A circumspect review of the history of the formative years of the Arabic linguistic tradition brings to light many impressive features regarding the form, function and design of the linguistic sciences, including the rapid and yet refined nature of their development. However, one fascinating aspect of these features is the fact that pioneering generations of grammarians were in essence individuals famed not only for their role as distinguished luminaries of linguistic abstraction, but also as Qur'anic readers primarily engaged in developing sophisticated models for the physical preservation of Islam's sacred corpus of scripture, the Qur'an.\(^1\) Given the importance of the liturgical value of scripture, which enshrined theological, legal and paraenetic motifs, this was a task which demanded immense linguistic scrutiny and precision.\(^2\) Indeed, the critical attention to detail applied to the verification of the textual integrity of scripture as enshrined in Qur'anic readings dynamically served as a catalyst for Arabic linguistic thought, engendering the expansion of this discipline as readers sought to relate the linguistic phenomena inherent in the corpus of *variae lectiones* to a robust and coherent theory of language. Individuals among these readers who were responsible for promulgating and advancing the earliest abstract models of language analysis together with their pupils emerged as a distinct class of linguistic specialists, and their introspective efforts therein gradually paved the way for the materialisation of two conventional schools of language: the Başran and Küfan traditions. However, both these developed traditions were now advocates of a seemingly insular approach to the study of the phenomenon of language; and the technical development of the form and content of their discipline reflected this shift in focus and application. Grammarians and readers had been effectively separated as two classes of scholars, and the conceptual compass of their respective interests and pursuits reflected this separation.

While the language of the Qur'ān was of primary significance as a sacrosanct and inviolable source to both grammarians and readers, the issue of approaching the authentication of linguistic configurations of readings of the text, despite the infini-
tesimal countenance of their variance, was to prove far more controversial. The reader tradition adhered to a precept that Qur'anic readings together with their linguistic configurations must be based upon transmitted precedents; grammarians, while accepting the broad thrust of this principle, were keen to integrate theoretical and traditional considerations in the approach to the authentication of readings, refining grammatical models to collate, evaluate and justify linguistic configurations inherent in the corpus of Qur'anic readings, as well as elucidating the linguistic inimitability of the Qur'anic diction. One of the unavoidable consequences of this theoretical approach is that confined aspects of the hypothetical and speculative projection of readings were ventured. Despite being carried out in the spirit of linguistic justification, this was to leave an indelible print on the efforts to collect and appraise Qur'anic readings over ensuing centuries.

A number of these early grammarians were to disassociate themselves from their former cohorts, diminishing not only the role of early readers in the inception of Arabic linguistic thought, but also their continued contribution to linguistic thought. The rationale behind this conspicuous dissociation from readers was profound: one way in which grammarians could sanction their audacious activities was to call into question the ability and linguistic aptitude of readers, disputing their prestige as authorities of the readings of scripture. It also provided them with scope to pursue their own Procrustean arguments: linguistic idiosyncrasies of readings which infringed upon their theories of language and grammar could thereby be criticised and dismissed. Grammarians were eagerly seeking to extend their influence from the sphere of the linguistic sciences to the reading tradition, but such manoeuvres were passionately resisted. This resulted in a prolonged struggle. It was this state of affairs that served as the prelude to Ibn Mujāhid’s (245–324/859–936) authorship of a work defining seven acknowledged Qur’anic readings associated with seven readers. It is reasonable to argue that any attempt to gauge accurately the broad significance of his work, the Kitāb al-Sab’a, together with its design and content, has to be anchored to the factors which spontaneously brought about the genesis of the Arabic linguistic tradition and the emergence of the separate classes of grammarians and readers. It symbolised the extension of an encounter which has its roots in the formative years of the Arabic linguistic tradition and continued into the classical Islamic period.

The Ninth/Tenth Centuries of the Islamic Tradition: A Milieu of Polarisation and Consolidation

Contemporary writers exploring the history of the intellectual maturity of the classical Islamic tradition have conventionally identified the ninth and tenth centuries of this tradition as a period in which an inclination towards consolidation and homogeneity distinguished classical scholarship's approach to the Islamic sciences. It is during this
phase in its history that Sunnism imperiously assumed greater definitive form and function. This impression is seemingly created by perceptions of the general tenor of literature and thought of this period with the basic assumption that, across areas of learning such as Qur'anic readings, hadith literature, jurisprudence, theology, exegesis and grammar a shift towards the standardisation of concepts and doctrines was manifest. Montgomery Watt's survey of this seminal period of Islamic thought refers to the salient features of consolidation and canonisation to illustrate the maturing of Sunni orthodoxy as expressed through a blend of rational and traditional methods. Watt refers specifically to the fact that a general consensus was attained regarding the corpus of traditions enshrining the model of the Prophetic Sunna; he argues that the expansion and resolution of legal doctrines were broached through this corpus of traditions, adding that the establishment of legal rites and schools was equally prominent during this period. Indeed, Watt estimated that the formulation of the science of the principles of law (usul al-fiqh) was to increase 'mutual recognition' among disciplines. It is while discussing the Qur'anic sciences, which he admits enjoyed a measure of historical stability, that Watt offers a preview of the discipline of Qur'anic readings, qirā'a, explaining the chronological background to the lectiones of scripture and approaches to the sacred text. It is this aspect of Watt's survey that is relevant to our study as it concerns the enterprise of the eminent reader Ibn Mujahid. Building on the theme of consolidation, Watt propounded the view that during the tenth century the 'desire to secure uniformity in the readings of the Qur'an' was given realistic expression through the efforts of Ibn Mujahid, who set out to circumscribe the Qur'anic readings sanctioned by orthodoxy. The efforts to promote 'seven sets of standard readings' coupled with the fact that Ibn Mujahid was instrumental in opposing two individuals, Ibn Miqsam (265–354/878–965) and Ibn Shannabudh (d. 328/939), who both insisted on adhering to an idiosyncratic formulation of readings which contravened traditional conventions, seemingly sustained the impression that the periods in question were redolent of the general shift to standardisation and homogeneity. However, this view misconstrues the nature of the activity of these two readers; it also takes for granted that their endeavours were somehow sanctioned within the confines of the reading tradition prior to these periods. In fact, Ibn Mujahid was merely reiterating the axioms of the reading tradition which were based on the conviction that the linguistic phenomena inherent in Qur'anic readings were the manifestation of defined precedents. The issue here was not one of restriction. Moreover, as we shall attempt to establish, the apposite context and background to Ibn Mujahid's endeavour are resolved by an entirely different set of circumstances and developments: namely, the inner dynamics of the Arabic linguistic tradition and its relationship with the discipline of readings.

The implications of certain events in the life of Ibn Mujahid also featured indirectly in George Makdisi's review of the origins of usul al-fiqh. Makdisi was primarily
concerned with designating the treatise of Shāfiʿi on the sources of law, al-Risāla, as an ‘antidote’ to the philosophical theology of the rationalist Muʿtazilites, highlighting the transition inherent in successive attempts to synthesise the sources of Islamic law. Makdisi sought to explain why later Sunnī expressions of usūl al-fiqh combined a conspicuous mix of theological epistemologies and legal precepts. He identified three landmark events which symbolised the triumph of traditionalism over rationalism: a) the inquisition (mihna) in which Ahmad ibn Hanbal (164–241/780–855) took a stand against the Muʿtazili doctrine of the temporal status of the Qurʾan; b) the defection of Abūʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (260–324/873–935) to the camp of the traditionalists from the Muʿtazilites; and finally, c) the promulgation of a traditionalist creed by the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Qādir (r. 381–422/991–1031), which was pronounced in 409/1018 and was seen as an attempt to stem the rise of a resurgent and transformed Ashʿarism. It is during his discussion of Ashʿarī’s defection from the Muʿtazilites that Makdisi refers to the trial of the aforementioned reader Ibn Shannabūdhi, whose idiosyncratic system of selecting Qurʾanic readings was vigorously opposed by Ibn Mujāhid. He states that Ibn Shannabūdhi would not have been compelled to retract his readings had the Muʿtazilites been successful in securing the doctrine of a created Qurʾan a century earlier, and posits this as a reflection of the failure of the mihna. However, although the incident in question does reflect an irrefutable confrontation between traditionalism and rationalism, Ibn Shannabūdhi’s endeavours have their origin in an entirely different set of circumstances: they were shaped by developments in the Arabic linguistic tradition, and a theological nexus of the type implied by Makdisi had no real bearing on this whole episode.

The events which surround the enterprise of Ibn Mujāhid continue to serve, perhaps misleadingly, as an indicator of trends of presumed consolidation and harmonisation in theology, grammar and, indeed, jurisprudence. Intriguingly, Jonathan Owens’ study of classical Arabic grammatical theory proposed that the crystallisation of formal schools of grammar had occurred only during the late ninth century and alludes to the ‘coincidence’ of Ibn Mujāhid’s providing ‘the first explicit catalogue of seven variant reading traditions’ during this period when ‘grammatical descriptions were consolidated’. According to this viewpoint, the perceived moves towards formalisation in grammar felicitously coincided with trends towards standardisation in terms of Qurʾanic readings. However, the paradigmatic parallels suggested of Ibn Mujāhid’s endeavours in all of the aforementioned examples appear to be far too expedient; presupposition à propos the significance of this scholar’s efforts, together with reference to him as an analogue for the intricate processes of consolidation and homogeneity, is not positively demonstrated by the historical facts.

