

Orientalists on the Early History of the Compilation of the Quran:

A Study of "The Origins of the Koran" by Ibn Warrāq

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Abstract

History of the compilation of the Quran has frequently been discussed by the orientalist. *Ibn warrāq* in "The Origins of the Quran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book" has compiled the works of different orientalist from the referred perspective. This paper studies the arguments developed by the orientalist in the mentioned book on the early history of compilation of the Quran. It finds that these works, negating the thoroughness concerning compilation of the Quran, put a question mark on its authenticity. This study rejects the orientalist's assertions and supports the Muslim claim of accuracy observed during the compilation of the Quran with historical evidences and logical arguments.

Keywords: *Ibn Warrāq*, Collection of Quran, Textual Criticism.

Collection and compilation of the Quran has been a very important subject for almost all the renowned orientalist. Knowing the fact that establishment of the theory of undeniable authenticity of the Quran depends upon its recording and collection; orientalist strived to investigate critically the early history of the compilation and collection of the Quran. Arthur Jeffery remarks: "the Western scholars do not consent that the arrangement of the text of the Quran which is in our hands now is

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the work of the Prophet".² It is in this spirit that orientalist allege that Quran was not indeed recorded during the Prophet's lifetime.

Ibn Warrāq has reiterated their criticism and allegations on the collection of the Quran. In his book, *The origins of the Koran* he has included his introduction as a prelude, therein; he discusses the collection of the Quran. He is of the opinion that through a critical investigation of the Quran it is hoped to find out answers of the following questions:

1. How did the Koran come to us?—That is the compilation and the transmission of the Koran.
2. When was it written, and who wrote it?
3. What are the sources of the Koran? Where were the stories, legends, and principles that abound in the Koran acquired?
4. What is the Koran? Since there never was a *textus receptus ne varietur* of the Koran, we need to decide its authenticity.³

After describing the project of collection of the Quran under the custody of Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with them) he finds no relief to his agony against the integrity of the text of the Holy Book:

There are no compelling reasons for accepting the "Uthmānic story and not the *Abū Bakr* one; after all they are all gleaned from the same sources, which are all

² Arthur Jeffery (ed), Introduction, *Kitāb al-Masāhif* (Cairo: Maktabat al Khānji, 1936), 5.

³ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 10.

exceedingly late, tendentious in the extreme, and all later fabrications, as we shall see later.⁴

He continues his hypothesis that the verses were preserved by only depending on memory of the Arabs with all its limits and drawbacks. Very ironically and resentfully he puts a question on the memory of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding remembering the revelation of long *Sūrās*:

But I have even more fundamental problems in accepting any of these traditional accounts at their face value. When listening to these accounts, some very common- sensual objections arise which no one seems to have dared to ask. First, all these stories place an enormous burden on the memories of the early Muslims. Indeed, scholars are compelled to exaggerate the putatively prodigious memories of the Arabs. Muhammad could not read or write according to some traditions, and therefore everything depends on him having perfectly memorized what God revealed to him through His angels. Some of the stories in the Koran are enormously long; for instance, the story of Joseph takes up a whole chapter of 111 verses. Are we really to believe that Muhammad remembered it exactly as it was revealed?⁵

According particular objectives he rejects every tradition or evidence with regard to the recording or written preservation of the Quran:

⁴ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 13.

⁵ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 13.

Similarly the Companions of the Prophet are said to have memorized many of his utterances. Could their memories never have failed? oral traditions have a tendency to change over time, and they cannot be relied upon to construct a reliable, scientific history. Second, we seem to assume that the Companions of the *Prophet heard and understood* him perfectly.⁶

The major theme runs through Ibn Warrāq's voluminous works on the Quran, "*The origins of the Koran*" and "*What the Koran Really Says*" is to put a question mark on the authenticity of the Quran. Majority of the orientalists, since a long time, have never been intended to believe that the Quran is an unaltered word of Allah, as Muslims believe. They find Bible with a history of corruption, tempering and alteration in consequence of implying the principles of textual criticism. Being religiously biased and prejudiced or with objectives of political empowerment and for acquisitive interests not for academic research, they apply the principles of higher criticism to Islam's sacred book but originated zilch sensible prove to realize their contentment. So they have endeavored at their level best and even spent their lives to rummage around microscopically for each and every, weak and slight clue to negate the fair collection and transmission of the Quran in the early history of Islam. But after a long run of centuries they could not make heads or tails of it. In this study we shall discuss about allegations of the orientalists on the subject and analyze them in the light of evidences.

