

Dialectology and Qirā'āt: The Existence of al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah in the Study of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān

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ABSTRACT

The discourse on *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah* represents a pivotal theme in the study of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, particularly in relation to the diversity of recitations (*qirā'āt*) and Arabic dialects. This study aims to explore the existence of *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah* within the frameworks of dialectology and *qirā'āt*, as well as its implications for Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic legal derivation. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach through a literature review method, this research draws upon classical sources such as *al-Itqān* by al-Suyūṭī and *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī, alongside relevant contemporary references. The analysis investigates the concept of *ahruf*, the historical development of *qirā'āt*, and their relationship to variations in Arabic *lahjah*. The findings suggest that the diversity of Qur'anic recitations is deeply rooted in the linguistic landscape of the time of revelation and that these variations significantly influence Qur'anic exegesis and the derivation of Islamic legal rulings (*istinbāt al-aḥkām*).

Keywords: *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah, qirā'āt, dialectology, tafsir, Islamic law*

ABSTRAK

Pembahasan mengenai *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah* merupakan tema penting dalam studi *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, khususnya terkait keragaman bacaan (*qirā'āt*) dan dialek Arab. Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan eksistensi *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah* dalam konteks dialektologi dan *qirā'āt*, serta implikasinya terhadap penafsiran dan hukum Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif dengan metode studi pustaka. Data dikumpulkan melalui telaah mendalam terhadap literatur klasik seperti *al-Itqān* karya al-Suyūṭī dan *Jāmi' al-Bayān* karya al-Ṭabarī, serta dilengkapi dengan analisis sumber-sumber kontemporer yang relevan. Analisis dilakukan dengan menelusuri konsep *ahruf*, perkembangan *qirā'āt*, serta kaitannya dengan variasi *lahjah* Arab. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ragam bacaan al-Qur'an berakar dari realitas linguistik masa turunnya wahyu, dan perbedaan *qirā'āt* berdampak langsung pada pemahaman tafsir serta *istinbāt* hukum Islam.

Kata Kunci: *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah, qirā'āt, dialektologi, tafsir, hukum Islam*

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INTRODUCTION

For many laypeople, the topic of qirā'āt does not occupy a central place in their religious discourse. Most of them accept the Qur'anic text in its standardized form both in terms of orthography and pronunciation without critically engaging with the underlying variations that exist within the science of qirā'āt. This is understandable, given that they receive the Qur'an in a uniform mode of recitation commonly practiced in their communities. In contrast, expert reciters (qurrā') possess a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the variations in recitation, including the linguistic, grammatical, and dialectical justifications for each reading. For ordinary Muslims, encountering different modes of recitation may appear unfamiliar or even confusing. However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest among some expert reciters and certain segments of the general public to explore and recite the Qur'an using the seven canonical qirā'āt. This emerging trend can be seen as a revitalization of Qur'anic literacy and an effort to reconnect the sacred text with its rich oral and linguistic heritage. It also serves as a means to make the Qur'an more accessible, dynamic, and integrated into the fabric of contemporary religious life (Irham, 2020).

The concept of al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah represents a significant and intricate area within the discipline of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān. Its historical and theological importance has drawn considerable attention from scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim (including Orientalists), who have sought to understand its precise nature and implications. The discourse surrounding al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah has generated a wide range of scholarly interpretations. Al-Suyūṭī reports that there are approximately forty different opinions regarding its meaning and scope (Suyuthi, 2017). Meanwhile, Ibn Ḥibbān, as cited by Manna' Khalīl al-Qaṭṭān, notes that classical scholars have offered around thirty distinct views on the matter (Al-Qattan, 2013).

