



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

**Озтюрк Хайреттин**

доктор *PhD*, доцент, Теологический факультет, Отделение  
фундаментальных исламских исследований, Университет Ондокуз майыс, г. Самсун,  
Турция

hayrettin.ozturk55@hotmail.com

УДК 297.18

## CONCERNING THE SEVEN LETTERS IN THE QIRAA (READING) OF QUR'AN

О чтении (кыраате) Корана на семи буквах

*The “Seven letter problem” in the recitation of the Qur’an has been the most difficult and important matters in its history. The foundation of the problem is based on the hadith of prophet: “Allah sent the Qur’an upon seven letters. Read the most convenient for you”. This narration brings a lot of question with it. Therefore: What dialect was the Qur’an written in? What was intended by seven letters? Has any information been passed on to us from Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him) regarding what seven letters mean? How strong are these commentaries? This article takes a diverse approach, by investigating critiques of modern thoughts against tradition. This article will look at the matter from the foundation and not base it on the matter of seven letters.*

*Key words: Seven Letters, Accentual Recitation and Quran Recitation.*

### INTRODUCTION

There is great importance in the Qur’an’s history, regarding the hadith that has been related to the Prophet (S.A.), which is based on the matter of seven letters in the Qur’an. For this reason there have been many thoughts for and against this issue. However, neither has come to a vigorous result.

In this article “the matter of seven letters” has been viewed from a different angle. It will display the incoherent of other narratives of the seven letters by putting out other sources.



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

The Qur'an is the Holy Scripture, which contains the *final* revelation as recited to the people of Mecca and Medina by the Prophet Muhammad (A.S.) for a period of 23 years. This period of revelation began in AD 613 and ended in 632. Through the words of the Holy Qur'an, we are informed in a clear manner:

*“Lo! This Qur'an guideth unto that which is straightest, and giveth tidings unto the believers who do good works that theirs will be a great reward.”* [Isra, 17:9]

*“Alif. Lam. Ra (this is) a scripture which We have revealed unto thee (Muhammad- peace and blessings upon him) that thereby thou mayst bring forth darkness unto light, by permission of their Lord, unto the path of the Mighty, the Owner of Praise.”* [Ibrahim, 14:1]

The word *Qur'an* is derived from the Arabic three-letter root word *qar'a*, meaning “he read”. At times this word *qar'a* refers to the speech of the Holy Prophet (S.A) who was the medium of this divine revelation. The fact that the *Qur'an* was sent down in the Arabic language has been emphasized through out the *Qur'an* in several verses:

*“Lo! We revealed it (the Qur'an) a Lecture in Arabic that ye may understand.”* [Yusuf, 12:2]

*“And we have made (this Scripture) easy in thy language only that ye may heed.”* [Duhan, 44:58]

The Prophet spoke the dialect of the *Quraish*, which was the predominant form of Arabic spoken by the people of Mecca. This is one of the prime reasons for the revelation to be descended in the dialect of the *Quraish* as stated in the Holy *Qur'an*:

*“And we never sent a messenger save with a language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them”* [Ibrahim, 14:4]

This fact is also attested in several narrations of *Ahadith*:

In a *hadith* that occurs in the Sunan of Abu Dawud, ‘Umar tells to Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud, who was in Kufa: “Allah sent the Qur'an in the Quraishi dialect. Make it be recited in the Quraish dialect, not in that of Huzail.” [4, VII, p. 644.]



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

‘Uthman said to the council he elected, during the collecting of the Qur’an: “You and Zaid ibn Sabit, in case of a dispute, write it in the Quraish tongue. The Qur’an was sent down in their language.” [6, VI, p. 224]

The Arabic language, like most other languages has its own variances in its regional dialects. These differences in dialect were consistent with the tribal differences of the time and the predominant dialect of the time was the dialect of the tribe of the *Quraish*. One of the reasons for this predominance was that the *Quraish* whom were the custodians of the Holy *K’aba* in Mecca were located in the centre of the Arabian Peninsula. This meant that Mecca and the tribe of the *Quraish* were considered to be far away from the foreign neighboring nations such as the Rome or *Rum* (Byzantium), Ethiopia or *Habash* and Persia or *Ajam*. Due to Mecca’s distance from such foreign influences, linguistic or other it was unanimously accepted by the other Arabian tribes that Mecca was the heart of the Arabian Peninsula. [27, p. 9]

In the early revelation the Qur’an was revealed in the Arabic dialect of the *Quraish*. This dialect preserved the purity of the Arabic language and was constantly enriched by the visiting tribes whom visited the Holy *Ka’ba*. Thus it became the language of Arab poetry and literature and gained currency with the other tribes of Arabia. For this reason the dialect of the *Quraish* was the language of the early revelation as Mecca was cherished as the very heart of the Arab lands and the dialect of the *Quraish* being its official language. There is no dispute that the Holy Qur’an was recorded in the dialect of the *Quraish* during the life of the Holy Prophet (S.A.) and during the period of the Four Caliphs.

It is narrated by Abu Abd el Rahman el-Sulami on this subject: “The *qira’a* of Abu Bekr, ‘Umar, Uthman, Zaid ibn Sabit, Muhajir and Ansar are all one. Which is the *qira’a* that the Rasulallah had read to Jibril once every year and then twice in the year that he passed away. Zaid had witnessed this final *arza*. People would read in this *qira’a*. Hence Abu Bekr trusted Zaid for the act of collecting the Qur’an and Uthman appointed him for the mission of writing”. [19, I, p.331]

One of the most important and as well as the most complicated matters concerning the *qira’a* of the Holy Qur’an is the matter of 7 letters. The *hadith* related with the topic is:

“Verily this Qur’an is sent down on 7 letters. You read the easy one for you”. [6, II, p.202; 13, II, p. 202]



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

There is no explicit clarification that has reached us from the Prophet (S.A.) to what exactly was intended in this narration by the seven letters or *ahrof*. Scholars of the past have attempted to offer an explanation with regards to the aforementioned ‘seven letters’ and there are around thirty opinions with regards to this matter. Some claim there are over forty opinions.

