

Special Issue
Collection and Transmission of the Qur'an

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Political Issues
Dr Khalid Zaheer

Mankind seems to be divided by religious categorisation. Some religious groups are more exclusive in their approach than others. However, the approach of condemning people belonging to other faiths, although it has become a much less pronounced problem in recent times, has not vanished completely.

There have been many approaches adopted by religious scholars belonging to different faiths to check the tendency of growing bigotry amongst religious people. The Vatican adopted the policy of Religious Inclusivism through its decree of 1967 which expressed sentiments of cordiality for other important world religions. Words of sympathy were also reserved in the decree for those who have chosen to follow the approach of atheism.

There are, however, some Christians scholars who believe that Religious Inclusivism, even though it is a welcome improvement on Religious Exclusivism, still falls short of being fully convincing. What has been presented by William Rowland, John Hick, and Paul Badham is an approach to justify what they describe as Religious Pluralism. According to this approach, all important religions are genuine human responses to the same Transcendental Reality, even though influenced by the respective cultural environments of the religious leaders. Thus all of them are simultaneously correct, and all offer important insights into the understanding of the Ultimate.

Both Religious Inclusivism and Religious Pluralism promise more religious tolerance amongst those who choose to adopt these points of view, although the latter seems to be more capable of engendering true respect in the hearts of believers of one faith for the believers in the other faiths.

Muslims have normally been considered Religious Exclusivists, who would not hold people of other faiths worthy of being offered respect for their religious commitments. There is, therefore, felt a need to present an Islamic point of view on how Islamic teachings propose to tackle the issue of religious plurality.

Islam, on the one hand takes a firm position in confirming the unquestionable authenticity of its teachings, on the other hand it also calls for genuine respect for all non-Muslims. Even though there seems to be apparently a contradiction in the approach, a better understanding of the various verses of the Qur'ān on the subject would suggest that it is not necessarily so.

The correct Islamic approach towards the non-Muslims is to assume that all of them have, as yet, not been properly convinced about the authenticity of the divine origins of the teachings of Islam. It is for the Muslims to help the non-Muslims to appreciate the truthfulness of the Islamic teachings. That would require not only intelligent preaching on their part but, perhaps more importantly, a behaviour of respect for the fellow human beings, irrespective of their faith. The absence of that behaviour on the part of some Muslims has been an important reason for their failure to present Islam as a message which is worthy of being taken seriously by the non-Muslims. Thus true religious tolerance is at the heart of a proper Islamic behaviour. Thus it will be shown that all Muslims are required to be extremely tolerant of other faiths and to continue their struggle to convince them politely.

This approach is neither Religious Inclusivism of the sort adopted by the Vatican, nor Religious Pluralism as proposed by Rowland Williams, John Hick, and Paul Badham. It is, in fact, a call for religious tolerance because of the possibility of lack of proper communication of the true message of God. Since no body knows whether the other individual has been communicated the message of Islam properly, therefore, no Muslim has the right to condemn any non-Muslim on grounds of religious differences.

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Collection and Transmission of the Qur'an

Qur'an
Shehzad Saleem

Collection and Transmission of the Qur'an

The Qur'an we have with us today is the very one – word for word -- which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (sws). It was collected both in the form of a book and learnt by heart by many companions of the Prophet (sws) during his own life time and then transferred verbally as well as in the written form to the next generations. Such is the monumental nature of this transmission that the inerrancy of the Qur'anic text is an incontestable reality.

In the following paragraphs, this claim shall be corroborated through the Qur'an itself and through the norms of established history.

Collection

The Qur'an, as well as many Ahādīth, records the fact that the Qur'an was compiled in the form of a book before the Prophet (sws) left for his heavenly abode.

The verses which record this testimony of the Qur'an¹ must be understood in the context and background of the whole Qur'an: The Prophet (sws), it is evident from the Qur'an, was desirous of the fact that his addressees accept faith. During the course of his hectic struggle to achieve this end, he encountered stiff opposition from People of the Book and from the Quraysh. However, if this hostility impelled him to increase his efforts on the one hand, it also created in him the yearning to receive the whole of the Qur'an as soon as possible because he thought that the whole and completed message might answer all the questions and doubts raised by his opponents and induce them to accept faith. Furthermore, the piecemeal revelation of the Qur'an was objected to by the Quraysh². They tauntingly commented on this in the following words:

Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once? Thus [is it revealed] that We may strengthen your heart thereby, and We have revealed it gradually and painstakingly. (25:32)

As is evident from the later part of the verse, the Prophet (sws) is solaced by the Almighty that for his proper education and instruction and for that of the people, a gradual process of revealing divine decrees has been employed. Consequently, at various places in the Qur'an, he is told to exercise resolve and patience until the whole of the Qur'an is revealed to him:

Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you and pray: O Lord advance me in

knowledge. (20:113-4)

The initial verses of Sūrah A'lā portray another instance where the Prophet (sws) is told to exercise patience about receiving the whole of the Qur'ān. He is cited two distinct examples which shed light on a common law of nature: there exists the principle of gradual progression and development in all the phenomena of nature. Everything reaches its culmination after passing through various stages. Consequently, he need not worry. The revelation of the Qur'ān will also be gradually completed after passing through various stages:

Glorify the name of your Lord, Most High [O Prophet], Who created [all things], then perfected [them], and Who set their destinies [for them], then [accordingly] showed them the way [to follow], and Who brought forth vegetation, then made it lush green. [In a similar manner, this divine revelation will also gradually reach its end, then] soon We shall [finally] recite it to you; then you will not forget except what Allah pleases. (87:1-18)

With this background, consider now the following verses of the Qur'ān which are in fact similar to the above quoted verses ((20:113-4) and (87:1-19)) in their purport. They also direct the Prophet (sws) to exercise patience until all the Qur'ān is revealed. Only here, the assurance provided to the Prophet (sws) is through a forceful declaration of the whole scheme of the Almighty about the revelation of the Qur'ān. He is assured that it is the responsibility of the Almighty to collect and compile the Qur'ān as well as to recite it to him in a certain sequence. It is the Almighty Himself who will preserve the text of the Qur'ān as well as the mode of its recital:

[To reveal to them, as soon as possible, the whole of the Qur'ān O Prophet!] do not move your tongue swiftly to acquire this [Qur'ān]. Verily, upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it, follow this recital [of Ours]. Then upon Us is to explain it [wherever need be].³ (75:16-19)

Let us now reflect simultaneously on these verses and on the following verse of Sūrah A'lā already quoted before:

Soon We shall [finally] recite it [-- the Qur'ān --] to you; then you will not forget it except what Allah pleases. (87:18)

As a result, we arrive at the following conclusions about the whole Qur'ānic scheme of its own collection and compilation:

1. The Qur'ān was given piecemeal to the Prophet (sws) according to the circumstances which arose and which required divine guidance.
2. Its chronological revelation is of no significance. It was arranged in a new sequence by the Almighty. Once its initial revelation was over, the Almighty through archangel Gabriel read it out to the Prophet (sws) a second time. In this second recital, temporary directives were revised or deleted permanently.
3. This final arrangement and recital was done once the Qur'ān had been collected and compiled in the form of a book. It was read out to Prophet (sws) in a manner that it was rendered absolutely secure from any loss or doubt.
4. After this final recital, the Prophet (sws) was bound by the Almighty to follow this recital only. He was not allowed to read it according to the previous recital.

5. In this final recital, if any directive needed further explanation, it was furnished by the Almighty Himself at this time of compilation⁴.

Consequently, it is clear from the Qur'ān that its collection was completed in the very life of the Prophet (sws) by the Almighty. The final recital of the Qur'ān, which has been termed as the Arda-i-akhīrah (the final presentation)⁵ by our scholars, constitutes the whole of the Qur'ān as revealed to Muhammad (sws).

Many Ahādith also record the compilation of the Qur'ānic text in the lifetime of the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) had appointed many amanuenses for this purpose. Zayd (rta) is reported to have said:

We used to compile the Qur'ān from small scraps in the presence of the Messenger. (Hākim, Mustadrak)

The following account also bears witness to the fact that the Qur'ān existed as a written document in the time of the Prophet (sws):

Mālik said that no one should carry the Mushaf by its strap, nor on a pillow, unless he is clean... (Mu'attā, Kitāb Al-Nidā' Li'l-Salāh)

Another Hadīth informs us about some of the companions who had memorised the Qur'ān in its entirety and gone over it with the Prophet before his death:

Narrated Qatādah: I asked Anas Ibn Mālik: 'Who collected the Qur'ān at the time of Prophet?' He replied: 'Four, all of whom were from the Ansār: Ubay Ibn Ka'ab, Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal, Zayd Ibn Thābit and Abū Zayd.' (Bukhārī, Kitāb Fadā'ilu'l-Qur'ān)

One copy of the Qur'ān was placed in the Masjid-i-Nabawī so that people could make their own copies from it or learn from it. The pillar of the mosque near which the Mushaf was placed was called the Ustuwānah-i-Mushaf (The Pillar of the Mushaf), and is referred to in various Ahādīth; (See for example: Sahīh Muslim: Kitābu'l-Salāh; Sahīh Bukhārī: Kitābu'l-Salāh).

The completed Book was referred to by the Prophet (sws) in his last sermon in the following words:

I have left you something, which if you hold steadfast to, you will never fall into error: the Book of Allah and my established practice.... (Ibn Hishām, Sīrah, vol. 4, [Cairo: Maktabah Al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyyah], p. 186)

In the light of this evidence, it can be safely concluded that Qur'ān was collected and compiled in the form of a book in the lifetime of the Prophet (sws). Consequently, isolate reports which, contrary to this evidence, mention that this collection actually took place after the Prophet (sws) by his companions can in no way be accepted. The narratives, which describe that it was Abū Bakr (sws) who collected the Qur'ān in one Mushaf and it was 'Uthmān (rta) who fearing differences in reading the Qur'ān ordered to make official copies of it, contradict the Qur'ān and the norms of established history, and therefore cannot be accepted.⁶ To any one who objectively examines the material reported in history on this subject, it becomes evident that in spite of the painstaking efforts of the Prophet's companions, some portions of the Qur'ān were lost forever before it could be compiled in book form⁷ while some others were found by a sheer stroke of luck at the initiative of a person who had them⁸.

Notwithstanding these details, the mere contradiction of such reports with the Qur'ān is proof enough of their spurious nature. Moreover, the Isnād (chain of narrators) of the narratives which mention this collection has also been challenged quite convincingly in recent times⁹.

It is by disregarding the testimony of the Qur'ān and by insisting on accepting such spurious reports that the collection of the Qur'ān has become a subject of worthy and weighty criticism from the Orientalists¹⁰. In the opinion of this writer, Muslim scholarship must cling to the Qur'ān for its own testimony on its collection for something decisive and certain as well as consistent in this regard. It is this testimony which they should present to their non-Muslim brethren since the authenticity of the words of the Qur'ān is beyond doubt; all other sources like Sīrat Literature, the Hadīth Literature and the Tafsīr Literature are subservient to it. The nature of all these three sources obviously is such that they cannot be termed as error free by any Muslim. Whilst their promiscuous heap may contain pearls of wisdom, yet the presence of unauthentic material in them can in no way be denied. Their 'credit stands on slippery grounds', and contradictory details about the same event may simultaneously exist in their corpus. Therefore, conclusions drawn on their bases cannot be termed as absolutely true. At best, they can be regarded as possibly true.

The situation becomes very grave if one considers the fact that in reality it is the authenticity of scripture that actually draws the dividing line between Muslims and the followers of other divinely revealed faiths. For it is the Muslims who claim that all previous divine scriptures have been interpolated and corrupted and that it is they who have with them a complete authentic script from the Almighty. If the data from which they prove the authenticity of their scripture provides dubious results, then they really have a very heavy task at their hands to reckon with since the sincere seekers of truth in their non-Muslim counterparts are provided with a possible legitimate excuse to reject the Qur'ān as the unadulterated word of God.

