

AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONDITIONS OF TAWĀTUR IN THE QIRĀ'ĀT

QIROATLARDAGI MUTAVOTIRLIK SHARTLARI BORASIDAGI QARASHLAR TAHLILI

АНАЛИЗ МНЕНИЙ УЧЁНЫХ ОБ УСЛОВИЯХ ТАВАТУРА (МАССОВОЙ НЕПРЕРЫВНОЙ ПЕРЕДАЧИ) В ТРАДИЦИЯХ ЧТЕНИЯ КОРАНА

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Annotation. This article examines the concept and definition of mutawatir qiraat and the views of scholars on this issue. The similarities and differences among the presented opinions are analyzed, and conclusions derived from them are studied through comparative analysis. Particular attention is given to the reasons for scholarly disagreements concerning the third of the three fundamental conditions required for Qur'anic readings to be recognized as authentic, as well as the perspectives of researchers and scholars on this matter.

In addition, the article investigates the debates surrounding Ibn Mujahid's "Kitab al-Sab'a", including whether the qiraat presented in this work is related to the hadith of "seven ahruf". The study draws on both classical sources and modern research.

Furthermore, the article emphasizes that the hadith of "seven ahurf" does not signify "seven qiraat," as such an interpretation is neither found in the hadith texts nor in the works of Muslim scholars. It is argued that one of the main factors contributing to this widespread misunderstanding among the masses was Ibn Mujahid's "Kitab al-Sab'a". Since this work was limited to seven qiraat yet achieved broad popularity, it led ordinary people to the unfounded assumption that these seven qiraat corresponded directly to the "seven ahurf" mentioned in the hadith.

Key words: Qur'an, qiraat, mutawatir, "seven ahurf", Ibn Mujahid, Ibn Jazari, Shatibi, imam of qiraat, method, farsh.

Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada mutavotir qiroat tushunchasi, ta'rifi va bu boradagi ulamolarning qarashlari tadqiq qilingan. Keltirilgan qarashlar orasidagi farqli va o'xshash jihatlar tahlil hamda ulardan kelib chiqadigan xulosalar taqqoslash asosida o'rganib chiqilgan. Qur'on qiroatlarining sahih deb e'tirof etilishi uchun talab qilinadigan uchta asosiy shartlarning oxirgisiga oid qarashlardagi

ixtilofning sabablari va bu boradagi tadqiqotchi hamda olimlarning fikrlari bayon qilingan.

Shu bilan bir qatorda, Ibn Mujohidning "Kitobus sab'a" asari atrofida fikrlar va qarashlar, mazkur asarda keltirilgan qiroatlarning "yetti harf" hadisiga aloqasi bor yoki yo'qligi kabilar fundamental asarlar va zamonaviy tadqiqot hamda tahqiqatlar asosida tahlil qilingan.

Bundan tashqari, "yetti harf" hadisi aynan yetti qiroatni anglatmasligi, bu tushuncha na hadis matnida na islom ulamolarining asarlarida zikr qilinmagani, insonlar o'rtasida bu xato tushunchaning shakllanishiga ta'sir qilgan asosiy omillardan biri Ibn Mujohidning "Kitobus Sab'a" asari hisoblanishi, ushbu asar faqat yetti qiroat bilan cheklanganligi va uning keng shuhrat qozonishi natijasida, oddiy insonlar orasida ushbu yetti qiroat hadisda kelgan "yetti harf" degan asossiz xulosalarga kelinishiga sabab bo'lgani bayon qilingan.

Kalit so'zlar: Qur'on, qiroat, mutavotir, yetti harf, Ibn Mujohid, Ibn Jazariy, Shotibiy, qiroat imomi, usul, farsh.

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются понятие и определение мутаватирных кираатов, а также позиции учёных по данному вопросу. Проводится сравнительный анализ сходств и различий между этими позициями и рассматриваются выводы, к которым они приводят. Особое внимание уделяется причинам разногласий среди учёных относительно третьего из трёх ключевых условий, необходимых для признания коранических чтений достоверными, а также взглядам исследователей и богословов на эту проблему.

Также анализируются дискуссии вокруг труда Ибн Муджахида «Китаб ас-саб'а», включая вопрос о том, связаны ли зафиксированные в нём кирааты с хадисом о «семи ахруфах». Исследование опирается как на классические фундаментальные источники, так и на современные научные работы.

Подчёркивается, что хадис о «семи ахруфах» не означает «семь кираатов», поскольку подобное толкование отсутствует как в тексте самого хадиса, так и в трудах авторитетных исламских учёных. Утверждается, что одним из основных факторов формирования данного заблуждения среди широкой аудитории стал труд Ибн Муджахида «Китаб ас-саб'а». Ограничение этого сочинения семью кираатами и его широкая распространённость привели к необоснованному выводу о тождестве семи кираатов «семи ахруфам», упомянутым в хадисе.

Ключевые слова: Коран, кираат, мутаватир, семь ахруфов, Ибн Муджахид, Ибн аль-Джазари, Шатиби, имам кираатов, усул, фарш.

