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The Similarities in the Readings of HAFS and SHU'BAH: A Phonetic and Linguistic Study

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap aspek-aspek konflik dalam bacaan Al-Qur'an antara riwayat Hafs dan Shu'bah, yang menyebabkan terjadinya asimilasi fonetik, seperti asimilasi antara *ḍammah* dan *kasrah*, asimilasi antara *fathāh* dan *kasrah*, substitusi, dan *idgham*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dengan melakukan studi pustaka serta mengkaji karya-karya klasik tentang bacaan Al-Qur'an dan studi ilmiah modern. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa ulama klasik menyebut asimilasi dengan istilah *idgham*, substitusi (*ibdal*), kepatuhan (*ittiba'*), atau kedekatan (*mujawarah*), sedangkan ulama kontemporer menyebutnya sebagai kemiripan (*tashabuh*), homomorfisme (*tashakul*), netralisasi (*tahyiid*), atau kedekatan. Perbedaan dalam bacaan Hafs dan Shu'bah yang menghasilkan asimilasi ditemukan dalam variasi bacaan antara *ḍammah* dan *kasrah*, *fathāh* dan *kasrah*, substitusi, serta *idgham*.

Kata kunci: asimilasi, *idgham*, bacaan Al-Qur'an

Abstract

This study aimed to uncover the conflicting aspects of Quranic readings between the recitations of Hafs and Shu'bah, which led to phonetic assimilation, such as assimilation between *ḍammah* and *kasrah*, assimilation between *fathah* and *kasrah*, substitution, and idgham. This research employed a descriptive method by conducting library research and examining classical works on Quranic readings as well as modern scientific studies. The study found that classical scholars referred to assimilation as *idgham*, substitution (*ibdal*), compliance (*ittiba'*), or adjacency (*mujawarah*), while contemporary scholars termed it as similarity (*tashabuh*), homomorphism (*tashakul*), neutralization (*tahyiid*), or adjacency. The differences in the readings of Hafs and Shu'bah, which resulted in assimilation, were identified in their variations in reading between *ḍammah* and *kasrah*, *fathah* and *kasrah*, substitution, and idgham.

Keywords: assimilation, idgham, Quranic readings

Introduction

Scholars and researchers have studied and interpreted the Qur'an since its revelation until the present day, focusing on its recitation and meanings. Among the most significant disciplines of Qur'anic studies is the science of Qur'anic readings, which originated with the revelation of the Qur'an itself. This field is vital, as it focuses on the proper recitation of the words of Allah, the Exalted. Anyone who seeks to study the Qur'an and its sciences must master its recitation, as accurate interpretation and understanding of the Book of Allah are only possible after proper recitation, as taught by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Since Qur'anic recitation is inherently linked to language, grammar, morphology, and all aspects of linguistics, it became a vast domain for linguistic scholars and their inquiries (Sulaiman al-Fadhul, 2007).

This great Book was revealed to the best of humanity and was delivered to the Muslim community in the most exemplary manner. Allah then entrusted it to a select group of the Prophet's heirs—its guardians—who preserved it from distortion and alteration. They transmitted it to successive generations with the utmost care, fulfilling Allah's promise: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an, and indeed, We will be its guardian" (Surah Al-Hijr, 15:9). They conveyed the Qur'an along with its various modes of recitation, enabling subsequent generations to fulfill their obligations toward it.

Through their efforts, it became evident that the Qur'an was recited in multiple readings, some of which agree in certain aspects while differing in others. Such is the case with the narrations of Hafs ibn Sulayman al-Asadi (d. 180 AH) and

Shu'bah ibn Ayyash ibn Salim Abu Bakr al-Hannat al-Asadi (d. 193 AH), both transmitted from 'Asim ibn Abi al-Najud al-Asadi (d. 127 AH), may Allah have mercy on them all.

By examining the recorded works of scholars regarding each narration, the researcher identified that the differences between these narrations constitute a rich and valuable resource for linguistic and exegetical studies. In certain instances, these differences also influence the determination of legal rulings derived from the verses.(Muhammad, 1430).

The recitation of Imam 'Asim has become widely recognized in contemporary times across many Muslim-majority regions, particularly the narration of Hafs, which is the most prevalent and widely disseminated across the Islamic world. This widespread acceptance led the French orientalist Blachère to remark, "In the future, the Muslim community will likely recognize only the recitation of 'Asim through the narration of Hafs." Most Qur'an reciters master both narrations and encourage their students to learn them both to achieve comprehensive mastery. Students strive to perfect their articulation, though they may sometimes assume that the meanings of both narrations are identical—or conversely, they may assume otherwise. However, despite its shared origin with Hafs from 'Asim, the narration of Shu'bah has not gained the same widespread recognition (al-Asmari, 1429).

It is widely known that the readings transmitted from 'Asim consist of two primary narrations: one by Hafs and the other by Shu'bah. These two narrations differ significantly, with variations reaching approximately five hundred words (al-Hamzawi, n.d.) These differences encompass phonetic, grammatical, and morphological aspects. Such variations may perplex readers and lead them to question the reasons behind these discrepancies, as the words originate from the same linguistic roots but are pronounced differently. This phenomenon, recognized in modern linguistics as assimilation, requires detailed analysis and clarification to inform and convince readers of the reasons for assimilation in Qur'anic readings. This need motivated the researcher to undertake a linguistic study of these differences.

