

# Islamic Scriptures and Voice Intonation: A Preliminary Survey in Arabic Linguistic Thought and *Ḥadīth* Interpretive Discourse

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**Abstract.** This is the first study that aims to explore the possibility of applying the art and science of voice intonation in reading statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and to form a theoretical framework explicative of the nexuses between the two enterprises. The study ventures to assess the attention towards a range of functions played by voice intonation such as attitudinal functions, psychological functions and other indicative functions as it may have appeared within the various compositional strategies of *ḥadīth* literature. It also aims to examine how normal conversations, declarative sentences, questions, etc. could be identified through voice intonation and the extent to which the understanding of a certain *ḥadīth* can be affected by such an exercise. The preliminary analysis indicates that the right selection of tone assumes a crucial role in forming a sound *ḥadīth* interpretation. The consequential extension of this study may involve several other subtopics in the field such as the oral and written transmission of *ḥadīth*, the euphony and cacophony of narrated words and sentences in *ḥadīth*, and the psycho-spiritual effects of *ḥadīth*.

**Keywords and phrases:** intonational meaning, *ḥadīth* interpretation, *ḥadīth* linguistics, *matan* criticism, scriptural phonology

## Introduction

“*Yasin dan Sulaiman pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan ḥadīth di Istanbul*”. This Malay sentence can be intoned variably based on different contexts. If the sentence were to be a response to a nonpolar question, several emphases could be expected following the use of different interrogative words (*wh*-questions). The following (A 1–4) represents possible cases that exemplify the above proposition, with the emphases and risings in intonation indicated by the capitalisation:

A. *Yasin dan Sulaiman pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan ḥadīth di Istanbul.*

1. Who: *Siapakah yang pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan ḥadīth di Istanbul? = YaSIN dan SulaiMAN (yang) pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan ḥadīth di Istanbul.*
2. What: *Apakah yang dilakukan oleh Yasin dan Sulaiman di Istanbul? = Yasin dan Sulaiman pergi menghadiRI semiNAR berkenaan ḥadīth di Istanbul.*
3. What: *Yasin dan Sulaiman pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan apa di Istanbul? = Yasin dan Sulaiman pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan HADĪTH di Istanbul.*
4. Where: *Yasin dan Sulaiman pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan ḥadīth di mana? = Yasin dan Sulaiman pergi menghadiri seminar berkenaan ḥadīth di ISTANBUL.*

Cases such as the above constitute an instance conventionally qualified as the essence of “focusing” (Büring 2016). Focusing, occasionally rendered as accentual or informational in English phonetics, constructs one of the intonational functions that correspond constantly to the intonation-and-meaning phenomena. According to Büring, a difference in the prosodic realisation of an utterance corresponds in an ostensibly systematic way with a difference in interpretation. This consistently corroborates the fact that the rise and fall of pitch in human voices plays a vital role in how they express meaning. Informational function such as the above could be the most fundamental function in our voice intonation. However, other more specific functions have also been established such as attitudinal function (e.g., expressing emotions and attitudes), grammatical function (e.g., discerning a question from a statement), discourse function (e.g., discerning a subordinate clause from a main clause), psychological function (e.g., imparting a better chance of comprehension) and indexical function (e.g., representing context, background, identity, etc.) (Wells 2006).

This sort of linguistic phenomenon is not exclusive to bahasa Melayu and English. It has also been long visited in Arabic linguistic thought. A classic example often adduced is the following line of al-Farazdaq (c. 114 AH/732 CE):

كَمْ خَالَةَ لَكَ يَا جَرِيرُ وَعَمَّةٌ      فُدْعَاءٌ قَدْ حَلَبْتُ عَلَيَّ عِشَارِي

Since the linguist and grammarian of Arabic language Sībūyīyē (c. 180 AH/796 CE, Persia) has reported that the ancient native Arabs used the particle *kam* to denote both an assertion and a question, the above line can be read either as a declarative or as an interrogative one. In the former, the word *khālat* will take an *i*-case (*majrūr*),

so as to be read *khālatin*, while in the latter, it will assume an *a*-case (*manṣūb*), so as to be pronounced *khālatan*. The meaning changes significantly from asserting that Jarīr has many aunts to asking Jarīr about the number of aunts he has. Although this example shows how grammatical identification affects interpretation, it does implicitly indicate that intonation, especially in poetry, contributes significantly to the outcome.

Moreover, one finds that the attention given by the Muslim Arabs towards intonation is extensive in the field of Qur'anic recitation. The study of *maqāmāt* (melodic modes) of recitation bears witness to this effort where some sort of musicality such as the use of melody and vocal artistry are required to induce an ideal recitation (Rasmussen 2001). The recitation of the Qur'ān, however, is regarded by Muslim scholars and the public as a separate art, mainly to distinguish it from the art of other religious and secular music, although certain overlaps in ornamentation, terminology, emotional and physical responses, and aesthetic and economic standards have been observed. This is to maintain the divine identity, perfection and uniqueness of the text and to avoid reducing it to the status of entertainment (Nelson 2001). This traditional bifurcation can also be perceived from the centuries-old debate on the status of *samā'* that concerns both the status of religious and devotional songs and music, and the status of music per se in Islamic rulings (Al-Judaie 2005).

