

Ibn Mujahid's Canonical Legacy: Examining Sanad Authentication and Political Factors in the Standardization of Qirā'āt sab'ah

Jejak Warisan Kanonisasi Ibn Mujahid: Mengeksplorasi Autentikasi sanad dan Faktor Politik dalam Standarisasi Qirā'āt sab'ah

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Abstract

This research delves into the study of qirā'āt, specifically examining variations in Qur'anic recitation within the modern context of Qur'anic studies. Academic literature has typically overlooked qirā'āt, tending to emphasize linguistic aspects of qirā'āt in general. However, recent scholarly discussions underscore the increasing significance of scrutinizing the authenticity of qirā'āt. The presence of uncertainties and disputes concerning the authenticity of qirā'āt, both within Western and Muslim scholarly circles, renders this subject exceptionally intriguing for investigation. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's theory of the archaeology of knowledge and Shahab Ahmad, this study endeavors to bridge the existing knowledge gap by tracing the historical development of the standardization and canonization of qirā'āt. Specifically, our research will shed light on the motivations and procedures employed by Ibn Mujahid in designating seven Imams as authoritative figures in the canonization of qirā'āt sab'ah. Furthermore, we strived to uncover the ways in which political factors exerted influence over the endeavor to 'canonize' qirā'āt in seven distinct variants. Our findings reveal that the success of Ibn Mujahid's codification and canonization of qirā'āt hinged not solely on the narrative of unifying Muslim perspectives on the diverse recitation variants but was also significantly shaped by underlying political considerations throughout the process. These discoveries offer fresh insights into comprehending the historical dynamics of qirā'āt al-Qur'an and underscore the crucial importance of considering the political backdrop in understanding religious traditions.

Keywords: Qirā'āt sab'ah, Canonization, Power Politics, Ibn Mujahid

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji qirā'āt al-Qur'an, yakni variasi dalam bacaan al-Qur'an, dalam konteks kajian al-Qur'an modern. Qirā'āt telah sering diabaikan dalam literatur akademik, yang cenderung lebih fokus pada aspek-aspek kebahasaan qirā'āt secara umum. Namun, dalam diskursus akademik terkini, perhatian terhadap otentisitas qirā'āt semakin penting. Ketidakpastian dan kontroversi seputar otentisitas qirā'āt, baik yang disampaikan oleh sarjana Barat maupun Muslim, menjadikan topik ini semakin menarik untuk diselidiki. Dengan menggunakan teori arkeologi pengetahuan oleh Michel Foucault dan juga Shahab Ahmad, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kesenjangan pengetahuan ini dengan menggali sejarah penyeragaman dan kanonisasi qirā'āt. Khususnya, penelitian ini akan mengulas motif serta proses standarisasi dan seleksi yang diterapkan oleh Ibnu Mujahid dalam menetapkan tujuh imam sebagai otoritas dalam kanonisasi qirā'āt sab'ah. Selain itu, penelitian ini akan mencoba mengungkapkan bagaimana faktor-faktor politik memengaruhi upaya 'kanonisasi' qirā'āt dalam tujuh varian tersebut. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan kodifikasi dan kanonisasi qirā'āt oleh Ibnu Mujahid tidak hanya bergantung pada narasi tentang penyatuan pandangan umat Islam terhadap perbedaan varian bacaan al-Qur'an, tetapi juga dipengaruhi oleh

faktor politik yang melatarbelakangi proses tersebut. Temuan ini memberikan wawasan baru dalam pemahaman tentang dinamika sejarah qirā'āt al-Qur'an serta pentingnya mempertimbangkan konteks politik dalam pemahaman tradisi keagamaan.

Kata Kunci: Qirā'āt sab'ah, Kanonisasi, Politik Kuasa, Ibnu Mujahid

Introduction

The study of *Qirā'āt*, as a component of Qur'anic studies, has historically received limited attention. In classical literature, exemplified by the works of 'Abd al-'Azīm Al-Zarqānī (died 948 AH/1541 AD), Muhammad Al-Zarkasyī (died 749 AH/1348 AD), and Ibn al-Jazārī (died 833 AH/1430 AD), the discourse on *qirā'āt* predominantly centers on the divergences in pronunciation among the imams of *qurrā'* regarding verses from various narrations of Qur'anic recitation.¹ However, within the contemporary landscape of Arabic scholarship, there has been a notable shift in focus towards aspects of Arabic *lahjat* that are associated with *qirā'āt*. Scholars like Raḍī 'Alāwī² and 'Abd al-Fattāh Ismā'il³ adopt a linguistic approach as the primary foundation for their research. This approach stands in contrast to philosophical or historical approaches, which do not delve into the historical context of *qirā'āt* and the profound sociological and philosophical implications of *qirā'āt's* validity in depth.

Prominent Western scholars, including Christopher Melchert, Frederik Leemhuis, and Shady Hekmat Nasser, have recently placed significant emphasis on the examination of the canonization process of *qirā'āt*.⁴ Nevertheless, their attempts thus far have not provided a comprehensive explanation for the intricacies underlying the canonization of *qirā'āt*. It is essential to recognize that *qirā'āt* cannot be solely attributed to a consensus but rather involve intricate political factors contributing to the codification of diverse Qur'anic recitations. Conversely, European scholars like Ignaz Goldziher have endeavored to cast doubt on the authenticity of *qirā'āt*.⁵

This article delves into a rarely explored aspect of Qur'anic studies research, specifically focusing on the authentication and the underlying power dynamics in the

1 Muhammad 'Abd al-'Azim Al-Zarqani, *Manābil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, 1995), 336; Badr al-Din Al-Zarkasyi, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1988), 465; Ibn Al-Jazari, *Munjid al-Muqri'in wa Mursyid ath-Thalibin* (Kairo: Maktabah Ali bin Muhammad 'Imran, 2009), 49.

2 Riḍā 'Alawī, *Mauqif Al-Baṣariyyin Wa al-Kuffiyyin Min al-Lahjāt Wa Atsaribā Fī Ikhtilāfi al-Qirā'āt al-Qur'āniyyah* (Fakultas Bahasa Universitas Kuffah, t.t.).

3 'Abd al-Fattāh Ismā'il, *Atsar al-Lahjāt al-'Arabiyyah fi al-Qirā'at al-sab'* (Beirut: Dār wa Maktabah al-Hilal, 2008).

4 Christopher Melchert, "Ibnu Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qur'anic Readings," *Brill* No.91 (2000). Shady Hekmat Nasser, *The Second Canonization of the Qur'an* (Leiden: Brill, t.t.); Frederik Leemhuis, "Reading of the Qur'an," dalam *Encyclopedia of The Qur'an*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

5 Ignaz Goldziher, *Madzhab al-Tafsir al-Islami* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah, 1955), 4.

process of codifying *qirā'āt* by Ibn Mujahid. The study conducts a historical analysis of the formation of Ibn Mujahid's codification of *qirā'āt*, aiming to uncover shifts during a particular period (discontinuity) and shed light on the prevailing epistemic dominance at the time of *qirā'āt* codification (archaeology of knowledge). Employing Michel Foucault's theory, power is conceptualized as a framework encompassing power relations connected to continuous domination.⁶

In the examination of the canonized transmission of *qirā'āt*, the article employs Shahab Ahmed's framework to pose essential inquiries regarding the transmission process and the contextual circumstances that led to the canonization of Ibn Mujāhid's *qirā'āt*.⁷ These inquiries serve as valuable tools for elucidating the process and motivations behind Ibn Mujāhid's canonization and for analyzing the reception of his canonized *qirā'āt*. This study contends that the success of Ibn Mujāhid's codification and canonization of *qirā'āt* was not solely attributable to the narrative of unifying Muslims' perspectives on variant Qur'anic readings. It was also significantly influenced by political factors that lent support to the codification of these variant readings.

