A Basic History of Qirā‘āt

- Introduction -

The science of qirā‘ah, primarily, is a study about the agreement and differences with regards to the articulation of the recited text of the Qur’ān Karīm, which exists amongst the qurrā’ who transmitted from Rasūlullāh ﷺ through chains of narration. The following sciences are also related closely to qirā‘ah:

- The science of Taḥrīr at-ṭuruq. (Separating every transmitted version and citing its source)
- The science of Asmā’ Rijāl al-Qirā‘āt. (The competence of the narrators)
- The science of 'Ilal al-Qirā‘āt (Expounding on the meanings that warrant variations in I‘rāb etc.)
- The science discussing the count of the Āyāt.
- The science of Tajwīd.
- The science of Waqf and Ibtidā’.
- The science of Rasm Khāṭ.
- The details about the Qur’ān Karīm being revealed according to the Sab’ah Aḥruf and the history of the codification of qirā‘āt.

Many people are under the misconception that the science of qirā‘ah is about beautifying the voice and reciting the Qur’ān Karīm in melodious tunes. These are known as taghannī and ḫusn aṣ-ṣaut. Refer to my article “Recitation of the Qur’ān Karīm and its beauty” for details on these. Though taghannī and ḫusn aṣ-ṣaut are meritorious, they are not part of qirā‘ah.

Undoubtedly, the most virtuous occupation towards which a person can dedicate his life, is the seeking of the knowledge of the Shari‘ah, practicing according to it and imparting it to others. It is the best pursuit in life and most profitable in this world as well as in the ākhirah. The foundation of all knowledge
rests on the Qur’ān Karīm, which is the speech of Allāh Ta'ālā. The sciences which are related to the Qur’ān Karīm are many in number, with each one having great benefits.

First and foremost, it is of utmost importance to perfect the memorization of the Qur’ān Karīm and to correct the pronunciation of its text. This can only be possible after verifying the authentic qirā‘āt. If the authentic qirā‘āt are not verified, one will not be able to ascertain as to which narrations may be recited and which ones may not be recited. The study of qirā‘āt therefore take precedence over all else.

Authentic qirā‘āt can be verified by studying them under an ustād who has acquired a sanad (uninterrupted chain of narration) for these. It is not sufficient to merely look into the books of qirā‘ah or tafsīr to determine what is authentic and what is not. Some people make the mistake of looking into the books of tafsīr and recite the qirā‘āt mentioned therein as Qur‘ān. Many of the qirā‘āt contained in the books of tafsīr are shādh. It is not permissible to recite these as Qur‘ān.

The authentic narrations of qirā‘āt are the text which form the very basic foundation of the Qur’ān Karīm. Allāh Ta'ālā has guaranteed its preservation. If these were not secured and preserved, then the recitation of the Qur’ān Karīm, its translation, its explanation, the rulings deduced from it, etc. would have lost all credibility.

In present times, the narration of Ḥafṣ is most common throughout the world. The narrations of Qālūn, Warsh, Dūrī Baṣrī and Sūsī are recited in some countries. The remainder of the authentic narrations are recited only by the qurrā’ and not by the general folk. If these narrations were not preserved by the qurrā’, the enemies of Islām, who are always plotting to distort the meaning of the Qur’ān Karīm, would have found the ideal opportunity of achieving their objectives by corrupting its text and attributing it falsely to one of the authentic narrations not known to the general folk. However, this will never be possible, since there always was and will be a great multitude of qurrā’ across the world who preserve the qirā‘āt of the Qur’ān Karīm. In can be clearly understood from here, that the following beliefs are all misconceptions:

- The study of qirā‘ah is of no real benefit.
- The qurrā’ don’t play a role in the preservation of the Shari‘ah.
- The qurrā’ are easily dispensable.
- One achieves nothing by studying qirā‘ah.
Those who hold such beliefs fail to realize that the qurrā’ have been selected by Allāh Ta’ālā to fulfill a great task. They are part of the foundation upon which the solid structure of the Shari’ah lies.

Due to the great importance of the science, the ‘ulamā’ have stated that it is wājib ‘ala l-kifāyah to learn and teach qirā’ah. In fact, Mullā ’Ālī Qārī has mentioned that it is an accepted fact that the science of qirā’ah is the most virtuous of all those obligations which are farḍ ‘alā l-kifāyah, because it is the preservation of a miracle which contains all the laws needed by the ummah for their salvation.\(^1\)

In fulfilling this duty, the ‘ulamā’ in every era, made great sacrifices in preserving the science of qirā’ah. The science is as old as the revelation of the Qur’ān Karīm itself. This article will highlight to the reader that there was a great multitude of ‘ulamā’ in history who served in this field. It will highlight the different regions of the Islamic world where they lived. It will highlight their travels and their quest to meet their seniors who possessed shorter āsānīd. It will highlight their efforts to impart this knowledge by means of teaching and writing. It will eliminate the false notion, that qirā’ah is just an exaggeration by some fanatics of the last century. It will clarify many other doubts about qirā’ah as well and it will enable one to have a better understanding about qirā’ah altogether.

Amongst the many attacks made by modernists against Islam, is the attack against the validity and authenticity of the qirā’āt. The reason for raising such types of objections against the qirā’āt is to create doubt with regards to the Qur’ān Karim and Islam. Recently, I came across one such modernist who claimed that the variations in qirā’ah are the outcome of the ijtihād of the qurrā’!\(^1\)

To prove his point, he has quoted a statement of Ibn Mujāhid: “The people have differed in qirā’ah just as they differed in āhḵām.” Firstly, the meaning of this statement is not as is being claimed. Ibn Mujāhid has explained the meaning of his statement, but it has been ignored. 'Allāmah Ja’barī has also clarified the statement of Ibn Mujāhid. Secondly, all other statements of Ibn Mujāhid which emphasize the importance of adhering strictly to the qirā’ah which was taught and not to introduce anything new, have been ignored! Thirdly, so much of emphasis is put on Ibn Mujāhid as if he was the only qārī in his time. Fourthly, the modernist wishes to analyse the views of Ibn Mujāhid directly without the influence of latter scholarship. The modernist has also written that it is almost impossible for the canonical eponymous readings to have met the conditions of tawātur and tawātur fails to apply to the transmission of the Quranic eponymous readings.
Many people read the writings of such deviants and are being misled. Poisonous ideas of kufr are being implanted in their minds without them being aware of it. The importance of studying the science of qirā’ah, having a thorough understanding about its intricacies, and knowing the history of its codification, in these times of fitnah, is greater than it ever was. It has become common in these times to take knowledge from anywhere and everywhere. ‏’Allāmah Ja’barī ﷺ has mentioned the conditions for accepting someone as an authority in qirā’ah. After mentioning many requirements related to being proficient in various sciences, he adds on the following: “One must be practical on the sunnah, he should conduct himself in a dignified manner, he should be modest, he should be just and pious, he should turn away from the world and pay attention to the hereafter and he should be close to Allāh Ta’ālā.” These days, even a person who doesn’t have the appearance of a Muslim and doesn’t have an ustād in qirā’ah is highly regarded because he has studied some books independently. We forget that knowledge is a nūr which is transferred from heart to heart. Cutting out our predecessors and trying to acquire knowledge directly from the books of previous scholars, without having learnt and understood the objectives of that knowledge from expert asā’idhah, is totally against our principles.

May Allāh Ta’ālā guide us to the straight path, grant us istiqāmah and save us from all forms of misguidance. Āmīn.

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Chapter One

The era of the Noble Messenger


The nature of the variations in recitation is such that they are all in harmony with each other. Their meanings are consistent and there is no contradiction between them. The variations can be divided into three broad categories:

1. Multiple pronunciations without changing the meaning. E.g.

2. Multiple pronunciations with a change in meaning. Both meanings apply to the same entity/subject without contradiction. E.g. (Allāh Ta’ālā is The owner as well as The king) (The hypocrites lie as well as deny).

3. Multiple pronunciations with a change in meaning. Both meanings apply to a different entity/subject without contradiction. E.g. (You i.e. Fir’awn know deep down in your heart that these signs were sent by Allāh Ta’āla / I i.e. Mūsā am convinced that these signs were sent by Allāh Ta’āla).

Rasūlullāh ﷺ would recite the Qur’ān Karīm to the saḥābah and teach it to them according to the dialect which they were accustomed to. All the authentic variations of qirā’āt were recited and taught.
by Rasūlullāh ﷺ, and it for this reason that we cannot single out a particular qirā‘ah and believe it to be the only qirā‘ah which Rasūlullāh ﷺ recited. Whenever someone migrated to Rasūlullāh ﷺ, he would refer him to one of the other šāhābah in order to teach the Qur‘ān Karīm to him. Rasūlullāh ﷺ also named certain šāhābah and encouraged others to learn from them. Those who were pointed out were: ’Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd, Sālim Mawla Abi Hudhaifah, Mu‘ādh Ibn Jabal, Ubay Ibn Ka‘b. The ‘ulama‘ have explained the reasons for specifying these šāhābah:

1. They had memorized the Qur‘ān Karīm well.
2. They used to recite with excellent pronunciation together with having an outstanding potential to teach others and correct their recitation.
3. Other šāhābah, like 'Ali Ibn Abī Ṭalib and Zaid ibn Thābit were already known for teaching the Qur‘ān Karīm, whilst these were not.
4. They had learnt the Qur‘ān Karīm directly from Rasūlullāh ﷺ.
5. They had freed themselves for this noble effort whilst others dedicated themselves to other dinī activities.
6. Some šāhābah like Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal and Zaid ibn Thābit etc. had learnt all the different qirā‘āt. This made it easier for them to teach as they could teach each person according to the dialect which he was comfortable with.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has mentioned great virtue and promised enormous rewards for memorizing the Qur‘ān Karīm. A few famous aḥādith are as follows:

خيركم من تعلم القرآن وعلمه. (رواه البخاري)
من شغله القرآن عن ذكرى ومساكن اعطيته أفضل ما أعطي السائلين. (رواه الترمذي)
أفضل العبادة قراءة القرآن. (فضائل القرآن وفضلت للرازي)
الماهر بالقرآن مع السفرة الكرم البررة والذي يقرأ القرآن ويمتنع فيه وهو عليه شاق له أجران. (متفق عليه، واللفظ لمسلم)
إبن الله أهلي من الناس، قول: من هم يا رسول الله، قال: أهل القرآن هم أهل الله وخاصته. (مسند الإمام أحمد بن حنبل)
It is therefore not strange that hundreds and thousands of ṣaḥābah would compete with one another in memorizing the Noble Book. Some had memorized a portion, some most of it, and some all of it. Any given part of the Qur'an Karim was memorized by a substantial number of ṣaḥābah. The huge number of ṣaḥābah who were ḥuffādh can be gauged from the fact that, just one year after the demise of Rasūlullāh, during the battle of Yamāmah, 70 ḥuffādh of the ṣaḥābah were martyred!

There was a panel of ṣaḥābah known as the scribes of revelation. Whenever any portion of the Qur'an Karim was revealed, Rasūlullāh would summon some of the them and dictate to them the verses which were revealed. They would write it on skins, stones, barks of trees, bones etc. and it would be kept away safely. In this way, the entire Qur'an Karim, with all its variations in pronunciation, was preserved by memory as well as in writing.

Just as how some aḥkām (rulings) were abrogated, similarly some of the variations which were originally permitted to recite, were abrogated. Much of this abrogation had taken place during the 'urḍah akhīrah (last presentation/revision with Jibril during the last Ramaḍān of Rasūlullāh’s life) Rasūlullāh lived for more than five months after the last presentation. During this time, he conveyed to ṣaḥābah all that was abrogated and all that was kept intact. Zaib ibn Thābit as well as other ṣaḥābah were present at the time in Madīna Munawwara to observe the final presentation and they were fully aware of what was included in the final version of the Qur'an Karim and what was abrogated. In this way Rasūlullāh left this world with the Qur'an Karim fully preserved in all its aspects, as promised by Allāh Ta'ālā:
After the demise of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, the ṣaḥābah ﷺ continued to recite and teach the Qurʾān Karīm according to the way in which they were taught. Abū 'Ubaid al-Qāsim ﷺ has mentioned the names of twenty muhājirīn and seven anṣār from whom the transmission of qirāʿāt has been recorded. Thus, there were various qirāʿāt being recited after the demise of Rasūlullāh ﷺ just as they were being recited during his lifetime. Each one would recite according to what he had been taught. No one objected to another person’s recitation. They understood that all these were correct and one could opt for whatever suited him best.

