

## THE ULAMA PERSPECTIVE TOWARD THE STATUS OF QIRĀ'AT SAB'AH

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**Abstrak.** *Qirā'at Sab'ah Menurut Perspektif Ulama.* Artikel ini akan menganalisis kedudukan *qirāat sab'ah* menurut para ulama. Tulisan ini merupakan kajian kepustakaan. Data diambil dari pendapat, konsep dan teori yang dikemukakan para ulama dalam berbagai literatur. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa *qirāat sab'ah* diterima sebagai *qirāat mutawâtir* dan sebagai *qirāat mutawâtir* maka *qirāat sab'ah* telah memenuhi kriteria sebagaimana yang disebutkan oleh para ulama.

**Kata kunci:** *qirā'at sab'ah, ulama, qirā'at mutawâtir, al-Qur'an*

**Abstract.** *The Ulama Perspective toward The Status of Qirāat Sab'ah.* This article is a preliminary attempt to discuss and trace the status of *qirāat sab'ah* from the perspective of ulama. The writing of this article is done based on library research. The data, concept and theory for this writing are taken from ideas, concepts and theories written by ulama as stated in the list of references at the end of this article. The result of the analysis in this article indicates two main things related to the status of *qirāat sab'ah*, there are *qirāat sab'ah* is recognized as *qirāat mutawâtir* and as *qirāat mutawâtir*, it has fulfilled the criteria as proposed by well-known Islamic ulama.

**Key words:** *qirāat sab'ah, ulama, qirāat mutawâtir, Alquran.*

### Introduction

*Qirā'at* with all forms of different ways of reading the *Qur'ân* is the beauty and the greatness of *Qur'ân* miracle. It is believed and accepted as dogmatic solely from Allah SWT (*tawqîfiyyah*). It is not the result of human rationality (*ijtihâdiyyah*). The existence of *qirāat* is to maintain credibility and authenticity of *kalâm Allâh* and to provide an ease of reading the *Qur'ân* to Muslims.

Grouping and popularity of the *qirāat* are largely determined by the figure initiated and socialized it. They are Ibn Mujâhid (died in 324 H), Ibn al-Jazârî (died in 833 H), al-Syâthibî (died in 590 H) and so on. This situation causes the occurrence of another terms like *qirāat* of Five, *Qirāat* of Seven, *Qirāat* of Eight, *Qirāat* of Ten, and *Qirāat* of Fourteen.<sup>1</sup>

This paper discusses the definition and standardization of *qirāat al-sab'ah*. Besides, the opinions of the ulama on the status of *qirāat mutawâtir* and the status of *Qur'ân* verses with different *qirā'at mutawâtir* reading *Qur'ân* are also discussed in this paper.

### Basic Concept of Qirā'at Sab'ah

Ulama, like Syihâb al-dîn al-Qasthalânî (died in 923 H), set the types of *qirāat* based on the relationship of *qirāat* to the priest.<sup>2</sup> *Qirāat* can be divided into three types: (1) *Qirāat sab'ah*, the *qirāat* which is attributed to the seven priests of *qirāat*, namely Imâm Nâfi' (died in 169 H), Ibn Katsîr (died in 120 H), Abû 'Amr (died in 154 H), Ibn 'Âmir (died in 118 H), 'Âshim (died in 127 H), Hamzah (died in 156 H), al-Kisâ'ib (died in 189 H) and Ibn Mujâhid. Acceptability and popularity of *qirāat sab'ah* are accepted by jumhur ulama.<sup>3</sup> (2) *Qirāat 'asyarah*, is the *qirāat* which is attributed to ten priests of *qirāat*, namely seven priests mentioned before and three more of them, namely Yazîd Imâm Abû Ja'far ibn al-Qa'qa' (died in 130 H), Ya'qûb (died in 205 H) and Khalâf (died in 229 H). This *qirāat* of ten is disputed the level of its popularity and acceptability by ulama. Ibn al-Jazârî (died in 833 H) has opinion that *qirāat* of ten is *qirāat mutawâtir*. It means that three *qirāat* after

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<sup>1</sup> Syar'i Sumin, *Autentisitas dan Popularitas Qiraat Sab'ah*, (Depok, Pena Utama, 2008), p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qasthallânî, *Lathâif al-Isyârât li Funûn al-Qirâât*, Tahqîq Syaykh 'Amir al-Sayyid Utsmân, (Mesir: Mathba'ah al-Majlis al-A'lâ li al-Syuûn al-Islâmiyyah, 1972), p.170.