Ibn Mujahid and the Standardization of *Qirā'āt*

Ibn Mujāhid's complete name is Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Mūsa ibn 'Abbās ibn Mujāhid. He was born in Sūq al-Aṭasy, a district within Baghdad, in the year 245 AH and passed away in 324 AH.⁸ In the 3rd century AH/9th century AD, Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324 AH/936 AD) introduced seven variations of Qur'anic recitation, which were subsequently acknowledged as canonical and attributed to seven specific Imams. This collection of recitations came to be known as the *qirā'āt sab'ah*.⁹ The seven esteemed *qurrā'* imams are Nāfi' al-Madanī (d. 169 AH/786 AD), Ibn Kaṣīr al-Makkī (d. 120 AH/738 AD), Abū 'Amr al-Baṣrī (d. 110 AH/728 AD), Ibn 'Āmir al-Syāmī (d. 118 AH/736 AD), 'Āṣim al-Kūfī (d. 127 AH/745 AD), Ḥamzah al-Kūfī (d. 156 AH/773 AD), and Āli Kisā'I (d. 189 AH/805 AD).¹⁰

6 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 109–114. Hans N. Weiler Weiler, *Whose Knowledge Matters? Development and the Politics of Knowledge* (Stanford University, t.t.), 2.

7 Shahab Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* (London: Harvard University Press, 2017), 42. Muhammad Jamaluddin Qasimi, *Qawā'id al-tahdīs fī funūn muṣṭalah al-hadīs* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, t.t.), 212; Mahmud At-thahhan, *Taisīr Muṣṭalah hadīs* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, t.t.), 15.

8 Ibnu Jazārī, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā'*. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2006), 128. Lihat Juga Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Shape of the Qur'an," dalam *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context* (London: Routledge, 2008), 2.

9 Sya'ban Muhammad Isma'il, *al-Qirā'āt: Ahkamuba wa Masdaruba* (Kairo: Dar al-Salam, 1999), 113.

10 Ibnu Jazārī, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, jilid II, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2006), 128. Isma'il, *al-Qirā'āt: Ahkamuba wa Masdaruba*.

The process of *qirā'āt* canonization, undertaken by Ibn Mujahid, was instigated at the behest of the ruler of his era. The ruler tasked Ibn Mujahid with standardizing the Qur'anic recitation to address concerns arising from variations in *qirā'āt*. Drawing upon Shady Hekmat Nasser's classification, this canonization endeavor led by Ibn Mujāhid marked the second canonization event subsequent to the canonization of the *Uṣmānī Mushaf*. In this context, Ibn Mujahid standardized the *qirā'āt sab'ah* by selecting seven *qurrā'* imams and assessing them against three specific criteria: adherence to the Arabic language, alignment with one of the *Uṣmānī Mushafs*, and the validity of the *sanad* traceable to the Prophet (through a *ṣaḥiḥ sanad* that *muttaṣil* to the Prophet).¹¹

The primary criteria for accepting *qirā'āt* revolves around the adherence to the Arabic language. However, a question emerges regarding the specific type of Arabic deemed suitable to meet this requirement. Labīb Sa'īd has noted that the Arabic language in question is that of the Quraysh, primarily because the Qur'an was initially revealed to an audience from among the Quraysh. Furthermore, there are references in various sources affirming that the Quraysh dialect possesses a high degree of linguistic quality and is easily comprehensible.¹² Hence, the expected linguistic standard aligns with that of the Quraysh. Al-Ibrahīmī further adds that any deviation from the correct application of Arabic language rules can be rectified by cross-referencing with Pre-Islamic verse or poetry.¹³ Consequently, guided by this linguistic standard, Ibn Mujāhid singled out those Imāms who recited the Qur'an using the Quraysh language. For instance, in the case of the words “التابوت” and “التابوة,” the accepted form is “التابوت” due to its alignment with the Quraysh language.¹⁴Top of Form

Furthermore, the acceptance of a Qur'anic recitation also hinged on the consideration and requirement of conformity with the *Uṣmānī Mushaf*.¹⁵ This Mushaf, which served as a unifying text during the era of 'Uthmān, did not encompass the entirety of the diverse recitation variations existing at that time. As elucidated by James A. Bellamy, the *Uṣmānī Mushaf* possessed distinct characteristics divergent

11 Ibnu Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt* (Mesir: Dār al-Ma'rifah, t.t.), 18.

12 Ṭaha Ḥusain, *Fī Al-Adab al-Jāhili* (Cairo, 1927), 110; Abu 'Ubaid Al-Qasim, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* (Makkah, 1973), 309; Abū Bakr Al-Baqillani, *Nukāt al-Intiṣār* (Alexandria, 1971), 386; Ibnu Mandzur, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1883), 588. Lihat Farid Esack, *The Qur'an : A User's Guide* (Oxford: One World Publication, 2005), 67. Lihat juga Muhammad Mustafa Al-Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation Text* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003), 154.

13 Muhammad Al-Ibrahīmī, *Seven Readings, One Holy Book, And the Gratuitous Attacks*, t.t., 535.

14 Labib Sa'īd, *Al-Jam' al-Shawt al-Awwal li Al-Qur'ān al-Karim* (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabi, t.t.), 72.

15 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 8.

from other readings, potentially leading to misreading.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it remained the foundational standard accommodating the *sab'atu ahruf*,¹⁷ which constituted the standard for reading and writing during 'Uthmān's periode,¹⁸ aimed at mitigating the conflicts of that period. According to al-Zarkasyī, 'Usmān ibn 'Affān's actions were a continuation of the endeavors initiated by his predecessors. Consequently, when 'Usmān ibn 'Affān undertook the task of copying and codifying the Mushaf, he adhered to the established principles applied by his predecessors. This underscores that the recitation codified by 'Usmān still retained a traceable *sanad* linking it back to the Prophet.¹⁹ In essence, *'Usmānī Mushaf* is recognized as an accepted standard of recitation due to its canonization during 'Uthman's era, subsequently serving as a guiding reference for generations, even in the presence of other extant recitation variations. Top of Form

Syauqi Dha'if, in his work "*al-Sab'ah*" authored by Ibn Mujahid, has illuminated discrepancies in Quranic readings that diverge from the text of the *'Usmānī Mushaf*. To illustrate, in Surah Al-Kahf, verse 79,²⁰ the *'Usmānī Mushaf* reads: "وَكَانَ وَرَاهُمْ مَلِكٌ" . However, an alternate variant reading departs from the *'Usmānī Mushaf* and reads: "يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا". Moreover, Ibn Shyanabuz also recited variations differing from the *'Usmānī Mushaf*, as evident in Surah Al-Jumu'ah, verse 9.²¹ While the *'Usmānī Mushaf* reads: "يَأْيُهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تُوذِي لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ" , an alternate reading, not in concordance with the *'Usmānī Mushaf*, reads: "يَأْيُهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تُوذِي لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَامضُوا إِلَى دِكْرِ اللَّهِ".

Additionally, Ibn Miqsam faced disciplinary measures from Ibn Mujāhid for reciting readings that did not adhere to the accepted *sanad* standards. Ibn Miqsam's position held that if a reading conformed to the Arabic language and corresponded with the *'Usmānī Mushaf*, it could be employed in prayers and other recitations, even if the *sanad* did not align. This discrepancy is exemplified in Surah Yusuf, verse 80, where the *'Usmānī Mushaf* reads: "فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْسَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا" (So when they despaired of him, they secluded themselves [to confer] privately). However, Ibn Miqsam's reading diverged from the established guidelines, reading: "فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْسَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجْبَاءً" (So when they despaired of him, they secluded themselves [to confer] privately). This

16 James A. Bellamy, "Textual Criticism of the Koran," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Vol.121, No.1 (Maret 2001): 1.

17 Ahmad 'Ali Al-Imam, *Variant Readings of the Qur'an: A Critical Study of Their Historical and Linguistic Origins* (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998), 74.

18 Abdul Fattah al-Qadli, *Tarikh al-Mushaf al-Syarif* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Jundi, 2011), 22.