The reassessment of the political and religious role of the Muʿtazilites during the episode of inquisition and the controversy regarding the temporal status of the Qurʾan
by scholars such as Wilferd Madelung and Joseph van Ess has meant that the theological antithesis between Sunnī orthodoxy and Muʿtazilism has become an undeniably complex and convoluted phenomenon.\textsuperscript{13} The prominence of leading Ḥanafī jurists during this entire affair, together with the question of their theological inclinations, has fuelled much speculation as to the very nature of the intellectual forces which inexorably shaped Sunnī orthodoxy. This in turn has led to debate concerning the nature of political and religious authority within the matrix of the early ʿAbbāsīd caliphate.\textsuperscript{14} Formulating his views on this re-evaluation of the relative inclinations and characteristics of the schools of theology of the ninth century, Christopher Melchert has methodically argued for a ‘new identification of all the main opposing theological parties’.\textsuperscript{15} His argument is acutely structured around the relationship between Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and his presumed adversaries. Melchert concludes that there were three main parties during this ninth century period: traditionalists (this included figures such as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal), rationalists (this includes the Muʿtazilites and many Ḥanafī jurists), and semi-rationalists (self-proclaimed traditionalists of chiefly Shafiʿī and Mālikī persuasion who indulged in apologetic theology). Ex hypothesi, the traditionalists are viewed as abhorring any form of dialectics, accepting only the Qurʾan and hadith as the sole basis for interpreting and defending all aspects of religious orthodoxy; in contrast, the semi-rationalists indulged in kalām and their application of jurisprudence was based on a rational synthesis of traditional sources. In this hypothesis the semi-rationalists included prominent individuals such as Ĥusayn al-Karābīsī (d. 248/862), Aḥū Thawr (d. 240/854), Ḥārith al-Muḥāṣibī (d. 243/857), Dāwūd ibn Khalaf al-Zāhir (d. 270/884), Muzānī (d. 264/878), Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), even Shafiʿī (d. 204/820) is placed in this category. Critical for our study is the fact that Ibn Mujāhid serves as a prospective juncture for Melchert’s proposition regarding the semi-rationalists’ ‘classical organization of Qurʾanic recitation’.\textsuperscript{16}

However, the developments which brought about the organisation of readers and readings are not fully explained by Melchert’s interpretation of the events of the ninth and tenth centuries; nor is it apparent that friction between so-called rationalists and semi-rationalists is a decisive factor in their elaboration. Moreover, much of Melchert’s classification is based on confined reports from later biographical compilations, texts whose canonising function is manifest. Indeed, Melchert accepts that there is nothing in the primary source material to suggest that these so-called semi-rationalists conceived of themselves as a distinct group. Furthermore, he compartmentalises scholars and their scholarly interests in the order of mutually exclusive categories in a way which certainly serves his own classification of this scholarship, but cannot be definitively substantiated on the basis of primary source material from the periods in question.

Melchert extends the broad thrust of his traditionalist contra semi-rationalist classification of attitudes in scholarship in a separate but connected study which expressly
attempts to gauge the significance of Ibn Mujähid’s efforts to ‘standardise’ seven Qur’anic readings. Steered by this hypothesis of identification, Melchert broaches the classical approach to the tradition of Qur’anic readings and their promulgation, using the transmission of hadith and the literature of traditions as his analogue. He compares and contrasts approaches to the scrutiny of relevant texts with reference to the written and oral means of preserving and transmitting such material. However, while the distinctions in the modes of transmission between both disciplines during this period appear fascinating, it is difficult to countenance their conclusive relevance given that the contextual and conceptual significance of the history of the reading tradition is not fully discussed in his study; the enterprise of Ibn Mujähid is given context by Melchert within the matrices of the modes of hadith transmission. For example, Melchert cites Ibn Mujähid’s statement that ‘it was a blameworthy innovation to read any variant that agrees with the unpointed text, regardless of whether a previous authority has so read’; however, in this instance the issue for Melchert is whether some variant readings were the result of their being passed on via written transmission. Melchert suggests that, if transmission had been oral in nature, ‘there never would have arisen the vexed question of whether any reading consistent with the unpointed text was permissible’. He reasonably concludes that this is proof that some readers clearly relied upon written texts. However, the whole purpose of Ibn Mujähid’s statement was to arrest the speculative activities of the grammarians; it was articulated with this pressing consideration in mind. Thus, to an extent Melchert’s forthright classification of attitudes to scholarship predicates both his conclusions and his approach to interpreting the endeavours of Ibn Mujähid.

Interestingly, early scholars preoccupied with the text of the Qur’an and its readings are not clearly identified by Melchert as constituting a separate grouping of scholarship, namely readers (qurrā’); nor is the possibility that they represented so-called traditionalists considered. For Melchert ‘the study and transmission of the Qur’anic readings before Ibn Mujähid had been carried out mainly by grammarians and litterateurs, not traditionists (muhaddithīn), and he contends that the study of variant Qur’anic readings was developed ‘above all in Baghadi belletrist circles’; according to Melchert, Ibn Mujähid is closer to the semi-rationalist perspective; meanwhile, the attempt to promote seven readings is seen by Melchert as a means to put a stop to ‘the multiplication of readings, hence limiting the burden of Qur’anic scholarship’. Melchert makes the point that the establishment of seven readings did ‘restrain growing complexity’ in the area of readings and ‘their recognition, however halting and incomplete, did mark a widely observable turn in the tenth century towards limited agreement and manageability’. Melchert also sees the trials of Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shannabūdh as being neither triumphs of the traditionalist party nor endorsements of Ibn Mujähid’s choice of seven readings. This notwithstanding, it should be stressed
that it was never Ibn Mujāḥid’s intention that a reader could not go beyond his selection of seven readings; the axioms of the reading tradition were the ultimate determinants in this respect. Ibn Mujāḥid had effectively selected seven sets of readings associated with seven renowned readers which were acquired by him from their distinguished narrators. There did exist authoritative ikhtiyārāt (syntheses of Qur’anic readings) outside of Ibn Mujāḥid’s selection of seven. Ibn Mujāḥid was seeking to invigorate a simple precept, namely, that qirā’a was a sunna; he was thereby reproaching the conduct of certain grammarians who had encouraged a pretentious culture of presupposition in their approaches to the authentication and analysis of the corpus of Qur’anic readings. Moreover, he was continuing a mode of authorship developed and refined by his many reader predecessors.

The Historical Encounter: Background and Context

The activities of Ibn Mujāḥid are typically contextualised within the historical framework of the two separate trials of the readers Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shannabūd. Classical Arabic biographical sources have preserved absorbing accounts of these events. The affairs of these two figures seem to lend themselves to the view that they were victims of tangible shifts towards consolidation and standardisation in the ninth and tenth centuries of the Islamic tradition. Yet, in order to gauge the significance of the events leading up to the trials of these two readers it is worth taking into account the crux of what was at stake. These two readers had independently devised an approach to the synthesis and selection of Qur’anic readings which clearly contravened the conventions predominant within this tradition. Their readings comprised specific variations on the given vocalic and consonantal values of specific lexemes in selected verses of the Qur’an together with instances of the transposition, interpolation, and substitution of lexical items. However, given the incontrovertible importance of the Qur’an as a liturgical text, these variations could not be considered Qur’anic in the strict sense of the word: there were weighty implications regarding the validity of such readings in acts of devotional worship such as congregational or individual prayers. It is this simple reality that governed orthodoxy’s assertive opposition to these individuals’ antics. Historical precedents indicate that grammarians had always pursued an abstract approach to probing the manifestation of linguistic phenomena in readings. The affair of Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shannabūd betrayed a distinctly linguistic nexus: they had adopted an approach obliquely inspired by the intuitive attitudes of the grammarians. The so-called periods of standardisation and consolidation therefore play only a peripheral role in influencing the course of events, coincidentally providing a backdrop for the activities of these two readers. Unusually, the paradoxes presented by the intricacies of this affair rest solely with the fact that readers as opposed to grammarians were caught up in this controversy, although, significantly, Ibn Miqsam also enjoyed a sound reputation as a grammarian. However, these two
individuals had irredeemably rekindled the contentious issue of approaches to the methods of authenticating the *variae lectiones* of scripture. The accentuation of such radical perspectives towards the authentication of readings would have been resisted throughout the history of the reading tradition irrespective of the relative setting: the earliest extant literature of the grammarians provides testimony to this very fact.

Ibn Miqsam Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Yaʿqūb Abū Bakr al-ʾAtṭār is described as an authority on Kūfīan grammar by his contemporary Ibn al-Anbārī (260–328/874–939). Indeed, he was also known by the sobriquet *ghulām Thaʿlab* due to his close association with this leading Kūfīan linguist. Notwithstanding his idiosyncratic approach to readings, the treatises ascribed to Ibn Miqsam disclose an exceptionally orthodox demeanour. He was the author of the following writings: *Kitāb al-Anwar fi tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, *Kitāb al-Madkhal ilā ʿilm al-shīr*, *Kitāb al-Ḥiḥāj fiʾl-qiṣāʿa*, *Kitāb al-Maqṣūr waʾl-mamdūd*, *Kitāb al-Mudhakkar waʾl-muʾannath*, *Kitāb al-Waqf waʾl-ibtīdāʾ*, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥīḥ, Kitāb ʿAdad al-tamām*, *Kitāb Muṣālāsāt Thaʿlab*, *Kitāb al-Intīṣār li-qurʾān al-amsār*, *Kitāb al-Latāʾif jamʿ hijāʾ al-maṣāḥīḥ*, and, most interestingly, *al-Radd ʿalā al-Muʿtazila*. These forms of authorship are typically synonymous with the functional works of early readers. He is linked to an impressive array of readers, most significantly Idrīs ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm (199–292/814–905), who was also a mentor of both Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Shannabūdā. In promulgating a synthesis of Qur’ānic readings, Ibn Miqsam accepted that a reading had to be in concordance with the consonantal outline of at least one of the ʿUthmānic codices; he also accepted that a reading should be harmonious with an aspect of ʿarabiyya; however, he rejected the importance of a reading being supported by a precedent or *isnād*. He deemed that his readings were Qur’ānic and valid in acts of devotional worship, namely congregational and other ritual prayers. A selection of his readings indicates that they involved, in a number of instances, the transposition of individual lexical items, and the exchange of consonants within a given verse which innovatively circumvented the strictures of homographs.

