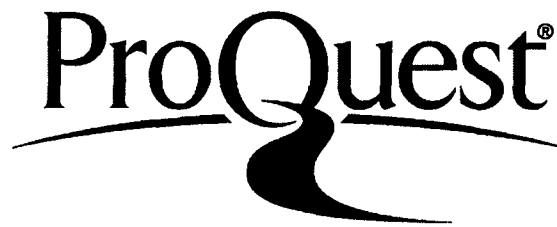
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The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qur'ān The problem of *tawātur* and the emergence of *Shawādhdh*

Abstract

This dissertation studies the transmission of the variant readings of the Qur'ān, the canonization of the system Readings, and the emergence of the non-canonical (*shawādhdh*) readings. I argue that Ibn Mujāhid and the Muslim scholars before him had different criteria from the later Muslim scholars for accepting a Qur'ānic reading as canonical, and that Ibn Mujāhid treated the variant readings of the Qur'ān as legal rulings (*ahkām*). Usūlīs and Hadīth theoreticians were the ones mainly responsible for moving the discipline of Qirā'āt from the realm of *fiqh* into the realm of Hadīth, thus replacing the important criterion of *ymāc* (consensus) with sound transmission (*isnād*). After studying the theories of *tawātur* in detail, I show that the transmission of the system Readings of the Qur'ān failed to meet the conditions of *tawātur* set by the *usūlīs*, and thus I emphasize the importance to distinguish between the transmission of the consonantal text of the Qur'ān and the ways in which this text could be read.

After studying the chains of transmission of the seven canonical Readings, I

highlight the role played by the immediate transmitters of the eponymous Readers to determine the identity of the two canonical *Rāwīs* of each system Reading and the generation from which those *Rāwīs* were selected I also show through the detailed study of the *isnāds* how the *shawādh* readings started to emerge through the single strands of transmission that were not followed up and corroborated Diverging from the *ymā'* caused many of these readings that were originally attributed to the eponymous Readers to be deemed irregular and they gradually entered into the *shawādh* literature Finally, I created a database of variants from the variant readings of the Qur'ān and early Arabic poetry and compared these variants to each other after categorizing their types into different categories These concordances show similar aspects in the transmission of poetry and the Qur'ānic readings, where the different proportions of each category of variants in both literatures reflect the restrictions of the consonantal outline of the Qur'ān and the poetry meters

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Introduction

In the late nineties, a rumor spread in one of the small *sunnī* neighborhoods in Beirut that the Sheikh of the mosque had grown senile. The residents of that small neighborhood had to interrupt the Sheikh when he was reading the Qur'ān before dawn's prayers and force him to stop his recitation and leave the mosque. One of those residents told me that they could not tolerate the Sheikh's mockery of God's holy book, he was reading the Qur'ān in a strange way as if he was imitating the dialect of the Lebanese people in the south. The resident also said "can you imagine he was saying *"ihdīnā al-zirāta al-mustaqīm"* with a *zāy*! Even my three-year-old daughter can read *al-Fātihah* correctly"

At that time I was still not familiar with the discipline of *Qirā'āt*, however a couple of years later I realized that what the Sheikh has done was reciting the Qur'ān according to the canonical Reading of Hamzah b. Habīb al-Zayyāt, which is as valid and "Qur'ānic" as the Reading of Hafs, which is what most Arabs in the Middle East are familiar with. The Reading of Hafs, or more accurately Hafs *'an 'Āsim*, was not common in the Arab and Muslim world until the Ottomans adopted it as the official Reading of the Empire. Furthermore, the first complete audio recording of the Qur'ān was done by Mahmūd Khalīl al-Husarī in 1961, and it followed the Reading of Hafs *'an 'Āsim*, which became the dominant Reading in the Arab and Muslim world, whereas all the other canonical Readings started to die out except among specialists and highly educated scholars.

The aforementioned canonical Reader Hamzah al-Zayyāt used to sell oil for a living, hence his nickname "*al-Zayyāt*". However, one tradition claims that when

Hamzah started reading the Qur'ān before receiving a formal education in recitation, he read at the very beginning of the Qur'ān “*dhālika al-Kitābu lā zayta fihī*” (This is the Scripture whereof there is no oil) instead of *rayba* (doubt) After that, Hamzah decided to learn the Qur'ān properly with the experts until he perfected it Regardless of the authenticity of this account, the relayed message is clear one cannot read the Qur'ān without proper and formal training even if he is one of the seven canonical Readers of the Qur'ān The Qur'ān should be recited according to the teachings of the Prophet and his Companions, it must be read through *sunnah* and never through *ijtihad*

Scholarship on Qirā'tā has attracted many scholars over the years and several studies have been produced on this subject from perspectives such as historical, grammatical, philological, phonetic, literary, and theological My dissertation studies the transmission of the variant readings of the Qur'ān and the mechanisms through which some system Readings were established as canonical where as some others were deemed as non-canonical (*shawādh*) I also study the theory of *tawātur* and how successful its application was on the transmission of the Qur'ānic Readings Finally I run a comparative study between the variants of the Qur'ān and the variants of early Arabic poetry in order to compare between the nature of both sets of variants and how similar or different they are from each other The dissertation is divided into five chapters chapter one provides a background on the study of Qirā'āt and the important scholarship that has been done on the topic in addition to a detailed study of the transmission of the Prophetic tradition of the *sab'at ahruf* (the seven modes of recitation), which is considered to be the only legitimization for the existence of the variant readings of the Qur'ān The objective is to estimate when this tradition was

widely in circulation within the Muslim community and the implications of this tradition with its different versions Chapter two studies the process of the canonization of the seven Readings by Ibn Mujāhid I will examine the period prior to Ibn Mujāhid focusing on al-Tabarī and his criteria for accepting a valid reading of the Qur'ān Then I will conduct a close reading of the introduction of Ibn Mujāhid's Qirā'āt work in order to extract his criteria for establishing the seven-Reading canon I will propose a different interpretation of Ibn Mujāhid's views and demonstrate that he treated the variant readings of the Qur'ān as legal rulings (*ahkām*), and that the *usūlīs* and *qurrā'* community after him moved the discipline of Qirā'āt from the realm of *fiqh* and *ytihād* unto the realm of Hadīth The last section of chapter two studies the theory of *tawātur*, its characteristics, and its theological and epistemological consequences The theory of *tawātur* will be studied from the perspectives of the *usūlīs* and Hadīth theoreticians This study of *tawātur* will serve as a preface to chapter three that will study the theories on the transmission of the Qur'ān The first part of this chapter will examine how the *usūlīs* defined the Qur'ān and to what extent *tawātur* is essential in its definition The second part will examine the theories and opinions of scholars on the transmission of the Qur'ānic system Readings and how *tawātur* fails to apply to the transmission of these Readings, which raises the question if the Qur'ān is transmitted through *tawātur*, yet the system Readings were not transmitted through *tawātur*, and one cannot read the Qur'ān except through these system Readings, what is it then in the Qur'ān, which was transmitted through *tawātur*? Chapter four will study in detail the transmission of the canonical Readings and how they were passed on from the eponymous Readers down to the Qirā'āt collectors I will demonstrate the importance

of the immediate transmitters of each eponymous Reader and how they play an essential role in determining the main *Rāwīs* (transmitter) of each system Reading The stemmata that I will create for the transmission of these Readings will show it is almost impossible for these Readings to meet the conditions of *tawātur* I will also demonstrate how the concept of the *shawādh* readings started to evolve through the dying single strands of transmission, and will suggest that the concept of *shawādh* is broader and more complex than the variant readings of the pre-ʿUthmānic codices In chapter five I will compare two sets of variants, the first Qurʾānic and the second poetic I have created a sample database of Qurʾānic and poetic variants and categorized them under twenty-three groups My goal is to find similarities and differences between the natures of the variants in both literatures and determine to what extent the restrictions of the consonantal outline and poetry meters would affect the transmission of the Qurʾānic Readings and early Arabic poems In the conclusion I summarize my discoveries and propose plans for future research

Chapter 1: The variant readings and the *sabʿat aḥruf* of the Qurʾān

According to Muslim tradition, ʿUthmān’s (r 23-35/644-56) codification of the Qurʾān during his caliphate was a reaction to the disagreement among the Prophet’s Companions, and subsequently among the common Muslims, in the recital and sometimes the ordering of individual verses of the Qurʾān ʿUthmān formed a committee supervised by Zayd b Thābit¹ (d ca 34-5/655) who, relying primarily on the alleged sheets (*suhuf*) of Hafṣah (d 41/661), established what became the official edition of the Qurʾān, and produced multiple copies of it to be sent to the major Islamic capitals. The historical accounts disagree as to whether the copies sent off by ʿUthmān were supposed to be identical or deliberately different,² each containing different Qurʾānic variants,³ under the assumption that the Prophet himself acknowledged these variants⁴ as being equally divine.⁵

¹ According to Muslim tradition, Zayd b Thābit was previously commissioned by Abū Bakr (r 11-3/632-4) and ʿUmar b al-Khattāb (r 13-23/634-644), during the former’s caliphate to collect the Qurʾān from palm leaves, flat stones, animal shoulder blades, and other primitive writing materials into what became to be known as the first *suhuf* (sheets) which were passed on to ʿUmar then to his daughter Hafṣah, one of the Prophet’s wives, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Sahīḥ*, ed Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khatīb, (Cairo 1979), 3/337-8 Caetani and Noldeke have pointed out the strangeness of this Abū Bakr’s commissioning the collection of the Qurʾān and then the handing it on to his successor looks like a state affair, however it becomes the inheritance of Hafṣah, thus a private affair, Theodor Noldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns (GdQ) Die Sammlung des Qorāns*, (Leipzig 1909 reprint 2004), 2/19

² ʿUthmān instructed the committee that if they disagreed with Zayd, who was Medinese, on matters of spelling and pronunciation in the Qurʾān, they should write it down in accordance with the dialect of Quraysh. On the other hand, we do not know from the historical accounts whether Zayd wrote all these copies by himself or with the assistance of other copyists, see Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Masāḥif*, ed Muḥibb al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Sajjān Wāʿiz, (Beirut 2002), 1/199-215

³ Muhammad Habash counted forty-nine scribal differences among the ʿUthmānic codices, deduced from the differences among the canonical readings that inevitably had to result from the consonantal differences in the script, such as additions or omissions of prepositions and conjunction particles. A recurrent example in *Qirāʾāt* literature is the reading of the Meccan Ibn Kathīr (d 120/738) of Q (9 100) “*Jannātin tajrī min tahtihā ʾl-anhāru*” (gardens under which rivers flow), while the rest of the canonical Readers read “*Jannātin tajrī tahtahā ʾl-anhāru*”, Muhammad Habash, *al-Qirāʾāt al-Mutawātirah wa Atharuhā fi al-Rasm al-Qurʾānī wa al-Ahkām al-Sharʿiyyah*, (Damascus 1999), p 93. Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī in *Kitāb al-Masāḥif* lists many of these scribal differences among the five codices of Madīnah, Makkah, Kūfah,

Many prominent Muslim scholars such as al-Tabarī (d 310/923), who wrote a book on twenty variant Readings⁶ of the Qur'ān attributed to twenty eponymous Readers,⁷ and al-Zamakhsharī (d 538/1144) both rejected several canonical readings⁸ and gave preference to some readings over others, they did not adopt one complete

Basrah, and Damascus, al-Sijistānī, *Masāhif*, 1/253-282, ed Arthur Jeffery, (Leiden 1936), pp 39-49, see also Abū 'Amr al-Dānī, *al-Muqni' fī Ma'rifat Marsūm Masāhif Ahl al-Amsār*, ed Nūrah al-Humayyid, (Riyad Dār al-Tadmuriyyah, 2010), pp 537-61, 571-615 The English translations of the Qur'ān are by Yusuf Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān* and Arthur John Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* Any translation of a variant reading is my translation unless otherwise specified

⁴ In order to resolve the issue of what variants exactly the Prophet did acknowledge as “Qur'ān”, we are faced with the concept of the final review (*al-'ardah al-akhīrah*), during which Jibrā'il (Gabriel) reviewed the Qur'ān with the Prophet twice before his death, allegedly in all its permitted variants Any Companion to whom a sound variant reading was ascribed was simply claimed to have heard “all” the Qur'ān directly from the Prophet after the final review On the other hand, any reading rejected later on, even if it had a sound transmission, was readily classified as one that might have been allowed by the Prophet only before the final review, and subsequently was abrogated by it, See 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān*, ed Fawwāz Zamarlī, (Beirut 1995), 1/281, 384, Taqīyy al-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, ed 'Āmir al-Jazzār and Anwar al-Bāz, (Cairo 2005), 13/212-3

⁵ The tradition with its several versions can be found in al-Sijistānī, *Masāhif*, ed Jeffery, pp 18-9, ed Wā'iz, 1/195-6, Cf John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'ān*, (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1977), p 141

⁶ A variant Qur'ānic reading could be a single variant, size of a word or two, or a system and a collection of readings attributed to an eponymous Reader In the latter case, I will refer to this type of variants as “Reading” with capital R and sometimes as “eponymous Reading” On the other hand, a single word variant will be simply referred to as a “reading” with small r

⁷ The book is lost Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b Sallām's (d 224/838) compilation on Qirā'āt, lost as well, comprised of twenty-five Readings attributed to twenty-five eponymous Readers, Abū al-Khayr Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā'āt al-'Ashr*, ed Muhammad Sālim Muhaysin, (Cairo 1978), 1/88-9 Similarly, an eponymous reader with a distinct style and school of recitation will be referred to as “Reader” with capital R Any other Qur'ān reader will be referred to as “reader” with small r

⁸ Examples are abundant in their exegeses For example, on Q (15 56), al-Tabarī says “readers disagreed on reading “*wa man yaqnu/at*” (and who despairs of), for the Medinese and the Kūfans read it with a *fathah* on the *nūn*, i e *yaqnat* except for al-A'mash and al-Kisā'ī who read it with a *kasrah* on the *nūn*, i e *yaqnut* and this latter reading ought to be the correct one because reading it with a *fathah* on the *nūn* is not familiar in Arabic”, Abū Ja'far al-Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed 'Abd Allāh al-Turkī, (Cairo 2001), 14/85-6 A more audacious statement by al-Tabarī is one in which he comments on Q (1 4) “*ma/ālikī yawmī 'd-dīn*” (Master of the Day of Judgment), where he refuses and even prohibits the reading of *mālikī* He deems those who try to explain and justify this reading as being stupid and confused, al-Tabarī, *Jāmi'*, 1/152-3, 157 Labīb al-Sa'īd, in his *Difā' an al-Qirā'āt al-Mutawātirah fī Muwājahat al-Tabarī al-Mufasssīr*, (Cairo 1978), collected eighty-nine examples from Tabarī's *Jāmi'* in which he refuses or prefers certain canonical readings over others A good example from al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf* is his disparagement for Ibn 'Āmir's reading of Q (6 137) “*wa kadhālika zayyana li kathīrin mina 'l-mushrikīna qatla awlādihim shurakā'uhum*” (Even so, in the eyes of most of the pagans, their "partners" made alluring the slaughter of their children) Ibn 'Āmir read *zayyana* in the passive *zuyyina* and hence took *qatla* to the nominative *qatlu* He also read *awlādihim* in the accusative *awlādahum*, and *shurakā'uhum* in the genitive *shurakā'ihim*, thus reading the verse as “*wa kadhālika zuyyina li kathīrin mina 'l-mushrikīna qatlu awlādahum shurakā'ihim*” (Even so, in the eyes of most of the pagans, the slaughtering of their children by their partners was made alluring) al-Zamakhsharī says “[The Arabic] in this reading of Ibn 'Āmir is so repugnant that even if it occurs as a poetic license it would be so abhorred and detested”, Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, ed 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mawjūd, (Riyad 1998), 2/401

system by an eponymous Reader but chose from the different readings available and circulating at the time what best suited their interpretation of the verse. Both cases are intriguing. al-Tabarī lived and wrote before the canonization of the Seven Readings, which took place roughly in the year 322/912, whereas al-Zamakhsharī lived and wrote two hundred years after that. For both scholars, it seems that the canonical Readings were being stripped of their divine nature, and their origin was not attributed to the Prophet himself,⁹ but to the Qur’ān readers and transmitters, i.e. to their own selectivity in reading and understanding (*ijtihād*) of the ‘Uthmānic consonantal text supported by the context of the Qur’ānic verse.

This chapter will serve as an introduction to the main theories on the origins of the variant readings of the Qur’ān starting with the very beginning of its collection and codification. Special attention will be paid to the Prophetic tradition of *al-ahruf al-sab‘ah* (the seven ways/modes). This *hadīth*, with its many multiple versions, is the only Prophetic legitimization for the existence of the variant readings of the Qur’ān,¹⁰ without which only “one” Reading of the Qur’ān is possible. The whole philosophy behind the existence of the variant readings and the utmost care with which Muslim scholars studied and transmitted these readings come from the belief that the Qur’ān was revealed to the Prophet in different recitation modes, named “*al-ahruf al-sab‘ah*”

⁹ The exegete Ibn ‘Atīyyah, for example, openly embraces this point of view. He uses numerous non-canonical readings in his exegesis, and Ibn Jinnī’s *Muhtasab* is one of his main sources. Ibn ‘Atīyyah states that the Seven eponymous Readings are the result of the Readers’ interpretation (*ijtihād*) of the defective ‘Uthmānic consonantal script and that those Readings were accepted through the consensus of the community (*ummah*), ‘Abd al-Haqq Ibn ‘Atīyyah, *al-Muharrar al-Wajīz*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muhammad, (Beirut 2001), 1/48.

¹⁰ The major Muslim view is that the Seven Readings are only “part” of the *sab‘at ahruf*. It is only the ignorant masses, as the erudite Muslim scholars put it, who think that the seven Readings and the *sab‘at ahruf* are equivalent, see Abū al-Khayr Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjad al-Muqri’in wa Murshid al-Tālibīn*, ed. Zakariyyā ‘Umayrāt, (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1999), pp. 70, 82-3, ed. ‘Alī b. Muhammad al-‘Imrān, (Makkah Dār al-Fawā’id, 1998), pp. 181-2, 184-5, 231.

The majority of Muslim scholars are of the opinion that the Seven and/or the Ten canonical Readings are only "one part" of *al-ahruf al-sabʿah*, al-Tabarī states that all the readings that agree with the ʿUthmānic script are part of one *harf* only, and that the other *ahruf* were lost ¹¹ I will try to track down this *hadīth*, with its different versions, back to its main *madār* (common link), i.e. the main person(s) responsible for circulating this *hadīth* I will focus on investigating the earlier Hadīth sources only up until the collections of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869) and Muslim (d. 261/875), both of which transmitted this *hadīth* with several *isnāds*. The goal is to examine when this tradition was approximately circulating.

The collection and the codification of the Qurʾān

The collection and the codification of the Qurʾān have been studied extensively by Western and Muslim scholarship. I will give a general survey of the most important theories on this topic to serve as a background for my dissertation. Medieval and contemporary Muslim scholars faithfully adhere to the historical accounts in the early sources. They assume continuous and logical sequence of events that took place during and after the Prophet's life. According to Muslim tradition, the process of the collection and the codification of the Qurʾān underwent three stages ¹² The first was writing down the individual verses and *sūrah*s under the Prophet's instruction, during his lifetime ¹³

¹¹ al-Tabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, 1/52-3, 58-9

¹² The details and the study of the various traditions concerning this historical event can be found in Arthur Jeffery (ed.), *Muqaddimatān fi ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, (Cairo: al-Khānjī, 1972), pp. 17-38, al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Masāhif*, ed. Wāʿiz, pp. 153-216

¹³ The general Muslim accepted view is that the Prophet had scribes called *kuttāb al-wahy* (the revelation scribes) who used to write down the verses revealed to Muhammad under his instruction. ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib, Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān, Ubayy b. Kaʿb, and Zayd b. Thābit were the most notable among those scribes. It is also mentioned that several Companions had personal notebooks and scraps in which they wrote down the revealed Qurʾānic verses for their own personal usage. These notebooks and scraps

The second was gathering these unbound and scattered writings into one collection of sheets called *suhuf Hafṣah* during Abū Bakr's Caliphate¹⁴ The final stage was ʿUthmān's official codification of a "unified" text of the Qur'ān¹⁵ This last stage is usually known in Muslim tradition as *naskh al-masāhif* (the abrogation of the codices) rather than *jamʿ al-Qur'ān* (the collection of the Qur'ān)

The disagreement among Muslims in reading the Qur'ān was the main reason that forced ʿUthmān to collect and codify/unify the text of the Qur'ān He made sure that all the other unofficial copies owned by the Companions were burned, the act that is known as *tahrīq al-masāhif* Nonetheless, variants still existed in the official copies ʿUthmān sent to the major Islamic capitals Muslim tradition insists that those differences among the five or seven copies were deliberate, for they represent variants that the Prophet acknowledged himself Several Muslim authorities also argued that the Arabic script used during the process of the codification of the Qur'ān was "deliberately" consonantal, being stripped of all diacritics, both the short vowels and the dots¹⁶ This was done in order to accommodate multiple readings for one form¹⁷

comprised later on the core of what is known as the codices of the Companions (*masāhif al-sahābah*) and the material used to officially collect and codify the Qur'ān during Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān's Caliphates, Mannāʿ al-Qattān, *Mabāhith fi ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo Maktabat Wahbah, 2000), pp 118-20, Subhī al-Sālih, *Mabāhith fi ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut Dār al-ʿIlm li al-Malāyīn, 2000), pp 65-74, ʿAdnān Muhammad Zarzūr, *ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān wa Iʿjāzuh wa Tārīkh Tawthīqih*, (Amman Dār al-ʿĀlām, 2005), pp 123-5, Cf Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, *al-Itqān fi ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, ed Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Qur'āniyyah, (al-Madīnah Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd, 2005), 2/377-8, 385-7, Abū al-Fidā' Ibn Kathīr, *al-Fusūl fi Sīrat al-Rasūl*, ed Muhammad al-Khatrāwī et al, (Damascus Mu'assasat ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān, 1982), pp 255-6

¹⁴ Zarzūr, *ʿUlūm*, pp 125-9, al-Qattān, *Mabāhith*, pp 120-3, al-Sālih, *Mabāhith*, pp 74-8, Cf al-Suyūtī, *Itqān*, 2/379-82, 384-7, al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/204-9

¹⁵ al-Qattān, *Mabāhith*, pp 123-9, Zarzūr, *ʿUlūm*, pp 129-45, al-Sālih, *Mabāhith*, pp 78-89, Cf al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/210-16, al-Suyūtī, *Itqān*, 2/387-93

¹⁶ Muslim tradition suggests that the Companions' knowledge of the Arabic script and orthography was exceptional The Muslim authorities insisted until the present day to maintain the original ʿUthmānic script unchanged Mālik and Ibn Hanbal prohibited the addition of the long vowels *alif* and *wāw* Mālik was asked "Could the *Mushaf* be written according to the new rules of spelling and orthography?" Mālik answered "Never, it can only be written based on the first copy (*al-katbah al-ūlā*)" There exist also several traditions that speak of the Companions and Successors' dislike toward adding dots and verse

Very few Muslim scholars openly challenged these statements Ibn Khaldūn (d 808/1406) for example condescendingly criticized the traditionalists for their ahistorical views regarding the development of the Arabic script He stated that the early Arabic script was still underdeveloped when the Companions wrote down the prototypical codices The imperfections of the early script led to several discrepancies in the Uthmānic copies Those who believe that the Companions excelled in Arabic orthography are, according to Ibn Khaldūn, idiots¹⁸ Nonetheless, the mainstream view of Muslims is that the variant readings of the Qur'ān are of a divine nature The Uthmānic codices were rid of diacritics to allow multiple readings for the text Despite Uthmān's efforts at codifying the text of the Qur'ān and limiting its variants, the different readings of the Qur'ānic text, permitted by the nature of the script, kept multiplying with time until Ibn Mujāhid (d 324/935) limited them to seven Readings This will be discussed in more detail in chapter two

On the other hand, western scholarship was and is still skeptical and critical towards the traditions concerning the collection and the codification of the Qur'ān The

markers in the Qur'ān Mālik permitted using dots in copies used as textbooks for the students but not in the official copies (*al-ummahāt*) Ibn Mujāhid stated that unequivocal words should not be vocalized while al-Dānī was unwilling to accept diacritics written in black ink because this changes the form of the *mushaf* Nonetheless, it is acceptable that the diacritics would be marked in red and the *hamzahs* in yellow, al-Suyūtī, *Itqān*, 6/2199-200, 2245-9, Abū 'Amr al-Dānī, *al-Muḥkam fī Naqt al-Masāḥif*, ed 'Azzah Hasan, (Beirut Dār al-Fīkr al-Mu'āsir, 1997), pp 2-12, 35-43 On the development of the early Arabic script from Nabatean see Beatrice Grundler, *The Development of the Arabic Scripts*, (Atlanta Scholars Press, 1993) Grundler shows the gradual evolution of the Arabic alphabet, letter by letter, from the Nabatean alphabet by relying on a wide corpus of inscriptions starting with the 2nd century BCE Nabīa Abbot, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and its Qur'ānic Development*, (Chicago Chicago university Press, 1939) is an important work as well for the history of the development of the Arabic script in as much as it pertains to the early Qur'ānic manuscripts in both Kūfī and *naskhī/Hijāzī* styles For evidence of early usage of diacritics in Pre-Islamic Arabic script, see Alan Jones, "The dotting of a script and the dating of an era", *Islamic Culture*, 72(1998), pp 95-103, James Bellamy, "A new reading of the Namārah inscription", *Journal of the American Oriental Society (JAOS)*, 105 (1985), pp 31-51

¹⁷ al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/306-9, Jeffery, *Muqaddimatān*, pp 117-171, al-Sijistānī, *Masāḥif*, pp 253-82

¹⁸ 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, ed 'Abd al-Salām al-Shaddādī, (al-Dār al-Baydā' 2005), 2/315-6

authenticity of the historical accounts were challenged especially by Wansbrough and Burton who both claimed that these traditions, i.e. the collection of the Qur'ān during Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān's Caliphate, cannot be dated earlier than the 3rd/9th century¹⁹ Wansbrough believed that the Qur'ān as we know it today emerged out of pericopes of prophetic logia that developed independently in the 1st/7th and 2nd/8th centuries,²⁰ and that the Qur'ān cannot be dated prior to the third Islamic century²¹ Burton, on the other hand, believes that the Qur'ān as we know it today is Muhammad's Qur'ān, i.e. it did not pass through any process of collection nor codification. The Qur'ān is Muhammad's edition and not ʿUthmān's. The traditions that speak otherwise are to be rejected on the basis of late forgery²² Much earlier, Schwally rejected the traditions of Abū Bakr's collection of the Qur'ān but accepted the ones about ʿUthmān²³ Casanova believed that the codification of the Qur'ān did not take place before the Caliphate of the Umayyad ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65-86/685-705) at the hands of al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/713)²⁴ Mingana supported this opinion based on a survey of early non-Muslim sources that do not speak of the Qur'ān as a "book" at that time²⁵ Motzki challenges many of these earlier arguments and proposes that there is some credibility to the Muslim tradition regarding the collection and the codification of the Qur'ān. He

¹⁹ John Burton, *Collection*, pp. 105-113, 225-40, John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, ed. Andrew Rippin, (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), pp. 43-52

²⁰ "the structure itself of Muslim scripture lends little support to the theory of a deliberate edition. Particularly in the *exempla* of salvation history, characterized by variant traditions, but also in passages of exclusively paraenetic or eschatological content, ellipsis and repetition are such as to suggest not the careful executed project of one or of many men, but rather the product of an organic development from originally independent traditions during a long period of transmission", Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 47

²¹ Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, pp. 1-52, especially p. 44

²² Burton, *Collection*, pp. 105-89, 225-40, especially 239-40

²³ Friedrich Schwally, "Betrachtungen über die Koransammlung des Abū Bekr", G. Weil, (ed.), *Festschrift Eduard Sachau zum siebenzigsten Geburtstage*, (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1915), pp. 321-5

²⁴ Paul Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde: étude critique sur l'Islam primitif*, (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1911-1924), pp. 103-142, 162

²⁵ Alphonse Mingana, "The transmission of the Koran", *Moslem World*, 7 (1917), pp. 223-232, 402-414

dates those traditions and the first codified text of the Qur'ān to the last quarter of the 1st/7th century²⁶

Unfortunately, we do not have a Qur'ānic manuscript or even fragments that we can consider as an autograph by the Prophet or his scribes. The few papyrus and fragments we have are controversial,²⁷ and the alleged *mushaf* attributed to ʿUthmān, which was published recently in Turkey might be close to the original prototype but it is still not authentic.²⁸ The recent discoveries of early Qur'ānic manuscripts and inscriptions date them to as early as the 1st/7th century.²⁹ The most notable among these findings is Déroche's publication of an early manuscript of some Qur'ānic fragments that he dates back to the 1st/7th or early 2nd/8th centuries.³⁰ These Qur'ānic fragments were studied by Yasin Dutton who suggested that the manuscript was copied in Syria based on the Reading of the eponymous Reader Ibn ʿĀmir.³¹ In addition to Déroche's manuscript, the Qur'ānic parchment discovered in Sanʿā' in 1972 exhibits different *sūrah* and verse order from those of the official ʿUthmānic copy.³² A very recent publication by Sadeghi studied a palimpsest of a Sanʿā' facsimile, Stanford '07, in which

²⁶ Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'ān: A reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments", *Der Islam*, 78 (2001), pp. 1-34

²⁷ Otto Pretzl, "Die Koranhandschriften", *GdQ*, 3/249-274, Adolf Grohmann, "The Problem of Dating Early Qur'āns", *Der Islam*, 33 (1958), pp. 213-231, Angelika Neuwirth, "Koran", H. Gatje (ed.), *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1987), 2/96-135

²⁸ For a detailed study of the different manuscripts claimed to be the original *mushaf* of ʿUthmān see Sahar Sālim, *Adwā' ʿalā Mushaf ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān wa Rihlatuhu Sharq wa Gharban*, (Alexandria: Mu'assasat Shabāb al-Jamī'ah, 1991). In 2007, Tayyar Altıkulaç published a critical edition of the *mushaf*. The edition is based on the Topkapı palace museum manuscript in Istanbul, see Tayyar Altıkulaç (ed.), *al-Mushaf al-Sharīf al-Mansūb ilā ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān*, (Istanbul: Markaz al-Buhūth al-Islāmiyyah, 2007)

²⁹ Estella Whelan, "Forgotten witness: Evidence for the early codification of the Qur'ān", *JAOS*, 118(1998), pp. 1-14, "Writing the word of God: Some early Qur'ān manuscripts and their milieux", *Ars orientalis*, 20 (1990), pp. 113-47

³⁰ François Déroche, *Les manuscrits de style hiğāzī: le manuscrit arabe 328 (a) a la Bibliothèque nationale*, (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1998)

³¹ Yasin Dutton, "An early *Mushaf* according to the reading of Ibn ʿĀmir", *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies (JQS)*, 3/1 (2001), pp. 71-89

³² Gerb Pun, "Observations on early Qur'ān manuscripts in Sanʿā'", S. Wild (ed.), *The Qur'ān as Text*, (Leiden: 1996), pp. 107-11

two layers of “Qur’ān” were recorded on it. The upper layer is the standard ʿUthmānic rendition and the lower effaced layer is a pre-ʿUthmānic text. Radiocarbon dating assigns the lower layer to belong to the first half of the 1st/7th century.³³

Western scholarship has been naturally critical as well in its study of the variant readings of the Qur’ān. Pretzl conducted extensive research on the subject of Qirā’āt by working on several manuscripts unavailable to scholars at the time.³⁴ Beck’s series of articles on the early Qur’ānic variants and codices are still of paramount importance, especially his study on the history and characteristics of the Kūfan school.³⁵ Several works were devoted to the detailed study and characteristics of eponymous Readers such as al-Hasan al-Basrī by Bergstrasser,³⁶ Zayd b. ʿAlī³⁷ and Ibn Mīqām by Jeffery, whose *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’ān: The Old Codices*, documented several early codices and Readings by the Companions and the Successors.³⁸ Fewer studies are devoted to the non-canonical readings³⁹ such as Bergstrasser’s study on Ibn Jinnī’s

³³ Benham Sadeghi, “The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qur’ān of the Prophet”, *Arabica*, 57(2010), pp. 343-436

³⁴ Otto Pretzl, “Die Wissenschaft der Koranlesung”, *Islamica*, 6(1934), pp. 1-47, 230-246, 290-331

³⁵ E. Beck, “ʿArabīyya, Sunna und ʿĀmma in der Koranlesung des zweiten Jahrhunderts”, “Die b. Masʿūdvarianten bei al-Farrā”, “Die Kodizesvarianten der Amsār”, “Studien zur Geschichte der Kufischen Koranlesung in den beiden ersten Jahrhunderten”, “Der ʿUthmānischen Kodex in der Koranlesung des zweiten Jahrhunderts”, “Die Zuverlässigkeit der Überlieferung von ausser ʿuṭmānischen Varianten bei al-Farrā”, *Orientalia* 15 (1946), 180-224, 25 (1956), 353-83, 28 (1959), 186-205, 230-56, 16 (1947), 353-76, 17 (1948), 326-55, 19 (1950), 328-50, 20 (1951), 316-28, 22 (1953), 59-78, 14 (1954), 355-73, 23 (1954), 412-35

³⁶ Gotthelf Bergstrasser, “Die Koranlesung des Hasan von Basra”, *Islamica*, 2(1926), pp. 11-57

³⁷ A. Jeffery, “The Qur’ān readings of Zaid b. ʿAlī”, “Further readings of Zaid b. ʿAlī”, *Revista degli Studi Orientali (RSO)*, 16(1936), pp. 249-89, 18(1940), pp. 218-36

³⁸ A. Jeffery, “The Qur’ān Readings of Ibn Mīqām”, Samuel Lowinger and Joseph Somogyi (ed.), *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, (Budapest 1948), 1/1-38

³⁹ A. Spitaler, “Die nichtkanonischen Koranlesarten und ihre Bedeutung für die arabische Sprachwissenschaft”, *Actes du XXe Congrès international des orientalistes Bruxelles, 5-10 septembre 1938*, (Louvain: Bureaux du musée, 1940), pp. 314-5. Omar Hamdan, “Konnen die verschollenen Korantexte der Frühzeit durch nichtkanonische Lesarten rekonstruiert werden?”, S. Wild (ed.), *The Qur’ān as Text*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 27-40

Muhtasab, a collection of *shawādh* readings⁴⁰ The variant readings were naturally discussed in the general works on the history of the Qur'ān Goldziher believed that the Qur'ānic variants originated mainly as a result of the defective ʿUthmānic script that allowed multiple readings of one form This defective script also helped induce some deliberate changes to the text in order to promote certain theological ideas or concepts⁴¹ Burton suggested that the early local schools of *fiqh* deliberately devised the variant readings in order to accommodate their legislative needs⁴² Vollers claimed that the Qur'ān was revealed in the vernacular Qurashī dialect of the Meccans,⁴³ which did not exhibit case endings (*iʿrāb*) According to him, there are traces in the official ʿUthmānic text of the Qur'ān of this vernacular dialect, however it is more evident in the literature on the variant readings of the Qur'ān that was codified later on according to the poetic language prevailing at the time The late grammarians introduced the system of *iʿrāb* based on the models of the pre-Islamic poetry corpus they received⁴⁴ Noldeke wrote a negative review on Vollers' theory⁴⁵ arguing that there are no traces of historical traditions and accounts insinuating that the Qur'ān was read without *iʿrāb* However, Paul

⁴⁰ G Bergstrasser, "Nichtkanonische Koranlesarten im Muhtasab des Ibn Ǧinnī", *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 2(1933), pp 5-92

⁴¹ Goldziher, *Richtungen*, pp 4-20, Bellamy wrote a few articles suggesting several emendations to the Qur'ānic text through which a better understanding of the text would be attained, J Bellamy, "Some Proposed emendations to the Text of the Koran", "More Proposed Emendations to the Text of the Koran", "*al-Raqīm* or *al-Raqūd*? A Note on *Sūrah* 18 9", *JAOS*, 113/4 (1993), pp 562-73, 116/2(1996), pp 196-204, 111(1991), pp 115-7 In the 2007 annual meeting of the American Oriental society, Bellamy suggested another emendation the mysterious "*al-samad*" in Q (112 2) should be read "*al-jāmid*"

⁴² Burton, *Collection*, pp 165-86

⁴³ On the history of the classical Arabic language (*ʿarabiyyah*), K Versteegh, *The Arabic language*, (Edinburgh Edinburgh University Press, 1997) serves as an excellent survey, presenting and evaluating the various theories regarding the evolution of classical Arabic On the features and components of the dialects of pre-Islamic Arabic see Chaim Rabin, *Ancient West-Arabian*, (London Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951)

⁴⁴ Karl Vollers, *Volkssprache und Schriftsprache im alten Arabien philologische Untersuchungen zur klassischen arabischen Sprache mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Reime und der Sprache des Qorans*, (Amsterdam APA-Oriental Press, 1981)

⁴⁵ Th Noldeke, "Der Koran und die 'Arabīja'", *Neue Beiträge zur Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, (Strassburg 1910), pp 15

Kahle revived Vollers' thesis by presenting historical accounts and several traditions exhorting Muslims to read the Qur'ān with *rāb*, an indication according to Kahle that the Qur'ān used to be read without *rāb* at the time of its revelation ⁴⁶ From a totally different perspective, Gunter Luling suggested that the short and mysterious *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān are rewritings of originally Christian Syriac Hymns ⁴⁷ Recently, Christoph Luxenberg (pseudo) stirred up the discussion on the language of the Qur'ān, whether it is poetical *arabiyyah* or vernacular, voting for the latter According to him, the original language of Mecca, and therefore also the Qur'ān, was a mixture of Arabic and Syriac, and there are certain words and phrases in the Qur'ān that might become clear, if viewed from the Syriac angle ⁴⁸

***Al-ahruf al-Sab'ah* (The Seven Modes)**

The only legitimacy for the existence of variant readings of the Qur'ān is the Prophetic tradition(s) that speaks of the existence of the *sab'at ahurf* ⁴⁹ There is a huge uncertainty as to what is meant by the *sab'at ahurf*, an uncertainty that sometimes amounts to mystery Until now, no reasonable explanation has been offered for the exact meaning of the *sab'at ahurf* Al-Suyūṭī enumerates thirty-five different interpretations of the *sab'at ahurf* tradition ranging from linguistic to Sufi and esoteric

⁴⁶ Paul Kahle, "The Qur'ān and the 'Arabīya", *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, 1/163-182, "The Arabic readers of the Koran", *JNES*, 8 (1949), pp 65-71

⁴⁷ Gunter Luling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation The Rediscovery and Reliable Reconstruction of a Comprehensive Pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal Hidden in the Koran under Earliest Islamic Reinterpretations*, (Delhi 2003) (English translation and reworking of the original German version *Über den Ur-Qur'ān Ansatz zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qur'ān*, (Erlangen 1974)

⁴⁸ Christoph Luxenberg (pseudo), *Die syro-aramaische Lesart des Koran ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, (Berlin 2000) (English translation, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran a Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran*, (Berlin 2007))

⁴⁹ Cf Goldziher, *Richtungen*, pp 36-7

interpretations⁵⁰ Muslim scholars, however, unanimously agree that the *sabʿat ahruf* are not *al-Qirāʾāt al-Sabʿ* that were collected and canonized by Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/935). Only the ignorant masses took the *sabʿat ahruf* of the Prophetic tradition to be the seven canonical Readings.⁵¹ This issue will be discussed in more detail in the second chapter of this dissertation.⁵²

Since the notion of the *sabʿat ahruf* was and is still vague, a correct translation of the term is almost impossible, for we actually do not know what is meant by *harf*.⁵³ The best interpretation one can come up with from the context of the traditions that speak of the *sabʿat ahruf* is that *harf* was probably meant to be equivalent to a mode of recitation or a manner of pronunciation.⁵⁴ These are still speculations gleaned from the context of these traditions,⁵⁵ all of which describe people who disagreed on reading a certain Qurʾānic verse during the life of the Prophet and who, after hearing the conflicting parties, authenticated the different readings and acknowledged them all to be Qurʾānic. The reason presented by the Prophet for the validity of such discrepancies is that the Qurʾān was revealed in *sabʿat ahruf*. The translation I am going to adopt here for *harf* is “mode”, although as of now I am still not convinced that *harf* is meant to be a

⁵⁰ al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 1/306-35, Cf. Noldeke, *GdQ*, 1/50

⁵¹ “A great majority of the masses believe that the *sabʿat ahruf* are the Seven Readings. This is unfathomable ignorance”, al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 1/333, Cf. Shahāb al-Dīn Abū Shāmah, *al-Murshud al-Wajīz ilā ʿUlūm Tataʿallaq bi al-Kitāb al-ʿAzīz*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2001), pp. 117-22, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munīd*, ed. Al-ʿImrān, pp. 213-26

⁵² Refer to chapter two for the discussion on the canonization of the seven Readings and their connection to the *sabʿat ahruf* pre- and post Ibn Mujāhid

⁵³ Cf. Goldziher, *Richtungen*, p. 37

⁵⁴ F. Leemhuis, “Readings of the Qurʾān”, *Encyclopedia of Qurʾān (EQ)*, Cf. Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī, *al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah li al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muḥaymin Tahhān, (Jaddah: Dār al-Manārah, 1997), p. 27-39, Fathī b al-Tayyib Khumāsī, *al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah wa Irtibātuhā bi al-Qirāʾāt*, (Damascus: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1995), pp. 180-3

⁵⁵ I have cited and translated most of these accounts along with their textual variants in the footnotes below

mode of recitation I have found some evidence in *Musnad al-Tayālīsī* supporting my uncertainty and I will present it at the end of this section

The *sabʿat ahruf* not only acknowledge the existence of the canonical Readings of the Qurʾān, but also justify the very existence of the *shawādhdh* readings, both the anomalous and the irregular⁵⁶ The official copy of the Qurʾān codified by ʿUthmān abrogated the codices of the Companions containing the *shawādhdh* readings The existence of the *shawādhdh* readings was explained to be part of the *sabʿat ahruf*⁵⁷ Before I proceed with the discussion of the variant readings and their canonization, a survey of the *sabʿat ahruf* tradition must be carried out Several Books have been written on the topic⁵⁸ Unfortunately, most of these studies are descriptive and lack proper analysis despite of the massive material their authors have collected They almost all follow the same methodology and more or less the same structure the nature of the Arabic language, the different dialects of Pre-Islamic Arabic attested in philological works, the circumstances within which the Qurʾān was revealed, the inimitability of the Qurʾān and the different dialects and languages exhibited in it, the different social and educational backgrounds of the early Muslims and thus the license given to them to read the eloquent “Qurashī” Qurʾān in their own dialect, the different

⁵⁶ I make a clear distinction between the anomalous and the irregular readings of the Qurʾān, both of which are called *shawādhdh* in Arabic The anomalous readings are those that disagree with the ʿUthmānic consonantal text while the irregular readings are those that agree with script but lack sound transmission and the consensus of the Qurʾān readers

⁵⁷ Chapter two will discuss this issue in more detail, Cf al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1/52-3

⁵⁸ ʿAbd al-Ghafūr Mahmūd Mustafā Jaʿfar, *al-Qurʾān wa al-Qirāʾāt wa al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah*, (Cairo Dār al-Salām, 2008), ʿItir, Hasan Diyāʾ al-Dīn, *al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah wa Manzilat al-Qirāʾāt minhā*, (Beirut Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyyah, 1988), Sājidah Sālīm Abū Sayf, *Marwiyyāt al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah fī Kutub al-Sunnah*, (Amman Dār al-Fārūq, 2008), Mannāʿ al-Qattān, *Nuzūl al-Qurʾān ʿalā Sabʿat Ahruf*, (Cairo Maktabat Wahbah, 1991), Muhammad Mahmūd ʿAbd Allāh, *al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah wa Usūl al-Qirāʾāt*, (Amman Muʾassasat al-Warrāq, 2003), Shaʿbān Muhammad Ismāʿīl, *al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah wa al-Qirāʾāt wa mā Yuthāru Hawlahā min Shubuhāt*, (Makkah Nādī Makkah al-Thaqāfī al-Adabī, 2001), Fathī b al-Tayyib Khumāsī, *al-Ahruf al-Sabʿah wa Irtibātuhā bi al-Qirāʾāt*, (Damascus Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1995)

aspects related to the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf*, the collection and the codification of the Qurʾān, *masāhif al-amsār* (the prototypal official copies of the ʿUthmānic codex), the development of the Qurʾānic Readings, and defending the integrity and the authenticity of the Qurʾānic variants, both the canonical and the *shawādh* Western scholarship has not devoted much attention to the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf*, whether regarding the accuracy of its transmission or its importance to the Qurʾānic sciences Goldziher and Noldeke briefly, but analytically, explained the background of this tradition and its connection to the Qirāʾāt sciences ⁵⁹ Noldeke analyzed the different interpretations of what is meant by the *sabʿat ahruf* and critically rejected many of them He explained those different modes of recitation, i.e. the *ahruf*, to be the Prophet’s inability to remember correctly what he had recited before, thus giving way to discrepancies in the rendition of the verses ⁶⁰

The correlation between the variant Readings and the *sabʿat ahruf* is strong We can safely assume from the historical accounts that Qurʾānic discrepancies existed before the promulgation of the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf* The Prophet acknowledged these variants by clarifying that the Qurʾān might be read in seven different modes My dissertation is mainly concerned about the possibility of dating approximately the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf* When was the notion of the *sabʿat ahruf* widely circulating in early Muslim societies? Whether these accounts are authentic or not is not critical to my discussion The tradition might have been actually said verbatim by the Prophet, but this fact is not important by itself if the tradition was known to a few people only and not made known to a wider audience The more important question is when these

⁵⁹ Goldziher, *Richtungen*, pp 36-51, Noldeke, *GdQ*, 1/33-57

⁶⁰ Noldeke, *GdQ*, pp 47-8

accounts became well-circulated and widespread within the Muslim community. In order to answer that, I will rely on the method developed by Motzki to establish an approximate dating of the tradition.

Dating the tradition of the *sab'at ahruf*

In his article “The Collection of the Qur’ān: A reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments”,⁶¹ Motzki contested the arguments of Wansbrough, Burton, Schwally, Casanova, and Mingana regarding the Muslim traditions of the collection and codification of the Qur’ān. He criticized their methodological approaches in dismissing and dating those traditions. Motzki offered a new methodological approach through which one might be able to date a tradition approximately by studying both the *isnād* and the *matn* (body) of the tradition as transmitted in the Hadīth sources. Another aspect that Motzki stresses is the ongoing availability of early sources that were not available to these scholars. Studying a tradition with al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869) as a starting point is not acceptable anymore. Additionally, it is not acceptable any longer to presume the outdated western approach of dismissing the Prophetic traditions as being fraudulent altogether and fabricated much later than those traditions claim. The arguments of Goldziher, Mingana, Schacht, Burton, and their students about Hadīth fabrication must be re-evaluated in light of recent methodological developments in Hadīth scholarship and new sources that have become available. Motzki’s approach is powerful enough to suggest strongly that the reports on the collection and the codification of the Qur’ān during the caliphates of

⁶¹ Motzki, “Collection”, pp. 1-34

Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān were in circulation towards the end of the first Islamic century ⁶²

I am going to follow Motzki's approach and try dating the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf* to see if it is possible to construct an approximate timeframe within which the notion and the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf* came to circulate among Muslims. In the traditions Motzki analyzed, the common link of all these traditions on the collection and the codification of the Qurʾān was Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741). Motzki considered the possibility that al-Zuhrī might have come up with the traditions himself, but he also suggested that there are no textual, historical, and *isnād*-related reasons to dismiss the fact that al-Zuhrī might have collected and heard these traditions from his predecessors ⁶³. I have collected and analyzed the traditions of the *sabʿat ahruf* in the sources prior to al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869). I began with the *Musannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī (d. 211/826) as a starting point, and then I tracked down the traditions in the *Muwattaʾ* of Mālik (d. 179/795), the *Musnad* of Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālīsī (d. 204/819), *Fadāʾil al-Qurʾān* by Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838), the *Musannaf* of Ibn Abī Shaybah (d. 235/849), and lastly *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (d. 256/869). I labeled each unique *matn* with a capital letter (A, B, C, etc.) and sub-labeled the variations on each *matn* with a small letter (A-a, A-b, etc.). The small letter "p" stands for "partial", denoting an abridged version or an excerpt of the *matn*. Motzki holds that the association of some *isnād* strands with the *matn* variations makes fabrication of the

⁶² Motzki, "Collection", p. 31

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 30

isnad unlikely ⁶⁴ I will explain that in more detail when I analyze the data collected below

Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795)

The earliest source in which I could find the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf* is the *Muwattaʿ* of Mālik. This fact by itself dates the tradition to at least the last quarter of the second Islamic century, one hundred and fifty years before Ibn Mujāhid's (d. 324/935) canonization of the seven Readings. Only one account is mentioned in the *Muwattaʿ* and it has the following *isnād*

A) Mālik b. Anas → al-Zuhrī → ʿUrwah b. al-Zubayr → ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAbdīn al-Qārī → ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb ⁶⁵

ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī (d. 211/826)

In the *Musannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, three accounts⁶⁶ that speak of *Al-ahruf al-sabʿah* are mentioned. The accounts have the following *isnāds*

A) Maʿmar b. Rāshid al-Azdī → al-Zuhrī → ʿUrwah b. al-Zubayr → al-Miswar b.

Makhramah + ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAbdīn al-Qārī → ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb ⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Motzki, "Collection", p. 27

⁶⁵ The *matn* "A" of these accounts goes as follows: "I [ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb] passed by Hishām b. Hakīm b. Hazām reciting *sūrat al-Furqān*, and this was during the lifetime of the Prophet. So I listened to his recitation and to my surprise he was reading in different modes (*ʿalā ahruf kathīrah*) from which the Prophet has read to me. I was on the verge of interrupting his prayer but I waited until he finished and then I grabbed him from his garment and asked him: "who taught you this *sūrah* in the way you have just read?" He answered: "The Prophet did," I said: "you are lying, for by God, the Prophet himself taught me to read this *sūrah*." So I took him to the Prophet and said: "O messenger of God, I heard this man reading *sūrat al-Furqān* in modes (*ahruf*) that you have not taught me before." The Prophet said: "Leave him Omar! Hishām, Read!" and Hishām recited the same reading that I have heard a while ago. The Prophet said: "It was revealed as such" and then he said: "Omar, Read!" and I recited the Reading that the Prophet has taught me before. The Prophet said: "It was revealed as such" and he continued by saying: "The Qurʾān was revealed in seven different modes (*ahruf*), thus read [in whichever way easier to you/whatever was made available to you] (*mā tayassar*)", Abū ʿAbd Allāh Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwattaʿ*, ed. Muhammad Mustafā al-Aʿzamī, (Abū Zabī Muʿassasat Zāyid b. Sultān, 2004), 2/281-2

⁶⁶ ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī, *al-Musannaf*, ed. Habīb al-Aʿzamī, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), 11/218-220

⁶⁷ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Musannaf*, 11/218-9

B) Ma^cmar b Rāshīd al-Azdī → al-Zuhrī → °Ubayd Allāh b °Abd Allāh b °Utbah → Ibn °Abbās⁶⁸

C) Ma^cmar b Rāshīd al-Azdī → Qatādah →⁶⁹ Ubayy b Ka^cb⁷⁰

Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālīsī (d. 204/819)

In the *Musnad* of Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālīsī three accounts dealing with the *sab^cat ahruf* occur They have the following *isnāds*

A) Fulayh b Sulaymān al-Khuzā‘ī → al-Zuhrī → °Urwah b al-Zubayr → al-Miswar b Makhramah + °Abd al-Rahmān b °Abdīn al-Qārī → °Umar b al-Khattāb⁷¹

D) Hammād b Salamah → °Āsim [b Bahdalah]⁷² → Zırr b Hubaysh → Ubayy b Ka^cb⁷³

D-a) Shu^cbah b al-Hajjāj → al-Hakam b °Utaybah → Mujāhid → °Abd al-Rahmān b Abī Laylā → Ubayy b Ka^cb⁷⁴

⁶⁸ The *matn* “B” of these accounts goes as follows “Jibrīl read the Qur’ān to me in one mode (*‘alā harf*) but I asked him to read again [differently] (*rāja^ctuhu*) I kept asking him for more until he reached seven modes (*sab^cat ahruf*)”, °Abd al-Razzāq, *Musannaf*, 11/219

⁶⁹ It is very unlikely that Qatādah b Dī‘āmah transmitted directly from Ubayy b Ka^cb The link is broken in this transmission and the Hadīth biographical books do not speak of Qatādah transmitting directly or even by *tadlīs* on behalf of Ubayy, Shahāb al-Dīn Ibn Hajar al-°Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, ed Ibrāhīm al-Zaybaq et al, (Beirut Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1995), 3/428-9

⁷⁰ The *matn* “C” of these accounts goes as follows “I [Ubayy b Ka^cb] disagreed with one of my companions on reciting a verse, so we plead to the Prophet to be our judge The Prophet said “Ubayy, Read!” and I recited the verse The Prophet asked my companion to read the same verse, and he did The Prophet then said “Both of you read correctly”, however I said “No we did not!” The Prophet then pushed me in the chest and said “When the Qur’ān was revealed to me I was asked “would you like it to be revealed in one or two modes?” so I answered “two modes”, and then I was asked “two or three modes?” and I answered “three”, until we reached seven modes (*sab^cat ahruf*), all of which are satisfactory and comprehensive as long as verses calling for God’s mercy are not interchanged with verses calling for God’s punishment, hence it is ok if one replaces “God the Hearer, the Knower” with “God the Mighty, the Wise”, °Abd al-Razzāq, *Musannaf*, 11/219-20

⁷¹ Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālīsī, *al-Musnad*, ed Muhammad al-Turkī, (Cairo Dār Hajar, 1999), 1/44-5

⁷² °Āsim b Bahdalah b Abī al-Najūd the Qur’ān Reader is a weak Hadīth transmitter, Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1/627

⁷³ The *matn* “D” of these accounts goes as follows “Jibrīl came to the Prophet at the Mirā stones and the Prophet said “O Jibrīl, I was sent to illiterate people among them old men, old women, boys, slaves, and ruffians who never read a book before” But Jibrīl answered the Prophet by saying “The Qur’ān was revealed in seven modes (*sab^cat ahruf*)”, al-Tayālīsī, *Musnad*, 1/439

⁷⁴ The variation “D-a” on the *matn* “D” of these accounts goes as follows “Jibrīl came to the Prophet at the fountain of Banū Ghifār and told him “God Has commanded you to read the Qur’ān to your people in one mode (*‘alā harf wāhid*)” The Prophet said “I ask God’s forgiveness, my people are incapable of that” Then Jibrīl came to him another time and said “God Has commanded you to read the Qur’ān to your

Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b Sallām (d. 224/838)

In *Fadāʾil al-Qurʾān*, Abū ʿUbayd enumerates several traditions about the *sabʿat ahruf*. The *isnāds* and contents of these accounts are as follows ⁷⁵

A) ʿAbd al-Rahmān b al-Mahdī → Mālik b Anas → al-Zuhrī → ʿUrwah b al-Zubayr → ʿAbd al-Rahmān b ʿAbdīn al-Qārī → ʿUmar b al-Khattāb ⁷⁶

A) Abū al-Yamān → Shuʿayb b Abī Hamzah → al-Zuhrī → ʿUrwah b al-Zubayr → al-Miswar b Makhramah + ʿAbd al-Rahmān b ʿAbdīn al-Qārī → ʿUmar b al-Khattāb ⁷⁷

A) ʿAbd Allāh b Sālih → al-Layth [b Saʿd] → ʿUqayl [b Khālid] + Yūnus b Yazīd → al-Zuhrī → ʿUrwah b al-Zubayr → al-Miswar b Makhramah + ʿAbd al-Rahmān b ʿAbdīn al-Qārī → ʿUmar b al-Khattāb + Hishām b Hakīm ⁷⁸

C-a) Yazīd b Saʿīd + Yahyā b Saʿīd → Humayd al-Tawīl → Anas b Mālik → Ubayy b Kaʿb ⁷⁹

C) Yazīd b Saʿīd → al-ʿAwwām b Hawshab → Abū Ishāq al-Sabīʿī → Sulaymān b Surad → Ubayy b Kaʿb ⁸⁰

people in two modes (*ʿalā harfayn*)” but the Prophet answered “I ask God’s forgiveness, my people are incapable of that” Jibrīl came a third time to the Prophet and said “God Has commanded you to read the Qurʾān to your people in three modes (*ʿalā thalāthat ahruf*)” and the Prophet said “I ask God’s forgiveness, my people are incapable of that” Jibrīl came the fourth time and said “God Has commanded you to read the Qurʾān to your people in Seven modes (*ʿalā sabʿat ahruf*), whichever mode they choose to read is correct”, al-Tayālīsī, *Musnad*, 1/452-3

⁷⁵ Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b Sallām, *Kitāb Fadāʾil al-Qurʾān*, ed Marwān al-ʿAtīyyah et al , (Damascus Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2000), pp 334-9

⁷⁶ Abū ʿUbayd, *Fadāʾil*, p 334

⁷⁷ *ibid* , p 335

⁷⁸ *ibid* , p 335

⁷⁹ The variation “C-a” on the *matn* “C” of these accounts goes as follows “Doubt [in Islam] never occurred in my hart until I read a verse different from what another man has read I said “The Prophet has taught it to me as such”, and he said “The Prophet also has taught it to me as such” We went to the Prophet and I asked him “O messenger of God, haven’t you read this verse to me as such?” The Prophet said “Yes” The other then man asked him “Haven’t you read that verse to me in that way?” The Prophet said “Yes” The Prophet then said “Jibrīl and Mīkāʾīl came to me once Jibrīl sat to my right and Mīkāʾīl to my left Jibrīl said [to me] “Read the Qurʾān in one mode (*ʿalā harf*)” Mīkāʾīl told Jibrīl “Ask him to read more [in more modes]” Jibrīl did until he reached seven modes, each of them is comprehensive and satisfactory”, Abū ʿUbayd, *Fadāʾil*, p 336

⁸⁰ Abū ʿUbayd, *Fadāʾil*, p 336

C) Hajjāj → Isrāʿīl → Abū Ishāq al-Sabīʿī → Suqayr al-ʿAbdī → Sulaymān b Surad → Ubayy b Kaʿb ⁸¹

C) Hajjāj → Shuʿbah → al-Hakam [b ʿUtbah] → ʿAbd al-Rahmān b Abī Laylā → Ubayy b Kaʿb

E) Ismāʿīl b Jaʿfar → Yazīd b Khusayfah → Muslim b Saʿīd or Busr b Saʿīd → Abū Juhaym al-Ansārī ⁸²

E) ʿAbd Allāh b Sālih → al-Layth → Yazīd b al-Hād → Muhammad b Ibrāhīm → Busr b Saʿīd → Abū al-Qays → ʿAmr b al-ʿĀs ⁸³

D) Abū al-Nadr → Shaybān → ʿĀsim b Abī al-Najūd → Zīrr b Hubaysh → Hudhayfah b al-Yamān ⁸⁴

B) ʿAbd Allāh b Sālih → al-Layth → Yūnus → al-Zuhrī → ʿUbayd Allāh b ʿAbd Allāh b ʿUtbah → Ibn ʿAbbās ⁸⁵

F) ʿAffān → Hammād b Salamah → Qatādah → al-Hasan [al-Basrī] → Samurah b Jundub ⁸⁶

Ibn Abī Shaybah (d. 235/849)

In the *Musannaf* of Ibn Abī Shaybah, eleven accounts on the *sabʿat ahruf* tradition are mentioned. These accounts carry the followings *isnāds*

⁸¹ *ibid*, p 336

⁸² The *matn* “E” of these accounts goes as follows “Two men disagreed upon reading one verse that they both claimed was taught to them directly by the Prophet. The Prophet said “The Qurʾān was revealed in seven modes, thus do not argue noisily about it, for arguing about the Qurʾān is blasphemous (*fīhi kufr*)”, Abū ʿUbayd, *Fadāʿil*, p 337

⁸³ *ibid*, pp 337-8

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p 338

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p 338

⁸⁶ The *matn* “F” of these accounts goes as follows “The Qurʾān was revealed in three modes (*thalāthat ahruf*)”, *ibid*, p 339. According to Abū ʿUbayd, all the accounts he enumerated on the *sabʿat ahruf* tradition are *mutawātrah* except for this last account on behalf of Samurah

G) Sufyān b ʿUyaynah → ʿUbayd Allāh b Abī Yazīd → Abū Yazīd al-Makkī → Umm Ayyūb⁸⁷

G) Sufyān b ʿUyaynah → ʿAmr b Dīnār⁸⁸ → Prophet⁸⁹

G) Muhammad b Bīshr → Muhammad b ʿAmr⁹⁰ → Abū Salamah → Abū Hurayrah → Prophet⁹¹

C-p) Muhammad b Bīshr → Ismāʿīl b Abī Khālīd → ʿAbd Allāh b ʿĪsā → ʿAbd al-Rahmān b Abī Laylā → Ubayy b Kaʿb⁹²

D-p) Ghandar → Shuʿbah → al-Hakam → Mujāhid → ʿAbd al-Rahmān b Abī Laylā → Ubayy b Kaʿb⁹³

G) Jaʿfar b ʿAwn → al-Hajarī⁹⁴ → Abū al-Ahwas → ʿAbd Allāh [b Masʿūd]⁹⁵

C-p) Zayd b Hubāb → Hammād b Salamah → ʿAlī b Zayd b Judʿān⁹⁶ → ʿAbd al-Rahmān b Abī Bakrah → Abū Bakrah⁹⁷

D-p) Yazīd b Hārūn → Humayd al-Tawīl⁹⁸ → Anas b Mālīk → Ubayy b Kaʿb⁹⁹

⁸⁷ The *matn* “G” of these accounts goes as follows “The Qurʾān was revealed in seven modes (*sabʿat ahruf*) whichever one reads is correct”, Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Musannaf*, ed Usāmah b Ibrāhīm b Muhammad, (Cairo al-Fārūq al-Hadīthah, 2008), 10/45-6

⁸⁸ The *hadīth* is *mursal* and the link is broken ʿAmr b Dīnār is generally considered to be trustworthy, Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3/268-9

⁸⁹ Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/46

⁹⁰ Muhammad b ʿAmr b ʿAlqamah is considered to be a weak transmitter, Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3/662-3

⁹¹ Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/46

⁹² The *matn* “C-p” (partial) mentions only the last part of *matn* “C” “God Has revealed to me that I read the Qurʾān in seven modes”, Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/46

⁹³ The *matn* “D-p” mentions only the last part of *matn* “D” “Jibrīl told the Prophet “God Has commanded you to recite the Qurʾān to your nation in *sabʿat ahruf*, whichever one they recite is correct””, Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/46

⁹⁴ Ibrāhīm b Muslim al-Hajarī is considered to be a weak transmitter, Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1/86-7

⁹⁵ Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/46

⁹⁶ ʿAlī b Zayd b Judʿān is weak and untrustworthy, Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3/162-3

⁹⁷ Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/46-7

⁹⁸ Humayd al-Tawīl is not a strong transmitter He is known by his *tadlīs* from Anas b Mālīk, Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1/493-4

⁹⁹ Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/47

D-p) °Ubayd Allāh b Mūsā → Isrā'īl → Abū Ishāq al-Sabī'ī → Saqīr¹⁰⁰ al-°Abdī →

Sulaymān b Surad → Ubayy b Ka'b¹⁰¹

F) °Affān → Hammād b Salamah → Qatādah → al-Hasan [al-Basrī] → Samurah b

Jundub¹⁰²

A-p) Khālīd b Makhlad → °Abd al-Rahmān b °Abd al-°Azīz al-Ansārī → al-Zuhrī →

°Urwah b al-Zubayr → al-Mīswar b Makhramah + °Abd al-Rahman b °Abdīn al-Qārī →

°Umar b al-Khattāb¹⁰³

D-p) Husayn b °Alī → Zā'idah → °Āsim b Bahdalah → Zīrr b Hubaysh → Ubayy b

Ka'b¹⁰⁴

Al-Bukhārī (d 256/869)

In the *Sahīh* of al-Bukhārī we only find the *matn* "A" of the tradition with the following *isnāds*

A) °Abd Allāh b Yūsuf → Mālīk b Anas → al-Zuhrī → °Urwah b al-Zubayr → °Abd al-Rahmān b °Abdīn al-Qārī → °Umar b al-Khattāb¹⁰⁵

A) Sa'īd b °Ufayr → al-Layth → °Uqayl → al-Zuhrī → °Urwah b al-Zubayr → al-Mīswar b Makhramah + °Abd al-Rahmān b °Abdīn al-Qārī → °Umar b al-Khattāb¹⁰⁶

A) Abū al-Yamān → Shu'ayb → al-Zuhrī → °Urwah b al-Zubayr → al-Mīswar b Makhramah + °Abd al-Rahmān b °Abdīn al-Qārī → °Umar b al-Khattāb¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Or Suqayr, and sometime with *sād* instead of *sīn*

¹⁰¹ Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/47

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 10/47

¹⁰³ The "A-p" *matn* of this account is the last part of the "A" *matn* "The Qur'ān was revealed in *sab'at ahruf*, therefore read [in whichever way easier to you/whatever was made available to you] (*mā tayassar*)", Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/47

¹⁰⁴ This "D-p" *matn* is the last part of the "D" *matn* "Jibrīl told the Prophet "command them to read it in Seven modes"", Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Musannaf*, 10/47-8

¹⁰⁵ Abū °Abd Allāh al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al-Musnad al-Sahīh*, (Beirut Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), p 583

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, pp 1276, 1865-6

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p 1286

A) al-Layth → Yūnus → al-Zuhrī → ʿUrwah b al-Zubayr → al-Miswar b Makhramah +
ʿAbd al-Rahmān b ʿAbdīn al-Qārī → ʿUmar b al-Khattāb ¹⁰⁸

Data Analysis

The data collected above is not comprehensive. However, it is representative of the transmission and circulation of the tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf* in the early Islamic sources. We can discern an association of certain *matns* with specific strands of *isnād*, the fact that yields “conspiracy theory” in the fabrication of a certain tradition very unlikely ¹⁰⁹. To corroborate a tradition and authenticate it, the more trustworthy *isnāds* one can attain the sounder the tradition is ¹¹⁰. The different versions of the *sabʿat ahruf* tradition can be summarized as follows:

- *Matn “A”* recounts the dispute between ʿUmar b al-Khattāb and Hishām b Hakīm in reading *sūrat al-Furqān*. The Prophet vindicated both of their readings by declaring that the Qurʾān was revealed in *sabʿat ahruf*. This seems to be the oldest account we have on this tradition. I collated all the *isnāds* from the different sources of the *matn “A”* version and created a stemma showing that al-Zuhrī is the common link and the only source of this tradition in its *matn “A”* version.