<sup>3</sup> Abd al-'Alî Sâlim Mukram and Mukhtâr Aḥmad 'Umar, *Mu'jam al-Qirâât al-Qur'âniyyah Ma'a Muqaddimah fi al-Qirâât wa Ayyah al-Qurrâ'*, (Beirut, Dâr al-Fikr, 1402), p.76.

*qirâat sab'ah* have the same popularity as *qirâat sab'ah*.<sup>4</sup> (3) *Qirâat arba'ah 'asyar* (*qirâat* of fourteen), is *qirâat* of ten plus four priests, namely Ibn Muhâisin (died in 123 H), al-Yazîdî (died in 202 H), Hasan al-Bashrî (died in 110 H) and al-'A'masy (died in 148 H). The Ulama agree that the last four *qirâat* is *qirâat syâdzdzah*, namely the *qirâat* which have valid *sanad* in accordance with the rules of the Arabic language, but violated *Rasm al-Mushhaf*.<sup>5</sup>

The definition of *qirâat sab'ah* cannot be separated from the role of the figure of *qirâat* of *Qurân* namely Abû Bakr Ahmad ibn Mûsâ ibn al-'Abbâs ibn Mujâhid al-Tamîmî al-Baghdâdî (died in 324 H). He is the initiator and formulator of *qirâat sab'ah* concept who had large contribution in the development of knowledge of *qirâat*, which was accepted and agreed by jumhur ulama as *qirâat mutawâtir*.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, definitely, *qirâat sab'ah* is *qirâat* of *Qur'an* compiled and selected by Ibn Mujâhid (died in 324 H) based on valid standards of *qirâat* requirements. It is also based on the evaluation of the credibility and capability of the priests of *qirâat*, as well as their seniority and popularity. It results in the reading from seven people *ahl al-Qurrâ'* from five cities, namely in Makkah, Ibn Katsîr (died in 120 H), in Madinah, Nâfi' (died in 169 H), in Syam, Ibn 'Âmir (died in 118 H), in Bashrah, Abû 'Amr (died in 154 H) and in Kufah, 'Âshim (died in 127 H), Hamzah (died in 156 H) and al-Kisâ'î (died in 189 H).<sup>7</sup>

### Legal Basis of *Qirâ'at Sab'ah*

Before describing the criteria of *qirâat sab'ah* foundation, it is better to understand the situation regarded as the prologue encouraging the birth of *qirâat sab'ah*. Firstly, the *qirâat* of *Qurân* has the problem. It must be solved seriously. There is the *hadîts* of Rasulullah Saw. describing that *Qurân* was revealed in "seven letters". Then, the Prophet command to choose to read the easiest one. The Prophet himself did not explain what he meant by "the seven letters".<sup>8</sup>

Besides, there are many versions of *qirâat*. It was said that the Prophet Muhammad Saw. has permitted to read them. Even, people who do not like the

development of the *qirâat* of *Qurân*, especially expert lust and heresy's actors (أهل الأهواء وأصحاب البدع), they read *Qurân* with wrong and unpopular *qirâat*. They create, modify, add or subtract the new *qirâat*.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the ulama of *ahl al-qurrâ* did quick response to keep and preserve the purity of *Qurân*, in order not to be tampered by people who are not responsible for the original *qirâat* in which the *sanad* does not reach Rasulullah Saw.