Consequently, only material from these sources which is in consonance with the view of the Qur'ān should be accepted and that which contradicts this view should be rejected.

Transmission

Once the Qur'ān was collected in the lifetime of the Prophet (sww) and memorised by many of his companions, it was transmitted to the next generations both verbally and in script form. In fact, the verbal transmission superseded the written one. For it is this transmission that has actually safeguarded the Qur'ānic text which can be read variously if the actual vocalization is not known. Hundreds and thousands of the Prophet's companions learnt it by heart and then passed it on verbally to the next generation, which in turn memorised the text in great numbers and this process is still continuing. This generation to generation transmission is so overwhelming and all-embracing that the transmitted text has been rendered safe and secure from any alteration. Consequently, such is the prodigious nature of this transmission that solitary reports which convey even a slight difference are of no value. In other words, like established historical events which are also conveyed through such generation to generation transfer and which as result cannot be challenged, the text of the Qur'ān we have with us, on similar grounds, is also established beyond any doubt. For example, the facts that Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington or that Genghiz Khan ravaged Baghdad are reports that have been transmitted from the generations that saw and witnessed these events to the next to the extent that no one can challenge the established nature of these reports. Similar is the case of the mechanism of the transmission of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān we have with us today has been transferred by thousands of the companions of the Prophet (sww) with a

consensus on the report that this was the very Qur'ān revealed to Muhammad (sww). In turn, this generation transferred this Qur'ān and this report to the next generation. So, just as the contentions that Napoleon never met his fate at Waterloo or that Baghdad was never devastated by Genghis Khan cannot be entertained in the world of reason and rationality since they belie established history, the contention that the Qur'ān we have today is not the same as what was revealed to Muhammad can in no way be accepted.[11](#)

Also, in this regard, the following points need to be appreciated:

(i) All written texts of the Qur'ān are actually compiled and written on the basis of the oral transmission. In other words, written texts are not the real source of the transmission of the Qur'ān. They are totally dependent on the oral tradition of transmission, which is the real mode of transmission of the Qur'ānic text. Even today, each written text must be attested by the oral tradition of transmission through a Hāfiz who has learnt the Qur'ān.

(ii) It is the oral transmission which was used later on by the Ummah to write the vowel sounds on the Qur'ānic text for the benefit of non-Arab readers.

(iii) The often undertaken quest for the oldest written codex of the Qur'ān has academic importance only since this has no role in determining the original text of the Qur'ān, which, as pointed out, is not dependent on written texts.[12](#)

In the light of this discussion, it can be safely concluded that the promise of the Almighty mentioned in the Qur'ān[13](#) regarding its protection and safety has stood fulfilled ever since the Qur'ān was revealed and will continue to stand the test of time until the end of this world is heralded.

This article has thus far ventured forth to explain the collection and transmission of the Qur'ān. However, owing to certain prevailing concepts, three questions may spring in the mind of the readers:

1. What about the verses of the Qur'ān which are thought to be operational yet are not found within the Qur'ān?
2. What were the seven readings of the Qur'ān on which it was supposed to have been revealed?
3. What are the extant variant readings of the Qur'ān?

This article ends with an attempt to answer these questions.

The Extraneous Verses

There exists a consensus among Muslim scholars that there are some verses of the Qur'ān which do not exist in it yet are operational. In technical parlance, they are called 'Mansūkhū'l Tilāwah Dūn Al-Hukm' (whose reading has been withdrawn but whose ruling still exists). Writes Āmidī:

Scholars unanimously concede that there are verses which do not exist in the Qur'ān whose directive still remains.

(Āmidī, Al-Ahkām Fī Usūlī'l-Ahkām, vol. 2, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1980], p. 201)

In this regard, the most striking example is the verse of stoning found in some of the major books of Hadīth literature. One of its texts is reported as follows:

'Umar said: 'Refrain from destroying yourself by denying the verse of stoning. Matters should not reach the stage that people should begin to say: "We do not find mention of two punishments (stripes and stoning) in the Book of Allah." No doubt the Prophet did Rajam (stoning to death) and so did we. I swear by Him in whose hands is my life that if I were not fearful of the fact that people would say that 'Umar has made an addition in the Book of Allah, I would have written the verse: "Stone to death the old man guilty of fornication and the old woman guilty of fornication" in the Qur'ān. The reason is that we ourselves have recited this verse [from the Qur'ān]'. (Mu'attā, Kitābu'l-Hudūd)

While Muslim scholarship¹⁴ try to explain this by saying that the directive of Rajam found in such Ahādīth abrogates the directive of punishing fornicators found in the Qur'ān (24:2), some of the critics of the Qur'ān by citing this and other similar examples of such verses found in the Hadīth literature say:

It is far more reasonable to conclude that most of the various passages said to have been omitted from the Qur'ān were either overlooked, or not known to all the companions, or quite simply forgotten (such as the passage said by Abū Mūsā to have contained the verse about the insatiable greed of man. cf Sahīh Muslim).¹⁵

This opinion of our scholars cannot be accepted and requires serious reconsideration. No verse which is thought to exist outside the Qur'ān can be considered as still operational in any way. How can a part of the Qur'ān be extraneous to it? The Qur'ān we have today is itself a proof on the fact that everything outside it is not its part in any way.

Also, since the doctrine of abrogation¹⁶ is used by both Muslims and non-Muslims to justify or refute such verses, it seems appropriate here to allude to some important statutes of this doctrine:

(i) Only a Qur'ānic verse can abrogate another verse. Consequently, both the abrogating and the abrogated verses exist in the Qur'ān. For example: 58:13 abrogates 58:12; similarly 4:11 abrogates 2:180-2. In other words, no abrogated verse of the Qur'ān is found outside the Qur'ān, and no Hadīth can abrogate a Qur'ānic directive.

(ii) The word Naskh (abrogation) is not used in the Qur'ān as a term, as is generally understood. It was centuries later that 'Naskh' became a term coined by the scholars of Usūl. In 2:106, where it occurs, it refers to abrogation of certain directives of previous divine scriptures by the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān itself does not comment on whether any verse of its verses has been abrogated or not.

(iii) The abrogation found in the Qur'ān concerns only laws and directives; it does not in any way relate to beliefs, morality or historical accounts.

The Seven Readings

The following Hadīth is generally presented to contend that the Qur'ān was actually revealed on seven different

readings:

Yahyā narrates from Mālik who narrates from Ibn Shahāb Zuhri who narrates from ‘Urwah Ibn Zubayr who narrates from ‘Abdu’l-Rahmān Ibn ‘Abdu’l-Qarī that ‘Umar Ibn Khattāb said before me: ‘I heard Hishām Ibn Hakīm Ibn Hizām reading Sūrah Furqān in a different way from the one I read it, and the Prophet (sws) himself had read out this sūrah to me. Consequently, as soon as I heard him, I wanted to get hold of him. However, I gave him respite until he had finished the prayer. Then I got hold of his cloak and dragged him to the Prophet (sws). I said to him: “I have heard Hishām Ibn Hakīm Ibn Hizām reading Sūrah Furqān in a different way from the one you had read it out to me”. The Prophet (sws) said: “Leave him alone [O ‘Umar]”. Then he said to Hishām: “Read [it]”. [‘Umar says:] He read it out in the same way as he had done before me. [At this,] the Prophet said: “It was revealed thus”. Then the Prophet (sws) asked me to read it out. So I read it out. [At this,] he said: “It was revealed thus. This Qur’ān has been revealed on seven Ahruf. You can read it in any way you find easy from among them”’. (Mu’attā, Mā Jā’ Fi’l-Qur’ān)

On the following grounds, this Hadīth cannot be accepted:

Firstly, the very meaning of this Hadīth has baffled everyone, and no one has ever been able to present a convincing explanation of it. Suyūṭī has cited forty different interpretations of it in his treatise *Al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūmī’l-Qur’ān* and after realizing their weakness has admitted in *Tanwīru’l-Hawālik*, a commentary on the *Mu’attā* of Imam Mālik, that this Hadīth should be regarded among the *Mutashābihāt* (ie something whose meaning is not known):

To me the best opinion in this regard is that of the people who say that this Hadīth is from among matters of *Mutashābihāt*, the meaning of which cannot be understood. (Suyūṭī, *Tanwīru’l-Hawālik*, 2nd ed., [Beirut: Dāru’l-Jayl, 1993], p. 199)

Secondly, even if the most plausible meaning that the word *Ahruf* means the various accents and pronunciations which existed in the various tribes of Arabia is taken, the text of the Hadīth itself negates this meaning. It is known that both ‘Umar (rta) and Hishām (rta) belonged to the same tribe: the Quraysh.

Thirdly, even if it is accepted that this difference was of accent and pronunciation between various tribes, the verb *unzila* (was revealed) is certainly very inappropriate. The Qur’ān has specified that it was revealed in the language of the Prophet’s tribe: the Quraysh (See for example: 19:97, 44:58). How can it be accepted that the Almighty Himself revealed the various accents and pronunciations?

Fourthly, it is known that Hishām had accepted Islam on the day Makkah was conquered. If this Hadīth is accepted, it would mean that for almost twenty years even the closest companions of the Prophet (sws) like ‘Umar (rta) was unaware of the Qur’ān being revealed in some other reading. This clandestine teaching of course directly contradicts many verses of the Qur’ān which direct the Prophet (sws) to convey and communicate each and every verse of the Qur’ān. See for example 5:67.

The Variant Readings

It is alleged that there exist several variant readings of the Qur’ān. In this regard, it is said that their amount cannot be fixed and every reading which fulfils the following criteria is acceptable:

Any reading which is grammatically correct by any means¹⁷, is according to the script of the Uthmānic codices in any way¹⁸ and whose chain of narration is Sahīh cannot be rejected. In fact, it is from among the seven Ahruf on which the Qur'ān was revealed whether the reading be narrated from the seven great readers or the ten or anyone of acknowledged status besides these. (Ibn al-Jazarī, Al-Nashr Fi'l-Qirā'āt al-'ahsr, vol. 1, [Egypt: Maktabah al-Tujjāriyyah], p. 9)

It is further understood that:

When any of these three criteria is not fulfilled for a reading then such a reading shall be considered weak, or unknown (Shāzah), or unacceptable whether it be from the seven readers or the ten or from those who are even greater than these. This is the correct opinion according to the researchers of the past and recent times¹⁹. (Ibn al-Jazarī, Al-Nashr Fi'l-Qirā'āt al-'ahsr, vol. 1, [Egypt: Maktabah al-Tujjāriyyah], p. 9)

It is said that the first person to record these readings in the form of a book was Abū 'Ubayd Qāsim Ibn Salām (d:224 AH). He recorded twenty five readings; Abū Ja'far Tabarī (d:310 AH) recorded over twenty readings, while it was Abū Bakr Ibn Mujāhid (d: 324 AH) who selected the seven famous ones²⁰. The number selected by Ibn Mujāhid (seven) has been objected to by many scholars since this number has led people to think that these seven were the same as the seven Ahruf on which the Qur'ān was supposed to have been revealed:

Abū Shāmah has said: A group of people say that the seven readings found today are the ones implied by the seven Ahruf mentioned in the Ahādīth. However, this is totally against the consensus of the scholars of Islam. This view has arisen only among certain ignorant people. Abū 'Abbās Ibn 'Ammār has said: The compiler of the seven readings has done an inappropriate thing. As a result, the masses are faced with a complex situation. People with little knowledge think that the seven Ahruf mean the seven readings. Ibn Mujāhid should have either selected a number greater than seven or a number less than seven to avoid this confusion. (Suyūti, Itqān Fī 'Ulūmī'l-Qur'ān, 2nd ed., vol. 1, [Baydār: Manshurāt al-Radī, 1313 AH], p. 274)

In the opinion of this writer, none of these readings can be accepted in any way owing to the following reasons:

(i) The following verses of the Qur'ān explicitly tell us that the whole of the Qur'ān was recited on ONE READING in a particular way by the Almighty Himself after its revelation was completed:

Verily, Upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it follow this recital [of Ours]. (75:17-18)

It is clear from these verses that the Almighty recited the Qur'ān in a single reading. The words leave no room for multiple readings of the same word/verses. Furthermore, the verse emphatically instructs the Prophet (sws) to follow ONLY this particular recital.