Notwithstanding that, voice intonation has been identified by the Qur'anic exegetes as an instrumental agency to gauge the possible meanings of a Qur'anic verse, especially one that accommodates multiple *qirā'āt* (variant readings). As an example, when commenting on the Qur'anic verse of al-A'rāf 7:123, Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (377 AH/988 CE) indicated that the word *آمنتُمْ* (*āmantum*) has been read by the *qurrā'* (readers) in the sense of either interrogative or declarative (Al-Fārisī 1993). From a comparison between 35 English translations of the Qur'ān, it is learned that five of them left the translated sentence without a question mark. The other five finished it with an exclamation mark and the rest clearly assumed it as a question. Taking it as a declarative sentence, the verse will translate as: "Pharaoh declared, 'You have believed in Him before I permit you. This is a plot you...'" whereas reading it as a question yields: "Pharaoh said, 'How dare you believe in Him before I have given you permission? This is a plot you...'" Thus, in reading the Qur'anic text (al-A'rāf 7:123),

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ءَأَمَنْتُمْ بِى قَبْلِ أَنْ ءَادَنْ لَكُمْۢ اِنْ هٰذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَّكْرْتُمْوهُ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ  
لِنُخْرِجُوْا مِنْهَا اٰهْلَهَاۙ فَاَسْتَوَف تَعْلَمُوْنَ

the use of high pitch in reciting the word *āmantum* (ءَأَمَنْتُمْ) suggests that the reciter is taking it as a question, while the low pitch implies that it is a mere assertion.

The field of Qur'anic studies may have conditioned this subject under several areas of subdisciplines, i.e., the science of *tajwīd*, the science of *qirā'āt*, the art of *tarannum*, etc. It had also been forwarded that the attention towards tones and melodies in this area was motivated by the Prophetic tradition that says: "He is not of us who does not chant pleasingly with the recitation of the Qur'ān" (Al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. 7527), and the Prophet's remark of his companion, Abū Mūsā's recitation as "being endowed with a Davidian windpipe – attributed to the Prophet David's family" (Al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. 5048).

On the other hand, *ḥadīth* texts too have been appropriated as scripture in Islamic thought (Musa 2008). As far as the subject of intonation is concerned, a question is worth asking in relation to this second source of Islamic sacred texts – was there any study on the *tanghīm* (intonation) of the speech of the Prophet?

### **The Concept of *Tanghīm* (Intonation) in Arabic Linguistic Thought**

Modern Arabic linguistic thought was introduced to the term *tanghīm* by Ibrahim Anis (n.d.) who wrote under the topic *mūsiqā al-kalām* (the music of speech):

Recent experiments have proven that as a person utters a sentence of his own language, he does not follow a single pitch in producing the sounds. A word that consists of one syllable may differ in its pitch. Likewise, the multi-syllable words. In some languages like the Chinese, the difference in pitches may lead to different meanings ... we may call this changing of levels in pitches as *al-naghmah al-mūsīqiyyah* (musical tune). (Anis n.d., 103)

Earlier, Anis indicated that as human beings speak, there is a change of pitch in almost all syllables that he uttered. However, the range between a pitch to another is not as pronounced as the range between them during an act of singing. Moreover, they are far more extended in English songs compared to Arabic songs (Anis n.d., 8). This modern treatment of Arabic linguistics adds a new dimension to Arabic phonetics and phonology. Classical and medieval Arabic grammarians such as al-Khalīl al-Farāhīdī (170 AH/786 CE), Sībuvīyē and Ibn Jinnī (392 AH/1002 CE) have already initiated the study of points of articulation (*makhārij al-ḥurūf*) where the vocal tract of man is divided into several areas and points according to the articulation or other classifications of the speech sounds of classical Arabic. In addition, Ibn Jinnī in his *Sirr Ṣinā'at al-I'rāb* remarked on the influence of a letter sound to the neighbouring one when a string of sounds is vocalised (1993, 6–9). Subsequently, Ibn Sīnā (428 AH/1037 CE) by the virtue of his interest in anatomy provided a study on the generation of sounds which is phonetic as well as anatomic of the throat and the tongue

(n.d., *passim*). His specific reference to the function of implosive and explosive movements of air resulted in his *Risālat Asbāb Hudūth al-Ḥurūf* to uniquely treat the three folds of sounds; production, acoustics and auditory (Al-Fayyūmī 1991). The interconnectedness of these subjects is somehow intricate, yet its presence is undeniably recognised. Ibn Jinnī himself has made a reference in *al-Khaṣā'is* (1952, 371) to the notion of *tanghīm* as he explained that the omitted adjective in the sentence such as *كان والله رجلاً!* (He is, BY ALLAH, a man) is retrievable through the recognition of high pitch in the word Allah and the lengthened sound of *lām* in it. It is as if the person is saying, “He is, BY ALLAH, a great man!” or “a brave man!” Ibn Jinnī argued that *taḥwīḥ* (accentuation), *taḥrīḥ* (rise), *tafkhīm* (euphuism) and *ta'zīm* (exaltation) could be sensed sometimes in the speech of a person which justifies the omission of certain adjectives. It is also worth noting that the science of *tajwīd* has recorded several discussions about *waqf* (stopping) and *saktah* (breathless pause) where the beauty of recitation is related to the timing and the movement of air.

Eventually, the modern Arabic linguistic treatment of *tanghīm* does labour more attention to the study of intonation and voice variations, since that modern linguistic has defined intonation as the variations in the pitch of voice, i.e., the variations in the pitch of the musical note produced by vibration of the vocal chords (Jones 1976). Although languages can be divided into *lughāt naḡhmiyyah* (tonal languages) and *lughāt tanghīmiyyah* (intonation languages), all languages are subjected to the natural intonation or *al-tanghīm al-ṭabī'ī* that is devoid of any intonation-and-meaning functions yet allows its speaker to converse according to the sound system of the language (Al-Ḥāzīmī 2009). Nevertheless, the ultimate aim of any linguistic study, as highlighted by the linguist Tammam Hassan (1994), or any prosodic analysis as propounded by the pioneer John Firth (d. 1948), rests in seeking a connection between phonology and the study of meaning. David Crystal (1976, 195) assertively maintained:

Scholars have been anxious to restrict the formal definition of intonation to pitch movement alone (though occasionally allowing in stress variation as well); but when the question of intonational meaning is raised, then criteria other than pitch are readily referred to as being part of the basis of a semantic effect.

