

The Legal Status Of The Four Qira'at E Shazah In Islamic Jurisprudence

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Abstract

The science of Qira'at is considered one of the most superior sciences because it is directly related to the Qur'an itself. Consistency is necessary for the proof of recitations. Recitations that are not consistent are classified as Shaaz. There are several types of Shaaz recitations, one of which is the recitations of the Four Shadh. All the recitations in this category are proven authentic through continuous chains of transmission, although they did not attain the level of consistency. It is widely believed that these recitations were part of the Qur'an before the final compilation, after which their recitation was abrogated. Using consistent recitations as evidence for legal rulings is considered valid and commendable by all scholars. However, there is disagreement among scholars regarding using rare authentic recitations as evidence. This debate has explored various topics related to the recitations of the Four Shaaz, such as the application of the term "Qur'an," recitation in prayer, reading for teaching and learning purposes, and deriving legal rulings. Furthermore, the predominant position has been identified based on evidence.

Key Words: Recitation, Authenticity, Mutawatira, Shaaza, Legal rulings.

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Introduction

The science of Qur'anic readings is a fundamental discipline that serves as the source for all religious sciences. Qur'anic readings can be broadly categorized into two main types: Qiraat e Mutawatira and Qira'at e Shazah. Qiraat e Mutawatira are those that have been reliably transmitted through numerous chains of narration, while Qira'at e Shazah are those considered less common or rare. Just as legal rulings and Arabic grammar can be derived from Qira'at e Mutawatira, Qira'at e Shazah also hold significance in understanding religious injunctions, especially when supported by authentic sources.

The narrators of Qira'at e Shazah can be divided into two categories. The first category comprises those narrators who commonly transmit Qira'at e Shazah, and they are quite numerous. Some of the Ten Companions (Asharah Mubashsharah) even transmitted Qira'at e Shazah. For example, among the Companions, Ibn Mas'ud, Masruq bin al-Ajd'aa bin Malik, and Abdullah bin Zubair (may Allah be pleased with them), and among the Successors, Nasr bin Asim al-Laythi al-Basri, Mujahid bin Jabr, Aban bin Uthman bin Affan, Dhahak bin

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Mazahim, Muhammad bin Sirin, and Qatadah bin Di'amah Abu al-Khattab al-Sadusi, among others, fall into this category.

The second category includes those Qira'at e Shazah attributed to the four famous Imams of Qira'at (Ibn Muhaisin al-Makki, Yahya al-Yazidi, Hasan al-Basri, and Suleiman al-Amash), whose readings have been compiled in some scholarly works.

The chain of transmission of these Imams is continuous and authentic. Furthermore, there are fundamental and subsidiary differences among these Imams throughout the entire Quran. Like the Ten Imams, each Imam has two transmitters. According to scholars of Qira'at, the readings of these Imams are considered singular reports because their chains are authentic. In this discussion, an analysis will be made of the differences among scholars regarding the validity and invalidity of authentic readings, including the readings of the Four Imams and the Qira'at e Shazah.

Application of the Term "Quran" for Shaz Readings

The Class of Orientalists often objects to the Quranic text based on Shaaz readings. Therefore, it is appropriate to clarify the position of the scholars of the Muslim community on this matter. In this matter, the clarification provided by Imam Sarkhasi is of great significance. He writes: Know that the Noble Quran is the book revealed upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It was written down in manuscripts over the course of years. It has reached us through transmission chains of famous readings, known as "Mutawatira." Anything beyond what is "Mutawatira" does not reach the level of certainty, and Quranic evidence cannot be established without certainty. For this reason, the consensus of the Muslim community is that if someone recites the Shaaz reading attributed to Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) in prayer, their prayer would not be valid. This is because it lacks the transmission of Mutawatira, and that which is not Mutawatira cannot be considered Quran.¹

Imam Baji (may Allah have mercy on him) has also reported the consensus of the Muslim community regarding the prohibition of including any narration in the Quran without being Mutawatira.²

