

The Criticism of Grammarians and Linguists Regarding Some of the Authentic Qiraat

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Abstract

This research aims to prove that the authentic qirā'āt (Qira'at Mutawatira) is revealed from Allāh Almighty and to refute the criticisms and objections made regarding the Qirā-ah (recitations) of Hamzah, Ibn' Amir, and Al-Kisai. It also seeks to clarify these criticisms to prevent those who might use them as a weapon to attack the upright religion and its clear revelation. The importance of the research lies in raising awareness about the prohibition of preferring one of the authentic qirā'āt over another after they have been transmitted by the Imāms chosen by the Muslim community. The ten chosen Imāms were selected not only because of their mastery of these recitations but also because of their expertise in interpreting, explaining, and justifying them. There is no room for comparison in the authentic qirā'āt with anything external, even if they differ in any measure or rule. Once a Qirā-ah is proven authentic and widely transmitted, there is no rejection or weakening of it, and it must be believed as part of the Qur'an. This research relies on the inductive method to collect the topic's elements by referring to the most famous books of well-known scholars who focused on the issue of the authentic qirā'āt. It also relies on the descriptive-analytical method to analyze the texts and clarify the rules and principles established by the Imāms of the qirā'āt. The research concludes with several findings, the most important of which are: the authentic qirā'āt are revealed from Allāh and have been preserved from any harm, as Allāh has taken it upon Himself to protect His noble Book, as He says in the clear verse: "Indeed, it is We who have sent down the Qur'an, and indeed, We will be its guardian." The researcher recommends conducting further studies and research to respond to those who criticize the Qur'an.

Keywords: Qirā'āt, Recitations, Narration, Seven, Path

The Quranic Recitations

The ten Qira'at (Recitations) are ten different methods of recitation of the Qur'an that have been approved by scholars in their books to determine the authentic qirā'āt. This scholarly consensus has led to the establishment of practical reliance on them. The first book to be considered one of the most famous in spreading the seven Qira'at among the people is Al-Sab'ah by Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Abbas ibn Mujahid. Due to the widespread distribution of this book, confusion and misunderstanding arose among people, both the

general public and the scholars, regarding the meaning of the "seven letters" and the seven Qira'at. This issue was intensified by the criticism of scholars who disapproved of Ibn Majahd's compilation, as they believed (in their opinion) that it opened the door to confusion, which should not have been opened (Tadhkirah, 1990).

Then, the Islamic world was surprised by the arrival of one of the most essential books on the Qira'at, which gained widespread acceptance among people, especially among reciters and those skilled in recitation. This book is *At-Tayseer* by Abu' Amr Uthman ibn Sa'id ibn' Uthman al-Dani al-Andalusī, who was the teacher of Imam Ash-Shatibi in this field. In his biography, Ibn al-Jazari said: "The imam, the distinguished scholar, the teacher of the teachers, and the master of the scholars of recitation. He was asked about issues related to the narrations and the sayings of the early scholars, and he would present them in full, with the chain of narrators traced back to its sources. Anyone who looks at his books will recognize the extent of his knowledge and what Allāh, the Almighty, had blessed him with. Glory be to the All-Knowing Opener." His famous book *Al-Taysir* is well-known, and his *Jami' al-Bayan* on the seven qirā'āt stands out (Ad-Dimashqī, 1932).

After him, Imam Ash-Shatibi authored the poem *Hirz al-Amani wa Wajh At-Tahani* on the seven qirā'āt. This poem was a summarized version of his teacher Ad-Dani's book, as he stated, "And in its ease, I aimed to shorten it... and by the help of Allāh, it bore fruit." Similarly, Imam Ibn al-Jazari wrote a poem on the three additional readings that complement the seven qirā'āt, stating: "And after this, take my verses on the three letters... with them, the ten recitations are completed" (Al-Andalusī, 2001).

With the addition of three more recitations, Imam Ibn al-Jazari increased the total number of authentic qirā'āt to ten, ensuring that no recitations were considered more authentic or widely accepted by those skilled in recitation beyond the ten (At-Tadhkirah, 1990).

These three additional recitations are those of the imams Abu Ja'far al-Madani, Ya'qub al-Hadrami al-Basri, and Khalaf ibn Hisham al-Baghdadi. The Qur'an was revealed in seven different ways, not only related to the script and pronunciation, meaning, diacritical marks, signs of stopping, and brevity. Due to the varying dialects and accents of the Arabs to whom the Qur'an was revealed, the Companion and Caliph Uthman ibn Affan compiled the Qur'an into one unified script. Seven established and three additional recitations complement the seven, completing the ten recitations. These recitations and their pronunciation were transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through the companions, then the followers, and so on. However, some strict Shafi'i scholars hold that these three additional recitations are not authentic but are considered exceptions (Ad-Darwish, 1995).