INTRODUCTION

The word *Qur'an*¹ refers to "the Noble Qur'an, the miraculous divine speech of Allah revealed to Muhammad (peace be upon him), transmitted through *tawātur* and recited in acts of worship" (Muhammad

¹ The term "Qur'an" originates from lexical meanings that include "recitation," "reading," "collection," and "memorization."

Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2013, pp. 33-36; Baqlah, 2009, p. 74).

The term *Qirā'ah*² is defined as “the science of reciting the Qur'an through diverse modes of pronunciation (such as rules of *madd*, *idghām*, *ghunnah*, and *imālah*), the specific characteristics of these rules in different *qirā'āt*, as well as the dialects in which the Qur'an was revealed, all transmitted through a continuous chain of narration” (Ayman Baqlah, 2009, pp. 70-72).

Imam al-Jazari defines *qirā'āt* as “the science that deals with the manner of performing the words of the Qur'an and with attributing the differences in their recitation to those who transmitted them” (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2013, p. 416).

In his work *Questions and Answers on the Sciences of the Qur'an*, Ahmadkhon Rashidov writes: “This science examines the Qur'anic words and the differences among them, which are transmitted from one of the reciters on the basis of a *sanad*³, that is, the manner of performance conveyed through narration.” The term *sanad* is defined in terminology as “the chain of transmission that traces the Qur'an and its modes of recitation back to their sources” (Shodmonov, 2025, pp. 230-231). It denotes an uninterrupted succession of Qur'an transmitters extending from the era of the Prophet (peace be upon him), through the Companions, and onward. In this context, the *sanad* signifies a continuous line of transmission reaching back to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Rashidov further notes that “the subject of the science of *qirā'āt* is the state of the Qur'anic words during pronunciation and the instruction of the proper manner of articulating them” (Rashidov, 2024, p. 136). From the perspective of their acceptance, the Qur'anic recitations are classified into several categories.

Among these categories, the first to be accepted is the *mutawātir*⁴ recitations. refers to recitations transmitted by such a large number of reliable narrators that it is normally impossible for them to have agreed upon a falsehood. According to the sound scholarly view, a *mutawātir* recitation is one that has been transmitted – from the beginning to the end of its chain (*sanad*) – by a large group of trustworthy transmitters whose number cannot be precisely determined, with each group transmitting it from another in a *mutawātir* manner (Abdul Aziz ibn Sulayman, 2011, p. 84).

Ibn al-Jazari states: “*Qirā'āt* is the science that studies the modes of reciting the words of the Qur'an and

the differences among them, attributing these variations to the transmitters who conveyed them.”

Shihab al-Din al-Qastalani explains: “This science concerns the agreements and differences among the transmitters of the Book of Allah with respect to language, grammatical inflection, omission and affirmation, vocalization, *sukūn*, connection and separation, and similar aspects of pronunciation and substitution (*badal*), which are known through audition (oral transmission).”

Another scholar defines the science of *qirā'āt* as “the study of the modes of performing the words of the Qur'an and their differences, attributed to the transmitters who narrated them” (Salim 'Awwadh Habashan, 2013, pp. 165-172).

On the basis of these definitions, *mutawātir qirā'āt* may be described as “the recitations revealed by divine revelation – that is, conveyed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) through Jibrīl (peace be upon him) – and transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him) by numerous trustworthy narrators in a continuous and uninterrupted *mutawātir* chain.”

At present, the origins of the ten *mutawātir* modes of recitation are traced back to their revelation to the Messenger of Allah. The development of the recitations and their scholarly foundations has a long history and has been examined extensively by Muslim scholars.

After the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away, many Qur'an reciters were killed in battles. For this reason, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (may Allah be pleased with him), with the consensus of the Companions, instructed Zayd ibn Thābit to compile the Qur'an into a single *muṣḥaf*⁵. As a result, the Qur'an was fully compiled into written sheets, which were first kept with Abū Bakr, then with 'Umar, and later with Ḥafṣa (may Allah be pleased with them) (Ibn al-Jazari, 2009, p. 7).

During the caliphate of 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with him), and upon the suggestion of Ḥudhayfa (may Allah be pleased with him), copies were prepared from a single authorized exemplar of the *muṣḥaf*. Zayd ibn Thābit, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥārith ibn Hishām (may Allah be pleased with them) were appointed to carry out the copying. These codices were then sent – each accompanied by a reciter from among the Companions – to the cities of Baṣra, Kūfa, Shām, Mecca, Yemen, and Bahrain.

Afterward, a group of scholars specializing in Qur'anic recitation emerged, dedicating themselves to mastering the recitation of the Qur'an in its original form and to establishing its foundational principles. As a

² The word *qirā'ah* literally means “to read,” “to study,” “to compile,” and “to memorize”;

³ The word *sanad* literally means “support” or “reliance”;

⁴ The word *mutawātir* literally means “successive,” “continuous,” “recurrent,” and “certain / beyond doubt”

⁵ The word *muṣḥaf* literally means “written pages,” “book,” or “codex of the Qur'an”;

result, they came to be known as the “imams of *qirā'āt*.” A *qirā'āt* imam is a scholar who studied the recitations from his teachers, selected one of the transmitted forms, and specialized in it. For example, Imām Nāfi' studied with seventy Tābi'in scholars and, from among the recitations he had learned from his teachers, chose one form for himself. This process of selection is called *ikhtiyār*, and the chosen form itself became known as a *qirā'ah*. Accordingly, a scholar who specializes in a specific recitation is called the imam of that recitation, and the recitation he selected is attributed to his name (Shodmonov, 2025, p. 227).