The opinions of the scholars fall into two schools of thought.

1. The significance of the ‘seven letters’ resides in the number seven which is the majority opinion.

2. The significance of the ‘seven letters’ does not reside in the intrinsic number seven but what is intended is ease.

Concerning the first school there has been some differing on these letters and the most known scholarly opinions are the following:

What are intended by the seven letters are the seven dialects in the Arabic language which were used in the compilation of the Holy Qur’an. Some examples of the dialects were *Quraish*, *Huzail* and *Tammim* and the sum of them was seven. Some of those whom claimed this opinion were Abu Ubaida al Qasim ibn Salam (d. 250 AH), Abu Hatim al-Sijistani (d. 250 AH), Ahmad ibn Yahya Sa’lab (d. 291) and Azhari (d. 370 AH. [19, I, p.309; 16, I, p. 135]

According to Ubaida al-Qasim ibn Salam and Ali, the seven letters are the seven dialects in the Arabic language and it does not mean that there are seven meanings to these seven letters. Some of these letters are the dialect of the *Quraish*, some from *Huzail*, some from *Hawazin* and the people of Yemen. The wordings of these letters were read differently but their core meaning was the same. For example words like *halumma*, *ta’la* and *akbil* in essence all mean ‘come’. Abdullah ibn Ma’sud would read *zakyatan* instead of *sayhatan* in the verse *Inkanat illa sayhatan wahidatan*, and although there is a difference in wording, the meaning is the same. [10, p. 91]

This view is not considered a strong one because there were more than seven dialects in the Arabic language. Therefore why was one dialect given precedence over another? There is no authentic evidence on this matter and if the seven words meant the seven dialects then there would be no dispute among the various tribes. Umar and Hisham ibn Hakim whom were both *Quraish* would not dispute with each other with regards to the *qira’a* and how can we explain the dialect and Umar’s unique reading? [19, I, p. 311]

The other school upholds that the purpose of the seven letters return to the sane core essential meaning even though there was a variance in the actual words, such as *asri*, *ajjil*, *halumma*, *ta’ala* and *akbil*. This opinion is supported by Sufyan ibn



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

Uyayna (d. 198), Abdullah ibn Wahb (d. 197) and Abu Ja'far a-Tahawi (d. 321). [19, I, p. 304;16, I, p. 134.]

Firstly, because of the difficulty of explaining each word according to the seven dialects is due to their similarity to one another. The fact remains that this cannot be applied to the majority of the Qu'ran. If one cannot apply to the sum of the Qu'ran then the same is true to any other part of it.

The aim of the “seven” is *hasr* is ease and practice. What was intended by “seven” was not the intrinsic number *per se* as it was the custom of the Arabs to use other expressions such as “seven”, “seventy” or “seven-hundred” to intend a generic number. It was reported the Prophet (S.A.) had permitted his Companions to use two words which were similar to one another in meaning. Such a claim could lead us to believing that the present Qu'ran was indeed tampered with and therefore is not the original Qu'ran in its pristine form. Would it be possible for the Prophet (S.A.) to allow some of the Companions to recite *surat Yaseen* as follows “*Yaseen. Wa'l zikri'l atheem. Innaka lamina'l anbiya. Ala' tariqin sawiyy. Inzalu'hamidi'l karim. Lituhaawwifa qawman ma hawwafa aslafuhum fahum sahun*”? This would be a calumny against the Prophet (S.A.).

The Qu'ran commands “*Say: Bring a Lecture other than this, or change it Say (O Muhammad): It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow that which is inspired in me. Lo! If I disobey my Lord I fear the retribution of an awful day*” [Yunus, 10:15]

As it is not possible for the Prophet (S.A.) to tamper with the Qu'ran, how therefore would it be possible for anyone else to do so? The Prophet (S.A.) taught Bara' bin Azziz the recitation of the prayer with the wording “*Wa nabi yakka allathi arsalta*” yet this Companion recited it “*wa rasullikallatho arsalta*”. Upon hearing this, the Prophet (S.A.) ordered him to replace the word *nabi* instead of *rasul* [8, p. 176]. If no license was permitted for prayer then how would it be so for the Qu'ran?

As no authorization was given for changing the prayer then how would it be possible to tamper with an *ayat* of the Qu'ran? Therefore we can add that the claim that the Prophet (S.A.) would read the Qu'ran according to the “seven letters” is a claim that needs to be substantiated. We are told by Allah the Most High:

“*With ye have we sent, and lo! We are grave....*”

Some have confused the notion of the seven “*qaraat*” with the “seven letters”, which remains a fallacy. Most of the scholars of the past criticized Ibn Mujahid for



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

his preference of the number seven and the ambiguity that it caused. If he had chosen another number to record the *imams* there would have been less controversy. Some scholars wrote concerning the “seven letters” but the fact remains that there were more than seventy *imams*, some whom were more famous in repute than the seven mentioned in the books of the *qaraat*.

During the reign of the Calif Ma'mun, Kisai added to these *qaraat*. [8, p. 161] Although the most famed *qaraats* vary in number, ranging from seven to ten or thirteen the reality remains that there was actually a greater number of *qaraat* as recorded in the books of *qaraat*. The first to compile the *qaraat* was Abu Ubaid Al Qasim ibn Salam in which he records over twenty-five *qaraat*. Later, Ahmad ibn Jubair ibn Muhammad Al-Kufi while in Antioch wrote a book on the five *qaraat* in which he selected an imam from each of the five famous cities.

