

## THE READING OF Q. 5.60

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Commenting on Q. 90.12ff: *wa-mā 'adrāka mā l-'aqabatu \* fakku raqabatin \* 'aw 'iḥāmun fī yawmin dī masgābatin \* yatūnan dā maqrabatīn \* 'aw miskīnan dā matrābatīn \* ṭumma kāna mina lladīna 'āmanū...*, aṭ-Ṭabarī weighed the merits of two readings reported in the literature (*Ġāmi'* XXX, 111.).

Some of the Makkans and, according to Ibn 'Abī Ishāq, the generality of the Basrans and, among the Kufans, al-Kisā'ī read: *fakka raqabatan 'aw 'aḥama*. aṭ-Ṭabarī had heard that 'Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' had alleged the verbality of the sentence: *ṭumma kāna mina lladīna 'āmanū*, in favour of reading: *fakka raqabatan 'aw 'aḥama*, as a verb sentence, as though he regarded it as the continuation of the sense of [Q. 90.11]: *fa-lā qtaḥama l-'aqabata \* wa-mā 'adrāka mā l-'aqabatu \* [fa-lā] fakka raqabatan \* wa-[lā] 'aḥama... ṭumma kāna mina lladīna 'āmanū...*

Most of the Madinese, the Kufans and the Syrians read: *fakku raqabatin*, as an *'idāfa* and both *fakku* and *'iḥāmun* as *maṣḍars*.

According to aṭ-Ṭabarī, the correct view is that these are two well-known readings, each of which had been adopted by men learned in *qirā'a* and *ta'wīl*. Whichever of the two a Reader elected to use would provide an acceptable text. If he recited it as verbal, the meaning would be: *fa-lā qtaḥama l-'aqabata; lā fakka wa-lā 'aḥama; ṭumma kāna*. This is the better of the two readings in terms of the 'arabiyya, since *'iḥām* is a noun, but *kāna* is a verb and the Arabs prefer to link noun with noun and verb with verb. Had the verse been revealed: *ṭumma 'an kāna*, that would have been even better. *'an kāna*, equalling *kawnu-hu*, is more congruent with *fakku* and *'iḥāmu*, as linking noun with noun. The verbs *fakka* and *'aḥama* are more correct in terms of the 'arabiyya than their nouns, although reading them as *maṣḍars* and reading *kāna* follows a good recognised usage of intending, without expressing the *'an*: *In 'alā 'ayyuhāddā z-zāgīrī 'ahḍura l-waḡū*, Ṭarafa meant *'an 'ahḍura*. What justifies the *ta'wīl* is that the line continues: *wa-'an 'aḥada l-laddāt*. *Wa-'an* shows that it was his intention to join a preceding *'an* to a following *'an*, but without expressing the first *'an*. Applying this *ta'wīl* to the verse makes *kāna* a *maṣḍar*, and so a noun joined to a noun.

aṭ-Ṭabarī constantly boasts his uncomplaining adherence to the readings reported as from the authoritative experts in the two fields of *qirā'a* and *ta'wīl*, whether a single reading has been transmitted as unanimously accepted by all the experts, or, as here, more than one reading has been acknowledged as 'well-known' among the experts of the different Islamic centres. He requires this loyalty also from every Muslim. Nevertheless, he expresses an extremely reluctant and unenthusiastic attitude towards just such readings in the case of Q. 5.60: *qul hal 'unabbi'ukum bi-šarrin min dālika maṭṭabatan 'inda llāhi - man la'ana-hu llāhu wa-ḡadība 'alay-hi wa-ḡā'ala min-humu l-qirada wa-l-ḥanāzīr wa-'abada t-tāḡūta*.