The account of Ibn Miqsam’s trial is preserved in a text entitled *al-Bayān waʾl-faṣl* composed by a companion of Ibn Mujāhid, Abū Tāhir ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn ʿUmar (d. 349/960); quotations from this text are found in the *Taʾrīkh Baghḍād* of Khaṭīb al- Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) and in the *Muʿjam al-udābāʾ* of Yāqūt (d. 629/1229). Abū Tāhir is quoted as saying, ‘During our own lifetime a character has stood out claiming that if a feature of ʿarabiyya correlating with the ḥurūf al-Qurʾān were to be appropriately reconciled with the consonantal outline of the mushaf, then in his estimation its recitation was valid in terms of prayers or for other related purposes.’

One of the many infamous examples of Ibn Miqsam’s readings employs a mechanism of substitution applied to Q. 12:80. The conventional reading is *lammaʾstayʾasū minhu khalāṣū nafṣyyan* (referring to the brothers of Joseph who, having despairsd of
persuading the king to release their brother, withdraw to consult murmuring with one another). Ibn Miqsam replaced the yāʾ in the term najiyyan with a bāʾ and radically altered the vocalic values, furnishing the reading nujabāʾ. This gave the verse a rather different semantic gloss which Arthur Jeffery translated as ‘So when they despaired of him, they withdrew as noble men’.31 Yāqūt mentions that, given the contextual constraints, such a gloss seems to be implausible.32 Ibn Mujāhid was one of a number of distinguished individuals who were called upon to question Ibn Miqsam regarding his approach to readings.

One must bear in mind that the earliest ṣUthmānic codices were reported to have been deliberately denuded of diacritics and vowel markings, allowing the various authenticated indigenous readings to be superimposed onto the text of the official codices.33 There were slight orthographical differences among these codices; indeed, the genre of ikhtilāf al-masāḥif was developed to scrutinise the orthographical distinctions of these early codices. Early readers also pursued the enumeration of verses in codices with such considerations in mind.34 Yet, the essentially oral nature of the reading tradition profoundly governed all these physical processes. The author of the Bayān, Abū Ṭāhir, expresses the view that Ibn Miqsam’s conduct constituted a grave innovation, for he was ‘selecting readings on the basis of speculative thought and presumption without adhering tenaciously to prescribed precedents’.35

The historical reports relate that eminent jurists and readers brought the matter to the attention of the sultan. A tribunal was set up in 322/934 to deal with this matter. Ibn Mujāhid was instrumental in cross-examining Ibn Miqsam, requesting that he provide religious sanction for his arguments.36 Unable to do so, he was compelled to sign a retraction. He promised to refrain from his erroneous ways; however, it is reported that he continued to recite in his own idiosyncratic manner until his very death. Indeed, he is cited as referring to the fact that luminaries of the reading tradition were all noted for having their own ikhtiyār; he was, therefore, merely emulating them. He defiantly asserted that ‘Khalaf ibn Hishām, Abū Ṣubayd and Ibn Saʿdān were all able to select; it was permitted for them and not censured, it is likewise permissible for me’.37 The author of the Bayān waʾl-faṣl, Abū Ṭāhir, countered this defence by distinguishing between the selection procedure of the aforementioned figures and the tangential method contrived by Ibn Miqsam. The eleventh century biographical dictionary compiled by the Başran grammarian Ibn al-Anbārī (513–77/1118–81), Nuzhat al-alibbāʾ fi ṭabaqāt al-udabāʾ, perceptively qualified this fact by adding that the Kūfan reader Khalaf ibn Hishām (150–229/767–844) had relinquished some of the ḥurāf of Ḥamza ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt (80–156/700–72), choosing in their place the reading (ḥurāf) of Nāfī (d. 169/785).38 He also recalls that Abū Ṣubayd and Ibn Saʿdān did not proceed beyond the readings of the qurrāʾ of the amṣār (garrison towns): they searched for precedents.39
Although Ibn Miqsam was adamant in asserting that he had merely emulated the endeavours of his predecessors, he had ventured beyond the scope allowed in the approaches to the selection, authentication and justification of Qur'anic readings. One approach emphasised the importance of isnad; the second resorted to an admixture of isnad and speculative analysis. However, in the case of the latter approach, the processes of ikhtiyār had assiduously reconciled isnad with 'arabiyya. The grammarians selected from a host of precedented readings, using parity with the model of 'arabiyya as the principal criterion when expressing a preference for a reading. Technically, the criteria of narration were infrequently transgressed within the sphere of such collections. The hypothetical configuration of linguistic features of the sacred text does feature in the ma'dnī genre of works (grammatical commentaries on the Qur‘an); yet it was carried out in the spirit of linguistic justification and always tempered with the admission that readings were based on defined and authenticated precedents. Conversely, in Ibn Miqsam’s stance, 'arabiyya had superseded isnad. Even Jeffery, who compiled a detailed inventory of Ibn Miqsam’s many readings, inferred that the trials of these two readers were, ‘in a sense test cases as to the continued legitimacy of ikhtiyār’, which he suggests had previously developed in a rather arbitrary manner. Thus, in Jeffery’s view, this affair was essentially about the limitation of ikhtiyār, signifying the ‘development of the process of canonisation of the text of the Qur‘ān’.  

However, a close reading of the earliest sources of the reader tradition shows this is plainly not the case. Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shannabūdh had infringed upon conventions consistently considered sacrosanct by their fellow readers. Given his credentials as a trained Kūfīan grammarian, the dynamics of Ibn Miqsam’s approach to readings can clearly be placed within the vector of a linguistically inspired philosophy. He adopted an intensely radical approach to variae lectiones which had no accepted antecedents as far as the reading and grammarian traditions were concerned. Ironically, contemporary grammarians of both Başrīan and Kūfīan persuasions composed spirited refutations of Ibn Miqsam’s synthesis of readings: Ibn al-Anbārī was the author of Kitāb al-Radd ‘alā man khālafa mushaf ‘Uthmān, while Ibn Darastawayhi (258–346/871–958) composed Kitāb al-Radd ‘alā Ibn Miqsam fi ikhtiyārihi. Ibn Miqsam was the putative author of a text entitled Kitāb al-Iḥtijāj li’l-Qur‘ān in which he presented and defended his peculiar readings. Ibn Miqsam’s antics were imposingly furnished with symbolic import. Yāqūt relates a report in which Ibn Miqsam is seen in a dream, praying in a congregational prayer with his back turned towards the qibla; scholars of oneiromancy observed that this was an unequivocal condemnation of his contravention of the orthodox consensus among readers.

Ibn Mujāḥid was also involved in a second trial. This took place in 323/935, and implicated a second reader, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Shannabūdh, a respected individual
who had travelled extensively in his quest for knowledge of readings, visiting prominent centres of learning in the classical Islamic world. He is associated with the famous traditionist and linguist Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī (198–285/813–99), a scholar renowned for his stern religiosity. Furthermore, his mentor in the reading tradition was Ishaq ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 286/899), who was eminent as ‘the scribe of Khalaf ibn Hishām al-Bazzār’. Ishaq ibn Ibrāhīm’s brother was meanwhile responsible for transmitting Khalaf’s ikhtiyār. It is significant to note that Ibn Shannabūd was the author of five works: Kitāb mā khālafa fīhi Ibn Kathir Abā ‘Amr, Kitāb Qirāʾāt ‘Ali, Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-qurrā’, Kitāb Shawādhdh al-qirāʾāt, and a monograph of his own readings. Once again, these were functional works typically associated with the early reader tradition.