Following Abu Ubaid Al Qasim was Qadhi Ismail ibn Ishaq Al-Maliki who compiled in his book twenty *qaraat*, which included the seven aforementioned *imams*. Imam Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir A-Tabari in his *Al-jami* compiled also compiled twenty. However Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ahmad Amr Al-Dajuni compiled ten *qaraats* in his book which included Abu Jafar ibn Jarir as one of the *imams*. All this points to the fact, that it was Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Mujahid to be the first scholar to limit the *qaraat* to the number of seven.

With hindsight, it does seem as if *qaraats* were not transmitted by multiple transmissions, *mutawatir* from the Prophet (S.A.) himself. Equally they were not transmitted from the reciters or *qurras*. [8, p.164] When taken into consideration that there were some disagreements concerning the recitations this could indicate that the books of the Qu'ran or *mushaf* were not written with any vowelling or punctuation marks. These *masahif* were disseminated to the different lands via the Companions and differences in opinions arose in the different cities as to how actually these *masahif* should be read.

If it agreed upon that all the *qaraats* were based on the narrations with reliable reporters it has also been established that not all of these *qaraats* were narrated directly from the Prophet (S.A.). As some narrations do clearly contradict one another further, then further investigation needs to be done to establish the authenticity.

What can be said with regards to the seven letters? The *hadith* which mentions these seven letters is regarded as fundamental in understanding the history of the Qu'ran. [26, p. 129] Due to the contradicting views and reports which do not lead to any clear conclusion to the matter it is our opinion that the *hadith* of the seven letters needs to be reassessed. Merely analyzing the *hadith* with logic does not help us in the discussion and what it required is to understand the fundamentals, meaning studying



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

the reasons as to what were the circumstances to the *hadith* of the seven letters. Let us look at some of the subsequent *ahadith* that concern the seven letters.

1. Ibn Abbas, narrated that the Prophet (S.A.) said “Jibril (A.S.), made me recite the Qu’ran on seven letters. I went on to ask him to add until the seven letters were attained” [6, II, p. 202; 13, II, p.202]

2. Ubay ibn Ka’b narrated: “I was in the *masjid* and a man came to offer his prayer and recited the Qu’ran in a *qaraat* that I did not recognize. Then, another man came and recited the Qu’ran in another *qarrat* . After praying we went to the Prophet (S.A.) and I said – “This man recited the Qu’ran in a different *qaraa* that I know. Then came yet another (man) and recited also in a different *qaraa*. The Prophet (S.A.) ordered them to recite and acknowledged their recitations. At that moment there appeared in me a denial and yet we were longer in the time of *jahalia*. Upon noticing this incident the Prophet (S.A.) hit my chest.

A heavy perspiration fell from me and at that moment felt like I was seeing Allah Ta’ala clearly. He said to me “Ubayy! The Qu’ran was sent down upon to be recited on one letter and I asked Allah to give ease to my *ummah*. I was sent to Allah a second time and was asked to read it on two letters. Once again, I pleaded Him to give ease to the *ummah*. The third time He said sent it back saying “In every reference thou makest, there is a response to your expectation: recite the Qu’ran upon the seven letters. I left the third one to the day on which all the created, even including Ibrahim (a.s.) would face me.” [13, II, p.203; 11, V, p. 127]

3. According to another narration by Ubayy bin Ka’b which is similar to the aforementioned one with the difference in narration being that a man came into the *masjid* and recited the Qu’ran in a different *qaraa*. Ubayy and the man both went to the Prophet (S.A.) and he confirmed that both the recitations were permissible. [17, I, p.42;10, pp. 79–80]

4. According to the narration of Adbu-Rahman bin Abi Bekr which he heard from his father, “Jibril (A.S.) said to the Prophet (S.A.): Recite the Qu’ran on one letter. Mikaeel, then told him to increase in the recitation. Jibril (A.S.) ordered him to make the recitation on two letters. This continues until they attained six or seven letters. Jibril (A.S.) then said, “That is enough. They are the same so long as they do not alter the *ayat* of wrath with the *ayat* of mercy and the *ayat* of mercy with the *ayat* of wrath”. It can be inferred that the words *halumma* and *ta’ala* both have the meaning of “come”. [11, V, p. 41]

5. In a narration found in Bukhari, Omar said “I heard Hashim bin Hakim recite *sura al-Furqan* in prayer. I listened to him and noticed that he was reciting in a manner that the Prophet (S.A.) had not permitted. I was about to fall on him during



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

the prayer but instead waited until he had finished to pray. I then grabbed him by the collar and asked him “Who taught you how to recite in this manner? He answered, “The Holy Prophet taught me how to recite in that manner.” I said, “You are lying because the Prophet (S.A.) taught me to recite in a different manner to yours.” I grabbed by the collar and carried him to the Prophet (S.A.) and said, “O Messenger of Allah! I heard him reciting in a manner that you had forbidden to me to do so.” The Prophet (S.A.) said to me “Leave him.” And said to Hisham “Recite!”. He then recited in them same manner I had listened to him recite. After the Holy Prophet said, “It was sent down like this: this Qu’ran was revealed upon the seven letters. Recite it in whatever way it is easier for you.” [6, VI, p.100; 13, II, p. 101; 18, XI, p.61]

