

# Qira'at Reading as Sunnah Muttaba'ah: A Perspective Study on Orientalist Views

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## Abstract

Qira'at is the basic knowledge about reading Al-Quran with various way in reciting by the imams and narrators based on qira'at mutawatirah either seven qira'at or ten qira'at. This reading is narrated from generation to generation by companions from the prophet Muhammad SAW by reciting it as known as *talaqqi* from from the beginning. This study discusses on the views of the orientalists which totally deviated and confused the Muslim to accept the truth by disputing this qira'at reading as a mutawatir level reading from the prophet Muhammad SAW. These views of the orientalists will be evaluated based on that arguments by the qira'at scholars in proving that the authority of qira'at reading is clearly came from the prophet Muhammad SAW without any doubt. The results of this study prove that the orientalist views are totally based on opinions which not related with any fact of qira'at and history background.

**Keyword:** Qira'at, Manhaj, Mutawatir, Orientalists, Authority.

## 1.0 Introduction

Al-Quran has been revealed since more than 1400 years. Although the period of decline has been thousands of years, but the virtues of Al-Quran could not be deny because it is God's revelation that has been guaranteed by its authenticity and is secured from any irregularities and human sinful. Al-Quran is revealed as a book of guidance that guides the people to the straight path and the following the truth. The miracle of Al-Quran is more prominent as it is revealed in seven different readings as it was repeated and recited by Rasulullah SAW from Jibril AS and was narrated by generation to generation as was mentioned in the hadith of Rasulullah SAW (Al-Asqalani, 1986).

Ibn 'Abbas reported that Rasulullah SAW said “Jibril taught me one qira’at and I reviewed it until he taught me more, and I kept asking him for more and he gave me more until finally there were seven qira’at.” (narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3047; Muslim, 819)

### 1.1 Definition of Qira’at

Qira’at (قراءات) was defined from a word *jama’* derived from the word of *qiraah* (قراءة) which means ‘reading’. The word *qiraah* comes from the word قرأ which means ‘read’. According to the term, qira’at has been debated by scholars in various definitions. One of the definitions has been explained by al-Qadhi (2004) as the knowledge on pronouncing the verse of the Al-Quran, approved reading method (*ittifaq*) and disputed (*khilaf*) by placing the reading on the recursors of the Al-Quran.

### 1.2 Definition of orientalist

According to the Kamus Dewan (fourth edition), the orientalist is a person that specializes in language, culture and everything by referring to East Nation. According to Kamus Pelajar (second edition), orientalist is referred to a people that learns the language, literature, the culture of the East, especially the Far East like the Malays and Japan. Al-Fakawi (2009) stated that orientalist is referred to a western intellectual who emphasized by doing the research on special affairs concerning about Islamic religion, culture, literature and life of the believers. Thus, orientalism is the research movement closely related to the affairs of the East especially concerning the religion of Islam and all matters relating to history, religions in the east, languages, philosophy, socio-economy, customs and artistry (al-Fakawi, 2009).

### 1.3 Brief History of the Development of Qira’at

The history of qira’at is begun by the time of Rasulullah SAW being sent to be an apostle and receiving revelation from Allah SWT. Jibrail AS presented the revelation to Prophet Muhammad SAW in a different readings. The twenty three years of apocalypse revelation process with various qira’at reading has become the basis of essential knowledge to the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his *ummah* (A’bbas, 2008).

After the Prophet Muhammad SAW received the revelation from Jibril AS, then he taught his companions about the readings. This showed that he was the first qurra’ leader which recited the qiraat readings to his companions (al-Qattan, 1996). Al-Quran from beginning was revealed in Quraish, but since the people at that time had difficulties in reading Al-Quran, then this became one of the reasons for the recitation of Al-Quran in seven readings to facilitate the reading of the Quran to the Arabs at that time (al-Sha’labi, 1999).

Thus, there are various qiraat reading of mutawatirah as found in the manhaj of imam qiraat like methods of qiraat such as *naqal*, *tarqiq ra’*, *taghliz lam*, *silah mim jama’*, *imalah*, *taqlil*, *idgham kabir*, *isymam*, *raum* and others. There are also *farsh al-huruf* reading in every *surah* which has been narrated by the qiraat *imams*. All of these qira’ats is continuously connecting its reading with the chain of narration (Sanad) until the Prophet Muhammad SAW (al-Habash, 1999).

U'thman bin A'ffan, A'li bin Abi Talib, Ubai bin Ka'ab, Zaid bin Thabit, A'bdullah bin Masu'd and Abu Musa al-Asy'ari are among the best companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW that referred the qira'at from him and being taught that qira'at to other companions.

