



THE FORMATION OF THE QUR'ĀNIC SCIENCES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCIENCE OF RECITATION IN TRANSOXIANA

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Abstract. *The article examines the formation of the Qur'ānic sciences and the course by which the science of recitation (qirā'a) developed in Transoxiana. It sets out the division of the Noble Qur'ān into chapters and parts and the pedagogical purpose of that division, the technical definition of the Qur'ān given by the specialists in the Qur'ānic sciences and the analysis of its several components, and the manner in which the revealed text was transmitted by mass transmission from the Prophet through the Companions and the Successors. It then traces the rise of the sciences that grew out of the study of the Qur'ān – the abrogating and the abrogated, the occasions of revelation, exegesis, interpretation and the science of intonation – and shows that these took shape within the science of ḥadīth before becoming independent disciplines. The second part of the article is devoted to the contribution of the scholars of Transoxiana: the arrival of Imām al-Jazarī in Transoxiana in the time of Amīr Tīmūr and the training of a generation of masters of the ten readings, the works on recitation and intonation composed in Samarqand, Bukhara, Tashkent and Qūqān in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the place of the Qur'ānic sciences in the upbringing and the patronage of 'Alīshēr Navoiy, and the institution of the Dār al-ḥuffāz. The article concludes that a considerable part of this heritage still awaits its researchers.*

Keywords: *Qur'ānic sciences, science of recitation, intonation, Transoxiana, al-Jazarī, ten readings, Dār al-ḥuffāz, 'Alīshēr Navoiy, manuscript heritage.*

INTRODUCTION

The Noble Qur'ān, which was revealed over the course of twenty-three years in the earliest period of Islam, is divided into one hundred and fourteen chapters, and the division of these chapters was determined by the Prophet Muḥammad himself. Concerning the division of the Qur'ān into chapters, parts and sections, Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī expresses the following judgment: «In such a division of the Noble Qur'ān there are a great many conveniences for the reader. If, for example, one who commits the Qur'ān to memory memorizes a single chapter or a single portion, this becomes for him an impulse towards memorizing the remainder; for when the reciter has finished memorizing a particular portion he sets about memorizing another portion upon an orderly basis. Such a division creates for the reader considerable convenience and ease. Because he has memorized a portion of the Qur'ān, a feeling of gladness and of pride arises in the reciter's heart, and this is one of the factors that urge the reader towards memorizing still more» (al-Nasafī, 1988:I/9).

The relevance of the subject lies in the fact that the Qur'ānic sciences, and the science of recitation among them, were cultivated in the central cities of Transoxiana for centuries, and that hundreds of works composed there on recitation and intonation remain insufficiently studied. The aim of the present article is accordingly twofold: to set out how the Qur'ānic sciences took shape as independent disciplines, and to trace the development of the science of recitation in Transoxiana on the basis of the sources.

MAIN PART

The specialists in the science of lexicography emphasize that the word «Qur'ān», besides the senses of «to read» and «to recite», also bears the sense of «gathering together»; and in this there is an indication that the final speech of God Most High gathers within itself the meanings, the wisdom and the rulings of all the divine books revealed before it. For fifteen centuries the greater part of mankind has known, even without knowing the lexical meaning of the word «Qur'ān», that it is the sacred book of the Muslims. Yet recognition of the Noble Qur'ān is not accomplished merely by knowing the lexical meaning of its name or whose sacred book it is; in order to know what kind of book that sacred book is, one must have recourse to the definition given by the possessors of the particular science.

The possessors of the Qur'ānic sciences define the Noble Qur'ān as follows: «The Qur'ān is the inimitable speech of God Most High, revealed by way of revelation to Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, transmitted by mass transmission, and recited in worship.» In order to understand this definition well it requires some commentary. From the clause «revealed by way of revelation to Muḥammad» it follows that the revelations of God Most High that were not sent down to Muḥammad – such as the Psalms, the Torah and the Gospel – are not the Noble Qur'ān. The true Psalms, Torah and Gospel are likewise the speech of God Most High, but because they were not revealed to Muḥammad they cannot be the Noble Qur'ān (al-Suyūṭī, 1996:I/270).

From the expression «transmitted by mass transmission» it follows that speech not transmitted in that manner cannot be the Noble Qur'ān. To be transmitted by mass transmission means to be transmitted by so great a number of persons that the speech cannot be declared false. All of them are trustworthy persons who have never approached a single word of falsehood, and who by reason of their number have no possibility of agreeing together upon a lie. The Noble Qur'ān, from its first word to its last, has been transmitted in precisely this manner. It was Gabriel, the trustworthy possessor of the

revelation, who transmitted the Qur'ān from God Most High to Muḥammad; and how this transmission took place, that is to say how the verses of the Noble Qur'ān were conveyed to the Prophet by Gabriel, many of the Companions saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears.