Theoretical Studies

Qur'anic Recitation Variations

The existence of multiple valid Qur'anic readings (qirā'āt) is well-established in Islamic scholarship. These variations represent different dialectal and linguistic features that were present during the revelation period. Recent studies have shown that these variations serve important linguistic and semantic functions. According to Alshdaifat (2019), the different readings often complement each other in meaning and interpretation, rather than contradicting one another

Phonetic Assimilation in Arabic

Phonetic assimilation in Qur'anic recitation follows specific linguistic patterns that have been studied extensively in modern phonology. Watson (2007) demonstrates that these assimilation patterns follow predictable phonological rules that are consistent with general Arabic phonological principles. Studies by Al-Nassir (2021) have shown that the differences between Hafs and Shu'bah's readings often reflect systematic phonological processes common in Classical Arabic.

Historical Transmission and Authentication

The transmission chain (isnād) of Qur'anic readings plays a crucial role in their authentication. Shah (2020) argues that the systematic nature of transmission through established chains of narrators helped preserve the integrity of different readings. The variations between Hafs and Shu'bah's readings demonstrate how different transmission chains maintained distinct phonological features.

Phonological Theory and Qur'anic Readings

Modern phonological theory provides frameworks for understanding the systematic nature of variations between readings. According to Younes (2019), these variations often reflect natural phonological processes that are well-documented in other Semitic languages. The differences between Hafs and Shu'bah's readings can be analyzed using contemporary phonological theories of assimilation and feature spreading.

Sociolinguistic Aspects

Recent research has highlighted the sociolinguistic dimensions of Qur'anic readings. Mustafa (2018) suggests that the different readings preserved important dialectal variations that existed among early Muslim communities. The variations between Hafs and Shu'bah's readings may reflect different social and regional linguistic practices of their time.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach. The method was designed to examine various classical and modern literatures to analyze the recitation of the Qur'an comprehensively. Data collection techniques involved reviewing classical works on Qur'anic recitation, analyzing modern scientific studies in the fields of phonology and linguistics, and identifying differences in recitations between the Hafs and Shu'bah transmissions. This approach provided a strong foundation for understanding recitation variations and the factors influencing them.

The focus of the study's analysis lay in specific aspects of Qur'anic recitation, such as phonetic assimilation, differences between *ḍammah* and *kasrah*, as well as *fathah* and *kasrah*, including phenomena such as substitution and *idgham*. The qualitative descriptive approach enabled the researcher to systematically and deeply explore phonetic differences, thereby making a significant contribution to the study of Qur'anic phonology and linguistics.

Results and Discussion

Before delving into the core of the article, it is essential to examine the lives of Hafs and Shu'bah, whose narrations represent the key focus of this study. Additionally, since both narrators derived their readings from 'Asim, it is necessary to explore the life of 'Asim, the distinguished scholar from whom Hafs and Shu'bah acquired their knowledge.

A Brief History of 'Asim's Life

'Asim ibn Abi al-Nujud al-Kufi al-Asadi, also known as Abu Bakr ibn Bahdala, was a prominent Qur'anic reciter from Kufa and one of the seven renowned Qur'anic readers. His father was reportedly named either 'Abd or Abu al-Nujud, while Bahdala was the name of his mother. Some sources suggest that Abu al-Nujud

was his father's name, and others state it was 'Abd Allah. Born during the caliphate of Mu'awiyah, 'Asim was a client of the Banu Jazima tribe of Malik ibn Qayyin ibn Asad and initially worked as a grain seller.

'Asim belonged to the third generation of Qur'anic reciters in Kufa, alongside Hamzah and al-Kisai. He began his studies in Qur'anic recitation at an early age, as he once said, "We used to go to Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami as young boys." This indicates his youthful enthusiasm for learning from the Qur'anic scholars of his time.

'Asim studied Qur'anic recitation under Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, Zir ibn Hubaysh al-Asadi, and Abu 'Amr al-Shaybani. These three, in turn, learned from 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him. Additionally, al-Sulami and Zayd ibn Thabit learned from 'Uthman ibn 'Affan and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with them. Al-Sulami also studied with Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Zayd ibn Thabit. Moreover, Ibn Mas'ud, 'Uthman, 'Ali, and Zayd directly learned the Qur'an from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and Zir also studied under Ibn Mas'ud. This lineage demonstrates the solid foundation of 'Asim's recitation, as it was transmitted from the leading Companions who had received the Qur'an directly from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through oral transmission (az-Zahabi, 1982).

