

The Foundations Of The Morphological Orientation Of Qur'ānic Semantics And Its Role In Their Semantic Integration

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Abstract:

The various forms of the Qur'ānic readings constitute one of the most significant fields of study closely connected to the linguistic sciences. They represent an important source for enriching Arabic and establishing its grammatical and morphological norms. Consequently, scholars have engaged extensively with them at times, adducing them as authoritative evidence and, at other times, defending their validity. All of this activity developed within the framework of *'ilm al-tawjīh* (the science of orientation), whose branches have multiplied in accordance with the various axes of linguistic variation found among the readings. Within this broader context, the present study focuses on one such axis, namely, the morphological axis. It proceeds from a central problem: to investigate instances of morphological variation in certain Qur'ānic passages and to examine the impact of such variation on the semantic importance of the verse's context. Furthermore, it explores the role of the science of orientation in elucidating the aspects of semantic integration among these differing forms, notwithstanding their variation and divergence. To address this problem, the study adopts a descriptive-comparative methodology to identify selected instances of variation between readings: the first concerns nouns, and the second concerns verbs. In doing so, it presents the various cognitive and linguistic tools employed by scholars of orientation to demonstrate the semantic coherence among these forms within the structure of the Qur'ānic text, despite their formal differences.

Keywords: Qur'ānic Readings; Morphological Orientation; Semantic Integration; Linguistic Variation; 'Ilm al-Tawjīh.

Definition of the Qur'ānic Readings:

The concept of *Qur'ānic readings* may be summarised as the study of the various modes of pronunciation and performance through which the Noble Qur'ān has been transmitted. On this basis, 'Abd al-Fattāh al-Qāḍī defines it as follows: 'It is a discipline through which the manner of pronouncing the Qur'ānic words and the method of their performance are known, whether in agreement or in divergence, with each aspect attributed to its transmitter.' (Al-Qāḍī, 2002, p. 5). However, it does not merely stop at revealing the different modes of recitation; rather, it extends beyond that, for it possesses exegetical dimensions that contribute to understanding the Qur'ānic texts, assist in deriving legal rulings, and help comprehend the divine intents in the required manner. As a result, the *science of readings* has been regarded as the bridge connecting the sciences of the Qur'ān with the sciences of language, since it constitutes the primary means for a more precise understanding of the texts of the Noble Revelation.

Among the features of the Qur'ānic inimitability manifested in the readings is that the variation occurring in certain Qur'ānic passages does not affect any fundamental principle of religion. That is, it does not pertain to verses related to matters of legislation in the domains of creed, acts of worship, or transactions, as such would constitute an entry point to juristic disagreement that could open the way to division, fragmentation, and deviation from the principles and teachings of the true religion.

Conditions of Sound Reading:

Scholars have presented multiple classifications of the Qur'ānic readings according to several criteria, foremost their conformity to the rules and regulations of Arabic, as well as to the 'Uthmānic consonantal script. Through this, the *model sound reading* is realised, which is regarded as the most complete and the most authentic reading. These criteria appear among all scholars who have defined the conditions of a sound reading. In this regard, Ibn al-Jazarī states, 'Every reading that accords with Arabic, even in one aspect, and accords with one of the 'Uthmānic codices, even potentially, and whose chain of transmission is sound, is the sound reading which it is not permissible to reject, nor lawful to deny; rather, it is among the seven letters in which the Qur'ān was revealed, and it is obligatory upon people to accept it, whether it be among the seven Imāms or the ten.' (Ibn al-Jazarī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 9)

Conversely, a reading is judged anomalous if it lacks one of the aforementioned elements. One researcher defines it as follows: 'Whatever does not fulfil those conditions, in terms of authenticity, conformity to Arabic, and conformity to the 'Uthmānic script, is anomalous.' (Lahnān, 2005, p. 197). On the basis of this definition, the conditions for judging a reading to be sound rest upon three fundamental criteria:

