# ԵՐԵՎԱՆԻ ՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԱԼՍԱՐԱՆ ԱՐԵՎԵԼԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՖԱԿՈՒԼՏԵՏ

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# Հրատարակվում է Երևանի պետական համալսարանի արևելագիտության ֆակուլտետի գիտական խորհրդի որոշմամբ

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Shushan Kyureghyan<sup>1</sup>

## "THE DEVIL'S DECEPTIONS IN THE RELEVANCE OF READING THE QURAN ACCORDING TO 'IBN AL-JAWZĪ'S "TALBĪS IBLĪS""

Keywords: Quran, 'Ibn al-Jawzī, reciters, valid readings, Devil's deceptions

At the initial stage of the formation of Islam, a number of sciences were formed, with the need for complete preservation, reliable transmission, accurate reading and interpretation of the scripture. One of these sciences is Quran-reading which is the subject of this study.

The tradition of public reading of the Quran (qirā'ā) was formed during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. The reading was followed by an interpretation of the text, as the believers often came up with questions about the incomprehensible words and phrases in the revelation. In the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Quran had a written text, thus being the first book written in Arabic. However, the textual problems related to the Quran have not been met. In the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Arabic writing was imperfect, which created many problems for the reading and understanding of the text, demanding a parallel reading tradition for the written text, which was very diverse in different centers of the Caliphate.

In order to better understand the issues related to the Quran-reading it is necessary to analyze the conversion from the oral knowledge to the written and the reaction of the reading tradition to the official stages of the text fixing process. While speaking about Quranic readings we should take into account that the meaning of this term has changed in between  $7^{th}$  and  $13^{th}$  centuries when Ibn al-Jawzi authored his work Talbīs Iblīs. The term  $qir\bar{a}$  was used to indicate both the particular reading of the entire Qur'ān

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 $(qir\bar{a}'\bar{a}=reading)$  and a special reading of a word or of a single passage of the Qur'ān  $(qir\bar{a}'\bar{a}t=variants)$  and in general to indicate a recitation of single parts or the entire Qur'ān  $(qir\bar{a}'\bar{a}=recitation)$ . Muhammad was the first who recited the Quran. Thus, he was the first qāri and his sermons were the first readings.

The first step of the canonical redaction of Quran was in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century after the promulgation of 'Uthmān codex,² which was intended to rectify the disagreements on different readings of the revealed text. The Quran's text collection and the distribution of manuscripts in the caliphate centers contributed to the important process of preserving the text. However, the 'Uthmān manuscripts did not have diacritic signs and vowels, which allowed various local readings to have superior position on the official manuscripts.

The next stage is the introduction of the diacritic signs and vowels dating to the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the free choice on the qirā'ā was limited but not entirely forbidden as the complete unification was not achieved. After saving the Quran from physical extermination and the standardization of the text arose the problem of not distorting the scripture. In the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Ibn Mujahid (d. 936), the influential reader of Baghdad, brought this process to the logical conclusion by banning the further use of uncanonical readings and recognizing seven readings as canonical<sup>3</sup>. The readers henceforward had to use only the canonical readings. This, however, did not completely rule out the uncanonical deviant (shawādd) readings, which are touched upon by one of the most prominent theologian, preacher, legal scholar and historian 'Ibn al-Jawzī' in his work "Talbīs Iblīs (The devil's deceptions), one of the major works of Hanbali polemic. In this work he launched an attack not only on the various heretical sects, but also on everyone whom he considered responsible for introducing bid'a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> When disputes regarding the correct text of the sacred book arose in the army, threatening the sense of Muslim unity, the caliph 'Uthmān (ruled 644/656) decided to commission an official edition of the Qur'ānic text. That recension came to be known as the 'Uthmānic codex. Gregor Schoeler, *The genesis of literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Mustafa Shah, "The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qur'anic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujāhid's Kitb al-Saba," *Journal of Quranic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2004): 85.

