Orientalism on Variant Readings of the Qur’an: The Case of Arthur Jeffery

Mohammad A. Chaudhary

Arthur Jeffery, an Australian–American orientalist who conducted research on various aspects of the Qur’an, was interested in the variant readings of the Qur’an. Among his works, the most celebrated is his Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’an. Jeffery also contributed a number of articles pertaining to Qur’anic studies to The Muslim World and other journals.

Along with his invaluable work on biblical studies, he pursued his research on the Qur’an while serving in Cairo as the director of the American Research Center, as a professor of Semitic languages at Columbia University, and as an adjunct professor at the Union Theological Seminary. Besides his studies on variant readings, he wrote on such topics as foreign vocabulary in the Qur’an and the collection of Judeo–Christian sources of the Qur’an. He also translated selected surahs of the Qur’an and devised a new arrangement to establish “development in Muhammad’s thought.” In fact, Jeffery belongs to that category of orientalists who, in postcolonial times, shifted to textual and philological studies and, unlike their predecessors, had no chance to act as advisor to the colonial masters of Muslim Asia and Africa. Many contemporary orientalists, such as Bernard Lewis and John O. Voll, have shifted further to area studies and Islamic culture.

Sources

Jeffery, whose field of interest is the Qur’an, is fully aware of what it actually means for the Muslims: “It is sometimes said that Christianity could exist without the New Testament, but Islam certainly could not exist without the Qur’an.” Probable Qur’an in the religious schism choose it for life-long study, T book [and] the impress of his last,” he translated selected a collected about six thousand commentary (tafsir), linguisti styles (qira’ât). His main sa Dâwûd (d. 316 A.H.).

Jeffery cherishes and app Torry and their application o Qur’an, which led to their 1 “Muhammad had been gather the material he planned to issue, died before he had issue applies the principles of his Qur’an and contends that the entrusted with making recen genuinely from the Prophet, v doubtful authenticity.

However, he claims, the con tained in the “metropolitan cc a good deal of material that t lived to issue his book.” But h of information that would fit panied by an authentic chain variant reading entries listed chains of transmission, a fact evidence to support his conti ness of expression” in the Qu ings in his Materials, Jeffei earliest basic source, Ibn Abi its isnâd is weak and that the

Primary and Seconda

Jeffery, after having spent in order to prepare a critical e 1926 with Professor Bergstra Munich. After the professor’s tion with the Archive’s new di was killed in Sebastopol du destroyed during the Allied bi. The gigantic task of publishin therefore, be realized. Jeffery extremely doubtful if our ge
Readings of the Qur'an

Arthur Jeffery

Chaudhary: Orientalism on Variant Readings

without the Qur'an." Probably the central and pivotal position of the Qur'an in the religious schema of Islam induced and encouraged him to choose it for life-long study. To establish that "the Qur'an is Muhammad's book [and] the impress of his personality is on it from the first word to the last," he translated selected surahs under his own new arrangement and collected about six thousand variant readings from books dealing with commentary (tafsir), linguistics (lughah), literature (adab), and reading styles (qira'at). His main source was the Kitab al Masahif of Ibn Abi Dawud (d. 316 A.H.).

Jeffery cherishes and applauds the "independent studies" of Bell and Torry and their application of the principles of "higher criticism" to the Qur'an, which led to their reaching the "remarkable" conclusion that "Muhammad had been gathering, recasting, and revising in written form the material he planned to issue as his Book... [but] the Prophet, however, died before he had issued the Book." Following Bell and Torry, he applies the principles of higher criticism to his textual studies of the Qur'an and contends that the committee to whom Uthman ibn... A"Af'an entrusted with making recension produced an official recension that is genuinely from the Prophet, with the exception of a very few passages of doubtful authenticity.

However, he claims, the committee left out quite a bit of material contained in the "metropolitan codices" at the time of Uthman and included a good deal of material that the Prophet would not have included had he lived to issue his book. But he is unable to furnish us with any examples of information that would fit into the latter category and that are accompanied by an authentic chain of transmission (isnad). A large number of variant reading entries listed in his Materials lack proper and authentic chains of transmission, a fact which he himself realizes. He also gives no evidence to support his contention concerning "the Prophet's awkwardness of expression" in the Qur'an. Moreover, while listing variant readings in his Materials, Jeffery never mentions his source. As for his earliest basic source, Ibn Abi Dawud's Kitab al Masahif, he concedes that its isnad is weak and that the orthodoxy may not accept it.

