

THE STANDARDIZATION OF QUR'ĀN READINGS:
THE TESTIMONIAL VALUE OF DREAMS

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1. General Background: The Authority of Dreams in Classical Islam¹

Authorization in Islam is often achieved on the basis of prophetic *ḥadīṭ* formulated to legitimate the topic under discussion. The topic of dreams in Islam is no exception to this rule in the sense that the authority given to their usage as a reliable source is also based on prophetic sayings. Each one of the canonical *ḥadīṭ* collections adduces a chapter on dreams, and so do over ninety percent of other *ḥadīṭ* collections.² In a standard chapter on dreams in a *ḥadīṭ* collection we usually find some prophetic sayings about dreams alongside a few narrations of dreams. These are adduced to establish the reliability of dreams and to supply a legitimation of the usage of dreams as a source of guidance.

Prophetic sayings about dreams, although presented in a variety of versions, do not exceed more than two basic ideas: one defines dreams as part of prophecy,³ and the other declares that a vision of the Prophet in a dream is deemed equal to his actual appearance.⁴

Furthermore we find a pair of sayings that should be understood as precautions taken against a misleading usage of dreams. They come in the form of a threat addressed to those who fabricate dreams: 'He who lies about his dream deliberately (in other versions without the word 'deliberately'), will have to join a barley corn on the day of judgement and he will not be able to do so.'⁵

¹ This topic has been examined in a previous study of mine (Kinberg forthcoming). Here only a short summary is given.

² See, for example (in chronological order): Mālik b. 'Anas (d. 179/795), *al-Muwatta'*; 'Aḥmad b. 'Alī 'Abdarrazzāq b. Hammām al-Ḥimyarī (d. 211/826), *al-Muṣṣanaf*; 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Abī Šayba (d. 235/849), *al-Muṣṣanaf ft l-ahādīṭ wa-l-ūṭar*; 'Alī' ad-Dīn 'Alī b. Balabān al-Fārisī (d. 739/1308), *al-Iḥsān bi-tarīḫ Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hibbān* (d. 301/913); Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Ḥākim an-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014), *al-Mustadrak 'alā ṣ-ṣaḥīḥayn ft l-ḥadīṭ*; 'Abū Bakr 'Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1065), *Ši'ab al-'imān*; idem. *K. al-'adāb*; Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Bagawī (d. 516/1122), *Maṣābiḥ as-sunna*; 'Abū l-Farāğ 'Abdarrahmān b. 'Alī Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200), *Kuṭb al-ḥadā'iq ft 'ilm al-ḥadīṭ wa-z-zuhdiyyāt*; 'Alī b. 'Abī Bakr al-Hayṭamī (d. 807/1404), *Mağma' az-zawā'id wa-manba' al-fawā'id*; idem., *Kaṣf al-'asṭr 'an zawā'id al-bazzār*; Ibn Ḥağar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1448), *al-Maḏālib al-'āliya bi-zawā'id al-masānid al-ṭamāniya*; 'Alī' ad-Dīn 'Alī al-Muttaqī al-Ḥindī (d. 975/1567), *Kanz al-'ummāl ft sunan al-'aqwāl wa-l-'af'āl*.

³ Wensinck, 1936-64: I, 181 (*b.ṣ.r.*). For a list of references see Kinberg forthcoming: note 12.

⁴ Wensinck 1936-64: VII, 53 (*n.w.m.*). For a list of references see Kinberg forthcoming: note 16. See also note 7 below.

⁵ Wensinck 1936-64: V, 549 (*k.d.b.*). See also note 9 below.

We also find *ḥadīṭs* that encourage the dreamer to act according to his dream, ensuring him that it is possible to distinguish right from wrong⁶ and the Prophet's advice from the devil's delusion.⁷ These sayings supply an almost absolute guarantee as to the ability of a person to decide whether to follow a dream or not.⁸ In this manner these sayings further strengthen the authority of dreams.

All these *ḥadīṭs* actually attest to the process of the penetration of dreams into the Islamic community, a process which was, most likely, very similar to that of the *ḥadīṭ*: First, people related dreams, then a theoretical foundation was built up to authorize the usage of dreams; at the same time the narration of dreams already flourished, and consequently there was a need to stop, or at least to restrain the flood of dream narrations. In order to fight forgeries, the *ḥadīṭ* threatened those who invented dreams. These were similar to other traditions which were formulated to attack the fabrication of prophetic *ḥadīṭs* (in both cases the penalty of forgery is Hell).⁹ Hence, we may notice a common denominator shared by dreams and by prophetic *ḥadīṭs*: high esteem which on the one hand enabled one to consider the message delivered through any of these mediums authoritative and, on the other hand demanded a strict examination of reliability. The message delivered through these dreams is individual by definition; it nevertheless has implications for the whole community. The experience described in each of these dreams meant to be taken as a peerless model for daily pious behaviour. In this respect dreams should be compared with edifying *ḥadīṭ*.¹⁰

Whether we define dreams as a genre in its own right, or as a sub-genre of *ḥadīṭ*, or else as a special literary form of edifying *ḥadīṭ*, its extensive usage is beyond any doubt. The legitimation of the usage of dreams created in Islam a situation in which various groups could easily record dreams in order to justify their own ways of behaviour. Our examination of dreams, therefore, should not differ from the analysis of *ḥadīṭ*, since both are products of given circumstances which prevailed at a given time and place, and both were narrated to answer certain questions or to approve of existing phenomena; both, therefore, should be treated as the mirror of their environment.