(ii) The whole of the Muslim Ummah today, except for a few North African countries, is united in reading the Qur'ān in just one way. The variation is so insignificant that it cannot be accepted in any way. These areas of the African continent did not even fall into the mainstream of the Muslim Ummah conquered by the Companions of the Prophet (sws) during the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphate. The only complete reading of the Qur'ān which is in vogue in all the mainstream areas from the time of the Prophet (sws) is the Qir'āt al-'Āmmah (the universal reading) – the very reading read out to the Prophet (sws) once the revelation of the Qur'ān had been completed. It

was this very reading which existed among the companions of the Prophet (sws). Abū ‘Abdu’l Rahman Sullamī (d:105 AH²¹) narrates:

The reading of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and Zayd Ibn Thābit and that of all the Muhājirūn and the Ansār was one. They would read the Qur’ān according to the Qir’āt al-‘Ammah. This is the same reading which was read out to the Prophet (sws) in the year of his death by Gabriel. Zayd Ibn Thābit²² was also present in this reading [called] the ‘Ardah-i-Akhīrah²³. It was in this very reading that he taught the Qur’ān to people till his death. (Zarkashī, Burhān, 2nd ed., vol. 1, [Beirut: Dāru’l-Fikr, 1980] p. 237)

This reading is generally known today as the Reading of Hafs (Qir’āt-i-Hafs). However, its correct name is the Qir’āt al-‘Ammah. In the words of Ibn Sīrīn (d:110 AH²⁴):

The reading on which the Qur’ān was read out to the Prophet (sws) in the year of his death is the same according to which people are reading the Qur’ān today. (Suyūtī, Itqān Fī Ulūmī’l-Qur’ān, 2nd ed., vol. 1, [Baydār: Manshūrāt al-Radī, 1343 AH], p. 177)

This is the testimony of a famous person who died more than seventy years after the Prophet (sws).

(iii) If the variant readings which actually change the meaning of a verse are incorporated in the text and reflected upon in light of the coherence of the Divine Book and its sublime language, it becomes evident that the text of the Qur’ān totally rejects them on grounds contained within the text.

An example would help in understanding this point:

According to the readings of Hamzah, Abū Amr, and Ibn Kathīr we find arjulikum in place of the standard reading of arjulakum in the fifth verse of Sūrah Mā’idah. This changes the meaning quite drastically. The reading arjulikum would mean that in wudu feet are to be wiped (the Arabic verb for wiping is Masah) as against arjulakum, the standard reading according to which feet are to be washed. An indication within the verse rejects the reading of arjulikum. If read thus (ie in the genitive), the mention of the words ilā al-ka’bayn (up to the ankles) after arjulikum means that feet are to be wiped up to the ankles. We know that Masah is basically a symbolic expression signifying the attainment of purity and has been allowed to produce ease. Whereas in case of water, it is necessary that the extent to which the feet are to be washed be known, in case of Masah a mention of this extent is an obvious redundancy. In other words, the words ilā al-ka’bayn in this case are superfluous. They only become meaningful if feet are to be washed. Consequently, another verse of the Qur’ān, which actually describes Tayammum (dry ablution), mentions the Masah of the face and the hands without specifying the extent to which this Masah is to be done:

... And if you find no water then take for yourselves clean sand or earth and rub therewith your hands and faces. (4:43)

Redundant words, of course, do not exist in the elegant diction of the Qur’ān. Therefore, on the basis of this internal testimony provided within the verse, the reading arjulikum stands rejected as well.

This analysis should serve as a pointer at all the variant readings and brings out their fallacy.

(iv) It has already been shown that the Qur'ān is Mutawātir (ie such a large number of people have transmitted the Qur'ān that the existence of any error in the transmitted text is impossible). There exists a consensus of opinion among the scholars of our Ummah on this as well.[25](#) Consequently, Suyūṭī asserts:

There is no difference of opinion about the fact that whatever is contained in the Qur'ān is Mutawātir both in totality and in part. To the Ahlu'l-Sunnah, the placements therein and its arrangement are all Mutawātir so that it [the Qur'ān] becomes indisputable. This is because it is an acknowledged fact that the Qur'ān is a document whose details desire Tawātur Consequently, whatever part of the Qur'ān has been transmitted through the Ahād (isolate reports) and is not Mutawātir is unquestionably not the Qur'ān by any means. (Suyūṭī, Itqān Fī 'Ulūmi'l-Qur'ān, 2nd ed., vol. 1, [Baydār: Manshūrāt al-Radī, 1343 AH], p. 266)

Now, if the chains of narrators of these variant readings are examined, none of them can be claimed as Mutawātir. They may be Mutawātir from their famous originators but they are certainly not Mutawātir all the way from these originators up to the Prophet (sww). At best, they can be classified as Ahād (isolate reports). An example would suffice to illustrate this. Following are the three ways[26](#) in which one of the Qur'ān, 'Āsim Ibn Abī Najwad Al-Bahdlah (d: 127 AH[27](#)) has narrated his reading from the Prophet (sww):

I

Muhammad (sww)

'Abdu'llāh Ibn Mas'ūd

Zirr Ibn Hubaysh

Abū 'Abdu'l-Rahmān Sullamī Abū 'Amr Shāybānī

'Āsim Ibn Abī Najwad

Hafs Ibn Sulaymān

Abū Bakr 'Ayyāsh

II

Muhammad (sww)

Zayd Ibn Thābit

Ubayyi Ibn Ka'ab

Abū 'Abdu'l-Rahman

Sullamī

‘Āsim Ibn Abī Najwad

Hafs Ibn Sulaymān

Abū Bakr ‘Ayyāsh

III

Muhammad (sws)

‘Alī

‘Uthmān

Zirr Ibn Hubaysh

Abū ‘Abdu’l-Rahmān Sullamī

‘Āsim Ibn Abī Najwad

Hafs Ibn Sulaymān

Abū Bakr ‘Ayyash

Muslim scholars recognize this very fact, but quite inexplicably most of them still insist on accepting these variant readings:

The opinion of the majority is that these readings are Mutawātir. However, one opinion is that they are Mashhūr²⁸ The truth in this regard is that they are Mutawātir from these seven [Qurr’ā]. As far as their Tawātur from the Prophet (sws) is concerned, this is debatable. For the chain of narrators of these seven are found in the books of Qirā’āt. These chains are transmission from a single person to another and do not fulfil the condition of Tawātur neither from the first narrator to the last nor in between. (Zarkashī, Burhān, 2nd ed., vol. 1, [Beirut: Dāru’l-Fikr, 1980] p. 319)

(v) Not only are these readings isolate reports (Ahād), but also many of the narrators of these readings are not regarded as trustworthy by the scholars of ‘Ilmu’l-Rijāl as far as accepting Ahādīth from them is concerned. As an example, this is what is written about Hafs Ibn Sulaymān, perhaps the most famous and most widely acclaimed of all the disciples of the major Qurrā’:

‘Abdu’l-Rahmān Ibn Abī Hātim, ‘Umar Ibn Shu‘ayb Sābūnī, Ahmad Ibn Hambal, Bukhārī, Muslim and Nasā’ī call him Matrūku’l-Hadīth (From whom Ahādīth are not accepted) In the opinion of Yahyā Ibn Mu‘īn as quoted by Abū Qudāmah Sarakhsī and ‘Uthmān Ibn Sa‘īd he is not trustworthy ‘Alī Ibn Madīnī says: he is weak in matters of

Hadīth and I have forsaken him voluntarily. Abū Zur'ah also says that he is weak in matters of Hadīth Sālih Muhammad Al-Baghdādī says the Ahādīth narrated by him are not worth writing and all of them mention unfamiliar things in religion. Zakariyyah Ibn Yahyā Al-Sājī narrates from Sammāk and 'Alqamah Ibn Marthad and Qays Ibn Muslim that his Ahādīth are not reliable 'Abdu'l-Rahmān Ibn Abī Hātim says that he asked his father about Hafs. His father said that his Ahādīth are not even worth writing. He is weak in matters of Hadīth, cannot be attested to and his Ahādīth are not acceptable. Abdu'l-Rahmān Ibn Yūsuf says that he is a great liar, worthy of being forsaken and forges Ahādīth. Hākim Abū Ahmad says: He wastes Ahādīth. Yahyā Ibn Sa'īd says that he took a book from him but never returned it. He would take books from people and copy them. Abū Ahmad Ibn 'Addī narrates from Al-Sājī and Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Al-Baghdādī and Yahyā Ibn Mu'īn that Hafs Ibn Sulaymān and Abū Bakr Ibn 'Ayyāsh are the most competent of all who know the reading of 'Āsim. Hafs is even more competent than Abū Bakr. However, Hafs is a great liar while Abū Bakr is reliable.[29](#)

It seems quite strange that a person so widely regarded as unreliable (even called a liar) in accepting Hadīth from be regarded as a very dependable person as far the Qur'ān is concerned.

It is clear from this analysis that these extant readings which are found in books of Tafsīr and read and taught in religious schools can in no way be accepted. Whether they originated from insistence by some to cling to the first recital of the Qur'ān[30](#), or were mere explanations of the actual verses written down by the companions in their own codices or, like the extraneous verses, were concocted to disparage the Qur'ān is a mystery which perhaps may never be solved. However, this much is certain that they have nothing to do with the text of the Qur'ān.

Appendixes

- [Appendix A: Critical Analysis of the Reports which Mention the Collection of Abū Bakr \(rta\) and the Recension of 'Uthmān \(rta\)](#)
- [Appendix B: The Controversial Personality of Ibn Shihāb Zuhrī](#)
- [Appendix C: View of the Orientalists on the History of the Qur'ānic Text](#)
- [Appendix D: A Comment on some Dissenting views on the Authenticity of the Qur'ān](#)

1. In recent times, Farāhī (d:1930), a scholar from the subcontinent, has vehemently presented this testimony of the Qur’ān. Though he was not the first one to direct the attention of Muslim scholarship towards it, yet the way in which he has presented it entitles him to be placed among the pioneers of this view. In later years, Ghāmidī (b:1951), a pupil of Farāhī’s distinguished student Islāhī (d:1997) has lent precision to the seminal work done by Farāhī in this regard. This article draws heavily from the works of both these writers. (For details see (i) Farāhī, *Majmū’ah Tafāsīr*, 1st ed., [Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991], pp. 206-214, (ii) Ghāmidī, *Usūl-u-Mubādī*, *Ishrāq*, VI (October 1998), 18-25).

2. They did this in order to lend credibility to their contention that some others were also involved in the preparation of the Qur’ān and that whenever a section was completed, it was presented:

And the disbelievers say: This is but a lie that he has forged, and others have helped him in it. (25:4)

3. These verses are generally interpreted by most commentators in a different way. Technically speaking, the antecedent of the genitive pronoun *hī* in the construction *li ta’jala bihī*, in their opinion, refers to the part of the Qur’ān which was revealed on one occasion. Consequently, according to them the verse means that the haste shown by the Prophet (sws) concerned receiving part of the Qur’ān which was meant to be revealed on a particular occasion. The reason for this haste was that the Prophet (sws) feared that the part of the Qur’ān being revealed to him on an occasion might get lost. This view is actually based on a Hadīth narrated by Ibn Abbās and recorded in most books of Hadīth. It says that the Prophet (sws), due to the above mentioned reason, would start repeating the words of the revelation rapidly as soon as Gabriel recited them to him. Thereupon, he was instructed by the Almighty to refrain from moving his tongue rapidly since the Almighty Himself had taken the responsibility of safely collecting it in his heart. In contrast to this, Farāhī argues that in the light of the context of the Qur’ān and other parallel verses (25:32, 20:113-4), the reason the Prophet (sws) showed haste was that he wanted to receive the whole of the Qur’ān (and not the part revealed on one occasion) in order to silence the questions and objections raised by his opponents. The second thing which is to be noted in these verses is that the verb *jama’a* does not mean that the Qur’ān was collected in the heart of the Prophet (sws) as most commentators contend; such figurative use of the word requires some textual indication. On the contrary, it refers to the collection of the Qur’ān in the form of a book by the Almighty.