It is sufficient to note that 'Asim learned directly from Ibn Mas'ud, about whom the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that he recited the Qur'an fresh as it was revealed. For this reason, Shu'bah, upon hearing the sources of 'Asim's recitation and his teachers, stated, "I have verified and received the recitation from two authentic sources: 'Asim obtained it from al-Sulami and Zir ibn Hubaysh, who themselves learned from prominent Companions." Al-Sulami, born during the Prophet's lifetime, was the first to teach the agreed-upon recitation to the people of Kufa in the Great Mosque for forty years. He never took payment for teaching the Qur'an and passed away around the year 80 AH. He narrated from 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Sa'd, Khalid ibn al-Walid, Ibn Mas'ud, Hudhayfah, and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. Among those who narrated from him were 'Asim, 'Ata' ibn al-Sa'ib, al-Nakha'i, and others (Ibnu al-Jazari, 2006).

A Brief Biography of Hafs:

Hafs ibn Sulayman Abu 'Amr al-Asadi al-Kufi, also known as Hafs ibn Sulayman ibn al-Mughira or Hufayṣ, was the most knowledgeable of 'Asim's students in his recitation. Hafs was his stepson (the son of his wife from a previous

marriage) and lived with him in the same household. Born in 90 AH, he passed away in 180 AH. Hafs learned Qur'anic recitation directly from 'Asim, whose transmission is traced back to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him. Hafs resided in both Mecca and Baghdad, where he taught his recitation. He once mentioned to 'Asim, "I see that Shu'bah's recitation differs from mine," to which 'Asim replied, "I taught Shu'bah what I learned from Zir ibn Hubaysh, who transmitted from Ibn Mas'ud, and I taught you what I learned from Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, who transmitted from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib." This marked the origin of the differences between the readings of Hafs and Shu'bah. Hafs noted that he did not disagree with 'Asim in any letter of the Qur'an except for the word "ḍu'f" in the verse: "It is Allah who created you from weakness (ḍu'f), then made after weakness strength, then made after strength weakness and gray hair" (Surah al-Rum, 30:54). Hafs chose to pronounce it with a ḍammah (ḍu'f) because Ibn 'Umar reported that when he recited it to the Prophet (peace be upon him) with a fathah (ḍa'f), the Prophet corrected him to say ḍu'f.

Yahya ibn Ma'in remarked, "The most authentic narration of 'Asim's recitation is that of Hafs ibn Sulayman," which was transmitted by 'Ubayd Allah ibn al-Sabah and 'Amr ibn al-Sabah (Abu Zur'ah, 1997).

A Brief Biography of Shu'bah

Shu'bah ibn 'Ayyash ibn Salim Abu Bakr al-Hannat al-Asadi, also known as Abu Bakr ibn 'Ayyash al-Nahshali al-Kufi, was a renowned reciter from Kufa. He was born in 95 AH and passed away in 193 AH. Shu'bah was a prominent figure among Kufa's Qur'anic teachers and reciters. He was known for completing the recitation of the Qur'an once every day and night.

Shu'bah mentioned that he first approached 'Asim as a young boy, learning the Qur'an from him as a student learns from a teacher. For about three years, he persevered through harsh summers and winters to attend 'Asim's lessons at the Mosque of Banu Kahl. He learned the Qur'an from 'Asim in portions of five verses at a time, perfecting them before moving on to the next. By the time he parted ways with 'Asim, he had mastered the Qur'an without missing a single letter. Shu'bah recited the Qur'an to 'Asim three times and also learned from 'Ata' ibn al-Sa'ib and Aslam al-Manqari. He noted that he mastered only 'Asim's reading. Shu'bah's recitation is characterized by tendencies toward imala (tilting), hamza (glottalization), and idgham (assimilation), along with features of Bedouin dialects. This is likely because 'Asim learned from Zir ibn Hubaysh, who in turn learned from

Ibn Mas'ud. Ibn Mas'ud's lineage traced back to the Hudhayl tribe, and Shu'bah's narration reflected characteristics of Ibn Mas'ud's dialect, which had influences from Hudhayl. Although Hudhayl was primarily a settled tribe, linguistic evidence indicates Bedouin influences in their dialect. This connection may help explain some of the differences between the narrations of Shu'bah and Hafs from 'Asim.

A group of individuals studied Qur'anic recitation under Shu'bah, including Yahya al-'Alimi, Abu Yusuf al-A'sha, al-Barjami, 'Urwah al-Asadi, Yahya ibn Adam, and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Hammad. Shu'bah was characterized by piety and devoutness, and he was regarded as a great imam. He strongly rejected the doctrine of the "creation of the Qur'an" and accused those who upheld it of heresy. When Shu'bah was on his deathbed, his sister wept. He said to her, "Why are you crying? Look at that corner; I have completed the Qur'an in it eighteen thousand times." This statement reflects his devotion, asceticism, and deep love for the Qur'an. Shu'bah lived a long life and stopped teaching Qur'anic recitation seven years before his death. He remained steadfast in following the Sunnah, and Ibn al-Mubarak said, "I have never seen anyone more committed to the Sunnah than Shu'bah." Shu'bah was also known for his cautiousness in transmitting his recitation. He rarely allowed others to learn directly from him, which resulted in the scarcity of his transmission in Kufa. Over time, his recitation became less widespread, and the reading of Hamzah al-Zayyat became predominant among the people of Kufa. (Ibnu Mujahid, 1980).

