

Compilation of the Qur’ān [An Analytical Study]

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Abstract

This paper discusses the collection of the Qur’ān, an exposition on its various types and stages and the motives that led to its compilation. It will delve into each stage providing detail of the collection and compilation in the eras of the Prophet (pbuh), Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān. In addition, it will deal with the following questions: who ordered its collection? Who carried out this task? What was the methodology or procedure which the Companions of the Messenger (pbuh) adopted for its collection? In this article, answers to the objections of the orientalisists have been given to a required extent. Through this study, it will also be clear that the text of the Qur’ān per se is the same that was revealed by Allah to the Prophet (pbuh). It is protected in written form from all kinds of distortion and alteration till the Day of Resurrection.

Keywords:

Qur’ān, Memorisation, Compilation, Collection, Prophet Muhammad, Caliph Abu Bakr, ‘Uthman.

The Types of Collection of the Qur’ān, its Stages and Approaches

The collection of the noble Qur’ān refers to one of three types: the first is its collection through memorisation; the second is its collection through writing with all its letters, words, verses and chapters; and the third is its preservation through oral transmission. In this paper, we will concentrate on the first two types with a focus on the collections and the compilations of the Qur’ān during the eras of the Prophet (pbuh), Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān.

The First Type: Its Collection through Memorisation

The Messenger (pbuh) used to memorise what was revealed to him from the Qur’ān. Then, he would specially dictate it to the appointed scribes of revelation and recite it generally to the Companions. His Companions would preserve the Qur’ān in their memory, and this was the first type of collection.

This type is evidenced through the statement of Almighty Allah: “Do not rush your tongue to hasten (your memorization of) this (Qur’ān). Indeed, it is upon Us to collect it together (in your breast) and to recite it (by your tongue) accurately.”¹

The meaning of ‘collect it’ (jam’ahu) here refers to preserving it through memorization. According to the narration of Ibn ‘Abbās, when the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was dealing

with the intensity of the revelation, he used to move his lips. Then Almighty Allah revealed: "Do not rush your tongue to hasten (your memorization of) this (Qur'ān). Indeed, it is upon Us to collect it together (in your breast) and to recite it (by your tongue) accurately." Ibn 'Abbās explains that this means 'He preserves it in your chest and then you recite it.' Subsequently, Allah said, "So once We have recited it (entirely through Gabriel), follow its recitation," which means: 'So, listen to it and be silent, then it is Our duty to make you recite it.' Ibn 'Abbās further clarifies that when Gabriel came, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) would listen to it, and when Gabriel departed, the Prophet (pbuh) would recite it exactly as it was recited to him.²

Almighty Allah said: "*And be not in haste with the Qur'ān before its revelation to you is completed.*"³ After this, He (pbuh) remained silent when the revelation came. When Gabriel would go away, the Messenger (pbuh) would find the Qur'ān in his chest memorised just as Allah promised.

The Messenger (pbuh) memorised the entire Qur'ān, as well as his Companions. Once every year in the month of Ramaḍān, Gabriel would revise it, and he did it twice in the year in which his holy demise took place. It is reported by 'Ā'isha in regards to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) that he said to Fāṭima: 'Gabriel would come to me to revise the Qur'ān once every year, and this year he came twice to revise. I do not think it means anything but my demise. Verily, you will be the first of the people of my house to meet me.'⁴ He (pbuh) would recite the Qur'ān day and night to the extent his heels would crack.

The Preservation of the Holy Qur'ān by the Companions

The Companions would intensely compete in memorising, reciting and understanding the Holy Qur'ān. They would compete to study, interpret and act upon it. They would not go past ten Qur'ānic verses unless they learned what knowledge and practice it contained. They would abandon their beds and be motivated to carry out the night vigil with the recitation of the Qur'ān in the *Tahajjud* ritual prayer—to the extent that their houses would be heard with the humming of bees due to their recitation. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) would encourage them to do that and he would be keen to listen to their recitations.