⁶ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 13.

Criticism of some prominent orientalists on the recording and collection of the Quran during the Prophet's lifetime inflated by Ibn Warrāq is as under:

Theodor Noldeke (d. 1930)

How the various pieces of the Koran took literary form is uncertain. Muhammad himself, so far as we can discover, never wrote down anything. The question whether he could read and write has been much debated among Muslims, unfortunately more with dogmatic arguments and spurious traditions than authentic proofs. At present one is inclined to say that he was not altogether ignorant of these arts, but that from want of practice he found it convenient to employ someone else whenever he had anything to write.⁷

He goes on to forward his hypothesis, that even long portion of the Koran existed in written form from an early date may be pretty safely inferred from various indications, especially from the fact that in Mecca the Prophet had caused in serious to made, and pieces to be erased, in his previous revelations.

For, we cannot suppose that he knew the longer Suras by heart so perfectly that he was able after a time to lay his finger upon any particular passage. In some instance he relied too much on his memory. For example he seems to have occasionally dictated the same Surah to different persons in slightly different terms.⁸

Muhammad himself had never thought of an authentic collection of his revelations; he was usually concerned only with the object of the moment,

⁷ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 39.

⁸ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 40.

and the idea that the revelations would be destroyed unless he made provision for their safe preservation, did not enter his mind.⁹

Leone Caetani (d. 1935)

The Koran was not collected during the Prophet's lifetime; this is clearly stated by good authorities. Those who are enumerated as collectors can certainly have collected only a part, for otherwise there is no explanation of the great pains to which the three caliphs, *Abū Bakr*, *'Umar*, *'Uthmān*, put themselves after Muhammad's death to produce the single official text of the Prophet's revelation.¹⁰

Alphonse Mingana (d. 1937)

Ibn Warrāq has included Mingana's two articles "*Three Ancient Korans*" and "*Transmission of the Koran*" in his book "*The origins of the Koran*". These articles demonstrate Mingana's objective study of the Quran and brags to face it with a mental composure.¹¹ He wants to impose this hypothesis upon the modern Muslims to create the spirit of Higher Criticism among them to give up the immature senility in which they have lived and still live and the low traditionalism of doctrine which famishes all the beauty of their writings.¹² Mingana assumes the various aspects of the Quran for criticism based on objective study and one way swapping as he points out: ...we would wish to direct the attention of every reader of the Koran to the following points:

1. The sources of the Koran.

⁹ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 40.

¹⁰ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 68.

¹¹ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 77.

¹² Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 77.

2. If we strip from its text the historical events and the circumstances in which it was written, it becomes an inexplicable composition.
3. How were the verses of the Koran preserved from 612 to 632?
4. Who is the compiler of the standard text that we have today, and is this compilation authentic?¹³

As it is evident from the above, he selects different subjects for internal and external criticism of the Quran, but he lays much emphasis on criticism of the collection and compilation of the Quran to investigate the integrity and authenticity of the text. In this regards he advances his research common to all orientalist i.e. rejecting the written preservation of the Quran, highlighting the role of *Zayd Ibn Thābit* (may Allah be pleased with him) as real compiler, oral transmission of the Quran, memory of the Arabs with human limitations, progressive evaluation and many other allegations.

Alphonse Mingana states that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had no idea of writing down the verses in a complete code or in a book shape:

The most important question in the study of the Koran is its unchallengeable authenticity. How could Muhammad in all the wars by which his life was so unfortunately agitated, in all the displacements that he must have undergone, keep all the verses which had been previously revealed to him in his memory, after an interval of several years? A plausible and final

¹³ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 77.

answer will probably never be given to this question, and the only tenable hypothesis is that which discards the difficulty by the assumption of the prodigious memory of his followers, who are believed to have learnt the strophes by heart and that in period lasting from 612 till 632. This hypotheses which seems to be that of *dernier resort* can be supported by the fact that the Prophet who was more probably an unlettered man had never thought of writing a book, or of gathering together, in complete code, the scattered verses which he had recited to his friends in some circumstances of his life; so much so, that after his death, the emissaries of *Abū Bakr*, his successor in the caliphate, could scarcely put together some separate bits of verses, despite the good memory, and the extreme care of *Zayd bin Thābit* the real compiler of the Koran of today.¹⁴

Here Mingana disagrees with all the Islamic traditions and proofs regarding compilation and collecting of the Quran under the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the other hand, it is evident from the Islamic sources that the Quran has been written down by the Companions under the supervision of the Prophet himself.