The readers are at variance on how to vowel this:<sup>1</sup> Ḥiğāzīs, Syrians, Basrans and some of the Kufans read it as vowelled here: *wa-ʿabada t-ṭāğūta*. The *taʿwīl* must, in aṭ-Ṭabarī's view, be: *wa-[man] ʿabada t-ṭāğūta*. Here *ʿabada* represents *ʿābidan*, and is treated as a preterite verb. The verb is the *ṣila* of the unexpressed relative *man*. With *tağḍīr* of the *man*, noun is now linked with noun. A number of the Kufans, however, read: *wa-ʿabuda t-ṭāğūti*. In this *ʿidāfa*, *ʿabuda* means *ḥadam*, worshippers. An *ʿisnād* traces this reading to Ḥamza and Yahyā b. Waṭṭāb, while a second *ʿisnād* refers it to al-ʿAʿmaš (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ġāmiʿ*/ed. Šākir X, 439-40). At this point, aṭ-Ṭabarī refers to al-Farrāʾ, but it is preferable that we consult al-Farrāʾ's comment direct (*Maʿānī*, I, 314). We note immediately the assumption that *wa-ʿabada* is joined by its *wāw* to *wa-ğāʿala min-humu l-qirada*, by means of the intended, but unexpressed relative *man*. Support for this verbal reading is found in the attribution to both *ʿAbdallāh* and *Ubayy* of: *wa-ʿabadū t-ṭāğūta*. Unaccountably, the partisans of *ʿAbdallāh* are now reported as meaning: *wa-ʿabuda t-ṭāğūti* as *ʿidāfa*, which al-Farrāʾ explains as representing in meaning *ḥadama*, worshippers, and in form, a noun of plurality rather than a plural form of noun.

A second group, intending annexation also, read *ʿubuda*, on the pattern of the plural of the plural, as in *ʿumār/ʿumūr*, thus *ʿibād/ʿubud*. al-Farrāʾ seems to regard a third reading, although similar in *taʿwīl* to the reading attributed to the Companions of *ʿAbdallāh*, as hypothetical. Were anyone to recite: *wa-ʿabada t-ṭāğūti*, in the *ʿidāfa*, and intending the apocopated form of the plural *ʿabada<sup>mm</sup>*, that would be a correct reading, for the poet truncated *wulāh* to *wulā* in: *qāma wulā-hā fa-saqaw-hā ṣarḥadan*. He is less certain, however, about the reading: *wa-ʿabuda t-ṭāğūti*; if there is an alternative pronunciation, as in the case of *ḥaḍīr/ḥaḍūr*, *ʿağīl/ʿağul*, this reading might be justified. The noun *ʿabd* is viewed as in origin adjectival and so as retaining adjectival status in regard to the availability of certain patterns, including plural formations. But, if this reading is intended to imitate the line of ʿAws b. Ḥağar, *ʿa-banī lubayna ʿinna ʿummakum \* ʿamatun wa-ʿinna ʿabākum ʿabudun*, that would be quite unacceptable as a Qurʾān reading. The poet was constrained by considerations of rhyme, the preceding line ending in *ʿahadun*.<sup>2</sup>

According to aṭ-Ṭabarī, ʿAbū Ġaʿfar read *ʿubida t-ṭāğūti*, but that is dismissed as 'meaningless'. God had apparently denounced a group for worshipping *ṭāğūt*. To follow that by stating that the *ṭāğūt* had been an object of worship would be irrelevant and out of keeping with both the opening and the closing of this verse (*Ġāmiʿ*/ed. Šākir X, 440).<sup>3</sup>

Burayda read: *wa-ʿābida t-ṭāğūti*. Were that to have been *wa-ʿabada t-ṭāğūti*, it would have been sound as to the *ʿarabiyya*, although aṭ-Ṭabarī would not accept it as a reading, since it is at variance with the reading of the authoritative Reciters. In terms of its *ʿarabiyya*, it can be explained as an apocopated form of *ʿabada<sup>mm</sup>*, a plural of *ʿābid*, with the *hā* elided in deference to the *ʿidāfa* (*Ġāmiʿ*/ed. Šākir X, 441). aṭ-Ṭabarī himself deployed this very explanation in his comment on Q. 30.3: *wa-hum min baʿdi ġalbi-him*; that is, *min baʿdi ġalbatihim*. The word is a *maṣdar*. One says

<sup>1</sup> See aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ġāmiʿ*/ed. Šākir X, 439.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. a modification of *ʿabd* for reasons of metre/rhyme.

<sup>3</sup> The text has Abū Ġaʿfar, al-Qāriʾ and Abū Ġaʿfar, an-Naḥwī, in a second *ʿisnād*.