Since they devoted themselves seriously to the study of recitation, the recitations came to be attributed to them. Among these scholars were, in Madina: Abū Ja'far Yazīd ibn al-Qa'qā' (d. 130/747), Shayba ibn Nisāh (d. 130/747), and Nāfi' ibn Abī Nu'aym (d. 169/785); in Mecca: 'Abd Allāh ibn Kathīr (d. 210/825), Ḥumayd ibn Qays al-A'raj, and Muḥammad ibn Muḥaysin (d. 123/740); in Kūfa: Yaḥyā ibn Wathāb (d. 103/721), 'Āṣim ibn Abī al-Najūd (d. 129/746), Sulaymān al-A'mash (d. 148/765), Ḥamza (d. 159/775), and al-Kisā'i (d. 189/804); in Baṣra: 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī Ishāq, 'Isā ibn 'Umar (d. 149/766), Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā' (d. 154/770), 'Āṣim al-Jahdarī (d. 128/745), and Ya'qūb al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 205/820); and in Shām: 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Āmir (d. 118/736), 'Atīyya ibn Qays al-Kilābī (d. 121/738), Ismā'il ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥājir, Yaḥyā ibn Ḥārith al-Dhimārī (also known as al-Zayyāt), and Shurayḥ ibn Yazīd al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 203/818) (Ḥabashan, 2013, p. 189).

As the number of students and scholars engaged in the study of *qirā'āt* increased, differences also multiplied and clarity began to diminish. For this reason, a group of scholars of *qirā'āt* formulated criteria and conditions to distinguish the authentic readings, transmissions (*riwāyāt*), and recitational pathways from those that were not authentic. A *riwāyah* (lit. “transmission,” “report”) in technical usage refers to a form of recitation attributed to a specific transmitter who narrates it from the imam of a given recitation, even if a chain (*sanad*) exists between them; for example, the transmissions of Ḥafṣ and Shu'bah from Imām 'Āṣim. A single recitation may have more than one transmitter, as reflected in the fact that each imam of *qirā'āt* has two or more transmitters (Shodmonov, 2025, p. 230).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative textual-analytical design based on close reading of classical and contemporary works on Qur'anic recitation traditions. The analysis focuses on scholarly perspectives regarding

the conditions for recognizing a recitation as *ṣaḥīḥ* – that is, a recitation that (1) conforms to the principles of the Arabic language, (2) corresponds to the 'Uthmānic muṣḥaf, and (3) is transmitted through *tawātur* (continuous mass transmission). Particular attention is given to the third criterion and to the scholarly debates concerning its formulation and interpretation.

The primary corpus of analysis consists of classical works on *qirā'āt* and their commentaries, including the writings of Ibn al-Jazarī, Abū 'Ubayd Qāsim ibn Sallām, al-Shāṭibī, al-Nuwayrī, and other authoritative scholars of the discipline. These texts were examined alongside verified modern academic studies and critical editions of *qirā'āt* literature. The selection criterion for sources was their recognized scholarly authority within the Islamic sciences, their methodological relevance to the question of authenticity in recitation, and their treatment of the concepts of *tawātur*, *sanad*-authenticity, and *mashhūriyyah*.

The methodological approach was based on a qualitative textual and conceptual analysis of classical and contemporary works on Qur'anic recitation traditions. The study employed comparative textual analysis of differing scholarly positions on the conditions of authenticity in *qirā'āt*; conceptual examination of the terms *tawātur*, *sanad*, *mashhūr*, and *shādhdh* in their disciplinary usage; historical-contextual analysis of the emergence of canonical recitations and their scholarly reception; and analytical reconstruction of the arguments advanced by proponents of differing formulations of the third condition of authenticity.

Special attention was given to reconciling apparently divergent scholarly formulations by identifying their underlying conceptual commonalities – particularly the relationship between *tawātur* and *sanad*-authenticity. The analysis further incorporated an evaluative reading of debates surrounding Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-Sab'a* and its role in shaping public perceptions of the “seven recitations,” including whether they were identified with the “seven *aḥruf*” mentioned in the ḥadīth.

Through this integrative approach, the study sought to clarify how different methodological frameworks within the *qirā'āt* tradition converge on shared epistemological principles, despite variations in terminology and formulation.

RESLUTS

On the basis of these criteria, for a recitation to be accepted as *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), the scholars stipulated that it must (1) conform to the principles of the Arabic language, (2) correspond to at least one of the 'Uthmānic codices (*maṣāḥif*), that is, one of the copies of the Qur'an

written during the caliphate of 'Uthmān and sent to different regions, and (3) be transmitted through *tawātur* (multiple independent and reliable transmitters) (Ibn al-Jazarī, 1435/2014, p. 117).

