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## THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF QIRA'AT IN THE SCIENCE OF TAFSIR

**Abstract.** *This article investigates the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of Qira'at (Quranic recitations) within the broader framework of Tafsir (exegesis). It analyzes the historical trajectory of Quranic codification, beginning with the foundational efforts of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan and progressing through the scholarly contributions of Ibn Mujahid, Al-Shatibi, and Ibn al-Jazari. The study identifies five pivotal stages of canonization that transformed the oral tradition into a standardized academic discipline. Furthermore, it explores the integration of recitation variants in classical exegetical works, such as those by Al-Tabari, Al-Zamakhshari, and Al-Nasafi, highlighting how these variants influence legal and linguistic interpretations in Islamic scholarship.*

**Keywords:** *Quranic recitations, Qira'at, Tafsir, Canonization, Uthmanic Mus'haf, Ibn Mujahid, Islamic Intellectual History, Hanafiy Jurisprudence.*

### INTRODUCTION

The process of collecting the Quranic *mus'haf* in Islamic history serves as a primary issue in analyzing the theoretical-methodological foundations of *Qira'at* within the science of *Tafsir*. In the early Islamic period, although verses were primarily transmitted through oral tradition and circulated widely among Muslims, several factors such as the rapid expansion of Islamic territories, the development of *Fiqh*, and the linguistic variations among Arab dialects necessitated the unification of the Quran into a stable, standardized written form. This monumental task was achieved during the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan (d. 35/655). His initiative was not merely a formalization of the existing text but a strategic “canonization” aimed at limiting discrepancies arising

from diverse recitations, preserving the unity of the *Ummah*, and preventing potential sectarianism in scriptural interpretation. This period established the framework for *rasm al-mus'haf* (orthography) and the scientific systematization of transmission chains, laying the groundwork for subsequent centuries of tajwid and recitation rules.

## MAIN PART

Following the Uthmanic codification, the process of standardizing the *mutawatir* (massively transmitted) recitations of the Holy Quran unfolded through several critical phases. The Uthmanic initiative represents the first stage of these systematization efforts (Jazari, 2010:199). The second stage of canonization was realized through the work of Abu Bakr Ahmad Ibn Mujahid (d. 324/936), who selected and formalized the system of the Seven Readings. This academic lineage was further refined by Abu Amr al-Dani (d. 444/1053) and subsequently by Qasim ibn Firruh al-Shatibi (d. 590/1193), whose didactic poem *Hirz al-amani wa wajh al-tahani* popularly known as the *Shatibiyya* became a cornerstone for Quranic education and remains a standard text to this day. The fourth stage involved the official recognition of three additional recitations by Ibn al-Jazari (d. 833/1429), completing the “Ten Recitations” framework (Jazari, 2010:68). The 1923 Cairo (Azhar) edition is often regarded as the fifth stage, significantly contributing to the global stabilization of the *Hafs 'an 'Asim* recitation. Analyzing these stages in chronological sequence is essential for understanding how the selected corpus of recitations was implemented through various scholarly and administrative measures (Nasser, 2020:5-9).

The inherent diversity of Quranic recitations was the primary catalyst for Uthman ibn Affan's initiative to collect and codify the text. Upon the completion of the official *mus'haf*, the Caliph ordered the destruction of all other existing copies to maintain a singular, authoritative version. Prior to this, a “universal” written Quran in a fully agreed-upon single format did not exist among the companions. Even after the official codification, prominent companions such as Ibn Mas'ud and Ubay ibn Ka'b maintained their personal manuscripts. These codices differed from the official version in terms of *Sura* sequence and textual variants; for instance, Ibn Mas'ud's manuscript reportedly omitted the *Fatiha* and the *Mu'awwidhatayn*, while Ubay ibn Ka'b's version included the *Khal'* and *Hafd* (Qunut prayers) as distinct chapters (Suyuti, 2008:143; Sijistani, 2002:179-195).

The existence of the Quran is intrinsically linked to its recitations, as *Qira'at* constitutes the sole medium for its reading and liturgical performance. Among the numerous historical variations of the Quranic text, ten primary recitations have been preserved, serving as the singular divine source of the Quran. It is important to note that beyond these ten *mutawatir* recitations, four additional recitations exist, maintained by specialists such as Hasan Said Sakandari, who continue to preserve and teach this knowledge in the contemporary era. These diverse recitations are not merely “accidental” performance variations, nor do they simply reflect dialectal features or technical styles of recitation; rather, they are “essential” structural components of the Quran. The canonical recitations represent the masoretic version of the Quran, providing the necessary phonetic framework without which the skeletal consonants (*rasm*) of the Uthmanic *mus'haf* originally written without diacritical marks or vowels cannot be articulated. Consequently, personal opinion or *ijtihad* cannot be applied to the reading of the *rasm*, as Quranic recitation is a collective sunnah taught by the Prophet (s.a.w.) and meticulously preserved by the Muslim community to this day.