These differing opinions illustrate just how complex and challenging the discussion on al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah truly is. Misunderstanding this issue can have serious consequences for the Qur'an itself, even becoming a weapon used by the enemies of Islam to undermine the very foundations of the Muslim ummah. For this reason, Az-Zarqānī stated:

“This discussion is both frightening and complex, as it can lead to various opinions. This has led some scholars to conclude that the topic of al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah is among the most difficult (musykil) to understand. A mistake in this matter can open the door for the enemies of Islam to make negative accusations against the Qur'an since neither from the Qur'an nor from prophetic traditions (athar) that clearly explains the meaning of al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah” (Az-Zarqani, 1995, h. 166)

Regarding al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah, many problems have emerged concerning the revelation of the Qur'an in seven modes, and even to this day, it remains a puzzle in the history of the Qur'an. Although the reports (riwāyāt) related to this issue are considered authentic (ṣaḥīḥ) and even reach the level of mutawātir, they remain general and non-specific (mujmal), and no one is reported to have asked the Prophet directly about the meaning of al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah (Nashoih, 2016). This is evidenced by the wide variety of differing interpretations

offered by scholars concerning its definition.¹

The differences in qiraat undeniably include various dialects used by Arab tribes. Each tribe had its own unique dialectal characteristics that influenced the pronunciation of Arabic letters. It is therefore not surprising that, at the time the Qur'an was revealed, the Arabic language existed in diverse forms, especially since the Arabic script had not yet included dots and vowel markings. As a result, non-Arabs faced difficulties in reading the Qur'an, which often led to errors in recitation. Nashoih, 94 .

The study of dialectology and qiraat has been widely discussed by scholars. Among the recent studies are: an article by Ahmad Khoirur Roziqin titled, "*Sejarah dan Proses Kodifikasi Qiraat Sab'ah: Melacak Warisan Penting Dalam Tradisi Membaca al-Qur'an*," (Roziqin, 2023) Ahmad Shahir, et.al "*Sab'ah Aḥruf dan Implikasinya di Dalam Pentafsiran al-Qur'an: Kajian Terhadap Khilaf Ibdal Huruf*" (Masdan et al., 2017) Yogi Sulaeman "*Mengungkap Makna al-Qur'an diturunkan Dalam Tujuh Huruf*," (Sulaeman, 2023) dan Abdul Kholiq Hasan, "*al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah: Sebuah Fenomena Sejarah al-Qur'an (Dalam Kajian Klasik dan Kontemporer)*" (Hasan, 2007). Based on the above assumptions and a review of the literature, this paper seeks to explore the aḥruf al-sab'ah, its existence and relevance in the study of ulum al-Qur'an, and its implications in interpretation, as discussed in this study.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive method aimed at understanding and thoroughly describing religious phenomena, particularly the concept of al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah within the discipline of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. This approach does not focus on numerical data but rather on the meaning and interpretation of texts. The primary data sources are classical Islamic texts (*kutub al-turāth*), such as works of tafsir and Qur'anic sciences. The data collection technique used is library research, which involves analyzing relevant literature, including books, journals, and manuscripts. The objective of this method is to explore the diverse scholarly views on al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah and to trace the development of their thoughts in order to enrich academic discourse in Qur'anic studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hadith *Aḥruf sab'ah*

The history and development of the science of qira'āt began with differing opinions regarding the time when the qira'āt was first revealed. There are two main views on this matter: First, qira'āt began to be revealed in Mecca alongside the revelation of the Qur'an. The reasoning behind this is that most of the Qur'anic chapters are Makkiyah, and within

¹ There is no clear consensus regarding the meaning of *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah*, so it remains speculative (*ẓannī*) in nature. Some scholars define *al-Aḥruf as-Sab'ah* as the idea that the Qur'an was revealed in seven languages belonging to seven nations other than the Arabs. This opinion is supported by the presence of non-Arabic words in the Qur'an, such as *sirāt* (Roman), *istabraq* (Greek), *sijjīl* (Persian), and *hawnān* (Syriac). Other scholars, however, argue that the seven aḥruf refer to the seven well-known dialects of Arab tribes that were prominent at the time.

them there are qira'āt just as there are in the Madaniyah chapters. This indicates that the qira'āt had already started to be revealed in Mecca. Second, qira'āt began to be revealed in Medina after the event of the Hijrah, when many people had embraced Islam and there was a diversity of Arabic expressions and dialects. This opinion is supported by a hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari, Muslim, an-Nasa'i, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, and Malik, from Umar bin Khattab, in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:²

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ أَنْزَلَ عَلَى سَبْعَةِ أَحْرَفٍ فَاقْرَأُوا مَا تيسَّرَ مِنْهُ

“Indeed, this Qur'an was revealed in seven modes of recitation, so recite whichever of them is easiest for you.”