19 Al-Zarkasyi, *al-Burbān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'an*, jilid I, 233–235.

20 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 15–16.

21 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 16.

variant reading by Ibn Miqṣam was considered a violation of the established rules.²²

Labīb Sa'īd also presents several reasons underscoring the significance of reciting the Qur'an in accordance with the *'Uṣmānī Mushaf*. One primary rationale lies in its connection to the Mushaf preserved by Ḥafṣah. Initially conceived as a unifying endeavor by the ruler to foster cohesion among Muslims, the *'Uṣmānī Mushaf* eventually emerged as the obligatory recitation guide for the populace during that era. The term *'Uṣmānī Mushaf* encompasses a recitation that has been transmitted *mutawatir* from the Prophet, employs the Quraysh dialect, encompasses multiple recitation variations, and upholds the *tartīb* (sequence) of verses and letters as taught by the Prophet.²³ However, while the *'Uṣmānī Mushaf* has become the foundation for the standard recitation, it is imperative to scrutinize the political motivations behind 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān's canonization of the Mushaf. This raises the question of whether Ibn Mujāhid had certain motives behind selecting the *'Uṣmānī Mushaf* as the reference for recitation, particularly when Ibn Mas'ūd's Mushaf was still extant and in use. Consequently, this inquiry prompts an examination of whether political considerations or other influencing factors played a role in Ibn Mujāhid's decision to establish the *'Uṣmānī Mushaf* as the standard for recitation.

The third imperative condition for the acceptance of a *qirā'āt* lies in the continuity of its *sanad*, ensuring an unbroken chain of transmission leading back to the Prophet.²⁴ This condition necessitates the perpetuity of the teacher-student relationship (*al-'alāqah baina al-rāwī wa al-marwī 'anh*) until a direct connection with the Prophet is established.²⁵ Additionally, parameters such as fairness (*'adālah fī al-ruwāh*) and specificity (*al-ḍabt fī al-ruwāh*) among the *qurrā'* play a pivotal role in evaluating the integrity of a *sanad*.²⁶ Ibn Mujāhid introduced further requisites for *qārī'* participants within the *qurrā'* sab'ah, expecting them to possess comprehensive knowledge of *i'rāb*, *qirā'āt*, a profound understanding of the meanings associated with each Quranic recitation, expertise in handling contentious *qirā'āt*, and the ability to offer historical assessments of specific readings.²⁷ From the criteria employed by Ibn Mujāhid in selecting the seven imams of the *qurrā'* featured in his work, it is evident that he exercised meticulous discretion in identifying exemplary models for

22 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 16.

23 Sa'īd, *Al-Jam' al-Shawt al-Awwal li Al-Qur'an al-Karim*, 612.

24 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 45. Lihat juga Shady Hekmat Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qur'an: The Problem of Tawatur and the Emergence of Shawadhbāh* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 47–48.

25 Muhammad Jamāluddin Qāsīmī, *Qarwāid al-Tabḍis fī Funūn Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīs* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, t.t.), 212; lihat juga Mahmud Aṭ-Ṭaḥḥān, *Taisir Muṣṭalah hadīs* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, t.t.), 15.

26 Al-Ibrahimi, *Seven Readings, One Holy Book, And the Gratuitous Attacks*, 535.

27 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 45.

Quranic recitation.²⁸

Ibn Mujāhid's selection of seven *qurrā'* imams to comprise the *qirā'āt sab'ah* was not intended as an exclusionary measure against other existing recitations. Instead, his objective was to choose *qurrā'* who could effectively represent the diverse reading madhhabs that had evolved in prominent centers of Qur'anic instruction, including Medina, Mecca, Kuffah, Basrah, and Sham.²⁹ As articulated by Montgomery and Richard Bell, the seven *qurrā'* imams handpicked by Ibn Mujāhid can be viewed as emblematic of the reading madhhabs cultivated in these respective regions. Within this framework, Nāfi' al-Madanī represented Medina, Ibn Kaṣīr stood for Mecca, Abū 'Amr represented Basrah, Ibn 'Āmir represented Sham, and Kuffah boasted three imams who embodied its madhhab: 'Āṣim, Ḥamzah, and 'Āli Al-Kisā'i.³⁰ By selecting *qurrā'* from these diverse locales, Ibn Mujāhid aimed to encompass the breadth of Quranic recitations extant at that time and to represent the distinct recitation madhhabs that had developed in various centers of Quranic instruction.

In the context of establishing additional qualifications for a *qāri'* to serve as a legitimate representation of *qurrā'*, geographical factors alone are considered insufficient. Therefore, several supplementary criteria are necessary to gauge the qualifications and credibility of a *qāri'*. For instance, among these requirements are expertise in *qirā'āt* and the duration of the teacher-student relationship. Syaūqī Dha'if also meticulously formulates the criteria for rawis to be included in the canonization of *qirā'āt*. Seven crucial conditions must be met, including professionalism, disciplinary specialization, vertical specialization, mentorship, dissemination, geographical affiliation, and freedom from repeated errors. With these criteria in place, the selection process for *qurrā'* becomes more comprehensive, ensuring that they can be relied upon as legitimate representatives of the various Quranic recitations.³¹

Upon close examination of the criteria employed by Ibn Mujāhid in determining the *qurrā'*, questions naturally arise concerning the motivations behind the selection of the *Mushaf* and the conditions imposed on the *qāri'*. It becomes evident that factors such as scholarly standards, *sanad* continuity, geographical origin,³² higher levels of *sanad*, and the reputation of an imam played a role in influencing the choice of *qurrā'* imams. This has, in turn, resulted in certain inconsistencies in the selection of imams, as while the choice of imams based on geographical

28 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 45.

29 Al-Ibrahimi, *Seven Readings, One Holy Book, And the Gratuitous Attacks*, 533.

30 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 53–87.

31 Nasser, *The Second Canonization of the Qur'an*, 92–93.

32 Nasser, *The Second Canonization of the Qur'an*, 101.

origin aimed to represent the diversity of recitations from various regions, it did not inherently guarantee the superiority of these recitations over those of imams hailing from different locales. Consequently, it would have been prudent for the *qurrā'* to embark on a journey to seek out alternative transmissions of the Qur'an, validate and authenticate transmissions from various recitation systems, and compare them with transmissions from different *rāwi*. Criticisms have arisen against Ibn Mujāhid for remaining within the confines of his comfort zone in Baghdad³³ and refraining from traveling to other cities to procure documents and collect *qirā'āt* from other proficient teachers.

Authentication of *Sanad* in Ibn Mujāhid's Standardization of *Qirā'āt*

To assess the appropriateness and consistency of Ibn Mujāhid's criteria regarding *rāwi* and *sanad* continuity, which have been established as standards in the canonization of the *qirā'āt* he endorsed, I employed the *jarḥ* and *tādīl* methods commonly utilized in the critique of hadith *sanads*. This methodological approach treats the *qirā'āt* as akin to hadith material, permitting an investigation of the narrators to evaluate the quality of the *qurrā'* and to examine the presence of any ambiguous or questionable transmissions. As a result of the standardization process undertaken by Ibn Mujāhid in determining the *qurrā'* Imams incorporated into his canonization of *qirā'āt*, seven Imams were selected. These included Nāfi' al-Madanī (d. 169 H/786 AD), Ibn Kaṣīr al-Makkī (d. 120 H/738 AD), Abū 'Amr al-Baṣrī (d. 110 H/728 AD), Ibn 'Āmir al-Syāmī (d. 118 H/736 AD), 'Aṣim al-Kūfī (d. 127 H/745 AD), Ḥamzah al-Kūfī (d. 156 H/773 AD), and Āli Kisā'I (d. 189 H/805 AD).