A significant reason why Shaaz readings cannot be considered part of the Quran is that they have not attained the level of general acceptance and transmission. If these readings were part of the Quran, they would certainly have been transmitted through continuous chains of narration, and the community would have accepted them as they have accepted the Qira'at e Mutawatira. The Quran, which challenged all mankind to produce a single chapter like it, cannot possibly have verses akin to it but beyond the comprehension of a few individuals. Such a great miracle, which remains a challenge for all humanity, and which has been transmitted continuously through various means in every era, cannot possibly exist without being known to all. Therefore, it is evident that due to the absence of the condition of transmission, the term "Quran" cannot be applied to Shaaz readings.

It is evident that the reason Shaaz readings are not considered part of the Quran is that they lack Mutawatira transmission. If these readings were part of the Quran, they would surely have been transmitted through continuous chains of narration .

However, since the Quran is an extraordinary miracle for the world, it requires multiple means of transmission to establish certainty. Therefore, when it is necessary to have Mutawatira evidence for the Quran, it becomes imperative to acknowledge that Shaaz readings are not part of it because they lack this widespread transmission. Furthermore, it has been unanimously agreed upon by the Muslim community during the era of Hazrat Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Quran consists only of the manuscripts compiled under his supervision. Anything beyond that is not considered Quran. Even after the passage of time, no objections have been raised by Muslims regarding these manuscripts. Conversely, despite numerous efforts by adversaries of Islam, they have failed to prove any alterations in the Quran. Additionally, scholars and jurists of all four schools of thought unanimously agree that reciting

Shaaz readings in prayer is not permissible because nothing besides the Quran can be recited as the Quran in prayer. Therefore, anyone who considers Shaaz readings as Quran, scholars have taken a strong stance against them, which will be elaborated in the following paragraphs. Here, the aim is to clarify that scholars' prohibition of reciting Shaaz readings in prayer and their firm stance against those who do so is also a clear indication that Shaaz readings are not part of the Quran.

From the mentioned evidence, it is clear that Shaaz readings have never been considered part of the Quran from ancient times to the present day. Therefore, it is extremely astonishing for objectors to claim differences in the Quran based on Shaaz readings. When we cannot label any Shaaz reading as Quran, the same ruling applies to the readings of the four Imams, and applying the term "Quran" to them is also not permissible.

The ruling on reciting Qira'at e Shazah in prayer and the disagreement among scholars

There is no disagreement among scholars regarding the permissibility of reciting Qira'at e Shazah for the purpose of learning, transmitting, and compiling. The evidence for this lies in the authentic transmission of these readings from the noble companions. Therefore, those companions from whom these readings are narrated cannot be criticized merely on this basis. However, the remaining issue is whether reciting Qira'at e Shazah is permissible in prayer. On this matter, the consensus of the ummah (Muslim community) is that reciting only Qira'at e Mutawatira is permissible in prayer.

From the preceding statements, it is clear that Qira'at e Shazah are not considered part of the Quran by the entire ummah, thus providing clear evidence that reciting them as Quran in prayer is prohibited.

However, some scholars are attributed with the opinion of allowing the recitation of Qira'at e Shazah in prayer. For example, it is narrated regarding Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad that they considered reciting Qira'at e Shazah in prayer permissible, as mentioned by Imam Ibn Taymiyyah in his fatwas and by Imam Ibn Jazari in his "Al-Nashr." Firstly, we need to acknowledge this fact.

The Reality of the Attribution of the Narration to Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) and the

Opinion of the Maliki School

Regarding the permission of reciting Qira'at e Shazah in prayer, a statement is attributed to Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on him), which is narrated by his student Imam Ibn Wahb. "Ibn Wahb narrates that Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) informed me that Abdullah bin Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) taught someone to recite (إِنَّ شَجَرَتَ طَعَامِ النَّبِيِّ) but he used to recite it as (طَعَامِ النَّبِيِّ). Upon this, Ibn Masood said: 'Recite it as (طَعَامِ الْفَاجِر)'. I asked Imam Malik if he considers this recitation permissible, to which he said: 'Yes, in my opinion, it is permissible.'"⁴

Analysis

This narration is unique in that it is attributed directly to Imam Malik through Ibn Wahb, without any other students of Imam Malik mentioning it. Therefore, this narration inherently holds the status of being rare. On the contrary, other students have reported the prohibition of reciting Qira'at e Shazah in prayer according to Imam Malik's stance.