6. It was narrated from Ubayy bin Ka’b, that “The Messenger of Allah (S.A.) was approached by Jibril (A.S.) when he was at the water-basin of *Ghifar*, and said to him, “Allah commands you to recite the Qu’ran to your *ummah* upon one letter.” The Prophet (S.A.) then said, “My *ummah* would not have the capacity to withstand it, I ask for Allah’s mercy and forgiveness.” Jibril (S.A.) returned a second time to him and said, “Allah commands you to recite the Qu’ran upon two letters.” The Prophet (S.A.) said, “My *ummah* would not have the capacity to withstand it. I ask for Allah’s mercy and forgiveness.” Then Jibril (A.S.) returned a third time to him and said, “Allah commands you to recite the Qu’ran to your *ummah* upon three letters.” The Prophet (S.A.) replied, “My *ummah* would not have the capacity to endure that too. I ask for Allah’s mercy and forgiveness.” Then Jibril (A.S.) came a fourth time and said, “Verily, Allah commands you to recite to your *ummah* upon seven letters, whatever letter they will recite upon they will recite it in a correct manner.” [13, II, p. 203; 15, II, p. 102; 11, V, p. 128 ]

7. It was narrated form Ubbay bin Ka’b, that The Messenger (S.A.) met Jibril (A.S.) at *Ahjaru’I Mira* and he said, “I was sent as a Prophet to an unlettered nation form amongst which are simple men, women and children.” Jibril said, “(Order them) to recite the Qu’ran upon seven letters.” [18, VI, pp. 193–195]

8. It was narrated from Abu Hurayra, “The Qur’an was sent down upon the seven letters, so recite it as there is no hardship. Do not change the *ayah* of wrath for the *ayat* of mercy.” [10, I, p. 103]

9. Saeed bin Yahya narrated form Asim who narrated from Zirr bin Hubaish who narrated from Abdullah bin Mas’ud who said, ”We disputed concerning a *sura* of the Qur’an to whether there were thirty-five or thirty-six *ayats*.” We then decided to go to the Messenger of Allah (S.A.) and found Ali with him. We informed him on the disputed *qira’a*. The face of the Messenger (S.A.) became red and said, ”People before you were doomed due to argumentation amongst yourselves.” He then



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

whispered to Ali to say to us, “The messenger of Allah orders you to recite it as you know it.” [17, I, pp. 9–15; 8, p. 176 ]

It can be noted the *ahadith* concerning with the seven letters were narrated with similar wordings by Ibn Abbas, Zaid bin Thabit, Amr bin As. Abu Bekr and Nafi’ bin Haris. However, those *ahadith* which were mentioned are the most well-known ones and have been recorded in the books of *Ahl Sunnah*. One narration which does contradict the aforementioned *ahadith* is the one narrated by Zurara who heard from Abu Ja’far in his *Sahih*, “The Qur’an is one and alone. It came form the presence of Allah which is one and alone. All the disputations were created by the narrators.” [8, p.177]

Interestingly, when Fudayl bin Yasser asked Abu Abdullah, ”People say that the Qur’an was descended upon seven letters, what have you to say to this?” They reply form Abu Abdullah was,” They are telling a lie. The Qur’an was descended upon one letter form the presence of Allah, the one and only.” [8, p.177]

### **Inconsistencies and disputes with regards to the narrations of the seven letters**

1. According to some narrations it was narrated the Jibril (A.S.) asked the Prophet (S.A.) to recite on one letter. The Prophet (S.A.) then asked him to increase until seven letters were reached. In some narrations the reaching of the seven letters happened in the third coming of Jibril (A.S.) while this is contradicted by another narration which states that these seven letters were reached in. Allah ordered to recite on three letters while in some narrations the seven letters are commanded in the fourth coming.

2. In other narrations the increasing of the letters happened in a single moment and place. It was mentioned that the Prophet (S.A.) went on to plead for the increase of the aforementioned seven letters through the guidance of Mikaeel (A.S.) and the increase by Jibril (A.S.), while in others it was only Jibril (A.S.) that made the augmentations after a series of several visits.

3. Contradictions in the narration of Ubayy where in some he entered the *masjid* to hear two men reciting in different styles of recitation while in other narrations Ubayy was already in the *masjid* and the two men entered afterwards and recited in a different reciting styles.

4. According to the narration of Ibn Ma’sud, it is said the Prophet (S.A.) listened to the disputed *qira’a* when his face reddened and he said that people of the past were doomed due to argumentation. He then whispered to Ali which later Ali



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

was to inform the disputers that the Messenger (S.A.) ordered them to recite as they knew it. [17, I, pp. 9–15; 8, p. 176] Herein lies the contradiction, that on the one hand the disputers are warned that argumentation was the cause of the destruction of the people of the past while on the other, they are told to recite it as they know. How is it that the Prophet (S.A.) tells the disputers to recite it as they know and at the same time whispers something to Ali while being in their presence? All this points to the fact that this narration has some clear aberrations.

One of the elements of dispute in the narration is in the sentence, “All is sufficient as long as they do not change the *ayah* of wrath for the *ayah* of mercy and the *ayah* of mercy for the *ayah* of wrath.” The Prophet (S.A.), then goes on to say that these differences (in the reciting styles) are an ease for his *ummah*. If we take as a premise that these differences if reciting styles were an ease for the *ummah* then why were they a source of argumentation in the time of Uthman to the extent that it would become a weapon by which some would declare the infidelity of others. How is it that the Prophet (S.A.) would desire something which would cause strife in the *ummah* and how is it that the Most High would accept such a supplication?

Another aberration is that narration that, “My *ummah* would not have the capacity to withstand the *qira’a* on one sole letter.” This seems to be a lie as if Muslims of all four corners of the earth have managed to recite the Qur’an from the Uthman era right until present times, then how is it that the Companions and the Quoraishi Arabs were incapable of reciting upon on letter?