*galba*, but here, the *hā'* is elided, on account of the *'iḏāfa*, much as happens also in the expression *'iqāmu ṣ-ṣalāt*, for *'iqāmatu ṣ-ṣalāt* (*Ġāmī'* XXI, 14).

aṭ-Ṭabarī insists on restricting the choice of reading to one of the two versions adopted by the recognised reciters: *'abada ṭ-ṭāḡūta* or *'abuda ṭ-ṭāḡūti*. These are to be preferred to other versions even more correct as to their *'arabiyya*, and of the two, the more correct is the first in which the verb *'abada* is to be taken to be the complement, *ṣila*, of the intended, but unexpressed relative, *man*. That the *man* is, indeed intended, is shown by the reading that is attributed to Ubayy and 'Abdallāh, *wa-'abadū ṭ-ṭāḡūta*, for that represents *wa-lladīna 'abadū*. The accusative in *ṭāḡūta* is to be preferred, as governed by *'abada*, since the other form, *'abuda*, is not common among the Arabs nor is it familiar in their language (*Ġāmī'*/ed. Šākir X, 442).

The linguists denied any grammatical regimen to any relative, *man* or *alladī*, supposedly suppressed following the prepositions *min* or *fi*. To permit such grammatical regimen was regarded as a serious error, an impermissible solecism and, indeed, some considered it such bad Arabic that they would simply not allow it. In consequence, they preferred to read *wa-'abuda ṭ-ṭāḡūti* (*Ġāmī'*/ed. Šākir X, 442). That is a perfectly clear statement of the role of syntactic thinking in the choice of a Qur'ān reading. The language of the Qur'ān must be made to conform to the ideas of the grammarians.

Other linguistic scholars permitted grammatical regimen in the conditions described, although only reluctantly, for they deplored it as unchaste Arabic. In aṭ-Ṭabarī's view, they ought therefore to have been consistent and denounced it for use in Qur'ān recitation. They claimed to deplore it in everyday speech, yet they permitted precisely that unchaste Arabic in their own renderings of the sacred texts. They regarded *man*, although suppressed following *min*, as accusative, object of *ḡā'ala* (*Ġāmī'*/ed. Šākir X, 442).

In relation to the problem of the reading of this verse, aṭ-Ṭabarī comes as close as he ever came to questioning the *'iḡmā'*. If he could bring himself to reject something in which the scholarly community was agreed, he would have preferred to adopt a reading different from these two readings which he has here discussed (*Ġāmī'*/ed. Šākir X, 442). But what is widespread and accepted by the Muslims without any disagreement, may not be abandoned in favour of anything else. For that reason alone, aṭ-Ṭabarī will not permit any Muslim to suggest any other reading than one of these two which he has described as transmitted and accepted by the Muslims.

*'Iḡmā'* has thus triumphed over *iḥtiyār*.

It is not easy to locate a detailed discussion of the issues at question here in Q. 5.60, but the succinct statement by Ibn Ya'īṣ (*Šarḥ* III, 77) is sufficiently clear: A noun may not be joined to a verb, since the object of *'atf* is to share in the work exerted by the *'āmil*, and the governing factors operating on verbs are not those which operate on nouns.

The classical Readers and grammarians were constrained to operate on the basis of the bare consonantal ductus provided in the *muṣḥaf*. The skeletal framework lacked zero-vowel, short-vowel and long 'a' vowel marking and indication of consonant length. Providing these features were taken into account, the huge battery of patterns that generations of avid collection of linguistic forms had placed at the disposal of the scholars could be applied to the Qur'ān texts as long as the rules agreed among the syntacticists were not breached in proposing resolutions of the

rudimentary texts. In these activities, a written text, as opposed to a transmitted oral tradition is the foremost object of scholarly amelioration.

With these limits in mind, one could suggest for the key term of Q. 5.60 innumerable possibilities:

'*abada*'; '*abuda*'; '*ubada*'; '*ubuda*'; '*ubida*'; '*ubbada*'; '*ubbāda*'; '*ābida*'; '*ibāda*'; '*abada<sup>mm</sup>*'; '*abada*'; '*abda*'; '*ubda*'. The following patterns do not satisfy the restrictions: '*abadī*'; '*ābidū*'; '*ābidī*'; '*abīd*'; '*abīd*'; '*a'bud*'; '*ubidat*'.