Primary and Secondary Codices

Jeffery, after having spent many years collecting the variant readings in order to prepare a critical edition of the Qur'an, began to collaborate in 1926 with Professor Bergstrasser, who established a Qur'anic Archive in Munich. After the professor's death in 1933, he continued his collaboration with the Archive's new director, Dr. Otto Pretzl. Unfortunately, Pretzl was killed in Sebastopol during World War II and the Archive was destroyed during the Allied bombing campaigns and the subsequent fires. The gigantic task of publishing his critical edition of the Qur'an could not, therefore, be realized. Jeffery expressed his pain and anguish: "It is thus extremely doubtful if our generation will see the completion of a really
critical edition of the text of the Qur'an.”

Jeffery, in fact, intended to publish a critical edition featuring one column of Kūfī script facing a critically edited Ḥaḍīṣ text on the opposite page.

In his attempt to introduce “rival codices” to the Uthmanic Codex on the basis of variant readings mentioned in works by Muslim scholars, he produced approximately fifteen “primary” codices and thirteen “secondary” codices. The fifteen primary codices are ascribed to ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, ‘Ali ibn Abū Ṭalib, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, Abū Mūsā, Ḥaḍīṣ, Anas ibn Mālik, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Zayd ibn Thābit, ‘Abd ‘Allāh ibn Zubayr, Ibn ‘Amr, ‘Ā’ishah, Sālim, Umm Salamah, and ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr. He also ascribed some secondary codices to members of the next generation, among them al Aswad ‘Alqamah, Ḥiṭṭān, Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr, Talhah, ‘Ikrīmah, Mujāhid, ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ, al Rabi‘ ibn Khuthaym, al A‘mash, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, Sāliḥ ibn Kaysān, and al Hārith ibn Suwayd. In addition, he lists some unnamed codices with a number of variant readings. It should be remembered that not every person purported to have a certain codex actually possessed a personal copy of the Qur’an. However, based on some variant readings ascribed to these individuals that differ from the reading of the ‘Uthmanic Codex, Jeffery assigns to each of them a rival codex, regardless of whether or not the person concerned claimed or insisted upon a particular reading ascribed to him/her after the appearance of the official recension. It is also worthy of mention that none of these rival codices, some of which were said to exist in the Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif and other sources before the time of the official recension, have survived until our own time. As Jeffery says: “It is unfortunate that not sufficient [material] has survived to enable us to get a real picture of the text of any one of them.” Nevertheless, “in some cases, Jeffery was able to determine the primary codex from which a secondary one was derived.”

**Orthographic Peculiarities of the ‘Uthmanic Recension**

In his attempt to revive precanonical readings, Jeffery seems to be very concerned about Ibn Shanabudh (d. 328 A.H.) and Ibn Miqsam (d. 362 A.H.), who were not allowed uncanonical readings or to make use of the old variants that existed before the fixing of the text. He is also very critical of Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324 A.H.), who settled on seven reading styles and decreed that only they were the canonical and permissible ways of vowel-ling and reading the ‘Uthmanic recension. It is important to note that in some later works on reading styles, some Muslim scholars added three and others even seven more reading styles to the seven of Ibn Mujāhid. However, all of these readings conformed to the ‘Uthmanic text’s orthography, and the major interests of the reciters (qurrā’) were confined to questions of orthography (rasm) and pause (waqf).
Jeffery, while dealing with the orthographic peculiarities of the 'Uthmanic recension, calls them “oddities” and “mistakes.” He criticizes al Dānī (d. 444 A.H.) who, in his al Muqni, which is a book of instructions for Qur'anic scribes, insists on the following spellings: 19:1, with a long ǧīlif instead of the normal ǧīlif in 18:36, 18:47, and 37:130. Without going into the issue of whether the 'Uthmanic script is God-given (tawqīfi) or not, it is necessary to point out that it is confirmed by the unanimous judgment (ijma') of the Companions and the following generation. It is also important to note that, in most cases, the peculiarities of the 'Uthmanic script represent non-Qurayshí dialects. For example, the Banū Ṭayy wrote the final ǧīlif rather than ǧīlif (tā’ marbūtah).

We can conclude the discussion on orthographic variants by saying that the peculiarities of the 'Uthmanic script, like writing ǧālāt and zakāt with a wāw, should not be overemphasized and exaggerated. Doing so runs counter to conventional orthography only in the case of certain specific words that can be singled out easily for explanation.