The Concept of Assimilation

Language, while being a life necessity, also serves as an aesthetic medium, reflecting the personality of its speaker much like clothing reflects the individual who wears it. Just as some people invest effort, time, and money into coordinating their attire to appear elegant to themselves or others, phonetic assimilation fulfills one of two purposes for speakers of a language. The first purpose is economy of muscular effort during speech, achieved by eliminating dissonances in conflicting phonetic clusters, whether within words or sentences. The second purpose is to achieve the desired aesthetic through verbal harmony among adjacent sounds (al-Mushawarah, 2017).

Ancient Arab linguists recognized this phonetic phenomenon but addressed it under different terminologies, incorporating it into the categories of idgham (consonantal assimilation), ibdal (substitution), and ittiba' (following). Western scholars also defined the phenomenon in various ways:

Daniel Jones described assimilation as the process of replacing one sound with another under the influence of a nearby sound within a word or sentence, sometimes extending to the interaction of two successive sounds that result in a distinct sound. Vendryes viewed assimilation as similarity, occurring when one sound borrows one or more features of an adjacent sound to the point of blending with it. He noted that the first sound typically influences the second but occasionally, due to cognitive processes, the reverse may occur. Mario Bei defined assimilation as making two dissimilar sounds similar. Brosnahan described it as the adaptive modifications of a sound when it is adjacent to others.

In modern Arabic linguistic studies, Ali Abdel-Wahed Wafi was among the first to address this phenomenon, referring to it as "assimilation" (tashakul). He noted that sometimes the first sound influences the second, sometimes the reverse, and occasionally the two sounds merge to produce a third or one sound entirely absorbs the other. Karim Hossam al-Din called it "neutralization" (tahyeed), describing it as the blending of one phoneme into another until they form a single phoneme in a specific phonetic context, a concept known as idgham in classical Arabic linguistics.

Ibrahim Anis described assimilation as the influence of adjacent sounds on each other, detailing its types and degrees of influence, such as voicing, devoicing, and place of articulation changes. He emphasized that assimilation occurs only when two sounds are directly adjacent, without any intervening element, even a short vowel. This process is particularly likely when the first sound is in a state of what is called sukoon (phonetic pause). Finally, Ahmad Mukhtar Omar defined assimilation as "the transformation of dissimilar phonemes into similar ones, either partially or completely" (al-Mushawarah, 2017).

From the definitions provided by scholars regarding assimilation, their explanations, and the examples they presented, it became evident that phonetic changes between two sounds occurred due to proximity. Ancient scholars referred to this phenomenon by a different term, al-mujawarah (proximity).

The effects of assimilation appeared prominently in the differences between the narration of Hafs and that of Shu'bah from 'Asim. The researcher explored these differences as follows:

Assimilation Between Ḍammah (u-vowel) and Kasrah (i-vowel)

In Surah Maryam (19:8), Allah says: "وَقَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا"

Hafs recited the word 'itiyya with a kasrah (i) on the initial letter ('i-tiyya). Similarly, he recited with a kasrah in şillya (şilya) in Surah Maryam (19:70), Allahu Ta'ala says "ثُمَّ لَنَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِينَ هُمْ أُولَىٰ بِهَا صِلِيًّا" and jithiyya (jithya) in Surah Maryam (19:72), Allah Says "ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًّا" However, he retained the ḍammah (u) in bukiyya (bukya) in Surah Maryam (19:58), Allahu Ta'ala says "إِذَا تَتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرَوْا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا" In contrast, Shu'bah recited all these words with an initial ḍammah (Ibnu Mujahid, 1980). Shu'bah maintained the ḍammah as the original form. Ibn Manzhur explained that the original structure of 'utiyya was 'utuww ('utūw). One of the two ḍammahs was replaced, causing the waw to transform into a ya, resulting in 'utiyya. The kasrah in 'itiyya occurred when the vowel of the first letter assimilated to the kasrah of the following letter, achieving phonetic harmony (Ibnu Manzhur, 1431).

Hafs's recitation of 'itiyya with a kasrah harmonized with the doubled ya that followed (Abu Zur'ah, 1997). In this case, the ḍammah of the first letter was influenced by the kasrah of the second, resulting in a kasrah. This represented a complete, deliberate, and distant form of assimilation. The assimilation of ḍammah to kasrah was further reinforced by the presence of the ya as the third consonant in these words. Phonetically, this can be illustrated as follows:

عِتِيًّا	عُتِيًّا
Itiyyan	Utiyyan
The Original Assimilation of Ḍammah to Kasrah	
Hafs's Recitation	Shu'bah's Recitation

Similarly, in şilliya (صِلِيًّا), the ḍammah on the letter šād in Shu'bah's recitation was influenced by the kasrah on the following letter lām. Consequently, it transformed into a kasrah. This phenomenon represents a complete, deliberate, and distant assimilation. The phonetic diagram below illustrates this transformation:

صَلِيَّا	صَلِيَّا
Siliyyan	suliyyan
The Original Assimilation of Ḍammah to Kasrah	
Hafs's Recitation	Shu'bah's Recitation

Assimilation Between Faṭḥah and Kasrah

Allah says ”كنت نسيا منسيا” (Surah Maryam, 19:23)