The narration attributed to Imam Malik's student Ibn al-Qasim quotes Imam Malik as saying: "Whoever recites in his prayer the recitation of Ibn Masood or any other companion that contradicts the Mushaf (standard text of the Quran), then he should not be followed in prayer."⁵

This means that if anyone recites the Qira'at e Shazah of Ibn Masood or any other companion in prayer, then one should not pray behind him.

Regarding Ibn Wahb's narration attributed to Imam Malik, it is not accurate to attribute it to Imam Malik because Imam Malik did not accept single isolated reports as a valid basis for deriving legal rulings, especially in matters of jurisprudence. Therefore, it is not plausible that he would consider reciting Qira'at e Shazah permissible in prayer based on a solitary report.

Even if Ibn Wahb's narration is considered accurate, it does not establish the permissibility of reciting Qira'at e Shazah in prayer. However, it can be argued that Imam Malik considered Qira'at e Shazah as valid evidence for legal deductions.

Furthermore, after mentioning Ibn Wahb's narration, Imam Ibn Abdul Barr states:

"Imam Malik mentioned this narration only to clarify the meaning of the hadith of the Seven Ahruf, and the reality is that reciting Qira'at e Shazah in prayer is definitely not permissible. This is because anything other than the Uthmani Mushaf is certainly not متواتره (mass-transmitted), but rather its authenticity relies on individual narrations."⁶

Many scholars of the Maliki school have explicitly declared the recitation of Qira'at e Shazah as impermissible in prayer, and no fatwa (religious verdict) has proven otherwise. Therefore, Imam Abu al-Barakat al-Dardir, who adheres to the dominant view of Imam Malik in his book, states:

"Besides the Uthmani recitation, all other recitations are Shadh. If any Shadh recitation contradicts the Uthmani tradition, then reciting it in prayer would invalidate the prayer. However, if it is in accordance with the Uthmani tradition, the prayer would not be invalidated. Nevertheless, its recitation is definitely not permissible, and if the pronunciation is incorrect, the prayer would not be invalidated."⁷

From the above statements, it is evident that according to Imam Malik and the Maliki school, reciting Qira'at e Shazah in prayer is absolutely prohibited.

If, hypothetically, Ibn Wahb's narration were considered accurate, it could only serve as evidence for the permissibility of reciting Shadh readings in prayers for educational purposes. Therefore, according to this position, reciting Qira'at e Shazah, including those of the four canonical recitations, would not be permissible in prayers.

Hanbali's Opinion

The Hanbali position states that reciting Shadh readings in prayers is prohibited, and doing so renders the prayer invalid. As mentioned by Imam Ibn Najjar, a renowned scholar among the Hanbalis:

"The reason for the Qur'an not being continuous (متواتره) is that it is anomalous (shadh), so prayer behind it will not be valid."⁸

However, a statement attributed to Imam Ahmad suggests that prayer remains valid⁹ even if anomalous readings are recited during it. Even if Imam Ahmad's position were authentically confirmed, this stance is not acceptable. The Hanbali school, like others, has not adopted this position and considers continuous readings necessary for the validity of prayer, as clarified by Imam Ibn Najjar's aforementioned statement.