¹⁴ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 8.

Arthur Jeffery (d. 1959)

Arthur Jeffery rejects the collection of the Quran during the Prophet's life time in introduction of his famous work *Materials for the History of the Koran*¹⁵:

Nothing is more certain than that when the Prophet died there was no collected, arranged, collated body of revelation.....the earliest strata of tradition available to us make it quite certain that there was no Koran left ready as a heritage for the community. The prophet had proclaimed his message orally, and, except in the latter period of his ministry, whether they were recorded or not was often matter of chance.¹⁶

David Margoliouth (d.1940)

Margoliouth in his article *Textual Variants of the Koran*¹⁷ writes:

The fact that the revelations might be abrogated is likely to have seriously affected the importance attached of the Koran in the Prophet's time. When with the Prophet's death revelation ceased, such texts as had been preserved acquired vast importance; they were all that could be known of the will of God. Since, if the tradition is to be revealed, there was no official copy in existence, those who claimed the monopoly of portions might aspire to be dictators of the community.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 115-133.

¹⁶ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 116-117.

¹⁷ Originally published in *The Moslem World*, vol.15 (1925), 334-44.

¹⁸ Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran*, 155.

In view of orientalist's above statements, it is evident that they unanimously reject the recording, arrangement and collection in black and white by the Prophet (peace be upon him). In the following pages we shall discuss the collection of the Quran during the Prophet's lifetime and also weigh the evidence of allegations on the subject on purely research grounds in the light of authentic resources.

Analysis of Criticism on the collection of the Quran under the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

The Quran had been collected in following two ways during the Prophet's life time:

- i. **Oral Collection.** Oral collection was based on memorization (حفظ). The Prophet (peace be upon him) was himself the very first memorizer (حافظ) of the Quran.
- ii. **Written Collection.** The verses had also been preserved and collected and were in written form.

Oral Collection

In the early days of Islam, much importance was given to memory for the preservation of the Quran. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replicated the words of verses at the time of their revelation to memorize them in the early days of his prophet hood in the beginning of revelation. The following verses concern the Prophet's eagerness to memorize the *Quran* whilst it was still being revealed:

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَتَعَجَّلَ بِهِ - إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَإِذَا
قُرْآنَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ - ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ¹⁹

¹⁹ 75:16-19.

Move not thy tongue concerning the (Quran) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear).

In his haste to commit verses to memory before they slipped away, he would move his tongue in anticipation of the coming words. These verses assured the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he need not repeat the words hurriedly right at the moment of revelation itself because Allah Himself would confer upon him a memory that he would not forget a revelation after having heard it once.

Memorization of the Quran by the Prophet (peace be upon him)

The verses were committed to the Prophet's memory as soon as they were revealed. Thus the Prophet's heart itself was the safest repository of the Quran wherein there was not the slightest chance of any mistake or alteration. So, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was the first memorizer of the Quran. An authentic report reveals that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to repeat the Quran with *Jibr'īl* in the month of Ramadan every year, and twice in the year of his death.²⁰ There are many other reports and traditions in this respect:

Fātima said, "The Prophet informed me secretly, *Jibr'īl* used to recite the Quran to me and I to him once a year, but this year he has recited the entire Quran with me

²⁰Muhammad bin Ismā'īl Bukhārī, *Al-Jām'ie al-Sahīh, Fadāil al-Qur'ān* (Damascus: Al-Yamāmat Liltabā'ata wal-Nashr, 1990), 7.

twice. I do not think but that my death is approaching."²¹

Ibn Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Prophet would meet Jibr'īl every night during the month of Ramadan, till the end of the month, each reciting to the other.²²

Abū Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Prophet and Jibr'īl would recite the Quran to each other once every year, during Ramadān, but that in the year of his death they recited it twice.²³

Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) gave a similar report to the above adding, "Whenever the Prophet and Jibr'īl finished reciting to each other I would recite to the Prophet as well, and he would inform me that my recitation was eloquent."²⁴

The Prophet, Zayd b. Thābit and Ubayy b. Ka'b recited to one another after his last session with Jibr'īl.²⁵

Each of the above *Hadīths* describes the recitations between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Jibr'īl every year continuously. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had also memorized the Quran to Companions who were themselves so keen to learn and memorize the Quran that every one

²¹Bukhārī, *Sahīh*, *Fadāil al-Qur'ān*, 7.