During the 11th year after hijrah, a fierce battle was fought against Musailamah, the false claimant of nubuwwah. Musailamah was killed in this battle, but there were many who martyred on the side of the Muslims. 70 of these martyrs were ḥuffādh of the Qurʾān Karīm. Witnessing this, Umar ﷺ insisted to Abū Bakr ﷺ that he should compile the Qurʾān Karīm in writing, lest some part of it be lost by the loss of the huffādh. After showing reluctance, Abū Bakr ﷺ finally agreed, and Zaid ibn Thābit ﷺ was appointed with the task of gathering the Qurʾān. There were many reasons why Zaid ﷺ was chosen for this task, and not anyone else. He had memorized the Qurʾān Karīm during the lifetime of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He was well acquainted with the various qirāʿāt. He was a scribe of revelation during the time of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He was just, upright and pious. He was a courageous lad with exceptional intelligence. He was present at the time of the last revision of the Qurʾān Karīm, thus aware of all abrogation. His recitation was in conformity with the 'urdāh akhīrah.

Although Zaid ﷺ was an expert ḥāfidh and qārī, it was not left up to him to compile the Qurʾān Karīm on his own. There was extreme amount of precaution taken. A public announcement was made to the ṣaḥābah ﷺ that anyone who had learnt any portion of the Qurʾān Karīm directly from Rasūlullāh ﷺ should come up and produce it. Umar ﷺ sat together with Zaid ﷺ at the door of the masjid to receive...
what the šahābah brought. Whenever something was brought, then together with Zaid attesting to its authenticity, there were a few conditions for accepting it.¹⁹

1. The portion of the Qurʾān Karīm needed to be memorized by the šahābi. 
2. The portion needed to be presented in writing. 
3. Two witnesses were needed to testify that it was written in the presence of Rasūlullāh. 

In this way the entire Qurʾān Karīm including all its authentic qirāʾāt was compiled. There were no dots, ḥarakāt, etc. in the original script of the Qurʾān Karīm. This allowed multiple qirāʾ āt to conform with one script. In places where it was not possible to combine different qirāʾ āt on one script, both qirāʾah were written. 'Allāmah Kawtharī says that the alternative qirāʾah was written in the margin. I would think that both were written in the main text. It is proven that the šahābah would write the tafsīr of the Qurʾān Karīm together with its text since there was no fear of them mistaking it as the Qurʾān Karīm.²⁰ If they could write non-Qurʾān with Qurʾān, then it is quite possible that they wrote two variations of the Qurʾān together, as here too, there was no fear of confusion. There were fully aware that one of the two variations needed to be recited and not both. In this way, added to memorization, the writing of the authentic qirāʾ āt of the Qurʾān Karīm were now preserved in one single compilation. In this compilation of Abū Bakr, each surah was written in separate booklets, hence the sequence of the surahs were not arranged. It was the first time in history where the entire Qurʾān Karīm was gathered in one place. Prior to this, the written portions of the Qurʾān Karīm were scattered amongst the šahābah. This compilation did not impact on the way the Qurʾān Karīm was recited. Each person still continued to recite in the manner in which he was taught and there were multiple qirāʾ āt in vogue. The mushāf of Abū Bakr remained with him throughout his lifetime. It was thereafter passed on to his successor, Umar. After the demise of Umar, it was kept by his daughter, Ummul Muʿminīn Ḥafṣah. 

During the khilāfah of Umar, expert šahābah were dispatched to the distant Islamic cities in order to teach the Qurʾān Karīm. Here too, there was no standard method of recitation determined. Each one taught according to the way in which he recited in the time of Rasūlullāh.²¹ ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd 20

¹⁹فتح الباري، باب جمع القرآن
²⁰الشري (1:22)
²¹الإيضاح للكتاب المتین (۱۷)
was sent to Kūfah. 'Ubādah Ibn aš-Ṣāmit was sent to Ḥimṣ. Abū ad-Dardā' was sent to Damascus. Muʿadh Ibn Jabl was sent to Palestine.22

In the 25th year after hijrah, during the khilāfah of ‘Uthmān, the Muslim army fought a battle in Azerbaijan. Part of this army had come from Iraq and part of it from Sham. The Iraqis’ qirā’ah was different from the Shamis’. This led to confrontation between them. Each one claimed that his qirā’ah was better than the others. Ḥudhaiyah ibn Yamān witnessing this, rushed back to the khilāfah, ‘Uthmān and begged to act as quickly as possible to save this ummah from being disunited. ‘Uthmān discussed this with the senior šaḥābah and they agreed that multiple copies of the Qur’ān Karīm should be made and sent out to the different regions. ‘Uthmān appointed Zaid ibn Thābit, Sa’id ibn ‘Āṣ, Abdurrahmān ibn Ḥārith ibn Hishām and ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubair to complete this task. The musḥaf compiled by Abū Bakr was sought from Ḥafṣah and additional copies were made of the same. The instruction given by ‘Uthmān to the three qurashi šaḥābah was as follows: “When you differ with Zaid with regards to the Arabic dialect of the Qur’ān, then write according to the dialect of the Quraish, because the Qur’ān was revealed according to this dialect.” The script of the Qur’ān Karīm was without dots and ḥarakāt, as explained earlier. This made it possible for multiple qirā’āt and multiple dialects to conform to a single script in most places. In some places it was not possible. E.g. كل سفينة غصبا / كل سفينة صالحة غضبا. In the first instance, other dialects were automatically included and in the second instance, they were excluded. The qurashi dialect was a diverse one and it included more than one pronunciation.

Therefore, if there were two qirā’āt which were according to the qurashi dialect and both could not be accommodated in one script, then some musḥahif were written according to one qirā’ah and some according to the other. There was a total of 5, 6, 7 or 8 maṣāḥīf written. One copy was kept by ‘Uthmān for his personal use. This copy is called “Imām”. One copy was kept for the people of Madīnah Munawwarah and Zaid ibn Thābit was appointed to teach the people according to it. One copy was sent to Makkah Mukarramah and ‘Abdullāh ibn as-Sā’īb was appointed to teach according to it. One copy was sent to Sham and Mughirah ibn Abī Shihāb was appointed to teach according to it. One copy was sent to Kufah and Abū Abdurrahmān as-Sulami was appointed to teach according to it. One copy was sent to Baṣrah and Āmir ibn ‘Abd Qais was appointed to teach according to it.23 These were the famous five cities from where the science of qirā’ah was disseminated. The people in these cities were also allowed to continue reciting as they had been doing previously, as long as it coincided with the

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22 المصدر السابق
23 المصدر السابق
'Uthmānī script. The saḥābah unanimously agreed that all other copies of the Qurʾān should be destroyed and the only recitation which will be allowed is that which is according to the 'Uthmānī script.

Even though the copies of the Qurʾān Karīm written by 'Uthmān were copied from the one written by Abū Bakr, the following features were unique to the 'Uthmānī script:

1. The sequence of the surahs was formed, as it was written in one book.
2. The scope of difference between the qirāʾāt was decreased, by omitting non-qurashi dialects which could not conform to the script. This is an established fact, since it has been proven in authentic aḥādīth that, prior to the 'Uthmānī masahif being written, the saḥābah, would recite the Qurʾān Karīm contrary to it. Omitting some qirāʾāt was totally permissible. It is not like omitting part of the Qurʾān Karīm. The preservation of the qirāʾāt was not binding on the ummah. It was an option (rukhsah) granted to them as a favour from Allāh Taʿālā. When the saḥābah realised that this was leading to disunity, they all agreed to give it up as this was in the best interest of the ummah.

The qirāʾāt which were omitted from the maṣāḥif are termed as shādh as people stopped reciting them. Some of these qirāʾāt have reached us today through authentic chain of narration, but not through tawāṭur. (Tawāṭur will be discussed at a later stage). In order for anything to be considered as part of the Qurʾān Karīm, it is necessary for it to be proven with tawāṭur. The shādh qirāʾāt will therefore not be accepted as Qurʾān, and neither will they be classified as non-Qurʾān. We will remain neutral in this matter.

The reason for the first compilation was to preserve the Qurʾān Karīm from being lost. The reason for the second compilation was to save the ummah from being disunited due to disagreement on qirāʾāt. Even though the 'Uthmānī script allowed diversity in its pronunciation, it served the purpose for which it was written well.

1. Prior to the 'Uthmānī script, non-qurashi qirāʾāt were in vogue. Some of these were no longer allowed.
2. Prior to the 'Uthmānī script, there was no standard measure besides verbal transmission by means of which the qirāʾāt could be judged, thus making it easy for a person to refute authentic qirāʾāt.
3. The recitation of inauthentic qirā’āt which were in vogue, were banned. Inauthentic qirā’āt includes that which was abrogated, mistakes that had crept into recitation as well as recitation of tafsīr (explanatory words) added to the text, as part of Qur‘ān Karīm.

During the period of the ṣaḥābah the various qirā’āt were identified by attributing them towards the ṣaḥābah who taught them or towards the cities in which they were recited. They would refer to the qirā’ah of Zaid ibn Thābit as: قراءة زيد or قراءة أهل المدينة or قراءة العامة or قراءة الجماعة. The qirā’ah of ’Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd was known as قراءة ابن مسعود: قراءة أهل الكوفة or قراءة ابن مسعود.

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Those tabi‘in who had learnt the Qur’an Karim from the saḥābah, taught it in their period of time. There were some tabi‘in who were especially known for teaching the Qur’an Karim. In Madinah Munawwarah there were eleven such tabi‘in. In Makkah Mukarramah there were six, in Kufah fifteen, in Basrah ten and in Sham there were two. Refer to an-Nashr for their names. These tabi‘in had many students. Some of these students were tabi‘in as well. The most famous students of these tabi‘in were as follows:

- In Madinah Munawwarah there were Abū Ja‘far Yazīd ibn Qa‘qā’, Shaibah ibn Niṣāh and Nāfī ibn ‘Abdurrahmān.
- In Makkah Mukarramah there were 'Abdullāh ibn Kathīr, Ḥumaid ibn Qais al-A’raj and Muḥammad ibn Muḥaisin.
- In Kūfah there were Yahyā ibn Wathāb, 'Āṣim ibn Abū Najūd, Sulaymān al-A’mash, Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb and 'Ali ibn Ḥamzah al-Kisā‘ī.
- In Baṣrāh there were 'Abdullāh ibn Abū Ishaq, 'Īsā ibn 'Umar, Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā', 'Āṣim al-Jahdārī and Ya’qūb al-Ḥidramī.
- In Sham there were 'Abdullāh ibn Āmīr, Atiyah ibn Qais al-Kilābī, Ismā‘īl ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Muhājir, Yahyā ibn al-Ḥārith az-Zimmārī and Shuraiḥ ibn Yazīd al-Ḥidramī.

However, during the period of these qurrā’, the qirā‘at were no longer known as the qirā‘ah of Zaid, the qirā‘ah of Ibn Mas‘ūd etc. They were now attributed to the qurrā who taught them. In spite of these qirā‘at being learnt from the saḥābah, they would say: The qirā‘ah of Nāfī, the qirā‘ah of Abū 'Amr, the qirā‘ah of Ibn Kathīr etc. The reason for this is that these qurrā did “ikhtiyār”. Ikhtiyār literally means to choose. Here it doesn’t mean that the qurrā innovated or deduced the qirā‘at. In fact, it means that they would learn multiple qirā‘at from various teachers. Thereafter they would not
teach all the qirāʿāt that they had acquired. Instead, they would choose some of what they had learnt and formulate a method of qirāʿah which they would recite and teach.

The variations in qirāʿah are not like those found in fiqhī masāʾil. A faqīh gathers whatever evidence is found pertaining to a masʿalah. He then uses his resources, applies his mind and concludes that which he feels is correct. This type of deduction (istinbāṭ) is not permissible in qirāʿah. A qārī has no option but to stick to that which he was taught. The stance of a faqīh with regards to his own view is correct with the possibility of error (صواب يحتمل الخطأ), and his stance with regards to the view of the opposition is error with a possibility of being correct (خطأ يحتمل الصواب). In actual fact, only one of the two views are correct. The faqīh who deduced the correct masʿalah will get a double reward while the one who erred will get a single reward. As far as the different qirāʿāt are concerned, each one is true and authentic (حق وصواب). In reality, each one is revealed by Allāh Taʿālā, therefore correct. Reciting either one of the two earns one equal reward.