Hafs recited it as “nasya” with a faṭḥah on the letter nūn, while Shu’bah recited it as “nisya” with a kasrah. Here, the influence of the yā’ caused the faṭḥah on the nūn to shift into a kasrah, despite the presence of a silent consonant between them. This phenomenon represents a complete, deliberate, and distant assimilation, as illustrated in the following phonetic diagram:

نَسِيَّا	نَسِيَّا
nisyan	nasyan
Shu'bah's Recitation	Hafs's Recitation

Ibn Khalawayh explained that the recitation with faṭḥah (nasya) signified the verbal noun, derived from the verb nasītu ash-shay’a nasyan wa nisyanan (I forgot something) (Ibnu Khaluwaihi, 2006). The term nasy refers to something discarded and of no significance (az-Zajaj, 2004). Most Arabs pronounced it with a kasrah on the nūn. (al-Farra).

An-Nahhās favored the recitation with a kasrah on the nūn (an-Nahhas, 2004), while Al-Azhari clarified that nasya was originally nasiya, but it was lightened by eliminating the medial vowel, resulting in nasya نَسِيَّا (al-Azhariy, 1999). Thus, the original form with a kasrah was simplified by dropping the medial vowel, leading to faṭḥah. It is possible that those who recited it with a kasrah did so to align it with the yā’, also intending simplification, but through assimilation instead. Assimilation between vowels, as seen here, often serves as a strategy to achieve ease and fluency in pronunciation.

Assimilation Through Substitution

Substitution is a branch of phonetic assimilation and involves the influence of sounds upon one another. Linguistically, it means replacing one thing with another (Ibnu Manzhur, 1431). In technical terms, it refers specifically to replacing

one sound with another. Az-Zarkashī stated, "Among their linguistic practices is substituting letters and making one take the place of another" (az-Zarkasyi, 1988). Similarly, Al-Iṣṭarabādhī defined substitution as "replacing one letter with another, understood through its derivational examples" (al-Istrabazi, 1975)

Ibn Jinnī discussed substitution under the category of minor assimilation, explaining: "Minor assimilation involves bringing one letter closer to another without full assimilation" (Jinni, n.d). This implies that the affected sound does not fully transform into the influencing sound to the point of complete assimilation; rather, it approximates the influencing sound. For example, the tā' in ifta'ala transforms into a ṭā' when preceded by ṣād, ḍād, ṭā', or ḏā', as in iṣṭabara. Similarly, the tā' transforms into a dāl when preceded by zāy, dāl, or dhāl, as in izdāna. Additionally, a sīn before an emphatic letter transforms into a ṣād to approximate the emphatic sound (Jinni, n.d).

The definitions of substitution provided by modern scholars align with those of classical scholars. They define it as "the replacement of one letter with another" (al-Anthaqi, n.d) or as "the removal of one letter and replacing it with another" (Abdul Qadir, 1998). Modern linguists also classified substitution as a subset of assimilation. Ibn Fāris considered substitution as a characteristic feature of the Arabic language, emphasizing that it represents a tendency toward ease and simplification. He noted that Arabs, through their innate linguistic sense, recognized the relationship between the substituted sound and the original sound (Ibnu Faris, n.d). Sibawayh highlighted this tendency toward ease, saying, "This is apparent in forms like tazdīr instead of taṣdīr. What drove them to approximate and substitute the letters was the desire to produce their speech from a single direction, utilizing their tongues in a unified manner" (Sibawaihi, 2004). This indicates that substitution occurs to make articulation easier, with the tongue producing sounds from the same or nearby articulation points. For example, when a sound with the istiḥlā' (elevation) feature occurs, it is often preceded by another sound sharing this characteristic. Otherwise, the non-istiḥlā' sound may be replaced with one that aligns in elevation or other phonetic attributes. Substitution operates under specific phonetic rules. For example, 'Abdul Ṣabūr Shāhīn noted, "True substitution only occurs when there is a phonetic relationship between the substituted sound and the original sound, such as proximity of articulation or sharing certain phonetic features like voicing, aspiration, plosiveness, or fricativeness" (Syahin, 2007).

Assimilation (Idgham)

Assimilation (idgham) represented one of the linguistic phenomena that both early and modern scholars studied extensively. Linguistically, idgham referred to "insertion." Ibn Manẓūr explained, "Idgham is the insertion of one letter into another, just as one inserts the reins into the horse's mouth"(Ibnu Manzhur, 1431)".

In technical terms, idgham concerned linguistic sounds. Az-Zubaydī described it as "the insertion of one sound into another when the latter absorbs the former"(az-Zubaidi, 1965)". Assimilation depended on a phonetic relationship. Ibn Jinnī defined it as "the approximation of one sound to another," distinguishing two main types:

1. When two identical sounds meet, and the first is assimilated into the second.
2. When two closely related sounds meet, where one transforms into the other and is then assimilated into it (Jinni, n.d.).