Hanafi Opinion

According to the Hanafi scholars, reciting anomalous readings during prayer is not permissible. Imam Sarakhsi writes that reciting such readings during prayer, when their Qur'anic status is not established, can corrupt the prayer similar to reciting mere news¹⁰

Shafi'i Opinion

The renowned jurist of the Shafi'i school, Imam Nawawi, writes regarding those who recite anomalous readings in prayer or outside of it:

"The recitation of anomalous readings in prayer or outside of it is prohibited because these are not part of the Quran, and the authenticity of the Quran can only be established through متواتره (mass-transmitted) readings. Deviation from this principle is not permissible. Therefore, anyone who adopts a stance contrary to this is either mistaken or ignorant."¹¹

Here, it should also be noted that according to the Shafi'i school of thought, reciting anomalous readings is only forbidden in prayer and outside of it as a substitute for Quranic recitation. However, for educational purposes, such recitation is permissible.

Ruling on Learning and Teaching of Qira'at e Shaaza

Reading, narrating, and compiling rare readings for the purpose of learning and teaching is permissible. According to the majority of scholars, rare readings hold the status of singular reports. Therefore, preserving them is a religious obligation incumbent upon the community, and the narration and compilation of such readings are essential for fulfilling this obligation.

The Legal Significance of Inferential Reasoning from Qira'at e Shaaza in Islamic Jurisprudence

The consensus among scholars is that rare readings do not constitute the Quran, as they are transmitted through isolated chains of narration, hence they do not qualify as one of the accepted recitations. This leads to differing opinions among scholars regarding the legal validity or invalidity of inferential reasoning from rare readings in Islamic jurisprudence.

First opinion: Advocates of the Invalidity of Qira'at e Shaaza

The proponents of this position do not consider rare readings as valid evidence in Islamic jurisprudence because such readings cannot be deemed as the Quran, nor are they transmitted as hadiths directly from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This stance is held by scholars within the Shafi'i school such as Imam Juwayni, Ghazali, Amedi, and Ibn al-Arabi. Similarly, scholars within the Maliki school such as Imam Zarkashi, Nawawi, and Qurtubi also support this view.

Imam Juwayni writes: "Rare readings were not transmitted with continuous repetition. Therefore, it is not correct to argue based on them, nor is their status equivalent to the transmission of solitary reports from trustworthy sources. For this reason, the continuous fasting as expiation was negated, which was based on the recitation (rare) of Abdullah bin Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him), in which he added the word 'continuous' after 'three days'."¹²

Imam Ibn al-Arabi states: "Rulings cannot be based on rare readings because they are not established in the first place."¹³

Imam Zarkashi has also mentioned a similar sentiment in "Al-Bahr al-Muhit fi Usul al-Fiqh". Whereas Imam Nawawi, may Allah have mercy on him, writes: "According to our school of thought, evidence cannot be derived from rare readings, nor does it have the authority of a narration from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This is because the one transmitting it is attributing it as part of the Quran, whereas consensus is a condition for the Quran. Therefore, when it is not established as Quran, it is also not established as a hadith."¹⁴

Second opinion: Advocates of the Validity of Qira'at e Shazah

The proponents of this position consider the derivation of Islamic legal rulings from Qira'at e Shazah permissible, provided that the shadh reading is proven with a sound chain of transmission. In this case, its validity is attributed to a hadith narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by a just Companion. This stance is held by jurists of the four Sunni schools of thought, including Imam Sirkhasi, Imam Ibn Qudamah, Abu Bakr al-Jassas, Abu al-Husayn al-Basri, and others.

Imam Sarkhasi, may Allah have mercy on him, writes: "We do not consider the addition to Ibn Mas'ud's recitation as Quran; rather, we regard it as a solitary hadith narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is because we are certain that the Companion recited it after hearing it from the Prophet (peace be upon him), and it is obligatory to act upon the Prophet's (peace be upon him) narration."¹⁵

Imam Abu Bakr al-Jassas, may Allah have mercy on him, has clarified in his book "Al-Fusul fi al-Usul" with multiple evidences that the practice and recitation of Qira'at e Shazah were abrogated during the time of prophethood, but their ruling remains. Therefore, it serves as evidence and proof in deriving legal rulings.¹⁶

Arguments of the Opponents of the Validity of Qira'at e Shazah

First Argument:

During the era of Caliph Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him), there was a consensus among all the companions, including the entire Muslim community, that whatever exists between those two covers (i.e., the two covers of the Quran) constitutes the Quran. Any addition not found in the Uthmanic codex cannot be considered part of the Quran.