In the following pages I will limit myself to a few dream narrations which treat Qur'ānic readings and Qur'ān readers. While keeping in mind that dreams in Islamic literature may reproduce differences and developments within the Islamic community, I will show the possible contribution of these narratives to the understanding of the standardization of Qur'ānic readings.

⁶ "If any of you sees a dream he likes, it is from Allāh; he should thank God for it and tell it [to others] ...", Wensinck 1936-64: II, 206 (r.'y).

⁷ The Devil will never take the Prophet's image in a dream. For further elaboration see Kinberg forthcoming: notes 16, 18 and the equivalent pages there. See also note 4 above.

⁸ For a possible comparison with the concept of 'iḡmā', see Kinberg forthcoming: notes 36, 37 and the equivalent pages there.

⁹ For further elaboration see Kinberg forthcoming: notes 19-23 and the equivalent pages there. See also note 5 above.

¹⁰ For dreams as an edifying means see my introduction to Ibn 'Abī d-Dunyā, *Manām*. See also Kinberg forthcoming: note 42 and the equivalent pages there.

2. Dreams dealing with Qur'ān readings¹¹

Q. 49.14

In a dream, Raḡaba b. Maṣqala (d. 129/747)¹² reads the Qur'ān to the Prophet and says: *qālat al-'a'rāb 'āmannā* (Q. 49.14). To that the Prophet says: "don't say *qālat al-'a'rāb 'āmannā* (= we believed); say: *qālat al-'a'rāb 'aminnā* (= by embracing Islam we gained security).¹³ The text is not vocalized, but when the word under discussion is mentioned for the first time, it has (in the manuscript) an '*alif* *mamdūda*', whereas in the second time it has a regular '*alif*'. It is hard to tell whether we have here a different reading or a gloss. It is very clear, however, that we are presented with an echo of a debate, in which one side tries to gain the Prophet's support through a dream. We may regard this rare anecdote as an example of a source in which an old reading has been preserved. We do not have a documentation of this reading (or gloss) in any other source. My reading is based on the *intention* of the verse, expressed in the commentaries which deal with the '*asbāb an-nuzūl*' to this verse.¹⁴

Q. 37.1-3, 94

al-Kisā'ī (d. 182/798),¹⁵ sees the Prophet in his dream. The Prophet asks him to read the Qur'ān and al-Kisā'ī begins with *Sūrat aṣ-Ṣāffāt*. As to the first verses (*wa-ṣ-ṣāffāti ṣaffan fa-z-zāğirāti zağran fa-t-tāliyāti dīkran*), the Prophet prohibits him the assimilation of the *tā'* with the first consonant of each of the following words.¹⁶ al-Kisā'ī continues his reading until he reaches verse 94, where he reads *fa-'aḡbalū 'ilayhi yazifūna*. The Prophet stops al-Kisā'ī and says: "you did well, but don't say *yazifūna*". No alternative is given. The Prophet then adds: "I will have you compete with the angels, or (according to another version) with the other Qur'ān readers".¹⁷

Although the text is not vocalized, we may assume that this narration has preserved al-Kisā'ī's reading, which is adduced as *yazifūna*.¹⁸ As to the preferable reading, the Prophet says nothing. The Qur'ānic text of today reads *yaziffūna*, with gemination of the *fā'*, but *qirā'āt* books adduce other readings as well.¹⁹ Attention

¹¹ The narrations are arranged chronologically, according to the time of the dream narrator.

¹² For his biography see aḡ-Dahabī, *Siyar* VI, 156 and the bibliography there.

¹³ Ibn 'Abī ḏ-Dunyā, *Mamām* # 115.

¹⁴ For example see: Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl* 479; Ibn Qutayba, *Tafsīr* 416; aḡ-Tabarī, *Ġāmi'* XXVI, 90; az-Zağğāğ, *Ma'ānt* V, 39; al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* XVI, 348; Ibn Ḥayyān, *Bahr* VIII, 117; aḡ-Ṣawkānī, *Fath* V, 68.

¹⁵ For biographical details and other dreams about al-Kisā'ī see "Dreams dealing with Qur'ān readers" below.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibn Muğāhid, *Sab'a* 546 and the explanation in note (1) there. See also Ibn Ḥālawayhi, *Ḥuğga* 274-5; Ibn Ġalbūn, *Tadkīra* II, 635; Ibn Ḥalaf, *'Unwān* 161; al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* XV, 61.

¹⁷ al-Bağdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* XI, 409-10; cf. *Ibid.* 409, 410; Ibn al-'Anbārī, *Nuzha* 62.

¹⁸ al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* XV, 95.

¹⁹ For examination of different readings see (in chronological order): Ibn Muğāhid, *Sab'a* 548; Ibn Ḥālawayhi, *Ḥuğga* 274-5; Ibn Ġalbūn, *Tadkīra* II, 636-7; Ibn Zangāla, *Ḥuğga* 609; Makki, *Kaṣf* II, 225.

should be drawn to the fact that no change of consonants nor of meaning is offered here. Our narration rather focuses on the question of the right pronunciation of the unvocalized text.