At the end of the second century of Hijra, the ulama of *ahl al-Qurrâ* began to do the research. They selected and tested the truth of *qirâat* which is recognized as *qirâat* of *Qurân*. Those research and testing were done by using rule and criteria accepted and agreed by Muslim jurists, namely concerning the *sanad*, *Rasm al-Mushhaf* and the rules of the Arabic language.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, in the middle of the third century hijrah, there was a figure namely Ibn Mujâhid (died in 324 H) in Baghdad to keep and maintain the authenticity of *qirâat* of *Qur'an*. He put the reminder of *Qurân* into four categories: (1) Those who are proficient on the aspect of Arabic language and *qirâat*. They are the the priest (*imâm*) who can be the reference of *Qurân* reminder. (2) The one who is expert in Arabic language and spell the dialect correctly but they do not have other knowledge. They are like Arabian hinterland who read *Qurân* with their own dialect or language. They are not able to change their spoken language because they have been glued with their mother tongue. (3) The reminders of *Qurân* who are only able to reproduce what they listen from other people without any other knowledge. They are not proficient in Arabic language and they do not have other knowledge. Their basic knowledge is only memorizing and listening. (4) The reminders of *Qurân* who are proficient in Arabic language. They know the semantics of *Qurân* and master the dialect but they do not have the knowledge of *qirâat*. Their knowledge of Arabic language encouraged them to read *Qurân* by using the letters permitted in Arabic language although this model of reading *Qurân* is not followed by the previous people. Thus, they have done a heretic.<sup>11</sup>

The many versions of reading *Qurân* encourage Ibn Mujâhid to evaluate the existing *qirâat* and then he proposed the foundation on *qirâat sab'ah*.<sup>12</sup> In the book "al-sab'ah", Ibn Mujâhid rejected some *qirâat* that

<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Jazarî, *al-Nasyr fî al-Qirâat al-'Asyr*, (Beirut, Dâr al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1970), p.46.

<sup>5</sup> Abu Zar'ah, *Hujjat al-Qirâat*, Tahqîq, Sa'id al-Afghânî, (Beirut, Muassasat al-Risâlah, 1984), p.14.

<sup>6</sup> Mannâ' al-Qaththân, *Mabâhîts fî Ulûm Al-Qur'an*, (Beirut, al-Syirkah al-Mutta'hîdah li al-Tawzî', 1973), p.79.

<sup>7</sup> Abd al-'Alî Sâlim Mukram and Mukhtâr Ahmad 'Umar, *Mu'jam al-Qirâat al-Qur'âniyyah*, p. 73 and 76.

<sup>8</sup> Syar'i Sumin, *Autentisitas dan Popularitas Qiraat Sab'ah*, p.6

<sup>9</sup> Abd al-'Alî Sâlim Mukram and Mukhtâr Ahmad 'Umar, *Mu'jam al-Qirâat al-Qur'âniyyah*, p.74.

<sup>10</sup> Mannâ' al-Qaththân, *Mabâhîts fî Ulûm Al-Qur'an*, p.172.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Jazarî, *al-Nasyr fî al-Qirâat al-'Asyr*, p.46.

<sup>12</sup> Mannâ' al-Qaththân, *Mabâhîts fî Ulûm Al-Qur'an*, p.172.

did not follow the rules of the Arabic language. The concept of *qirâat sab'ah* according to Ibn al-Mujâhid is based on three conditions which was agreed and accepted (*ijmâ*) by ulama. It is also based on special consideration on the credibility and capability of the priests of *qirâat*. In detail, the requirements as the basis of *qirâat sab'ah* of Ibn al-Mujâhid version are as follows: (1) *Qirâat* must have a valid *sanad*. (2) *Qirâat* must follow one of the writing of *Mushhaf 'Utsmânî* at least implicitly. (3) *Qirâat* must follow one of Arabic language rules.<sup>13</sup> (4) The priest of *qirâat* is well-known. His *qirâat* is recognized by jumhur ulama. He masters all aspects of *qirâat* and Arabic language. (5) The seniority as the priest and the numbers of the follower must be considered. Then, his *qirâat* must be taken into consideration to develop.<sup>14</sup>

