

[Home](#) > [Prophethood and the Prophet of Islam](#) > [Part Two Prophet of Islam Special Prophethood](#) > [Revelation and Preservation of Quran](#) > [Compilation of Quran](#) > Third instance: During the Tenure of Uthman

Revelation and Preservation of Quran

Quran is a heavenly book and the word of God Almighty. Lofty matters and facts of Quran have come down in the form of Arabic words and sentences which were sent down to the illuminated heart of the Prophet of Islam through Jibraeel.

Verses of Quran were revealed on the Prophet of Islam in a period of 23 years on different appropriate occasions in journey and at home and in war as well as peace.

Sometimes one verse, sometimes a number of verse and at other times even a whole chapter was revealed at a time.

The Holy Quran has 114 chapters and all of them except Surah Taubah begin with the formula: In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Every chapter is composed of a number of verses. The big chapters are called as the long chapters and the small chapters are called as the short chapters.

A number of chapters were revealed in Mecca or its surroundings and they are known as the Meccan chapters and others were revealed in Medina and its surroundings and they are Medinan chapters.

The Holy Prophet (S) paid special attention in order to preserve the collection of Quran and to prevent it from interpolation and alteration, and that is why he performed the following three actions:

1. Whenever a verse was revealed on the illuminated heart of the Prophet, he recited it immediately and stored it in his memory, never forgetting it, because his infallibility prevented him from forgetting it or making a mistake in it.

Quran says:

سُنُّقُرْبُكَ فَلاَ تُنسى

“We will make you recite so you shall not forget...” (87:6)

The Holy Prophet (S) paid attention to recitation of Quran and its repetition and he recited it on every appropriate occasion. He quoted the relevant verses in sermons, explanation of Islamic laws and moral topics. He recited parts of Quran in obligatory and recommended ritual prayers. Every day he recited a number of verses and especially during the days of Ramadan. Although the Holy Prophet (S) had never attended a school he knew the whole Quran by heart and he recited it in the sequence of its revelation. He was infallible and immune from mistakes in receiving it from Jibraeel, its preservation and its conveyance.

2. The Holy Prophet (S) recited to the companions every chapter or verse that was revealed on him and also encouraged them to learn them by heart, and Muslims also made efforts to listen to the revealed verses and to commit them to memory. The Holy Prophet (S) also in this regard tried that the verses that people learnt should be correct and without any error. Memorizers of Quran also recited the verses of Quran in presence of the Holy Prophet (S) in order to make sure of their accuracy.

Through this method, a large number of companions learnt the correct recitation of Quran and among them seven persons became famed in this regard.

Suyuti writes: Among those who recited the Quran in the presence of the Holy Prophet (S), seven became more famed; they were: Uthman, Ali, Ubayy, Zaid ibn Thabit, Ibn Masud, Abul Darda and Abu Musa Ashari. [1](#)

Since the Messenger of Allah (S) laid so much emphasis on memorizing the Quran, a large number of companions according to their capacities, memorized at least a part of it. Among them some of them succeeded in learning it by heart; and they were named as ‘reciters’ (Qurra) or ‘memorizers of Quran’ (Hafiz Quran). Their exact number is not known, but they were considerable in number.

Suyuti has narrated from Qurtubi that he said: Seventy reciters of Quran (Qurra) were killed in the Battle of Yamama. During the time of the Holy Prophet (S) the same number were killed at the well of Maoona. [2](#)

From this statement it can be concluded that the memorizers of Quran were in such large numbers that 140 persons were killed only in these two battles. Although it is not known that those who were killed knew the whole Quran by heart or only a part of it.

Some writers believe that those who knew the whole Quran by heart were less than this number.

Shaykh Abdul Hayy Qattani writes:

During the time of the Holy Prophet (S) ten persons knew the whole Quran by heart: Ali, Uthman, Ubayy ibn Kaab, Maaz ibn Jabal. Abul Darda, Zaid ibn Thabit, Abu Zaid Ansari, Tamim Dari, Ubadah ibn Thabit and Abu Ayyub. [3](#)

3. Transcription and compilation. The Messenger of Allah (S) chose some persons to transcribe the Quran. When a verse or some verses were revealed, he summoned one of them and dictated the same and they put it in writing. After that he asked the scribe to read what he has written. He listened carefully and if there was even the slightest mistake, he corrected it. Sometimes the Holy Prophet (S) used to specify the place where the scribe was supposed to record the verse and for example say: Write down this verse in such and such chapter after such and such verse.[4](#)

The Messenger of Allah (S) had a large number of scribes and they are said to be up to 43 persons.[5](#) But all of them were not scribes of revelation; on the contrary some were scribes who wrote the letters of His Eminence.