The First Criterion: Conformity with the Standards of the Arabic Language

This constitutes one of the essential pillars required for judging a reading to be sound. A reading must conform to the rules of the Arabic linguistic system at all its levels, i.e., phonetic, morphological, syntactic and semantic, even if the particular reading is weak or uncommon among grammarians. This is because the Qur'ānic text, in all its readings, is in origin the primary and most authoritative model to which recourse is made in adducing evidence for the validity of linguistic standards. Consequently, any reading that deviates from these measures is rejected and deemed invalid. Ibn al-Jazarī stated, 'The fundamental principle concerning a sound reading is that it should accord with the rules of the Arabic language, given that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic. It is inconceivable that there should be a reading that is not in harmony with grammatical rules. Nevertheless, scholars rely, in affirming the authenticity of a Qur'ānic reading, upon a sound chain of transmission. They do not investigate the conformity of the reading to grammatical rules, nor whether it reflects what was widespread among the modes of speech of the Arabs; rather, they depend upon what has been established for them through transmitted reports and what has been authentically narrated.' (Ibn al-Jazarī, n.d., p. 16)

In contrast, some Basran grammarians rejected this principle and denied certain readings that departed from linguistic standards, as they were more rigorous in constructing their grammatical views on analogy and reliable citation rather than on transmitted usage alone. However, the majority of linguists did not adopt this view; rather, some refuted the later Basran grammarians' position and regarded such objections as anomalous and not relied upon. Shawqī Ḍayf, explaining the view of those who adopted this position, states: 'The Noble Qur'ān and its readings were a source for their grammatical rules, and a group of them hesitated only before a few isolated instances in the readings, scarcely exceeding the fingers of one

hand... In truth, it was the Basrans in the third century who criticised certain readings, and in a few examples that cannot validly be taken as constituting a phenomenon.’ (Ḍayf, n.d., p. 19). This is because linguistic reality attests that the Basrans and other established grammatical schools drew on Qur’ānic readings to support their grammatical positions, substantiate their arguments, and refute opponents.

The second criterion: The establishment of authenticity through uninterrupted mass transmission (*tawātur*) from the Prophet ﷺ so that its authenticity cannot be impugned.

The third criterion: That it does not depart from the ‘Uthmānic consonantal script of the Noble Muṣḥaf.

The Purpose of the Variation among the Qur’ānic Readings

The variation among the Qur’ānic readings in certain passages, in which there appears to be divergence in the use of different linguistic forms or reliance upon differing linguistic principles despite the unquestionable consensus that the Noble Qur’ān is of divine origin and free from error, derives directly from the *seven letters*, as the limits of this variation do not extend beyond their scope. This is affirmed by Ibn al-Jazarī, who explained: ‘...for the variation referred to therein is a variation of diversity and difference, not a variation of contradiction and opposition, for such is impossible in the speech of God Most High.’ God Most High says:

[النساء: 82] ﴿أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا﴾

‘Do they not then reflect upon the Qur’ān? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found much discrepancy.’

(al-Nisā’: 8) (Ibn al-Jazarī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 49)

For this reason, the multiplicity and variation of readings offer immense benefits and significant effects, assisting in attaining a precise understanding of the Qur’ānic text and in deriving its subtle meanings without opening the door to contradiction or divergence that would lead to negating what is affirmed or affirming what is negated.

This matter is not confined solely to the sound reading; rather, the readings in all their categories have contributed, even if only in part, to opening broader horizons in the fields of the religious sciences and the linguistic sciences alike, since all of them are authentically established from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and have been transmitted to us by way of uninterrupted mass transmission. Thus, they do not differ from the Qur’ān in any respect. Ibn Taymiyyah states the following: ‘These readings in which the meaning varies are all true. Each reading, in relation to another, is akin to a verse alongside another verse; it is obligatory to believe in them all and to follow what they contain of meaning in knowledge and in practice. It is not permissible to abandon the implication of one on account of another, supposing that there is contradiction.’ (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995, vol. 13, p. 391). Indeed, both classical and modern studies conducted in this field have established that the Qur’ānic readings interpret one another, which falls within the juristic sphere under the designation of *interpreting the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān*, bearing in mind that the variation among the readings does not encompass the entirety of the Noble Qur’ān. This confirms that the Qur’ānic readings constitute an inseparable part of the Qur’ānic text as a whole.

Among the objectives of this variation is also the facilitation it provides to Muslims, who speak diverse Arabic dialects, each with its own linguistic habits and practices, such as hamzah articulation, imālah,

lightening, and differences in certain inflectional aspects, thereby easing their memories and transmission.