The last two requirements is preferred as the basic consideration by Ibn Mujâhid. At the end, he does not nominate Imâm Ya'qûb (died 205 H) as the priests of *qirâat sab'ah*. He prefers to choose Imâm al-Kisâ'i (died in 189 H). In other words, in Bashrah, Ibn Mujâhid prefers to choose Abû 'Amr al-Bashrî (died in 154 H) than two of his students, Ya'qûb (died in 205 H) and Al-Yazidî (died in 202 H). Similarly, he prefers to choose Nâfi' al-Madanî (died in 169 H) than Abû Ja'far (d. 130 H) the teacher of Nâfi' himself because Nâfi's *qirâat* is more popular among the experts of *qirâat* in Madinah. Furthermore, Khalâf (died in 229 H) was not nominated for *qirâat sab'ah*, because his *qirâat* is the same as *qirâat* of people of Kufa. Khalâf himself is regarded as junior. In Mekah, Ibn Mujâhid prefers to choose Ibn Katsîr (died in 120 H) than Ibn Muḥaysin (died in 123 H) because Mekah people did not agree with Ibn Muḥaysin *qirâat*.<sup>15</sup>

It seems that Ibn Mujâhid is very strict in determining the criteria to be used as the basis for the legality of *qirâat sab'ah*. He is successful in identifying seven priests of *qirâat* from five cities. He can put the basic concept of valid *qirâat sab'ah*. It was recognized by jumhur ulama. It is also accepted and recognized as *qirâat mutawâtir*.

### The Status of *Qirâ'at Sab'ah* as *Qirâ'at Mutawâtir*

According to jumhur ulama, *qirâat sab'ah* was narrated by Prophet Muhammad Saw. as popular *qirâat*. Nevertheless, there are some scholars questioning

what is meant by *mutawâtir*. Is it *mutawâtir* from the perspective of the Prophet Saw., or *mutawâtir* from the perspective of the priests of *qirâat* of seven. For example, Imâm Badr al-dîn al-Zarkasyî (died in 794 H/1392 M) stated that *qirâat sab'ah* is narrated popularly by the priests of *qirâat sab'ah*, while the status of its *mutawâtir* is from the Prophet Saw. It is still questionable. As mentioned by al-Zarkasyî, it happened because the *sanad* (the story) as stated by the priests of *qirâat sab'ah* in their *qirâat* books, is personal story which cannot be regarded as to reach the level of *mutawâtir*.<sup>16</sup>

Related to this case, al-Sakhawâ (died 643 H), for example, has the opinion as follows:

It will not reduce the degree of the status of the mutawâtir of *qirâat sab'ah* when the *qirâat* is narrated through individual story (أحد). Similarly, if you say: "It had been told to me that Fulan got info from Fulan that he has seen the city of Samarkand". This does not reduce the degree of the acceptability of the news you had received, because the city of Samarkand has been known by many people by its popularity. Thus, it is clear that *qirâat sab'ah* is *qirâat mutawâtir* (from the Prophet).<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, the limitation of *sanad* or story as mentioned by the priests of *qirâat sab'ah*, does not deny the existence of the *sanad* of those *qirâat* from another people. Attributing *qirâat sab'ah* to the priests of *qirâat* by stating a given *sanad* as the basis of their *qirâat* is aimed at keeping the *qirâat* itself and to keep their teacher in mind. Whereas, each of them in all generations accepts the *qirâat* by considering the level of the popularity and acceptability of the *sanad*. This is because *Qurân* in any countries is accepted by a group of people from a group of people through their priest of *qirâat*. It continuous from one generation to the next generation.