Shaykh Abdul Hayy writes: Uthman ibn Affan and Ali were the scribes of revelation, when these two persons were not present, Ubayy ibn Kaab and Zaid ibn Thabit were entrusted with the duty. If none of them were present, any other scribe that was present there was given the job. They were as follows: Muawiyah, Jabir ibn Saeed, Aban ibn Saeed, Alaa Hadhrami, Hanzala ibn Rabi.[6](#)

These were of those who wrote a special copy of Quran for the Messenger of Allah (S). Although there were others also who recorded the verses in their private copies, so much so that some scribes of revelation in addition to the copy of the Holy Prophet (S) used to make a copy for themselves.

Writers began every chapter with the formula: In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, which was revealed at the beginning of every chapter. They continued to add verses to it till a new 'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful' was revealed, which was a sign that it was a new chapter. After that they transcribed new verses, except in special cases when the Messenger of Allah (S) ordered that such and such verse should be placed in some other chapter in a particular place.

Yaqubi writes:

Ibn Abbas says: When we saw 'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful' we understood that the previous chapter was over and a new chapter was beginning.[7](#)

Paper of that Time

There is no doubt that the scribes of revelation inscribed the verses of Quran on things, therefore it is remarkable that we should know what type of paper existed at that time. It is learnt from Quran that during the time of the Prophet of Islam, a thing existed, which was named as Qirtas.

The Holy Quran says:

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالُوا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّا هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

“And if We had sent to you a writing on a paper, then they had touched it with their hands, certainly those who disbelieve would have said: This is nothing but clear enchantment.” (6:7)

We learn from history that paper was already in existence during the time of the Prophet. In China it was manufactured from grass. In India, they wrote on pieces of white silk. In Iran they wrote on thin tanned leather, which was called Adeem. White and thin slabs of stone, copper sheets, iron and zinc, and barks of date trees, shoulder bone of the camel and goat; pieces of wood were all used as writing surfaces.[8](#)

Scribes of revelation wrote down the verses of Quran on the above mentioned objects and handed them over to the Holy Prophet (S). His Eminence stored them in a special place in his house so that at the time of his passing away, a complete copy of Quran would be available with him.

Probably at the time of his passing away, the Prophet of Islam entrusted this same copy to Imam Ali (a.s.), who was himself a scribe of revelation.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) says:

The Messenger of Allah (S) said to Imam Ali (a.s.): O Ali, Quran is placed behind my bed and it is written on a scroll, silk and papers. So take it and do not lose it like the Jews who allowed the Taurat to be lost.[9](#)

Compilation of Quran

As mentioned previously, verses of Quran were revealed disparately on the Messenger of Allah (S) during a period of 23 years and he paid special attention to have them compiled and recorded. It was compiled a number of times till it came into the hands of Muslims in the present form:

First instance: During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet

The first step that the Prophet of Islam took was that he ordered the transcription of the revealed verses on sheets. He himself supervised the transcription and specified the proper place where a particular verse was supposed to be written. He separated the chapters and gave a title to each of them. He asked the scribes to read what they had written so that it may be free of errors. Then he took the sheets and stored them in a safe place. In this way, all the verses and chapters of Quran were gathered with His Eminence, but it is not known in what sequence were they placed and whether they were in some special sequence as followed in the recording of chapters?

It can be concluded from some statements that the method of compilation and arrangement was finalized during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (S) and under his supervision.

Zaid ibn Thabit says:

We were employed with the Messenger of Allah (S) to compile Quran from pages.[10](#)

It is not known correctly that how this new compilation was and how it was completed.

Collection and compilation of Quran at that time was not restricted to the copies of the Holy Prophet (S); on the contrary a number of scribes of revelation also wrote down the verses for themselves and in this way other copies of Quran also came into being, which is mentioned in books of traditions, exegesis and history. Like the copy of Ali (a.s.), copy of Ibn Masud, copy of Ubayy Ibn Kaab and the copy of Zaid.