After understanding that ikhtiyār is not istinbāṭ, let us look at an example of ikhtiyār. If a person had three teachers. In Surah al-Fātiḥah, the first teacher taught him to recite لکما with an alif, الصراط with a ṣād, and علیهم with a kasrah on the hā. The second teacher taught him لکما with an alif, السراط with a ṣād and علیهم with a ḍammah on the hā. The third teacher taught him لکما without an alif, الصراط with īshmām, and علیهم with šilah. These are three qirāʿāt which he has learnt, but if he has to do ikhtiyār and switch the combinations in different ways, he will have a total of twelve qirāʿāt. If a person chose to recite لکما with an alif, īshmām in الصراط and šilah in علیهم he will not be able to attribute this to any one of his teachers, but he can attribute each of these words separately to a teacher. Now it can easily be understood why the qirāʿāt were no longer attributed to the ṣaḥābah even though all of it was learnt from them. The reason is that the particular sequence in which it was recited was not learnt from any one ṣaḥābi, but it was the choice (ikhtiyār) of the qārī. Imām Nāfiʾ learnt qirāʿāt from seventy tābiʿīn. When he did ikhtiyār, he left out all those wajahs which were taught to him by one teacher only. Similarly, many of the qurrāʾ like Abū `Amr, Kīsāʾī, Shu`bah, Ḥafṣ etc. did ikhtiyār.

There are some conditions for the permissibility of ikhtiyār:

1. Every wajah (method of recitation) chosen, must be authentic i.e. It must have a valid sanad (chain of narration)
2. Each wajah must be attributed correctly to the teacher from whom it was learnt. There should be no false attribution.

3. Ikhtiyār is not allowed in places where there are two or more words and the wajah of one is based on the other. For example, there are two qirā’āt: أَحَد مَيَتَّكُم and أَحَد مَيَتَّكُم. Here it is not permissible to recite أَحَد مَيَتَّكُم because one is based on the other.34

During the second century, the famous muḥaddithin had compiled ahādīth on the subject of qirā’āt, but this was not regarding the qirā’āt/ikhtiyār of the qurrā’. It consisted of narrations mentioning the recitation of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

As far as compilations regarding the qirā’āt of the qurrā’ is concerned, there were books written during the second century, but these did not become popular amongst people. Amongst those who authored books during this time were: Yahyā ibn Ya’mur al-Adwānī ☪ (passed away 90 A.H.), Abān ibn Taghlib ☪ (passed away 141 A.H.), Muqātil ibn Sulaymān ☪ (passed away 150 A.H.), 'Abdul Ḥamīd ibn 'Abdul Majīd al-Akhfash ☪ (passed away 177 A.H.), Harūn ibn Mūsā al-A’war ☪ (passed away around 200 A.H.) etc.

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34 (شَرِّ النَّٰحِيَّةِ: ٢٢)
The names of twenty-one qurrā' were mentioned above, who were masters in the field of qirā’āt in their respective cities. They had dedicated themselves fully to learning and teaching qirā’ah. They would give full importance to the preservation of the qirā’āt. The people in their cities all attested to their experience in the field thus they gained popularity amongst the ummah. Students began flocking towards them in order to learn their qirā’āt. Even though ikhtiyār still remained permissible, – and will always remain permissible - people stopped practicing ikhtiyār of qirā’āt on a large scale. (The qurrā’ of later generations did practice ikhtiyār, but on a much smaller scale.) The reason given by Ibn Mujāhid is that they sensed the need to preserve the qirā’āt of these great qurrā’ to be greater than the need to do ikhtiyār. The number of students learning qirā’āt from the qurrā’ increased greatly. All of these students did not have equal potential and they were not of the same calibre. Some were proficient in their recitation, accurate in relating and retaining the qirā’āt with good understanding. Others were lacking in some of these qualities. Due to this, errors began to creep into recitation. As these errors became more common and widespread, there was a fear that the truth will be confused with falsehood. At this point in time, once again, the 'ulamā’ of the ummah rose to this challenge by introducing two things. Firstly, they outlined some principles according to which the authenticity of qirā’āt will be judged. Secondly, they preserved whatever authentic qirā’āt were known to them by compiling books on qirā’āt.

The three principles of an authentic qirā’āt:

1. The qirā’ah should at least have one valid chain of narration which is recorded. It should be well known to the qurrā’ (mashhūr/mustafid) and they should accept it as a valid qirā’ah (talaqqī bil qabūl). They should not consider it to be an error or an isolated narration. The clause - المّنقول إلىينا نقلا متواترا - is included in the definition of “al-Qur’ān”. This means that the Qur’ān Karīm is that which is transmitted with “tawātur” i.e. a narration transmitted by so many reliable people in every period of time, that one will be convinced of its authenticity. The number of people
narrating is not stipulated, because it can vary, depending on the type of people narrating, the information that is conveyed, and the time and place concerned. Tawātur is the strongest form of narration. It gives the benefit of knowledge of certainty ( علم اليقين).

There are a few types of tawātur. One type is tawātur al-insād (chains of narration which are recorded). When we refer to a hadith being mutawātir, it is of this type. One will be able to produce the different chains of narration right up to the messenger ( ﷺ). The number of mutawātir aḥādīth found, is very small because of the strict conditions which are necessary for it.

Another type of tawātur is tawātur aṭ-ṭabaqah (one generation narrating from the previous generation without recording the names of those who have transmitted the information). When we refer to the Qur'ān Karīm being mutawātir, it is of this type. Every generation had hundreds of ḥuffādh and qurrā’ who taught the Qur'ān Karīm to the next generation. Because of the large number of people narrating it, it was not necessary to record their names. Recording the chains of narration here, would be a useless exercise since nobody can doubt it. It can be compared to a person who records the names of people who possess one nose and two eyes. If you were to ask every Muslim person today as to who can produce an uninterrupted chain of narration stating that his or her great grandfather recited Surah al-Fātiḥah, then not many will be able to do it, even though they may be convinced about the same. Similar is the case with qirā‘at. Even though one is not able to produce a record of chains of narration, it is still authentic because it has been passed down, generation to generation. A person doesn’t need to study a chain of narration to be convinced of its authenticity. He sees a world full of people around him reciting these qirā‘at. As for the previous generations, how can a person be convinced about which qirā‘ah were recited by them? How will he be able to tell that a certain qirā‘ah had tawātur aṭ-ṭabaqah in previous times? Doesn’t a possibility exist of a qirā‘ah being fabricated by someone, and thereafter it becomes famous? In order to answer these questions, the three principles were put in place. These three principles are an indication of the qirā‘ah having tawātur aṭ-ṭabaqah in previous generations.

Had the tawātur of the Quʾān Karīm been like that of hadith, there would have been no need for the three principles. If any part of the Qurʾān Karīm is proven through tawātur al-insād, it will provide knowledge of certainty. It will become binding on every person to accept it, irrespective of
whether it meets any condition or not.\textsuperscript{40} The need to judge according to three principles arises in a case when the narration has reached us with tawātur at-tabaqah and the status of the chain of narration in previous generations is unknown. Accepting a qirā’ah based on it having “one valid chain of narration which is recorded” does not imply in any way, that the qirā’ah is not mutawātir.

2. The qirā’ah should conform to the rasm of any one of the maṣāḥif `uthmāniyyah with regards to substituting, adding and deleting of words. As mentioned above, there were some places where words were written differently in the maṣāḥif `uthmāniyyah to accommodate more than one qirā’ah. It is therefore not necessary for the qirā’ah to conform to all the maṣāḥif.

It is not necessary to conform to the script with regards to the spelling of words and the formation of letters. Non conformity here is unavoidable as the spelling and formation will change according to different traditions. There are words like زكوة and ضرب where all qirā’at do not conform to the script. With regards to spelling and formation, we will suffice on the other two principles.\textsuperscript{41}

It should also be noted that the conformity in most places is in essence whilst in some places it is based on probability. E.g. The qirā’ah (لك ما وث) with an alif conforms to the script (لك ما) based on probability that the alif was deleted for abridgment as in words like زكوة.\textsuperscript{42}

3. The qirā’ah should be according to the rules of grammar of any notable Arab dialect. It suffices for it to be eloquent, and not necessarily most eloquent. It does not need to be the most common dialect either. It also does not need to be a unanimous opinion. Therefore, if some grammarians object to its accuracy, it will still be valid.

From the three principles, the first one is most vital and the other two are subsequent to it.\textsuperscript{43} Whenever the first is present, the remaining two will be found. The reason for mentioning the second and third principles is to make it easy for the average student to distinguish between an authentic qirā’ah and an inauthentic one. Finding out the status of a sanad is relatively easy, but finding out the details of shuhrah, istifāḍah and talaqqī requires expertise in the field of qirā’ah. Once the average student sees that the second and third principles are not fulfilled, he can already tell that the qirā’ah is inauthentic. Once any qirā’ah meets the above-mentioned criteria, it will be classified as authentic, irrespective of which Imām it is narrated from. It could be from any of the seven a’immah, any of the ten a’immah or

\textsuperscript{40} A Basic History of Qirā’at
\textsuperscript{41} Kenz al-Ma’ani (١:٨٣)\textsuperscript{2}
\textsuperscript{42} Al-Masūd Al-Ju’fī (١:١٦)\textsuperscript{2}
\textsuperscript{43} Al-Masūd Al-Ju’fī (١:١٦)\textsuperscript{2}
anyone besides them. If any one of the conditions are not met, the qirā’ah will be deemed as inauthentic, no matter who it is being attributed to.44

The significance of the three principles

The importance of having a valid sanad is proven right from the beginning. Various șaḥābah are reported to have said: (Recitation must be according to a method which the latter generation receives from the previous one). Abū 'Amr al-BAṣrī, a great qārī and naḥwī said: “If it was not necessary to recite according to the way one had learnt, I would have recited a certain word in a certain way.”

Reciting a qirā’ah without a valid sanad, based on analogy (qiyyās) is not permissible. For example, one may not assume that because Imām 'Āṣim recites مَا لِلناس with an alif in Surah al-Fātiḥah, therefore we could recite مَا لِلناس with an alif in Surah an-Nās.

Muḥammad ibn Miqsam was a qārī and naḥwī who lived in Baghdad. He was born in 265 A.H and passed away in 354 A.H. He held an erroneous view that as long as a qirā’ah conforms to the maṣāḥif and it is according to Arabic grammar, it should be allowed. He was arrested and presented in court in the presence of the 'ulamā’ and qurrā’ of his time. He was given the choice to retract his view or he would be lashed until he does. He announced his repentance and an official record of this was kept. Abū Aḥmad al-Fardi as well as others had seen in a dream that Ibn Miqsam was performing ṣalāh with his back towards the qiblah. It was interpreted to indicate his false belief with regards to the qirā’āt which he had unduly allowed.45 This incident proves the firm stance of the 'ulamā’ with regards to the importance of reciting with a valid sanad.

The importance of conformity to the maṣāḥif can be established from the fact that the șaḥābah unanimously agreed that every method of recitation which is not according to the maṣāḥif should be abandoned.46 The qurrā’ who succeeded them also considered conformity to the maṣāḥif to be necessary. Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Shanabūdhd was a great qārī in Baghdad. He passed away in 328 A.H. He held an erroneous view that it is permissible to recite the shādh qirā’āt (which does not conform to the maṣāḥif). A meeting was called with the governor, Abū 'Ali ibn Maqlah, Ibn Mujāhid, and a group of
'ulamā’ and judges. Ibn Shanabdūh admitted to reciting the Shādh qirā’āt and was adamant on his view. He spoke out harshly against the governor, the judge and Ibn Mujāhid. The governor ordered that he be lashed. He was thus forced to retract due to the pain of the punishment. He cursed the governor saying: May Allāh Ta’ālā cut off your hand and may He scatter all his matters. The curse was answered and the governor underwent much disgrace. This incident proves that the ‘ulamā’ were strict on the condition of conformity to the masāḥif to the extent that they did not even spare a great personality like Ibn Shanabdūh. He too was taken to task for violating the policy. As for his curse coming true, this doesn’t prove that he was correct. It teaches us to deal in an appropriate way with the people of the Qurʾān Karīm, even if they are at fault. As for the shādh qirā’āt that he recited, we cannot tell with certainty that they were invalid. It was mentioned previously that we remain neutral in this matter.