Nāfi' al-Madani

His full name is Nāfi' b. 'Abdur-Rahman b. Abu Nu'aim al-Madani, and he was born in the year 70 AH/690 AD.³⁴ Although originally hailing from Isfahan,³⁵ Nāfi' grew up and settled in Medina. The city of Medina holds great significance in the history of Islam as it was the initial place where the Prophet imparted the teachings of the Qur'an to his Companions. Consequently, numerous distinguished *qurrā'*, including Companions like 'Uṣmān b. 'Affān, Ubay b. Ka'ab, and Zayd b. Ṣābit, emerged from Medina. Given that Madīnah was regarded as one of the regions representing the legitimate (*ṣaḥīḥ*) recitation, Nāfi' was selected by Ibn Mujāhid

33 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 45.

34 al-Zirikli, *Al-A'lām*, jilid 8, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2015), 50.

35 Al-Asqalānī, *Tabdzīb al-Tabdzīb*, jilid 6, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1996), 50.

to be one of the seven *qurrā'* imams included in the canonized *qirā'āt sab'ah*. Nāfi' al-Madanī had several notable teachers, including Abū Ja'far Yazīd b. al-Qa'qa' al-Madanī (d. 127 AH/745 AD), Shibah b. Nishah (d. 130 AH/748 AD), 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Hurmuz al-A'raj (d. 117 AH/735 AD), Yazīd b. Rummān (d. 129 AH/747 AD), and Muslim b. Jundub (d. 110 AH/729 AD).³⁶

Ibn Mujāhid meticulously traced the chain of transmission from Nāfi's teachers to the Prophet, evaluating the credibility of some of Nāfi' al-Madanī's instructors. Ibn Mujāhid documented the unbroken *sanad* of Nāfi's teachers, revealing that 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Hurmuz al-A'raj was among Nāfi's students, who had studied directly under Abū Hurairah (d. 58 AH/ 728 AD) and Ibn Abbās (d. 68 AH/ 688 AD). These two individuals were companions of the Prophet and had directly acquired knowledge from him. Additionally, Nāfi' had studied under Abū Ja'far Yazīd b. Qa'qa' al-Madanī, who had familial ties to Ubay b. Ka'ab (d. 22 AH/643 AD), a Companion granted the privilege of reciting directly in front of the Prophet. Nevertheless, there exists some uncertainty surrounding Abū Ja'far Yazīd b. Qa'qa' al-Madanī's status as Nāfi's teacher. Although his *sanad* was of a higher order than Nāfi's, these factors seemingly did not meet the criteria set by Ibn Mujāhid to include Abū Ja'far among the seven Imams of the *qurrā' sab'ah*.³⁷

Ibn Mujāhid conducted an exhaustive evaluation of Nāfi's credibility. He provided a comprehensive account of Nāfi's transmission of his recitation to 70 tabi'in, acknowledging that while Nāfi' had some recitations that raised questions, if any were deemed to be *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), Ibn Mujāhid incorporated these recitations into the accepted *qirā'āt*. Furthermore, Ibn Mujāhid included testimonies from hadith scholars affirming Nāfi's status as a trustworthy individual (*ṣadūq*) within the hadith studies.³⁸ He also documented numerous narrations attesting that Nāfi's *qirā'āt* was regarded as the sunnah *qirā'āt* and frequently referred to as the recitation of the people of Medina.³⁹

From Ibn Mujāhid's assessment, it is evident that the *sanad* of Nāfi' al-Madanī maintains a robust connection between Nāfi' and his teachers, ultimately tracing back to the Prophet. Nāfi' unquestionably holds credibility as both a *qāri'* and a narrator. Nevertheless, the exclusion of Abu Ja'far Yazid al-Madanī, who served as Nāfi' al-Madanī's teacher, from Ibn Mujāhid's *qirā'āt sab'ah* raises intriguing

36 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 54.

37 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 54-62.

38 Al-Asqalāni, *Tabḥīḥ al-Tabḥīḥ*, jilid 5, 602. Ibid., 238. Hibban, *Ats-Tsiqqat*, jilid 5, 472.

39 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 62.

questions. Instead, Abu Ja'far Yazīd found inclusion in *qirā'āt* 'asyrah by Ibn Jazāri.⁴⁰ This inconsistency suggests that Ibn Mujāhid may have applied additional criteria when selecting the imams for *qirā'āt sab'ah*. One plausible consideration could have been the imam's prominence during their era. In this context, Nāfi's fame in his time might have influenced Ibn Mujāhid's decision to include him among the *qurrā sab'ah*. Nevertheless, further research is imperative to gain a deeper understanding of why Abu Ja'far Yazid al-Madanī was not encompassed in Ibn Mujāhid's *qirā'āt sab'ah*.

Abdullāh bin Kaṣīr

His full name is 'Abdullāh ibn Katsir ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Zadzan ibn Fairuzan ibn Hurmuz al-Dāri. He was born in 45 AH/665 AD in Mecca.⁴¹ He is known by several names, including Abū Ma'bad, Abū 'Abbad, and Abū Bakr. Additionally, he bears the nisbat al-Kinani due to his previous status as a slave of 'Umar bin Alqamah al-Kinani. Despite his Persian origins, he established himself in Mecca. Notably, Mecca was home to numerous *qurrā'* among the Companions, including 'Usmān b. 'Affān, 'Umar b. Khattab, 'Āli b. Abī Ṭālib, and 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd. Furthermore, among the tabi'in, individuals such as 'Ubaid b. 'Umair, 'Aṭa' b. Abū Rabah, Ṭawūs, Mujāhid b. Jabar, Ikrimah, and Ibn Abū Malikah were prominent figures in the city.⁴²

Ibn Mujāhid conducted an extensive examination of Ibn Kaṣīr's teachers to assess the teacher-student relationship and the continuity of the *sanad* leading back to the Prophet. Among Ibn Kaṣīr's notable teachers, Mujāhid bin Jabr (d. 104/722) stood out. Mujāhid received his Qur'anic *sanad* from Abdullah ibn Saib (d. 75 AH/694 AD) and Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 AH/688 AD). Historical records confirm that Ibn 'Abbās had direct tutelage from Ubay ibn Ka'ab (d. 22 AH/643 AD), a companion of the Prophet. Ibn Mujāhid pointed out that Ibn Kaṣīr's teacher, Mujāhid bin Jabr, praised Ibn Kaṣīr, noting that although Ibn Muhaisin's recitation wasn't universally accepted, Abdullah Ibn Kaṣīr's recitation found favor among the people of Mecca.⁴³ In assessing the connection between Ibn Kaṣīr and Mujāhid b. Jabar, Ibn Mujāhid affirmed that there were no discrepancies in their readings. Furthermore, Al-Žahabī mentioned that Ibn Kaṣīr also received instruction from 'Abdullāh b. Sāib, a renowned Qur'anic scholar in Mecca. 'Abdullāh b. Sā'ib traced his Qur'anic transmission to Ubay b. Ka'ab and 'Umar b. Khaṭṭāb. Ibn Kaṣīr's education

40 Al-Žahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-a'šār*, 172.

41 Jazari, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, 396.

42 Al-Žahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-A'šār*, jilid 1, 69.

43 Al-Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-Qurrā' wa Kamāl al-Iqra'*, jilid 2, 448.

also included learning from Darabas, who had his own Qur'anic *sanad* from Ibn 'Abbās.⁴⁴ While there are records suggesting that Ibn Kašīr only acquired partial Qur'anic knowledge from 'Abdullāh b. Sā'ib, this particular detail wasn't documented by Ibn Mujāhid in his work.