**Variant Readings of al Fāṭiḥah**

To analyze critically Jeffery's treatment of various Qur'anic readings, it seems better to use one sūrah as an example. We will use Sūrah al Fāṭiḥah. He states that 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd is reported to have read:

- ملک for ملک
- یهینا for یهینا
- میا for میا
- عُیج for عُیج

Ubayy ibn Ka'b is reported to have read:

- ملک for ملک
- یهینا for یهینا
- صراط المستقيم for صراط المستقيم
- نین for نین
- عُیج for عُیج

'Aḥī ibn Abī Ṭālib is reported to have read:

- ملک and ملک ینم for ملک
- یهینا for یهینا
- عُیج for عُیج

'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās is reported to have read:

- صراط for صراط all through the Qur'an.

'Umar ibn al Khāṭṭāb is reported to have read:

- ملک for ملک
- میا for میا
- عُیج for عُیج

'Ā'ishah and Sa'ād ibn Abī Waqqās are reported to have read:

- ملک for ملک
Some of Jeffery’s secondary codices followed the primary codices in variant readings of Al Fātiḥah. Abū Rabī ibn Khuthaym, who generally followed ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd in variant readings, is reported to have read for the surah in Al Fātiḥah and in the rest of the Qur‘an. Al A‘mash, another follower of Ibn Mas‘ūd, is also reported to have read for throughout the Qur‘an.

With regard to Al Fātiḥah, in addition to what Jeffery has mentioned in his Materials, many other variant readings have been mentioned by Muslim scholars on the various reading styles (qirā‘āt). For example, Abū Muḥammad Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib al Qays ī (d. 437 A.H.) along with many other variants of this surah, ascribes some more readings to the Companions. He says that Abū Hurayrah is reported to have read for and ‘Abd Allāh ibn al Zubayr (as well as ‘Umar ibn al Khaṭṭāb) to have read for. He has also mentioned that Yahyā ibn Waththab, a member of the following generation, has read with kasrah on the first nun for and that Abū Sawār al Ghanawī, one of the most eloquent Arabs in history, read for. Ibn Khālawayh (d. 376 A.H.), on the authority of al Aṣma‘ū, says that Abū ‘Amr read for the surah.

Other variant readings of Al Fātiḥah have been given by Jeffery. In view of its central character in the Qur‘an and because of its encompassing central theme of the unity of God, he tries to make it a counterpart to the Lord’s Prayer of Christianity and concludes:

[The Fātiḥah], when we examine it, proves to be more or less a cento of ideas and expressions taken from other parts of the Qur‘an. It is possible, of course, that as a prayer it was constructed by the Prophet himself, but its use and its position in our present Qur‘an are due to the compilers, who placed it there, perhaps on the fly-leaf of the Standard Codex.

In this article, he reproduced a variant text of Al Fātiḥah from some Shi‘ī traditions. The text reads as follows:

He then introduces another unauthentic version of this surah that, comprised of variant readings, is different from the ‘Uthmānic recension in a most sensational and journalistic way. This new version does not have a complete chain of narrators, although it has “survived” to our day. Moreover, the dates of the manuscript and the name of the scribe are not ascertainable. Jeffery says:
Last summer in Cairo I came across a similar variant version. It is given in a little manual of *fiqh*, whose beginning, unfortunately, is missing, so that we do not know the name of the author. It is a quite unimportant summary of *Shāfi‘ī fiqh*, written, if one may venture a judgement from the writing, about one hundred and fifty years ago, perhaps a little earlier, in a clerkly hand, and the variant version is written on the inside cover under the rubric: *qirā‘at shāhidhah li al Fātiḥah*. The MS is in private possession, and though the owner was willing to lend me the copy of the passage, and use it if I saw it fit, he was not willing that his name be revealed, lest he come into disrepute among his orthodox neighbors for allowing an unbeliever to see such an uncanonical version of the opening *Sūra* of their Holy Book.

The text of this variant has some certain similarities to that already given, and runs:

```
Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim
```

He goes on to say that under the text there is a statement about its chain of transmission:

```
```

and, in the end, concludes: “[It is] quite possible that Khalil had access to good old tradition as the primitive reading of the *Fātiha*. I can make nothing of the rest of the *isnād* from Khalil to al-Jubbā‘ī, and possibly it is much later than the *matn* from Khalil.”

**Sab‘at Aḥruf**

When analyzing the above-mentioned variant readings in the opening *sūrah* of the Qur’ān, it seems imperative to discuss how they arose. This subject has been discussed abundantly in the *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, the *Muqaddimatān*, and other books on variant readings. These are also the sources used by Jeffery in his studies. The Prophet is reported to have said that the Qur’ān was revealed to him in seven ways (in seven *ahrah*, plural of *harf*), by which he meant dialects or seven different ways of recitation. It is narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās that the Prophet said: “Gabriel recited the Qur’ān to me in one way. Then I requested him (to read it another way), and continued asking him to recite it in other ways. He recited it in sever al ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways (ahrah).” To make it easier for the elderly, the illiterate, and the nomadic people to recite the Qur’ān, the Prophet allowed them to recite various dialectal variants in their own way, which eventually led to diversification in reading
styles. The books on variant readings show that the Companions used this concession fully and continued to do so until ‘Uthmān finalized the codex and issued an official recension that abrogated all other readings and dialectal usages and maintained the readings used by the Prophet.

