

THE DIFFERENT ARABIC VERSIONS OF THE QUR'AN

By Samuel Green

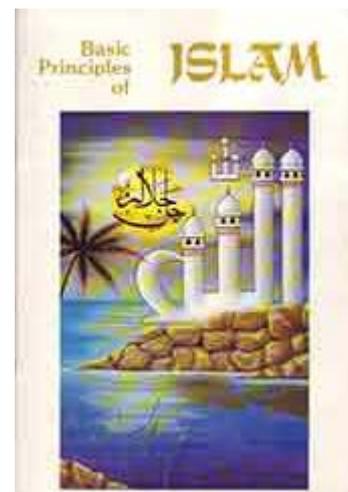
INTRODUCTION <https://answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm>

Many Muslims have told me that the Qur'an has been perfectly preserved and that all Qur'ans around the world are absolutely identical. They have said this in order to prove that the Qur'an is superior to the Bible. Maybe a Muslim has said this to you? Maybe you are a Muslim and this is what you believe and have said about the Qur'an yourself?

It is common for Muslims to believe and say this because this is what their leaders teach them. Consider the following quote.

No other book in the world can match the Qur'an ... The astonishing fact about this book of ALLAH is that it has remained unchanged, even to a dot, over the last fourteen hundred years. ... No variation of text can be found in it. You can check this for yourself by listening to the recitation of Muslims from different parts of the world. (*Basic Principles of Islam*, p. 4)

The above claim is that all Qur'ans around the world are identical and that "no variation of text can be found". In fact the author issues a challenge saying, "You can check this for yourself by listening to the recitation of Muslims from different parts of the world". In this article I will take up this challenge and see if all Qur'ans are identical.



CONTENTS

- Some [history](#) related to the recitation of the Qur'an.
- [A Comparison between two Arabic Qur'ans](#) from different parts of the world.
- The extent to which the differences [affect the meaning](#).
- [Comparing more Arabic Qur'ans](#).
- Appendix 1 - [The Seven Ahruf and the Ten Qira'at](#)
- Appendix 2 - [How do Islamic scholars understand the different versions?](#)
- Appendix 3 - [Choosing the Best Reading - Islamic Scholarship in Practice](#)
- Appendix 4 - [The Seven Ahruf, Ten Qira'at, and Isnads of the Qur'an](#)
- Appendix 5 - [The Memorisation of the Qur'an and the Qira'at](#)
- Appendix 6 - [Where to buy different versions of the Qur'an](#).

HISTORY

To start our investigation we turn to an Islamic encyclopedia written by a practising Muslim. This scholar explains an important aspect of the history of the Qur'an. Please read this quote a few times if you are new to this area of study.

(C)ertain variant readings (of the Qur'an) existed and, indeed, persisted and increased as the Companions who had memorised the text died, and because the inchoate (basic) Arabic script, lacking vowel signs and even necessary diacriticals to distinguish between certain consonants, was inadequate. ... In the 4th Islamic century, it was decided to have recourse (to return) to "readings" (*qira'at*) handed down from seven authoritative "readers" (*qurra'*); in order, moreover, to ensure accuracy of transmission, two "transmitters" (*rawi*, pl. *ruwah*) were accorded to each. There resulted from this **seven basic texts** (*al-qira'at as-sab'*, "the seven readings"), each having two **transmitted versions** (*riwayatan*) with only minor variations in phrasing, but all containing meticulous vowel-points and other necessary diacritical marks. ... The authoritative "readers" are:

Nafi` (from Medina; d. 169/785)

Ibn Kathir (from Mecca; d. 119/737)

Abu `Amr al-`Ala' (from Damascus; d. 153/770)

Ibn `Amir (from Basra; d. 118/736)

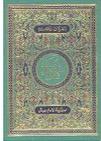
Hamzah (from Kufah; d. 156/772)

al-Qisa'i (from Kufah; d. 189/804)

Abu Bakr `Asim (from Kufah; d. 158/778)

(Cyril Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 324, bold added)

Therefore, we need to realise that the Qur'an has been passed down to us from men called the "Readers". They were famous reciters of the Qur'an in the early centuries of Islam. The way these men recited the Qur'an was formally recorded in textual form by other men called the "Transmitters". There are in fact more Readers and Transmitters than those listed above. The table below lists the ten commonly accepted Readers, their transmitted versions, and their current area of use.

The Reader	The Transmitter	Current Area of Use
"The Seven"		
Nafi`	 Warsh	Algeria, Morocco, parts of Tunisia, West Africa and Sudan
	 Qalun	Libya, Tunisia and parts of Qatar
Ibn Kathir	al-Bazzi	
	Qunbul	
Abu `Amr al-'Ala'	 al-Duri	Parts of Sudan and West Africa
	al-Suri	
Ibn `Amir	Hisham	Parts of Yemen
	Ibn Dhakwan	
Hamzah	 Khalaf	
	Khallad	
al-Kisa'i	al-Duri	
	Abu'l-Harith	
Abu Bakr `Asim	 Hafs	Muslim world in general
	Ibn `Ayyash	
"The Three"		
Abu Ja`far	Ibn Wardan	
	Ibn Jamaz	

Ya`qub al-Hashimi	Ruways
	Rawh
Khalaf al-Bazzar	Ishaq
	Idris al-Haddad

Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, p. 199.

What the above means is that the Qur'an has come to us through *many* transmitted versions. You cannot recite or read the Qur'an except through one of these versions. Each version has its own chain of narrators (isnad) like a hadith. There are more versions than those listed above but they are not considered authentic because their chain of narration is considered weak. Not all of these versions are printed or used today, but several are. We will now compare two of them.

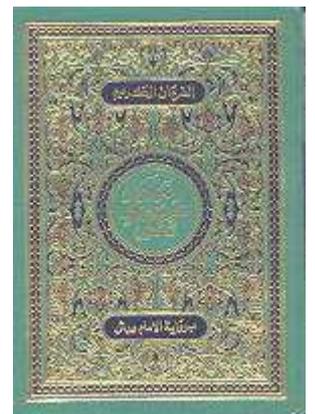
A COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO ARABIC QUR'ANS

All these facts can be a bit confusing when you first read them. If you are feeling that way don't worry; it's normal. To make things simple we will now compare two Qur'ans from different parts of the world to see if they are identical. The Qur'an on the left is now the most commonly used Qur'an. It is the 1924 Egyptian standard edition based on the of the transmitted version of Imam Hafs. The Qur'an on the right is according to Imam Warsh's transmitted version and is mainly used in North Africa.



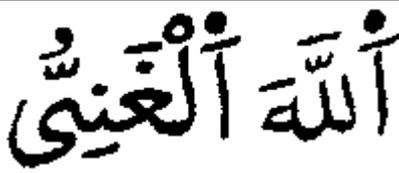
When we compare these Qur'ans it becomes obvious they are not identical. There are five main types of differences between them.