In his work, Ibn Mujāhid underscores that the Meccans did not gather recitations of *qirā'āt* to the same extent as they did with Ibn Kašīr's recitations.⁴⁵ This assertion aims to highlight Ibn Kašīr's significant influence in the realm of *qirā'āt* within Mecca. Furthermore, praise for Ibn Kašīr is not limited to Ibn Mujāhid; it extends to other scholars as well. Notable figures like Abū 'Amr ibn A'la and Sufyan ibn 'Uyainah have acknowledged Ibn Kašīr's expertise in the field of *qirā'āt* during his era.⁴⁶ Al-Sakhāwī, in his work "*Jamāl al-Qurrā'*," highlights Ibn Kašīr's exceptional memorization skills and his ability to proficiently follow all the recitations of his teachers.⁴⁷ In fact, al-Jazāri noted that Ibn Mujāhid regarded Ibn Kašīr as the principal hub for Qur'anic instruction in Mecca.⁴⁸ Beyond *qirā'āt*, Ibn Kašīr garnered respect in the field of hadith, earning the designation of "*siqqah*" or trustworthy narrator. Esteemed hadith scholars such as Al-Nasā'i, Yahya b. Mu'in, Muhammad b. Sa'd, and Ibn Sa'd provided this assessment. Collectively, these accolades underscore Ibn Kašīr's standing as both a proficient *qāri'* and a highly reliable narrator within the Islamic scholarship.⁴⁹

Ibn Kašīr had numerous students who diligently pursued his teachings in the field of *qirā'āt*. Among his notable disciples were Abū 'Amr bin al-A'lā al-Bašrī, Ismā'il bin Abdullāh bin Qasthanṭin al-Qiṣṭi, Ismā'il bin Muslim, Abu Naḍr Jarīr bin Hazīm bin Zaid, Al-Bazzī, Qunbul, Şufyan bin 'Uyainah, and many others.⁵⁰ The knowledge and guidance on *qirā'āt* imparted by Ibn Kašīr wielded substantial influence over his generation of students. Ibn Kašīr's passing in the year 120 AH/738 AD in the city of Mecca, at the age of 75, marked the end of an era.⁵¹ However, the legacy of *qirā'āt* knowledge that he meticulously preserved and shared continued to flourish through the dedicated efforts of his students. These disciples, in turn, perpetuated the rich scholarly tradition in the field of *qirā'āt*, ensuring its enduring

44 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fi al-Qirā'āt*, 65. Lihat juga Al-Žahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, 86;

45 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fi al-Qirā'āt*, 65.

46 Al-Žahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, jilid 8, 454.

47 Al-Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-Qurrā' wa Kamāl al-Iqra'*, jilid 2, 449.

48 Jazāri, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah fi Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, 445.

49 Al-Žahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 203.

50 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fi al-Qirā'āt*, 66.

51 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fi al-Qirā'āt*, 66.

impact on subsequent generations.

Ibn Mujāhid's evaluation of Ibn Kaṣīr, although not as extensive as his assessment of Nāfi', provides insights into the continuity of the *sanad* and affirmations regarding Ibn Kaṣīr's credibility as a *qāri'*. It can be inferred that Ibn Kaṣīr's *sanad* is traced back to the Prophet through Mujāhid bin Jabar. His renowned memorization skills and trustworthy status as a *ṣiqqah* further enhance his reputation as a dependable *qāri'*. However, it's noteworthy that *Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā al-Kibar* includes a remark suggesting that Ibn Kaṣīr did not transmit some of his Qur'anic recitations to Abdullāh bin Sa'ib, whom Ibn Kaṣīr acknowledges as one of his teachers. This raises queries about his recitation lineage from Abdullāh b. Sa'ib, particularly given that his teacher, Mujāhid b. Jabar, also learned from Abdullāh b. Sa'ib.⁵² Consequently, further research is warranted to substantiate Ibn Kaṣīr's recitation history with Abdullāh ibn Sa'ib, as the continuity of the *sanad* stands as a pivotal criterion in assessing a *qāri'*'s credibility.

Abū 'Amr bin 'Ala

His complete name was Zabban bin 'Ala bin 'Ammar bin al-'Uryan. He was born in the year 68 AH/688 AD in Mecca but spent his formative years in Bashrah. Scholars have attributed nineteen different names to Abū 'Amr, including Zabban, 'Uryan, Yahyā, Mahbūb, Junaid, Uyaynah, Uthman, Ayyar, Khair, Juz', Humaid, Hammad, 'Aqābah, 'Utaibah, 'Ammar, Faid, Qubaiṣah, Muhammad, and Abū 'Amr.

In evaluating the transmission chain between Abū 'Amr and his teachers, Ibn Mujāhid provides insight into some of Abū 'Amr's instructors, including Mujāhid (d. 103 AH/722 AD), Sa'id b. Jubayr (d. 95 AH/714 AD), Yahya b. Ya'mar (d. 103 AH/722 AD), Ibn Kaṣīr (d. 120 AH/738 AD), and Humaid b. Qais (d. 123 AH/741 AD). Notably, the focus is on the continuity of their *sanad* to the Prophet, particularly Abū 'Amr's *sanad* from Mujāhid b. Jabar. Mujāhid b. Jabar, in turn, received instruction from Ibn 'Abbās, who had learned from Ubay b. Ka'b, with Ubay b. Ka'b's *sanad* ultimately tracing back to the Prophet.⁵³ While Ibn Mujāhid didn't provide the complete chain of transmission for all of Abū 'Amr's teachers, he did affirm that Abū 'Amr's recitation was characterized as easy, light, and not burdensome.

Abū 'Amr's presence in Kufa reinvigorated scholarly activities, akin to the impact during Hishām b. 'Urwah's lifetime. Nevertheless, Al-Ḍahabī records statements from figures like Zuhayr b. Harb, who claimed that Abū 'Amr *lā ba'ṣa bibi*, meaning

52 Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifāt al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-A'ṣār*, jilid 1, 203.

53 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qir'āt*, 84.

he had not memorized any hadith.⁵⁴ While this aspect is not explicitly mentioned by Ibn Mujahid in his work, he does cite testimonies from hadith authorities like Yahya b. Ma'in, who affirms Abū 'Amr's status as a *ṣiqqah* narrator.⁵⁵ This raises questions regarding whether his inability to memorize traditions affected the quality of his narration in *qirā'āt*. In the realm of hadith, a narrator's capacity to memorize traditions holds significant weight in assessing their reliability. Nonetheless, it is noted that Abū 'Amr is still regarded as a *ṣiqqah* narrator, and it is precisely this aspect of his trustworthiness in the field of hadith that Ibn Mujahid seeks to underscore in evaluating his credibility as a *qirā'āt* narrator.

In the assessment of Abū 'Amr's credibility in the realm of *qirā'āt*, Ibn Mujāhid cites numerous accounts affirming Abū 'Amr's extensive knowledge in this domain, his exceptional command of the Arabic language, and his esteemed stature as an imam in the field of linguistics. Additionally, Abū 'Amr was renowned for his humility in the realm of knowledge.⁵⁶ His passing occurred at the age of 84 in the year 110 AH/728 AD.

ʿAbdullāh bin ʿĀmir

His full name was 'Abdullāh ibn 'Āmir ibn Kariz ibn Rabī'ah ibn Habīb ibn 'Abd Shām ibn 'Abdi Manāf ibn Quṣoy.⁵⁷ He belonged to the al-Yahṣabī tribe, which derived its name from his grandfather, Yahshūb b. Dihman b. 'Āmir b. Himyar b. Saba' b. Yahshūb b. Ya'rab b. Qaḥṭan b. 'Abr.⁵⁸ Among the various nicknames attributed to him were Abū Nu'aim, Abū 'Ālim, Abū 'Ubaid, Abū Muhammad, Abū Mūsā, Abū Ma'bad, and Abū 'Uṣmān.⁵⁹ His birth took place in the year 21 AH/642 AD in Damascus.⁶⁰

Ibn Mujāhid's work lacks an extensive elucidation of the name and background of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Āmir. It primarily encompasses the continuity of the transmission chain from his teacher Mughīrah b. Abī Shihāb to Uṣmān b. 'Affān.⁶¹ However, supplementary annotations by Al-Ḍahabī suggest that Ibn 'Āmir had additional

54 Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1., 231.

55 Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 101.

56 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 82.

57 Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Isti'āb fī Ma'rifat al-Aṣḥāb*, jilid 3, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1995), 64.

58 Jazari, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, jilid 1, 380.

59 Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 186.

60 Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 188.