The importance of a qirā’ah being according to Arabic grammar is established from the fact that the Qurʾān Karīm was revealed according to the most eloquent dialects. Any qirā’ah which is in conflict with grammar must therefore be a fabricated one.

One of the first people who made mention of the three principles was Abū ’Ubaid Qāsim ibn Sallām. Ibn Jarir at-Tabari (passed away 310 A.H.) mentioned the first two principles. Abū Bakr ibn Mujāhid (passed away 324 A.H.) and Ibn Khālawayh (passed away 370 A.H.) have also mentioned these principles. Ahmad ibn ’Ammār al-Mahdawī (passed away 430 A.H.), Makkī ibn Abī Ṭalib (passed away 437 A.H.), Abū ’Amr ad-Dānī (passed away 444 A.H.), Abū Shāmah (passed away 665 A.H.) etc. followed thereafter.

The compilation of books on qirā’ah

The authentic qirā’āt/ikhtiyār of the qurā’ were preserved by compiling them in book form. The compilations of those in the third century and after, gained recognition. For sake of brevity, the names of only a few authors are being mentioned below.

1. The first renowned Imām known for compiling the qirā’āt of the qurā’ was Abū ’Ubaid Qāsim ibn Sallām. Abū ’Ubaid was born in Afghanistan in the year 157 A.H. He travelled to Iraq in 176 A.H. to acquire knowledge. He learnt qirā’ah from ‘Alī al-Kisā’i, Isma’il ibn Ja’far, Hishām ibn
'Ammār, Sulaim ibn 'Īsā, Yahya ibn Ādam etc. He became a leading qāri', lughwi, faqih and muhaddith. He was appointed as a judge in Tarasūs, Turkey in the year 192 A.H. After 18 years of service in this post, he went to Egypt, and from there to Baghdad. He authored many books, the most famous of them being al-ṭabī‘ah, fatsayl al-qirā‘āt, ḍabī‘ah al-mansūf, āmūl, Ghrib al-ḥadīth. He also wrote the books on qirā‘āt. His book on qirā‘āt consisted of fifteen or twenty-five qirā‘āt. He was known as ʿAlā‘ al-nāṣ bilāt al-ʿarb. One of his outstanding services which he rendered to the ummah was explaining the meanings of uncommon words which occur in the ḥadīth of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. It was his practice to divide the night into three parts. One part was for sleep, one for ṣalāh and one for writing. He performed Ḥajj 219 A.H. and remained in Makkah Mukarramah until he passed away there in 224 A.H.

2. Abū 'Umar ad-Dūrī. His name was Ḥafṣ ibn 'Umar. He was a great Ṽahwi, who was originally from Baghdad. He studied under various prominent 'ulamā‘ of his time. He compiled the book: جزء في قراءة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في قوله. This book does not include the seven qirā‘āt. According to Abū 'Ali al-Ahwāzī and al-Ja‘barī, ad-Dūrī studied all the seven qirā‘āt. al-Ja‘barī has mentioned that ad-Dūrī had compiled a book with regards to these seven qirā‘āt. He is probably referring to another book. He passed away in the year 246 A.H.

3. Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad ibn Jubair ibn Muḥammad. He was originally from Kūfah, but settled in Antakīyyah, Turkey, where remained teaching qirā‘āt up to the end of his life. Amongst his teachers were: 'Ali al-Kisā‘i, Sulaim ibn ʿĪsā, Yahyā ibn Mubārak al-Yazīdī etc. His book on qirā‘ah consisted of five qirā‘āt. He passed away in the year 258 A.H.

4. Abū ʿIsḥāq Ismā‘īl ibn ʿIsḥāq al-Mālikī was born in the year 199 A.H. He was the judge of Baghdad for twenty-two years. He was a great muhaddith and faqih. He promoted the madhhab of Imām Mālik in Baghdad. Amongst his teachers was Qālūn ʿĪsā ibn Mīnā. He authored various books, one of them being a book on qirā‘ah which consisted of twenty qirā‘āt. He passed away in the year 282 A.H.

5. Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr at-Ṭabarī. Born in the year 224 A.H. in Tabrastān. He travelled to the different cities of Iraq and Egypt to acquire knowledge. After returning to Baghdad, he was offered the post of being the judge, but he declined. He was a qāri‘, faqih, muhaddith, mufassir and Mu‘arrīkh. He is known as ʾAbām al-mufassirīn. However, his criticism against some mutawwātir qirā‘āt is considered to be one of his lapses. In spite of his high rank in knowledge, he was always humble. Amongst his writings is a book on qirā‘ah, al-Jāmi‘. It consisted of more than thirty qirā‘āt. He passed away in Baghdad in the year 310 A.H.
6. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Umar ad-Dājūnī. He lived in Palestine. Although he was blind, he travelled far to acquire the knowledge of qirāʾāt. When he reached Baghdad to learn from Ibn Mujāhid, the latter learn qirāʾāt from him and he told his students as well to learn from him. His book on qirāʾāh named: کتاب طبقات القراءة included the qirāʾāh of Abū Jaʿfar. He passed away in the year 324 A.H.

7. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Mūsā ibn 'Abbās ibn Mujāhid. He was born in Baghdad in the year 245 A.H. He was a great qārī, muḥaddith and lughawi. He surpassed all his peers and outmatched them. He learnt from a vast galaxy of teachers. Amongst them was 'Abdurrahmān ibn 'Abdūs to whom he recited the Qurʾān Karim twenty times. He was the first person to compile the seven qirāʾāt in his book. None of the qurraʾ had as many students as he had. Hundreds of students would learn from him at one given time. He would have up to 84 deputy qurraʾ helping him to correct the recitation of the students. He passed away in the year 324 A.H.

8. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Naṣr ash-Shażāʾi. He was a famous Imām in Basrah who learnt from high ranking teachers. He also compiled a book on qirāʾāh. He passed away in the year 370 A.H.

9. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn Mahrān. He hails from Iran. He travelled to Baghdad and Damascus to acquire knowledge. He was the muḥaqiq of his time in qirāʾāh. A very pious man whose duʿāʾs were readily accepted. From amongst his writings are كتاب القراءة, كتاب الطبقات للقراءة, كتاب الشامل etc. His book consists of ten qirāʾāt. He passed away in the year 381 A.H.

10. Abū Ṭayyib 'Abdul Mun'im ibn Ghalbūn. He was born in the year 309 A.H in Halab, Sham, but settled in Egypt. He was an expert qārī, very reliable and pious man. He is the ustādh of leading qurraʾ like Abūl Ḥasan ibn Ghalbūn, Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālīb, Abū 'Umar at-Talhamī, Abū 'Abdullāh Ibn Sufyān etc. He compiled the book كتاب القراءة, which consists of seven qirāʾāt. He passed away in the year 389 A.H.

11. Abūl Ḥasan Ṭāhir ibn 'Abdul Mun'im ibn Ghalbūn is the son of Abū Tayyib, mentioned above. He hails from Sham, travelled to Iraq to acquire knowledge, settled in Egypt and passed away there. He learnt qirāʾāh from his father as well as other teachers. He is the ustādh of the famous Abū 'Amr ad-Dānī. He compiled the book كتاب القراءة, which consisted of eight qirāʾāt. He passed away in the year 399 A.H.

Qārī Fatḥ Muhammad has listed seven books that were compiled in the third century and more than twenty-five in the fourth century.

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50 غاية النهاية لابن الجزري
The qurrā’ were scattered across the different Islamic lands, including Ḥijāz, Sham, Iraq, Iran and Egypt. After the books of qirā’ah were compiled, students aspired to learn the qirā’āt contained in each of these books directly from the authors. They would undertake long journeys to reach them and get ijāzah (authorization) from them. Once they received ijāzah from any particular author and recited according to what he taught, or according to what he compiled, it would be said that they were reciting according to the “ṭarīq” of the author or according to the “ṭarīq” of his book.

Technically, any qirā’ah which is attributed to any person in a sanad (chain of transmission), besides the qārī and his student, can be termed as a “ṭarīq” of that person. If it is attributed to the qārī, it is termed as a “qirā’ah” of the qārī. If it is attributed to the student of the qārī, it is termed as a “riwaayah” of the student (rāwī).

Some continued to study according to the former trend, without the qirā’āt being compiled in writing.

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The practice of compiling books on qirāʿāt continued during the 5th and 6th centuries and the practice of the students also continued. They would endeavour to achieve the shortest sanad possible to narrate from the qurrāʾ who compiled books on qirāʿah. Hundreds of books were compiled on qirāʿah during these centuries. For sake of brevity, the names of just a few famous authors are being listed.

<table>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of Author</th>
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<td>Abū Ṭāhir Ismāʿīl ibn Khalaf al-Ansārī</td>
<td>Spain/Egypt</td>
<td>al-ʿUnwān</td>
<td>7 455 A.H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Abūl Qāsim Yūsuf ibn ʿAlī al-Hudhalī</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>al-Kāmil</td>
<td>50 465 A.H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Shuraih al-Ashbili</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>al-Kāfī</td>
<td>7 476 A.H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Abū Maʿshar ʿAbdulkarīm ibn ʿAbūṣṣamad at-Ṭabarī</td>
<td>Makkah</td>
<td>at-Talkhīṣ</td>
<td>8 478 A.H.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qari Fatih Muhammad has listed more than fifty books that were written in the fifth century and thirty in the sixth century.

The 5th and 6th century saw the science of qira’ah still flourishing in the Islamic lands of Iran, Iraq, Shām and Egypt. During this period, qira’ah also spread to the countries of North Africa and Spain. Abū 'Umar at-Ṭalamanakī was the first to introduce qira’ah to Spain.

We also notice the trend of compiling the “seven qira’āt” gaining some momentum. However, the number of qira’āt which were prevalent still remained unrestricted, as in previous centuries.

It is important to note that the various qira’āt which were prevalent in the Islamic cities, were being recited by those who specialized in qira’ah. As far as the common people were concerned, there was one qira’ah which was commonly recited by all of them. The details of this will be mentioned in chapter ten.
The 7th and 8th century

During this period, the number of books compiled on qirā’ah decreased substantially. The names of some qurrā' who did compile qirā’ah, are as follows:

1. Abdurraḥmān ibn Ismā'il as-Safrāwī. Passed away 636 A.H.
3. Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Mawṣili. Passed away 656 A.H.
5. Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar al-Ja'barī. Passed away 732 A.H.
6. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abdul Muḥammad ibn 'Aḥmad al-Wajīh al-Wāṣīṭī. Passed away 740 A.H.
7. Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Andalūsī. Passed away 745 A.H.
8. Ṭāhir ibn Arabshah al-Asbahānī. Passed away 786 A.H.

Qārī Faṭḥ Muḥammad has listed eighty books that were written in the seventh and eighth centuries. Approximately half of these books were new compilations and half were commentaries etc. of Shāṭibiyah.

One of the reasons for minimal compilations could be that some of the previous books were exceptionally well written, to the extent that the qurrā' considered teaching them to be more beneficial, instead of compiling new books. These books therefore gained popularity. They were:

1. At-Taysir of Abū 'Amr ad-Dānī. (444 A.H.)
2. Al-'Unwān of Abū Ṭāhir ibn Khalaf. (455 A.H.)
3. Al-Irshād of Abūl 'Īzz al-Qalānisī. (521 A.H.)
4. Ḥirz al-Amānī of Abūl Qaṣīm ibn Firrūh ash-Shāṭībī. (590 A.H.)

The significance of the first two books is that they were authored by qurrā' who were not only proficient in the science of Qur'ān and qirā'ah, but also in Arabic and ḥadīth. The books were also brief, thus making them easy to memorize. They were a concise version of the detailed works of the same authors. At-Taysir was abbreviated form al-Jāmī, and al-'Unwān was abbreviated from al-Iktifā'. These books comprised of authentic narrations which were transmitted from well recognized qurrā'.
The significance of al-Irshād is that the author was an expert in the explaining the meanings of the qirāʿāt, a master in the complexities of qirāʿāt, knowledgeable about the ṭuruq of qirāʿāt and a possessor of the shortest asānīd in qirāʿāt. He was actually lucky to have these short asānīd, because his teacher Abū 'Alā Ghulām al-Ḥirās & travelled to different cities, met with the qurrah’ and acquired knowledge from them. When Abū 'Alī returned to Wāsīṭ, Abū 'Izz learnt from him and then compiled al-Irshād. Al-Irshād is also a concise version of al-Kifāyah, written by the same author. Al-‘Unwān was more famous in Egypt and al-Irshād was more famous in Iraq.\(^{51}\)

**The Ṭariq of Shāṭibiyyah**

When a person recites any of the seven qirāʿāt in the manner explained in the book, Ḥirz al-Amānī, authored by Abū Ḥaṣim ash-Shāṭibi &, it is said that he is reciting according to the ṭariq of Shāṭibiyyah. The significance of the book, Ḥirz al-Amānī, is that it is in essence, at-Taysīr in rhythm form with minor additions. It contains the seven famous qirāʿāt, each being narrated by two narrators, with each narration generally transmitted through one ṭariq.