4. Consequently, according to Farāhī, verses which generally begin with the words *Kadhālika Yubiyyinu’l Allāh* (See for example: 2:187, 2:219, 2:266, 3:103, 24:58, 24:61) were placed in this final stage of compilation to explain and elucidate a previously sent down verse.

5. It is evident from the Ahādīth literature that each year in the month of Ramadān, archangel Gabriel would recite to the Prophet (sws) the portion of the Qur’ān revealed until then. In the last Ramadān of the Prophet’s life, he twice recited the whole of the Qur’ān to the Prophet (sws). Abū Hurayrah narrates:

The Prophet (sws) was read out the Qur’ān each year. However, in the year he died, it was read out to him twice. (Bukhārī, *Kitāb Fadā’ilu’l-Qur’ān*)

6. See appendix A.

7. Many (of the passages) of the Qur'ān that were sent down were known by those who died on the day of Yamāmah ... but they were not known [by those who] survived them, nor were they written down, nor had Abū Bakr, 'Umar or Uthmān [by that time] collected the Qur'ān, nor were they found with even one [person] after them. (Ibn Abī Dawūd, Kitābu'l-Masāhif, 1st ed., [Egypt: Al-Matba'ah al-Rahmāniyyah, 1936], p. 23).

8. John Gilchrist quotes the following account:

Khuzaymah Ibn Thābit said: 'I see you have overlooked (two) verses and have not written them'. They said: 'And which are they?' He replied: 'I had it directly (tilqiyya - 'automatically, spontaneously') from the messenger of Allah (Sūrah 9, verse 128): There has come to you a messenger from yourselves. It grieves him that you should perish, he is very concerned about you: to the believers he is kind and merciful', to the end of the sūrah'. 'Uthmān said: 'I bear witness that these verses are from Allah'. (Ibn Abī Dawūd, Kitābu'l-Masāhif, 1st ed., [Egypt: Al-Matba'ah al-Rahmāniyyah, 1936], p. 11).

(John Gilchrist, Jam'u'l-Qur'ān – The Codification of the Qur'ān Text, Internet Version: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Jam/chap1.html>)

He then concludes by saying:

The significant feature of this narrative is that Zayd and the others are said to have missed these verses completely when transcribing the Qur'ān. In fact, the statement that Zayd only found them with Abū Khuzaymah is here stated to mean that it was only at the latter's initiative that the verse was recorded at all. He found it necessary to draw the compiler's attention to them -- it was not Zayd's search for two verses he already knew that occasioned their inclusion. In fact, the text goes on to say that Abū Khuzaymah was asked where they should be inserted in the Qur'ān and he suggested they be added to the last part of the Qur'ān to be revealed, namely the close of Sūrah al-Tawbah. (Ibid).

9. See

Tamannā 'Imādī, Jam'u'l-Qur'ān, Karachi, Rahman Publishing Trust, 1994. See also Appendix A and Appendix B.

10. See for example (i) Theodore Noldeke, Geschichte des Qorans, Leipzig, 1909-38 in 3 parts, (ii) Arthur Jeffery, Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān, Leiden, 1937 and (iii) John Gilchrist, Jam'u'l-Qur'ān, South Africa: MERCSA, 1989. See also Appendix C.

11. There is, therefore, no need to comment on such spurious reports as Hajjāj Ibn Yūsuf changing the Qur'ān at eleven places. (See Ibn Abī Dawūd, Kitābu'l-Masāhif, 1st ed., [Egypt: Al-Matba'ah al-Rahmāniyyah, 1936], p. 117)

12. This ongoing search has as yet located two hitherto oldest versions written in the Kūfic script dated round 100 AH. One of them is preserved today in the Soviet State Library at Tashkent in Uzbekistan in southern Russia, and the other is kept on public display in the Topkapi museum in Istanbul.

13. It is We who have revealed the Qur'ān and verily We shall preserve it. (15:9)

14. They maintain that whilst the Qur'ān says that a man and a woman guilty of fornication are to be flogged a hundred times, the Ahādith amend this directive by saying that if a married man and a married woman are guilty of fornication, then they shall be stoned to death. In other words, in their opinion, the directive of the Qur'ān is only meant for unmarried men and women.

15. John Gilchrist, Jam'u'l-Qur'ān -- The Codification of the Qur'ān Text, Internet Version: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Jam/chap4.html>)

16. For details see Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān, 5th ed., vol. 1, [Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1993], pp. 308-317

17. That is even if its construction is not Fasīh (eloquent). See Ibn al-Jazarī, Al-Nashr Fī'l-Qirā'āt al-'ahsr, vol. 1, [Egypt: Maktabah al-Tujjāriyyah], p. 10.

18. An example to illustrate this condition is the word Malik and Mālik. Since Arabic word (mīm) when written between two letters is without an alif (the elongated vowel sound) in these scripts, both these readings, it is alleged, are possible. See Ibn al-Jazarī, al-Nashr Fī'l-Qirā'āt al-'ahsr, vol. 1, [Egypt: Maktabah al-Tujjāriyyah], p. 11.

19. One can estimate this period considering that Ibn al-Jazarī died in 833 AH.

20. For further details see Ibn al-Jazarī, Al-Nashr Fī'l-Qirā'āt al-'ahsr, vol. 1, [Egypt: Maktabah al-Tujjāriyyah], pp. 33-35.

21. See Abu'l Hajjāj Mizzī, Tahdhību'l-Kamāl, 2nd ed., vol. 14, [Beirut: Mu'assasah Al-Risālah, 1413 AH], p. 410.

22. This of course does not mean that only Zayd was present during the 'Ardah-i-Akhīrah. Other companions would certainly have been present as well. Consequently, the following Hādith tells us that Ibn Mas'ūd was also present:

The Prophet (sws) was read out the Qur'ān each year. However, the year he died it was read out to him twice. Ibn Mas'ūd was present in this last recital, and [as a result] came to know what was abrogated and what was changed. (Ahmad Ibn Hambal, Musnad, vol. 1, pp. 362-3)

23. ie the final presentation.

24. See Abu'l Hajjāj Mizzī, Tahdhību'l-Kamāl, 2nd ed., vol. 25, [Beirut: Mu'assasah Al-Risālah, 1413 AH], p. 354.

25. See Appendix D

26. See Ibn al-Jazarī, Al-Nashr Fī'l-Qirā'āt al-'ahsr, vol. 1, [Egypt: Maktabah al-Tujjāriyyah], p. 155.

27. See Abu'l Hajjāj Mizzī, Tahdhību'l-Kamāl, 2nd ed., vol. 13, [Beirut: Mu'assasah Al-Risālah, 1413 AH], p. 478.

[28.](#) ie widely attested.

[29.](#) See Abu'l Hajjaj Mizzī, Tahdhību'l-Kamāl, 2nd ed., vol. 7, [Beirut: Mu'assasah Al-Risālah, 1413 AH], pp. 13-15.

[30.](#) As pointed out earlier with reference to 75:16-19, this initial recital of the Qur'ān was replaced by a final one by the Almighty Himself.

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PAKISTAN

Sayyid Abu'l Hasan 'Alī Nadwī The Fragrance of the East Fades Away

Obituary
Radiance Viewsweekly

Mawlānā Abu'l Hasan 'Alī Nadwī, an Islamic scholar of global repute, breathed his last at his native village in Rai Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh on December 31, 1999. He was 85.

President of All India Muslim Personal Board (AIMPLB) and founder member of the Makkah-based Rābitah al-'Ālam al-Islāmī, Mawlānā Abu'l Hasan 'Alī, popularly known as 'Alī Miyān, rendered invaluable services in the various educational, literary and research fields in Arabic and Urdu.

Born in a devout Muslim family of Rae Bareilly in January 1914, Mawlānā Abu'l Hasan 'Alī Nadwī was initiated into theology by his father Mawlānā Hakīm Sayyid 'Abdu'l Ha'i Hasanī Nadwī, who was himself an eminent scholar of his time. His father died when he was only nine leaving the young 'Alī under the guidance of his elder brother Dr Sayyid 'Abu'l 'Alī Hasanī. Besides his brother, those who moulded his personality include his revered mother, Mawlānā Ahmad 'Alī Lāhorī, Mawlānā 'Abdu'l Qādir Rā'ipurī, and his teacher Khalīl Ibn 'Arab and Mawlānā Haydar Hasan Khān.

His grasp of Islamic history and brilliant writings earned 'Alī Miyān a distinguished position among the Muslim intelligentsia quite early in his life. After completing his education at Lucknow-based Dāru'l 'Ulūm Nadwatu'l 'Ulamā, he joined Nadwah as a teacher of Arabic and Tafsīr literature and served this premier institution in this capacity for about 10 years. Then he succeeded his elder brother as Secretary of Nadwah and later held the responsibility of Rectorship of Nadwah till the last breath of his life. Besides, he also rendered his services as deputy Editor of the Urdu journal, Al-Nadwah.

Mawlānā Abu'l Hasan 'Alī was a prolific author with about 80 books of scholarly and research nature to his credit, many of which have been rendered into different languages. He made his debut in the literary field at the age of 17 with an Arabic work on Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd which was published in the Egyptian newspaper, Al-Manār. It was followed by Sīrah Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd in Urdu written in 1939-40. His masterpiece, Mā Dhā Khasira al-'Ālam Bi Inhitāti'l Muslimīn was so widely acclaimed that it carved out a place for him in the literary circles of the Arabic world. His other eminent works include Western Civilisation; Islam and Muslims; Faith versus Materialism; Nabī-i-Rahmat; Islamic Concept of Prophethood; Muslims in India; Tarīkh Da'wat-u-'Azīmat; Qadiyanism: A Critical Study; Daryā-i-Kābul Say Daryā-i-Yarmūk Tak; Purānayn Chirāgh, besides his biography, Kārwan-i-Zindagī.

The late Mawlānā was associated with a number of religious, literary, research and cultural institutions in India and abroad. He was president of Dīnī Ta'līmī Council, UP; chairman of the Managing Committee of Dāru'l Musannifīn,

Azamgarh, UP; president of the Board of Trustees, Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford University, UK; member of the Academy of Arts and Letters, Damascus; member Higher Council of Madīnah University; member Executive Committee of the Islamic Universities Federation, Rabat, Morocco; and member of the Academy of Arabic Language, Amman, Jordan.

He had also been Visiting Professor at the Damascus and Madīnah Universities. Some of his works have the distinction of being prescribed in the syllabi of numerous universities.

Mawlānā Abu'l Hasan 'Alī Nadwī was also one of the recipients of Malik Faisal International Award for his services to the cause of Islam in 1980. The Mawlānā was also associated with Jamā'at-i-Islāmī during 1940s but dissociated himself from the Jamā'at fold soon.

Though he was issueless, the late Mawlānā left a large number of his associates and disciples behind him.

His funeral prayer was led by Mawlānā Rābi' Hasan Nadwī and attended by a large number of his associates and well-wishers. He was laid to rest in his ancestral graveyard late in the night of December 31.

Courtesy: 'The Radiance Viewsweekly', Delhi, India

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PAKISTAN

Autumn

Rhyme and Reason

Sultan Khilji

'I was alive once...and that was when you were not dead.'

The voice echoed through the thunderous rain and I never even noticed for once, the other coffin that was lying besides yours. Maybe it wasn't even there till they offered you to the black soil on that bleak September night. Maybe I was too engrossed in myself to notice, or maybe I was too wrapped up in you to feel life drain out of me into that abysmal hole in the ground that only seemed six feet deep at that time.

Even they never noticed. But then, how could they anyway? The blind are never supposed to see. Or are they?