Imam Sam'ani writes:

"It is not known why it is claimed that the recitation of the Shadhah holds the status of solitary narration, nor is the evidence for categorizing it as solitary narration known. We know that these recitations are not established through continuity or through the routes of individuals. The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, unanimously agreed upon the Mus'haf known as the Imam's Mus'haf during the era of Uthman ibn Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, which is still present before us today. Additionally, they abandoned the other Mus'hafs. According to some narrations, they burned them, while according to others, they buried them."¹⁷

It is established that since the Qira'at e Shazah were not included in the manuscripts compiled during the era of Caliph Uthman, considering them as authoritative contradicts the consensus of the Muslim community, and opposing consensus is not permissible.¹⁸

Second Argument:

Qira'at e Shazah cannot be considered as authoritative due to being transmitted as singular reports, as they were not transmitted as singular reports but as Quranic text. Since their status as Quranic text cannot be established, their status as reports cannot be established in the first place.

Third Argument

if the Qira'at e Shazah are transmitted as Quranic text, it constitutes a clear error on the part of the transmitter. This is because it is a mandated duty of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to convey the Quran to such a vast audience that certainty of knowledge is attained. Entrusting this duty to only one individual would not fulfill the prophetic mission. Additionally, the majesty and grandeur of the Quran demand that it be conveyed to a large audience. Therefore, it is certain that if any reading is transmitted as Quranic text and the transmitter presents it as such, it constitutes an error. Furthermore, it implies an accusation against the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) of failing to fulfill his prophetic duty. If he did not transmit the Qira'at e Shazah as Quranic text, then it is also possible that the transmitter has their own religious doctrine, and the doctrine of the transmitter does not serve as evidence. This creates confusion regarding the validity of the transmission, as one possibility asserts its validity while the other questions it.¹⁹

Evidence of the Validity of Qira'at e Shaaza

First Argument

Qira'at e Shazah with authentic chains traceable to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as narrated by the noble companions, could have two possibilities: either they were indeed recitations of the Quran, but abrogated later, yet their ruling remained intact, or they were not Quranic recitations at all but rather interpretations of the Quran Majid.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ expressed it, and the companion articulated it, understanding it as Quran.²⁰

From this, it is evident that there could be two possibilities regarding the status of Qira'at Shazah. Firstly, it was initially part of the Quran, and then its recitation was abrogated. Secondly, it could have been a bearer of revelation. Therefore, the debate is not about the validity or invalidity of Qira'at Shazah but rather whether it should be considered as Quranic authority or as a narration of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Second Argument

The second argument revolves around the possibility that a narrator may have introduced their personal opinion as a recitation attributed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ or a companion. However, this possibility is entirely invalid because attributing one's personal opinion to the Prophet is equivalent to falsehood, and it's inconceivable for any companion to attribute something to the Prophet that did not originate from his sacred words. Additionally, it's implausible for a companion to transmit a recitation without having heard it directly from the Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, if a recitation is deemed authentic through a companion but has not reached us through multiple chains of transmission, it implies that its recitation was abrogated at a later stage. Due to the companion's absence during the later period, they might not have been aware of its abrogation and mistakenly transmitted it as Quran. Alternatively, it could have been an interpretation of a Quranic verse, and the narrator mistakenly presented it as Quran. Had it been Quran, it would have reached us through multiple transmissions, as clarified earlier.

Third Argument

The third evidence cited by proponents is a narration from the Muwatta of Imam Malik, which states:

Ibn Shihab said, "Umar ibn al-Khattab used to recite: 'When the call to prayer is proclaimed on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah.'"²¹

Meaning, Hazrat Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to recite the verse *وَإِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ* (وَأِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ) from Surah Al-Jumu'ah during the Friday prayer.

