

Review paper

An Assessment of *Riwayat* (Narrations) and their spread in Hausaland

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ABSTRACT: The Qur'an is the most sacred Book of Allah on earth which is divinely protected against all forms of distortions and manipulations. The revelation of the Qur'an is different from that of the previous scriptures in many ways the Prophet to whom it was revealed was an unlettered person likewise most of his companions (who heard from him preserved it and transmitted it to posterity). It was revealed in piece meal as an oral communication over a period of about twenty three years before its perfected completion. As the time of the Prophet's demise, the revelation of the Qur'an was concluded and preserved in both oral and written forms. Reciting the Glorious Qur'an without Tajwid it reduce someone reward from Almighty Allah because with good melodious sound that is to beautify your recitation with good intonation.

Keywords: Islam, Qur'an, Hausaland, *Riwayat*, *Qira'at*.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this paper is to give comprehensive analysis on the spread of *Riwayah Warsh* to *Hafs* in Hausaland. For the sake of convenience, the paper will briefly look at the emergence of the science of *Riwayah* of *Warsh* and *Hafs*. It will also be of crucial importance to look at the history of Hausaland, as centre of Islamic scholarship. The paper also intends to give detailed analysis of the factors responsible for the shift and the effects in the society.

Qira'at is a plural of *Qira'sh* and literally, it is the root of *Qara'ah* e.g. he recited, he is reciting – recitation and the reciting manuscript. Meaning *Tala*, he recited and he is a reciter. Technically, it means different forms of recitation of the Glorious Qur'an is of the notable authorities of recitation follow in their recitations.¹

Another definition is that, it is a science through which the consensus of Qur'anic reciters and their discrepancies are known regarding deletion and confirmation, vow realization as well as connection and disconnection and something of this nature of voicing formality as well as suppression, and hosts of others.² The authenticity of methodologies of recitation has been

confirmed with its chain of narration linked to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). The generation of the reciters who make people to adhere to their procedures of recitation could be traced to the generation of the companions. Its root has been traced from their vocalization. Among those companions are Ubay b. Ka'ab, Ali b. Abi Talib, Zaid b. Thabit, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Musa Al-Ash'ary, Uthman b. Affan etc.³

It was from these scholars that many companions and successors had taken the methodologies of recitation in various cities and all of them were said to have form the Messenger of Allah (May peace and blessings be upon him).⁴

Revelation of the Glorious Qur'an in Seven Letters

The Arabs had different dialects which evolved from their natural disposition in its sound, voices and letters. Literature books have given extensive explanations and comparative analysis on it, however, each tribe has

deviation (*Lahn*) in many words which others did not have.⁵

The *Quraysh* took it upon themselves to provide some unique services, which caused their dialect to thrive among the other branches of Arabs. Such services include among other things, living in the vicinity of the *Ka'abah (al-Bayt)*, watering pilgrims, servicing the Holy Masjid (at *Masjid al-Haram*) and leading the commercial activities.

Due to those specialities, therefore, the Arabs made the *Quraysh* to be the leading authority of their dialects, and that made the Qur'an to be sent to the Prophet (May peace and blessings be upon him) in the dialect of the *Quraysh* because the Arabs were used to it and it was made to be an avenue of confirming the inimitability of the Qur'an. This is because, the Arabs, despite their eloquence in language oratory cowardly failed to produce its similitude or even a chapter from it *Surah Baqarah*.⁶

This has indeed, confirmed the richness perfection and inimitability of the Qur'an which Allah has revealed to His Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessings be upon him). The Glorious Qur'an had purely supplied how letters and methodologies of recitation from the Arabic language. In fact, this was done in order to make its recitation, memorization and comprehension much easier.⁷

Indeed, there are authentic texts of Prophetic traditions regarding the revelation of the Qur'an in seven letters. Such include;