The fact that it is in rhythm makes it even easier to memorize. The level of eloquence, the usage of metaphors, the subtle indications, its comprehensive nature, are but some of the reasons why this work supersedes all other poetry by far. The author, being an expert in qirāʿah, lughah, fiqh and ḥadīth, was also a wali (close friend) of Allāh Ta’ālā.

Another reason for minimal compilations on qirāʿāt during the 7th and 8th century, could be that the qurrah’ in this period focused more on writing commentaries on the works of ash-Shāṭibi & compared to compiling new books, as there was a greater need for this. A few famous qurrah’ amongst those who wrote commentaries on the works of ash-Shāṭibi &, during this period, were:

1. Abū Ḥaṣan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad as-Sakhāwī &.
2. Abū Shāmah 'Abdurrahmān ibn Ismā’īl &.
3. Abū Yāsuf Ḥusain ibn Abū 'Izz al-Hamzānī &.
4. Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Alḥmad al-Fāsī &.
5. Abū Ḥishāq İbrāhîm ibn 'Umar al-Ja’barī &.
6. Abū l'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Jūbārah &.
7. Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Mawṣili &. 

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\(^{51}\)المجد (٢٩)

The fact of the matter is that the excellence of Ḥirz al-Amānī overpowered all other books on qirāʼah. People flocked to Egypt in order to learn this ṭarīq from the author during his lifetime and from his students after his demise. Everyone aspired to have the shortest sanad possible leading to ash-Shāṭibī ﷺ. This can be gauged from the fact that Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ only has two links between him and ash-Shāṭibī ﷺ even though two hundred years had passed. 52 Many students restricted themselves to learning this ṭarīq, whereas they would learn various turuq of qirāʼah prior to this. Ḥirz al-Amānī also fell prey to exaggeration. Some extract such meanings from it which were not intended by the author. Some believe that the book is immaculately flawless. Some also believe that the only qirāʼāt which are authentic are those which are included in Ḥirz al-Amānī and other qirāʼāt are not established. Some believe that the number of authentic qirāʼāt are only seven and nothing more. 53 When Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abdul Mu'min al-Wāṣīti ﷺ arrived in Damascus around the year 730 A.H., he began teaching the ten qirāʼāt. Some qurrā’ of Damascus who only knew ash-Shāṭibiyah and at-Taysir became jealous of him. They asked the judge to prevent him from teaching, but the 'ulamā’ of the time all agreed that it was permissible and that all ten qirāʼāt were equally authentic. 54

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52 غاية النهاية (٢٢:٢)
53 المصدر السابق
54 الشفر (١٠٧)
This century marks the advent of Abul Khair Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Jazrī ioxide. He was born in Damascus in the year 751 A.H. He studied qirā’ah together with other Islamic sciences. He spent his life in various countries and cities which include Damascus, Cairo, Alexandria, Makkah, Madinah, Yemen, Turkey, Transoxiana, Hiraat, Yazd, Asbahan, Shiraz and Basrah. Throughout his travels, he was either involved in learning or teaching the Qur'ān Karīm. The total number of qurrā’ from whom he learnt qirā’ah is forty-six. He taught qirā’ah in the Jāmi’ Umawī in Damascus. Thereafter, he took up the grand post of teaching qirā’ah at Madrasah Šāliḥiyah, which was held by his teacher Ibn as-Sallār ioxide, after he had passed away. He was authorized in issuing fatāwā by Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr, Shaykh Ḍiyā’ ad-Dīn Sa’dullāh al-Qazwīnī and Sirāj ad-Dīn al-Bulqīnī ioxide. He was appointed as a judge in Damascus as well as in Shiraz. He established a madrasah named Dār al-Qur'ān, in each of these two cities where he taught qirā’ah. He participated in jihādah together with the 'Uthmānī ruler, Sultan Beyazid. The Sultan was overpowered by the Mongol ruler, Timorlink. Ibn al-Jazrī was taken by the Mongols to Transoxiana where he remained for about three years. Many students of many parts of the world studied under him. He wrote many books on qirā’ah and other subjects. Amongst his famous books are: at-Tamhid Fi ‘Ilm at-Tajwīd, Munjīd al-Muqrī’ in wa Murshid at-Ṭālibin, al-Muqaddimah al-Jazariyyah, at-Ṭaḥbir at-Taysīr, ad-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah, an-Nashr Fīl Qirā’āt al-‘Ashr, at-Ṭayyibah, Ghāyah an-Nihāyah, al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn etc.

It was his practice to fast on every Monday, Thursday and three days each month. He was also punctual with tahajjud ṣalāh. He never missed, even when on journey.

In his era, Ibn al-Jazrī ioxide realized that the science of qirā’ah was fading away, as most people were only prepared to dedicate a limited amount of time to it. In that short space of time, they would only study the famous books like at-Taysīr, al-‘Unwān and ash-Shāṭibiyah. These books only contain seven qirā’āt and this too, is confined to a few ṭuruq only. Many qirā’āt which were prevalent in previous generations were no longer existent and many were on the verge of becoming extinct. Ibn al-Jazrī ioxide managed to salvage whatever he could by undertaking many journeys to various qurrā’ of his time. After obtaining authorization for more than sixty books on qirā’ah which included thousands of ṭuruq, he condensed
much of it into his famous ۃَرِیقُ ٹَییبہ, which he taught to many students in many parts of the world. In this way, a huge treasure of qira’ah, which had almost vanished was secured for future generations to benefit from.

The ۃَرِیقُ ٹَییبہ

When a person recites any of the ten qira’āt in the manner explained in the book, ٹَییبہ an-Nashr, authored by Muḥammad ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ, it is said that he is reciting according to the ۃَرِیقُ ٹَییبہ. The book ٹَییبہ, written in rhythm is a summary of the book an-Nashr which is in prose. It contains ten qira’āt, each being narrated by two narrators, with each narration transmitted through two ṭuruq initially, four ṭuruq subsequently, and many more eventually. The number of narrations in it totals twenty, which are ultimately transmitted through approximately a thousand ṭuruq. This is unlike Shāṭibiyyah etc., which include fourteen narrations, generally transmitted through only one ۃَرِیقُ each.

The following diagram outlines the ṭuruq in the qira’āh of ٹَییبہ an-Nashr which are included in ٹَییبہ. The remainder of the qira’āt can be understood in a similar way. (Only those which have a tick ☑ are found in Shāṭibiyyah. The multiple ṭuruq mentioned at the bottom are also not included in Shāṭibiyyah)
When composing this taraf, Ibn al-Jazrī first chose the ten qirā‘at, two narrations for each qirā‘ah, two turuq for each narration, each of which branch into two, which gives four turuq. Thereafter, he searched through thirty-seven books for these turuq, which could be included in his Ṣayyībah. It is important to note that all the turuq of these thirty-seven books are not included, as many of them do not concur with what he had chosen. The diagram below explains how many turuq 'Abdūl 'Izz al-Qalānisī included in his book al-Ghayh for the qirā‘ah of Imām Nāfi’. All of those which are shaded, do not coincide with the turuq of an-Nashr, hence they have been omitted.

The remainder of the riwāyat can be understood in a like manner. Most of the thirty-seven books also have a similar explanation to them.
Another outstanding feature of the book an-Nashr is that Ibn al-Jazrī has basically covered all the important aspects of tajwid and qirā’ah in it. Almost every ikhtilāf has been discussed in detail, followed by a just ruling, deduced on the basis of confirmed principles. Only authentic narrations have been recorded and distinguished from those which are not. All objections against authentic qirā’āt have been satisfactorily answered. Isolated narrations have been identified. Every effort has been made to trace the correct source of every single wajah of qirā’ah, in order to avoid false attribution. A book, no qārī can be independent of. It is one of its kind, and it can only be truly appreciated by one who studies it.

The praises of the 'ulamā’ awarded to Ibn al-Jazrī testify to the fact that they recognized the high rank he had attained. For sake of brevity, only a few statements are given. Ibn Hajar states: “He was the highest authority in the science of qirā’ah in all regions.” Allāmah Sakhāwī has quoted at-Tūsī saying: “He was unequalled in narrating with the shortest asānīd, in the memorizing of ḥadīth, in the science of jarḥ wa ta’dīl and in knowing the lives of previous and latter narrators.” As-Suyūṭī states: “He was an Imām of qirā’āt, unmatched during his time throughout the world.”

The fact is that all the qurrā’ who came after Ibn al-Jazrī throughout the ages, have all depended on him. He rightfully deserves the titles: ٌا مام المقرئين و خاتمة الحافظين المحققين.
The Tariq of ad-Durrah al-Mudī'ah

Ad-Durrah al-Mudī'ah is a book authored by Ibn al-Jazrī. It is in rhythm from and it is the summary of the book, Taḥbīr at-Taysīr also compiled by Ibn al-Jazrī. At-Taḥbīr is in prose and it contains the seven qirā’āt which are found in ad-Dānī’s at-Taysīr, with three additional qirā’āt, viz. The qirā’āt of Abū Ja'far, Ya’qūb and Khalaf. The tūruq of the three qirā’āt link up to the following authors:

1. Muḥammad ibn Khayrūn
2. Abū Ṭāhir ibn Siwār
3. Abūl Ḥizz al-Qalānīsī
4. Abū Bakr al-Khayyāṭ
5. Abū Muḥammad Sībṭ al-Khayyāṭ

These tūruq were randomly selected by Ibn al-Jazrī from an-Nashr. They have no special significance. He could have chosen any of the other tūruq in place of these.

Ad-Durrah only discusses the three qirā’āt. However, it is imperative to first know the seven in order to fully grasp the meanings of ad-Durrah. When a person recites any of the three qirā’āt in the manner explained in the book, ad-Durrah al-Mudī’ah, it is said that he is reciting according to the tariq of ad-Durrah al-Mudī’ah.

There were others besides Ibn al-Jazrī who compiled books in the ninth century as well. Qārī Fath Muḥammad has listed more than thirty books which were written in the ninth century. Some of these were commentaries of Shāṭibiyah, Ṭayyibah and Durrah.

The seven qirā’āt

The seven qirā’āt refer to the qirā’ah of Imām Nāfī’ ibn ‘Abdurrahmān, Imām ‘Abdullāh ibn Kathir, Imām Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alā’, Imām ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Āmir, Imām ‘Āṣim ibn Abin Najūd, Imām Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb, and Imām ‘Aly ibn Ḥamzah al-Kisā’ī. It is important to note that the seven aḥruf (dialects) according to which the Qur’an Karīm was revealed are different to the seven qirā’āt. The qirā’āt all fall within the scope of the seven aḥruf, no matter how many they are. It has been explained above that there were numerous qurra’ in the second and third century who were famous for teaching qirā’ah. The names of twenty-one of these were listed. The ummah always recited according to the qirā’āt of many a’immah, and they will continue doing so. In the early centuries of Islam, no one objected to having more than
seven qirāʻāt, nor did anyone restrict the number of qirāʻāt to any number. As long as the three principles were adhered to, there was no problem with reciting any qirāʼah. The seven qirāʻāt gained popularity from the time Ibn Mujāhid compiled his book, السبع. He was the first person to choose these seven qirāʻāt. There are two possible reasons why he had chosen the number seven. It was to concur with the number of “aḥruf” revealed and to concur with the number of māṣāḥif written by 'Uthmān. There would have been no problem with choosing seven as every author is at liberty to compile as he pleases. The problem arose when he said in his book: “These are the qirāʻāt which are being recited in the Muslim cities.” Although he did not mean restriction, it did give this impression to the common people, since they were already aware of the seven aḥruf. Now, when they heard about the seven qirāʻāt, they thought it to be the same thing. It would have been better if Ibn Mujāhid said: “These are some of the qirāʻāt ...” After Ibn Mujāhid, many authors followed the same trend by compiling the same seven qirāʻāt in their books. Reciting according to the ṭarīq of any of these books can be termed as “the seven qirāʻāt.” One of the most famous books which contains the seven qirāʻāt is Hirz al-Amānī. Therefore, when the term “seven qirāʻāt” is used in present times, it usually refers to the ṭarīq of Shātibiyyah.