Dr. Salim Muhammad 'Awwadh Habashan notes that the scholars of *qirā'āt* developed rules and criteria for *mutawātir* recitations in order to distinguish them from *shādhdh* recitations and to prevent them from becoming conflated with them. The term *shādhdh* 'in technical usage refers to "a recitation whose chain (*sanad*) is not authentic, or which does not correspond to the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*, or which has no recognized basis in the Arabic language; such a recitation is not to be read" (Abdul Aziz ibn Sulayman, 2011, p. 85). These criteria were formulated because the violation of any one of these pillars results in the rejection of that recitation.

These pillars consist of *tawātur*, conformity to the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*, and conformity to the Arabic language. After these pillars were set out and consolidated by Ibn al-Jazarī (through his work *Munjid al-Muqri'*), they became firmly established. Although the scholars specialized in this field clearly defined the pillars of *ṣaḥīḥ* (*mutawātir*) recitations, their expressions differed particularly with regard to the principal pillar – *tawātur*. Some scholars held that the authenticity of the chain (*sanad*) was sufficient for a recitation to be accepted, whereas the majority considered *tawātur* to be a necessary condition for its acceptance (Habashan, 2013, p. 209).

These pillars consist of *tawātur*, conformity to the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*, and conformity to the Arabic language. After these pillars were articulated and consolidated by Ibn al-Jazarī – particularly through his work *Munjid al-Muqri'* – they became firmly established in the scholarly tradition. Although specialists in this field clearly defined the pillars of *ṣaḥīḥ* (*mutawātir*) recitations, their formulations differed especially with respect to the principal pillar, *tawātur*. Some scholars argued that the authenticity of the chain (*sanad*) was sufficient for a recitation to be accepted, whereas the majority regarded *tawātur* as a necessary condition for its acceptance (Habashan, 2013, p. 209).

Regarding the requirement of *tawātur* in the transmission of recitations, Abū al-'Abbās Mahdawayh states: "The Qur'an has been established not through *āḥād* reports, but through the transmission of the community – that is, the body of the Muslim ummah who are specialists in the science of *qirā'āt*." The term *āḥād*⁶ in technical usage refers to "a recitation whose chain (*sanad*) is authentic, yet which does not correspond to the 'Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*, or does not

conform to the grammatical principles of the Arabic language, or does not attain the level of widespread acceptance described above; such a recitation is not to be recited in the Qur'an" (Abdul Aziz ibn Sulayman, 2011, p. 84).

Ibn al-'Arabī likewise states that "the Qur'an has been established through *mutawātir* transmission." The commentator on *Tayyibat al-Nashr*, al-Nuwayrī, writes: "Know that the seven letters and the well-known recitations (*mashhūr qirā'āt*) have been transmitted in a *mutawātir* manner." The term *mashhūr*⁸ in technical usage refers to "an authentic recitation whose chain (chain of transmitters) is sound, but which has not reached the level of *tawātur*, while still corresponding to the 'Uthmānic script (*rasm al-muṣḥaf*), conforming to the grammatical rules of the Arabic language, and being accepted and widely practiced by the reciters (*qurrā'*)." These two categories – *mutawātir* and *mashhūr* recitations – are regarded as acceptable recitations (al-Nuwayrī, 1424/2003, pp. 121-122).

The majority of scholars of *qirā'āt*, as well as scholars of legal theory (*uṣūl*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and ḥadīth, emphatically affirm that *tawātur* is a necessary condition in the transmission of recitations (Ibn al-Ḥajīb, 1405/1985, p. 46; Walī Allāh Sayyid 'Alī al-Nūrī al-Safaqsī, 1415/1995, p. 5; 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Abd al-Ghanī, 1401/1981, p. 7). Although specialists in this field clearly defined the pillars of *ṣaḥīḥ* (*mutawātir*) recitations, their formulations differed particularly with respect to the most essential pillar – *tawātur*. Some scholars considered the authenticity of the chain (*sanad*) to be sufficient for a recitation to be accepted, whereas the majority held that *tawātur* is a necessary condition for its acceptance (Habashan, 2013, p. 209).

Ibn al-Jazarī explains that the acceptance of a recitation as *ṣaḥīḥ* is based on three conditions: (1) that it conforms – even from one linguistic perspective – to the Arabic language; (2) that it corresponds – even potentially – to one of the 'Uthmānic codices (*maṣāḥif*), meaning that it may be supported through oral transmission even if it is not explicitly represented in the written orthography of the *muṣḥaf*; and (3) that its chain (*sanad*) is authentic.

The phrase "even potentially" refers especially to recitational forms belonging to the *farsh* readings, that is, variants occurring in dispersed and individual Qur'anic words which do not fall under a single general rule, but instead possess specific rulings applicable to particular instances (Abdul Aziz ibn Sulayman, 2011, p. 142). For example, in the verse ﴿مَالِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ﴾ (Āṣim and al-Kisā'ī recited the word with an alif (*mālik*), whereas the remaining seven imams recited it without an alif (*malik*);

⁶ lit. "irregular," "deviant," "outside the norm"

⁷ lit. "individual," "singular"

⁸ lit. "well-known," "widely recognized"

however, this ruling applies only to this occurrence in Sūrat al-Fātiḥa, since in the verse ﴿قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ الْمُلْكِ﴾ all reciters read the word (*mālika*) with an alif. As for the authenticity of the chain, Ibn al-Jazarī emphasizes that every transmitter must be upright in character and strong in memory, and must have received the recitation directly from the preceding reliable narrator.