While Ibn Miqsam spoke of readings being permissible if an aspect of their ‘arabiyya was in concordance with the consonantal sketch of the official mushāf, Ibn Shannabūd took the view that concordance with the ‘Uthmānic codices was not a prerequisite to the acceptance of a reading. He is known to have recited readings belonging to a class of qirā’āt classified as anomalous, shawādhdh. Technically speaking, the term shādhādh was employed to designate a variegated stock of readings which were irregular for one or more reasons: they lacked the high levels of transmission required to validate their liturgical status; they contravened the ‘Uthmānic codices; or they could not be reconciled with an aspect of the conventions of an accepted ‘arabiyya. It is the second category of shawādhdh readings for which Ibn Shannabūd was notably indicted for reciting: the existence of a precedent, together with the fact that a reading was compatible with the conventions of ‘arabiyya, was sufficient in his view for a reading to be considered Qur’anic. It is reported that, on occasions, while leading congregational prayers, he recited specific readings (hurūf) which contravened the sacrosanct ‘Uthmānic codices. These particular readings were the so-called exegetical interpolations and glosses attributed to ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b and Ibn ‘Abbās, and also other pre-‘Uthmānic lectiones suppressed as far as their liturgical value was concerned. Among the examples of his readings are Q. 62:9, idhā nūdiya li’il-ṣalātī min yawmī’l-jumū‘ātī fa’māḏū ilā dhikri’llāh instead of fa’saw ilā dhikri’llāh; while, for Q. 18:79, wa-kāna warā’ahum malikun ya’khudhu kullā safātān ghasban, he read wa-kāna amāmahum malikun ya’khudhu kullā safātān ṣāḥiḥatin ghasban. Ibn al-Nadim (d. 393/1003), and Yāqūt both provide examples of Ibn Shannabūd’s contravention of the ‘Uthmānic codices. The Kufan philologist Ibn al-Anbārī compiled a refutation of his readings entitled Kitāb Naqḍ masā’il Ibn Shannabūd. It seems that Ibn Shannabūd refused to relinquish this methodology, nor would he cease from circulating proscribed readings, maintaining that such readings had a distinctly devotional value. He was arraigned before a tribunal of judges, jurists and readers, convened in the presence of the wazīr Muhammad Ibn Muqla
Yaqut combines a number of important historical narratives covering this issue. Quoting from a text entitled *Afwaj al-qurra*”, he confirms that Ibn Mujahid took a very prominent role in prosecuting Ibn Shannabudh. Indeed, he was able to secure a signed retraction, preserved in Yaqut’s *Mu‘jam*, which was obtained after Ibn Shannabudh received ten strokes of the whip. He was duly released; still, like his contemporary Ibn Miqaam, he continued to advocate privately his views on readings. In the succinct account of the trial of Ibn Shannabudh recounted by the Hanbalite polymath Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1200), mention is made of his renouncing the most ‘outrageous’ of these *huruf*; however, he truculently argued that the other readings which he had recited were based on precedents.

Despite the fine distinctions between the approaches of these two readers, compatibility with ‘*arabiyya* appears as a common feature in the arguments adduced by both Ibn Miqaam and Ibn Shannabudh, although, prima facie, in the case of this latter figure it is less prominent. However, that Ibn Shannabudh renounced the most ‘outrageous’ of these *huruf* seems to suggest that the stock of his *shawadhdh* readings was not restricted to contraventions of the ‘Uthmanic codices such as those ascribed to prominent companions, but probably extended to other questionable alternatives which he had formulated. This is seemingly consistent with a grammarian-inspired approach, although such approaches exceed the bounds breached by even the most innovative of grammarians. The earliest recorded example of a reader radically accentuating linguistic considerations in the authentication and justification of scripture is the pioneering reader-grammarian of Mecca, Ibn Mu‘aysin (d. 123/740). Ibn Mujahid crucially asserts in the preface to his *Kitab al-Sab’*a that Ibn Mu‘aysin ‘constructed and organised (readings) according to the principles of ‘*arabiyya*’, and that he had formulated an *ikhtiyar* in which he differed from his fellow Meccans, noting, again, that it was based on ‘*madhahib* ‘*arabiyya*’. Ibn Mujahid added this caused the early Meccans to spurn his readings as they contravened the consensus among readers; they favoured the readings of Ibn Kathir (45–120/665–737). Ibn Mu‘aysin was a mentor of several of the earliest linguists of Basra and Kufa. Most fascinating is the fact that Ibn Shannabudh was one of those scholars who actively promulgated Ibn Mu‘aysin’s reading; and it was this linguistically-inspired approach to readings which created the environment for the development of Arabic linguistic thought.

Writing in the fourteenth century, the scholar of readings Ibn al-Jazari (751–833/1348–1429) authoritatively spoke of three conditions which governed the authenticity of a Qur’anic reading in terms of its liturgical value. These conditions stipulated the existence of a sound precedent, *ismād*; concordance with one of the ‘Uthmanic codices; and compatibility with an aspect of the diction of ‘*arabiyya*’. These standards broadly formed the basis of the attitude to Qur’anic readings of luminaries such as Makkî
ibn Abī Talib (355–437/965–1047) and Abū ʿAmr al-Dānî (371–444/981–1053), but the true spirit of these conditions reveals a much earlier provenance, particularly the condition of concordance with the ʿUthmānic codices. The criticisms made by the Kūfīan grammarian Farrāʾ (144–207/761–822) of certain readings of Abū ʿAmr ibn ʿAlāʾ (d. 154/771) were ventured with compatibility with the codices in mind. Ibn al-Jazārī does move on to state that a reading which complied with all three conditions could not be rejected. He claimed that it was a manifestation of the seven aḥruf in which the Qurʾan was revealed. This doctrine of seven aḥruf provided latitude in terms of its sanctioning a confined measure of diversity inherent in the stock of Qurʾānic readings. A number of scholars argued that all aspects of the seven aḥruf were encompassed in the ʿUthmānic codices; others stated that confined aspects of the seven aḥruf were exemplified in the ʿUthmānic codices. Ibn al-Jazārī censured those who are ignorant of the distinction between the seven aḥruf and the seven readings selected by Ibn Mujāhid. He revealed that accurately transmitted readings are attributed to readers outside of these seven, commenting that scholars had voiced criticisms concerning Ibn Mujāhid's structuring his book around the readings of seven readers. They suggested that Ibn Mujāhid should have based his selection on any number other than seven, as this would have obviated ambiguities between the tradition which speaks of the Qurʾan being revealed in seven aḥruf and his collection of seven readings. It is clear from Ibn al-Jazārī's remarks that, although grammarians would always stress linguistic considerations such as issues of frequency of usage or analogies of language, the reader instinct was to rely principally on the trusted methods of narration.

Ibn Qutayba (213–76/829–89) referred to an important distinction regarding the applicability of the seven aḥruf in his seminal work which examines grammatical subtleties of the Qurʾānic diction, Taʾwil mushkil al-Qurʾān. Having provided examples of the manifestation of these aḥruf, which included citations from pre-ʿUthmānic codices, he contemplates the question of whether it was possible for these readings to be recited in the present. He declared that any of these readings which were in concordance with the codex (of ʿUthmān) were permitted, but not those which went beyond the consonantal sketch of this codex. With this proviso in mind, he added the important qualification that the license granted to the companions, successors and a number of eminent early readers, in terms of their choice, synthesis and range of readings, as furnished by the seven aḥruf doctrine, remained exclusive to them: the configuration of the qirāʾāt they scrupulously supplied constituted the sum and substance of the corpus of the reading tradition. It was not appropriate to go beyond these readings. This statement reinforced the sense that later scholarship was merely selecting from this eclectic stock of lectiones.

Ibn al-Jazārī reflectively refers to Ibn Shannabūdh and Ibn Miqsam in his survey of the principles covering the acceptance of readings, suggesting that the hostility
between Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Shannabūd was typical of that found among eminent contemporaries. It is noticeable that less criticism is reserved for Ibn Shannabūd on the basis that there existed differences among jurists regarding the permissibility of reciting in prayers this particular type of shādhdh reading, namely those pre-Uthmānic readings attributed to certain companions. However, a majority of jurists took the view that these readings had no relative mutawātir basis and lacked the required consensus needed to substantiate their Qurʾānic status. They delivered a categorical indictment of anyone promoting their recitation on the basis that they were Qurʾānic. The justification for Ibn Shannabūd’s stance towards these readings rests with their having been recited at some stage in their history by a confined number of prominent companions and successors who derived these readings from the Prophet. Scholars such as Ibn al-Jazari would retort that the imposition of the Uthmānic codices together with the companions’ consensus regarding their peremptory status meant these kinds of shawādhdh readings were to all intents and purposes unacceptable as far as their liturgical value was concerned. Nevertheless, it is evident that out of the two readers Ibn al-Jazari does reserve harsher criticism for Ibn Miqsam’s method of synthesising readings, denouncing it as a grave transgression: it was based on arbitrary analogues of ʿarabīyya.

Defining the Text: Ibn Mujāhid’s Kitāb al-Sabʿa

Ibn Mujāhid Aḥmad ibn Mūsā was recognised by his contemporaries as the most distinguished reader of his generation. He had studied with the leading figures of the reading tradition, including ʿAbd al-Ｒahmān ibn ʿAbdūs (d. 280/894), Qunbul (195–291/810–904) and numerous other luminaries. He associated with prominent Kūfī and Basran linguists such as Muhammad ibn Jahm al-Simmāri (d. 280/893), Thaʿlab (d. 291/904) and Mubarrad (d. 285/898). Indeed, the esteem in which his scholarship was held is reflected in the fact that his work, the Kitāb al-Sabʿa, became the subject of copious grammatical apologies and commentaries by leading Basran and Kūfī linguists. The text itself was composed prior to the trials of Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shannabūd. This is evident from the fact that a prominent grammarian pupil of Ibn Mujāhid, Abū Bakr ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 316/928), was so impressed by the text that he decided to compose a grammatical explication and justification of the readings selected in the Kitāb al-Sabʿa. He completed only the first chapter of the Qurʾān and some verses from Surat al-Baqara. Ibn al-Sarrāj’s student Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) composed a treatise entitled al-Hujjāfi ʿilal al-qirāʾ ʿāt al-sabʿ. Fārisī reminisced over the contribution made by Ibn al-Sarrāj to this genre, adding that he would incorporate his mentor’s analysis within his own text. Intriguingly, Fārisī refers to Ibn Mujāhid’s text as Maʾrifat qirāʾ ʿāt ahl al-amṣār waʾl-Hijāz waʾl-ʿIrāq waʾl-Shām. Thus, the text enjoyed quite a reputation well before the trials of these two readers. However, it is also the case that the material comprised in this text had already been
assiduously authenticated. Indeed, Ibn Mujahid states that he himself had read, then revised the reading of Ibn Kathir with Qunbul in the year 278/891; this provides some indication of the chronological provenance of the collated material featured in the *Kitāb al-Sab’a*.75