61 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 86.

teachers, including Abū Dardā', Fuḍalah ibn 'Uбайд, and Muḡhīrah ibn Abī Shihāb.⁶² The linkage of Muḡhīrah's name with "Ṣāhib 'Uṣmān" may potentially insinuate that Muḡhīrah b. Abī Shihāb was not widely recognized among the *qurrā'*, possibly due to the juxtaposition of his name with that of 'Uṣmān. Furthermore, a footnote mentions that Hishām had weakened Ibn 'Āmir's narration from 'Uṣmān, contributing to the intricacy of evaluating the reliability of his narration.⁶³

Ibn Muḡhīrah's preference for Ibn 'Āmir's recitation over that of al-'Āmasy as part of the *qirā'āt sab'ah* is noteworthy. This choice was not solely founded on the basis of a continuous *sanad* but also took into account the ṭabaqāt (rank in the *sanad*) and the *qirā'āt's* level of fame. Despite al-'Āmasy's recitation having a higher *sanad* compared to Ibn 'Āmir's, Ibn Muḡhīrah opted for Ibn 'Āmir's *qirā'āt* due to its greater popularity and wider acceptance among the public.⁶⁴ Furthermore, it appears that Ibn Muḡhīrah aimed to highlight Ibn 'Āmir's renown among both *qurrā'* and scholars in the Shamā' region at that time. He connected Ibn 'Āmir's name not only with Nāfi', who represented the *qirā'āt* of Mecca for the people of Sham but also with the city of Medina, where Nāfi' served as a reference for recitation. This interpretation suggests Ibn Muḡhīrah's intention to establish Ibn 'Āmir's *qirā'āt* as one of the most widely recognized representations of ṣaḡīḡ *qirā'āt*.

Ibn Muḡhīrah's treatment of Ibn 'Āmir's credibility in the field of *qirā'āt* is somewhat limited in his work. Instead, he appears to have intended to underscore the unbroken chain of *qirā'āt* from Ibn 'Āmir all the way back to Uṣmān ibn 'Affān, emphasizing Ibn 'Āmir's prominent role as a revered figure and *qirā'āt* exemplar in Sham. This, in turn, led Ibn Muḡhīrah to select him as the representative of the *qirā'āt* imams from Sham in the canonization of *qirā'āt sab'ah*. However, upon reviewing the chain of transmission from Ibn 'Āmir's teachers to the Prophet, there is one line of transmission through Muḡhīrah ibn Abī Shihāb that raises questions about Ibn 'Āmir's fame as a *qāri'*. This arises from the pairing of Muḡhīrah's name with the descriptor "Ṣāhib 'Uṣmān" (companion of Uṣmān), potentially suggesting that Muḡhīrah ibn Abī Shihāb may not have been a well-known figure among *qurrā'*, as his name is associated with that of the companion of Uṣmān. Notably, this detail is not presented by Ibn Muḡhīrah in his work but is referenced by al-Ḥābi in "Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣṣār."

62 Al-Ḥābi, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣṣār*, jilid 1, 188. Lihat juga Muḡhīrah, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 86.

63 Ibid.

64 Al-Ḥābi, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣṣār*, jilid 1, 195. Muḡhīrah, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 87.

Āṣim bin Abī al-Najūd

Āṣim ibn Abī al-Najūd was born in Kuffah⁶⁵ and emerged as a prominent scholar of the Qur'an following the passing of Imam 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Abdullāh ibn Hubaib al-Sulamī. According to Ibn Mujāhid, Āṣim's chain of transmission can be traced back to distinguished tabi'in of his era, including Zer b. Hubaisy al-Asadī (d. 82 AH/ 701 AD), Abu 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Abdullāh b. Hubaib al-Sulamī (d. 105 AH/ 724 AD), and Sa'ad b. Iyāsh al-Syaibanī (d. 78 AH/697 AD). Notably, Zer b. Hubaisy's educational lineage includes 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd, 'Usmān b. Affān, and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, while Abu 'Abd al-Rahmān derived his transmission from 'Usmān b. Affān, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd. Sa'd b. Iyash al-Shibani, on the other hand, acquired his transmission directly from 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ud.⁶⁶ In his commentary on Āṣim, Ibn Mujāhid emphatically noted that Āṣim meticulously preserved the teachings of his teacher Abu 'Abd al-Rahmān,⁶⁷ who held a preeminent position in *qirā'āt* during that era, ensuring that not a single letter was omitted from his instruction.

In evaluating Āṣim's credibility, Ibn Mujāhid presents multiple narrations that attest to his reputation as a highly eloquent and remarkably reliable figure. Both Hasan ibn Ṣālih and Shu'bah, prominent scholars of their era,⁶⁸ acknowledged Āṣim as one of the most eloquent individuals of his time. Āṣim al-Kufī's life came to an end in Mecca at the close of 127 AH/ 745 AD.⁶⁹

Ibn Mujāhid's commentary on Āṣim is relatively brief, suggesting that Āṣim was already a widely recognized and esteemed figure during that era. Ibn Mujāhid consistently emphasized that Āṣim's proficiency and linguistic expertise in Kufa were unparalleled. His exceptional ability to fluently recite the Qur'an and his recognition as one of the foremost *qirā'āt* scholars, second only to Nāfi', underscored his credentials as a distinguished *qāri'*. Furthermore, the existence of a direct student-teacher relationship connecting Āṣim to the Prophet served as a robust criterion that warranted Āṣim ibn Abī Najūd's inclusion in Ibn Mujāhid's *qirā'āt sab'ah*.

Ḥamzah al-Zayyat

Ḥamzah ibn Hubaib ibn 'Umarah ibn Isma'il, born in Kufa in 80 AH/699

65 Al-Zahabi, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 204.

66 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 70.

67 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 70.

68 Al-Zahabi, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 206.

69 Hibbān, *Ats-Tsiqqat*, jilid 7, 256. Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 70.

CE, had humble origins as a slave hailing from the lineage of Ikrimah ibn Rabi'.⁷⁰ In Ibn Mujāhid's comprehensive evaluation, Ḥamzah emerged as a prominent *qāri'* who received instruction from two key mentors, al-ʿAṣy (who passed away in 148 AH/765 AD) and Ibn Abī Lailā (who also passed away in 148 AH/765 AD).⁷¹ Al-ʿAṣy, Ḥamzah's initial teacher, possessed a *sanad* that directly traced back to the esteemed Companion Ibn Mas'ūd.⁷² Ibn Mujāhid meticulously expounded on the unbroken chain of transmission in Ḥamzah's second mentorship under Ibn Abī Lailā. This lineage involved Minhal, whose own *sanad* reached Sa'īd ibn Jubayr. Sa'īd b. Jubayr, in turn, was a student of Ibn 'Abbās, whose *sanad* established a direct link to Ubay b. Ka'ab, an individual who had studied directly under the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad himself.⁷³

Ibn Mujāhid further elucidated the continuity between teacher and student in the *sanad* connecting Ḥamzah with Ḥumran b. A'yan (who passed away in 120 AH/738 AD). This *sanad* extended back to the Prophet through an uninterrupted succession of teacher-student relationships. Ḥamzah received instruction from Humran, who, in turn, had been mentored by 'Ubaid b. Nuḍailah al-Khuzā'i (who passed away in 72 AH/691 AD). 'Ubaid b. Nuḍailah had obtained his transmission from Alqamah, who had the privilege of learning from Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd—a companion of the Prophet Muhammad who had direct access to the teachings of the Prophet.⁷⁴ Through this meticulous exposition, Ibn Mujāhid showcased the robust *sanadīc* connection between Ḥamzah and the Prophet Muhammad. Additionally, he underscored the enduring teacher-student relationships that ultimately traced back to the Prophet in the transmission of Qur'anic recitation.