Moreover, every recitation that is well-known among the leading imams who are authorities in this science (*a'immat hādhā al-sha'n al-dābiṭīn lahu*), and which they do not regard as erroneous (*ghalaṭ*) or *shādhdh* (that is, solitary and contrary to the majority), is considered *ṣaḥīḥ*. It is not permissible to reject such a recitation, nor is it lawful to deny it; rather, it constitutes part of the seven letters upon which the Qur'an was revealed, and people are obliged to accept it. It makes no difference whether it is attributed to one of the seven imams, the ten imams, or any other reciter whose transmission has been accepted.

However, whenever any one of these three pillars is violated, the recitation is deemed weak, *shādhdh* – that is, “a recitation whose chain (*sanad*) is not authentic, or which does not correspond to the ‘Uthmānic *muṣḥaf*, or which has no recognized basis in the Arabic language; such a recitation is not to be recited” (Abdul Aziz ibn Sulayman, 2011, p. 85) – or invalid (*bāṭil*), regardless of whether it is attributed to one of the seven imams or to scholars more renowned than them. This is the position held by the verifying imams among both the early and later scholars, and it was explicitly articulated by Imām Ḥāfiẓ Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd al-Dānī (Ibn al-Jazarī, 2009, p. 9).

Ibn al-Jazarī criticizes the position advanced by some later scholars who stipulated *tawātur* as a necessary condition for the authenticity of recitations. In his view, if a recitation is established at the level of *tawātur*, then there remains no need for any additional conditions such as conformity to the ‘Uthmānic script. This is because, according to him, any recitation transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him) through a *mutawātir* chain must be accepted and regarded with certainty as part of the Qur'an, even if it were to contradict the ‘Uthmānic orthography (Ibn al-Jazarī, 2009, p. 13).

Ibn al-Jazarī also explains that he initially supported the requirement of *tawātur* – as he stated in one of his earlier works, *Munjid al-Muqri* – but later came to the conclusion that this position was incorrect and contrary to the views of the pious early scholars (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). He therefore revised his stance.

Commenting on the fact that Ibn al-Jazarī, in *Al-Nashr fī al-Qirā'āt al-'Ashr* and *Tayyibat al-Nashr fī al-Qirā'āt al-'Ashr*, replaced the condition of *tawātur* with the condition of an authentic chain (*sanad*), Ṭāhir

ibn ‘Āshūr states: “This means that, if a recitation is not *mutawātir* from the Prophet (peace be upon him), then the following three conditions are required for its acceptance. If it possesses an authentic chain that reaches the Prophet (peace be upon him), yet does not attain the level of *tawātur*, it holds the status of a *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*. As for the *mutawātir* recitations, they are not in need of these conditions, because their *tawātur* itself establishes them as authoritative in the Arabic language and, by virtue of their conformity to the codified *muṣḥaf*, renders them independent of any further conditions” (Ṭāhir ibn ‘Āshūr, 2000, p. 53).

These conditions include the following: *talqī* (receiving and acceptance), meaning that the recitation is received by the ummah without objection or repudiation, and *istifāda* (wide prevalence within the city), that is, its circulation and practice among the people of the locality.

Dr. Salim Muhammad ‘Awwadh Habashan, however, emphasizes that replacing *tawātur* with the condition of an authentic chain (*sanad*) – as seen in the views of Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Abū Shāmāh, and especially Ibn al-Jazarī – is insufficient. He states: “Relying solely on the authenticity of the chain in *qirā'āt* – as Ibn al-Jazarī inclined toward in his later period, substituting it in place of *tawātur* – is not adequate. This is because a memorizer (*ḥāfiẓ*) may forget part of what he heard, the letters may become confused for him, or he may recite in a dialect (*lahn*) of which he is unaware. If he falls into doubt, he may resort to narrating from someone else in order to justify himself. There may also be people who trust him, and thus they may accept from him something that he has forgotten, erred in, or even that has become his habitual manner of recitation.”

He further states that “the authenticity of the chain is not sufficient to establish that a recitation is Qur'an, because – alongside *sanad*-authenticity – there is also a need for *tanaqul* (continuous communal transmission) which reflects the reception of the recitation by the ummah. This is particularly important because many such recitations may, in fact, be interpretive glosses (*ta'wīl*) transmitted together with the revelation (*tanzīl*), and thus may mistakenly come to be regarded as part of the Qur'an itself” (Habashan, 2013, p. 211).

He notes that Shaykh Abū ‘Amr ibn al-Ṣalāh objected – in his legal opinion – to those who were satisfied solely with the authenticity of the chain, and he set forth the conditions for the acceptance of a recitation, stating: “It is required that the recited text be transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him) as Qur'an through *mutawātir* transmission, or be narrated in a similarly widespread (*mashhūr*) manner and received by the ummah, as is the case with the seven recitations. For in this matter, what is taken into consideration is that which has been firmly established and adopted as

a foundational principle within the methodological framework of the discipline.”