1) From Ibn Abbas (May Allah be Pleased with him), that he said; the Messenger of Allah (May peace and blessings be upon him) says "Jibril recited the Qur'an to me on a single letter and I repeated it to him, thus, I did not stop seeking for more from him and he kept giving me more, till he exhausted or reached the seventh letter."⁸

2) From Ubay b. Ka'ab (R.A) he says; Jibril (A.S) came to the Prophet (May peace and blessings be upon him) and said; verily, Allah is commanding you to recite the Qur'an to your *Ummah* on a single letter, he then said (S.A.W) I asked Allah's forgiveness, but my *Ummah* cannot bear that. Then Jibril came to him for the second time and said; verily, Allah is commanding you to recite the Qur'an to your *Ummah* in two letters – He said; I asked Allah's forgiveness but my *Ummah* cannot bear that. Then he came to him for the third time and said; verily, Allah is commanding you to recite the Qur'an to your *Ummah* in three letters; he said; I asked Allah's forgiveness but my *Ummah* cannot do that. Then, he came to him for the fourth time and said; verily, Allah is commanding you to recite the Qur'an to your *Ummah* in seven letters; whichever letter they recited it, they are confirmed (if they have adhered to the right manner).⁹

Brief History of Methodologies of *Warsh* and *Hafs*

1) *Imam* Uthman b. Sa'id (*Warsh*) was an Egyptian, but originally a Tunisian. He was born in the year 110AH. He

went to *Imam* Nafi'u in Madinah for the purpose of learning Qur'anic recitation in the year 155A.H. In just one month, he had four graduations where he returned home for the continuation of teaching the Qur'an. His nickname is Abu Sa'id and he is also called "*Warshan*" (fairly skinned). It was people who made this name to be *Warsh* for easier pronunciation.¹⁰

2) *Imam Hafs* b. Sulaiman was born in the year 90A.H, he died in the year 180A.H, his nickname was Abu Amir and his mother was a wife to *Imam* Asim. He learnt recitation from *Imam* Asim and it was said that he used to learn five verses in a lesson until he completed his studies.¹¹

Obviously, *Riwayah* of *Hafs* b. Sulaiman is recently the most dominant and popular *Riwayah* world over. Before it, the most popular up to the fifth century was the recitation of *Imam* Nafi'u especially the *Riwayah* of *Warsh*; it was followed by the recitation of *Imam* Abu Amir b. Ala and it continued until the twelve century A.H.

The *Riwayah* of *Hafs* became popular worldwide and it has been asserted that it is easier than all other *Riwayah* and copies of the Qur'an printed in this *Riwayah* have dominated larger parts of the world.¹²

One day, *Imam Hafs* asked *Imam* Asim and told him that; "I taught you recitation in the same manner I learnt from Abu Abdurrahman Al-Sulami from Aliyu b. Abi Talib. Then, I taught Shu'uba in the same manner I learnt from Zurr b. Habash from Abdullahi b. Mas'ud¹³. The *Warsh* mode of recitation is the second as far as Nafi'u school of recitation is concerned. The first is that of *Qalun*.

This mode of *Warsh* had been the first and the dominant, as far as the African continent is concerned. This is connected to the fact that the founder of the mode Abu Sa'id was an Egyptian, and Egypt was the first Islamic Center from which Islam penetrated deeply into Africa some routes down to Kanem-Borno.

More so, students from Kanem-Borno were parts of the early contingents to settle at Egypt for Arabic and Islamic learning studies. These and other related factors led such the wide spread and acceptance of the *Warsh* mode of recitation including Northern Nigeria. It is a known fact that Borno people have the large, if not the largest number of Qur'anic scholars and reciters in the African region, and that the dominant and the most accepted mode of recitation there is *Riwayah Warsh*.