1. He said to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī: 'If you had seen me while I was listening to your recitation [of the Qur'ān] last night, [you would have felt delighted]. You are indeed gifted with a sweet voice akin to that of the instrument or instruments of the family of Dāwūd.'⁵
2. He listened to the recitation of Sālim who was the slave of Abū Ḥudhayfa and said to him: 'All praises are for Allah for making people like you among my *Umma*.'⁶
3. It is reported from 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd that he said that the Prophet (pbuh) asked him to recite to him. He said: 'O Messenger of Allah, shall I recite to you, even though you are the one upon whom the Qur'ān was revealed?' He said: 'Yes.' So, he recited *Sūra al-Nisā'* until he reached the following verse: "*So how shall it be, when We bring forward from every nation a witness, and (Esteemed Prophet) We bring you as a witness to all of them?*"⁷ He (pbuh) said, "It is sufficient for now," so 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd turned towards him and saw tears well up in his eyes.⁸

It is not surprising that there were large numbers of Companions who had memorised the Qur'ān. A significant number of Companions had memorised it in the lifetime of the Messenger (pbuh). For example, among the Muhājirīn who memorised the entire Qur'ān

were: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Ṭalḥa, Sa‘d, Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ḥudhayfa, Sālim (the freed-slave of Abū Ḥudhayfa), Abū Ḥurayra, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar, Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Amr b. ‘Āṣ, his son ‘Abd Allāh, Mu‘āwiya, ‘Abd Allāh b. Zubayr, ‘Abd Allāh b. Sā‘ib, ‘Ā’isha, Ḥafṣa, Umm Salama et al. And among the Anṣār were: ‘Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit, Ubayy b. Ka‘b, Mu‘ādh b. Jabal, Zayd b. Thābit, Fuḍāla b. ‘Ubayd, Maslama b. Mukhallad, Abū al-Dardā’, Anas b. Mālik, Abū Zayd b. al-Sakan, et al.—May Allah be pleased with them all.

The Second Type: Collection Through Writing

The Qur’ān which was revealed to the Prophet (pbuh) is preserved word for word and is still recited in the same way as it was recited during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh). There were two methods to preserve something—memorisation and writing—and the Qur’ān was preserved through both methods. In order to cast doubt on the authenticity of Islam and the authority of the Qur’ān, the orientalist have criticised the Prophet (pbuh) as well as the Qur’ān. The orientalist have raised two types of objections to the Qur’ān. The first one is about its collection and compilation, while the second one is related to the differences in recitation. The orientalist claim that the collection of the Qur’ān in one *muṣḥaf* under the supervision of Zayd b. Thābit during the time of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and scribed into seven copies in accordance with the dialect of the Quraysh during the time of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān are evidence that the Qur’ān was not written down during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), but it was done after him by the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

The renowned orientalist Arthur Jeffery writes: ‘It contains the substance of Muhammad’s deliverances during the twenty odd years of his public ministry. It is clear that he had been preparing a book for his community which would be for them what the Old Testament was for the Jews and the New Testament for the Christians, but he died before his book was ready, and what we have in the Quran is what his followers were able to gather after his death and issue as the corpus of his revelations.’⁹

Arthur Jeffrey’s views are strongly refuted by the early and basic sources of Islam, because the Holy Prophet (pbuh) not only kept the Qur’ān apart from his sayings and statements, but also made special arrangements for its collection and protection during his lifetime. Arthur Jeffrey’s view is contradicted by the German-born priest Pfander’s statement that: ‘It seem possible that the work of compilation was begun in his life, but it was completed some year after his death.’¹⁰

To answer these objections by the orientalist, we will explore the collection and compilation of the Qur’ān by exploring the three stages of its written compilation. The three stages of this second type are as follows:

The first stage, which was during the era of the Messenger (pbuh), entails the Qur’ān being collected and compiled in the era of the Messenger (pbuh) when it was written down. As for the fact that the compilation was completed sometime after his death, the answer is that the revelation was continuing during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh) and thus it was not possible to finalise the Qur’ān in one volume. So, when the Prophet (pbuh) passed away, the first Caliph completed its compilation.

The second was during the era of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq when it was brought together and gathered in one book.

And the third was in the era of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, when it was copied down into several

manuscripts.

We shall discuss each of these three stages:

The First Stage: Compilation of the Qur'ān in the Era of the Messenger (pbuh)

There is no doubt that the effort of the Messenger (pbuh) and his Companions were geared towards the first type, which was to gather and preserve the Qur'ān in their hearts, notwithstanding that they were a people who did not read nor write. Moreover, there were no writing tools available to them as it was not a prevalent technology in that era.