Q. 2.106, 128

'Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839)²⁰ tells that 'Abū Nu'aym al-Qāri' (= Šuġā' b. 'Abī Naṣr, d. 190/806)²¹ saw the Prophet in his dream and read the Qur'ān to him according to the reading of 'Abū 'Amr b. 'Alā'. The only two verses which the Prophet changed were 2.106: *'aw nunsihā* instead of *'aw nansa'hā* and 2.128: *'arinā* instead of *'arnā*.²² It should be noticed that the changes in neither of the two places touch the consonants. In the first, the root *n.s.y.*, which means "to forget" is preferred, and the root *n.s.'*, which has the meaning of "to delay" is ruled out;²³ the second example examines the way in which the *hamza* determines the vocalization of *rā'*.²⁴

Q. 14.22

There are cases in which the Lord Himself appears in a dream to support a Qur'ān reading. Such is the next case, which tells about Ḥalaf b. Hišām, one of the ten authorized Qur'ān readers (d. 228/843).²⁵ Ḥalaf b. Hišām appears in a dream telling that the Lord has forgiven him and asked him to read the Qur'ān to Him. So he does, and the only place the Lord changes his reading is *Sūrat Ibrāhīm* (Q. 14. 22).²⁶ Since the text is unvocalized it is hard to know which reading was presented as preferable. It seems, however, that the word under discussion was *bi-muṣrihiyya*, which, according to the readings collections, can be read also *bi-muṣrihiyyi*.²⁷ This reading, as the others discussed above, does not deviate from the consonantal skeleton of the text, but rather treats its vocalization.

²⁰ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 17; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* X, 490 and the bibliography there. See also the introduction to 'Abū 'Ubayd, *Ḥuṭab* 7-75; and Burton 1987:50.

²¹ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 324.

²² al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* II, 68, 127; Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 291; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifa* 84. Cf. Ibn Muġāhid, *Sab'a* 82, and the dreams about 'Amr b. 'Alā' in "Dreams dealing with Qur'ān readers" below.

²³ al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* II, 68. For examination of different readings see: 'Abū 'Ubayd, *Nāsih* 4-5; as-Sigistānī, *Masāhif* 107-8; Ibn Muġāhid, *Sab'a* 168-9; Ibn Ḥalawayhi, *Ḥuġġa* 63; Ibn Ḥalawayhi, *Šawādd* 16; al-Fārisī, *Ḥuġġa* II, 185-202; Ibn Ġalbūn, *Tadkira* II, 320; Ibn Zangāla, *Ḥuġġa* 109-10; Ibn Ḥalaf, *'Urwān* 71; al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* XV, 95-6; Makkī, *Kaṣf* I, 257-60; as-Samīn, *Durr* II, 58-60. See also Wansbrough 1977:196 where *nansa'* is translated as "to defer".

²⁴ Ibn Zangāla, *Ḥuġġa* 114-5; al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* II, 128. For examination of different readings see Ibn Muġāhid, *Sab'a* 170-1; Ibn Ġalbūn, *Tadkira* II, 322; as-Samīn, *Durr* II, 118-9.

²⁵ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 272; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* X, 576 and the bibliography there.

²⁶ al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* VIII, 327.

²⁷ For the examination of both readings see: Ibn Muġāhid, *Sab'a* 362; Ibn Ḥalawayhi, *Ḥuġġa* 178; Ibn Ġinnī, *Muḥtasab* II, 49; Makkī, *Kaṣf* II, 26-7; Ibn Ḥalaf, *'Urwān* 115; 'Abū Ḥayyān, *Tadkira* 34. See also al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī* II, 75-6; al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* IX, 357.

Q. 20.58

'Abū 'Uṭmān al-Māzinī (Bakr b. Muḥammad, d. 249/863)²⁸ sees the Prophet in his dream and reads to him *Sūrat Tāhā*. When he reaches verse 58 he reads *makānan siwan*. The Prophet corrects him and says: "read *suwan*, read according to the reading of Ya'qūb" (= 'Abū Muḥammad Ya'qūb b. 'Ishāq al-Ḥaḍramī, one of the ten authorized Qur'an readers, d. 250/864).²⁹ As in the previous examples, no vocalization is indicated. We find, however, that Ya'qūb al-Ḥaḍramī followed the readings of 'Āṣim and Ḥamza;³⁰ we also find that 'Āṣim and Ḥamza used to read *suwan*.³¹ The meaning of both readings is the same and, according to aṭ-Ṭabarī, both forms exist in the language.³²

Assimilation (= 'idgām)

'Abū l-'Abbās b. Masrūq (d. 298/911)³³ tells that he heard 'Abū Ḥamdūn the Qur'an reader (aṭ-Ṭayyib b. 'Ismā'īl, d. 240/855)³⁴ telling that one night, while praying, he read a Qur'anic verse with 'idgām. He then fell asleep and in his dream he saw as if light wrapped his neck. He also heard the light saying: "The Lord is between me (the light) and you ('Abū Ḥamdūn)". 'Abū Ḥamdūn wonders about the light's identity and finds out that it represents the one consonant he assimilated in reading. 'Abū Ḥamdūn then promises not to do it again. He wakes up and tells that from this moment on he will never read with assimilation again.³⁵

This dream narration does not treat a reading of a particular verse, but rather deals with the general question of reading the Qur'an with or without assimilation. as-Sihāwī offers an explanation for this dream narration by reporting that 'Abū Ḥamdūn followed both the reading of al-Kisā'ī³⁶ and that of Ya'qūb al-Ḥaḍramī.³⁷ The latter was known for avoiding assimilation, and so, assumes as-Sihāwī, al-Kisā'ī's influence is prominent in this case.³⁸ It is not entirely clear whether the intention of the narration is to negate 'idgām in general, or to criticize one instance in which 'idgām must not have been used. The instruction delivered

²⁸ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 179.

²⁹ Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 386; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* X, 173 and note (3) there; Ibn Ḡalbūn, *Tadkira* I, 82 and note (5) there. For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 386; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* X, 169 and the bibliography there.

³⁰ Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 386.

³¹ Ibn Muḡāhid, *Sab'a* 418. Cf. al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'* XI, 212-3.

³² aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ġāmi'* XVI, 134. See also Ibn Iḥlawayhi, *Ḥuḡḡa* 216; Ibn Iḥlawayhi, *Šawā'id* 90; Makkī, *Kašf* II, 98; Ibn Ḥalaf, *'Unwān* 129.

³³ For his biography see aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* XIII, 494 and the bibliography there.

³⁴ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 343; al-Baḡdādī, *Ta'rīḫ* IX, 360.

³⁵ as-Sihāwī, *Ġamāl* II, 486; Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 344; al-Baḡdādī, *Ta'rīḫ* IX, 361.

³⁶ See note 71 below.

³⁷ See note 29 above.

³⁸ as-Sihāwī, *Ġamāl* II, 487.

through the dream is nevertheless apparent: an improper reading might prevent even a pious and ascetic Muslim like 'Abū Ḥamdūn from reaching the Lord.

Q. 1.4; Q. 2.7

Due to the character of the Arabic script, in most of the dreams that deal with readings, the change offered is not defined in a precise way. There are, however, dream narrations that are very accurate and leave no doubt as to the preferable reading. Such is the case with the expression *māliki yawmi d-dīn* of Q. 1.4: *mālik* with a long vowel, or *malik* with a short one. The dream account that deals with this question uses accurate terms, and states the preferable reading precisely.

'Aḥmad b. Kāmil (d. 350/961), who was a Qāḍī in Baghdad,³⁹ tells that in his dream he saw the Prophet standing in the mosque. 'Aḥmad approaches the Prophet and begins to read him the Qur'ān, starting with *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*. When he reaches *maliki yawmi d-dīn* he addresses the Prophet asking: "how am I going to read it? *malik*, or *mālik*?" The Prophet answers *maliki yawmi d-dīn*. To avoid any doubt 'Aḥmad further asks: "with an '*alif*', or without an '*alif*'" and the Prophet answers: "without an '*alif*'". Then 'Aḥmad continues and reaches the seventh verse of *Sūrat al-Baqara* and reads: *ḥatama Allāhu 'alā qulūbihim*. To that the Prophet says: *ḥatama Allāhu 'alā 'af'idatihim*, pronouncing the last word with a glottal stop. 'Aḥmad tells that still in his dream it occurred to him that the Prophet's intention was to teach him that the word *qalb* means *fu'ād*.⁴⁰

Here we have a combination of a reading and a gloss. The different readings of *māliki yawmi d-dīn* and *maliki yawmi d-dīn* are mentioned in every collection of readings,⁴¹ and naturally in Qur'ān commentaries. However, neither *tafsīr* works, nor do *qirā'āt* books mention a change of reading from '*alā qulūbihim*' to '*alā 'af'idatihim*', which might indicate that we do not deal here with a reading, but rather a gloss. To prove this point I will use al-Qurtubī's commentary to this verse. While dealing with the word *qalb*, al-Qurtubī mentions that *qalb* can mean both heart and brain. In this verse, according to al-Qurtubī, *qalb* means heart.⁴² This second part of the dream may very well reflect a discussion about the meaning of the word *qalb*, which was solved by a prophetic guidance that reached the believers through a dream.

All the examples adduced above, including the last one, treat the consonantal skeleton as a substratum from which no deviation can be made. We may assume, therefore, that these examples belong to the time in which the 'Uṣmānic codex of the Qur'ān already gained its authority and eliminated the other early *maṣāḥif* of the Qur'ān.

³⁹ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazārī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 98; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* XV, 544 and the bibliography there. See also note 85 below.

⁴⁰ al-Baghdādī, *Ta'arūḥ* IV, 358.

⁴¹ See for example as-Sigistānī, *Maṣāḥif* 103-6; Ibn Muḡāhid *Sab'a* 104-5; Ibn Ḥālawayhi, *Ḥuḡḡa* 38; Ibn Ḥālawayhi, *Ṣawāḍ* 9; al-Fārisī *Ḥuḡḡa* I, 7-49; Ibn Ḡalbūn, *Tadkīra* I, 85; Ibn Zangala *Ḥuḡḡa* 77-9; Ibn Ḥalaf, *'Umwān* 67; as-Sam'ānī, *Durr* I, 47-54.

⁴² al-Qurtubī, *Ġāmi'* I, 189; al-Fārisī, *Ḥuḡḡa* I, 301-9.

The next narration is a reflection of a later stage in which a reluctance to examine the differences between Qur'ān readings has already prevailed: The Wazīr of al-Qā'im bi-'Amri-llāh, Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Aḥmad b. al-Muslima (d. 450/1058)⁴³ saw 'Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Haddā' after his death in a dream. The latter was known as a Qur'ān reader (d. 415/1024).⁴⁴ Three times the dreamer asks the deceased as to what God has done with him, and each time he receives the answer that the Lord has forgiven him. Then the dreamer asks about the controversies concerning the Qur'ān readings, and the answer he receives is: "all of them are one".⁴⁵

While keeping in mind that dream narrations reflect the spirit of the time in which they were formulated, we may assume that the last dream, which does not agree with the meticulous arguments and discussions about differences of readings but rather calls for standardization, also fits the time in which it was created, namely the first half of the 5th/11th century (the dream narrator died in 450/1058).

The following examination of dreams that deal with Qur'ān readers enables us to go one century backwards and show that the process of the standardization of the Qur'ān readings had already begun in the 4th/10th century.