It is a culture and tradition of the people in Hausaland who are predominantly Muslims to send their children to informal Islamic schools to acquire Arabic and Islamic knowledge instructions. According to the system, a student is first introduced to recite the Glorious Qur'an fluently up to completion and he will later try to commit it to memory both in verbal and written. To attain this, most people from the Hausaland, send their children to Borno. The domination of the Maliki School of law to the African continent in general and the Hausaland in particular had also contributed to the vast domination of *Warsh* mode of recitation. This is because the founder of the school was

Nafi', a Madinite as well as *Imam* Malik, the *Imam* of *Dar-al-Hijrah*. Therefore, the subsequent conquests of the African continents during their time made it easier for both the Maliki School of law and the *Warsh* mode of recitation to gain ground in the area under study.¹⁴

The Jihad movement founded and headed by *Shaykh* Uthman b. Foduye is also relevant to this discussion. This is because they all professed both the *Maliki* School of law as well as the *Warsh* mode of recitation, despite the fact that they were versed in all other schools and modes. This can be seen in some of their literary contributions in the field of exegesis and jurisprudence. A typical example of this can be seen in the famous work of Abdullah b. Foduye in exegesis, *Diya al-Ta'awil*, where the original text of the Qur'an was written in *Warsh*. But in the exegesis he analysed the verses in the light of other modes of recitation.¹⁵

The fact that the Jihadists have professed this mode made its spread all over the area felt by their revival endeavour. For this purpose, such people learnt the Qur'an in the *Warsh* mode, taught their students and supporters who came back to their respective areas to teach. In fact, in the olden days, before the advent of Qur'anic Recitation Competition, people see other modes of recitation, e.g. *Hafs* and others as innovations and incorrect as well as the Kufic style of writing with which the other modes were written. People in those days accepted and recognized only the *Warsh* mode as well as the *Maghribi* inscription as correct and genuine. This was simply because it was the only mode in circulation as far as Hausaland was concerned.¹⁶

It should however be noted that, despite the fact that the *Warsh* mode has dominated the area under study, yet its rules were abused to the extent that an Arab may not comprehend or even understand that it is the Glorious Qur'an that is being recited. This was because the learning chain had been sinking to the extent that it deteriorated to the lowest level.

History had it that during the commissioning of one of the *Jumu'at* mosques during the reign of Sir Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto, some scholars from the Saudi Kingdom have listened to a recitation by a local scholar whom they could not understand that he was reciting the Glorious Qur'an. They all thought that he was giving a speech in the local language which they suggested that the Glorious Qur'an should be recited in place. This could prove the extent of the deterioration. Another evidence for this is the difference between the North-east, and the North-west system of the recitation which both claims to be the *Warsh* mode, In a nutshell, there was no unifying mode of the *Warsh* version.¹⁷

As time went on, scholars from the North went to the Arab countries to learn Arabic and Islamic studies, such countries include Egypt, Sudan, Libya etc where some of them learned the correct modes of recitations with the science of Qur'anic recitation (*Tajwid*). They later came back to teach their people the correct mode. This was

greeted with a lot of criticisms by the conservatives (Local *Mallams*).

Factors Responsible for the spread of *Riwayah Warsh* to *Hafs* in Hausaland

Hausaland is the centre of learning. There is no doubt that Sokoto Caliphate is one of the great politics in Africa which was established through the *Jihad* of *Shaykh* Uthman b. Foduye in 1804. That made it to be a centre of learning.

Sokoto witnessed large number of visitors from various parts of the world who came to equip themselves with the monumental works of the *Jihad* literature of the Caliphate. On the other hand, Kano has been a great centre of learning because it has been a centre of commercial activities for hundreds of years. That made different kinds of people from various parts of the world to visit the area. So also, it is the second largest state in Nigeria and it has been one of the most important centres of the Sokoto Caliphate. Moreover, even before the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate, many scholars known to be notable authorities in their own time visited the area and propagated Islam, such include of the Kunta scholars, *Imam* Al-Suyuti, *Shaykh* Abdulkarim Al-Maghili and others. This has categorically explained that the importance of Kano and Sokoto as far as Islamic learning and scholarship are concerned cannot be over-emphasized.¹⁸