Earlier, he stressed that, “intonation is not a single system of contours or levels, but the product of the interaction of features from different prosodic systems – tone, pitch-range, loudness, rhythmicality and tempo in particular” (Crystal 1976, 195).

In a nutshell, whether classical and medieval Arabic linguistic thought harboured a systematic thought of *tanghīm* or not has been a matter of debate amongst modern Arabic linguists (‘Awaḍ and Na‘āmeḥ 2006). It is interesting to note that the development of early Arabic linguistic thought has been observed to correlate the development of Qur’anic reading sciences (Shah 2003a, 2003b). What interests this research is the awareness to the various perspectives of *tanghīm* or prosodic realisation and its semantical function in the comprehension and the deliverance of Arabic speech, particularly the Prophetic *ḥadīth*. In other words, if the function of intonation is identified in Arabic linguistics in two categories, *wazīfah adā’iyyah* (syntactic role) and *wazīfah dilāliyyah* (semantic role) (Al-Ḥāzimī 2009), the present survey attempts to see the connection between the two roles within the context of *ḥadīth* studies.

### The Concept of Voice in *Ḥadīth* Theoretical Treatises and Modern Studies

Although the concept of *adā’* has been treated in classical Arabic linguistic thought, the classical *ḥadīth* sciences took a different route when discussing the term *adā’*. Under the topic of *al-taḥammul wa al-adā’* (reception and transmission), one will find elaborate discussion on the use of terms such as *ḥaḍartu* (I attended), *sami‘tu* (I heard), *ḥaddathanā* (he narrated to us), *akhbaranā* (he informed us), *ajāza lanā* (he granted us the permission to narrate), etc., by a *rāwī* (transmitter) during the transmission of *ḥadīth*. This reflects the immense attention towards the *sanad* (chain of transmission) and its continuity laboured by the scholars of *ḥadīth* in attending the subject of *adā’* or *ta’diyah* (literally: fulfilment) in *ḥadīth*. The Prophetic *ḥadīth* that says, “God makes radiant those who heard our article, recognise it, safeguard it, and transmit it to others in the same form that he heard it (*addāhā kamā sami‘ahā*)”, was discussed in the sense of whether the paraphrasing of a *ḥadīth* text is allowed or not. Never was the phrase “*addāhā kamā sami‘ahā*” explained in relation to the Prophet’s tone in his speech. A dedicated study on this *ḥadīth* from both the *riwāyah* and *dirāyah* (transmission and interpretation) perspectives was carried by ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-‘Abbād (1981), yet he left no single clue on whether any classical scholars of *ḥadīth* touched upon the subject of the Prophetic intonation. It is evident that *adā’* was understood by *ḥadīth* scholars in the sense of the deliverance that secures the physical structure of the text rather than the sonic voice of the text.

Another discussion under the topic of *adā’* was the conditions of *ta’diyah*. Some of these include *‘adālah* (uprightness) and *ḍabṭ* (memory). A number of scholars extended the discussion to the status of *ḥadīth* reported by a non-believer, a young kid, a woman, etc. The subject of *adā’* in *ḥadīth* theoretical treatises could be said to focus on preserving the exact textual form of the *ḥadīth* as possible as one can,

without serious consideration given to the performance of the speech. This can be explained by the text-based framework of Muslim jurisprudence and legal practice that underlies the development of *ḥadīth* systematic criticism. Even the attainment of superior *isnād*, *al-isnād al-‘ālī* or *isnād* with lesser number of intermediaries whose justification is to be as close as possible to the original source of the speech, namely the Prophet, was not expounded in the sense of obtaining the most accurate tone of the speech sound.

This research has since ventured into finding clues to the subject of voice and intonation in the theoretical treatises of *ḥadīth* criticism. Unfortunately, from among 100 treatises on *‘ulūm al-ḥadīth* and *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, the search has yielded no effective result. The search has also included a careful examination of discussion in prominent works such as *Ma ‘rifat ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* by al-Ḥākim al-Naysāūrī, *al-Kifāyah fī Uṣūl ‘Ilm al-Riwāyah* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Muqaddamah* by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* by al-Suyūṭī, *Faṭḥ al-Mughīth* by al-Sakhāwī and contemporary works such as *‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth Aṣīluḥā wa Mu ‘āṣiruhā* by Abullais al-Khayrabādī and *Tahrīr ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* by Abdullah al-Judaie.

The search was further extended to digital books. The researcher has organised approximately 250 treatises on the theoretical aspects of *ḥadīth* criticism and *sunnah* studies in a digital software named *al-Maktabah al-Shāmīlah*. The first attempt was to search for the root نَعَمَ (to intone) and its significant derivatives such as the word النغمة (tone), with and without the definite marker ال, the word التنغيم, and the word النغم within this collection. As foreseen, the software gave no significant result. The next attempt was to look for the word صوت (voice) and its derivatives within the same corpora. The software provided several results, but none were related to the subject of intoning a *ḥadīth* text.

The third step of this survey was to look for a study that treats both phonetics and *ḥadīth* studies available on the world wide web. The main website that was referred to is <http://b7oth.com> whose main page is titled *Jāmi ‘ al-Buḥūth wa al-Rasā ‘il al- ‘Ilmiyyah*. The web was assessed on 15 September 2018. Similar to the previous attempts, the search yielded no significant result. The closest treatise one may consult on this subject is a doctoral dissertation titled *Al-Asālīb al-Ṭalabiyyah wa Adā ‘ātihā al-Iblāghīyyah fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī: Muqārabah Tadāwuliyyah* (Instructional Styles and Its Rhetorical Expressions in the Prophetic Ḥadīth: A Pragmatic Analysis) which was submitted by Hamidat Djemai (2015) at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University, Algeria. Djemai studied the performative modes (as opposed to informative modes) found in the rhetoric of *ḥadīth*. The subject dragged the author to study the interrogative (*istifhām*), positive imperative (*amr*), prohibitive or negative imperative (*nahy*), vocative (*nidā ‘*) and optative

(*tamannī*) styles in *ḥadīth* texts as well as the role of context in the deliverance (*adāʿ*) of its message. However, little has been said by the author on the relationship between these functions and the intoning process of the *ḥadīth*.