Maybe they chose not to see ... or maybe their demons curtailed it from their view by sheer force of evil. They think they are their companions for eternity, but they are not. They'll live with their demons till they die ... but they'll die alone. His or her demon will move on to someone else, perhaps to her or perhaps to him, again, to haunt him or her to eternity.

As for me, I'll just lie here ... alone. With no angel or demon to keep me company. For I am one who has found permanent companionship with solitude itself. I have seen the light in the supreme darkness of its nothingness. I have heard the whispers of solace echoing through its silent vales. I have found love and sympathy cradled in the tentacles of scorn within it ... I have found my voice, but have lost the words.

But I know. I'll live within this death till it dies. And they will learn to let their demons go, and awaken with their hearts not blind anymore.

They will see that other coffin ... lay it beside yours and cover it with the black soil of that bleak September night. And a voice shall echo through the cemetery...

I was dead once...that was when you were not alive,

But now I am alive within your death.

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PAKISTAN

Appendix A: Critical Analysis of the Reports which Mention the Collection of Abū Bakr (rta) and the Recension of 'Uthmān (rta)

Appendixes
Shehzad Saleem

I

Following is a narrative of Sahīh Bukhari which mentions the collection of the Qur'ān by Abū Bakr (rta):

Mūsā Ibn Isma'īl narrates from Ibrāhīm Ibn Sa'ad who narrates from Ibn Shihāb Zuhri who narrates from 'Ubayd Ibn Sabbāq who narrates from Zayd Ibn Thābit Al-Ansārī, one of the scribes of the revelation: 'Abū Bakr sent for me after the casualties among the warriors [of the battle] of Yamāmah. 'Umar was present with Abū Bakr who said: "'Umar has come to me and said, the people have suffered heavy casualties on the day of [the battle of] Yamāmah, and I am afraid that there will be some casualties among the Qur'ān at other places, whereby a large part of the Qur'ān may be lost, unless you collect it. And I am of the opinion that you should collect the Qur'ān.'" Abū Bakr added: "I said to 'Umar: "How can I do something which Allah's Apostle has not done?" 'Umar said: [to me]: "By Allah, it is [really] a good thing". So 'Umar kept on pressing trying to persuade me to accept his proposal till Allah opened my bosom for it and I had the same opinion as 'Umar's." Abū Bakr said [to me]: "You are a wise young man and we do not suspect you [of telling lies or of forgetfulness]; and you used to write the Divine Revelation for Allah's Apostle. Therefore, look for the Qur'ān and collect it." By Allah, if he [Abū Bakr] had ordered me to shift one of the mountains [from its place], it would not have been harder for me than what he had ordered me concerning the collection of the Qur'ān. I said to both of them: "How dare you do a thing which the Prophet has not done?" Abū Bakr said: "By Allah, it is [really] a good thing." So I kept on arguing with him about it till Allah opened my bosom for that for which He had opened the bosoms of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. So I started locating the Qur'ānic material and collecting it from parchments, scapula bones, leafstalks of date palms and from the memories of men. I found with Khuzaymah two verses of Sūrah Tawbah which I had not found with anybody else [and they were]: 'Verily there has come to you an Apostle [Muhammad] from among yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He [Muhammad] is ardently anxious over you [to be rightly guided]' (9:128). (Bukhārī: Bāb Jam 'u'l-Qur'ān)

This report cannot be accepted on the following grounds:

1. It is against the Qur'ān and some other Ahādīth which state that the Qur'ān was compiled in the time of the Prophet (sws). This narrative clearly says that it was the companions of the Prophet (sws) who collected it after he died. This is evident from the fact that, according to this narrative, the collection took place only after the battle of

Yamāmah. Also, Abū Bakr's remark to 'Umar (rta): 'How can I do something which Allah's Apostle has not done?' and the declaration of Zayd (rta) to both Abū Bakr (rta) and 'Umar (rta): 'How dare you do a thing which the Prophet (sws) has not done?' point to this conclusion.

2. An astonishing thing which strikes any person who reads this report is that the companions of the Prophet (sws) were apparently not fully alive to the importance of the collection of the Qur'ān. If the Qur'ān had not been collected in one place in the time of the Prophet (sws) as alleged, it seems very befitting that the very first task they should have set before themselves after the Prophet's death was to collect and collate their divine book. Instead, they, as this narrative says, only embarked upon this job after the battle of Yamāmah, which was fought almost a year after the Prophet's death. Moreover, it is evident from the narrative that had 'Umar (rta) not insisted on this collection, it might never have taken place. Abū Bakr (rta) and Zayd Ibn Thābit (rta) both were reluctant and 'Umar (rta) had to really assert himself many times before the point could be driven home. All this of course is against common sense and very difficult to believe. Moreover, it questions the integrity of the companions, which is beyond doubt.

3. The report mentions that the real reason which induced the companions to collect the Qur'ān was the death of many reciters of the Qur'ān in the battle of Yamāmah. It is historically known that out of those killed, there were just 40 companions of the Prophet (sws), which of course should be no cause of any alarm. The historian Ibn Athīr³¹ (d: 690 AH) has recorded these names. Among these also, the only famous compiler of the Qur'ān to be killed was Sālim (rta).

4. According to this report, such a monumental task was entrusted just to one companion: Zayd Ibn Thābit (rta). Many other companions senior to him in age and companionship like the wives of the Prophet (sws), 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd (rta), Ubayyi Ibn Ka'ab (rta), Mu'adh Ibn Jabal (rta), most of whom had witnessed the whole of the revelation period, were quite strangely not even consulted. Zayd (rta) was just eleven years old at the time of migration, and it is well known that he did not even belong to the Quraysh in whose tongue the Qur'ān was revealed and written.

5. The last part of the narrative is quite incomprehensible: the closing verses of Sūrah Tawbah were only found with Khuzaymah Ansārī (rta). Notwithstanding the fact that in various other texts of the narrative, the name Abū Khuzaymah (rta) is found, and while some texts mention that only one verse was found with him while others say that two verses were found, this last part is against the Qur'ān and established history even if its following interpretation offered by Ibn Hajar (d:1372 AD), the famous scholar of Hadīth, is accepted:

The correct interpretation of Zayd's remark that he had failed to find the verse with anyone else is that he had failed to find it in writing, not that he had failed to find those who bore it in their memories. (Fathu'l-Bārī, 1st ed., vol. 9, [Lahore: Dāru'l-Nashr Al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1981], p. 12)

The written Qur'ān existed in its complete form in the time of the Prophet (sws), as has been shown in the main text of this article. It could not have been without these verses.

6. If this collection by Abū Bakr (rta) was a personal endeavour, then of course it loses its real importance, and if it was done at the official level, then we are confronted with another nagging question: Why did not the first caliph make arrangements to implement this as the official script? Apparently, he did not even order to make copies of it.

Not even ‘Umar (rta), the second caliph, undertook this task.

7. Another question which arises pertains to the custody of the collected text. If it is accepted that the collection of Abū Bakr (rta) was done at the state level then the question arises: Why was the collected Qur’ān not transferred to ‘Uthmān (rta) after the death of ‘Umar (rta) ? Instead, we find that it was given into the custody of Hafsa (rta), one of the Prophet’s wives. Furthermore, ‘Uthman (rta) not even demanded it from Hafsa (rta) until after the battle against the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

8. Narratives which describe the Uthmānic recension (see below) tell us that this collection done by Zayd Ibn Thābit (rta) was faulty and incomplete since certain verses of Sūrah Ahzāb were not found in it, as was known later. In other words, even if it is accepted that Zayd (rta) was given some assignment of collection, what comes to light is that the written text of Zayd (rta), was quite unbelievably, not even checked for mistakes!

9. If the chain of narrators of this report is considered, it comes to light that it is a weak report. In the science of Hadīth, such a narrative is called Gharīb³². There is only one narrator in each of its first three links. Only Zayd Ibn Thābit (rta) narrates it. From Zayd (rta), only ‘Ubayd Ibn Sabbāq narrates it, and from ‘Ubayd Ibn Sabbāq, only Ibn Shihāb Zuhri narrates it.³³ In other words, for almost three generations this report was only known to very few people. This is quite strange keeping in view the gravity of its contents.

10. No text of this report is without the controversial personality of Ibn Shihāb Zuhri (See Appendix D) in its chain of narrators. This of course makes the very origin of this report as suspect and questionable.

11. Two of the earliest books on Muslim history ‘The Tabaqāt’ of Ibn Sa‘ad (d: 230 AH)³⁴, and Tārīkhul-Umam wa Al-Malūk of Ibn Jarīr Tabarī (d: 310 AH)³⁵ contain no reference to the events reported in this report. Ibn Sa‘ad³⁶ gives an elaborate treatment to the life and times of Abū Bakr (rta). Tabarī mentions the revolt of Musaylamah with considerable detail³⁷. However, nowhere do these two historians mention any collection of the Qur’ān under Abū Bakr (rta). The absence of any reference to the events reported in this narrative in these two earliest books of Islamic history is indeed very strange. The collection of the Qur’an by Abū Bakr (rta) was by no means an insignificant event and deserved mention if it ever took place.

12. The earliest book on Hadīth, the Mu‘attā of Imam Mālik (d: 179 AH)³⁸ also is devoid of any such report. Even the Sahīh of Imam Muslim (d: 261 AH)³⁹, the celebrated scholar of Hadīth and a student of Imam Bukhārī himself does not mention this report.

II

Following is another report recorded in Sahīh Bukhārī about the recension of ‘Uthmān (rta):

Mūsā narrates from Ibrāhīm Ibn Sa‘ad who narrates from Ibn Shihāb Zuhri who narrates from Anas Ibn Mālik: Hudhayfah Ibn Al-Yamān came to ‘Uthmān at the time when the people of Syria and the people of Iraq were waging war to conquer Arminya and Adharbajān. Hudhayfah was afraid of their [the people of Syria and Iraq] differences in the recitation of the Qur’ān; so he said to ‘Uthmān: ‘O chief of the believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book [the Qur’ān], as Jews and the Christians did before’. So ‘Uthmān sent a message to Hafsa saying: “Send us the manuscripts of the Qur’ān so that we may compile the Qur’ānic materials in perfect

copies and return the manuscripts to you”. Hafsa sent it to ‘Uthmān. ‘Uthmān then ordered Zayd Ibn Thābit, ‘Abdullāh Ibn Zubayr, Sa‘īd Ibn Al-‘Ās and ‘Abdu’l Rahmān Ibn Hārith to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies. ‘Uthmān said to the three Quraysh men: ‘In case you disagree with Zayd Ibn Thābit on any point in the Qur’ān, write it in the dialect of the Quraysh as the Qur’ān was revealed in their tongue’. They did so, and when they had written many copies, ‘Uthmān returned the original manuscripts to Hafsa. ‘Uthmān sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur’ānic materials whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt. Zayd Ibn Thābit added: “A verse from Sūrah Ahzāb was missed by me when we made copies of Qur’ān and I used to hear Allah’s Apostle reciting it. So we searched for it and found it with Khuzaymah Ibn Thābit Ansārī. [That verse was]: Among the believers are men who have been true in their covenant with Allah (33:23).”