3. Dreams dealing with Qur'ān readers⁴⁶

Dreams in which Qur'ān readers appear are, in most cases, laudatory. In this sense they are not different from other dreams adduced in biographical works.⁴⁷ They all follow one basic pattern: An image from the afterworld appears in a dream of a living person and tells about its condition, usually a favourable one. When asked, the deceased explains which of his deeds enabled him to reach Heaven, and by so doing he instructs the living person on how to lead his life.⁴⁸ Although the favour bestowed on the figure is individual, it nevertheless has general implications for the field for which that figure was known. Thus we find accounts of dreams that deal

⁴³ Known by the name Ra'īs ar-Ru'asā'. For his biography see ad-Dahabī, *Siyar* XVIII, 216 and the bibliography there. For the name Muslima see Ibn Māköülā, *'Ikmdl* VII, 253.

⁴⁴ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazārī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 572; al-Baġdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* XII, 98.

⁴⁵ al-Baġdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* XII, 98. See also note 92 below.

⁴⁶ The narrations are arranged chronologically according to the figure that appears in the dream. The approximate date of each dream is determined by the time of the dream narrator.

⁴⁷ Most biographical works adduce dreams in large numbers. See, for example (in chronological order): Muḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/845), *Kitāb at-ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*; 'Abū Muḥammad 'Abdarrahmān b. 'Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī (d. 327/938), *al-Ġarḥ wa-t-ta'dīl*; 'Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1175), *Ta'rīḥ madīnat Dimašq* and its shortened version, made by Ibn Manzūr (d. 711/1311); 'Abdarrahmān b. 'Alī Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200), *Sīfat as-safwa*; 'Abdallāh b. As'ad al-Yāfi'ī (d. 768/1366), *Rawḍ al-rayyḥīn*; 'Abdarra'ūf al-Manāwī (d. 1022/1613), *al-Kawākib ad-durriyya*. So do biographical works which are limited to one figure, such as *Manāqib al-'Imām 'Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal* and *Sīrat 'Umar b. 'Abdal'azīz*, both by Ibn al-Ġawzī.

⁴⁸ For the manner in which the living benefit from the dead's experience see Kinberg 1986; Kinberg forthcoming, notes 26, 27 and the equivalent pages there.

with *fuqahā'* but which have implications also for the schools of law,⁴⁹ dreams about *zuhhād* that have implications for practical ethics,⁵⁰ dreams about *ḥadīṭ* transmitters which have implications for the authenticity of the *ḥadīṭ* literature,⁵¹ and dreams that treat Qur'ān readers and have implications for the development of the standardization of Qur'ān readings. This last kind of dreams may be found in general biographical works, in collections of Qur'ān readings and Qur'ān readers⁵² and in biographies of grammarians.⁵³ They all deal with individuals, but each one of them has also a more general intention and meaning. Thus a reward bestowed on a Qur'ān reader should be understood as an authorization of his reading. For this reason I will treat each of the following accounts as a reflection of the environment in which it was formulated, and examine it in the light of the development of the science of the Qur'ān readings (*'ilm al-qirā'at*).

Ḥamza b. Ḥabīb b. 'Umāra az-Zayyāt⁵⁴

Sulaym b. 'Isā (Ḥamza's student, d. 188/804)⁵⁵ saw his master (Ḥamza) crying. He asks him about it and Ḥamza tells that he saw the Day of Resurrection in his dream. He tells that in his dream he heard a voice declaring that only those who behaved according to the Qur'ān would be invited to the Lord. Then he is summoned to God. He enters a house where he hears a recital of the Qur'ān. He is ordered by an angel to ascend a *minbar* made of white pearls, the sides of which were made of yellow sapphire and its stairs of green chrysolite. Then he is asked to read *Sūrat al-'An'ām* and then *Sūrat al-'A'rāf*. When he reached the end of *Sūrat al-'A'rāf* the Lord asks him as to the reading he was following. Ḥamza says that he followed Sulaymān,⁵⁶ who followed Yahyā,⁵⁷ who followed 'Abū 'Abdarrahmān as-Sulamī,⁵⁸ who learnt it from 'Alī b. 'Abī Ṭālib. The Lord approves each one of the readers

⁴⁹ For further information see Kinberg 1985.

⁵⁰ For further information see Kinberg 1986.

⁵¹ Special attention will be given to this topic in a future article.

⁵² Collections of Qur'ān readings treat mainly the differences in readings and concentrate on phonological, morphological and syntactical phenomena. However, there are collections which dedicate a special part to the Qur'ān readers themselves; these collections do adduce dreams. The richest sources for dreams of Qur'ān readers are Ibn Ḡalbūn (d. 399/1008), *Ṭaḍkīra*; ad-Ḍahabī (d. 748/1374), *Ma'rifa*; Ibn al-Ġazarī (d. 833/1429), *Naṣr* and *Ṭabaqāt*.

⁵³ See, for example (in chronological order): az-Zubaydī (d. 379/989), *Ṭabaqāt*; Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 577/1181), *Nuzha*; as-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), *Buḡya*.

⁵⁴ One of the seven authorized Qur'ān readers (d. 156/773). For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 261; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* VII, 90 and the bibliography there.

⁵⁵ For his biography see al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 318; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* IX, 375 and the bibliography there.

⁵⁶ Sulaymān b. Mīhrān al-'A'maš (d. 148/765). For his biography see al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 315; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* VI, 226 and the bibliography there.

⁵⁷ Yahyā b. Waṭṭāb al-'Asadī (d. 103/722). For his biography see al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 380; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* IV, 379 and the bibliography there.