Another relevant study to this research is the article presented by Farha al-Sharīdī (2015) of Sirte University titled *Al-Taḥlīl al-Fūnīmī li al-Khiṭāb al-Nabawī: Dirāsāt Ṣawtiyyat Maqṭaʿiyyah fī Khuṭbat al-Wadāʿ*. Al-Sharīdī performed a phonemic analysis on the last sermon of the Prophet Muhammad as recounted in *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah* of Ibn Hishām. Her aim was to analyse the use of various syllables that consist of various onsets and rimes, viz. nucleus and coda, in the speech of the Prophet. Although her paper focused more on the phonemic and syllabic patterns of the sermon, al-Sharīdī did assert that the subject plays a vital role in the process of intonation and the study of voices that will affect the interpretation of the speech. While tracing the idea of syllable amongst the classical scholars, al-Sharīdī managed to present the definition of *maqṭaʿ* or syllable according to al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Jinnī. However, despite her claim that *ḥadīth* represents the best of Arabic speech and the aesthetic of its rhetorical strategies constitutes the ideal of illustrious human speech, al-Sharīdī did not inform us of any treatment of the subject by *ḥadīth* scholars. On top of that, she admitted that studies on the linguistic dimension of *ḥadīth* are rather exiguous and invited the readers to build further on her enterprising attempt.

The finding above corresponds well to Mustafa Shah's (2011) writing on "The Language of *Ḥadīth*" presented in the *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*. The main issue that was raised by him in tackling the subject was the debate on paraphrasing a *ḥadīth* text or *al-riwāyah bi'l-ma'nā*. As for the grammatical citation and the linguistic value of *ḥadīth*, Shah detailed an extensive debate on the topic and concluded that:

The marginalisation of the language of *ḥadīth* in the realm of grammatical citation has tended to obscure both the attention the corpora received in the works of early and medieval grammarians, as well as its use for the purpose of exemplification in other areas of early and medieval linguistic thought. (Shah 2011)

One important aspect remains to be considered, namely, has any of the interpreters of *ḥadīth* alluded to the significance of tone in the understanding of *ḥadīth* across those extensive commentary works of *ḥadīth*? The present study has not yet covered the commentaries in its gauging of the subject. The tradition requires more attention in the academia. According to Joel Blecher (2018):

The field of *ḥadīth* studies has largely overlooked the rich and extensive tradition of *ḥadīth* commentary (*sharḥ al-ḥadīth*), even as a handful of short articles and book chapters have begun to draw attention to the commentary tradition's value as a key hub of Islamic social and intellectual life over the past millennium ... *ḥadīth* commentary has remained hidden in plain sight.

Much more need to be done before the possibility of finding the connection between Arabic linguistic thought and *ḥadīth* commentaries can be learned constructively.

### The Effect of Intonation on the Deliverance and the Understanding of *Ḥadīth*

In recognising the effect of intonation in the understanding of *ḥadīth*, the present study has chosen a number of *ḥadīth* texts and hypothesised the effect of different intonations in communicating its multifaceted functions. It is worth noting that earlier scholars of Arabic medieval thought have also specifically pointed out subjects such as the occurrence of ellipsis in *ḥadīth* text that can be recognised through a certain intonation. For example, the *ḥadīth* text reported in one of the manuscripts of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (*ḥadīth* no. 1485) spelled:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتَى بِالتَّمْرِ عِنْدَ صِرَامِ النَّخْلِ فَيَجِيءُ هَذَا بِتَمْرِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ تَمْرِهِ حَتَّى يَصِيرَ عِنْدَهُ كَوْمًا مِنْ تَمْرٍ، فَجَعَلَ الْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ يُلْعَبَانِ بِذَلِكَ التَّمْرِ فَأَخَذَ أَحَدُهُمَا تَمْرَةً فَجَعَلَهَا فِي فِيهِ، فَنَظَرَ إِلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ فَأَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ فِيهِ، فَقَالَ: (مَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ آلَ مُحَمَّدٍ لَا يَأْكُلُونَ الصَّدَقَةَ).

Meaning:

Dates used to be brought to the Messenger of Allah immediately during the plucking season. Different individuals would come with their dates until a big heap was gathered [as a charity for those in need]. Once al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn [the grandchildren of the Messenger of Allah] played with those dates and one of them took a date and put it in his mouth. The Messenger of Allah looked at him and took it out from his mouth and said, “[Don’t] you know that Muḥammad’s family do not eat from the charity[?]”

In the course of reconciling between the version that reported it with *ما علمت* (You know that) and the one that reported it with *أما علمت* (Don’t you know that), Ibn Mālik (1992, 146) in *Shawāhid al-Tawdīḥ* stated that those who omitted the prefix, namely, *hamzah al-istiḥām* (the interrogative particle) understood that it is

indubitably preserved by implication (*taqdīr*) without which the meaning will be incoherent. According to 'Awaḍ and Na'āmeh (2006), the actual identifier for this implied *hamzah al-istifhām* is the intonation of the speaker.

The following 1–4 functions will further reinforce this impression:

1. Discerning the level of imperative.

عَنْ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ: (فُصُّوا سِبَالَكُمْ، وَوَقِّرُوا عَتَانِيكُمْ، وَخَالِفُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ)

This *ḥadīth* is reported in *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal (2001, no. 22283) with this exact wording on the authority of Abū Umāmah RA. Should it be read with a rising tone and faster tempo from the word *quṣṣū* till the word *al-kitāb*, the meaning will be rendered: “Trim closely your moustache, let your beard grow and act against the People of the Book!”, whereas a reading with the falling tone and slower tempo would suggest the meaning to be that the Messenger of Allah said: “You may trim closely your moustache and you may let your beard grow, and [by doing so, you can] be different from the People of the Book”.