¹⁰⁸ al-Bukhārī, *Sahīh*, p. 1716

¹⁰⁹ Refer to Motzki, “Collection”, p. 27

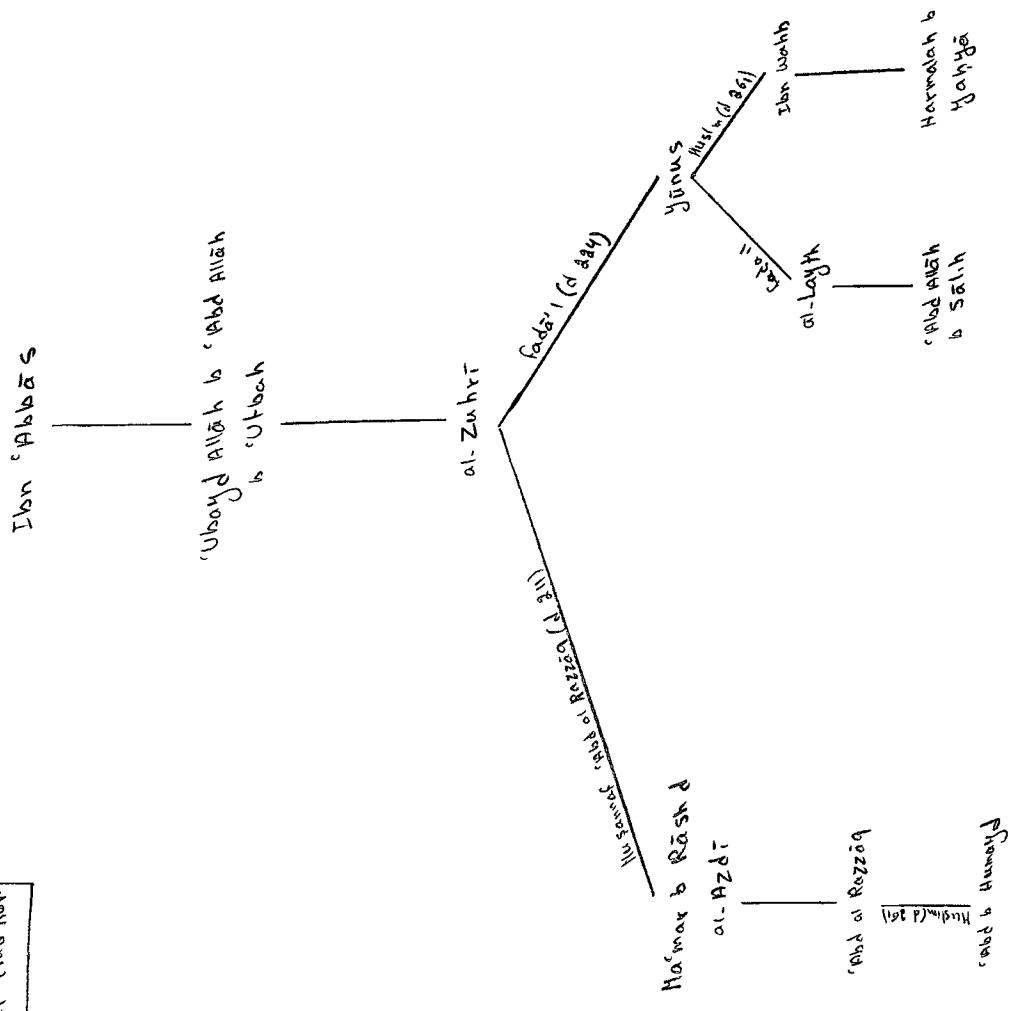
¹¹⁰ This is known as *al-mutābīʿ wa al-shāhid* (confirmation and follow-up), Kamali, Mohammad Hashim, *A Textbook of Hadīth Studies*, (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2005), pp. 176-80, al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Sharh Taqrīb al-Nawāwī*, ed. Salāh ʿUwaydah, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1996), 1/128-9

- *Matn* “B” of this tradition is not as common as the other *matns*, and it seems to be an extrapolation and commentary on *matn* “A” This version provides neither background nor context to the *sabʿat ahruf* tradition The Prophet states that Jibrīl recited the Qurʾān to him in *sabʿat ahruf*, which are all equal Al-Zuhrī comments afterwards that those *sabʿat ahruf* pertain to verses that do not confuse the licit with the illicit (*al-amr al-wāhid alladhī laysa fīhi halāl wa lā harām*) It is imperative to notice that this statement by al-Zuhrī only comes with the *matn* “B” and is never coupled with the *matn* “A” This might suggest that the *matn* “B” is a commentary on al-Zuhrī’s behalf or his students For the sake of comprehensiveness, I extracted the *isnāds* of the *matn* “B” version from the *Sahīh* of Muslim,¹¹¹ and sketched the Stemma below Al-Zuhrī is again the common link and the only source of this version of the tradition, which in my opinion is only his commentary on *matn* “A” version One can notice that there are only two strands of *isnād* of the “B” version from al-Zuhrī both of which are identical to two strands in the “A” version, i.e. al-Zuhrī → Maʿmar b Rashīd al-Azdī → ʿAbd al-Razzāq and al-Zuhrī → Yūnus → al-Layth → ʿAbd Allāh b Sālih The strand al-Zuhrī → Yūnus → Ibn Wahb → Harmalah b Yahyā of version “B” exists in version “A” as well from a transmission obtained by Muslim,¹¹² which I did not use for the stemma I sketched for version “A”

¹¹¹ Abū al-Husayn Muslim b al-Hajjāj, *al-Musnad al-Sahīh*, ed Abū Qutaybah al-Fārayābī, (Riyad Dār Tībah, 2006), 1/366

¹¹² Muslim, *Sahīh*, 1/366

matn 'B' of Me
Sabat a href traditor

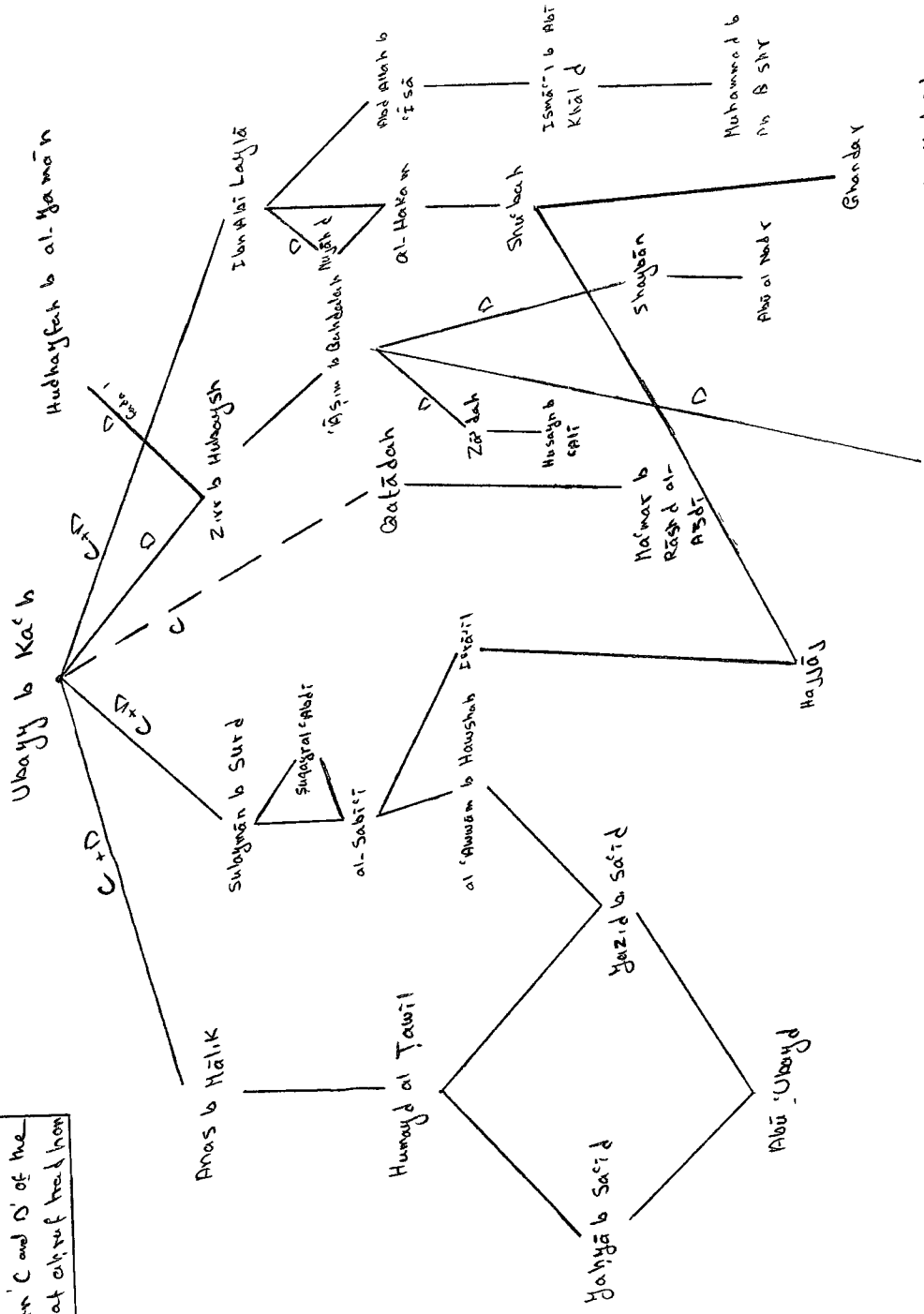


- Versions “C” and “D” are slightly problematic *Matn* “C” follows the same structure of “A” but with more elaboration. Instead of ʿUmar b al-Khattāb and Hishām b Hakīm as the disputing parties, we have in “C” Ubayy b Kaʿb and one of his companions disagreeing on the reading of a certain verse. One needs to keep in mind Ubayy’s notoriety in early Islam as someone known along with Ibn Masʿūd for having his own non-ʿUthmānic codex. Ubayy and Ibn Masʿūd are often quoted in early Islamic sources for their disagreements on the ʿUthmānic edition. As in *matn* “A”, Ubayy and the man go to the Prophet for arbitration, the Prophet asks each man to read the verse the way they have been taught, and the Prophet acknowledges both readings to be correct. *Matn* “C” in some of its variations elaborates more on the conclusion, the Prophet tells Ubayy that both Jibrīl and Mikāʿīl taught him the *sabʿat ahruf*. *Matn* “C” also expresses Ubayy’s suspicions and doubts about the Qurʾān and possibly Muhammad’s Prophecy when the latter acknowledges two different readings for the same verse to be true. But Muhammad reassures Ubayy that these variants are of divine source and that they are both “Qurʾān”. *Matn* “C” and its variations seem to emphasize the contents of “A” and “B”, and the study of their *isnāds* does not show any significant common link responsible for promulgating this tradition, except for Ubayy himself. The single strands of transmission originate from Ubayy but do not find a transmitter in the subsequent generations to carry on and spread the account widely. Even Muslim Hadīth critics deemed most of these *isnāds* as weak. As for the *matn* “D” accounts, I am inclined to suggest that they are later elaborations on the second half of the “C” accounts. They describe the Prophet’s request from Jibrīl to make reading the Qurʾān easier for the illiterate Muslims. Jibrīl answers his request and starts teaching the

Prophet the Qur'ān in one *harf* until he ends with *sab'at ahruf* This version of the tradition unequivocally clarifies the wisdom and the reasons behind the *sab'at ahruf* explained as being different ways in reciting the Qur'ān *Matn "C"* itself provides a similar explanation when it explicitly declares that it is fine if one replaces "God the Hearer, the Knower" (*al-Samī' al-ʿAlīm*) with "God the Mighty, the Wise" (*al-ʿAzīz al-Hakīm*) After comparing the scattered and weak *isnāds* of *matns "C"* and "D", I suggest that they are complementary and originating from the same source in addition to being later fabrications and elaborations on *matn "A"* The offshoot transmission line from Hudhayfah b al-Yamān to Zīrr b Hubaysh is out of place in addition to the *matn "C-p"* cited in Abū ʿUbayd's *Fadā'il*, with a wandering *isnād* that starts from Abū Bakrah The partial common links such as Humayd al-Tawīl and ʿĀsim b Bahdalah and transmitters such as Suqayr al-ʿAbdī and Ibn Judʿān are impugned according to Hadīth criteria ¹¹³

¹¹³ See the footnotes above from Ibn Hajar's *Tahdhīb*

matn 'C and D' of the
 Saḥā al-ḥayr hadith



Abū Bakrah → 'Abd al-Rahmān b Abū Bakrah → Ibn Jubayn → Ḥumayd b Salamah → Zayd b Ḥubaysh

- Versions E, F, and G are easier to deal with and I presume their forgery. *Matn* “E” follows the same structural pattern of “A” and “C”: two men disagree on reading a certain verse, they seek the Prophet for arbitration and he tells them that they are both right. The Prophet then adds that disagreeing on two correct readings of the Qur’ān is blasphemous (*kufīr*). This statement is very unlikely to have been initiated in the Prophet’s time, and it is probably a projection of the later disagreements among Muslim Scholars regarding the Qur’ānic nature of the Canonical Readings.¹¹⁴ *Matns* “F” and “G” offer bare statements that the Qur’ān was revealed in *thalāthat* and *sab‘at ahruf* respectively. These versions offer neither context nor background for the tradition, as if the statement had become a well-known adage to be quoted by itself. The *isnāds* of these versions are single lines of transmission with several problematic transmitters according to Hadīth criteria, such as Abū Yazīd al-Makkī, ‘Amr b Dīnār, Muhammad b ‘Amr, and al-Hajarī.¹¹⁵

The preliminary examination of the *sab‘at ahruf* tradition speaks for some credibility to the version transmitted by al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741) and corroborated by several good *isnāds* in the early sources. Nevertheless, regardless of the authenticity of this tradition, it is very likely that the notion of the *sab‘at ahruf* was circulating and promulgated towards the end of the first century of the Islamic calendar, parallel to al-Zuhrī’s accounts and narratives on the collection and the codification of the Qur’ān during Abū Bakr’s and ‘Uthmān’s Caliphates.¹¹⁶

Some clues on the meaning of *harf*

¹¹⁴ Refer to Chapter two for a detailed discussion on the topic.

¹¹⁵ Refer to Ibn Hajar’s comments in the footnotes above.

¹¹⁶ Refer to Motzki’s discussion above.

The wording of the *matn* “A” tradition in *Musnad al-Tayālīsī* was intriguing. The tradition starts as follows with ‘Umar b al-Khattāb speaking “The prophet has taught one *sūrah* from the Qur’ān, which I fully grasped and memorized by heart. One day, while I was praying in the mosque, I found Hishām b Hakīm praying besides me. He began that *sūrah* with a *harf* different from that which the Prophet has taught me.”¹¹⁷ What is different in this text is that the *sūrah* is not specified to be *sūrat al-Furqān* unlike in the later traditions, which almost always designate *al-Furqān* by name. Most importantly, this tradition specifies that the dispute was about the beginning of the *sūrah*. The wording of the text is intriguing, ‘Umar says “*fa ‘iftataha tilka al-sūrah ‘alā ghayr al-harf alldhī aqra’anī ‘alayhi Rasūl Allāh*.” This insinuates stark differences in the way the *sūrah* began. ‘Umar would not have been so impatient as to have barely waited until the prayer was over before facing off with Hishām regarding a misplaced vowel or putting the wrong case ending on the word. The differences have to do with the wording itself. We have two leads now, the first is that the *sūrah* in question is *sūrat al-Furqān* and the second lead is that the disagreement was in the opening of the *sūrah*. I referred to the canonical Readings works and found no variant readings for the opening verses of *al-Furqān*. However, this is not the case with the *shawādh* readings. Q (25:1) reads “*tabāraka ‘lladhī nazzala ‘l-furqāna ‘alā ‘abdihi li yakūna li ‘l-‘ālamīna nadhīran*”¹¹⁸ There is only one *shawādh* reading associated with this verse and it reads “*tabāraka ‘lladhī nazzala ‘l-furqāna ‘alā ‘ibādihī li yakūna li ‘l-‘ālamīna li ‘l-jinnī wa ‘l-*

¹¹⁷ *al-Tayālīsī, Musnad*, 1/44

¹¹⁸ Blessed is He Who hath revealed unto His slave the Criterion (of right and wrong), that he may be a warner to the peoples

insī nadhīran”¹¹⁹ The addition of “*lī ‘l-jinnī wa ‘l-insī*” to the verse is especially conspicuous at the very beginning of the *sūrah*. This *shawādh* reading is attributed to ‘Abd Allāh b al-Zubayr. The tradition of the *sab‘at ahruf* in its “A” *matn* is always transmitted through al-Zuhrī → ‘Urwah b al-Zubayr. ‘Urwah b al-Zubayr is ‘Abd Allāh b al-Zubayr’s younger brother, both the sons of al-Zubayr b al-‘Awwām. ‘Abd Allāh b al-Zubayr had his own non-‘Uthmānic codex and some examples of his Reading are documented in the *masāhif* literature.¹²⁰ It is probable that the *mushaf* of ‘Abd Allāh b al-Zubayr’s – being the Caliph in al-Madīnah for ten years before his reign ended at the hands of al-Hajjāj and ‘Abd al-Malik b Marwān – became the Zubayr family *mushaf*. Therefore, the tradition of the *sab‘at ahruf* might have originated with ‘Urwah b al-Zubayr as a result of the differences found between the ‘Uthmānic and the Zubayr codices. This does not necessitate forgery on ‘Urwah’s behalf, rather, it indicates an interest on his part to propagate the *sab‘at ahruf* tradition and perhaps to vindicate the codex and Reading of his older brother ‘Abd Allāh b al-Zubayr.

To conclude this section, we notice that there are different layers within which dating the *sab‘at ahruf* tradition is possible. The first is based on the earliest sources that document this tradition, which are *al-Muwatta’* by Mālik and *Musnad al-Tayāhīsī*. This dates the tradition back to the last quarter of the 2nd/8th century. The second is based on the study of the *isnāds* and the corresponding *matns* of those traditions, which present al-Zuhrī as the common link for promulgating the tradition. This dates the tradition back to the first half of the 2nd/8th century. The third is assuming the

¹¹⁹ Blessed is He Who hath revealed unto His slaves/servants the Criterion (of right and wrong), that he may be a warner to the peoples: the humans and the jinn, Abū Hayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-Bahr al-Muhīt*, ed. ‘Alī Mu‘awwad et al, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993), 6/440.

¹²⁰ Al-Sijistānī, *Masāhif*, ed. Jeffrey, p. 81-3.

responsibility of ʿUrwah b al-Zubayr (d 94/712) in spreading the tradition as I have just explained above. This dates the tradition back to the last quarter of the 1st/7th century.

The Shīʿīs' views towards the Qurʾān, the variant Readings, and the *sabʿat ahruf*

Scholarship on the Qurʾān rarely considers the views of the Shīʿī scholars on the subject, possibly because Shīʿīs have complicated views on the topic. In the recently published *The Cambridge Companion to the Qurʾān*, which is supposed to give a general historical, linguistic, and theological overview of the Qurʾān, no chapter was designated to discuss the Shīʿīs' views on the history of the Qurʾān, its transmission, its variant readings, its esoteric implications, and its integrity as a text. Shīʿīs' views are usually treated separately from the mainstream Sunnīs, who, since the medieval times, relentlessly wrote against the Shīʿah, who were and still are treated as a threat to Sunnī Islam.

One of the most controversial Shīʿī arguments regarding the Qurʾān is its falsification (*tahrīf*). This topic has been dealt with extensively since the 3rd/9th century and western scholarship has discussed it at length since the 19th century. Goldziher documented the Shīʿīs' rejection of the ʿUthmānic codex that was subjected to several important additions and omissions.¹²¹ Among the omissions, two full *sūrah*s are claimed by the Shīʿīs to have been dropped from the ʿUthmānic edition.¹²² These arguments by the Shīʿīs have stirred endless debates and discussions since medieval times. It is very

¹²¹ Goldziher, *Richtungen*, pp. 270-89.

¹²² Noldeke, *GdQ*, 1/ 221-3. See the English translations of all these Shīʿī additions in W. St. Clair Tisdall, "Shīʿah addition to the Koran", *The Moslem world*, 3 (1913), pp. 227-241.

often that one reads in books of Sunnī *tafsīr*, *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, *Usūl al-Fiqh*, and *firaq* compilations the relentless defense by the Sunnīs of the integrity of the Qur’ān against the *rāfidah* i.e. the Shī‘īs. With the recent availability of published Shī‘ī sources, the debate between the Sunnah and the Shī‘ah on the integrity of the Qur’ān is more alive than ever. There are several satellite TV channels hosting programs that primarily discuss modern and medieval Shī‘īs’ views towards the Qur’ān. Sunnī and Shī‘ī religious scholars from Qumm, Najaf, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan conduct these debates. A simple googling of the phrase “*tahrīf al-Qur’ān*” will yield hundreds if not thousands of pages on this topic, especially in discussion forums and message boards by both the masses and several religious authorities.¹²³ There is also a recent interest in this topic by some western and Muslim scholars where several books and articles were published discussing the notion of *tahrīf* extensively.¹²⁴

Without getting into more detail about the Shī‘īs’ views regarding the historical text of the Qur’ān and their theological implications, it is obvious that the discipline of Qirā’āt and the variant readings of the Qur’ān were used by the Shī‘īs to support their arguments that the Qur’ān was falsified and altered.¹²⁵ Therefore, the notion of the

¹²³ Message Boards such as <http://www.dd-sunnah.net/forum/index.php> (*shabakat al-difā‘ ‘an al-sunnah*) and <http://www.ansarsunna.com/vb/index.php> (*shabakat ansār al-sunnah*) are replete with posts and discussions about the integrity of the Qur’ān and the “blasphemous” beliefs of the Shī‘ah.

¹²⁴ Hussein Mudarressi, “Early debates on the integrity of the Qur’ān: a brief survey”, *Studia Islamica*, 77 (1993), pp. 5-39, R. Brunner, “La question de la falsification du Coran dans l’exégèse chuite duodécimaine”, *Arabica*, 52/1 (2005), pp. 1-42, “The dispute about the falsification of the Qur’ān between Sunnīs and Shī‘īs in the 20th century”, S. Leder et al. (ed.), *Studies in Arabic and Islam: proceedings of the 19th congress, Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Halle 1998* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), pp. 437-446, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Etan Kohlberg, “Révélation et falsification: Introduction à l’édition du Kitāb al-qirā’āt d’al-Sayyārī”, *Journal Asiatique*, 293/2 (2005), pp. 663-722, Kamāl Haydarī, *Siyānat al-Qur’ān min al-tahrīf*, (Beirut: Dār Jawād al-‘Immah, 2010).

¹²⁵ The examples are numerous in Shī‘ah sources; see for the example the introduction of al-Kāshānī’s *tafsīr*, Muhammad Muhsin al-Fayd al-Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-Sāfi*, (Tehran: Manshūrāt al-Sadr, 1994) 1/40-56. Exegetes such as al-Tūsī (d. 460/1067) and al-Tabarsī (548/1153) whose Qur’ān commentaries are full of traditions on the authority of the Companions defend the integrity of the Qur’ān. On the hand, exegetes such as al-Fayd al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680) and al-‘Ayyāshī (d. 320/932) openly confess the falsification of

canonical Seven and Ten Readings does not exist in Shī'ism¹²⁶ Al-Khū'ī wrote extensively on this topic criticizing the Sunnī tradition of the variant readings and showing several discrepancies within the tradition itself regarding the collection of the Qur'ān, the codices, the canonical Readings, and the *sab'at ahruf* tradition¹²⁷ The Shī'ah do not recognize the *sab'at ahruf* tradition, al-Tūsī (d. 460) says that it is common knowledge among the Shī'ah that the Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet in one *harf* only¹²⁸ I am not going to discuss the Shī'īs' tradition in rejecting the variant Readings and their theological arguments regarding the *sab'at ahruf* tradition because this deserves a separate study I only want to point out that there is a trend within the Islamic tradition itself that rejected the notion of the *sab'at ahruf* in the Qur'ān and consequently did not develop a discipline for the Qirā'āt sciences It is worth mentioning that the Shī'ah nowadays read the Qur'ān according to the Reading of Hafṣ → 'Āsīm justified by the fact that the *isnād* of this Reading goes back to 'Alī b. Abī Tālib

Conclusion

The Variant Readings of the Qur'ān derive their legitimacy from the Prophetic tradition of the *sab'at arhuf*, however, Muslim scholars have had no common understanding of the meaning of the term *harf* This has resulted in more than thirty-five different interpretations of the *sab'at arhuf* tradition However, despite the

the Qur'ān and that the Companions altered it They also consider the canonical Readings to be one form of this falsification We rarely find any Shī'ī scholar nowadays admitting the fact that the Qur'ān is falsified They deny such accounts on the authority of their medieval scholars or simply do not find them binding It might be also an act of *taqiyyah*

¹²⁶ Refer to the last section of Chapter three for more details

¹²⁷ Abū al-Qāsim Al-Khū'ī, *al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut Dār al-Zahrā', 1979), pp. 122-234

¹²⁸ Abū Ja'far Al-Tūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ahmad al-'Āmilī, (Beirut Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1982), 1/7-9

vagueness of the concept of *harf*, the discipline of *Qirā'āt* and the meticulous transmission of the variant Readings of the Qur'ān are essentially dependent on the mysterious *sab'at ahruf* tradition. After performing *isnād* and *matn* analysis, I conclude that this tradition was in circulation probably by the last quarter of the first Islamic century, this indicates that the multiplicity of the Qur'ānic Readings not long after the codification process by 'Uthmān still lacked official validation by the Prophet himself. The Shī'īs rejected the accounts of the *sab'at ahruf* tradition and considered it be one form of the falsification of the Qur'ān (*tahrīf*). Though the Shī'īs have no specific Qur'ānic Reading for themselves, they often follow the Reading of 'Āsim → Hafs. The integrity of the Qur'ān and the historical accounts pertaining to its collection and codification have been discussed at length in Western scholarship. The dominant theories of Western scholars range widely from the Qur'ān as the exact final version that Muhammad left before his death to the Qur'ān as a document collected and codified no earlier than the third Islamic century.

Chapter 2: Ibn Mujāhid and the canonization of the seven

Readings

The Seven and Ten Canonical Readings of the Qur'ān are usually described as being *mutawātirah*, i.e. they were passed on from the Prophet and his Companions to the later generations through multiple concurrent transmissions. In the Islamic tradition, almost anything that is transmitted via *tawātur* is considered to be unequivocally true and accurate. In this chapter, I aim to detect when and how the term *tawātur* was applied to describe or modify the Qur'ān generally, and its variant Readings specifically. I will also pay special attention to how and when the phrase “*al-qur'ān al-mutawātirah*” started to be used as an unquestionable criterion for considering a Qur'ānic Reading to be canonical, and thus divine. References to the *tawātur* in the discipline of Hadīth literature are essential to see if, and most importantly when Hadīth terminology started to affect the terms of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Qur'ānic sciences).

I will start this survey prior to the official canonization of the variant Readings by Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936), a process that was called by the Muslim scholars *tasbī' al-sab'ah* (the “septuplization” or the founding of the seven Readings). Consequently, Ibn Mujāhid was called *musabbī' al-sab'ah* (The “septuplist” or the founder of the Seven). This period, i.e. early 4th/10th century, was the stage after which the validity of a Qur'ānic Reading began to be judged according to certain criteria that I shall discuss later.

In the second part of this chapter I will examine what the *usūlīs* (legists of the principles of Islamic law) had to say and contribute to the subject of the *tawātur* of the Qur'ān and its variant Readings. Several *usūlīs* discussed this topic at length and

expressed some concerns regarding this problematic issue. Heated discussions arose at the time of al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) regarding the integrity of the Qur'ān and its transmission. al-Bāqillānī wrote the two-volume book *al-Intisār li al-Qur'ān* in which he defended the credible transmission of both the physical content of the Qur'ān, i.e. the consonantal script, and its oral aspects, i.e. the variant Readings. I will examine the opinions of some influential *usūlīs* concerning the *tawātur* of the Qur'ānic readings and point out the problematic issues they were trying to handle and resolve.

In the late 8th/14th century, Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429) became the leading authority in the discipline of *Qirā'āt*. He canonized three additional Readings and declared that the ten canonical Readings were all transmitted via *tawātur*. However, twenty years later, Ibn al-Jazarī reconsidered his earlier opinion and declared it fallacious. His revised position held that the Ten Readings were not transmitted via *tawātur* but through sound single chains of transmission (*āḥād*). I consider Ibn al-Jazarī's revision of his point of view to be an indication of the problematic nature of this subject, and of the constant debate that was taking place among Muslims. The dominant trend after Ibn al-Jazarī was to hold onto his earlier position on the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings, and ever since Ibn al-Jazarī and al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), the *tawātur* of the Qur'ān and its variant canonical Readings have become self-evident truths not open to discussion and questioning.

Qirā'āt Collections pre- Ibn Mujāhid

Ibn Mujāhid was not the first to collect some variant Readings of the Qur'ān in an attempt to limit those Readings to a manageable and credible corpus. However, he

might have been the first to enforce his criteria and canonize the Readings, as Melchert has suggested, through political power¹ Ibn Mujāhid believed that by his time a consensus had been reached concerning the general criteria applied to a valid Qur'ānic reading, and that no one could recite and teach the “obsolete” readings of the Companions that disagree with the consonantal outline of the ʿUthmānic codices. Those who opposed Ibn Mujāhid’s new Canon and insisted on adopting their own standards were tried, flogged, and forced to adhere to the consensus²

We find in the bibliographical sources several titles that were written much earlier than Ibn Mujāhid. These titles seem to be short monographs written by some of the eponymous Readers or by their students describing their master’s Reading. Most of these titles are now lost – if they ever existed – and the few still in manuscript form are either written in a later period or erroneously ascribed to their authors³. Under the section of the Qur’ānic readings in *GAS*, Sezgin indicates that many titles are allegedly ascribed to those early authors and that they actually belong to later periods. Works attributed to authors and scholars of the 2nd/8th century are described to belong to the 6th/12th and even the 10th/16th century⁴.

These early compilations that collect variant Qur’ānic readings attributed to eponymous Readers are numerous. Al-Fadlī roughly lists around forty-four works on

¹ Ch. Melchert, “Ibn Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qur’anic Readings”, *Studia Islamica*, 91 (2000), pp. 20-2

² *Ibid.*, p. 5. Cf. Shahāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ*, ed. Ihsān ʿAbbās, (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), 5/2325

³ In *al-Fihris al-Shāmil*, a manuscript is listed under the authorship of Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ (d. 154/770) in the library of Aya Sofia under catalogue number 4814. I obtained a copy of this manuscript and apparently it is a very late copy that uses colors with a fully vocalized text. The book seems to be only a transmission on behalf of Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ, Muʿassasat Āl al-Bayt, *al-Fihris al-Shāmil li al-Turāth al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī al-Makhtūt ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān, Rasm al-Masāhif*, (Manshūrāt Muʿassasat Āl al-Bayt: Amman, 1986), p. 1

⁴ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums (GAS)*, (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 1/6-15

Qirā'āt prior to Ibn Mujāhid⁵ Most of these works are now lost, however one important aspect to be noticed from those titles and their descriptions is that they were not concerned with a specific number of Qur'ānic Readings to be collected and canonized, contrary to the post-Ibn Mujāhid era as we will see shortly A common phrase one often finds upon reading the entries on those early Qirā'āt authors in the bibliographic dictionaries is "he has a book on Qirā'āt" (*lahu kitāb al-qirā'āt*) Muqātil b Sulaymān (d 150/767), Abbān b Taghlib al-Kūfī (d 141/758), Hushaym al-Sulamī (d 183/799) are a few notable examples among many others⁶ One important work seems to be a compilation by Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsım b Sallām (d 224/838), which was comprised of twenty-five variant Readings attributed to twenty-five eponymous Readers⁷ A man by the name of Ahmad b Jubayr al-Kūfī al-Muqrī' (d 258/871) wrote two books on Qirā'āt the first was a collection of five variant Readings and the second was another collection of eight Readings⁸ The judge Ismā'īl b Ishāq al-Mālikī (d 282/895) collected twenty variant Readings attributed to twenty eponymous Readers⁹ Two important aspects should be noticed here, the first is that those works varied in the number of the variant Readings they collected, as they were not concerned with delineating a specific number of Readings For example, Ahmad b Jubayr al-Kūfī al-Muqrī' wrote two books on five and eight variant Readings of the Qur'ān Thus we could say that the number of the permissible Qur'ānic Readings was flexible to some degree The pre-Ibn Mujāhid era seems not to be concerned with limiting the Readings to a specific number Several

⁵ Al-Fadlī, 'Abd al-Hādī, *al-Qirā'āt al-Qur'āniyyah tārikh wa ta'rīf*, (Beirut Dār al-Qalam, 1985), pp 27-32

⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, Abū al-Faraj, *al-Fihrist*, ed Rizā Tajaddud, (Tehran Maktabat al-Asadī, 1971), pp 227, 276, 284

⁷ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Nashr*, 1/88-9

⁸ Ibid , 1/34, Makkī b Abī Tālib al-Qaysī, Abū Muhammad, *al-Ibānah 'an Ma'ānī al-Qirā'āt*, ed 'Abd al-Fattāh Shalabī, (Cairo Dār Nahdat Mīsr (n d)), p 51

⁹ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Nashr*, 1/88-9

Qur'ānic Readings were in circulation and Muslim authors were collecting and documenting them ¹⁰ The second noticeable aspect, if the biographical dictionaries are to be trusted, is that Muslim scholars started to collect and document the different *qirā'āt* as early as the 1st/7th century, probably starting with Yahyā b Ya'mur (d 90/708) ¹¹ One should keep in mind that the oldest among the Seven Readers was Ibn 'Āmir the Damascene who died in 118/736 while the youngest was al-Kisā'i, born in 119/737 This is an indication that collecting and documenting the variant readings of the Qur'ān started earlier than the Seven canonical Readers, when most of them were still young students of Qirā'āt, Nāfi' was born in 70/689, Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' in 68/687, and Hamzah al-Zayyāt in 80/699

Before I discuss the case of al-Tabarī (d 310/923), two earlier works deserve some attention The first is by the aforementioned Yahyā b Ya'mur, about whom Ibn 'Atiyyah (d 543/1148) says the following “ as for vocalizing (*shakl*) the *mushaf* and putting dots on the letters (*naqt*), it is said that 'Abd al-Malik b Marwān (d 86/705) commissioned al-Hajjāj (b Yūsuf) (d 95/713) who undertook this mission in Wāsīt al-Hajjāj partitioned the Qur'ān into more parts (*ahzāb*) and since he was the governor of Irāq, he commissioned al-Hasan (al-Basrī) (d 110/728) and Yahyā b Ya'mur to vocalize the consonantal text of the Qur'ān and put the dots on the letters Consequently, Yahyā b Ya'mur wrote a book in Wāsīt on the different *qirā'āt* and collected what had been

¹⁰ Abū al-Qāsim al-Hudhalī (d 465/1072) compiled *al-Kāmil fī al-Qirā'āt al-'Ashr wa al-Arba'in al-Zā'idah 'alayhā* in which fifty variant Readings of the Qur'ān were collected and documented This book is considered one of the most extensive books on Qirā'āt It was poorly edited and published by Jamāl b al-Sayyid Rifā'i al-Shāyib (Cairo Mu'ssasat Sanā li al-Tibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 2010) A PhD dissertation was written on this work in 2008 in Umm al-Qurā university in Saudi Arabia, 'Abd al-Hafiz al-Hindī, *al-Imām al-Hudhalī wa Manhajuhu fī Kitābihi al-Kāmil fī al-Qirā'āt al-Khamsīn*, (PhD Dissertation Umm al-Qurā University, 2008)

¹¹ 'Abd al-Haqq Ibn 'Atiyyah, “Muqaddimat Ibn 'Atiyyah li Tafsīrihi al-Musammā al-Jāmi' al-Muharrar”, in *Muqaddimatān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed A Jeffery, (Cairo, al-Khānjī 1972), p 275

transmitted and told of people's disagreements over reading the Qur'ān. However, he limited his collection to only the readings that agree with the script of the *mushaf*. People adhered to this (collection) for a long time, until Ibn Mujāhid wrote his book"¹²

The second book that I want to draw the reader's attention to is by Hārūn b Mūsā al-A'war, who according to Ibn al-Jazarī was the first to track down the different modes of recitation in Basrah and to document them. It is said that he also investigated the readers who transmitted the irregular (*shādhah*) readings whose *isnāds* he meticulously studied.¹³ Again, if we give the bibliographical dictionaries some credibility we could assume that collecting and documenting the *shawādhah* readings methodically started with the last quarter of the 2nd/8th century. The aforementioned work by Ibn Ya'mur, if the account bears any truth to itself, suggests that by the year 90/708 the notion of adhering to the script of the *mushaf* was given attention and importance.

al-Tabarī (d. 310/923)

The most important and influential among the scholars who collected different *qirā'āt* before Ibn Mujāhid was presumably al-Tabarī, who was one of Ibn Mujāhid's teachers in *Qirā'āt*.¹⁴ Al-Tabarī compiled a book, now lost, in which he collected more than twenty variant Readings of the Qur'ān.¹⁵ We do not know much about this book, however it is very probable that al-Tabarī did not intend to canonize the different readings of the Qur'ān, which were in wide circulation at the time. He also did not

¹² Ibn 'Atiyyah, *Muqaddimatān*, p. 275

¹³ Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah fī Tabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, ed. Gotthelf Bergstrasser, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2006), 2/303

¹⁴ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, 1/128, 2/96

¹⁵ Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 1/89

intend to exclude the readings that were invalid according to his own standards. As one can see from his *Tafsīr*, al-Tabarī often lists most of the readings of the verse known to him followed by his own judgment and *iytihād* where he favors one reading over another. In al-Tabarī's view, quite a few of those variant readings were not of divine nature. On the contrary, their origin was attributed to the Qur'ān readers and the transmitters themselves, i.e. to their own selectivity and *iytihād* while reading and deciphering the ʿUthmānic consonantal text, but not to the Prophet.¹⁶ Discussing al-Tabarī's position on the variant readings of the Qur'ān is important in order to form a better understanding of the development of the concept of *shawādh* and how this term was used to denote different aspects of the Qur'ānic readings whenever the criteria of validating those readings changed.

al-Tabarī's criticism and rejection of some acknowledged readings that were labeled later on as *mutawātirah*, have forced many Muslim scholars to criticize him¹⁷ even up until today. Several Muslim religious authorities have written treatises criticizing al-Tabarī and his position regarding the canonical readings, some of which he considered to be erroneous and invalid. Labīb al-Saʿīd for example in his *Difāʿ ʿan al-Qirāʾāt al-Mutawātirah fī Muwājahat al-Tabarī al-Mufasssīr*, collected eighty-nine examples from al-Tabarī's *Tafsīr* in which the latter refused some canonical readings and gave preference to some readings over others. The title itself is interesting for al-Saʿīd is

¹⁶ Ibn ʿAtīyyah (d. 543/1148) openly states that the Seven Readings originated due to the eponymous Readers' interpretation (*iytihād*) of the defective ʿUthmānic text. Consequently, the Seven Readings were accepted through the consensus of the community, Ibn ʿAtīyyah, *al-Muharrar al-Wajīz*, 1/48.

¹⁷ Ibn al-Jazarī criticized al-Tabarī in his *qirāʾāt* book for being selective in his choice of the different readings of some verses. He says "he (al-Tabarī) committed some mistakes in his book *al-Jāmiʿ (fī al-Qirāʾāt)* where he would not mention all the variants of certain verses. He caused the undisputed readings to seem like there are disagreements upon them and the controversial readings to seem like there is a consensus on them. This is bizarre coming from a great scholar like him (al-Tabarī)", Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, 2/96.

simply suggesting that al-Tabarī is a *mufasssīr* by profession and not a *qārī*, and therefore he is not an authority when it comes to Qur’ānic readings¹⁸ Another book criticizing al-Tabarī was recently written by Sheikh Muhammad al-Hararī under the title of *al-Qirā’āt al-Mutawātirah allatī Ankarahā Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī fī Taf̄sīrihi wa al-Radd ‘alayhi*¹⁹ I will examine a few examples in which al-Tabarī rejects some readings that later on were considered to be canonical and divine I am mainly interested in his comments regarding the extent of the circulation of some readings and the basis on which he rejects one of these

On Q (2 285) “*āmana ‘r-rasūlu bi mā unzila ilayhi min rabbihī wa ‘l-mu‘minūna kullun āmana bi ‘llāhi wa malā’ikatihī wa kutubihī wa rusulihī lā nufarriqu bayna ahadin min rusulihī*”²⁰, al-Tabarī says that the readers disagreed on how to read *kutubihī* The Medinese and some Irāqīs read it as *kutubihī*,²¹ the plural form of *kitāb*, and some Kūfans read it as *kitābihī*,²² in the singular form Al-Tabarī gives his own opinion by saying that even though the latter reading is well known and accepted among Muslims, what he really likes “*alladhī huwa a‘jabu ilayya*” is the reading in the plural form *kutubihī* The reason is that what precedes and follows this word, i e *kutubihī*, are words in the plural form, so he prefers to read the disputed word in the plural form as well²³ In this example we notice that both readings are known, accepted and well circulated, however al-Tabarī still makes a choice and picks one reading as better than the other

¹⁸ Labīb al-Sa‘īd, *Difā‘ ‘an al-Qirā’āt al-Mutawātirah fī Muwājahat al-Tabarī al-Mufasssīr*, (Cairo 1978), pp 11-12, 15-26

¹⁹ (MA Thesis al-Jāmi‘a al-Islāmiyyah, 1986)

²⁰ “The Messenger believes in what was sent down to him from his lord and the believers, each one believes in God and His angels and in His books and His Messengers, we make no division between any one of His messengers”

²¹ This is the reading of Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’, ‘Āsim, Ibn Kathīr, Nāfi‘, and Ibn ‘Āamir, Abū Bakr Ibn Mujāhid, *Kitāb al-Sab‘ah fī al-Qirā’āt*, ed Shawqī Dayf, (Cairo Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1972), p 195

²² This is the reading of Hamzah and al-Kisā‘ī, Ibn Mujāhid, *al-Sab‘ah*, p 195

²³ Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 5/149

based on his own logic and literary taste. Therefore, if different readings of a verse are accepted through the *ymāʿ*, al-Tabarī moves to other criteria in order to establish the validity of a reading or the precedence of one reading over another.

In the same verse, al-Tabarī mentions the disagreement on reading *nufarriqu*. He says that some late readers “*baʿd al-mutaqaddimīn*” read it as *yufarriqu*,²⁴ however the only acceptable reading for al-Tabarī is *nufarriqu* and no other reading could be accepted, for this reading is so widely transmitted and circulated that error and collaborative negligence could not have taken place “*al-naql al-mustafīd alladhī yamtanī u maʿahu al-tashāʿur wa al-tawātuʾ wa al-sahw wa al-ghalat*” Based on that, Al-Tabarī considers the reading of *yufarriqu* to be *shādhah*. Nevertheless, this same reading deemed to be *shādhah* by al-Tabarī was canonized later on and became *mutawātirah* and of divine status. The reading is attributed to the Basran Yaʿqūb al-Hadramī who is one of the Ten eponymous Readers.

Al-Tabarī dismisses Qurʾānic readings attributed to the Seven Readers as well, or to be more accurate to those who became known as the Seven Readers. In Q (4:1) “*wa ittaqū ʿallāha ʿladhī tasāʿalūna bihi wa ʿl-arhāma*”,²⁵ all the readers read *al-arhāma* in the accusative case except Hamzah who read the variant in the genitive case *al-arhāmi*.²⁶ Al-Tabarī states that the genitive reading is not eloquent and that the only reading he authorizes is the accusative *al-arhāma*. Therefore, al-Tabarī openly dismisses the

²⁴ This is the reading of Yaʿqūb, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/447

²⁵ “And fear God by whom you demand one of another, and the wombs”

²⁶ Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 3/24. Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī says the following regarding the genitive and the accusative readings: “Those who read *al-arhāma* in the accusative case considered it to be either a direct object for *ittaqū* and thus the coordinating conjunction *wa* joins *al-arhāma* to *allāha*, or a direct object for *tasāʿalūna* and thus the coordinating conjunction *wa* joins the prepositional phrase *bihi* to *al-arhāma*. On the other hand, those who read *al-arhāmi* in the genitive case considered *al-arhāmi* to be joined to the pronoun *hi* in the prepositional phrase *bihi* by the coordinating conjunction *wa*. However, this is awkward and rare, and it is better to abandon its usage”, Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī, *al-Hujjah li al-Qurrāʾ al-Sabʿah*, ed. Badr al-Dīn Qahwajī and Ahmad al-Daqqāq, (Damascus: Dār al-Maʿmūn li al-Turāth, 1987), 3/121

reading by Hamzah and considers it to be wrong²⁷ Again, this grammatically awkward reading by Hamzah was canonized later on by Ibn Mujāhid and was acknowledged by the community of the Qur’ān readers In Q (6 137) al-Tabarī dismisses a reading by Ibn ʿĀmir, who is one of the Seven Readers, and considers that reading to be repulsive and inarticulate He adds that this reading cannot be well founded for it contradicts the consensus of the readers²⁸ He also rejects the reading of Ibn Kathīr in Q (2 37) for the same reasons²⁹ Similarly, all these readings rejected by al-Tabarī openly were canonized later on and enjoyed the status of being absolutely valid and divine

Al-Tabarī does not adopt or adhere to an eponymous Reading with regard to which he agrees to all its particular single readings If a particular reading of a verse disagrees with what al-Tabarī calls the consensus of the Qurrā’ or if the reading exhibits awkward syntactical structure, al-Tabarī readily dismisses the reading and labels it as *shādhah* even if it is attributed to a well established Reader who became later on one of the canonical Seven or Ten readers Nevertheless, the term *ymāʿ al-Qurrā’* is not well defined by al-Tabarī and the criteria for such an *ymāʿ* are somehow vague, for even when it comes to what a considerable group of readers have agreed upon, “a” majority and not “the” majority, al-Tabarī would dismiss their reading and prefer his own His reasoning is always supported, as he claims, by “some” consensus of the readers For

²⁷ Al-Tabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, 6/344-350

²⁸ Refer to chapter one, page two, footnote eight for a detailed discussion of this verse, Al-Tabarī, 9/576-7

²⁹ Q (2 37) reads “*fa talaqqā Ādamu min rabbihi kalimātun*” (Then Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation)) which is the reading of all the Readers except Ibn Kathīr who read “*fa talaqqā Ādama min rabbihi kalimātun*”, thus making Adam the direct object of the verb Al-Tabarī says that even though this reading is grammatically permissible, however semantically the verse does not make any sense The only valid reading that he authorizes is *Ādamu* in the nominative case, for this reading enjoys the consensus of the Readers and the Muslim scholars This consensus cannot be challenged by a reader who could have erred or been forgetful, Al-Tabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, 1/580

example, in the very well known disagreement on Q (14) “*ma/ālikī yawmī ‘d-dīn*”,³⁰ al-Tabarī refuses and even prohibits the reading of *mālikī*. He considers those who adhere to this reading to be stupid and confused.³¹ This is the reading of two out of the Seven Readers, namely ‘Āsim and al-Kisā’ī, in addition to Ya‘qūb and Khalaf, the two Readers in the canonical system of the Ten Readings. However, al-Tabarī claims that the consensus of the readers in his time is against that reading. Could the consensus have changed so rapidly within few years after al-Tabarī (d. 310/923) during Ibn Mujāhid’s (d. 324/936) time?

The following example reveals important aspects regarding al-Tabarī’s criteria for and opinion concerning the anomalous readings, i.e. the readings that do not agree with the consonantal outline of the ‘Uthmānic codices. His statement and commentary on Q (14:46) are very important in order to have a better understanding of his criteria for a valid reading. Q (14:46) reads as follows “*wa in kāna makruhum la-tazūla minhu ‘l-jibālu*”³². Al-Tabarī transmits more than ten different accounts supported by good *isnāds*, which speak to the effect that several Companions and Successors used to read that verse with *kāda* and *la-tazūlu*, thus reading “*wa in kāda makruhum la-tazūlu minhu al-jibālu*”. Two things should be mentioned here, the first is that this anomalous reading seems to have been very well circulated among the Companions and the Successors ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb, ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ubayy b. Ka‘b, Anas b. Mālik, Ibn ‘Abbās, and few other figures were reported to have had read that verse in its anomalous form. It is reported that this reading was written as such in the codex of Ibn Mas‘ūd. The second thing that needs to be mentioned is that the anomalous reading of

³⁰ (The Master of the Day of doom)

³¹ Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi‘*, 1/152-3, 157

³² (Though their devising were such as to remove mountains)

kāda brings with it the irregular reading of *la-tazūlu*. In the first canonical reading, “*in*” is a negation particle and the verse should be translated more properly to mean “their devising would not remove the mountains.” The *lām* preceding *tazūla* is *lām al-juhūd* (*lām* of denial) and the verb is in the subjunctive case.³³ On the other hand, in the anomalous reading of *kāda*, “*in*” is considered to be *mukhaffafah min al-thaqīlah* (The *an* that is lightened from the heavy form)³⁴ and the *lām* preceding *tazūlu* is *lām al-fāriqah* (the distinguishing *lām*) that usually accompanies *in al-mukhaffafah*.³⁵ What interests me here is the reading of al-Kisā’ī who read the verse with *kāna* and *la-tazūlu*, thus keeping the second portion of the anomalous reading *la-tazūlu*, which always coexisted with *kāda* and was never read with *kāna*. al-Tabarī objects to al-Kisā’ī’s reading by giving a grammatical reasoning as to how this *lām* of *la-tazūlu* cannot be *lām al-fāriqah* if the verse is read with *kāna*, as al-Kisā’ī did.³⁶ Al-Tabarī’s also argues that the consensus of the Qur’ān readers is to read the verse with *li-tazūla* and the irregular reading *la-tazūlu* is invalid since it goes against the consensus. One of the conclusions one can draw from this grammatical argument by al-Tabarī is the following: since it is grammatically incorrect to use *lām al-fāriqah* after *kāna*, the proper usage of this *lām* would be after *kāda*, and I suggest that al-Kisā’ī subconsciously presumed the anomalous reading of *kāda* and automatically brought with it the irregular reading of *la-tazūlu*. This is not surprising when, as we will shortly learn, the Qur’ān in Kūfah was still influenced by the pre-canonization Reading of Ibn Mas‘ūd up until the 2nd/8th century.

³³ Abū al-Fath Ibn Jinnī, *al-Muhtasab fī Tabyīn Wujūh Shawādhidh al-Qirā’āt wa al-Īdāh ‘anhā*, ed. Muhammad ‘Atā, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1998), 2/40-1, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Samīn al-Halabī, *al-Durr al-Masūn*, ed. Ahmad al-Kharrāt, (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, [n.d.]), 7/125-7.

³⁴ W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1996), 2/26.

³⁵ Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/41, al-Samīn al-Halabī, *al-Durr*, 7/125-7, Wright, *Grammar*, 2/26, 1/283.

³⁶ Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi‘*, 13\724.

Another piece of information we can draw from that passage is al-Tabarī's understanding of the notion of *ymāc*. He says that some people might wonder how could the reading of *li-tazūla* be considered as *ymāc* when many Companions and Successors have read *la-tazūlu*? Al-Tabarī responds by saying that the reading of *la-tazūlu* is valid only if one reads the verse with *kāda*, however, it is not permissible anymore to read the verse with the *kāda* variant because what is written in the *masāhif* now is *kāna* and not *kāda*. No one is allowed to change the script of the *masāhif* anymore, and Muslims must adhere to the reading of the majority of the *Qurrā'* and not be concerned with those who contradict (*shadhdha*) them. This statement is very important and several points must be assessed here:

- 1) According to al-Tabarī, regardless of how many sound and well-circulated accounts there exist which document a certain reading that does not agree with the *rasm* of the *mushaf*, these 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 in the case of Ibn Mas'ūd,³⁷ al-Tabarī explicitly acknowledges the validity of these accounts and offers the following reconciliation: those anomalous readings attributed to the Companions are not acceptable "to us" (*‘indanā*), simply because "our" *masāhif* are different from "their" *masāhif*. The Companions' readings might have been acceptable at their time because they might have had different codices from the

³⁷ See for example al-Bāqillānī's vehement defense of Ibn Mas'ūd and Ubayy b. Ka'b in his *Intisār*, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *al-Intisār li al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muhammad 'Āsīm al-Qudāt, (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2001), 1/61-2, 300/31, 267-78, 394-9. See also al-Sjistānī, *Masāhif*, 1/179-94, Abū Muhammad Ibn Hazm, *al-Fisal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Nihal*, ed. Muhammad Nasr and 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Umayrah, (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1996), 2/212.

ones we have now, therefore our *masāhif* cannot accommodate their anomalous readings. Consequently, we are forced to reject any reading that disagrees with the *rasm* of our current codices even if the sound historical accounts unequivocally document that it was a reading of the Companions.

- 2) The consensus according to al-Tabarī is to be understood as the consensus of the readers of the Qur’ān (*qara’at al-amsār*) and not the Muslim scholars or the Companions and the Successors. Al-Tabarī does not usually name the readers in his *tafsīr* upon commenting on the different readings of a certain verse. Instead, he uses phrases such as “the readers of Makkah and ‘Irāq, some Kūfans, the readers of Madīnah, some late readers, etc.” Nonetheless, when one reader contradicts the majority of the Qur’ān readers, al-Tabarī names him and states his opinion regarding that reading.
- 3) The rules of eloquent Arabic and proper grammar are major sources for al-Tabarī’s additional arguments for accepting or rejecting certain readings. A valid reading should exhibit eloquent (*fasīh*) syntax and not only show acceptable Arabic phrasing according to some dialect of Arabic, as later readers and scholars have suggested.³⁸ On Q (15:56) for example, al-Tabarī says “readers disagreed on “*wa man yaqni/at*”,³⁹ for the Medinese and the Kūfans read it with a *fathah* on the *nūn*, i.e. *yaqnat* except al-A‘mash and al-Kisā‘ī who both read it with a *kasrah* on the *nūn*, i.e. *yaqnit*. This latter reading ought to be the correct

³⁸ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, p. 79

³⁹ (And who despairs of)

one because *yaqnat* with a *fathah* on the *nūn* is not familiar in Arabic”⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the *rasm* of the *mushaf* and the consensus of the readers are still given the priority for al-Tabarī. The famous disagreement on Q (20:63) “*in/na hādhāni la sāhirāni*”,⁴¹ which does not agree with the *fasīh* Arabic, forced al-Tabarī to reject the proper ‘*arabiyyah*’ reading of Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’ who read “*inna hādhayni*”, since his reading disagrees with the *rasm* of the *mushaf* and contradicts the *ymā‘*. al-Tabarī also rejects the reading of “*in*” because the majority of the readers read “*inna*”⁴². He provides a grammatical explanation stating that this verse might be grammatically correct, but not *fasīh*, according to some Arabic dialects.⁴³ Therefore, according to al-Tabarī eloquent Arabic comes as a third criterion after the *rasm* of the *mushaf* and the consensus of the readers. Nevertheless, it plays an important role when al-Tabarī wants to dismiss a certain reading or favor one reading over another, even though those readings he rejects are attributed to well-known readers who became canonical later on.

The case of al-Tabarī gives us some insight regarding the circulation of readership and the criteria for accepting valid Qur’ānic readings in his time shortly before the official canonization of the variant readings by Ibn Mujāhid. We should notice that in al-Tabarī’s view, there are acceptable and correct readings, unacceptable and wrong readings, and readings that are neither correct nor wrong. Within all these categories, he does not speak of any divine source for these readings, for some readings are better

⁴⁰ al-Tabarī, *Jāmi‘*, 14/85-6

⁴¹ (These two men are sorcerers)

⁴² Nāfi‘, Ibn ‘Amir, Hamzah, al-Kisā‘ī, and ‘Āsim → Shu‘bah read “*inna*”, while Ibn Kathīr and ‘Āsim → Hafṣ read “*in*”, Ibn Mujāhid, *Kitāb al-Sab‘ah fī al-Qirā‘āt*, p. 419

⁴³ Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi‘*, 16/97-101

than others, and therefore they cannot be equal in status. There are several readings that used to be in circulation during the Companions' time, however these readings cannot be used anymore since they disagree with the current *rasm* of the *mushaf* and the current *ymāc* of the Qur'ān readers. Those readings were acceptable at the time, but not anymore.

One more thing must be noted about Al-Tabarī: he did not try to canonize or limit the Qur'ānic readings to an authoritative corpus. Al-Tabarī compared the different readings and tried to find the best choice based on the current *rasm* of the *mushaf*, the present-day *ymāc*, and proper Arabic grammar and syntax. On the other hand, he was neither politically powerful enough, nor theologically adamant enough, to enforce his own selection (*ikhtiyār*) upon the *qurrā'* of his time. His disagreement with the Hanbalīs, who were politically powerful at that time, and his confinement to his house after being accused of *shī'ism*⁴⁴ might have been behind his failure to create a Qirā'āt Canon.

Ibn Mujāhid and *Kitāb al-Sab'ah*

Two features generally characterize modern Arabic scholarship on Qirā'āt. First, it is apologetic in nature in being concerned with defending the validity and thus the divine nature of the canonical Readings and consequently the integrity of the Qur'ān. Second, it tries to establish a continuous tradition and a never-before-disputed consensus regarding the validity of the canonical Readings, a consensus that goes back long before Ibn Mujāhid. One of the important things we should note here is that the term *tawātur al-qirā'āt* does not appear in Ibn Mujāhid's terminology, either in his *Kitāb*

⁴⁴ F. Rosenthal, "General Introduction", in *The History of al-Tabarī*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 1/71-7. Cf. Shams al-Dīn Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1985), 14/277.

al-Sabʿah or in the biographical information recorded about him. According to his contemporary Muhammad Habash for example, Muslim scholars and the whole nation (*al-ummah*) agreed as early as the beginning of the 3rd/9th century to establish three conditions upon which the validity of any Qurʾānic reading could be decided, first, the reading must agree with the rules of *ʿArabiyyah*, second it must agree with the *rasm* of the *mushaf*, and third it must have an *isnād* that is characterized by *tawātur*.⁴⁵ It is needless to say that the term *tawātur al-qirāʾāt* came much later than Ibn Mujāhid, as we will see shortly. In his introduction to *Kitāb al-Sabʿah*, Shawqī Dayf tried to establish the conditions through which Ibn Mujāhid considered a reading to be valid. He stipulated the following conditions: agreement with the *rasm*, sound transmission, and agreement with Arabic grammar.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the phrases Dayf used are almost verbatim those that later Qirāʾāt scholars coined and which were “canonically” set by Ibn al-Jazarī in the 9th/15th century.⁴⁷ Dayf and many scholars after him already assumed that the “canonical” trio of conditions were also those of Ibn Mujāhid, whom they claimed to have believed in the *tawātur* and thus the divine nature of the canonical Readings. In the following section I suggest that Ibn Mujāhid stipulated different conditions to judge the validity of any Reading. I also try to reinterpret his selection of the Seven Readers and his position regarding the status and the source of the canonical Readings, (i.e. are they of divine or human nature).

Reconsidering Ibn Mujāhid’s criteria. *qirāʾāt* as legal rulings (*ahkām*)

⁴⁵ Habash, *al-Qirāʾāt al-Mutawātirah*, p. 70

⁴⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Al-Sabʿah*, p. 19

⁴⁷ Compare with Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, p. 79, *al-Nashr*, 1/9-14

Nowhere in Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt* does one find an explicit statement on the criteria according to which he chose the seven eponymous Readers⁴⁸ We also do not know if the other readers he excluded from his selection did not satisfy the conditions he set for himself or if their exclusion was simply a matter of selection (*ikhtiyār*) and preference The seven Readers Ibn Mujāhid chose to represent the valid canonical Readings are the following Ibn Kathīr (d 120/737) the Meccan, Nāfi' (d 169/785) the Medinese, Ibn 'Āmir (d 118/736) the Damascene, Abū 'Amr Ibn al-'Alā' (d 154/770) the Basran, 'Āsim b Abī al-Najūd (d 127/744), al-Kisā'ī (d 189/804) and his teacher Hamzah al-Zayyāt (d 156/772), the Kūfans There were also several well-established and authoritative readers besides those seven According to Ibn al-Jazarī, Abū Ja'far Yazīd b al-Qa'qā' (d 130/747), Ibn Muhaysin (d 123/740), al-A'mash (d 148/765), Ya'qūb al-Hadramī (d 205/820), al-Hasan al-Basrī (d 110/728), and many others were as famous and credible as those seven⁴⁹ Before I get into the scholars' reaction to Ibn Mujāhid's establishment of the seven canonical Readings, I will explore in detail what he himself says in the introduction of *al-Sab'ah* I intend this section to be a close study of the introduction of *Kitāb al-Sab'ah* in order to figure out Ibn Mujāhid's criteria for a valid and acceptable Reading

Ibn Mujāhid compares the differences of the *qirā'āt* and the disagreements among the readers with the disagreements and differences among the *ahkām* (legal

⁴⁸ The book starts with a general introduction on the variant readings of the Qur'ān and the characteristics of a good and trustworthy reader Several Prophetic traditions are quoted on the subject after which Ibn Mujāhid introduces the seven eponymous Readers and their main transmitters, their biographies, anecdotes about them, and his own chains of transmission down to each Reader, Ibn Mujāhid, *al-Sab'ah*, pp 45-101

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, pp 215-6

rulings) “*ikhtalafa al-nās fī al-qirā’ah kamā ikhtalafū fī al-ahkām*”⁵⁰ This short and underdeveloped phrase is a very important statement that was not given much attention. Ibn Mujāhid remarks that people’s disagreement on the *qirā’āt* is similar to their disagreement on the *ahkām*. This also includes the different traditions and accounts, related to both the *qirā’āt* and the *ahkām*, transmitted on behalf of the Companions and Successors. One should keep in mind, as we shall see later on, that later scholars stipulated the acceptance of “all” the seven and the ten Readings without denying a single individual reading in any of those canonical systems. The seven and the ten Readings are held of divine nature, i.e. they are all Qur’ānic, including single variants upon which Readers disagreed, for those Readings in their entirety yield necessary knowledge (*‘ilm darūrī*)⁵¹. I do not believe that this was the position of Ibn Mujāhid, for if the disagreements on *ahkām* and *qirā’āt* are of similar nature, those disagreements are therefore the outcome of *iytihād* on the part of the scholars. Such *iytihād*, both in *ahkām* and *qirā’āt*, is not based on opinion only, it is also based on *āthār*, i.e. Prophetic traditions and accounts from the Companions and the Successors. Scholars disagree on *ahkām* because they disagree on interpreting the traditions. They also disagree on the different criteria and standards according to which they derive their legal rulings and establish their precedence. The above statement by Ibn Mujāhid drives me to conclude that he believed that the same process must have taken place with *qirā’āt* as with the *ahkām*. The Qur’ān readers, just like the *fuqahā’*, judged the traditions and the *āthār* and chose a corpus in which they included choices of the readings they believed to be the most probably correct, or in other words the closest to

⁵⁰ Ibn Mujāhid, *al-Sab‘ah*, p. 45

⁵¹ This is a summary of the *fatwā* by ‘Abd al-Wahāb al-Subkī quoted by Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, pp. 174-5. The notions of necessary knowledge and *tawātur* will be explored in more detail in chapter three.

the *sharī'ah*⁵² No one argues that “all” the different legal rulings by the four legal schools are canonical and correct, and that the differences among the *madhāhib* are of divine nature, i.e. the Prophet himself declared and practiced all these different and often contradictory *ahkām*. By the same token, no one should argue that the Prophet read the Qur’ān in all the seven and the ten Readings, as later Muslim scholars vehemently argued⁵³ I will get back to this point later in this chapter when I show how the status of *qirā’āt* moved from a legal ruling (*hukm*) to a Prophetic tradition (*hadīth*)

Going back to the introduction of *al-Sab‘ah*, Ibn Mujāhid describes the characteristics of a good Qur’ān reader: solid foundation in the Arabic language and extensive knowledge of the other different readings - compare how a *faqīh* should be aware of the rulings of other *fuqahā’* before he establishes his own ruling; he should have awareness and knowledge of the traditions (*āthār*) on *qirā’āt* and finally a critical understanding of the meaning of the verses he is reading⁵⁴ These are the characteristics of a trustworthy reader who must possess all four characteristics, otherwise the reader could be impugned. Therefore, a credible reader should be aware of how the other readers are currently reading the text and how they have read it before. This presumes that a trustworthy reader must be aware of all the disagreements among the Qur’ān Readers who, theoretically at least, read only according to what the Companions and Successors have taught the community to read. A reader who brings up a reading that is not based on what the trustworthy readers have read before is a *mubtadi‘* (innovator). Ibn Mujāhid lists several traditions that support this argument,

⁵² *Fiqh* is the means to discover the true purposes of *sharī'ah* (*maqāsid al-sharī'ah*)

⁵³ Read the extensive discussion on this topic and refer to the classical sources cited in al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/351-378, Cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Fatāwā*, 13/212-3

⁵⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *al-Sab‘ah*, p. 45-6

and he again compares between *qirā'āt* and *ahkām* by saying that both disciplines comprise practices upon which a consensus was established and other practices that were abandoned and rejected. Ibn Mujāhid says that the readings of the people of al-Madīnah, Makkah, Kūfah, al-Basrah and Damascus at the time are what they have learned from the trustworthy Successors who taught them those readings. There existed a few brilliant Readers who studied directly with the Successors where a unanimous agreement was established among the corpus of the Qur'ān readers, both the elite and the common readers, to adhere to and follow the reading of those few brilliant Readers.⁵⁵ One should notice here the vital role *ymā'c* played, a role that was ignored later on and replaced by sound transmission. I will shortly discuss this matter in more detail.