Memorisation was considered more reliable in preserving texts than writing. However, the Holy Qur'ān was largely based on both methods, i.e. preserved through memorisation, as well as writing. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) appointed scribes for the revelation. Each time something from the Qur'ān was revealed, he would order them to write it down to accentuate its preservation.

1- Scribes of the Revelation

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) appointed many Companions and would command them to write and compile the Qur'ān whenever something from it was revealed unto him. These Companions were known as '*Kuttāb al-Wahy*' (The Scribes of the Revelation).

Among the Companions who were the scribes were: The four caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī), Zayd b. Thābit, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Ibān b. Sa'īd, Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān, Khālīd b. Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣ, Ḥanzala b. al-Rabī', al-Zubayr b. al-'Awām, 'Āmir b. Fahīra, 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Arqam, al-Mughīra b. Shu'ba, 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāḥa, Khālīd b. al-Walīd, Thābit b. Qays et al. as mentioned in *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* of Ibn al-Kathīr and *Zād al-Ma'ād* of Ibn al-Qayyim.¹¹

He (pbuh) would guide them where to place the verses in their chapters. They would write on various things, such as palm leaves, stones, leather, paper, shoulder bones etc. The writing would then be placed in the house of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), and in this way, the blessed era of the Prophet (pbuh) ended.

2- Particularities of this Stage

This collection was described by two great Companions. Zayd b. Thābit said: 'While we were with the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), we compiled the Qur'ān from parchments.'¹² In other words, he collected it to arrange the verses from the parchments.

'Uthmān b. 'Affān narrated that there were times when multiple chapters would be revealed to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). When something was revealed to him, he would call upon some of those who would write, and he would say to them: 'Put these verses in the chapter in which such-and-such is mentioned.'¹³

It is reported by Ibn 'Abbās (pbuh) that he said: 'When a chapter would be revealed to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), he would call some of those who would write. He would say: 'Place this chapter in the place where such-and-such is mentioned.'¹⁴

This compilation consisted of the arrangements of the verses according to the directives of the Prophet (pbuh). This arrangement was assisted by Gabriel. It was reported that Gabriel used to say: 'Put such-and-such in such-and such place.' There is no doubt that Gabriel did not give these instructions except with the command of Almighty Allah.¹⁵

The conclusion is that the Qur'ān was written in its entirety at the time of the Messenger

(pbuh) and the writing catered and included the *aḥruf sab‘a*, in which the Qur’ān was revealed.

3- Writing Tools

Writing tools were not prevalent at that time for the Companions, so they used to write upon everything what their hand could get hold of, such as: the palm leaf (*al-‘usub*), thin stones (*al-likhāf*), piece of leather (*al-riqā’*), paper, clothing or broad end of the palm (*al-karānīf*), a wood placed on the back of a camel to ride on (*al-qatab*) and a broad bone of a camel or sheep (*al-katf*).¹⁶

The scribes of the revelation would place everything on which they would write in the house of the Messenger (pbuh) and they would make a copy for themselves.

The Holy Qur’ān was not combined in one *muṣḥaf* in the era of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). Rather, it was fragmented into patches, shoulder bones, leather belts and other things. It is for this reason why Zayd b. Thābit said, when the collection of the Qur’ān was ordered in the era of Abū Bakr (pbuh), that he went around to gather the Qur’ān from parchments, shoulder bones, palm leaves and from people’s memory.¹⁷

4- The Reason Why the Qur’ān was not Collected in a Single Muṣḥaf

Why was the Qur’ān not collected in one *muṣḥaf* in the era of the Messenger (pbuh)? The scholars have responded to this question and have mentioned many reasons for it. Some of the responses are:

1. Almighty Allah protected His Prophet (pbuh) from forgetfulness by His statement: ‘*We shall make you recite (the Qur’an), then you will never forget (any of it), except what Allah may wish.*’¹⁸ It was to bring about the abrogation in rulings. So when there was concern in regards to the forgetfulness of people, then combining the Qur’ān into one *muṣḥaf* was carried out. It was done to ensure its accurateness, which in fact was not needed before that.¹⁹

2. Al-Khaṭṭābī said: He (pbuh) did not collect the Qur’ān in one *muṣḥaf* because there were going to be verses that were going to abrogate some of its laws and recitations. When the revelation ended with his demise, Allah inspired the Rightly Guided Caliphs to fulfil this task and to bring about His truthful promise regarding its protection for this *Umma*.²⁰