We have noted how the hypothetical reference to a relative *man*, intended, but not verbally expressed in the verse, has been projected as an ancient reading attributed to one of the Companions, while the reading of a second Companion was cited to confirm the verbal nature of the outline '*abada*'.

az-Zamaḥṣarī offers an explanation of '*abuda*' as a verbal form. The term means: 'became the object of worship', as '*amura*' means, 'became a commander, an '*amīr*'. The suggestion might tend to imply that *aṭ-ṭāḡūtu* might have to be read as a nominative. The same word, '*abuda*', could also be a noun form, derived from an adjectival sense, the pattern *fa'ulun* being used to denote the excessive possession of a quality, as *faṭmun*, *ḥaḍurun* mean respectively, 'showing a high degree of intelligence, of caution'. Those spoken of in this verse carried their submission to *ṭāḡūt* to excessive lengths. The form '*ubada*' could also be adjectival, formed after the measure of *ḥuṭamun*. The form '*abada<sup>mm</sup>*' is a plural of '*ābid*', as *kafara* is of *kāfir*. Eliding the *hā*', in deference to the '*idāfa*', would give '*abada*', or '*abada*' might be a noun of plurality, on the pattern of *ḥadam*, the plural of *ḥādīm* (az-Zamaḥṣarī, *Kaṣṣāf*, I, 469)<sup>4</sup>.

To these notes, ar-Rāzī (*Tafsīr* XII, 36-7) adds that some regarded '*abd*' and '*abud*' as permitted variant pronunciations; others argued that '*abud*' derived from the plural form '*ubud*' by vowel-dissociation. It has also been held that '*abud*' might have derived from '*a'bud*', by elimination of the initial *hamza* and relocation of its vowel. Finally, '*abud*' may have been derived from '*abada<sup>mm</sup>*', the plural form. After elision of the *hā*', in deference of the '*idāfa*', the middle vowel was altered in order to distinguish the noun form from the verb form.

al-Qurṭubī attributes a plurality of readings to Ibn 'Abbās. '*ubuda*' may be a plural of '*abd*', as *ruhun* is of *rahn* and *suquf* is of *saqf*; or '*ubud*' could be the plural of '*ibād*', as *ṭumur* is of *ṭimār*, or of '*ābid*', as *buzul* is of *bāzil*, or of '*abīd*', as *riḡuf* is of *raḡīf*.

Ibn 'Abbās is also reported as having read '*ubbad*', which is plural of '*ābid*', as *ṣuḥhad* is of *ṣāhid* and *ḡuyyab* is of *ḡā'ib*. His reading '*ubbād*' is plural of '*ābid*', as '*ummāl*' is of '*āmil*' and *ḡurrāb* is of *ḡārib*. This reading was attributed to 'Abū Wāqīd. The Basrans read '*ibād*', while 'Amr al-'Uqaylī and Ibn Burayda both read '*ābid*'.

The reading '*abadī*', attributed by az-Zamaḥṣarī to both Ubayy and 'Abdallāh, is repeated by ar-Rāzī and al-Qurṭubī who, however, also cites for 'Abdallāh the additional reading, '*ubada*', on the pattern of *ḥuṭamun* and, for Ubayy, the additional reading of '*ubidat it-ṭāḡūtu*'. He attributes to 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr the reading '*a'bud*' (*Ḡāmir* VI, 235).

al-Qurṭubī cites a total of twelve possible readings. ar-Rāzī, like az-Zamaḥṣarī, had listed seventeen, while 'Abū Ḥayyān can amass no fewer than twenty-two read-

<sup>4</sup> But, Ibn Manẓūr *Lisān*, sub voce '*abd*', questions the reports on certain of these readings.

ings which he organises into neat categories. There are six preterite verb forms: 'abada; 'abadū; 'abda; 'abuda; 'ubida; 'ubidat. Eight broken plural noun forms: 'abada<sup>mm</sup>; 'abada; 'a'buda; 'abīda; 'ibāda; 'ubbada; 'ubbāda; 'ubuda. Two sound plural forms: 'ābidū; 'ābidī. Four singular noun forms used generically: 'abuda; 'ubada; 'abd; 'ābid (of which two differing *ta'wīl*s are offered) (Ibn Ḥayyān, *Baḥr* III, 519-20).