Thus, it can be concluded that the opinion of some ulama who doubted the popularity and acceptability of *qirâat sab'ah* from the Prophet Saw., will not undermine the position of *qirâat sab'ah* in its capacity as *qirâat mutawâtir* from prophet Muhammad Saw. Syauqi Daif, who wrote *tahqîq* of the book of Ibn Mujâhid, states the following:

By putting *Qur'ân* into Utsmani manuscript, then the reading of *Qur'ân* is never separated from the main reason, guided by the written one. Even since the era of Prophet Muhammad, it is guided by the history, a valid and popular story from him. The main reason is always a history from the Prophet Saw. *Qurân* is also accepted

<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Jazarî, *al-Nasyr fî al-Qirâat al-'Asyr*, p.46.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Mujâhid, *Al-Sab'ah fî al-Qirâat*, Tahqîq Syauqi Daif, (Mesir, Dâr al-Ma'ârif, 1400 H), p.19.

<sup>15</sup> Syar'i Sumin, *Autentisitas dan Popularitas Qiraat Sab'ah*, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Zarkasyî, *Al-Burhân fî 'ulûm al-Qurân*, (Beirut, Dâr al-Ma'ârif, 1957), p.319.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Qasthallânî, *Lathâ'if al-Isyârât li Funûn al-Qirâat*, p.178.

by the followers from the Prophet Muhammad through reading. The *tâbi'in* receives it from Prophet's followers, and so on from generation to generation, through the popular story. In the meantime, since the very beginning of Islam, there has been a group of Muslims in every area of the Arabian Peninsula at that time, those who were specializing themselves in reading, memorizing and preserving *Qurân* based on the reading which is narrated popularly by Prophet<sup>18</sup>. As it is known that the writings of *Qurân* contained in the Manuscript Utsmani did not use letters (النقط) and punctuation (الشكل). Thus, the manuscript contained all *qirâat* which is popular from the Prophet Muhammad<sup>19</sup>.

Meanwhile, some ulama classifies three versions of other *qirâat* namely, *qirâat* Abû Ja'far (died in 130 H), *qirâat* Ya'qûb (died in 206 H), and *qirâat* Khalâf (died in 229 H) which he (Khalâf) came up later with his own *qirâat*, which is different from *qirâat* Imâm Hamzah (died in 165 H). Therefore, he is categorized into the group of the priest of *qirâat* of ten and regarded as popular *qirâat*. Thus, based on their opinion, there are ten popular *qirâat*. Related to this, Ibn al-Jazarî states:

As for *qirâat sab'ah*, (admittedly as *qirâat mutawâtir*) by al-Syâthibî (died 590 H) as well as three other *qirâat* i.e., *qirâat* of Abû Ja'far, *qirâat* of Ya'qûb, and *qirâat* of Khalâf (died 229 H), are classified as *qirâat mutawâtir* and categorized as *qirâat* revealed by Allah Swt. to the Prophet Muhammad. The popularity and acceptability of *qirâat* of ten are not only limited to those who read it based on certain *sanad*, but it is popular and acceptable among any Muslims who pronounced *two kalimat syahâdat*.<sup>20</sup> Talking about *qirâat mutawâtir*, the ulama agree and accept the status of *qirâat mutawâtir* only around the priests of *qirâat*. However, they have different idea about the status of *qirâat mutawâtir* if it is related to the Prophet Saw. It was mentioned at that time that Syihâb al-Dîn Abû Shama (died in 665 H) and al-Zarkasyî (died in 794 H) are those who doubt it. The reason is that among the *sanad* levels, as mentioned in the books of *qirâat*, some of them do not meet the required numbers to be popular. Among the ulama, such as Abû al-Ma'âlî (died in 776 H) and al-Jazarî (died in 833 H), as quoted by Ibn Salim Bâzmûl, it was said that the insufficient numbers of the story of *qirâat*, as mentioned in the books of *qirâat*, cannot be used as the reason to judge that the *qirâat* is not *mutawâtir*.<sup>21</sup>