²² Bukhārī, *Sahīh*, *Saum*, 7.

²³ Bukhārī, *Sahīh*, *Fadāil al-Qur'ān*, 7.

²⁴Abū J'afar Muhammad bin Jarīr Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi'e al-Bay'ān fi ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, (Translated & Abridged by J Cooper, W F Madelung and A Jones) (Oxford: Oxford University Press & Hakim Investment Holdings (M.E.), 1987),1/28.

²⁵Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi'e al-Bay'ān*, 1/28.

of them wanted to excel the other. Moreover the Quran was being revised by the Prophet and his Companions at least in daily five prayers. They also revised the Quran in their nightly prayers.

Memorization of the Quran by the Companions the Prophet

Further, Arabs were prominent for their strong and extraordinary power of memory all over the world and after examining for centuries in the dark ages they had received the guidance of the Holy Quran which they considered to be the most treasured possession of their lives. Therefore, very soon a large group of the pious Companions memorized the entire Quran perfectly.

Not names of all the memorizer (*Huffāz*) Companions are available in the reports and traditions, however, various traditions indicate some names of the Companions as memorizers of the Quran. They are:

Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Ali, Talha, Sa'ad, Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, Huzaifah, bin Yamān, Sālim Maula Abī Huzaifa, Abū Hurayrah, Abdullah bin 'Umar, Abdullah bin 'Abbās, 'Amr bin 'Āas, Mu'āwiyah, Abdullah bin Zubayr, Abdullah bin Sa'ib, Ā'ishah, Hafsa, Umm Salamah, Umm Warqah, Ubayy bin Ka'b, Mu'āz bin Jabal, Abū Halimah Mu'āz, Zayd bin Thābit, Abū Darda, Mujamma bin Jaryah, Muslimah bin Mukhallad, Anas bin Mālik, 'Aqbah bin 'Āmir, Tamim Dāri, Abū Mūsa Ash'ari and Abū Zayd (may Allah be pleased with them).²⁶

²⁶ As-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al -Qur'ān* (Lahore: Suhayl Akadimī, 1980), 1/73-74.

There were many other Companions whose names could not be preserved in the traditions in that capacity. This fact is evident from various traditions as the Prophet had sent up to 70 reciters (*Huffāz*) as teachers of the Quran to a tribe, 70 reciters Companions were martyred in the battle of Bi'r Ma'ūnah and 70 more were martyred in battle of Yamāmah after the Prophet's death.²⁷

We may conclude that the preservation of the Quran in the early days of Islam was based on memory. This was the safest and most reliable method in view of the circumstance of that time because the number of literate persons in those days was very small and printing press was not invented so far. This oral transmission did excellent for preservation and a rapid spread of the Quran among the whole community in a limited time space which was impossible in case of mere relying upon pen and paper. The excellent memory of Arabs was well utilized for the preservation of the Holy Quran and through this power of memory the Quran spread all over the Arabia in a very short time.

It is significant to note that the practice of memorizing the Quran by heart has been in practice in every era of the history and generation to generation. The same practice is in vogue up till our lifetime and will continue till the last day of the last Muslim.

It is important to note that it has been the habit of the Muslims since the very beginning to make collections of selected Suras in one compilation for purpose of memorization, especially by students at *madrasahs*. In this scenario, Mingana's negation of memorization of the Quran by the Prophet and the Companions seems rather imprudent and unjustified.

Written Collection of the Quran under the Prophet (peace be upon him)

²⁷ As-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 73.