Ibn Mujāhid evaluated Ḥamzah's proficiency in *qirā'āt* by considering the abundance of narrations that cited Ḥamzah's recitation as a point of reference. During his era, Ḥamzah earned a reputation as a dependable *qāri'*, signifying his trustworthiness in transmitting the Qur'an's recitation accurately.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Ibn Mujāhid underscored the alignment of Ḥamzah's recitation with the *Uṣmāni Mushaf*, the official codex established by 'Uthmān ibn Affān.⁷⁶ Ibn Mujāhid clarified that Ḥamzah's recitation did not deviate from ʿAṣy's rendition, which was in accordance

70 Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 250. Lihat Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 72.

71 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 72.

72 Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rīfat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, jilid 1, 251.

73 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 72.

74 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 73.

75 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 77.

76 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 74.

with the recitation of Zayd ibn Ṣābit. This alignment demonstrated that Ḥamzah's recitation conformed to the recognized standard of the Mushaf endorsed by the Muslim community. Consequently, Ibn Mujāhid asserted that Ḥamzah's recitation possessed a high degree of reliability within the realm of *qirā'āt* al-Qur'an, aligning with the established provisions in the *Uṣmāni Mushaf*.

Ibn Mujāhid's thorough assessment of Ḥamzah's credibility as a *qāri'* is evident from the descriptions and comments he provided. He meticulously outlined the *sanads* connecting Ḥamzah's teachers and students, ensuring their connection to the Prophet. This adherence to the criterion of *sanad* continuity to the Prophet aligns with one of Ibn Mujāhid's parameters for canonizing *qirā'āt sab'ah*. Furthermore, Ibn Mujāhid placed significant emphasis on the alignment of Ḥamzah's recitation with the *Uṣmāni Mushaf*. This adherence to the official codex established by 'Uthmān ibn Affān played a crucial role in confirming Ḥamzah's *qirā'āt* as *ṣaḥīḥ*, thereby recognizing it as a valid recitation within the Qur'anic *qirā'āt* tradition. Although Ibn Mujāhid did not explicitly mention Ḥamzah's fame in Kufa, his validation of the conformity of Ḥamzah's recitation to the *Uṣmāni Mushaf* underscores that Ḥamzah was indeed considered a credible *qāri'*. His recitation held a valid and respected position within the *qirā'āt* tradition.

Alī bin Ḥamzah Al-Kisā'i

The full name of this scholar is Abū al-Hasan 'Alī ibn Ḥamzah ibn Abdullāh ibn Bahman ibn Fairūz. He was born in Kufa in the year 120 AH (738 AD) and passed away at the age of 70 in 189 AH (805 AD).⁷⁷ In Ibn Mujāhid's account of 'Alī Al-Kisā'i's teachers, he mentions several individuals, including Ibn Abī Lailā, Aban ibn Taghlab, Ḥamzah ibn Hubaib az-Zayyati, among others.⁷⁸ However, Ibn Mujāhid does not provide a detailed explanation of the chain of transmission that demonstrates the existence of *sanad* continuity among Al-Kisā'i's various teachers, unlike his thorough assessments of other Imams. One might reasonably assume that Ibn Mujāhid may have hastily concluded the *ṣaḥīḥ* status of Al-Kisā'i's *qirā'āt* solely because of his association with Ḥamzah, without delving into the *sanads* connecting Al-Kisā'i with his other instructors. This assumption raises valid questions about the credibility of Al-Kisā'i's *qirā'āt*. To strengthen his argument regarding the *ṣaḥīḥ* nature of Al-Kisā'i's *qirā'āt* within the Qur'anic *qirā'āt* tradition, Ibn Mujāhid should consider providing additional information about the chain of transmission and the continuity of Al-Kisā'i's teachers, similar to his assessments of other reciters. Such

⁷⁷ Al-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, 305. Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 79.

⁷⁸ Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 79.

an approach would enhance the clarity and thoroughness of his evaluation.

The data presented by Al-Žahabī in his book aligns with Ibn Mujāhid's assessment that there was no doubt about Al-Kisā'i being a student of Ḥamzah. Consequently, Ibn Mujāhid did not find it necessary to elaborate on the chain of transmission to the Prophet in Al-Kisā'i's case. Moreover, Ahmad ibn Suraij's statement that Al-Kisā'i was a scholar of *qirā'āt* and a *qāḍī* of his era provides further substantiation for the belief that Al-Kisā'i possessed competence in the field of *qirā'āt* and carried sufficient credibility in narrating the recitations of the Qur'an.⁷⁹

Ibn Mujāhid's treatment of 'Alī al-Kisā'i in his work lacks an in-depth examination. He appears to have operated on the assumption that Ḥamzah possessed credibility in *qirā'āt*, and this same assumption was extended to 'Alī al-Kisā'i as a disciple of Ḥamzah. Consequently, 'Alī al-Kisā'i found his place among the imams of the *qurrā'* al-sab'ah in Ibn Mujāhid's canonization. However, it's worth noting that the extent of 'Alī al-Kisā'i's engagement with Ḥamzah's teachings raises questions, as it might be considered less intensive than what is typically expected in the realm of *qirā'āt*. In the domain of *qirā'āt*, a high level of intensity in the teacher-student relationship is essential, whereas 'Alī al-Kisā'i's recorded deposits from Ḥamzah may appear somewhat limited. Moreover, Ibn Mujāhid's rapid conclusions about the quality and continuity of 'Alī al-Kisā'i's *sanad* are worth considering. His failure to mention the chain of transmission from 'Alī al-Kisā'i's teachers leaves gaps in the evidence regarding the continuity of the *sanad* back to the Prophet. This aspect warrants further scrutiny to establish 'Alī al-Kisā'i's standing in the context of *qirā'āt*.

Upon a careful examination of Ibn Mujāhid's approach to describing the imams of *qurrā'* sab'ah in his work, it becomes evident that there are certain inconsistencies in his judgments that do not consistently align with the parameters previously outlined. One notable inconsistency is that Ibn Mujāhid appears to assign a significant weight to an imam's fame as one of the crucial criteria in his selection, even when there are *ṭabaqāt* with a higher *sanad* height. This is evident in his preference for the *qirā'āt* of Nāfi' al-Madanī over Abū Ja'far, where he prioritizes Nāfi's fame over the *sanad* height, which might suggest a lack of consistency in his selection criteria. A more consistent approach would prioritize the *sanad* height as the primary criterion. Furthermore, inconsistencies arise in the way Ibn Mujāhid elaborates on the relationship between teacher and student and the continuity of the *sanad* to the Prophet. For instance, in the case of his selection of al-Kisā'i, he provides limited clarity regarding the continuity of the *sanad* by examining only one line from Ḥamzah as one of the teachers of al-Kisā'i who became part of the *qurrā'* sab'ah. This

⁷⁹ Al-Žahabī, *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt wa al-Aṣār*, 303.

approach raises questions about the quality and consistency of his assessments of these *qirā'āt* imams. Therefore, Ibn Mujāhid's methodology and criteria in selecting these imams may require further examination to ensure consistency and alignment with established parameters.

Political Motivations in Ibn Mujāhid's Canonization of *Qirā'āt*

To comprehend the political motivations underpinning Ibn Mujāhid's canonization and the key proponents behind it, as well as the factors contributing to the canonicity of his *qirā'āt*, a deeper exploration of the political context and conflicts of the era is warranted. This investigation is crucial given that, during this period, Ibn Mujāhid wielded substantial authority and prestige within the domain of *qirā'āt*.⁸⁰ Notably, he maintained close ties with a prominent figure named Ibn Muqlah, who held a pivotal role as a vizier in the government overseen by Al-Rāḍī. This proximity afforded Ibn Mujāhid significant sway and clout in the realm of *qirā'āt*. Consequently, Ibn Mujāhid possessed the capacity to establish *qirā'āt sab'ah* as an authoritative discourse. Furthermore, the process of canonizing *qirā'āt sab'ah* garnered support from the reigning ruler of the period, Al-Rāḍī. Despite the tumultuous political landscape and ongoing conflicts, Al-Rāḍī endorsed Ibn Mujāhid's initiative to canonize *qirā'āt sab'ah*. This alignment of interests could have been driven by Al-Rāḍī's pursuit of consolidating his rule's legitimacy and authority. Hence, politics played a pivotal role, and the backing of influential figures of the time was instrumental in elevating *qirā'āt sab'ah* to a canonical status, with Ibn Mujāhid serving as one of its principal architects.