The *Kitāb al-Sab’a* represents a meticulously focused endeavour, premised primarily on the importance of the Qur’ān as a liturgical text. The work is structured around the authenticated Qur’ānic readings sourced to seven eminent readers, adhering to the traditional order arrangement of chapters and verses in the Qur’ān. Ibn Mujahid selected those readers whose Qur’ānic readings had previously gained noticeable prominence and distinction within the reader tradition; they were celebrated luminaries from the regions of Hijāz, Iraq and Shām.76 The text’s primary purpose is to collate, record, appraise, and thereby contrast the principal features of these readings in respect of their acknowledged vocalic values, which in turn betray the rather subtle and minute nature of variances existent among these readings; the fact that these variances are restricted to a selected lexeme or lexemes within a given verse demonstrates the rather precise nature of this endeavour. Moreover, the comparative resolution of the vocalic values of the readings in question is interspersed with an authoritative synopsis of phonological and phonetic contingencies, all of which obviously served as pertinent factors in the articulation of scripture.77

Ibn Mujahid includes a compelling preface to his work in which he outlines not only its purpose and design, but also provides the traditionalist context prefiguring the accepted approach to the authentication of readings and the ascendancy of established precedents; variations in the readings were based on Prophetic precedent and transmitted faithfully by the individual readers in question. Furthermore, the controversy regarding approaches to authentication resonates in the themes touched upon in Ibn Mujahid’s preface. He warns of the perils of pursuing readings purely on the basis of hypothetical and speculative explication, a rather subtle indictment of those who chose to emulate the pedantry of a number of grammarians. Ibn Mujahid even alludes to the example of an individual well versed in the intricacies of *išrāb* being driven by his discernment therein to recite a *harf* which was permissible in ‘arabiyya, but had not been articulated by scholars from the past. He described such a person as an ‘innovator’ in the pejorative sense. In a further example, Ibn Mujahid referred to a quotation made by the Basran philologist and reader Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ when asked by his pupil, Aṣmaʾi (d. 213/828) to explain how a reader was supposed to distinguish readings which had an identical consonantal outline, but were dissimilar in terms of their vocalic values. Abū ʿAmr replies, ‘That can only be determined by what was heard on the authority of our first sheikhs,’ the inference being that they were based on a precise selection of this pre-determined material.78 Ibn Mujahid concluded his preface with a series of references to the adage regularly articulated by the
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Readers: 'al-qirā'āt 'a sunna'. Moreover, he adds that the majority of scholarship among the qurūrā had agreed upon the authoritative status of these particular readers: the content, format and disposition of his Kitāb al-Sab'a confirm that its author was particularly loyal to the reading tradition and the simple axioms espoused by readers. The mastery of the grammarians is also tacitly acknowledged, but this had to be tempered with the realisation that readings were selected on the basis of defined precedents. Having presented the framework for his work, Ibn Mujāhid introduces the seven readers whose variae lectiones are presented in this treatise together with their genealogies, mentors, students and narrators. Coupled with the preface, this detailed presentation of the numerous scholars and luminaries together with their localities has the desired effect of underpinning the axiom that these Qur'anic readings were meticulously preserved and transmitted. Ibn al-Nadīm credits Ibn Mujāhid with the authorship of a number of functional type tomes, including two treatises: Kitāb al-Qirā'āt al-ṣaghīr and Kitāb al-Qirā'āt al-kabīr. The editor of the Kitāb al-Sab'a argued that the former text was his book on seven readings, while the Kitāb al-Qirā'āt al-kabīr comprised those readings which lacked the same levels of successive transmission and recognition enjoyed by his choice of seven readings. According to Ibn Jinnī, Ibn Mujāhid designated these latter readings as being shawādhīth.79

Ibn Mujāhid also includes a preliminary section which surveys the so-called asānīd al-qirā'āt: the chains of authority which each of the seven readings he selected was based upon. These are initially sourced not only to his own mentors in the reading tradition with whom he had assiduously read (qāra'a) and acquired the readings in question, but more frequently and extensively to a vast array of informants upon whom he had relied in precisely collating all the documented aspects of a reading.80 The process of listing the distinctive sources of the reading, whether this is referenced to qirā'āt, personal informants, or textual sources, symbolises the collective corroboration of a reader's lectio. Within this preliminary section, the lists of sources cited for the readings of Nāfi', Ibn Kathīr, Āṣim (d. 127/744) and Abū Āmīr are particularly detailed and lengthy, while for Ḥamza, Kīsā'ī and Ibn Āmīr (d. 118/736) the pool of his sources were comparatively less, but just as authoritative.81 Moreover, whenever there were differences and nuances regarding a particular reader's rendering of an aspect of a given harf, Ibn Mujāhid illustrated such variances within the main body of the text, citing the narrators in question.82

The phonological and phonetic themes explored by Ibn Mujāhid are particularly salient in the early part of this text. Thus, while the recorded differences relating to the opening chapter of the Qur'an are restricted to the vocalic values of the term sovereign (mālik, malik, malk and milk), path (shirāt, sirāt, and zirāt), the prepositional phrase ('alayhim and 'alayhum), and the exceptive particle (ghayri, ghayra), the interfaced nature of Ibn Mujāhid's approach, by drawing attention to analogous
examples throughout the Qur’an, extends the scope and magnitude of his survey; this is also apparent in his review of subsequent Qur’anic chapters. His summary of differences among the readings in the opening chapter is also lengthened by his commentary on the so-called ‘ilal (grammatical rationale) governing the individual readings. This is something he duly promises to desist from, stating that for the remainder of the text he will recount only the specific vocalic values of the readings, ‘akhbartu bi’l-qirā’a mujarrada’. Prior to his focusing upon Sūrat al-Baqara, he furnishes a separate study of idghām (phonological assimilation) and the approach of the seven readers to this phenomenon; the phonological significance of topics such as kināya (the articulation of pronouns), hamz (the omission and commission of the glottal stop, particularly in reference to al-madd wa’l-qasr), fath and imāla (the ‘conventional’ opening of the a vowel and its fronting or deflection), and yā’āt al-idāfa (the pronunciation of possessive suffixes formed in the first person singular) are introduced in terms of the seven readers’ application of these traits, and this constitutes an integral part of Ibn Mujāhid’s review of the second chapter of the Qur’an. Given that the principal phonological concerns are addressed in the early part of the text, the discourse in the subsequent chapters focuses almost entirely on the vowelling of phonemes within certain verses, although exceptional phonological topics intersperse his survey of differences among the readings. Ibn Mujāhid consistently references consonantal variances to the indigenous codices. Moreover, the whole book is premised on the conception that each instance of a variance is technically based on a transmitted convention.

**Earl ier Collections of Qur’anic Readings: The Contribution of Readers and Grammarians**

The predisposition to collect and collate readings is traced to earlier periods in the history of the Arabic linguistic tradition and its reader complement. Readers and grammarians were to contribute to this genre in their own inimitable ways: the works of the readers were based extensively on the notion of isnād and riwāya; the grammarians’ compilations naturally accentuated linguistic considerations and perspectives, but they too were effectively moored to the principle of isnād. The grammarians’ propensity towards hypothetical pedantry, emendation and evaluation did unquestionably continue, but it was vociferously countered by the readers’ characteristic references to the authority of precedents. This meant that the focus of the grammarians’ collections of readings was confined to venting rational explication through the veneer of linguistic justification and evaluation. Despite that, the grammarian contribution to this genre of collections is rather formidable.

Ibn al-Nadīm includes a separate list of works which collated Qur’anic readings, however he makes no distinction between the nature of the methodology employed in
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the approaches of their authors. A contemporary of Sibawayhi (d. 177/793) by the name of Ḥārūn ibn Mūsā is said to have been the author of one of the first treatises to circumscribe Qur’anic readings. The Başran philologist Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869), who himself was the author of a collection of readings, reports that Ḥārūn was the first individual to pay attention to aspects of variances among readings, wujūh al-qirā‘āt, composing a text in which he traced asānīd for shādhdh readings. This trend in authorship was pursued by the Başran Ya‘qūb al-Ḥaḍramī (117–205/735–820). He was the author of a treatise entitled Kitāb al-Jāmi‘ in which he detailed the different aspects of readings and traced each harf to its original reader. It was also the case that some linguists elected to focus on a specific reading. Thus one finds that the Başran philologist Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215/830) dedicated a monograph to the grammatical defence of the reading of Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlā’. The Andalusian author of Tabaqāt al-nuḥāt, Abū Bakr al-Zubaydī (308–79/921–89), refers to Abū Ḥātim’s text on Qur’anic readings. Zubaydī mentions the title of this work, noting that the work provided details of both al-qurrā‘ and al-ʿulamā‘. Zubaydī clearly relied upon this work when citing readings referred to by grammarians. Ibn Jinnī reported that Abū Ḥātim’s book was one of the texts he relied upon when compiling his famous Kitāb al-Muḥtasab fi tabyīn shawādhhdh al-qirā‘āt waʾl-iḍāḥ ʿanhā’. Furthermore, Ibn Mujāhid himself refers to the fact that he was able to corroborate aspects of the reading of Nāfī from a book narrated by Muhammad ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845), the author of the celebrated al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā, on the authority of his mentor Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Wāqidī (d. 208/823). Wāqidī was the author of a text entitled Kitāb al-Qirā‘āt.