Abu Ya'la also narrated a report in his Musnad that Uthman once said from the pulpit, "I would like to mention someone who heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, say: Indeed, the Qur'an was revealed upon seven ahurf, all of which are sufficient and complete." When Uthman stood up, the people stood as well, and their number was so large that it could not be counted all of them bearing witness to the statement (As Suyuthi, 2008).

Imam Bukhari also narrated from Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أَقْرَأَنِي جِبْرِيلُ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَلَمْ أَزَلْ أَسْتَزِيدُهُ حَتَّى انْتَهَى إِلَى سَبْعَةِ أَحْرَفٍ

“The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: “The Angel Jibril recited the Qur'an to me in one mode of recitation, but I asked him to repeat it, and I kept asking him to increase the modes, and he continued to add until it reached seven modes of recitation.” (Al-Bukhari, t.t.)

This hadith is a summary of a longer narration and indicates the time when it became permissible to recite the Qur'an in seven modes, which was after the Hijrah. This is because the hadith, in the narration of Ubay bin Ka'b, mentions the water source of Banu Ghaffar, which is located near the city of Madinah (Handawi, 1982). The strength of this second opinion does not imply a rejection of reciting Makkan surahs in seven modes, since there is a hadith that recounts a disagreement in the recitation of Surah al-Furqan, which is a Makkan surah. This clearly shows that even Makkan surahs were included among the seven modes. The hadith is as follows:

حدثنا سعيد بن عفير، قال: حدثني الليث، قال: حدثني عقيل، عن ابن شهاب، قال: حدثني عروة بن الزبير، أن المسور بن مخرمة وعبد الرحمن بن عبد القاري حدثاه: أنهما سمعا عمر بن

الخطاب يقول: سمعت هشام بن حكيم يقرأ سورة الفرقان في حياة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فاستمعت لقراءته، فإذا هو يقرأ على حروف كثيرة لم يقرئها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فكادت أساوره في الصلاة، فتصبرت حتى سلم، فلببته بردائه، فقلت: من أقرأك هذه السورة التي سمعتك تقرأ قال: أقرئها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فقلت: كذبت، فإن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد أقرئها على غير ما قرأت، فانطلقت به أقوده إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فقلت: إني سمعت هذا يقرأ بسورة الفرقان على حروف لم تقرئها، فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «أرسله، اقرأ يا هشام». فقرأ عليه القراءة التي سمعته يقرأ، فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «كذلك أنزلت». ثم قال: «اقرأ يا عمر». فقرأت، فقال: «كذلك أنزلت، إن هذا القرآن أنزل على سبعة أحرف، فاقروا ما تيسر منه.»

Meaning: "Umar ibn Khattab said, "I heard Hisham ibn Hakim reciting Surah al-Furqan during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah. I paid close attention to his recitation and noticed that he was reciting it in ways I had never heard from the Prophet himself. I was about to confront him while he was still praying, but I held back and waited until he had finished his prayer. When he completed it with salam, I seized his cloak and asked, 'Who taught you to recite this surah?' He replied, 'The Messenger of Allah taught it to me.' I said to him, 'You are lying. By Allah, the Prophet recited this surah to me, and it was not the way you recited it.' So I brought him to the Messenger of Allah and told him, 'I heard this man reciting Surah al-Furqan in ways you never taught me, even though you taught me that very surah.' The Prophet said, 'Let him go, O Umar. Recite, O Hisham.' Hisham then recited it as I had heard him in prayer. The Prophet said, 'That is how it was revealed.' Then he said, 'Now you recite it, O Umar.' So I recited it as he had taught me. The Prophet said, 'That is how it was revealed. He then said again, 'Indeed, the Qur'an was revealed in seven modes of recitation, so recite whichever of them is easiest for you. (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)."

(Bukhari, n.d.; Nisaburi, 1436).