Definition of the Qirā'āt and the Meaning of the Seven Ways

Several linguistic and terminological definitions are used by those skilled in recitation. In the book *Majaaz al-Qur'an*, the term "recitations" (Qirā'āt) linguistically refers to the plural of "recitation" (Qira'ah), which is derived from the verb *qara'a*, meaning "to recite" or "to read," and "Qur'an" is derived from the same root, as it refers to the act of gathering or combining verses and chapters. It is called "The Qur'an" because it gathers and combines verses and surahs, putting them together. Allāh says in the Qur'an, "Indeed, upon Us is its collection and

its recitation," meaning its gathering and its recitation. So, when We recite it, follow its recitation (Al-Ansārī, 1994).

Al-Mufradat states: "Qira'ah is the act of combining letters and words in the intonation manner." It further clarifies that one does not say "I recited the people" if referring to gathering them, and it is not considered a recitation if one speaks a single letter. The Qur'an, originally a noun, functions like other abstract nouns such as "kufran" (ingratitude) and "rajhan" (preference). As stated by Ibn al-Jazari, the technical definition is: "The science of how to properly perform the words of the Qur'an and the differences in recitations as attributed to their narrators." It is also reported by Al-Banna Ad-Dimyati: "It is the science by which one can know the agreement of those who transmitted the Book of Allāh and their differences in pronunciation, based on hearing" (Ad-Dimashqī, 1999).

Both definitions encompass authentic, famous, and exceptional recitations. This indicates that the Qur'anic qira'at has a broad meaning; it is not limited to words with differences in pronunciation or performance but includes those on which there is no disagreement.

Criticism from Grammarians and Linguists on Some Authentic Qira'at

Linguistic Differences in Qira'at

The science of Qur'anic recitations (Qirā'āt) often involves linguistic discussions because it deals with Qur'anic words revealed in Arabic, which have many rhetorical aspects. Therefore, this science is considered one of the miraculous features of the Qur'an. Even though the recitations offer multiple ways of pronouncing the Qur'anic words, their meanings remain within the original context and retain their extraordinary eloquence, with each reading reinforcing the meaning of the others.

Nevertheless, linguistic issues in the recitations have sparked debates, primarily due to disagreements over words that pertain to Arabic grammar and its rules. Grammarians and linguists have objected to these issues, considering them errors and dangerous to the authenticity of the Arabic language. They argue that some Qur'anic recitations, despite being widely transmitted, cannot be regarded as correct because they deviate from the established grammatical and linguistic rules. For them, even if a reading is widely transmitted, it is invalid if it contradicts established grammar.

As a result, some grammarians and linguists disliked reciting or listening to these recitations. Imam Abu al-Abbas Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad, for example, expressed strong disapproval of Hamzah's recitation, saying: "If I prayed behind an imam who reads with the kasra (a vowel mark indicating a "short i" sound), I would take my shoes and leave" (Al-Mubarrad, 1997). He was referring to the reading of the verse, "وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ" [النساء: 1]. "And fear Allāh through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship)" [Sūrat An-Nisā': 1]. In this case, Hamzah and his followers read the word (وَالْأَرْحَامَ) "wal-arhām" (and the wombs) with a kasra. This reading has been subject to significant criticism, and we will mention these criticisms, God willing.

Examples of Criticized Qira'at by Linguists and Grammarians and their Objections

Firstly, the recitation of Ibn 'Aamir Ad-Dimashqī in the verse:

"وَكَذَلِكَ زَيْنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتَلَ أَوْلَادَهُمْ شُرَكَائُهُمْ لِيُزْذَوْهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ" "And so to many of the Mushrikūn their (Allāh's so-called) "partners" have made fair-seeming the killing of their children, in order to lead them to their own destruction and cause confusion in their religion" [Sūrat Al-An'ām: 137].

Ibn 'Aamir read the verse with a damma (vowel mark indicating a "u" sound) on the "zay" and a kasra (vowel mark indicating an "i" sound) on the "baa' " with the verb (قتل) "qatl" (killing) in the nominative, (أولادهم) "awladihim" (their children) in the accusative, and (شركاؤهم) "shurakaa'uhum" (their partners) in the genitive. His reading was:

"وَكَذَلِكَ زَيْنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتَلَ أَوْلَادَهُمْ شُرَكَائُهُمْ لِيُزْذَوْهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ" [Sūrat Al-An'ām: 137].

Criticism From The Critics And Objectors

1- Az-Zamakhsharī said:

"As for the reading of Ibn 'Aamir, ((قتل أولادهم شركائهم)) 'the killing of their children – their partners,' with (قتل) the killing in the nominative and (أولادهم) the children in the accusative, and (شركائهم) the partners in the genitive, adding (قتل) the killing to (شركائهم) the partners and separating them with something other than a preposition, this would be awkward and rejected if it appeared in the context of necessities like poetry. How could it be in prose, especially in the miraculous Qur'an, known for its eloquence and precision?" (Az-Zamakhsharī, 1987).