From another perspective, all the readings collectively stand as testimony to the inimitability of the Noble Qur'ān in terms of its preservation and protection from alteration and discrepancy, despite its existence in these numerous forms.' (Al-Suyūfī, 1974, vol. 1, p. 279). Notably, this variation in the modes of recitation did not arise from the independent reasoning of the Imāms and reciters, who might otherwise have fallen into disagreement or contradiction among themselves; rather, it is a recitational variation transmitted to us through uninterrupted mass transmission, since recitation is a following tradition, unrelated to differences among the Imāms or scholars of religion in subsidiary legal matters.

Scholars have classified the purposes and objectives that necessitated this variation into three principal domains: 'first, that which pertains to inimitability and preference; second, that pertains to interpretation and clarification; third, that pertains to legal ruling and inference.' (Maṣūf, 2024, p. 43) All of these complement one another, such that a comprehensive reading of the Noble Qur'ān cannot be attained except through reliance upon these variations, which remain enduring testimony to its inimitability.

Position of the Qur'ānic Readings in Arabic Linguistic Study

Early Arab scholars devoted considerable attention to the study of the Qur'ānic readings across all their categories owing to the diverse dialectal phenomena they encompass, which broadened the channels of Arabic linguistic inquiry and opened new horizons for it. Scholars have expanded extensively upon them and established them as a firm scholarly foundation to which they returned to substantiate their views and support their linguistic arguments, even in the case of anomalous readings, since the transmissions that conveyed these readings are regarded among the most reliable attestations documenting the various linguistic and dialectal practices that shaped the linguistic landscape at that time.

The influence of the readings on linguistic heritage is evident in the studies and research produced in this field through scholars' reliance upon them, particularly grammarians, who resort to them in contexts of grammatical disagreement when one group sought to advance decisive proof and manifest evidence. There is no doubt that the Noble Qur'ān, with its readings, constitutes the truest of evidence and the clearest of proofs; thus, many grammarians turned to the readings to establish an opinion or reinforce a position.' (Shājī, n.d., p. 23) They were also regarded as reliable sources for documenting certain Arabic dialectal phenomena, morphological, lexical and syntactic, which differed from the standards of the Qurashī dialect and which nonetheless found expression within the Qur'ānic text.

The Relationship between the Science of Orientation and the Qur'ānic Readings:

The *science of orientation* (*ilm al-tawjīh*) is regarded as one of the most eminent Arabic sciences to which Arab scholars devoted considerable attention from the time of the revelation to the Messenger (peace upon him), owing to its effective role in preserving the Qur'ānic text and in understanding and interpreting it in light of the recitational differences existing among the renowned reciters. The principal reason for the emergence of the *science of the orientation of readings* was the multiplicity of Qur'ānic readings and their variation at multiple levels, since this science, in essence, aims to explain the differences among these recitational aspects of the same Qur'ānic text. This variation pertains to all the linguistic, phonetic, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels, thereby directly affecting the content and eloquence of the Qur'ānic verse.

From this perspective, this science is defined as ‘a discipline through which the manner of pronouncing the Qur’ānic words and the method of their performance are known, whether in agreement or divergence, with each aspect attributed to its transmitter.’ Each reciter has his own particular method of reciting the Qur’ānic verses, and each mode of recitation possesses specific justifications and explanations upon which there is agreement as to their correctness.

Accordingly, the core subject matter addressed by this science is the text of the Noble Qur’ān. This is achieved by examining the instances of recitational disagreement, which manifest in multiple forms. Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Bannā defined this science as follows: ‘It is a discipline by which the agreement and disagreement of the transmitters of the Book of God Most High are known with regard to omission and affirmation, vowelisation and sukun, separation and conjunction, and other aspects of pronunciation, substitution and the like, in terms of transmitted hearing.’

This science has been known for various designations, most notably *the science of derivation*, *the science of interpretation*, and *argumentation*. However, the term that gained the widest currency and broadest approval among specialists is *the science of orientation*, since it is a discipline whose objective is to uncover the various Qur’ānic aspects within a single Qur’ānic context while seeking to clarify the cause of variation and its justifications, all for the purpose of defending the authenticity and originality of the reading and revealing the semantic and rhetorical grounds for this recitational variation and divergence, to ensure sound reading. Thus, its primary aim is ‘to clarify and interpret the meaning of the verse that has been read in more than one manner.’ The purpose, therefore, is clarification and elucidation, and the refutation of doubts and misconceptions that may affect the Qur’ānic text as a result of the multiplicity and variation of its recitational aspects, which would inevitably lead to confusion in determining the intended meaning and divine purpose within the various Qur’ānic contexts that were subject to disagreement.