It is reported that Anas ibn Mālik recited\(^{(94:1-2)}\). When this was objected to, he said\(^{(130:685)}\) when this was objected to, he said. On the authority of Ibn Sirīn, it is narrated that Ibn ‘Abbās said that and\(^{(110:669)}\). It is said that Ubayy ibn Ka‘b was teaching a Persian Sūrah 44:44\(^{(109:653)}\) when the Prophet learned of this, he asked him to recite\(^{(110:589)}\). When the Prophet learned of this, he asked him to recite instead of , which was easier for him.

Dialectal Variants in the Arabian Peninsula

The interaction and overlapping of various Arabian dialects has been a complex issue in the history of the Arabic language. Jeffery, a western scholar who lacked facility in Arabic, could not understand the extent of dialectal variants and their usages in the times of the pre-‘Uthmānic recension. Therefore, after seeing a variety of variant readings ascribed to the Companions, he developed the idea of introducing “rival codices” to the ‘Uthmānic recension.

To understand the extent and role of various Arabic dialects as regards the various reading styles without going into dialectal details, it is important to point out that it is generally accepted that the Qur’an was revealed in the common Arabic (al lughah al ‘Arabiyyah al mushtarakah), a language understood throughout the peninsula and used by poets and orators as a medium of communication.\(^{(47:343)}\) As this common Arabic, which was the vehicle for Qur’anic expression, had a vivid impress of the Qurayshī dialect on it, it is generally assumed that the Qur’an was revealed in that particular dialect. A small book on the dialects used in the Qur’an,\(^{(48:249)}\) ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbas (d. c. 68 A.H.),\(^{(49:233)}\) and transmitted by Ibn Ḥasnūn, contains numerous entries from different tribal dialects. Although probably not comprehensive, the work determines the dialectal origin of at least 265 words used in the Qur’an. Of these, 104 are derived from the dialect of the Quraysh, 45 from the Hudhayl, 36 from the Kiṇānah, 23 from the Hijmā, 21 from the Ḥimyar, 21 from the Ḥarith, 13 from the Tamūm and the Qays ʿIlān, 6 from the ʿAmmān, the Azd Shanūʿah, and the Khātham; 5 from the Ṭay, the Midhāj, the Madyan, and the Ghassān; 4 from the Banū Ḥamīfah, the Ḥadramawt, and the ʿAshʿar; 3 from the ʿAmmār; 2 from the Khūzā’ah, the Sabā, the Yamāmah, the Muzaynah, and the Thaqīf; 1 from the Azd; 1 from the Khazraj; and 1 from the al ʿAmāliqah, Sā‘idīs, and Saʿad al ʿAshūrah.\(^{(50:89)}\)

It should also be kept in mind that while the Qur’an represented an amalgam of Arabian dialects, it was in the most eloquent and inimitable style and was a code of life and a book for everybody. All who adhered to
Islam, whether illiterate, bedouin, or non-Arab, was expected to recite it. The hadith dealing with the seven accepted reading styles (sab'at aḥruf) and many other stories\(^5\) indicate that the Prophet, while teaching the Qur'an, always made sure that the message was understood by those who were being addressed. In such a situation, especially in the early years of Islamic history, it seems very natural to have variant readings or to use synonyms when necessary.

The topic of tribal dialects and their appreciation in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times can be understood better by narrating a frequently repeated story concerning a man of the Banū Kilāb or the Banū ‘Āmir. This man visited Dhū Jadan, a king of Yemen, who was sitting on a raised platform. The king said to him: “Thib” (ثيَب), i.e., which means “sit,” in the Yemeni dialect. The visitor understood it as meaning “jump” (from wathaba, yathibu) and therefore jumped from the platform and died.\(^5\) In another report, it is said that one day when Abū Hurayrah was with the Prophet, the latter dropped a knife and said to him: “سَضْنَتْ” (sukkan). Abū Hurayrah did not understand, and so the Prophet repeated his request. At last Abū Hurayrah asked: “سُتْنَتْ” (Sukkan). Sikkin is a Hijāzī word and does not appear in the Azdī dialect, where the relevant word is mudyah.\(^5\) It is thus clear that not all Arabs in preofficial recension times understood the implications of the Qur’an’s vocabulary and, logically, they would feel more inclined to read it if the text were closer to their own dialect.