The second intonation would be more convincing if the whole text is to be observed. The *ḥadīth* reads:

خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَشِيخَةٍ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ بِيضٌ لِحَاهُمْ، فَقَالَ: "يَا مَعْشَرَ الْأَنْصَارِ، حَمِّرُوا، وَصَقِّرُوا، وَخَالِفُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ." فَقُلْتُ: "يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ يَتَسَرَّوْنَ وَلَا يَأْتِرُونَ؟" فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: "تَسَرَّوْا وَانْتَرُوا، وَخَالِفُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ." فَقُلْتُ: "يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ يَتَخَفُّونَ وَلَا يَنْتَعِلُونَ؟" فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ: "فَتَخَفُّوا وَانْتَعِلُوا، وَخَالِفُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ." فَقُلْنَا: "يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ يَقْصُونَ عَتَانِيَهُمْ، وَيُوقِرُونَ سِبَالَهُمْ!" فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ: "فُصُّوا سِبَالَكُمْ وَوَقِّرُوا عَتَانِيَكُمْ، وَخَالِفُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ."

Although the literal translation would be different, the second intonation would suggest the following:

The Messenger of Allah came across some Anṣār seniors whose beard has turned white. He said to them: Why don't you change the white into red or yellow, and be different from the People of the Book? I said: O Messenger of Allah, the People of the Book would wear pants, but they thought that it is forbidden to wear sarong. The Messenger of Allah replied: You may wear both pants and sarong and be different from the People of the Book. I said: O Messenger of Allah, the People of the Book would wear leather socks, but they thought that it is forbidden to

wear sandals. The Messenger of Allah replied: You may wear both the leather socks and the sandals and be different from the People of the Book. We said: O Messenger of Allah, the People of the Book would trim closely their beard and let grow their moustache. The Messenger of Allah replied: “You may trim closely your moustache and let your beard grow and be different from the People of the Book”. [Ibn Hanbal 2001, *ḥadīth* no. 22283]

## 2. Discerning a question from a statement.

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: جَاءَتْ امْرَأَةٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ فَقَالَتْ: "يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أُمِّي مَاتَتْ وَوَعَلَيْهَا صِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ، فَأَقْضِي عَنْهَا." فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: "أَرَأَيْتِ لَوْ كَانَ عَلَى أُمِّكَ دَيْنٌ أَكُنْتَ تَقْضِيهِ؟" قَالَتْ: "نَعَمْ." قَالَ: "فَدَيْنُ اللَّهِ أَحَقُّ."

Ibn ‘Abbās related that a woman came to the Messenger of Allah and said: “O Messenger of Allah, my mother died, and she hasn’t fulfilled her duty to fast two months consecutively. I fulfilled them on her behalf [literal translation]”. The Messenger of Allah asked: “Suppose some debt was due from your mother, would you pay it?” She replied: “Yes”. He said: “The debt of Allah deserves more than it should be paid”.

This *ḥadīth* was recorded by al-İsfahānī in *Al-Musnad al-Mustakhrāj* (1996, *ḥadīth* no. 2605). In the text, the woman’s statement *فَأَقْضِي عَنْهَا* (I fulfilled them on her behalf) is originally a question, but the interrogative particle was omitted. Only a rising tone will suit this last part of her statement. By the virtue of the tone, a listener will immediately understand that the implied statement is *أَفَأَقْضِي عَنْهَا؟* (Should I fulfil them on her behalf?). The grammatical structure of the statement and the reply from the messenger in this regard are secondary. Further investigation will also reveal that other versions of this *ḥadīth* reported in the form of an interrogative sentence. Nevertheless, in this specific version of the *ḥadīth*, it was the ineluctable intonation that essentially gave the idea that the woman was asking a question.

## 3. The discourse function of *ḥadīth* intonation.

عَنْ ابْنِ بُرَيْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: "كُنْتُ نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنِ الْأَسْرَبَةِ فِي ظُرُوفِ الْأَدَمِ، فَاشْرَبُوا فِي كُلِّ وَعَاءٍ، غَيْرَ أَنْ لَا تَشْرَبُوا مُسْكِرًا."

Ibn Buraydah, on the authority of his father, reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “I had forbidden you from the drinking (and preparation of) *nabīdh* in the vessels made of leather, but now you may drink in all vessels, but you do not drink an intoxicant”.

The above *ḥadīth* was recorded by Muslim in *Al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Al-Naysābūrī 1954, *ḥadīth* no. 2001). The part from “*kuntu*” until “*al-adam*” is spoken with a lower pitch, a narrow range of pitch, a faster tempo and a lesser loudness to indicate that the information is marginal and already known to the listener. The new commandment in this *ḥadīth* is the permissibility of drinking in all vessels. Through the contrasting intonation, listeners will be able to recognise the new information as well as the main clause in the speech.

4. Providing a better chance of comprehension and preservation of knowledge.

عن النُّعْمَانَ بْنِ بَشِيرٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ: "إِنَّ الْحَلَالَ بَيِّنٌ، وَإِنَّ الْحَرَامَ بَيِّنٌ، وَإِنَّ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ أُمُورًا مُشْتَبِهَاتٍ، وَسَأَضْرِبُ لَكُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ مَثَلًا، إِنَّ لِلَّهِ جَمِيًّا، وَإِنَّ جَمِيَّ اللَّهِ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ، وَإِنَّهُ مَنْ يَزِعْ حَوْلَ الْجَمِيِّ، يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُخَالِطَ الْجَمِيَّ."