1. Extra Words
2. Graphical/Basic Letter Differences
3. Diacritical Differences
4. Vowel Differences
5. Basmalah Difference



The following examples are scanned copies of the same word/s in the same verse from these two Qur'ans. On some occasions the verse number differs because the two Qur'ans number their verses differently. There is a slight difference in script as well: the letter Qaaf in the Warsh version is written with only one dot above, and the Faa has a single dot below. This is the orthography of North African (Maghribi) Arabic script.

EXTRA WORDS

THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO IMAM HAFS	THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO IMAM WARSH
 <p>Allah huwa l-ghaniyu</p> <p>Allah is the self-sufficient ... 57:24</p>	 <p>Allah l-ghaniyu</p> <p>Allah, the self-sufficient ... 57:23</p>
<p>The Hafs versions has an extra word, <i>huwa</i>, in this verse. This makes the grammar different between these two Qur'ans. In the Hafs version it is a sentence, <i>Allah is the self-sufficient</i>. While in the Warsh version it is a phrase, <i>Allah, the self-sufficient</i>. Both Qur'ans are expressing the same idea but are doing it in different ways and as a result are recited differently.</p>	

وَسَارِعُوْا

wasaari'uu

And hasten to ... 3:133

سَارِعُوْا

saari'uu

Hasten to ... 3:133

The Hafs version has the extra word *waw* (and). This does not change the meaning of the verse but does change the way it is recited.

GRAPHICAL/BISIC LETTER DIFFERENCES

THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO IMAM HAFS

وَوَصَّيْ

wawassaa

And Ibrahim enjoined (wawassaa) on his sons ... 2:132

THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO IMAM WARSH

وَأَوْصَى

wa'awsaa

And Ibrahim instructed/made (wa'awsaa) his sons ... 2:131

The Hafs version is a 2nd form verb, while the Warsh version has an extra alif to make a 4th form verb. This intensifies the meaning of the verb.

يَرْتَدَّ

yartadda

... turn back ... 5:54

يَرْتَدِدْ

yartadid

... turn back ... 5:56

The two words are recited differently but have the same meaning. They are two different examples of the 8th form jussive verb. This is most likely a difference in dialect.

قَالَ

qaala

He said (qaala), "My lord knows ..." (21:4)

قُلْ

qul

Say (qul): My lord knows ... (21:4)

In the Hafs version *qaala* is the perfect tense and therefore Muhammad is the subject of the verb, but in the Warsh version *qul* is the imperative and therefore the subject is God who is commanding Muhammad/Muslims. This difference is repeated in 21:112.

وَلَا يَخَافُ

walaayakhaafu

... and for him is no fear (walaayakhaafu) ... 91:15

فَلَا يَخَافُ

falaayakhaafu

... therefore, for him is no fear (falaayakhaafu) ... 91:15

There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This changes the connection from "and" to "therefore".

DIACRITICAL DIFFERENCES

Arabic uses dots (i'jam) to distinguish certain letters that are written the same way. For instance the basic symbol

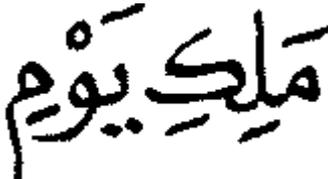
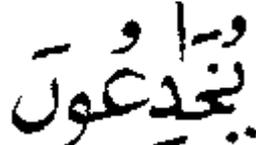
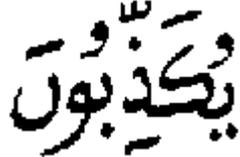
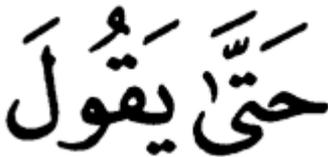
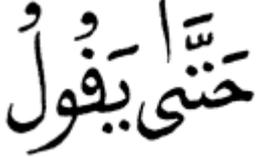
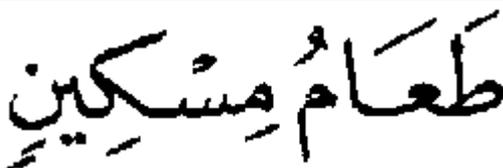
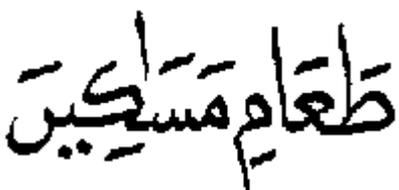
ا represents five different letters in Arabic depending upon where the diacritical dots are placed: باا' ,

تاا' , ثاا' , ناا' , ياا' . Here we see another difference between these two Qur'ans; they do not have the dots in the same place. The result is that different letters are formed.

THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO IMAM HAFS	THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO IMAM WARSH
<p>نَغْفِرُ nagfir</p> <p>... we give mercy ... 2:58</p>	<p>يُغْفِرُ yughfar</p> <p>... he gives mercy ... 2:57</p>
There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "we" to "he".	
<p>نَقُولُونَ taquluna</p> <p>... you (plural) say ... 2:140</p>	<p>يَقُولُونَ yaquluna</p> <p>... they say ... 2:139</p>
There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "you" to "they".	
<p>نُنشِرُهَا nunshizuhaa</p> <p>... we shall raise up ... 2:259</p>	<p>نُنشِرُهَا nunshiruhaa</p> <p>... we shall revive/make alive ... 2:258</p>
There are different root letters in these words and this makes two different words. The two words have a similar meaning but are not identical.	
<p>آتَيْتُكُمْ ataytukum</p> <p>I gave you ... 3:81</p>	<p>آتَيْنَاكُمْ ataynakum</p> <p>We gave you ... 3:80</p>
There are different letters in the middle of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "I" to "we".	
<p>يُؤْتِيهِمْ yu'tiihim</p> <p>... he gives them ... 4:152</p>	<p>نُؤْتِيهِمُ nuutiihimuu</p> <p>... we give them ... 4:151</p>
There are different letters at the beginning of these words. This difference changes the meaning from "we" to "he".	
<p>هُمْ عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ hum `ibadu l-</p> <p>rahmani</p> <p>... they are slaves of the Most Gracious ... 43:19</p>	<p>هُمْ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ hum `inda l-</p> <p>rahmani</p> <p>... they are with the Most Gracious ... 43:19</p>
The middle letter of the middle word is different in these verses. This changes the meaning of these words significantly: In the Hafs version the word is a noun and means <i>slaves</i> while in the Warsh version the word is a preposition and means <i>with</i> . Thus, the verses have a different meaning.	

VOWEL DIFFERENCES

Arabic uses small symbols (tashkil) above and below the letters to indicate some of the vowels of a word. Here we see another difference between these two Qur'ans; they do not use the same vowels in the same place.

THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO OF IMAM HAFS	THE QUR'AN ACCORDING TO OF IMAM WARSH
 <p>maaliki yawmi</p> <p>Owner of the Day ... 1:4</p>	 <p>maliki yawmi</p> <p>King of the Day ... 1:3</p>
<p>The Hafs version has a long <i>alif</i> which makes an active participle meaning <i>owner</i>, while the Warsh version is a nominal noun meaning <i>king</i>.</p>	
 <p>yakhda'uuna</p> <p>... they deceive ... 2:9</p>	 <p>yukhaadi'uuna</p> <p>... they seek to deceive ... 2:8</p>
<p>There are different vowels on the first and second letters of these words. The Hafs version is a 1st form of the verb, while the Warsh version is a 3rd form.</p>	
 <p>yakdhibuuna</p> <p>... they lie ... 2:10</p>	 <p>yukadhdhibuuna</p> <p>... they were lied to (or) they deny ... 2:9</p>
<p>There are different vowels on the first and second letters of these words. The Hafs version is a 1st form of the verb, while the Warsh version is a 2nd form either active or passive. (Note: this word appears twice in this verse.)</p>	
 <p>hatta yaquula</p> <p>... so that they said ... 2:214</p>	 <p>hatta yaquulu</p> <p>... until they said ... 2:212</p>
<p>There is a different vowel on the last letter. The <i>fatha</i> vowel used in the Hafs version places the verb into the subjunctive mood which gives the preceding particle <i>hatta</i> the meaning <i>so that</i>. The Warsh version uses the <i>damma</i> vowel which places the verb into the imperfect indicative mood which gives the particle <i>hatta</i> the meaning <i>until</i>.</p>	
 <p>ta'aamu</p> <p>miskiinin</p> <p>... a redemption by feeding a poor man ... 2:184</p>	 <p>ta'aami masakiina</p> <p>... a redemption by feeding poor men ... 2:183</p>
<p>There are several different vowels in these words. These change the noun from singular to plural; and hence changes the number of men you are required to feed to redeem yourself for failing to fast.</p>	
 <p>qatala</p>	 <p>qutila</p>

And many a prophet fought (qatala) ... 3.146

And many a prophet was killed (qutila) ... 3.146.

There are different vowels in these words. These change the meaning from the active to the passive and thus changes the meaning of the verse.

رِسَالَتَهُ risaalatahu

his message ... 5:67

رِسَالَتِيH risaalatihi

his message ... 5:69

There are different vowels on the last two letters of these words. These change the case and pronunciation of the word. The Hafs version is in the accusative case while the Warsh is in the genitive. This reflects a different understanding of the grammar of the sentence.

سِحْرَانِ sihraani

... two works of magic ... 28:48

سَاحِرَانِ saahiraani

... two magicians ... 28:48

There are different vowels on the first two letters of these words. These change the word from an active participle in the Hafs version to a noun in the Warsh and thus changes the meaning of the verse.

رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهِH rabbiha wa kutubihi

... her lord and his books. 66:12

رَبِّهَا وَكِتَابِهِH rabbiha wa kitabihi

... her lord and his book. 66:12

There are different vowels used for the word *kitab* (book). This difference makes the word plural in the Hafs version and singular in the Warsh version. This slightly changes the meaning of the verse because in the Hafs version Mary believes in all of God's books, while in the Warsh version she believes in the book that is with her.

THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES

We have now considered four types of differences between these two Qur'ans: extra words, differences in letters, diacritical dots and vowels, but how many of these differences are there between these two Qur'ans? There are Islamic reference books that answer this question. The title page below is from a book entitled, "The Readings and Rhythm of the Uthman (Qur'anic) Manuscript".



In this book the author displays the text of the Hafs version of the Qur'an but underlines any word where there is a difference among the Readers. This difference is then shown in the margin. The author has used a colour coded system to show which Reader is different. If the variant word in the margin is red this indicates that the Reader was Imam Warsh. Please study the page below and identify the underlined words and then the corresponding colour coded words in the margin.



When the red coded differences are counted there are found to be 1354 accepted differences between the Hafs and Warsh versions.

BASMALAH DIFFERENCES

There is another type of difference between these two Qur'ans, the Basmalah. The Basmalah is the phrase, "In the Name of Allaah, the Ever-Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy". Both the Hafs and Warsh versions of the Qur'an have the Basmalah at the start of every sura except sura 9. In this way they are identical, however, while including it in their Qur'ans these Imams understood the Basmalah in very different ways. For Imam Hafs, the Basmalah was part of the revelation and part of the first verse as it was recited, while for Imam Warsh, the Basmalah was a du'a (supplication) to introduce each sura; it was written at the start of each sura, like the sura titles, but was not considered part of the revelation. Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi explains this.

The *basmalah* is the phrase that occurs at the beginning of each *soorah* of the Qur'aan, except for *Soorah* at-Tawbah, and reads, as every Muslim knows,

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

'Bismillaah ar-Rahmaan ar-Raheem'

(In the Name of Allaah, the Ever-Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy).

There is a difference of opinion amongst the scholars of the Qur'aan over whether this phrase is to be considered as a verse at the beginning of each *soorah*, in particular *Soorah* al-Faatihah, or whether this is merely a phrase said for blessings between the *soorahs*, and is meant to identify where one *soorah* ends and the next begins.

The scholars are agreed that the *basmalah* does not form part of *Soorah* at-Tawbah, and that it is a verse of the Qur'an in 27:30 ... but disagree as to its status at the beginning of the other *soorahs* ...

The scholars who claim that the *basmalah* at the beginning of the *soorahs* is a verse of the Qur'aan, (include) Imaam ash-Shaafi'ee (d. 204 A.H.) (and) Imaam Ahmad (d. 241) ... However, those that do not hold the *basmalah* at the beginning of the *soorahs* to be a part of the Qur'aan (include) Imaam Maalik (d. 179) (and) Aboo Haneefah (d. 150 A.H.) ...

Based on this classic difference of opinion, the *qira'aat* (the Readers) themselves differ over whether the *basmalah* was a verse in *Soorah* al-Faatihah and the other *soorahs*. Among the *Qaarees* (the Readers), Ibn Katheer, 'Aasim and al-Kisaa'ee were the only ones who considered it to be a verse at the beginning of each *soorah*, whereas the others did not. (Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, pp. 157-158.)

To summarize the above. The four Imams who founded the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools disagree as to whether the Basmalah is part of the revelation at the start of each sura. Imam ash-Shafi'ee and Imam Ahmad believed that it was, while Imam Maalik and Aboo Haneefah believed it was not. As a result the different Readers who come from these schools have different views too. For Ibn Kathir, al-Kisa'i, and Abu Bakr `Asim (Hafs) the Basmalah was part of the revelation of each sura, but for the majority of the Readers: Nafi` (Warsh), Abu `Amr al-'Ala', Ibn `Amir, Hamzah, Abu Ja`far, Ya`qub al-Hashimi, and Khalaf al-Bazzar, the Basmalah was not part of the revelation. Therefore, while both of the Qur'ans we are examining contain the Basmalah, in the Hafs Qur'an it is considered part of the revelation, while in the Warsh Qur'an it is not considered part of the revelation but du'a.