⁵⁸ 'Abdallāh b. Iḥābīb b. Rab'ā (d. c. 73-75/693-695). For his biography see al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 413; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* IV, 267 and the bibliography there.

and then asks from whom ʿAlī learnt his reading. Ḥamza answers: "from Muḥammad"; "And who taught my Prophet Muḥammad?" asks the Lord, and Ḥamza answers: "The angel Gabriel". "And who taught Gabriel?" Ḥamza refuses to answer. The Lord then tells him to say: "You". Ḥamza repeats it and the Lord praises the people of the Qur'ān, among whom Ḥamza is one.⁵⁹ This is a detailed narration, much longer than the average. We find here an approval of a chain of Qur'ān readers going from Ḥamza to the Lord Himself,⁶⁰ as well as a Divine encouragement to those who deal with the Qur'ān, of whom Ḥamza is one.

In the next dream narration, legitimation to Ḥamza's reading is granted by the Prophet. Its first part treats the trustworthiness of Ḥamza as a *ḥadīth* transmitter and its second part examines Ḥamza as a Qur'ān reader. In the second part Ḥamza reads the Qur'ān to the Prophet from beginning to end. The Prophet's reaction to Ḥamza's reading is: "[your reading is] as the one revealed to me".⁶¹

In the last two narrations the sound basis of Ḥamza's reading, its value and accuracy are approved by supreme authorities: in the first one by God, and in the second one by the Prophet. A general praise that does not treat the issue of *qirā'āt* is bestowed on Ḥamza in the second part of a narration which tells about al-Kisā'ī. The latter appears in a dream telling about himself being saved. When asked about Ḥamza he answers that he is in the uppermost heaven and that it is possible to see him only as one sees a glittering star.⁶² This last narration follows a common pattern: support given through a comparison of two or more celebrities.⁶³ Two famous and favourite Qur'ān readers are being compared, and of the two Ḥamza is being preferred. Thus the last narration, in spite of its being so different from the previous two, has also implications for Ḥamza's authority as a Qur'ān reader.

'Abū 'Amr b. 'Alā'⁶⁴

Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (d. 198/814)⁶⁵ sees the Prophet in his dream and tells him that he is confused as to which reading of the Qur'ān to follow. The Prophet answers decisively: the reading of 'Abū 'Amr b. 'Alā'.⁶⁶

The high esteem of 'Abū 'Amr b. 'Alā's reading is expressed also in another dream, where 'Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839) presents before the Pro-

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Ṣifa* III, 157-8. For a shorter version see Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Sabwa* 68. Cf. as-Sihāwī, *Ġamal* II, 474, following another dream which is interpreted as a criticism of Ḥamza's strictness.

⁶⁰ This technique reminds us of the examination of the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* transmitters, which is sometimes done through the medium of dreams. See note 51 above.

⁶¹ Ibn Ḡalbūn, *Tadkira* I, 73-4.

⁶² al-Baġdādī, *Tarīḫ* XI, 414-5, and see note 73 below.

⁶³ For other examples of comparisons see Kinberg 1985:68ff.

⁶⁴ One of the seven authorized Qur'ān readers (d. 157). For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 288; *ad-Dahabī*, *Siyar* VI, 407 and the bibliography there.

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 308; *ad-Dahabī*, *Siyar* VIII, 454 and the bibliography there.

⁶⁶ Ibn Muġāhid, *Sab'a* 81; Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 291; Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Nasr* I, 134, as-Suyūfī, *Buġya* II, 232; Ibn Ḡalbūn, *Tadkira* I, 68; *ad-Dahabī*, *Ma'rifa* 85; Ibn Manzūr, *Muḥṭasab* XXIX, 82.

phet some of the readings of 'Abū 'Amr b. 'Alā'; the Prophet listens and makes only two changes while approving the rest.⁶⁷

Nāfi' b. 'Abdarrahmān b. 'Abī Nu'aym⁶⁸

A person who studied the Qur'ān with Nāfi' told that whenever Nāfi' was talking, a good fragrance spread from his mouth. Nāfi' denies wearing any perfume and rather tells that once in his dream the Prophet read into his mouth. A wonderful fragrance has been emanating from his mouth ever since.⁶⁹ In a similar narration Nāfi' is asked about the origin of his good qualities and the brightness of his face. He then tells that in a dream he read the Qur'ān to the Prophet and that the Prophet took him by his hand.⁷⁰

'Alī b. Ḥamza al-Kisā'ī⁷¹

Ḥamīd ar-Ru'āsī (d. c. 190-192/806-808)⁷² sees al-Kisā'ī in his dream and asks about his condition. When he hears that al-Kisā'ī has reached Heaven he asks how and finds out that this was bestowed on him due to his study of the Qur'ān.⁷³

'Abū l-Mundir Nuṣayr b. Yūsuf, al-Kisā'ī's student (d. 240/855),⁷⁴ comes to visit al-Kisā'ī on his death bed. al-Kisā'ī tells him that once he was reading the Qur'ān before people in the Mosque of Damascus. He closed his eyes and saw the Prophet entering the mosque. A man then approached the Prophet and asked: "whose reading should we follow?" The Prophet pointed to al-Kisā'ī.⁷⁵

'Abū Ġa'far Yazīd b. al-Qa'qā' al-Madanī⁷⁶

'Abū Ġa'far is seen in a dream after his death in a most pleasant condition. He addresses the dreamer and asks him to spread the good news to his friends and to those who followed his Qur'ān reading; God will forgive them all.⁷⁷

⁶⁷ Ibn Muğāhid, *Sab'a* 81-2; al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdīth* XII, 180; Ibn Manẓūr, *Muḥtaṣar* XXIX, 82. For a different version of the same dream see "Dreams dealing with Qur'ān readings" (Q. 2.106, 128) above.