Ibn Mujāhid moves to another topic where he again lists several traditions stating that reading the Qur'ān is *sunnah* (*al-qirā'ah sunnah*) and that one should read only as he was taught.⁵⁶ Once more, this analogy suggests that Ibn Mujāhid regards the *qirā'āt* as legal rulings that are largely established by *sunnah*. So far, nothing is said about *tawātur* and Ibn Mujāhid is not keen to demonstrate the sound transmission of the different Readings from the eponymous Readers down to the Prophet. For example, he says that Ibn Kathīr studied with Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 104/722) who studied with Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687) who studied with Ubayy b. Ka'b (d. 30/650).⁵⁷ This is the only *isnād* we have for Ibn Kathīr's Reading and several other canonical Readings, as we will see shortly. This limited documentation of the chains of transmission of the canonical Readings either shows lack of information or indifference towards documenting the

⁵⁵ Ibn Mujāhid, *al-Sab'ah*, p. 48-9

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 49-52

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 64-5

canonical Readings with multiple *isnāds*. If it were the former, why did some scholars not try to fabricate more *isnāds*, as was done in Hadīth scholarship? And if it were the latter, what makes Qirā'āt documentation different from that of Hadīth?⁵⁸ In my opinion, what was more important to Ibn Mujāhid is that the Meccans, in the case of Ibn Kathīr, agreed on and accepted his Reading, and therefore the chain of transmission of his Reading is of second value after the *ymā'* to adhere to Ibn Kathīr's Reading was established. The concept of *sunnah* is important here - by utilizing it Ibn Mujāhid moves the Qirā'āt discipline away from the domain of Hadīth and draws it closer to the domain of Fiqh. As legal rulings vary from one region to another according to the specific *sunnah* established there,⁵⁹ a Qur'ānic reading might also vary from one place to another according to the *sunnah* established in that region as to how the people were taught to recite that reading.

Ibn Mujāhid's criteria for the selection of the Seven Readers

As I have mentioned before, Ibn Mujāhid did not explicitly state his criteria for what constitutes a valid and acceptable Reading, neither did he specify the reasons for which he specifically chose Seven Readers. Later Muslim scholars tried to apply to Ibn Mujāhid's selection the formulaic three-condition set for a valid canonical Reading, i.e. *'arabiyyah*, *rasm* and sound *isnād/tawātur*, however I argue that the last condition was not as important to Ibn Mujāhid as the *ymā'* of the Qur'ān readers. My second argument is that Ibn Mujāhid did not intend to limit the canonical Readings to the specific

⁵⁸ Melchert touched upon this subject in a recent article that explored the similarities among the Ten canonical Readings in terms of the content of the transmission, Ch. Melchert, "The relation of the ten readings to one another", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 10/2 (2008), pp. 73-87, "Ibn Mujāhid", pp. 7-11.

⁵⁹ For more insight on *sunnah* and the living tradition, see J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, (Oxford 1950), pp. 58-81.

number seven and that his exclusion of the other well-established readers was methodical and consistent. It might be possible to establish rules according to which the conditions of *‘arabiyyah*, *rasm* and sound *isnād* could be fulfilled, but how can one determine the criteria for *sunnah* and *ymā‘*? Nonetheless, a syntactical structure might be proven to be more eloquent than another, and some *isnāds* are naturally stronger than others. However, are there acceptable and unacceptable *sunnahs*, and who can determine that except the people of a certain region who follow that *sunnah*? “A” *sunnah* is a practice that was taught and established by the Companions and the Successors. That which defines a *sunnah* or a practice in al-Madīnah is different from that which defines a *sunnah* in al-Kūfah. The same logic could be applied to the *qirā‘āt*, assuming that Ibn Mujāhid treats them as *ahkām* and *sunan*. According to this understanding of Ibn Mujāhid’s logic, a Qur’ānic reading cannot be bound by definitive and rigid conditions. Adhering to the *rasm* and following the proper rules of Arabic were already accepted principles by *qurrā’ al-amsār*, a pre-Ibn Mujāhid movement. The term itself *qurrā’ al-amsār* denotes readers who adhere to the ‘Uthmānic codices. Nevertheless, the third important condition for Ibn Mujāhid is the *ymā‘* and the adherence to the *sunnah*, as exercised by the Successors and the Companions. A good *isnād* is important but *ymā‘* is more important for establishing a sound *isnād*. However, disagreeing with the *jamā‘ah* (community) does not suffice to determine an acceptable reading, and the case of Ibn Shanabūdh testifies to this.⁶⁰ Documenting the *isnād* of an eponymous Reading is important for establishing the authority and qualifications of the Reader as valid. It is more or less similar to obtaining a degree diploma today.

⁶⁰ Paret, R, “Ibn Shanabūdh”, *EF*, Noldeke, *GdQ*, 3/110-2, Melchert, “Ibn Mujāhid ”, pp 20-21

Therefore, the *isnād* in the transmission of the Qirā'āt is different from that of the Hadīth without which a tradition would be automatically dismissed. The *isnād* of a Qirā'ah serves as a certification of the Reader while the *isnād* of an *hadīth* serves as its backbone without which the *hadīth* cannot exist.

Obtaining an *isnād* certificate testifies to one's credibility as a reader, however, it does not allow him to come up with any single reading that contradicts the *sunnah* and the *ymāc*, both of which are adhered to by the majority of the *qurrā'* community. What happened to Ibn Shanabūdh and the other readers who kept reciting the *shawādh* readings, is a good example for the above argument. By the 3rd/9th century, the consensus of the Qur'ān readers was to abandon those *shawādh* readings despite the fact that trustworthy readers such as Ibn Shanabūdh⁶¹ kept reciting them. His Reading was in agreement with proper Arabic and was supported by sound transmissions and authentic traditions (*āthār*) from the Companions and Successors. It is true that some of his readings did not agree with the 'Uthmānic *rasm*, however, it was more important that those readings violated the consensus of the community of the *qurrā'*, who had already agreed to abandon the *shawādh* readings after the official codification of the Qur'ān.

The Selection of the Seven

There is still no definitive answer as to why Ibn Mujāhid chose specifically seven eponymous Readers and whether he intended to match the number of the Readers to

⁶¹ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 2/49-52, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, ed. Tayyār Altīqūlāg (Istānbūl: Turkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Islām Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1995), 2/546-553.

the seven *ahruf* of the aforementioned *hadīth* ⁶² I will closely examine the introduction of Ibn Mujāhid's *al-Sab'ah* in order to analyze his opinions directly without the influence of the later scholarship on this matter. One should first keep in mind that by the 3rd/9th century, the dominant opinion among Muslims was that the number of *masāhif al-amsār*⁶³ was five. There are references to the fact that *masāhif al-amsār* at that time, i.e. 3rd/9th century, were kept in the five major Islamic capitals: al-Madīnah, Makkah, al-Basrah, Dimashq, and al-ʿIrāq. Al-Sijistānī, for example, enumerates the scribal differences among the *masāhif* of the aforementioned five cities ⁶⁴

When Ibn Mujāhid lists his eponymous Readers to talk about each of them individually, he mentions several accounts that speak of the Reader's trustworthiness and knowledge. He picks one Reader from each city of the five *amsār* except al-Kūfah/al-ʿIrāq from which he chooses three Readers. While Ibn Mujāhid is fully aware of other authoritative and trustworthy readers in the five capitals, he still provides the same reasoning for selecting one Reader only from each city. This one-Reader only selection is always justified by accounts that speak of the consensus established by the *qurrā'* community in each city to adhere to and recite the Qur'ān according to that Reader's system of Reading. For instance, Ibn Mujāhid says that Abū Ja'far Yazīd b. al-Qa'qā' was an unrivaled *Imām* in *qirā'āt* during his time whose Reading adhered to the *sunnah*. However, Ibn Mujāhid selects Nāfi' instead of Abū Ja'far, a selection supported by many other accounts that also testify to Nāfi's adherence to the *sunnah*, but most

⁶² Refer to chapter one for the discussion on the *sab'at ahruf*

⁶³ *masāhif al-amsār* always refer to the official copies of the Qur'ān, which ʿUthmān sent to the major Islamic capitals after he codified the Qur'ān

⁶⁴ al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Masāhif*, ed. Wāʿiẓ, 2/424

importantly by the fact that that the current and dominant Reading of the people of al-Madīnah and its community of the *qurrā'* is that of Nāfi^c and not Abū Ja^cfar⁶⁵

The case of Makkah is no different than al-Madīnah Ibn Mujāhid states that the Meccans agreed to adopt and adhere to Ibn Kathīr's Reading, it was a consensus of the Meccans and the community of its *qurrā'* There were other authoritative and trustworthy readers at the time such as Ibn Muhaysin (d 123/740),⁶⁶ yet Ibn Mujāhid says that Ibn Muhaysin disagreed in some readings with his Meccan colleagues, who generally did not concur with his Reading as much as they concurred with Ibn Kathīr's⁶⁷ This is enough of a satisfactory reason for Ibn Mujāhid to exclude Ibn Muhaysin and choose Ibn Kathīr as the representative Reader of Makkah

The same reasons are applied to the selections of Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' the Basran and Ibn 'Āmir the Damascene It is said that Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' became the chief Reader of al-Basrah even though the well-known and trustworthy al-Hasan al-Basrī, of the fourteen Readers, was still alive Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' followed the *āthār* (traditions) and the *sunnah* and barely disagreed or contradicted the readings of the *Imāms* before him⁶⁸ Therefore, he adhered to and respected the *ymāc'* of the *qurrā'* community Ibn Mujāhid also mentions that there were other well-known readers in al-Basrah, however they were not as authoritative as Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' to whose Reading the Basrans have adhered To be more precise, Ibn Mujāhid does not actually say "all" Basrans, but

⁶⁵ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 56-63

⁶⁶ Ibn Muhaysin entered the system of the fourteen Readers established by al-Dīmyātī (d 1117/1705) However, Ibn Muhaysin along with al-Hasan al-Basrī, al-Yazīdī, and al-'Ā'mash were never accepted as canonical Readers Their Readings are still considered to be *shawādh*, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Dīmyātī, *Ithāf Fudalā' al-Bashar bi al-Qirā'āt al-Arba'at 'Ashar*, ed Sha'bān Muhammad Ismā'īl, (Beirut 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1987), 1/65

⁶⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 65

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp 79-81

rather most of them (*aktharuhum*)⁶⁹ Canvassing the majority and deciding on whom the *ymāʿ* is strongest play the decisive roles in determining Ibn Mujāhid's selection for the representative Reader of al-Basrah. The same holds for Ibn ʿĀmir the Damascene, as Ibn Mujāhid clearly states that the majority of the people in al-Shām/Syria follow the Reading of Ibn ʿĀmir.⁷⁰

We arrive at the problematic selection of three Readers from al-ʿIrāq/al-Kūfah, which is politically, socially and historically more complex than the other four capitals. Ibn Mujāhid starts by saying that the early Kūfans used to read the Qurʾān according to the “early” Reading of Ibn Masʿūd, i.e. his pre-ʿUthmānic Reading. Ibn Masʿūd's disciples continued to recite this early Reading and teach it among the Kūfans. An account on the authority of al-Aʿmash (d. 61/148) states that only very few Kūfans (*al-rajul wa al-rajulān*) were reciting the Qurʾān in accordance with ʿUthmān's official codices.⁷¹ We also read that the Kūfans by the middle of the 1st/7th century were familiar “only” with the Reading of Ibn Masʿūd.⁷² Ibn Mujāhid then tells us that the first Companion who started teaching the Qurʾān among the Kūfans according to the post-codification Readings was Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 73-4/692-3) who installed himself in the grand mosque of Kūfah to teach people the Qurʾān. After forty years of teaching in Kūfah, al-Sulamī was succeeded by his student ʿĀsim b. Abī al-Najūd (d. 127/744), the eponymous Reader.⁷³

One of the important elements that should be noticed here is this short historical prelude to the status of Qurʾān reading in Kūfah. Unlike the other four cities

⁶⁹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p. 84

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66-7

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 67

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 68-9

about which Ibn Mujāhid does not seem compelled to offer any historical background on the status of Qur'ān reading, al-Kūfah presents a complex situation. Moreover, contrary to those four capitals, al-ʿIrāq and specifically al-Kūfah did not have one single dominant Reading to which the majority of the readers adhered. According to the historical background presented by Ibn Mujāhid, we know that by the time of the eponymous Reader ʿĀsim b. Abī al-Najūd, the Reading of Ibn Masʿūd was still in circulation and commonly recited by Kūfans. Ibn Mujāhid gives the names of several trustworthy and credible Kūfan readers who were still reciting the Qur'ān according to Ibn Masʿūd's pre-ʿUthmānic Reading.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, in Ibn Mujāhid's opinion and according to the majority of the Qur'ān readers, scholars, and the Muslim community, the Reading of Ibn Masʿūd was not a valid and acceptable Reading anymore for it departed from the *ymāʿ*. Consequently, Ibn Mujāhid disregards the Kūfan readers who were still following the *harf* of Ibn Masʿūd and chooses ʿĀsim instead. With the selection of ʿĀsim, Ibn Mujāhid faces a problem: the Reading of ʿĀsim was followed by "some" Kūfans only. ʿĀsim's Reading was far from being the dominant Reading in Kūfah and only one part of the Kūfan community adhered to and followed his Reading.⁷⁵

That second aspect of the early weak support for the Reading of ʿĀsim in al-Kūfah again shows how this city differed from the other four capitals, thus forcing Ibn Mujāhid to choose more than one Reader to represent al-Kūfah. In other words, there was no one dominant Reading in al-Kūfah at the time, on which the majority of the Kūfan community agreed. Ibn Mujāhid turns to Hamzah al-Zayyāt, whose Reading in al-Kūfah was widely circulated and more popular than ʿĀsim's. Several points must be

⁷⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p. 66

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71

noted here Hamzah learned his Reading from many Successors and trustworthy Qur'ān readers, however, his two most important teachers were al-A'ash and Ibn Abī Laylā. Al-A'ash was the heir of the pre-ʿUthmānic Reading of Ibn Masʿūd whereas Ibn Abī Laylā was the heir of the post-ʿUthmānic Reading of ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib. Ibn Mujāhid stresses the fact that Hamzah departed from al-A'ash only in the readings that disagreed with the *rasm*.⁷⁶ Essentially this means that Hamzah filtered out the anomalous readings of Ibn Masʿūd and followed the rest of his Reading, which agreed with the codified script. The following statement is very significant in describing an important feature of Hamzah's Reading vis-à-vis Ibn Masʿūd's. Hamzah used to *yaʿtabir* (analyze, test, and judge something based on proper analogy) the pre-ʿUthmānic Reading of Ibn Masʿūd,⁷⁷ which means that Hamzah was conversant with that Reading to the extent of being critical about its particulars. Any anomalous reading by Ibn Masʿūd was readily rejected by Hamzah who then considered its counterpart in the allegedly post-codification Reading of Ibn Masʿūd.

According to Ibn Mujāhid, Hamzah's Reading dominated Kūfah, however, there were still some Kūfans who disliked his Reading. Those Kūfans criticized and impugned Hamzah and even belittled him.⁷⁸ Once more, we encounter a non-consensual statement about an eponymous Reader, which has no parallel to the eponymous Readers of the other four capitals. For instance, Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241/855) was known for his loathing of some aspects of Hamzah's Reading, while Abū Bakr b. ʿAyyāsh said that his Reading was an innovation (*bidʿah*). Many notable scholars considered the prayer to be invalid if the Qur'ānic verses were recited according to Hamzah's

⁷⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 71-4

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 73

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 76-7

Reading⁷⁹ It was also said that Hamzah was not skilled at Arabic and that he used to make a lot of grammatical mistakes⁸⁰

For the second time Ibn Mujāhid faces a problem in his selection. In the first choice, the Reading of ʿĀsim was not well circulated and only few Kūfans followed it. On the other hand, the second choice of Hamzah was also problematic, for even though his Reading was widespread and common among Kūfans, many trustworthy and authoritative Kūfan readers still disliked his Reading. al-Dhahabī says that at an earlier stage many people refused Hamzah's Reading, however, the *ymāʿ* accepts it nowadays⁸¹. Once more, we notice the important role that the *ymāʿ* played in the inclusion of a Reading in the canon. Furthermore, a Reading such as Hamzah's was able to move from the status of an innovation (*bidʿah*) to canonical and divine status in less than one hundred years.

Being aware of such criticism against Hamzah, Ibn Mujāhid finalizes his list of the Kūfan Readers and lastly turns to al-Kisāʿī, a solid grammarian whose knowledge of Arabic grammar no one could doubt. As Hamzah's student, al-Kisāʿī followed his teacher's Reading system in moderation and covered his shortcomings in Arabic grammar. Al-Kisāʿī became an authority on *Qirāʾāt* scholarship, and people used to mark and annotate their personal copies of the *Qurʾān* when he recited in public⁸².

That being said, al-Kūfah proved to be more complex than Dimashq, Makkah, al-Madīnah, and al-Basrah. Being the center of interacting and contending intellectual, political, theological, and sectarian factions before the establishment of Baghdad in

⁷⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Maʿrifat al-Qurrāʾ al-Kibār*, 1/250-9

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 1/260

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 1/255

⁸² Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 78-9

145/762,⁸³ it is not surprising to see the lack of “a” consensus among Kūfans. Getting all the competing factions and the adroit scholars of Kūfah to agree on and adhere to one Reading only was a difficult, if not an impossible task. Selecting more than one eponymous Reader from al-Kūfah was inevitable for Ibn Mujāhid, nonetheless, the question remains whether he was predetermined to establish Seven Readers or it was only chance that the number seven echoed the *sabʿat ahruf*. I believe that the case of al-Kūfah with its complexity, diversity, and the effects of the roles of Ibn Masʿūd and Hamzah forced Ibn Mujāhid to include three Readers to be collectively the representatives of al-Kūfah. Thus, it was probably inevitable that Ibn Mujāhid’s Readers came to be seven. I believe that if Ibn Mujāhid had found one Reader among the three Kūfan Readers upon whom the majority of the Kūfans agreed, he would have chosen that Reader alone to represent al-Kūfah, as he did with the other four capitals. If Ibn Mujāhid’s predetermined goal was to select exactly seven Readers, why did he not choose two Readers from some other city? Why would al-Kūfah stand out with three eponymous Readers while the rest of the major cities are represented by one Reader each? I believe that because al-Kūfah was a complex and problematic case, Ibn Mujāhid was forced to choose three Kūfan Readers, one of whom—namely Hamzah—was less highly regarded than some other well respected non-Kūfan Readers such as Abū Jaʿfar al-Madanī of whom Ibn Mujāhid speaks highly.⁸⁴

To conclude this section before I move on to Muslim scholars’ reaction to Ibn Mujāhid’s selection, I want to highlight the aspect of a *qirāʾah* as both *sunnah* and similar to a *hukm* from Ibn Mujāhid’s perspective. In that sense, one might be able to

⁸³ See Hichem Djait, “al-Kūfah”, *EI*²

⁸⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p. 56

conceive of *Kitāb al-Sabʿah* as an *ikhtilāf* (disagreement/diversity) work. The book was not meant to present all the Qurʾānic readings as being *wahy* (revelation), as later *Qirāʾāt* scholars presumed. Instead, *Kitāb al-Sabʿah* is similar to a work on the disagreements among the lawyers (*ikhtilāf al-fuqahāʾ*),⁸⁵ where the writer would mention the disagreements on a *hukm* among the main representatives of the different schools of *fiqh* and provide the argument (*hujjah*) for each school, something that Ibn Mujāhid often did in his book when he stated the Reader's *hujjah* for reading a verse in a different way. In Q (1 4) “*ma/āliki*” for example, Ibn Mujāhid lists the different readings of the verse and mentions each Reader's logical, theological and philological evidence “*wa hujjat man qaraʿa*”⁸⁶. This approach of trying to defend the legitimacy of a reading by means of argumentation is similar to exploring the validity of a *hukm* through reasoning and justification as well. This is very different from the later approach to *qirāʾāt*, which considered them all to be divine revelations recited by Jibrīl and acknowledged by the Prophet. Such an approach consecrates the canonical Readings and does not allow arguments or reasoning to prove or disprove their validity. To prove my point, the arguments quoted by Ibn Mujāhid in regard to the aforementioned Q (1 4) are dropped in Ibn al-Jazarī's *Qirāʾāt* work.⁸⁷ Ibn al-Jazarī is not concerned with which argument is stronger because all the canonical Readings are divine down to every single constituent reading.

⁸⁵ Some of the works that belong to this genre are al-Tabarī's *Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahāʾ*, al-Dabbūsī's *Taʾsis al-Nazar*, al-Ūzāʿī's *Ikhtilāf Abī Hanīfah wa Ibn Abī Laylā*, al-Tahāwī's *Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahāʾ*, and many other titles that can be referred to in Abū Jaʿfar al-Tabarī, *Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahāʾ*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, [n.d.]), pp. 6-8.

⁸⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p. 104.

⁸⁷ Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr* 1/371-2.

Had Ibn Mujāhid or the seven Readers themselves believed that the variant readings were of divine nature, they would not have tried to argue for or against a certain reading. The very fact that the literature of *‘ilal al-qirā’āt*⁸⁸ (Justification of the readings) has developed since the 2nd/8th century⁸⁹ indicates the need to provide grammatical and syntactical proofs, which offer arguments that assess the superiority of one reading over another. In the same manner, the *fuqahā’* argue among themselves by discussing, criticizing, refuting, and even yielding to one another’s *ahkām*, for there are no absolute proofs that this or that legal ruling was acknowledged or rejected by the Prophet. The *fuqahā’* try to comprehend and determine the *sharī‘ah* rules set and laid down by God through their devised principles of law (*usūl al-fiqh*), which comprise Qur’ān, traditions, *ymā‘* and *qiyās* (analogy). They agree on some points but disagree on others. Similarly, I believe that Ibn Mujāhid and the readers in his time were also trying to determine the “*sharī‘ah*” of the Qur’ān laid down by God, i.e. the closest way in which the Prophet read the Qur’ān as it was revealed to him. The *qurrā’* were attempting to do this through principles of reading (*usūl al-qirā’ah*), which comprise following the teachings of the Successors and Companions, transmitting and studying the different traditions that discuss the Qur’ānic variants, establishing some kind of *ymā‘* among the

⁸⁸ Also called *tawjīh al-qirā’āt*

⁸⁹ Justifying the different readings and providing arguments for and against certain readings started very early on with the eponymous Readers themselves, as the biographical sources indicate. Works such as *Maf‘ānī al-Qur’ān* by al-Farrā’, al-Akhfash, and al-Zajjāj are abundant with examples on the different readings of a verse and the grammatical justification of each reading. After Ibn Mujāhid wrote his *Kitāb al-Sab‘ah*, the genre of *tawjīh al-qirā’āt* or *‘ilal al-qirā’āt* started to solely focus on the justification of each variant reading on basis of grammar, syntax, semantics, and sometimes theology. The most important of these works are *al-Qirā’āt wa ‘ilal al-Nahwiyyīn fihā* by al-Azharī (d. 370/980), *Hujjat al-Qirā’āt* by Ibn Zanjalah (d. 403/1012), *‘Irāb al-Qirā’āt al-Sab‘ wa ‘ilaluhā* by Ibn Khālawayhī (d. 370/980), *al-Hujjah li al-Qurrā’ al-Sab‘ah ‘immat al-Amsār bi al-Hiyāz wa al-‘Irāq wa al-Shām alladhīna dhakarāhum Ibn Mujāhid* by al-Farīsī (d. 377/987), etc., Muhammad Sālīm Muhaysin, *al-Mughnī fī Tawjīh al-Qirā’āt al-‘Ashr al-Mutawātirah*, (Beirut Dār al-Jīl, 1988), 1/7-17

readers, following the proper rules of Arabic grammar and syntax, and adhering to the ʿUthmānic consonantal text (*rasm*). Similarly, the *qurrāʾ* agreed on some readings but disagreed on others. Ibn Mujāhid’s role was to enumerate all those similar and different readings in his book, which aimed at including the most common and representative readings of his time.

Qirāʾāt post Ibn Mujāhid

Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Rāzī (d. 454/1062) states in a treatise often quoted in Ibn al-Jazarī’s *Munjid al-Muqriʾin*, that scholars and Qurʾān readers before Ibn Mujāhid’s canonization of the seven Readings selected five Readers and consented to follow their Readings. This phenomenon was called *bidʿat al-amsār al-khamsah* (the innovation of the five-city reading canon)⁹⁰. One Reader only was selected from each city/capital to which ʿUthmān dispatched the official copies of the codified Qurʾān. Those Readers were Ibn Kathīr (d. 120/737) the Meccan, Nāfiʿ (d. 169/785) the Medinese, Ibn ʿĀmir (d. 118/736) the Damascene, Abū ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAlāʾ (d. 154/770) the Basran, and ʿĀsim b. Abī al-Najūd (d. 127/744) the Kūfan. Al-Rāzī then says that Ibn Mujāhid observed how meticulous and industrious al-Kisāʾī (d. 189/804) and his teacher Hamzah al-Zayyāt (d. 156/772) were. They both devoted most of their time to authenticate the transmission of the Qurʾānic readings in order to achieve precision and exactitude. As a result, Ibn Mujāhid decided to add both of them to the five Readers of the *amsār* even though it is said that he hesitated for a long time before choosing between al-Kisāʾī and the Basran Yaʿqūb al-Hadramī (d. 205/820). According to al-Rāzī, Ibn Mujāhid preferred

⁹⁰ It was probably called an innovation because variant readings of the Qurʾān were never determined by *sunnah* or tradition. The term *bidʿah* by itself is another indication that early Muslim scholars were treating the discipline of Qirāʾāt from a legal/*fiqh* perspective.

al-Kisā'ī to Ya'qūb because Ibn Mujāhid had a shorter—thus “higher” (*isnād ʿālī*) and more reliable—chain of transmission down to al-Kisā'ī (*isnād ʿālī*), which he lacked with his transmission of Ya'qūb's Reading that Ibn Mujāhid did not have an all-inclusive transmission of its particular single readings⁹¹

As I have shown in the previous section, I do not believe that the above statements by Abū al-Faḍl al-Rāzī, and consequently Ibn al-Jazarī's arguments based on those statements, represent Ibn Mujāhid's views on the nature of the *Qirā'āt* and the selection of the seven Readers he made. As a matter of fact, the notion of the innovation (*bid'ah*) of the five-city reading canon, i.e. Makkah, al-Madīnah, Dimashq, al-Basrah, and al-Kūfah, aptly fits my interpretation of Ibn Mujāhid and the early Muslim scholars' perspective on the discipline of *Qirā'āt* as being closer to legal rulings and *sunnah* rather than to Prophetic traditions that necessitate authentication through sound *isnāds*.⁹² The notion of *bid'ah* in itself naturally suggests going against the *sunnah*.⁹³ Canonizing the variant readings was an act that violated the *sunnah* of the Prophet, the Companions, and the Successors, some of whom read in ways that became rejected by the new Canon, a *bid'ah* that dictated conforming to the ʿUthmānic consonantal outline, correct Arabic grammar and the *ymāʿ* of the Qur'ān readers. From what we have seen before, it is unlikely in my opinion that Ibn Mujāhid, as Abū al-Faḍl al-Rāzī suggests, hesitated to choose between al-Kisā'ī and Ya'qūb al-Hadramī as the seventh eponymous Reader in his canonical selection. Ibn Mujāhid clearly stated that Ya'qūb al-Hadramī (ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Ishāq) is inferior to Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlā' and that

⁹¹ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, p. 221

⁹² Melchert studied the correlation between Hadīth and *Qirā'āt* transmitters and concluded that there is a fine separation between the two disciplines, Melchert, “Ibn Mujāhid”, pp. 7-11

⁹³ On *bid'ah* and its relation to *sunnah*, see the sources cited in J. Robson, “*bid'ah*”, *Et*

the majority of the Basrans at the time were reading the Qur'ān according to Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā's Reading⁹⁴ Ibn Mujāhid had no reason to consider including al-Hadramī in his selection and I believe that al-Rāzī's assumptions are flawed Only under the assumption that Ibn Mujāhid was simply trying to establish a seven-Reading canon is one entitled to assume his indifference to choosing between al-Kisā'ī and Ya'qūb al-Hadramī According to the data available to Ibn Mujāhid, the *ymā'* in Basrah was clearly established around Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā This fact was more than sufficient to exclude Ya'qūb from the list of the canonical Readers, as Ibn Mujāhid worked to include only the Readers on whom the *ymā'* of the five capitals was unequivocally established But since 'Āsim's Reading in al-Kūfah did not enjoy the same level of *ymā'* as the Readings of Ibn Kathīr, Nāfi', Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā, and Ibn 'Āmir, Ibn Mujāhid was compelled to add two more Readers to represent al-Kūfah collectively Thus he abrogated *bid'at al-amsār al-khamsah*⁹⁵

Ibn Mujāhid's decision to limit the canonical Readings to seven only evoked huge tension among Muslim scholars from the 4th/10th century on That being said, we still cannot be absolutely certain that Ibn Mujāhid did not intend, at least subconsciously, to attain the number "seven" for the selected canonical Readings, and therefore retroactively vindicate, or simply honor, the Prophetic tradition of the *sab'at ahruf*⁹⁶ Ibn al-Jazarī unequivocally states that Ibn Mujāhid's true intention was to have

⁹⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 84

⁹⁵ On the role of *ymā'* as a condition to the validity of a Reading before Ibn Mujāhid especially during al-Tabarī's time, see F Leemhuis, "The Readings of the Qur'ān", *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān (EQ)*, Jeffery, "The Qur'ān Readings of Ibn Mīqām", 1/1-2

⁹⁶ Refer to chapter one for a more detailed discussion on the *sab'at ahruf* tradition

the seven Readings correspond to the *sabʿat ahruf* and ʿUthmān’s seven codices⁹⁷ On the other hand, he is certain that Ibn Mujāhid could not have believed or even considered the possibility that the seven *ahruf* “are” the seven Readings, as many people have later on⁹⁸

Abū al-Fadl al-Rāzī explains the urge of Muslim scholars to add more Readings to Ibn Mujāhid’s canonical seven in order to eliminate all doubt as to the non-identity of the seven Readings and the seven *ahruf*⁹⁹ Shortly after Ibn Mujāhid, compilations of eight,¹⁰⁰ ten,¹⁰¹ and beyond ten Readings,¹⁰² started to appear more often Criticism of Ibn Mujāhid’s seven-Reading canon became more disparaging and condescending, Muslim scholars did not object to the Readers themselves but to the specific number “seven”, for any number would have sufficed except seven¹⁰³ Al-Mahdawī (d 440/1048) criticizes Ibn Mujāhid by saying that he did something that should have never been

⁹⁷ The number of the codices varies according to the different traditions Though the dominant opinion is that the codices were five in number, there are some traditions that speak of three, seven, and nine codices, W M Watt and R Bell, *Introduction to the Qurʾan*, (Edinburgh Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp 42-3, Cf al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/184-7

⁹⁸ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, ed ʿUmayrāt, p 83, ed al-ʿImrān, p 216

⁹⁹ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, ed al-ʿImrān, p 221

¹⁰⁰ The most important of these works are Ibn Ghalbūn’s (d 399/1008) *Tadhkirah* (Jaddah 1991), which added Yaʿqūb to the seven Readers, and *al-Talkhīs* (Jaddah 1992) by Abū Maʿshar al-Tabarī (d 478/1085)

¹⁰¹ Such as *al-Mustanīr* (Dubayy 2005) by Abū Tāhir b Siwār al-Baghdādī (d 496/1102), *al-Irshād* (Makkah 1983) by Abū al-ʿIzz al-Qalānīsī (d 521/1127), *al-Misbāh* (Cairo 2002) by Abū al-Karam b Fathān al-Shahrazūrī (d 550/1155), and *al-Kanz* (Beirut 1998) by Ibn Wajīh al-Wāsītī (d 740/1339)

¹⁰² On eleven Readings we have *al-Rawdah* (Medīna 2004) by Abū ʿAlī al-Baghdādī al-Mālikī (d 438/1046) and *al-Jāmiʿ* (MA Thesis Cairo, [n d]) by Ibn Fāris al-Khayyāt (450/1058) Both works added al-Aʿmash (d 148/765) to the ten-Reading canon On twelve Readings we have *al-Mubhy* (Makkah [n d]) by Sibṭ al-Khayyāt (d 541/1146), which added to the seven Readings Yaʿqūb al-Hadramī, Ibn Muhaysin (d 123/740), al-Aʿmash, Khalaf, and al-Yazīdī (d 202/817) On thirteen Readings we have *al-Bustān* (Riyad 1995) by Ibn al-Jundī (d 769/1367) On fourteen Readings we have *Ithāf Fudalāʾ al-Bashar* (Beirut 1987) by al-Dīmyātī (d 1117/1705), which added the Readings of al-Hasan al-Basrī (d 110/728), Ibn Muhaysin (d 123/740), al-Yazīdī (d 202/817), and al-Aʿmash (d 148/765) to the ten-Reading canon Any Reading beyond the ten-Reading canon was never accepted to be “canonical” Those Readings were deemed sound *āhād* transmissions and were categorized as *shawādhdh*, which means that using them in prayers is prohibited al-Zurqānī wrongly puts al-Shanabūdī (d 388/998) instead of al-Aʿmash as the fourteenth Reader This is clearly a mistake since al-Shanabūdī was one of the transmitters of al-Aʿmash, not to mention that he was too late to be a model Reader Abū al-Qāsim al-Hudhalī al-Maghribī (d 465/1072) wrote a book on fifty Readings entitled *al-Kāmil* The book was criticized by al-Dhahabī (d 748/1347) and Ibn al-Jazarī for many of its weak transmissions, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, p 85

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, p 213

done, i.e. confusing the masses (*al-‘āmmah*) and misleading the average person to assume that the seven Readings are the seven *ahruf* of the Prophetic tradition ¹⁰⁴ In a poem that illustrates three additional Readings to Ibn Mujāhid’s Seven, al-Ja‘barī (d. 732/1331) says that the Septuplist/founder of the Seven (*dhū al-tasbī‘*) did not clarify his intentions, and therefore he misled the masses to the extent that many scholars declared that he committed a grave error (*akhtala*) ¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Jazarī agrees with this statement and says that this *shubha* (obscurity that causes doubt), i.e. to make people mistake the seven Readings for the seven *ahruf*, spread widely among the masses such that when people happened to listen to a Reading that was not attributed to any of the seven Readers, they would dismiss that Reading and consider it *shādhah* ¹⁰⁶

The Discipline of Qirā’āt prospered after Ibn Mujāhid. More works on the variant Readings of the Qur’ān started to appear and scholars explored the possibility of including other eponymous Readers. At some point, the discussion gradually shifted from the specific number of the acceptable Readings to their validity, authenticity, and status as being divine revelation. What caused heated discussion for centuries was the origin and transmission of the Readings, were those Readings transmitted through *tawātur* or single chains of transmission from the Prophet? Is there a Reading better than others or are they equally divine? How can one explain some odd readings in those canonical systems, which violate the rules of eloquent Arabic? Most importantly, why is it important to prove that the canonical Readings, the Seven and the Ten, are *mutawātirah* and what are the ramifications if they are not?

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 214

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 214

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 214-5

The *tawātur* of the canonical Readings

I have said before that the expression *tawātur al-qirā'āt* appeared neither with Ibn Mujāhid nor with al-Tabarī. Before I proceed to the discussion of *tawātur al-qirā'āt*, we need to understand the term *tawātur* better: what is the context in which it was discussed and utilized, and by whom? The discussion of *tawātur* and subsequently the theories of knowledge (*‘ilm*) are explored by several disciplines, mostly by theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*),¹⁰⁷ *usūlīs* and Hadīth theoreticians. The discourse is mainly concerned with theoretical arguments on the theory of knowledge and epistemology. Knowledge of past and contemporary events that are acquired through sensory experience is the framework within which these scholars present their arguments. Weiss explored this extensively in his study of *tawātur* from the perspective of the *usūlīs* by mainly focusing on al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) views.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, Hadīth theoreticians were mostly concerned with historical reports, *āthār*, and Prophetic traditions, how and when can a report be characterized as *mutawātir*? I will examine the theories of *tawātur* according to both the *usūlīs* and the *muhaddithūn*, after which I will consider the concept of the *tawātur* of the Qur'ān and the canonical Readings.

Tawātur according to the *usūlīs*

As Wensinck noted, discussions of *tawātur* and *mutawātir* reports are found mainly in manuals of *usul al-fiqh* (juridical methodology/principals of law). *Usūlīs* were concerned with the conclusiveness of a Prophetic report, i.e. how the report could yield

¹⁰⁷ These discussions can be usually found in *kalām*, *‘aqīdah* (doctrine), and logic (*mantiq*) compilations such as Ibn Taymiyyah's *Dar' Ta'ārud al-‘Aql wa al-Naql* and *al-Safadiyyah*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Mu‘tazilī's *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-‘Adl*, al-Futūhī's *Sharh al-Kawkab al-Munīr*, al-Ījī's *al-Mawāqif fī ‘ilm al-Kalām*

¹⁰⁸ B. Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past: The Theory of *Tawātur* According to Ghazālī", *Studia Islamica*, 61 (1985), pp. 81-105.

knowledge (‘ilm), certitude (yaqīn), and therefore obtain necessary/immediate knowledge (‘ilm darūrī)¹⁰⁹ Multiple and sufficient chains of transmission of a *mutawātir* report may effectively preclude error and collusion in forgery Therefore, characterizing a report to be *mutawātir* automatically leads to its absolute and unquestionable validity¹¹⁰ The sought-after goal is to attain immediate and necessary (darūrī) knowledge that is superior to presumptive (zannī) and acquired (muktasab) knowledge¹¹¹ Within his definitions and classifications for the different categories of ‘ilm, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) states that *al-mutawātirāt* fall under the category of knowledge that is absolute (jāzim) Such knowledge results from the auditory perception (sam‘) - being one of the five senses - and rationality/reason (‘aql)¹¹² The important question is the following why does *tawātur* impart necessary and immediate knowledge?

Linguistically, *tawātur* is the arrival of something/someone after that of another with a gap (*fatrah/muhlah*) in between the two arrivals Subsequently, the technical sense of *tawātur* in reports (*akhbār*) means that the reporters/transmitters relay the same account without any communication with one another (*majī’uhum ‘alā ghayr al-ittisāl*) and, more importantly, without being aware that each of them is transmitting

¹⁰⁹ A J Wensinck, “*Mutawātir*”, *EF*² For an etymological and historical discussion, see G H A Juynboll, “*Tawātur*”, *EF*²

¹¹⁰ Hallaq establishes three conditions that must be satisfied in order to achieve the certainty of a *mutawātir* report, first, the chains of transmission must be numerous enough to preclude error or collaboration on forgery, second, the very first class of transmitters should have had a direct sensory knowledge from the Prophet himself, and third, the two previous conditions must be met at every stage of transmission starting with the Companions and ending with the last transmitter of the report, W Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp 60-1

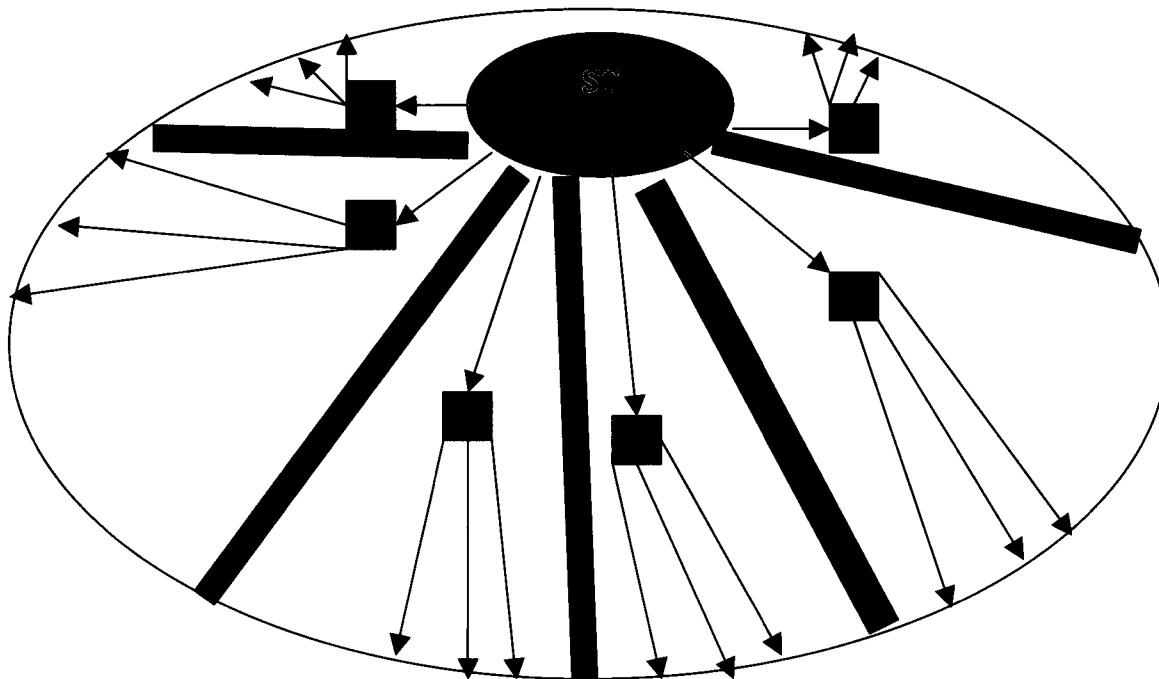
¹¹¹ Detailed discussion of the different categories of ‘ilm and the relative certainty each category yields can be found in Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā min ‘ilm al-Usūl*, ed Hamzah Hāfiz, (al-Madīnah Kulliyat al-Sharī‘ah, 1992), 1/26-7, 74-6, 138-153, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mahsūl fī ‘ilm Usūl al-Fiqh*, ed ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mawjūd, (Beirut al-Maktabah al-‘Asriyyah, 1999), 1/9-16, Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, *al-Bahr al-Muhīt fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, ed ‘Abd al-Qādir al-‘Ānī, (Kuwait Wazārat al-Awqāf, 1992), 1/52-83

¹¹² Al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 1/12

that same report. In other words, the transmitters' "arrival" according to the definition, is the act of reporting their transmissions separately, unaware of the possibility that others may or may not report this account. As a result, the formulaic definition of a *mutawātir* report is one that is transmitted by multitudes of people to the extent that knowledge (*ʿilm*) is axiomatically imparted to the listener because of the unquestionable and inevitable validity of the report.¹¹³ Below is a diagram that roughly summarizes and represents the above definition.

¹¹³ Ibid , 3/902

A



ST. Subject of the *mutawātir* report an event, a person, a city, a text, etc

R Direct reporter/witness for the subject of *tawātur*, i e one who directly receives the information related to ST through sensory experience or other *mutawātir* reports

D. Deterrent The non-existence of motives/incentives among Rs to forge ST D represents the complete disaffiliation among Rs and the lack of coordination among each other The disassociation among Rs is through time and place, i e transmitting ST in different places and at different times

A• Posterior audience of *tawātur*, who receive ST through various distinct ways of transmission

In the above definition of *tawātur*, we should be mindful of a comment introduced by al-Zarkashī stating that a *mutawātir* report is one that is transmitted by multitudes of people such that collusion on forgery becomes impossible “due to their large number” (*min haythu kathratuhum*)¹¹⁴ The phrase “due to their large number” is decisive in establishing *tawātur*, for there might be reports in which collusion on forgery is impossible to happen as well, but “not” on account of the large number of reporters. Therefore, the factor of having a large number of reporters to establish *tawātur* is crucial, at least according to the above parameter set by many *usūlīs*. The majority of Muslim scholars agree that this “large” number cannot, and should not be specified even though there have been several attempts to identify this number with figures such as 5, 10, 12, 20, 40, 70, 313 and 1700¹¹⁵

There are several conditions¹¹⁶ that must be met on both ends of a report, the transmitters and the receivers, in order for it to be characterized as *mutawātir*. I will summarize these conditions as follows:

A) The Transmitters

- 1) The transmitters should possess certain/necessary knowledge (*yaqīnī*) of what they are transmitting, i.e. they should not have any doubts of that which they are relaying nor should they be describing an opinion (*ra’y*), only the facts should be reported.
- 2) The knowledge that the transmitters obtain, which is imparted by the report, should be necessary and immediate by its very existence (*darūri*). The

¹¹⁴ Al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/231

¹¹⁵ al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/232-4, al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/922-6, Hallaq, *History*, p. 61

¹¹⁶ Read the detailed discussion on the conditions of *tawātur* adopted by al-Ghazālī as presented in Weiss, “knowledge of the past”, pp. 88-94

transmitters should attain this knowledge either through sensory experience or through other *mutawātir* reports. For instance, despite the fact that the Prophethood of Muhammad is a *mutawātir* report known and disseminated among all Muslims, the report by itself does not spontaneously impart immediate and necessary knowledge that could be attained in this case through reasoning and induction. Therefore, non-Muslims do not obtain certain and necessary knowledge upon receiving the reports of Muhammad's Prophethood¹¹⁷

- 3) The earliest generation of reporters should have a clear, exact and direct observation of the subject of the report
- 4) The reporters should not be forced to transmit the report or manipulate its contents. The report will be authenticated through parallel reports transmitted by other transmitters, thus eliminating the possibility of a transmitter being forced to produce a forged report
- 5) The number of the reporters must reach a point beyond which collusion or forgery is utterly impossible. This number can never be specified for it varies according to the circumstances, events, and the reporters themselves¹¹⁸
- 6) The different versions of the report should all be similar and without critical variations. The criterion to be considered upon comparing the different

¹¹⁷ Al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/231-2, al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/922

¹¹⁸ Al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/232, al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/922-6

versions of a report is its content (*maʿnā*) regardless of disparity in the wording (*ʿibārah/lafz*) of parallel reports ¹¹⁹

B) The Receivers

- 1) The receiver should be sane and not show any sign of mental disorder
- 2) The receiver should not have prior knowledge of the content of the report, otherwise the knowledge attained through that report is absurd (*tahsīl al-hāsīl*)
- 3) Some scholars argued that the receiver should be neutral to the contents of the report and not have any preconceived ideas or beliefs that might challenge and call into question the contents of the transmitted report ¹²⁰

The majority of scholars agreed that the accounts transmitted through *tawātur* must yield knowledge (*tufīd al-ʿilm*), whether of contemporary or past events ¹²¹ This imparted/yielded knowledge is immediate and necessary (*darūrī*) ¹²² Immediate

¹¹⁹ Al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/235 Some scholars stipulated other conditions to be fulfilled by the reporters such as *ʿadālah* (probity), Islām, freedom, and the existence of a *Maʿsūm* (infallible) among them, however these conditions were rejected by the majority, al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/235-7, al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/920, 927

¹²⁰ Al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/237 This condition was advocated by al-Sharīf al-Murtadā (d 436/1044) in order to prove the *Imāmah* (succession to the Caliphate) of ʿAlī b Abī Tālib Sunnī scholars naturally challenged the argument

¹²¹ al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/902-4 Contemporary events would be things such as the existence of distant cities, countries and famous figures, whereas past events would be things such as reports about kings and prophets of the ancient history

¹²² Al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/904, al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/238-245 This is the opinion of the majority (*al-jumhūr*) of *usūlīs* except for al-Juwaynī (d 478/1185) and some Muʿtazilah such as al-Kaʿbī (d 319/931) and Abū al-Husayn al-Basrī (d 436/1044) They argued that this imparted knowledge is discursive and mediated (*nazarī*) Abū al-Husayn al-Basrī gives three arguments to prove that the knowledge yielded by *tawātur* is not immediate (*ghayr darūrī*) but discursive/mediated (*nazarī*) First, in order to hold that the knowledge established by *tawātur* is immediate, one should conduct some reasoning beforehand, i.e. one must establish that the reporters can not collaborate on forgery, that the contents of the parallel reports are similar, and therefore the impossibility of the report to be forged Consequently, the receiver of a *mutawātur* report already conducted this reasoning to determine that the knowledge established by that report is immediate Therefore, this knowledge is discursive/mediated and not immediate The second argument holds that if this knowledge established by *tawātur* is necessary, this means that we are in need of that knowledge and that we cannot detach ourselves from it If this were the case, we would have known, necessarily and by instinct, that this knowledge is necessary, as we do with the other necessary and immediate knowledge – such as knowing that something is sweet or bitter or knowing that

knowledge principally means knowledge that is gained without proof, either by sensory experience, i.e. sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, or by intuitive knowledge¹²³ This knowledge yielded by *tawātur* is true and exact (*sidq*), and therefore it is absolutely impossible to be inaccurate or false in any capacity¹²⁴ We should keep in mind for now the importance of establishing the *tawātur* of the Qur'ān, which will result in its absolute integrity The *mutawātir* transmission of the Qur'ān will be a self-evident *mutawātir* event/report that yields immediate and necessary knowledge This idea will be explored in more detail in the next chapter

Tawātur according to Hadīth theoreticians (*al-muhaddithūn*)

something is black or white However, since we are already arguing about whether this knowledge is necessary or not, this signifies that this knowledge is not necessary The third argument, as presented by al-Ka'bi, maintains that if it were acceptable to know by necessity (*darūrah*) that which is not sense-perceptible - a *mutawātir* report in this case - then it would be acceptable to know by induction (*istidlāl*) that which is sense-perceptible, since the conclusion is fallacious, then the premise is fallacious as well Therefore, *mutawātir* reports cannot establish necessity, al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/905

¹²³ Muhammad 'Alī al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Istilāhāt al-Funūn wa al-'Ulūm*, 'Abd Allāh al-Khālīdī (tr.), (Beirut Maktabat Lubnān, 1996), 2/1115-8

¹²⁴ The discussion is very theoretical, intricate, and convoluted It follows the usual *kalām* methodology in argumentation The logic behind this argument can be summarized as follows if the *mutawātir* report is false then there are only two possibilities 1) the reporters know it is false (*kadhīb*), 2) the reporters do not know it is false Both possibilities are improbable because of the following logic In the first scenario, it is impossible that the reporters transmit the report while being aware of its falsehood, for this would indicate one of the following 1) they lied for a reason or 2) they lied without any reason (2) is impossible for two reasons a) a particular and distinct act cannot happen at the same time without a reason and a motive (*muqayyih*) In other words, it is unlikely that all the reporters would tell the same exact lie at the same time without any motive b) Falsehood/lying (*kadhīb*) is a repulsive trait (*qabīh*) that cannot be associated with people's actions innately, therefore, it is impossible that this *qabīh* act of falsehood be carried out on a large scale of people without a strong motive, i.e. the intention to lie In other words, a *qabīh* act cannot occur without a strong motive because *qabīh* acts are not innate in the human nature Consequently, (a + b → (2)) the reporters who transmit a *mutawātir* report cannot lie without a reason As for the first possibility (1), i.e. the reporters lying for a reason, this is also impossible for the following logic c) the motive behind lying is either common or private, c-1) it is impossible for the motive to be common for this implies that all the reporters have some kind of communication among each other, the fact that automatically terminates *tawātur* On the other hand, c-2) it is also impossible to have different and private motives behind lying for it is inconceivable that those multitudes of people lie and fabricate the same exact account yet for different motives that entail things such as money, political pressure, personal reasons, caprices, etc As a result, (c-1 + c-2 → (1)) the reporters who transmit a *mutawātir* report cannot lie for a reason, See the full discussion in al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/906-920

Juynboll notes that according to Muslim scholars, *tawātur* generally insinuates “broad authentication” and that the authenticity of a *mutawātir* report is guaranteed and cannot be challenged. He also observes that early Hadīth theoreticians such as al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360/971) and al-Hākīm al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) did not use the term *tawātur*.¹²⁵ We do actually find the verb *tawātara* in the *Mustadrak* of al-Hākīm indicating the existence of so many reports as inevitably to confirm the subject of the reports. For example, al-Hākīm comments on a report about the name and epithet of Abū Tālib, ‘Alī’s father, by saying “*tawātara al-akhbār bi anna Abā Tālib kunyatuhu ismuhu*” (Numerous reports confirmed that Abū Tālib’s name and epithet are the same”).¹²⁶ He says in another place that the reports are *mutawātirah* that the Prophet was born circumcised.¹²⁷ It seems that *tawātur* in this context is used to indicate that the report is widespread and well circulated among the community.

Tawātur was defined more strictly when Hadīth theory and terminology became more established in the later periods. Ibn al-Salāh (d. 643/1245) includes the *mutawātir* reports under the category of the *mashhūr* (well-known), but asserts that the *mutawātir* class belongs to the *usūl* domain and that the *muhaddithūn* are not concerned with this category of Hadīth because it is extremely rare to find. He adds that al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1069) defined the *mutawātir* report in the terms of the *usūlīs*, to which Ibn al-Salāh objects, for the craft of the *muhaddithūn* (*sinā‘atuhum*) does not deal with *tawātur*.¹²⁸ Al-Khatīb did actually define *tawātur* in the *usūlīs* terms, according to him, a

¹²⁵ Juynboll, “Tawātur”, *El*²

¹²⁶ Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Hākīm al-Naysābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Sahīhayn*, ed. Muqbil al-Wādī, (Cairo: Dār al-Haramayn, 1997), 3/124

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 2/707

¹²⁸ Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-Īdāh Sharh Muqaddimat Ibn al-Salāh*, (Beirut: Dār al-Hadīth, 1984), p. 225

report is either *āhād* or *tawātur*. A *mutawātir* report is one that is transmitted by a group of people whose number is sufficient enough to preclude collaboration on forgery. Al-Khatīb added one more interesting detail to this definition by saying that the reporters' collaboration on forgery is impossible to take place within the timeframe in which the report is being spread on their behalf. He finalizes the definition by stating that such a report cannot be uncertain, and that the motives or reasons behind lying and forgery are inconceivable for such a group of reporters. If those conditions are met, then the report is true, and therefore it offers necessary knowledge.¹²⁹

Ibn al-Salāh further emphasizes that the *muhaddithūn* should not be concerned with the *mutawātir* reports because of their extreme rarity. The conditions of *tawātur* must be met at every stage of transmission starting with the very first class of transmitters up until the last one. Even the widely spread and well-known *hadīth* “*innamā al-ʿamalū bi al-niyyāt*”¹³⁰ (Deeds are by intentions) is not *mutawātir* because the conditions of *tawātur* were met only in the subsequent periods of transmission and not in the early stages. Nevertheless, the *hadīth* “*man kadhaba ʿalayya mutaʿammidan fa li yatabawwaʿ maqʿadahu min al-nār*” (he who intentionally lies about me will find his abode in Hell-Fire) might be an example of a *mutawātir* report since it was transmitted by a large number of Companions.¹³¹

Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) provides the same description of *tawātur* as Ibn al-Salāh by saying that the *mutawātir* tradition is a category discussed and utilized in *usūl al-fiqh*,

¹²⁹ Al-Baghdādī (Al-Khatīb), Abū Bakr, *al-Kifāyah fī ʿilm al-Riwāyah*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1988), pp. 16-17.

¹³⁰ Al-Suyūṭī challenges Ibn al-Salāh's claim regarding the rarity of the *mutawātir* in *Hadīth*. He says that he wrote a book entitled *al-Azhār al-Mutanāthirah fī al-Akhbār al-Mutawātirah* in which he gathered several traditions that achieved the status of *tawātur*, Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-Rāwī*, 2/105.

¹³¹ Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Taqyīd*, pp. 226-9.

and that Hadīth theoreticians are not concerned with *tawātur* because it is almost non-existent in their literature. I should highlight an important aspect in the definitions of Ibn al-Salāh and al-Nawawī both of whom do not use the qualifying *usūlī* condition of the “sufficient number of people” required to establish *tawātur*. According to their definition, a *mutawātir* report is one that yields necessary knowledge as a result of the *sidq* (honesty/truthfulness) of its transmitters, this must be applied throughout all the generations and classes of transmitters.¹³² The question that must be asked here is why did the Hadīth theoreticians avoid the expression “sufficient number of people”? The answer might lie in the fact that the maximum number of first-generation transmitters any *hadīth* carries is sixty-two Companions.¹³³ The standard *usūlī* definition that entails a sufficient or large number of people (*al-jam‘/al-jamm al-ghafīr*) does not apply to any of the Prophetic traditions, even the most authentic and sound among them. Hadīth traditions involve the exact numbers and precise names of the transmitters of the *hadīth*, while *usūlī mutawātir* reports involve large and unidentified numbers of reporters.

In his annotation of al-Nawawī’s Hadīth manual,¹³⁴ al-Suyūṭī explains that in *mutawātir* reports, one should not scrutinize and impugn the reporters,¹³⁵ for ‘*adālah* (probity) is not as decisive in the *mutawātir* reports as in Prophetic traditions. This is contrary to al-Zarkashī who stipulated the ‘*adālah* of the reporters of the *mutawātir*.¹³⁶

¹³² Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, 2/102-4, al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taḥqīd*, p. 225

¹³³ With some corroboration with other traditions and *isnād* authentication (*takhrīj*) the number could fluctuate between forty, sixty-two, sixty-one, ninety-eight, one hundred, and two hundreds, see the discussion on this matter in al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taḥqīd*, pp. 229. al-Suyūṭī provides the complete list with names of the sixty-two Companions, al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2/104-5

¹³⁴ *Al-Taḥrīb wa al-Taysīr li Ma‘rifat Sunan al-Bashīr al-Nadhīr* by al-Nawawī is an abridgment of Ibn al-Salah’s Hadīth manual

¹³⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2/104

¹³⁶ See footnote #119

Al-Suyūṭī objects to al-Nawawī and Ibn al-Salāh’s arguments that the *mutawātir* reports are rare and accuses them of lacking the proper knowledge (*qillat al-ittilāʿ*) of transmission and *isnād* tracking. He asserts that the *mutawātir* reports are plentiful, and as expected from al-Suyūṭī, he refers to his own book on which topic no one else has ever written before. In this book, *al-Azhār al-Mutanāthirah fī al-Akhhbār al-Mutawātirah*, al-Suyūṭī collects all the traditions characterized by *tawātur* along with their complete *isnāds*.¹³⁷

Tawātur between Usūl al-Fiqh and Hadīth

We have seen how the definition of *tawātur* put forward by the *usūlīs* poses a problem for the *muhaddithūn*, the *usūlī*-formulated conditions cannot be fulfilled in Hadīth where only a handful of Prophetic traditions were evaluated as potentially *mutawātir*. Later Hadīth theoreticians attempted to establish more traditions as *mutawātir* by “finding” more chains of transmission for the same *hadīth*, which could possibly be traced back to more Companions (being the earliest generation of transmitters). One should ask, why is *tawātur* important to the *usūlīs*? Why did they discuss this “theoretical” subject at length when only a couple of Prophetic traditions might have had the status of *tawātur*? There are several points to be addressed here before one could attempt to answer such a question. First, there is unanimous consensus among Muslims, not including the Shīʿah, that the Qurʾān was transmitted through *tawātur*, this will be the main point of discussion in the next chapter. Second,

¹³⁷ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2/105. There are two manuscripts of this book and the number of *hadīths* characterized by *tawātur* varies between the two manuscripts. The first manuscript includes one hundred and thirteen *hadīths* while the second manuscript includes eighty-three *hadīths*, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Qatf al-Azhār al-Mutanāthirah fī al-Akhhbār al-Mutawātirah*, ed. Khalīl al-Mays, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1985), pp. 3-4.

one of the major discussions among the *usūlīs* is the theory of abrogation (*naskh*), and among the various topics discussed under this subject is the possibility of the *sunnah* to abrogate the Qur’ān. The *sunnah* in question here is often referred to as *sunnah mutawātirah* that usually meets the conditions of *tawātur* suggested by the *usūlīs*. Therefore, the *usūlīs* are not interested in some Prophetic traditions that could abrogate the Qur’ān because they, as well as the *muhaddithūn* are aware that practically the *mutawātir hadīth* does not exist. On the other hand, a *sunnah mutawātirah* could exist, for the practices and actions of the Prophet and his Companions could definitely be transmitted by a sufficient number of people, for their ‘*adālah* to be inconsequential to the report. Moreover, a *sunnah* could be relayed by multitudes of people whose different beliefs, opinions, and social classes make their collaboration on error and deliberate fabrication of the report almost impossible. As a result, one should take into consideration that *sunnah* is the appropriate domain for *tawātur* and not Hadīth.

The *usūlīs* were well aware of that, although it was never formulated explicitly as such. Hence, they considered the *mutawātir* to be of two major categories, the first is *lafzī* (verbatim or literal *tawātur*), and the second is *ma‘nawī* (conceptual *tawātur* or *tawātur* of the contents). For example, if someone reported that Hātim [al-Tā‘ī] gifted ten slaves, and another person reported that he gifted five she-camels, and in some other report it said that Hātim gifted twenty garments, all these reports demonstrate the generosity of Hātim, thus we acquire a certain knowledge from the content of these reports, which speaks of Hātim’s generosity but not the exact nature of the gifts he bestowed.¹³⁸ Al-Suyūtī argues that *tawātur ma‘nawī* is also possible in Hadīth, for

¹³⁸ al-Rāzī, *Mahsūl*, 3/927

example, the *hadīth* that invokes raising the hands during supplication is *mutawātir* with regard to the act of raising the hands, however the details in those *hadīths*, which describe the process of raising the hands, vary ¹³⁹

Lastly, I will examine Ibn Taymiyyah's (d. 728/1327) views on *tawātur*, since he is both an *usūlī* and a Hadīth theoretician. He discusses the topic from different perspectives because of the subtlety of the definition of *tawātur*. Ibn Taymiyyah is asked about the number of *mutawātir* traditions available in the *Sahīhs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, however, he does not give a straightforward answer. According to him, *tawātur* has several meanings (*yurādu bihi ma'ānin*), yet the decisive criterion for *tawātur* is yielding knowledge regardless of the number of the reporters of the subject by *tawātur*. Necessary and immediate knowledge could be attained through reports because of different factors, among which are the large number of reporters, the probity (*ʿadl*) and trustworthiness of the transmitters, and *qarā'in* (evidence) that co-exist with the report ¹⁴⁰. In Ibn Taymiyyah's opinion, a *mutawātir* report could also be any report the veracity of which the *ummah* (community) unanimously accepted. Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyyah still prefers to classify this category of reports as being *mashhūr* (well-known) or *mustafīd* (widely circulated). Most of the traditions in the two *Sahīhs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are well-known and accepted by the *ummah*, and since *ymāʿ* is infallible (*maʿsūm*), the *ymāʿ* established by the *muhaddithūn* regarding the validity and authenticity of the traditions in those two books necessitates their imparting of necessary knowledge ¹⁴¹. We can clearly see here how *tawātur* became intertwined with another concept, which is the specialized or private consensus, i.e. a consensus on a

¹³⁹ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb*, 2/106

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 18/30

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 18/30

subject matter established among the specialists on that topic. This being the case, *tawātur* could be established among groups of experts who are entitled to judge the validity and authenticity of the reports relating to their specialized field. According to this new parameter set by Ibn Taymiyyah, *tawātur* could characterize any report judged to be authentic by the corresponding group of experts on the subject matter, if the experts agree on the authenticity of the report, this automatically means that the report is *mutawātir*, and therefore it yields immediate and necessary knowledge.