This is a significant difference because the Basmalah appears 113 times at the start of the surahs and has 4 words, which means there are 452 extra words in the Qur'an according to Imam Hafs than the Qur'an of according to Imam Warsh.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE DIFFERENCES AFFECT THE MEANING

I am often told by Muslims that the differences between these Qur'ans are only a matter of dialect, accent or pronunciation, and do not affect the meaning, however, this is clearly not the case. The examples given earlier show that the differences are far more significant: they change the subject of the sentence, whether the verb is active or passive, singular or plural, how the grammar of the sentence is to be understood, and whether or not the Basmalah is even part of the revelation at the start of each sura. These differences do affect the meaning. The evidence speaks for itself.

Subhii al-Saalih[1] summarizes the differences into seven categories.

1. Differences in grammatical indicator (i`raab).
2. Differences in consonants.
3. Differences in nouns as to whether they are singular, dual, plural, masculine or feminine.
4. Differences in which there is a substitution of one word for another.
5. Differences due to reversal of word order in expressions where the reversal is meaningful in the Arabic language in general or in the structure of the expression in particular.
6. Differences due to some small addition or deletion in accordance with the custom of the Arabs.

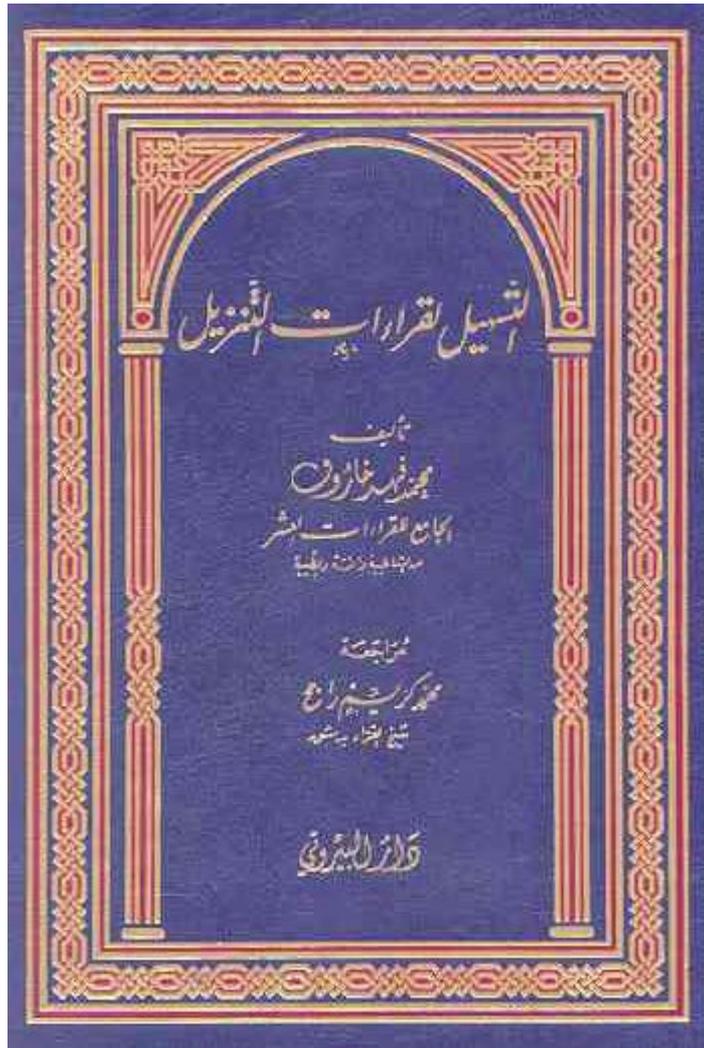
7. Differences due to dialectical peculiarities.

We can also add to this list the difference in the status of the Basmalah.

Therefore, the claim that these differences are just a matter of dialect and do not affect the meaning is false. The evidence speaks for itself.

COMPARING MORE ARABIC QUR'ANS

Our investigation so far has only considered two versions of the Qur'an, but as we saw at the beginning of this article there are many other versions that could also be examined for variants. The book below does this. It is a Qur'an that lists the variants from the Ten Accepted Readers.



Translation

Making Easy the Readings of What Has Been Sent Down

Author

Muhammad Fahd Khaaruun

The Collector of the 10 Readings

From al-Shaatebeiah and al-Dorraah and al-Taiabah

Revised by

Muhammad Kareem Ragheh

The Chief Reader of Damascus

Daar al-Beirut

In this edition of the Qur'an, Muhammad Fahd Khaaruun has collected accepted variant readings from among the Ten Accepted Readers and included them in the margin of the 1924 Egyptian standard edition of the Hafs version of the Qur'an. These are not all the variants, there are other variants that could have been included, but the author has limited himself to the variants of the Ten Accepted Readers. As the title of his book suggests this makes it easy to know what the variant readings are because they are clearly listed.

Below is a page from this reference Qur'an. You can see the variant readings listed in the margin. Approximately two thirds of the verses of the have some type of accepted variant. This is approximately 4000 accepted variants.

(٢٧١) ﴿فَبِعَمَّ﴾ ابن عمرو، حمزة، والكسائي، وخلف.

﴿فَبِعَمَّ﴾ ورش، وابن كثير، وحفص، ويعقوب.

﴿فَبِعَمَّ﴾ قالون، وأبو عمرو، وشعبة، بخلف عنهم، وأبو جعفر. واختلاس كسرة العين: قالون، وأبو عمرو، وشعبة، وهو الوجه الثاني هم.

(٢٧١) ﴿هَيَّ﴾ وقف يعقوب بهاء السكت.

(٢٧١) ﴿فَهُوَّ﴾ قالون، وأبو عمرو، والكسائي، وأبو جعفر.

﴿فَهُوَّ﴾ الباقون، ووقف يعقوب بهاء السكت.

(٢٧١) ﴿وَنُكْفَرُ﴾ نافع، وحمزة، والكسائي، وأبو جعفر، وخلف.

﴿وَنُكْفَرُ﴾ ابن كثير، وأبو عمرو، وشعبة، ويعقوب.

﴿وَيُكْفَرُ﴾ الباقون.

(٢٧١) ﴿سَيَاتِكُمْ﴾ لورش

سُورَةُ التَّوْبَةِ
الْمَائِدَةِ

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ نَفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِنْ نَذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٢٧١﴾ إِنْ تَبَدُّوا أَلصَدَقَاتِ فَنِعْمَ هِيَ وَإِنْ تَخَفَوْهَا وَتَوَتَّوْهَا الْفُقَرَاءُ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧٢﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَا يُنْفِقْكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُؤْتِ الْيَتَامَى وَاللَّفُقَرَاءَ الَّذِينَ أَحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعْفُفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَاقًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٧٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٤﴾

٤٦

ثلاثة البدل، ووقف حمزة بإبدال الميمزة باء حالصة ﴿سَيَاتِكُمْ﴾.