Commenting on the condition of *sanad*-authenticity, Dr. Salim ‘Awwadh Habashan explains: “The authenticity of the chain is sufficient for the acceptance of a recitation only when accompanied by the following: (1) the acceptance of the recitation by the ummah, and (2) its clear, established, and widespread presence (*mashhūriyyah*) among the Muslim community. Accordingly, although the scholars who stipulate *sanad*-authenticity do not regard *tawātur* as an obligatory condition for the acceptance of a recitation, it may nevertheless be observed that, alongside *sanad*-authenticity, they also require elements that, in effect, integrate such a recitation into the category of *mutawātir* recitations.” (Habashan, 2013, p. 211)

Commenting on the pillar of *sanad*-authenticity and its related implications, al-Zarqānī states: “This principle, in its meaning, indicates that every recitation in which these three pillars are combined is to be deemed acceptable, and that a ruling has even been issued declaring disbelief upon the one who rejects it. These three pillars are a sign of *tawātur*, and the knowledge referred to here belongs to the category of necessary religious knowledge – whether the recitation is transmitted from the Seven Imams, the Ten Imams, or from any other accepted imams.”

Building on this and similar statements by other scholars, Dr. Salim Muhammad ‘Awwadh Habashan emphasizes: “The aforementioned statements represent the position of the scholars of *qirā’āt*, as well as the specialists in legal theory, the jurists, and the hadith scholars, who stipulated *tawātur* as a condition for the acceptance of Qur’anic recitations. They opposed the view that *sanad*-authenticity alone is sufficient, and regarded it as a later-emerging opinion.” (Habashan, 2013, p. 211)

He further notes that, although he gives preference to the view of the majority of scholars – namely, that *tawātur* constitutes the fundamental pillar for establishing that a passage is part of the Qur’an, whether in whole or in part, and that it must therefore be upheld – he does not reject the statements of the proponents of the first opinion concerning the establishment of a recitation, such as those of Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Abū Shāmah, or Ibn al-Jazarī. Rather, he interprets their statements – which affirm that a recitation must either be transmitted from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as Qur’an through *tawātur*, or transmitted in a similarly widespread manner and accepted by the ummah – as functionally equivalent to *tawātur* in establishing and validating a Qur’anic recitation. On this basis, he emphasizes that the difference between the representatives of the two approaches is, in reality,

only at the level of formulation, whereas in essence they refer to the same underlying principle (Habashan, 2013, pp. 222-223).

In his study on Ibn al-Jazarī’s work *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā’āt al-‘Ashr*, Dr. Salim Muhammad Maḥmūd al-Shinqīṭī argues that Ibn al-Jazarī’s differing position regarding the third condition for the authenticity of recitations does not, in fact, contradict the position of the majority of scholars concerning the requirement of *tawātur*. Accordingly, when reference is made to recitations whose chains are authentic (*sanad ṣaḥīḥ*) or *mutawātir*, what is intended is none other than the ten well-known recitations.

The researcher explains: “The author’s view regarding the authenticity of the chain ultimately returns to *tawātur*, because the scholars who stipulate *sanad*-authenticity also require the conditions of ‘widespread acceptance’ (*mashhūriyyah*) and ‘broad transmission’. These two conditions are regarded – by a number of scholars of legal theory – as constituent elements of *tawātur*, as demonstrated by the evidences cited in *Kashf al-Asrār*. Furthermore, both groups – despite their differing formulations – consider the ten recitations to be *mutawātir*, whereas, in the case of other recitations, the conditions of *tawātur* required by both sides are not fulfilled. Hence, in order to reconcile these differing views, the matter should not be approached from the perspective of whether a recitation is *mutawātir* or merely authentic, but rather from the perspective of whether it is accepted or not accepted; in this way, the disagreement is resolved.” (Ibn al-Jazarī, 1435/2014, pp. 123-125)

From the definitions discussed above, it becomes evident that the acceptance of a recitation as *ṣaḥīḥ* is generally conditioned upon three criteria: conformity to the principles of the Arabic language; conformity to the ‘Uthmānic muṣḥaf; and *tawātur* – or, in some formulations, the authenticity of the chain of transmission.

Although, with respect to the third condition, differing views are found among Ibn al-Jazarī and some other scholars, the condition they advance – namely, the “authenticity of the chain” – in essence encompasses the two features that are themselves required within the condition of *tawātur*: (1) acceptance by the ummah and (2) wide dissemination within the Muslim community. For this reason, as indicated in the statements of the commentators, scholars, and researchers cited above, both formulations may be understood as expressing one and the same substantive meaning.

Some scholars have claimed that one of the earliest works written on the subject of Qur’anic recitations – Ibn Mujāhid’s *Kitāb al-Sab‘a* – intended, by its title, to identify the seven recitations as those referred to by the

notion of the “seven letters” (*sabʿat al-aḥruf*) mentioned in the ḥadīth.

The ḥadīth states: “Gabriel recited the Qurʾan to me on one ḥarf, and I continued asking him to increase (the number) until he ended at seven aḥruf.” (Al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 796)

In interpreting the expression “seven letters” in this ḥadīth, Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf states that it signifies that the Qurʾan was revealed in seven forms (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2013, pp. 276-277).

Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: “I heard Hishām ibn Ḥakīm reciting Sūrat al-Furqān in a manner different from my recitation, and the Messenger of Allah taught it to me (in another way). I almost rushed against him while he was still in prayer, but I waited until he finished. Then I took hold of him by his cloak and brought him to the Messenger of Allah and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, I heard this man reciting Sūrat al-Furqān in a way different from how you taught me to recite it.’ He said: ‘Let him go. Recite, O Hishām.’ So he recited as I had heard him. The Prophet said: ‘It was revealed in this way.’ Then he said to me: ‘Recite.’ So I recited, and he said: ‘It was revealed in this way. Indeed, this Qurʾan was revealed upon seven aḥruf, so recite from it whatever is easy for you.’” Narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allah be pleased with them both); reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. (al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 583)

The above ḥadīth not only indicates that the Qurʾan was revealed upon seven aḥruf, but it also shows that some of the Companions were initially unaware of this, and that the matter became known to them only after disagreement arose among them. It further suggests that the revelation of the Qurʾan in this form was intended to make recitation easier for people, so that they would not be burdened or face hardship.

Ubayy ibn Kaʿb (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: “The Prophet (peace be upon him) was at the watering place of Banū Ghifār when Jibrīl (peace be upon him) came to him and said: ‘Allah commands you to recite the Qurʾan to your ummah upon one ḥarf.’ He said: ‘I ask Allah for His pardon and His forgiveness; indeed my ummah will not be able to bear that.’ Then he came to him a second time and said: ‘Allah commands you that your ummah recite the Qurʾan upon two aḥruf.’ He said: ‘I ask Allah for His pardon and His forgiveness; indeed my ummah will not be able to bear that.’ Then he came to him a third time and said: ‘Allah commands you that your ummah recite the Qurʾan upon three aḥruf.’ He said: ‘I ask Allah for His pardon and His forgiveness; indeed my ummah will not be able to bear that.’ Then he came to him a fourth time and said: ‘Allah commands you that your ummah recite the Qurʾan upon seven

aḥruf; whichever ḥarf they recite upon, they have done correctly.’” Narrated by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Tirmidhī. (Muslim, 1998, p. 319)

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf emphasizes that this ḥadīth likewise indicates that the Qurʾan was revealed upon seven aḥruf, and that this was intended as a means of facilitation, making recitation easier for the ummah. After reviewing a number of scholarly interpretations concerning the meaning of the “seven aḥruf,” he notes that the scholars ultimately permitted variation in seven domains: differences in the pronunciation of nouns in their various morphological forms; variation in grammatical inflection and vocalization (iʿrāb); differences arising from changes in letters, including diacritical markings; variation resulting from the substitution of one word for another; differences involving advancement and delay (taqdīm wa-taʾkhīr); variation involving the addition or omission of minor elements; and differences related to dialectal forms of recitation (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2013, pp. 276-285, 295).

Ibn al-Jazarī likewise stresses that what is meant by the “seven aḥruf” is not the seven well-known recitations later compiled by Ibn Mujāhid in his work *Kitāb al-Sabʿa* in the fourth Islamic century. Rather, he notes that identifying the seven aḥruf with these seven recitations is merely a claim made by some members of the general public (Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Jazarī, 1345/1926, p. 24).

Ibn al-Jazarī also notes that “the first reliable scholar to compile the qirāʾāt into a book was Abū ʿUbayd Qāsim ibn Sallām, who included fifteen recitations – among them the seven recitations later cited by Ibn Mujāhid.” From this statement it becomes clear that Ibn Mujāhid was not the first person to compile the qirāʾāt into a written work

Ibn al-Jazarī further emphasizes that Ibn Mujāhid was, in fact, the sixth scholar to author a work on qirāʾāt – after Abū ʿUbayd Qāsim ibn Sallām, Aḥmad ibn Jubayr ibn Muḥammad al-Kūfī, Qādī Ismāʿīl ibn Ishāq al-Mālikī, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, and Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar al-Dājūnī – and that his distinctive contribution was that he limited the number of canonical recitations to seven (Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Jazarī, 1345/1926, pp. 33-34).

Ibn al-Jazarī explains in detail the earliest scholars who authored works on the qirāʾāt, noting that the reason for doing so is that people began to assume that the recitations mentioned in *al-Shāṭibiyyah* and *al-Taysīr* were identical with the “seven aḥruf” mentioned in the ḥadīth, and that anything beyond these was to be regarded as *shādhah*. He further observes that some scholars criticized Ibn Mujāhid for restricting himself,

in his book, to only seven recitations, arguing that he ought either to have mentioned more than seven, or fewer than seven, or at least to have explained why – despite the existence of other authentic and mutawātir recitations – he limited himself to seven.