Moreover, each time the revelation was sent down the Prophet would say, «Summon the scribes to me», and when the Companions who recorded the revelation arrived he would recite the noble verses to them exactly as he had received them from Gabriel. The Companions who acted as scribes wrote every letter of the verses with the greatest care, while the other Companions committed them to memory with the same care. In this manner the Noble Qur'ān was conveyed from the Companions to the Successors and from them to the following generations both orally and in writing (al-Suyūṭī, 1996:I/270).

It must likewise be emphasized that the Noble Qur'ān is a book of immense importance in which there exist foundations that serve as the basis of a number of sciences. According to the analysis of researchers, the number of such sciences amounts to thousands. The sciences directly connected with the Qur'ān itself, however, are reckoned to be the following: the abrogating and the abrogated, the occasions of revelation, exegesis, interpretation and the science of intonation. These sciences first took shape and developed within the framework of the science of ḥadīth, and in this manner they gradually separated into distinct sciences; and at the present day further sciences have taken shape upon the basis of these in their turn (al-Nasafī, 1988:I/9).

The emergence of centralized states in Central Asia and in Transoxiana in particular, the development of the economy, the restoration of the caravan routes, the expansion of trade and the growth of handicrafts and of agriculture became in their turn an impulse towards cultural and spiritual advancement. Together with this, the gathering of scholars from various lands in the central cities of Transoxiana and Khurāsān also exercised its positive influence. This is observable with particular clarity in the period of the Timurids and afterwards, and in these periods hundreds of works relating to recitation and intonation were written by the scholars of Central Asia.

As the historian and academician D. Yusupova writes in her research upon the Timurid period, in that very period, in which science and culture in Central Asia were highly developed, such accomplished scholars of exegesis, ḥadīth, jurisprudence, Sufism, recitation and other religious sciences as Mawlānā Mu'īn al-Dīn Farāhī (d. 907/1501–

1502), Amīr Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ḥasan Turbatī, Mawlānā Mu‘īn al-Dīn Wā‘iz, Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (d. 905/1499–1500), Amīr Sayyid Aṣīl al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh Ḥusaynī (d. 883/1478), Ḥāfiẓ Ghiyāth (d. 872/1468), Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Uthmān (d. 901/1495), Niẓām al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh, Khwāja ‘Imād al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Abharī, Shaykh al-Islām Sayf al-Dīn Aḥmad Taftāzānī (d. 916/1511), Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Wā‘iz Kāshifī and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Tabadgānī (d. 891/1486) carried on their activity. It must be emphasized that the scholars whose names have here been mentioned rendered great service to the development of the Qur’ānic sciences and of the science of recitation in our land.

In the period of Amīr Tīmūr the science of recitation developed in Transoxiana in every respect. Having defeated Sultan Bāyazīd in the battle of Ankara in the year 805/1402, and bringing the people of learning and excellence of that country to Transoxiana, he brought with him also the celebrated scholar of recitation Imām al-Jazarī. It was here that Muḥammad b. al-Jazarī wrote his treatise devoted to intonation, «al-Muqaddima al-Jazariyya». Many of the people of Kesh and of Samarqand received instruction from him; and in Kesh ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Tillā Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ Bāyazīd Keshī and Ḥāfiẓ Maḥmūd b. Muqrī studied the science of the ten readings under him and attained the title of shaykh of the readings (al-Jazarī, 2011:13). The scholar’s world-renowned work «Taqrīb al-nashr fī al-qirā’āt al-‘ashr» gathers together the summation of the knowledge he had acquired over years of travel from city to city, the chains of transmission of the reciters, and the transmitters of the ten readings together with their brief biographies; and from the author’s own time to the present day the book has been studied as a primary source by all reciters (al-Jazarī, 2012:12).

Ērmuḥammad Samarqandī, a scholar who lived and worked in Samarqand in the sixteenth century, wrote a work on recitation and intonation entitled «Qawā‘id al-Qur’ān». In the book he expounded in detail the method of the reading of ‘Āṣim, its transmitters and its rules. Manuscript copies of the work are preserved in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan; and even Mawlānā ‘Alī al-Qārī made use of this work in the commentary that he wrote upon «al-Muqaddima al-Jazariyya».