(٢٧٢) ﴿فَلَا تُنْفِقْكُمْ﴾ بالتحقيق، وإبدال الميمزة باء حالصة، وقف حمزة ﴿فَلْيُنْفِقْكُمْ﴾.

(٢٧٣) ﴿يَحْسَبُهُمْ﴾ ابن عمرو، وعاصم، وحمزة، وأبو جعفر. ﴿يَحْسَبُهُمْ﴾ الباقون.

(٢٧٤) ﴿وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾ يعقوب. ﴿وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾ حمزة. ﴿وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾ الباقون.

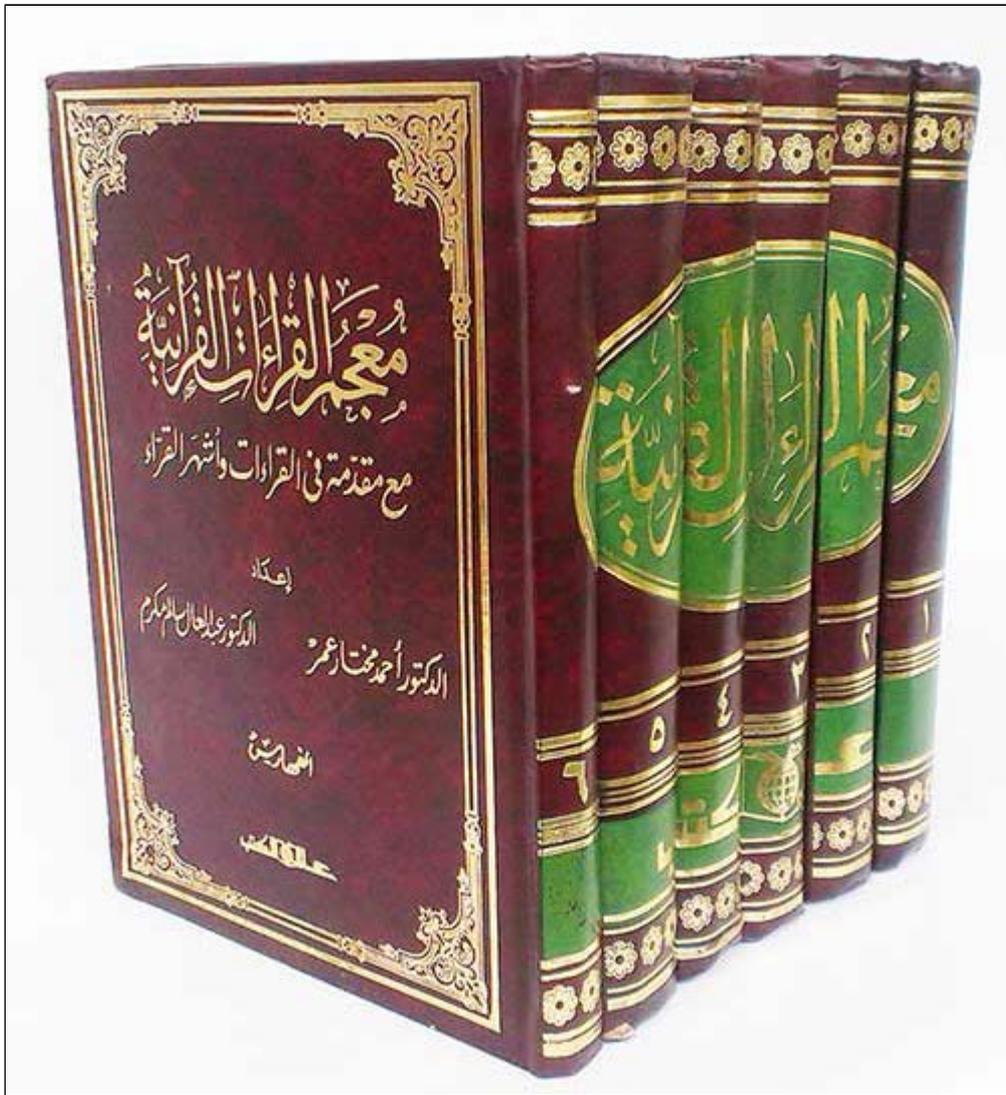
الممال

﴿أَنْصَارُ﴾ أبو عمرو، ودوري الكسائي، وبالقليل ورش.

﴿هَدَاهُمْ﴾ حمزة، والكسائي، وخلف، وقلها ورش بخلفه.

﴿بِسَيِّئَاتِهِمْ﴾ حمزة، والكسائي، وخلف، وقلها أبو عمرو، وورش بخلفه.

Below is a six volume encyclopedia set which records all known variants. It is entitled: *Mu'jam al-qiraa'at al-Quraaneeyah, ma'a maqaddimah fee qiraa'at wa ashhar al-qurraa* (The Encyclopedia of the Quranic Readings with an Introduction to Readings and Famous Readers).



Here is a sample page from this encyclopedia set. Almost every verse in the Qur'an has variants associated with it.

المصدر	القارئ	أوجه القراءة	النص المصحفي	رقم الآية	مسلسل
اتف ١٥٥ .	حزبة - أبو جعفر	(٢) راسه (وقفاً)			
بحر ٧٦ / ٢ - كشف ١٢١ / ١ .	الحسن - السزهرى - التلمي ^(١) .	أَوْسُكُ	أَوْسُكُ	١٩٦	٥٧٣
امع ٥٠ / ١ - بحر ٧٨ / ٢ . كشف ١٢١ / ١ .	-	فصيام	فَصِيَامٌ	١٩٦	٥٧٤
	أبي	فصيام ثلاثة أيام متتابعات	فَصِيَامٌ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ مُتَتَابِعَاتٍ	١٩٦	٥٧٥
امع ٥٠ / ١ - بحر ٧٩ / ٢ - جامع ٤٠١ / ٢ - كشف ١٢١ / ١ - قخر ١٦٤ / ٢ . غيث ١٥٦ .	زيد بن علي - ابن أبي عيلة	وسبعة	وَسَبْعَةٌ	١٩٦	٥٧٦
	الكساين	الإمالة في حالة الوقف	كَامِلَةٌ	١٩٦	٥٧٧
مختصر شواذ القراءات / ١٢ .	الحسن ^(٢)	الحج أشهر	أَلْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ	١٩٧	*
بحر ٨٨ / ٢ - تب ١٣٢ / ٢ - مع ١١٤ / ١ .	ابن مسعود - الأعمش	رفوف	رَفَفَتْ	١٩٧	٥٧٨
اتف ١٣٥ - اعن ٢٤٥ / ١ - امع ٥٠ / ١ - بحر ٨٨ / ٢ - جامع ٤٠٨ / ٢ - كشف ١٢٢ / ١ - مع ٢٩٢ / ٢ .	عاصم - أبو جعفر يزيد بن القمعا - الحسن .	(١) فلارفت ولا فسوق ولا جدال ^(٣)	فَلَا رَفَّتْ وَلَا فُسُوقٌ وَلَا جِدَالٌ	١٩٧	٥٧٩

(١) في مختصر ابن خالويه ١٢ بزيادة السلمي .