In any case, even though an authentic qirāʼah is judged on the basis of the three principles, and not on the basis of it being narrated from the seven qurrā’, a person will still be more convinced about the authenticity of the seven qirāʻāt, because of the popularity of these a’immah and also because most of what is attributed to them is authentic. However, one should not forget that the seven qirāʻāt are not the only qirāʻāt which are mutawaʻātir, as stated by majority of the ‘ulamā’.

The three qirāʻāt

The three qirāʻāt refer to the qirāʻāt of Imām Abū Ja’far Yazīd ibn Qa’qā’, Imām Ya’qūb ibn Ishāq and Imām Khalaf ibn Hishām. Many authors have included these qirāʻāt in their books. One of the most famous books written on the three qirāʻāt is ad-Durrah al-Muḍi’ah. It is for this reason that in present times, when the term “three qirāʻāt” is used, it generally refers to the ṭarīq of ad-Durrah.
The ten qirāʿāt

The ten qirāʿāt refer to the aforementioned seven qirāʿāt together with the aforementioned three. These ten qirāʿāt were included by many authors in their books. In present times, the ten qirāʿāt are known to be of two types: sughrā and kubrā. Sughrā refers to the ṭarīq of Shātibiyyah together with the ṭarīq of ad-Durrah. Kubrā refers to the ṭarīq of Ṭayyibah.

The fourteen qirāʿāt

The fourteen qirāʿāt refer to the aforementioned ten qirāʿāt together with the following four:

1. Muḥammad ibn 'Abdurrahmān ibn Muḥayṣin
2. Yaḥyā ibn Mubārak al-Yazīdī
3. Ḥasan ibn Yasār al-alusī
4. Sulaymān ibn Mahrān al-A'māsh

These qirāʿāt were compiled by various authors in their books. In present times, it is common to study these qirāʿāt according to the ṭarīq of al-Fawāʿid al-Muṭabarāh. This is a book in rhythm compiled by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Muṭawallī. The turuq of these qirāʿāt are from the following books:

1. Al-Mubhij written by Sibt al-Khayyat 'Abdullāh ibn 'Alī
2. Al-Mufradāt written by Abū 'Alī al-Ahwāzī
3. Al-Mustanār written by Abū Ṭāhir ibn Siwār

It should be noted that Muḥammad Mutwallī’s sanad for these four qirāʿāt does not link up to Ibn al-Jazrī, but to some of Ibn al-Jazrī’s contemporaries.
- Chapter Eight -

The 10th century up until the 15th century

The acceptance with which Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ was blessed is amazing. He is known as “Musnid ad-dunyā ﬁl qirā’āt.” This means that presently, every single sanad of authentic qirā’āt link up to him. This does not mean that he was the only person who taught qirā’ah in his era. There were many other qurrā’ as well who taught qirā’ah. The students of Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ learnt from others besides him as well. The qurrā’ chose to record his sanad instead of others because of his status and significance in qirā’ah. In this way the sanad of his contemporaries and their students phased out, while his sanad continued. The transmission of all authentic qirā’āt prevalent in our times, is recorded through the medium of Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ. This is an accolade of Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ that nobody can take away. It is there to stand for good as time cannot be reversed. “This is the grace of Allāh Ta’ālā which He gives to whoever He desires.”

The number of books written on qirā’ah in these last six centuries are innumerable. In addition to the ṭariq of Shātibiyah, it has been a common practice for the last six centuries to study the ṭariq of Durrah and Ṭayyibah. Accordingly, most of the books of qirā’ah written are pertaining to these three ṭuruq.

Some of the outstanding books are:

1. Inshād ash-Sharīd by Abū ’Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ghāzī ﷺ. Lived in Morocco. Passed away in 910 A.H.
3. al-Budār az-Zāhirah by the author mentioned above. The book pertains to the ten qirā’āt. The distinct feature in an-Nashshār’s books was that it is incredibly user friendly. The places of iktilāf can be easily determined and they are repeated when they occur more than once. Al-Budār is a concise version of Ibn al-Jazrī’s ﷺ an-Nashr. The lapse in this work is that it included multiple ṭuruq without distinction between them. Those who restricted themselves to this book, inevitably became victims of talfīq (Mixing the ṭuruq and attributing them falsely).
4. Laṭāʿīf al-Ishārāt by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭallānī ﷺ. The book contains the ten qirā’āt according to the ṭariq of Ṭayyibah as well as the four qirā’āt. Al-Laṭāʿīf is considered to be a commentary on an-Nashr. It is a voluminous work which is published in ten parts. It is one of the
most comprehensive books on qirā‘ah, covering the rules of qirā‘at, the explanation of its meanings, the rasm of the text, the count of the āyāt, places of waqf and ibtidā‘ etc. The introduction also covers many aspects related to the Qur‘ān Karim. Al-Qaṣṭallānī passed away in 923 A.H.

5. A commentary on Shātibiyah by Mūllā ‘Alī ibn Sulfān al-Harawi. The book is based on previous commentaries written by as-Sakhāwī, Abū Shāmāh and al-Ja‘barī. It also includes the research of Ibn al-Jazrī at places. The expertise of the author in various sciences and his unique style of writing makes the book an outstanding one.

6. Ithā‘ Fuḍalā‘ al-Bashar by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ad-Dimyāṭī al-Banna‘. The book contains the ten qirā‘at as well as the four qirā‘at. It is an abridgment of an-Nashr. It also explains rasm and the count of āyāt. Al-Banna‘ passed away in the year 1117 A.H.

7. Ghayth an-Nafa‘ by ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad an-Nūrī as-Ṣafāqūsī. He is from Tunisia and he passed away in 1117 A.H. The book pertains to the seven qirā‘at according to the ṭarīq of Shātibiyah. The reason for its compilation was to differentiate between authentic and inauthentic narrations. The book is also convenient for the user like the books of an-Nashshār. It is claimed that Ghayth an-Nafa‘ is the most well researched book on qirā‘ah after an-Nashr.

8. Taḥrīr at-Turūq war Riwāyat Fil Qirā‘at by ‘Alī ibn Sulṭān al-Manṣūrī. He was originally from Egypt. He migrated to Turkey specially to teach qirā‘at according to the ṭarīq of the Egyptian qurrā‘. Many students had benefitted from him. He passed away in 1134 A.H.

9. Ḥallu Mujmīlāt at-Ṭayyibah by the author mentioned above. This book is in rhythm form. He has authored other books as well.

10. Al-l’ilāf Fi Wujūh al-Ikhtilāf by ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad, better known as Yūsuf Efendi Zādah. He was a Ḥanafī scholar of ḥadīth, tafsīr and qirā‘ah who hails from Turkey. He learnt qirā‘at from the aforementioned al-Manṣūrī and others. He has various other writings as well, which include a commentary on Ṣaḥīh Bukhārī and a commentary on Ṣaḥīh Muslim. He passed away in the year 1674 A.H.

11. ‘Umdah al-'Irfān by Muṣṭafā ibn 'Abdurrahmān al-Izmīrī. A Ḥanafī scholar who hails from Turkey and settled in Egypt. He learnt qirā‘ah from the aforementioned Yūsuf Zādah as well as others. He is considered as the most outstanding scholar of research in the field of Taḥrīr al Qirā‘at, after Ibn al-Jazrī. The ‘ulamā‘ of qirā‘ah have accepted his books and they depend on his writings up to this day. He has done a thorough study on the turūq of an-Nashr and he has pointed out the errors of al-Manṣūrī and Yūsuf Zādah. He passed away in the year 1155 A.H.
12. Badā‘ al-Burhān, a commentary on al-‘Umdah mentioned above, by the same author. He has written other books as well.

13. Sanat Tālib Li Ashrafīl Maṭālib by Sayyid Hāshim ibn Muḥammad 隆. He was a student of the aforementioned al-Azmīrī 隆. This book is also with regards to the tāḥrīr of the tūrūq of an-Nāshr. He passed away after the year 1179 A.H.

14. Hibah al-Mannānī Fi Taḥrīr Awjuh al-Qur‘ān by Muḥammad ibn Khalīl, better known as at-Tabbākh 隆. The book also discusses tāḥrīr of tūrūq. It is in rhythm form. The author has also written a commentary on it known as Fatḥ al Ayyīr Rāḥmān. At-Tabbākh passed away after the year 1205 A.H.


16. Nathr al-Marjānī Fi Rasāmi Naẓm al-Qur‘ān by Muḥammad Ghawth ibn Naṣiruddin an-Nā‘ītī al-Arkātī 隆. The most comprehensive book on Rasm al-Qur‘ān. It explains the history of the science, the rules of rasm and thereafter discusses the rasm of every word of the Qur‘ān Karīm in sequence, from beginning to end. The author is from amongst those Arab tribes who migrated from Madinah Munawwarah to India after the attack of Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf. Al-Arkātī 隆 passed away in the year 1238 A.H.

17. Ar-Rawḍ an-Nādir by Muḥammad ibn Ahmād al-Mutawalli 隆. Al-Mutawalli was an Egyptian scholar of different Islamic sciences and a master in qirā‘at. He has written many books on qirā‘ah and tajwīd. Ar-Rawḍ is one of his most outstanding books. It is regarding the tāḥrīr of tūrūq. He was a great research scholar with an excellent memory who had overshadowed his contemporaries. He had memorized many mutūn. He was known as “Ibn al-Jazrī aş-Şaghīr” and “Khātimah al-Muḥāqqiqin.” Today, a great number of asāniḍ in qirā‘ah link up to him. He passed away in the year 1313 A.H.

18. Ithāf al-Barriyyah by Ḥasan ibn Khalaf al-Husainī 隆. The book is in rhythm form and it is regarding the tāḥrīr of Shāṭibiyyah. ‘Alī aḍ-Ḍabbā‘ 隆 has written a good commentary on it, called Mukhtaṣar Bulūg al-Umnīyāh. It is widely accepted by the qurrā‘. The author is a student of the aforementioned al-Mutawalli. He passed away in the year 1342 A.H.

19. Fawāid Makkīyyah by Abdurrahmān ibn Bāshīr Khān Ilāhabādī 隆. He studied qirā‘ah at madrasah Sawlatiyyah in Makkah Mukarramah. Mawlānā Raḥmatullāh Kirānwī 隆 advised him to return to India and strive in propagating the knowledge of tajwīd and qirā‘ah. Initially, people were not
interested and only a few attended his lessons. He therefore lost courage and he made all his preparations to return to Makkah Mukarramah. He saw Rasūlullāh ﷺ in a dream who said to him “Abdurrahmān! Remain in India, as we are due to take much services from you.” After this, he abandoned the idea of leaving and continued striving. Slowly but surely, many students came to him and benefitted tremendously from him. He is known as “Musnid al-qirā‘ āt fil hind.” Prior to him, the science of qirā‘ah was found only on a small scale in the Indian Subcontinent. Presently, it has become quite common and the sanad of most qurrā’ link up to him. He passed away in the year 1341 A.H.

20. Muqarrib at-Tahīr lin Nashr wat Tahbīr by Muḥammad ibn Abdurrahmān al-Khaliji ﷺ. The book pertains to the tahīr of tūrūq. The author was a Ḥanafī scholar from Alexandria, Egypt. He has written other books as well. He passed away in the year 1389 A.H.

21. Al-Budūr az-Zahirah by 'Abdul Fattāḥ al-Qādī ﷺ. He lived in Egypt and passed away in the year 1403 A.H. The object of this compilation was to simplify matters further for the student. It has a similar format to Ghayth an-Nafā‘, except that it includes all ten qirā‘ āt. It is also simplified as the lengthy details of al-Ghayth have been deleted. Using this book is very convenient and time efficient. However, the benefit one attains by studying al-Ghayth cannot be achieved through al-Budūr.