The Meaning of the Seven Aḥruf

The ahruf sab'ah, or seven ahruf, are one of the miraculous aspects of the Qur'an. The word ahruf is the plural of harf, which in Indonesian is commonly translated as "word" or "letter." In Arabic, however, the word harf is a polysemous term with multiple meanings depending on its context. It can refer to the edge of something, a peak, a skinny camel, a single letter of the alphabet, one of the Arabic letters, meaning, a water channel, face, word, language, and so on. The word sab'u in Arabic means the number seven, but it can also imply an indefinite or unlimited quantity. Thus, al-ahruf as-sab'ah can be interpreted as seven

languages, seven sciences, seven meanings, seven recitations, seven forms (awjuh), and so forth (Sulaeman, 2023)

Scholars have differed in their opinions regarding the meaning of ahruf sab'ah. According to Imam Suyuthi, there are no fewer than 40 interpretations (As Suyuthi, 2008). Some scholars state that the ahruf sab'ah refer to seven types of dialects from among the various Arabic dialects, most of which belong to the Quraysh tribe, while others include the dialects of Huzail, Thaqif, Hawazin, Kinanah, Tamim, or Yamamah (Al-Qattan, 2013). All of which are found throughout the Qur'an. Others argue that the ahruf sab'ah represent seven legal aspects: muhkam, mutashabih, nasikh, mansukh, 'am, khas, and qashash.

Regarding the meaning of the hadith on al-ahruf al-sab'ah, As-Suyuthi offered many definitions, including the following: 1) He cited the opinion of Sa'dan an-Nahwi, who stated that the hadith narrated by Abu Ya'la is problematic in terms of understanding its meaning, because the word harf in Arabic can have various meanings, such as a letter of the alphabet, a word, a meaning, or a direction. 2) Another opinion holds that the number seven is mentioned literally, but what is meant is ease, flexibility, and allowance. The word sab'ah is often used to express plurality in single units, just as seventy is used to express tens, and seven hundred for hundreds. Thus, in this hadith, it is not intended to denote a fixed number. This opinion was put forward by 'Iyadh and those who agreed with him. However, this view is refuted by the hadiths narrated from Ibn Abbas, Ubay bin Ka'b, Imam Nasa'i, and Abu Bakrah, as reported by Imam Nasa'i, which all indicate that the number seven in this case is a literal number and represents an actual limit.

A third opinion suggests that the seven ahruf refer to seven qira'at. However, it is noted that there is no word in the Qur'an that is recited in exactly seven ways except for a few, such as *wa 'abada at-thaghut* (al-Ma'idah: 60) and *fa la taqul lahuma uffin* (al-Isra: 23). This third opinion is countered by the interpretation that the seven ahruf refer to any word that can be recited in one, two, three, or even more than seven ways. Another view, presented by Imam Ibn Qutaibah (Suyuthi, 2017), holds that the seven ahruf represent seven types of variations in recitation: changes in vowel markings while retaining the same meaning, changes in verb forms, alterations in dot placement, substitution of one letter for another, switching word order (taqdim and ta'khir), additions or omissions, and the replacement of one word with another.³

Imam Abu Fadl al-Razi explains that the meaning of al-ahruf as-sab'ah (the seven ahruf) does not go beyond seven categories, among which are (ar-Razi, t.t.): 1) 1. Variations related to (الاسم) or nouns, such as singular mufrad), plural (jamak), masculine (muzakkar), and feminine (mu'annas). An example can be found in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Mu'minun: وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رُغُونَ. The word لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ in this verse can be read in the singular form as لِأَمَانَتِهِمْ, or in the plural form as 2 لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ. Variations related to verbs (Fi'il), including Fi'il *Māḍī* (past tense), Fi'il *Muḍāri'* (present/future tense), and Fi'il Amr (imperative). For

³ This opinion of Ibn Qutaibah was emphasized by Qasim ibn Thabit, who stated that the rukhsah (concession) indeed existed. However, most of the Companions at that time were not accustomed to writing or familiar with written scripts, but they did recognize letters and their articulation points (makhrāj). This comment was later responded to by stating that such a view should not lead to belittling Ibn Qutaibah. It is possible that the stated number was based on a consensus or perhaps known through careful observation or scholarly investigation (risālah or research).

instance, in the Qur'an: فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ The word بَاعِدْ in this verse can be read as بَاعِدُ, in the form of Fi'il Amr, or as يَاعِدْ, in the form of Fi'il Mādi. 3. Variations in the form of Ibdāl (substitution).⁴ An example appears in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:259) in the word ننشزها. The letter zāy (ز) in the word ننشزها can be replaced with rā' (ر), changing the reading to ننشزها.