The level and status of *mutawâtir* of *qirâat* of *Qurân* was not only based on the number of *sanad* listed in the *qirâat* books because *sanad* is only the name representing many people who specialized themselves in narrating certain *qirâat* carefully. Each *qirâat* is learned and used by every people of each country from generation to

generation. It is like the popularity of pilgrimage news and *qirâat* of *Qurân*. They are accepted by the people at any time as news which are *mutawâtir*.<sup>22</sup>

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that *qirâat mutawâtir* is not only judged by the number *sanad* mentioned in the books of *qirâat*. The chained of the *sanad* of a *qirâat* from *qirâat* priests up to the *qirâat* Prophet as listed in the genealogy of *sanad* in *qirâat* holy books, is just the names representing people in narrating certain *qirâat*. It cannot be denied that *qirâat sab'ah* is recognized by all ulama for its *mutawâtir*. Its narration as *mutawâtir* is a fundamental element for valid *qirâat* in which it's *Qurân* is recognized. Hence, the *qirâat sab'ah* is indeed recognized the authenticity of its *Qurân*.

Why *qirâat sab'ah* was accepted and agreed its status as *qirâat mutawâtir* by the ulama? In relation to this, al-Qasthallânî states as follows:

Based on the criteria of popular or not, *qirâat* of *Qurân* is divided into three types, namely: (1) The one which is agreed of its popularity, that is the well known *qirâat sab'ah*. (2) There is a difference opinion of the ulama for the popularity related to three *qirâat* beside *qirâat sab'ah*. (3) Those that are agreed as *qirâat syâdzdzah* or the four other *qirâat*.<sup>23</sup>

What factors that causes the *qirâat sab'ah* is agreed by ulama of its popularity and also known in the Islamic world until now? There three factors, namely: (1) *Qirâat sab'ah* has more narrators and the *sanad* is popular, both as *lafzhî* (revealed and recorded), as well as *simâ'î* (audible and spread). More over, the priests of *qirâat sab'ah* are well known by their credibility and capability of the knowledge of *qirâat* of *Qurân*. (2) The specialization of *qirâat sab'ah* priests are concentrated to explore and pursue *Qurân qirâat* with their wide knowledge and the maturity of their knowledge about it. While the ulama of *qirâat* experts before them or their contemporaries are not yet specialized themselves to pursue *qirâat* of *Qurân*. They usually pursue the field of linguistics, fiqh, hadith, tafsir, chronicle and other knowledges developed at that time. (3) The popularity of a *qirâat* is not only judged by the number *sanad* stated in books of *qirâat*. The chained of *sanad* of a *qirâat* from the priests of *qirâat* up to the Prophet, as listed in the genealogy of *sanad* in *qirâat* books, is only the names representing people in certain *qirâat* narration.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Mujâhid, *Al-Sab'ah fi al-Qirâat*, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Mujâhid, *Al-Sab'ah fi al-Qirâat*, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn al-Jazarî, *al-Nasyr fi al-Qirâat al-'Asyr*, p.46.

<sup>21</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Sâlim Bazmul, *Al-Qirâat wa Atsâruhâ fi al-Tafsîr wa al-Aḥkâm*, (Riyad: Dâr al-Hijrah, 1996 M), p.149.

<sup>22</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Sâlim Bazmul, *Al-Qirâat wa Atsâruhâ fi al-Tafsîr wa al-Aḥkâm*, p.151.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Qasthallânî, *Lathâif al-Isyârât li Funûn al-Qirâat*, p.170.

<sup>24</sup> Syar'i Sumin, *Autentisitas dan Popularitas Qiraat Sab'ah*, p.282.