The orthographic variations of the rival codices, which have not been recorded in the ‘Uthmanic codex (i.e., reading al sirāt with șād, ẓā, and za’ in the opening surah), and the use of synonyms (i.e., reading ١٠٩٣٣٣ for the ‘Uthmanic text’s ١٠٩٣٣٣ in Surah 94) can be understood in the light of the statement by Ibn Jinnī (d. 392 A.H.):

>“Wherever there are more words to give the same meaning, there is every likelihood that those words are representing different dialects [and linguistic units].”\(^5\) He also cites, on the authority of al Asma‘i, an interesting controversy between two men over the word saqr. One pronounced it with a șād while the other used a ẓā. They decided to ask for a third opinion. The third man, who pronounced it with a za’, differed from both of them. What this shows is that each individual was using his own dialect to pronounce the word in question.\(^5\)

Jeffrey's claim that “the mass of variant readings that has survived to us from the codices of Ubayy and Ibn Mas‘ūd shows that they were real textual variants and not mere dialectal peculiarities”\(^5\) indicates that the substitution of one word with a synonym\(^5\) from another dialect in the rival codices led him to the above conclusion. He does not seem to have understood the Prophet’s permission for new Muslims, many of whom were elderly, illiterate, bedouin, and without any background in Arabic, to use variant readings. It is also evident from the above-mentioned example of Ubayy and the Persian who could not pronounce a certain word. In an oft-
quoted hadith on the seven reading styles mentioned in *Sahih al Bukhari*, it is very clear that the Prophet, after listening to Hishām ibn Ḥakım’s and ‘Umar ibn al Khattāb’s differing recitations of Sūrah al Furqān, approved each reading. In fact, it is recorded that the Prophet had taught these different readings to them. He said: “This Qur’an has been revealed to be recited in seven different *ahruf* (ways), so recite it whichever (way) is easier for you.” Pearson seems to have difficulty in understanding the word *ahruf* and says: “The meaning of this expression in the hadith is uncertain, the term *ahruf* being the plural of *ḥarf*, ‘letter.’” Nevertheless, Ibn Mujāhid has made it quite clear that it means “seven readings,” regardless of whether they belong to different dialects or are different dialectal readings for the same word.

It is interesting to note that Jeffery, in view of the unauthenticated chain of transmissions that accompany such uncanonical variant readings, could not venture to bring any reading *par excellence* with that of the ‘Uthmānic text. On the contrary, he says that “some of the variants, in the form in which they have survived to us, seem linguistically impossible, and in certain cases this has been noted in the source which quotes the variant.” He concedes further that Bergstrasser in his preliminary collection of the uncanonical readings of Ibn Mas‘ūd and Uba‘i made an attempt to estimate the value of these two texts as compared with the ‘Uthmānic text. With the increase of material one feels less inclined to venture on such a judgment of the value.

He tries to explain the variants found in the uncanonical codices as being improvements on the ‘Uthmānic text, as Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibn ‘Abbās are reported to have read لر instead of مثا in 2:137. Jeffery suggests further that these Companions may have suggested such variants out of piety. One should be aware, however, that when Jeffery deals with any aspect of Islam, he does so through a Christian paradigm. For example, he states that Islam, like Christianity, has a sacred book but never goes on to say that it is one of the three Abrahamic religions. In the case of the New Testament, it is generally held that all the gospels originally circulated anonymously. Authoritative names were later assigned to them by unknown figures in the early church. In most cases the names are guesses or perhaps the result of pious wishes.

In order to equate the Qur’an with the Bible, Jeffery suggests that some of the Companions made “changes and improvements” in the Qur’anic text based on “motives of piety.” Unfortunately for him, he seems to have missed the fact that any addition or deletion to the Qur’an is such a heinous crime that one cannot imagine that a Companion would do such a thing. It also would not have been tolerated by his/her fellow Companions.
Conclusion

We can sum up the discussion in the following points:

1. It is clear that variant readings, such as pronouncing al širāt in Sūrah al Fātihah with a sād, a sin, or a zā‘ or Ibn Mas‘ūd’s reading of ‘tā‘ for hattā in Sūrah 12:35, reflect the tribal dialect of the individual reciter. It should be noted that hā and ‘ayn, as well as alif and qāf, are interchanged in various Arab dialects. Similarly, the readings of iyyāka, wiyāka, and hayyāka in al Fātihah are dialectal variants, as the alif is interchanged with the wāw and the hā‘ in various dialects. The reading of nista‘īnu with kasrah on the first nūn is also a dialectal variant, as yi‘lamūna is read for ya‘lamūna in Sūrah 2:56 and tiswaddu for taswaddu in Sūrah 3:106 in the Banū Asad dialect. The readings of malik, mallak, malk, malik, and malik in Sūrah al Fātihah are also dialectal variants and represent allowed reading styles. These dialectal variants of malik have been ascribed to the Prophet, who is reported to have read them. Had these variants been inadmissible, the Companions would not have differed in their recitation of this most-repeated sūrah.