‘Alīshēr Navoiy, the great poet of the Uzbek people, likewise possessed knowledge relating to the Noble Qur’ān, to its recitation and to its intonation, and he loved these disciplines. In the article devoted to the historian Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (d. 1454) in his anthology «Majālis al-nafā’is» he recalls an event from the time when he was six

years old: «It happened that our dwelling lay at the gate of his hospice... I must have been about six years of age... I was granted the favour of going towards him. Whatever he asked, I answered. He smiled and praised me, and then asked: 'Do you go to school?' I said: 'I do.' He said: 'How far have you read?' I said: 'As far as the chapter Tabāraka.' He said: 'Of the children of this company you came when we called, and you became acquainted with us; let the Fātiḥa be recited for you', and he honoured me with his own blessing» (Navoiy, n.d.:XII/14).

It is evident from this account that Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī asked 'Alīshēr which chapter of the book he was reading – that is, of the Noble Qur'ān – he had reached. From the conversation it becomes clear that when Sharaf al-Dīn summoned a group of children in order to test their knowledge the first to come was 'Alīshēr Navoiy, and that in that period the earliest instruction of children began with learning to read the Qur'ān. We may likewise know from this that at the age of six Navoiy already possessed a certain degree of knowledge of the science of the Qur'ān.

That 'Alīshēr Navoiy created wide opportunities for the development of the Qur'ānic sciences is observable also in the care he showed for students of knowledge. His contribution to the Qur'ānic sciences is observable, further, in that in his own time he had several commentaries written upon the Noble Qur'ān: two of these commentaries, namely «Jawāhir al-tafsīr li-tuḥfat al-amīr» (The Jewels of Exegesis, a Gift for the Amīr) and «Mawāhib-i 'Aliyya» (Lofty Gifts), were written at the poet's own direct suggestion and under his patronage.

Ḥāfiẓ Badr al-Dīn Bukhārī, known by the epithet «Ḥāfiẓ-i kalān» (the great memorizer), likewise wrote a work on the science of recitation entitled «Durrat al-farīd» (The Gathered Pearl). In the seventeenth century Ḥāfiẓ Dūst Muḥammad b. Yādgār al-Wazīrī composed a work entitled «Majma' al-'ajā'ib» (The Collection of Marvels), in which he expounded one by one the seven, the ten and the anomalous readings. Muḥammad Bāqī b. Tursun Muḥammad b. Bābājān b. Mawlānā Mīrān al-Bukhārī al-Sāktarī, for his part, produced a complete commentary in Persian upon the ode of Imām al-Shāṭibī, dedicating it to Subḥānqulī Khān; this work was published in Tashkent in 1914 together with the commentaries of Mawlānā 'Alī al-Qārī and of Muḥammad Shu'la (al-Jazarī, 2012:12).

The development of cultural life is observable first of all in the various fields of construction. Thus it may be seen that architecture in Central Asia developed in several stages: existing buildings were restored, and in their turn important edifices serving

the sphere of science and of education were erected. Among these the architectural institution called «Dār al-ḥuffāz» (the house of those who memorize the Noble Qur'ān) was built in nearly all the major cities of Central Asia, and in these there were trained reciters of the Noble Qur'ān and scholars who had studied all the readings. One such institution is the architectural complex «Chār Bakr» in Bukhara.

In Transoxiana – in the cities of Samarqand, Bukhara, Tashkent and Qūqān – dozens of works relating to recitation and to intonation were created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well, and these are still awaiting their researchers. Taken as a whole, the contribution of the scholars of our land to the sciences of recitation and of intonation is, as in the other Islamic sciences also, beyond comparison, and to this day it has not been sufficiently studied.

CONCLUSION

A number of sciences are gathered together in the Noble Qur'ān, the divine book, and according to the analyses of researchers these sciences at present amount to thousands. Under the name of the Qur'ānic sciences there are such disciplines as the abrogating and the abrogated, recitation, exegesis and interpretation, which took shape and developed directly out of the study of the revealed text (al-Nasafī, 1988:I/9; al-Suyūfī, 1996:I/270).

Reading the Qur'ān with intonation and in due order is likewise reckoned among the Qur'ānic sciences, and in their own time all the Muslim scholars devoted particular attention to this. Many scholars of the past wrote books upon recitation, and in this the scholars who lived and dwelt in Transoxiana have a place of their own, the arrival of Imām al-Jazarī and the training of the masters of the ten readings in Kesh and Samarqand being a turning point in that history (al-Jazarī, 2011:13; al-Jazarī, 2012:12).

Reciting the Noble Qur'ān with melody has a foundation in the revealed law, for many sound ḥadīths have been transmitted from the Messenger of God concerning this. The study of the works on recitation and intonation created in Samarqand, Bukhara, Tashkent and Qūqān, many of which remain in manuscript, is accordingly one of the pressing tasks of the Qur'ānic studies of our day.

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