2- Abu Ali al-Farisi, a renowned grammarian, said:

"This is a distasteful construction that is rarely used. Had it been changed to another form, it would have been preferable. They do not allow the separation of an addition from what is added to using a preposition in prose, even though they permit it in poetry." (Ad-Darwish, 1995).

3- Al-Azhari also stated:

"As for the reading of Ibn 'Aamir, it is abandoned because it involves a form of prioritization and delay that is akin to the disjointed speech of a poet, which is not considered eloquent and is very poor in the eyes of the eloquent, so I do not permit the reading of it" (Al-Hārithī, n.d.).

If we look at the above statements, we find that these grammarians and linguists, among others, censured this noble reading as though Ibn 'Aamir had no valid chain of transmission from his teachers, noble companions, and followers who preceded him in reading the Qur'an in different ways and setting the foundations for recitation. Therefore, no one should doubt the legitimacy of his reading.

Secondly, The reading of Hamzah ibn Habib Az-Zayyat in the verse:

"وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ" [النساء: 1]. "and fear Allāh through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship)" [Sūrat An-Nisā': 1].

Imam Hamzah read the word (والأرحام) "wal-arhām" (and the wombs) with a kasra (a short "i" sound) on the "mim," and he is unique in this reading.

Criticism From Critics And Objections To This Reading

1- Az-Zajjaj said:

"The correct reading is to make (والأرحام)'arhām' in the accusative, meaning: 'Fear the wombs, do not cut the relations of the wombs (kinship).' As for the genitive reading in (والأرحام)'arhām,' this is a mistake in Arabic grammar, permissible only in the necessity of poetry, and it is also a mistake in the great matter of religion. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Do not swear by your forefathers' (al-Bukhari, 1993). How could it be said that you ask through Him and the wombs in this way?"

2- Az-Zamakhsharī, in Al-Kashaf, said:

(تسألون به وبالأرحام) "'You ask through Him and the wombs' – the genitive here is a result of conjoining the apparent to the implicit, which is not sound. The connected pronoun is attached just like its noun, and the preposition and object act as a single unit. When they are strongly connected, as in (مررت به وزيد) 'I passed by him and Zayd' or 'this is his slave and Zayd's,' it becomes very tightly connected, so it was not permissible. The repeated action should occur, as in (مررت به وبزيد) و (هذا غلامه و غلام زيد) 'I passed by him and by Zayd' or 'this is his slave and the slave of Zayd.' You can see the correctness of 'I saw you and Zayd' or 'I passed by Zayd and Amr,' as the connection is weaker because it is not repeated." He tried to justify the correctness of this reading by claiming that it implies a repetition of the preposition (Az-Zamakhsharī, 1987).

3- Ibn' Atiyyah, agreeing with the rejection of the Basran grammarians, said:

"Imam Hamzah and a group of scholars read (والأرحام)'wal-arhām' with the genitive as a continuation of the pronoun. Their understanding was that it means they ask through Him and the wombs, like how a person might say: أسألك بالله وبالرحم 'I ask you by Allāh and by the womb.' Al-Hasan, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i, and Mujahid explained this. However, this reading is not permissible according to the leading grammarians of Basra because they do not allow the addition of a noun to a pronoun in the genitive case" (Al-Andalusī, 2001).

Thirdly, the reading of Imam al-Kisa'i regarding idgham (the merging of letters) in verse:

"...إِنْ نَّشَاءُ نَخْسِفُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ... " "...If We will, We shall sink the earth with them..." [Sūrat Saba': 9].

Al-Kisa'i read it with the idgham (merging) of the "fa" in (نخسف) nakh'sif into the following "ba," making it (نَخْسِفُ بِهِمُ) nakh'sif bihim (We could cause the earth to swallow them). Imam al-Kisa'i is unique in this reading.

Criticism From Critics And Objections To this Reading

1- As-Sirafi, the author of the book Idgham al-Qurra', said:

"What was narrated from al-Kisa'i regarding merging the 'fa' into the 'ba' is rare and weak." (As-Sirafi, 1405).

2- Ibn Khālawayh said:

"The reasoning behind this is that the place of articulation for 'ba' is from the lips, while the place of articulation for 'fa' is from the bottom of the lower lip and the edges of the upper teeth. The two letters are similar in their places of articulation, but the 'fa' has a spreading sound that prevents the merging. As for merging the 'ba' into the 'fa,' this is correct" (Ibn Khālawayh, 1979).