⁶⁸ One of the seven authorized Qur'ān readers (d. 169/786). For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 330; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* VII, 336 and the bibliography there.

⁶⁹ Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 332; Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Naṣr* I, 112; Ibn Ġalbūn, *Taḍkira* I, 51; ad-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifa* 90; al-Qastalānī, *Latā'if* I, 93.

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 332.

⁷¹ One of the seven authorized Qur'ān readers (d. 182/798). For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 535; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* IX, 131 and the bibliography there. See also "Dreams dealing with Qur'ān readings" (Q. 37.1-3, 94).

⁷² For his biography see al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdīth* III, 44.

⁷³ Ibn 'Abī d-Dunyā, *Manām* #84. Cf. al-Bağdādī, *Ta'riḥ* XI, 414-5, where a question about Ḥamza's situation is added. (See note 62 above.)

⁷⁴ For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 340.

⁷⁵ Ibn Ġalbūn, *Taḍkira* I, 79; ad-Ḍahabī, *Ma'rifa* 105.

⁷⁶ One of the ten authorized Qur'ān readers (d. c. 127-132/745-50). For his biography see Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 384; ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* V, 287 and the bibliography there.

⁷⁷ Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 384; Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Naṣr* I, 178; al-Qastalānī, *Latā'if* I, 97.

In another dream 'Abū Ġa'far is seen next to the *Ka'ba*. He asks to send his regards to his friends and to tell them that God has put him among the *shuhadā'*. He also asks to greet 'Abū Hāzīm⁷⁸ and to inform him that the Lord and His angels visit his session (*mağlis*) during the evenings.⁷⁹

Although each one of the dream narrations presents a different reward, their intention is one: to establish the authority of the Qur'an readers and to legitimate the usage of their readings. All the examples adduced hereby were most likely formulated and circulated at the beginning of the process of the canonization of the Qur'an readings. The dreams I presented so far reflect the two main stages of the process. There are dreams which preserve the competition and the arguments between the Qur'an readers and their followers; in others harmonization of readings is reflected. Furthermore we have dream narrations about two disputing Qur'an readers, Ibn Muğāhid, the compiler of the seven readings and his contemporary Ibn Miqṣam, who refused to follow any particular authority preferring to decide for himself.⁸⁰ The comparison between the two different ways in which these images are presented conveys the tendency to canonization, particular to that time.

'Abū Bakr 'Aḥmad b. 'Abbās b. Muğāhid⁸¹

On the night Ibn Muğāhid dies, his neighbour has a dream. In his dream he hears a voice saying: "Tonight died the one who has been rectifying God's revelation [= Qur'an] (*muqawwim waḥyi-llāh*) for the last fifty years." On the next morning the neighbour hears that Ibn Muğāhid has died the previous night.⁸²

It is most probable that the title *muqawwim waḥyi-llāh* does not refer to one specific reading, but rather to Ibn Muğāhid's efforts toward the canonization of the seven readings. This fits the message delivered in another tradition, not in the form of a dream, where Ibn Muğāhid is asked why he does not choose a reading of his own. He answers that preserving the *'imāms'* readings [most likely the seven] is better.⁸³ If this is the case, we may assume that the intention of the dream goes beyond the man himself. It approves of Ibn Muğāhid's collection of the seven readings, and naturally authorizes all the seven Qur'an readers who are included in this work.

The next narration treats the way Ibn Muğāhid himself reads the Qur'an. The latter tells that he saw the Lord in a dream. He reads the Qur'an to the Lord twice,

⁷⁸ This is, most likely, Salāma b. Dīnār al-'A'rağ (d. c. 135-140/753-758). For his biography see ad-*Dahabī*, *Sīyar* VI, 96 and the bibliography there.

⁷⁹ Ibn al-Ġazarī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 384. For the first part only see ad-*Dahabī*, *Sīyar* V, 288; ad-*Dahabī*, *Ma'rifa* I, 61.

⁸⁰ Paret 1960-: V, 127.

⁸¹ The compiler of *as-Sab'a ft l-qirā'at* (d. 324/936). For his biography see ad-*Dahabī*, *Sīyar* XV, 272 and the bibliography there. See also the introduction to Ibn Muğāhid, *Sab'a* 16-20.

⁸² al-Bağdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* V, 147; Yāqūt, *Udabā'* V, 69.

⁸³ ad-*Dahabī*, *Sīyar* XV, 273; ad-*Dahabī*, *Ma'rifa* 217.

and in his reading he has two mistakes. Ibn Muğāhid feels very sorry, but then he hears God's consolation: "Perfection is [exclusively] mine."⁸⁴

According to another account Ibn Muğāhid appears after his death in the dream of 'Aḥmad b. Kāmil al-Qādī,⁸⁵ reading the Qur'ān. When asked about reading the Qur'ān while dead, Ibn Muğāhid answers that while still alive, at the end of each prayer and also each time he finished to read the Qur'ān, he used to invoke God to enable him to read the Qur'ān in his grave. His invocation was answered.⁸⁶

The last two laudatory narrations add to the piety, truthfulness and reliability of Ibn Muğāhid and consequently further contributes to the authority of his work and of the seven readers. Needless to say that these narrations cannot be earlier than the beginning of the 4th/10th century. As opposed to these laudatory narrations we find one dream account in which the attitude is negative. The image which appears in this dream is no other than Ibn Muğāhid's opponent, 'Abū Bakr b. Miqsam:

'Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Ya'qūb b. Miqsam al-'Aṭṭār⁸⁷