Al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “The lawful is clear, and the unlawful is clear, and between that are matters that are of resembling nature. I will give you an analogy. Allah has a sanctuary. Allah’s sanctuary consists of what he has declared unlawful. If someone grazes (his animals) around a sanctuary, he would soon wind up in it”.

The *ḥadīth* with this exact wording is recorded in the *ḥadīth* fascicle of al-Anṣārī (1998, *ḥadīth* no. 25). The monotonous reading of the statement would surely make it difficult to grasp, but giving the suitable pitch, tempo and loudness demands that the speech be read with several stops. With the help of the rhyme found in the speech, the *ḥadīth* could be divided into the following pieces:

*Inna al-ḥalāl bayyīnūn,*  
*Wa inna al-ḥarām bayyīnūn,*  
*Wa inna bayna dhālika umūran mushābihātīn,*  
*Wa sa-aḍribu lakum fī dhālika mathalān,*

*Inna lillāh ḥimā,*  
*Wa inna ḥimā Allah mā ḥarrama Allah,*  
*Wa innahu man yar‘a ḥawl al-ḥimā,*  
*Yūshiku an yukhālīṭa al-ḥimā,*

This breaking of the *ḥadīth* into several pieces makes it easier for the listener to grasp the meaning and additionally memorise the speech. As Wells (2006) has already declared concerning the psychological function of intonation:

Tonality helps us to organise speech into units that are easy to perceive, memorise and perform. We can all repeat an arbitrary string of three, four and five numbers, but not a string of ten – unless we split them into two units of five.

All the above represents how the act of conscious intoning of *ḥadīth* fulfils several functions formulated initially in English linguistic musings of the subject of intonation. As for the indexical function, viz. the intonation that provides the information of the context, the background, or the social identity of the speaker, it is quite difficult to find a suitable candidate for the exemplification purpose from the *ḥadīth* corpora. Essentially, Tench (2011, 151) in his study on English intonation asserted that the indexical function of intonation does not directly affect either meaning or paralanguage, but rather manifests at the transmission stage of communication. Nevertheless, he does not deny the possibility that the addressee may evaluate the message in relation to the identity of the messenger. However, that falls in the sphere of the addressee's personal knowledge which is beyond the linguistic description.

### Potential Contributors to Arriving at the Appropriate Intonation

Given the crucial role of intonation as illustrated in the previous section, the natural response of an observant Muslim towards this subject would be an attempt to find a way to learn the proper intonation that can be applied to the *ḥadīth* texts. It is simultaneously a challenge for the scholars of *ḥadīth* to vet this aspect of the discipline while they were well informed that no single *ḥadīth* has ever been transmitted together with its tone. The previous review of *ḥadīth* literature has also buttressed this fact. Some prominent *adhān* callers were said to have distributed *ijāzah* (permission certificate) to intone a mode of *adhān* that was narrated with a continuous *sanad* to the Companion of the Prophet, Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ, who was the first *mu'adhdhin* (caller to prayer) (Al-Muqaddim 2015; Laissani 2016). Some has even arranged a *talqīn* (auditory learning) session to transmit the *shar'ī adhān* (religious call to prayer) that is based on the principles of Islamic liturgical practices.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, this was taken by some scholars as belonging to the domain of *musalsal* (serial mode) *ḥadīth* where most of them were evaluated as *ḍa'īf* (weak) *ḥadīth* (Al-Nawawī 1985, 87; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2006, 197; Ibn al-Mulaqqin 1988, 19). In most cases, the tone that was transmitted in those narrations was reproduced based on several conditions inferred from the Islamic injunctions, not the exact tone that was inherited in a form of echomimetic enterprise.

The Arabic classical transmission-based literature also does not give us much hope to find examples for tone preservation. Some instances, however, do reflect the attempt to communicate the tone of some words or texts. Ibn Mufliḥ in his

*Al-Maqṣad al-Arshad* (1990, 66) related that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was asked concerning the melodious recitation of the Qur'an. Ibn Ḥanbal asked the inquirer: "What is your name?" He replied: "محمد (Muḥammad)". Ibn Ḥanbal then remarked: "Would you be happy if people call you موحامد (Mūhāmād) lengthening every syllable sound?"

Thus, the tone of words or texts was occasionally indicated by the inclusion of additional vowel or the elongation symbol (*al-mādd*) such as (~). It denotes an elongation that is longer than a regular elongation. In the following *ḥadīth*, this symbol is used to convey the tone of recitation applied by the Prophet.

عَنْ شُعْبَةَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنَ قُرَّةَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنَ مَعْقِلٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ افْتَتَحَ بِسُورَةِ الْفَتْحِ وَهُوَ عَلَى نَاقَتِهِ، فَرَجَعَ فِيهَا آ آ آ، يَهْمَزُ وَيَتَرَسَّلُ. "وفي رواية قال شعبة: قلت: كيف كان يُرَجِّعُهُ؟ قال معاوية: "أه آه آه."

Shu'bah said; I heard Mu'āwiyah ibn Qurrah said; I heard 'Abd Allah ibn Mughaffal said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah reciting Sūrah al-Faṭḥ while he was on his camel ride. He recited it in *tarjī'* (a vibrating and pleasant voice), such as a sound of ā ā ā repeated thrice, making clear the sound of *hamzah* (ا:) and lengthening it". In another version of this narration, Shu'bah was reported to ask: "How does the *tarjī'* sound?" Mu'āwiyah replied: "Āh āh āh". (Ibn al-Ja'd 1990, *ḥadīth* no. 1112)

Such an absence and unavailability forced the intonation process to operate within the domain of personal *ijtihād* (to exert oneself industriously in requesting the knowledge of a certain subject). Several tools which are required for this task must be posited especially those skills and masteries that are related to *ḥadīth* criticism. The present survey will highlight a number of contributors that may assist a reader in arriving at the most appropriate intonation of a *ḥadīth* text.