One *Malam* Yahaya Yola used to have a programme in Radio Kaduna Called "*Filin koyon karatun al-Qur'ani*" meaning a forum for learning Qur'anic recitation, in which the scholar used to expend all talents in teaching both the *Warsh* and *Hafs* modes of recitation, pointing out the difference between them and the common mistakes committed by most people in the process of their recitation. This development was initially seriously rejected by the majority, though very few individuals and scholars accepted it as worthwhile.¹⁹

From this period, the competition of the two modes of *Warsh* and *Hafs* (which was newly introduced) began. This continued up to the introduction of National Qur'anic Recitation Competition in Nigeria where *Riwayah Hafs* is winning the race. It gained more recognition than the former *Warsh*. This was indeed an unprecedented revolution in Qur'anic recitation as far as Nigeria is concerned, very unprecedented. In fact, at the advent of the National Qur'anic Recitation Competition, States like Plateau was about to be old fashioned because it was only few contestants from Borno and Kano, a time could recite in the *Warsh* mode.²⁰

This was how *Hafs* replaced the *Warsh* mode. Other related factors that contributed to this development is the pilgrimage trip to Saudi Arabia where *Hafs* takes precedence over other modes of recitations by the Nigerian pilgrims. The Saudi Kingdom publishes and

distributes the Glorious Qur'an which is printed in the *Hafs* mode to the pilgrims who come along with their copies in their homeland. This also contributed in no small scale in the spread of *Hafs*.

Another factor is that scholars who are experts in the *Warsh* are not many due to the above mentioned facts and other related factors. Therefore, most of the students are learning the *Hafs* mode. Although it may not be generalized seeming the difficulty in the *Warsh* mode compared to the *Hafs* mode is another vital reason for this revolution, where a recite reckons as reciting what is not written e.g. in the case of "*Naq'*" etc, which is very difficult.²¹

Other factors that contributed to the shift are:-

Activities of *Gardawa* in Maiduguri and Zaria

Some *Gardawa* (are people who memorized the Glorious Qur'an without *Tajwid*) are investing huge efforts in learning, memorizing and teaching of the Glorious Qur'an in Hausaland. However, due to some traditional inclinations and practices, they misused the opportunity by ignoring the original teachings of the Glorious Qur'an. Consequently, many scholars who have trained abroad through scholarship schemes started to preach against their ideologies, that made people to run away from their teachings, and that brought a serious deterioration of *Riwayah Warsh*.

The Saudi Kingdom Policy on Qur'an Production in the Later Years

The policy of King Fahad b. Abdul Aziz in producing copies of the Glorious Qur'an for distribution worldwide through the King Fahad Qur'an Publishing House in Madinah has assisted tremendously in spreading the *Riwayah* of *Hafs*. He gave more emphasis on the production of the copies of the Qur'an with *Riwayah Hafs* more than ever before, and this trend continued to date.

Western Education

Despite some benefits that could be obtained in this system, it is agreed that western education has caused damages which have serious detrimental effects to Islamic learning and scholarship in Nigeria as a whole and Sokoto *Jihad* literature in particular.

One of the specific areas in which it seriously affected Islamic scholarship is the fact that most of those who acquired western education regarded sending their children to traditional Islamic schools (*Makarantun Zaure*) as something that could weaken their mental ability and degrading their status because students of such schools are seated on the ground. Therefore, in this way, the western education had seriously caused the non challant attitudes of parents for sending their children to traditional schools of Islamic learning. Thus, it is very obvious that

this prevented the children from learning *Riwayah Warsh* which is mostly being taught in such Islamic schools (*Makarantun Zaure*).²²

Emergence of *Izalah* Movement in 1978

The emergence of *Izalah* movement led by *Shaykh* Isma'il Idris Zakariya Jos in 1978 had greatly contributed towards the decline of *Riwayah Warsh* system of recitation. This is because the *Izalah* was influenced by the *Wahabiyyah* movement based in Saudi Arabia, who were followers of *Shaykh* Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahab. The *Wahabis* supported the activities of *Izalah* and established a link, and that made the shipping of their books to Nigeria including copies of *Riwayah Hafs* of the Glorious Qur'an which were brought regularly during that period.