The political unrest of this era can be traced back to the enduring conflict between the Hanbalis and the Shafi'is, a strife that had persisted from the era of al-Mutawakkil and extended into the reign of Al-Rāḍī. While this conflict had distinct political origins, it nonetheless exerted a notable influence on the canonization process of *qirā'āt* during Ibn Mujāhid's era. In the time of Ibn Mujāhid, a political contention between the Hanbalis and Shafi'is centered on the interpretation of *qiyās* (legal analogy). Hanbali scholars, who accorded primacy to the Qur'an and Hadith, vehemently rejected the utilization of *qiyās*—a practice embraced by the Shafi'iyah faction as one of the Islamic law's sources. This dispute also cast a shadow over the canonization of *qirā'āt* during that period.

Within this context, individuals who failed to recite the Qur'an in accordance with Ibn Mujāhid's prescribed standards could be subjected to legal proceedings, as exemplified by the cases of Ibnu Syanābuẓ and Ibn Miqsam, both associated with

⁸⁰ Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 15.

the Hanbali group.⁸¹ These trials functioned as mechanisms for repudiating their recitations, and the underlying political feud between the Hanbalis and Shafi'is lent further impetus to this rationale for rejection. Consequently, the canonization of Ibn Mujāhid's *qirā'āt* did not solely hinge on the standardization of recitation; it also symbolized a triumph of the Shafi'iyah over the Hanbalis in their political wrangling. Thus, Ibn Mujāhid's *qirā'āt* attained canonical status and emerged as the primary guide in the domain of variant readings during this period.

The emergence of Ibn Shanābuẓ, a student of Imam Qunbul who recited the narrations of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and Ubay ibn Ka'ab in the Mihrab, gained prominence when Ibn Mujāhid detected that his recitation was at odds with the 'Uthmāni Mushaf. Ibn Mujāhid promptly reported his findings to Caliph Al-Rādī, who subsequently relayed the report to Ibn Muqlah, then serving as the vizier. In response to this report, Ibn Mujāhid was instructed to prepare an official report expounding on his observations of Ibn Syanabūz reciting the Qur'ān in a manner inconsistent with the standards that Ibn Mujāhid had established.⁸² Consequently, Ibn Syanabūz had to undergo a trial for reciting the Qur'ān in a manner contrary to the recognized standards.

This phenomenon underscores the profound impact of Ibn Mujāhid's canonization of *qirā'āt* on the public sphere, where individuals were expected to adhere to established rules of recitation. Ibn Mujāhid's influential position as both a *qāḍī* and *qārī* during his era fortified his authority in the process of canonizing *qirā'āt*. Furthermore, this occurrence sheds light on the role of political orthodoxy in the canonization of *qirā'āt*. The discourse on *qirā'āt*, which attained canonical status, gained ascendancy during this period due to the support it received from the politics of power that championed its canonization. Additionally, the high regard and recognition accorded to Ibn Mujāhid enhanced the credibility of this canonization, further consolidating the influence and predominance of canonical *qirā'āt* within society at the time.

Despite some uncertainties and reservations arising from a review of the *qurrā'* included in his canonization, Ibn Mujāhid's establishment of these *qirā'āt* as the definitive standards endured during his era, complete with various conditions and criteria that he had delineated. This endorsement received backing from the prevailing authorities, although it is apparent that Ibn Mujāhid did not always adhere consistently to the standard conditions he had established when selecting *qurrā'*

81 Melchert, "Ibnu Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qur'anic Readings," 5–6. Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 15.

82 Mujāhid, *Kitāb Al-Sab'ah fī al-Qirā'āt*, 15.

Imams.⁸³ This circumstance engendered a certain ambiguity within the canonization of *qirā'āt*. While it was regarded as the ultimate directive, there remained certain transmissions that retained an element of ambiguity yet had been instituted as the standard recitation by the contemporary government. Although Ibn Mujāhid did not dismiss the existence of other readings that qualified as *ṣaḥīḥ qirā'āt*, his contribution in canonizing the readings of his time should be acknowledged. This endeavor furnished both the populace and the government with guidelines and regulations for the selection of recitations to be employed in prayers and various other contexts.

Conclusion

The canonization of *qirā'āt sab'ah* by Ibn Mujāhid, despite previous similar efforts by other figures such as Abu 'Uбайд Qosim ibn Salam, attained canonical status due to its reinforcement by political factors and the credibility of Ibn Mujāhid himself. He undertook the standardization of *qirā'āt* by taking into account the rules of the Arabic language, adherence to the Mushaf 'Uthmāni, and the uninterrupted continuity of the *sanad* tracing back to the Prophet. However, he also displayed a preference for *qāri'* who enjoyed greater renown, sometimes at the expense of those possessing a higher level of *sanad*. The selected *qurrā'* imams hailed from the key centers of Qur'anic education of their era, including Medina, Makkah, Bashrah, Kuffah, and Sham. These standards subsequently evolved into prerequisites for the acceptance of *qirā'āt*, culminating in their limitation to seven in his work, *al-Sab'ah*.

The canonization gained substantial and definitive traction thanks to systematic support from the political authority represented by the reigning ruler of that era. The ruler engaged Ibn Mujāhid, who possessed significant authority and credibility in the domain of *qirā'āt*, to establish *qirā'āt sab'ah* as the prescribed recitation for the populace, particularly in the context of prayer. However, there remained individuals who did not adhere to this rule, exemplified by Ibnu Syanābuẓ, who adhered to the recitation according to the Mushaf of Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd. This demonstrates the pivotal role played by Ibn Mujāhid's political influence and

83 Regarding the section on the canonization of *qirā'āt sab'ah* by Ibn Mujāhid, there are noteworthy observations. For instance, Ibn Mujāhid omitted the inclusion of Abu Ja'far Yazid al-Madani in the third *tabaqat*, despite the fact that Abu Hurairah, who was part of the second *tabaqat* and had a closer *sanad* to the Prophet than Nāfi' in the fourth *tabaqat*, was among his teachers. Instead, Ibn Mujāhid favored the inclusion of Nāfi' in his canonization. Another salient point to consider is the geographical dimension of the imam selection process, which appears somewhat limited. Ibn Mujāhid appeared disinclined to venture beyond his familiar terrain in Baghdad, where he primarily sourced readings from his immediate teachers without pursuing transmissions from other *qurrā'* imams in different locations for comparative purposes. This is a pertinent aspect to assess since the prominence of an imam in one region does not inherently imply superiority over other imams.

authority in the canonization of *qirā'āt sab'ah*.

While this study has conducted a comprehensive examination of the canonization of *qirā'āt sab'ah* by Ibn Mujāhid and the political factors influencing this process, there exist various facets that could serve as subjects for future research. One potential avenue is the exploration of the social and cultural factors that impacted the reception and adoption of *qirā'āt sab'ah* within the society of that era. Furthermore, additional research could delve into the ramifications of the canonization of *qirā'āt sab'ah* on the development of *qirā'āt* science and the broader comprehension of Islam. Additionally, a deeper investigation into the distinctions between the *qirā'āt* recognized by Ibn Mujāhid and other variants of *qirā'āt* that fall outside the purview of *al-Sab'ah* could warrant attention in future research endeavors. Consequently, forthcoming research holds the potential to furnish enhanced insights into the role of *qirā'āt sab'ah* in Islamic history and its implications for contemporary understanding and practice of Islam.

Supplementary Materials

The data presented in this study are available in [insert article or supplementary material here] (Usually the datasets were analyzed from library research can be found in the whole data references).

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Authors' contributions

All listed authors contributed to this article. A.A.M wrote the original draft, reviewed and edited it, and wrote the formal analysis, compiled the resources, conceptualised the study, and managed the project administration. M.I. was responsible for the methodology and validation and supervised the project

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

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