## The Status of Qurân Verses with Different Versions of Qirâat

Sometimes there is an agreement among the experts of *qirâat* about the *qirâat* of a particular verse. Sometimes there are different version of *qirâat* among them. In case one verses of the *Qurân*, there are two different versions of *qirâat*, are the two of them from Allah SWT?. In this case, there is a difference opinion of the ulama as follows:<sup>25</sup> (1) Both are the words of God. (2) Only one version is commanded by Allah Swt., while the other is allowed by Him to be read with different *qirâat* version. (3) If each of these *qirâat* have a different meaning or intention, then both of them are commanded by Allah Swt., so both versions of *qirâat* are the same level as *Qurân* verses. For example, take a look at the following words of God <sup>26</sup>ولا تقربوهن حتى يطهرن. Rasm (يطهرن) in the verse can be read يطهرن and can also be read يطهرن. For those who read “يطهرن” is Hafsh, Nâfi ‘, Ibn’Âmr and Ibn Katsîr. While for those who read “يطهرن” is Hamzah, Al-Kisâi and Syu’bah.<sup>27</sup>Based on the first version of *qirâat* the meaning of the verse is: “And do not approach them (your wives) until they are purified (stop from their menses without taking a bath).” Meanwhile, according to the second version of *qirâat* (يطهرن), the meaning of the verse is: “And do not approach them (your wives) until they are purified (stop their menses and taking a bath).”<sup>28</sup> (4) If both versions of *qirâat* contain the same meaning or intention, so only one version of *qirâat* is spoken by Allah Swt., but it is allowed to be read as other version of *qirâat*. (5) If it is true that only one of the two versions of the *qirâat* is spoken by God, then it is spoken by the Quraysy language.

## Closing Remarks

Based on the above explanation, at the end of this writing, the writer can draw five conclusion as follows: first, *qirâat sab'ah* is *qirâat* of priests of seven which is compiled by Ibn Mujâhid based on valid criteria of *qirâat* and evaluation of the credibility and capability of the priests, as well as their seniority and popularity, namely Imâm Nâfi ‘al-Madani, Ibn al-Makkî Katsîr Abû ‘Amr al-Bashrî, Ibn ‘Âmir al-Syâmî, ‘Ashim al-Kûfi, Hamzah al-Kûfi and al-Kisâ’i al-Kûfi.

Second, the criteria used by Ibn Mujâhid as the basic concepts of *qirâat sab'ah* are: (1) The *qirâat* must have

a valid *sanad*. (2) The *qirâat* must follow the writing of one of the *Rasm Mushhaf Utsmânî*. (3) The *qirâat* must follow one of Arabic language rules. The priest of the *qirâat* must be popular and his *qirâat* is recognized by jumhur ulama who has much knowledge about all aspects of *qirâat* of *Qurân* and Arabic language. (4) The seniority of the *qirâat* priest and the number of their followers or disciples must be considered. Their *qirâat* is agreed to develop.

Third, the popularity of a *qirâat* is not only judged by the number of *sanad* mentioned in the books. The chained of the *sanad* of a *qirâat* from the priest of *qirâat* up to the Prophet as listed in the genealogy of *sanad* in *qirâat* books is only the names representing people in certain *qirâat* narration.

Fourth, if one of the verses of the *Qurân* has two or even more different versions of *qirâat*, so there are only two possibilities as follows: (1) Both are spoken by God, so that both are the revelation of God (the meaning spelling). (2) One of them was spoken by God while others were allowed by God to read it and both them are revelation of God (spelling and meaning).

Fiveth, as has been previously mentioned by the authors, If the two versions of *qirâat* mentioned above fulfill the standard *qirâat*, and since the legitimate *qirâat* is popular *qirâat* which obviously recognized its *Qurân*, so even if there are two or more versions of *qirâat*, the author tends to say all of those *qirâat* are revelation of God, either in the form of words of God or revelation through His permission to be read with different version of *qirâat*. []

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<sup>25</sup> Al-Zarkasyî, *Al-Burhân fi ‘ulûm al-Qurân*, p.326.

<sup>26</sup> Q.s. al-Baqarah [2]: 222.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Mujâhid, *Al-Sab’ah fi al-Qirâat*, p.182.

<sup>28</sup> Syar’i Sumin, *Autentisitas dan Popularitas Qiraat Sab'ah*, p.285.

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