According to 'Abū Ḥayyān, the Seven read *wa-'abada ṭ-ṭāgūta*. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī read this also, although he is further reported as having read 'abda, alleged by Ibn 'Aṭīya to show what he calls 'reduction' of the *tanwīn* of 'abdan before the article. 'Abū Ḥayyān curtly dismisses that *ta'wīl* on the grounds that a noun form which is neither *maṣdar* nor agent, could never produce an accusative in *ṭāgūta*. al-Ḥasan's 'abda should rather be seen as a 'lightening' of 'abada. The reading reported from 'Abdallāh, 'abuda, resembling *ṣarufa*, may be interpreted 'became a worshipper', whereas az-Zamaḥṣarī had interpreted it to mean 'became an object of worship'.

an-Naḥāṭī, Ibn al-Qa'qā' and, according to Hārūn, al-'A'maš also, read 'ubida, which, however, 'Abdallāh is now reported to have read in the feminine, 'ubidat. 'Abdallāh is further reported as reading *wa-man 'abada*, supplying in his reading the much desired relative which is otherwise spoken of as having been suppressed.

According to report, Ibn 'Abbās, Muḡāhid, Ibn Waṭṭāb and others, read *wa-'ubud*, plural of 'abd, as *nahun* is plural of *rahn*. Ṭa'lab explained it, however, as plural of 'ābid, as *ṣarif* is plural of *ṣarīf*. Following al-'Aḥṣā, az-Zamaḥṣarī had suggested it was the plural of 'abtd, thus plural of a plural. They recite the poet's line: *unsub il-'abda 'ilā 'abā'i-hi \* 'aswadi l-ḡalda min qawmin 'ubud*.

al-'A'maš and others read *wa-'ubbad*, plural of 'ābid, as *ḡurab* is plural of *ḡarīb*.

Some of the Basrans read 'ibād, plural of 'ābid, as *qiyām* is plural of *qā'im*; or, it might be a plural of 'ubud, or of 'abd.

A reading, 'abtd, plural of 'abd, as *kalīb* is plural of *kalb*, has been ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās.

'Ubayd b. 'Umayr read 'a'buda. Both Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Abī 'Abla read *wa-'abada*, meaning thereby, the plural of 'ābid, 'abada<sup>mm</sup>, as *saḡara<sup>mm</sup>* is the plural of *fāḡir*, and showing the elision of the *hā'* on account of the *'idāfa*. Or, it may be a noun of plurality, as *ḡādīm* has the plural *ḡadam*. The reading with the *hā'*, 'abada<sup>mm</sup>, has also been recorded.

Some read *wa-'ābidīf* and, according to one report, Ibn 'Abbās read *wa-'ābidū*. These are two sound plural forms, the latter, the nominative, being conjoined to the *man* in *man la'ana-hu*, although, in this case, one has to supply before the 'abadū the understood *mubiada' hum*: *wa-[hum] 'ābidū ṭ-ṭāgūti*; the accusative reading may be taken to be conjoined to *qirada*.

'Awn al-'Uqaylī's reading, *wa-'ābid* was interpreted by 'Abū 'Amr as 'reduced' from a plural pattern, *fa'ā'il*. It might also be taken to be the singular 'ābid used generically.

'Abū 'Ubayda read 'ābida, but 'ābida *ṣ-ṣaytān*, in place of *wa-'ābida ṭ-ṭāgūti*.

'Abdallāh is further reported to have read *wa-'ubada*, the intensive, as in *ḡu(amun)*. Ḥamza, al-'A'maš and Ibn Waṭṭāb read *wa-'abuda*, in the measure of *yaqūzun*, *nadusun*. Nuṣayr, an associate of al-Kisā'ī, repudiated this reading as an unrecognised form of the word.

Suggesting that those who read *wa-'abuda* may have meant *'a'buda*, 'Abū 'Ubayd also repudiated the reading as unreported from anyone of chaste Arabic speech. 'Abū 'Alī, agreeing that there is no such plural form in the language, admitted that it is a singular form expressing frequency and excess. That was also the view of az-Zamaḥṣārī and of Ibn 'Aṭiya. Ibn Mālik recorded it as a noun of plurality.

'Ikrima reports that Ibn 'Abbās read *wa-'ubbad*, which is plural of *'ābid*, as *ḍurrab* is plural of *dārib*, although, in this report, *tāghūta* is reported as being in the accusative. That suggests the presence of *tanwīn*, elided on account of the following definite article.

It seems reasonable to suggest that this bewildering welter of morphological possibilities and this apparent irresponsible attribution is more a tribute to the exuberance of scholars excited by the rich stores of forms and patterns made available by generations of scholars delving into the potential of the language than to any serious regard for an oral tradition of the Qur'ān recitation transmitted in parallel with the preservation of the written record of the *muṣḥaf*.

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