The following observations and questions merit serious consideration, and unless sound answers are given to them, this report also cannot be accepted:

1. After the death of the Prophet (sws), sense and reason demand that the written and oral transmission of the Qur’ān would have received a great push at the hands of his successors. With more and more people entering in the folds of Islam, there would have been a great demand to read and learn the Qur’ān. The caliphs must have been alive to this demand and would have arranged to make thousands of written copies to be distributed all over their empire. Such would be the scale of this availability of the Qur’ānic text together with its true vocalization through its thousands of readers that any one who would read the consonantal text of the Qur’ān in a different manner would have stood corrected immediately. In fact, there was hardly any chance that such cases would even have arisen in view of the large scale dissemination of the Qur’ān. Ibn Hazam writes:

When the Prophet (sws) died, all of the Arabian peninsula had embraced Islam from the Red Sea in the west passing through the shores of Yemen to the Persian Gulf in the east and from the Persian Gulf passing through Euphrates along the borders of Syria back to the Red Sea. There are so many cities and places in the Arabia that only the Almighty knows their true number. For example, there is Yemen, Bahrain, Amman, Najd, the two peaks of the Tay tribe, the lands of Mudar, Rabi‘ah, Qudā‘ah, Tā‘if, Makkah. In short, all these areas had embraced Islam and there was no city, town or settlement without a mosque. In all these mosques, the Qur’ān was read in the five prayers and the Qur’ān was taught to men, women and children. It was also written. At the death of the Prophet (sws), there was no difference of any sort between the Muslims. All the Muslims were united and were on the same set of beliefs. Then Abū Bakr became the caliph and remained in office for two and a half years. He waged wars against Rome and Persia. He conquered Yamāmah and thereby the number of people who knew the Qur’ān increased. Many people like Ubayyi, ‘Uthmān, ‘Umar, ‘Ali, Zayd, Abū Zayd and Ibn Mas‘ūd besides a host of others had already compiled the Qur’ān. Not a single city was without written copies of the Qur’ān Then Abū Bakr died and ‘Umar became the caliph. He conquered Persia, Syria, Egypt and the Arabian peninsula. In all these Muslim territories, mosques were built and copies of the Qur’ān written. The Qur’ān continued to be read and taught to the younger generation in the schools of religious instruction. This state of affairs continued for ten years and some months. There were no differences between the Muslims and they were united on one faith. There were not less than one hundred thousand copies of the Qur’ān in areas like Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and in other areas between them. Then ‘Uthmān became the caliph and many new territories were conquered and everything received a further impetus. Such was the quantity of the copies of the Qur’ān, that no one could have counted them. This state of unity continued till the death of ‘Uthmān which is 12 years from the time Abū Bakr became the Caliph. (Ibn

Hazam, Al-Fasal fi'l-Milal wa al-Ahwā wa al-Nahal, 1st ed., vol. 1, [Maktabah al-Salām], pp. 66-7)

In the light of this, it is difficult to imagine that any difference such as the one referred to in this report would have arisen and become a cause of such great alarm.

2. Even if it is accepted that some differences had arisen in reading the Qur'ān at one place, the only step needed was to send written copies of the Qur'ān to that place. With the Qur'ān already found in great numbers all over the empire, what was the need to send its copies to other places like Basrah, Makkah Bahrain and Yemen? Can it be believed that officially written copies were only sent in the various territories of the empire after people in one small part had begun to differ? Can it be accepted that 'Uthmān (rta) and his predecessors never thought of this all important task prior to this?

3. It is known that the Qur'ān was revealed and written in the dialect of the Quraysh. In this report, quite strangely, 'Uthmān (rta) is seen instructing Zayd (rta) (who himself did not belong to the Quraysh) and the others to make copies in the dialect of the Quraysh in case of any difference. If the version from which the Qur'ān was to be copied was already written in the dialect of the Quraysh, no difference could have arisen. Even if any difference would have arisen, how could the view of Zayd (rta) be forsaken since it was his script which the first two Caliphs had already accepted. Moreover, what was the need of forming a committee to correct Zayd (rta), since the original was already written by him and he was just required to make its copies?

4. Once again we are confronted with some missing verses in this narrative. This time it is some verses of Sūrah Ahzāb⁴⁰. At this second instance of writing, Zayd (rta) is reported to have remembered them. One can only wonder what more could be attributed to him had he been given a third chance of writing down the Qur'ān.

5. If the chain of narrators of this narrative is considered, it comes to light that this report is also Gharīb. There is only one narrator in each of its first two steps. Only Anas Ibn Mālik (rta) narrates this report. From Anas (rta), only Ibn Shihāb Zuhri narrates it. This means that for almost half a century, this report was confined to very few people.

6. Here again, no text of this report is without the controversial personality of Ibn Shihāb Zuhri (See Appendix D), in its chain of narrators. Like the previous one, the very origin of this report becomes dubious owing to his presence.

7. What further compounds the unreliability of this narrative is the fact that the narration of Ibrahīm Ibn Sa'ad from Ibn Shihāb Zuhri is doubtful since at the time of Zuhri's death he was only sixteen years old and residing in Madīnah – a city far off from Aylah near the borders of Egypt where Zuhri lived⁴¹. Consequently, Ibn Hajr records:

Sālih Jazarah says: His Ahādīth narrated from Zuhri are not [as secure as] those from Ibn Ishāq since he was very young when he heard Ahādīth from Zuhri. (Ibn Hajar, Tahdhību'l-Tahdhīb, 1st ed., vol. 1, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Ma'rifah, 1996], p. 142)

8. Like the previous one, the events reported in this report find no mention in the two earliest works on Muslim history 'The Tabaqāt' of Ibn Sa'ad (d: 230 AH), and Tārīkhul-Umam wa Al-Malūk of Ibn Jarīr Tabarī (d: 310 AH). Consequently, while Ibn Sa'ad records in detail the life and achievements of Zayd Ibn Thābit (rta), nowhere in it does he mention that Zayd (rta) was instrumental in making the copies of the Qur'ān at the behest of Abū Bakr (rta)⁴². Similarly, Tabarī⁴³ mentions the battle at the fronts of Armenia and Azerbaijan with some detail but does

not recount that any difference in reading the Qur'ān had arisen; he also does not give any reference to the 'Uthmānic redaction. The absence of any reference to the events reported in this narrative in these two earliest books of Islamic history is indeed very strange. These were by no means insignificant events and deserved mention if they ever occurred.

9. Again, the Mu'attā of Imam Mālik (d: 179 AH) and the Sahīh of Imam Muslim (d: 261 AH), also are devoid of any such report.

[31.](#) Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī'l-Tārīkh, 1st ed, vol. 2, [Beirut: Dar Beirut, 1965], pp. 366-7. See also (i) Tamannā 'Imādī, Jam'u'l-Qur'ān, [Karachi: Al-Rahmān Publishing Trust, 1994], ps. 128-130 and (ii) Muftī 'Abdu'l Latīf Rahmānī, Tārīkhul-Qur'ān, 1st ed., [Lahore: Progressive Books], p. 129.

[32.](#) See (Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, Al-Bā'is al-Hathīth Sharah Ikhtisāru'l- 'Ulūm al-Hadīth (Ibn Kathīr) 3rd ed., [Cairo: Dāru'l-Turāth, 1979], p. 141.

[33.](#) For more details see Tamannā 'Imādī, Jam'u'l-Qur'ān, [Karachi: Al-Rahmān Publishing Trust, 1994], pp. 120-151

[34.](#) See Al-A'lām, Zarqalī, vol. 3, [Beirut: Dāru'l-'Ilm Al-Mallāyīn, 1992], p. 82

[35.](#) See Al-A'lām, Zarqalī, vol. 3, [Beirut: Dāru'l-'Ilm Al-Mallāyīn, 1992], p. 224

[36.](#) See: Ibn Sa'ad, Tabaqāt, vol. 3, [Beirut: Dār Beirut. 1957], pp. 181-213

[37.](#) See Tabarī, Tārīkhul-Umam wa Al-Malūk, vol. 3, (Dāru'l-Fikr, 1979), pp. 243-54.

[38.](#) Al-A'lām, Zarqalī, vol. 5, [Beirut: Dāru'l-'Ilm Al-Mallāyīn, 1992], p. 257

[39.](#) Al-A'lām, Zarqalī, vol. 7, [Beirut: Dāru'l-'Ilm Al-Mallāyīn, 1992], p. 136

[40.](#) Some authorities say that these verses too were actually found at the time when Zayd had collected the Qur'ān in the reign of Abu Bakr (rta). (See Zarkashī, Burhān, 2nd ed., vol. 1, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Fikr, 1980] p. 234)

[41.](#) See Ibn Hajar, Tahdhību'l-Tahdhīb, 1st ed., vol. 4, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Ma'rifah, 1996], p. 156.

[42.](#) Ibn Sa'ad, Tabaqāt, vol. 2, [Beirut: Dār Beirut. 1957], pp. 358-62.

[43.](#) See Tabarī, Tārīkhul-Umam wa Al-Malūk, vol. 5, (Dāru'l-Fikr, 1979), pp. 45-6.

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Appendix B: The Controversial Personality of Ibn Shihāb Zuhri

Appendixes
Shehzad Saleem

The Controversial Personality of Ibn Shihāb Zuhri⁴⁴

His full name is Abū Bakr Muhammad Ibn Muslim Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn Shihāb Zuhri (d:124 AH). While he has been generally regarded as a reliable personality by the scholars of ‘Ilmu’l-Rijāl, evidence is found to the contrary as well. In fact, this evidence coupled with the fact that he is inevitably found in the chain of narrators of many Ahādīth which disparage the status of the Qur’ān, that of the first two caliphs as well as that of Ā’ishah (rta), the beloved wife of the Prophet (sws)⁴⁵ cast dense clouds of doubt on his personality.

This contrary evidence shows that Zuhri is guilty of the following:

1. Idrāj
2. Tadrīs
3. Irsāl

1. Idrāj: In the text of a Hadīth, this means the insertion of something in it that does not belong to it without giving any indication of this insertion. (Mahmūd Tahhān, Taysīr Mustalīh al-Hadīth, [Karachi: Qadīmī Kutub Khānah], p. 102)

Idrāj is prohibited by all the authorities:

Idrāj deliberately done by a narrator is totally prohibited in all its types. There is a consensus among the scholars of Fiqh, Hadīth and Usūl, besides others on this because it is camouflage and deceit and an attribution of something to someone who never said it. Ibn Sam‘ānī and others besides him say: ‘He who deliberately does Idrāj becomes unreliable, and a person who changes a passage in any way is a liar’. (Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, Al-Bā‘is al-Hathīth Sharah Ikhtisāru’l- ‘Ulūm al-Hadīth (Ibn Kathīr) 3rd ed., [Cairo: Dāru’l-Turāth, 1979], p. 64)

It is known that Zuhri was a Mudrij (person who does Idrāj):

Zuhrī used to explain various Ahādīth a lot and many a time he would not mention the particle [of speech] from which would be known whether the words were from the Prophet (sws) or from Zuhrī. So some of his contemporaries would always ask him to separate his words from those of the Prophet (sws). (Sakhāwī, Fathu'l-Mughīs, vol. 1, [Beirut: Dāru'l Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996], p. 267-8)

Rabī'ah would say to Ibn Shihāb: My situation is totally different from you. Whatever I say, I say it from my own self and you say it on the authority of the Prophet (sws) and so you must be careful, and it is not befitting for a person to waste himself [like this]. (Bukhārī, Tacrīkhu'l-Kabīr, vol. 3, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], pp. 286-7)

Rabī'ah would say to Ibn Shihāb: When you narrate something according to your own opinion, always inform the people that this is your own view. And when you narrate something from the Prophet (sws), always inform them that it is from the Prophet (sws) so that they do not consider it to be your opinion. (Khatīb Baghdādī, Al-Faqīh wa Al-Mutafaqqih, vol. 1, [Lahore: Dāru'l-Ahyā al-Sunnah], p. 148)

Ibn Rajab records the following opinion of Imam Bukhārī:

Zuhrī would narrate Ahādīth and on most occasions would insert sentences from his own self. Some of these would be Mursal and some of them would be his own. (Ibn Rajab, Fathu'l-Bārī, 1st ed., vol. 5, [Jaddah: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1996], p. 286)

2. Tadrīs: In Asnād, this means the narration from a person, whom a narrator has met, of something which is not heard from him giving the impression that it has actually been heard from him. (Ibn Salāh, Muqaddamah, 4th ed., [Multan, Farūqi Kutub Khānah, 157 AH], p. 34)

Imam Shu'bah comments on Tadrīs in the following words:

It is the brother of falsehood. (Khatīb Baghdādī, Al-Kifāyah, 1st ed., [Hyderabad: Dā'iratu'l-Ma'ārif, 1357 AH], p. 355)