The remaining seven categories are as follows: 4. Variations in the form of Taqdīm and Ta'khīr (advancing and delaying word order). An example is the verse: وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ, This verse can also be read by advancing and delaying certain words so that it becomes: وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْحَقِّ بِالْمَوْتِ (ar-Razi, t.t.). 5) Variations in terms of I'rāb (grammatical case endings)⁵ (Suyuthi, 2017). The word الْمَجِيدُ in this verse can be understood as an adjective (ṣifah) either for دُو or for الْعَرْشِ, resulting in different recitations such as دُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدِ (with a kasrah). 6. Variations in the form of Ziyādah wa Naqṣ (addition and omission).⁶ An example is in خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى وَمَا خَلَقَ إِذَا يَغْشَى, specifically the phrase وَمَا خَلَقَ, which can be read by omitting the phrase وَمَا خَلَقَ, so that the verse becomes 7 وَالذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى. (Az-Zarkasyi, 1972). Variations related to Lahjah (dialect), such as izhār, idghām, tafkīm, tarqīq, imālah, and others. An example can be found in Allah's saying: هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثٌ مُوسَى. The letter ت in أَتَاكَ and the letter س in مُوسَى can be pronounced with imālah, so the verse would sound like: *Hal atēka, and Mūsē.*

Based on the explanation above, the meaning of the seven ahurf is understood according to the perspective of the one who interprets it. However, it is important to note that the Seven Ahurf are not the same as the Seven Qiraat. The term Seven Ahurf has existed since the time the Qur'an was revealed, as explained in the hadith from Ibn Abbas, who said:(Al-Bukhari, n.d.)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَقْرَأَنِي جِبْرِيلُ عَلَى حَرْفٍ، فَرَأَجَعْتُهُ، فَلَمْ أَزَلْ أَسْتَزِيدُهُ
وَيَزِيدُنِي، حَتَّى انْتَهَى إِلَى سَبْعَةِ أَحْرَفٍ

Meaning: "The Messenger of Allah said: Jibril recited the Qur'an to me with one harf (mode of recitation). Then I kept asking him to increase it, and he continued to add for me until it reached seven ahurf."

The Effect of Qiraat in Tafsir

The emergence of the term Qiraat Sab'ah (Seven Canonical Readings) occurred long after the passing of the Prophet Muhammad, specifically after the era of the Tabi'in, near the end of the second century Hijri. The development of the Seven Qiraat was the result of scholarly research by experts of Qur'anic recitation (Qurra') into the various modes of Qur'anic readings that had appeared, as a direct implication of the understanding of the Ahurf Sab'ah (Yusof et al., 2015).

In order to preserve the purity and miraculous nature of the Qur'an, certain criteria

⁴ The substitution of a particular letter or word with another letter or word that has the same meaning

⁵ The position or status of a particular word within a sentence

⁶ The addition or omission of certain words within a sentence

were established. These include ittisal al-sanad (a continuous chain of transmission going back to the Prophet), conformity with the rasm ‘Uthmani (*the script of the ‘Uthmanic codex*), and adherence to valid rules of Arabic grammar. Based on research using these criteria, seven recitations were officially recognized as authentic, mutawatir (mass-transmitted), and in accordance with the established guidelines. These recitations were then developed and preserved, each attributed to the name of the Imam who propagated it (Bazith, 2020).

Narration and talaqqi (direct transmission) from trustworthy and reliable individuals is the main key in accurately acquiring the correct qiraat of the Qur’an, just as it was taught by the Prophet Muhammad to his companions (Qatthan, 2000). The Companions themselves received qiraat in various ways. When Caliph ‘Uthman sent copies of the mushaf to different Islamic regions, he assigned scholars whose qiraat corresponded to each particular mushaf.⁷ These individuals recited the Qur’an differently from one another, since they had learned from different Companions, who themselves differed in how they received the qiraat from the Prophet. Among the Companions, there were seven who were well-known as masters of qiraat: ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ibn Mas‘ud, Abu al-Darda’, and Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari (Al-Qattan, 2013).