Abū Shāma al-Maqdasī said: He did not collect it in one *muṣḥaf*, as he knew there will be abrogation in its laws and writing. When Allah completed the *Dīn* with the demise of His Prophet (pbuh), and when the revelation stopped, He decided for the Rightly Guided Caliphs at the time then they needed it, so they combined it together in one book.²¹

Al-Zarkashī said: He left the duty of collecting the Qur’ān in one *muṣḥaf*, because some of the recitation styles were going to be abrogated. If it was gathered, and if some of its recitation styles were removed, it would have led to disagreement and confusion in the *Dīn*. So Allah preserved it in the hearts until the time when abrogation was stopped. Then this task was carried out by the Rightly Guided Caliphs.²²

3. The Holy Qur’ān was not revealed all in go, but rather it was revealed over the course of twenty-three years.

4. Al-Zurqānī said in *al-Manāhil*: The Qur’ān was not collected in the form of formal pages and books due to many reasons. The first is that there were no skilful scribes that could write on leaves of paper in that period, like that which were available in the era of Abū Bakr

when it was written on paper. Nor the skilful scribes were available which were available in the era of 'Uthmān, who then scribed it into books. The Muslims at that time were fine, the reciters were many and Islam had not yet expanded its civilisation. It was safe from trouble, and reliance was still on memorisation more than writing, all the while writing tools were not readily available. And the Messenger's care for memorising the Qur'ān was beyond description and his demise took place with a set purpose, which was after the completing the Qur'ān that was revealed on *aḥruf sab'a*.

Another reason is that the sequence of the verses and chapters were not according to the order of its revelation. It is known that the revelation was according to causes and situations. So its arrangement was for other reasons.

You are now aware that if the Qur'ān was collected on sheets and in books, based on what we have explained, alteration would have taken place in the sheets and books each time an abrogation took place or another unexpected cause. In addition to this, the circumstances did not help and the tools of writing were not easily available, and above all, the reliance was on memorisation. However, when the matter settled with the completion of revelation and the journey of the Messenger (pbuh) to the Hereafter, when copying became secure and the arrangement were specified, and there were reasons that required copying the Qur'ān onto sheets or into books, Allah gave this task to the Rightly Guided Caliphs. They carried out this task to protect the Qur'ān and paying attention to the origin of the initial law²³, materialising the statement of Allah: '*Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder Ourselves, and indeed We are its Protectors.*'²⁴

The Second Stage: Compilation of the Qur'ān in the Era of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq

The second type of compilation was in the era of Abū Bakr, and there were many reasons for it.

One such reason was the martyrdom of many reciters, which resulted in a fear of losing some of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Abū Bakr sent armies to fight the apostates. The armies consisted of Companions, among them were those who had memorised the Qur'ān. The fight was very severe which resulted in a lot of Qur'ān reciters being martyred. There were around 500 people among them who had memorised the Qur'ān. When some of the Companions feared losing some parts of the Qur'ān due to losing those who memorised it, Abū Bakr decided to gather the Qur'ān in one book in the presence of the Companions.

Imam al-Bukhārī reported this story in his *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* from Zayd b. Thābit. He said: Abū Bakr sent those slain at al-Yamāma to me and 'Umar was with him. Abū Bakr said that 'Umar came to me and said: 'The killing during al-Yamāma has led to the fear of the Qur'ān being lost as the Qur'ān reciters were being martyred. So the Qur'ān will be lost unless you collect it, and I see that you are the one to collect it.' Abū Bakr said: 'I said to 'Umar: 'How can I do something that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) did not do?' 'Umar said: 'By Allah, it is good.' 'Umar continuously reminded me, to the extent that Allah expanded my heart for that, and I saw what 'Umar could see.'