The three scholars referred to by Ibn Miqsam in his forlorn defence of his approach to readings were all authors of texts which collated readings: Khalaf ibn Hishām al-Bazzār, Muḥammad ibn Saʿdān and Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām. Yet, they were equally famed for their erudition in the linguistic sciences, which explains the disposition of their respective works. Khalaf was a Kūfān-trained reader. He had developed his own synthesis of readings (iḥtīyār) which was essentially based upon the readings of Ḥamza ibn Ḥabīb. Ibn Ashta al-Isfahānī (d. 316/928), an authority on early codices, asserts that Khalaf adhered to Ḥamza’s madḥhab regarding readings despite contravening him in 120 instances (harf); however, he replaced them with the readings of Nāfī acquired from their transmitter Iṣḥāq al-Musayyibī (d. 206/821). His own students in readings, the Kūfāns Salama ibn ʿĀṣīm (d. 270/884) and Muḥammad ibn Jahm, were both noted for transmitting the literary legacy of Farrā‘. Khalaf was originally situated in Baghdad, but journeyed to Kūfa in order to study readings with Abū Bakr ibn ʿAyyāsh (95–193/713–809). Biographical material which mentions Khalaf confirms that he was stringently drawing from a variegated pool of authenticated precedents in formulating his reading. Due to his distinguished
standing within the reading tradition, classical scholarship designated his \textit{lectio} as one of the ten canonical readings.\textsuperscript{95} Muhammad ibn Sa‘dān’s collection of readings is referred to by Ibn al-Jazārī as \textit{al-Jāmi‘ wa’l-mujarrad}.\textsuperscript{96} These readings apparently did not contravene the \textit{mashhūr} or well-known readings, and accordingly his \textit{ikhtiyār} would seemingly have been within the limits of authentically acquired readings. He had both Baṣrī and Kūfī mentors. Yāqūt presents material concerning Ibn Sa‘dān which discloses contrasting details: he reports that Ibn Sa‘dān had adhered to Hamza’s reading before venturing his own selection (\textit{ikhtiyār}), wherein ‘he corrupted the \textit{asl} and the \textit{far‘}, despite being a grammarian’.\textsuperscript{97} Yāqūt adds that Ibn Sa‘dān reflected upon \textit{ikhtilāf} and was a scholar in \textit{‘arabiyya}. That individuals such as Ibn Mīqṣām and Ibn Sa‘dān were prepared to place emphasis upon linguistic considerations was a corollary of the dominance and the authority impressed upon the reading tradition by linguists. It is probably why Ibn Mīqṣām also referred to this figure when trying to defend his own stance and method in identifying and promoting peculiar aspects of readings, although it would seem that Ibn Mīqṣām misconstrued the nature of Khalāf’s \textit{ikhtiyār}. Moreover, Jeffery’s view that an \textit{ikhtiyār} was an ‘independent judgement on how the skeleton consonantal should be pointed and vowelled for correct recitation’ appears to overlook the fact that it was limited to selection from a pre-determined pool of \textit{variae lectiones}.\textsuperscript{98}

The figure of Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (157–224/774–839) looms large in the classical reading tradition. He, like Khalāf, was the author of a \textit{Kitāb al-Qira‘āt}; however, references to, together with citations from, his text are far more profuse, allowing one to gauge the approach adopted by its author. Abū ‘Ubayd is linked with an impressive array of early Kūfī luminaries, including Sulaym (130–88/748–803), Kīsā‘ī (120–89/738–804), Yahyā ibn Ādam (d. 203/819), and Ibn ‘Ayyāsh.\textsuperscript{99} He was of \textit{mawla} extraction and he developed an \textit{ikhtiyār} of readings which, according to Ibn al-Jazārī, was in harmony with \textit{‘arabiyya} and \textit{athār}.\textsuperscript{100} Not every grammarian was able to achieve this delicate balance. It was said that his work collated 25 readings. Dhahabī (d. 748/1347) declares that no Kūfī was able to produce a work of this calibre.\textsuperscript{101} Ibn Mujāḥid had recourse to this work as he mentions Abū ‘Ubayd’s text in the \textit{Kitāb al-Sab‘a}.\textsuperscript{102}

The Baṣrī trained grammarian Abū Ja‘far al-Nabāhīs (d. 338/949) describes the \textit{Kitāb al-Qira‘āt} as the definitive work in the field of readings and regularly adduces quotations from it in his own influential \textit{ma‘ānī} text, \textit{Fīrāb al-Qur‘ān}.\textsuperscript{103} The citations from this work given in the \textit{Fīrāb} reveal that Abū ‘Ubayd accentuated the value of \textit{‘arabiyya} as a major determinant in his selection of readings. However, that Abū ‘Ubayd was able to effect a relative harmony between readings and \textit{‘arabiyya}, as sug-
gested by Ibn al-Jazari, seemingly alleviated the gravity of the situation. Nonetheless, in one instance Nahḥās derided Abū ābād’s use of analogical reasoning in selecting a reading: Abū ābād had expressed a preference for Abū āmīr’s reading of Q. 57:23 because it reflected a phonological symmetry with the previous verse; however, the point of issue was not the reading, which was authenticated, but the mode and context of selection. Nahḥās advises that ‘this method of ihtijāj is discarded by scholars and ahl al-nazar’; he moves on to state that the Qurʾān ‘cannot be subjected to maqāyīs: it is established by collective transmission’.\(^{104}\) It should be noted that although Nahḥās himself often indulges in a similar method in his appraisal of readings, Abū ābād’s choice of Abū āmīr’s reading was based on a form of rhythmic congruity between two disparate verses.

Nahḥās also highlights Abū ābād’s selection of Ibn Masʿūd’s reading of Q. 3:39, which reads fa-nādahuʾl-malāʾika, and displays a lack of concord in gender between the verb and its subject, as opposed to fa-nādathuʾl-malāʾika. Quoting from the text of Abū ābād, Nahḥās reports that he justified his ikhtiyār by stating that Ibn Masʿūd treated the term malāʾika as a masculine throughout the text of the Qurʾān; and that Abū ābād selects this reading because he wishes to differ with the polytheists who asserted that the angels were the daughters of God. Nahḥās interprets this gesture as having no bearing upon the selection of a reading. Furthermore, he dismisses the reasoning behind his selection, claiming that the Qurʾān delivers its own riposte to those deliberating upon the gender of angels; this does not, however, prevent Nahḥās from subsequently endorsing both readings.\(^{105}\)

In a further example Nahḥās includes a quotation in which the Başrań Abū āmīr ibn al-‘Alā is censured by Abū ābād for promoting a reading which contravened the metropolitan codices. The reading in question was Q. 19:19 and the term li-ahaba, which was rendered layahaba: the yāʾ was preferred to the hamza. Abū ābād reports that this was a clear contravention of all the indigenous codices. Moreover, he asserts, ‘If it were possible to change a harf of the mushaf on the basis of an opinion, it would expose the mushaf to alteration such that one would not be able to distinguish between divine revelation and superfluous material.’\(^{106}\) These sentiments symbolised the spirit of the ancient reading tradition and its intractable adherence to precedents; Abū ābād’s work clearly embodied this spirit. Given the form and design of the selection procedures encompassed in Abū ābād’s ikhtiyār, it seems curious that Ibn Miqsam should refer to him to justify his own method of synthesising readings.

There are a number of other individuals recognised as readers to whom texts which collated readings are ascribed: the Kūfans Yahyā ibn Ādam, Ḥafs ibn āmīr al-Dūrī (150–246/767–860) and Aḥmad ibn Jubayr (d. 258/872) are mentioned as having composed treatises collating Qurʾānic readings of Kūfān, Başrań and Ḥijāzī
provenance. Yahyā is an important source for the early tradition of Kūfī readings; through his studentship with Abū Bakr ibn ʿAyyāsh he relates how he codified the readings of ʿĀṣim ibn Abī al-Najūd. Ibn al-Ṭabarī as the first reader to bring together qirāʾāt. He is often referred to by the epithet nahwi. The author of an important collection of eleven readings Kitāb al-Iqnaʾ, Abū ʿAlī al-Ahwāzī (362–446/973–1054), mentions that al-Dūrī journeyed extensively in quest of Qur’anic readings and these included hurrāf which had gained relative prominence together with readings described as shawādhdh: it was with this latter category of readings that he was thoroughly acquainted. Aḥmad ibn Jubayr was one of Kūfī’s students, but his mentors also included other prominent Kūfans. He travelled to Hijāz, Egypt and Syria before settling in Anatolia. He composed a text which brought together the readings of five scholars: one from each major city. Biographical reports show him to be a stern upholder of traditional conventions in respect of Qur’anic readings; indeed, it is recounted that he took exception to the use of green coloured dots in codices, which were often employed to indicate peculiar features of variant readings, for fear that they might lead someone to recite a harf not articulated by the pious ancestors.