The Companions then dispersed throughout the Islamic world, each carrying with them the qiraat they had received. This led to differences among the Tabi‘in in how they received the Qur’an, depending on which Companion they studied under. The same occurred with the generation of Tabi‘ al-Tabi‘in, who likewise differed in how they received qiraat (Az-Zarqani, 1995). Qiraat scholars among the Tabi‘in were also spread across different regions.⁸ The Tabi‘in qiraat experts residing in Madinah included: Ibn al-Musayyab, ‘Urwah, Salim, ‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, Sulaiman dan ‘Ata’ (sons of Yasar), Mu‘adh bin Harits known as Mu‘adh al-Qari, Abd al-Rahman bin Hurmuz al-A‘raj, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Muslim bin Jundab and Zayd bin Aslam. Those residing in Makkah included: ‘Ubayd bin ‘Umair, ‘Ata’ bin Abu Rabah, Tawus, Mujahid, ‘Ikrimah and Ibn Abu Malikah (Ningrum, 2019).

As the qiraat continued to develop and spread widely, it began to influence the interpretation of the Qur’an and had implications for legal derivation (istinbat al-ahkam). The author will present several examples, including the following:

1. Implication of Ibdal (substitution)

The word of Allah in Surah al-Baqarah: 74

⁷ When the mushaf was transcribed during the caliphate of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, the script was intentionally written without dots and diacritical marks, so that its sentences could accommodate more than one different qirā’āt. If a single sentence could not encompass them, it would be written in another mushaf. This process continued until the ‘Uthmānic codex came to include the *ahruf sab‘ah* and the various existing qirā’āt.

⁸ This situation continued until the emergence of the well-known imams of *qirā’āt*, who specialized in specific *qirā’āt* and taught their respective recitations. The next phase of development was marked by the beginning of the documentation of *qirā’āt* knowledge. Historians mention that the first person to write about *qirā’āt* was Imam Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224 AH). He authored a book titled *al-Qirā’āt*, which compiled the *qirā’āt* of 25 transmitters. See al-Qattān, *Mabahith*, vol. I, p. 174. Another opinion states that the first person to compile the science of *qirā’āt* was Abū ‘Umar Ḥaḥṣ ibn ‘Umar al-Muqri’ ad-Darīr (d. 246 AH).

وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Meaning: “and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.

First, the recitation of Ibn Kathir uses *ya al-ghaybah* (*ya'malun*), where the pronoun changes from *ta al-khitab* (second person) to *ya al-ghaybah* (third person), meaning "what they do." Second, the recitation of other Qurra' uses *ta al-khitab* (*ta'malun*), meaning "what you do," which maintains the continuity of the verse. **ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ**.

Its interpretation: Al-Alusi interpreted this verse by stating that it contains a warning from Allah, who observes every deed, both apparent and hidden, and gives recompense in this world and in the Hereafter. The variation in the word (*ya'malūn*) is contextually connected to the subsequent verses, which are in the third-person form (such as *an yu'minu*, *yasma'ūna*). Meanwhile, the second variation, *ta'malun*, corresponds to the preceding verses (*wa idz qotaltum*, *faddāra'tum fiha*) (Al-Baghdadi, t.t.).

Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi also commented on the first variation. He explained that the reading with *ya' al-ghaybah* is directed toward Bani Isra'il (the Jews). At the beginning of the verse, the form is *mukhattab* (addressed directly), as seen in the verse: **ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ**. However, by the end of the verse, the form shifts to *ya' al-ghaybah*, as if the address is no longer directed at the immediate audience (Andalusi, 1992).

As for the second variation, *ta' al-khitab*, al-Andalusi viewed the use of the direct address as a reminder and lesson for the believers regarding the evil nature and attitude of the Jews. Al-Thabari also interpreted the word *ta'malun* by referring to the Jewish rabbis and their denial of Allah's verses. Thus, in this verse, Allah states that “what you do” will be repaid in the Hereafter as a consequence of your actions in the world (Andalusi, 1992).