Ibn Taymiyyah further limits *tawātur* and states that some reports could demonstrate *tawātur* among certain groups only, for these reports could impart necessary and immediate knowledge among the experts on the subject matter of those reports. This is also dependent on the circumstances that accompany the report, which include the number of the reporters, their trustworthiness, and any indications or signs (*qarā'in*) that might prove decisive in yielding immediate knowledge. Even though the well-known *hadīth* “*innamā al-ā'mālu bi al-niyyāt*” is not *mutawātir* according to definition, yet the *ummah* unanimously accepted this *hadīth* through the *ymāc*, and therefore the *hadīth* indisputably imparts certain and immediate knowledge. As mentioned before, the number of reporters is not a decisive factor in establishing the *tawātur* of a report anymore, because the reasons and conditions that establish certain knowledge could differ with the circumstances in the same way satiety (*shabāc*) occurs after eating, satiety could be due to the sufficient amount of consumed food, or due to its quality such as meat, or due to the circumstances that would make one reach satiety even with small portions of food, such as happiness, anger, and sadness.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūc*, 18/31

To conclude our discussion, we can say that *tawātur* is classified into two categories general (‘āmm) and specialized or private (*khāss*) Both the *usūlīs* and the *muhaddithūn* – Ibn Taymiyyah puts them both together under one group – consider many reports to be *mutawātir* yet the masses (*al-‘āmmah*) are not even aware of these reports This distinction between *tawātur ‘āmm* and *tawātur khāss* will be important in the discipline of *Qirā’āt* where the same argument is used to establish the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings among the community of the *qurrā’*, since *tawātur* was almost impossible to prove based on the conditions set by the *usūlīs* This will be the topic and the main discussion of the following chapter

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the process of the canonization of the seven Readings at the hands of Ibn Mujāhid There were several attempts before Ibn Mujāhid to limit the variant readings of the Qur’ān, and al-Tabarī’s endeavors were the most important among these attempts Al-Tabarī and the earlier *qurrā’* community put forward several conditions in order to establish the validity of a Qur’ānic reading These conditions can be summarized as follows the reading must agree with the consonantal outline of the ‘Uthmānic codices currently available at the time, the reading must exhibit eloquent Arabic grammar and syntax, the reading must have been taught by the elder *qurrā’* who were taught the Qur’ān directly from the Successors, and finally the reading must enjoy the consensus of the *qurrā’* community I showed in the case of al-Tabarī that there was no tendency towards sanctifying any Qur’ānic reading, and that al-Tabarī objected to many readings that became canonical and divine later

on Early Muslim scholars did not look at the variant readings of the Qur'ān as divine revelation and attributed the Qur'ānic variants to human origins, i.e. either the reader's *yiṭihād* in interpreting the Qur'ānic verse or simply an error in transmission. This position changed drastically in the later periods, especially after the 5th/11th century where the canonical Readings were treated as being divine revelation, i.e. every single reading and all the seven and the ten Readings were revealed by God as Qur'ān. I argued that Ibn Mujāhid and the early Muslim scholars before him, including al-Tabarī, looked at the *qirā'āt* from the perspective of legal verdicts (*ahkām*). In my interpretation of Ibn Mujāhid's views on *qirā'āt* I suggested that the notion of *qirā'ah* as *sunnah*, as well as providing evidence for the precedence of one reading over another, is characteristic of the literature of *ikhtilāf* (differences) especially in *fiqh*. The conditions of *ymāc* and *sunnah* set by the early Muslims support my argument. Dropping these two conditions and replacing them with a documented sound *isnād* in the later periods show that *Qirā'āt* discipline moved from *fiqh* into the Hadīth domain. I also argued that Ibn Mujāhid was forced to choose seven eponymous Readers for his selection of the canonical Readings, and that the complex case of al-Kūfah resulted in choosing more than one Reader to represent collectively the disunited *ymāc* of al-Kūfah. Muslim scholars were dissatisfied with Ibn Mujāhid's misleading seven-Reading canon and they actively compiled works that included more or less Readings than the canon established by Ibn Mujāhid. Ibn al-Jazarī canonized three more Readings by the 9th/15th century, and Muslims nowadays consider the seven and the ten Readings to be canonical and *mutawātirah*. To understand better what is meant by *tawātur*, I studied the definition of the term according to the *usūlīs* and the *muhaddithūn* and showed that

the conditions and parameters of *tawātur* as theorized and put forward by the *usūlīs* cannot be applied to Prophetic traditions. Consequently, Hadīth theoreticians denied the existence of *mutawātir* reports in their literature. I argued that the *usūlīs* were interested in formulating a well-developed theory of *tawātur* to serve their arguments regarding the possibility of the *sunnah mutawātirah* abrogating the Qur'ān, and to prove the integrity, truthfulness, and the divinity of the Qur'ān as a *mutawātir* transmission that imparts necessary, immediate, and certain knowledge. This aspect will be the subject matter of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: *Hadd* al-Qur'ān and the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings

I will study in this chapter how the *usūlīs* defined the Qur'ān/*al-Kitāb*,¹ and discuss the criteria they used in their definitions. It is difficult to refer to every single manual on *usūl al-Fiqh* since al-Shāfi'ī's *Risālah*, so I will choose the most influential *usūl* manuals and study their definitions of the Qur'ān to see if, and to what extent, these definitions varied with time. Before I start with the medieval sources, I would like to present the final version of the definition of the Qur'ān, as currently taught by and circulated among Muslim scholars, in order to have a general sense of how much, if any, the perception of the Qur'ān has changed since medieval times. I will take Wahbah al-Zuhaylī's compendium on *usūl* in which he states the following definition and characteristics of the Qur'ān: "The Qur'ān is the speech of God, which was revealed to the Prophet in Arabic, being inimitable in its shortest *sūrah*. It is that which is written in the *masāhif*, transmitted via *tawātur*, and recited in the Muslims' liturgical practices. It begins with *sūrat al-Fātihah* and ends with *sūrat al-Nās*"² I will shortly revisit each parameter of this definition in detail. Presenting this final version of the definition will give us a good idea as of how the definition of the Qur'ān has changed over time to become more comprehensive and inclusive.

One should keep in mind that the discussions related to the Qur'ān, its authenticity, and its status as an absolute source (*hujjiyyah*) in legal rulings, are

¹ There is usually no distinction between al-Qur'ān and *al-kitāb*, although some scholars distinguished *al-kitāb* by being the written Qur'ān. On the other hand, the *mushaf* always refers to the physical form of the Qur'ān, there is no *mushaf* without the Qur'ān/*al-kitāb*, but there is a Qur'ān/*kitāb* without the *mushaf*.

² Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Usūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), p. 421.

fundamental in *usūl* works. The Qur'ān is unanimously³ the primary source of Islamic law. Unlike early *usūl* theoreticians, the later *usūlīs* became concerned with an exact definition of al-Qur'ān/*al-Kitāb*. For example, one can easily notice how al-Shāfi'ī in his *Risālah* had hardly devoted any time to formulating a definition of the Qur'ān, or even to stating its importance as a primary source of Islamic law.⁴ As Hallaq points out, according to al-Shāfi'ī, "The Quran as a source of law hardly needed any justification"⁵ and "the Quran's authority was seen as self-evident, it was too well established as a source of law to warrant any justification."⁶ Nonetheless, latter *usūlīs* felt the need to define the Qur'ān primarily in order to determine that which can or cannot be used for liturgical practices, in addition to governing what is considered an absolute source (*hujjah*) for the extraction of legal rulings. The *usūlīs* were also concerned with the rules by which Muslims are condemned as non-believers (*kuffār*) if they should deny parts of the Qur'ān.⁷

One can usually find the discussion on the definition of the Qur'ān (*hadd al-Kitāb*) under the section of the studies of the legal proofs (*mabāhith al-adillah al-shar'īyyah*).⁸ The section on the Qur'ān (*mabāhith al-Kitāb*) always comes first and it

³ This applies to almost all different *sunnī* schools and even the extremists (*ghulāt*) among the *shī'īs* who held that the Qur'ān is falsified, refer to chapter one for more details on the *shī'ī* views regarding the falsification (*tahrīf*) of the Qur'ān.

⁴ Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Risālah*, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, [n.d.]), pp. 19-20, 113.

⁵ Hallaq, *A History of Islamic legal theories*, p. 22.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷ The consensus among Muslims is that anyone who denies one verse of the Qur'ān is a non-believer/infidel (*kāfir*), Abd Allāh al-Jibrīn, *al-Irshād Sharh Lum'at al-Itiqād al-Hādī ilā Sabīl al-Rashād*, ed. Muhammad al-Munayf, (Riyad: Dār Tībah, 1997), p. 189. Cf. Abū Zakariyyā al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān fī Ādāb Hamalat al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muhammad al-Hajjār, (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 1996), pp. 164-5.

⁸ The legal proofs or simply the sources of law vary in the extent of their application with each legal school (*madhhab*). The four primary sources of law upon which the four *sunnī* schools agree are the Qur'ān, Hadīth/*Sunnah*, Consensus (*Ijmā'*), and Analogy (*Qiyās*). Other sources of law or proofs (*adillah*) are accepted by some schools such as *istihsān* (application of discretion in legal verdicts), *istislāh* (public good), *'urf* (Custom), and *qawl al-sahābī* (the saying/opinion of the Companion), al-Zuhaylī, *Usūl*, pp. 417-

almost always covers the following topics: the definition of the Qur'ān, *tawātur* and inimitability as parameters and characteristics of the Qur'ān, its yielding of necessary and absolute knowledge, the seven *ahruf* of the Qur'ān, the *shawādh* readings and their capacity to establish legal rulings, and finally the nature of the *basmalah* as to its being a Qur'ānic verse in the opening of each *sūrah*.⁹ Upon referring to some early *usūl* manuals, one can easily find that the notion of defining the Qur'ān/*al-kitāb* was not consistently established as a norm in *usūl* methodology.¹⁰ Among these early works, I have not seen a well-formulated definition of the Qur'ān in the *usūl* works by al-Karkhī¹¹ (d. 340/951) and al-Jassās (d. 370/980).¹²

Al-Dabbūsī (d. 430/1038)¹³

In al-Dabbūsī's *Taqwīm al-Adillah*, we find a section that discusses the definition of *al-kitāb*. Al-Dabbūsī defines *al-kitāb* with the following phrase: "God's book is that which was transmitted to us between the two covers (*daffatayn*) of the *masāhif* according to the seven well-known (*mashhūrah*) *ahruf* through *tawātur*, for non-*mutawātir* transmission does not produce certainty and God's book must yield necessary

716, 733-927. The Zāhirīs, represented by Ibn Hazm, accepted only the Qur'ān, *sunnah*, and some forms of *ijmā'* to be valid sources of law, Abū al-Tayyib al-Sarīrī, *Masādir al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī wa Turuq Istithmārīhā 'inda al-Imām al-Faqīh al-Mujtahid 'Alī Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hazm al-Zāhirī*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2002), Abdel-Magīd Turkī, "al-Zāhirīyya", *Et'*, Cf. I. Goldziher, *Die Zāhiriten*, (Leipzig 1884), Eng. tr. (Leiden 1971), pp. 18-36, M. Abū Zahrah, *Ibn Hazm Hayātuh wa 'Asruh wa 'Ārā'uh wa Fiqhuh*, (Cairo 1954). Shī'īs embrace the Qur'ān, traditions of the Imāms', *ijmā'* – only when the Imām is included – and *'aql* (reasoning) as sources of legal rulings, Sadr al-Dīn Fadl Allāh, *al-Tamhīd fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, (Beirut: Dār al-Hādī, 2002), pp. 95-358.

⁹ Among the other topics discussed under the section of the Qur'ān as a primary legal source, are *al-muhkam wa al-mutashābih* (the clear and the ambiguous), *al-naskh* (abrogation), translation of the Qur'ān, the language of the Qur'ān with respect to its non-Arabic vocabulary, and few other subsidiary topics.

¹⁰ Unlike, for example, abrogation (*naskh*), the authority of the *sunnah*, and the *ijmā'* (consensus), which are almost always discussed in *usūl* manuals.

¹¹ Abū al-Hasan al-Karkhī was a Hanafī and a Mu'tazilī scholar. He wrote a short treatise on the Hanafī principles of law, which is usually referred to as *Usūl al-Karkhī*.

¹² al-Jassās was a Hanafī scholar. His work on *usūl* is entitled *al-Fusūl fī al-Usūl*, (Kuwait 1994).

¹³ Abū Zayd al-Dabbūsī is a Hanafī scholar.

knowledge (*‘ilm yaqīnī*)¹⁴ Al-Dabbūsī then presents a counter argument stating that the inimitability of God’s book is sufficient to prove that it was sent down by God whether it was transmitted through *tawātur* or not. However, Al-Dabbūsī responds by saying that the individual verses by themselves are not inimitable, nonetheless, each verse is an absolute source of proof (*hujjah*). The verses do not become Qur’ānically valid unless they are received directly from the Prophet or through *tawātur* transmission. Furthermore, the inimitability of the Qur’ān is only a proof of the Prophet’s true claims that he was sent by God, Who enabled the Prophet to produce inimitable speech.¹⁵ Therefore, inimitability is not a proof that the Qur’ān is God’s speech.¹⁶ Al-Dabbūsī then argues that the decisive factor in defining the Qur’ān is the *mutawātir* transmission and NOT that which is written in the *masāhif*, because the Companions wrote down the Qur’ān in the *masāhif* only after they had thoroughly memorized it. The act of writing the Qur’ān was to protect it from possible additions or omissions, and not to define or identify the Qur’ān. What the Companions wrote in the *masāhif* was the Qur’ān that was only *mutawātir* for them, and they did so after comparing it to the Prophet’s own edition of the Quran.¹⁷

¹⁴ Abū Zayd al-Dabbūsī, *Taqwīm al-Adillah fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, ed. Khalīl al-Mays, (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001), p. 20. Refer to chapter two for a detailed discussion on the theory of *tawātur*.

¹⁵ The literature known as *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah* (distinctive signs of Prophecy) presents proofs that testify to the Prophecy of Muhammad, such as the miracles he performed, the previous prophets’ anticipation of his appearance, his ethical behavior, his historical influence, and the divine and perfect message of Islam, which he passed on. See for example Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mu‘tī Qal‘ajī, (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1988).

¹⁶ al-Dabbūsī, *Taqwīm*, p. 20.

¹⁷ Several authorities in the Muslim tradition believe that the Prophet and the Companions had collected the Qur’ān in “some” primitive written forms such as tree leaves, leather scraps, shoulder blades, etc., al-Qattān, *Mabāhith fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, pp. 118-20. One tradition transmitted in the Hadīth collection of Ibn Mājah quotes ‘Ā’ishah saying “the stoning and breastfeeding verses were revealed to the Prophet, and I had them written down in a sheet/scroll (*sahīfah*) under my bed, however a domesticated animal entered the house and ate it”, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, ed. Muhammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, (Cairo al-Bābī al-Halabī, [n.d.]), 1/625-6 (*hadīth* #1944).

Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1063)

There is no direct statement for the definition of the Qur'ān by Ibn Hazm who considers it to be a self-evident truth that does not any definition According to Ibn Hazm, the Qur'ān is that which (*huwa*) is well known everywhere (*al-mashhūr fi al-āfāq*) We can still identify the following characteristics and features of the Qur'ān from Ibn Hazm's scattered comments

- 1- The Qur'ān was and is still validated by the transmission of the whole community (*al-kāffah*) with no uncertainties whatsoever
- 2- The Qur'ān is that which is written in the *masāḥif*¹⁸
- 3- The Qur'ān is that which was revealed to the Prophet in its seven different Modes (*ahruf*) All these seven Modes are still existent in the well-known Readings of the Qur'ān¹⁹

Ibn Hazm presents-under the chapter of *Ijmā'*,²⁰ and surprisingly not under the section of the legal proofs (*al-adillah al-shar'iyah*)²¹ - a lengthy discussion on the codification of the Qur'ān arguing that 'Uthmān kept all the seven *ahruf* in the official codified editions and that he did not drop them as some Muslims have claimed Ibn Hazm argues that it is unimaginable that 'Uthmān would have dropped anything from the Qur'ān because at that time, Islam has already spread from Khurāsān to Barqah,²²

¹⁸ Abū Muhammad Ibn Hazm, *al-Ihkām fi Usūl al-Ahkām*, ed Ahmad Muhammad Shākīr, (Beirut Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, [n d]), 1/95

¹⁹ Ibn Hazm, *Ihkām*, 1/96, 4/165

²⁰ Zāhirīs reject the *ymā'* as a source of law They accept one form of *ymā'* only which is the *ymā'* among the Companions because it is possible to achieve, unlike the *ymā'* of scholars or *fuqahā'*, which is impossible to realize Ibn Hazm also accepts the *ymā'* of the whole Muslim nation, if it can be attained, M Bernard, "Idjma'", *Et*, Cf Abū Muhammad Ibn Hazm, *Marātib al-Ijmā'*, (Beirut Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1982), pp 11-20

²¹ Ibn Hazm, *Ihkām*, 4/162-172

²² Barqah is a region between Egypt and Tunisia, Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, (Beirut Dār Sādir, 1977), 1/388-90

and from Yemen to Adharbayjān Therefore, Muslims had more than a hundred thousand *mushafs* in their possession and they were teaching the Qur’ān in every town and city to adult men, women, and young boys ²³ Needless to say that this is an unreasonable exaggeration on Ibn Hazm’s part (to claim that by the year 35/655, Muslims had in circulation one hundred thousand *mushafs*) ²⁴

al-Bazdawī (d. 482/1089) and al-Sarakhsī (d. 490/1096)

In his *usūl* manual, al-Sarakhsī states that *al-kitāb* “is” the Qur’ān that was revealed to the Prophet, written down in the *masāhif*, and transmitted to us according to the seven well-known *ahruf* through *tawātur* transmission, for anything below the status of *tawātur* is never enough to prove the validity and the authenticity of the Qur’ān ²⁵ Al-Sarakhsī built his argument almost verbatim on al-Bazdawī’s, who has already offered the same definition by stating that the Qur’ān as it was revealed to the Messenger of God is that which was written down in the *masāhif* and transmitted on the Prophet’s behalf through *tawātur*, and without any uncertainty (*shubhah*) ²⁶

Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)

Al-Ghazālī’s discussion on the Qur’ān in his *Mustasfā* is one of the most comprehensive early *usūlī* discussions, and it has been quoted extensively in later *usūl* works Al-Ghazālī states that *al-kitāb* is that which was transmitted to us, within the two

²³ Ibn Hazm, *Ihkām*, 4/163

²⁴ Assuming that at this time there were 100,000 Muslims who knew how to read and write, and that they were able to obtain materials capable of producing 100,000 copies of the *mushaf*

²⁵ Abū Bakr al-Sarakhsī, *Usūl al-Sarakhsī*, ed. Abū al-Wafā al-Afghānī, (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993), 1/279

²⁶ ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-Asrār ‘an Usūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Umar, (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1997), 1/36-7

covers of the *mushaf* (*bayna daffatay al-mushaf*) according to the seven well-known (*mashhūrah*) *ahruf*, through *tawātur* ²⁷ This definition is similar to what was provided before by al-Dabbūsī, Ibn Hazm, al-Bazdawī, and al-Sarakhsī, and it seems that by the 5th/11th century the main characteristics and parameters of the Qur’ān were already established among Muslim scholars, both the theologians and the *usūlīs* Al-Ghazālī explicates his statement further and offers more details and arguments to support the parameters of his definition

What is meant by *al-Kitāb*, al-Ghazālī says, is the revealed Qur’ān (*al-munazzal*), and the reason for limiting it by the *mushaf* is because the Companions were very meticulous and keen on writing only what is Qur’ānic in the *mushaf*, to the extent that they purposely insisted on not using any diacritics or verse separators (*karihū al-ta‘āshīr wa al-naqt/nuqat wa amarū bi al-tajrīd*) so that the Qur’ān would not be mixed with any non-Qur’ānic materials As for the condition of *tawātur*, it is necessary to ensure that what is written in the *mushaf*, i.e. the Qur’ān, is what was agreed upon [among the Companions] It is logically and practically impossible that parts of the Qur’ān might have been neglected, because the *ummah* had all the sufficient reasons to memorize the Qur’ān by heart and meticulously transmit it fully with the utmost integrity ²⁸

Therefore, the main parameters of al-Ghazālī’s definition of al-Qur’ān are revelation, *mushaf*, and *tawātur* al-Ghazālī emphasizes the importance of the third parameter since stipulating *tawātur* in the Qur’ān is essential to yield [necessary] “knowledge” (*al-‘ilm*), because God’s speech is substantive/concrete (*haqīqī*) and not abstract/theoretical (*wad‘ī*) In other words, God’s speech and commands cannot follow

²⁷ Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā min ‘Ilm al-Usūl*, ed Hamzah b Zuhayr Hafiz, (al-Madīnah Sharikat al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah li al-Tibā‘ah, 1992), 2/9

²⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/9

the pattern of the following formula “if you, humans, think that a certain act is good or bad, then We will make it licit or forbid it” God’s speech, al-Ghazālī emphasizes, is concrete and substantive, it cannot result in uncertain rulings (*hukm zannī*)²⁹

Al-Ghazālī then discusses other parameters set by other scholars and argues against them. For example, he argues that inimitability (*iʿjāz*) is not part of the definition of the Qur’ān, because being inimitable (*muʿjiz*) is only a sign and a proof for the truth of Muhammad’s Prophethood. Moreover, inimitability could arise with phenomena other than the Qur’ān. Also, a fragment of any verse (*āyah*) is not inimitable, yet this fragment is Qur’ānic, therefore, inimitability cannot be a criterion for identifying the Qur’ān.³⁰

Al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233)

Al-Āmidī defines the Qur’ān/*al-kitāb* by quoting al-Ghazālī’s definition verbatim, preceded by the phrase “it has been said” (*qīla*) “as for the true meaning of *al-kitāb* (*haqīqat al-kitāb*), it has been said that it is that which was transmitted to us within the two covers of the *mushaf* according to the seven well-known (*mashhūrah*) *ahruf*, through *tawātur*”³¹ However, al-Āmidī contests this definition by saying that there should not be any other parameter to define *al-kitāb* except that it is the revealed Qur’ān (*al-Qur’ān al-munazzal*) by means of Jibrīl. Al-Āmidī argues that the nature and the veracity of the Qur’ān should not be affected by transmitting the Qur’ān through *tawātur*. Even if it were not transmitted to us at all, this does not mean that the Qur’ān is not truthful, for

²⁹ *ibid*, 2/10

³⁰ *ibid*, 2/9-10

³¹ Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *al-Ihkām fī Usūl al-Ahkām*, ed. ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAfīfī, (Riyad: Dār al-Sumayʿī, 2003), 1/215

then we are only ignorant of its existence by not receiving it. Consequently, our knowledge of the Qur'ān's existence should not be a parameter in its definition nor should it be considered a characteristic of its nature. In other words, the Qur'ān's transmission, regardless of its *tawātur*, is not a parameter in the definition.³² Therefore, Al-Āmidī dismisses *tawātur* as a necessary parameter in the definition of *al-kitāb*, and then he elucidates his two other parameters, i.e. Qur'ānity and revelation, "*tanzīl*". By stating that *al-kitāb* is "the" Qur'ān, we hence avoid the other divine books that were sent down by God to his other messengers, such as the Torah and the Bible, for none of these books is the "the" book that was sent down to the Muslim nation and is currently used in their legal system. Furthermore, by designating *al-kitāb* as the Qur'ān, we disregard the other revealed speech by God to the Prophet, which is not recited as part of the Qur'ān, such as the *hadīth qudsī*. As for the other parameter, i.e. revelation (*al-munazzal*), it is meant to avoid God's speech that was not revealed to the Prophet, for this speech is not part of "the" book. Therefore, the Qur'ān cannot be defined as the eternal speech (*al-kalām al-qadīm*) or the inimitable speech (*al-mu'jiz*).³³

Ibn al-Hājib (d. 646/1248)

In his *Mukhtasar al-Muntahā al-Usūlī*, Ibn al-Hājib defines *al-kitāb* as follows: *al-kitāb* is the Qur'ān, it is the revealed speech being inimitable in at least one *sūrah*. Those who said that *al-kitāb/al-Qur'ān* is that which was transmitted to us between the two covers through *tawātur* offer a circular definition, for the existence of the *mushaf* and its transmission are dependent on the existence of the Qur'ān, therefore we cannot define

³² al-Āmidī, *Ihkām*, 1/215

³³ al-Āmidī provides the same reasoning and rationale offered by al-Ghazālī, *ibid*, 1/215-6

the Qur'ān with parameters dependent upon the subject of the definition. In other words, defining the Qur'ān with parameters that are intrinsically dependent on the Qur'ān itself is fallacious. The *mushaf* is a notion intrinsically dependent on the Qur'ān, therefore it cannot define the Qur'ān that we are trying to define.³⁴

Al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834)

I will end this short survey with al-Shawkānī's discussion on the Qur'ān and its definition. Al-Shawkānī states that *al-kitāb* is the revealed speech to the Messenger of God, which is written in the *masāhif* and transmitted to us through *tawātur*. Al-Shawkānī explicates the parameters of this definition further and emphasizes that by stipulating *tawātur* transmission, the irregular/anomalous (*shādhah*) readings are hence excluded.³⁵ Al-Shawkānī brings up the objections to the above definition for being circular, i.e. to consider the *masāhif*,³⁶ inimitability and *tawātur* as parameters,³⁷ and after discussing them³⁸ he restates the above definition of the Qur'ān as the speech of God, which is revealed to Muhammad, recited among Muslims, and transmitted via *tawātur*.³⁹

Summary and observations

³⁴ Abd al-Rahmān al-Jī, *Sharh Mukhtasar al-Muntahā al-Usūlī*, ed. Muhammad Ismā'īl, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004), 2/274.

³⁵ Muhammad b. 'Alī al-Shawkānī, *Irshād al-Fuhūl ilā Tahqīq al-Haqq min 'Ilm al-Usūl*, ed. Abū Hafs al-Atharī, (Riyad: Dār al-Fadīlah, 2000), 1/169.

³⁶ Refer to the above discussion on this subject.

³⁷ Refer to the above discussion on this subject.

³⁸ al-Shawkānī, *Irshād*, 1/169-70.

³⁹ *ibid*, 1/171.

We notice that almost all *usūl* manuals stipulate *tawātur* as a parameter in the definition of the Qur'ān. Based on the theories of *tawātur* and knowledge I discussed earlier,⁴⁰ it seems only natural to stipulate *tawātur* as an essential parameter to define the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is the primary and absolute source of legal rulings, its validity, authenticity, and absoluteness must not to be doubted or questioned, for the Qur'ān must yield necessary and absolute knowledge. According to medieval Muslims, the only medium, through which a text could be authenticated, is *tawātur*. Once the text achieves the status of *tawātur*, it is considered to be automatically and inevitably true. In order to distinguish the Qur'ān from other texts such as the Prophetic traditions and supplications, the Qur'ān was distinguished by *tawātur* that was designated as an essential parameter to identify the Qur'ān. On the other hand, the *usūlīs* who rejected *tawātur* as a parameter in the definition were mainly driven by methodological and theoretical argumentative motives. Al-Āmidī and Ibn al-Hājjib argued that *tawātur* cannot be a parameter in the definition of the Qur'ān that should exist as a notion regardless of how it was transmitted, the Qur'ān is a fact (*haqīqah*) independent of *tawātur*. Similarly, the existence of the *mushaf* is naturally dependent on the existence of the Qur'ān, therefore, considering the *mushaf* to be a parameter in the definition will lead to a circular argument (*al-dawr*). Nevertheless, both al-Āmidī and Ibn al-Hājjib emphasized the fact that *tawātur* is an important aspect of the Qur'ān, it is a necessary condition to ensure the validity and authenticity of receiving the text of the Qur'ān. The consensus is established among Muslim scholars (*ymāc al-jumhūr*) that what was

⁴⁰ Refer to chapter two

transmitted “as” Qur’ān⁴¹ took place through *tawātur*, and therefore Muslims are certain that the knowledge it yields is absolute (*hujja*)⁴² In conclusion, almost none of the *usūlīs* stated that the Qur’ān might not have been transmitted through *tawātur* We should keep in mind for now that many *usūlīs*, as we have seen in the definitions above, correlated the parameter of the *tawātur* of the Qur’ān with the “fact” that it was transmitted according to the seven well-known *ahruf* and not the seven Readings

In the course of discussing and defining the Qur’ān as a legal source, most *usūl* manuals deal with two problematic subjects after the identification of the parameters of the Qur’ān/*al-kitāb*, namely the *basmalah* and the *shawādh* readings as source of law

Al-Basmalah⁴³

Muslim scholars of the four eponymous *sunni* *fiqh* schools disagreed whether the *basmalah* is a verse of the Qur’an or not Medieval Muslim scholars have dealt with this topic at length, and it was the subject of many treatises,⁴⁴ as well as extensive

⁴¹ One interesting syntactical observation in these *usūl* premises is the usage of “*min*” (of/from) The statements usually go like this “what was transmitted of (*min*) the Qur’ān through *tawātur* is absolute (*hujjah*), however disagreement arises as to what was transmitted of it (*minhu*) through *āhād*” Using the preposition “*min*” in “*min al-Qur’ān*” indicates that the notion of “Qur’ān” is divided into two categories, the first one is “*qur’ān*” (small q) that can be understood as a generic noun that includes everything revealed to the Prophet whether it was abrogated later on or not It also includes all the permissible anomalous readings during the Prophet’s time, which were rejected after the official codification of the Qur’ān The second category is “the” Qur’ān that was collected in the *masāhif* and transmitted through *tawātur* What was transmitted through *āhād* from the *qur’ān* (small q) is not Qur’ān (capital Q)

⁴² Al-Āmidī, *Ihkām*, 1/216, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Raf’ al-Hājib ‘an Mukhtasr Ibn al-Hājib*, ed ‘Alī Mu‘awwad, (Beirut ‘Ālam al-Kutub, [n d]), 2/83-4

⁴³ For Historical and theological aspects of *al-basmalah*, see W Graham, “*Basmala*”, *EQ*

⁴⁴ Such as Murtadā al-Zabīdī, *al-Radd ‘alā man abā al-Haqq wa ıdda‘ā anna al-Jahr bı al-Basmalah min Sunnat Sayyid al-Khalq*, ed A al-Kuwaytī, (Riyad 1991), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Ahkām al-Basmalah*, ed Majdī al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm, (Cairo [n d]), Muhammad b ‘Alī Abū al-‘Irfān al-Sabbān, *al-Risālah al-Kubrā fī al-Basmalah*, ed F al-Zamrī and H al-Mīr, (Beirut 1995)

discussion by modern scholars ⁴⁵ I will only study the *usūlīs*' arguments that pertain to our discussion on *tawātur*, namely why according to some scholars the *basmalah* is considered to be an opening Qur'ānic verse in each *sūrah*, while other scholars have argued the opposite I will address the main arguments as presented in al-Ghazālī's *Mustasfā* and refer to other arguments in different sources whenever necessary

The point of agreement between the two camps is that the *basmalah* is "one" verse from the Qur'ān, but the disagreement is whether it is an independent recurring verse in the opening of each *sūrah* In other words, are the *basmalahs* in the openings of each *sūrah* considered to be individually independent verses, hence if the total number of the chapters of the Qur'ān is 114, we have 113⁴⁶ verses that are the *basmalahs* of each chapter Al-Ghazālī presumes that al-Shāfi'ī was inclined to believe that the *basmalah* is a verse from every single *sūrah* of the Qur'ān, including Q (1) *al-fātihah/al-hamd* ⁴⁷ However, he wonders if al-Shāfi'ī believed that the *basmalah* is an independent verse by itself in each *sūrah* or that it is only a part of the first verse of each *sūrah* al-Ghazālī believes that there is no statement that can be directly attributed to al-Shāfi'ī through any of his students ⁴⁸ Al-Ghazālī concludes that the correct way to approach the problem of the *basmalah* is to presume the following wherever the *basmalah* was/is

⁴⁵ H Algar, "Besmellāh In exegesis, jurisprudence and cultural life", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4/172-4, I al-Basyūnī, *al-Basmalah bayna Ahl al-'Ibārah wa Ahl al-Ishārah*, (Cairo 1972), B Carra de Vaux, (Revised by L Gardet), "Basmala", *EP*, M, al-Gharawī, *al-Isim al-A'zam wa al-Basmalah wa al-Hamdalah*, (Beirut 1982), P Gignoux, "Besmellah Origin of the Formula", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4/172

⁴⁶ There is no *basmalah* in *sūrat al-tawbah* as I will show shortly

⁴⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/13

⁴⁸ *Ibid* 2/13 According to the editor of *al-Mustasfā*, he has not found yet any authority that cites that opinion by al-Shāfi'ī as presented by al-Ghazālī

written in the Qur'ān with the same script and handwriting of the other verses, it is then considered to be Qur'ānic⁴⁹

One of the major complications al-Ghazālī poses is the following since the Qur'ān is only authenticated and validated through *tawātur* that inevitably results in decisive, indisputable and absolute knowledge-the Qur'ān itself-how did then the scholars and the *ummah* disagree on the nature of the *basmalah*, whether it is Qur'ānic or not? In other words, since anything transmitted through *tawātur* is unquestionably valid and absolute, and since Muslim scholars unanimously agreed that the Qur'ān was transmitted through *tawātur*, why is it that a disagreement took place regarding some parts of this *mutawātir* Qur'ān, namely the *basmalah*?⁵⁰ Al-Ghazālī's opponents further add to this complication by asking the following since the scholars did disagree on the Qur'ānicity of the *basmalah*, this implies that *tawātur* does not necessarily yield indisputable and absolute knowledge, as it has been claimed. Therefore, *tawātur* could yield uncertain knowledge, and if this is true, how could the Qur'ān then be authenticated through uncertain means? Furthermore, doubting the authenticity of some parts of the Qur'ān will prompt the *Shī'ah* for example to claim that 'Alī's right of succession was indeed mentioned in the Qur'ān yet the Companions dropped those verses that speak of his rightful succession⁵¹

Al-Ghazālī responds to that previous argument with the following logic the Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet so that he passed it on completely to his Companions and to the *ummah*, who are "the people" of *tawātur* (*ahl al-tawātur*). Thus,

⁴⁹ Ibid , 2/13, al-Nawawī says that this argument by al-Ghazālī is the strongest proof that the *basmalah* is a verse from the Qur'ān in the opening of each *sūrah*, Abū Zakariyyā al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū' Sharh al-Muhadhdhab li al-Shīrāzī*, ed M al-Mutī'ī, (Jaddah al-Irshād, [n d]), 3/296-313

⁵⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/14

⁵¹ Ibid , 2/14

forgery and collaboration on lying are unimaginable, for it is presumed that the Companions and the *ummah* would never omit any verse from the Qur'ān or transmit the Qur'ān imperfectly⁵² Al-Ghazālī then proceeds to present al-Bāqillānī's opinion and arguments on the topic and argues against them I will discuss al-Bāqillānī's arguments directly from his *Intisār* before I come back to al-Ghazālī

Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1012)

Al-Ghazālī based his argumentation mainly on al-Bāqillānī's, who addressed the problem of the *basmalah* extensively in his *Intisār* Al-Bāqillānī's opponents ask although the Qur'ān was transmitted through *tawātur* that yields absolute knowledge, the Companions, Successors, Muslim scholars and the *ummah* have disagreed on the Qur'ānic nature of the *basmalah*, is it a verse in the beginning of each *sūrah* of the Qur'ān or is it only a part of *al-fātihah*? If the *basmalah* is a verse in each *sūrah*, does it belong to the first verse of each *sūrah* or is it a separate and independent verse in every single *sūrah* except *sūrat al-tawbah*? Did the Prophet recite it audibly during his prayers or silently? Al-Bāqillānī's opponents then say that all these questions and doubts insinuate that the Qur'ān is not as far from dispute and disagreement as it has been claimed, despite its presumed *tawātur* as proposed by the scholars⁵³ Furthermore, the *basmalah* is not the only Qur'ānic element that has been stained with uncertainty, Ibn Mas'ūd denied the Qur'ānic nature of *al-mu'awwidhatayn*,⁵⁴ and there has been a

⁵² *Ibid*, 2/15

⁵³ al-Bāqillānī, *al-Intisār li al-Qur'ān*, 1/204

⁵⁴ *al-Mu'awwidhatayn* are the last two chapters of the Qur'ān Q (113) and Q (114), both of which start with the verse "*qul a'ūdhu*" (Say I seek refuge in), See Noldeke, *GdQ*, pp 39-46, Cf al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/300-30, Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān*, ed Ahmad Saqr, (Cairo Dār al-Turāth, 1973), pp 42-8

considerable dispute over the exact order of the *sūrahs* and the precise number of the verses in each *sūrah* ⁵⁵ All these complications and uncertainties, al-Bāqillānī's adversaries claim, lead us to doubt the absolute and authentic transmission of the Qur'ān, because presuming the *tawātur* of its transmission contradicts many aspects that cast doubt on some parts of it ⁵⁶

Al-Bāqillānī responds to these claims extensively but I will summarize the arguments that pertain to our discussion on *tawātur* and transmission. In al-Bāqillānī's view, the *basmalah* is neither a part of *al-fātihah*, nor the opening verse of each *sūrah* in the Qur'ān, it is rather a verse in *sūrat al-naml* Q (27 30)⁵⁷ only. Those who claim that the *basmalah* is an opening verse in every *sūrah* of the Qur'ān relied on the fact that the Companions established a consensus on what is Qur'ānic and what is not by recording only the revealed Qur'ān in the *masāhif*, and thus excluding everything else that is not Qur'ānic. The Companions have unequivocally informed the whole *ummah* of this act so that confusion (*shubhah*) would not occur as to what is Qur'ānic and what is not. Therefore, it is misleading to suggest that the Companions established their consensus on the Qur'ānicity of everything written in the *masāhif* except for the *basmalah* and the *mu'awwidhatyan*, therefore, one must presume that everything the Companions wrote down in the *mushaf* is Qur'ānic. Consequently, wherever the *basmalah* is written in the *mushaf*, one should assume that it is a revealed Qur'ānic verse. Moreover, there exist many accounts to the effect that the Prophet used not to know the beginning or the end of any *sūrah* unless the *basmalah* would be revealed to him and hence, it is

⁵⁵ See Noldeke, *GdQ*, pp 27-30, 46-7, 63-8, Cf al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/131-156

⁵⁶ al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/204-5

⁵⁷ “*innahu min Sulaymāna wa innahu bi 'ismi 'l-lāhi 'r-rahmāni 'r-rahīmi*” (Lo! it is from Solomon, and lo! it is in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)

presumptuous to suggest that what was revealed alongside the Qur'ān with the beginning and end of each *sūrah* is not Qur'ānic⁵⁸ On top of that, many accounts attest that several Companions openly stated that the *basmalah* is an opening Qur'ānic verse in each *sūrah*, yet they were never contested or deemed wrong This means that had the *basmalah* not been Qur'ānic, the other Companions would have objected to such a statement Additionally, Ibn 'Abbās stated in a certified account that Satan (*al-Shaytān*) stole a verse from the Qur'ān, namely the *basmalah*, hinting at the fact that many Muslims stopped reading it with the openings of the *sūrahs*⁵⁹ What also proves that the *basmalah* is a Qur'ānic opening verse in each *sūrah*, is that the Companions wrote it down at the beginning of each *sūrah* except in Q (9) *sūrat al-tawbah/barā'ah* Had the *basmalah* been only a separation verse that distinguishes the beginning from the end of the *sūrahs*, the Companions would have written the *basmalah* at the beginning of Q (9)⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Companions neither included the *sūrahs*' titles in the *mushaf* nor any verse separators (*fawāsil*) so that any non-Qur'ānic material would not be included in the *mushaf* As a result, the Companions would not have included a non-Qur'ānic *basmalah* in the *mushaf* thus stirring doubts (*shubhah*) by affixing a non-Qur'ānic element to each *sūrah* at its beginning⁶¹

Al-Bāqillānī responds to the above arguments as follows even though it is not certain that the *basmalah* is a verse of *al-fātihah* or an opening verse in every *sūrah*, we are inclined to believe that it is not a verse in the Qur'ān except in *sūrat al-naml* Q (20 37) There are several sound accounts confirming that the Prophet did not recite

⁵⁸ al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/206-208

⁵⁹ Ibid , 1/208-10

⁶⁰ Ibid , 1/210

⁶¹ Ibid , 1/210-213

the *basmalah* audibly at the beginning of *al-fāṭihah*, and that the Caliphs and scholars (*imāms*) after him did not recite it audibly either. Had the *basmalah* been part of the *fāṭihah*, it would have been absurd to recite parts of it audibly and some other parts inaudibly, this shows that the *basmalah* is not part of the *fāṭihah* and that it is only a way to begin the *sūrah*.⁶² Al-Bāqillānī then states his main argument as the following: scholars of the *ummah* unanimously agreed that the Prophet unequivocally spread the Qur'ān among the *ummah* by relaying it publicly to everyone in a way that eliminated confusion (*shubḥah*), and consequently the Qur'ān's absoluteness (*ḥujjah*) was established. The Prophet did not circulate some parts of the Qur'ān more than he did some other parts, nor did he read parts of it to some people and exclude others. Similarly, the Prophet did not clarify to one or two Companions only that some parts are Qur'ānic while others are not. The Prophet disseminated the Qur'ān publicly and equally to the whole *ummah*. Therefore, it is unimaginable that the Prophet recited some verses to Ibn Mas'ūd only and kept out the other Companions from learning those verses, or that he told Ibn Mas'ūd or any other Companion some critical information about the Qur'ān without circulating this information among the other Companions. Similarly, it is impossible that the Prophet would have revealed to Ibn Mas'ūd only some of the seven *ahruf*, the order of the *sūrahs*, and the non-Qur'ānicity of some verses, without informing the other Companions. This is unanimously unacceptable to all Muslim scholars.⁶³

⁶² Ibid , 1/213-6

⁶³ Ibid , 1/220-1. Al-Bāqillānī tries to justify Ibn Mas'ūd's position by saying that the accounts transmitted on his behalf are either unreliable or that Ibn Mas'ūd's Reading has been abrogated by the consensus of the *ummah*.

I will now return to where we stopped with al-Ghazālī's discussion on the *basmalah* when he argues against the reasoning of al-Bāqillānī, who according to al-Ghazālī erred in his opinion regarding the non-Qur'ānicity of the *basmalah*. Al-Ghazālī says that al-Qādī, i.e. al-Bāqillānī, considered those who believe that the *basmalah* is an opening Qur'ānic verse in every *sūrah* are wrong, and argued that if the *basmalah* were Qur'ānic, the Prophet would have clarified this unequivocally to the *ummah*. Al-Qādī chose to consider those people to be wrong and not infidels (*mukhtī' wa laysa bi kāfir*) because the non-Qur'ānic nature of the *basmalah* was not attested through *tawātur* or *mutawātir* accounts.⁶⁴ Moreover, al-Bāqillānī admitted that the *basmalah* was written down in the Qur'ān in the beginning of each *sūrah* with the same script and handwriting as the rest of the Qur'ān, unlike the titles of the *sūrahs* that were written with a different script in order to highlight their non-Qur'ānic nature.⁶⁵

Al-Ghazālī responds to al-Bāqillānī's arguments by saying that incorporating any non-Qur'ānic materials into the Qur'ān is known to be an act of infidelity (*kufr*) whether it is the *basmalah* or anything else. Just as judging one to be an infidel (*kāfir*) by considering *al-Qunūt*⁶⁶ or *al-tashahhud*⁶⁷ or *al-ta'awwudh*⁶⁸ to be Qur'ānic, the same logic must be applied to the *basmalah*, and one should be deemed *kāfir* and not *mukhtī'* were

⁶⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/15

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 2/15-17

⁶⁶ The two *sūrahs* of *al-qunūt* (humility) are two short chapters that were included in the codex of Ubayy b. Ka'b. They are usually referred to as *sūratā al-khal' wa al-hafd* (the two chapters of denial and strive) or simply *al-qunūt*. Muslim authorities unanimously rejected the two *sūrahs* to be part of the Qur'ān and regarded them as supplications, Noldeke, *GdS*, pp. 33-38, Cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 2/422-428.

⁶⁷ *al-tashahhud* is recited during prayers after the second prostration: "at-tahīyyātu li 'l-lāh, wa 's-salawātu wa 't-tayyibātu as-salāmu 'alayka ayyuhā 'n-nabīyyu wa rahmatu 'l-lāhi wa barakātuh. As-salāmu 'alaynā wa 'alā 'ibādī 'l-lāhi 's-sālihīn. Ashhadu an lā ilāha illā 'l-lāhu wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhu wa rasūluhu" (All worships are for Allah. Allah's peace be upon you, O Prophet, and His mercy and blessings. Peace be on us and on all righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.)

⁶⁸ *al-ta'awwudh* is reciting "a'ūdhu bi 'l-lāhi mina 'sh-shayṭāni 'r-rajīm" before one starts reading the Qur'ān. The consensus of the Muslim scholars is that *al-ta'awwudh* is not Qur'ānic, Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh al-Turkī, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006), 1/142-135.

the *basmalah* not Qur'ānic Al-Ghazālī then uses al-Bāqillānī's own logic against him, presuming the non-Qur'ānicity of the *basmalah* just because the Prophet did not unequivocally state that it is a Qur'ānic verse in every *sūrah*, al-Ghazālī argues that the Prophet did not either unequivocally state that the *basmalah* is not Qur'ānic, in the same way he did with both *al-ta'awwudh* and *al-tashahhud* ⁶⁹ If one claims that what is not Qur'ānic is numerous and that the Prophet could not have made statements regarding everything that is not Qur'ān, al-Ghazālī answers that this would have been true only if the confusion (*shubhah*) surrounding the *basmalah* is not strong enough Since the *basmalah* was written down in the *mushaf* with the same script as the rest of the Qur'ān, and since it was revealed to the Prophet at the beginning of each *sūrah* – both facts are strong evidence to presume the Qur'ānicity of the *basmalah* – it is unimaginable to presume that the Prophet would allow the Muslims to be confused regarding the nature of the *basmalah* and not openly declare that the *basmalah* is not Qur'ānic The Prophet's silence regarding the nature of the *basmalah* suggests that it is Qur'ānic ⁷⁰

After all the above arguments from both sides regarding the problematic nature of the *basmalah*, we arrive at an important section in this discussion It seems that determining the Qur'ānic nature of the *basmalah* became a matter of *iytihād* (opinion) and could not be determined absolutely or decisively by *tawātur* or even *ymāc* How could the Qur'ān, partially or entirely, be validated and authenticated through *iytihād*?⁷¹ Al-Bāqillānī allows the disagreement on the number of verses and their exact length,

⁶⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/17

⁷⁰ Ibid , 2/18

⁷¹ One should keep in mind that the established consensus is that the Qur'ān cannot be read using *iytihād*, and that the *Qirā'āt* are *sunnah* Refer to the previous discussion in chapter two regarding my argument that Ibn Mujāhid treated the variant readings as legal verdicts (*ahkām*)

because the Qur'ān Readers and their *ijtihād* determine these matters ⁷² As far as the *basmalah* is concerned, it is certain and absolute that it is part of the Qur'ān in *sūrat al-naml* Q (27 30), nevertheless, the disagreement pertains to whether it is part of the Qur'ān once only, in Q (27 30), or multiple times in the beginning of each *sūrah* Consequently, doubt is permissible in this case, for it involves the exact number and the length of the verses, which *ijtihād* is entitled to determine ⁷³ As a result, deciding on the nature of the *basmalah* is speculative (*nazarī*) and not absolute (*qat'ī*) since it did not sustain the necessary *tawātur* to yield automatically absolute and necessary knowledge Furthermore, determining the Qur'ānicity of the *basmalah* is indeed speculative (*zannī, ijtihādī*) because the Companions themselves disagreed on its nature, and all Muslims are uncertain of its Qur'ānicity, unlike *al-ta'awwudh* and *al-qunūt*, both of which are decisively non-Qur'ānic Since the *basmalah* is a Qur'ānic verse at least in Q (27 30), it is certain that the *ijtihād* (opinion) does not touch the core and essence (*asl*) of the Qur'ān As for what is written down as "Qur'ān" in the *mushaf*, the *ijtihād* may decide the exact position of the written Qur'ānic materials, and whether it is Qur'ānic once or several times ⁷⁴

⁷² al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/226-235

⁷³ al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/19-20 This argument was rejected based on the repetitive verses in the Qur'ān, which Muslims unanimously agree that each repeated verse is an independent verse by itself The ubiquitous example given to refute al-Bāqillānī's argument is the repetitive verse of Q (55) *sūrat al-Rahmān* "fa bi ayyi ālā'i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān" (Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that ye deny), which is repeated in this seventy-eight-verse *sūrah* thirty-one times If one allows the repetitive verses to be considered as one verse only, then it is permissible to treat these verses of Q (55) as one verse only, and not count them towards the total number of the verses in this *sūrah* and eventually in the whole Qur'ān

⁷⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/21, al-Āmidī, *Ihkām*, 1/219-222 Al-Dabbūsī states that the *basmalah* is not an opening Qur'ānic verse in each *sūrah*, including Q (1) *al-fātihah*, yet it is recited to obtain blessings On the other hand, the *basmalah* is a Qur'ānic verse revealed to separate the *sūrahs* from each other Therefore, it was written in the Qur'ān because it is a Qur'ānic verse by itself, nevertheless it was written with a different script from the rest of the Qur'ān since it is not part of any *sūrah* The *basmalah* cannot possibly be authenticated as Qur'ān with all the disagreements and disputes regarding its Qur'ānic nature, for the Qur'ān cannot be authenticated and validated except through *tawātur* that yields no

The Mālikīs did not trouble themselves with this notion of *iythād* because they absolutely denied the *basmalah*'s Qur'ānic nature except in Q (27 30) Ibn al-Hājib and the commentators on his *Mukhtasar* argue the following anything transmitted through *āhād* is not Qur'ān, and this includes the *basmalah*, for *tawātur* is not established that it is a Qur'ānic opening verse in every *sūrah* The argument that suggests the Qur'ānicity of the *basmalah* because it was written in the *masāhif* with the same script as the rest of the Qur'ān is not enough of a proof, transmission through *tawātur* overrules anything else ⁷⁵

The Shāfi'ī Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī responds to Ibn al-Hājib's arguments by saying that he, i.e. Ibn al-Hājib, got himself involved in a subject that he does not fully comprehend, and that he took it upon himself to defend his Mālikī colleagues who believed that the *basmalah* is not Qur'ānic Al-Subkī argues against Ibn al-Hājib in detail, even though he concludes by saying that he himself is not claiming the *tawātur* of the *basmalah*, but nevertheless he is simply using the same reasoning of Ibn al-Hājib to show the flaw (*fasād*) of his argument According to al-Subkī, and the Shāfi'īs in general, the stronger argument that the *basmalah* is Qur'ānic is that it was written down in the *masāhif* in the beginning of each *sūrah* In conclusion, al-Subkī does not presume the *tawātur* of the *basmalah*, even though al-Shāfi'ī did, for it was probably *mutawātirah* to

shubhah (confusion), al-Dabbūsī, *Taqwīm*, pp 20-1 To summarize the position on the *basmalah* according to the different legal schools (*madhāhib*), we can say the following the Shāfi'īs believe that the *basmalah* is an opening Qur'ānic verse in each *sūrah* including *al-fātihah* and excluding *al-tawbah/barā'ah* According to the Mālikīs, the *basmalah* is not a Qur'ānic verse at all, whether in *al-fātihah* or any other *sūrah* - except for Q (27 30) of *sūrat al-naml* The Hanafīs state that the *basmalah* is a Qur'ānic verse by itself, nevertheless it is not part of *al-fātihah* or any of the other *sūrahs*, it is rather an independent verse revealed to separate the *sūrahs* from each other, al-Zuhaylī, *Usūl*, pp 428-431

⁷⁵ al-Ījī, *Sharh Mukhtasar al-Muntahā al-Usūlī*, 2/280

al-Shāfiʿī at the time, for *tawātur* could be established among some people and not others⁷⁶

Summary and observations

Muslim scholars have disagreed whether the *basmalah* is a Qurʾānic opening verse in each *sūrah*. Those who believed that it is a Qurʾānic opening verse in every *sūrah* based their argument on the fact that the *basmalah* is written down in the *masāḥif* in the beginning of every *sūrah* with the same script,⁷⁷ unlike the titles of the *sūrahs*, which were written with a different script, thus suggesting their non-Qurʾānic nature. These scholars refer also to several traditions that suggest the Qurʾānicity of the *basmalah* in every *sūrah*. On the other hand, other scholars believed that the *basmalah* is not a Qurʾānic opening verse in every *sūrah*, despite the fact that it was written down in the *masāḥif*, simply because *tawātur* was not established as far as the Qurʾānicity of the *basmalah* is concerned. The simple fact that there is a disagreement among Muslim scholars on the Qurʾānicity of the *basmalah* is enough of a reason to exclude it from the Qurʾān that is absolute, no part of the Qurʾān might be subject to doubt or transmitted through *āḥād* chains. *Tawātur*, which is equivalent here to the consensus of the *ummah* or the scholars, supersedes the fact that the *basmalah* was written down in the *mushaf*. Therefore, the *basmalah* is considered to be transmitted through *āḥād* transmission despite being written down in the *mushaf*. Even those who presumed its Qurʾānic

⁷⁶ al-Subkī, *Rafʿ al-Hāyib*, 2/83-90

⁷⁷ al-Nawawī and al-Ghazālī claimed that the *basmalah* is written with the same script as the rest of the Qurʾān while al-Dabbūsī stated that the *basmalah* is written with a different script.

nature, as an opening verse in each *sūrah*, never claimed that it was transmitted through *tawātur*

The second and less problematic subject that the *usūlīs* had to deal with while defining and discussing the Qur’ān as a source of law is the famous anomalous reading of Ibn Mas‘ūd Q (5 89) “ *fa-siyāmu thalāthati ayyāmin mutatābi‘āt*” (then three successive days of fasting) This reading resulted in the legal question “*al-tatābu‘ fī sawm kaffārat al-yamīn*” (fasting three consecutive days to expiate breaking the oath) ⁷⁸ Muslim Scholars dismissed the anomalous reading of Ibn Mas‘ūd and deemed it *shādhah* because it was not transmitted through *tawātur* Even the Hanafīs who necessitated succession in the three-day fasting based on Ibn Mas‘ūd’s reading, considered the reading to be *shādhah*, and treated it as tradition only (*khābar*) ⁷⁹

We conclude the following points from this section

- According to some *usūlīs*, *tawātur* is considered to be a parameter in the nature and definition (*hadd*) of the Qur’ān
- The other *usūlīs* who refused to consider *tawātur* as a parameter in the *hadd* of the Qur’ān still stipulated *tawātur* as an essential condition to validate and authenticate the Qur’ān

⁷⁸ *sawm kaffārat al-yamīn* (fasting to expiate breaking the oath) is a legal verdict that obligates the Muslim who breaks his oath to feed ten poor people or provide them with clothes or free a Muslim slave as expiation for breaking the oath If one is unable to do any of these three options he is compelled to fast three days The Mālikīs and Shāfi‘īs have not necessitated successiveness in the three days of fasting, while the Hanafīs made it necessary that the three days should be consecutive based on the anomalous reading of Ibn Mas‘ūd, which they treated as a sound account (*khābar*), Abū Muhammad Ibn Hazm, *al-Muhallā bi al-Āthār*, ed Muhammad Munīr al-Dimashqī, (Cairo 1933), 8/65-76

⁷⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/11-12

- Almost all *usūlīs* agree that Qur'ān cannot be authenticated through *āhād* transmission. Each verse must be authenticated through *tawātur* in order to be regarded as Qur'ān.
- Even though the *basmalah* was written down in the *masāhif* with the same script as the rest of the Qur'ān, its transmission did not achieve the status of *tawātur*. Scholars have disagreed on its Qur'ānic nature whether it is an opening verse in every *sūrah*, or an opening verse in *al-fātihah* only, or not a Qur'ānic verse at all.
- The reading of Ibn Mas'ūd of Q (5:89) “ *fa-siyāmu thalāthati ayyāmin mutatabi'āt*” (then three successive days of fasting) was not transmitted through *tawātur*. Thus, the reading does not establish a legal ruling because it lacked the condition of *tawātur*, and consequently lost its Qur'ānicity. Nevertheless, the Hanafīs stated that the reading should result in a legal ruling since it should be regarded as a tradition (*khābar*) in the least, which necessitates action but not knowledge.

I will now discuss the *tawātur* of the Canonical Readings, the Seven and/or the Ten. According to the *usūlīs*, are these Readings transmitted through *tawātur* or not?

Tawātur al-Qirā'āt al-Sab' al-Ashr

I have mentioned in the previous chapter Ibn al-Jazarī's position on the issue of *tawātur al-Qirā'āt* and how he argued vehemently for the *tawātur* of the ten canonical Readings in his earlier work *Munjid al-Muqrin*. Nonetheless, Ibn al-Jazarī changed his position later in his life as one can read from the introduction to his *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā'āt al-Ashr* in which he acknowledged the inaccuracy of his initial

position regarding the *tawātur* of the Canonical Readings His revised view stated that the ten canonical Readings were not transmitted through *tawātur* but through single *āhād* transmission⁸⁰ I will study here the opinions of the *usūlis* on this topic whenever they dealt, since the subject of the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings is not always discussed in the *usūl* manuals The “Qur’ān” was almost always discussed in the *usūl* manuals as being transmitted through *tawātur*, nevertheless the transmission and validity of the canonical Readings were not similarly discussed often and at length

It could be misleading sometimes to consider one meaning only of certain phrases in *usūl* manuals and other medieval works, and ignore some other possible meanings It is also inaccurate to ignore the different aspects of such phrases and terms that were standardized according to one understanding only in a late period of time For example, the two terms *qirā’ah* and *harf* were interchangeable in early works of *tafsīr*, *Qirā’āt* and *usūl*⁸¹ Al-Ghazālī for instance stated that *al-Kitāb* is that which was transmitted to us within the two covers of the *masāhif* according to *al-ahruf al-sab‘ah al-mashhūrah*, through *tawātur*⁸² What did al-Ghazālī mean by *al-ahruf al-mashhūrah*? Did he mean the seven canonical Readings, or the *sab‘at ahruf* of the Prophetic tradition? If it is the latter, what did he mean then by *al-mashhūrah*? We are certain that the nature of the seven *ahruf* has always been mysterious and that

⁸⁰ Abū al-Khayr Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā’āt al-‘Ashr*, ed. ‘Alī Muhammad Al-Dabbā‘, (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, [n.d.]), 1/13

⁸¹ “From early works, however, it is clear that in the second/eighth century *harf* was taken to mean the same thing as *qirā’a* in its narrow sense of “variant reading”, F. Leemhuis, “Readings of the Qur’ān”, *EQ*, “Ursprünge des Koran als Textus Receptus”, S. Wild and H. Schild (eds.), *Akten des 27. Deutschen Orientalistentages (Bonn - 28. September bis 2. Oktober 1998) Norm und Abweichung*, (Wurzburg 2001), pp. 301-8

⁸² al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā*, 2/9

there has never been a consensus as to what they mean or signify⁸³ Therefore, it is inconceivable that al-Ghazālī implied the understanding and the knowledge of the seven *ahruf* among Muslims or even educated scholars Al-Āmidī quoted al-Ghazālī's definition verbatim and used the same phrase "*al-ahruf al-sab'ah al-mashhūrah*",⁸⁴ and al-Dabbūsī (d 430/1038) used the same phrase some eighty years before al-Ghazālī⁸⁵ On the other hand, Ibn Hazm (d 456/1063) used the following phrase "*al-Qirā'āt al-sab'*" according to which the Qur'ān was revealed are all preserved (*bāqiyah*) with the *ummah* It is inaccurate (*bātil*) to assume that 'Uthmān codified the *masāhif* according to one Reading only or to some of the seven *ahruf*⁸⁶ We notice here how the terms *ahruf* and *Qirā'ah* are equivalent for Ibn Hazm who apparently did not mean the seven canonical Readings of Ibn Mujāhid but meant the seven *ahruf* according to which the Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet This fact is confirmed in the discussion of *ymā'* where Ibn Hazm defended 'Uthmān's codification of the Qur'ān and argued that 'Uthmān could not possibly have dropped six out of the seven *ahruf* in the *masāhif*⁸⁷ Ibn Hazm concluded with the following statement as far as the seven *ahruf* are concerned, they are all preserved in the Qur'ān until the Day of Judgment, and they are all distributed within (*mathbūtah/mabthūthah*) the well-known (*mashhūrah*) *Qirā'āt*⁸⁸

In the following section I will study some *usūlīs'* statements regarding the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings As we have seen earlier, almost all the *usūlīs* agree

⁸³ Refer to the discussion in chapter one al-Suyūtī mentioned more than forty different interpretations for the meaning of the seven *ahruf*, al-Suyūtī, *Itqān*, 1/306-335

⁸⁴ al-Āmidī, *Ihkām*, 1/215

⁸⁵ al-Dabbūsī, *Taqwīm*, p 20

⁸⁶ Ibn Hazm, *Ihkām*, 1/96

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 4/162

⁸⁸ Ibn Hazm, *Ihkām*, 4/165

that the Qur'ān is *mutawātir*. They also make a clear distinction between the *mutawātir* Qur'ān versus the *shawādh* readings. In other words, anything *shādh* is not Qur'ānic, and anything that was transmitted through *āhād* is *shādh*. Only a few *usūlīs* have discussed the status of the *Qirā'āt* and what pertains to their transmission. Characterizing the *Qirā'āt* by *tawātur* has taken place at a later stage, the phrase “*tawātur al-Qirā'āt*” does not appear in early scholarship, neither with the *usūlīs* nor with the *qurrā'*. Abū Shāmah (d. 665/1266) in his *al-Murshid al-Wajīz* says the following: “Recently, some late Readers and blind followers (*muqallidūn*) started to circulate widely the notion that the seven Readings are entirely *mutawātirah*, i.e. they were transmitted through *tawātur* in every generation and with every single individual who transmitted those Readings, they also claimed that it is absolutely certain that those Readings were all revealed by God”⁸⁹. I will get back to Abū Shāmah's statement after exploring some of the late *usūlīs'* discussion on this topic.

Ibn al-Ḥājib and his commentators: al-Subkī and al-Ījī

Ibn al-Ḥājib devoted a short section in his *Mukhtasar* to the *Qirā'āt* and states the following: “The seven Readings are *mutawātirah* except in the aspects of performance (*adā'*) such as *al-madd* (lengthening of vowels), *al-īmālah* (a>e shift), *takhfīf al-hamzah* (Elision of *hamzah*), etc. If these Readings are not *mutawātirah*, it means that some of the Qur'ān is not *mutawātir*, such as Q (1:3) *malik* and *mālik*, where choosing one reading over the other is whimsical and biased (*tahakkum bātil*) because both readings are equal

⁸⁹ Shihāb a-Dīn Abū Shāmah, *al-Murshid al-Wajīz ilā 'Ulūm tata'allaq bi al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2002), p. 135.

in status ⁹⁰ Al-Subkī's comment on Ibn al-Hājib's statement is very short, he first quotes Abū Shāmah⁹¹ who asserted that *tawātur* is not applied to all the disputed single readings among the Readers and that the many disagreements among them are recorded in *Qirā'āt* manuals. Nevertheless, *tawātur* could be stipulated only when the Readers unanimously agree on certain readings that we received through different transmissions (*turuq*) ⁹² I will get back to Abū Shāmah's statement in detail in the next chapter when I study the different transmissions (*turuq*) of an eponymous Reading down to the later students in detailed stemmata ⁹³

The other commentators on Ibn al-Hājib's *Mukhtasar* did not add substantively to the topic. Al-Ījī gives the following comment on Ibn al-Hājib's statement: *tawātur* is not necessary for the seven Readings in the extrinsic aspects of the words (*hay'ah*) such as *al-madd* (lengthening of vowels), *al-līn* (lengthening a non vocalized consonantal *yā'* or *wāw*)⁹⁴, *al-imālah* (a>e shift), *takhfīf al-hamzah* (*hamzah* elision), etc. However, *tawātur* is absolutely necessary in the intrinsic aspects of the words (*jawhar al-lafz*) such as the variants *malik* and *māilk* where *tawātur* is stipulated in order to establish both words as Qur'ānic, otherwise some of the Qur'ān "ba'd al-Qur'ān" would not be *mutawātir*. One cannot arbitrarily choose one reading over the other because both of them are equal in status and validity. Al-Taftazānī and al-Jīzāwī do not add much to their commentaries.