Since its revelation, the Quran has remained constant, static, and standardized through its manifestation in the seven and ten official recitations. Throughout various stages of history, Islamic scholars have sought to create a standardized, unified text, whether at the level of written codices (*masahif*) or oral performance. Examining the five primary turning points in the history of Quranic canonization reveals how the official declaration and religious validation of a standardized corpus influenced new norms of transmission and interpretation.

The collection and codification of the Quran by Uthman ibn Affan (r.a.) stands as one of the most pivotal events in early Islamic history (Burton, 1977:117-59). Following the initial assembly initiated by Abu Bakr Siddiq (r.a.) at the suggestion of Umar (r.a.) and led by Zayd ibn Thabit (r.a.), the original folios were kept by the first two caliphs. Upon the death of Umar ibn al Khattab (r.a.), these folios were bequeathed to his daughter, Hafsa binti Umar, rather than being immediately transferred to the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan. This particular transition led Western researchers, such as Nöldeke, to suggest that the first collection might have been a private endeavor rather than a state sponsored project (Nöldeke et al., 1926: 19). However, there is no sufficient religious basis to conclude that the most important document of the nascent Islamic state was entrusted to Hafsa for purely personal reasons; rather, Uthman ibn Affan requested these folios

from her specifically so that Zayd ibn Thabit could use them as a reference to compare and copy during the second official collection (Sijistani, 2002:195-196).

It is crucial to emphasize that both the first collection under Abu Bakr and Umar and the second under Uthman were conducted at an official state level. In both instances, the leadership introduced and promoted a formal version that superseded other personal copies held or memorized by Muslims at the time. The official Uthmanic version was declared the only authentic Quranic material, and all other manuscripts including those belonging to prominent companions renowned for their close relationship with the Prophet (s.a.w.) and their expertise in recitation were ordered to be destroyed.

Furthermore, the historical significance of the individuals appointed to the committee led by Zayd ibn Thabit (r.a.) during the Uthmanic period is noteworthy. Many members were relatively young during the Prophet's (s.a.w.) lifetime: Sa'id ibn al 'As (r.a.) was only nine years old at the time of the Prophet's passing (Asqaloni, 1993:192-196), and Abdur Rahman ibn Harith ibn Hisham was less than ten years old and had not directly narrated from the Prophet (Asqaloni, 1993:212). Similarly, Abdullah ibn Zubayr ibn al Awwam was approximately ten years old at the end of the prophetic era, and his specific role in the codification process is often overlooked in historical biographical sources (Ibn al Athir, 2012:669-671; Ibn Abdul Barr, 1992: 41-47). The selection of these younger figures, alongside the emphasis on Zayd ibn Thabit's integrity as a "wise youth beyond suspicion," suggests a conscious administrative decision to prioritize a systematic, centralized codification over the potentially varied personal memories of the more senior companions.

### **The first stage: the uthmanic codification**

The strategic nature of the Uthmanic codification is further evidenced by the exclusion of senior companions who were historically and traditionally most closely associated with the Quran. Figures such as Ibn Mas'ud, Ali ibn Abu Talib, and Ubay ibn Ka'b (r.a.) were notably absent from the official committee. The selection of Zayd ibn Thabit (r.a.) specifically described as a "wise youth beyond suspicion" (*shabbun oqil lo nattahimuka*) suggests that the leadership prioritized a systematic administrative approach over the deep seated personal prestige of the elder companions (Sijistani, 2002:159-166). This indicates that the decision was likely a conscious policy aimed at the long term systematization of the Quranic text rather than a choice based solely on traditional seniority or piety.

The drive toward a singular, authoritative version was so resolute that even the original folios belonging to Hafsa binti Umar (r.a.) the sole surviving monument of the first collection by Abu Bakr and Umar were eventually destroyed. Although Marwan ibn Hakam (r.a.) had initially attempted to acquire these pages during Hafsa's lifetime, his request was denied. It was only after her death that Marwan ordered the folios to be brought and burned, an act intended to ensure that no existing manuscript could ever contradict or challenge the official Uthmanic version (Sijistani, 2002:202-203).