The Divisions of the Science of Orientation and Their Relationships to the Levels of the Arabic Language

Most researchers have relied on the foundations of Arabic linguistic theory to identify aspects of recitational variation and difference to argue for particular readings. Some have relied on morphological or syntactic principles in the defense of a specific reading; others have achieved their aim by grounding their arguments in phonetic criteria, whereas another group has engaged in the field of rhetoric to attain the same objective. This division played a decisive role in the emergence of distinct orientational branches, all of which derive from the *science of orientation*. These branches differ from one another in that each is based upon a specific linguistic level in establishing its propositions. Hence, there were four branches:

Phonetic Orientation

This branch is directly connected with the science of *tajwīd*. In accordance with this function, it has been defined as a discipline whose aim is ‘to account for the differences in the Qur’ānic readings in their phonetic and articulatory aspects, such as the full realisation of the hamzah and its facilitation, assimilation and its separation, imālah and gemination... and to present the arguments of each group and to explain the reasons for the occurrence of this type of variation in the Qur’ānic readings.’ Ultimately,

recourse is made to the semantic criterion to establish the validity of their explanations and derivations, provided that the limits of the religious objectives to be respected are not transgressed.

Syntactic Orientation

Researchers consider syntactic orientation to constitute the core of the science of argumentation for the readings, to the extent that some have closely associated the science of orientation with this aspect. Among the definitions given are 'a discipline whose aim is to clarify the aspects of the Qur'ānic readings and their conformity with the rules of grammar and language and to ascertain their linguistic basis in fulfilment of the well-known condition (conformity with the Arabic language, even in one aspect).' This type concerns the grammatical inflexion of the words of the Noble Qur'ān while linking them in all their states to the semantic dimension, that is, the meaning of the verse. It also seeks to examine the soundness of the Qur'ānic syntactic structure, concluding that the recitational aspects subjected to syntactic evaluation cannot, under any circumstances, deviate from the grammatical and structural standards governing the Arabic linguistic system, even if they rely upon anomalous and uncommon grammatical principles.

Rhetorical Orientation

Like the preceding types, rhetorical orientation is concerned with indicating the rhetorical aspects arising from variations and differences in readings and discerning their role in enriching the eloquence of the Qur'ān as one of its aspects of inimitability. Its highest objective is to study the rhetorical dimensions arising from the variation of Qur'ānic styles within the same context. This means that, despite the distinction occurring at the level of the readings in their diversity and multiplicity, such variation directly contributes to the diversity and integration of Qur'ānic meanings to fulfil a single divine purpose.

Morphological orientation

Morphological orientation directs its attention to the structure of the word and the alterations and transformations that affect it as required by meaning. It also examines its various derivations. For this reason, some researchers have linked it to the field of Qur'ānic exegesis and have defined it from this perspective as 'the interpretation of the readings in the variant forms relating to the structure of the word, its pattern, its inflections, or aspects of the morphological system' (Al-Kathīrī, 2024, p. 135). This signifies that the morphological orientation of the readings contributes to interpreting the meanings of the Qur'ānic verses in a particular reading to identify the aspects of agreement and difference between it and another reading relating to the same Qur'ānic passage through deducing the various semantic functions performed by the morphological pattern within the context. This reveals the subtleties of meaning expressed by the Qur'ānic texts.

From another perspective, morphological orientation constitutes an important means of affirming the validity of the recitational aspects authentically transmitted from the Messenger (peace be upon him) through arguments and proofs free from doubt.

Instances of Morphological Variation among the Qur'ānic Readings

The concept of morphological variation among the Qur'ānic readings may be summarised as the divergence in the morphological patterns of the nouns and verbs occurring therein. This is because variation at the level of morphological structures inevitably leads to variation at the level of the semantic structure of the word, whether noun or verb, on the basis that the phonological changes that may affect it result in the manifestation of functional morphological meanings in addition to the core meaning

inherent in the triliteral root. Each pattern possesses morphological meanings that differ from one reading to another, thereby allowing the generation of new significations that increase understanding, deepen it, and prompt reflection upon it... without resulting in semantic conflict or contextual contradiction.' (Karūsh, 2018, p. 493).