As it was stated that each was to recite according to their reciting manner as an ease and mercy for the *ummah* then why was the Qur’an compiled under one sole *qira’a* in the Uthman era? Is it plausible that Uthman and his followers were to forbid the other styles of reciting and in this way limit the mercy that Allah bestowed upon the *ummah*? Could have Uthman have forbid the reciting of the seven letters and his opinion become binding upon the *ummah*? Could have Uthman be more merciful than the Prophet (S.A.) and know what the Prophet (S.A.) did not know? Could it be that Uthman it had been disclosed to Uthman that all but the one *qira’a* had been abrogated?

Soon, we shall correlate these narrations to one another and discrepancies and other aberrations will become clear. They will be in clear contradiction to the authentic narrations and demonstrate that the claim that the Qur’an was sent down upon seven letters is an unfounded claim which is devoid of any basis. Due to plethora of internal contradictions it will be shown that the only possible conclusion is that the Qur’an was revealed upon one letter and that contradictory narrations are to be cast aside.



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

First, let us indulge the premise that the Qur'an was revealed upon the seven letters as an ease for the *ummah*. Let us scrutinize the narrations which seem to support this opinion.

One narration there is mention of the stream of water-basin of *Bani Ghifar*. Geographically, this is located near Medina, a place where the tribe *Bani Ghifar* wore to settle there at a later period. As the alleged event occurred in Medina, one can concur that the event happened after the migration because the disputes of the *qaraat* were not a matter of disputes prior to this migration, because the people concerned were the people of Macca were one and of the same tongue.

Further inconsistencies can be seen in some of the other narrations. We are informed that the Prophet (S.A.) met Jibreel (A.S.) at *Ahjaru'l Mira*, [22, pp. 55–57; 24, p. 20;] a place that is located near Quba. [12, p. 183] There is little doubt that this is a *hadith* that was revealed after the *Hijra*, which can be inferred by the strength of its narrators and the subsequent events that took place. Evidence that seems to hinge on the fact that this *hadith* could only have been revealed in the post-*Hijra* period (8 A.H.) is as follows:

1. On the strength of the reporters of this, which include Abu Hurayra, Ibn Abbas, Zaid bin Thabit, Amr bin As, Abu Bekr Nafi bin Al-Haris and Hisham-may Allah be pleased with them. Abu Hurayra accepted Islam only a year prior to the *Hijra*, in 7 A.H.

2. Ibn Abbas, one of the main narrators, was only born three years before the *Hijra* and could only be taken as a reliable narrator after ten years of age.

3. Equally, another of the narrators, Zaid bin Thabit was an illiterate eleven-year old at the time when the Holy Prophet entered Medina. Evidence seems to indicated that he was only able to recite the Qur'an at the age of seventeen at the earliest.

4. Another of the narrators, Amr bin As became a Muslim eight years after the *Hijra*.

5. Abu Bekr Nafi, became a Muslim during the siege of Ta'if, that is to say during the month of *Shawwal*. This happened eight years after the *Hijra*.

6. In the aforementioned *hadith* which narrated the dispute between Umar and Hisham, concerning the difference in *qaraat*, which was provided as decisive proof in the discussion concerning the existence of the seven letters. However, evidence seems to show that there are clear aberrations. Hisham, only embraced Islam on the day of the conquest of Mecca which happened on the eighth year of the *Hijra*. Also the Prophet (S.A.) did not return to Medina only until the month of *Dhul Hijja*. We can conclude that this *hadith* could only have been narrated at the ninth year after the



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

*Hijra.* After the conquest many people entered Islam and as recent converts, they were having problems in their recitation of the Qur'an. [21, III, pp. 162–172]

The above report focuses on the alleged dispute between Uman and Hisham concerning the *qaraat*. If we look at the biography of Hisham, he was from the Assadi tribe of the Quraish. His mother was Zaynab bint Awwam who was the sister of Zubair bin Awwam. [12, p. 145.] Likewise, Umar too was a Quraishi and also spoke the Quraishi tongue. Therefore how would it be possible that there arose a difference between Umar and Hisham concerning the recitation when they both were of a common Quraishi background? [12, p. 145; 3, X, p.21] If truly the seven letters represented a real difference in the dialects of the tribes, then why did both Umar and Hisham have a difference of opinion when they were both of the same Quraishi tribe? [12, p. 146] It has been narrated by Ibn Hajar that, "According to Umar, Hisham was mistaken as priority is given to Umar as he became a Muslim prior to Hisham. Umar feared that Hisham's *qira'a* may have been incorrect and herein lays the crux of the dispute between the two of them. Umar, had memorized *sura Al-Furqan* from the Prophet (S.A.) during the Meccan period. Hisham, was a recent convert and his conversion dated back to the conquest of Mecca and what he was reciting was what the Prophet (S.A.) had taught him with a variation of the seven letters which was the core of the dispute between the two of them. Hence, it is understood that Umar had not heard the *hadith* that the Qur'an was sent down upon seven letters. [12, p. 146; 9, V, p. 398] In our opinion it would have not been possible for Umar, whom had been in the constant companionship of the Prophet (S.A.) not to have known about this matter. If we do suppose for the sake of argument that Umar had not known of this *hadith*, then can the same be said about Ubayy and Abdullah bin Ma'sud? Is it possible that they too had no knowledge of this *hadith*? We conclude that this is impossible because we take as the premise that Umar and the other major companions whom were all in the companionship with the Prophet (S.A.) and therefore aware of any major incidents that had taken place. The alleged event took place after the conquest of Mecca and it was only after this very event that Hisham embraced Islam. Therefore it becomes virtually impossible that this event took place when it is alleged to have done so. Could it be possible that Hisham had been taught a *qar'a* which was in opposition to the Quraishi dialect despite the fact that Hisham was a Quraishi? Moreover, if Hisham was a Quraishi why was he not capable of reciting in this very Quraishi dialect? All this seems to indicate an unsound reasoning. How is it possible that Hisham had memorized this *qira'a*? All this leads to the same conclusion. It is not possible to decisively come to a clear solution. So how can it be that Hisham had memorized such a *qira'a*? Many a tribe would visit or