22. 'Ināyat Raḥmānī by Fataḥ Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ismā‘īl ﷺ. This is an Urdu commentary on Shātibiyyah and it is based on the commentary of ‘Ali ibn Sulṭān al-Harawi ﷺ. It also includes the research of others like ‘Ali ad-Ḍabbā‘. It is the most detailed work on qirā‘ah in the Urdu language and it is widely accepted in the Indian Subcontinent. Though he was blind, the author possessed great competency and he had a brilliant memory. He had memorized the various mutūn of qirā‘ āt. He passed away in the year 1407 A.H. and he is buried in Jannat al-Baqī‘ in Madinah Munawwarah.

23. Faridah ad-Dahr by Muḥammad Ibrāhim Muḥammad Sālim ﷺ. He was a great Ḥanafī scholar and a sufi who lived in Egypt. He authored various books, with al-Faridah being the most outstanding of those. In it, he has included the tariq of Ṭayyibah and fully explained the tūrūq of the qirā‘ āt throughout the various āyāt of the Qur‘ān Karīm. The book has been extensively researched. He passed away in the year 1430 A.H.
The prevailing qirā'āt and their ruling

There are presently fourteen qirā'āt in circulation. These can be broken down as follows:

1. The seven qirā'āt, according to the ṭarīq of Shātibiyyah and Ṣayyibah.
2. The three qirā'āt according to the ṭarīq of Durrah and Ṣayyibah.
3. The four qirā'āt according to the ṭarīq of al-Fawā'id al-Mubarak.

The ten qirā'āt are nothing separate from the ones mentioned above. It is just a combination of the seven qirā'āt with the three qirā'āt, either according to the ṭarīq of Shātibiyyah and Durrah (Known as Sughrā) or according to the ṭarīq of Ṣayyibah (Known as Kubrā).

As mentioned previously in chapter four, the authenticity of any qirā'ah is based upon it confirming to three principles viz. It should have a valid chain of narration. It should conform to the 'Uthmānī rasm. It should conform to the rules of Arabic grammar.

Based on the above three principles, a qirā'ah will basically fall under one of three categories.

1. Authentic: Divine revelation from Allāh Ta'ālā which was not abrogated. It is preserved in its original form. Rejecting it leads to Kufr. This qirā'ah is transmitted with tawātur. (Refer to chapter four for details)
2. Shādh: Not permissible to consider it as Qur'ān. It has been transmitted, but the transmission is without tawātur. Rejecting it does not lead to Kufr.
3. False (Mardūd): Necessary to reject it. It has no basis. It does not have a valid chain of narration. These qirā'āt are mentioned in some books of tafsir. An easy way to identify them is to compare them to the aforementioned qirā'āt. Any qirā'ah that does not fall in the above categories will be in this one.

Ruling on the seven qirā'āt

The seven qirā'āt, according to the ṭarīq of Shātibiyyah and Ṣayyibah are authentic. They have been transmitted to us with tawātur. Tawātur here is meant in a general sense, therefore it includes tawātur
al-Isnād and tawātur ʿt-ṭabqaḥ. (Refer to chapter four for details). Some sections of the asānīd may have tawātur ʿt-ṭabqaḥ and others may have tawātur ʿt-ṭabqaḥ. The section of the sanad from the seven qurrā' until Rasūlullāh ﷺ is definitely transmitted with tawātur ʿt-ṭabqaḥ. As far as isnād is concerned, this section is mashhūr.⁵⁷

Ruling on the three qirāʿāt

According to preferred view, the ruling of the three qirāʿāt is the same as that of the seven qirāʿāt. The three qirāʿāt according to the ṭarīq of Durrah and Ṭayyibah are authentic. They have been transmitted to us with tawātur. Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ, in his book al-Munjid, has recorded the names of the qurrā' who are known for transmitting the three qirāʿāt of Abū Ja'far, Ya'qūb and Khalaf ﷺ. In every age group, starting from the era of Ibn Mujāhid, up until the era of Ibn Jazrī ﷺ there are numerous qurrā' who have narrated the three qirāʿāt. Their numbers convince us about the tawātur of these qirāʿāt.

There are some fuqahā' like Imām Nawawī and Mullā 'Alī Qārī ﷺ who hold a different view. It is quite simple to make a judgment in a dispute of this nature, as this issue about some information being mutawātir or not, is not based on istinbāṭ (deduction). It is a based-on perception. The 'ulamā’ of Usūl have clearly explained that it is quite possible for a narration to be mutawātir according to some whilst others are unaware of its tawātur. Therefore, the one who proves the tawātur will get precedence over the one who negates it. This is according to the principle: الثبت يتقدم على النافي.

'Abdul Wahhab as-Subkī ﷺ has written that the tawātur of the ten qirāʿāt is not restricted to one who has learnt it, but it is mutawātir to every single Muslim who is a reciter of the kalimah, even if he be an ordinary uncivilized person who has not memorized a word of the Qur'ān Karīm.⁵⁸ In his introduction to an-Nashr, Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ has reproduced statements regarding the tawātur of the ten qirāʿāt, by sixteen great 'ulamā’ who have been approved and widely accepted by the ummah. Ḥafīz ibn Ḥajr al-'Asqalānī ﷺ has written in his fatwā: When it has been established that the shādh qirāʿāt are beyond the ten, no attention will be given to those who hold a conflicting view, as isolated views are not accepted. 'Allāmah Zāhīd al-Kawtharī ﷺ, the great ḥanafi scholar of the recent past says: The Shaykh of this science, Ibn al-Jazrī has recorded the

⁵⁷ al-qirāʿāt al-ʿṭabqaḥ لابن قطلك (ص ـ 24/25)
⁵⁸ شرح النشر (1): 42
names of the narrators of the ten qirā‘āt in his book Munjid al-Muqri‘īn. Anyone who studies it will be fully convinced about the tawātur of the ten qirā‘āt in every age group. He has clarified it to such an extent that nothing more can be added to it. Shaykh Muhammad ‘Awwāmah also reiterated the above statement, then says: This is the only truth besides which nothing deserves any attention. Ibn al-Jazrī has not left any opportunity for anyone to say conversely. ‘Allāmah Zainuddān ibn Qutlūbghā, the famous Ḥanafī faqīh, has written a treatise on the subject, wherein he clearly says that the recitation of each of the ten qurā‘ā, as a whole as well as in detail, is mutawātir. Ibn ‘Abīdīn Ash-Shāmī has also adopted the same view.

Ruling on the four qirā‘āt

It is unanimously agreed that the four qirā‘āt are shādh. These qirā‘āt have not been transmitted with tawātur. It is not permissible to recite these qirā‘āt as Qurān. Yes, one is allowed to study these qirā‘āt without considering them to be part of the Qurān Karīm. A person should take extreme care if he is studying these qirā‘āt, not to recite them as Qurān or give an impression in any way that it is Qurān. According to the Ḥanafī school, the shādh qirā‘āt are equal to those aḥādīth which are khabr wāḥid. We are allowed to use its meanings to clarify the ambiguity in an authentic text.

Since the shādh qirā‘āt are not considered as Qurān, therefore if a person confined his recitation in ṣalāh to any of the shādh qirā‘āt, his ṣalāh will not be valid. If he recited an authentic qirā‘ah together with reciting a shādh qirā‘ah, then his ṣalāh will be valid if the authentic qirā‘ah was recited to the extent which is necessary for the validity of ṣalāh.

There are other shādh qirā‘āt besides the four as well. They are mentioned in the books of tafsīr. These too, are not permitted to be recited as Qurān.
The total number of authentic qirāʿāt

The total number of qirāʿāt which have been confirmed by the 'ulamāʾ as authentic are ten. These ten are according to the ṭarīq of Ṭayyibah. (The ṭarīq of Ṭayyibah includes the ṭarīq of Shātibiyah, Durrah and many more). Any of the ten qirāʿāt transmitted through a ṭarīq besides that of Ṭayyibah will be judged according to the three principles.

It is important to note that it is possible to find shādh wujūh within the ten qirāʿāt as well. Not everything that is attributed to the ten aʾimmah is authentic. One is likely to find such shādh wujūh in non-popular turuq of qirāʿāt and also in some books of tafsīr.

All qirāʿāt which are beyond the ten qirāʿāt are considered to be inauthentic.

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- Chapter Ten -

The qirā’āt recited commonly across the world

Past and present

This article has enlightened us about various qirā’āt (seven, ten or more) being recited across the Islamic world by those who specialized in the field. As far as the general people were concerned, there was one qirā’ah being recited commonly by them. Details are as follows.

Makkah Mukarramah

The original qirā’ah which was prevalent here was that of ’Abdullāh ibn Kathir  . The qirā’ah of Abū 'Amr   thereafter replaced it. During the ninth century, the only qirā’ah which was being recited in Ḥijāz was that of Abū 'Amr  . At present, the narration of Ḥafṣ   is prevalent there.

Madinah Munawwarah

In Madinah Munawwarah, the people recited the qirā’ah of Imām Nāfi’   and they continued with it up until the time of Abū 'Ubaid   and probably after that as well. During the ninth century, the only qirā’ah which was being recited in Ḥijāz was that of Abū 'Amr  . At present, the narration of Ḥafṣ   is prevalent there.

Sham (Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon)

In Sham, all the people would recite the qirā’ah of Imām 'Abdullāh ibn 'Āmir   almost up to the end of the 5th century. It is said that the first person to introduce the qirā’ah of Imām Abū 'Amr   to Sham was Abū Muḥammad Hibatullāh ibn Aḥmad   (passed away 536 A.H). He was a reliable
muḥaqiq with a good understanding of qirā’ah and ḥadīth. He was the Imām of the Jāmi’ Umayr in Sham. He taught the qirā’ah of Abū ‘Amr to many people there. The Shamis’ thereafter left reciting the qirā’ah of Ibn ‘Āmir and started reading that of Abū ‘Amr. During the ninth century, the only qirā’ah which was being recited in Sham, was that of Abū ‘Amr.

Ibn ‘Ābidān (passed away 1252 A.H.) has commented that the narrations which were prevalent in Sham during his time (13th century) were that of Dūrī Baṣrī and Ḥafṣ. Presently, it is only the narration of Ḥafṣ which is recited there.

**Iraq, Basrah**

The people of Basrah recited according to the qirā’ah of Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alī during the second century. Thereafter they chose to recite the qirā’ah of Imām Ya’qūb Hidramī from the 3rd century right until the end of the 4th century. The Imām of the jāmi’ masjid in Basrah would not recite any other qirā’ah besides that of Ya’qūb. After some time they went back to the qirā’ah of Abū 'Amr. Presently, the narration of Ḥafṣ is commonly recited.

**Iraq, Kufah**

During the third century, the qirā’ah which was dominant amongst the people of Kufah was that of Imām Ḥamzah. No one would recite the qirā’ah of Imām ‘Aṣim. This practice changed over time and by the eighth century, the people of Iraq were accustomed to reciting the qirā’ah of Imām ‘Aṣim. As time progressed, the narration of Dūrī Baṣrī became dominant. Presently, the narration of Ḥafṣ is being recited.
Iran and Transoxiana

The narration of Abū 'Abdurrahmān Qutaibah ibn Mahrān ﷺ (passed away after 200 A.H.) (student of 'Alī al-Kisā'ī ﷺ) was most common in these areas until the end of the seventh century. Presently, the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ is being recited there.

Yemen

The qira‘ah of Abū 'Amr ﷺ according to the narration of Dūrī was commonly recited in Yemen during the eighth century. Towards the end of the eighth century, the narration of Qālūn ﷺ had commenced in some cities. The narration of Dūrī ﷺ still remained dominant with the maṣāḥif conforming to it. However, in recent years, the common people have started mixing the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ together with the narration of Dūrī ﷺ due to the maṣāḥif which are now printed according to the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ.

Egypt

Abū Sa‘īd 'Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd Warsh ﷺ lived in Egypt. He travelled to Madinah Munawwarah in order to learn qira‘ah from Imām Nāfi’ ﷺ. After his return, he taught his narration to the people of Egypt. The narration of Warsh ﷺ spread to other places from here. Warsh ﷺ passed away in Egypt in the year 197 A.H. The narration of Warsh ﷺ continued to be recited until the end of the fifth century. Thereafter, it was replaced by the narration of Dūrī Baṣrī ﷺ. During the ninth century, this was the only qira‘ah which was being recited there. The qira‘ah of Abū 'Amr ﷺ remained until the middle of the twelfth century. From then onwards, up to the present time, the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ is common.