Izalah movement also encourages and taught the recitation of the Glorious Qur'an with *Tajwid* which was being neglected at that time. Eventually, they introduced Qur'anic recitation competitions amongst their students from different *Islamiyyah* schools.

In addition, knowing the fact that people have neglected traditional Islamic schools due to the influence of western education, they showed the need to reform traditional Islamic schools by modernizing them in terms of construction and management, so as to make them have an outlook similar to that of western education schools. That reformation was done with a good intention of saving children from losing their Islamic identities.²³

Facilitation of easier learning

Riwayah Hafs is the easiest among all the *Riwayat*, that is why many people nowadays prefer it to all other *Riwayaht*. This is evident because, before the emergence of *Izalah* activities, people in this area only recite in *Riwayah Warsh*, but when the *Riwayah Hafs* became widespread, many people thought that it was just a mode of recitation initiated by *Izalah* group, and thus it as only meant for *Izalah* adherents. However, today *Riwayah Hafs* has dominated everywhere, and that is a clear testimony that it is easier in learning than any other *Riwayah*.

In conclusion, the above mentioned factors are among the reasons that led to a drawback of utilization of *Riwayah Warsh* in Nigeria as a whole, and Hausaland in particular.

The State of *Riwayah Warsh* and *Riwayah Hafs* in Our Contemporary Time

Many *Hadith* reports stated that the Qur'an was actually revealed in seven dialects. This has been narrated by twenty Companions; among them were Ubay b. Ka'ab and Abdullah b. Abbas (R.A) who reported that the Messenger of Allah said:

Angel Jibril recited Qur'an to me in one way, then I requested for him to recite it in another way and he recited it in several ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways. In other words, Umar (R.A) once complained to the Prophet (S.A.W) that Hisham has recited *Surah Al-furqan* in a way different from what he Umar had heard from the Prophet, but the Prophet (S.A.W) said: "This Qur'an has been revealed to be recited in seven letters, recite whichever is easier for you."²⁴

The seven readings were standardized between the second/eighth century *hijrah*. Ibn Mjahl, a ninth century scholar, wrote a book entitled the seven readings, in which he selected seven of the modes of recitation as the best transmitted and reliable, *Riwayah Warsh* and *Hafs* were also included.²⁵

In the contemporary Hausaland, *Makarantar Allo* (Qur'anic school) had emerged since the 11th century when Islam was introduced into Hausaland. By that time, the predominant Qur'anic scholars in Hausaland used *Riwayah Warsh* for teaching children in their various schools. Different people from both rural and urban areas engaged themselves in learning this *Rwayah (Warsh)*. During that period, the Qur'anic scholars were teaching Qur'anic recitation without full application of *Tajwid*, and this made them to commit many mistakes in the recitation of the Glorious Qur'an. It is without doubt that the recitation of the Qur'an correctly would not be possible without acquiring the knowledge of *Tajwid*. However, during that period, acquisition of this knowledge was very difficult because there was a scarcity of scholars who possessed this great knowledge.