From this explanation, it can be inferred that after assimilation, whether the sounds were identical or closely related, they became a single sound articulated from one articulation point. This single sound was often stronger and more pronounced to the ear, as the tongue lingered slightly longer on the assimilated letter than on a non-assimilated one. Ramadan ‘Abd At-Tawwāb noted, "A geminated sound is, in reality, one long sound whose duration equals that of two sounds" (Abduh at-Tawwab, n.d.)". Assimilation only occurred when the first sound was either silent (sākin) or lost its vowel if it was originally vowelized. This was because vowels acted as a separator between the two sounds, preventing assimilation.

The presence of a vowel required the tongue to articulate the vowel, creating a barrier to the assimilation process. Thus, a necessary condition for assimilation was the direct contact of the two sounds without any intervening element Assimilation was, therefore, a phonetic process used by Arabs to achieve ease and fluidity in pronunciation. Al-Makkī observed, "The essence of assimilation lies in two identical letters, and its purpose is to achieve simplification" (Makki, 1981)".

Native Arabic speakers intuitively practiced assimilation, recognizing its natural occurrence in their speech. Abū ‘Amr ibn Al-‘Alā’ stated, "Assimilation is the natural speech of Arabs, flowing on their tongues effortlessly, and its purpose is to achieve ease. Its cause lies in similarity, homogeneity, or proximity between

sounds" (Ibnu al-Jazari, 2002)". Thus, Arabs performed assimilation instinctively whenever phonetic conditions such as similarity, homogeneity, or proximity between sounds were present.

Identical sounds shared the same articulation point and phonetic attributes. Homogeneous sounds differed in attributes but shared the same articulation point. Proximate sounds were close either in articulation point, phonetic attributes, or both.

Modern linguists studied idgham under the broader concept of assimilation (tamāthul), though assimilation was conceptually broader than idgham. Ramadan 'Abd At-Tawwāb described assimilation as follows: "Linguistic sounds influence one another, causing changes in the articulation points or attributes of certain sounds. The sounds of a language differ in articulation, intensity, friction, voicing, and aspiration. When two sounds with similar articulation points or proximate articulation points meet—one being voiced and the other voiceless—a tension arises. Each sound tries to pull the other toward itself, creating similarity in all or some of their attributes, leading to harmony and phonetic congruence" (Abduh at-Tawwab, 1983).

The condition for adjacent sounds influencing one another was that they shared a similar articulation point or attribute, and their meeting was direct without separation (Anis, 1992).

This phenomenon (idgham or assimilation) was a phonetic feature evident in Qur'anic recitations. It often reflected the characteristics and qualities of the sounds or, in some cases, the linguistic environment of the reciters.

Disputes over assimilation and non-assimilation (iḏhār) were common among Qur'anic readers, such as in the cases of Shu'bah and Ḥafṣ. For instance, Ḥafṣ followed the principle of iḏhār (clear articulation) as the original rule, while Shu'bah practiced idgham (assimilation) in certain contexts. Examples of such variations include:

Assimilation of Dhal into Ta'

Allah Says "وَإِذْ وَاعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ" (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:51).

Ḥafṣ ‘an ‘Āṣim recited the word "ittakhadhtum" with clear articulation (iẓhār) of the dhal. In contrast, Shu‘bah recited it as "ittakhthum", assimilating (idghām) the dhal into the ta’ (Ibnu Mujahid, n.d).

Early scholars justified this assimilation by pointing to the proximity of the two sounds in their articulation points, as well as their balance in terms of strength and weakness. Specifically, the ta’ possesses characteristics of intensity (shiddah) and aspiration (hams), while the dhal is voiced (jahr) and fricative (rikhwah). Modern linguists provided a similar explanation, noting: "The dhal is a voiced, fricative, interdental sound, whereas the ta’ is a voiceless, plosive, dental sound" (Anis, 1999). Due to this proximity in articulation points, the dhal was influenced by the ta’, adopting all its characteristics. As a result, assimilation occurred. The process can be represented in the following phonetic diagram:

التختم	التخادم
ittakhthum	ittakhadhtum
Assimilation (Idghām)	Original: Clear Articulation (Iẓhār)
Shu‘bah’s Recitation	Ḥafṣ’s Recitation

From this, it becomes evident that the dhal was influenced by the ta’, fully assimilating into it in a controlled, complete, and connected manner. The dhal adopted all the characteristics of the ta’ and was merged into it. It is also noteworthy that Ḥafṣ retained the original clear articulation of the dhal (iẓhār), adhering to its natural pronunciation. Meanwhile, Shu‘bah chose to assimilate the dhal into the ta’, producing a merged pronunciation (idghām).

Assimilation of ta’ into ṭa’

Allah says in surah al-Baqarah 2:222 “ولا تقربوهن حتى يطهرن فإذا تطهرن فأتوهن من” حيث أمركم الله

Ḥafṣ recited "yaṭ-hurn" with the ṭa’ unmerged and the ha’ pronounced with a ḍammah, whereas Shu‘bah recited "yaṭ-ṭahharn" with the ṭa’ doubled through assimilation. In other sources such as the codices of Abū and Anas, the word appeared as "yatatahharn" (Ibnu Mujahid, n.d).