⁹⁰ al-Subkī, *Raf' al-Hājib*, 2/91

⁹¹ Abū Shāmah was well versed in different disciplines including *tafsīr*, history and Hadīth. He was also a Qur'ān reader where he learned and memorized the seven Readings at the age of seventeen. He was a Shāfi'ī and it is said that he was assassinated by two Hanbalīs for his liberal opinions, al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rifa al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, 3/1334-1337

⁹² al-Subkī, *Raf' al-Hājib*, 2/93

⁹³ Refer to chapter four

⁹⁴ Such as *bayt* (house) and *khawf* (fear)

regarding Ibn al-Hājib's statement on the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings They limit their explanations to clarify the phenomena of *madd*, *līn*, and *takhfif al-hamzah* ⁹⁵

Al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1391)

According to al-Zarkashī, the seven Readings are *mutawātirah* in the view of the majority [of scholars] including al-Juwaynī as one can read in his *al-Burhān* ⁹⁶ However, the Hanafī author of *al-Badī'* claimed that they are well known (*mashhūrah*) only and not *mutawātirah* ⁹⁷ Al-Sarūjī (d. 710/1310) ⁹⁸ claimed that the seven Readings are *mutawātirah* according to the four eponymous Imāms and all Sunnī scholars except the *mu'tazilah* who consider these Readings to be transmitted through *āhād* ⁹⁹ Al-Zarkashī does not comment on these statements, especially the last one by al-Sarūjī, who presumed that Abū Hanīfah (d. 150/767) Mālik (d. 179/796), al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), and

⁹⁵ al-Ījī, *Sharh Mukhtasar al-Muntahā al-Usūlī*, 2/286

⁹⁶ al-Juwaynī does not say that explicitly, but rather says the following as for the differences in readings that are a result of the different case endings (*irāb*), the *mushaf* does allow such variants Readings are transmitted through *tawātur*, he who does not memorize the Qur'ān well would doubt the *tawātur* of any single reading, because he is not a reader himself *Tawātur* could be realized among a group of experts in the field, for *tawātur* is divided into two categories, the first is when people collectively participate in transmissions such as reports about countries and nations, and the second is when the transmission is limited to specialized groups who are the experts on the subject topic of the transmission, Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Dīb, (Qatar Matābi' al-Dawhah al-Hadīthah, 1978), 1/668-9

⁹⁷ al-Zarkashī might have made a mistake in this statement due to a copyist error in al-Sā'atī's manuscript The published text of al-Sā'atī says the following "*al-qirā'āt al-sab' mashhūrah wa qīla mutawātirah wa illā la kāna ba'd al-Qur'ān ghayr mutawātir*" (The seven Readings are well-known and it is said that they are *mutawātirah*, otherwise parts of the Qur'ān would not be *mutawātir*) However, the reasoning and arguments given by al-Sā'atī and his commentator al-Isfahānī (d. 749/1348) favor the *tawātur* of the Readings Therefore, the original statement might have been intended to say "*al-qirā'āt al-sab' al-mashhūrah wa qīla mutawātirah* ", Shams al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, *Bayān Ma'ānī al-Badī'*, ed. Yāsīn al-Shādīlī, (Makkah Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā (PhD dissertation), 1984), pp. 924-5 Al-Laknawī (d. 1225/1810) mentions that some people have claimed that the seven Readings are *mashhūrah*, however this opinion is insubstantial, 'Abd al-'Alī al-Laknawī, *Fawātih al-Rahamūt bi Sharh Musallam al-Thubūt*, ed. 'A 'Umar, (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, [n.d.]), 2/18-9

⁹⁸ Shams al-Dīn al-Sarūjī wrote a commentary on al-Marghīnānī's compilation on *fiqh* entitled *al-Hidāyah fī Sharh Bidāyat al-Mubtadī'* Al-Sarūjī's book is incomplete and unpublished

⁹⁹ Ibn Hanbal is known for his apathy and rejection of Hamzah's Reading, al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'*, 8/473, al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā'*, 1/250-66

Ibn Hanbal (d 241/855) considered the seven Readings to be *mutawātirah*. All four of these *Imāms* died before Ibn Mujāhid (b 245/859) was born, and the process of accepting these Readings as canonical through *tawātur* took place long after Ibn Mujāhid.¹⁰⁰ It is unlikely to assume that al-Sarūjī believed that the notion of the seven Readings existed before Ibn Mujāhid and that the seven Readings were recited and in wide circulation before the seven eponymous Readers, this is farfetched and not supported by any historical accounts.

Al-Zarkashī says that some late scholars claimed that the seven Readings are *mutawātirah* only among the generations between the eponymous Readers and their students, yet the *tawātur* of these Readings among the generations between the Prophet and the eponymous Readers is uncertain. The *isnād* of all the eponymous Readers up to the Prophet is a single chain of transmission and the conditions of *tawātur* are not met with these *isnāds*. Al-Zarkashī's answer to this dilemma, quoting al-Bāqillānī,¹⁰¹ is that the *ummah* accepted those Readings, chose them to represent the *mushaf*, and confirmed their Qur'ānity. This fact is also supported by the *usūlīs'* rule that *khābar al-wāhid* (the account transmitted by few reporters) is valid and absolute if the *ummah* receives it with unanimous acceptance.

Al-Zarkashī then references Abū Shāmah and his statement that the seven Readings are not *mutawātirah* as to all the utterances (*alfāz*) on which the seven Readers have disagreed. Al-Zarkashī says that such statements by Abū Shāmah and the other Qur'ān readers (*qurrā'*) mislead us to believe that the seven Readings are not *mutawātirah* and that a sound Reading is one that combines good *isnād* and agreement.

¹⁰⁰ al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rifat*, 1/255

¹⁰¹ al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/353-92

with the *mushaf* and Arabic syntax, therefore *istifādah* (wide circulation) is enough of an attribute to characterize the canonical Readings. Al-Zarkashī argues against this reasoning, stating that these scholars and readers are mistaken because they were deceived by the fact that the *isnāds* of the seven Readings are limited to few people only. They assumed that these *isnāds* resemble those of the *āhād* accounts and traditions, hence Kamāl al-Dīn al-Zimīlikānī clarified this confusion, he said that the limited *isnāds* of those Readings do not imply that they were not transmitted and spread by many other transmitters and reporters, because all the locals of every town and city received the Reading of their *imām*. Therefore, *tawātur* was already established among the people of the different towns and regions with regard to the Reading that they were taught by the eponymous Reader and his students. On the other hand, it was the eponymous Readers who calibrated the readings and adjusted them (*dabatū al-hurūf*), and this is why the *isnāds* came on their behalf only. This case is similar to the accounts on *ḥijjat al-wadāʿ* (The last sermon/The farewell pilgrimage), which were transmitted through *āhād*, nonetheless the event of the farewell pilgrimage was transmitted by a number of people with whom *tawātur* is established.¹⁰²

It is difficult to accept the arguments provided by al-Zarkashī on behalf of al-Zimīlikānī mainly because it does not resolve the problem of the variants within one eponymous Reading,¹⁰³ if the Reading of an eponymous Reader was taught to the masses, and therefore transmitted through *tawātur*, variants within one Reading should not have existed.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, even if the Reading was allegedly recited before the

¹⁰² al-Zarkashī, *al-Bahr al-Muhīt*, 1/466-7

¹⁰³ Refer chapter four for more details

¹⁰⁴ The two-*rāwī* canon for example wouldn't have existed in this case. Refer to chapter four for more details on the development of the two-*rāwī* canon. It is peculiar also to read that an eponymous Reader

masses, the commoners were not qualified to memorize and accurately transmit the Qur'ān, just as they were not qualified to transmit *hadīth*. Professional readers disagreed among themselves in transmitting the Reading of their corresponding eponymous school, thus one should not expect from the masses, including the elite scholars who are not Qur'ān Readers in profession, to contribute to the transmission of the Qur'ān. Al-Zarkashī continues with the opinion of the Mālikī judge Ibn al-ʿArabī as presented in his book *al-ʿAwāsīm min al-Qawāsīm*. Al-Zarkashī's citation is abridged, incomprehensive, and misleading in several places¹⁰⁵. I will directly refer to the original text of *al-ʿAwāsīm*.

Abū Bakr b al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148)

Ibn al-ʿArabī designates a section in *al-ʿAwāsīm* to discuss the problem of the seven *ahruf* and the variant readings. Like the rest of this book, this section is addressed as a *qāsimah* (calamity, problem) that Ibn al-ʿArabī discusses and defends with a counter argument labeled as *ʿĀsimah* (protector). He begins with analyzing the tradition on the *sabʿat ahruḥ*¹⁰⁶ and then proceeds to the accounts on collecting the Qur'ān during Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān's caliphates¹⁰⁷. Ibn al-ʿArabī talks about the copies that ʿUthmān allegedly sent to the major Islamic capitals and argues that the differences among Muslims at that time in reading the Qur'ān became more and more substantial¹⁰⁸. The consensus of the Companions in collecting and codifying the Qur'ān abrogated all the

like Hamzah used to pray while reciting the Qur'ān according to some other Readings and not to his own Reading, al-Dhahabī, *Maʿrifat*, 1/258

¹⁰⁵ al-Zarkashī's quotes are fragmentary and they form an incoherent pastiche of Ibn al-ʿArabī's arguments

¹⁰⁶ Refer to chapter one for a detailed study of this tradition

¹⁰⁷ Refer to chapter one for details on the process of collecting and codifying the Qur'ān

¹⁰⁸ Ibn al-ʿArabī, Abū Bakr, *al-ʿAwāsīm min al-Qawāsīm*, ed. ʿAmmār Tālibī, (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1974), pp. 356-358

pre-ʿUthmānic exceptional-though permitted at the time-readings The *masāḥif* became the norm and the guideline (*al-ʾasl*), and the Companions taught the Successors how to read the Qurʾān and recite it based on the codified *masāḥif* that were written in the same way the Companions used to write during the time of the Prophet, i.e. without vowels and diacritics This non-vocalized text of the Qurʾān made it easier for the people to read since there were already differences in reciting the Qurʾān (*ikhtilāf al-dabt*)

Ibn al-ʿArabī then makes an audacious statement that is rarely held by other Muslim scholars, he says that few inconsistencies occurred during the process of copying the *masāḥif*, the process that was undertaken by Zayd b Thābit’s committee These inconsistencies were in four or five letters, however they increased when the Qurʾān readers further disagreed among each other on another forty letters, among which are the *wāw*, *yāʾ* and *alif* There were no inconsistencies with full words except in two places, both of which are a two-consonant word, the first is “*huwa*” (he) in Q (57 24),¹⁰⁹ and the second is “*min*” (from) in Q (9 100)¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, these inconsistencies are not substantial and they do not affect the essence of the religion (*lā yuʾaththir fī al-dīn*)¹¹¹

Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the inconsistencies and the variants in the Qurʾān started to multiply, and that many scholars, both the qualified and the unqualified ones, wrote

¹⁰⁹ “*fa inna ʾllāha huwa ʾl-ghaniyyu ʾl-hamid*” (still Allah is the Absolute, the Owner of Praise) Nāfiʿ, Ibn ʿĀmir and Abū Jaʿfar al-Madanī dropped *huwa* and read “*fa inna ʾllāha ʾl-ghaniyyu ʾl-hamid*”, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/384

¹¹⁰ “*jannātin tajrī tahtihā ʾl-anhār*” (Gardens underneath which rivers flow) Ibn Kathīr added “*min*” before *tahtihā* and read “*jannātin tajrī min tahtihā ʾl-anhār*”, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/280

¹¹¹ Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāsim*, p. 359

on this topic According to him, Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī¹¹² in his *Qirā'āt* book dropped the Readings by Hamzah, al-Kisā'ī, and Ibn 'Amir¹¹³ Moreover, Ibn Mujāhid initially included Ya'qūb among the seven Readers but dropped him later on and replaced him with al-Kisā'ī Ibn al-'Arabī says that al-Kisā'ī in relation to Hamzah is similar to Ya'qūb in relation to Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' On the whole, Ibn al-'Arabī confirms that limiting the Readings to seven specifically has no basis in law (*al-sharīah*)¹¹⁴

Ibn al-'Arabī then provides a very interesting political and social analysis for the reasons of the circulation of some Readings over others in different regions According to him, Ibn Mujāhid used his political influence to drop Ya'qūb (*usqita bi al-sultān*), and added al-Kisā'ī instead The political powers supported his decision and forced his selection on the community (*alzamat al-mamlakah dhālika li al-nās*) The Reading of Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' became dominant in Iraq, however when the Umayyads controlled Muslim Spain, they wanted to distinguish themselves from the Abbasids By choosing to adhere to the customs and tradition of *al-madīnah*, the Umayyads adopted the Reading of Nāfi' → Warsh On the other hand, the Reading of Nāfi' → Qālūn was taught in Iraq and became more dominant than Nāfi' → Warsh¹¹⁵

Ibn al-'Arabī continues the discussion on the seven Readings and says that the permitted/canonized discrepancies among the seven Readings all together grew exponentially and were documented through 1,500 transmissions (*riwāyah*), whereas

¹¹² Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī (d. 250/864) had his *qirā'ah* that is known as *qirā'at* Abī Hātim or *ikhṭiyār* Abī Hātim He rejected some of the canonical readings by Nāfi', Hamzah, Khalaf, and Ibn 'Amir, Yusrā al-Ghabānī, *Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī wa al-Dirāsāt al-Qur'āniyyah*, (Makkah Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā (MA Thesis), 1989), pp. 76, 99-103

¹¹³ Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-'Awāsīm*, p. 359, Cf. Makkī Qaysī, *al-Ibānah 'an Ma'ānī al-Qirā'āt*, pp. 37-8

¹¹⁴ Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-'Awāsīm*, pp. 359-360

¹¹⁵ Refer to the stemmata in chapter four and the discussion on the Reading of Nāfi' → Warsh, which was not taught at the early stages of the standardization of the *qirā'āt* The results of my analysis agree with the statements by Ibn al-'Arabī

the irregular/non-canonized (*shādhah*) discrepancies among the seven Readings were documented though 500 transmission Scholars aimed at limiting the variants yet they kept multiplying, and the scholars wanted to justify those variants by attributing them to different aspects of the Arabic dialects (*lughah*) ¹¹⁶

After Ibn al-ʿArabī discusses some issues related to the *basmalah*,¹¹⁷ we arrive at the section cited in al-Zarkishī’s *Bahr* Ibn al-ʿArabī states that some people have stipulated three conditions to accept a Qur’ānic reading, sound transmission, correct Arabic, and agreement with the *mushaf* These conditions were only stipulated because the seven Readings were not transmitted through collective groups (*bi ymāʿ*) but rather through single individuals (*āhād*) (*jamʿ al-sabʿ lam yakun bi ymāʿ wa innamā kāna bi ikhtiyār min wāhid aww āhād*) The preferred opinion (*al-mukhtār*) is that Muslims should read the Qur’ān according to the *mushaf* and not deviate from what was soundly transmitted For example, adhering to one Reading only while reciting any part of the Qur’ān is not a requisite, for all the Readings are “Qur’ān” These Readings were chosen by seven Readers (*ikhtiyārāt*), and no one is obliged to adhere to their Readings because those Readers are not infallible One is even encouraged to read the Qur’ān according to the *Qirāʾāt* books by Abū ʿUbayd¹¹⁸ or al-Tabarī,¹¹⁹ both of which are superior to Ibn Mujāhid’s book ¹²⁰

Ibn al-ʿArabī then criticizes Ibn Masʿūd’s position with regard to ʿUthmān’s codification of the Qur’ān and refuses his anomalous readings that disagree with

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāsim*, pp 360-1

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 361

¹¹⁸ Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b Sallām (d 224/838) had a *qirāʾah* himself His book on *Qirāʾāt*, which is now lost, is known to be the first book that collected different Readings of the Qur’ān, Ghānim Hamad, “Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b Sallām al-Baghdādī Hayātuh wa Juhūduh fī Dirāsāt al-Qirāʾāt”, *Majallat Kulliyat al-Sharīʿah*, 9 (1986), pp 151-203

¹¹⁹ Refer to the discussion on al-Tabarī in chapter two

¹²⁰ *al-ʿAwāsim*, p 362

codified *mushaf*¹²¹ He proceeds with the following statement what I choose for myself when I read the Qur'ān is to recite most of the variants (*hurūf*) according to Qālūn's Reading, except when he articulates the *hamzah*,¹²² for I do not articulate the *hamzah* unless the meaning would change or become equivocal I also do not put a *kasrah* on consonants followed by a long vowel *wāw*,¹²³ for the sudden shifting from a *kasrah* to the long vowel *yā'* vocalized with *dammah* is an articulation that I cannot execute I would not also recite according to Hamzah's *madd*,¹²⁴ nor would I pause on a non-vocalized last consonant,¹²⁵ like he did Furthermore, I would never recite with *al-idghām al-kabīr*¹²⁶ (major assimilation) of Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' even if it were transmitted by ninety thousand people! In my opinion, this is all sheer dialectal permutations (*lughāt*) and not variant readings (*Qirā'āt*) because the Prophet did not verify any of these variants If one were to closely examine these Readings, he would find that they are all subjective choices based upon dialectal and semantical variations (*m'ānī wa lughāt*)

Finally, Ibn al-'Arabī states that the soundest of the seven Readings in terms of *isnād* are 'Āsim and Ibn 'Āmir's Abū Ja'far al-Madanī's Reading is valid without any doubt On the other hand, after inspecting the *isnāds* of the other Readings, Ibn al-

¹²¹ Ibid, pp 362-3

¹²² Qālūn articulated the *hamzah* in certain words with long vowels For example, the word "nabī" (Prophet) with its plural forms "nabiyyīn" and "anbiyā'" were read as *nabī'*, *nabī'īn*, and *anbi'ā'*, See 'Abd al-Hakīm Abū Zayyān, *al-Thamur* (sic) *al-Janī fī Bayān Usūl Riwāyat Qālūn 'an Nāfi' al-Madanī*, (Libya Maktabat bin Hmūdah, 2004), pp 113-7

¹²³ Such as putting a *kasrah* on the *bā'* in *buyūt* (houses) and the 'ayn in 'uyūn (fountains) as rendered in the Readings of Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Āmir, Hamzah, al-Kisā'ī, Khalaf, Nāfi' → Qālūn, and Hafṣ → Shu'bah, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/226

¹²⁴ Ibn Hanbal often declared that what he hates most in Hamzah's Reading is the exaggerated *madd*, On Hamzah's rules of *madd*, see T Damrah, *Rifā'at al-Darajāt fī Qirā'at Hamzah al-Zayyāt*, (Jordan 2008), pp 18-9

¹²⁵ Damrah, *Rifā'at al-Darajāt*, pp 19-22, 32-7

¹²⁶ Refer to chapter four regarding this phenomenon

°Arabī finds them to be well known (*mashhūr*) only where most of them are based on dialectal variations

Going back to al-Zirkishī, he finishes his citations on the topic of the seven Readings with Ibn al-°Arabī, and concludes by saying that the consensus was established as to the *tawātur* of the seven Readings. Nonetheless, Ibn al-Hājib and a few other scholars excluded the aspects of performance (*adā'*), such as *madd al-līn*, *al-imālah*, and *takhfif al-hamzah*, from being *mutawātirah*. According to al-Zarkashī, Ibn al-Hājib's opinion is undermined and not valid (*da°if*)¹²⁷

Al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834)

I will end this survey with al-Shawkānī's discussion of the seven Readings. According to Al-Shawkānī, people claim that each one of the seven and the ten Readings is *mutawātirah*. However, there has not been one single proof for such a claim because all these Readings were transmitted through single *āhād* transmission. This is obvious for those who are knowledgeable in the study of the *isnād* of the seven Readers. Furthermore, a group of *qurrā'* scholars have already established a consensus that some parts in those Readings are *mutawātirah* while the other parts are only *āhād*, nevertheless, none of those *qurrā'* have ever claimed the *tawātur* of the entire seven or the ten Readings. Some *usūlīs* have imposed the condition of *tawātur* on the canonical Readings, but the *usūlīs* are not the authority on *Qirā'āt* scholarship. The community of

¹²⁷ al-Zarkashī, *al-Bahr*, 1/468

the *Qurrā'* are the only authority in this subject because they are familiar with the subtleties of their craft ¹²⁸

Al-Shawkānī concludes with the following statement everything considered, the variants on which the eponymous Readers agreed are absolutely Qur'ān Similarly, the variants on which they disagreed are still Qur'ān only if the script of the *mushaf* and rules of eloquent Arabic accommodate each of these variants However, if the consonantal text of the *mushaf* does not permit these variant readings that do hold a sound *isnād* and exhibit correct Arabic, those readings are not Qur'ānic and are bound to be considered anomalous (*shādhah*) On the other hand, these anomalous readings hold the same status of *khābar al-āhād*, whether they are attributed to the seven Readers or not ¹²⁹

The question that I want to address here is the following “the Qur'ān”, whether the physical text of the *mushaf* or the conceptual speech revealed to the Prophet, is *mutawātir* However, according to al-Shawkānī and the few other *usūlīs* we have discussed earlier, the seven canonical Readings were “not” transmitted through *tawātur* The established consensus among Muslim scholars is that one “cannot” read the Qur'ān while employing *ijtihād* (opinion) to decipher the consonantal outline of the ʿUthmānic codices, and therefore one must read the Qur'ān according to tradition (*athar*) and *sunnah* How can these contradicting facts/notions be brought together? In other words, the Qur'ān is *mutawātir* yet the Readings are *āhād*, there is no Qur'ān without the official Readings, so how could a *mutawātir* text be recited using non-*mutawātir* Readings?

¹²⁸ Cf al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān*, 1/668-9, Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 13/210-12, al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, 10/170-1

¹²⁹ al-Shawkānī, *Irshād*, 1/173-4

Al-Zuhaylī and the Modern *usūlīs*

The notion of *tawātur* al-Qur'ān has become an established axiom that cannot be subject to doubt or even discussion, especially in modern and contemporary works of Muslim scholars. One notices the tendency in the modern *usūl* manuals to create a continuous and unbreakable chain of events that systematically narrates and interprets the collection of the Qur'ān and its variant readings from the time of the Prophet.¹³⁰ For example, we read the following in al-Zuhaylī's discussion on *tawātur* al-Qur'ān: the Qur'ān is transmitted through *tawātur*, this is an uncontested fact of the Qur'ān that was transmitted by written and oral means throughout all the periods of time since Jibrīl brought it to the heart of Prophet Muhammad up until our current day. The scribes of revelation (*kuttāb al-wahy*)¹³¹ used to write down the Qur'ān and the Companions used to memorize it by heart. These two procedures, i.e. writing and memorization, were in sync all the time until now. The ancestors (*al-salaf*) transmitted the Qur'ān faithfully in a way that made it impossible for anyone to collude in deception, lie, add, and omit anything from it, this fact is indisputable throughout history. Furthermore, transmitting through *tawātur* is a unique feature of the Qur'ān, which distinguishes it from any of the other divine books.¹³²

¹³⁰ The prevailing opinion in modern Muslim scholarship regarding the existence of the seven Readings is usually apologetic in nature. We read in the modern works of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān by al-Zurqānī, al-Qattān and al-Salīh that the Qur'ānic variants were due to the different Arabic dialects in order to make reading the Qur'ān easier for Muslims. Furthermore, the differences in the *masāhif* that 'Uthmān sent to the major Islamic capitals were intentionally commissioned by the committee in order to allow all the variants to legitimately exist based on at least one of those *masāhif*; al-Qattān, *Mabāhith*, pp. 127-33, 139-43, 170-5, al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/125-30, 142-5, 210-14, al-Salīh, *Mabāhith*, pp. 111-117.

¹³¹ The exact number of the scribes of revelation varies in the sources between thirteen and twenty-three. The most famous among them are the four righteous Caliphs, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Zayd b. Thābit, and Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān.

¹³² al-Zuhaylī, *Usūl*, 1/424-5.

Summary and observations

We find in the introduction of al-Nuwayrī's *Sharh tayyibat al-Nashr* a classification of scholars and what each group of them thinks regarding the *tawātur* of the Qur'ān and the canonical Readings al-Nuwayrī draws the line between the *usūlīs*, the *fuqahā'*, and the *Qurrā'* and says that according to the *usūlīs* and the *fuqahā'*, the consensus is established that the Qur'ān cannot be authenticated except through *tawātur*. On the other hand, the *Qurrā'* initially agreed that the Qur'ān is *mutawātir*, however Abū Muhammad Makkī Qaysī¹³³ and some late Readers argued that the *Qurrā'āt* are not *mutawātirah* ¹³⁴

It is obvious why the *usūlīs* stipulated *tawātur* in the transmission of the Qur'ān either as a characteristic of the text or a parameter in its definition, being the primary source of law, the Qur'ān's authenticity must not be questionable or doubted. The text, both in content and exact wording (*lafz wa ma'nā*), is authentic and absolute. Even though the Prophetic traditions documented in the *sihāh* Hadīth collections acquired an absolute value in terms of content, authenticity, and authority, Hadīth scholars still had to go through the whole process of cross examining or impugning (*al-Jarh wa al-ta'dīl*) the transmitters, corroborate traditions with each other, criticize and rationalize the content of traditions, and travel across the countries to search for more traditions in order to authenticate others. *Usūlīs* strived to prove the authority of *sunnah*/Hadīth as absolute sources of law, to the extent that *sunnah* was given the power to abrogate the

¹³³ Cf. Makkī Qaysī, *Ibānah*, pp. 46-50

¹³⁴ Abū al-Qāsim al-Nuwayrī, *Sharh Tayyibat al-Nashr*, ed. °A. Abū Sinnah, (Cairo: Majma' al-Azhar, 1986), 1/57

Qur'ān¹³⁵ The Qur'ān is above reasoning and doubts, questioning its transmission insinuates doubting its integrity, and therefore its absolute authority that the divine law cannot compromise

Several *usūlīs* criticized their colleagues for presuming the *tawātur* of the *Qirā'āt*, a matter that only the *Qurrā'* community can determine among themselves. Those *usūlīs* never had any solid proof or sound argument for such a claim, yet they had to establish the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings in order to meet the requirements of their theoretical framework regarding the authority and absoluteness of the Qur'ān as a divine text and as a primary source of law. The problem is obvious but was never addressed directly, which is the fact that very few people, regardless of their integrity and probity (*ʿadālah*), transmitted the canonical Readings¹³⁶. This is clear from the chains of transmission of those Readings transmitted by the seven and the ten Readers. The early Muslim community did not unconditionally accept all those Readings, the Readings of Hamzah, al-Kisā'ī, and Ibn ʿĀmir were always disparaged, criticized, and sometimes ridiculed¹³⁷. The Qur'ān must be read and recited according to how the Companions have taught the community. In other words, one cannot read the Qur'ān without those canonical Readings, the Qur'ān is coded, and one needs the canonical Readings to decode it. In theory, the Qur'ān is *mutawātir*, i.e. it is absolute and it yields necessary and undisputed knowledge, however the means by which the Qur'ān is

¹³⁵ See the discussion on this topic in al-Āmidī, *Ihkām*, 3/189-197, al-Zarkashī, *Bahr*, 4/109-17

¹³⁶ The seven/ten Readers and their two main *rāwīs* were deemed weak (*daʿīf*) and careless in their transmissions of *hadīth*. This is evident in almost any *Hadīth* biographical dictionary (*ryāl* books). For example, the entry on ʿĀsim in al-Dhahabī's *ryāl* dictionary states the following: ʿĀsim is trustworthy in Reading, however he is mediocre in *Hadīth*. He is honest (*sadūq*) yet oblivious (*yahīm*). Yahyā al-Qattān said that ʿĀsim is terrible at memorizing, and al-Nasā'ī confirmed that, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl fī Naqd al-Ryāl*, ed. ʿAlī Muhammad al-Bijjāwī, (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1963), 2/357

¹³⁷ The criticism was undertaken by eminent scholars such as Ibn Hanbal, al-Sijistānī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Tabarī, etc., refer to chapter two for more details

decoded and read are not *mutawātirah*. That is to say, the consonantal text of the Qur’ān, as it was written down and codified by ʿUthmān is *mutawātir*. Even the Shīʿīs, who long held that the Qur’ān is falsified and altered,¹³⁸ have finally accepted this codified text of the Qur’ān. In reality, they have no other alternative except to reconstruct the text based on the historical traditions, which are not sufficient by all means, or to wait for al-Mahdī to bring along the original version of the Qur’ān as it was truly revealed by God to the Prophet.

It is true that Ibn Mujāhid codified the seven Readings by the beginning of the 4th/10th century, but the notion of the seven canonical Readings took some time to be established as a canon. We do not find in the works by al-Ghazālī, al-Juwaynī, al-Dabbūsī, al-Karkhī, and many other scholars up until the 6th/11th century the mentioning of the notion of the seven canonical Readings as an established canon. Readings were referred to as “*al-Qirāʾāt al-mashhūrah*” (the well-known Readings). On the other hand, other famous Readers, such as Abū Jaʿfar al-Madanī, Abū Ishāq al-Hadramī, Khalaf, and several others whom Ibn Mujāhid excluded, were still cited and referenced. Prominent Muslim scholars such as Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī, al-Zamakhsharī, Ibn ʿAtīyyah, Abū Hatīm al-Sijistānī, Makkī al-Qaysī, and several others held that the canonical Readings were the result of the *ijtihad* and interpretation of the Readers themselves and not of divine nature. I will briefly now present the Shīʿī’s position regarding the canonical Readings. Currently, the Shīʿah recite the Qur’ān only according to the Reading of ʿĀsim → Hafs.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Refer to chapter one and the last section of the current chapter.

¹³⁹ Shīʿīs in general reject the notion of the *tawātur* and even the existence of the seven Readings. However, their scholars stated that it is permissible to read the Qur’ān according to any of the seven Readings, Abū al-Qāsim al-Khūʿī, *Minhāj al-Sālihīn*, (Baghdād: Matbaʿat al-Dīwānī, 1992), 1/165.

The *Shī'īs* and the seven/ten Readings

I have previously discussed the *Shī'ah's* point of view regarding the integrity of the *Qur'ān* and its authenticity¹⁴⁰ I will now briefly present their position as to the authority of the canonical Readings First, we should note that in a modern *shī'ī* work on *usūl al-fiqh*, the definition and characteristics of the *Qur'ān* lack the parameter of *tawātur*, and this is quite uncommon in *sunnī usūl* manuals, as we have seen earlier The *Qur'ān* is defined as the speech of God that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in its exact particular utterance (*alfāz*), meaning (*ma'nā*), and style The *Qur'ān* is also the book, which is the written *mushaf* that we have today without additions or omissions¹⁴¹

The *Shī'ah* in general do not accept the notion of variant and multiple readings in the *Qur'ān* We read in *Tafsīr al-Sāfi* by al-Fayd al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), one of the most prominent scholars of the 11th/17th century, that *al-āmmah* (the commoners), i.e. the *Sunnīs* have a well-known tradition that speaks of the *Qur'ān* as being revealed to the Prophet according to seven *ahruf* Some of those *Sunnīs* (*al-āmmah*) claimed that this tradition is *mutawātir* though they disagreed among themselves as to the meaning of those seven *ahruf*¹⁴² On the other hand, the *khāssah* (the elite), i.e. the *Shī'ah* transmitted similar accounts that testify to the validity of that account¹⁴³ Al-Kāshānī holds onto the exposition that the notion of the seven *ahruf* means having seven

¹⁴⁰ Refer to chapter one

¹⁴¹ Fadl Allāh, *al-Tamhīd fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, p. 97 The notion of the *Qur'ān* not being falsified and altered is fairly new in *shī'ī* thought, Cf. 'Alī al-Milānī, 'Adam *Tahrīf al-Qur'ān*, (Qumm [n.d.]), *al-Tahqīq fī Nafy al-Tahrīf 'an al-Qur'ān al-Sharīf*, (Qumm [n.d.])

¹⁴² Muhammad al-Fayd al-Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-Sāfi*, ed. Husayn al-'Alamī (Tehran: Manshūrāt al-Sadr, 1994), 1/59 Al-Kāshānī presents several *Sunnī* interpretations for the seven *ahruf* tradition, which can be traced back in al-Suyūtī's *Itqān*, Refer to chapter one for more details

¹⁴³ al-Kāshānī, *Tafsīr*, 1/59

different interpretations of the Qur'ān ¹⁴⁴ He integrated the different accounts that try to explain the meaning of the seven *ahruf* by saying that the Qur'ān has seven divisions/categories (*aqsām*) of *āyāt*, seven different esoteric meanings (*batn*) for each *āyah*, and that it was revealed according to seven different dialects (*lughāt*) ¹⁴⁵

Al-Kāshānī rejects the notion of the variant readings of the Qur'ān as represented by the seven canonical Readings He cites several Shī'ī authorities who emphasize the fact that the Qur'ān should be read in one way only “The Qur'ān is one and it was revealed by the One, however the differences in the readings were caused by the transmitters”, and that “the enemies of God who claim that the Qur'ān was revealed according to seven *ahruf* are liars, the Qur'ān was revealed by the One according to one *harf* only” ¹⁴⁶ Al-Kāshānī concludes that there should be only one correct Reading for the Qur'ān, those who presume the validity of all the different readings are liars ¹⁴⁷ The *Sunnīs* could not unify the people's different system of Readings, thus they permitted the notion of the variant readings of the Qur'ān Abiding by the seven or the ten Readings became a very well known legal ruling among the *fuqahā'* to the extent that they prohibited using any other Reading outside those seven and ten Readings, because they claimed their *tawātur* and the *shudhūdh* of all the other Readings However, the truth is that the *mutawātir* in the Qur'ān is only the common and undisputed readings among those eponymous Readings, since the *mutawātir* cannot be subject to doubt or

¹⁴⁴ Ibid , 1/59 These seven different interpretations are referred to as *sab'at aqsām amr* (command), *zajr* (prohibition), *targhīb* (invitation), *tarhīb* (intimidation), *jadāl* (altercation), *mathal* (proverb), and *qasas* (narration)

¹⁴⁵ Ibid , 1/60-1

¹⁴⁶ Ibid , 1/60-1

¹⁴⁷ Ibid ,1/61

uncertainty¹⁴⁸ In conclusion, what the *sunnīs* have compiled and composed in the field of *Qirā'at* and recitation (*tajwīd*) should be juxtaposed and compared with the traditions transmitted on the authority of the infallible *shī'ī imāms* in order to determine what they are worth¹⁴⁹

On the other hand, several *shī'ī* authorities permitted the usage of the seven Readings Al-Tūsī (d 460/1067) states that the norm among the *Shī'ah (ashābunā)* is that the Qur'ān must have been revealed according to one *harf* and one Reading only, however they agreed to recite it according to the Readings of the *Qurrā'*¹⁵⁰ The same position is expressed by al-Hillī,¹⁵¹ al-Khū'ī¹⁵² and al-Khumaynī¹⁵³

The non-*tawātur* of the Qur'ānic Readings is only a natural result of the general beliefs of the *Shī'ah*, since the Qur'ān is falsified and altered, there is actually no point in adopting any system of Reading On the other hand, if the Qur'ān were transmitted without any alteration, the *Shī'ah* would have faced the same problem as the *Sunnah*, i.e. what is the correct and absolute Reading of the Qur'ān as intended by God? The answer might be all of them as the *Sunnah* believe or possibly the Reading that al-Mahdī will adopt when he reappears from his second occultation The *Shī'ah* never had a specific Reading system of their own, and they had to rely on the *Sunnīs* who developed this discipline very early on al-Tabarsī (d 548/1153) for example chose ten Readers to be the Canonical Qur'ān renderers, however he dropped *Nāfi'* and added *Abū*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 1/61-2

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 1/62-3

¹⁵⁰ al-Tūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 1/7

¹⁵¹ Al-Hasan b Yūsuf al-Hillī, *Tahrīr al-Ahkām al-Shar'īyyah*, ed Ibrāhīm al-Bahādirī, (Qumm Mu'assasat al-Imām al-Sādiq, 1999), 1/245

¹⁵² al-Khū'ī, *Minhāj*, 1/165

¹⁵³ Rūh Allāh al-Khumaynī, *Tahrīr al-Wasīlah*, (Dimashq Safārat al-Jumhūriyyah al-Īrāniyyah, 1998), 1/167

Hātīm al-Sijistānī,¹⁵⁴ who was never considered to be among the Sunnī canonical Readers. The existence of the Qur’ānic variants gave many Shī‘ī authorities the pretext to presume the falsification of the Qur’ān, which was vehemently rejected by the Sunnī scholars since the 4th/10th Century. There are several parts in al-Bāqillānī’s *Intisār* dedicated to refuting the Shī‘ah’s (*rawāfid*) claims that the Qur’ān is falsified.¹⁵⁵ Whether the Shī‘ah truly believe that the Qur’ān is falsified or not, they still have no other choice but to accept and use the current ‘Uthmānic text. Consequently, they have to decode the ‘Uthmānic text with one of the canonical Readings since there is no other means to decode the consonantal outline except through those well established and unanimously accepted Readings. Nevertheless, the Shī‘ah do not hold those canonical Readings to be sacred, and as a result they can achieve several goals through that

- 1- The Qur’ān is *mutawātir*, yet they are not bound to adopt the canonical Readings that decode the *mutawātir* consonantal outline, if a reading agrees with the accounts attributed to the *Imāms*, it is automatically accepted, otherwise there is no theological obligation to hold onto it.
- 2- To refuse the *tawātur* and the authenticity of the canonical Readings automatically leads to refuse the validity and effectiveness of *ymā‘*, this conforms to the Shī‘ah’s position on rejecting the *ymā‘* unless the infallible *Imām* contributes to it.
- 3- Not having an absolute Reading of the Qur’ān might open the door to permitting readings that were transmitted in Shī‘ī accounts. In the worst-case scenario, even if such readings were not used in recitation, they can still be used for

¹⁵⁴ Abū al-Fadl al-Tabarsī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1997) 1/11

¹⁵⁵ al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/71-96, 1/331-351, 1/393-419, 2/421-7, 2/513-631

argumentation and interpretation, just as the anomalous readings are used by the Sunnīs

- 4- The common Reading that the Shī'ah use is 'Āsim → Hafs, which is conveniently suited for their theological doctrine, since 'Āsim's *isnād* of his Reading ends up at 'Alī b Abī Tālib

Conclusion

The general consensus among Muslim scholars is that the Qur'ān was transmitted through *tawātur*. However, disagreement rose among the scholars as to the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings. Some scholars have argued that the different variants are all Qur'ānic in nature because God revealed them all, while others have argued that these variants were the result of the Readers' interpretation of the 'Uthmānic consonantal text. Many Muslim scholars challenged the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings, for there is no proof to the claim of *tawātur*. Those Readings were all transmitted through single chains of transmission (*āhād, naql al-wāhid 'an al-wāhid*) and the most that can be said is that they are well known (*mashhūrah*) but not *mutawātirah*. On the other hand, the *usūlīs* insisted on the *tawātur* of the canonical Readings because it serves their theoretical framework on *tawātur* that must yield certain knowledge. Some *usūlīs*, however, argued that not all the aspects of the canonical Readings are *mutawātirah*, such as the details of performance (*adā'*). In conclusion, the dominant opinion among the Muslim scholars holds to the non-*tawātur* status of the canonical Readings. However, the *tawātur* of the Qur'ān itself poses the following complication for this view: how can a *mutawātir* text be read and decoded through non-*mutawātir* means, i.e. the canonical Readings?

Chapter 4: The transmission of the canonical Readings and the emergence of *Shawādh*

In this chapter I will study the literature of the non-canonical (*shawādh*) readings of the Qur'ān in terms of their nature, origin, function, importance and relationship to the canonical Readings. The main focus, however, will be on the irregular readings, i.e. those that agree with the *rasm* of the *mushaf* but lack a sound transmission. References to the anomalous readings, i.e. those that disagree with the *rasm* will be made whenever necessary. The concept of *shawādh* will be traced back to its earlier usages where one can notice how the implications of this term varied from time to time, for what was considered *shawādh* at one point became "canonical" later on. The chains of transmission of these irregular readings will be examined and compared to the *isnāds* of the canonical Readings so that we might be able to discern what made the *isnāds* of the canonical Readings more reliable and stronger than the irregular ones. These chains of transmission will help us recognize specific trends and possibly schools of transmission that might be identified with other chains of transmission in the canonical Readings, Hadīth, and poetry. It is very peculiar, for example, to see the name of the philologist and poetry collector al-Asma'ī (d. 216/831) appear in few *isnāds* of some of the irregular readings. Another piece of information that could be extracted from examining those chains is the place from which these accounts on *shawādh* emerged and started to circulate, were they mainly concentrated in al-Kūfah, al-Basrah, al-Hijāz (Makkah and Madīnah), and Damascus, as the canonical Readings were? Can we also locate a group of transmitters mainly responsible for spreading these accounts, as is the case in poetry with *rāwīs* such as al-

Asma'ī, al-Mufaddal, Ibn al-A'rābi, etc or do they come from widespread strata of the population as is the case with Hadīth? A brief background on the emergence of *shawādh* will be presented in addition to discussion of the important scholarship on the topic

Background

In addition to the literature on the canonical Readings, both the seven and the ten, another literature known as *al-Qirā'āt al-Shawādh/al-Shādhah* (the non-canonical readings) was also a subject of great interest to the Muslim scholars. In theory, the non-canonical readings do not comply with at least one of the three conditions we discussed before, i.e. sound transmission/*tawātur*, *arabiyyah*, and *rasm*.¹ The most striking feature of the non-canonical readings, besides theoretically disagreeing with at least one of the above three conditions, is that Muslims are prohibited to use them in prayers.² These readings do not hold a Qur'ānic status anymore, although they were used and recited liturgically before 'Uthmān's codification of the Qur'ān and during the time of the Prophet, being "one *harf*" of the seven *ahruf*.³ However, after the consensus of the *ummah* was established that one is

¹ Refer to chapter two for more details

² Ibn al-Hājib (d. 646/1248) prohibited the liturgical usage of any non-canonical reading. He also rejected the *shawādh* readings to be treated as *khbar āhād* (a *hadīth* transmitted with a single or limited number of chains of transmission) that necessitates a religious obligation (*ijāb al-ʿamal*). Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) adhered to the same position in his annotation on the *Mukhtasar*, al-Subkī, *Rafʿ al-Hājib ʿan Mukhtasar Ibn al-Hājib*, 2/95-7. See also Abū 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Fath al-Barr fī al-Tartīb al-Fiqhī li-Tamhīd Ibn 'Abd al-Barr*, ed. Muhammad al-Maghrāwī, (Riyad: Majmū'at al-Tuhaf al-Nafā'is al-Duwalīyyah, 1996), 4/596-8; Abū 'Amr Ibn al-Salāh, *Fatāwā wa Masā'il Ibn al-Salāh*, ed. 'Abd al-Mu'tī Amīn Qal'ajī, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rīfah, 1986), 1/231-3. See also Leemhuis, "Readings of the Qur'ān", where he discusses the historical development of the liturgical usage of the variant readings.

³ Refer to chapter one for the discussion on the seven-*ahruf* tradition and to chapter two for the notion of the abrogation of the non-canonical readings by the codification of the Qur'ān (*jam' al-masāhif*). For the

allowed to read only according to the ‘Uthmānic codices, any reading that did not comply with the *rasm* of the *masāhif* was abrogated by that consensus. Consequently, Muslims are prohibited to use those non-canonical readings in prayers or even to recite them in public.⁴ Nonetheless, Muslim scholars transmitted these *shawādhdh* readings with extreme care for they were still used in a variety of disciplines, mostly philology and exegesis.⁵ As of just mentioned, a reading classified as *shādhdhah* does not comply with at least one of the three conditions mentioned above.⁶ I shall call the readings that disagree with the *rasm*, “anomalous” readings, whereas the readings that agree with the *rasm* yet lack sound transmission or exhibit poor ‘*arabiyyah*, “irregular” readings. Nevertheless, both types in Arabic are called *shawādhdh* (sing *shādhdhah*). One must also note that within one eponymous non-canonical Reading,⁷ we can have both types of *shawādhdh*: the irregular and the anomalous. For example, in the Reading of al-Hasan al-Basrī, Q (1 6) is read “*ihdīnā sirātan mustaqīmān*”,⁸ which is anomalous,⁹ whereas Q (1 2)¹⁰ is read “*al-hamdu li ‘llāh*”, which is irregular.¹¹ Unfortunately, the literature of *shawādhdh* does not differentiate between the two types. Note that the discussion on

early terminological distinction between *harf* and *qirā’ah* and when they started to be used interchangeably, see Leemhuis, “Readings”, EQ.

⁴ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, ed ‘Umayrāt, p 19, ed al-‘Imrān, p 82, Leemhuis, “Ursprunge des Koran als Textus Receptus”, pp 301-8.

⁵ A. Jeffery, “Introduction”, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’ān: The Old Codices*, (Leiden 1937), p 2.

⁶ Practically any reading outside the canon of the ten Readings is *shādhdhah*, although theoretically we could have more than ten Readings if the three conditions of transmission, ‘*arabiyyah*, and *rasm* are met. The fourteen Readings canonized by al-Dīmīyātī lacked the recognition and acceptance of the Muslim community to be considered canonical, and therefore the four additional Readings to the canonical ten are still considered to be *shawādhdh*.

⁷ Such as the Readings of al-Hasan al-Basrī, Ibn Muhaysin, al-A‘mash, al-Yazīdī, Ibn Shanabūdh, Ibn Mīqsam, etc., See I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung*, (Leiden Brill, 1920), pp 46-8, Jeffery, “The Qur’ān Readings of Ibn Mīqsam”, 1/1-38, “The Qur’ān readings of Zaid b ‘Alī” and “Further readings of Zaid b ‘Alī”, pp 249-89 and pp 218-36, Bergstrasser, “Die Koranlesung des Hasan von Basra”, pp 11-57.

⁸ Q (1 6) “*ihdīnā ‘s-sirāta ‘l-mustaqīm*” (Show us the straight way)

⁹ Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 1/116.

¹⁰ Q (1 2) “*al-hamdu li ‘llāh*” (Praise be to Allah)

¹¹ This reading is attributed to the Bedouins (*qirā’at ahl al-bādiyah*), Ibn Jinnī, *al-Muhtasab*, 1/110-11.

shawādh readings, both by Muslim and western scholars, is usually associated with the pre-ʿUthmānic codices, mainly Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652), Ubayy (d. 19-35/640-656), ʿAlī (r. 35-40/656-661), and Ibn ʿAbbāsʿ (d. 68/687)¹² First, we shall briefly examine scholarship done on the anomalous readings, and then move in the main discussion of this chapter to highlight the importance of the irregular readings compared to the canonical ones, in terms of transmission and acceptance. Finally, the transmission of the anomalous readings will be also examined to try and identify, if possible, some groups and figures that might be responsible for transmitting these readings.

Scholarship on the *shawādh*/anomalous readings

Scholarship on the *shawādh* was and is still mainly interested in the pre-ʿUthmānic readings from different perspectives such as the collection and integrity of the Qurʾān, *fiqh* rulings, abrogation theory, political dimensions, philological obscurities of the text and the influence of the local dialects spoken at that time.¹³ There is an

¹² See E. Beck, "Die b. Masʿūd varianten bei al-Farrā", pp. 353-83, pp. 186-205, pp. 230-56, "Studien zur Geschichte der Kufischen Koranlesung in den beiden ersten Jahrhunderten", pp. 326-55, pp. 328-50, pp. 316-28, pp. 59-78, Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 1-18, Goldziher, *Richtungen*, pp. 8-18, 34-7, Noldeke, *GdQ*, 2/30-46, Leemhuis, "Ursprünge", pp. 301-8, Bergstrasser, "Nichtkanonische Koranlesarten im Muhtasab des Ibn Ǧinnī", pp. 5-92, Spitaler, "Die nichtkanonischen Koranlesarten und ihre Bedeutung für die arabische Sprachwissenschaft", pp. 413-14, Hamdan, "Konnen die verschollenen Korantexte der Frühzeit durch nichtkanonische Lesarten rekonstruiert werden?", pp. 27-40.

¹³ These aspects were pinpointed by Margoliouth who maintained that the lack of diacritic markings and vowel signs in the consonantal Kūfic script lead the Qurʾān readers to employ different interpretations of the text. Margoliouth also held that the Qurʾānic textual variants, such as those attributed to Ubayy and Ibn Masʿūd were actually attempts at deciphering the ambiguous Qurʾānic consonantal outline. Furthermore, the alterations in the different codices and manuscripts of the Qurʾān were due to the copyists' intentional or unintentional errors. D. Margoliouth, "Textual Variations of the Koran", *The Muslim World*, 15 (1925), pp. 334-44. Mingana was of the opinion that several interpolations took place in the Qurʾān, and that some Christian and Jewish amanuensis who converted to Islam wrote the bulk of the codices of Ubayy, ʿAlī, Ibn Masʿūd and several others. Mingana also believed that the Qurʾān stayed in *suhuf* (rolls of parchment) form until ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65-86/685-705) and al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/713) who added new materials to the Qurʾān by depending on the oral recitations of some Qurʾān readers, or what Mingana called "the Prophet's oracular sentences", A. Mingana, "The Transmission of the Koran", *The Muslim World*, 7 (1917), pp. 223-32, 402-14. Mingana also discussed at length the impact of the primitive Arabic script and the lack of vowels and diacritics in the defective script of the Qurʾān,

overlap between the concept of the pre-ʿUthmānic readings and the pre-ʿUthmānic codices, for these readings were almost always associated with the existence of a pre-ʿUthmānic codex. In the classical sources for example, the expressions “*ḥarf Ibn Masʿūd*”, “*mushaf Ibn Masʿūd*”, and “*qirāʾat Ibn Masʿūd*” are often used interchangeably.¹⁴ Modern scholarship has been mostly interested in the anomalous variants that often correspond to readings cited in a pre-ʿUthmānic codex.¹⁵ Jeffery compiled several early codices/Readings by some Companions and Successors (*tābiʿūn*) in his *Materials*. He also compiled a codex/Reading by Zayd b. ʿAlī (d. 122/739) and Ibn Mīqṣam.¹⁶ Accordingly, the study of the irregular readings has rarely received any attention and this will be the main focus of this chapter.

which naturally resulted in multiple readings of the words, A. Mingana, *Leaves from Three Ancient Qurʾāns possibly pre-ʿUthmānic with a list of their Variants*, (Cambridge 1914), pp. 11-22. Vollers and Casanova were also of the opinion that the final form of the Qurʾān took place by the time of al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf, and Caetani presented a political survey of the circumstances that surrounded the codification of the Qurʾān along with the status of the other codices circulating at the time, in addition to the social, political, and scholarly development of the *Qurrāʾ* movement, L. Caetani, “ʿUthmān and the Recension of the Koran”, *The Muslim World*, 5 (1915), pp. 380-90. Textual criticism of *sūrat al-Fāṭihah* and the many variants this chapter encompasses lead Jeffery to believe that it was not originally part of the Qurʾān, A. Jeffery, “A Variant Text of the *Fāṭihah*”, *The Muslim World*, 29 (1939), pp. 158-62. Jeffery also believed that many variants emerged due to the utilization of the pre-ʿUthmānic codices, Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 7-8. Both Goldziher and Jeffery’s main contention is that the lack of diacritical markings and vowel signs allowed the Qurʾān readers some liberty in providing their own interpretation of the consonantal text in accordance with the context of the verse, Goldziher, *Richtungen*, pp. 3-8, A. Jeffery, “The Textual History of the Qurʾān”, *The Qurʾān as Scripture*, (New York: R. F. Moore Co., Inc., 1952), p. 97. Muslim scholarship is generally apologetic and defensive concerning the origins and reasons behind the Qurʾānic variants, which are claimed to be of divine nature and resulting from valid dialectal differences, M. M. Al-Azami, *The History of the Qurʾānic Text from Revelation to Compilation*, (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003), pp. 156-161, al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/115-19, 138-42, 288-90, 330-34. Shiʿīs do not acknowledge the system or the literature of the variant readings of the Qurʾān, and their majority holds that those readings were not acknowledged by the Prophet as divine revelation, and that they were the result of the readers’ own interpretation of the defective ʿUthmānic script, al-Khūʿī, *al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, pp. 160-196.

¹⁴ Leemhuis, “Reading”, *EQ*.

¹⁵ See Hamdan, “Konnen die verschollenen Korantexte der Frühzeit durch nichtkanonische Lesarten rekonstruiert werden?”, pp. 27-40.

¹⁶ Jeffery, “The Qurʾān readings of Zaid b. ʿAlī” and “Further readings of Zaid b. ʿAlī”, pp. 249-89, 18(1940), pp. 218-36, “The Qurʾān Readings of Ibn Mīqṣam”, 1/1-38. Refer to chapter one for more details on Vollers’ position regarding the *shawādh* readings and its relation to the local Qurashī dialect of the time, Cf. Vollers, *Volkssprache und Schriftsprache im alten Arabien*, pp. 1, 55-79, 175-196, Noldeke, “Der Koran und die ‘Arabīya’”, pp. 1-5, Kahle, “The Qurʾān and the ‘Arabīya’”, 1/163-182, “The Arabic readers of the Koran”, pp. 65-71. Another trend of scholarship on the language of the Qurʾān, though not closely related

Farsh and usūl

I need to explain the two terms *farsh* and *usūl* before tackling the subject of *shawādh* in more detail in order to observe how Qirā'āt scholars utilized them in their works. The discipline of Qirā'āt is divided into *usūl al-qirā'ah* (general principles) and *farsh al-hurūf* (specific variants). The *usūl* are general principles and rules of thumb, which are always applicable throughout the whole Qur'ān. On the other hand, the *farsh* are specific variants that apply to specific words only. *Usūl* can be shared among several Readers, yet it can also be unique to one single Reader. *Usūl* usually comprise of linguistic phenomena that are applied uniformly and often without exceptions throughout the Qur'ān, such as assimilation (*idghām*), generally all eponymous Readers agreed that if a non-vocalized consonant is followed by the same vocalized consonant, assimilation between the two consonants becomes mandatory. For example, “*idh dhahaba*” must be read “*idh-dhahaba*”¹⁷. This is one principle of the *usūl* shared by all the Readers, however, there are other principles of the *usūl*, which are specific to individual Readers, who are usually characterized by these specific principles. Taking up assimilation again, we learn that each Reader had his own style in *idghām* depending on different combinations of consonants. Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' was known for his famous *al-idghām al-kabīr* (the major assimilation) through which he would assimilate two vocalized identical or similar consonants by stripping the first consonant off its vowel

to Qirā'āt, is the Syriac-Aramaic interpretation of the Qur'ān. Luling suggested that the short and mysterious *sūrah*s of the Qur'ān were actually rewritings of originally Christian Syriac Hymns, Luling, *Challenge to Islam for Reformation*, pp. 12-7. Luxenberg stirred up the discussion on the language of the Qur'ān, whether poetical 'arabiyyah or vernacular, voting for the latter. According to him, the original language of Mecca, and therefore also the Qur'ān, was a mixture of Arabic and Syriac. There are certain words and phrases that might become clear, if viewed from the Syriac angle, Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramaische Lesart des Koran*, pp. 230-35, 244-49, 25-67.

¹⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p. 125.

and assimilating it into the second one, thus forming a doubled consonant. For example, *ya^llamu mā* becomes *ya^llam-mā*, and *fīhi hudan* becomes *fīh-hudan*.¹⁸ This phonetic principle is unique to Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’, it is considered to be among his *usūl* and it is applied throughout the whole Qur’ān whenever two consonants meet the requirements of a major assimilation.¹⁹ Besides *idghām*, *usūl* include other linguistic phenomena such as *madd* (lengthening of vowels), *qasr* (shortening of vowels), rules of the silent *nūn*, *tanwīn* (nūnation), *imālah* (a>e shift), etc.²⁰ In each principle (*asl*) of these *usūl*, every Reader has his own unique style (*madhhab*), yet it is still possible that some of these principles would be common and shared among few Readers.

On the other hand, *Farsh al-hurūf* comprise the word variants that the Readers disagreed on. These variants are applicable only in their specific location in the Qur’ān and cannot be generalized to apply to the variance on similar words. Even the same exact word in different locations in the Qur’ān could be read differently.²¹ A simple example of *farsh* would be ‘Āsīm and al-Kisā’ī’s readings of Q (1:4) “*mlk*” as “*mālik*” while

¹⁸ Abū al-Hasan Ibn Ghalbūn, *al-Tadhkirah fī al-Qirā’āt al-Thamān*, ed. Sa‘īd Zu‘aymah, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001), pp. 29-30.

¹⁹ The eponymous Readers had different ways in performing assimilation and I will demonstrate that through the case of the *dāl* of the particle *qad*. Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’, Hamzah, al-Kisā’ī, and Ibn ‘Āmir → Hishām assimilated the *dāl* of *qad* when it is followed by *sīn*, *dhāl*, *dād*, *zah*, *zāy*, *jīm*, *sād*, and *shīn*. ‘Āsīm, Ibn Kathīr and Nāfi → Qālūn did not assimilate the *dāl* when followed by the aforementioned letters. Nāfi → Warsh assimilated the *dāl* when it is followed by *dād* and *zah* only. Ibn ‘Āmir → Ibn Dhakwān assimilated the *dāl* when it is followed by *dād*, *zah*, *dhāl*, and *zāy*. ‘Abd al-Fattāh al-Qādī, *al-Wāfi fī Sharh al-Shātibiyyah fī al-Qirā’āt al-Sab‘*, (Jaddah: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 1999), pp. 130-1. See also the chapters on the different approaches in the assimilation of the *dhāl* of the particle *idh*, the *lām* of the interrogative *hal* and the conjunction *bal*, and the case of *tā’ al-ta’nīth*, *ibid*, pp. 129-137.

²⁰ Such as the vocalization of the third person masculine possessive, subject and personal pronoun (*hā’ al-kināyah*), the articulation of the *hamzah*, moving the vowel of the *hamzah* to the consonant preceding it (*naql harakat al-hamzah*), *al-waqf* (pause during recitation), the articulation of the *rā’* and *lām*, the pronunciation of the first person possessive, subject and personal pronoun (*yā’āt al-idāfah*), and the rules of *yā’āt al-zawā’id* (the additional *yā’* that is lacking in the Qur’ānic script yet pronounced in recitation, such as *wā’id* that is written *wād* and *nadhīr* that is written *ndhr*).

²¹ See the different examples given by Al-Azamī for *mālik*, *malik*, *rushd*, *rashad*, *darran*, and *durrān*, al-Azamī, *The History of The Qur’ānic Text*, pp. 157-8.

the rest of the Readers read “*malik*”²² Ibn Kathīr, Nāfi^c, Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’ read “*krh*” as “*karhan*” in Q (4 19) and Q (46 15), whereas Hamzah and al-Kisā’ī read “*kurhan*” in both verses ‘Āsim and Ibn ‘Āmir read *karhan* in Q (4 19) yet *kurhan* in Q (46 15)²³ Notice how the same exact word was read differently by the same Reader depending on its specific location in the Qur’ān, general rules and analogy cannot be applied within *farsh al-hurūf*, for the individual variants were allegedly read and rendered as they were transmitted on behalf of the Prophet Qirā’āt books are usually divided into two main parts *usūl* and *farsh* In addition to the customary foreword and *isnād* certificates, the Qirā’āt work almost always starts with the *usūl* section that explains the Readers’ principles (*madhāhib*) in recitation The second part covers *farsh al-hurūf* where the authors usually start with the first chapter of the Qur’ān and list all the variant readings in each verse Naturally, all the variants mentioned under this section are attributed to the eponymous Readers, yet the authors digress every now and then to mention a reading outside the system of the seven or the ten Readings to corroborate certain readings When all the Readers agree on the same reading, no variance will be pointed out and the unanimously agree-upon reading will not be listed Therefore, only the disagreed-upon readings are listed under *farsh al-hurūf*, and it is very often that whole verses are skipped simply because there was no disagreement among the Readers on any of these verses Variant readings that are caused by differences in *usūl* are not listed unless there is an exception that needs to be emphasized In the example I have just mentioned above on Q (2 255) “*ya‘lamu mā*”, one will never find under the *farsh* section that Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’ read “*ya‘lammā*”, because this variance can be

²² Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, pp 104-5

²³ *Ibid*, p 229

deduced by analogy for being one of Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’s principles of recitation, which is applied to all the similar cases in the Qur’ān

Transmission of the Readings

In the previous two chapters, I discussed the problem of *tawātur* in regards to the canonical Readings and the doubts raised by many medieval Muslim scholars as to the fulfillment of the conditions of this *tawātur*, concluding that the eponymous Readings were transmitted through *āhād* chains of transmission from the Prophet down to the eponymous Readers. On the other hand, the *tawātur* of the Readings, or rather their *istifādah* (wide circulation), from the generations of the Readers down to their students and later transmitters, is possible and could be fulfilled. The question that I want to address is how did the medieval Muslim community receive these canonical Readings and what is the nature of those chains of transmission? Furthermore, what are the differences among the different Qirā’āt works? Why are there several compilations on the seven Readings for example? Do they have similar content? Since each Reading is attributed to a specific Reader, why would the Qirā’āt scholars compile more works on those Readings and relist the same variants over and over?

After Ibn Mujāhid’s canonization of the seven Readings, Qur’ān readers tried to further authenticate those Readings by acquiring them through different transmitters. In other words, the Qurrā’ started to imitate the *muhaddithūn* by corroborating a Reading with more *isnāds*. The *muhaddithūn* sought different transmission strands (*turuq*) and compared the contents (*matn*) of the individual *hadīths* to each other, as a

result they traveled in order to receive the same *hadīth* from different reporters²⁴ It seems that at one point the same process took place in Qirā'āt scholarship, unfortunately the desired results were different unlike the Hadīth, the Qur'ān could not endure variants In later Qirā'āt works, we find that more narrators were documented as having transmitted on the authority of the seven Readers' disciples For example, in Ibn Mujāhid's (d 324/935) *Sab'ah*, the total number of transmitters between him and Ibn 'Āmir is ten²⁵ while in Ibn Ghalbūn's (d 399/1008) *Tadhkirah* the number increases to at least twenty-one between Ibn Ghalbūn and Ibn 'Āmir²⁶ Naturally, and as one can see from fig 11 below, the Qurrā' sought other sources in addition to Ibn Mujāhid to further authenticate the latter's transmission of the seven Readings down to the last detail, Ibn Ghalbūn the father, as one can see in fig 11 below, was no less of an important source on the seven Readings than Ibn Mujāhid, through tracking down more transmitters to further authenticate Ibn 'Āmir's Reading

The authentication and corroboration of the Qirā'āt caused a problem that did not afflict Hadīth scholarship Uniformity was the goal, nevertheless the more transmissions on the authority of the seven Readers sought, the more variants the Qurrā' obtained A *hadīth* could be transmitted in *ma'nā* (content), or divided into several parts and transmitted separately, or have its grammar corrected if it was transmitted with *lahn*, or paraphrased with the possibility of omitting and adding words²⁷ Hadīth is not affected by textual variants, and as long as the meaning conveyed

²⁴ In Hadīth terminology this process is called *i'tibār* When X of narrators transmits a *hadīth* on the authority of Y, Hadīth scholars try to search if this *hadīth* was transmitted by other reporters in the same generation of Y, al-Suyūtī, *Tadrib*, 1/129-30

²⁵ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 101, see also fig 10 in this chapter

²⁶ Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, pp 14-5, see also fig 11 in this chapter

²⁷ Al-Suyūtī, *Tadrib*, 2/58-68

in the different traditions is similar, the corroboration of one *hadīth* with as many available accounts as possible, regardless of textual variants, is often favorable ²⁸ The Qur’ān, however, must be transmitted verbatim, otherwise it is not any longer Qur’ān. If all the transmissions of a variant reading were to be taken into consideration, any verse would have ended up being read in several ways, all being attributed to one single eponymous Reader.

I will take as an example the entry under Q (9:37) “*innamā ‘n-nasī‘u ziyādatun fī l-kufri*”²⁹ Ibn Mujāhid stated that all seven Readers unanimously read “*nasī‘u*”. However, he mentioned two reports asserting that a transmitter by the name of Shibl, who was an immediate transmitter from Ibn Kathīr, claimed that the Meccan eponymous Reader read “*nas‘u*”, while in the other report, also on the authority of Shibl, Ibn Kathīr was purported to have read “*nisiyyu*”. Ibn Mujāhid added another report to the effect that Ibn Kathīr also read “*nasyu*”, however he concluded by saying that Qunbul, a fourth-generation transmitter from Ibn Kathīr, read “*nasī‘u*”, which was the dominant reading among the Meccans at his time ³⁰ Consequently, we have four different permutations for one word, and all four variants are attributed to Ibn Kathīr, thanks to Ibn Mujāhid who listed them all under the entry of Q (9:37), despite the fact that his preference was to follow the unanimous reading “*nasī‘u*”. Referring to Ibn Ghalbūn’s (d. 399/1008) *Tadhkirah*, one reads under the same entry of Q (9:37) that Nāfi^c → Warsh³¹ read

²⁸ Subhī Al-Sālih, *‘Ulūm al-Hadīth wa Mustalahuhu*, (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 2002), pp. 50-72, 241-4, G. H. A. Juynboll, “Reappraisal of Some Technical Terms in Hadīth Science”, *Islamic Law and Society*, 8/3 (2001), pp. 303-349, especially pp. 315-322.

²⁹ (The month postponed is an increase of unbelief).

³⁰ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, p. 314.