Ibn al-Ṭabarī relates that the Basrān judge Ismāʿīl ibn Ishāq (199–282/814–895) composed a text which included the readings of twenty imams. Ibn Mujāhid actually transmitted readings on this figure’s authority. According to Ibn al-Ṭabarī, the readings he collected included the seven selected by Ibn Mujāhid for his text. Yāqūt expressed the view that Ismāʿīl’s works were held in great esteem by Ibn Mujāhid and by other eminent authorities on readings. Activity in the area of collecting and collating readings was clearly vigorous. Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224–310/839–922) composed two texts on qirāʾāt. The first of these works was entitled al-Fasl bayna ‘l-qiraʾāt. It is supposed to have scrutinised differences among the readers regarding the hurūf of the Qurʾān. It provided not only the names of prominent readers from Medina, Mecca, Kūfah, Baṣrā, Shām and other regions, but additionally the variances among the readings he cited were grammatically evaluated. Sadly the text like so many in this genre has not survived, but the substance of its contents would have permeated Ṭabarī’s extant commentary on the Qurʾān. Having referred to scholarship’s reception of his work, Yāqūt includes a quotation in which Ibn Mujāhid praises Ṭabarī’s work and refers to its comprising an error regarding a harf of Ḥamza with which Ṭabarī was authoritatively familiar. Ibn Mujāhid concludes that the mistake was due to the fact that Ṭabarī based his book on Abū ʿUbayd ibn al-Qāsim’s earlier work on readings which contained this original error. Ahwāzī also describes a text composed by Ṭabarī collating qirāʾāt, claiming that it consisted of eighteen volumes written in a large script. Ibn al-Ṭabarī includes a report in his biographical entry for Ṭabarī asserting that his work on readings was called al-Jāmiʾ.
Further works on Qur'anic readings and readers were written throughout the third century. The Meccan specialist in readings Ishaq ibn Aţhmad al-Khuza'î (d. 308/921) composed several treatises which codified disagreements and agreements among Meccan readings. Ibn Shannabûdhd studied readings with this figure. He was an important source for Ibn Mujâhid and his *Kitâb al-Sab'a*. Muţhammad ibn Ishaq Abû Rabî`a (d. 294/907) was an authority on Meccan readings. He produced a detailed monograph of the readings of two eminent Meccans, Qunbul and Bazzî (170–250/786–864); Dhaḥabî remarked that he produced a text encapsulating the readings of Ibn Kathîr. Muhammad ibn Ishaq Abu Râdî`a (d. 294/907) was an authority on Meccan readings. He was the author of a text entitled *Kitâb al-Mu`jam al-kabîr fi asmâ` al-qurra` wa-qirdâ`ihihim*. Ibn al-Nâdîm states that he recorded monographs of the readings of Hamza and Kisâ`î, and he wrote *Kitâb al-Qira`ât al-thamân*, adding Khalaf’s reading to the ‘seven’ readings. Muţhammad ibn Aţhmad al-Dâjûnî (273–324/886–936), an eminent colleague of Ibn Mujâhid, is named as the author of a compilation of readings. The synthesis of readings preserved in all of these texts formed a substantial part of the corpus of the reading tradition. But equally, there were clearly other *variae lectiones* which could be corroborated in line with the axiomatic principles of authentication spoken of by luminaries of the reading tradition. This very fact explains why specific collections of readings continued throughout the fourth century even after the text of Ibn Mujâhid had been composed: Ibrâhîm ibn ʿAbd al-Razzâq al-Anţâqî (d. 338/950), Aţhmad ibn Naşr al-Shadhâ`î (d. 373/984), Abû Bakr Aţhmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Mîhrân (d. 381/991), ʿAbd al-Mun`îm ibn Ghalbûn (389/999) and his son Ṭâhir ibn Aţhmad (d. 399/1009) had all composed texts which collated specific numbers of readings.

While many of the aforementioned works seemingly accentuated the substantive codification of readings, supplementing this in some instances with grammatical analysis and resolution, there are also a number of works which were composed under the rubric *al-İhtijâj li'l-qir"at* (also referred to as *hujja* works), pursuing the grammatical justification of readings as an explicit and purposeful objective. Grammarians of both Kûfân and Başrân persuasions were the authors of focused texts on this topic: Mubarrad, Tha`lab, Ibn Qutayba, Ibn Kaysân, Ibn al-Sarrâj, Naşr ibn ʿAlî, Ibn Darastawayhi to name only a few. Biographical accounts of the Başrân and Kûfân traditions consistently ascribe texts on the topic of *qir"at* to individual luminaries. The *İhtijâj* works assume the hegemony of the model of *'arabiyya* as an instrument for the authentication of scripture. It should not be surprising that eminent later grammarians should choose this format to pitch their sophisticated arguments; the *İhtijâj* literature was a vehicle for the expression of their influence. Moreover, this had initially been practised in the *ma`ānî* type exegetical treatises which one associates with grammarians.
Conclusions

The extensive efforts to collate and preserve the vast corpus of Qur’anic readings by early readers and grammarians provide the historical setting for Ibn Mujahid’s rigorous endeavour. These earlier collections furnished Ibn Mujahid with a prospective framework which formed the outline of his own treatise. His work clearly belongs to the jam‘-type treatises: those texts composed by readers emphasising the straightforward collation of readings with a minimum of grammatical explication. His predecessors within the reading tradition had distinctively defined the strictures of identifying the various huruf and their precise features. The standardisation of readings was not the purpose of the text. Indeed, the so-called periods of consolidation and homogeneity did not impinge upon the approach and methodology adopted by readers towards variae lectiones. Ibn Mujahid’s work was propelled into the limelight not only due to his prominence during the trials of Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shannabudh, but also because he was so influential as a teacher of readings among leading Basran and Kufan linguists. It was this fact that granted his work such saliency, due to these luminaries’ composing illustrious explications and apologies of his Kitab al-Sab’a. His work was not an attempt to arrest the proliferation of readings, but rather to reiterate the traditional axioms of readers, convincing his grammarian cohorts to dissipate their intellectual energy and expertise in the consummate defence of material which had enjoyed high levels of recognition and successive transmission, rather than indulging in hypothetical grammatical projection and pedantry; this they loyally executed. Ibn al-Sarraj and Abū ‘Alī al-Fārisī both worked on grammatical explications of the Kitab al-Sab’a; a further grammatical commentary on the Kitab al-Sab’a entitled Kitab al-Hujja was composed by another of Ibn Mujahid’s pupils, the Kufan grammarian Ibn Khālawayhi (d. 370/980).130 Abū Mansūr al-Azhari (d. 370/980), the eminent philologist, also produced a Kitab Mā‘āni al-qirā‘āt in which the Kitab al-Sab’a served as one of its principal sources for his grammatical survey and evaluation of variae lectiones.131 Moreover, some grammarians even turned their attention to producing commentaries of Ibn Mujahid’s other treatise which collated readings ascribed to luminaries outside of his choice of seven.132 The tenacity of the readers and their adherence to traditional conventions had proved to be indispensable. Despite the apparently derivative status of his endeavours, Ibn Mujahid’s legacy was to be a lasting one.

NOTES
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6 Montgomery Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, pp. 261–2. To an extent, this line of argument is pursued by Michael Cook in The Koran, A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 73f. He is described as bringing ‘order into the field’ by picking out seven leading traditions. This view barely takes into account activity prior to Ibn Muḥāhid.

7 Montgomery Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought, p. 262.


10 Makdisi, Studia Islamica 59, pp. 18–22; cf. Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, p. 100.

11 Makdisi, Studia Islamica 59, p. 19.

12 Jonathan Owens, Early Arabic Grammatical Theory: Heterogeneity and Standardization, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science (Amsterdam: John Benjamin BV, 1990), pp. 5–6 & p. 219, especially n. 15. Owens speaks of the period 890–930 as one in which ‘Arabic grammatical descriptions were consolidated in a form which in many respects has remained essentially unchanged up to the present’ (p. 219).

13 Wilferd Madelung, ‘The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Qurʾān’ in Félix M. Pareja Casañas (ed.), Orientalia Hispanica: sive studiosa FM, Pareja octo-