Some exegetes and jurists linked the lighter recitation (taḥfīf) with the cessation of menstrual blood and the heavier recitation (tashdīd) with purification by water (al-Qisiy, 1984). The reader who opted for the lighter form implied that purification occurred upon the cessation of blood, while those who stressed the ṭa' and assimilated it into the ta' implied washing with water. However, Ibn 'Aṭīyyah clarified that either recitation could imply purification through washing or the cessation of blood. This indicates that the variations in recitation arose due to phonetic factors rather than theological distinctions (Athiyah, 2001).

Ḥafṣ's recitation (yuṭṭhurn) followed the original form of the verb ṭahura, while Shu'bah's recitation (yuṭṭahharna) involved assimilation. Its origin was yattāhharna, where the ta' was first silenced for lightening purposes, similar to the reduction seen in words like yattadhakkar and yattadar derived from yatazakkar and yataḍdar (Abduh at-Tawwab, 1983). This is further supported by the presence of "yattāhharna" in the codices of Abī and Anas, as well as its use by Ibn Mas'ūd (Zur'ah, 1997).

The ta' assimilated into the ṭa' because both are strong, voiceless, dental plosive sounds. The ta' serves as the softened counterpart of the emphatic ṭa'. Classical scholars described the ṭa' as a voiced sound, while modern linguists identified it as voiceless. They noted that both ta' and ṭa' are voiceless sounds, with the ṭa' possessing an additional emphatic quality, while the ta' is its softened equivalent (Anis, 1999). These two sounds differ only in the features of emphasis (tafkhīm) and non-emphasis (tarqīq). Due to their shared features of plosiveness, voicelessness, and proximity in place of articulation, as well as their close adjacency in the phonetic environment, the ta' was replaced by the ṭa' and subsequently assimilated into it. This can be represented in the following phonetic diagram:

يُطْطَهِّرْنَ	يُطْطَهِّرْنَ	يُطْطَهِّرْنَ
yata t ahharna	yat t ahharna	ya t t ahharna

Thus, the ta' assimilated to the ṭa' through a complete, progressive, and connected assimilation. Ḥafṣ's recitation was followed by Nafi' and Ibn Kathir, while Shu'bah's recitation was followed by Hamzah and al-Kisai. (Athiyah, 2001).

Assimilation of Nun into Waw

Allah says into quran surah Yasin 1-3 : 36 "يس والقرآن الحكيم" dan surah Al-qalam 1: 36 "ن والقلم وما يسطرون"

Hafs recited with explicit articulation (izhar) of the nun in “Yā Sīn” and “Nūn” in both instances, whereas Shu’bah recited with assimilation (idgham) of the nun into the waw in both cases (al-Qisi, 1981). Some scholars stated that explicit articulation of the nun is preferable here because it represents an isolated letter, and isolated letters are treated as if paused upon. Pausing prevents assimilation. Conversely, those who assimilated the nun based their interpretation on the principle of connection, meaning that the letter’s name (nun) is pronounced in continuity (al-Farra, n.d.) ,Al-Azhari regarded both forms as valid linguistic variations (al-Azhariy, 1999). The relationship between explicit articulation and pausing on the nun versus assimilation and continuity lies in their respective phonetic conditions. Assimilation corresponds to connected reading, while explicit articulation aligns with a paused reading.

Al-Khuli explained that the waw is a voiced bilabial glide, while the nun is a voiced nasal alveolar sound. The waw has a nasal counterpart in the mim, which is also a bilabial nasal. Both nun and mim share the nasal and voiced qualities, while waw and mim share the bilabial place of articulation and the voiced characteristic. This phonetic overlap and proximity in articulation explained the relationship between the nun and waw. The closeness of their articulation points and their shared voiced feature made assimilation between the two sounds possible(al-Khuli, 1990). This could be represented using the following phonetic diagram:

ياسين والقرآن	←	ياسين والقرآن
yāsīwwal k ur>an	←	Yasīn wal k ur > an
The assimilation reading by Shu’bah		The original reading by Hafs

It was observed that the nūn had been influenced by the following wāw in a complete and connected manner, fully assimilating its characteristics and merging into it.

Assimilation of Nūn into Rā'

Allah Ta'ala Says into surah Al-Qiyamah 27:75 “وقيل من راق”

Ḥafṣ read "man rāq" with a pause after "man" and did not join it with "rāq", a reading unique to him. Shu'bah, however, read it with the assimilation of the nūn into the rā' (Ibnu Mujahid, n.d.). The pause in Ḥafṣ's recitation on "man" was explained as a way to avoid confusion with the word being perceived as one entity, (Al-Banna, 2001) 'implying exaggeration, such as "marrāq" (as-Samin, 1994).

The assimilation of nūn into rā' occurred due to their close articulation points and shared intensity. Both letters are voiced and occupy a position between plosives and fricatives. Modern linguists described them as dental-alveolar and highlighted that the rā', nūn, and lām are among the most sonorous consonants in Arabic (Anis, 1999).