(٢) في مختصر ابن خالويه ١٢ بكسر الحاء في كل القرآن : الحسن .

(٣) وانظر العنوان ورقة ٥٢ .

CONCLUSION. We began this article by considering this common Islamic claim:

No other book in the world can match the Qur'an ... The astonishing fact about this book of ALLAH is that it has remained unchanged, even to a dot, over the last fourteen hundred years. ... No variation of text can be found in it. You can check this for yourself by listening to the recitation of Muslims from different parts of the world. (*Basic Principles of Islam*, p. 4)

This claim is wrong. All of the Islamic evidence shows there are different canonical versions of the Qur'an used around the world today. They differ in their words, basic letters, diacritical dots, vowels, and the Basmalah; and these change the meaning of words and sentences. Therefore how the Qur'an is recited around the world today is different; not all Qur'ans are identical.

I realise this may be hard for some Muslims to accept because in their culture they have grown up being taught there is only one Qur'an, however, this is the fault of Islamic leaders who continue to exaggerate about the Qur'an as they attack the Bible.

This article only considers the different Arabic versions of the Qur'an used in the world *today*. If you wish to learn about the different Qur'ans in Islam's early history then read [The Preservation of the Qur'an](#).

APPENDIX 1 - THE SEVEN AHRUF AND TEN QIRA'AT

Why are there so many different versions of the Qur'an? The traditional Islamic answer comes from a hadith in which Muhammad said Allah gave the Qur'an in seven modes (ahruf).

Narrated Umar bin Al-Khattab: ... (Muhammad said) "This Qur'an has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways (ahruf), so recite of it whichever is easier for you." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 6, bk. 61, no. 514)

Islamic scholars agree that there are differences between the ahruf but do not agree as to what these differences are:

As for what is meant by these seven *ahruf*, there is a great deal of difference on this issue. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 A.H.) recorded thirty-five opinions on the issue, and as-Suyootee listed over forty. Ibn Sa'adan (d. 231 A.H.), a famous grammarian and reciter of the Qur'aan, even declared that the true meaning of the *ahruf* was known only to Allaah, and thus to attempt to investigate into this issue was futile! (Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, p. 175)

Some of the main options for the differences between the seven ahruf are:

- Different Arabic dialects.
- Synonyms.
- Differences in Arabic grammar, i.e. sentence construction.

If this hadith is authentic we can at least say that Muhammad allowed differences in how the Qur'an was recited. If the hadith is fabricated it still indicates a situation where different versions of the Qur'an existed and needed to have their existence justified. Either way, both options indicate that early in Islam's history there were different versions of the Qur'an. So how did the seven ahruf become the ten qira'at of Uthman's Qur'an?

The seven ahruf and ten qira'at are related but are not the same thing. Here is a summary from the Islamic sources of what seems to be the best explanation for how the seven ahruf became the ten qira'at:

1. Muhammad allowed the seven ahruf of the Qur'an. Each ahruf was a way of reciting the Qur'an, that is, each ahruf had its own qira'ah/reading.
2. These differences caused problems for the early Muslims.

Narrated Anas bin Malik: Hudhaifa bin Al-Yaman came to Uthman at the time when the people (Muslims) of Syria and the people of Iraq were waging war to conquer Armenia and Azarbaijan. Hudhaifa was afraid of their (the people of Syria and Iraq) differences in the recitation of the Qur'an, so he said to 'Uthman, "O chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book (Quran) ... (*Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 6, bk. 61, no. 510)

3. Caliph Uthman solved this problem by establishing one text, in one dialect, and destroying the other versions. His goal was to remove the differences and unite the Muslim community around a single text recited in the Qurayshi dialect.

So 'Uthman sent a message to Hafsa saying, "Send us the manuscripts of the Qur'an so that we may compile the Qur'anic materials in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you." Hafsa sent it to 'Uthman. 'Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, 'Abdullah bin Az-Zubair, Said bin Al-As and 'AbdurRahman bin Harith bin Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies. 'Uthman said to the three Quraishi men, "In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit on any point in the Qur'an, then write it in the dialect of Quraish, the Qur'an was revealed in their tongue." They did so, and when they had written many copies, 'Uthman returned the original manuscripts to Hafsa. 'Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt. ... (*Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 6, bk. 61, no. 510)

4. Uthman's Qur'an removed most of the differences between what Muslims were reciting, however, some were able

to remain due to the vague nature of the Arabic script that was used at this time.

The (Arabic) script used in the seventh century, i.e. during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, consisted of very basic symbols, which expressed only the consonantal structure of a word, and even that with much ambiguity. While today letters such as baa, taa, thaa, yaa, are easily distinguished by points, this was not so in the early days and all these letters used to be written with a straight line. (Von Denffer, *Ulum Al-Qur'an - An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, p. 57)

This vague nature of the script of Uthman's Qur'an allowed sections of the qira'at/readings from the other ahruf to be transferred into Uthman's Qur'an. If the qira'at/readings of the other ahruf was compatible with Uthman's basic text, it could continued to be read in Uthman's Qur'an. In this case the basic script was vocalised with different diacritical and vowel markings (as we have seen). This resulted in different readings/qira'at/vocalisations for the same word in Uthman's Qur'an. Thus, Uthman's Qur'an was no longer a single ahruf with its own reading/qira'ah but a mixture of readings from different ahruf.

5. This vague nature of the Arabic text also allowed new variants to arise that were compatible with Uthmanic text.

When more and more Muslims of non-Arab origin and also many ignorant Arabs studied the Qur'an, faulty pronunciation and wrong readings began to increase. It is related that at the time of Du'ali (d. 69H/638) someone in Basra read the following *aya* from the Qur'an in a faulty way, which changed the meaning completely:

That God and his apostle dissolve obligations with the pagans (9:3)

That God dissolves obligations with the pagans and the apostle.

This mistake occurred through wrongly reading *rasulihi* in place of *rasuluhu*, which could not be distinguished from the written text, because there were no signs or accents indicating the correct pronunciation. Unless someone had memorised the correct version he could out of ignorance easily commit such a mistake. (Von Denffer, *Ulum Al-Qur'an - An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, p. 58)

Islamic scholars record at least 50 different readings/qira'at/vocalisations systems that had developed for Uthman's Qur'an.[2] These different qira'at show a range of opinions existed as to how the Uthman text could be read. In fact, since there were at least 50 different qira'at it shows that there was confusion as to how the Uthman text should be read.

6. Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Mujahid solved this problem by choosing seven of these qira'at/reading systems as canonical, and in time another three were accepted. Reciting any of the non-canonical qira'at was now forbidden and punishable.

Two Qur'an readers were famously tried for reciting unacceptable variants, Ibn Miqdam in 322/934 and Ibn Shannabudh in 323/935. Both were forced to recant. (Christopher Melchert, *Ibn Mujahid and the Establishment of the Seven Qur'anic Readings*, p. 5)

The result is there are now ten canonical qira'at/readings/vocalisations systems for Uthman's Qur'an. This is how the qira'at of the seven ahruf, and the variants that arose from the vagueness of the text, became the ten qira'at of Uthman's Qur'an. This is why there are different versions of the Qur'an today. For more detailed examination of this history read [The Preservation of the Qur'an](#)

APPENDIX 2 - HOW DO ISLAMIC SCHOLARS UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT QIRA'AT?

In this article we have considered the Ten Accepted Readers and looked at two of them in particular, however, there are many others. Islamic scholars record up to 50 different versions.[2] No one accepts all of these as authentic. They are judged in the same way a hadith is judged for authenticity. In this way the Qur'an is the same as the Hadith.

Most Islamic scholars believe that all of the authentic versions are from God.

This oral tradition (of the Qur'an) embraces ten distinct systems of recitation, or, as they are generally called among scholars, "Readings" (qiraa'at), each transmitted by a "school" of Koran-readers deriving its authority from a prominent reader of the second or early third century of the Islamic era. The slight variation among the Ten Readings is attributable to the dialectal variation in the original Revelation. ... It should be emphasized that all of the Readings were transmitted orally from the Prophet. (Labib as-Said, *The Recited Koran: A History of the First Recorded Version*, p. 53)

Every reading in accordance with Arabic (grammar) even if (only) in some way, and in accordance with one of the *masaa'hif* of Uthmaan, even if (only) probable, and with sound chain of transmission, is a correct (Sahiih) reading, which must not be rejected, and may not be denied, but it belongs to the seven modes (ahruf) according to which the Qur'aan was revealed, and the people are obliged to accept it, no matter whether it is from the seven *Imaans*, or the ten or from other accepted *Imaans* (Abu-l-Khair bin al-Jazari; cited from Ahmad von Denffer, *Ulum Al-Qur'an*, p. 119.)

Some Islamic scholars believe there is only one recitation of the Qur'an and that the different qira'at/versions come from the Readers and not God.

The Koran was originally recited in one language and one dialect, namely that of the Quraysh. However, as soon as readers from the different tribes began to recite it, a variety of readings emerged, reflecting dialectal differences among the readers. The diversity was so great that later generations of readers and scholars had to labor intensely over the recording and careful analysis of these readings. In so doing they give rise to a special science, or rather special sciences, devoted exclusively to this enterprise. ...

I should pause here to note that certain religious authorities have supposed that the Seven Readings were transmitted by a process of continuous transmission (*tawaatur*) on a wide scale from the Prophet himself, unto whom, so they allege, they were revealed by Gabriel. These authorities therefore consider that whoever rejects any of the established readings is an unbeliever. They have not, however, been able to produce any evidence for what they claim except that the tradition which reads, "The Koran was revealed in seven dialects (*ahruf*)".

The truth of the matter is that the seven Readings had nothing to do with the Revelation, nothing in the least; and whoever rejects any of them is not for having done so an unbeliever; nor has he sinned or gone astray in his religion. The origin of these Readings is to be found in the diversity of tribal dialects among the early Muslim Arabs, and everyone has the right to dispute them, and to accept and reject them, or parts of them, as seems proper.

In point of fact, people have disputed the Readings and argued over them, and have even accused each other of error with respect to them; yet we know of no Muslim who ever charged another with unbelief over this matter (Taahaa Husayn, *Fi'l-Adab al-jaahilii*, cited from Labib as-Said, *The Recited Koran: A History of the First Recorded Version*, pp. 97&99)

It is generally known that there are seven or ten different recitations of the Qur'an - By recitation is meant the different wordings which convey the same or allied meanings *Maalik* and *Malik* - Such as *Yatta'harna* and *Yat'harna*. It is generally believed the recitation of the seven or the ten reciters of the first, second and third century of Islam are valid and the Muslims are allowed to adopt either of these in their reciting Qur'an and it is generally held that the origin of these various recitations go back to the time of the Holy Prophet who approved these varieties but according to the Shia Ithna-Ashari School whose views are based on the teachings of the Holy Imams, the revealed recitation of the Qur'an cannot be but one and as the Imam puts it, "Qur'an is One, came down from the One, the variation in recitation comes from the reciters not from God." (S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, p. 58a)

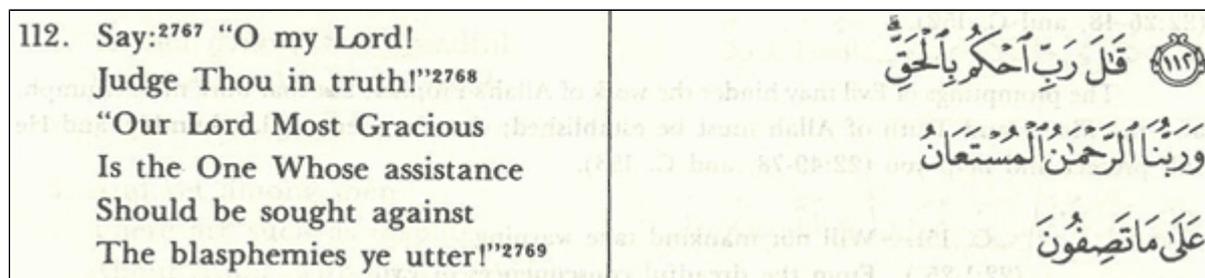
APPENDIX 3 - CHOOSING THE BEST READING - ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP IN PRACTICE

As we have seen in Appendix 2 that the orthodox Islamic understanding regarding the different qira'at/readings is that all of the authentic qira'at are from God. Thus all of the Hafs qira'ah is a true revelation just as all of the Warsh qira'ah is a true revelation. Now scholars can say these things but what they do reveals what they truly believe. This

is the case for Abdullah Yusuf Ali who made one of the most famous and widely used English translations of the Qur'an.

Yusuf Ali based his translation on the Hafs qira'ah, however, he consulted other qira'at, and sometimes used a different qira'ah at certain points in his translation. That is, he chose from among the qira'at the reading that made the best sense.

We see this with his translation and footnote for sura 21:112. Below are scans from *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, 4th ed., Brentwood, Md., U.S.A.: Amana Corp., 1989, by Abdullah Yusuf Ali:



2767. See above, n. 2666 to 21:4. The better reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood. Note that, on that construction, there are three distinct things which the Prophet is asked to say: viz.: (1) the statement in verses 109-11, addressed to those who turn away from the Message; (2) the prayer addressed to Allah in the first part of verse 112; and (3) the advice given indirectly to the Believers, in the second part of verse 112. I have marked these divisions by means of inverted commas.