### **The transition to orthographic reforms and early exegesis**

Despite these efforts to centralize the text, the evolution of the Quranic orthography continued into the Umayyad period. Approximately fifty years later, during the reign of Abdul Malik ibn Marwan (r.a.), the governor of Iraq, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (d. 95/714), undertook significant reforms of the Uthmanic *mus'haf's* orthography (Hamdan, 2010:795-835). As a state official, Hajjaj possessed the authority to introduce these changes and enforce them strictly, reportedly penalizing those in Kufa who continued to recite according to the non Uthmanic codex of Ibn Mas'ud (Ibn Abdul Barr, 1981:298). These reforms represent a secondary phase of canonization, focusing on the visual and linguistic refinement of the written text to ensure greater clarity in transmission (Déroche, 2014:138-142).

During the latter stages of this first canonization era, the scholarly integration of recitation variants reached a significant milestone with the publication of Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al Tabari's (d. 310/922) *Jami' al bayan*. Written in Baghdad between 283 and 290 AH, this monumental work remains one of the most authoritative references in the Islamic world for its inclusion of *Qira'at* (Tabari, 1994:15). Tabari's methodological uniqueness lies in his direct engagement with verse meanings without over-relying on exhaustive minor details. Notably, he frequently employed general descriptors such as "the reciters differed" or "some recited in this manner" rather than attributing variants to specific Imams (Tabari, 1994: 17). This indicates that during his time, recitations had not yet been strictly formalized under the names of the "Seven" or "Ten" Imams, as seen in his analysis of Sura al Fatiha, verse 3 (Tabari, 2001:149).

The transition toward the second major phase of canonization became necessary because, despite the efforts of Uthman and Hajjaj, the Quran was still not recited in a singular, uniform manner. Experts in recitation continued to teach various styles rooted in the traditions of the companions, including "non Uthmanic" and "irregular"

(*shadhdh*) variants. This ongoing diversity led Ibn Mujahid (d. 324/936) to undertake the unification of the Quran at the level of the recitations themselves, rather than just the written *mus'haf*. In the 250 years between Uthman's codification and Ibn Mujahid's work, Quranic variants had permeated the sciences of *Tafsir*, grammar, *Hadith*, and *Fiqh*. Before Ibn Mujahid standardized the Seven Readings, there were reportedly up to twenty five different collections of recitations attributed to various individuals (Nasser, 2013:6), and scholars like Abul Qasim al Huzali (d. 467/1072) had recorded as many as fifty different recitation styles (Huzali, 2007:17).

### **The second canonization: ibn mujahid and the seven readings**

The formalization of the "Seven Readings" by Ibn Mujahid (d. 324/936) was not met without significant scholarly opposition. Many contemporary and subsequent theologians criticized the selection as an unwarranted innovation (*bid'ah*) that risked inciting discord (*fitna*) among Muslims. The primary point of contention was Ibn Mujahid's arbitrary restriction of authentic recitations to precisely seven, thereby excluding numerous other reliable reciters from his classification (Nasser, 2013:6; Melchert, 2000:5-22). Although Ibn Mujahid did not explicitly detail his selection criteria in a definitive list, his work implies that a valid recitation must satisfy three fundamental conditions: 1) adherence to the orthography (*rasm*) of one of the five Uthmanic codices; 2) conformity with the rules of Arabic grammar; and 3) established consensus (*ijma'*) within the region where the recitation was practiced (Shah, 2004: 72 102; Nasser, 2015:85-113).

While other scholars before, during, and after Ibn Mujahid's era authored similar compilations of recitations, none achieved the same level of enduring authority. The unprecedented success of his system can be attributed to his strategic collaboration with the Vizier Ibn Muqla (d. 328/939), which provided the necessary political impetus to promote his system of *Qira'at* and the criteria for authenticity on a public and administrative scale (Zahabiy, 1985: Vol. 15, 265). Consequently, Ibn Mujahid's framework became the template for subsequent literature in the field, and despite minor variations, his classification remains the bedrock of the officially recognized Seven Readings.

In the period following Ibn Mujahid, the documentation of Quranic variants continued to flourish, particularly in the eastern regions of the Islamic world where scholars often looked beyond the "Seven." Works encompassing eight, nine, ten, and

even fourteen recitations were frequently produced (Nasser, 2013:64). Crucially, these recitations did not constitute monolithic, internal variation free systems. Each recitation branched into various transmissions (*riwayat*), and the internal complexity of a reading often increased in proportion to the number of its transmitters. While Ibn Mujahid restricted the primary Imams to seven, he did not impose a specific limit on the number of transmitters (*rawis*) who could narrate from these Imams (Ibn Mujahid, 2011:64).