³¹ Not every reading attributed to Warsh automatically presumes that he transmitted it from Nāfi^c, for it is said that Warsh had his own style and *ikhtiyār* (selection), Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah fī Tabaqāt al-Qurrā’*, 1/446. Moreover, we often encounter in Qirā’āt works expressions such as “*madhhab Warsh*”, “*tafarrud Warsh*”, “*‘inda Warsh*”, etc., See Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī, *al-Ta’rīf fī Ikhtilāf al-Ruwāt ‘an Nāfi^c*, ed. Al-

*nasīyyu*³² Al-Dānī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān* elucidated more on this variant and mentioned that Nāfi' → Warsh [→ al-Azraq] and Nāfi' → Qālūn → Ibn Sālih/Abū Sulaymān read *nasīyyu*, whereas Nāfi' → Warsh → al-Isbahānī and Nāfi' → Qālūn → <transmitters other than Ibn Sālih/Abū Sulaymān> read *nasī'u*³³ There are several points that need to be brought up before I proceed to the detailed study of the chains of transmission of the eponymous Readers

- 1) All the variants of *nsy* mentioned above belong to the *farsh* section and none is considered to be a result of the *usūl* of the Reader or his style of recitation
- 2) The three variants of *nsy*, namely *nas'u*, *nasīyyu*, and *nasyu* attributed to Ibn Kathīr → Shībl were not cited anymore in the later Qirā'āt works, at least the main Qirā'āt manuals for we do not find these variants in the works by al-Dānī, al-Shātībī, Ibn al-Jazarī, al-Nuwayrī, etc Surprisingly enough, these readings became *shawādh* Upon examining the entry of Q (9 37) in Ibn Khālawayhī's (d

Tuhāmī al-Hāshimī, (Morocco al-Lajnah al-Mushtaraka li Nashr Ihyā' al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1982), pp 212-7, 225-7, 246-9 Nonetheless, Warsh's Reading is often recognized as that of Nāfi' and rarely an independent Reading, unlike the Reading by Khalaf of the Ten, whose Reading is often recognized as an amalgamation of al-Kisā'ī and Hamzah's Readings, Ja'far, *al-Qur'ān wa al-Qirā'āt wa al-Ahruf al-Sab'ah*, 1/77, Cf al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, 1/419-422, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 1/246-7

³² This variant might look like one of the principles of recitation adopted by Warsh, i.e. the lenition of the *hamzah*, however it is not This case is an exception that does not follow his systematic method of the *hamzah* lenition or *naql harakat al-hamzah* (shifting the vowel of *hamzah* to the consonant preceding it) There are various rules for Warsh's principle of the *hamzah* lenition, but the two major rules can be summarized as follows

- 1- The *hamzah* is weakened when it is the first root of the verb, for example *yu'minūn* is read *yūminūn*, and *yu'fakūn* is read *yūfakūn*, etc
- 2- When the consonant preceding the *hamzah* in the beginning of the word is not vocalized, the vowel on the *hamzah* shifts back to that consonant and the *hamzah* is weakened, as long as that consonant is not a *yā'* preceded by a *kasrah* or a *wāw* preceded by a *dammah* For example, "*man āmana*" is read "*manāmana*" and "*qad aflaha*" is read "*qadaflaha*", etc , al-Dānī, *al-Ta'rif*, pp 209, 225

The variant "*nasīyyu*" is an exception of the second rule, and this is why it was possibly mentioned under *farsh al-hurūf* under the entry of Q (9 37) in several Qirā'āt manuals, al-Dānī, *al-Ta'rif*, p 294, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nash*, ed al-Dabbā', 1/405, 2/279, ed Muhaysin, 2/31, 3/96, Abū 'Amr al-Dānī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī al-Qirā'āt al-Sab'*, ed Sāmī al-Sabbah, (Makkah Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā (MA Thesis), 2001), 3/201

³³ Al-Dānī, *Jāmi'*, 3/201-2

370/980) *Mukhtasar fī Shawādhdh al-Qur’ān*, we find that he listed those readings as being *shādhdhah* yet attributed them to the eponymous Reader Ibn Kathīr Ibn Khālawayhī also added one more variant, *nasā’u*, transmitted by Hārūn [b Mūsā al-A’war]³⁴ Furthermore, in Ibn Jinnī’s (d 392/1001) *Muhtasab*, “*nasyu*” is mentioned as a variant reading attributed to Ibn Kathīr, as well as to Ja’far b Muhammad, al-Zuhrī, al-‘Alā’ b Sayyābah, and al-Ashhab³⁵ In al-Kirmānī’s (d 505-515/1111-1121) *Shawādhdh*, the same reading is also attributed to Ibn Kathīr and to the same people mentioned above by Ibn Jinnī Al-Kirmānī added that “*nasū’u*” is a variant attributed to al-Sulamī, Mujāhid and Talhah³⁶ We should keep in mind for now the account Ibn Mujāhid transmitted in the introduction of his *Sab’ah*, which speaks to the effect that the Reading of the aforementioned Shibl “is” the Reading of Ibn Kathīr³⁷ More will be said shortly on Shibl and his transmission of Ibn Kathīr’s Reading

- 3) We should be aware by now that not every reading attributed to an eponymous Reader belongs to the system of the seven Readings, and therefore is automatically considered canonical³⁸ It is natural to assume that the Readers had several disciples who eventually transmitted what they have learned to their own students However, their transmission was obviously not consistent, and it became clear with time that those second and third generation transmitters must be limited in number in order to restrict the readings to as

³⁴ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar fī Shawādhdh al-Qur’ān min Kitāb al-Badī’*, ed G Bergestresser, (Baghdād Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1968), p 52

³⁵ Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 1/404-5

³⁶ Radiyy al-Dīn Al-Kirmānī, *Shawādhdh al-Qirā’āt*, ed Shimirān al-‘Ijlī, (Beirut Dār al-Balāgh, [n d]), p 213

³⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab’ah*, p 93

³⁸ Refer to the discussion in Abū Shāmah, *al-Murshid al-Wajīz*, pp 134-7

fewer variants as possible, a process that evokes ʿUthmān’s codification of the Qur’ān and Ibn Mujāhid’s canonization of the Seven. I will come back to this point later in this chapter and in the conclusion of my dissertation to suggest that the codification of the Qur’ān underwent four major phases: the first was with ʿUthmān through unifying the codices, the second was with Ibn Mujāhid through canonizing seven Readings out of the many Readings that were in circulation at the time, the third was with the community of the Qirā’āt scholars and more specifically al-Dānī and al-Shātībī through establishing a two-*Rāwī* canon for each eponymous Reading,³⁹ and the fourth phase was with Ibn al-Jazarī through canonizing the ten Readings and solidifying the divine status of the canonical Readings.

- 4) The logical criterion for selecting the secondary transmitters, the two canonical *Rāwīs*⁴⁰ here, and adopting their transmission was through comparing their transmission among their various students to establish their consistency in transmitting the Reading. A transmitter whose transmission disagreed with the majority of his peer-transmitters was disregarded, and therefore excluded from being a main *rāwī* of the eponymous Reading. This is where the essence of the concept of the *shādhah* lies and how in my opinion it started to evolve, regardless of sound transmission, *rasm*, and *ʿarabiyyah*, a reading that was

³⁹ The two-*rāwī* canon will be discussed later in this chapter, but one should note that the process of choosing two *rāwīs* only out of several other *transmitters* caused dissatisfaction among Muslim scholars, similar to the disagreements that took place after Ibn Mujāhid canonized the Seven Readers. Abū Hayyān al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344) stated that there were many *rāwīs* more trustworthy than the two canonical *rāwīs*, for example, among Nāfi’s transmitters, Abū Hayyān claimed that there were more knowledgeable and trustworthy transmitters than Qālūn and Warsh, and that the readings listed in *al-Shātībīyyāh* and al-Dānī’s *Taysīr* are only a fraction of the actual readings transmitted on behalf of the eponymous Readers, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munjid*, ed. Al-ʿImrān, pp. 103-110.

⁴⁰ *Rawī* with capital R will refer to one of the two canonical *Rāwīs* while *rāwī* with a small letter r will refer to a non-canonical *rāwī*.

condemned as *shāhdhah* was one that disagreed with the transmission of the majority. Again, this process of canonizing the transmissions of the *rāwīs* was very similar to the official codification of the text of the Qur'ān and the canonization of its Readings, both of which had *ymāc* as the main criterion to establish the canon, even when some readings disagreed with the *rasm* and showed awkward Arabic syntax. As I have mentioned earlier, the results of obtaining more *isnāds*, thus more “narratives” for an eponymous Reading, were not as favorable as the results obtained in Hadīth. Muslim scholars needed as many Prophetic traditions as they could have obtained in order to support the legislative system. Even the *hadīths* transmitted through single chains of transmission (*khābar āhād*) were accepted and integrated in the *fiqh* rulings and *tafsīr*.⁴¹ But the case of the Qur'ānic readings was diametrically opposite, Muslim scholars sought a unified text with limited variants, but the more transmissions they obtained the more variants they had to accept and deal with. The desired ultimate result would have been of course to find all the transmissions corroborating the same exact reading, but unfortunately this was not the case. The above example on the different variants of “*nsy*” supports my view.

- 5) I can briefly now comment on Jeffery's statement regarding the variant forms one finds for a reading attributed to the same eponymous Reader. Jeffery said

⁴¹ Refer to chapter three for more information on *khābar al-wāhid*. The consensus of the *usūlīs* is that *khābar al-wāhid* necessitates obligation (*yūjib al-ʿamal*), and some *usūlīs* argued that it necessitates both obligation and knowledge (*ʿilm*), Ibn Hazm, *al-Ihkām fī Usūl al-Ahkām*, 1/119-137, al-Āmidī, *al-Ihkām fī Usūl al-Ahkām*, 2/42-95. As for the weak (*daʿīf*) *hadīth*, there is a general agreement that it should not be used in *fiqh* rulings and that it does not necessitate knowledge, although some scholars argued differently. Weak *hadīth* can be generally used to promote and establish the discipline of *fadaʿil al-aʿmāl* (moral/virtuous deeds), see all the sources cited in ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Khudair, *al-Hadīth al-Daʿīf wa Hukm al-Ihtiyāj bihi*, (Riyad: Dār al-Muslim, 1997), pp. 250-95.

that many of these variants exhibit an impossible linguistic structure and that they are “doubtless due to faulty transmission”⁴² Ibn Jinnī defended many of these strange linguistic structures in his *Muhtasab*, but what Jeffery was probably right about is the aspect of the faulty transmission that medieval Muslim scholars were well aware of. In order to minimize the threshold of error with the multiplying number of transmitters in all the canonical Reading, two main transmitters (*Rāwīs*) were thus chosen to represent each one of the seven eponymous Readings, while the rest of the transmitters, regardless of their trustworthiness and credibility, were dropped. Any reading that was attributed to the eponymous Readers through transmitters other than the two main *Rāwīs*,⁴³ became *shādhah* with time. This is how we obtained the coined expressions *Hafs ‘an ‘Āsim*, or *Warsh ‘an Nāfi‘*, as *Hafs* and *Warsh* were one of the two main *rāwīs* of ‘Āsim and Nāfi‘ respectively.⁴⁴

The Immediate Transmitters of the seven Readers

I will now examine the immediate transmitters of the seven Readers as given in Ibn Mujāhid’s *al-Sab‘ah fī al-Qirā’āt*. I will designate each immediate transmitter with the

⁴² Jeffery, “Introduction”, *Materials*, p. 16

⁴³ Muslim scholars who objected to this two-*rāwī* canon still considered many transmitters to be credible *rāwīs*. One can still find in some *Qirā’āt* works the names of more than two *rāwīs* as the main transmitters of an eponymous Reading. More will be said later in this chapter.

⁴⁴ I reproduced the chart of the eponymous Readers and their *rāwīs* as presented in Watt and Bell, *Introduction to the Qur’ān*, p. 49,

District	Reader	First <i>Rāwī</i>	Second <i>Rāwī</i>
Medina	Nāfi‘ (d. 169/785)	Warsh (d. 197/812)	Qālūn (d. 220/835)
Mecca	Ibn Kathīr (d. 120/737)	al-Bazzī (d. 250/854)	Qunbul (d. 291/903)
Damascus	Ibn ‘Āmir (d. 118/736)	Hishām (d. 245/859)	Ibn Dhakwān (d. 242/856)
Basra	Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’ (d. 154/770)	al-Dūrī (d. 246/860)	al-Sūsī (d. 261/874)
Kufa	‘Āsim (d. 127/744)	Hafs (d. 180/805)	Shu‘bah (d. 193/809)
Kufa	Hamzah (d. 156/772)	Khalaf (d. 229/843)	Khallād (d. 220/835)
Kufa	al-Kisā‘ī (d. 189/804)	al-Dūrī (d. 246/860)	al-Layth (d. 240/854)

initials of his master eponymous Reader followed by a number I listed the names in the same order in which they were mentioned by Ibn Mujāhid, but I designated the first two numbers to the first and second *Rāwīs*⁴⁵ We should keep in mind however, that the notion of the two *Rāwīs* did not exist during Ibn Mujāhid's time and that it developed in the 5th/11th century during al-Dānī's time, as I shall explain later The seven Readers and their immediate transmitters are listed below as follows

Nāfi^c Total number of immediate transmitters = 17⁴⁶

- Complete transmission of the Qur'ān = 11 transmitters (N3-Ismā'īl b Ja'far al-Ansārī al-Madanī, N4-Muṣlim b Jammāz, **N1-Qālūn**, N5-al-Asma'ī,⁴⁷ **N2-Warsh**, N6-Ishāq b Muhammad al-Musayyabī, N7-ya'qūb b Ja'far,⁴⁸ N8-Abū al-Hārith al-Layth b Khālīd,⁴⁹ N9-Abū Bakr al-A'ashā, N10-al-Zubayr b 'Āmir, N11-Abū Qurrah Mūsā b Tāriq⁵⁰)
- Partial transmission of the Qur'ān = 6 transmitters (N12-al-Wāqidī,⁵¹ N13-Khārijah b Mus'ab, N14-Saqlāb, N15-al-Layth b Sa'd, N16-Abū al-Rabī' al-Zahrānī, N17-'Abd Allāh b Idrīs)

Ibn Kathīr Total number of immediate transmitters = 3⁵²

- IK1-Shibl b 'Abbād,⁵³ IK2-Ma'rūf b Mushkān, IK3-Ismā'īl b 'Abd Allāh b Qıstantīn

⁴⁵ The first and second *Rāwīs* are not always among the immediate transmitters of the eponymous Readers, as we shall see shortly

⁴⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 88-92

⁴⁷ He is the philologist and poetry collector

⁴⁸ He is the brother of N3-Ismā'īl b Ja'far al-Ansārī al-Madanī

⁴⁹ He is one of the two *Rāwīs* of al-Kıṣā'ī

⁵⁰ Most probably, the last two transmitters N10 and N11 transmitted the Qur'ān partially because they were listed with a group of partial transmitters, however Ibn Mujāhid did not state that explicitly like he did with the others, so I included them here

⁵¹ The famous historian

⁵² Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 92-4

Note that the two renowned *Rāwīs* of the Meccan Reading, i.e. Qunbul (d. 291/903) and al-Bazzī (d. 250/864) are not the immediate transmitters of Ibn Kathīr's Reading. There are two generations of transmitters separating them from Ibn Kathīr. Only the three transmitters mentioned above transmitted directly from Ibn Kathīr.

ʿĀsīm Total number of immediate transmitters = 12⁵⁴

- **A1- Abū Bakr Shuʿbah b. ʿAyyāsh, A2-Hafs, A3-al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī,**⁵⁵ **A4- Abān b. Yazīd al-Basrī,**⁵⁶ **A5-Hammād b. Salamah, A6-al-Dahhāk b. Maymūn, A7- Hammād al-Asadī, A8-Shaybān b. ʿAbd al-Rahīm, A9-Nuʿaym b. Maysirah al-Nahwī, A10-al-Hakam b. Zahīr, A11-al-Mughīrah al-Dabbī, A12-Hammād b. Shuʿayb**

Hamzah. Total number of immediate transmitters = 2⁵⁷

- H1-Sulaym b. ʿĪsā, H2-ʿĀʿidh b. Abī ʿĀʿidh

Similar to Ibn Kathīr, the two renowned *Rāwīs* of Hamzah's Reading, i.e. Khalaf (d. 229/843) and Khallād (d. 220/835) are not immediate transmitters from Hamzah. Nonetheless, Ibn Mujāhid said that other immediate transmitters would be mentioned throughout the book when there is a disagreement on a certain reading attributed to Hamzah.

Al-Kisāʾī Total number of immediate transmitters = 4⁵⁸

⁵³ Shibl b. ʿAbbād is the same transmitter who was the subject of our discussion before on the variants of "nsy"

⁵⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 94-7

⁵⁵ The poetry collector

⁵⁶ A1 to A4 are the four main transmitters Ibn Mujāhid mentioned in his *isnād*. The rest of the transmitters, A5-A12, immediately transmitted from ʿĀsīm as well, but Ibn Mujāhid mentioned them throughout his book whenever they have transmissions that would disagree with A1-A4. I am under the impression that the transmissions of A5-A12 are partial and not complete transmissions of the Qurʾān.

⁵⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 97-8

⁵⁸ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 98

- ~~K1-al-Dūrī, K2- Abū al-Hārith al-Layth b. Khālīd,~~⁵⁹ K3-Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsīm b Sallām,⁶⁰ K4-Nusayr b Yūsuf

Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ Total number of immediate transmitters = 10⁶¹

- AA1-al-Yazīdī, AA2-ʿAlī al-Jahdmī, AA3-Abū Yazīd al-Ansārī, AA4-ʿAbd al-Wārith, AA5-ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b ʿAtāʾ, AA6-Hārūn b Mūsā, AA7-Husayn b ʿAlī, AA8-Shujāʿ b Abī Nasr, AA9-ʿUbayd b ʿAqīl, AA10-Khārījah b Musʿab⁶²

Abū ʿAmr b al-ʿAlāʾ’s two main *Rāwīs*, al-Dūrī (d 246/860) and al-Sūsī (d 261/874)

are not among his immediate transmitters

Ibn ʿĀmir total number of immediate transmitters = 1⁶³

- IA1-Yahyā b al-Hārith al-Dhīmārī

Ibn ʿĀmir’s two main *Rāwīs*, Hishām (d 245/859) and Ibn Dhakwān (d 242/856) are not among his immediate transmitters as well

I will now return to the earlier discussion of Q (9 37) and its different readings attributed to Ibn Kathīr all through IK1-Shibl b ʿAbbād, and ask the following question if Shibl was a main immediate transmitter from Ibn Kathīr,⁶⁴ why would a reading that was transmitted on his behalf get rejected? More importantly, why would it be attributed to Shibl in the first place, and not to some late transmitters? For now, we should keep in mind that the immediate transmitters of the eponymous Readers might have disagreed among each other on some variants I will discuss this aspect further in the following pages I will now examine the immediate transmitters of the seven

⁵⁹ Who is N8 as well

⁶⁰ The Qurʾān scholar and exegete

⁶¹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp 98-101

⁶² Who is N13 as well

⁶³ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp 101

⁶⁴ See also fig 1

Readers as given in Ibn Ghalbūn's (d 399/1008) *al-Tadhkirah fī al-Qirā'āt*,⁶⁵ where they are listed as follows

Nāfi^c. Total number of immediate transmitters = 4 (N3-Ismā'īl b Ja'far al-Ansārī al-Madanī, N6-Ishāq b Muhammad al-Musayybi, **N1-Qālūn**, **N2-Warsh**)

Ibn Kathīr Total number of immediate transmitters = 3 (IK1-Shibl b 'Abbād, IK2-Ma'rūf b Mushkān, IK3-Ismā'īl b 'Abd Allāh b Qīstantīn)

'Āsīm Total number of immediate transmitters = 3 (A3-al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī, **A2-Hafs**, **A1-Shu'bah Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh**)⁶⁶

Hamzah Total number of immediate transmitters = 1 (H1-Sulaym b 'Īsā)⁶⁷

Al-Kisā'ī total number of immediate transmitters = 4 (**K1-al-Dūrī**, **K2-al-Layth b. Khālīd**, K4-Nusayr b Yūsuf,⁶⁸ K5-Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Qutaybah b Mīhrān)

It seems that K3-Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b Sallām was dropped here and replaced by Qutaybah b Mīhrān

Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' Total number of immediate transmitters =1 (AA1-al-Yazīdī)

Ibn 'Āmir Total number of immediate transmitters = 1 (IA1-Yahyā b al-Hārith al-Dhīmārī)⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, pp 11-9

⁶⁶ It is claimed that Hafs' Reading is the one that 'Āsīm received from 'Alī b Abī Tālib, whereas the Reading Shu'bah transmitted is the one that 'Āsīm received from Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 1/230, Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, p 16

⁶⁷ In the edition of *al-Tadhkirah* by Sālih Zu'aymah the section of the *isnāds* of Hamzah's Reading is missing I was relying on this edition until I found the better critical edition by Ayman Suwayd, Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, ed Zu'aymah, pp 18, ed Ayman Rushdī Suwayd, (Jaddah Sīsilat Usūl al-Nashr, 1991), pp 42-5

⁶⁸ In the edition of this book, this is mentioned as Nusayr and Abū al-Mundhir This is a mistake because both names refer to one person, i.e. Abū al-Mundhir Nusayr b Yūsuf al-Nahwī, Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, ed Zu'aymah, p 19, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 2/297 The second edition by Suwayd confirms this error and the text maintains Abū al-Mundhir Nusayr, Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, ed Suwayd, p 54

⁶⁹ There is a misleading *isnād* that puts Ahmad b al-Mu'allā as an immediate transmitter of Ibn 'Āmir However, he is a second generation transmitter who studied with Hishām and Ibn Dhakwān, who are Ibn 'Āmir's two main *Rāwīs*, Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, p 14, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 1/27 In the edition of Suwayd, which uses another Manuscript of *al-Tadhkirah*, the *isnād* is corrected as follows Ahmad b al-

One can immediately notice that the number of immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers dropped substantially. The seventeen immediate transmitters of Nāfi^c dropped to four only, whereas ʿĀsim's immediate transmitters dropped from twelve to three, and the immediate transmitters of Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlā' dropped from ten to one only. By the time of Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Ghalbūn, i.e. in the 4th/10th century, the notion of the two-*rāwī* canon was not in circulation, yet. As one can tell from the considerable decline in the number of the immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers, there was an essential need to limit the number of transmitters and subsequently their transmissions of variants.

The modest numbers of the immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers seemed to have posed a problem for Muslim scholars. Not only there was no consistency in the range of the numbers of the immediate transmitters, for example seventeen for Nāfi^c while one immediate transmitter only for Ibn ʿĀmir, but also the sum of the numbers themselves was mediocre. How could a transmission through one or three or ten or even seventeen transmitters be characterized as *mutawātir*? We should have a better understanding now of how problematic the subject of the *tawātur* of the *Qirāʾāt* was, and the lengthy arguments whether the canonical Readings were transmitted through single (*āhād*) chains of transmission or through *tawātur* and the implications of either cases. Those *āhād* chains started with the limited and mediocre number of immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers where any further authentication through other immediate transmitters seemed to be practically impossible, the more transmitters people sought, the more variants they were faced

Muʿallā → Hishām b. ʿAmmār → ʿIrāk b. Khālīd → **IA1-Yahyā b. al-Hārīth** → Ibn ʿĀmir, Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, ed. Suwayd, p. 28

with In several cases, the Reading came through one immediate transmitter only, such as the Readings by Ibn ʿĀmir, Hamzah and Abū ʿAmr b al-ʿAlā On the other hand, we read in later Qirāʾāt books and ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān that the numbers of the immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers were much bigger and in many instances “countless”, for example, thirty-four immediate transmitters from Nāfiʿ, thirty from Ibn Kathīr, thirty-seven from Abū ʿAmr b al-ʿAlā, a group (*jamāʿah*) from Ibn ʿĀmir among which eight were named by Ibn al-Jazarī, countless transmitters from ʿĀsim among which twenty-three were named by Ibn al-Jazarī, fifty-six from Hamzah, and twenty-one from al-Kisāʾī⁷⁰ These numbers are considerably bigger, yet they were not supported by any *isnād* that might even give them some credibility This phase may look similar to the multiplication of *isnāds* in *Hadīth*⁷¹ but with two exceptions first, no chains of transmission were newly “discovered” or simply fabricated, and therefore instead of increasing the numbers of the transmitters between the Prophet and the eponymous Reader, and between the eponymous Reader and his two canonical *Rāwīs* - the counterpart of the common link in *Hadīth* - we find that later Qirāʾāt manuals tried to decrease those numbers Second, the content of the transmission, i.e. the Qurʾānic variants in this case, was not fully documented in the later Qirāʾāt manuals, even in voluminous works such as *al-Jāmiʿ* by al-Dānī These variants were losing their place in

⁷⁰ Jaʿfar, *al-Qurʾān wa al-Qirāʾāt wa al-Aḥruf al-Sabʿah*, 1/85-6, Cf Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 2/289-91, 1/381

⁷¹ The research done by Juynboll on *isnād* analysis in *Hadīth* showed that a number of transmitters and common links invented several of their authorities in order to soundly connect their transmissions to the Prophet with a good *isnād* that Juynboll called a “diving *isnād*”, i.e. bypassing a transmitter in order to aim directly at other transmitters so that a direct link might be established to the main source of transmission, i.e. the Prophet or the Companions Juynboll also argued that many Companions’ names were invented in the transmission chains to establish more credibility in the *isnād*, G H A Juynboll, “The Role of *Muʿammarūn* in the Early Development of *Isnād*”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 81(1991), pp 155-9, *Muslim Tradition*, (Cambridge Cambridge University press, 1983), pp 206-17 On the growth of traditions in the later sources compared to the earlier ones, see Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, pp 23-5

the canonical Qirā'āt manuals and started to infiltrate the *shawādh* works, whereas the *hadīth* variants were almost often fully documented in Hadīth collections. Before I arrive at any conclusions, I will further examine the immediate transmitters of the eponymous Readers as given in al-Dānī's (d. 444/1052) *Jāmi' al-Bayān*,⁷² which is one of the largest and most comprehensive Qirā'āt works with a substantive and impressive collection of *isnāds* and Qur'ānic variants. The immediate transmitters of the eponymous Readers are listed as follows:

Nāfi⁷³ Total number of immediate transmitters = 4 (N3-Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Ansārī al-Madanī, N6-Ishāq b. Muhammad al-Musayyibī, **N1-Qālūn**, **N2-Warsh**)

Ibn Kathīr⁷⁴ Total number of immediate transmitters = 3 (IK1-Shibl b. 'Abbād, IK2-Ma'rūf b. Mushkān, IK3-Ismā'īl b. 'Abd Allāh b. Qīstantīn)

'Āsim⁷⁵ Total number of immediate transmitters = 4 (**A1-Shu'bah Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh**, **A2-Hafs**, A3-al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī, A12-Hammād b. Abī Ziyād Shu'ayb)

Hamzah⁷⁶ Total number of immediate transmitters = 1 (H1-Sulaym b. 'Īsā)

Al-Kisā'ī⁷⁷ Total number of immediate transmitters = 5 (**K1-al-Dūrī**, **K2-al-Layth b. Khālīd**, K4-Nusayr b. Yūsuf, K6-al-Shayzarī,⁷⁸ K5-Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Qutaybah b. Mīhrān)

Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā'⁷⁹ Total number of immediate transmitters = 3 (AA1-al-Yazīdī, AA8-Shujā' b. Abī al-Nasr, AA4-'Abd al-Wārith)

⁷² Al-Dānī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī al-Qirā'āt al-Sab'*, 1/219 and ff

⁷³ *ibid*, 1/219-249

⁷⁴ *ibid*, 1/250-264

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 1/291-320

⁷⁶ *ibid*, 1/321-33

⁷⁷ al-Dānī, *al-Jāmi'*, 1/334-41

⁷⁸ This immediate transmitter from al-Kisā'ī was not mentioned by Ibn Mujāhid or Ibn Ghalbūn

⁷⁹ al-Dānī, *Jāmi'*, 1/265-81

Ibn ʿĀmir⁸⁰ Total number of immediate transmitters = 1 (IA1-Yahyā b al-Hārith al-Dhimārī) I summarized all the data above in the following table

	The Number of Immediate transmitters with <i>isnād</i> documentation			The Number of Immediate transmitters without <i>isnād</i> documentation
The Eponymous Readers	Ibn Mujāhid's <i>al-Sabʿah</i> (d 324/935)	Ibn Ghalbūn's <i>al-Tadhkirah</i> (d 399/1008)	Al-Dānī's <i>al-Jāmiʿ</i> (d 444/1052)	Ibn al-Jazarī's <i>Ghāyat al-Nihāyah</i> (d 833/1429)
Nāfiʿ	17	4	4	34
Ibn Kathīr	3	3	3	30
ʿĀsīm	12	3	4	23
Hamzah	2	1	1	56
Al-Kisāʿī	4	4	5	21
Abū ʿAmr b al-ʿAlāʾ	10	1	3	37
Ibn ʿĀmir	1	1	1	8

We do not see any additions to the names of the immediate transmitters except for al-Shayzarī in the case of al-Kisāʿī despite the massive and comprehensive collection of *isnāds* in al-Dānī's *Jāmiʿ*, which covers more than two hundred pages in this book. As a result, the transmission from the eponymous Readers down to the Qirāʾāt collectors and scholars was very limited in terms of the numbers of the immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers. Despite the fact that later scholarship tried to list and document as many immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers as possible,

⁸⁰ Ibid , 1/282-90

such attempts were only theoretical and devoid of any *isnād* documentation. These endeavors aimed at demonstrating that the numbers of the immediate transmitters who memorized and “perfected” the transmission of the whole Qur’ān were numerous if not countless. One might wonder why fictional *isnāds* were not fabricated as in the case of Hadīth, in the same way analyzed and theorized by Juynboll? Is it because *isnād* fabrication would have been impossible in Qirā’āt transmission because of the technical nature of this discipline, which cannot be mastered by anyone? Or is it because the actual *isnāds* were not needed in the first place and the goal was to demonstrate that a large and “sufficient” number of reporters transmitted the Qur’ān, which is an evocation of the theory of *tawātur*?

The authentication of Readings and the emergence of the Irregular readings

I discussed in the previous section the case of the immediate transmitters from the eponymous Readers and the problem of their limited numbers. No matter how many immediate transmitters from the Eponymous Readers were mentioned in later Qirā’āt works, only a handful of immediate transmitters survived in the documented chains of transmission. The other immediate transmitters did not take part in any *isnād*, not even a fabricated one. The same can be said about the generation of the eponymous Readers themselves, for although the Successors taught many students the correct Reading of the Qur’ān, as they have learned it directly from the Companions, only the seven and the ten Readers were able to pass on that heritage to the Muslim community, since they were shrewd scholars who perfected the transmission of the

Qur'ān exactly as they were taught⁸¹ Up to this point in my discussion, I am able to suggest the following we have received the consonantal text of the Qur'ān, a coded script, through *tawātur*,⁸² assuming that the written text could establish *tawātur*⁸³ The seven and the ten Readers undertook the process of decoding this coded form, and as a result any reading that was attributed to those Readers was considered to be Qur'ānic, while any other reading outside the system of the seven or the ten Readings was deemed as *shādhah*, it might have been Qur'ānic at some point prior to 'Uthmān's codification of the Qur'ān, and consequently it was abrogated by the *ummah*'s consensus⁸⁴

How could one further validate and authenticate the transmission of the Readings by those Eponymous Readers if they were our only source of transmission? Even if the Muslim scholars and the Muslim community established on firm grounds that those Readers were aptly characterized by integrity, trustworthiness and probity, the Qur'ān would still have been transmitted through ten “trustworthy” people only, even though we have already established before that trustworthiness is not an important factor in establishing *tawātur*⁸⁵

The attention was then redirected toward the disciples of the immediate transmitters, and similar to what was done in *hadīth* corroboration where the

⁸¹ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Munīd*, ed Al-'Imrān, pp 96-9, 113-64, al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/288-92, al-Suyūṭī, *Itqan*, 169-71

⁸² According to Abbot, the earliest fragments of Qur'ānic manuscripts date back to the 1st/7th century, Nabia Abbot, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script*, (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1939), The facsimile edition of MS Paris of the Qur'ān published by Déroche and Nosedá in 1998 featuring a *mā'il* Hijāzī script of the Qur'ān, dated this manuscript to around the turn of the 1st/7th century According to Dutton, this manuscript shows that it has been written according to the Reading of Ibn 'Āmir, Dutton, “An Early Mushaf According to the Reading of Ibn 'Āmir”, pp 71-89

⁸³ Oral transmission for Muslim scholars is almost always superior to written transmission, see the discussion on this issue in al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāyah*, pp 226-40

⁸⁴ Refer to chapters two and three

⁸⁵ Refer to chapter two for more details

muhaddithūn travelled to obtain more *isnāds* and shorter *туруq* of a certain tradition, Qirā'āt discipline underwent the same process. In other words, how could one prove, for example, that Nāfi^c was a trustworthy Reader, besides what has been written about him later in the biographical dictionaries as being meticulous and consistent (*dābit*) in his transmission? Theoretically, this could have been done by inspecting the transmissions of his students and comparing them to each other, a process after which Qirā'āt critics would have found out that those transmissions by Nāfi^c's students were generally consistent, a fact that testifies to Nāfi^c's credibility. The same process would have happened with Nāfi^c's immediate transmitters, and consequently out of the alleged thirty-four immediate transmitters from Nāfi^c, only a handful showed consistency and shrewdness in their transmissions. Later Qirā'āt critics were not able to find much information on the immediate transmitters of the eponymous Readers, especially if we assume that the critical study of Qirā'āt started by the 3rd/9th century,⁸⁶ where the biographical information on those transmitters was naturally scarce. Nonetheless, transmission concordances among the disciples of the immediate transmitters were possible and I will demonstrate in the following pages how this process might have happened.

I will start first with the case of Ibn Kathīr, for whom we know three immediate transmitters only, namely Shibl b. ʿAbbād, Maʿrūf b. Mushkān, and Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Qıstantīn. Figure 1 below is a stemma of Ibn Mujāhid's *isnāds* of Ibn Kathīr's Reading

⁸⁶ Refer to Chapter two for more information.

Note the following

- 1) This stemma and all the other subsequent stemmata represent the complete chains of transmission as documented by Ibn Mujāhid in the beginning of his *Sabʿah*. There might be other minor and incomplete *isnāds* for certain readings that he mentioned within the book, but it is almost certain that he did not obtain an audition certificate for the whole Qurʾān through those chains. The transmission chains represented in the above stemma and all the subsequent stemmata are allegedly full transmissions of the Qurʾān up to Ibn Kathīr.
- 2) In Figure 1, one can see that there are three immediate transmitters only of Ibn Kathīr's Reading, namely IK1-Shibl b ʿAbbād, IK2-Maʿrūf b Mushkān, and IK3-Ismāʿīl b ʿAbd Allāh al-Qust who also transmitted directly from the first two transmitters. IK3 was certainly younger than IK1 and IK2, although he could have probably transmitted directly from Ibn Kathīr, yet his main source of transmission was IK1 and IK2. We can easily notice that the most important immediate transmitter of Ibn Kathīr's Reading is IK1-Shibl b ʿAbbād who passed on his master's Reading to seven students, whereas IK2-Maʿrūf b Mushkān transmitted the Reading to Wahab b Wādih in addition to IK3-al-Qust, who was able to transmit the Reading to three readers only.
- 3) Wahab b Wādih is the only second-generation transmitter who received direct transmissions from "all" three immediate transmitters of Ibn Kathīr. This should have definitely made him an important transmitter of Ibn Kathīr's Reading, and no wonder that both Qunbul and al-Bazzī, the two canonical *Rāwīs* of Ibn Kathīr's Reading, have Wahab b Wādih as a transmitter in their *isnāds*.

Naturally, both Qunbul and al-Bazzī ought to become two important *Rāwīs* of Ibn Kathīr's Reading, simply because no one else in their generation received transmissions from all three immediate transmitters of Ibn Kathīr. The only way to authenticate further the transmission of Wahab b. Wādih was to corroborate the transmissions of al-Bazzī and al-Qawwās → Qunbul, and I will demonstrate how this might have happened shortly.

- 4) Ibn Mujāhid received the Reading of Ibn Kathīr through five different transmitters, whose transmissions always converged toward Shibl b. 'Abbād and ultimately to Ibn Kathīr.

The process of authenticating the Reading might have probably started two generations later than the immediate transmitters'. The students of the immediate transmitters' disciples - in this example it would be the generation of al-Qawwās, al-Bazzī, Khlaf b. Hishām, Hāmid al-Balkhī, and Rawh b. 'Abd al-Mu'min - started to study with different teachers, for example, al-Bazzī received transmissions from three different sources: Wahab b. Wādih, 'Ikrimah b. Sulaymān, and 'Abd Allāh b. Ziyād. We can assume that at this stage, the generation of al-Bazzī would have compared the different transmissions they received, and as a result they accepted the common transmissions as part of the system Reading and rejected the divergent transmissions that gradually became *shādhah*, as I shall explain later on. In the generation of al-Bazzī, he was the only one who received three different transmissions from three different sources, the fact that naturally qualified him to become a main *Rāwī* of Ibn Kathīr's Reading. On the other hand, Qunbul, the second canonical *Rāwī* of Ibn Kathīr's Reading, does not stand out as a strong transmitter in comparison to al-Bazzī. The

reason might lie in Wahab b Wādih being in his *isnād*, for he was the only transmitter who has received transmissions from the three immediate transmitters of Ibn Kathīr. I will turn now to the chains of transmission of Ibn Kathīr's Reading as documented in Ibn Ghalbūn's *Tadhkirah*. I represented these chains of transmission with the following stemma

Note that no more attempts were made to find more immediate transmitters from Ibn Kathīr, the aforementioned immediate transmitters IK1, IK2, and IK3 seemed to be either the only immediate transmitters of Ibn Kathīr or the only immediate transmitters that could be connected to Ibn Kathīr through a valid *isnād*. Therefore, attention must have been redirected toward authenticating what was received from these three immediate transmitters. Notice how Shibl b. ʿAbbād, after being authenticated by seven transmitters in Ibn Mujāhid’s *isnād*, was authenticated by two transmitters only in Ibn Ghalbūn’s *isnād*, since a more important task than finding more disciples of Shibl was to solidify and further authenticate the transmissions of Qunbul and al-Bazzī. As we have just seen in Figure 1, these two transmitters were the key transmitters of Ibn Kathīr’s Reading, being the only ones receiving full transmissions from the three immediate transmitters of the eponymous Reader. Subsequently, there was no need to find more ways (*turuq*) to connect al-Bazzī to the previous generation, and those links dropped from three with Ibn Mujāhid (al-Bazzī ← Wahab b. Wādih, al-Bazzī ← ʿIkrimah b. Sulaymān, and al-Bazzī ← ʿAbd Allāh b. Ziyād) to one only with Ibn Ghalbūn (al-Bazzī ← ʿIkrimah b. Sulaymān) who was more interested as we can see from Figure 2 in authenticating al-Bazzī’s transmission and obtaining his “narrative” through as many students as possible. The transmission from al-Bazzī to his students increased from one only with Ibn Mujāhid (al-Bazzī → Mudar al-Asadī) to three with Ibn Ghalbūn (al-Bazzī → Mudar al-Asadī, al-Bazzī → Saʿdān al-Jaddī, and al-Bazzī → Ishāq al-Khazāʿī). Similarly, the transmission from Qunbul to his students increased from one (Qunbul → Ibn Mujāhid) in Figure 1 to three in figure 2 (Qunbul → Ibn Mujāhid, Qunbul → al-Yaqtīnī, and Qunbul → Abū Rabīʿah). The more, yet consistent,

transmissions one could obtain from al-Bazzī and Qunbl, the more authentic and reliable those two *Rāwīs* would have been. Moreover, it is natural to assume that the more students a transmitter had, the more famous he was during his time, which suggests that he was known for his superiority and shrewdness as a Qur'ān reader and trustworthy transmitter.

One more aspect should be pointed out here upon comparing Figures 1 and 2 to each other. We can see that the all-the-way single strands of transmission (henceforth SST) from the main source to the receiver in Ibn Mujāhid's *isnād* are missing in Ibn Ghalbūn's. Out of the five transmissions Ibn Mujāhid received, two only survived in Ibn Ghalbūn's *isnād*, namely Ibn Mujāhid ← Qunbul and Ibn Mujāhid ← Mudar al-Asadī. The three other transmissions through Idrīs b. ʿAbd al-Karīm, Ahmad b. Zuhayr, and al-Husayn b. Bishr al-Sūfī, were all SSTs (single strands of transmission) that eventually died. We can see from Ibn Ghalbūn's *isnād* in Figure 2 that the two surviving chains of transmission through Ibn Mujāhid have both Qunbul and al-Bazzī playing a role similar to the common link in Hadīth transmission.

The last *isnād* I am going to study for Ibn Kathīr's Reading is the one given by al-Dānī in his *Jāmi'*⁶ that is considered to be among the most comprehensive of all Qirā'āt books in terms of the documented *isnāds* and variants. I have divided this stemma into two charts that highlight the transmissions through Qunbul and al-Bazzī respectively.

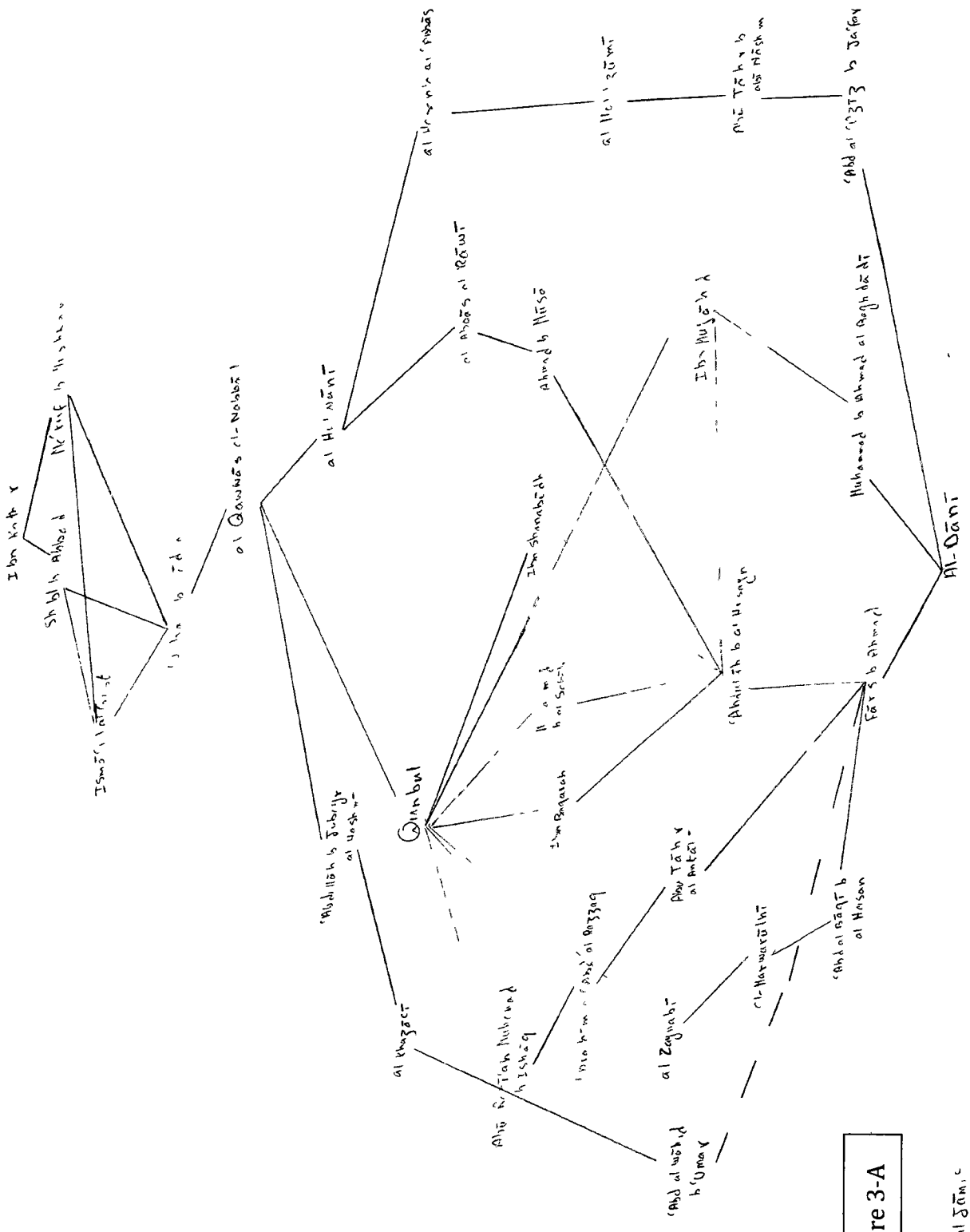


Figure 3-A

al-Da'ni

Note how in Fig 3-A the transmissions from Qunbul onwards increased to seven, and it seems that it was quite difficult, as extensive al-Dānī's *isnāds* as they were, to connect Qunbul to the generation of transmitters preceding him except for al-Qawwās, to whom two more transmitters found their way (al-Qawwās → al-Hulwānī and al-Qawwās → °Abd Allāh b Jubayr al-Hāshimī), which was possibly a way to corroborate the transmission of Qunbul by creating a third quasi-*Rāwī*, namely al-Hulwānī. Thus, the *uruq* (ways) to al-Qawwās increased from one to three, and as can one see from Fig 3-A, al-Hulwānī might have functioned as a corroborating third quasi-*Rāwī* where all the conditions that applied to Qunbul and al-Bazzī applied to him as well, first, he transmitted from Wahab b Wādih, the only transmitter who studied with the three immediate transmitters of Ibn Kathīr, and second, he functioned as a common link where he passed on his transmission to two transmitters, hence making the chain of transmission passing through him not a SST (single strand of transmission) where it was possible to authenticate his transmission through his two students. Again, one should notice that no attempt was made to increase the chains of transmission between al-Qawwās and the generation that preceded him or to find more immediate transmitters from Ibn Kathīr. I will now examine second stemma that represents the transmission of Ibn Kathīr's Reading through al-Bazzī.

As one might have expected, the number of transmissions from al-Bazzī has increased, he started with one transmitter only in Ibn Mujāhid's *isnād* (al-Bazzī → Mudar al-Asadī) then three transmitters in Ibn Ghalbūn's, and ended with eight transmitters in al-Dānī's as documented in *al-Jāmi'*^c

Before I proceed to more *isnād* analysis for other eponymous Readers, I can now discuss and attempt to answer the following statement and question by Jeffery

these seven systems were transmitted in the Schools, and very shortly after their acceptance as canonical we find a great many *riwāyas* in existence as to how each of them read. In the case of one or two of them the *riwāyas* were very considerable in number. By the time that al-Dānī, who died in 444 A H. came to write his *Taysīr*, two *riwāyas* from each of the seven had been chosen as canonical, and as alone having official sanction. As to how these were chosen we have no information whatever, and at present cannot even venture a guess. Any reading from any of these *riwāyas* is canonical. No official decision that we know of was taken to establish these particular *riwāyas* as alone permissible, and so the word "canonical" is not quite accurate, but these *riwāyas* did come to take a position of unique authority for which we have no more appropriate word than canonical.⁸⁷

One can see from my *isnād* analysis of the transmission of Ibn Kathīr's Reading that this statement by Jeffery did not accurately represent the status of the seven Readings and their transmission through the two canonical *Rāwīs*. First of all, it is true that al-Dānī chose two *Rāwīs* for each canonical Reading in *al-Taysīr* but he did not exclude the other *Rāwīs* as non-canonical. Jeffery might have forgotten to mention that *al-Taysīr* is only an abridged manual of *Qirā'āt* written for students in order to facilitate the memorization of the variants provided by the seven Readers. Al-Dānī said in this

⁸⁷ Jeffery, *The Qur'ān as Scripture*, p. 100

work [*al-Taysīr*] I sought brevity and abandoned thoroughness and repetition and I mentioned two *Rāwīs* only for each Reader thus providing a total of fourteen *riwāyahs* that are the most commonly used and recited”⁸⁸ Al-Dānī did not propose here a canonical status for these *riwāyahs*, especially when he stated later on that if the two *Rāwīs* disagreed in their transmissions, he would attribute the variants to the *Rāwīs* themselves and not to the eponymous Reader⁸⁹ This suggests that “canonicity” is “theoretically” restricted to the eponymous Readers only, and that any inconsistencies in transmission would be directly associated with the *Rāwīs* The second point I want to emphasize in regard to Jeffery’s statement is that *al-Taysīr* is an abridged manual of *Qirā’āt* and not a definitive critical edition of the seven Readings In his other larger and more comprehensive work, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān fī al-Qirā’āt al-Sab’*, al-Dānī listed most of the *Rāwīs* of the seven Readings known to him through the different *isnāds* he provided Therefore, al-Dānī did not limit himself to two *Rāwīs* only and the notion of the two-*Rāwī* canon is absent in the *Jāmi’* The *Rāwīs* of the seven Readings as they were given in *al-Jāmi’* are as follows⁹⁰

- Nāfi’ 4 *Rāwīs*, Ismā’īl b Ja’far, Ishāq al-Musayyibī, Qālūn, and Warsh
- Ibn ‘Āmir 5 *Rāwīs*, Ibn Dhakwān, Hishām, al-Walīd b ‘Utbah, ‘Abd al-Hamīd b Bakkār, and al-Walīd b Muslim
- ‘Āsim 4 *Rāwīs*, Shu’bah, Hafṣ, al-Mufaddal, and Hammād b Abī Ziyād
- Al-Kisā’ī 5 *Rāwīs*, al-Dūrī, Abū al-Hārith, Nusayr, al-Shayzarī, and Qutaybah

⁸⁸ Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī, *al-Taysīr fī al-Qirā’āt al-Sab’*, ed Otto Pretzel, (Beirut Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1984), pp 2-3

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p 3

⁹⁰ Al-Dānī, *Jāmi’*, 1/83-162

- Ibn Kathīr 3 Rāwīs, al-Qawwās, al-Bazzī, and Ibn Fulayh (Notice how al-Dānī indifferently unlisted Qunbul as a canonical Rāwī and replaced him with Ibn Fulayh and the aforementioned al-Qawwās)
- Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’ 2 Rāwīs, al-Yazīdī and Shujā‘
- Hamzah 1 Rāwī, Sulaym b ‘Īsā

It is true that limiting the Rāwīs of the canonical Readings might have started formally with al-Dānī in *al-Taysīr*, where this process became more emphasized and “canonized” in later Qirā’āt works, especially *al-Shātibiyyah*⁹¹ However, one should note that there was no reference by al-Dānī or the scholars of his time, which considered the transmissions of the two canonical Rāwīs to be canonical I agree with Jeffery that the two-Rāwī canon might have started to take place in the 5th/11th century when it became customary in Qirā’āt scholarship to limit the several Rāwīs of a canonical Reading to the two already chosen by al-Dānī in his student manual *al-Taysīr* Nonetheless, by referring to one of al-Dānī’s important contemporary Qirā’āt works, namely *al-Rawdah fī al-Qirā’āt al-Ihdā‘Ashrata* by Abū ‘Alī al-Mālikī (d. 438/1046), one can easily notice that the notion of the two-Rāwī canon did not yet exist Al-Mālikī listed four Rāwīs for Nāfi‘, two for Ibn Kathīr, two for Ibn ‘Āmir, two for ‘Āsim, three for Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’, three for Ya‘qub al-Hadramī, four for Hamzah, eight for al-Kisā‘ī, and none for Khalaf, al-A‘mash, and

⁹¹ *Al-Shātibiyyah* is a poem by al-Shātībī (d. 590/1194), which rendered the whole book of *al-Taysīr* by al-Dānī in verse form *Al-Shātibiyyah* has been the most famous and mostly used manual on the seven Readings since its composition until today where it has become the principal reference for Qirā’āt students and scholars According to Ibn al-Jazarī, no one has ever been able to compose a text as superior as *al-Shātibiyyah* to the extent that no other book whether in Qirā’āt or any other discipline was capable of achieving similar fame, acceptance, and wide circulation among the common people and scholars alike Ibn al-Jazarī said also that one would find a copy of *al-Shātibiyyah* with almost every student at the time, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 2/21-2

Abū Jaʿfar al-Madanī ⁹² The answer to Jeffery’s question as to when and why two *Rāwīs* were chosen to represent a system Reading may lie within the transmission analysis of these Readings In the case of Ibn Kathīr for example, both al-Bazzī and Qunbul were among the best candidates to represent the Reading of Ibn Kathīr, where the chains of transmission from different *Qirā’āt* collections were naturally clustered around them Finally, we should keep in mind that those two canonical *Rāwīs* were not among the immediate transmitters of Ibn Kathīr, unlike the *Rāwīs* of Nāfiʿ whom we shall discuss next The numerous immediate transmitters who were available for Nāfiʿ naturally allowed direct and immediate authentication with the generation of his students, unlike the case of Ibn Kathīr where direct authentication was difficult with three immediate transmitters only I will start with the following stemma that represents the *isnāds* of the transmission of his Reading as given by Ibn Mujāhid in *al-Sabʿah*

⁹² Abū ʿAlī al-Mālikī, *al-Rawdah fī al-Qirā’āt al-Ihdā ʿAshrah*, ed. Nabīl b. Muhammad ʿAlī Ismāʿīl, (Riyad Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muhammad b. Suʿūd, 1994), 1/105-42

Note the following

- 1) Unlike the case of Ibn Kathīr, the immediate transmissions from Nāfi^c are numerous. There are seventeen immediate transmitters from Nāfi^c, which is a relatively large number compared to Ibn Kathīr's three immediate transmitters. It is obvious now that the authentication of Nāfi^c's Reading might have started directly with the generation of his immediate transmitters and the following generation, since there were several transmissions available whose corroboration and authentication would have been very feasible.
- 2) Ibn Mujāhid received Nāfi^c's Reading through eighteen different ways, which should have made the comparison among the different transmissions yield a fairly consistent and corroborated Reading of Nāfi^c.
- 3) We can clearly see from Fig. 4 the candidates who were going to become the main *Rāwīs* of Nāfi^c's Reading. Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Madanī al-Ansārī diverged into three chains, Qālūn into four, and Warsh into three. Warsh and Qālūn became the two canonical *Rāwīs* of Nāfi^c's Reading, although Ja'far b. Ismā'īl continued to be a very important *Rāwī* who was often cited and referred to in *Qirā'āt* works.⁹³
- 4) There are some important names that need to be underlined, such as al-Dūrī who is one of the two canonical *Rāwīs* of Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā, the philologist and poetry collector al-Asma'ī, the eponymous Reader al-Kisā'ī, the historians al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa'd, and the grammarian Yūnus b. Habīb.

Next is the stemma that represents the *isnāds* of the transmission of Nāfi^c's Reading as given in Ibn Ghalbūn's *Tadhkirah*. Note the following

⁹³ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghayah*, 1/148, al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rifa al-Qurrā'*, 1/144, al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 9/228

- 1) The number of the immediate transmitters from Nāfi^c decreased from seventeen in Ibn Mujāhid's *isnād* to four only in Ibn Ghalbūn's. Those four transmitters became the main *rāwīs* of Nāfi^c's Reading as can one see in some of the more comprehensive *Qirā'āt* books such as *Jāmi' al-Bayān* and *al-Kāmil* by al-Hudhalī. Nonetheless, among those four *rāwīs*, Warsh and Qālūn became Nāfi^c's two canonical *Rāwīs*.
- 2) Qālūn seems to have become more prominent than the other *rāwīs* by diverging into five chains of transmissions, whereas Warsh's transmissions decreased from three with Ibn Mujāhid to one only. This is quite surprising especially when we see that the non-canonical *rāwī* Ismā'īl b. Ja'far maintained three transmissions with both Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Ghalbūn. One should keep in mind that Warsh moved to Egypt after he finished his studies with Nāfi^c and became the chief Qur'ān reader (*muqir'*) of Egypt,⁹⁴ which might have led the early Qur'ān readers to redirect their attention to Qālūn and Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Madanī since both stayed in al-Madīnah⁹⁵ and became the heirs of the Medina school. I explored this possibility further and examined the *isnāds* of Nāfi^c's Reading in *al-Rawdah* by Abū 'Alī al-Mālikī who stated that the most significant *rāwīs* of Nāfi^c's Reading were Qālūn, Warsh, Ismā'īl b. Ja'far, and al-Musayyabī. However, al-Mālikī documented the *isnāds* of his transmission of Nāfi^c's Reading through all these *rāwīs* except for Warsh.⁹⁶ Why and how was Warsh chosen to be a canonical *Rāwī* of Nāfi^c's Reading when the *isnād* analysis shows that the

⁹⁴ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 1/446-7, al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā'*, 1/323-6

⁹⁵ al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā'*, 1/326-8, 1/294-5, Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 1/542-3, 148

⁹⁶ Al-Mālikī, *al-Rawdah fī al-Qirā'āt al-Ihdā' Ashrata*, 1/105-8, 150-7

transmission through the other immediate transmitters of Nāfi^c was more prominent while the transmission chains through Warsh decreased from three with Ibn Mujāhid to one with Ibn Ghalbūn to none with al-Mālikī?

Before tackling this problem, I will study the *isnāds* of Nāfi^c's transmission as documented in al-Dānī's *Jāmi^c*. I will distribute al-Dānī's *isnāds* over four stemmata, one for each immediate transmitter/*rāwī* from Nāfi^c. The first two stemmata are comprehensive while the remaining two stemmata show only the second-generation transmitters and their subsequent students. Figure 6 below shows the transmission of Nāfi^c's Reading through his *rāwī* Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Madanī as documented in *Jāmi^c al-Bayān*. Notice how the transmissions from Ismā'īl b. Ja'far increased from three with Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Ghalbūn to six in the chart below. Among Ismā'īl b. Ja'far's students, al-Dūrī was the main disseminator of his master's transmission diverging at four chains, while all the other students passed on Ismā'īl's transmission to one student only.

The next chart represents the transmission of Nāfi's Reading through Ishāq al-Musayyabī who passed on his transmission to nine students, thus adding eight more transmission chains to Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Ghalbūn's *isnāds*. Six out of these nine chains are SSTs (single strand of transmissions). In the remaining three chains, we have important names such as al-Musayyabī's son Ibn Ishāq and Khalaf, the tenth eponymous Reader in Ibn al-Jazarī's system.

The next chart shows the transmission of Nāfi^c's Reading through Qālūn who passed on his transmission to sixteen students. Three chains only. Out of these sixteen transmissions are not SSTs, and the partial common links Ahmad b. Sālih, al-Hulwānī, and Ismā'īl b. Ishāq passed on Qālūn's transmission to more than one student. The following stemma shows the transmission of Nāfi^c's Reading through Warsh

As can one see from Figure 9, Warsh still maintained a low number of students transmitting from him compared to the other *rāwīs* six transmitters from Ismāʿīl b Jaʿfar, nine transmitters from Ishāq al-Musayyabī, and sixteen transmitters from Qālūn, and yet, Warsh became a canonical *Rāwī* of Nāfiʿs Reading alongside Qālūn. Consequently, out of the four major immediate transmitters/*rāwīs* of Nāfiʿs Reading, Warsh received the least attention, and there might several reasons for this phenomenon

- 1- As I have just mentioned before, Warsh was known to have settled in Egypt after studying with Nāfiʿ in Medina, which means that Qurrāʾāt scholars would have sought the transmission of Warsh by travelling to Egypt. I believe that a scholar who wanted to study the Reading of Nāfiʿ, being the representative of the Medinese school, would have travelled to al-Madīnah and studied with Nāfiʿs immediate students who stayed and taught in al-Madīnah. The three major transmitters of Nāfiʿ Ismāʿīl b Jaʿfar, Qālūn, and al-Musayyabī were all Medinese, who stayed and taught in Medina until they died, unlike Warsh who left for Egypt after his studies were completed with Nāfiʿ.
- 2- If the canonization of Warsh as the second *Rāwī* of Nāfiʿ was an intentional act undertaken by the Qurrāʾ community, I believe that it might have been mainly the responsibility of al-Dānī followed of course by al-Shātībī. Al-Dānī travelled and stayed in Egypt for one year where he studied with Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī al-Khāqānī, who was an authority on the Reading of Nāfiʿ as transmitted through Warsh. Ibn al-Jazarī says “ Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī in his *al-Taysīr* relied on Abū al-

Qāsim al-Misrī for the transmission and documentation of Warsh’s Reading”⁹⁷

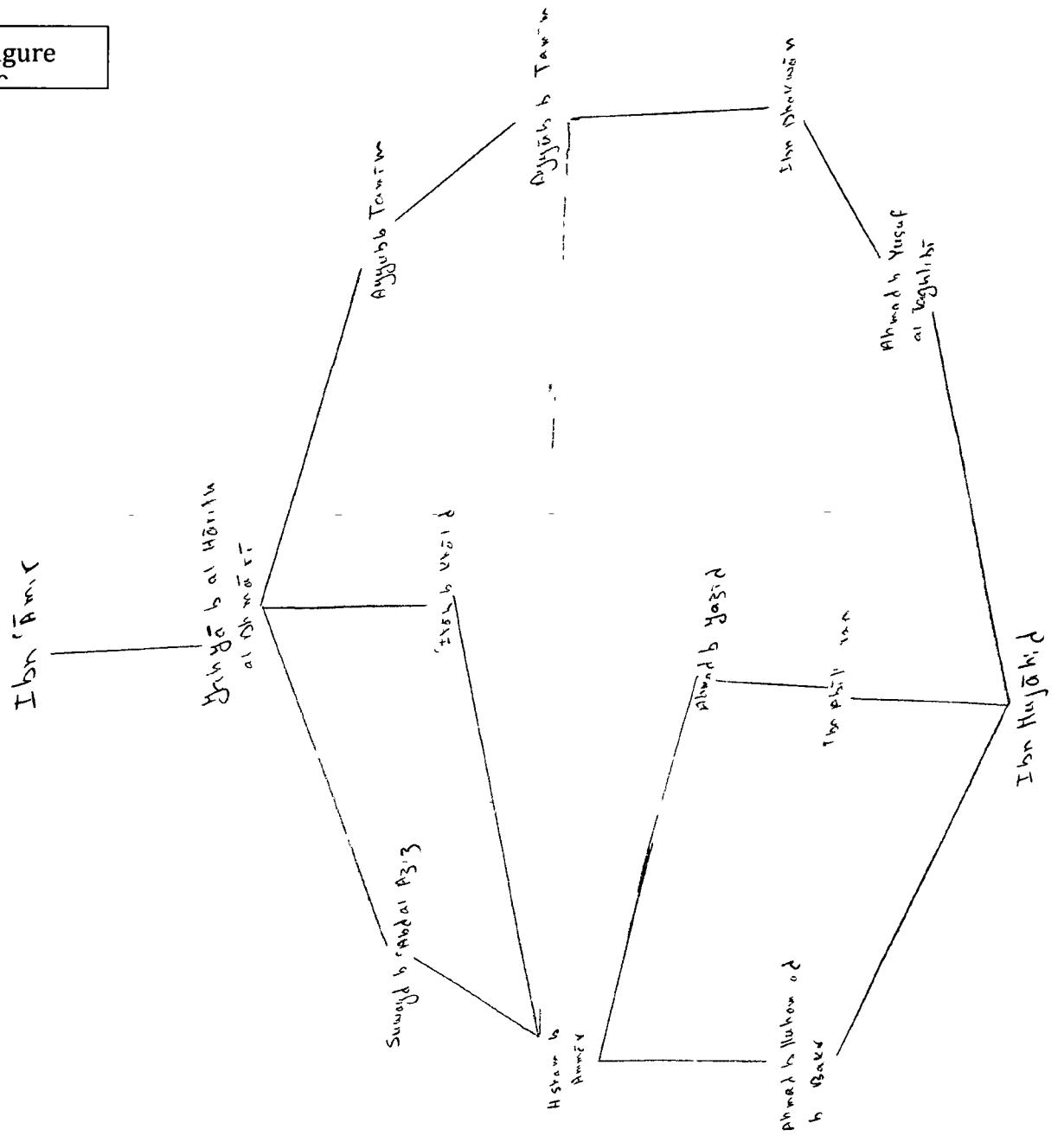
On the other hand, al-Shātībī was known to have lived in Egypt for a long time, which might have made him very familiar with Warsh’s transmission

- 3- Since Qālūn, Ismā‘īl b Ja‘far, and al-Musayyabī were all Medinese, it is possible that Qālūn was chosen to represent the “current” Medinese transmission, while Warsh was chosen as the authority on Nāfi‘ in Egypt, in addition to all that has been known about him in developing his own style of recitation and a very peculiar *ikhtiyār*, yet still heavily dependent on Nāfi‘

The last eponymous Reader I am going to study his *isnād* is Ibn ‘Āmir, whose transmissions have always been known for their scarcity. Starting with Ibn Mujāhid, Ibn ‘Āmir had one immediate transmitter only, and he is two generations apart from his two canonical *Rāwīs*, Ibn Dhakwān and Hishām b ‘Ammār al-Sulamī. His case is very similar to that of Ibn Kathīr and we will see shortly if the similar conclusions can be drawn from both cases. The following stemma shows the transmission of Ibn ‘Āmir’s Reading through the *isnāds* documented in Ibn Mujāhid’s *al-Sab‘ah*

⁹⁷ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyah*, 1/245

Figure 1.2



Yahyā b al-Hārith is the only immediate transmitter from Ibn ʿĀmir. Consequently, the authentication of Ibn ʿĀmir's Reading or the corroboration of Yahyā b al-Hārith's transmission are almost impossible, just as the processes of authentication and corroboration were not feasible with the generation of Ibn Kathīr's immediate transmitters. Each one of the three students of Ibn al-Hārith, namely Suwayd b ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, ʿIrāk b Khālīd, and Ayyūb b Tamīm has one single strand of transmission only. However, in the third phase of transmission we notice that Hishām b ʿĀmir received three individual transmissions from the three students of Ibn al-Hārith, which indicates that during this stage the authentication and corroboration processes has already begun. The transmission through Ibn Dhakwān does not deserve any attention yet since he received his transmission through Ayyūb only, and passed it on to just one student. Next is the stemma of the *isnāds* of Ibn ʿĀmir's Reading as documented in Ibn Ghalbūn's *al-Tadhkirah*.