#### 1. The study of uncommon words in *ḥadīth*.

Known as the science of *gharīb al-ḥadīth*, the knowledge of this subject helps in the fluent pronunciation of peculiar words and phrases in *ḥadīth*. Some manuals such as *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* of Abū 'Ubayd and *Al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar* of Ibn al-Athīr are useful for further investigation. The *ḥadīth* such as: شَرُّ مَا فِي رَجُلٍ شَحٌّ هَالِعٌ وَجُبْنٌ خَالِعٌ (What is evil in a man are alarming niggardliness and unrestrained cowardice) (Abū Dāwūd 2009, *ḥadīth* no. 2511) would be easier to enunciate if the word *hāli'* is learned beforehand.

## 2. The study of *al-amthāl al-nabawiyah* (Prophetic proverbs).

*Hadīth* corpora are replete with proverbial forms as proffered by compilers such as al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (c.320 AH/932 CE), al-Rāmhurmuzī (360 AH/971 CE), and Abu'l-Shaykh al-Isfahānī (369 AH/980 CE) although they differed slightly in defining *amthāl* either as proverbs or similitudes. Familiarity with the proverbial forms will undoubtedly accelerate the comprehension and reading skill. An example of this kind can be learned in the following *hadīth*:

لَا حَلِيمَ إِلَّا دُوْ عَثْرَةَ وَلَا حَكِيمَ إِلَّا دُوْ تَجْرِبَةٍ.

No one is forbearing unless he himself has made a mistake. No one is wise unless he himself has lived through experiences. [Ibn Hanbal 2001, *hadīth* no. 11056]

The recognition of rhyme contributes towards the best intonation in addition to the familiarity with various forms of proverbs, idioms, similes, metaphors and the likes in *hadīth* corpora.

## 3. The study of Arabic rhetorical strategy devised in the *hadīth*.

Apart from the Qur'ān and poetry, Arabic rhetoric literature has also consulted *hadīth* in establishing some principles of rhetoric (Al-Jarbī 2012). Al-Jarbī indicated that the Prophet's fluency and high aesthetical flavour in language have been the subject of many studies. In fact, the presence of any cacophonous words or ineloquent qualities in a *riwāyah* (narration) would be taken as a sign of an apocryphal or fabricated *hadīth* (Ibn Qayyim 1998, 79). Al-Jurjānī (1991) in his demonstration of several elements of rhetoric in *Asrār al-Balaghāh* (p. 113) devised a number of *hadīths*. As an example, he cited the following *hadīth*:

تَجِدُونَ النَّاسَ كَأَيْلٍ مَائَةٍ لَا يَجِدُ الرَّجُلُ فِيهَا رَاجِلَةً.

You would find people like one hundred camels and you would not find even one (camel) fit for riding. (Al-Naysābūrī 1954, *hadīth* no. 2547)

According to him, the principles and components of Arabic metaphor are clearly adhered to and well observed in *hadīth* texts. Ultimately, rhetorical preference impinges upon an intoning exercise and this has also been successfully established in some studies (El Zarka 2017). It is not far-fetched then to conclude that the study of Prophetic rhetoric will contribute significantly to the identification and deliverance of the appropriate intonation of *hadīth*.

4. The study of *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* (abrogation) in *ḥadīth* literature.

As illustrated in the above-mentioned explanation on discourse function of intonation, certain falling and rising in tone would indicate that a novel fact is being introduced to the listener. Inversely, the knowledge of the abrogated and the abrogating matters in *ḥadīth* contributes in finding the best intonation for any *ḥadīth* text that is relevant to the discussion.

5. The study of *sabāb wurūd al-ḥadīth* (the *ḥadīth* background).

The study of the socio-historical background of any Prophetic tradition, or in a broader sense, the context of the *ḥadīth*, has been attracting more researchers to uncover its importance and consequences in modern times. However, most of these researches have been focussing on its role in the course of *ḥadīth* interpretive pursuits (Al-‘Awnī 2017, 8). The present study, uniquely and unconventionally, suggests that intonation can affect the listener’s understanding of any injunctions or statements carried in a *ḥadīth* text. To prove this point, the following *ḥadīth* should be explicated.

أَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ يُعِيمُ بَيْنَ أَظْهَرِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ.

One may intone this *ḥadīth* with a high pitch, a slower speed, and an amplified loudness to impress the meaning, “I disown every Muslim who lives among the polytheists”. On the contrary, one may read it in a low pitch, a falling tone, a tremulous voice or a slower tempo, where the meaning could be rendered as, “I am not responsible for any Muslim who stays among the polytheists”, or “I am not obliged to pay the full blood money for any Muslim who stays among the polytheists”.

The difference between the two meanings is significant for the former implies a general and universal declaration while the second alludes to a specific event. The intonation highly plays a role in communicating each meaning. However, the second rendition could be preferred and more convincing when the background of this statement is learned. A more complete narration of this *ḥadīth* read as what follows:

Jarīr b. ‘Abd Allah is reported to have said that the Messenger of Allah sent a battalion to the tribe of Khuth‘um. Some of the members of the tribe sought salvation in performing prostration (to mark themselves as Muslim). However, the battalion hurriedly killed them (while doubting their acts). When the Messenger of Allah heard of this, he ordered their families to be paid half the amount of blood money and said,

“I am acquitted of every Muslim who lives amongst the polytheists”. We asked, “Why is that, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “You could not distinguish between their two fires (i.e., between who were Muslims and who were non-Muslims)”. (Abū Dāwūd 2009, *ḥadīth* no. 2645)

Hence, one may conclude that any speaker or reader of *ḥadīth* should consult the *sabab wurūd* references to ensure the right impression is gained before delivering a *ḥadīth* to the public or any relevant group.