The substitution of ihdīnā and lā with their respective synonyms arshīdnā and ghayra in Sūrah al Fātihah also represent dialectal variants that are among the permitted recitations. Jeffery, in his attempt to introduce rival codices, has ignored the facts that this sūrah is recited out loud in most of the daily prayers and that a reading not allowed by the Prophet would not have been allowed or perpetuated. Moreover, Jeffery has failed to bring any objection from a Companion that this sūrah, as it appears in the ‘Uthmānic recension, was not in accord with the Prophet’s recitation.

2. While creating doubts and making insinuations about the ‘Uthmānic recension and despite his acceptance that the transmission of the variants is through weak chains of transmission, Jeffery is nevertheless hesitant to admit the reality of the Muslim world consensus (ijmā‘) on it. If we suppose that some variants are genuine and were used in pre-‘Uthmānic recension times due to their conformity to the seven permissible readings, even then a text transmitted through one narrator (āhād) cannot be preferred to a text handed down by one generation to the next (tawātur).

3. While dealing with the variant readings, Jeffery has ignored completely the important factor of the Qur’an’s oral transmission. The ‘Uthmānic recension was not just another official document to be shelved after the committee had completed it. The canonical version was available to everyone. One copy of the official recension (al Muṣḥaf al Imām) was kept in Madinah, while copies were sent to other cities in the Islamic state of that time. Thousands of Companions who had memorized most, if not all, of the Qur’an and who had first-hand knowledge of how the Prophet had recited the Qur’an, were in Madinah. It must also be remem-
bered that all of the Companions, despite the fact that the scribes and many Companions had written materials with them, approved the ‘Uthmānic recension as the recitation of the Prophet and accepted its authenticity and accuracy.

4. In his zealous drive to introduce rival codices, Jeffery ignored the fact that Ibn Mas‘ūd, although after some hesitation, surrendered his codex to ‘Uthmān and thereafter never appears to have insisted on any reading ascribed to him. Moreover, Jeffery has failed utterly to produce any statement from Ibn Mas‘ūd implying that what was in the ‘Uthmānic recension was not from the Prophet. After Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b is the second Companion to whom a bulk of variant readings has been ascribed. Although Jeffery recognizes that all secondary codices have been derived from Ibn Mas‘ūd’s and that no codex has been derived from Ubayy’s, he gives primary importance to the variants ascribed to the latter and thus ignores the fact that Ubayy participated in the gigantic task of completing the ‘Uthmānic recension. ‘Āli ibn Abī Ṭālib, who is held to have had a codex before the official recension, is reported to have showed his gratitude and satisfaction with the ‘Uthmānic recension by saying: “If I were in command in place of ‘Uthmān, I would have done the same.”

5. Despite his admission that many variant readings have been invented by later theologians, philologers, and grammarians and then ascribed to early authorities in order to gain prestige, Jeffery is still interested in restoring the “original reading” of the Qur’an. More recently, two other orientalists—John Burton and John Wansbrough—have concluded that all of the accounts about “Companion codices,” “metropolitan codices,” and individual variants were fabricated by later jurists and philologers. Jeffery has also ignored the fact that the earliest basic sources for variant readings are the reports of Ibn Abī Dāwūd (d. 316 A.H.), Ibn al Anbārī (d. 328 A.H.), and Ibn al Asḥāb (d. 360 A.H.). However, their reports do not have proper narration chains and are not supported by genuine transmission chains.