During the era leading up to the third major phase of canonization (324–590 AH), the integration of *Qira'at* remained a defining feature of authoritative *Tafsir* literature. A prominent example is Abu al Layth al Samarqandi (d. 373/983), whose work *Bahr al ulum* (commonly known as *Tafsir al Samarqandi*) utilized recitation variants as a primary exegetical tool. In his methodology, Samarqandi would first enumerate the different ways a verse was read by various Imams before proceeding to provide the semantic interpretation. Furthermore, he meticulously recorded the chains of transmission, citing which companions and successors (*tabi'un*) practiced specific recitations (Samarqandi, 1993:81-82).

Another monumental figure of this period was Abu al Qasim Mahmud al Zamakhshari (d. 538/1143), the author of the celebrated *al Kashshaf*. Known for its profound linguistic and rhetorical insights, this work also prioritized the science of *Qira'at*. Zamakhshari's approach was distinct; he presented recitation variants concisely without delving into the exhaustive historical or semantic details found in other commentaries. His work is particularly noted for its unique dialectical structure, utilizing a “question and answer” format. He typically begins a theological or linguistic inquiry with the phrase “If you say...” (referring to a potential question) and responds with “I say...” to provide the resolution (Zamakhshari, 2009:25-28). Other scholars of this era, such as Ibn Atiyya, also contributed significantly to the exegetical tradition by maintaining this rigorous focus on the relationship between the revealed text and its diverse modes of recitation.

### **Regional developments and the andalusian school**

The development of *Qira'at* in the western part of the Islamic world followed a distinct trajectory compared to the East. As early as the 10th century, Abu al Tayyib Ibn Ghalbun (d. 389/998), whose work profoundly influenced North African and Andalusian scholars, established the practice of selecting two primary transmitters (*rawis*) to represent each recitation. Comparative analysis of sources from the 10th

and 11th centuries indicates that, unlike the more diverse Eastern tradition, the Western school systematically adopted the “Seven Readings” framework, preserving exactly two narrations for each (Nasser, 2013:66). This regional conformism gradually permeated the East, largely due to the influence of Abu Amr al Dani (d. 444/1052), whose work *al Taysir fi al qira’at al sab’a* was specifically designed to simplify the science for educational purposes.

The political instability in 11th century Andalusia, characterized by the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate and the rise of the *Taifa* kingdoms (*Muluk al tawa’if*), played a surprising role in this academic stabilization. Denia emerged as a significant *Taifa* state under the rule of Abu al Jaysh Mujahid ibn Abdullah al Amiri (d. 436/1044), a patron of the arts and a scholar of *Tafsir* himself (Seybold, 2020). Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406) noted that Mujahid al Amiri’s court became a sanctuary for Quranic scholars, transforming Denia into a premier center for recitation studies. It was within this scholarly environment that Abu Amr al Dani flourished, eventually becoming the leading authority on *Qira’at* across both the West and the East (Zahabiy, 1985:557).

Among al Dani’s extensive writings, *al Taysir* achieved unparalleled fame as a concise student manual. His formula of selecting two *rawis* for each of the seven recitations became the universal standard in later pedagogical literature (Dani, 2008:5).

### **The role of al shatibi in standardizing recitations**

This influence reached its zenith through the work of Qasim ibn Firruh al Shatibi (d. 590/1193), who transformed al Dani’s prose into the celebrated didactic poem *Hirz al amani wa wajh al tahani*, commonly known as the *Shatibiyya*. Al Shatibi, who studied in Xativa before relocating to Egypt, was eventually appointed to the *al Madrasa al Fadiliyya* in Cairo by the vizier Qadi al Fadil (Ibn Khallikan, 1994:158; Qiftiy, 1986:160). Renowned for his extraordinary memory and polymathic knowledge in *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, and linguistics, al Shatibi is regarded as the quintessential figure in the standardization of Quranic recitations.

Al Shatibi’s primary contribution lies in his innovative use of didactic poetry to preserve and simplify the complex rules of *Qira’at*. He authored three major poetic works based on al Dani’s treatises: *Nazimat al zuhr* on verse numbering, *Aqilat atrab al qasa’id* on Quranic orthography, and the *Shatibiyya*, a 1,173 verse masterpiece on the Seven Readings. The *Shatibiyya* became so central to Islamic education that it was incorporated into the curricula of madrasas from Andalusia to the Maghreb and the

East (Ibn Khaldun, 2005:195). In cities like Fez, specialized endowments (*waqf*) were even established to support professorships dedicated exclusively to teaching this poem (Hamitu, 2005:137-139).