It is worse than committing fornication. (Khatīb Baghdādī, Al-Kifāyah, 1st ed., [Hyderabad: Dā'iratu'l-Ma'ārif, 1357 AH], p. 356)

Ibn Mubārak says:

That we plunge down from the sky is dearer to me than we do Tadrīs in a Hadīth. (Khatīb Baghdādī, Al-Kifāyah, 1st ed., [Hyderabad: Dā'iratu'l-Ma'ārif, 1357 AH], p. 356)

Imam Shāf'ī says:

We will not accept the narration of a Muddalis unless he says Haddathanī [It has been narrated to me] or Samī'tu [I have heard]. (Shāf'ī, Al-Risālah, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], p. 380)

Zuhrī's Tadrīs is recorded in the following words:

Imam Shāf'ī, Dāra Qutanī and many others have attributed Tadrīs to Zuhri. (Ibn Hajar, Tābaqātu'l-Mudallisīn, [Cairo: Maktabah Kulliyāt al-Azhar], pps. 32-3)

3. Irsāl: It means that the person before a Tābi'ī at the beginning of the chain is not mentioned. (Mahmūd Tahhān, Taysīr Mustalīh al-Hadīth, [Karachi: Qadīmī Kutub Khānah], p. 70)

On the status of Mursal Ahādīth (Ahādīth afflicted with Irsāl), authorities say:

In reality, Mursal Ahādīth are weak and worthy of being forsaken because they do not fulfil one condition of Maqbūl Ahādīth [Ahādīth which are acceptable], which is Ittisāl [continuity in the chain of narrators], and because the status of the person who is not mentioned is unknown as there is a chance that he may not be a Sahābī [companion]. (Mahmūd Tahhān, Taysīr Mustalīh al-Hadīth, [Karachi: Qadīmī Kutub Khānah], p. 71)

Imam Abū Dā'ūd says:

Out of the twenty two hundred Ahādīth narrated by Zuhri only half are Musnad⁴⁶ [the rest are Mursal]. (Dhahabī, Tadhkiratu'l-Huffāz, vol. 1, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], p. 109)

Ibn Hajar records the following words about Zuhri in this regard:

Yahyā Ibn Sa'īd Qattān is of the opinion that the Mursalāt of Zuhri are baseless. (Ibn Hajar, Tahdhību'l-Tahdhīb, 1st ed., vol. 5, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Ma'rifah, 1996], p. 269)

Imam Dhahabī has reported the following words of Yahyā Ibn Sa'īd Qattān:

The Mursalāt of Zuhri are the worst of all since he is a Hāfiz. Whenever, he wants he can disclose the name of a person, and whenever he wants he can conceal his name. (Dhahabī, Sayar A'lām al-Nubalā, 8th ed., vol. 5, [Beirut: Mu'ssasah al-Risālah, 1992], p. 338)

Imam Shāf'ī says:

The Mursalāt of Zuhri are baseless since he even narrates from [a person as unreliable as] Sulaymān Ibn Arqam. (Dhahabī, Sayar A'lām al-Nubalā, 8th ed., vol. 5, [Beirut: Mu'ssasah al-Risālah, 1992], p. 339)

Besides these three major aspects, it seems that Zuhri is guilty of other blemishes as well:

Sometimes, a group of people would present a Hadīth to him to corroborate something. So, at times, he would narrate from the whole group and sometimes from one person of that group. This would be according to the way he felt during the narration. Sometimes, he would insert the Hadīth narrated by one into that narrated by someone else as he has done so in the Hadīth of Ifk besides others. When he would feel lazy, he would narrate Mursal Ahādīth, and when he would be feeling fresh, he would narrate Muttasil ones. It is because of this that his companions differ a lot about him. (Zarqānī, Sharah Mu'attā, vol. 3, [Beirut, Dāru'l-Fikr], p. 377)

In a letter to Imam Mālik, Imam Layth Ibn Sa‘ad writes:

When we would meet Ibn Shihāb, there would arise a difference of opinion in many issues. When any one of us would ask him in writing about some issue, he, in spite of being so learned, would give three very different answers, and he would not even be aware of what he had already said. It is because of this that I have left him – something which you did not like. (Ibn Qayyim, I‘lāmu‘l Mūwaqqi‘īn, vol. 3, [Beirut: Dāru‘l-Jayl], p. 85)

In the light of this evidence, any narrative none of whose texts is without Zuhri in its chain of narrators becomes suspect.

[44.](#) For more details see Tamannā ‘Imādī. Imam Zuhri and Imam Tabari, Rahman Publishing Trust, Karachi, 1994.

[45.](#) See Khālid Mas‘ūd, Muhammad Ibn Shihāb Zuhri, Tadabbur, No. 21 (May 1987), 7-9).

[46.](#) Ahādīth in which there is no break in the chain of narrators and they are continuous up to the Prophet (sws). (See: Mahmūd Tahhān, Taysir Mustalih al-Hadīth, [Karachi: Qadīmī Kutub Khānah], p. 134)

[47.](#) John Burton, Collection of the Qur‘ān, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

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Appendix C: View of the Orientalists on the History of the Qur'ānic Text

Appendixes
Shehzad Saleem

Arthur Jeffery in his preface to the *Kitābu'l-Masāhif* of Ibn Abī Dāwūd has summarized the views of the German oriental scholar Theodore Noldeke (d:1930) and his successors on the history of the collection of the Qur'ānic text. The profound research initiated by Noldeke on this topic was subsequently completed and supplemented by his successors Scwally, Bergstrasser and Pretzl, and later printed in German in three volumes as 'Geschichte des Qorans'. Except for Burton⁴⁷ and a few others, the 'Geschichte' presents the dominant view of the Orientalists on this subject.

In the opinion of this writer, if the testimony of the Qur'ān on its collection and that of established history on its transmission is not taken into account, it is very difficult to refute the findings of these German Orientalists. As a humble tribute to the tremendous research carried out by them, I, for the benefit of the English reader, have translated from Arabic the portion of the preface written by Arthur Jeffery that summarizes these findings:

(i) The Prophet (sws) did not leave any book to his Ummah when he died: It is said that the Prophet (sws) directed his companions to write every verse revealed to him and he yearly used to present before Gabriel the portion of the Qur'ān written down in that year, and the year he died he twice presented the Qur'ān before Gabriel; in this way, the whole of the Qur'ān was collected in the lifetime of the Prophet (sws) on leaves and sheets; its sūrahs and verses were arranged in the very manner we have them today except for the fact that it was in form of Suhuf (sheets) and not in Mushaf (codex) form. [We] the Orientalists do not accept this view since it is against certain other Ahādīth which say that at the death of the Prophet (sws), the Qur'ān was not collected on anything. This is more in accordance with the apprehension expressed by Abū Bakr and 'Umar when there were a lot of casualties in the battle of Yamāmah (as has been narrated). These two had expressed their grave concern on these casualties and had feared that there could be more casualties on other war fronts and consequently a large part of the Qur'ān might be lost. It is evident from this that the cause of fear was the mass killing of the reciters of the Qur'ān who had learnt the Qur'ān by heart. Had the Qur'ān been collected and written, there would have been no cause of fear expressed by the two. Moreover the scholars of the West do not agree with the fact that the arrangement of the text of the Qur'ān we have today was made by the Prophet (sws).

(ii) Differences in the Codices of Companions: It has been narrated that several companions had collected the Qur'ān in a codex. Among them were 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib, Ubayyi Ibn Ka'ab, Sālim, Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ud, Abū Mūsā Ash'ari, 'Abdullāh Ibn Zubayr, Abū Zayd, Mu'adh Ibn Jabal and others. Some scholars are of the opinion that the word Jam' in such Ahādīth means learning by heart. However, [we Orientalists] do not agree with this view because of the following reasons: 'Alī had loaded his camel with what he had collected and brought it to the other companions; people had named what Abū Mūsā had collected as Lubābu'l-Qulūb (the essence of hearts); 'Uthmān had burnt what Ubayyi had collected; Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ud had refused to present 'Uthmān's governor of Iraq

what he had collected. This clearly entails that whatever they had collected was written in their codices. Each of these codices was specific to its compiler; each compiler had collected in his codex the verses and sūrahs that came to his knowledge. Consequently, in the opinion of the Orientalists, the codex compiled by Zayd Ibn Thābit for Abū Bakr was specifically meant for him and it was not an official codex as some people say. All these codices differed with one another because each consisted of what its compiler had collected in it, which was different from those of the others.

(iii) Gaining of currency of some companions' codices in the Islamic territories: When Islamic territories sprung forth after the conquest of Syria and Iraq, each group of people wanted a copy of the Qur'ān which is the basis of their religion, its directives and the collective affairs. The people of Kūfah agreed upon the codex of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, the people of Basrah upon that of Abū Mūsā Ash'arī, the people of Damascus upon that of Miqdād Ibn Aswad, the people of Syria upon that of Ubayyi Ibn Ka'ab. All these codices differed from one another. When the people of Iraq and Syria united to fight in the lands of Azarbaijan, they had serious difference in reading the Qur'ān to the extent that one started to censure the other about that which was not contained in his own codex claiming that it was not the Qur'ān. From this, sprung forth disputes and controversies. All this was the result of each one adhering to the codex of his own area.

(iv) Unification by 'Uthmān on one Harf: It has been narrated that Hudhayfah Ibn Yamān was among the armies who had conquered Azarbaijan. When he heard the disputes and controversies that had arisen between the people in reading the Qur'ān, he came over to 'Uthmān and said: 'O chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book [the Qur'ān], as Jews and the Christians did before'. So 'Uthmān stood before the people and said: "Anyone who has any part of the Book of Allah should bring it." So people came up with what they had of it on scapula bones, sheets and stalks of date trees and on other things. He then called forth Zayd Ibn Thābit and assembled for him a group from the people of Quraysh and directed them to collect the Qur'ān in one codex. So they collected the Qur'ān from written tablets and from the hearts of people. They would not accept anything unless two persons testified to it. It is also said that 'Uthmān asked Hafsa to send to him the Suhuf compiled by Zayd at the behest of Abū Bakr. These Suhuf became the basis of the new compilation of the codex done by 'Uthmān. After 'Uthmān collected and compiled this codex, he named it the official codex and he sent its copies to the various territories of his empire. He ordered that all other codices and Suhuf be burnt. Some scholars contend that 'Uthmān obtained from Hafsa the official text compiled by Zayd for Abū Bakr and copied this official text version in the dialect of the Quraysh because the Arabs used to recite the Qur'ān in various dialects. Others are of the opinion that 'Uthmān completed what 'Umar had begun. We are doubtful about these views because the Ahādīth which narrate the collection of the Qur'ān lead us to the conclusion that it was the difference in codices of the various territories which led 'Uthmān to direct Zayd to prepare and compile the codex read in Madīnah so that this official codex should become the codex for all the Muslim territories. In other words, this codex was not meant for Madīnah alone like the codex of Ibn Mas'ūd which was meant for Kūfah alone and like that of Abū Mūsā Asha'rī which was meant for Basrah only. It was meant for the whole of the Islamic kingdom.

(v) The codex of 'Uthmān was without diacritical marks or vowel sounds: The readers found differences in some letters in the codices sent to the various territories. In the codex of Kūfah, it was written < >, while in the others it was written <عملته>. Similarly, in the codex of Syria it was written < >, while in the others it was written < >. Likewise, in the codex of Madīnah and Syria the words were < >, while in the others they were < >. All these codices were without diacritical marks and vowel sounds. It was left to choice of a reader to give diacritical marks and vowel sounds on the text according to the meanings of the verses. <نعلمه> is an example of

this. One would read it as <جَعَلْمُهُ>, the other as <جَعَلْمُهُ> and another as <جَعَلْمُهُ> or as <جَعَلْمُهُ> in accordance with his interpretation of the verse. At that time, it was his choice to select the word that fitted according to his understanding of the verse as well as to select the vowel sounds. Moreover, the choice in reading of certain readers also existed which was based on the codices actually prohibited by 'Uthmān. This is evident from the various books of Qirā'aāt. After that, gradually arose the reading that became famous in a particular area of a territory and the people of that area followed it and rejected those of the other ones. The reading of the people of Kūfah, that of the people of Basrah, that of the people of Syria, that of the people of Hams, that of the people of Makkah and that of the people of Madīnah came into existence. These were in accordance with the choice of the famous readers of these areas.