6. As was the case with his predecessor Bell, Jeffery has failed to camouflage his prejudice against Islam and the Qur’an when dealing with its compilation. Following Bell, he declares that the recension of Abū Bakr was his own purely private affair. It is very surprising to note that he accepts as valid all of the variants indicated in the Muqaddimātān and the Kitāb al Maḥāfīf but ignores (without explaining why) these same sources’ assertion about Abū Bakr’s collection of the Qur’an, a fact that has been supported powerfully by early sources of history and hadith. Nevertheless, it is indubitable that the Qur’anic recension prepared by Abū Bakr served as the principal basis for the ‘Uthmānic recension.
7. Jeffery has also failed to understand 'Uthmān’s reasons for undertaking his recension and to acknowledge the factors of propagating dialectal variants and 'Uthmān’s concern with complaints stemming from variant readings. Abū Muḥammad Makki, like other Muslim exegetes, makes it clear that 'Uthmān sought to deal with this issue by codifying the Qur’anic text (the Prophet’s reading) and abrogating all other readings, even if they had been permitted by the Prophet during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{81} Al Qaysī also mentions that a team of at least twelve thousand Companions and Followers (Ṭābi‘īn) worked on the official recension and destroyed the uncanonical versions.\textsuperscript{82} It is inconceivable that such a large team of eminent Muslims could enforce a recension containing readings that, although ascribed to the Prophet, were of a doubtful nature.

8. Despite his claim, Jeffery could not observe the principles of higher criticism while dealing with the Qur’an and its variant readings. In his lecture on “The Textual History of the Qur’an,” delivered in Jerusalem (1946) and published in his \textit{The Qur’an as Scripture} (1952), he fails to mention the Archive's conclusion regarding the collection of the Qur’an and the textual differences in various versions. Dr. Ḥamīdullah, who had met Dr. Pretzl when the latter came to Paris to collect photocopies of the Qur’anic scriptures available in the libraries there,\textsuperscript{83} says that Pretzl told him: “Our institute (Archive) has collected the photographs of 42,000 copies of the Qur’an and we are collating them”\textsuperscript{84} and that, after accomplishing this task before its destruction, issued a “provisional report” that, according to him, reads:

> The work of collation of various copies of the Qur’an is not completed yet. However, on the basis of the work accomplished so far, we can say that there are occasional mistakes of the copyists, but there is no textual difference found [in the 42,000 copies of the Qur’an, which have been collated].\textsuperscript{85}

Jeffery, in his treatment of the Qur’an, talks exclusively about the Archive and his collaboration with Professors Bergstrasser and Pretzl, but surprisingly omits the mention of the Archive’s report and findings.

9. Finally, it seems appropriate to suggest that such orientalists as Pearson, who continues to pursue Jeffery’s mission to invalidate the character of the Qur’an as an unadulterated revealed book, should apply the principles of higher criticism in an affirmative way. By so doing, they would discover for themselves the truth of the Qur’anic claims: “Had it been from other than Allah they would surely have found much discrepancies and contradictions in it” (4:82) and “We have, without doubt, sent down the message [Qur’an] and We will surely guard it (from corruption and adulteration)” (15:9).
The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 12:2

Endnotes

1. Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an* (London: E. J. Brill, 1937). This book, edited by Jeffery, appeared in one volume with the *Kitāb al Maṣāḥif* by Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī Dāwūd Sulaymān al Sijistānī (d. 316 A.H.). Jeffery also edited two other manuscripts under the title of *Muqaddimâtāt fi ‘Ulām al Qur‘ān*, 2d ed (Cairo: Maktabat al Khānji, 1972). This book deals with the collection and variant readings of the Qur'ān. One portion contains the *Muqaddimah Kitāb al Mabānī*, whose author is unknown (the manuscript lacks the essential first folio). However, on the second page of the manuscript, the author mentions that he started writing his book in 425 A.H. and entitled it *Kitāb al Mabānī fi Nāẓm al Ma‘ānī*. The second portion, entitled *al Jāmi‘ al Mubarrar*, is by Ibn ‘Afīyā (d. c. 543 A.H.), who wrote it as an introduction to his Qur'ānic commentary. Both Noeldeke and his pupil Schwally have based their research on these works. The language, style, and chains of transmission employed therein reveal that the authors of these works belonged to Muslim Spain.


6. Ibid.


8. Ibid., 15. See also Jeffery, *Qur'an as Scripture*, 93-97.


13. Ibid.

14. Jeffery calls the personal collections of some Companions “rival codices.” These collections were surrendered to ‘Uthmān after the official recension had been compiled. Some details can be seen in the work edited by Jeffery himself: Ibn Mas‘ūd surrendered his codex to ‘Uthmān. See Jeffery, *Muqaddimātāt*, 95. Pearson also classifies the personal collections of the Companions in the preofficial recension period as “rivals.” He has relied mainly on Jeffery’s *Materials* when dealing with variant readings in his essay “Al-Kur'an,” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 5:406-8.