In conclusion, both of the above variations are considered *mutawatir*, as they each have their own evidence and intended meaning. What needs to be emphasized here is that Allah's oversight encompasses all of creation, whether believers or not, and that He will repay all deeds done on this earth. Likewise, this serves as a lesson to the Children of Israel regarding their misconduct toward Allah. The implications that can be drawn from the interpretations of these two variations relate to moral and theological aspects, particularly regarding Allah's constant surveillance (Umam, 2020).

2. Implication of *ziyadah wa naqs*

The word of Allah in Surah QS. Fatihah: 4

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Meaning: “Sovereign of the Day of Recompense”

Imam Asim and al-Kisai recited it with lengthening mad, *māliki* (مالك) while all other imams did not lengthen it, omitting the alif (ملك) Al-Tabari explained that there is no

disagreement among scholars of the Arabic language regarding the meanings of *maliki* and *māliki*. The interpretation of the word *maliki* without affirming the *itsbat alif* after the letter mim is that truly, Allah is the ultimate King in the Hereafter, and no creature among His creation, before the existence of the universe, held any sovereign authority or dared to dispute Him as King (Al-Tabari, 2010).

Al-Tabari then narrates a report concerning this qiraat recitation

وأما تأويل قراءة من قرأ (مالك يوم الدين) فما حدثنا به أبو كريب قال : حدثنا عثمان بن سعيد عن بشر عن عمارة قال : حدثنا أبو روق عن الضحك عن ابن عباس (مالك يوم الدين) يقول : لا يملك أحد في ذلك اليوم معه حكما كملكهم في الدنيا

مُلْكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ, Its interpretation is as narrated by Abu Kuraib, who said: It was reported by Uthman bin Sa'id, from Bishr bin 'Ammarah, from Abu Ruwaq, from al-Dhahhak, from Ibn 'Abbas, who said:

"No one will possess any kingdom on the Day of Judgment neither authority nor sovereignty as they may have had dominion over such things in the worldly life."
(Sobki & Yusof, 2021)

As for the interpretation of *malik*, it is considered the most authentic among the two qiraat versions, meaning "sovereignty" or "kingdom," based on its association with the word *mulk*, as opposed to the recitation of *milk*. The term *malik* carries more advantages over *mālik*. Indeed, *malik* refers to an established kingdom that cannot be possessed except by one who rules it, whereas a *mālik* (possessor) does not necessarily rule a kingdom. This opinion is based on the narration of al-Tabari:

وأولى تأويلين بالآية وأصح القراءتين في التلاوة عندي التأويل الأول وقراءة من قرأ (مالك) بمعنى الملك لأن في الإقرار له بالانفراد بالملك ايجابا بالانفراد بالملك وفضيلة زيادة الملك على المالك اذ كان معلوما ألا ملك وهو مالك وقد يكون المالك لا ملكا

*Based on the explanation above, Imam al-Tabari clarified the context of understanding the verse by examining the difference between the words *malik* and *mālik*, as well as the superiority of the word *malik* from the perspective of Arabic usage. As a result, the word *malik* carries a deeper meaning and encapsulates the meaning of *mālik*.* (Ismail et al., 2021)

CONCLUSION

Al-Aḥruf al-Sab‘ah (the Seven Ahruf) is an important subject in the study of Qur'anic sciences (ulum al-Qur'an). Its emergence coincided with the Qur'an being revealed in seven ahruf, which are scattered throughout the Qur'anic text. The hadiths that mention "*inna al-Qur'ana unzila 'ala sab'ati Aḥruf in*" are understood as an indication of the ease and facilitation provided by Allah in revealing the Qur'an in seven modes, some of which used the dialects of Quraysh, Huzail, Thaqif, Hawazin, Kinanah, Tamim, or Yamamah.

There are differing scholarly opinions regarding the meaning of the seven ahruf. Some scholars believe that the hadiths about the seven ahruf indicate a restriction in reciting the Qur'an to seven forms. Others argue that the ahruf sab'ah are the same as the qiraat sab'ah (the Seven Qiraat). However, the two are significantly different, even though they are closely related.

The implication of the seven ahruf on the seven qiraat has had a notable impact on Qur'anic interpretation. Therefore, the reasons behind the differences of opinion among scholars are most likely connected to the types of qiraat they followed, which influenced both tafsir (interpretation) and istinbat al-ahkam (derivation of legal rulings).

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