(vi) The dominance of choice of certain readers: It was agreed and accepted after sometime that the authority of certain readers in these territories has prevailed over the others. What these readers had selected in reading, became the reading of the people of their territory. These readers enunciated three principles for the basis of selecting various readings: (a) The reading should be in harmony with the 'Uthmānic codex, (b) It should originate from the companions and (c) It should be grammatically correct.

In 322 AH, Abū Bakr Ibn Mujāhid, the greatest scholar of the Science of Readings (Qirā'āt) of his times, selected between these readings and gave priority to the readings of seven readers. They were Nāfi' from Madīnah, Ibn Kathīr from Makkah, Ibn 'Āmir from Syria, Abū 'Amr from Basrah and 'Āsim, Hamzah and Kisā'i from Kūfah. He based this selection on the famous Hadīth: The Qur'ān has been revealed on seven readings; read any of those which you find easy from among these seven. However, most scholars did not accept this selection done by Ibn Mujāhid. Someone of them approved the reading of Abū Ja'far of Madīnah, some took favour to the reading of Ya'qūb of Basrah and others to that of Khalaf of Kūfah. Today most of the scholars accept the readings of the ten readers and regard the readings of these ten to be Mutawātir.

(vii) Reading of Hafs attains dominance and wide acclaim: The readings of each of these ten readers were transmitted by several narrators. After some time, people selected two narrators from among these for each of these ten. They favoured and chose those readings of Nāfi' which were narrated by Warsh and by Qālūn; of Ibn Kathīr those which were narrated by Qunbul and by Bizzī; of Ibn Amir those which were narrated by Ibn Dhakwān and by Hishām; of Abu 'Amr those which were narrated by Dūrī and by Sūsī; of 'Āsim those which were narrated by Hafs and by Abū Bakr; of Hamzah those which were narrated by Khalaf and by Khallād; of Kisā'i those which were narrated by Dūrī and by Hārith. Similarly, they chose and favoured those readings of Abū Ja'far which were narrated by Ibn Jammāz and by Ibn Wardān; of Ya'qūb those which were narrated by Rawh and by Ru'ays. Then later on only the versions narrated by each of the above two narrators of the ten readers were totally relied upon. These versions persisted in every age with people reading them until three of them received more acclaim than the others; they were: the reading of Abū 'Amr of Basrah as narrated by Dūrī, the reading of Nāfi' of Madīnah as narrated by Warsh and the reading of 'Āsim of Kūfah as narrated by Hafs. The version of Hafs subsequently prevailed over the other two except in the Maghrib where the reading of Warsh prevailed. Today, in most Muslim countries, the reading of 'Āsim through Hafs has survived as the most dominant and widely adopted of all the readings.

This in the opinion of the Orientalists is the history of evolution of the Qirā'āt (Readings) of the Qur'ān. It begins from the various codices individually compiled by the companions until 'Uthmān promulgated an official codex in his times. Then there remained a time of choice in the selection of various readings until the scholars started

relying on one formal reading.

It is thus proved that the results of the research carried out by the Orientalists are more in conformity with the various Ahādīth and the various contradictory accounts reported on this topic. These results are also more in harmony with the circumstances and incidents of that period.

Basing our results on this analysis, six distinct periods of the history of the evolution of the Qirā'āt (Reading) of the Qur'ān can be identified:

1. The period of the early codices.
2. The period of the 'Uthmānic codices sent to various territories.
3. The period of choice in reading.
4. The period of dominance of the seven or ten readings.
5. The period of choice in the readings of the ten.
6. The period of the general acceptance of the reading of Hafs, which is the period when these codices entered the phase of printing.[48](#)

In more recent times, John Gilchrist has written on the history of the Qur'ānic text. His findings are no different from those of the scholars of the German tradition. As against the more technical presentation of Arthur Jeffery, his presentation is perhaps more easier for the common man to grasp. Below, his findings are summarized in his own words:

The Qur'ān was compiled piecemeal, was not compiled in a single book during Muhammad's lifetime, was recited by many companions and was read at the time by Muslims with varying Arabic dialects. The course of the text thereafter down to the present day is largely what one would have expected and is generally consistent with itself, most certainly in its broad outline.

After Muhammad's death passages of the Qur'ān were lost irretrievably when a number of reciters died at the Battle of Yamāmah. This incident together with the Qur'ān's automatic completion as a book, once its mediator had passed away inspired a number of companions to compile their own codices of the text. These were basically consistent with each other in their general content but a large number of variant readings, many seriously affecting the text, existed in all the manuscripts and no two codices were entirely the same. In addition, the text was being recited in varying dialects in the different provinces of the Muslim world.

During the reign of 'Uthmān, a deliberate attempt was made to standardise the Qur'ān and impose a single text upon the whole community. The codex of Zayd was chosen for this purpose because it was close at hand and, having been kept in virtual seclusion for many years, had not attracted publicity as one of the varying texts as those of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd and Ubayyi Ibn Ka'ab had done. The other codices were summarily destroyed and Zayd's

text became the textus receptus for the whole Islamic world as a result.

Numerous records were retained, however, showing that key passages were missing from this text. It also had to be reviewed and amended to meet the caliph's standard for a single approved text. After 'Uthman's death, however, Hajjāj, the governor at Kūfah, made eleven distinct amendments and corrections to the text.

As the early codices were only written in consonantal form, however, the varying dialects survived largely unaffected by 'Uthman's action and it was only three centuries later that a scholar, Ibn Mujāhid, managed to limit these to seven distinctly defined readings in accordance with a tradition which stated that the Qur'ān originally came in seven different readings although the tradition itself made no attempt to define these readings.

Over the succeeding centuries, the Qur'ān continued to be read in seven different forms until five of them largely fell into disuse. Eventually only those of Hafs and Warsh survived and, with the introduction of a printed Qur'ān the text of Hafs began to take almost universal prominence.

The Qur'ān text as it is read and printed throughout the Muslim world today is only Zayd's version of it, duly corrected where necessary, later amended by Hajjāj, and read according to one of seven approved different readings. This is the reality - a far cry from the popular sentiment which argues for a single text right from the time of Muhammad himself. The reality, however, based on all the evidences available, shows that the single text as it stands today was only arrived at through an extended process of amendments, recensions, eliminations and an imposed standardisation of a preferred text at the initiative of a subsequent caliph and not by prophetic direction or divine decree.

The Qur'ān is an authentic text to the extent that it largely retains the material initially delivered by Muhammad. No evidence of any addition to the text exists and, in respect of the vast number of variant readings and missing passages that have been recorded, there does not appear to be anything actually affecting or contradicting the basic content of the book. In this respect, one can freely assume a relative authenticity of the text in the sense that it adequately retains the gist and content of what was originally there. On the contrary, there is no basis in history, facts or the evidences for the development of the text to support the cherished hypothesis that the Qur'ān has been preserved absolutely intact to the last dot and letter.⁴⁹

⁴⁷. John Burton, Collection of the Qur'ān, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

⁴⁸.(Arthur Jeffery, Preface to Ibn Abī Dāwūd's Kitābu'l Masāhif, 1st ed., [Egypt: Al-Matba'ah al-Rahmaniyyah, 1936], pp. 5-9)

⁴⁹. John Gilchrist, Jam'u'l-Qur'ān -- The Codification of the Qur'ān Text, Internet Version: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Jam/chap6.html>

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Appendix D: A Comment on some Dissenting views on the Authenticity of the Qur'ān

Appendixes

Shehzad Saleem

Some people have pointed out the dissenting views of some Muslims on the authenticity and completeness of the Qur'ān. The fact is that not only are these dissenting points of view unacceptable viz a viz the arguments for the contrary view point (as the main text of the article attempts to show), but such people as have these dissenting views are also in a negligible minority both among the Shī'ah and the Sunnī sects of the Muslims. Imam Khū'ī, a prominent Muslim scholar records the opinions of the Shī'ah authorities in the following words:

It is a known fact among the Muslims that the Qur'ān has not been tampered with in any way and that all of the Qur'ān we have with us today is the same that was revealed to the Prophet (sws). This has been specified by many authorities. Among them is the bona fide, Muhammad Ibn Bābwih, the chief of all the Muhaddithīn. He maintains that the view that the Qur'ān has not been tampered with is among the beliefs of the Imāmiyyah. The great Abū Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Hasan Tusi also holds this view. He has explicitly mentioned it in the beginning of his exegesis Al-Tibyān. He has also quoted the exactly similar opinion of his learned teacher and profound scholar Sayyid Murtaḍā. His arguments on it are the best of all. Similarly, the celebrated exegete of the Qur'ān Tabrasī has also expressed this same view in the preface of his exegesis Majma'atu'l-Bayān. Another person who has asserted this view is the leading jurist Shaykh Ja'far in his book Kashfu'l-Ghitā; he has also claimed a consensus on it. Allamāh Shahshahānī in his book Al-'Urwah Al-Wuthqā is an exponent of this view also. He has attributed it to many Mujtahidīn as well. Among them is the famous Muhaddith Muhsin Qāsānī (who has mentioned this view in his two books Al-Wāfī and 'Ilmu'l-Yaqīn) and the learned Muhammad Jawād al-Balāghī who has referred to this view in the preface of his exegesis Ālā'u'l-Rahmān. (Imam Khū'ī, Al-Bayān, 5th ed., [Qum: Al-Matba'ah Al-'Ilmiyyah, 1974], pp. 218-9)

Sufficient sources and examples have already been cited in the main text of this dissertation that any dissension from the view that the Qur'ān the Muslim Ummah has with it today is the very one revealed to the Prophet (sws), is held at best by a negligible minority both among the Shī'as and the Sunnīs. Tabrasī records:

Everyone agrees that the view that any addition has been made in the Qur'ān is baseless. As far as the view that there has been some omission in its text is concerned, one of our [Shī'ah] groups and the Hashawiyyah sect of the Sunnīs say that there have been omissions and alterations in it. However, the correct view of our sect is against this and Sayyid Murtaḍā has endorsed this view. In his answer to the issues of Tabrasiyāt, he has comprehensively dealt with this topic. At various places, he has written that the knowledge of the authenticity of the Qur'ān is exactly the same as that of cities, great events, famous books and the written record of poetry of the Arab poets. This was because there were abundant reasons and motives for the transfer and protection of the Book of Allah. Such was the extent of these that nothing could parallel them, since the Qur'ān is the miracle of Prophethood and the source

of law and other directives of Islam. The scholars of this Ummah undertook every effort to safeguard it so that they even recorded the differences in its reading, in its declensions and in its letters. In view of this extreme caution, how can it be believed that any part of the text was omitted or altered Sayyid Murtadā has also said that the Qur'ān was written and compiled in the time of the Prophet (sws) and we have it in same form today. This is corroborated by the fact that it was read in those times and learnt by heart by many companions and recited out to the Prophet (sws). Many of the companions of the Prophet (sws) like 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd and Ubbayy Ibn Ka'ab recited the whole of the Qur'ān before the Prophet (sws) many a time. All this shows that the Qur'ān was properly compiled in the time of the Prophet (sws); it was not unarranged or scattered about. Sayyid Murtadā is also of the opinion that those among the Imāmiyyah and the Hashawiyyah sects who have differed from this view are of no significance because the ones who have differed are from among the Ahli Hadīth and have based their view on weak Ahādīth considering them to be correct. Consequently, on the basis of such weak Ahādīth, a proven and a certain reality cannot be rejected. (Tabrasī, Majma'atu'l-Bayān, vol.1, [Beirut: Dāru'l-Fikr, 1994], pp. 15-16)

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