Zayd b. Thābit said: 'Umar was sitting with him, not speaking. Abū Bakr said: 'You are an intelligent young man, and we do not fault you. You used to write the revelation for the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). So search and collect the Qur'ān. I swear by Allah the heaviest burden upon me was to order the collection of the Qur'ān. I said: 'How can both of you do

such a thing which the Prophet (pbuh) did not do?' Abū Bakr said: 'I swear by Allah, it is good.' I pondered over it continuously until Allah expanded my chest for that which was expanded for Abū Bakr and 'Umar.' So, I searched for the Qur'ān and gathered it from parchments, shoulder bones, palm leaves and from the memory of people—to the extent that I found two verses of *Sūra al-Tawba* with Khuzayma al-Anṣārī which I could not find with anyone else: '*A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your suffering. He is deeply concerned for your well-being*'²⁵ to the end, i.e., (He meant that he was not able to find the last verse of *Sūra Barā'a* written with anyone except for Khuzayma al-Anṣārī), so the books in which the Qur'ān was collected existed with Abū Bakr until he died. Then it remained with 'Umar until he passed away. Then it remained with Ḥafṣa bint 'Umar.²⁶

Imam al-Bukhārī reported this hadith in other places of his book. It has been reported by Imam Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī through the chain of al-Zuhrī.

This collection was done with great care. This is evidenced by what has been reported by Ibn Abī Dāwūd that Abū Bakr said to 'Umar and to Zayd b. Thābit to sit at the door of the mosque, and whoever brings two witnesses to something from the Book of Allah, then write it down.²⁷ Al-Sakhāwī said something beneficial in '*Jamāl al-Qurrā*': 'What is meant by them are two just men who testify that the writing was written in front of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh).' Zayd did not just rely on the memory of any one of them. For this reason, he said in regard to the earlier hadith reported in al-Bukhārī: He did not find the last two verses of *Sūra Barā'a* except with Abū Khuzayma, i.e. he did not find it written with anyone except with Abū Khuzayma al-Anṣārī, even though Zayd had memorised it, and many of the Companions had memorised it. However, he wanted to combine memorisation and writing with an increase in reliability and extra precaution.²⁸

This is one of the best, most honourable and greatest of what al-Ṣiddīq did. After the Prophet (pbuh), Allah gave him such a rank that no one had after him. He collected the Holy Qur'ān from various places, until the reciter was able to memorise all of it, and this was the secret of the statement of the Almighty: '*Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder Ourselves, and indeed We are its Protectors.*'²⁹ It was for this reason each one of the scholars said including Abū Nu'aym, Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī, Khallād, Qubayṣa, Wakī', reported from Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, al-Suddī al-Kabīr, from 'Abd Khayr, from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib that he said: "The person with the greatest reward in the Qur'ān is Abū Bakr, for he is the first to combine the two tablets." Ibn Abī Dāwūd reported it in *al-Maṣāḥif*, Abū 'Ubayd in *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, and Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaḥ*—its chain of transmission is authentic.³⁰

Abū Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd said in *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*: Verily Abū Bakr is the one who collected the Qur'ān after the Prophet (pbuh)³¹ and it was 'Umar who became aware of this when the killing of those people took place who were Qur'ān reciters, i.e. a lot of them were martyred on the day of Yamāma. Allah killed Musaylima, and dispersed his forces, then they returned to Islam, but nearly five hundred Qur'ān reciters were martyred on that day. This is why 'Umar indicated to al-Ṣiddīq to collect the Qur'ān, so that nothing of it goes away from him because of the death of the Companions who memorised it, so when it was compiled in written form as well as being memorised, it aided in its preservation.³²

This is why we necessarily know that the Messenger (pbuh) delivered everything to us from the Qur'ān. So what the two Shaykhs Abū Bakr and 'Umar did was in the best interest of the *Dīn*, that with the blessing of Allah, they preserved the Book of Allah in pages, so that nothing

goes to waste after the demise of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh).

The pages of the Qur'ān were with al-Ṣiddīq during his lifetime. Then 'Umar took it with great care. When he passed away, it was with the mother of believers Ḥafṣa. Then it was taken from her by the leader of believers 'Uthmān b. 'Affān.³³

The History of this Compilation

As it is mentioned in the hadith, after the battle of Yamāma, it was the twelfth year of Hijra.

The Methodology of Zayd for this Collection

Zayd himself explained the methodology he adopted after his statement, 'Search the Qur'ān and collect it from parchments, shoulder bones, palm leaves and from the chests of people (i.e. their memories).'³⁴

When Zayd collected the Qur'ān during the era of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, this collection was based on four things:

The first is what was written in front of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh).

The second is what was preserved in people's memory.