(negative innovations) into Sunnism, and of these, particularly, the Muslim mystics.<sup>4</sup>

Devil's Deceptions is of particular importance due to the author's redress in enumerating some of the methods and means used by the devil in deceiving and misguiding mankind from the straight path. According to his explanation talbīs (deception) is to present falsehood in the image of the truth.<sup>5</sup> He has composed it to warn against Iblis's<sup>6</sup> disorder, to frighten people from his afflictions, to unveil what he has hidden and to expose him while he is disguised in his arrogance. The book consists of thirteen chapters (bab). In this four-hundred-page book there are only two observations (dikr) about devil's deceptions on readings and readers. The first part on this topic is "The Devil's Deception of the Reciters" which is included in the chapter "The Devil's Deception of the Scholars" in different divisions of knowledge next to the devil's deceptions of jurists, preachers and storytellers, linguists, poets etc. The second part is called "The Devil's Deceptions regarding Quran Recitation," which is included in the chapter "The Devil's Deception of the Worshipers in their Devotions" next to Deceptions regarding ablution, performing prayer, al-Hajj, al-Saum, etc. Thus, according to the author the readers are considered as scholars, reading is considered as 'ibāda.

It is noteworthy that all the deceptions in both chapters are not systematized by the author. The deceptions on readers and readings can be classified in three main sections: deceptions regarding the reading content (1), reading order (2) and deceptions regarding the behavior and etiquette of the reader (3). The deceptions on the reading content are mainly related to the use of false, non-valid or irregular readings instead of using the agreed upon modes. These are readings that contradict the Uthman

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Dapha Ephrat, "Ibn al-Jawzi", in *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, ed. Josef W. Meri (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 345.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> 'Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs* (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam), 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The devil is known under two designations in the Quran: Iblis, used always as a proper name, and *al-shaytan*, originally a generic designation but with the definite article used as a proper name as well. Stefan Wild, "Devil," in *The Quran: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 179.

manuscripts, do not have a reliable chain of transmitters (isnād) and may have contradictions with arabiyya. They (the reciters) spend most of their lives on collecting these versions, classifying and teaching them to others. They do this to the point that they miss out performing their obligations and responsibilities. Sometimes an Imam may be fluent at recitation but not well versed in what invalidates the prayer. The author also presents the necessary conditions to avoid irregular readings: Had these people (readers) contemplated, they would have realized that the objective is to memorize the Quran (1), to check its words (2), to realize it (3), then to act upon it (4), then accept what improves the soul and cleans morality (5), and then to move onto other Sharia sciences (6). One of the worst deceptions is to waste time on something else. Thus, 'Ibn al-Jawzī indirectly presents the necessary preconditions or rules for valid readings.

The rest of the deceptions in this group refer to linguistic inaccuracies, as a result of which the content of the Quran can be distorted. One example is the reciting of the same word but from different versions: maliki, māliki and malāki. This is not permissible because it goes against the flow of the Quran. The recitation of all verses with unnecessary sajdas (performing an extra prostration at the recitation of certain quranic passages) and tahlilat (this is a form of dzikr by uttering sentence-  $l\bar{a}$   $il\bar{a}ha$  illa  $ll\bar{a}h$ ), and takbirat (saying  $All\bar{a}hu$  akbar) is also disliked.

The next group presents the inadmissible actions during a reading which are again performed under the devil's deceptions. The author mentions: "Also, some of them burn many candles (to light up the place in which they are reciting Quran). This is a waste of money and imitation of the Zoroastrians, and a cause for women and men to gather in the night in a manner causing mischief". <sup>9</sup>Iblis makes them think that this is a form of glorification of Islam, when, in fact, glorification of Islam is achieved by implementing its rules.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> For the Arab-speaking community, the term al-'arabiyya expresses the commonality of Arabic and its related texts (luǧāt, laḥajāt). In this context it is used to show clear and pure Arabic (al-'arabiyya al-fusḥa). Yasir Suleiman, "Arabiyya," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Versteegh, Kees, (Leiden, Brill, Vol. 1, 2006), 604-606.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam), 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid., 110.