Ibn Nadeem has introduced them as follows: Those who compiled the Quran during the lifetime of the Prophet are as follows: Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), Saad ibn Ubaid, Abul Darda, Uwaim ibn Zaid, Maaz ibn Jabal, Abu Zaid, Thabit ibn Zaid, Ubayy ibn Kaab, Ubaid ibn Muawiyah and Thabit ibn Zuhayr. [11](#)

Each of them had a copy of Quran, which contained all the chapters and verses. But they had two defects: One was that they were not arranged in the shape of a book and secondly there was difference between them with regard to sequence of chapters. [12](#)

The Messenger of Allah (S) collected the verses and chapters of Quran in another way also: That is its preservation through the honest memorization of Quran, which took place as per the advice of the Prophet. A large number of people became engrossed in memorizing the Quran and some of them succeeded in learning the whole Quran by heart and they came to be called as those who knew the whole Quran by heart (Hafizaan Quran).

They commanded great respect among companions and are considered to be protectors of Quran. Quran was transferred to others through memory. Muslims also referred to them when need arose. So much so that even the compilers of Quran during the time of Abu Bakr and Uthman also relied on them.

During the time of the Holy Prophet (S), all the verses of Quran were gathered and compiled in this way and remained thus for the Muslims.

Second instance: During Abu Bakr's tenure

Although during the time of the Messenger of Allah (S) and under his direct supervision, the compilation of all the verses and chapters of Quran was completed, in the same way a number of companions had also memorized it; but for more satisfaction another action was necessary; because firstly: Verses and chapters had not been compiled in one place in the form of a book. Instead it was on various scattered sheets and hence prone to alteration.

Secondly: Memorizers of Quran who were the protectors of this heavenly scripture who were referred to in times of need, were prone to death or martyrdom. It was feared that with their death, some verses would be lost. As happened during the Battle of Yamama that a number of memorizers of Quran were killed, till Abu Bakr realized this danger and issued the command that the whole of the Quran should be compiled into a book.

With regard to this, Suyuti writes: Zaid ibn Thabit said: Abu Bakr summoned me after the Battle of Yamama while Umar ibn Khattab was also present there. He said to me: Umar came to me and said: In the Battle of Yamama, a large number of reciters and memorizers of Quran are killed; I fear that in other battles also memorizers of Quran would be killed in this way and hence the Quran will be lost. In my view you should issue orders for the compilation of Quran.

Zaid says: I asked Umar: How can I do something that the Holy Prophet (S) did not do? Umar replied: By God, this is a good and a necessary job, and emphasized so much on it that I was also convinced. Zaid says: Abu Bakr said to me: You are an intelligent and trustworthy young man and you were a scribe of revelation; gather the Quran accurately and diligently. I gathered the Quran from the barks of date palms, bones of quadrupeds and white slabs of stone and from the memories of those who had learnt it by heart. [13](#)

Zaid ibn Thabit, as per the orders of Abu Bakr, accepted this important responsibility and became engrossed in it. He sought the help of companions of the Holy Prophet (S) also and said: Anyone who is in possession of a copy of Quran, or has memorized a chapter or some verses, should present it to me so that I may record it. Companions accepted his call and agreed to co-operate.

Zaid fixed the testimony of two just persons as the criteria for acceptance of the verses. If two just men testified that they heard them from the Holy Prophet (S) or witnessed that it was written in the presence of the Holy Prophet (S), it was accorded acceptance and recorded.

Suyuti writes:

It is narrated from Laith ibn Saad that he said: Abu Bakr was the first to have the Quran compiled and he gave this responsibility to Zaid ibn Thabit. People presented the verses of Quran to Zaid but he didn't accept anything unless supported by the testimony of two just males. [14](#)

In the same way, he writes:

Umar said: All those who had taken something of Quran from the Holy Prophet (S) presented them so that it may be recorded. Companions had written the verses on paper, tablets, barks of date trees, but nothing was accepted except through the testimony of two just men. [15](#)

Although it should be mentioned that Zaid ibn Thabit was capable of this appointment from every aspect. Because firstly: he had faith, piety and was well known for trustworthiness and sagacity. Secondly: He was himself a memorizer of the Holy Quran and he had recited it before the Holy Prophet (S) twice and was certified as correct. Thirdly, he was a usual scribe of revelation. Fourthly: He was in possession of a copy of Quran which was certified by the Prophet.

Zaid ibn Thabit, who had such an excellence and being supported by all the other memorizers, after a diligent exercise, he compiled the Quran in a single copy and presented it to Abu Bakr. After Abu Bakr,

this copy came into the charge of Umar and after him it was handed over to his daughter, Hafsa.