No more immediate transmitters from Ibn ʿĀmir were introduced and Yahyā b al-Hārith remained as the only immediate transmitter of this Reading. We can clearly notice now that Hishām and Ibn Dhakwān started to function as the common link in the transmission of Ibn ʿĀmir’s Reading, Hishām with three students and Ibn Dhakwān with two. Note that al-Akhfash is a strong disseminator of Ibn Dhakwān’s transmission, which qualified him to be a partial common link in this transmission and one of the important transmitter readers of Ibn ʿĀmir’s Reading. Similarly, al-Hulwānī functioned as a partial common link to the transmission of Hishām and he also became an important transmitter reader of Ibn ʿĀmir’s Reading. Below are the *isnād* stemmata of Ibn ʿĀmir’s Reading through Hishām and Ibn Dhakwān respectively as documented in al-Dānī’s *Jāmiʿ*.

Hishām became a stronger common link with ten chains of transmission while his student al-Hulwānī maintained his important position as a strong disseminator of Hishām’s transmission. On the other hand, Ibn Dhakwān’s transmissions grew to a total of six, and again his student al-Akhfash maintained a growing number of transmissions amounting to ten.

Summary and Observations

After studying the previous charts two main points should be noted

- 1) The selection of the two canonical *Rāwīs* was heavily dependent on the number of the transmitters an eponymous Reader had. In the case of Nāfi^ᶜ, who had several immediate transmitters, it was inevitable that the main transmitters would be among his disciples, since the process of the authentication of his Reading might have been possible with the generation of his students. However, eponymous Readers such as Ibn ^ᶜĀmir, who had one immediate transmitter only, did not have as many immediate transmitters as it would have taken their Reading to be dissipated properly, where it was practically impossible to authenticate their Reading with the generation of the immediate transmitters. This could be applied to all seven Readers among whom ^ᶜĀsim, al-Kisāʿī, and Nāfi^ᶜ had their canonical *Rāwīs* from among their immediate transmitters, while Ibn Kathīr, Ibn ^ᶜĀmir, Hamzah, and Abū ^ᶜAmr b al-^ᶜAlāʾ had their canonical *Rāwīs* from among the later generation of transmitters. Abū ^ᶜAmr b al-^ᶜAlāʾ is slightly problematic since he started with ten immediate transmitters in Ibn Mujāhid’s *isnād*, however only his immediate transmitter al-Yazīdī survived in

Ibn Ghalbūn's *isnād* In all cases, we should note that the transmission of those eponymous Readers with few immediate transmitters couldn't be distinguished from the transmission of their few students

- 2) The SSTs (single strand of transmission) were usually dropped in later *isnāds* and were rarely followed up or corroborated. Those SSTs were used to increase the number of transmissions a Qur'ān reader could receive but in fact they did more harm than good in establishing a consistency in the transmission. I will demonstrate in the following section that those SSTs carried divergent transmissions and different permutations of a reading from what the other transmissions through the canonical *Rāwīs* have carried. The disagreements carried by the SSTs formed the bulk of the irregular readings, whereas the other transmissions that showed multiple strands and one or more common links became the main representative of the eponymous Reading. In other words, what became later on canonical or *mutawātir* is the transmission of a Reading through multiple strands that created partial common links who disseminated the school's Reading to as many students as possible, whereas the transmissions through SSTs deviated from the transmission of the majority and gradually entered the *shawādh* realm, regardless of the three conditions of *rasm*, *ʿarabiyyah*, and *isnād*.

***Shawādh* through SSTs (Single Strands of Transmission)**

Before I study some new examples of *shawādh* readings I will go back to the example of Q (9:37) "*innamā 'n-nasī'u*", which I discussed at the beginning of this

chapter and investigate who is mainly responsible for the transmission of the different permutations that diverged from the reading of the majority The irregular reading

“nas’u” is attributed to Ibn Kathīr through the following strand

Ibn Kathīr → Shibl → ‘Ubayd b ‘Aqīl → Muhammad b Sa‘dān → Muhammad b Ahmad b Wāsīl → Ibn Mujāhid⁹⁸

The strand Muhammad b Sa‘dān → Muhammad b Ahmad b Wāsīl → Ibn Mujāhid is not documented in the *isnād* of Ibn Mujāhid for the Reading of Ibn Kathīr, most probably because there was no complete Qur’ān audition through this strand

Furthermore, the strand Shibl → ‘Ubayd → Khalaf was not followed up or corroborated by any other strands in the later Qirā’āt scholars and it eventually died, ‘Ubayd b ‘Aqīl was removed from *al-Tadhkirah* and from the more *isnād* comprehensive collection, *al-Taysīr* The permutation “*al-nas’u*” has therefore become *shādhah*, and this reading entered Ibn Khālawayhi’s *Mukhtasar*⁹⁹ As for the permutation “*al-nasiyyu*”, it was transmitted through the strand Ibn Kathīr → Shibl → ‘Ubayd → Khalaf → Idrīs and Ahmad b Zuhayr [Ibn Abī Khaythamah] This strand can be located in Figure 1, however it is a SST that was ignored in later books, and again the reading “*al-nasiyyu*” can be found in Ibn Khālawayhi’s *Mukhtasar*¹⁰⁰ We see now that attributing a reading to Ibn Kathīr does not make that reading authoritative or canonical, the reading should not have been carried through a single strand of transmission (SST), otherwise it would be categorized as *shādhah*

⁹⁸ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, p 314

⁹⁹ Ibn Khālawayhi, *Mukhtasar*, p 57

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p 57

It seems that by the time of al-Shātībī, Qirā'āt scholars had probably agreed to adopt very few transmissions for the eponymous Readings. Two main transmissions by the two canonical *Rāwīs* were unanimously accepted, and by then not only the seven Reading were considered canonical and divine, but the two renditions of each Reading had also become canonical and divine. Still, very few transmitters maintained a reputation for being good *rāwīs*, and their transmissions were considered trustworthy and accurate. However, most of the other transmitters especially those in single strands of transmission became *shawādh* transmitters.

I will now examine a few examples that were transmitted through the non-canonical *Rāwīs*. Q (113 5) “*hāsīdīn*” (envier) was read without the *ā>ē* shift (*imālah*), even by Hamzah and al-Kisā'ī who are both notorious for executing *imālah*. Ibn Mujāhid documents the reading “*hāsīdīn*” attributed to Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' through one Ahmad b. Mūsā.¹⁰¹ The entry of Q (113 5) in Ibn Ghalbūn's *Tadhkirah* confirms this reading with the same *isnād*, and it is corroborated by a transmission attributed to al-Kisā'ī through Nusayr b. Yūsuf.¹⁰² In al-Dānī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, the reading attributed to Abū 'Amr through Ahmad b. Mūsā is confirmed and it is corroborated by a transmission on behalf of al-Kisā'ī through the immediate transmitter K5-Qutaybah b. Mīhrān.¹⁰³ On the other hand, al-Dānī in *al-Taysīr* omits this reading and skips all these transmissions that are dropped in *al-Shātībīyyah* as well.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the reading is not mentioned in al-Ahwāzī's (d. 446/1054) *Wajīz*,¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Bādhīsh's (d. 540/1145) *al-Iqnā'*,¹⁰⁶ and Ibn al-

¹⁰¹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p. 703

¹⁰² Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, ed. Suwayd, 2/653-4

¹⁰³ Al-Dānī, *Jāmi'*, 4/377

¹⁰⁴ Al-Qādī, *al-Wāfi' fī Sharh al-Shātībīyyah fī al-Qirā'āt al-Sab'*, p. 381, al-Dānī, *al-Taysīr*, p. 226

¹⁰⁵ Abū 'Alī al-Ahwāzī, *al-Wajīz fī Sharh Qirā'āt al-Qarā'ah al-Thamāniyah A'immat al-Amsār al-Khamsah*, ed. Durayd Ahmad, (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), p. 391

Jazarī's *al-Nashr*¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, if we check Ibn Khālawayhī's *Mukhtasar*, we find that the reading "hēsīdīn" is attributed to Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' and listed as *shādhah*¹⁰⁸ In his other book *al-Hujjah*, in which Ibn Khālawayhī gives grammatical explanations for the canonical variants, he says under the entry of Q (113) that there is no disagreement among the seven Readers in this *sūrah* except what has been transmitted on the authority of Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' that he performed the *imālah* in Q (113 5) and read "hēsīdīn"¹⁰⁹ This reading is not mentioned neither in Ibn Jinnī's *Muhtasab* nor in al-Kirmānī's *Shawdhah*, probably because both works are more interested in grammatical and syntactical anomalies rather than phonetic inconsistencies that Ibn Khālawayhī often documented in his work

In Q (97 5) "mtl'" (the rising) all Readers read "matla'" except for al-Kisā'ī who read "matli'" The unanimously accepted reading of Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' is "matla'" as well, although Ibn Mujāhid mentions that AA9-'Ubayd b 'Aqīl read "matli'"¹¹⁰ Ibn Ghalbūn mentions al-Kisā'ī divergent reading only and does not bring up Abū 'Amr's through 'Ubayd¹¹¹ In *al-Jāmi'*, al-Dānī does mention the reading "matli'" as being attributed to Abū 'Amr b al-'Alā' through AA9-'Ubayd, in addition to al-Kisā'ī's reading of course He also adds another transmission attributed to Ibn Kathīr through al-Qawwās → al-Hulwānī, which also reads "matli'"¹¹² The transmission of Abū 'Amr b al-

¹⁰⁶ Abū Ja'far Ibn al-Bādhīsh, *al-Iqnā' fī al-Qirā'āt al-Sab'*, ed 'Abd al-Majīd Qatāmīsh, (Damascus Dār al-Fīkr, 1982), 2/815

¹⁰⁷ Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/405

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 182-3

¹⁰⁹ Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn Khālawayhī, *al-Hujjah fī al-Qirā'āt al-Sab'*, 'Abd al-'Āl Sālīm Mukarram, (Beirut Dār al-Shurūq, 1979), p 378

¹¹⁰ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 693

¹¹¹ Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, p 549

¹¹² Al-Dānī, *Jāmi'*, 4/354

‘Alā’ → AA9-‘Ubayd is dropped in Ibn al-Bādhish *Iqnā’*,¹¹³ al-Ahwāzī’s *al-Wajīz*,¹¹⁴ al-Dānī’s *Taysīr*,¹¹⁵ and Ibn al-Jazarī’s *al-Nashr*.¹¹⁶ Finally, if we refer to the *shawādh* works, we find that the reading “*matlīc*” of Abū ‘Amr b al-‘Alā’ through AA9-‘Ubayd is listed in al-Kirmānī’s *Shawādh*.¹¹⁷ The same goes for the last example I am going to present, which is the entry of Q (89 25-6) All seven Readers read “*lā yu‘adhdhibu lā yūthiqu*” (None punishes None binds), except for al-Kisā’ī who read “*lā yu‘adhdhabu lā yūthiqu*” (None punished None bound) and ‘Āsīm through his immediate transmitter A3-al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī.¹¹⁸ The transmission of ‘Āsīm → A3-al-Mufaddal is mentioned in Ibn Ghalbūn’s *Tadhkirah*,¹¹⁹ and al-Dānī’s *Jāmi‘*,¹²⁰ yet it is dropped in al-Dānī’s *Taysīr*,¹²¹ Ibn al-Bādhish’s *al-Iqnā’*,¹²² al-Ahwāzī’s *Wajīz*,¹²³ and Ibn al-Jazarī’s *al-Nashr*.¹²⁴ Although the transmission of ‘Āsīm → A3-al-Mufaddal is not documented in the main *shawādh* works, the reading itself, i.e. “*lā yu‘adhdhabu lā yūthiqu*” can be found in different Qirā’āt manuals and *tafsīr* works, such as Abū Hayyān’s *al-Bahr al-Muhīt* in which he mentions that this reading was reported on the authority of Ibn Sīrīn, Ibn Abī Ishāq, Sawwār al-Qādī, Abū Haywah, Ya‘qūb al-Hadramī, and several others.¹²⁵

Summary and Conclusion

¹¹³ Ibn al-Bādhish, *Iqnā’*, 2/813

¹¹⁴ Al-Ahwāzī, *Wajīz*, p. 385

¹¹⁵ al-Dānī, *Taysīr*, p. 224

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Nashr*, 2/402-3

¹¹⁷ Al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, p. 519

¹¹⁸ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, p. 685

¹¹⁹ Ibn Ghalbūn, *Tadhkirah*, p. 543

¹²⁰ Al-Dānī, *Jāmi‘*, 4/340

¹²¹ *Taysīr*, 222

¹²² Ibn al-Bādhish, *Iqnā’*, 2/810

¹²³ Al-Ahwāzī, *Wajīz*, p. 380

¹²⁴ Ibn al-Jazarī, *Nashr*, 2/400

¹²⁵ Abū Hayyān al-Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-Muhīt*, 8/467

We can see now that the concept of *shawādh* is too broad and complex to be limited to the variants of the pre-ʿUthmānic codices and the anomalous readings that disagree with the consonantal outline of the *mushaf*. The Readings attributed to the canonical seven Readers were numerous and not consistent, and there were several transmissions for each Reading circulating among the community of the Qurrā'. Many of these transmissions were accepted shortly after the canonization of the seven readings, however most of these transmissions were ignored and dropped later on when the Qurrā' community started to adopt a two-*Rāwī* canon for each Reader, thus accepting the transmission of the eponymous Readings through two main *Rāwīs* only. Though the other transmissions attributed to the eponymous Readers were in circulation at the beginning, they gradually died out and many of them started to appear in the literature of the *shawādh*. There were no clear criteria for choosing the main transmitters/*Rāwīs* of an eponymous school, but my analysis shows that almost all of the SSTs (single strand of transmission) died in the later *isnāds*, and that the transmitters who acted as common links or partial common links and received transmissions from more than one source, often maintained their important position in the transmissions of the Reading and became either *Rāwīs* or important second generation disseminators of the Reading. Furthermore, the role of the immediate transmitters of the eponymous Readers is very important, the fewer those immediate transmitters were, the harder it was to authenticate and corroborate their transmissions, a process that took place two generations after the eponymous Reader. On the other hand, eponymous Readers with numerous immediate transmitters had

their two-canonical *Rāwīs* chosen from among their immediate transmitters because authentication and corroboration were possible at this stage

Chapter 5: The Nature of the Qur'ānic variants

There have been numerous attempts since the 2nd/8th century to understand and formally to categorize the different types of Qur'ānic variants. Unfortunately most of these attempts were incomplete and most importantly theoretical, i.e. they would provide very few examples for the variant types and not apply those classifications to a bulk of variants, which I intend to do in this chapter. One more important shortcoming of these classification attempts is that they were obsessed with limiting those variant types to seven categories, again evoking the *sab'at ahruf* tradition. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) carried out one of these earlier attempts in his *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān*, stating that after much deliberation and reflection he found that the variant types of the different readings are exactly seven.¹ Before Ibn Qutaybah, Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/868) undertook a similar attempt in which he attributed the existence of Qur'ānic variants to the differences in the dialects (*lughāt*) of Arabic. According to al-Sijistānī, the dialects of Arabic vary among each other in exactly seven ways, hence the seven *ahruf*.² Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1012), Abū al-Fadl al-Rāzī (d. 454/1062), and Ibn al-Jazarī (d.

¹ According to Ibn Qutaybah, these seven types are: 1) changes in the case endings and internal vowels of the word while retaining the same meaning and the consonantal form in the *mushaf* (ex. *atharu* and *athara*), 2) changes in the case endings and internal vowels of the word that will exhibit different meanings while retaining the consonantal form in the *mushaf* (ex. *bā'id* and *bā'ada*), 3) changes in the building consonants of the word (homographs) that will exhibit different meanings while retaining the consonantal form in the *mushaf* (ex. *nunshizuhā* and *nunshuruhā*), 4) changes in the building consonants of the word that will exhibit different consonantal form in the *mushaf* while retaining the same meaning (ex. *sūf* and *ʿihn*), 5) changes in the building consonants of the word that will exhibit both different meaning and different consonantal form in the *mushaf* (ex. *tal'* and *talh*), 6) changes in the position of the word within the verse (meta-thesis) (ex. *wa jā'at sakratu 'l-mawti bi 'l-haqq* and *wa jā'at sakratu 'l-haqqi bi 'l-mawti*), 7) changes in the omission and addition of the word (ex. *wa mā 'amilat aydihim* and *wa mā 'amilathu aydihim*), Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān*, pp. 36-8.

² These seven categories are: 1) interchanges between synonyms (ex. *hūt* and *samak*), 2) alternation between two consonants (*ibdāl*) (ex. *haraqtu* and *araqtu*), 3) changes in the position of the word within the verse or two letters in the same word (meta-thesis and transposition) (ex. *ʿamiq* and *ma'iq*, *ʿaradtu al-nāqata ʿalā al-hawd* and *ʿaradtu al-hawda ʿalā al-nāqati*), 4) addition or omissions of letters (ex. *taku* and *takun*), 5) changes in internal vowels (ex. *bukhl* and *bakhal*), 6) changes in case endings (ex. *basharan* and

833/1429) adopted the same categorization of Ibn Qutaybah and al-Sijistānī but with some modifications, however they all shared the same objective in keeping those differences at exactly seven ³

In the following pages, I propose a more comprehensive categorization of the types of Qur'ānic variants. These categories are based on the irregular and anomalous readings that I collected from the main Qirā'āt works and they are by no means comprehensive, for there are numerous Qirā'āt collections, and consulting all these books and manuscripts is a life-long project. The objective is to label and categorize the Qur'ānic variants that I study in the second part of the present chapter in order to create a sample database of variants and come up with some conclusions regarding the nature of these variants. The second step is to compare these variants to the variants one finds in Pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry. My goal is to determine whether the types of variants in Qur'ān and poetry are similar or not and whether we can find a trend in the variants of both literatures, which might give us some clues regarding the mechanism of the transmission of Qur'ān and poetry. I created twenty-three categories of variants and labeled each category with an abbreviation that will be used in the tables of concordances below. These categories derive from the corpus of the *sūrahs* and poems that I analyzed and a summary table of these variants can be found at the end of my description of these twenty-three variant types.

basharun), 7) phonetic phenomena such as the articulation of emphatic letters, assimilation, a>e shift, etc (ex *duhā* and *dūhē*), Jeffrey (ed), *Kitāb al-Mabānī in Muqaddimatān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, pp 219-228

³ Al-Bāqillānī, *Intisār*, 1/384-92, Jeffrey (ed), *Mabānī*, pp 215-18, al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1/132-8, Abū Shāmah, *al-Murshid al-Wajīz*, pp 99-105

Variant types

1) Case endings (i^ʿrāb) = CE

This type of variant encompasses words that have different case endings according to different readings. This is not limited to the short vowels, but also includes the long vowels *wāw*, *yāʾ*, and *alif* when they act as the actual case endings of the word, such as the six nouns (*abū*, *akhū*, *hamū*, *fū*, *dhū*, and *hanū*), the dual form, and the sound masculine plural nouns. The differences in case endings are a result of different interpretations of the syntax of the phrase, or simply due to improper usage of Arabic (*lahn*). For example, in Q (85:21-22) “*bal huwa Qurʾānun majīdun, fī lawhin mahfūzin/un*”, *mahfūz* is read in both the nominative case *mahfūzun* and the genitive case *mahfūzin*. *mahfūzun* modifies the Qurʾān and thus the verse translates to (Nay, but it is a glorious Qurʾan, guarded on a tablet), whereas *mahfūzin* modifies the *lawh* and the verse would translate to (Nay, but it is a glorious Qurʾan, on a guarded tablet).⁴ Another example is Q (85:12-15) “*inna batsħa rabbika la-shadīdun, innahu huwa yubdiʿu wa yuʿīdu, wa huwa ʿl-ghafūru ʿl-wadūdu, dhū/ī ʿl-ʿarshī ʿl-majīdu*”⁵ *dhū* in the nominative case modifies *huwa ʿl-ghafūru*, whereas *dhī* in the genitive case modifies *rabbika*.⁶ The improper use of Arabic is evident from the scholars’ criticism of several readings that exhibit improper Arabic syntax or utterances that have not been heard from Arabs.⁷ For example, the reading by Hamzah of Q (4:1) “*wa ʿttaqū ʿllāha ʿlladhī tasāʿalūna bihi wa ʿl-arhāma*”⁸ in which he read

⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 678

⁵ (Lo! the punishment of thy Lord is stern, Lo! He it is Who produceth, then reproduceth, and He is the Forgiving, the Loving, Lord of the Throne of Glory)

⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 678

⁷ Refer to the discussion on al-Tabarī and al-Zamakhsharī in chapter two

⁸ (Be careful of your duty toward Allah in Whom ye claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs (that bare you))

“*wa ‘l-arhāmi*” in the genitive⁹ was rejected by several scholars and grammarians Al-Farrā’ stated that this reading in the genitive case is repulsive “*fīhi qubh*”,¹⁰ whereas al-Tabarī demonstrated that the genitive reading is not eloquent Arabic (*ghayru fasīh*)¹¹ This category of variants will be represented by the abbreviation CE

2) Internal vowels (Intvl)

This type of variant is concerned with the discrepancies of the internal vowels of the words, both in verbs and in nouns I restrict the variance in the internal vowels of the words to the vowels of the consonant roots only, thus verbs that are read in the active and passive voices do not belong to this category For instance, Q (85 5) “*dhāti ‘l-waqūdi*” (of the fuel-fed) is also read “*wuqūdi*”,¹² and Q (85 8) “*naqamū*”¹³ is also read “*naqimū*”¹⁴ This category of variants will be represented by the abbreviation Intvl

3) Active and Passive forms (A⇌P)

This type of variant is also concerned with the changes in the internal vowels of the words, however it only encompasses verbs that are read in both the active and the passive voices For example, Q (86 7) “*yakhruju*” is also read “*yukhruju*”,¹⁵ and Q (88 4) “*taslā*” is also read “*tuslā*”¹⁶ This variance is abbreviated as A⇌P (Active ⇌ Passive) Additionally, I included under this category the changes from the active participle into

⁹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, pp 226

¹⁰ Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrā’, *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān*, ed Muhammad ‘Alī al-Najjar et al , (Beirut ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1983), 1/252-3

¹¹ al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, 6/346

¹² Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, pp 678

¹³ (They had naught against them)

¹⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, pp 678

¹⁵ ‘Abd al-‘Āl Makram and Ahmad ‘Umar, *Mu‘jam al-Qirā’āt al-Qur’āniyyah*, (Kuwait Kuwait University Press, 1988), 8/113-14

¹⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, pp 681-2

the passive participle forms and vice versa For example, Q (88 22) “*bi-musaytir*” is also read “*bi-musaytar*”,¹⁷ this type of variance is abbreviated as AP⇌PP

4) Gemination (Gem)

This category of variants includes both verbs and nouns that are read with or without a *shaddah* on one of their consonants The meaning of the geminated word usually indicates the energetic or the intensive mode of the non-geminated word, nonetheless in many other instances Gemination occurs for purely dialectal and phonetic purposes Q (85 4) “*qutūla*” for example, is read as “*quttūla*”,¹⁸ Q (88 17) “*l-ibili*” is read “*l-ibilli*”, and Q (88 20) “*sutihat*” is read “*suttihat*”¹⁹

5) Verb Form Discrepancies (VF)

This category of variants includes the different readings that are based on adopting different verb forms of the same word I used the following Roman numerals to designate the corresponding verbs forms

I → *fa^cala, fa^cila, fa^cula*

II → *fa^{cc}ala*

III → *fā^cala*

IV → *a^fala*

V → *tafa^{cc}ala*

VI → *tafā^cala*

VII → *‘nfa^cala*

VIII → *‘fta^cala*

¹⁷ Makram, *Mu^cjam*, 8/127-33

¹⁸ Makram, *Mu^cjam*, 8/107-8

¹⁹ *ibid*, 8/127-33

- IX → 'falla
 X → 'stafala
 XI → fa^clala
 XII → tafa^clala

For example, if one reading uses form I of the verb while another reading uses form III the variant will be designated as VF (I↔III) I do not presume the existence of an “original” reading that is more correct than the other, thus I use the symbol “↔” to denote the simultaneous coexistence of both variants being interchangeable and equal in value For example, Q (85 13) reads “yubdi’u” and “yabda’u”, both of which respectively exhibit forms IV and I of the verb “bada’a”, the variant is abbreviated as VF (I↔IV) ²⁰ Similarly, Q (86 17) reads “fa mahhul” and “fa amhil”, thus exhibiting forms II and IV of the verb “mahala”,²¹ the variant is represented as VF (II↔IV) I included in some cases the shifts to and from forms II and V to the previous category of Gemination described above One special case needs to be mentioned here is that of forms V and VI when conjugated in the imperfect 2nd person singular masculine and 3rd person singular feminine “tatafa^cal” and “tatafa^cal” The prefix “ta” is sometimes dropped or assimilated into the second “ta” For example, Q (89 17) reads “tahāddūna” and “tatahāddūna” ²² This type of variance will be included under another category that will be described later, namely Cs (loss of consonants)

6) Nūnation “tanwīn” (Nun)

²⁰ Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/107-8

²¹ *Ibid*, 8/113-14

²² Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/137-48

Naturally, this category comprises of nouns only I separated it from the case endings (CE) category since *tanwīn* exhibits an additional *nūn* consonant to the noun, which plays an important role in poetry meter Additionally, some of the variants under this category are not the result of the definite or indefinite state of a noun, rather, they exhibit some linguistic and dialectal features For example, Q (85 21) “*Qur’ānun majīdun*” is read “*Qur’ānu majīdin*”,²³ and Q (89 1) “*wa l-fajrī*” is read as “*wa l-fajrīn*”²⁴

7) Hamzah (Hmz)

The articulation or lenition of *Hamzah* is considered to be a principle of *usūl al-Qirā’ah* that I have discussed before²⁵ Therefore, I have not included any variant that is a natural result of the Reader’s style of recitation For example, reading “*yu’minūna*” or “*yūminūna*” features a style of recitation that is considered to be among the *usūl* of the Reader, being consistent in the system of Reading throughout the whole Qur’ān I only included the exceptions in this category, and some other instances where the *Hamzah* is being added or replaced by another vowel I used the sign “±” to denote the addition and omission of the *Hamzah* For example, Q (85 4) *l-ukhdūdi* is also read *l-khudūdi*²⁶ This variant exhibits the omission of the *Hamzah* and is abbreviated as Hmz (±) Q (90 20) is read “*Mu’sadatun*” and “*Mūsadatun*”, which might seem as a simple lenition of *Hamzah*, however Ibn Mujāhid preferred to distinguish between the two readings and list them as two separate variants²⁷ This variant is abbreviated as Hmz (u’→ū) where the *hamzah* is replaced by a long vowel Q (96 1) “*Iqra’*” is read “*iqra*” and “*iqrā*”,²⁸ both

²³ Makram, *Mu’jam*, 8/107-8

²⁴ Ibid , 8/137-48

²⁵ Refer to chapter four for more details

²⁶ Makram, *Mu’jam*, 8/107-8

²⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab’ah*, pp 686-7

²⁸ Makram, *Mu’jam*, 8/195-99

variants are abbreviated as Hmz (±) and Hmz (a'±ā) respectively. There is another feature in the variants concerned with the *hamzah*, i.e. translating the vowel of the *hamzah* to the consonant preceding it, a phenomenon called *naql harakat al-hamzah*. Readers like Warsh are known to have used this technique systematically whenever applicable, however there are some instances where this technique should not have been applied. For example, Q (114 1) “*Qul a'ūdhu*” reads *Qula 'ūdhu* by moving the *fathah* on the *hamzah* to the *lām* of *Qul*. I represented this variant by Hmz (swp), where swapping (swp) denotes the swapping of vowels between the *hamzah* and the consonant preceding it.

8) Long vowels (LV)

This category of variants comprises of the loss or gain or exchange in the long vowels *alif*, *wāw*, and *yā'*. Q (1 3) “*maliki*” and “*māliki*” fall under this category, and the variant is abbreviated as LV (±ā).²⁹ Q (86 7) “*s-sulbi*” is read “*s-sālibi*” as well,³⁰ and the variants are abbreviated as LV (±ā). *wāw* and *yā'* additions/omissions are represented by ±ū and ±ī respectively.

9) Derivatives (Drv)

This category of variants often comprises of anomalous variants where the same roots of the word are used but in a different derived form. For example Q (86 7) “*dāfiqin*” also reads “*madfūqin*” in one anomalous variant.³¹ Q (111 4) reads “*wa 'mra'atuhu*” while one anomalous variant reads “*wa murayyatuhu*” and another reads “*wa muray'atuhu*”³² The

²⁹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 104-5

³⁰ Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/113-14

³¹ *Ibid*, 8/114

³² *Ibid*, 8/266

consonantal outline of these variants is disparate, yet they share the same roots in their different derived forms

10) Imperfect Prefix Conjugation (Pfx)

This category comprises only verbs that are conjugated in the imperfect tense. If there is confusion as to who/what the subject of verb is, the verb will naturally be conjugated differently. Q (88 11) reads both “*Lā yusma‘u*” and “*Lā tusma‘u*”. This variance is abbreviated as Pfx (y↔t) where y refers to the prefix *yā’* and t refers to the prefix *tā’*. Similarly, the prefix *na* will be represented by n. Another example is Q (89 17-20) that read “*Tukrimūna, tahāddūna, ta’kulūna, tuhibbūna*” and also read “*yukrimūna, yahuddūna, ya’kulūna, yuhibbūna*”,³³ the variance is abbreviated as Pfx (y↔t). Naturally, the lack of diacritics in the consonantal text allows the prefix of the imperfect verb to be *yā’* or *tā’* or *nūn*. Any other prefix will result in an anomalous reading. For example Q (96 16) reads “*la nasfa‘anna*” and “*la asfa‘anna*”,³⁴ the variance is abbreviated here as Pfx (n↔a).

11) Alternation (Alt) “*ibdāl*”

When one word exhibits a variant form in one of its consonants, the variants are categorized under Alternation “*ibdāl*”. The consonantal change might be a result of multiple readings of a homograph, “ح” for example can be read *hā’* or *khā’* or *jīm*. Alternation could also happen as a result of sheer phonological phenomenon, *tā’* for example is pronounced *tā’* if preceded by an emphatic letter like in the word *istafā* that should originally be *istafā*. Regardless of the reason of alternation, which deserves more

³³ Makram, *Mu‘jam*, 8/143-6

³⁴ Makram, *Mu‘jam*, 8/195-99

detailed studies,³⁵ I collected the variants that exhibit this phenomenon and specified the consonants that have undergone the alternation in the word. For example, Q (88 22) reads “*bī-musaytir*”, “*bī-musaytir*”, and “*bī-muzaytir*”³⁶ This variance is abbreviated as Alt (s↔s) and Alt (s↔z)

12) Perfect Suffix Conjugation (Sfx)

This category is similar to the imperfect prefix conjugation, however it deals with the verbs that are conjugated in the perfect tense. For example, Q (88 17-20) read “*Khulīqat, rufīʿat, nusibat, sutihat*” but also read “*Khalaqtu, rafaʿtu, nasabtu, satahtu*”³⁷ These variants are abbreviated as Sfx (t↔tu). The following letters refer to the corresponding suffix verb conjugation: “tu” first person singular, “n” first person plural, “ta” second person singular masculine, “ti” second person singular feminine, “a” third person singular masculine, “t” third person singular feminine, and “ū” third person plural masculine.

13) Vowel Omission “*taskīn*” (Skn) and Loss of Consonants (Cs)

This category of variants is slightly different from the category of the case endings because it is phonetic in nature and not syntactical like the latter. There are variants, both nominal and verbal, where transmitters emphasized that the word was pronounced without any a case ending. Though this phenomenon is different from *waqf* (pause), this category of variants is often included under it. For example, Q (89 15-16) read “*akramanī, ahānanī*” and “*akraman, ahānan*”³⁸ These variants will be designated as

³⁵ For more information and details on the phenomena of *ibdāl* and *iʿlāl*, see al-Lughawī, Abū al-Tayyib, *Kitāb al-Ibdāl*, (Damascus 1960), Ibn al-Sikkīt, Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Ibdāl*, ed. Husayn Sharaf, (Cairo 1978), Suhaymī, Salmān, *Ibdāl al-hurūf fi al-Lahajāt al-ʿArabīyah*, (Madīnah 1995). See also the introduction in El-Berkawī, Abdel Fatah, *Die arabischen Ibdāl-Monographien, insbesondere das Kitāb al-Ibdāl des Abu t-Tayyib al-Lughawī ein Beitrag zur arabischen Philologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, (Erlangen 1981)

³⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 681-2

³⁷ *Ibid*, 8/127-33

³⁸ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp. 683-5

Skn On the other hand, some words exhibited a loss in one of their consonants, for example Q (100 9) reads “*bu^ʿthira*” and “*Bu^hthira*”, but also reads “*Bu^hitha*” This variance is abbreviated as Cs ($\pm r$), where the letter between the two brackets indicates the lost consonant

14) Pronoun Discrepancy (Prn)

Subject and object pronouns are also susceptible to variance in different transmissions Q (89 8) reads, “*lam yukhlaq mithluhā*” where as one anomalous variant reads “*lam yukhlaq mithluhum*”³⁹ These variants are abbreviated as Prn ($hā\rightleftharpoons hum$)

15) Particles

I included under this category all the variants that exhibit discrepancy in using different particles such as prepositions, conjunctions, relative pronouns, negation particles, etc Naturally, these variants are anomalous in nature, however there were several variants that were canonically accepted, especially the interchange between the conjunction particles *fāʾ* and *wāw* ($f\rightleftharpoons w$) The reasoning behind accepting a variant that deviates from the ^ʿUthmānic script is that the anomalous counterpart was written in one of the original five codices⁴⁰ The canonical reading of (89 30) is “*wa ʿdkhulī jannatī*” where as one anomalous variant reads “*wa ʿdkhulī fī jannatī*”,⁴¹ this variance is abbreviated as Ptcl ($\pm fī$) One anomalous reading that was unanimously accepted by Muslims is the reading of Q (9 100) “*jannātīn tajrī tahtahā ʿl-anhāru*” by Ibn Kathīr who read “*jannātīn tajrī min tahtihā ʿl-anhāru*”⁴² by adding *min* This variance is abbreviated as Ptcl ($\pm min$)

³⁹ *ibid*, pp 683-5

⁴⁰ Refer to chapters one and two for more details

⁴¹ Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/137-48

⁴² Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p 317

16) *al-Tā' al-Marbūtah* (Mrbt)

Some nouns exhibit variations related to the suffixed *tā' marbūtah*. This *tā'* is sometimes omitted and thus the noun becomes masculine in gender. Additionally, the *tā'* is sometimes pronounced as a *hā'* without nūnation. I also included under this category variants that show gender discrepancy due to the loss or addition of the *tā'*. For example, Q (89 27) reads “*Yā'ayyatuhā 'n-nafsu*” and in one anomalous variant it reads “*Yā'ayyuhā*”⁴³ These variants are abbreviated as Mrbt. Sometimes the final ending is *hā'* and not a *tā' marbūta* such as Q (101 9) that reads both “*māhiyah*” and “*māhiya*”⁴⁴ This variance is also abbreviated as Mrbt.

17) The Definite Article “*al*” (AL)

This category of variants comprises of nouns that show loss or addition of the definite article “*al*”. Almost all of these variants belong to the anomalous category. Q (95 5) reads “*Asfala sāfilīna*” where as one anomalous variant reads “*Asfala 's-sāfilīna*”⁴⁵ This variance is simply abbreviated as AL.

18) Meta-thesis and transposition

When two words show reversed order in one variant, I refer to this phenomenon as Meta-thesis (Meta). On the other hand, if within one word, two consonants or sounds show reversed order in a variant, I refer to this phenomenon as transposition (Trns). For example, Q (103 3) reads “*bi 's-sabri*” and “*bi 's-sabir*”. This is not simply a discrepancy in the internal vowels of the word, it rather shows moving the *kasrah* on the *rā'* to the non-vocalized *bā'*. This variance is abbreviated as Trns. Q (112 3) reads

⁴³ Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/137-48

⁴⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 695

⁴⁵ Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/191

“*Lam yalid wa-lam yūlad*”, which was anomalously read as “*lam yūlad wa-lam yalid*”⁴⁶ This variance is abbreviated as Meta

19) Common root. R

This category is concerned with variants that have one common root between each other. Note that when there are two common roots between the variants, they would belong to the Alternation category, since the dissimilar third root consonant will be the subject of Alternation. One example of a common root variance is *jismika* and *janbika* where the variance is abbreviated as R (j), the consonant “j” designates the common root between the two variants.

20) Assimilation. Ass

When two consonants or a long vowel and a consonant assimilate, the variants fall under the category of Assimilation. For example, *an mā* in Abū Dhu’ayb’s *‘ayniyyah* was also transmitted *ammā*⁴⁷. This variance falls under the Assimilation category where the *nūn* is assimilated into the *mīm*, the variance is abbreviated as Ass.

21) Amalgamation: Amg

There are instances where two nouns or particles are read together as one word. For example, in the *dāliyyah* of al-Muthaqqib al-‘Abdī, *dāmat lanā bihi* is also transmitted as *dāmat lubānatan lanā bihi*. *lanā bihi* is read as one word, after the *nūn* and the *bā’* alternate, thus becoming *lubānatan*. This variance is abbreviated as Amg.

22) Tense discrepancy. Tns

Verbs are sometimes transmitted in both the perfect and the imperfect tenses, this often happens with Form V “*tafa‘ala*” where the prefix “*ta*” is usually dropped from the

⁴⁶ Makram, *Mu‘jam*, 8/271-3

⁴⁷ Abū Muhammad al-Anbārī, *Sharh Dīwān al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, ed. Ch. Lyall, (Oxford 1921), pp. 849-50

third person feminine singular conjugation “*tatafa^{cc}alau*” and read as “*tafa^{cc}alu*”, therefore it gets confused with the perfect form *tafa^{cc}ala*. For example, in the *dāliyyah* by al-Muthaqqib, *Taqamma* is also read *Taqammasu*, which is a contraction of *tataqammasu*.⁴⁸ This variance is abbreviated as Tns

23) Form/Pattern· Frm

This category of variants is limited to words that do not have common roots with each other, yet they share the same pattern or form “*wazn*”. For example, *khbt* and *janb* in the *qāfiyyah* of Ta’abbata Sharran have the same form “*fa^ll*” but they do not share any common root or exhibit any direct alternation or transposition phenomena. They might have resulted from scribal errors due to the misplacement of dots, however not all variants under this category show scribal errors.

The following Table summarizes the variant types discussed above with the corresponding abbreviations

Variant Type	Abbreviation	Explanation
Addition or omission	±	The addition or omission of a particle, consonant, vowel, etc
Equivalence	↔	Indicates that the consonants or vowels interchanging between two variants are equivalent and that no variant originates from the other, rather they exist simultaneously
Case Endings	CE	Discrepancies in the case endings (<i>i^rrāb</i>) between the variants
Internal Vowels	Intvl	Discrepancies in the internal vowels of the variants
Active and Passive forms	A↔P AP↔PP	Interchanges between the active and the passive forms of the verbs (A↔P) and the participles (AP↔PP)

⁴⁸ Al-Anbārī, *Sharh*, pp 302-311

Gemination	Gem	The existence or absence of a <i>shadda</i> in the variants
Verb Form Changes	VF	Changes in the verb forms of the variants Verb forms are designated by Roman numerals I-XII
Nūnation	Nun	The existence or absence of <i>tanwīn</i> in the variants
Hamzah	Hmz	This category encompasses all different variations of the <i>hamzah</i> such as its lenition, articulation, omission, etc
Long Vowels	LV	The loss or gain or exchange between the long vowels <i>ā</i> , <i>ī</i> , and <i>ū</i>
Derivatives	Drv	Anomalous variants that exhibit different morphological patterns yet still share common roots
Imperfect Prefix conjugation	Pfx	Discrepancies in the prefixes of the imperfect verb forms often among the <i>yā'</i> , the <i>tā'</i> , and the <i>nūn</i>
Alternation	Alt	A consonantal interchange between two roots resulting in two variants This interchange will be represented by the equivalence symbol \rightleftharpoons flanked between the alternated consonants
Perfect Suffix Conjugation	Sfx	Discrepancies in the suffixes of the perfect verb forms often among the <i>tu</i> , <i>ta</i> , <i>ti</i> , and <i>at</i> endings
Vowel Omission (<i>taskīn</i>) and Consonant loss	Skn Cs	Omission of vowels and loss of consonants due to phonetic phenomena
Pronoun Discrepancy	Prn	Discrepancies in the subject, object, and possessive pronouns
Particles	Ptcl	The usage of different particles preceding nouns and verbs
<i>Al-Tā' al-Marbūtah</i>	Mrbt	Different aspects related to <i>al-Tā' al-Marbūtah</i> such as untying it to become a regular <i>tā'</i> , its omission, and transformation into a <i>hā'</i>
The Definite Article	AL	The existence or absence of “ <i>al</i> ” before nouns
Meta-Thesis and Transposition	Meta Trns	Meta Thesis is when two words exchange places in a sentence Transposition is when two letters exchange places within one word

Common root	R (x)	The existence of one common root (R) between the two variants
Assimilation	Ass	When two consonants or a vowel and a consonant assimilate forming a geminated consonant
Amalgamation	Amg	When two different words in one variant are read as one single word in another variant
Tense discrepancy	Tns	Tense discrepancy between the variants including the perfect, imperfect and future tenses
Form/Pattern	Frm	When two variants exhibit the same form or pattern in the word (<i>wazn</i>) yet they share no common roots

Concordances of Qur'ānic and poetic variants

Part 1· Qur'ānic variants

I collected the Data in four tables classified as follows the first table contains the variants of the seven canonical Readings as documented by Ibn Mujāhid in his *Kitāb al-Sab'ah al-Kibār*⁴⁹ The second table contains the variants of the ten canonical Readings as documented by Ibn al-Jazarī in his *al-Nashr* If the variant was already mentioned in the canonical-seven table, it automatically means that this variant is listed in *al-Nashr* Therefore, the Data in the second table include only the variants that have not been mentioned by Ibn Mujāhid The third table lists the irregular readings, i.e. the readings that have been rejected by the system of the seven and the ten Since almost all of our sources on the *shawādh* readings are prior to Ibn al-Jazarī, the readings that were attributed to the Abū Ja'far al-Madanī and Ishāq al-Hadramī were often listed under the

⁴⁹ There are several other books on the seven Readings that collected the variant readings attributed to the seven Readers through other transmitters and listed variants that were not listed by Ibn Mujāhid The most notable among these books are *al-Tabsīrah fī al-Qirā'āt al-Sab'* by Makkī Qaysī and *al-Taysīr fī al-Qirā'āt al-Sab'* by Abū 'Amr al-Dānī Refer to Chapter two for more details on the literature of Qirā'āt books

shawādh literature since they were not considered to be among the seven canonical Readings. Nonetheless, I listed the readings by Abū Jaʿfar and al-Hadramī under table 2 whenever they were listed by Ibn al-Jazarī, and I kept table 3 for the irregular readings that were rejected by both systems, the seven and the ten. Table 4 is reserved for the anomalous readings, i.e. the readings that disagree with the Qurʾānic/ʿUthmānic consonantal outline. I have not mentioned every single anomalous reading documented in the sources, for I am only interested in the readings that are close to the canonical ones in pronunciation or orthography. The anomalous variants that greatly differ from the canonical readings and exhibit completely different morphological forms are not listed under table 4. For example, variants that result from paraphrasing or exchanging one word for another were excluded in this table because they obviously do not stem from a written prototype. I followed the same approach with the poetry variants in the second part of this section and excluded variants that result from using synonyms of words or sometimes paraphrasing a whole verse, even though the meaning would not change much.

If a variant does not exist in the system of the seven Readings yet is reported in the other systems, i.e. the ten or the irregular or the anomalous systems, I show the undisputed form with a grey highlight to facilitate the comparison between that undisputed form and its later variants documented in the other systems after Ibn Mujāhid.

I have used here the last 30 chapters of the Qurʾān, which are the shortest among the 114 *sūrah*s, besides *al-fātihah*, and which are generally characterized by their short verses and excessive rhyming.⁵⁰ The majority of these chapters are *Makkīs*.⁵¹ I also

⁵⁰ Refer to Neuwirth, Angelika, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren – die literarische Form des Koran*, (Berlin 2007)

took *sūrat Yūsuf*, being a long narrative with longer verses and different syntactical structure from the aforementioned *sūrahs*. Even though these selections represent a very small fraction of the corpus of the whole Qur'ān, they will serve as a random sample to help us see if the Qur'ānic variants are similar to the variants found in poetry, and what the types of variants are that prevail within these random samples.

⁵¹ Twenty-seven out of these thirty *sūrahs* are *Makkīs*, the three Madanī *sūrahs* are *al-Nasr*, *al-Zalzalah*, and *al-Bayyinah*.

Q (114) *sūrat al-Nās*⁵² (6 verses, 20 words)

Q(x·y)	Variants 1 Canonical 7	Variants 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(114 1)		Qul a ^ʿ ūdhu Qula ^ʿ ūdhu	Hmz

Q(x·y)	Variants 3 Irregular	Variants 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(114 1)		Al-nās Al-nāt	Alt (s↔t)
(114 2)	malıkı mālıkı		LV (±ā)

⁵² Abū al-Baqā' Al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿrāb al-Qirā'āt al-Shawādhdh*, ed M ʿAzzūr, (Beirut ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1996), 2/762, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar fī Shawādhdh al-Qur'ān*, p 183, Ibn Jinnī, *al-Muhtasab fī Tabyīn Wujūh Shawādhdh al-Qirā'āt wa al-Īdāh ʿanhā*, 2/375-6, Makram, *Muʿjam al-Qirā'āt al-Qur'āniyyah*, 8/281

Q (113) *Sūrat al-falaq*⁵³ (5 verses, 23 words)

Q(x:y)	Variants 1 Canonical 7	Variants 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(113 4)		naffāthāt Nāfithāt, nufāthāt, nafithāt, nuffāthāt	LV (±ā) Intvl

Q(x.y)	Variants 3 Irregular	Variants 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(113 2)	sharrī Sharrīn		Nun
(113 2)	Khalaqa Khulīqa		A↔P

⁵³ Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/277, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/ 404-5, Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p 703, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh al-Qirāʾāt*, pp 527-8, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 183, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/375-6, al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿIrāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/760-1

Q (112) *Sūrat al-ikh̄lās*⁵⁴ (4 verses, 15 words)

Q(x.y)	Variants 1 Canonical 7	Variants 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(112 1)	Ahad ahadun ahadu		Nun Skn
(112 4)	Kufu'an kuf'an kufuwan		Intvl Hmz

Q(x:y)	Variants 3 Irregular	Variants 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(112 1)		Al-wāhīd	LV (±ā) Hmz
(112 3)		Lam yalīd wa-lam yūlad lam yūlad wa-lam yalīd	Meta
(112 4)	Kif'an Kifwan kifā'an kufan		Intvl LV (±ā) Hmz
(12 4)		Kufu'an ahadun Ahadun kufu'an	Meta

⁵⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 701-2, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/404, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 183, al-
'Ukbarī, *I'rāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/758-9, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/375, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/271-3, al-Kirmānī,
Shawādh, pp 526-7

Q (111) *sūrat al-Masad*⁵⁵ (5 verses, 29 words)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(111 1)	Lahabın lahbın		Intvl
(111 4)	hāmālatu al-hatabı hāmālata al-hatabı		CE

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(111 1)		abī Abū	CE
(111 2)		kasab 'ktasab	VF (I↔VIII)
(111 3)	Sa-yaslā Sa-yuslā Sa-yusallā		A↔P VF (I↔II)
(111 4)	wa-'mra'atuhu Wa-murayyatuhu Wa-muray'atuhu Wa-'mrātuhu		Drv Hmz
(111 4)	hāmīlatu al-hatabı hāmīlata al-hatabı hāmīlatun al-hataba	hāmālatan lı 'l-hatabı	Gem LV (±ā) Nun CE Ptcl (±l)

⁵⁵ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 700, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/404, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 182, al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿrāb al-Qurʾān*, 2/756-7, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/375, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/265-7, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 527-8

Q (110) *sūrat al-Nasr*⁵⁶ (3 verses, 19 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
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Q(x·y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(110 1)		Nasru 'llāhī wa 'l-fath Fathu 'llāhī wa 'n-nasr	Meta
(110 2)	yadkhalūna yudkhalūna		A↔P

⁵⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 700, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/404, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 182, al-ʿUkbarī, *Ḥrāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/755, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/375, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/261, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 527-8

Q (109) *sūrat al-Kāfirūn*⁵⁷ (6 verses, 95 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(109 6)	Wa liya dīnī Wa lī dīnī		Intvl

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(109 4)	ʿābīdun ʿābīdu		Nun
(109 6)		dīnī	Prn (±ī)

⁵⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, pp 699-700, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/404, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 182, al-Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/753-4, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/375, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/257-8, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 527-8

Q (108) *sūrat al-Kawthar*⁵⁸ (3 verses 10 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(108 3)		Shānī'aka shāniyaka	Hmz

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(108 1)		a ^c taynāka Antaynāka ⁵⁹	Alt (↔n)
(108 3)	shanīka		LV (±ā)

⁵⁸ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 698, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/404, Ibn Khālawayhi, *Mukhtasar*, p 182, al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿIrāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/752, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/374, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/253, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 527-8

⁵⁹ This is still common in the dialect of Kuwait and some Gulf countries where they say “inti” (to give) instead of “aʿti”, therefore “give me” is pronounced as *intīnī*

Q (107) *sūrat al-Mā'ūn*⁶⁰ (7 verses, 25 words)

Q(x y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(107 1)		a-ra'ayta a-rayta a-rāyta	Hmz

Q(x y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(107 1)		a-ra'ayta-ka araytaka	Prn (±ka) Hmz
(107 2)	yadu ^{cc} u yada ^c u		Gem
(107 5)		sāhūn Lāhūn	Alt (s↔l)
(107 6)	Yurā'ūn Yurawn Yura''ūn Yura'ūn		LV (±ā) Hmz Gem
(107 3)	Yahuddu Yahāddu		LV (±ā)
(107 1)		B1 'd-dīni 'd-dīna	Ptcl (±b1) CE

⁶⁰ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 698, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/404, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 181-2, al-
'Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/750-1, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/374, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/253, al-Kirmānī,
Shawādh, pp 527-8

Q (106) *sūrat Quraysh*⁶¹ (4 verses, 17 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(106 1)	lī-īlāfi lī-ī'lāfi lī-ilāfi	līlāfi	Hmz LV (±ī)
(106 2)	ilāfihim ī'lāfihim ⁶² īlāfihim		Hmz

Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(106 2)	ilfihim ilfahum ī'lāfihim ī'īlāfihim ilafihim Alāfihim Alfihim alāfahum		LV (±ā) CE Hmz Intvl
(106 1)	lī-ya'/ālaf la-ya'/ālaf la-ta'/ālaf la-ta'lafa	ilāfu	Drv Pfx (y±t) CE Ptcl (±lī)
(106 2)	Rihlata Ruhlata Rahulata		Intvl
(106 1)	Qurayshin quraysha		CE

⁶¹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 698, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403-4, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 180-1, al-ʿUkbarī, *ī'rāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/747-9, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/374, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/243-5, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, p 523-4

⁶² Ibn Mujāhid says that this was the reading of ʿĀsim → Shu'bah, however he abandoned this reading later on and followed Hamzah's, i e īlāf

Q (105) *sūrat al-Fīl*⁶³ (5 verses, 23 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
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Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(105 4)	tarmīhim Yarmīhim		Pfx (yẓt)
(105 5)	Ma'kūl Ma'akūl		Intvl
(105 1)	tara tar ⁶⁴	Tar'a	Skn Hmz

⁶³ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 697, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 180, al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿrāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/745-6, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/373-4, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/239-40, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, p 523

⁶⁴ Ibn Jinnī claims that this phenomenon is dominant in poetry, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/274

Q (104) *sūrat al-Humazah*⁶⁵ (9 verses 33 words)

Q(x·y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(104 2)	jama ^ʿ a jamma ^ʿ a		VF (I↔II)
(104 3)		Yahsabu Yahsibu	Intvl
(104 9)	Fī ^ʿ amadīn Fī ^ʿ umudīn		Intvl

Q(x·y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(104 2)	ʿaddadahu ʿadadahu		VF (I↔II)
(104 4)	La-yunbadhanna La-yunbadha’anna La-yunbadhān[n]ī La-yunbadhunna	La-yunbadhannahu La-nanbudhannahu	Hmz Prn (±hu) LV (±ā) CE ⁶⁶ Pfx (y↔n)
(104 4)	Al-hutamah Al-hātīmah		LV (±ā) Intvl
(104 9)	Fī ^ʿ umdīn Fī ^ʿ amdīn	Bī ^ʿ amadīn	Intvl Ptcl (fī↔bī)
(104 1)	Humazatīn lumazatīn Humzatīn lumzatīn Humuzatīn lumuzatīn		Intvl

⁶⁵ Ibn Mujaḥid, *Sabʿah*, pp 697, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 180, al-ʿUkbarī, *Frāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/741-44, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/372, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/233-6

⁶⁶ The variant “*La-yunbadhunna*” exhibits a different verb conjugation from “*La-yunbadhanna*” *La-yunbadhunna* constitutes of *la* + *yunbadhūn* + energetic *nūn*. The energetic *nūn* causes the loss of the long vowel *ū* and thus the variant reads *La-yunbadhunna*. On the other hand, *La-yunbadhanna* constitutes of *la* + *yunbadhu* + energetic *nūn*, where *yunbadhu* is conjugated in the 3rd person singular masculine

Q (103) *sūrat al-ʿAsr*⁶⁷ (3 verses, 14 words)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(103 3)	Bi 's-sabrī Bi 's-sabīr(i)		Trns

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(103 1)	Wa 'l-ʿasrī Wa 'l-ʿasīr		Trns
(103 2)	khusrīn khusurīn		Intvl
(103 3)	Bi 's-sabīr ⁶⁸		Trns

⁶⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p 696, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 179-80, al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿIrāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/740, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/372, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/229

⁶⁸ According to al-ʿUkbarī, this is a colloquial feature common at the time “*lughah mahkiyyah*”, al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿIrāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/740

Q (102) *sūrat al-Takāthur*⁶⁹ (8 verses, 28 words)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(102 6)	La-tarawunna La-turawunna		A↔P

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(102 1)	alhākumu Ālhākumu A'alhākumu		Hmz
(102 3-5)	ta ^ʿ lamūn ya ^ʿ lamūn		Pfx (t↔y)
(102 6)	La-tara'unna		Hmz
(102 7)	La-tarawunnahā La-turawunnahā La-tara'unnahā		A↔P Hmz
(102 8)	La-tus'alunna La-tusā'alna		VF (I↔III)

⁶⁹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 696, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 179, al-ʿUkbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/738-9, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/371-2, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/225-6, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 522-3

Q (101) *sūrat al-Qāriʿah*⁷⁰ (11 verses, 36 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(101 9)	Māhiyah māhiya		Mrbt

Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(101 4)	yawma Yawmu		CE
(101 5)	takūnu Yakūnu		Pfx (yẓt)
(101 9)	Māhī		Intvl
(101 1-2)	Al-qāriʿatu mā al-qāriʿatu Al-qāriʿata mā al-qāriʿata		CE
(101 9)	Fa-ummuhu Fa-immuhu		Hmz

⁷⁰ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p 695, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 179, al-ʿUkbarī, *Frāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/737, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/371, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/221-2, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 522

Q (100) *sūrat al-Ādiyāt*⁷¹ (11 verses, 40 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
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Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(100 4)	Fa-atharna Fa-aththarna		VF (I↔II)
(100 5)	Fa-wasatna Fa-wassatna	Fa-wasatna	VF (I↔II) Alt (s↔s)
(100 9)	bu ^ʿ thira ba ^ʿ thara	Bu ^h thira Bu ^h itha Ba ^h thara	Alt (ʿ↔h) A↔P Cs (±r)
(100 10)	hussila hasala hassala hasila		VF (I↔II) A↔P Intvl
(100 8)	li-hubbī ‘l-khayrī li-hubbī ‘l-khayr		Skn
(100 11)	inna anna		Hmz
(100 11)		La-khabīr khabīr	Ptcl (±la)
(100 6)	Li-rabbihī li-rabbih		Skn

⁷¹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿah*, p 694, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 178-9, al-ʿUkbarī, *Īrāb al-Qirāʾāt*, 2/735-6, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/370-1, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/215-17, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 521

Q (99) *sūrat al-Zalzalah*⁷² (8 verses, 36 words)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
Q (99 7-8)	Yarahu Yurahu yarah		A↔P CE
Q (99 5)		Yasduru Yazduru	Alt (s↔z)

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
Q (99 1)	zīlzālahā Zalzālahā zulzālahā		Intvl
Q (99 7-8)		Khayran yarahu sharran yarahu sharran yarahu Khayran yarahu ⁷³	Meta
Q (99 1)	zulzilātī Zilzilātī zalzalatī		Intvl
Q (99 4)	Tuhaddithu Yuhaddithu	Tunbi'ū Tunabbi'ū	Pfx (y↔t) VF (II↔IV)
Q (99 6)	li-yuraw li-yaraw		A↔P
Q (99 7-8)	yarāhu		LV (±ā)

⁷² Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 694, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 177-8, al-Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/733-4, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/369, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/211-12, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādhdh*, pp 520

⁷³ This is a reading by one Bedouin (*a'rābī*) who was asked why he read the verse in that reversed order and he responded by saying *khudhā janba harshā aw qafāhā fa-innahu kilā jānibay harshā lahunna tariqu* (take the side of *harshā* or its rear, since there is one path for both sides of *harshā*), Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, p 178

Q (98) *sūrat al-Bayyinah*⁷⁴ (8 verses, 94 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(98 6-7)	Al-bariyyatī Al-barī'atī		Hmz

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(98 2)	rasūlun Rasūlan		CE
(98 5)	Mukhlisīna Mukhlasīna		AP⇌PP
(98 7)	khayru khiyāru		LV (±ā)
(98 1)	Al-mushrikīna Al-mushrikūna		CE
(98 1)	munfakkīna munfakkūna		CE
(98 2)	suhufan suhfan		Intvl
(98 1)	Ta'tiyahumu Ya'tiyahumu		Pfx (y⇌t)
(98 1)		Lam yakunī Fa-mā kāna	Ptcl (mā⇌lam) Drv
(98 5)		Dīnu 'l-qayyimati 'd-dīnu 'l-qayyimatu 'd-dīnu 'l-qayyimu	AL CE Mrbt

⁷⁴ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p. 693, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/403, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp. 177, al-'Ukbarī, *Ḥrāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/731-2, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/369, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/207-8, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp. 519-20

Q (97) *sūrat al-Qadr*⁷⁵ (5 verses, 30 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(97 5)	Matla ^c ₁ Matli ^c ₁		Intvl

Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(97 4)	Kullī amrīn salāmūn Kullī ‘mrī’īn salāmūn silmūn		Hmz LV (±ā)
(97 5)	Matla ^c _a		CE
(97 4)	tanazzalu Tunazzalu Yanzīlu yunzalu		A↔P Pfx (y↔t) VF (I↔V)

⁷⁵ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, p 693, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/402-3, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 177, al-‘Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā‘āt*, 2/729-30, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/368, Makram, *Mu‘jam*, 8/203-4, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 519

Q (96) *sūrat al-ʿAlaq*⁷⁶ (19 verses, 72 words)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical Z	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(96 7)	Ra'āhu Ra'ahu ⁷⁷ Ri'āhu		LV (±ā) Intvl
(96 9,11,13)		a-ra'ayta a-rayta a-ra'āyta	Hmz LV (±ā)

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(96 1)	Iqra' Iqra iqrā		Hmz
(96 15)	La-nasfa'an La-nasfa'anna	La-asfa'anna	Gem Pfx (aẓna)
(96 16)	Nāsiyatın kādhibatın khātı'atın Nāsiyatun kādhibatun khātı'atun Nāsiyatan kādhibatun		CE
(96 17)	Fa 'l-yad'u nādīyahu nādīhı	Fa 'l-yad'u ilā/ilayya nādīhı	Prep (±ilā) Intvl
(96 19)	Lā tutı'hu Lā tu/attı'hu Lā 'ttutı'hu		Gem
(96 7)	Rā'ahu		LV (±ā)
(96 18)	Sa-nad'u Sa-yud'ā Sa-nad'ū Sa-tud'ā	Fa-sa'ad'ū	Pfx (yẓn) AẓP Pfx (aẓna) CE Ptcl (±fa) Pfx (yẓt)

⁷⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 692, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/401-2, Ibn Khālawayhı, *Mukhtasar*, pp 176-7, al-ʿUkbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/726-8, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/367, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/195-99, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 519

⁷⁷ Ibn Mujāhid says that he received this reading directly from Ibn Kathīr → Qunbul, however he believes that this reading is wrong (*wa huwa ghalat*)

Q (95) *sūrat al-Tīn*⁷⁸ (8 verses, 34 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
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Q(x y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(95 2)	sīnīna Sīnīna Sanīna Saynīna sīnāna	Saynā'a Sīnā'a Saynā sīnā	LV (±ī) Intvl Drv Hmz (±) LV (±ī) LV (ā±ī)
(95 2)		Wa-tūrī Fa-tūrī	Ptcl (wa±fa)
(95 5)		Asfala sāfilīna Asfala 's-sāfilīna Ilā asfala sāfilīna	AL Prep (±ilā)

⁷⁸ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 690, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/401, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 176, al-ʿUkbarī, *ʿrāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/725, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/367, Makram, *Muʿjam*, 8/191, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 518

Q (94) *sūrat Sharh*⁷⁹ (8 verses, 27 verses)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
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Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(94 7)	faraghta farigha		Intvl
(94 8)	Fa 'rghab Fa raghghib		VF (I≠II)
(94 1)	Alam nashrah Alam nashraha		CE
(94 5,6)	Al- ^c usri yusran Al- ^c usuri yusuran		Intvl
(94 7)	Fa 'nsab Fa 'nsabba		Gem
(94 2)		wizraka Wıqraka	Alt (z≠q)

⁷⁹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 690, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/401, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 176, al-^cUkbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/723-4, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/367, Makram, *Muġam*, 8/187-8, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 519

Q (93) *sūrat al-Duhā*⁸⁰ (11 verses, 40 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
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Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(93 3)	wadda ^ʿ aka wada ^ʿ aka		VF (I↔II)
(93 3)		taqhar takhar	Alt (q↔k)
(93 8)	ʿā'īlan ʿayyīlan		Hmz
(93 2)		qalā Qalāka	Prn (±ka)
(93 10)	's-sā'īla 's-sāla		Hmz
(93 5)		Wa-la-sawfa yu ^ʿ tīka Wa-la-sayu ^ʿ tīka	Ptcl (sa↔sawfa)
(93 6)	Fa-āwā Fa-awā		LV (±ā)
(93 7)	dāllan dāllun		CE

⁸⁰ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p. 690, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/401, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp. 175, al-ʿUkbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/721-2, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/364-5, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/179-84, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp. 516-17

Q (92) *sūrat al-Layl*⁸¹ (21 verses, 71 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(92 14)	Nāran talazzā Nār 't-talazzā		Gem

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(92 3)	'dh-dhakara 'dh-dhakari 'dh-dhakarū		CE
(92 14)		Nāran tatalazzā	Cs (±t)
(92 18)		yatazakkā yazzakkā	Cs (±t) Gem
(92 20)	'ibtighā'a 'ibtighā'u 'ibtighā 'ibtighā'an		CE Hmz Nun
(92 2)	tajallā Tujallā tujlī	tatajallā	AḏP Cs (±t) VF (IVḏV) LV (āḏī)
(92 3)		wa mā wa man	Ptcl (māḏman)
(92 17)	Wa-sa-yujannabuhā Wa-sa-yujannibuhā Wa-sa-nujannibuhā		AḏP Pfx (yḏn)
(92 3)	khalāqa khulīqa		AḏP
(92 7,10)	Lī 'l-yusrā lī 'l- ^c usrā Lī 'l-yusurā lī 'l- ^c usurā		Intvl
(92 20)	wajhi wajha		CE
(92 19)	tujzā Yujzā yajzī		Pfx (yḏt) AḏP

⁸¹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, p 690, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/401, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 175, al-^cUkbarī, *Ḍrāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/718-20, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/364, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/179-84, al-Kirmānī, *Shawādh*, pp 515-16

Q (91) *sūrat al-Shams*⁸² (15 verses, 54 words)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(91 15)	Wa lā Fa lā		Ptcl (waẓfa)

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(91 11)	Bī-taghwāhā Bī-tughwāhā		Intvl
(91 14)	Fa-dumdīma	Fa-damdama Fa-dahrama Fa-dahdaha	Alt (hẓm) Alt (dẓr) AẓP
(91 15)		Lā yakhāfu Lam yakhaf	Ptcl (lāẓlam) LV (±ā)
(91 13)	nāqata nāqatu		CE
(91 1-6)	Wa 'sh-shamsī, wa 'l-qamarī, wa 'n-nahārī, wa 'l-laylī, wa 's-samā'ī, wa 'l-ardī Wa 'sh-shamsa, wa 'l-qamara, wa 'n-nahāra, wa 'l-layla, wa 's-samā'a, wa 'l-arda		CE
(91 5,6,7)		wa mā wa man	Ptcl (māẓman)