The third is to not accept anything in written form until two witnesses testify that it was written in front of the Prophet (pbuh) like that which was present in the pages of Ibn Abī Dāwūd.³⁵ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī said: 'It was their purpose to only write that which has been written in front of the Prophet (pbuh) and to not just depend on memorisation.'³⁶ This has been proven earlier.

The fourth is to not accept anything from the memory of people except what they received directly from the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). 'Umar made an announcement that whoever has something from the Qur'ān that has been taken directly from the Messenger of Allah, he should bring it to us.³⁷

This book has certain features:

The first is that the Qur'ān was collected while taking care of accuracy in its research and investigation, keeping intact the principle of academic verification.

The second is that it was confined to that which was not abrogated.

The third is that it was based on what the *Umma* unanimously agreed upon and what has been accepted as *tawātur*.³⁸

The Third Stage: Compilation of the Qur'ān in the Era of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and its Reasons

The third stage of collection and compilation took place in the era of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān. The point which drove towards this act was the expansion of the Islamic conquests and the migration of the Companions to these lands. A new generation appeared that needed the study of the Qur'ān. The people of every region of the regions of the Islamic world used to take recitation from the famous Companions. The people of Syria used to recite the recitation of Ubayy b. Ka'b. The people of Kūfa used to recite the recitation of 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd and others used to recite according to the recitation of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī.³⁹

There were disagreements between them regarding the manner of recitation which resulted in conflict. For example, such disagreements took place between some of the Muslims factions when they met during the conquests of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Each group recited what was narrated to it and they disagreed and quarrelled.

It is reported from Anas b. Mālik that Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān went to 'Uthmān while he was

engaged in fighting alongside the people of Syria for the conquest of Armenia and alongside the people of Iraq for Azerbaijan. Ḥudhayfa was troubled by the variations in their recitations. He said to ‘Uthmān: ‘O Amīr al-Mu’minīn, take control of this Umma, before they disagree in regard to the Divine Book like the Jews and Christians.’ Consequently, ‘Uthmān sent a message to Ḥafṣa: ‘Send us the manuscripts of the Qur’ān so that we will copy them into ours and then return them back to you.’ Ḥafṣa sent them to ‘Uthmān, who then instructed Zayd b. Thābit, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith b. Hishām to transcribe them into the muṣḥaf. ‘Uthmān told the three men of Quraysh: ‘If you and Zayd b. Thābit disagree about something from the Qur’ān, write it in the dialect of the Quraysh, as it was revealed in their language.’ They did this and copied the manuscripts into the muṣḥaf. ‘Uthmān then returned the manuscripts to Ḥafṣa and sent a copy of the Qur’ān to every region where they had copied it and ordered that all other manuscripts other than the manuscript and muṣḥaf that were the Qur’ān be burned.⁴⁰

Suwayd b. Ghafla reported from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib that ‘Uthmān said: ‘What is your view regarding the Qur’ānic *muṣḥafs*, surely the people have differed about the recitation, to such an extent that one person said: ‘My recitation is better than your recitation and my recitation is better than your recitation! This is like disbelief.’ We said: ‘What is your opinion, O Amīr al-Mu’minīn?’ He said: ‘My opinion is to unite people on one recitation. If you all differ today, then those who will come after you will differ more severely.’ We said: ‘This is also our opinion.’⁴¹

‘Uthmān began implementing this wise decision around the end of the 24th year and the beginning of the 25th year of the Hijra. He had the Qur’ān dictated to four of the best Companions and trustworthy memorisers: Zayd b. Thābit, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith. The last three are from the people of Quraysh. ‘Uthmān sent a message to the mother of the believers Ḥafṣa bint ‘Umar, and she sent him the files she had, which were the files in which the Qur’ān was collected during the era of Abū Bakr. I was made the leading person in carrying out the last collection.