What has Yusuf Ali done in translating sura 21:112? The Arabic text displayed in his translation is the Hafs version, and it reads *qaala* (He said), however, Yusuf Ali has followed the majority of the qira'at which read *qul* (Say). The reason he gives for using a different qira'ah is:

2767. ... The better (sic) reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood. ...

That is, he believes the Warsh, along with other versions, give a better reading and so translates according to them. He does this again for sura 21:4, and explains that his decision has the support of other Islamic scholars:

2666. ... But more than one Commentator understands the meaning in the imperative, and I agree with them.

Choosing the best reading occurs several times throughout his translation: It occurs for sura 23:112 with the choice explained in footnote 2948, and a highly significant choice occurs in sura 33:6 with the following explanation:

3674. In spiritual relationships the Prophet is entitled to more respect and consideration than blood-relations. The Believers should follow him rather than their fathers or mothers or brothers, where there is conflict of duties. He is even nearer—closer to our real interests—than our own selves. In some Qirā'ahs, like that of Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, occur also the words "and he is a father of them", which imply his spiritual relationship and connect on with the words "and his wives are their mothers". Thus his spiritual fatherhood would be contrasted pointedly with the repudiation of the vulgar superstition of calling any one like Zayd ibn Hārthah by the appellation Zayd ibn Muḥammad (33:40): such an application is really disrespectful of the Prophet.

Here we see that the reading/qira'ah of Ubayy ibn Ka'ab has these extra words: "and he is a father of them". This means Ubayy ibn Ka'ab recited sura 33:6 as follows:

The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves, and he is a father of them and his wives are their mothers. ... (Qur'an 33:6)

This difference has an enormous affect on the meaning: Should Muslims consider Muhammad their father or not? In this case Yusuf Ali seems to accept both readings as valid but chooses not to include Ubayy ibn Ka'ab's reading as part of his translation.

The Islamic scholar, Alan Jones, like Yusuf Ali, explains how he has selected the best reading for his translation of the Qur'an.

The basic text used for this translation is that of the Egyptian standard edition, first issued in 1342/1923 and revised in 1381/1960 and subsequently. This is the most widely used text. It had its origins in the Iraqi city of Kufa in the second century of the Islamic era, and is technically known as the Hafs recension of the `Asim reading. Very rarely I have preferred a somewhat more conservative reading that originated in Medina: Warsh's recension of Nafi's reading. There is a note when I have done so. The notes also refer from time to time to the readings of one of the Companions of the Prophet, `Abdallah Ibn Mas'ud. (Alan Jones, *The Qur'an - Translated into English*, p. 19)

What the above examples demonstrate is that Islamic scholars do not treat all of the qira'at/readings as equally valid but instead choose the best reading from among them. Christians do not have a problem with Islamic scholars doing this because this is something Christian scholars do with the Bible. But Christians do have a problem when Muslims claim that all the qira'at/readings are revelation when clearly Islamic scholars do not treat them this way.

It is ridiculous to believe that God gave the Qur'an with thousands of variants; and it is quite reasonable for Islamic scholars to choose the best reading from among them. The doctrines of the seven ahruf and the ten authentic qira'at are simply an attempt to harmonize and justify the many variants. There may be some limited historical basis for these doctrines but in practice they do not work and Islamic scholars choose the best reading. In practice, Islamic scholars treat the different qira'at/readings as the first stage of interpreting the basic arabic text of the Qur'an.

APPENDIX 4 - THE SEVEN AHRUF, TEN QIRA'AT, AND ISNADS OF THE QUR'AN

As we saw in appendix 2, the orthodox Muslim belief is that each of the ten accepted qira'at, as a whole, can be traced perfectly back to Muhammad. The *isnad* is the list of names of those who passed this qira'at on from Muhammad. Thus the claim is that the whole of the Hafs qira'ah, in this form, can be traced back to Muhammad. However the relationship between the seven ahruf and ten accepted qira'at of Uthman's Qur'an makes the authenticity of these isnads problematic.

If we assume that the hadith about the seven ahruf is authentic, then we can conclude that it would be possible for a qira'ah/reading of a ahruf to be passed on as a complete whole, and for this to be traced back via an isnad to Muhammad. However, the ten accepted qira'at of Uthman's Qur'an are not the same as the qira'ah of a individual ahruf. As we saw earlier, Uthman destroyed most of the differences between the ahruf, and only those readings/qira'at that were compatible with his basic text were able to remain, and be included, as a reading/qira'ah of his text. This means that the ten accepted readings/qira'at based on Uthman's Qur'an are a mixture of qira'at/readings from various ahruf and not a continuous whole reading/qira'ah going back to Muhammad. The only continuous whole readings that exist are going back to the establishment of the Uthmanic text. Therefore, the isnads for the Ten Accepted Readers which claim to go back to Muhammad as a whole are false.

APPENDIX 5 - THE MEMORISATION OF THE QUR'AN AND THE QIRA'AT

The Qur'an is famous for being memorised. Some Muslims have told me that it doesn't matter if there are differences between the *written* Qur'ans because the Qur'an is firstly *oral* and only secondarily written. However, this is a false distinction for two reasons: Firstly, the Qur'an says that it is written (Q. 80:11-15) just as it is memorized, therefore, what is written matters. Secondly, these written Qur'ans are meant to be an exact record of the oral recitation of the 10 famous Readers. That is, the written versions claim to be the memorised oral versions. Thus the differences between the written versions are the differences between the memorised oral versions.

APPENDIX 6 - WHERE TO VIEW OR BUY DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE QUR'AN

I have bought some of these Qur'ans from my local Islamic bookshop. Any Islamic bookshop should be able to order them for you. They are also available online and from the following suppliers.

- [Easy Quran Store - Individual Qur'an Versions](#)
- [Easy Quran Store - 10 Version Qur'an](#)

- [Neel Wa Furat - 10 Version Qur'an](#)
- Iqra Shop - [Imam Qunbol Version](#), [Imam Warsh Version](#)
- [14 Qira'at Online](#)
- [Qur'an Flash](#) - Several versions of the Qur'an available for download.

ENDNOTES

[1] Subhii al-Saalih, *Muhaahith fii `Ulum al-Qur'aan*, Beirut: Daar al-`Ilm li al-Malaayiin, 1967, pp. 109ff.

[2] Al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim - A Tenth Century survey of Muslim Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 63-71. Also, Ibn al-JazarT, *Nashr*, vol. 1, pp. 34—7, cited from, Intisar A. Rabb, "Non-Canonical Readings of the Qur'an: Recognition and Authenticity (the Himsi Reading)", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 2006, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 124 footnote 114.

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