All the biographies of 'Abū Bakr b. Miqsam mention that he was an expert in Qur'ān readings and a great grammarian of the Kūfan school. His only vice was the fact that he read the Qur'ān not according to the Islamic consensus (*wa-tu'ina 'alayhi bi-'an 'amada 'ilā ḥurūf tuḥālifu l-ḡmā'*).⁸⁸ 'Abū 'Aḥmad al-Faraḍī⁸⁹ sees himself in a dream praying among people, all facing the *qibla*, except 'Abū Bakr b. Miqsam. The latter was standing with his back to the *qibla*. 'Abū 'Aḥmad al-Faraḍī connects it to Ibn Miqsam's deviation from the *qirā'āt* of the *'imāms*.⁹⁰

This dream cannot be earlier than the end of 4th/10th century (the narrator died in 406/1016). In a most tangible way it shows the fate of those who did not keep what should have been kept. Praying in the opposite direction conveys the Lord's rage, and is common in descriptions of the manner in which sinners and infidels lie in their graves.⁹¹ At the time of the deceased we witness the beginnings of the establishment of the canonical Qur'ān readings. The usage of unauthorized Qur'ān readings, therefore, called for a severe punishment as reflected in the last dream. Consensus (*'ḡmā'*) of Qur'ān readings is also implied in the dream mentioned in the previous part of this study, about 'Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaddā' (d.

⁸⁴ Yāqūti, *'Udabā'* V, 71.

⁸⁵ See note 39 above.

⁸⁶ al-Bağdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* V, 148; as-Suyūṭī, *Ṣudūr* 255; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Waḍiyya* XI, 185.

⁸⁷ Died circa 353-354/964-965. For his biography see Ibn al-Ḥazārī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 123; al-Bağdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* II, 208; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* XVI, 105 and the bibliography there.

⁸⁸ aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* XVI, 106.

⁸⁹ 'Ubaydallāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad 'Abū 'Aḥmad al-Faraḍī al-Bağdādī, a Qur'ān reader from Baghdad (d. 406/1016). For his biography see as-Sam'ānī, *Ansbā* IV, 366; Ibn al-Ḥazārī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 491; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* XVII, 212 and the bibliography there.

⁹⁰ Ibn al-Ḥazārī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 125; as-Suyūṭī, *Buḡya* I, 89; al-Bağdādī, *Ta'rīḥ* II, 208; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar* XVI, 106.

⁹¹ Ibn 'Abī d-Dunyā, *Qubūr* #62, 63; Kinberg 1986:294 note 42.

415/1024) who declares that all the *qir'āt* are one,⁹² and by so doing expresses a desire to smooth the differences between the readings. In contrasting the laudatory dreams about Ibn Muğāhid with the condemnatory one about Ibn Miqsam we are actually presented with the relationships between those who supported consensus and those who rejected it. The examination of these dreams, thus, enables us to draw some conclusions as to the circumstances which prevailed at that time, and to draw a picture which is not different from the one drawn from non-dream material, as offered by Paret:

"In the first half of the 4th/10th century, Ibn Muğāhid, the influential *Imām* of the readers in Baghdad, publicly and with governmental support brought this process to its logical conclusion. He banned further use of the *qir'āt* of Ibn Mas'ūd and other uncanonical readings ... In addition, Ibn Muğāhid declared the reading of the 'Uḥmānic consonantal text, standardised by tradition and consensus, to be obligatory, and compelled Ibn Miqsam, another fellow-reader, to renounce the claim which he had maintained until that moment that he could decide for himself on the punctuation and vocalization of the text ..."⁹³

4. Conclusion

Dreams are merely a small portion of a large group of traditions that treat Qur'an readings. But, whereas it is very often hard to date a tradition, dating dreams can be done by examining the time of the figure who transmits the dream.⁹⁴ Dreams therefore may offer sometimes more applicable information than *ḥadīth*, and consequently can be used more easily as historical documents. In the set of narrations adduced hereby, the earliest narration that deals with variants of readings is transmitted by Raqaba b. Maṣqala (d. 129/747), and the latest one by 'Aḥmad b. Kāmil (d. 350/961). The narration that conveys agreement of readings is about a century later. In the case of the Qur'an readers we also have early and late narratives. The earlier transmitter is Sulaymān b. 'Īsā (d. 188/804), and the latest is 'Abū 'Aḥmad al-Faraḍī (d. 406/1016). The narration which preaches for standardization of readings is from the end of the 4th/10th century or the beginning of the 5th/11th.

We may assume, therefore, that around the beginning of the 5th/11th century arguments about Qur'an readings ceased to exist as a crucial issue. This is the reason why at that time we find dreams in favour of standardization of the *qir'āt*. Moreover, from dreams of that time we also learn that those who did not follow the accepted line were threatened as to the fate awaiting them in the afterworld. This was the period of time in which the exclusive authority of the seven readings was created, and toward its end 'Abū 'Amr 'Uḥmān b. Sa'īd ad-Dānī (d. 444/1053)⁹⁵ compiled his *Kitāb at-taysīr fī l-qir'āt as-sab'*, following *Kitāb as-sab'a fī l-qir'āt*, which was

⁹² See note 45 above.

⁹³ Paret 1960-: V, 127.

⁹⁴ A dream can be somewhat later, but never earlier than the time of its immediate transmitter.

⁹⁵ For his biography see ad-Dahabī, *Siyar* XVIII, 77 and the bibliography there. For other *qir'āt* collections compiled at the same time see References.

compiled one century earlier by 'Abū Bakr b. Muğāhid. Evidence from dreams, then, supports the view that the canonization of the readings was completed by the end of the 4th/10th, or at the latest, at the beginning of the 5th/11th century.

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