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

pass by through Mecca and such an occasion it is not improbable that some of the Quraishi had learned some of their dialect. It is equally probable that Hisham had heard the Prophet (S.A.) recite in another dialect which was familiar to some of the other Companions- may Allah be pleased with them- and that he had memorized what he had heard. This could explain why there was a difference between the *qira'a* of Umar and Hisham as they had both memorized *sura Al-Furqan* at different times; Umar in Mecca and Hisham in Medina. We can infer by the expression “The Messenger (S.A.) of Allah made me recite it”, that Hisham was making it clear that he was truthful and that he had not invented it himself. This is important as it shows us that Hisham was confident enough to attribute this *qira'a* to the Prophet (S.A.) himself. We know that the language of the Qur'an was the dialect of the Quraish and that this is the dialect by which the Qur'an was revealed. If it had been permitted that the Qur'an could- for the sake of ease- be recited in another dialect, then why would Hisham have been incapable or found it difficult to recite the Qur'an in the Quraishi tongue when he himself was of the Quraishi tribe?

Taking into consideration all these elements we understand that such a dispute could only arise at a time when several Arab tribes had embraced Islam and the Holy Prophet was entering the last years of his blessed life on this Earth. The Prophet (S.A.) had migrated from Mecca to Medina with a constant growth of new tribes whom had freshly-embraced Islam. Since the *Hijra* from Mecca, thirteen years had passed and some eighty *surahs* had descended during that period. The revelation continued descending in the Medinan period and there question of disputed *qira'a* did not arise during this period. It is legitimate to ask why is it that the Prophet (S.A.) had intended ease with regards to the *qira'a* prior to the conquest of Mecca. The Qur'an had descended for twelve years and this counted for nine-tenths of the Qur'an. If there had been such an intention after the conquest, why is it that the conditions in Mecca and Medina were so fundamentally different? It is unthinkable to say that the Holy Prophet (S.A.) was prone to forgetfulness or mistake. Also it cannot be said that the prior conditions were not suitable. Thus, the prophet (S.A.) had not intended this in Mecca at any time but had done so during the Medinan period. The Prophet (S.A.) stated clearly that the, “Qur'an was sent down in seven letters. They are sufficient for you.” then why is it that there been argumentations due to its meaning and exegesis?

One can ask whether it is possible that the Prophet (S.A.) allowed the permissibility for his *ummah* to recite in a manner easier than he would for himself and would he have allowed for a person to recite it according to their capacity, thus explaining the seven letters.



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

The days, months, and years when he was in Mecca, but did it in Medina. I don't think there might be some other probabilities than this here.

Since the Messenger of Allah said “Qur'an is sent down on seven letters. They are all enough and valid,” why do the people dispute on the commentary and the exegesis of it? Should the Prophet explained it by an exegesis, not any different opinions would be claimed about it. Could it be possible that he would recite from the Qur'an without clarifying which of the recitations he was reciting? The Prophet (S.A.) recited to Jibril (A.S.) the entire Qur'an and the last year of his blessed life it was recited twice. We must realize that the Companions were ready for the *arza*. [5, pp. 109–110] And it may seem strange that there were that there were disputes about the recitations.

Thus, we can deduce from the above evidence that if there were seven letters they were only were permitted in the last blessed years of the Prophet (S.A.), after the conquest of Mecca. Let us ask when these seven letters were narrowed down to one.

There is a difference of opinion to whether the seven letters were decreased to one letter during the Prophet's time (S.A.) or the ensuing Othaman (R.A.) period. Scholars like Zarkani mentions in the *Muwatta* that the majority opinion concurs that this occurred during the life of the Prophet (S.A.) and has been supported by scholars such as Baqillani, Ibn Abdi Barr and Ibn Arabi. Ibn Arabi claimed, “When the difficulty concerning the reading of the Qur'an was lifted and the tongues became accustomed to it, the people started to be content with a single dialect. In view of this Jibreel (A.S.) presented the Holy Qur'an twice to the Prophet (S.A.) in his final *arza* and then Allah the Most High abrogated all the dialects which had previously been permissible in order for the Qur'an to be established on one single letter.” [25, pp. 20–21] Thus we understand that the seven letters had been abrogated in the last *arza* during which Jibreel (A.S.) presented the Qur'an to the Prophet. [1, pp. 30–31]

Thus, if there had been permissibility granted it follows that any ensuing abrogation would have occurred during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (S.A.), as any dispensation conferred by Allah the Most High could only be abrogated by the Prophet (S.A.). It defies reason to say that such an abrogation could have occurred during Uthman's rule (R.A.) as he would not have had the authority or permission to carry out such an abrogation. We dismiss any spurious allegations that the seven letters occurred during Uthman's rule as devoid of ant truth (*batil*).

The reports which centre round the contention of the seven letters –*huruf-a-saba'a*– all are attributed to the Holy Prophet (S.A.) through direct narrations or analogies. When Hisham (R.A.) declared that, “The Messenger (S.A.) of Allah made me recite like this” and the Holy Prophet (S.A.) said, “It was descended so” [12, p.