15. According to Ibn Abī Dāwūd, Abū Bakr was the first to collect the Qur'an. He mentions the names of ten Companions said by Jeffery as having “primary codices.” Although Ibn Abī Dāwūd never implies that all of them had written copies of the Qur’an, he mentions variant readings ascribed to them under the title of *Muṣḥaf*. He also uses such phrases as *jama‘a al Qur‘ān* (lit., “he collected the Qur’an”) for one who has memorized it. See Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al Maṣāḥif*, ed. by Arthur Jeffery 1st ed. (Cairo: 1936), 5, 10, 50-87. Ibn Abī Dāwūd has made it even clearer by saying that he uses the word *muṣḥaf* to mean *ḥarf* or *qirā‘ah* (reading) so that the variants he quotes need not be regarded as coming from actual written codices. See Jeffery, *Materials*, 15.

16. For a detailed account of the recensions of Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān, see Muḥammad Ḥamidullah, *Khutubāt-e-Bahawalpur* (Bahawalpur, Pakistan: Islamic University, 1401 AH), 3-29.


20. These seven systems are ascribed to Nāfī’ of Madinah (d. 169 A.H.), Ibn Kathīr of Makkah (d. 120 A.H.), Ibn ‘Amr of Damascus (d. 118 A.H.), Abū ‘Amr of Baṣrah (d. 154 A.H.), Āsim of Kūfah (d. 128 A.H.), Ḥamzah of Kūfah (d. 158 A.H.), and al Kisā‘ī of Kūfah (d. 189 A.H.).
23. Ibid., 49-50, 139.
25. While enlisting the variants, Jeffery has read it incorrectly: \( \text{ذَٰلِكَ بِكُلِّ إِنْطَهَا } \). See Jeffery, *Materials*, 117. As Jeffery never gives the sources of his entries in *Materials*, it cannot be determined from where he has taken the phrase \( \text{ذَٰلِكَ بِكُلِّ إِنْطَهَا } \), which obviously seems to be incorrect.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 185.
28. Ibid., 195.
29. Ibid., 220.
30. Ibid., 233.
31. Ibid., 287-88.
32. Ibid., 314-15.
34. Ibid., 96.
35. Ibid., 94.
37. Arthur Jeffery, “A Variant Text of the Fatiha,” *The Moslem World*, 29 (1939): 158. Jeffery, although he included the translation of al Fātiḥah and al Mu'āwwadhatan (Two Charms) in *The Koran - Selected Surahs*, does not consider them to be part of the Qur'an: “The form in which we have it [i.e., al-Qur'an] comprising one hundred and eleven suras” and says in the introduction to the translation of al Fātiḥah: “This short Sura does not belong to the Qur'an proper, but [is] a little prayer, a kind of cento made up of Koranic phrases, placed as an introduction to the Book, and commonly recited before the reading of any portion thereof.” Jeffery, *Koran*, 15, 23.
40. Ibid., 159.
41. Ibid., 160-62.
43. Khan, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 481-82.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 229-30.
48. There are discussions on this topic scattered throughout the various books on the Arabic language. Al Suyūṭī has a detailed chapter on it in his al Iṣqān fī ‘Ulūm al Qur‘ān.
50. Ibid., 5-7.
51. For details, see Jeffery (ed.), *Muqaddimātān*, 229-30.
54. Ibn Jinnī, al Khaṣāʾīṣ, 1:374
55. Ibid.
56. Jeffery, Qurʾān as Scripture, 97.
57. In a number of cases, variants in the old codices are merely synonyms for words used in the ‘Uthmānic text. Jeffery, Materials, 16.
58. Khan, Sahīh, 6:482-83.
60. Ibid., 409.
61. For details, see Jeffery, Muqaddimātān, 218-30.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Jeffery, Qurʾān as Scripture, 1.
68. For example, in Sūrah 77:11, uqqitat is read as wuqqitat by Ibn Maṣʿūd. Jeffery, Materials, 107. In the same way, wāw and alif are interchangeable, as in wujūh and ’ujūh. See Ibn Manẓūr, al Lisān, 2:107-8 (w-q-t).
70. Jeffery, Muqaddimātān, 220.
72. For details, see Jeffery, Muqaddimātān, 38; al Qayṣī, al Ibānāh, 73.
73. Jeffery, Muqaddimātān, 95.
74. Ibn Abī Dāwūd, Kitāb al Maṣāḥif, 23.
75. Jeffery, Materials, 2, 15.
76. Ibid., 16.
78. See, for example, W. Montgomery Watt, Bell’s Introduction to the Qurʾān (Edinburgh: 1977), 43.
80. See, for example, Khan, Sahīh, 6:476-80.
81. al Qayṣī, al Ibānāh, 96-97.
82. Ibid., 22-23.
83. Ḥāmidullāh, Khutūbāt, 15-16.
84. Ibid., 16.
85. Ibid., 15-16.