Some readers (muqri) also follow two and three reciters at the same time. It is impossible to comprehend all of these recitations simultaneously. Then he boastfully writes that he has read from one and the other. Here the term "muqri" has been used instead of more applicable word " $q\bar{a}r\bar{i}$ ". The term muqri (pl. muqri'un) is used for a proficient and usually professional reciter of the Qur'an. <sup>10</sup>

Another example is that some reciters compete to see who recites more in one day. I (the author) have seen some of them reciting the entire Qur'an three times in one long day. Iblis deceives them to believe that there is reward in this and fault in not doing this 11. In fact, recitation must be for Allah's sake not for being praised for it by others, and it must be done slowly. Here are two ayats from Quran which confirm this. Allah (the Mighty and the Majestic) said: "كتوراه على الناس على مكث" which means "that you might recite it (Quran) to the people over a prolonged period (al-Isra' 17: 106). And said: "ورتل القرآن ترتيلا", i.e. "and recite the Qur'an with measured recitation (Al-Muzammil 73:4). The other evidence is that the Prophet said: "لا يفقه من قرأ القرآن في اقل من ثلاث" which means that no one properly understands who reads the Quran in less than three days. 12

Another example of such errors is when some readers innovate methods of recitation according to melodious rhythms. Ahmad ibn Hanbal disliked this method of recitation. Al-Shafii said: Listening to the songs of desert Arabs is permissible, and so is its reciting in accordance with rhythms and a beautiful voice<sup>13</sup>. This does not mean that one can use musical rules during recitation. The closer the recitation goes to singing, the more disliked this action becomes. And if it becomes excessive to the point of taking the Quran outside of what it is meant for, then this is prohibited.

The third group of Devil's Deceptions toward the Reciters is more closely related to the reader's etiquette. One example is when some reciters

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Asma Afsaruddin, "Qur'an, Reciters and Recitation," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, ed. Josef W. Meri (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 659.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam), 110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam), 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibid., 111.

commit different sins, such as back-biting. They may even commit bigger sins thinking that memorization of the Qur'an would alleviate punishment. This is also from Devil's Deception of them, as the punishment of a knowledgeable person for committing sins will be more severe than that of an unknowledgeable person because the added knowledge increases a person's liability. Another example of the devil's deceptions is that some reciters climb on the minaret at night and start to recite the Quran with loud voices. They harm people by not letting them sleep well under the devil's deception.

Thus, even after the final standardization of the Quran there were questions and disagreements on how to read the revealed text and what should a good reciter do. The 13<sup>th</sup> century outstanding theologian 'Ibn al-Jawzī' as a defender of true faith has discussed this issue in his work "Talbīs Iblīs" by presenting reading and readers' mistakes as devil's deceptions. The analyzes of the given topic allowed us to classify the deceptions on readers and to define which readings are considered valid according to 'Ibn al-Jawzī'.

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## Շուշան Կյուրեղյան (Ամփոփագիր)

Իսլամական համայնքի ընդլայնումն ու առկա գիտելիքի ծավալի մեծացումը 7-րդ դարի կեսից արդեն անխուսափելիորեն ազդում էին ինֆորմացիայի բանավոր տարածման վրա՝ դարձնելով այն գրեթե անվերահսկելի։ Անհրաժեշտություն է առաջանում գրի առնել առկա գիտելիքը, ինչի արդյունքում ինֆորմացիայի հավաքման, մշակման, պահպանման և հաղորդման համակարգը փոխվում է։ 7-րդ դարի կեսերին Ղուրանն ունեցավ գրավոր տեքստ, այդպիսով դառնալով արաբերենով գրի առնված առաջին գիրքը։ Սրանով, սակայն, Ղուրանի հետ կապված տեքստաբանական խնդիրները չավարտվեցին

և Ղուրանի ընթերցման միասնական ձև չամրագրվեց։ Ղուրանի ընթերցման խնդիրները չվերացան նաև տեքստի վերջնական միօրինակացման և Ղուրանի ընթերցման հստակ գիտակարգի ('ilm al-qirā'āt) ձևավորումից հետո։

Հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել և վերլուծել վերոնշյալ խնդիրները և սատանայի խարդավանքները Ղուրանի ընթերցման hwngnւմ` num սուննիական իսյամի հանբայիական դպրոցի «Թայբիս ներկայագուգիչ Իըն wi-Smurghh Իրլիս» ստեղծագործության։ «Թայբիս Իըլիսը» հանբայիականության հիմնարար աշխատություններից է, որում հեղինակը պաշտպանում է Սուննան վնասակար նորարարություն ներմուծողներից։ Հոդվածում է արվում ուրվացծել ընթերցման ավանդույթի զարգացումը և դրա փոփոխությունները, ապա քննարկվում են Իբն ալ-Ջաուցիի՝ վավեր ընթերցման և վստահելի ընթերցողներին առաջադրվող պայմանները։

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