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

111] it is understood that these words were revelation from the Most High without any human interference with the wording. How then Uthman (R.A.) take the license to decrease these seven letters to one when we know these wordings were from Allah the Most High and not from mankind? Would there not be a mass remonstrance from the entire Companions –may Allah be pleased with them all- starting with Zaid?

The fact that there was no opposition from the major Companions or the others-may Allah be pleased with them all- strengthens in our opinion the argument that the decreasing of these seven letters did not happen in Uthman's era. As for the opposition of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (R.A.), this was an opposition to the actual burning of his own copy of the Qur'an and not to the different recitations.

So what exactly is the root of the dispute of the different *qira'a*?

In our opinion these disputes arose from the actual narrators and their recorded material. During the ensuing period, Uthman (R.A.) tried to impose a unity in the reading to the best of his abilities. Uthman's (R.A.) version of the Qur'an included the variances in the *qira'a* and was to be acknowledged by the entire *ummah*. If differences occurred in the Uthmanic copy, this was actually due to the nature of the Arabic writing at the time. This consisted of only the consonants without the inclusion of any vowels. This increases the chances of ambiguity in some of the readings which could possibly be read in different ways and therefore with different meanings. Another omission was the endings of the *ayats* which also had an influence of the different readings. Before the actual standardization of the writing of the Qur'an it was widely accepted that there were variances in the readings. [20, p. 45]

Goldziher claimed that the birth of the *qira'a* came about because of the lack of vowelling and punctuation. [14, p. 100]

Taha Husayn commented on this matter, "One group from among the scholars understood the seven *qirats* to be *mutawatir* as revealed by Jibreel (A.S.) upon the heart of the Prophet (S.A.) and denial is tantamount to being libeled as a blasphemer beyond any doubt. The truth is that none of the seven readings had an origin in revelation. He who denies is neither a blasphemer nor a *fasiq* nor a person whom destroys the prestige of the religion. The existence of the different readings is due to the dialects." [14, p. 106]

Ibn Hatib, commented on the dialects says, "I thought I had knowledge about the dialects however after consulting with my friends in Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Medina, Mecca and other lands, I know that the basis of these dialects are groundless. Their existence can be denied". [23, pp. 103–104] Ibn Hatib concludes by saying, "Our hearts are satisfied that this and similar *qir'ats* are not *sahih*. They go against



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

the grain of the Arabic dialect. All of them have an origin in mistakes by the teachers the mistakes of their scribes” [23, p. 105]

In conclusion, from the aforementioned narrations – the Hisham (R.A.) narration, the *Bani Ghifar* waterbasin and *Ahjar al-Mira*, we understand that the seven letters were authorized after the *Hijra* and the conquest of Mecca. They were then abrogated at the latest at the Prophet’s *arza* (S.A.) when peoples’ tongues had become accustomed to the Quraishi dialect. Since the conquest of Mecca (629 A.D.) and the passing away of the Prophet (S.A.), there was a period spanning two to three years. Would it be conceivable that the Prophet (S.A.) made such a supplication to his Lord for only two to three years? Or is it that the tongues became accustomed in those two or three years?

In summary, when looking at the evidence it is probable that the differences in the seven letters came about due to the dialectical differences that had in effect never been accepted as a common practice. The Qur’an was recorded and written in the Quraishi dialect during the era of the Prophet (S.A.) and that of the four khalifs –may Allah be pleased with them all. The recitations of Abu Bekr, Umar, Uthman, Zaid ibn Thabit and all the *muhajiroon* and *ansar* are one and the same. This is the recitation that the Prophet (S.A.) recited to Jibreel (A.S.) once a year and twice the year of his passing away. Zaid had witnessed this last *arza*. Then, Abu Bekr ordered the official copy of the Qur’an to be made and Uthman was given the mission of it being written –may Allah be pleased with both of them.

### *Bibliography*

1. Abu’l-Zahra, Muhammad, *al-Mu’jizatu’l-Kubra*, Beirut, 1970.
2. al-‘Askalani, Ibnu Hajar, *Tahzibu’l-Tahzib*, Beyrut, dss.
3. al-‘Ayni, Badra’l-Din Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn Ahmad, *‘Umdatul-Qari Sharhu Sahihu’l-Bari*, Beyrut, dss.
4. al-Asqalânî, Shihabuddin Abu’l Fadl Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Ibnu’l Hajar, *Fethu’l-Bari*, Cairo, 1987.

# СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ МУСУЛЬМАНСКИЙ МИР

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ НАУЧНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ  
РОССИЙСКОГО ИСЛАМСКОГО ИНСТИТУТА  
[www.islamjournal.ru](http://www.islamjournal.ru)

Озторк Хайреттин. О чтении (кыраате) Корана на семи  
буквах [Электронный ресурс] / Озторк Хайреттин //  
Современный мусульманский мир : электрон. журнал. –  
2018. – № 1. – 1 электрон. опт. диск (CD-ROM). Систем.  
требования: Pentium III, процессор с тактовой частотой 800  
Мгц; 128 Мб; 10 Мб; Windows XP/Vista/7/8/10; Acrobat 6 х.