16 Melchert, Arabica 46, pp. 251f.


18 Melchert, Studia Islamica 91, p. 15.

19 Melchert, Studia Islamica 91, p. 5.

20 Melchert, Studia Islamica 91, p. 10.


22 Melchert, Studia Islamica 91, p. 22.

23 Melchert, Studia Islamica 91, p. 21.

24 This is suggested in the opening sentence of Melchert’s article.


32 Yāqūt, Mu’jamar al-udabā’, vol. 5, pp. 311–12.


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35 Yāqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, p. 311.
36 Yāqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, pp. 311–12.
37 Yāqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, p. 311.
42 Examples of his readings are found in the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm, pp. 73–4. Yāqūt also provides details of his readings: Yāqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, p. 311.
50 Yāqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, p. 115. There is a semantic equivalence in such readings in terms of warā‘ and amām, due to the former being one of the addād; cf. Kitāb al-Addād, ed. Muḥammad Abū’l-Fāḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-ṣAṣrīyya, 1987). Cf. Wansbrough, Quranic Studies, pp. 202–3.
52 Yāqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, pp. 115f. See also Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, p. 83.
54 Yāqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, vol. 5, p. 116. An interesting twist to this tale is included in the narrative of Ibn Shannabūd’s trial. It is told that, having been punished at the behest of the wazīr Ibn Muqla for his brazen defence of his readings, he called upon God to avenge his treatment. He asked that Ibn Muqla’s authority be destroyed and his hands severed. History shows that the wazīr was the victim of a purge which claimed his life. See Ibn al-Jazā’irī, Tabaqāt al-qurrā’, vol. 2, p. 54.
56 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sab’ā, pp. 65f.
58 Shihab al-Dīn al-Qastalānī, *Laṭā‘īf al-’ishārāt li-funūn al-qirā‘āt*, ed. 6 Abd al-Šābūr Shāhīn & 6 ʿĀmir al-Sayyid ʿUthmān (Cairo: Lajnat ʿIlṭyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1972), vol. 1, p. 105. The author of the *Laṭā‘īf* states that his past antics are not considered a blemish against his character nor do they impinge upon his standing as a narrator.
60 See the introduction to al-İmām Abū Zayd, *Ḥujjat al-qirā‘āt*, ed. Saʿīd al-Afghānī (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1979), p. 13. The argument is that the *isnād* had to be *mutawātīr*; the suggestion being that Makkī and Ibn al-Jazari should have stressed that fact. The issue here is one of definitions.
68 Ibn al-Jazari, *al-Nashr fi’l-qirā‘āt al-‘ashr*, vol. 1, p. 14-15. Ibn al-Jazari adds that one cannot determine whether such readings were integrally Qur’anic nor can one rule regarding their soundness: therefore if a reading’s status cannot be established, it cannot plausibly be defined as Qur’anic. The person denying its Qur’anic status is not a disbeliever; yet to do so is deemed outrageous (p. 14). Ibn al-Jazari adds that it is wrong to classify readings outside of the seven selected by Ibn Mujāhid as being ʿāshāhda, stating the use of the terminology in this way represents a posterior development within the reading tradition; as we have noted from Ibn Jinnī’s quotation above, Ibn Mujāhid was referring to levels of transmission in this respect.
70 Ibn al-Jazari, *al-Nashr fi’l-qirā‘āt al-‘ashr*, vol. 1, pp. 14-15; cf. Ibn al-Jazari, *Tabaqāt al-qurā‘āt*, vol. 2, pp. 53f. He notes that this is one of the opinions ascribed to a number of Shāfiʿi and Ḥanafi scholars; it was also one of two opinions on the subject narrated on the authority of Mālik and Ahmad. Ibn al-Jawzī adds that most scholars said their recitation (in prayers) was not permissible. The claim that such readings had a relative level of transmission was rebutted by the fact that they would have superseded by virtue of the al-‘ardā al-akhirā (the Prophet’s final review with Gabriel) together with the consensus of the companions. Qualification of the legal niceties of this matter is provided on p. 15. Melchert’s remark that ‘Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal could be cited in favour of putting together one’s own reading of the Qur’an on the basis of known variants’, as sourced to Dhahabī’s Taʿrīkh, is a valid point; however, it has no analogue in terms of Ibn Shabbābīd’s activities for the plain reason that the latter’s readings could not
be sourced to authenticated precedents accepted by the classical reading tradition. See Melchert, Studia Islamica 91, p. 21.


73 Ibn al-Jazari, Ṭabaqāt al-qurrā’, vol. 1, pp. 139–42. The verb qara’a is used to qualify his relationship with these two figures, and the term sama‘an for the numerous other figures.


75 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sab’ā, p. 92. Welch states that the book came at just the right time, presuming that the viziers of the state adopted it. See his art. ‘Kur’ān’, p. 409.

76 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sab’ā, p. 87.

77 There are references to confined syntactic concerns but these are sporadic: see p. 112, in which he discusses the grammatical ‘illa of ghayr(a)’l-maghdūbi ‘alayhim in Chapter One.

78 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sab’ā, p. 48. One must emphasise the fact that the distinction between grammarians and readers seems to be one of methodology; grammarians show a greater propensity to speculate.

79 Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, p. 34. See Dayr’s introduction to the Kitāb al-Sab’ā (p. 20). It is also the case that the readings which fell outside the famous ten readings were referred to as being shādhdha; this appears to be a posterior development. Ibn Jinnī does censure Ibn Shammābūd and Ibn Miqsām. However, his authorship of the famous Kitāb al-Muhtasab was essentially about providing grammatical justification for the shādhdh readings as defined by Ibn Mujāhid. Gotthelf Bergsträsser, Nichtkanonische Koranlesarten im Muhtasab des ibn Ginnī, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (München, 1933). This book includes Ibn Jinnī’s preface to his text. See p. 15. The Kitāb al-Qirā’āt al-kabīr thus referred to the shawādhdh readings: those not enjoying high levels of transmission and recognition in the garrison cities. The technical compass of the term shādhdh varies according to the historical context and setting.


81 There were numerous other chains of authority which existed for the readings.


83 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sab’ā, p. 112. It was later grammarians such as Abū ʿAllī al-Fārisī and Ibn Jinnī who took up the reins of ‘ilal in their own commentaries on Ibn Mujāhid’s Kitāb al-Sab’ā.

84 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sab’ā, pp. 113–39. The editor of the text introduces the titles of these sub-sections but they are based on the author’s discourse. This is defined in terms of elongating and confining the hamza; articulating the concomitant and consecutive occurrence of hamza. See Pierre Cachia’s definition of these terms in The Monitor, A Dictionary of Arabic Grammatical Terms (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973).

85 Ibn Mujāhid, Kitāb al-Sab’ā, p. 48. See the following references to codices: pp. 108, 235, 245, 284, 318, 390, 428, 473, 479, 494, 542, 625 and 689.

86 Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, p. 38. Further works are often cited by Ibn al-Nadīm when covering the separate biographical details of individuals.


91 Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Nichtkanonische Koranlesarten*, p. 18. He also refers to Qutrub, Fārrāʾ, Zajjah and Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī as authors of studies of readings which he utilised.


95 Ibn al-Jazari, *al-Nashr*, vol. 1, pp. 188–91; he is referred to as one of the ten readers; we shall note below how Naqqāsh includes Khalaf in his compilation of eight readings. Ibn al-Jazari, *Tabaqat al-qurra*², vol. 1, pp. 272–3 and Qastalānī, *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, vol. 1, p. 98.


98 Jeffery, ‘The Qurʾān Readings of Ibn Miṣsam’, p. 4. Note the context in which he is mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Sabʿa*, pp. 314, 416, 463, 455 and 552.


112 He also speaks of mistakes and misapprehensions they might cause. See Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dānī, *al-Muḥkam ʿt fī naqīt al-maṣāḥif*, ed. ʿIzzat Ḥasan, 2nd edn
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114 Ibn al-Jazari, *Ṭabaqaṭ al-qurrāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 162, see also p. 140 in which it is mentioned that Ibn Mujāhid narrated *ḥurūf* on his authority (samāʿan). This judge was supposed to have been asked why *tabdil* (alteration of scripture) was permitted for *ahl al-Tawrāt*, but not for *ahl al-Qur’ān*; he replied that this was because the *ahl al-kitāb* were entrusted to devise the means to preserve their scripture, whereas in the case of *ahl al-Qur’ān*, God carries out that function (see p. 162).

115 Ibn al-Jazari, *al-Nashr*, vol. 1, p. 34.


124 Dhahabi, *Maʿrifat*, vol. 1, p. 185. Qunbul is described as the unofficial head of readings in Hijāz.


126 Ibn al-Jazari, *Ṭabaqaṭ al-qurrāʾ*, vol. 2, p. 120; cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrīst*, p. 42. This is rendered as ‘*al-thamāniyya*’ in this printed edition; an alternative title is *Kitāb al-Qurrāʾ al-thamāniyya*.


128 Ibn al-Jazari, *al-Nashr*, vol. 1, pp. 34–6, for the list of authors of collections see pp. 58–97. For Anṭāqī, see Ibn al-Jazari, *Ṭabaqaṭ al-qurrāʾ*, vol. 1, pp. 16f; for Shadhāʾī, see vol. 1, pp. 144–5; for Ibn Mīhrān, the author of *Kitāb al-Mabsūt fiʾl-qirāʿat al-ʾashr* and *Ṭabaqaṭ al-qurrāʾ*, see vol. 1, pp. 49f; for Ibn Ghalbūn, the author of the *Kitāb al-ʾIrshād fīʾl-sabʿ*, see vol. 1, pp. 470–1; his son Tāhir was the author of *Kitāb al-Tadhkira fīʾl-qirāʿat al-thamān*, see vol. 1, p. 339 and *al-Nashr*, vol. 1, pp. 73f. Cf. the editors’ introduction to *Kitāb al-ʾUnwān* pp. 15–22.

129 See my articles in *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 5:1 & 5:2. Baalbaki questioned whether figures such as Mubarrad would have composed works on this topic, but this view overlooks the methodology refined by grammarians. See Ramzi Baalbaki, ‘The Treatment of *qirāʿa* by the Second and Third Century Grammarians’, *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 15 (1985), pp. 11–32.

Later readers such as Makkî ibn Abî Ta’lib (d. 437/1045) and Abû ‘Amr al-Dânî also composed treatises which were structured around the concept of seven readings, although Makkî’s text does venture beyond the seven. However, in his famous Kitâb al-Kashf he mentions Ibn Mujâhid on only four occasions. Makkî ibn Abî Ta’lib, Kitâb al-Kashf ‘an wujûh al-qirâ’ât al-sab’, ed. M. Ramâdân (2 vols. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risâla, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 97, 116, 204; vol. 2, p. 79. Thus the concept of ‘seven’ readings per se becomes the focus. Dânî composed a concise synthesis of the seven readings and their readers, listing two narrators for each of the readings: Kitâb al-Taysîr fi’l-qirâ’ât al-sab’, ed. Otto Pretzl (Istanbul: Staatsdruckerei, 1930). Again, the focus and definition of these later texts is principally provided by the readings. It is reported that Dânî relied upon the text of Naqqâsh, mentioned above. See also Makkî’s Kitâb al-Tâbsîra fi’l-qirâ’ât, ed. M. Ramâdân (Kuwait: Manshûrat Ma’had al-Makhtûtât al-‘Arabiyya, 1985).