⁸² Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 688-9, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/401, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 174, al-Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/716-7, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/363, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/157-63

Q (90) *sūrat al-Balad*⁸³ (20 verses, 82 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(90 13)	Fakku raqabatın Fakka raqabatan		CE
(90 14)	Aw It ^c āmun Aw At ^c ama		CE Nun LV (±ā)
(90 20)	Mu'sadatun Mūsadatun		Hmz
(90 19)	'l-mash'amatı 'l-mash'ammattı ⁸⁴		Gem
(90 5)		a-yahsabu a-yahsıbu	Intvl

Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(90 7)	Lam yarahı Lam yarah		Skn
(90 6)	lubadan Lubbadan Lubudan Lubdan lıbadan		Gem Intvl
(90 11)	Fa-lā 'ıqtahama Fa-lā 'ıqtihāmu Fa-lā 'ıqtihāma		LV (±ā) CE
(90 14)	Yawmın dhī Yawmın dhā		CE
(90 1)	Lā uqsımu La-uqsımu		LV (±ā)
(90 4)	kabadın kabdın		Intvl
(90 5)	a-yahsubu		Intvl
(90 14)		Wa at ^c ama	Ptcl (waz ^{aw})
(90 19)	Al-mashammattı		Hmz

⁸³ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 686-7, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/401, Ibn Khālawayhı, *Mukhtasar*, pp 174, al-
'Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/714-5, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/361-3, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/151-4

⁸⁴ Ibn Mujāhid says that this reading is unjustified (*laysa lahu wajh*)

Q (89) *sūrat al-Fajr*⁸⁵ (30 verses, 139 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(89 3)	'l-watrı 'l-wıtrı		Intvl
(89 4)	Yasrı yasrı		LV (±ı)
(89 9)	Bı 'l-wādı Bı 'l-wādı		LV (±ı)
(89 15)	Akramanı Akramanı akraman		LV (ı±ı) Skn
(89 16)	Ahānanı Ahānanı ahānan		LV (±ı) Skn
(89 17-20)	Tukrımūna, tahāddūna, ta'kulūna, tuhibbūna Tahuddūna yukrımūna, yahuddūna, ya'kulūna, yuhıbbūna		Pfx (y±t) LV (±ā)
(89 25)	yu'adhıbu yu'adhıhabu		A±P
(89 26)	Yūthıqu yūthaqu		A±P
(89 16)		Fa-qadara rızqahu Fa-qaddara rızqahu	VF (ı±ıı)
(89 17,16)		rabbı rabbıya	Intvl

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(89 1, 3, 4)	Wa 'l-fajrı, wa 'l-watrı, yasrı Wa 'l-fajrı, wa 'l-watrı, yasrı		Nun
(89 3)	'l-watrı 'l-watrı		Intvl
(89 2)	Wa layālın 'ashrı Wa layālı 'ashrı Wa layālı 'ashrı		Nun LV (±ı)

⁸⁵ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 683-5, Ibn al-Jazarı, *al-Nashr*, 2/400-1, Ibn Khālawayhı, *Mukhtasar*, pp 173-4, al-
'Ukbarı, *Frāb al-Qırā'āt*, 2/706-13, Ibn Jinnı, *Muhtasab*, 2/359-1, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/137-48

(89 8)	Yukhlaq mithluhā Yakhluq mithlahā Nakhluq mithlahā Tukhlaq mithluhā	Yukhlaq mithluhum	A⇌P Pfx (y⇌n) Pfx (y⇌t) CE Prn (hā⇌hum)
(89 7)	Irama dhāti Aramma dhāta Arma dhāti Irma Irami dhāti Arīma dhāti arama		Gem CE Intvl
(89 6)	Bī- ^ʿ Ādin Bī- ^ʿ āda Bī- ^ʿ ādī		CE
(89 18)	Yuhāddūna tuhāddūna tahuddūna tatahāddūna		A⇌P Pfx (y⇌t) Cs (±t)
(89 29)	^ʿ ibādī ^ʿ abdī		Intvl LV (±ā)
(89 30)		wa 'idkhulī jannatī wa 'idkhulī fī jannatī	Ptcl (±fī)
(89 27)	wathāqahu withāqahu		Intvl
(89 9)	Wa thamūda Wa thamūdan Wa thamūdī		CE
(89 27)	Yā'ayyatuhā Yā'ayyatuhu	Yā'ayyuhā	Mrbt (±t) Prn (hu⇌hā)
(89 9)	Mardıyyatan Marduwwatan		Alt (y⇌w)
(89 9)		fa 'idkhulī 'idkhulī	Ptcl (±fa)
(89 13)		Sawta sawta	Alt (s⇌s)
(89 16)	Fa-quddīra rızquhu		A⇌P CE

Q (88) *sūrat al-Ghāshiyah*⁸⁶ (26 verses, 92 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(88 4)	Taslā Tuslā		A↔P
(88 11)	Lā tasma ^u fihā lāghiyatan Lā yusma ^u fihā lāghiyatun Lā tusma ^u fihā lāghiyatun		A↔P Pfx (y↔t)
(88 22)	Bī-musaytir Bī-musaytir Bī-muzaytir		Alt (s↔s) Alt (s↔z)
(88 25)		Iyābahum Iyyābahum	Gem

Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(88 4)	Tusallā		VF (I↔II)
(88 17)	'l-ibīlī 'l-ibīllī 'l-ibīlī		Gem
(88 20)	Sutihat Suttihat		Gem
(88 17, 18, 19, 20)	Khuliqat, rufi ^{at} , nusibat, sutihat Khalaqtu, rafa ^{tu} , nasabtu, satahtu		A↔P Sfx (t↔tu)
(88 23)	illā alā		Intvl
(88 3)	°āmilatun nāsibatun °āmilatan nāsibatan		CE
(88 22)	Bī-musaytar		AP↔PP

⁸⁶ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 681-2, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/400, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 172-3, al-
°Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/701-5, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 2/356-9, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/127-33

Q (87) *sūrat al-A^clā⁸⁷* (19 verses, 72 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(87 3)	Qaddara qadara		Gem
(83 16)	Tu'thirūna Yu'thirūna		Pfx (yẓt)

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(83 19)	ibrāhīma Ibrāhāmā Ibrāhama Ibrāhuma Ibrāhīma Ibrahama ibrahīma		LV (āẓī) LV (±ā) Intvl
(87 3)	Fa-hadā Fa-haddā		Gem
(87 18, 19)	's-suhufi, suhufi 's-suhfi, suhfi		Intvl
(83 16)	tūthirūna		Hmz

⁸⁷ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 680, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/399-400, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 172, al-
^cUkbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/700, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/117-24

Q (86) *sūrat al-Tāriq*⁸⁸ (17 verses, 61 words)

Q(x:y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(86 4)	Lammā lamā		Gem

Q(x.y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(86 4)	In kullu An kullu Inna kull”a		Hmz Gem CE
(86 7)	‘s-sulbı ‘s-sulubı ‘s-sālibı ‘s-salabı		Intvl LV (±ā)
(86 7)	yakhruju yukhrajū		A⇌P
(86 11, 12)	Wa ‘s-samā’ı, wa ‘l-ardı Wa ‘s-samā’u, wa ‘l-ardu		CE
(86 17)	Fa-mahhıl Fa-amhıl		VF (II⇌IV)
(86 17)	amhılhum mahhılhum		VF (II⇌IV)
(86 7)		dāfiqın madfūqın	Drv

⁸⁸ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘ah*, pp 678, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/399, Ibn Khālawayhı, *Mukhtasar*, pp 171-2, al-‘Ukbarī, *Frāb al-Qirā’āt*, 2/698-9, Ibn Jinnī, *al-Muhtasab*, 2/354-5, Makram, *Mu‘jam*, 8/113-14

Q (85) *sūrat al-Burū*⁸⁹ (22 verses, 109 words)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(85 15)	Dhū 'l- ^c arshī 'l-majīdu Dhū 'l- ^c arshī 'l-majīdi		CE
(85 22)	Mahfūzin Mahfūzun		CE

Q(x:y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(85 4)	qutīla quttīla		Gem
(85 5)	'l-waqūdi 'l-wuqūdi		Intvl
(85 8)	naqamū naqīmū		Intvl
(85 13)	Yubdi'u Yabda'u		VF (I≠IV)
(85 15)	Dhī		CE
(85 21)	Qur'ānun majīdun Qur'ānu majīdin		Nun CE
(85 22)	Lawhīn Lūhīn		Intvl
(85 4)	'l-ukhdūdi 'l-khudūdi		Hmz
(85 5)	'n-nāri 'n-nāru		CE

⁸⁹ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 678, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/399, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 171, al-^cUkbarī, *Īrāb al-Qirā'āt*, 2/695-7, Ibn Jinnī, *al-Muhtasab*, 2/354, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/107-8

Q (12) *sūrat Yūsuf*⁹⁰ (verses)

Q(x.y)	Variant 1 Canonical 7	Variant 2 Canonical 10	Variant type
(12 4)	Yā abatī Yā abata Yā abah		Mrbt (hẓt) Intvl
(12 7)	Āyātun āyatun		LV (±ā)
(12 8-9)	Mubīnīni 'qtulū Mubīnīnu 'qtulū		Nun
(12 10)	Ghayābatī Ghayābatī		LV (±ā)
(12 12)	Yarta ^c wa yal ^c ab Narta ^c ī wa nal ^c ab Narta ^c ī wa yal ^c ab Yarta ^c ī wa yal ^c ab Narta ^c wa nal ^c ab		Pfx (yẓn) CE
(12 14)	'dh-dhī'bu 'dh-dhību		Hmz
(12 19)	Yā bushrāya Yā bushrā Yā bushrāy		Skn Prn (±ī)
(12 23)	Hayta Haytu Hīta Hī'tu Hī'ta		Hmz Intvl CE
(12 24)	Al-mukhlasīn Al-mukhlīsīn		AP⇒PP
(12 31)	Wa qālatī 'khruj Wa qālatu 'khruj		Hmz
(12 31,5 1)	hāshā hāsha		LV (aẓā)
(12 47)	Da'ban Da'aban		Intvl
(12 49)	Ya ^c sīrūna Ta ^c sīrūna		Pfx (yẓt)
(12 56)	Yashā'u Nashā'u		Pfx (yẓn)
(12 62)	lī-fityatīhī lī-fityānīhī		LV (aẓā) Alt (tẓn)
(12 63)	Naktal		Pfx (yẓn)

⁹⁰ Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'ah*, pp 344-54, Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr*, 2/400-1, Ibn Khālawayhī, *Mukhtasar*, pp 66-70, al-Ukbarī, *Irāb al-Qirā'āt*, 1/679-720, Ibn Jinnī, *Muhtasab*, 1/332-350, Makram, *Mu'jam*, 8/137-48

	yaktal		
(12 64)	hāfīzan hīfzan		LV (āẓī)
(12 80)	'stay'asū 'stāyasū		Hmz
(12 90)	a'innaka innaka		Hmz
(12 90)	Man yattaqī Man yattaqī		CE
(12 109)	Nūhī Yūhā		Pfx (yẓn)
(12 110)	Kudhdhibū kudhibū		Gem
(12 110)	Fa-nunjī Fa-nujjiya Fa-nnujiya ^{91 92}		Gem AẓP

Q(x·y)	Variant 3 Irregular	Variant 4 Anomalous	Variant type
(12 4)	Yūsufu Yūsifu Yūsafu Yu'sufu Yu'sifu Yu'safu		Intvl Hmz
(12 4)	Yā abatā Yā abatu	Yā abatāhu	CE LV (±a) Cs (±h)
(12 4)	Lī liya		Intvl
(12 4)	innī inniya		Intvl
(12 4)	Ahada °ashara Ahada °shara		Intvl
(12 5)	Ru'yāka Ruyyāka Rıyyāka ruwyāka		Intvl Hmz
(12 7)	Lā taqsus Lā taqussu		Ass
(12 10, 15)	Ghaybatı Ghayyābātı		Gem LV (±ā)

⁹¹ Ibn Mujāhid rejects this reading, *al-Sab'ah*, p 352

⁹² Ibn Mujāhid provides a grammatical and linguistic justification for this awkward reading

	Ghayabatı Ghayyābatı Ghībatı		LV (ayẓī)
(12 8, 14)	Wa nahnu ʿusbatun Wa nahnu ʿusbatan		CE
(12 10)	Yaltaqıthu Taltaqıthu		Pfx (yẓt)
(12 11)	Taʿmannā Taʿmanunā tīmannā		Ass
(12 10)	ʿl-jubbı ʿl-jūbı		Ass
(12 12)	Nurtıʿ yurtıʿ wa yalʿab nartaʿı yartaʿı yurtaʿ wa yulʿab yartaʿu wa yalʿabu yartaʿı wa yalʿabu	narʿā	Pfx (nẓy) AẓP Cs (±t)
(12 13)	La-yahzununı La-yahzunnı		Ass
(12 13)	Tadhhabū tudhhibū		AẓP
(12 15)	La-tunabbiʿannahum La-nunabbıyannahum		Pfx (tẓn) Hmz
(12 16)	ʿishāʿan ʿushāʿan ʿushāʿan		Intvl Hmz
(12 19)	Yā bushrāyya Yā bushrayya		Gem
(12 18)	Kadhıbn Kadıbn Kadabın kadhıban		Alt (dhẓd) Intvl
(12 18)	Fa-sabrun jamīlun Fa-sabran jamīlan		CE
(12 22)	hukman hukuman		Intvl
(12 23)	Haytı Hıtu Hıʿtı Haʿta Haʿtu Haʿtı	Hā anā Huyyiʿtu Huʿıtu	Hmz Intvl CE
(12 23)	Rāwadathu		Gem

	rawwadathu		
(12 26, 27)		Qudda quddat	Sfx (a↔at)
(12 25)	°adhābun alīmun °adhāban alīman		CE
(12 26)	Qubulīn Qublin Qublu qubulu		Intvl Nun
(12 27)	Duburīn Dubrīn Dubru duburu		Intvl Nun
(12 28)	Ra'ā rā		Hmz
(12 30)	Shaghafahā Shaghīfahā Sha°afahā sha°ifahā sa°afahā		Intvl Alt (°↔gh) Alt (s↔sh)
(12 29)	Yūsufu yūsufa		CE
(12 31)	Muttaka'an Mattaka'an Mutka'an Muttakā'an Muttakan mutkan		Intvl Hmz LV (±ā)
(12 31)	hāsh hāshan hāshī hashā hāshu hāshan hasha	hashāt[?]	Nun CE LV (±ā)
(12 31)		Lī 'l-lāhī 'l-lāhī 'l-ilāhī 'l-lāha	Ptcl (±l) Cs (±l)
(12 31)	Basharan Basharī Bishīran basharun		Intvl CE Nun
(12 31)	Malakun malīkun		Intvl
(12 33)	Rabbī 's-sījnu		Intvl

	Rabbi 's-sajnu Rabbu 's-sajni Rabbu 's-sijni		CE
(12 33)	Asbu Asubbu		Gem
(12 33)	wa akun wa akūnu		CE
(12 34)	Fa-sarafa kaydahunna Fa-surifa kayduhunna		A⇌P CE
(12 35)	La-yasjunannahu La-tasjunannahu		Pfx (y⇌t)
(12 35)		hattā hīnin ᶜattā hīnin	Alt (h⇌ᶜ)
(12 36)	Khubzan khubzun		CE
(12 38)	Ābāī abāya		LV (±a) Hmz
(12 41)	Fa-yasqī rabbahu Fa-yasqī ribbahu Fa-yusqā rabbuhu	yustasqā	Intvl A⇌P
(12 45)	Ummatın Umatın Amatın Immatın Ammatın amahın		Intvl Nun
(12 45)	Wa 'd-dakara Wa 'dh-dhakara		Alt (dh⇌d)
(12 45)	Unabbi'ukum unabbikum Unbikum		Hmz Gem
(12 31)	Malakun malikun		Intvl
(12 47)	Da'aban Da'ban Dāban Du'aban		Intvl Hmz
(12 49)	Yaᶜsırūn Yuᶜsarūn Taᶜsırūn Tuᶜsarūn Taᶜassırūn Taᶜıssırūn Tıᶜıssırūn Taᶜassarūn	Taᶜtasırūn yaᶜtasırūn	A⇌P Pfx (y⇌t) VF (I⇌VIII) Gem

	yu ^ʿ assirūn ya ^ʿ assirūn		
(12 50)	'n-niswati 'n-nuswati		Intvl
(12 52)	li-ya ^ʿ lama li-yu ^ʿ lama		A⇌P
(12 51)	hashasa hushisa		A⇌P
(12 48)	Ya'kulna Ta'kulna		Pfx (y⇌t)
(12 59, 70)	Bī-jahāzihim Bī-jihāzihim		Intvl
(12 64)	'llāhu khayrun hāfīzan 'llāhu khayru hāfīzin	'llāhu khayru 'l- hāfīzīna	Nun CE AL
(12 64)		Fa 'llāhu Wa 'llāhu	Ptcl (fa⇌wa)
(12 65)	Ruddat ilaynā Riddat ilaynā		Intvl
(12 65)	Mā nabghī Mā tabghī		Pfx (n⇌t)
(12 72)	suwā ^ʿ a sā ^ʿ a sawgha sūgha suwāgha siwāgha saw ^ʿ a sawā ^ʿ a siwā ^ʿ a sū ^ʿ a		Alt (⇌gh)
(12 71)	tafqīdūn tufqīdūn		A⇌P
(12 71)		Bī-jihāzihim ja ^ʿ ala Bī-jihāzihim wa ja ^ʿ ala	Ptcl (±wa)
(12 71)		Mādhā mā	Ptcl (mādhā⇌mā)
(12 65)	Namīru Tamīru numīru		Pfx (n⇌t) A⇌P
(12 85)	Ta 'llāhi		Alt (t⇌b)

	Bı 'llāhı		
(12 76)	Dhī 'ilmın 'alīmun Dhī 'ilmın 'alīmun Dhī 'alīmın 'alīmun		LV (±ā)
(12 76)	Wı'ā'ı Wu'ā'ı I'ā'ı U'ā'ı		Intvl Hmz
(12 80)	'stay'asū 'stāyasū		Hmz
(12 87)	Y[ā]y'asu yāyasu		Hmz
(12 77, 81)	Saraqa Suriqa sarraqa		AḏP Gem
(12 86)	huznī hazanī huzunī		Intvl
(12 85)	haradan hurudan huradan harudan		Intvl
(12 85)	Takūna yakūna		Pfx (tḏy)
(12 87)	Fa-tahassasū Fa-tajassasū		Alt (hḏj)
(12 87)	Rawhı Rūhı		Intvl
(12 88)	Muzjātın muzjıyata		LV (±ā) Nun
(12 90)		a'innaka la-anta a'innaka aw anta	Ptcl (laḏaw)
(12 94)		Wa lammā Fa-lammā	Ptcl (waḏfa)
(12 94)		Fasalatı Infasala	Drv
(12 100)	Ru'yāya Ru'yayya		Ass
(12 101)	Wa 'l-ardı Wa 'l-arda		CE
(12 105)	Wa 'l-ardı Wa 'l-ardu Wa 'l-arda		CE
(12 110)	Kudhibū kadhabū		AḏP

(12 110)	Fa-nuǰǰiya Fa-najā	Fa-nunajǰī	AǰP
(12 111)	Qasasihim Qisasihim		Intvl
(12 111)	ʿibratun ʿibratan		CE
(12 111)	Tasdīqa tafsīla Tasdīqu tafsīlu		CE

Part 2. Poetry variants

There is a huge controversy regarding the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry, but one cannot think of oral transmission in Arabia without bringing poetry into the picture, especially pre- and early Islamic poetry. Although the extent to which oral transmission was utilized to transmit early Arabic poetry was questioned by Sezgin⁹³ and Nāsir al-Dīn al-Asad,⁹⁴ neither scholar ever denied the importance and role of oral transmission in early Arabic poetry. They did, however, emphasize the fact that poetry was also transmitted through written means.⁹⁵ My current research at this point is not concerned with the authenticity of early Arabic poetry, whether the transmission was purely oral, or supported by some aide-mémoire written means (inscriptions, parchments, consonantal outline of poems, etc.), the fact remains that the corpus of pre- and early Islamic poems is replete with variants, which is according to Zwettler an important characteristic of the oral nature of Arabic poetry.⁹⁶ These variants include different verse order, paraphrasing of complete verses, additions and omissions of

⁹³ Sezgin, *GAS*, 2/14-33

⁹⁴ Nāsir al-Dīn al-Asad, *Masādir al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili*, (Beirut Dār al-Jīl, 1996), pp 23-58, 107-33, 134-184

⁹⁵ The main question that should be asked regarding the written transmission of poetry is to what extent writing materials were available in Pre-Islamic Arabia and what is the population among the poetry community (poets, *rāwīs*, sages, *littérateurs*, etc.) who could read and write

⁹⁶ Michael Zwettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry*, (Ohio Ohio State University Press, 1978), chapter 4 “variation and attribution in the tradition of classical Arabic poetry”, pp 188-234

words and verses, disparate case endings and internal vowels, and many other linguistic and phonetic phenomena that induce variations in the verses. The variants in post-Umayyad poetry are much fewer than those in early Arabic poetry, and the reason is most probably the spread of the written *dīwāns* that collected and standardized the poets' work. Most of the variants we find in later poems are possibly due to scribal *tashīf* (distortion) ⁹⁷

My main objective of comparing two sets of variants in both the Qur'ān and early Arabic poetry is to determine the degree of similarity in the nature of these variants in both literatures. This will help me decide whether the mechanism of transmitting the Qur'ānic Readings was similar or different to early Arabic poetry, are we going to find the same type of variants in the Database I created above for the Qur'ānic readings? Are these variant types distributed in the same proportion? And finally, can the comparison between these two sets tell us anything regarding the oral versus written transmissions of both the Qur'ān and early Arabic poetry?

Unlike the Qur'ān, there are no codified and official collections of poetry, which were transmitted through canonical *Rāwīs*. This makes the direct comparison between the two genres complicated and unpredictable. Moreover, the different poems that were recorded in the early anthologies available to us now are attributed to different poets, transmitters, and time periods. I am mainly interested in Pre- and early Islamic poetry during which oral transmission, though contested, was vital in memorizing and transmitting the poems. There are several early anthologies that are considered to be

⁹⁷ One of the important sources on *tashīf* is the work by Hamzah al-Asfahānī in which he gave numerous examples of incidents on *tashīf* from different disciplines including poetry, Qur'ān, and prose, Abū 'Abd Allāh Hamzah al-Asfahānī, *al-Tanbīh 'alā Hudūth al-Tashīf*, ed. Muhammad Talas, (Damascus: Matbū'āt Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah, 1968)

among the primary sources of early Arabic Poetry, such as *al-Muʿallaqāt*, *al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, *al-Asmaʿiyyāt*, and *Jamharat Ashʿār al-ʿArab*. In order to maintain consistency as much as possible, I chose the *al-Mufaddaliyyāt* collection as my source for the poems whose variants I am going to study. Al-Mufaddal died in 178/794, and his anthology was transmitted by several of his students who recorded the poems of this anthology and subsequently taught it to their own students. There are many variants among the different versions we received of *al-Mufaddaliyyāt* including whole poems that were added or omitted in the different recensions of this work. I find this work to be the closest to the case of al-Qurʾān in terms of transmission, length, and language.

Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that the variants of the Qurʾān are more rigid and constrained by the official codices. The omitted and added phrases in the Qurʾān are indeed few relative to its size, including the verses that the extreme Shīʿīs (*Ghulāt*) claim were omitted during the official codification of the text.⁹⁸ The corpus of these added/omitted Qurʾānic phrases is much less than the added/omitted phrases and verses in the different recensions of early poetry where it is common to find a poem with several verses added or omitted in another version transmitted by a different *rāwī*. This was naturally a result of the freedom and flexibility with which *rāwīs* transmitted these poems, unlike the Qurʾān, which imposed theological restrictions upon the transmitters.

The poems I chose were randomly selected from *al-Mufaddaliyyāt*. I tracked the different recensions of these poems in the commentaries we have on *al-Mufaddaliyyāt* in

⁹⁸ Refer to the recent study and publication by Etan Kohlberg and Mohammad Alī Amīr-Moezzī, *The Kitāb al-qirāʾāt of Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Sayyārī*, (Brill Leiden, 2009). *Fasl al-Khutāb Ithbāt Tahrīf Kitāb Rabb al-Arbāb* is one of the most famous and notorious shīʿī books on the falsification of the Qurʾān. It was written by al-Nūrī al-Tabarsī who listed many of the allegedly omitted Qurʾānic verses that speak of the merits of the Prophet's family and ʿAlī's right of succession.

addition to the critical editions of the poets' *dīwāns* in which the editors consulted as many sources as possible to locate the different verses of these poems in the classical sources I also chose short poems that I add at the end to make the sample data more representative of the different poetic styles

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	Raybihā	Raybihī		Prn (hāẓhi)
2	ibtudhīlta	ibtadhālta		AẓP
3	lī-jismīka	lī-janbīka		R (j)
4	ammā	an mā		Ass
5	lī-jismī	bī-jismī		Ptcl (līẓbī)
6	annahu	annanī		Prn (huẓnī)
7	hawayya ¹⁰¹	hawāya		Ass
8	ikhāl	akhāl		Hmz (Ed) ¹⁰²
9	al-musharraḡ	al-muqashshar		Trns
10	Al-quwā	al-hawā		Alt (qẓh)
11	asʿalathu	azʿalathu		Alt (sẓz)
12	wa-laʿin	fa-laʿin		Ptcl (waẓfa)
13	wābīl	sayyīf	sayyīb	Alt (fẓb)
14	bī-rawdihī	bī-rawdātīn		Mrbt
15	malāwah	mulāwah	mīlāwah	Intvl
16	hīn	hazz		R (h)
17	shuʿmun	shuʿman		CE
18	haynuhu	haynahu		CE
19	Jīz ^c	Jāz ^{c103}		Intvl
20	nubāyī ^c	yunābī ^c		Trns
21	Nazm	najm		Alt (zẓj)
22	wa-nafarna	fa-nafarna		Ptcl (waẓfa)
23	mīthar	muthar		Intvl
24	bī-dhamāʿī-hī	bī-damāʿī-hī		Alt (dẓdh)
25	banī yazīd	banī tazīd		Alt (yẓt)
26	afazzat-hu	afarrat-hu		Alt (zẓr)

⁹⁹ al-Anbārī, *Sharh al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, pp 849-884, Abū Zayd al-Qurashī, *Jamharat Ashʿār al-ʿArab*, ed M Bajjāwī, (Cairo Nahdat Mīsr, 1981), pp 534-554, Abū Saʿīd al-Sukkarī, *Sharh Ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, ed M M Shākīr, (Cairo Dār al-ʿUrūbah, [n d]), 1/4-41

¹⁰⁰ The main source of the full poem is *al-Mufaddaliyyāt* collection with the commentaries by al-Anbārī and al-Tibrīzī. Another source is al-Sukkarī's commentary on the poetry of Hudhayl. The poem is widely cited in medieval sources such as *al-Aghānī*, Ibn Qutaybah's *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʿ*, *al-Amālī*, and many other sources, see Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī, *al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, ed A Shākīr, (Cairo Dār al-Maʿārif, 1942), pp 419-429

¹⁰¹ This is a dialect of Hudhayl where they assimilate the *alif maqṣūrah* and the 1st person pronoun *yāʿ*, and therefore *hawāya* becomes *hawayya*, *ʿasāya* becomes *ʿasayya*, etc

¹⁰² Ed Refers to the possibility that the variant is due to the editor's mistake or an obvious error in the manuscript

¹⁰³ A reading preferred by Abu ʿUbayd but there is no actual transmission for this variant

27	ya ^ʿ ūdhu	yalūdhu		Alt (ʿ↔l)
28	tarfuhu	tarfahu		CE
29	fa- ^ʿ htāja	fa- ^ʿ nsā ^ʿ a	fa ^ʿ rtā ^ʿ a	R (ʿ)
30	ghubr	ghubs	ghudf	Alt (r↔s)
31	yanhashnahu	yanhasnahu		Alt (s↔sh)
32	yadhubbuhunna	yadhūduhunna		R(dh)
33	fa-habā	fa-nahā		Trns Alt (b↔n)
34	Nadh	Nadkh		Alt (h↔kh)
35	yuqtirā	yuqtarā		A↔P (Ed)
36	yuqtarā	yafturā		Alt (f↔q)
37	Aqsada	Aqsara		Alt (d↔r)
38	ʿusbatan	ʿusbatun		CE
39	yatadawwa ^ʿ	yatadarra ^ʿ		Alt (w↔r)
40	fa-badā	fa-danā		Trns Alt (b↔n)
41	rihāb	rihāf		Alt (f↔b)
42	farrahā	furrahan		Intvl Nun
43	tārız	bārız		Alt (t↔b)
44	rıkhw	rahw		Alt (kh↔h)
45	fa-hıya	wa-hıya		Ptcl (wa↔fa)
46	fa-shurrija	fa-sharraja		A↔P
47	lahmuhā	lahmahā		CE
48	ıstughdibat	ıstus ^ʿ ıbat	ıstukrıhat	R(b)
49	ta ^ʿ annuqıhı	ta ^ʿ ānuqıhı		LV (±ā) Gem
50	tanādayā	tanādharā	tanāzalā	R(n)
51	mukhadda ^ʿ	mujadda ^ʿ		Alt (kh↔j)

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	amsı raththa	raththa amsı		Meta
2	Jādat lanā bīhı	Dāmat lanā bīhı	Dāmat lubānatan	Amg
3	Tumītu	Tamītu	Yamītu	Pfx (tẓy) VF (IẓIV)
4	tastafīduhā	yastafīduhā		Pfx (tẓy)
5	Bı-wıddı-hı	Bı-wıddı-hā		Prn (hıẓhā)
6	mımmā	mımmān		Ptcl (māẓman)
7	rubba	ruba		Gem
8	bāta	bātat		Sfx (aẓat)
9	safnatī	sıfnatī		Intvl
10	Tu'āzı	tuwāzı		Hmz
11	sharīm	sharīr		Alt (mẓr)
12	turāwıduhu	tuzāwıluhu	Tuhāwıluhu	Alt (zẓh) Alt (rẓz)
13	yurıduhā	yazıduhā		Alt (rẓz)
14	Al-najā'	Al-rakhā'		Frm
15	ʿanūduhā	ʿunūduhā		Intvl
16	Bı-anna-hu	Bı-anna-nı		Prn (huẓnı)
17	bı-anna-hu	Fa-ınnā-hu		Ptcl (bıẓfa)
18	Sa-yublıghunı	Sa-yablughunı		VF (IẓIV)
19	Balā'u-hu	Balā'u-hā		Prn (huẓhā)
20	zınād	zıyād		Alt (nẓẓy) (Ed)
21	Namayna-hu	Yamīna-hu	Yamīnu-hu	Alt (nẓy) CE
22	Fa-law	Wa-law		Ptcl (faẓwa)
23	Al-Jıbāl	Al-hıbāl		Alt (jẓh) (Ed)
24	Wa-qad	Fa-qad		Ptcl (faẓwa)

¹⁰⁴ Al-Muthaqqib al-^cAbdī, *Dīwān*, ed Hasan Kāmil al-Sayrafi, (Cairo 1971), pp 82-115, al-Anbārī, *Sharh Dīwān al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, pp 302-311, al-Tıbrīzī (al-Khatīb), *Sharh Ikhtiyārāt al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī*, ed Fakhr al-Dīn Qabbāwah, (Damascus Majma' al-Lughah al-^cArabiyyah, 1971), 2/704-724

¹⁰⁵ There are four main sources for this poem and they all go back to the *Mufaddaliyyāt* collection, the first is al-Anbārī's commentary, the second is al-Tıbrīzī's, the third is al-Marzūqī's, and the fourth is *Muntahā al-Talab* by Ibn Maymūn whose transmission goes back to al-Tıbrīzī's commentary on the *Mufaddaliyyāt*, Ibn Maymūn, Muhammad b al-Mubārak, *Muntahā al-Talab min Ash'ār al-^cArab*, ed M Tarıfı, (Beirut Dār Sādir, 1999), 4/5-12

25	badhdha	bazza		Alt (dh↔z)
26	yasa ^c	tasa ^c		Pfx (y↔t)
27	Afā'īlu-hu	Afā'īla-hu		CE
28	Yu'āzī	yuwāzī		Hmz
29	Taqammasa	Taqammasu	Yuqammasu, yuqammisu, tuqammisu	Tns A↔P
30	Taqammasa fī	Taqammasa bī		Ptcl (fī↔bī)
31	Wa'īduhā	wabīduhā		Alt ('↔b) (Ed)
32	Yahmī	Yahwī		Alt (m↔w)
33	marū ^c -in	Yarū ^c -u	Yarūgh-u	Drv Alt (↔gh)
34	ya'ābīb	ya'āsīb		Alt (b↔s)
35	tuthannā	yuthannā		pxf (t↔y)
36	mā	lā		Ptcl (mā↔lā)
37	Qutūduhā	quyūduhā		Alt (t↔y)
38	Al-shīnān	Al-sīnān		Alt (s↔sh)
39	qūdun	qūdn		CE
40	Tanabba ^c -a	Tatabba ^c -a	Tabatta ^c -a	Alt (n↔t) Trns
41	Tanabba ^c -a	Tanabba ^c -u		Tns
42	A ^c tāfihā	A ^c dādhā		R (↔)
43	hamīm-un	hamīm-an		CE
44	Al-hārīshī	Al-khārīshī		Alt (h↔kh)
45	khudūduhā	hudūduhā		Alt (h↔kh)
46	tatāba ^c -u	Tatāba ^c -a		Tns
47	Al-rīhāl	Al-ryāl		Alt (h↔j) (Ed)

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	īdu	īda	Hindu, hayda	CE Alt (↔h)
2	mālaka	qalbukı	qalbıkı	CE
3	īrāq	ibrāq		Alt (y↔b)
4	marrı	karrı		Alt (m↔k)
5	yasrī	tasrī		Pfx (y↔t)
6	hayyāt	habbāb		R(h)
7	Muhtafiyan	mukhtafiyan		Alt (h↔kh)
8	Wasl	habl		R(l)
9	Ahdhāq	hadhdhāq		Drv
10	Wa-aghraw	Fa-aghraw		Ptcl (wa↔fa)
11	ʿaykatayn	ʿaylatayn	ʿaythatayn, ʿaybatayn	Alt (k↔l↔th↔b)
12	khabt	janb		Frm
13	Raht	raʿn		R(r)
14	arwāqī	awraqī		Trns
15	Minhā	fīhā		Ptcl (min↔fī)
16	Najāī	najāī		Alt (ʿ↔t)
17	hathhathū	hashasū		Alt (th↔s)
18	aw	wa		Ptcl (aw↔wa)
19	shathth	Sha'th		Gem
20	Aw dhā	Wa dhā		Ptcl (aw↔wa)
21	dhā	dhī		CE
22	Qabīd	Qanīs		R(q)
23	ʿīwal	ʿawal		Intvl
24	Al-majd	Al-hamd		Trns Alt (j↔h)
25	arbāq	arfāq		Alt (b↔f)
26	mumtadd	mushtadd		Alt (m↔sh)
27	Andiyatın	anjıyatın		Alt (d↔j)
28	Jawwāb	jawwāl		Alt (b↔l)
29	Fa-dhāka	dhālīka		Cs (l)
30	istaghathta	istaghathtu ¹⁰⁸	istughītha	Sfx (ta↔tu) A↔P

¹⁰⁶ Ta'abbata Sharran, *Dīwān*, ed ʿAlī Dhū al-Fiqār Shākır, (Beirut Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1984), pp 125-144, Al-Anbārī, *Sharh al-Mufaddaliyyat*, pp 1-20, al-Tibrīzī, *Sharh Ikhtiyārāt*, 1/93-140, Aghā, Sālīh S., "Qāfiyyat Ta'abbata Sharran al-Mufaddaliyyah", *al-Abhāth*, 48-9 (2000-1), pp 7-80

¹⁰⁷ The main sources of the full poem are *Muntahā al-Talab* by Ibn Maymūn and the commentaries on the *Mufaddaliyyāt*, namely al-Anbārī, al-Tibrīzī, and al-Marzūqī's. Several other sources are cited in *al-Aghānī* and *al-Hamāsah al-Basriyyah*, See Ta'abbata Sharran, *Dīwān*, p 125

31	Na ^{cc} āq	naghghāq		Alt (°zgh)
32	Qultu	qulta		Sfx (taztu)
33	Qullatın	qunnatın		Alt (lzn)
34	Mıhrāq	mıkhraq		Alt (hzhk)
35	Qunnatahā	Qullatahā		Alt (lzn)
36	Yūqā	tūqā		Pfx (yzt)
37	Fihā	Mınhā		Ptcl (fızmın)
38	lı ^c adhdhālatın	lı ^c ādhlıatın		Gem
39	Man	Mā		Ptcl (manzmā)
40	Khadhdhālatın	Jadhdhālatın	jaddālatın	Alt (khzj) Alt (dzdh)
41	Ashıbın	Nashıbın		Alt (azn)
42	harraqa	kharrāqa	Yuhriqh, kharrāqta, harraqat, harraqtı	Alt (hzhk) Sfx (tazatztı)
43	Tahrāq	Takhrāq		Alt (hzhk)
44	Yaqūl	Taqūl		Pfx (yzt)
45	Abqaytuhu	Baqqaytuhu		VF (IIzIV)
46	Tatrukū	Tatrukī		Sfx (ūzī)
47	Yas'ala	Tas'alī	Tas'alū	Pfx (yzt) Sfx (īzū)
48	Ma'rifatın	ma'zıbatın	maghrıbatın	Alt (rzz) Alt (fb) Alt (°zgh)
49	Fa-lā	Fa-lan		Ptcl (lāzlan)
50	Yukhabırhum	Yukhabırkum		Sfx (humzkum)
51	La-taqra'ınna	La-taqra'unna	La-taqra'anna	Intvl
52	Tadhakkarta	Tadhakkartı		Sfx (taztı)

¹⁰⁸ Āghā considers this variant to be the editor's mistake, Agha, "Qāfiyyat ", p 32

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	Alā	arā		Alt (l↔r)
2	Ummu	Umma		CE
3	Idh	mudh		Alt ('↔m)
4	Wa-qad	Fa-qad		Ptcl (wa↔fa)
5	Umaymah	umāmah		LV (ā↔ī)
6	Zallat	Wallat		Alt (z↔w)
7	La-qad	Wa-qad	Fa-qad	Ptcl (la↔wa↔fa)
8	Saqūtan	Saqūtun		CE
9	Ghabūqahā	Ghabūbahā		Alt (q↔b)
10	lī-jārātīhā	lī-jāratīhā		LV (±ā)
11	Tahullu	Tuhillu	Tahillu	VF (I↔IV)
12	Tablatı	Tablıtı		Intvl
13	Wa-tullatı	Fa-tullatı		Alt (fa↔wa)
14	Fa-bitnā	Wa-bitnā		Alt (fa↔wa)
15	Musnıtı	musnatı		Intvl
16	Yushammat	Yushammit		A↔P
17	Ansha'tu	Ansa'tu		Alt (s↔sh)
18	Al-jabā	Al-hashā		Frm
19	Tadurrānī	Tudīrānī		Gem
20	hummatī	Jummatī		Alt (h↔j)
21	Lan	lam		Ptcl (lan↔lam)
22	mish'al	ma'shil		Trns
23	lī-ankıya	lī-anka'a	lī-abkıya	Hmz Alt (n↔b)
24	Al-ghuzāt	Al-ghazāt		Intvl
25	Āl	Awl	alw	LV (±ā) Trns
26	Tubayyatı	yubayyatı		Pfx (y↔t)
27	fazı'ū	fazı'at		Sfx (ū↔at)
28	Mutafallıtı	Mutalaffıtı		Trns
29	Jurāz	Juzār		Trns
30	Qatalnā	Qaltu		Sfx (nā↔tu)
31	ka-aqtā ^c	Ka-aqtār		Trns (↔r)
32	Jazaynā	Sa-nuzjī		Drv

¹⁰⁹ Al-Shanfarā, *Dīwān*, ed Imīl Badī Ya'qūb, (Beirut Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1996), pp 31-38, al-Anbārī, *Sharh al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, pp 194-297, al-Tibrīzī, *Sharh Ikhtiyārāt*, 1/513-532

¹¹⁰ The primary sources of the poem are the commentaries on the *Mufaddaliyyāt*, Ibn Maymūn's *Muntahā al-Talab*, and Abū al-Faraj's *al-Aghānī*

33	Manbitī	Munyatī ¹¹¹		Alt (b↔y)
34	Urīdat	Urīda		Sfx (at↔a)
35	Fa-īnnī	Wa-īnnī		Ptcl (wa↔fa)
36	Istamarratī	Amarratī		VF (X↔IV)
37	Ya'bā	Ābā		Pfx (y↔')
38	Mabā'atī	Mafī'atī		Alt (b↔f) LV (ā↔ī)

¹¹¹ Abū Ja'far Ahmad b 'Ubayd b Nāsīh claims that "munyatī" is *tashīf*, al-Anbārī, *Sharh al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, p 206

*al-mufaddaliyyah #77 nūniyyat al-Muthaqqib al-ʿAbdī*¹¹²

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	Sa'altukī an	Sa'altu ka'an	Su'iltı	Amg A⇌P
2	Fa-lā	Wa-lā		Ptcl (wa⇌fa)
3	Fa-ınnī law	Fa-law annī		Meta
4	Tatalla ^c u	Tutālī ^c u	Tatāla ^c u, Tatāla ^c a	Gem
5	Law	In		Ptcl (law⇌ın)
6	Dubayb	Subayb	Dabīb Sabīb	Alt (s⇌d) Intvl
7	Tabassar hal tarā	Tabassarhā tarā		Amg
8	Al-sahsahān	Al-dahdahān		Alt (s⇌d)
9	Sharāfa	Sharāfı		CE
10	Hıjlin	Rıjlin	rajlin	Alt (h⇌r) Intvl
11	Dharānih	Dharāyih	Zarāyih, sarāyih	Alt (dh⇌zz⇌s) Alt (n⇌y)
12	Yushabbahna	Yushabbihna		A⇌P
13	ʿurādāt	ʿirādāt	ʿarīdāt	Intvl LV (ā⇌ī)
14	Shu'ūn	Mu'ūn		Alt (sh⇌m)
15	Tanūshu	Yanushna		Drv
16	Thaqqabna	Naqqabna ¹¹³		Alt (th⇌n)
17	Bı-dhī ghudūnı	Lahu ghudūnu		CE
18	Al-Zalām	Al-Zılām		Intvl
19	Arīshu bıhā	Arīshu lahā		Alt (bı⇌lı)
20	Qā'ılatan	Qābılatan		Alt ('⇌b)
21	ʿasabtu	Nasabtu		Alt (ʿ⇌n)
22	Akūnu kadhāakı	Kadhāakı akūnu		Meta
23	ʿalayhā	ʿalayhı		Prn (hā⇌hı)
24	Radīh	Radīkh		Alt (h⇌kh)
25	Mın	ma ^c		Ptcl (mınma ^c)
26	Ashuddu	Shadadtu		Tns
27	Yajudhdhu	Yajuddu		Alt (dh⇌d)
28	Al-jānbayn	Al-hālibayn		Alt (j⇌h)

¹¹² Al-Muthaqqib al-ʿAbdī, *Dīwān*, pp 124-215, al-Anbārī, *Sharh al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, pp 587-92, al-Tibrizī, *Sharh Ikhtiyārāt al-Mufaddal*, 3/1246-1268

¹¹³ This variant is cited in *al-Tanbīh ʿalā hudūth al-Tashīf*, as an example of a scribal error, al-Asfānī, *al-Tanbīh*, p 244

				Alt (n̄zl)
29	Taghannā	Yughannā	Taghannat	Pfx (t̄zy) ĀzP Sfx (āzat)
30	Wa-alqaytu	Fa-alqaytu		Ptcl (wāzfa)
31	Fa-nāmat	Fa-qāmat		Alt (n̄zq)
32	Mulqā	yulqā		Drv
33	taʿlū	yaʿlū		Pfx (ȳzt)
34	nakhā ^c	nukhā ^c	nikhā ^c	Intvl
35	Taʿawwaha	tahawwahu		Alt (ʿ̄zh) Tns
36	Āhata	Hāhata	ahhata	Alt (ʿ̄zh) Gem
37	Daraʿtu	Dharaʿtu		Alt (d̄zdh)
38	Wadīnī	Wadīnan		Nun
	a-kullu	a-kulla		CE
	hallan wa- ʿirtihālan	hallun wa- ʿirtihālun		CE
	hallun	hillun		Intvl
	Yubqī	Tubqī		Pfx (ȳzt)
	Yaqīnī	Taqīnī		Pfx (ȳzt)
	Mā	Lā		Ptcl (mā̄zā)
	Fa-ruhtu	Wa-ruhtu		Ptcl (fāzwa)
	Musbakırr	Musbatırr		Alt (k̄zt)
	dahdāhıhı	dahdāhatın	sahsāhıhı	Mrbt Alt (s̄zd)
	Razīn	Rasīn	rakīn	Alt (z̄zs̄zk)
	Bı-haqqın	Bı-sıdqın		Alt (h̄zs)
	Fa-aʿrifu	Fa-aʿrifa		CE
	Attaqīka	Attaqīhı		Prn (kāzhı)
	Tattaqīnī	Yattaqīnī		Pfx (t̄zy)
	Wa-mā	Fa-mā		Ptcl (wāzfa)
	Abtaghıhı	Mubtaghıhı		Drv

*al-mufaddaliyyah #25 s̄imyyat al-Hārith b Hillizah*¹¹⁴

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	Al-hubs	Al-habs	Al-hıbs	Intvl
2	Fī 'sh-shamsı	Ka 'sh-shamsı		Ptcl (fīẓka)
3	Fa-habastu	Wa-habastu		Ptcl (faẓwa)
4	Jullı	Kullı		Alt (jẓk)
5	Mınhā	Fīhā		Alt (mınz̄fı)
6	Khadhımın	Khudhmın		Intvl
7	nu ^c addīhā	tu ^c addīhā		Pfx (nz̄t)
8	Fa-ılā	Wa-ılā		Ptcl (faẓwa)
9	Al-duhm	Al-udm		Trns Alt ('ẓh)
10	İlayhı	Ladayhı		Ptcl (ılāẓladā)
11	Tahısu	Tatısu	Taqısu	Alt (hẓtẓq) Alt (sẓs)
12	dana ^c at	danı ^c at		Intvl

¹¹⁴ al-Dabbī (al-Mufaddal), *al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, pp 132-4, al-Anbārī, *Sharh*, pp 263-268, al-Tıbrizī, *Sharh*, 2/631-642, al-Hārith b Hillizah, *Dīwān*, ed Imīl Badī^c Ya^cqūb, (Beirut Dār al-Kıtab al-^cArabī, 1991), pp 48-51, Ibn Maymūn, *Muntahā al-Talab*, 2/121-4

al-mufaddaliyyah #62 *Jīmīyyat al-Hārith b Hillizah*¹¹⁵ (10 verses)

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	Mudlij	Mudlaj		AP⇌PP
2	hamāmuhu	hamāmatun		Mrbt
3	Tadruji	Yadruji		Pfx (t⇌y)
4	Ajhamat	Ahjamat		Trns

¹¹⁵ Al-Anbārī, *Sharh*, pp 515-18, al-Dabbī, *al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, pp 255-6, al-Tibrīzī, *Sharh*, 3/1137-43, al-Hārith b Hillizah, *Dīwān*, pp 42-4

al-mufaddaliyyah #127 *Jīmīyyat al-Hārith b Hillzah*¹¹⁶ (8 verses)

#	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant type
1	Dūnihā	Dūnihī	dūninā	Prn (hā↔hī↔nā)
2	Wa-'sbub	Fa-'sbub	Wa-'hlub	Ptcl (wa↔fa)

¹¹⁶ Al-Anbārī, *Sharh*, pp 885-6, al-Dabbī, *al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, pp 429-30, al-Tibrīzī, *Sharh*, 3/1728-32, al-Hārith b Hillzah, *Dīwān*, pp 64-7

Data Summary and Analysis

Before I start my data analysis I should emphasize that general conclusions cannot be reached here for several reasons. First, the data I collected is not comprehensive and the numbers and percentages may change if other *sūrah*s were to be consulted. Second, I relied mainly on the Qirā'āt collections and I rarely used *tafsīr* works that might include many variants that were not mentioned in Qirā'āt manuals. Third, it will be misleading to conduct a direct statistical comparison between the Qur'ānic variants and their poetic counterpoints. The length of the verses, chapters, and poems is not proportional and a statistical approach would be possible based on groups of words only. I did gather all the variant types separately and counted how many times each type occurs.

The Total number of the Qur'ānic variants in the sample data I created above is 473. The distribution of the variant types is as follows:

Variant Type	Qur'ānic variants		Poetic variants	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
A⇌P (Active ⇌ Passive)	38	8%	9	3.1%
AP⇌PP (active participle ⇌ passive participle)	3	0.6%	1	0.3%
AL (Definite article "al")	3	0.6%	0	0.0%
Amg (Amalgamation)	0	0%	3	1.0%
Alt (Alternation between two consonant letters)	23	4%	101	34.6%
Ass (Assimilation)	5	1%	2	0.7%
CE (Case ending)	62	13%	19	6.5%

Cs (Loss of consonant)	8	1 7%	1	0 3%	
Drv (Derivatives)	6	1 2%	6	2 1%	
Frm (Form)	0	0%	3	1 0%	
Gem (Gemination)	28	6%	7	2 4%	
Hmz	50	10 5%	4	1 4%	
Intvl (Internal vowels)	75	16%	19	6 5%	
LV (long vowels)	50	10 5%	6	2 1%	
Meta (Meta-Thesis)	4	0 8%	3	1 0%	
Mrbt (<i>al-tā' al-marbūtah</i>)	4	0 8%	3	1 0%	
Nun (Nūnation)	17	3 6%	2	0 7%	
Pfx (The imperfect Prefix)	34	7%	17	5 8%	
Prn (subject, object, and possessive pronouns)	7	1 5%	7	2 4%	
Ptcl (particles)	24	5%	32	11 0%	
R (x) (Common Root)	0	0%	11	3 8%	
Sfx (The perfect suffix)	2	0 4%	12	4 1%	
Skn (<i>taskīn</i>)	8	1 7%	0	0 0%	
Trns (Transposition)	3	0 6%	13	4 5%	
Tns (Tense)	0	0%	5	1 7%	
VF (Verb form)	19	4%	5	1 7%	
	Total Number of variants	473	100%	292	100%

The 8% of Active ⇌ Passive variants in the Qur'ān is very interesting for these variants could have some theological implications, as in the naming of a subject or suppressing of the subject by changing the voice of the verb. For example Q (113:2) “*min sharri mā khalaqa/khuliqa*” would translate as (From the evil of that which He created) in the active voice, or as (From the evil of that which was created) in the passive voice, which would definitely raise the question as to whether God could or could not, might or might not, create “Evil”. Not surprisingly, I found a discussion on this subject in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *tafsīr*¹¹⁷. The A⇌P category is cut in half for the poetic variants, which might suggest a lack of concern for inducing changes in the voice of the verb especially since such changes would have barely any effect on the meter of the verse. The phenomenon of alternation needs special attention: 4% for the Qur'ānic variants versus 34% for the poetic variants. I will list all the cases of Alternation in the following table in order to detect the percentages of homographs. One should note however, that many homographs are also sounds that are very close in their area or manner of articulation in the mouth. Variant readings that are due to “misplacement of dots” should not always be attributed to the lack of diacritics in the ‘Uthmānic consonantal script, for some of these homographs are close to each other phonetically. For example, the shifts from *th* → *t* (*thalj* → *talj*), *sh* → *s* (*shajar* → *sajar*), *dh* → *d* (*dhīb* → *dīb*), and *z* → *d* (*zalla* → *dall*) in colloquial Arabic are phonetic phenomena that hardly have anything to do with the Arabic script. I am not going to get into a linguistic and phonetic discussion of the sounds of Arabic for this needs separate and more specialized study. This is a rough arrangement of the Arabic sounds according to their place of articulation in the mouth.

¹¹⁷ Al-Rāzī, *Mafātih*, 32/188-94

م و ف ب \ ص س ر \ ط د ت \ ل ر \ ص ح ش ي \ ك ق \ ع ح ح ع ه أ

Qur'ānic variants	Homographs	Phonetic proximity
ع ⇄ ع (2)	✓	✓
ع ⇄ ح (2)	✗	✓
ع ⇄ ن	✗	✗
ر ⇄ د	✗	✗
د ⇄ د (2)	✓	✓
ح ⇄ ح	✓	✗
ه ⇄ م	✗	✗
ك ⇄ ق	✗	✓
ل ⇄ س	✗	✗
ص ⇄ س (3)	✗	✓
ش ⇄ س	✓	✗
ت ⇄ س	✗	✗
ر ⇄ ص (2)	✗	✓
ن ⇄ ت	✓	✗
ن ⇄ ت	✓	✓
ق ⇄ ر	✗	✗

Note that not all the variants under the alternation category are caused by the misplacement of diacritics on the homographs and many of them exhibit phonetic

proximities that are still present in the present day Arabic dialects. As for the alternation in the poetic variants, the list is too long to consider in detail, but out of the 101 variants under the alternation category, 47 variants are due to homographs. Although many of these homographs share similar phonetic characteristics, many others do not, such as $z\ddot{a}r$, $t\ddot{a}y$, $s\ddot{a}d$, and $n\ddot{a}b$. Be that as it may, the high percentage of alternation category in the poetic variants compared to the Qur'ānic ones is alarming, and it should tell us something regarding the mechanism of transmission of these early poetry collections.

The Case ending and internal vowels categories are also intriguing: 13% and 16% respectively for the Qur'ānic variants versus 6.5% and 6.5% for the poetic variants. The discrepancies in case endings and internal vowels of words should be connected with the standardization of the language and who undertook the transmission of the subject literature. In the case of the Qur'ān, no eponymous Readers except for al-Kisā'ī and Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' were grammarians, not to mention that some of them were criticized for not being well-versed in Arabic grammar. On the other hand, almost all the poetry collectors and *rāwīs* were philologists and grammarians by default, al-Mufaddal, al-Asma'ī, Ibn al-A'rābī, al-Anbārī and his son, Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', Hammād al-Rāwiyah, al-Tibrīzī, al-Marzūqī, Tha'lab, al-Sukkarī, Ibn al-Sikkīt, and many others were our only channel through which we received the corpus of early Arabic poetry. Those poetry collectors did not refrain from adjusting the meter, correcting grammatical mistakes according to the norms of *'Arabīyyah* as they had become well established by the 2nd/8th century, replacing words, omitting or adding verses, rearranging the verses of the poem, etc. Therefore, the discrepancies in case endings and internal vowels are more

probable to occur among transmitters who were not specialized in Arabic grammar, than to occur with the specialized grammarians and philologists who transmitted the corpus of early Arabic poetry

As for the 10.5% versus the 1.4% of the *hamzah* articulation in the Qur'ān and poetry respectively, it is hardly surprising since the articulation of the *hamzah* would almost never change the meaning of the verse and it would represent a phonetic phenomenon most of the time. The low 1.4% of Hmz category in poetic variants shows how the loss of the *hamzah* affects the meter and therefore it would not be a common phenomenon in poetry, regardless of the dialect of the poet. The same applies to the loss of consonants and *taskīn* categories that are uncommon in poetry. The last category that I am going to comment on is the long-vowels category that exhibits the addition or omission of *alif* or *yā'* or *wāw* in the variants. The 10.5% for the Qur'ān versus the 2.1% for poetry shows the influence of the consonantal outline that excluded long vowels from the written script. The poetic variants would be susceptible to adding or removing a long vowel because of the restrictions of the meter. Similarly, Gemination is less frequent in poetry since the addition or omission of the doubled consonant would affect the meter. The other categories of variants are close in percentages or too few to propose a general statement regarding their occurrences in both literatures.

Summary and Observations

I proposed in this chapter a new way to study the nature of the variants in the Qur'ān through thorough categorization and comparison with the variants in early Arabic poetry. By creating a database of variants for selections from the Qur'ān and a few poems from the *Mufaddaliyyāt* poetry anthology, I was able to create around twenty categories of variants that applied to both selections. The first important observation is that both literatures share the same types of variant, regardless of the proportions and percentages of each type in both literatures. I doubt that examining a selection of *hadīths* would yield similar results. The limitations of the consonantal outline of the Qur'ān and its liturgical and theological restrictions definitely produce different proportions of the variant types from those in poetry, which is restricted by meters and rhymes. The variants that are due to discrepancies in case endings and internal vowels are more frequent in the Qur'ān, and I attribute that to the eponymous Readers being a group of transmitters who were not specialized in Arabic grammar and philology, unlike the transmitters of poetry who were mostly grammarians and philologists. Variants that introduce new consonants or vowels to the words are less common in poetry because of the restrictions of the meter, while the consonantal outline of the Qur'ān encouraged such variants, especially the long vowels *alif*, *yā'*, and *wāw*. The alternation between two consonants was much more frequent in poetry, and this alternation should not always be attributed "only" to homographs and misplacement of the dots, for the phonetic proximity of many consonants is also a major cause for such alternation to take place.

Conclusion and future Research

A well-known tradition that is often cited in classical sources describes the story of a man reading the Qur'ān in front of ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib. The man reached Q (56:29) and read “*wa talhin mandūd*” (and clustered plantains), but ʿAlī objected and said, what does this have to do with the *talh* (big thorny trees that camels usually feed on), it is rather *talʿ* (clustered dates or pollen sacs) just like Q (50:10) “*lahā talʿun nadīd*”. The man then asked ʿAlī if he should correct this mistake in his own copy of the Qur'ān, but ʿAlī objected and said that the Qur'ān should never be changed anymore. The tradition might be authentic to some degree, especially in that it is quoted by both *Shīʿī* and *Sunnī* sources, albeit with each faction positing its own interpretation of ʿAlī's real intentions. The reading of *talh* is perplexing and out of context, God in the preceding verses is promising the believers enticing objects and foods in Heaven: comfortable cushions, charming young boys, precious goblets, fruits, birds, virgins, waters, and thorny trees! Al-Zajjābī addressed this confusion by saying that the *talh* might not have thorns in Heaven. Other exegetes and philologists found a way as usual to interpret the *talh* to be bananas. Farfetched interpretations, forged traditions, and creating new vocabulary entries in the dictionaries were more feasible than accepting the fact that a “typo” or misspelling might have had taken place during the process of copying the *masāḥif*.

The legitimacy of Qur'ānic variants has been established through the mysterious tradition of the *sabʿat ahruf*, a term that has long eluded Muslim scholars. Through studying the different versions of this tradition and tracing it back to the early sources, I conclude that this tradition might have been in circulation among Muslims by the last quarter of the first Islamic century. Furthermore, the spread of this tradition

with its different recensions was probably a demonstration of the failure of the codification process by ʿUthmān, which was not able to produce a single unified Reading of the Qurʾān. The variant readings of the Qurʾān multiplied exponentially until Ibn Mujāhid in the first quarter of the fourth Islamic century won acceptance for seven “canonical” Readings and forced the Muslim community through his political influence to abandon all the other readings of the Qurʾān. There were several attempts before Ibn Mujāhid to establish eponymous Readings, the most important among these attempts being that of al-Tabarī, who rejected many readings that became known later as canonical. I demonstrate through a close reading of Ibn Mujāhid’s introduction to his work, *al-Sabʿah fī al-Qirāʾāt*, that the status of the variant readings of the Qurʾān was similar to the status of the legal rulings (*ahkām*), and that he did not consider the seven Readings to be of divine and absolute value. The *usūlīs* and the *Qirāʾāt* scholars after Ibn Mujāhid were the ones responsible for moving the *Qirāʾāt* discipline from the realm of legal rulings and *sunnah* into the realm of Hadīth. This shift caused a change in the criterion for accepting a valid Qurʾānic reading, the element of *ymāʿ*—a *fiqh* element—that which had the utmost importance during and prior to Ibn Mujāhid’s time, was virtually dropped and replaced by the element of the sound chain of transmission (*isnād*)—a Hadīth element. Furthermore, I suggest that Ibn Mujāhid’s selection of the seven eponymous Readers was natural because of the complicated case of al-Kūfah, from which he was forced to choose three Readers to represent the collective Reading of the Kūfans at the time, unlike the other major cities which unanimously followed one Reader only.

After discussing the theory of *tawātur* according to the *usūlīs* and Hadīth theoreticians, which necessarily yields absolute knowledge if all the conditions are met, I demonstrated that it was difficult, if not impossible, to apply the conditions of *tawātur* to the transmission of the canonical Readings of the Qur’ān. The conditions of *tawātur* are hardly applicable to Hadīth as well, and the *muhaddithūn* accepted very few traditions as being *mutawātirah*, arguing that *tawātur* falls under the realm of *usūl al-fiqh* and not Hadīth. Almost all *Usūlīs* and other Muslim scholars held that the Qur’ān was transmitted through *tawātur*. Through the theoretical discussions of the definition of the Qur’ān and the parameters of this definition, I show that *tawātur* is essential to identify the Qur’ān. However, in exploring the *usūlīs* and scholars’ opinions regarding the system Readings of the Qur’ān, I encountered a disagreement as to the applicability of *tawātur* to these Readings. How could one reconcile the following contradictory statements: the Qur’ān was transmitted through *tawātur* that establishes absolute knowledge, yet the Qur’ān cannot be recited and read except through the canonical Readings that are not *mutawātirah* and thus do not establish absolute knowledge?

I study the transmission of the canonical Readings in detail and highlight the importance of the immediate transmitters of each eponymous Reader. The numbers of those transmitters were insufficient to satisfy in any way the minimum conditions of *tawātur*. I demonstrate the impact of the number of the immediate transmitters on determining the generation of the two canonical Rāwīs of each eponymous Reading, every eponymous Reader with several immediate transmitters had his two canonical Rāwīs from among those transmitters. Furthermore, I highlight the role of the single strands of transmission in forming the irregular *shawādh* readings. These single

strands of transmissions died out with time and a considerable literature of *shawādh* can be traced back to those transmitters who became *shawādh* disseminators

Although these transmissions are attributed to the eponymous Readers, the fact that they are single strands of transmission that do not pass through a common link or are not corroborated by other transmissions caused them to lose an important element of recognition and *īmā*, and therefore they gradually entered the *shawādh* literature

Finally, having created a database of Qur'ānic and poetic variants I use this to compare the nature of the variants for the Qur'ān with that of the variants in early Arabic poetry Using the last thirty short chapters of the Qur'ān, *sūrat Yūsuf*, and several long and short poems from the collection of *al-Mufaddaliyyāt*, I categorize all the variants under twenty-three categories and estimate the percentage of each category with respect to the other categories Both the Qur'ān and early Arabic poetry show the same types of variants yet in different proportions, the restrictions of the consonantal outline and the poetic meters are evident in many of these categories Nevertheless, one should not jump to conclusions and overestimate the role that the early defective script played in creating the Qur'ānic variants and attribute them too readily to the misplacement of diacritics, for the same types of variants occur in early Arabic poetry as well, whose oral versus written character is still uncertain

Future research on the subject of *Qirā'āt* must be multifaceted First, we should be aware that there are hundreds of works on the discipline of *Qirā'āt* still in manuscript only The variants that these works may contain will be of great value to the literature of *Qirā'āt* Even some of the already published works on *Qirā'āt* need to be reedited and published because of a considerable number of mistakes in either typing

the manuscript or reading it. On the other hand, more research needs to be done on the *shawādh* readings, especially the irregular ones. Within the works on the *shawādh* and in the different *tafsīr* works, transmission chains and disseminators of many of those *shawādh* readings are documented. Collecting all these transmissions and identifying the *shawādh* transmitters will help us see a dynamic map of the transmission that took place between the successors and the generation of the Qirā'āt collectors. We might be able ultimately to identify certain schools of *shawādh* transmissions and be more accurate in determining the reason behind the abandonment of these irregular readings.

Categorizing more variants that will encompass the whole Qur'ān is a must, and it is a very doable task compared to the extremely difficult task of categorizing poetry variants. Comparing the nature of the variants within the Qur'ān itself will yield absolute results rather than the speculative ones I have obtained based on my small text samples. Creating a similar database for early poetry variants is also of immense grammatical and philological value, regardless of its relevance to the Qur'ānic variants. Nonetheless, both literatures show similar mechanisms of transmission, which is obviously lacking in *hadīth* variants.

The transmission of the Qur'ān is a complicated process that encompasses different aspects and is closely connected to other disciplines. The first step to progress in research on the Qirā'āt is to realize that there is a fundamental dichotomy in the transmission of the Qur'ān, i.e. the written consonantal outline versus the oral Readings. I am inclined to suggest that many of the Qur'ānic variants existed during the time of the Prophet just as the poetic variants in a poem existed during the life time of

the poets who lived in an oral-transmission environment. Regardless of the divine nature and source of the Qur'ān, the revelation process was an oral process above all. Muslim tradition itself speaks of the Prophet—after receiving the revelation—changing the order of the verses, revising them, forgetting some of them, and allowing verses to be paraphrased and recited differently. Analyzing these traditions and comparing them to the literature on the orally transmitted materials will give a different dimension to the studies on the Qur'ān in general and the Qirā'āt specifically.

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