This narration serves as clear evidence for the validity of the Shaaz recitations. Hafiz Ibn Abdul Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) writes in this regard:

The scholars have cited other Qira'at e Shazah as valid interpretations besides the Mushaf of Uthman, and this Hadith serves as clear evidence for it. Hence, all scholars have considered Qira'at e Shazah as valid interpretations, alongside providing detailed explanations and interpretations of the overall and challenging passages of the Uthmanic Mushaf. Similarly, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) used to recite the verse *فَأَمْسُوا إِلَى ذِكْرِ* "فَأَمْسُوا إِلَى ذِكْرِ" like Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did, and he would say that if there were no other readings besides "فَأَمْسُوا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ", he would run so fast for the Friday prayer that his cloak would fall off.²²

In this narration, deriving legal rulings from the Shaaz reading of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) serves as clear evidence of the validity of Qira'at e Shazah.

The prevailing stance

In the light of evidence, it becomes evident that the position of those who deem Qira'at e Shazah as authoritative and obligatory for practice is more accurate and robust. As for the arguments of the opponents, they indeed reflect a belief in the sanctity of the Quran, yet these arguments do not conclusively prove the invalidity of Qira'at e Shazah

Therefore, we do not consider Qira'at e Shazah as authoritative in the sense of being the Quran, but rather we regard them as authoritative because initially these readings were part of the Quran, later their recitation was abrogated, yet the ruling remained. Furthermore, since this ruling has reached us through multiple sources, it should be accepted as having the status of a singular report. Alternatively, it is possible that these readings were actually interpretations of the general and intricate meanings of the Quran, which were elucidated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and transmitted by his noble companions. There is no disagreement regarding the validity of both scenarios, and Qira'at e Shazah represent one of these scenarios. Therefore, there should be no disagreement about their validity.

Imam Abu Bakr Jassas clarifies this point as follows:

"The recitation of Abdullah ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) was initially part of the Quran. Then during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), its recitation was abrogated. Furthermore, the companions were instructed not to recite it as part of the Quran nor write it in the mushaf (written copies of the Quran), but its ruling remained intact. This is the reason why this recitation did not reach us through continuous transmission like the rest of the Quran. If it were part of the Quran, it would have certainly reached us through continuous transmission, just like the rest of the Quran has reached us. The fact that it did not reach us through continuous transmission and its general acceptance was not obtained provides clear evidence that its recitation was abrogated during the time of prophethood."²³

Summary of Discussion

1. Acceptance of Qira'at e Shazah of the Quran is subject to various conditions, including the criterion of continuity. However, Qira'at e Shazah do not necessarily fulfill this criterion.
2. Criticizing the Quran based on Qira'at e Shazah is unfounded because there is a consensus among the Muslim scholars that readings other than those compiled by Caliph Uthman cannot be considered part of the Quran.
3. A significant reason why Qira'at e Shazah are not considered part of the Quran is that they did not gain universal acceptance.
4. According to the majority of scholars, including Hanbalis, reciting Qira'at e Shazah during prayers invalidates the prayer.
5. While Qira'at e Shazah are not considered part of the Quran, they are permissible to study, teach, and narrate for educational purposes.
6. There is disagreement among scholars regarding the validity of Qira'at e Shazah in Shariah rulings.
7. Some prominent scholars, such as Imam Ghazali and Imam Zarkashi, reject the validity of Qira'at e Shazah in Shariah rulings, while others, including Imam Sarakhsi and Imam Ibn Qudamah, accept it.
8. Based on the evidence, the position of those who consider Qira'at e Shazah as evidence and obligatory to act upon is stronger and more reliable.
9. Qira'at e Shazah are not considered as evidence like the Quran. Rather, they are considered evidence because they were initially part of the Quran, later abrogated in recitation, but their legal rulings remained.
10. The acceptance of these readings is based on solitary reports, or they may represent interpretations of general and difficult passages of the Quran conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions.

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