The most prominent morphological instances in which substitution and variation have occurred within the body of the Qur'ānic readings are divided into two parts: one at the level of verbs and the other related to the nominal aspect. Some researchers have identified the forms of this morphological variation and classified them into two principal categories, each with specific patterns, as follows:

Nouns: The variation of nominal patterns has appeared in several forms, the most important of which are as follows: (*fa'l* and *fā'al*; the definite form with *al-* and the proper noun; *fa'īlah* and *fā'īlah*; the active participle and the passive participle; *fā'il* and *fa'ā'il*; the active participle and the verbal noun; *maf'al* and *mafā'il*; singular and plural; the verbal noun and the noun of instance...). * (Al-Ṭabṭabānī, 2006, pp. 27ff.)

Verbs: These exhibit multiple morphological phenomena, the most prominent of which are 'alternation between triliteral forms; between the triliteral and its augmented form with one additional letter; between the triliteral and its augmented form with two additional letters; between the past, present and imperative; between the active and the passive...'

In the corpus of the present study, a representative applied model has been selected for each type to observe the variation in morphological patterns within the Qur'ānic readings and to examine the extent of their effect on the general meaning of the Qur'ānic context in which they occur.

Effect of the Morphological Pattern on the Orientation of Meaning

By morphological pattern is meant the form or structure assumed by a word in the Arabic language, 'which may be shared by other words, and which consists of its arranged letters, its specified vowels, and its sukun, with due consideration given to the additional and original letters, each in its proper position.' (Al-Astarābādhī, 1982, vol. 1, p. 2). It is, therefore, an incidental attribute that varies according to the semantic context the speaker intends to express.

It thus becomes evident that the morphological pattern is associated with a specific meaning, namely, morphological meaning, even though variation in morphological patterns in Arabic does not prevent the retention of the general core meaning while allowing for semantic nuances added by these formal differences, which affect the original word.

The morphological meaning borne by a word does not confine its effect to the individual meanings inherent in the word itself; rather, its effects extend clearly to the general meaning expressed by the syntactic dimension, which in turn influences the rhetorical aspects performed by the context containing words in specific patterns. If these patterns change, this necessarily leads to a change in the rhetorical direction, differing in certain respects from the orientation it originally possessed.

Applied Models of Morphological Variation among the Qur'ānic Readings

First Model – Variation in the Form of the Verbal Noun

Such variation occurs in two readings of a single verse, namely, verse ninety-eight of Sūrat al-Kahf, which appears in two divergent forms in the word (*dakkā/dakkā'*). In the transmission of Warsh, it is read as follows:

[الكهف: 98] (قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّيٰ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ وَعَدُ رَبِّيٰ جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءً وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيٰ حَقًّا)

(said, "This is a mercy from my Lord; but when the promise of my Lord comes, He will make it level, and ever is the promise of my Lord true. ")

Surah Al-Kahf: 98

In this reading, the word (*dakkā*) is recited without the hamzah and with tanwīn on the kāf. It is thus an explicit, transmitted verbal noun on the pattern (*faʿl*), derived from the doubled trilateral root (*d-k-k*).

In the transmission of Ḥafṣ, however, it appears differently, as Ḥafṣ reads as follows:

[الكهف: 98] (قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّيٰ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ وَعَدُ رَبِّيٰ جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءً وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيٰ حَقًّا)

Here, the hamzah is retained in the word (*dakkāʾ*), known as the extended feminine alif, and the tanwīn is omitted from the end of the word, in contrast to the previous reading.

Both words, despite the difference in their forms, are derived from a single linguistic root. This indicates that their meanings are the same. This meaning is clearly recorded in the major Arabic lexicons. Among these is the definition provided by Ibn Manẓūr, who, after mentioning some of its derivatives, states: 'He levelled the الأرض by *dakk*, making its elevations and depressions even; he struck the earth, *dakk*; I struck the thing, *dakk*, when I struck it and broke it until I levelled it with the ground; and *al-dakk* refers to the demolition of a wall, a mountain, and the like.' (Ibn Manẓūr, 1919, vol. 3, pp. 425–426). This signifies that the word (*dakk*) revolves around the notion of intense pressure or violent striking that results in breaking, demolishing, or levelling in the Arabic lexicon.