The conquests during the era of ‘Uthmān expanded, which resulted in an increase of people’s need for the *muṣḥafs*. When the conquests expanded, people took it directly from the *muṣḥafs*. As a result, a difference occurred between them regarding the Qur’ān, which led to reviving the idea of collecting the Qur’ān once again, with a change in the methodology of collection. In this hadith, there is an explanation of the matter related to the collection of the Qur’ān during the era of ‘Uthmān. This stage was completed at the end of the 24th year and the beginning of the 25th year. The collection took place in the following procedure:

1. The reason for the collection was the differences among the people in the recitation of the Qur’ān.
 2. The one who indicated this problem was Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān.
 3. That the collection committee consisted of: Zayd b. Thābit al-Anṣārī, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith b. Hishām and Ubayy b. Ka‘b.
 4. The purpose of the compilation was to copy the Qur’ānic manuscripts of Abū Bakr into the various *muṣḥafs*, following a specific approach, and then to send a reciter with each copy to recite it to the people of the regions to whom it was sent.
 5. The collection method was copying the Qur’ānic manuscripts of Abū Bakr into the numerous Qur’ānic *muṣḥafs*. In addition to this, to have it written in the dialect of the Quraysh
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when there is a disagreement, and then to burn all the files except for these *muṣḥafs*. After the 'Uthmāni *muṣḥaf* was copied in the manner we explained earlier, Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Uthmān b. 'Affān ordered to send them to the great centres of the Islamic world. Along with each *muṣḥaf*, he also sent a reciter whose recitation most coincides with the reading of the people of that country. This is because direct reception is the foundation of the recitation of the Qur'ān.

He ordered to burn all other *muṣḥafs* or personal copies belonging to the Companions in order to eradicate any cause of disagreement and conflict between the Muslims in reciting the Book of Allah. The Companions responded to this call, so the copies of *muṣḥafs* were collected, and they were either burned or washed away with water.

The Companions agreed with this act, and it is reported from 'Alī who said: "May God have mercy on 'Uthmān ! If I was his leader, I would have also done what he did in regards to the Qur'ānic *muṣḥafs*."⁴²

It is reported by Muṣ'ab b. Abī Waqqāṣ that he said: "The people realised when 'Uthmān dealt with the matter of the Qur'ān and they liked that." Or he said: "No one was tired of that."⁴³

Secondly:

It turns out that 'Uthmān collected the Qur'ān with the most accurate means of confirmation and transmission. He did not just rely on memory, but also added the written form for authenticity. As for what Ibn Abī Dāwūd reported in *al-Maṣāḥif* narrated by Muṣ'ab b. Sa'd that he said: 'Uthmān heard the recitation of my father, 'Abd Allāh and Mu'adh. So he addressed the people saying: "The holy demise of your Prophet (pbuh) took place fifteen years ago and you have disagreement about the Qur'ān. It will be resolved. Whoever has anything from the Qur'ān that he heard directly from the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), he should bring it to me. So, he made the man bring him the tablet, the shoulder bone and the cloth containing the book. So whoever brought him something, he asked: 'Did you directly hear from the Messenger of Allah?' Then he said: 'Who is considered to be very eloquent among the people?' People said: 'Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣ.' Then he said: 'Who is considered to the best writer?' They said: 'Zayd b. Thābit.' He said: 'Let Zayd write and let Sa'īd dictate.' He said: 'Copies of the Qur'ān were written and distributed to different regions, so I have not seen anyone criticise him for that.'⁴⁴

Abū Shāma mentioned it in *al-Murshid al-Wajīz*⁴⁵ (and commented on it, saying: "As for what was narrated that 'Uthmān also collected the Qur'ān from parchments, just as Abū Bakr did, it is a narration that has not been proven, and there was also no need for him to do that as it was sufficient for him to use other means. The reliance is upon what we have presented at the beginning of the chapter which is based on the hadith of al-Bukhārī. However, we mentioned what followed as an addition to explain it, and to collate what was narrated in regards to the subject at hand.

It is possible that 'Uthmān asked to bring those parchments which were with him and collected the Qur'ān by taking from it while opposing what Abū Bakr had collected, which opposed those manuscripts, or that he consolidated by looking at all the cases that emerged from the copies. So, he did all or part of that, in order to remove the illusion of those who think that it is not right and to close the door to those who say that the Qur'ānic *muṣḥafs* have been changed or have had insertions or omissions.⁴⁶ If it is proven that 'Uthmān collected the parchments, then no doubt it is for extra conviction and increased precaution.

Thirdly:

As for the statement of Ibn ‘Umar: None of you should say: ‘I have taken the Qur’ān in its entirety,’ and he does not know what is the entire? Surely a lot of the Qur’ān has disappeared from it. But let him say: ‘I have taken from it what appears from it.’⁴⁷ Sa‘īd b. Manṣūr recorded it in *al-Tafsīr min al-Sunan*.⁴⁸

This refers to the recitation which was abrogated. Abū ‘Ubayd included it in the chapter: ‘The chapter on what was removed from the Qur’ān after its revelation, and not proven to be in the *muṣḥafs*.’