The impact of the *Shatibiyya* was so profound that it fostered a belief among both students and the general public that the only authentic recitations were those contained within its verses, leading to the marginalization of other valid variants as “irregular” (*shadhdh*) (Jazari, 2010:219; Nasser, 2020:20). Legends surrounding the poem’s composition including reports of al Shatibi performing 12,000 circumambulations of the Kaaba upon its completion and receiving prophetic blessings in dreams further solidified its near sacred status in the scholarly tradition (Qari, 1948: 82 83). Ibn al Jazari later remarked that it was nearly impossible to find a scholar or student in his time who did not possess a copy of the *Shatibiyya* (Jazari, 2017: 48 53). With over 130 commentaries written since its inception, the poem remains a cornerstone of Quranic studies at institutions like Al Azhar to this day (Tanahi, 2002:94-95).

The historical trajectory of *Qira’at* has consistently trended toward the systematization of diversity into a restricted, manageable corpus. This process is exemplified by the reduction of numerous textual traditions into a single written standard, the selection of seven primary recitations from at least fifty authentic variants, and the reliance on only two official transmitters (*rawis*) for each recitation, despite the existence of dozens of often conflicting narrations. In the period leading up to the fourth stage of canonization, several significant works of *Tafsir* were produced, integrating these developments into the exegetical tradition.

A paramount figure in this era was Abu al Barakat al Nasafi (d. 710/1310), whose work *Madarik al Tanzil wa Haqa’iq al Ta’wil* achieved prominence for its balanced approach to linguistic, theological, and recitation based analysis. In his introduction, Nasafi explicitly states that his objective was to compose a moderate commentary that harmonizes the aspects of *i’rab* (grammar) and *Qira’at* (Nasafi, 1998: 3). His definition of *Tafsir* places a significant emphasis on the science of recitation, describing it as the study of how Quranic words are articulated, their meanings, and their individual or structural rulings. As a representative of the Hanafiy school, Nasafi’s work is characterized by its defense of Hanafiy legal positions often using phrases such as “this is our evidence” (*wa hadha dalilun lana*) while remaining largely free from excessive sectarianism or reliance on *Isra’iliyyat* (Mustavo, 1998:6-8).

Nasafi's methodological rigor is particularly evident in his discussion of the *Basmala*. Relying on the *Hadith* of Abu Hurayra (r.a.) and the consensus of the Hanafiy school, he argues that the *Basmala* is a distinct, independent verse revealed to separate chapters and to invoke divine blessings, rather than being an intrinsic part of *Sura al Fatiha* or other chapters (Nasafi, 1998:25-26). Furthermore, he identifies *Qira'at* as the seventh essential science for any exegete, citing works such as Abu Ja'far ibn Bazish's *al Iqna'* for the Seven Readings and Abul Karam al Sharizuri's *al Misbah* for the Ten Readings as definitive references in the field (Andalusiy, 1993:109).

The transition from the "Seven Readings" to the "Ten Readings" reached its definitive conclusion with the scholarship of Abu al Khayr Muhammad ibn al Jazari (d. 833/1429). Before his era, various recitations by figures such as Abu Ja'far al Madani, Ya'qub al Hadrami, and Khalaf al Ashir were studied but not universally canonized. The success of Ibn al Jazari's expansion of the canon was driven by two factors: his extensive political scholarly network and his pedagogical innovation. Ibn al Jazari served as Chief Judge in Damascus and Shiraz and maintained personal relationships with high ranking rulers, including Sultan Bayezid I and Amir Temur (Zahabiy, 1992: 255-260).

Crucially, Ibn al Jazari secured a formal *fatwa* from the Chief Judge Tajuddin al Subki (d. 771/1370), which officially recognized all ten recitations as *mutawatir* (massively transmitted) and essential elements of the faith (Jazari, 2010:188-189; Nasser, 2013: 49). Seeking further legitimacy, he actively promoted his work *an Nashr fi al qira'at al ash'r* to other leading scholars, including Ibn Hajar al Asqalani, expressing his hope that it would become a standard text in the madrasas of Egypt (Zahabiy, 1992:258-259).