The word (*dakkāʾ*), which occurs in the second reading, is an adjective derived from the same linguistic root, with an additional semantic nuance indicated by the lexicographers in their definitions of this root through its association with the description of الأرض and the she-camel. Ibn Zanjalah states in this regard, '...and the Arabs say a she-camel (*dakkāʾ*), that is, one without a hump. It is necessary to posit an ellipsis since the mountain is masculine and thus cannot be described as (*dakkāʾ*) because it is a feminine adjective. The adjective has been made to stand in place of the noun described, and the noun described has been omitted.' (Ibn Zanjalah, 1998, vol. 1, p. 435)

Although the majority of Arabic lexicons associate the she-camel with the feminine adjective (*dakkāʾ*), other lexicons indicate that applying this description to the she-camel is merely by way of comparison. Among the definitions that emphasise this meaning are the following: '(*Dakkāʾ*) with lengthening, on the pattern *hamrāʾ*, is derived from their saying "a she-camel (*dakkāʾ*)", that is, flat-humped and not elevated; or from their saying "land (*dakkāʾ* "dakkāʾ)" for raised ground.' (Al-Ḥalabī, n.d., vol. 5, p. 450). This is because the original association of the adjective is with الأرض, where it conveys the meaning of levelling. This is reflected in the definition: 'a mound of clay not thick,' and it is said: '(*al-dakkāʾ*): level الأرض.'

Hence, the difference between the words (*dakkā*) and (*dakkāʾ*) becomes evident. (*Dakkāʾ*) indicates a state of levelling and evenness, whereas (*dakkā*) signifies the act of crushing, destruction and violent striking that leads to levelling, breaking or demolition.

The point of difference in this recitational instance does not lie in the essential meaning itself, since both words derive from a single semantic origin. Rather, the locus of difference lies in the variation of the two forms, that is, the difference in the form of the verbal noun within the same Qurʾānic context. This is reflected in the semantic aspect, leading to a shift in the meaning of the description of (*al-dakk*). Most

exegetes who addressed this passage sought to demonstrate that semantic integration exists between the two readings, despite the evident morphological difference at this point.

Among these is the statement of one exegete: 'The first reading (*dakkā*) indicates that when the time of Gog and Magog comes, God will cause that barrier to adhere to the الأرض, becoming smooth and level ground, whereas in the reading (*dakkā*), when the time of Gog and Magog comes, God will cause the barrier to be shattered, broken into fragments and levelled to the الأرض after having been elevated.' (Al-Mansūri, 2019, p. 74).

Thus, the difference between the two readings may be clarified to determine the point of semantic integration between them. When the promise of God comes to pass, He, exalted and majestic, will not merely leave the barrier shattered; rather, He will level it to the ground and cause it to adhere thereto so that the barrier becomes level الأرض with neither elevation nor depression. Thus, if the word (*dakkā*) expresses the act of levelling, the word (*dakkā*) describes the level state to which the barrier ultimately becomes reduced, namely, the final result of the act. The two forms, despite their differences, therefore complement one another in expressing the divine description intended in this Qur'ānic context.

Second Model: Variation at the Level of Verbs

From a morphological perspective, Arabic is classified according to multiple considerations, among the most prominent of which is word type, with words falling into three principal categories: noun, verb, and particle. The verb itself is divided into multiple classifications that differ in form and meaning. Consequently, variation between verbal forms is necessarily accompanied by semantic variation.

Upon examining the manifestations of morphological variation among the Qur'ānic readings, numerous examples may be found. In this context, one example has been selected to investigate the semantic effect resulting from variation in the form of the word, specifically the verb, where both readings contain the same verb, yet each occurs in a different tense. The instance concerns the statement of the Exalted in verse 125 of Sūrat al-Baqarah:

﴿وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنَاً وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلِّينَ ۖ وَعَوَدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنَّ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ
125 البقرة والرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ﴾

Moreover, [mention] when we made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security. Moreover, take, [O believers], from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer. Moreover, we charged Abraham and Ishmael, [saying], "Purify My House for those who perform Tawaf and those who are staying [there] for worship and those who bow and prostrate [in prayer]." Surah Al-Baqarah :125

In the exegesis of this verse, it is stated that God Most High made the Sacred House a place of return for people, to which they come back to fulfil their religious and worldly needs. He commanded them to take the Station of Abraham as a place in which they perform their prayer after completing the rite of circumambulation around the Ka'bah, 'such that the meaning of His saying (*muṣallā*) is a place of worship in which they follow him in the rites of pilgrimage.' (Al-Sa'dī, 2003, p. 51).