Compilation of Quran by Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.)

It can be concluded from some traditions and statements of some historians that Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) was the first of those who after the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (S) became engrossed in compiling the Quran as per the orders of the Holy Prophet (S).

Abu Bakr Hadhrami has narrated from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) that the Messenger of Allah (S) said to Imam Ali (a.s.):

Quran is placed behind my bed and it is written on scroll, paper and silk; take it and compile it and do not allow it to be lost like the Jews allowed Taurat to be lost. Thus Imam Ali (a.s.) went out and gathered them in a yellow piece of cloth and placed a seal upon it in his house and remarked: I will not put the cloak on my shoulder (to leave the house) till I don't compile the Quran. If someone came to his house, he appeared without his cloak. [16](#)

Abu Rafe writes that the Holy Prophet (S), in his last moments said to Imam Ali (a.s.): O Ali, take this Book of Allah. Imam Ali (a.s.) gathered it in a piece of cloth and took it to his house. When the Holy Prophet (S) passed away, Imam Ali (a.s.) began to compile the Quran and arranged it in sequence of its revelation and he was absolutely capable of this. [17](#)

Abd Khair has narrated from Imam Ali (a.s.) that he said:

When the Messenger of Allah (S) passed away, I took an oath that I would not put the cloak on my shoulder before compiling the Quran; thus I did not put the cloak on my shoulder except after I had compiled the Quran. [18](#)

Ibn Sirrin has narrated from Imam Ali (a.s.) that he said:

When the Messenger of Allah (S) passed away, I made an oath to Allah, that I would not put the cloak on my shoulder except for the Friday prayer, till I do not compile the Quran. [19](#)

It is mentioned in Tarikh Yaqubi:

That Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) compiled the Quran after the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (S) and loaded it on a camel and came and said: This is the Quran and I have compiled it. [20](#)

All this shows that at the end of his lifetime, the Holy Prophet (S) handed over a valuable copy of Quran to Imam Ali (a.s.) and said: Compile the Quran in one place. Imam Ali (a.s.), after the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (S) and after completing his funeral rituals, started compile the Quran and finally presented it to the caliph regime, but it was not accepted.

It is not absolutely clear what difference the Quran of Imam Ali (a.s.) had with the present Quran, but it

can be briefly said that its difference is not with regard to number of verses or chapters or change in some chapters or verses. Because it is proved beyond any doubt that no kind of alteration and change has taken place in Quran. Rather the present Quran is same as that which was revealed on the Holy Prophet (S).

That is why if it had any difference, it would have been with regard to the following:

1. Verses and chapters in the Quran of Imam Ali (a.s.) were compiled in the sequence of their revelation.
2. In verses which were abrogated, the abrogated verse was placed before the abrogating one.
3. Verses were recorded according to recitation of Messenger of Allah (S).
4. Most probably the commentary and interpretation that the Holy Prophet (S) had given to the clear and ambiguous verses and the context of their revelation were noted in the margins of that Quran or on other pages.

At the conclusion, we consider it necessary to reiterate the point that according to Shia faith, the Quran present among the Muslims today is the same as revealed to the Holy Prophet (S) and is protected from every kind of interpolation and alteration. Therefore, as per the commands of the Holy Imams (a.s.), they act on this same Quran.

Third instance: During the Tenure of Uthman

Its cause is explained as follows: After the battles of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Huzaiyah Ibn Yaman came to Uthman and informed him about the severe differences in recitation of Quran and said: O Chief of believers, before Muslims also become involved in differences that Jews and Christians have in their scriptures, do something and prevent differences from appearing in Quran.[21](#)

Although during the time of Abu Bakr a complete copy of the Quran had been prepared and compiled, he handed it over to Umar and later it came into the custody of his daughter, Hafsa. But this Quran was not given to the public. Instead, people continued referring to the copies that scribes of revelation had compiled during the time of the Holy Prophet (S) and these copies had become popular in Islamic areas.

Regrettably, the versions of Quran which had gained popularity were not same. They had differences with regard to two aspects: one was with regard to the sequence of verses and chapters and secondly with regard to mode of script. In this manner, different versions of Quran appeared and became popular in Islamic areas. Every group defended its own version and considered it superior to others.

When Huzaiyah saw these differences among Muslims, he was highly concerned and he perceived danger for the future of Quran and Muslims and after his return, mentioned it to Uthman and asked him to find a solution. Uthman also became extremely worried and decided to remove these differences and unite all the Muslims on a single version of Quran.