#### 6. The study of *ta'addud al-riwāyāt* (multiple narratives) of a *ḥadīth*

Another phenomenon that requires serious attention in the field of *ḥadīth* is the occurrence of diverging versions of a certain Prophetic tradition. It is not in the scope of this article to address the nature and essentials of this subject. Many treatises have deliberated on the issue. What concerns the present study is that the awareness of the multiple narratives of a certain text can affect the intonation of the text particularly in the sense that the level of voice corresponds faithfully to the level of confidence in the speech text. The more confident a reciter in the reconcilability of the variations in the text, the more convincing the intonation will form. Take an example the following *ḥadīth*:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: "مَنْ شَهِدَ الْجَنَازَةَ حَتَّى يُصَلِّيَ عَلَيْهَا، فَلَهُ قَبْرًا طً، وَمَنْ شَهِدَهَا حَتَّى تُدْفَنَ، فَلَهُ قَبْرًا طً."

Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah said, “Whoever follows the funeral procession and offers the funeral prayer for it will get a reward equal to one *qirāṭ*, and whoever attends it till burial will get a reward equal to two *qirāṭs*”. (Al-Bukhārī n.d., *ḥadīth* no.1325)

No issue amongst the *ḥadīth* scholars was reported in the classical *ḥadīth* literature concerning this *ḥadīth*. At first glance, a reciter may have no problem in delivering this *ḥadīth* to his audience. However, if a thorough study was carried off the history of the transmission of the *ḥadīth*, several other versions will surface.

عَنْ ثَوْبَانَ، مَوْلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ: "مَنْ صَلَّى عَلَى جَنَازَةٍ فَلَهُ قَبْرًا طً، فَإِنْ شَهِدَ دَفَنَهَا فَلَهُ قَبْرًا طً، الْقَبْرَاطُ مِثْلُ أُحُدٍ."

Thawban, the servant of the Messenger of Allah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “He who offered prayer for the dead, for him is the reward of one *qirāṭ*, and he who attended its burial, he would have two *qirāṭs* as his reward. A *qirāṭ* is equivalent to the mountain of Uhud”. (Al-Naysābūrī 1954, *ḥadīth* no. 949)

The reciter, here, is faced with additional information. This will either increase his confidence of the content or decrease it in the sense that some missing elements have been discovered and realised. The other version of this *ḥadīth* reads:

عن نافع قال: حَدَّثَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ أَنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ يَقُولُ: "مَنْ تَبِعَ جَنَازَةَ فَلَهُ قَبْرًا ط."  
 "فَقَالَ: أَكْثَرَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ عَلَيْنَا. فَصَدَّقَتْ عَائِشَةُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ وَقَالَتْ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ  
 اللَّهِ يَقُولُهُمْ قَالَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ: "لَقَدْ فَرَطْنَا فِي قَرَارِ بَطْ كَثِيرَةٍ."

Nāfi‘ related: Ibn ‘Umar was told that Abū Hurayrah said, “Whoever accompanies the funeral procession will have a reward equal to one *qirāṭ*”. Ibn ‘Umar said, “Abū Hurayrah talks of a too enormous reward”. ‘Ā’ishah attested Abū Hurayrah’s narration and said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah saying the same”. Ibn ‘Umar said, “We have missed numerous *qirāṭs*”. (Al-Bukhārī n.d., *ḥadīth* no. 1324)

By studying multiple versions of a *ḥadīth* narration and observing conformity and conflict within them, a reciter of *ḥadīth* would be able to gain control over his confidence and deliverance. Although all sub-areas in the science of *dirāyat al-ḥadīth* (interpretive discourse) would affect the process of understanding and intoning a *ḥadīth* text, the present study has limited its elaboration to selected prominent areas to suit the preliminary status of this library survey. It is glaringly obvious that the act of *takhrīj* (*ḥadīth* retracement) constitutes the most important key to the learning of all the above-mentioned issues.

## Conclusion

The interplay of intonation and *ḥadīth* text in this library survey has shown that the former is not simply a linguistic phenomenon but also a manifestation of a cognitive phenomenon while the latter owns some aspects of its interpretive function to the former. This preliminary survey in the relevant literature has revealed that the subject received too little attention either by the Arab linguists or even the *ḥadīth* experts themselves. Thus, the formulation of a systematic framework to locate all aspects of the discussion is considered unattainable for the time being. The present theoretical venture has also demonstrated that *ḥadīth* intonation plays a vital role for both the narrator and the listener. As for the narrator, it contributes in terms of performance, fluency, confidence, as well as faithful and devout transmission of the Prophetic statement. As for the listener, intonation contributes in the making of appropriate imagination of the Prophetic speech and the conveyance of the apposite meaning of the texts. The study of *ḥadīth* intonation, therefore, informs our exploration of *ḥadīth* interpretive discourse and by extension adds a new dimension to the epistemological enterprise of *ḥadīth* studies. Some practical

applications include the awareness of the listeners to the extreme manipulation of *ḥadīth* text through certain intonational exaggeration and elements of hateful speech. On the other hand, several issues such as the singing of *ḥadīth* and certain words of remembrance (*adhkār*) narrated in the *ḥadīth* can be addressed through well-developed arguments and discourse. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the experts of Arabic linguistics and the experts of *ḥadīth* to work out a systematic study of what may be termed *ḥadīth* phonology or *ḥadīth* linguistic thought. The effects of intonation on the listeners can also be investigated and analysed through systematic fieldwork analysis. Since *ḥadīth* has special psycho-spiritual effects amongst the observant Muslim community, the study of intonation in the deliverance of *ḥadīth* is a necessity for the community's social security and its civilisational endeavours.

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### Notes

1. Retrieved from Talqīn al-Shaykh Dr. Ilyas al-Adhān al-Shar'ī (2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3EHgBexMiM> (accessed 1 October 2018); and Adhān al-Albānī (2011), <https://www.ajurry.com/vb/attachment.php?attachmentid=13777&d=1315259483> (accessed 1 October 2018).

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