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

5. al-Baqillani, Abu Bekr, *Nukatu 'l-Intisar li Nakli 'l-Qur'an*, Fort: Muhammad Zaghlu 'l-Salam, Alexandria, dss.
6. al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim, *Sahih Bukhari*, İstanbul, 1315.
7. al-Hamed, Ganim Gadurri, *Rasmu 'l-Mushaf*, Baghdad, 1982.
8. al-Hui, Abu'l Qasim *al-Bayan fi Tafsiiri 'l-Qur'an*, 1996, republ.
9. al-Jazari, Izzu'l-Din Ibnu'l-Asir Abi'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad, *Usdu 'l-Ghaba fi Ma 'rifati 'l-Sahaba*, Fort: Muhammad Ibrahim al-Banna, Cairo, 1970.
10. al-Maqdisi, Shihabuddin Abdu'l-Rahman ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim Abu Shama, *Kitabu 'l-Murshidu 'l Wajiz*, Fort: Tayyar Altikulac, Ankara, 1986.
11. al-Marwazi, Ahmad ibn Hanbal al-Shaybani, *Musnad*, Cairo, 1313.
12. al-Nimr, Abdu'l-Mun'im, *Ulumu 'l-Qur'ani 'l-Karim*, Beirut, 1983.
13. al-Nisaburi, Muslim ibn Hajjaj ibn al-Quraishi, *Sahih al-Muslim*, İstanbul, 1329-1333.
14. al-Saghir, Muhammad Husayin, *Tarihu 'l-Qur'an*, Beirut, 1983.
15. al-Sijistani, Abu Bekr Abdullah ibn Abi Davud, *al-Sunan*, İstanbul, 1981.
16. al-Suyuti, Jalaladdin Abdu'l-Rahman Abi Bekr, *al-Itqan fi 'Ulumi 'l-Qur'an*, Beirut, 1987.
17. al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir, *Jami'u'l Bayan Fi Tafsiiri 'l-Qur'an*, Beirut, 1972.
18. al-Tirmizi, Muhammad ibn 'Isa, *Sahihu 'l-Tirmizi*, Cairo, 1931–1934.
19. al-Zarkashi, Badruddin Muhammad ibn Abdillah, *al-Burhan fi 'Ulumi 'l-Qur'an*, Fortificaion: Yusuf Abdurrahman al-Mar'ashali, Beirut, 1990.
20. 'Ali, Mawlana Muhammad, *Modern Dünya'da Islam Vahyi*, Translated: Mehmet Suat Aydin, Ankara, 1982.
21. Farraj, Abdu'l-Sattar Ahmad, “al-Ahrafu'l-Sab'a”, *Risalatu 'l-Islam*, Cairo, 1951, III.
22. Ibnu Kathir, Imamu'l-Din Ismail, *Fada 'ilu 'l-Qur'an*, Beirut, 1987.
23. Ibnu'l-Hatib, Muhammad ibn Muhammad Abdu'l-Latif, *al-Furqan*, Beyrut, dss.
24. Ibnu'l-Jazari, Abu'l-Khayr Muhammad Mahmud al-Dimashki, *al-Nashr fi 'l-Qiraati 'l-Ashr*, Beirut, dss.
25. Kara, Necati, *Kur'an-Sunnet Bütunlüğü*, Erzurum, 1995.
26. Shahin Abdu'l-Sabur, *Tarihu 'l Qur'an*, Cairo, 1966.
27. Sharafuddin, *Kur'an Tarihi*, 1329, İstanbul.
28. Zarzur, 'Adnan Muhammad, *'Ulumu 'l-Qur'an*, Beirut, 1991.

# СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ МУСУЛЬМАНСКИЙ МИР

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ НАУЧНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ  
РОССИЙСКОГО ИСЛАМСКОГО ИНСТИТУТА  
[www.islamjournal.ru](http://www.islamjournal.ru)

Озтюрк Хайреттин. О чтении (кыраате) Корана на семи буквах [Электронный ресурс] / Озтюрк Хайреттин // Современный мусульманский мир : электрон. журнал. – 2018. – № 1. – 1 электрон. опт. диск (CD-ROM). Систем. требования: Pentium III, процессор с тактовой частотой 800 Мгц; 128 Мб; 10 Мб; Windows XP/Vista/7/8/10; Acrobat 6 x.



Современный мусульманский мир. 2018. №1. ID 25

ISSN: 2587-6848

Свидетельство о регистрации СМИ: ЭЛ № ФС 77 - 69532 от 25.04.2017

## ÖZTÜRK Hayrettin

*Assistant Prof. Dr., The Faculty of Theology, Department of Basic Islamic studies, Ondokuz Mayıs University (OMU), Samsun, Turkey*

© АНО СНОЛД «Партнёр», 2018

© Озтюрк Хайреттин, 2018

### Учредитель и издатель журнала:

Автономная некоммерческая организация содействие научно-образовательной и литературной деятельности «Партнёр»

ОГРН 1161300050130 ИНН/КПП 1328012707/132801001

### Адрес редакции:

430027, Республика Мордовия, г. Саранск, ул. Ульянова, д.22 Д, пом.1

тел./факс: (8342) 32-47-56; тел. общ.: +79271931888;

E-mail: [redactor@anopartner.ru](mailto:redactor@anopartner.ru)



### О журнале

- ✓ Журнал имеет государственную регистрацию СМИ и ему присвоен международный стандартный серийный номер ISSN.
- ✓ Журнал является официальным изданием. Ссылки на него учитываются так же, как и на печатный труд.
- ✓ Редакция осуществляет рецензирование всех поступающих материалов, соответствующих тематике издания, с целью их экспертной оценки.
- ✓ Журнал выходит на компакт-дисках. Обязательный экземпляр каждого выпуска проходит регистрацию в Научно-техническом центре «Информрегистр».
- ✓ Журнал находится в свободном доступе в сети Интернет по адресу: [www.islamjournal.ru](http://www.islamjournal.ru). Пользователи могут бесплатно читать, загружать, копировать, распространять, использовать в образовательном процессе все статьи.

Прием заявок на публикацию статей и текстов статей, оплата статей осуществляется через функционал Личного кабинета сайта издательства "Партнёр" ([www.anopartner.ru](http://www.anopartner.ru)) и не требует посещения офиса.