With this aim, he invited Zaid ibn Thabit and consulted him; because he was an expert of Quran and had compiled it during the time of Abu Bakr. Therefore he asked him to exercise diligence and compile a copy of Quran. He handed over the Quran of Abu Bakr to Huzaifah. He also ordered Abdullah ibn Zubair, Saeed ibn Aas, Abdur Rahman ibn Harith to cooperate with Huzaifah in this matter. After that, he said: Study the Quran closely and try to pronounce the letters and words correctly. So that when you notice a difference, you should give preference to the pronunciation of Quraish as Quran was revealed in the language of Quraish.[22](#)

This committee was formed in 25 A.H. at the orders of Uthman. They took the Quran of Abu Bakr as criterion and compared the other versions with it. Saeed ibn Aas dictated it, as his pronunciation resembled that of the Messenger of Allah (S). Zaid wrote down the words according to the pronunciation of Saeed.

After a period of time, they realized that they needed the help of others as well so they invited eight other companions and together they became twelve persons.[23](#)

Ubayy ibn Kaab was one of the invitees and sometimes he dictated the verses for others. His Quran was also relied upon when it was in conformity. In doubtful instances, other companions were also referred to and their view was accepted only if two just males testified to its correctness.

In some instances, they also relied on the views of Imam Ali (a.s.).[24](#) Uthman supervised this process personally.

In this way a job of deep research was carried out as a result of which a Quran was compiled in a correct version. After that it was read out a number of times and compared with other copies and in the end a correct and accurate copy was finalized. It was then taken to be a standard to check and correct other copies.

After that Uthman ordered that it should be multiplied and a copy be sent to each Islamic metro. Thus they dispatched a copy of this Quran to all big cities and confiscated the ones extant over there and destroyed them.

In this way was realized the divine promise when God said:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.” (15:9)

And also:

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

“Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One.” (41:42)

And a collection of chapters and verses of Quran, without any alteration or additions or deletions, remained forever at the disposal of Muslims.

- [1.](#) Al-Itqan fee Uloomul Quran, Vol. 1, Pg. 96.
- [2.](#) Al-Itqan fee Uloomul Quran, Vol. 1, Pg. 94.
- [3.](#) Al-Tarateeb al-Idariya, Vol. 1, Pg. 46.
- [4.](#) Tarikh Yaqubi, Vol. 2, Pg. 43.
- [5.](#) Al-Tarateeb al-Idariya, Vol. 1, Pg. 115–116.
- [6.](#) Al-Tarateeb al-Idariya, Vol. 1, Pg. 114.
- [7.](#) Tarikh Yaqubi, Vol. 2, Pg. 34.
- [8.](#) Al-Tarateeb al-Idariya, Vol. 1, Pg. 122; Suyuti, Al-Itqan, Vol. 1, Pg. 78.
- [9.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 92, Pg. 48.
- [10.](#) Suyuti, Al-Itqan, Vol. 1, Pg. 76.
- [11.](#) Fehrist, Pg. 47.
- [12.](#) Fehrist, Pg. 43–48.
- [13.](#) Suyuti, Al-Itqan fee Uloomul Quran, Vol. 1, Pg. 76.
- [14.](#) Suyuti, Al-Itqan fee Uloomul Quran, Vol. 1, Pg. 77.
- [15.](#) Suyuti, Al-Itqan fee Uloomul Quran, Vol. 1, Pg. 77.
- [16.](#) Biharul Anwar Vol. 2, Pg. 48.
- [17.](#) Manaqib Ibne Shahr Ashob, Vol. 2, Pg. 41.
- [18.](#) Manaqib Ibne Shahr Ashob, Vol. 2, Pg. 41.
- [19.](#) Suyuti, Al-Itqan, Vol. 1, Pg. 77.
- [20.](#) Tarikh Yaqubi, Vol. 2, Pg. 135.
- [21.](#) Jamiul Usul, Vol. 2, Pg. 503.
- [22.](#) Jamiul Usul, Vol. 2, Pg. 504.
- [23.](#) Suyuti, Al-Itqan, Vol. 1, Pg. 79.
- [24.](#) Suyuti, Al-Itqan, Vol. 1, Pg. 79.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/prophethood-and-prophet-islam-ibrahim-amini/revelation-and-preservation-quran#comment-0>