In this case, al-Kisa'i's reading is unique in his merging of some letters with others, such as merging the 'fa' with the 'ba,' and the 'lam' with 'ha,' and sometimes the 'ta' with the 'tha'

and the 'sin.' This is rare and unusual among linguists and grammarians, who consider it weak. Although the reading is mutawatir (mass transmitted), it is regarded as an individual preference of al-Kisai in his recitation.

The Reason for Their Criticism and Objections to these Readings

Firstly, grammarians and linguists criticized Imam Ibn Amer's reading because, in their view, it contradicts the grammatical rules established by grammarians and linguists based on their long-standing analysis of the Arabic language. They argue that no reading, even if it is mutawatir (mass-transmitted), can be valid if it deviates from grammatical principles, referencing the three foundational pillars set by Imam Ibn al-Jazari in his work *At-Tayyibah*, as we previously mentioned.

When Ibn Amer read the verb (زَيَّنَ) zayyana (to adorn) in the passive voice as (زُيِّنَ) zuyyina (was decorated), with a dhamma (vowel) on the zay and a kasra (vowel) on the ba, making it a verb in the passive voice, he also raised (قَتَلَ أَوْلَادَهُمْ شُرَكَائِهِمْ) qatal (killed) in the nominative case. He used awladahum (their children) in the accusative case and shurakaa'ahum (their partners) in the genitive case. This, in their view, is an error because they believe there cannot be a separation between the mudaf (the added noun) and the mudaf ilayh (the noun to which it is added) except by a zarf (preposition), and even then, only in poetic forms. As Muhyi al-Din Darwish stated:

"Many grammarians have claimed that one cannot separate two related nouns except in poetry because the mudaf is treated as part of the mudaf ilayh, just as the tanween (nunation) is part of a noun. Therefore, as no separation is allowed between parts of a noun, it is also not permissible to separate it from what is considered part, which is the mudaf ilayh. This is the view of the Basri grammarians" (Ad-Darwish, 1995).

However, in this verse, there is no zarf (preposition) but rather a maf'ool bih (direct object), so they consider it a significant error, especially since it pertains to the Qur'an, the noblest of speech. Their objection was thus absolute, even to the point of declaring it a forbidden reading. Imam Abu Ja'far At-Tabari even criticized the reading, claiming that its chain of transmission was disconnected (Munqati' Al'isnad). Dr. Yahya Muhammad al-Hakami al-Fayfi discussed this in his book *Claims of Disconnected Transmission of Readings in Damascus*.

Secondly, as for the reading of Imam Hamzah bin Habib Az-Zayyat, some grammarians and linguists criticized it for the same reason. They consider it to contradict grammatical rules. Their objection is based on the fact that it involves the coordination of a visible noun with a pronoun in the genitive case without repeating the preposition, which they find improper. For example, they would not say, (مررت به وزيد) "I passed by him and Zayd," but rather (مررت به وبزيد) "I passed by him and by Zayd." Some also argued that the genitive reading implies a connection between asking about God and asking about the kinship, with asking by the kinship resembling an oath, and since the Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited oaths by anything other than God, saying, "Do not swear by your fathers, and whoever swears should swear by God" (al-Bukhari, 1995).

Thirdly, the reading of Imam al-Kisa'i was also criticized by some grammarians and linguists, again for being considered contrary to linguistic norms. The criticism was focused on his

practice of assimilating (Idgham) the fa (ف) into the ba (ب), which they considered weak in terms of linguistic rules. Therefore, they questioned how this weak form could be chosen as one of the accepted variants in the Qur'an.

Conclusion

All praise is due to Allāh, and peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). After that, here are some of the critical conclusions that emerged from this research:

- The integrity, trustworthiness, and proficiency in the Arabic language of the Imāms of the Qur'anic readings leaves no room for doubt in their transmission, including Imam Hamzah, Ibn Amer, and Al-Kisa'i. May Allāh have mercy on them.
- The high status of these Imāms and their place among the scholars of Qur'anic recitation is evident from the numerous teachers and students they had.
- The importance of their recitations and their mutawatir (transmitted through multiple chains) status, where scholars praised them, stating that they did not recite a single letter of the Qur'an except with authentic evidence.
- The Imāms, may Allāh have mercy on them, did not adopt any artificial approach in their recitation. Instead, they read the Qur'an precisely, as they were trained in careful and accurate recitation. As mentioned, their recitations were directly connected (Mutasil As-Sanad) to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Exaggeration, rejection, or criticism of these recitations is reprehensible among all the early generations of Muslims and is not specific to the three recitations we discussed.
- The objections raised by some grammarians to the readings of Hamzah, Ibn Amer, and Al-Kisa'i are unfounded. These readings are mutawatir, with correct languages acknowledged by scholars who accepted them. Even though they may not align with the grammatical rules they established, they form the basis upon which those rules were built, and not the other way around.

Allāh has made it possible for me to write after this research. All praise is due to Allāh, first and last. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions.

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