This similarity in features facilitated the assimilation process, where the nūn in its quiescent state was influenced by its proximity to the rā' and assimilated into it. Anis noted, "The nūn undergoes full assimilation into the rā' and lām, effectively disappearing into them according to the majority of reciters" (Anis, 1999). Thus, the nūn fully assimilated into the rā' in a complete, connected manner:

مَرَّاق	مَنْ رَاق
Marrā k in	manrā k in
Assimilation	Non-assimilation
Shu'bah reading	Ḥafṣ reading

Assimilation of Lām into Rā'

Allahu Ta'ala Says into surah Al-mutafifin 14:83 “كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ”

Ḥafṣ pronounced the lām in "bal rāna" distinctly, pausing after "bal" and then beginning anew. In contrast, Shu'bah assimilated the lām into the rā' (Ibnu Mujahid, n.d.). The close articulation of lām and rā', both emanating from the tip of the tongue, as well as their similarity in strength, facilitated this assimilation. Both letters exhibit a slight inclination toward lateralization, with lām being the closest letter to rā (Sibawaihi, 2004).

Makki stated, "The lām is a voiced letter; when it encountered the rā' in its quiescent state, it transformed into a rā' and was fully assimilated without repetition due to their close proximity. This occurred in cases such as 'bal rāna'" (ad-

Dani, 1988). Modern linguists (Anis, 1999) described them as voiced dental-alveolar sounds that are intermediate between plosives and fricatives. Moreover, lām tended to assimilate into most Arabic sounds due to its high frequency and widespread usage in the language (Anis, 1999). Both lām and rā’ were classified as liquid (or fluid) consonants, and therefore, lām was one of the closest sounds to rā’. This proximity facilitated assimilation in this reading of 'bal rāna', where lām underwent complete, regressive, and connected assimilation. The phonetic representation is as follows:

بَرَّانَ	بَل رَانَ
barrāna	bal rāna
Assimilation	Non-assimilation
Shu‘bah reading	Ḥafṣ reading

This assimilation exemplified a phonetic phenomenon tied to the points of articulation and the qualities of the letters, facilitating ease and fluency for speakers.

It was also observed that Ḥafṣ generally preferred non-assimilation, while Shu‘bah leaned toward assimilation, especially when the assimilation did not cause ambiguity in meaning. For example, in "waqīla man rāq", Ḥafṣ avoided obligatory assimilation by inserting a brief pause on the nūn to maintain clarity.

Assimilation in the Pattern Fa‘īl

Allahu Ta’ala says into surah Ali Imran 27:3 “وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ”

Hafs recited the word "al-mayyit" with emphasis (gemination) throughout the Qur’an (al-Azhariy, 1999) while Shu‘bah recited it as "al-mayit" with a lighter pronunciation (Ibnu Mujahid, n.d.). Al-Farisi explained that "mayyit" represents the original form, where the waw—which is the root’s middle radical—was transformed into a ya through assimilation into the adjacent ya. Meanwhile, "mayit" resulted from the omission of the middle radical, as it underwent elision after its initial transformation. According to Basran linguists, "mayyit" follows the pattern fa‘īl derived from maywat, with the waw assimilated into the ya after its transformation. Conversely, Kufan linguists asserted that it follows the fa‘īl pattern with its root being mawīt (al-Farisi, 2001)

Hafs's recitation adhered to the original, emphasizing the geminated form "mayyit". On the other hand, Shu'bah's recitation reflected the lighter form by omitting the second ya, rendering it as "mayit". Similar examples in the Arabic language include pairs like hayyin and hayn, layyin and layn, as well as ayyim and aym for a snake (al-Azhariy, 1999).

Those who recited the geminated form followed the Kufan approach, asserting that its root mawīt underwent the following transformation:

مَيِّت	مَيِّت	مَوِيت
Mayyit	Mayit	Mawit
الإدغام (Assimilation (idghām))	الإعلال بالقلب Vowel transformation (i'lāl bi al-qalb)	الأصل (Original form)

Subsequently, the ya was assimilated into the adjacent ya, forming mayyit. However, those who found the gemination and kasrah alongside the ya burdensome simplified it by omitting the middle radical ('ayn al-kalimah). This resulted in mayit, derived from the verb māt (yamūt), where the waw corresponds to the middle radical ('ayn), producing mayit. (al-Farisi, 2001):

إِنَّمَا الْمَيِّتُ مَيِّتٌ الْأَحْيَاءُ	لَيْسَ مَنْ مَاتَ فَاسْتَرَأَى مَيِّتٌ
the true dead is the lifeless among the living.	He who has died and found rest is not truly dead

Conclusion

To conclude this article, the key findings we have reached are as follows:

1. The concept of assimilation is not a new subject of study. Grammarians and Quranic reciters, both from earlier and later generations, have discussed it extensively. However, they differed in naming it. Early scholars referred to it as idgham (assimilation), ibdal (substitution), ittiba' (conformity), or mujawara (proximity), while modern scholars have termed it tashabuh (similarity), tashakul (harmonization), tahyeed (neutralization), or mujawara (proximity).
2. The differences between the narrations of Hafs and Shu'bah, which reveal aspects of assimilation, are reflected in their variations in pronunciation. These include differences between dammah (u-vowel) and kasrah (i-vowel), fathah (a-vowel) and kasrah (i-vowel), as well as in substitution and assimilation.

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