There are twenty four companions of the the Prophet Muhammad SAW that were involved and took part in the mastering the qira'at reading and became the qurra' at that time (al-Habash, 2001). Furthermore, this qiraat reading was continuously spreading to the tabi'in which stayed in different places especially in Medina, Mecca, Basrah, Kufah and Syam (al-Banna, 1987).

#### **1.4 Research Methodology**

This study is based on a qualitative study, the information for this study is obtained from sources and information from books and writings produced from previous studies. This study discussed on the orientalist views on qira'at and their criticism on that qira'at reading. This study also focused on the views from the scholars which related to the field of qira'at knowledge.

#### **1.5 Research objective**

The objectives of this study were:

- 1) To discuss some of the views of the orientalists regarding to qiraat.
- 2) To examine the scholars views on qiraat as a reading that became as a sunnah muttaba'ah which was inherited from the past.
- 3) To evaluate orientalist views and defend the authority of qiraat knowledge as a truth knowledge which was inherited from the prophet of Muhammad SAW.

#### **1.6 Literature review**

Based on the previous study, it was found a study that had elaborated on the orientalist view of qira'at generally. Most of the authors had listed the same name of orientalists that criticized the Al-Quran and qira'at. Among the names of orientalists that criticized and gave misleading views about al-Quran and qira'at were Ignaz Goldziher, Theodor Noldeke, Arthur Jeffery and many more. They were some of the orientalists that bring a doubt which sometimes can undermine the belief of Muslims upon Al-Quran and also the qira'at mutawatirah.

Most of the writers have clarified that before the emergence of a criticism about qira'at and Al-Quran, there were some orientalists that have traveled to several Muslim countries and studied about Islamic knowledge especially Al-Quran and qira'at, including they went to Andalusia. The orientalists learnt about the teaching of Islam and translated Al-Quran as well as Arabic books into their own language. The orientalists also studied Islamic sciences such as philosophy, doctoral, and various sciences of knowledge. Upon the return to their country, the orientalists have spread all the knowledge taught by Islamic scholars including the Arab culture and philosophy that have been disseminated (El-Badawiy dan Ghirah, 2008).

Until then in 1927, an orientalist named Alphonse Mingana suggested to conduct a critical study on Al-Quran texts, as has been done to the previous Jewish and Christian books. This was revealed to show about their disappointment to their scripture that had been changed and corrupted so much while the orientalist did not believe in their own scripture anymore.

Furthermore, the envious to Muslims people because they have Al-Quran with them which has been guaranteed the authenticity from Allah SWT without any corruption until hereafter (Arif, 2008).

Hence, some views have been raised to undermine the belief of Muslims against Al-Quran. For example, a view has been raised by Theodor Noldeke that questioned the difference of the qira'at which existed during the reign of the Khalifah Uthman and he stated that the cause of the occurrence of the qira'at differences because of the Arabic script itself. In addition, a view from Ignaz Goldziher that stated about the different qira'at of Al-Quran (text) with different readings that widely been used nowadays is based on the negligence of the copyist manuscript text itself (Zulkarnaen, 2010).

Furthermore, Yusuf (2014) in his writing stated that there were some orientalist assumed that the difference in reading in Al-Quran (qiraat) stemmed from the confusion in Arabic writing, which was texted without any dots and others symbols or signs.

Similarly, the view from A.Jeffry (1952) also stated when Al-Quran in mushaf Uthmani was texted without any dots and signs, the reader will be assumed that qira'at reading could be recited just according to their own understanding based on that qira'at readings. The same opinion was also explained by Goldziher that the difference in reading (qira'at) was stemmed from two main reasons, it was texted without any dots and there was no signs in the text (Najjar, 1955).

Blachere stated that the difference of qira'at existed because there were some numerous non-Arabic elements that have been brought into the Muslim community. Blachere gave two point of views because of that, firstly the reading of Al-Quran arose because someone had adapted non-Arabic elements until the different reading of Al-Quran was recited differly. Secondly, he assumed a group of Muslims that created a certain readings based on the mushaf Uthmani (Zulkarnaen, 2010).