Al-Ālūsī stated in *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*: They were unanimously agreed that there was no deficiency in the Qur’ān which was passed down consecutively to us by *tawātur*, as it is present today between the two covers. Yes, that which existed in the era of al-Ṣiddīq which was not unanimously agreed upon and not copied were removed. It would only be recited by those who did not receive the final copy. If this final effort and endeavour had not been carried out by ‘Uthmān, then the light of Qur’ān would have not spread all over the world. It is for this reason why this is associated to him. This is what is understood from what Abū ‘Ubayd narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar.⁴⁹

The researcher of Sa‘īd b. Manṣūr said: Abū ‘Ubayd, the researcher of *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* added a footnote—may Allah give him reward for providing a beautiful comment—in which he refuted what comes to mind in regards to the loss of Qur’ān. He stated it on page 285. This effect was conveyed by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Itqān*: ‘He kept silent about it, through which it seems that a large part of the Qur’ān was lost.’ Al-Ālūsī said, ‘Every news that leads to the loss of something from the Qur’ān, either the narration was fabricated or it will be interpreted.’ The external of this chain looks to be sound, and there is no room for doubt in regards to it, because the chain consists a series of hadith scholars. Ismā‘īl is Ibn ‘Āliya, Ayyūb is al-Sakhtiyānī and Nāfi‘ is the freed slave of Ibn ‘Umar.

However, there are two possibilities in front of us and not a third: Either we say, Ibn ‘Umar means that there has been loss without being copied—this concept is wrong, as there is concrete evidence proving the preservation of the Qur’ān without any loss, which is far from the statement of Ibn Umar; or we say, he is referring to the loss due to abrogation, which is acceptable, in fact this is what has happened. It is for this reason that the author has placed this information in this chapter.

It is possible for us to clarify what Ibn ‘Umar said to the *tābi‘īn*:

‘I took the whole Qur’ān’, i.e., everything that was revealed to the Prophet (pbuh), including both, that which was abrogated and that which continues to remain.

‘Much of the Qur’ān was lost from it’, i.e., that which was omitted in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) or that which was omitted during the two types of collection after him, due to not fulfilling the conditions of proving it being the Qur’ān according to what has been mentioned latterly and other conditions.

‘What appeared’, i.e., that which is established as the Qur’ān and was not abrogated, or that which was consecutively passed down and proven to be part of the main *muṣḥaf*.⁵⁰

Summary

In summary, the Qur’ān has a distinguished status compared to the previous divine books because Allah Almighty has taken the responsibility to protect it from any distortion and change. The imams of the Qur’ānic sciences have mentioned three stages of the collection and

compilation of the Qur'ān. The first stage is the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān. In the Prophet's era, the compilation and collection of the Qur'ān was conducted in the best possible way. During his era, the Qur'ān was written on palm stalks and stone tablets. The Companions used all the means available to them to preserve revelation. The scribes of the revelations were always present in the service of the Prophet (pbuh) with their writing equipment and they wrote down the Qur'ān according to the instructions of the Prophet (pbuh) as dictated to them.

The second stage is the era of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. In this era, the Qur'ān was compiled with the advice of 'Umar and other Companions. When the revelation came to an end with the demise of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), the first Caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq compiled the Qur'ān and collected it in one volume.

The third stage is the era of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān. During his era, in consultation with the Companions, he had the Qur'ān written down in the dialect of the Quraysh in order to end the differences in recitation. In order to eliminate the differences in recitation, several manuscripts were prepared with the advice of Hudhayfa b. Yamān, and the different manuscripts were made and sent to Kufa, Basra, Syria, Makkah and wherever the Muslims lived. Besides this, it was also obligatory to memorise the Qur'ān word for word. In this way, the pronunciation was preserved through memorisation and the script was preserved through writing. In this way, the Qur'ān is entirely preserved until the Day of Judgement in both memory and writing.

Thus, in this paper, the objections of the orientalisists on the compilation and collection of the Qur'ān have been rejected with arguments and it has been proven that this Qur'ān is a divine book protected from any distortion and change from the time of the Prophet (pbuh) until today.

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