Recognizing the complexity of his prose work *an Nashr*, Ibn al Jazari followed the didactic tradition of al Shatibi by versifying his findings. He authored *ad Durrat al muziyya*, which utilized the same meter and rhyme as the *Shatibiyya* to incorporate the three additional recitations, and *Tayyibat an Nashr*, a comprehensive 1,014 verse poem covering the full Ten Readings. These works, alongside his treatise on *Tajvid (al Muqaddima al Jazariyya)*, became the definitive pedagogical tools in the Islamic world. To this day, the majority of Quranic *ijazas* (certifications) are granted based on the mastery of these texts *ash Shatibiyya* and *ad Durra* (known as *al Ashr al Sughra*) or *Tayyibat an Nashr* (known as *al Ashr al Kubra*). This represents the culmination of a 1,400 year historical process of regulating the oral and written preservation of the Quran.

Ushbu yakuniy bo‘lim bilan maqolaning barcha tarixiy bosqichlari va zamonaviy davrdagi holati to‘liq qamrab olindi. Matn “**The Journal of Interdisciplinary Human Studies**” jurnalining talablariga muvofiq akademik ingliz tilida, mantiqiy xatboshilar va manbalarni matn ichida ko‘rsatish qoidalari asosida tayyorlandi.

The transition of the Quran from manuscript to print culture represents a significant milestone in the history of its standardization. While several printed editions appeared in the Muslim world as early as the 16th century, most did not achieve widespread acceptance (Hamad, 2001:601-609). This changed fundamentally with the 1923 Cairo edition, known as *al Mus’haf al Amiriy*. Produced under the supervision of Al Azhar scholars and the patronage of King Fuad I, this edition followed the *Hafs ‘an ‘Asim* recitation. Its meticulous accuracy and institutional backing led to the dissemination of millions of copies, effectively establishing it as the near universal standard for Quranic publication across the Islamic world (Mir’ashliy, 2017:158-159; Blachère, 1959:133-135).

In the mid 20th century, the process of canonization extended into the auditory realm. In March 1959, Labib Sa’id, a professor at Ain Shams University and an expert in *Qira’at*, proposed the “Oral Codification” (*al Jam’ al sawti*) of the Quran. His initiative was driven by a concern that many Muslims could no longer recite the Quran correctly and were only familiar with the *Hafs ‘an ‘Asim* variant. Sa’id envisioned a complete audio archive of all canonical recitations, a project eventually realized under the leadership of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. In 1961, the first full audio recording, *al Mus’haf al Murattal*, was released, featuring the renowned reciter Mahmud Khalil al Husary. Although intended to preserve all variants, the initial release again prioritized the *Hafs ‘an ‘Asim* recitation, further cementing its global dominance (Sa’id, n.d.: 99-124).

### **Modern standardization: print, audio, and contemporary tafsir**

The integration of these standardized recitations continued to influence the exegetical tradition in the 20th and 21st centuries. Muhammad Mutawalli al Sha’rawi (1911–1998), in his popular work *Tafsir al Sha’rawi*, utilized recitation variants to derive deeper semantic nuances, although he focused on providing concise summaries rather than exhaustive technical details (Sha’rawi, 1992:68). Similarly, the contemporary Syrian scholar Wahba al Zuhayli (1932-2015) in his *at Tafsir al Munir* adopted a systematic structure. For each sura, he first analyzes the *Qira’at* variants, grammatical structures (*i’rab*), and rhetorical features (*balagha*) before proceeding to the theological and legal

commentary. This modern approach demonstrates the enduring necessity of recitation science in contemporary Islamic jurisprudence and theology.

In conclusion, the stabilization of the Quranic text can be conceptualized as a five stage historical process. The first stage, led by Uthman ibn Affan (r.a.), unified the written *mus'haf* into a single authoritative codex. The second stage involved the restriction of oral recitations to a specific number of Imams, while the third stage standardized the number of official transmitters (*rawis*) to two per recitation. The fourth stage saw the expansion and formalization of the “Ten Readings,” introducing the critical pedagogical distinction between *al Qira'at al Ashr al Sughra* (based on the *Shatibiyya* and *Durra* texts) and *al Qira'at al Ashr al Kubra* (based on the *Tayyibat al Nashr*). The final stage is characterized by the global dominance of the *Hafs 'an 'Asim* variant through mass printing and digital media. Throughout each of these phases, the science of *Tafsir* has evolved alongside the text, with exegetes consistently employing the diverse modes of recitation to enrich the interpretation of the divine revelation.

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