### **1.7 Assessment of Orientalist Views**

The Islamic scholars have made the best explanation which referring to the statements that had been made by the orientalist. Noldeke's view about the qira'at's differences due to arabic writing has been described by al-Suyuti (2000) in his book *Al-Itqan Fi U'lum Al-Quran* that Ibn Jazari stated that one of conditions of acceptance qira'at mutawatirah is it should be coinciding with the Arabic language even though with one type of qira'at. The difference in qira'at reading was not become a problem because Al-Quran is indeed revealed by Allah SWT in Arabic. However, the main condition to achieve a mutawatirah level in qira'at reading is also must be accompanied by other conditions which need to be followed to differentiate with non-mutawatirah qiraat.

The view about qira'at differences that occurred during the time of the Khalifah Uthman as had been stated by al-Harazi (2001) that this different qira'at reading actually had begun from the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW, when the revelation from the Jibril AS was revealed directly to Prophet Muhammad and this different qira'at was not related due to the distribution of mushaf Uthmani was made to other places. After the completing the compilation of mushaf Uthmani, Khalifah Uthman asked the companions to eliminate any text of Al-Quran which was

written in sheets not to be used so that the uniformity of the Al-Quran reading is officially using the mushaf Uthmani. Only the mushaf Uthmani that have been printed and recognized as a valid mushaf for recitation. The decision of Khalifah Uthman was not his own decision, but he made that decision based on the views of his companions (Ijma'). While all the Muslims need to follow the instructions which was made by the Khalifah Uthman and his companions because their ijtihad at that time was the best for the whole ummah.

Hence, what the khalifah Uthman has done was a part of condition qira'at mutawatirah reading that coincides with the part of mushaf Uthmani. Any qira'at reading which was not similar and different from the mushaf Uthmani is automatically not to be recognized as the qiraat mutawatirah (Muhaisin, 2002).

A. Jeffry and Goldziher accused that Al-Quran during the reign of Khalifah Uthman was texted without any dots and sign as a main caused the existence of various qira'at and lead the readers to read al-Quran with their own thinking and far from the guidance. As a Muslim, it is well known that the reading of Al-Quran was narrated and studied from teacher through the history from one generation to one generation by *talaqqi musyafahah* reading. Thus, al-Quran itself was not narrated without a teacher and this narration has been done since long times ago. Muslims during the reign of Khalifah Uthman read Al-Quran with various qira'at by using the *talaqqi* method. *Ulama* has explained the position of Al-Quran after being revealed through several major stages, the first stage is known as the stage of narration (مرحلة الرواية الشفوية) that started from Prophet Muhammad SAW until the year 60 H. The second stage is during the spreading of Islam (مرحلة تشمل صدر الإسلام) where the existence of dots as a syntactical marks in the Al-Quran writings in 69 H during the time of Abu Aswad al-Duali. The third stage where the Al-Quran letters were marked with different symbols with complete vowel points to differentiate the reading using the system based on rumuz al-l'rab and al-l'jam (مرحلة ضبط القراءات برموز الأعراب والأعجام) beginning in 90 H (Muhammad, 1998). This proved that the reading of qira'at by Muslims is narrated with mutawatir which inherited from Rasulullah SAW and that reading is not following their own method.

Another orientalist, Blachere, stated that different of qiraat reading is caused by a lot of non-Arab elements that have been brought into the Muslim community. This statement was totally untrue because the language factor will not affected the reading of Al-Quran. The language issue as the cause to this problem should not be arise because the *ulama* have decided that one of the conditions for acceptance of qira'at mutawatirah is it should be in Arabic language and coinciding with mushaf Uthmani and the sanad narration is valid (Muhaisin, 2002). The view from Blachere that assumed some Muslims created certain qira'at readings based on the mushaf Uthmani was also fallacious accusation because the reading of Al-Quran is commonly practiced by *talaqqi musyafahah*. A Muslim will not read Al-Quran with his understanding except he had taken a valid narration of qiraat reading from his teacher.

### 1.8 Conclusion

Based on the views that were made by the orientalists on qiraat reading as sunnah Muttaba'ah, it was found that the arguments which was elaborated by orientalist scholars was very far from the truth and superficial from the scientific point of view. This is because some of the

orientalists ignoring the history the way Al-Quran is revealed, the way Al-Quran is narrated and the way Al-Quran is recited from one generation to another. The qira'at scholars have clarified clearly how the qiraat reading is narrated and inherited until to this day. Similarly, the legitimacy of qiraat reading of mutawatirah level is based on the pillars that have been approved from the ulama to ensure that qiraat reading is parallel with the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW. The study found that these views were baseless and rejected by the arguments and explanations that was made by the Islamic scholars. As a conclusion, this qiraat reading is the glorious revelation from Allah that has been conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad SAW for his *ummah* and Allah will take care of its authenticity until the Day of Judgment.

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