Moreover, Ibn al-Jazarī states: “Often the people of various cities confined themselves to the recitations of Nāfi‘, Ibn Kathīr, Abū ‘Amr, Ibn ‘Āmir, ‘Āṣim, Ḥamza, and al-Kisā’ī. This led the general public to assume that these recitations were definitively obligatory, so that whenever they heard any other recitation, they would declare it mistaken, or even deem its reciter a disbeliever... Had the number of recitations been mentioned as fewer than seven or more than seven, these doubts would have been removed.” (Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Jazarī, 1345/1926, p. 36)

On this basis, Ibn al-Jazarī concludes that every recitation in which the three required conditions are present must be accepted – whether it belongs to these seven recitations or to others – and that its acceptance is obligatory.

Dr. Shawqī Zayf – who edited and authenticated Ibn Mujāhid’s *Kitāb al-Sab‘a* – notes in the introduction to his edition that Ibn Mujāhid’s restriction to seven recitations led some people to form the mistaken impression that these seven recitations were identical with the “seven letters” mentioned in the ḥadīth, whereas this is not the case. He clarifies that Ibn Mujāhid did not intend by this selection to imply that the remaining recitations were *shādhah* in the technical sense employed in the science of qirā’āt. Rather, the intended meaning was that – in terms of the degree to which they were recited in the major cities at that time – the recitations beyond these seven occupied a rank lower than them.

At the same time, he stresses that Ibn Mujāhid cannot be held responsible for the misunderstanding that later arose among some people in this regard, and that the scholars acknowledged and approved his ijtihād. His preference for the recitation of Nāfi‘ over that of his teacher Abū Ja‘far was based on the wider dissemination of Nāfi‘’s recitation among the reciters of Madina in that period; similarly, his selection of Abū ‘Amr rather than Ya‘qūb reflected the same consideration. As for his omission of the recitation of Khalaf, this may – as Ibn al-Jazarī also indicates – be due to the fact that it did not depart from the recitational tradition of the reciters of Kufa. (Ibn Mujāhid, 1119/1707, pp. 18-20)

DISCUSSION

With regard to the three recitations that complete the ten mutawātir recitations, Ibn al-Jazarī cites in *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā’āt al-‘Ashr* a legal opinion issued by

the Shāfi‘ī scholar ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn al-Subkī, who states: “Praise be to Allah. The recitations which al-Shāṭibī restricted to seven, together with the recitations of Abū Ja‘far, Ya‘qūb, and Khalaf, are mutawātir recitations that are necessarily known in religion (that is, whose status does not require evidentiary proof). Each of the ten recitations, with its distinctive features, is necessarily known in religion, for it was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Only an ignorant person denies this. The mutawātir status of a matter is not limited to those who have examined its chains of transmission; rather, it is mutawātir for every Muslim who says, ‘Ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh wa ashhadu anna Muḥammadan Rasūl Allāh,’ even if he is illiterate and has not memorized a single letter of the Qur’an...” (Ibn al-Jazarī, 1345/1926, p. 45)

These three pillars – that is, the conditions upon which the acceptance of a recitation as ṣaḥīḥ is based – are embodied in the recitations transmitted by the renowned imams of the ten qirā’āt and their students. In this regard, Ibn al-Jazarī states: “In our time, the recitations upon which people have reached consensus in acceptance are the recitations of the ten imams of qirā’āt. They are: Abū Ja‘far, Nāfi‘, Ibn Kathīr, Abū ‘Amr, Ya‘qūb, Ibn ‘Āmir, ‘Āṣim, Ḥamza, al-Kisā’ī, and Khalaf.” (Habashan, 2013, p. 225)

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing analysis, three fundamental conditions are required for Qur’anic recitations to be recognized as ṣaḥīḥ (authentic). Although differences in expression have been observed regarding the final of these conditions, the detailed examinations of the scholars demonstrate that these disagreements are, in essence, very close in meaning. Both approaches, whether expressed in terms of “tawātur” (continuous and mass transmission) or “authenticity of the chain of transmission,” ultimately refer to the same evaluative criteria – namely, widespread circulation and collective acceptance by the Muslim ummah. Thus, the two perspectives employ different terminological formulations while aiming at the same underlying objective.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the ḥadīth concerning the “seven aḥruf” does not refer specifically to the seven canonical recitations, nor is such an interpretation found explicitly in the ḥadīth texts or in the authoritative works of reliable Islamic scholars. Rather, this notion has emerged as a misunderstanding prevalent among segments of the general public who have not engaged critically with scholarly sources or explored the deeper methodological foundations of the subject.

One of the principal factors contributing to the emergence of this misunderstanding among the public is Ibn Mujāhid's work *Kitāb al-Sab'a fī al-Qirā'āt*. Because this work focused exclusively on seven recitations and subsequently attained wide circulation and prominence, many came to assume that these seven recitations were identical with the "seven aḥruf" mentioned in the ḥadīth.

However, the prominent scholar Dr. Shawqī Dayf, in his introduction to *Kitāb al-Sab'a*, offers a scholarly clarification of this issue. In his view, Ibn Mujāhid's omission of the remaining three mutawātir recitations from the work – whether due to their degree of prevalence or their association with the Kūfan school – did not diminish their scholarly status or authenticity. On this basis, Dr. Dayf argues that Ibn Mujāhid regarded all ten recitations as possessing the same level of authenticity and tawātur (continuous mass transmission) as the seven recitations included in his book.

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