Spain

It has been mentioned that the Spanish Muslims originally recited the qira‘ah of Ibn 'Āmir ﷺ as narrated by Hishām ibn 'Ammār ﷺ, as those who had conquered Spain had come from Sham.

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75. غاية النهاية (٢٦:٢) 76. غاية النهاية (١:٢٩٢)
Ghāzī ibn Qais (passed away 199 A.H.) was the first person to introduce the qirā’ah of Imām Ṣafī’ in Spain. The Spanish depended on the narration of Ghāzī from Imām Ṣafī’. After some time, Abū Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Waddah (passed away 276 A.H.) learnt the narration of Warsh in Egypt and returned with it to Spain. The Spanish thereafter depended on the narration of Warsh. This qirā’ah remained there for many centuries as Ibn Ḥayyān (passed away 754 A.H.) has mentioned that the people of Maghrib, during his period of time, were accustomed to the qirā’ah of Imām Ṣafī’. 

Northern Africa

It has been mentioned that the people of North Africa first recited the qirā’ah of Ibn Ṭāmir according to the narration of Hishām ibn 'Amr, as many people of North Africa accepted Islam on the hands of Ismā’il ibn 'Ubaidullāh ibn Abīl Muhājis (passed away 132 A.H.) He was originally from Sham and he was sent by 'Umar ibn 'Abdūl 'Azīz as a governor to North Africa. During the second century, the qirā’ah of Imām Ḥamzah was introduced to North Africa by those who came with the Abbasi governors from Baghdad and Kufah.

Abū Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Khayrūn (passed away 306 A.H.) who was originally from Spain, introduced the qirā’ah of Imām Ṣafī’ in Tunisia. He was a staunch supporter of the narration of Warsh. Before him, nobody would recite the qirā’ah of Imām Ṣafī’ in this region besides a few. The general people were reciting the qirā’ah of Imām Ḥamzah. The few who were reciting the qirā’ah of Imām Ṣafī’ had been taught by Ibn al-Bargūth (passed away 272 A.H.). He was a teacher of qirā’at in the jāmm’i masjid in Tunisia. Abūl 'Abbās ibn Ṭālib, the judge of the time, had instructed him not to teach any qirā’ah besides that of Imām Ṣafī’. Presently, the narration of Warsh is common in the following countries: Morocco, Senegal, Niger, Mali and Nigeria. It is also common in most parts of Algeria and Mauritania, and in some parts of Egypt, Libya, Chad, and Tunisia. The narration of Qālūn is common in the following countries: Libya, Most parts of Tunisia, Some parts of Algeria and Yemen. The narration of Dūrī Baṣrī is common in the following countries: Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Most parts of Somalia and some parts of Yemen. The
narration of Sūsī is common in some parts of Somalia. The narration of Ḥafṣ has also been introduced to many of the above-mentioned African countries. Some people in their major cities have taken to it, but those in the rural areas have not changed their recitation.

**The Indian Subcontinent**

Presently, the narration of Ḥafṣ is recited by the common people in the Indian Subcontinent. It has been common for more than six centuries. The author of Tātārkāniyyah (passed away 786 A.H.) has mentioned that the dominant qirā’ah in the region was that of Ḥafṣ. We are not aware of any other qirā’ah dominating in this region prior to this.

**South East Asia**

The narration of Ḥafṣ is recited commonly in this region. It is not known whether other narrations dominated here previously.

**The narration of Ḥafṣ**

The narration of Ḥafṣ is most common across the world in present times. It has replaced the other narrations which were originally being recited in most of the Islamic cities. There are only a few places where other narrations are more common. The prevalence of the narration of Ḥafṣ has caused doubt in the minds of many people as they think that the narration of Ḥafṣ is the standard version of the Qurʾān Karīm and the others are secondary narrations. Some people think that only the narration of Ḥafṣ is authentic whilst others are not. These are all incorrect perceptions. It is important to note that the narration of Ḥafṣ only gained popularity in the latter centuries of Islam. History bears testimony to this. The dominance of the narration of Ḥafṣ is dispensable. If any of the other narrations had become common worldwide, it would have been just as good.

The main reason for the popularity of the narration of Ḥafṣ is acceptance in the sight of Allāh Ta’ālā. He does as He pleases and none can question Him. The outward factors which contributed to the popularity of the narration of Ḥafṣ are as follows:
1. From the time of its inception, the qirāʿah of Imām 'Āṣim ﷺ was regarded as an outstanding qirāʿah by the 'ulamā'. A great tabi‘ī and narrator of hadith, Abū Ishāq as-Sabī‘i ﷺ (passed away in 127 A.H.) would very often say: “I have never seen a greater qāriʾ than 'Āṣim.” Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal ﷺ (passed away in 241 A.H.) is reported to have said: “The qirāʿah of the people of Madinah is most beloved to me, and if that is not accessible, then the qirāʿah of 'Āṣim.” Makkī ibn Ābī Tālib ﷺ (passed away in 437 A.H.) is reported to have said: “The qirāʿah of 'Āṣim was preferred over other qirāʿah by the learned scholars whom I have seen. This is due to the eloquence of 'Āṣim, the authenticity of his sanad and the accuracy of his narrators.”

Considering the fact that the two most famous students of Imām 'Āṣim ﷺ were Abū Bakr Shu'bah and Ḥafṣ ﷺ, and Ḥafṣ ﷺ being preferred over Shu'bah ﷺ by the 'ulamā’ of the past, it is not surprising to see the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ gaining the popularity that it has.

2. An outstanding feature of the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ is its simplicity, in the sense that there are hardly any exceptions to the rules of recitation and it is free from having complicated rules which are found in other narrations. For example, every hamzah mutaḥarrikah is pronounced with tahqiq, besides the second hamzah in āmī. There is no need to understand complicated rules to identify which hamzah should be pronounced with tahqiq and which one with tashīl. The same can be said about ibdāl of hamzah, imālah, tarqiq of rā’, etc.

3. The 'Uthmānī khilāfah lasted from the year 923 A.H. until the year 1337 A.H. The services which were rendered to the ummah by them are noteworthy. Amongst these services was the imparting of Islamic knowledge. For this, they would despatch their 'ulamā’ to the cities which were under their rule, and even to other countries with whom they had good ties. The narration which was commonly read by the Uthmanis was that of Ḥafṣ ﷺ. Accordingly, their 'ulamā’ taught the same in the areas where they served. Most probably, the reason why the Uthmanis opted for the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ is that they followed Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ﷺ in fiqh. Since Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ﷺ learnt qirāʿah from Imām 'Āṣim ﷺ, it suited them best to recite the narration of Ḥafṣ ﷺ who also learnt from Imām 'Āṣim ﷺ. This was just a matter of choice. Another example of this was dominance of the narration of Warsh ﷺ in Spain. The Spanish preferred his narration because they were followers of Imām Mālik ﷺ in fiqh. The famous student of Warsh ﷺ, 'Abd aṣ-Ṣamad al-Utaḵī ﷺ, was a student of Imām Mālik ﷺ. It therefore suited them best to recite the narration of Warsh ﷺ.

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82 معرفة الفراء والذيني (1 : 375)
83 غاية النهاية (492)
84 البصرة (ص 44)
4. The first printed edition of the Qur'ān Karīm was produced in Italy by the Paganini brothers around the year 948 A.H. This edition contained many errors and it was soon discontinued. It did not gain popularity. The second printed edition was produced in Germany by Abraham Hinkelman in the year 1106 A.H. Many copies of this edition were printed and it was circulated widely. This edition was according to the narration of Ḥāfṣ. In 1334 A.H., a council of 'ulamā' gathered in Cairo who agreed to have the Qur'ān Karīm printed according to the narration of Ḥāfṣ. Many copies of this edition were circulated. There are two obvious reasons for which they may have chosen the narration of Ḥāfṣ. It was already the most common of all authentic narrations and it was best suited for printing purposes since the method of pronunciation hardly differs from the script. There is no need to add on extra signs to indicate imālah, tashil, naql, saktah, idkhal, šilah etc.

وَأَلَّهُ تَعَلَّمَ أَعْلَمَ وَعَلَمَ أَتَّمَمَ
1. This article is simply too short to do justice to the efforts of the qurrā’ in the field of qirā’ah. It just gives a basic idea of the science. Let alone the achievements of the qurrā’, even the names of many outstanding qurrā’ have not been mentioned here for the sake of brevity. In order to appreciate the efforts of the qurrā’, one needs to study their detailed works on qirā’ah, i’lal, rasm, etc.

2. This article makes it clear that the effort of the qurrā’ was concentrated mainly to preserve and promote the sab’ah aḥruf, according to which the Qur’ān Karīm was revealed. It was not to beautify the voice, as is often misunderstood. Reciting the Qur’ān Karīm in a beautiful voice is preferable, if it is within the limit. However, it cannot be considered as part of the science of qirā’ah.

3. The science of qirā’ah is as old as the revelation of the Qur’ān Karīm itself. This science has a rich legacy with many renowned qurrā’ and ‘ulamā’ having made great sacrifices for its preservation. Their efforts are actually the manifestation of the promise of Allāh Ta’ālā that He will preserve the Qur’ān Karīm. It is an honour to be amongst those whom Allāh Ta’ālā chooses for the task of preservation of the Qur’ān Karīm.

4. Many people believe that the narration of Ḥafṣ造船 is the original version of the Qur’ān Karīm and other narrations are subsequent to it. This is an erroneous belief. The narration of Ḥafṣ造船 only gained popularity in the recent past. Previously, the narration of Dūrī Başrī造船 was most common across the world. It is possible that the narration of Ḥafṣ造船 may lose its fame in future and another narration may take its place. The twenty narrations are equal in authenticity.

5. The various Islamic sciences are interlinked. Even if one specializes in a certain field, he has to have basic knowledge of other sciences. If one is completely ignorant of any specific science, it will have a negative effect on his field as he will not be able to fully grasp some aspects of it. A mufassir cannot be independent of ḥadīth, nor can a muḥaddith be independent of tafsīr. Similarly, a qārī cannot be independent of tafsīr, ḥadīth and fiqh just as a mufassir, muḥaddith and faqīh cannot be independent of qirā’ah.

6. Mullā 'Ali Qārī造船 has stated that there is agreement upon the fact that the knowledge of qirā’ah is the most virtuous of all those obligations which are fardʿ 'alā l-kifāyah as it is the preservation of a miracle which contains all the laws needed by the ummah for its salvation. It is no wonder that thousands of 'ulamā’ in history had made great sacrifices for it. They spent their time, wealth and
efforts in propagating qirā’ah. They separated from their dear ones and undertook arduous journeys to distant lands in search of this knowledge. The qurrā’ have clarified every aspect related to the text of the Qur’ān Karīm. Not only are the substitution of words preserved. Instead, every single letter, every single ḥarakah, every single sukūn and every word has been verified. The ḥarkāt which are pronounced completely have been distinguished from those pronounced partially. The duration of all the mudūd have been accurately calculated. The amount of imālah (inclination towards yā) in the alifs have been measured. Harakāt with ishbā’ (stretching sound) have been separated from those without ishbā’. There has been hundreds and thousands of qurrā’ in every period of time who have been studying these details through uninterrupted chains of narration. They are linked to Allāh Ta’ālā by means of their asānīd. In this way, the Qur’ān Karīm has been fortified. There remains no possibility for anyone to corrupt its pronunciation, let alone alter its text or distort its meaning. It will be strange if someone still claims that there is little or no benefit in studying qirā’ah. Ibn al-Jazrī ﷺ has mentioned that if there was no other benefit of qirā’ah besides the fact that one links himself to Allāh Ta’ālā, it would be sufficient, and if there was no other specialty of qirā’ah besides this one, it would be compensate for all else.85 Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ has mentioned in his fatāwā that the one who has learnt various qirā’āt has an advantage over one who only knows one qirā’ah.86

7. It had been the desire of our ustādh, Qārī Ismail Šāhib ﷺ that the history of qirā’āt should be compiled in English. He had sensed the need for this; hence he had entrusted the task to me many years back. May Allāh Ta’ālā make it beneficial for the readers and make it a form of perpetual reward for my parents, Qārī Šāhib ﷺ and all my asātidhah ﷺ. Āmin.

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Abdullah Motara

Dhul Ḥijjah 1440 A.H.

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85 Fatawa Ibn Kāmilah (13:404)  
86 Fatawa Ibn Kāmilah (13:404)