Factors that Led to the Development of Qur'an Recitation in *Riwayah Hafs* in Hausaland

In our contemporary time, many Muslims in the Northern parts of Nigeria have embraced *Riwayah Hafs* and it has almost dominated the entire region. People use *Riwayah Hafs* in their recitation more than *Riwayah Warsh* especially in Qur'anic schools and recitations in prayers. This also slowed down the progress of *Riwayah Warsh* which is now mostly found in rural areas. The factors that facilitated the progress and spread of *Riwayah Hafs* in Hausaland include the following:

1. Establishment of *Islamiyyah* Qur'anic schools
2. Introduction of Qur'anic Recitation Competition in Nigeria
3. Provisions of audio cassettes of *Riwayah Hafs* from Saudi Arabia
4. Introduction of allowances to *Islamiyyah* schools by government
5. Introduction of Islamic organizations
6. Effectiveness of Islamic teachers
7. The manipulation of voice while reciting Qur'an with the

application of *Tajwid* rules.

Establishment of *Islamiyyah* Qur'anic Schools

Islamiyyah Qur'anic schools adopt the style of western education schools thereby making them much interesting to many children and their parents too. This new innovation and style of teaching Islamic education all promote *Riwayah Hafs* and made it acceptable to many Muslims and very attractive.

Likewise, this system has classified student according to their level of study. That is why different classes were built so as to differentiate between senior and junior classes. The newly admitted students will not be in the same class with their seniors who are above their level in the acquisition of Islamic knowledge. When this system had been systematically arranged, students and many children were very much eager to get involved. That is why some students from *Makarantar Allo* used to seek the consent of their parents so as to transfer from their former schools to the *Islamiyyah* schools in order to benefit and engage themselves in this system.²⁶

Introduction of Qur'anic Recitation Competition in Nigeria

The idea of organizing Qur'anic recitation competition between students of *Islamiyyah* schools facilitates greatly the development of *Riwayah Hafs* in Hausaland and also encouraged students to concentrate much on the acquisition of the knowledge of *Tajwid*. The system is honouring students who have expressed their talents during such competitions by giving them prizes. This has then and encouraged them to acquire the knowledge of recitation of the Glorious Qur'an in *Riwayah Hafs*. This factor also helped greatly in making many students to memorize the Glorious Qur'an. Through this way, they keep on learning the *Riwayah Hafs* and are teaching other students. That is why *Riwayah Hafs* has dominated every parts of the Hausaland today including villages²⁷.

Conclusion

It is also obvious from the previous discussion in this work that there is a serious paradigm of shift from *Riwayah Warsh* to *Hafs* in contemporary time. There are thus numerous factors responsible for the paradigm. These include:

Simplicity in terms of recitation by using *Riwayah Hafs*. It has been established that reciting the Glorious Qur'an by using *Riwayah Hafs* is simpler than using *Riwayah Warsh*. This has made reciters to resort to *Riwayah Hafs* instead of *Riwayah Warsh*. This development has made *Riwayah Warsh* to be considered as difficult, even though the *Riwayah* originated from the Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessings be upon him). This is however

justifiable because human beings naturally love pleasure and try to avoid pain.

Availability of copies of the Glorious Qur'an in *Riwayah Hafis*. In contemporary time, there is widespread of the Glorious Qur'an printed in *Hafis*. These copies are not only within reach, but they are also accessible and affordable. It is also a fact that availability and affordability of an item enhances its utilization. Copies of the Glorious Qur'an in *Riwayah Hafis* can be found virtually everywhere in Hausaland. Every year, pilgrims are given complimentary copies of the Glorious Qur'an inscribed in *Hafis*.

Qur'anic recitation competition is spreading. The proliferation of Qur'anic recitation in contemporary time which is mostly conducted in *Riwayah Hafis*, promoted the shift from *Riwayah Warsh* to *Hafis*. The introduction of Qur'anic Recitation Competition in Nigeria in particular was associated with the spread of *Ilm al-Qira'at* and *Tajwid*. These made prospective reciters to opt for *Hafis* than *Warsh*. The only few reciters who still adhere to *Riwayah Warsh* are those who inherited the recitation from the traditional *Ulama*. Even within this category of reciters, many of them are now tempted to *Riwayah Hafis* for reciting the Glorious Qur'an, during the Qur'anic recitation competition.

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