The point of reference in this noble verse is the verb (*ittakhadhū*), concerning whose recitation differed among the readers. Each reading presents arguments and evidence establishing its validity and conformity with the governing standards of the Arabic linguistic system. Ibn 'Āmir and Nāfi' recited (*wa-ittakhadhū min maqāmi Ibrāhīma muṣallā*) with the khā' in the past tense form. They argue that this constitutes information concerning the progeny of Abraham, peace be upon him, namely, that they took the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer. (Ibn Zanjalah, 1998, p. 113).

For the second recitational form, the verb (*ittakhidhū*) appears in the imperative. Ibn Zanjalah states the following: ‘The rest recited (*wa-ittakhidhū*) with kasrah on the khā’, and their argument is what has been narrated in exegesis: that the Prophet ﷺ took ‘Umar by the hand, and when he came to the Station, ‘Umar said, “This is the Station of our father Abraham, peace be upon him.” He said, “Yes.” He said, “Shall we not take it as a place of prayer?” Then, God, Exalted and Majestic, revealed: (*wa-ittakhidhū min maqāmi Ibrāhīma muṣallā*).’ (Ibn Zanjalah, 1998, p. 113).

Therefore, the difference between the two readings may be discerned in terms of form and meaning. With respect to form, the first reading (*wa-ittakhadhū*) occurs in the declarative past tense, referring to the progeny of Abraham, peace be upon him, and his followers who took the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer to which they resorted in performing their rites of worship. The second reading, namely, that with kasrah (*wa-ittakhidhū*), occurs in the imperative form. This entails temporal variation that directs the core meaning in the two forms.

A review of the existing works, particularly those concerned with linguistic interpretation, indicates that most of them have examined the syntactic position of this verb and the extent of its connection to the general context of the verse in which it occurs. Various interpretations were advanced, manifested in ‘four aspects: one of them that it is coordinated with (*udhkurū*), it having been said that the address here is to the Children of Israel; the second that it is coordinated with the command implied in His saying (*mathābah*), as although He said: return and take.’ (Al-Ḥalabī, n.d., p. 105)

These two different readings are both mutawātir from the Prophet, peace be upon him. One indicates that the act occurred in the past, whereas the other conveys a command to perform it in the future. The existing works affirm that both readings are complementary despite the temporal variation between them. ‘The reading of Nāfi’ and Ibn ‘Āmir indicates that the act of taking occurred in the past, on the basis that God made the House a place of return for people and that taking the Station of Abraham is the practice of the monotheists. Then, the reading of the majority came to clarify that this community follows the path of the monotheists and that the divine command has come to it as it came to those before it.’ (Maḥmūd, n.d., p. 68).

Therefore, the two readings complement one another and interpret each other both semantically and temporally. Neither can be dispensed with in understanding the divine intent of this Qur’ānic context. The reading of Nāfi’ and Ibn ‘Āmir serves as a prelude to the reading of the majority. If the previous Muslim communities among the followers of Abraham, peace be upon him, take the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer, then this community is more worthy of taking the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer. This is the aspect of integration and harmony between the two readings: one reading prepared, and the other responded.’ (Maḥmūd, n.d., p. 68).

Conclusion:

The present study has arrived at several conclusions, which may be summarised as follows:

- *- The Qur’ānic readings are variant recitational forms occurring in certain passages at the phonetic, morphological, syntactic and rhetorical levels. They are readings transmitted by uninterrupted mass transmission from the Prophet ﷺ.
- *- Arab scholars, including exegetes and linguists, have devoted considerable attention to these recitational aspects, seeking to clarify their meanings by relying upon exegetical and linguistic principles

to reconcile these meanings. Among the most significant outcomes of this scholarly engagement is the emergence of the science of orientation, with its multiple branches and approaches.

*- The science of orientation is one of the foundational disciplines linking the various linguistic sciences with the religious sciences. It is connected to the levels upon which the linguistic system is established: phonetic, morphological, syntactic and semantic.

*- Morphological orientation is one of the branches of the science of orientation concerned with the structure of the word and its changes within the Qur'ānic readings, seeking to provide interpretation thereof.

*- The alteration of a word's pattern, whether nominal or verbal, and the variation occurring among the structures of nouns and verbs within the Qur'ānic readings falls within the domain of diversity and variation, not contradiction or opposition. This has not resulted in divergence between the meanings of the verses; rather, these subtle differences have led to semantic integration and concordance among the readings despite their formal variation. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the meanings of the Qur'ānic texts and to a more profound understanding of divine purposes.

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