The verses were written from the early history of the Quran when the Muslims at *Makkah* were few and suffering the enmity from their own people. Zayd bin Thābit (may Allah be pleased with him) describes the methodology adopted for the purpose:

كنت اكتب الوحي لرسول الله ﷺ و كان اذا نزل عليه الوحي اخذته برجاء شديدة وعرقا مثل الجمان ثم سرى عنه فكنت ادخل عليه بقطعة الكتف او نسوى فاكتب وهو يملى على فما افرغ حتى تكاد رجلى تنكسر من نقل ال القرآن حتى اقوال لا مشى على رجلى ابدأ فاذا فرغت قال اقراء فاقره فان كان فيه سقط اقامه ثم اخرج به الى الناس .²⁸

I used to write down the revelations for the Prophet (Peace be upon him). Whenever revelation (*Wahy*) came to him he felt intense heat and drops of perspiration used to roll down on his body like pearls. When this state was over I used to fetch a shoulder bone or a piece of something else. He used to go on dictating and I used to write it down. When I finished writing the sheer weight of transcription gave the feeling that my leg would break and I would not be able to walk any more. Anyhow, when I had finished writing he would say, "Read" and I would read it back to him. If there was an omission or error he used to correct it and then let it be brought before the people.

Many other traditions demonstrate that the revelations were written down in the earliest stages of Islam. For instance, 'Umar's (may Allah be pleased with

²⁸ Nuruddīn Al-Hayathmī Tabaranī, *Al-Awast, Majma'az-zawā'id* (Bairut: Dārul Kitāb al 'Arabī, 1967), 1/152.

him) conversion to Islam reveals that Companions of the Prophet used to recite the verses of the Quran from the parchments.²⁹ The Prophet (peace be upon him) had appointed many scribes for recording the revelation.

Ibn Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the verses revealed during the Makkān period were written down in Makkah.³⁰ Khālid bin Sa'eed bin al-'Ās (may Allah be pleased with him), one of the official scribes engaged in recording the Quran, states "I was the first to write down:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ-³¹

Another scribe Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) is reported to have said "We used to compile the Quran from small scraps in the presence of the Messenger".³²

Scribes of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him)

Dr. Subhī Sālih has counted the number of the Prophet's scribes up to forty³³ whereas Muhammad Mustafa A'zamī has mentioned about sixty five Companions who functioned as scribes for the Prophet at one time or another after Hijra during the Madanī period.³⁴ The more well-known scribes among the Companions are the following:

Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Ali, Ubayy bin Ka'b, Abdullah bin Abī Sarh, Zubayr bin Awwām, Khālid bin Sa'eed, Abān bin Sa'īd bin Al-'Ā's, Hanzalah, Mu'qib bin Abī Fātimah, Abdullah bin Arqam Az-Zuhri, Shurahbeel bin Hasnah,

²⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, 4/343-46.

³⁰ Ibn Duraid, *Fadāil al-Qur'ān*, 33.

³¹ Jalaluddīn As-Suyūṭī, *Ad-Durr al-Manthūr fi Tafsīr bil Ma'thūr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1403 A.H), 11.

³² As-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al Qur'ān*, 2nd ed., 1/202.

³³ Subhī Sālih, *Mabaḥith Fi 'ulūm Al-Qur'ān*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Dār Al-'Ilm, 1968), 101.

³⁴ A'zamī, *The History of The Qur'ānic Text*, 68.

Abdullah bin Rawāhah³⁵, ‘Āmir bin Fuhayrah, Amr bin al ‘Ās, Thābit bin Qais bin Shammas, Mughīra bin Sha‘abah, Khālid bin Walīd, Mu‘āwiyah bin Abī Sufyān, Zayd bin Thābit (may Allah be pleased with them all).³⁶

Whenever the revelation was descent upon the Holy Prophet called for any of the scribes and asked him to write down the verses according to his dictation.³⁷ Ibn Abī Dāwūd has recorded that whenever the *wahy* commenced, Zayd b. Thābit was mostly summoned as the scribe because of his nearness to the Prophet’s Mosque.³⁸ After completion of the recording Holy Prophet, would ask Zayd, , to read the verses back to him for proofreading so that it might be made sure that there had not crept in any scribal mistake.³⁹

Material used for Writing the Quran

When the Quran was being written, paper was used very rarely. The revelations were written down on everything that could be used for writing in those days. Aḥadīth mention the material on which the Quran was written, consisted of:

‘*Asab* (عسب); plural of ‘*Asīb* (عسيب): leafstalk of palm trees⁴⁰

³⁵ Hāfiz Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalānī, *FathulBārī bi-Sharḥa Sahīh Bukhārī* (Cairo: Matb‘at al-Babi, 1959), 9/18.

³⁶ Al-‘Asqalānī, *FathulBārī*, 18.

³⁷ Abū Ubaid al-Qāsim bin Salām, *Fadāil al-Qur‘ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1991), 280.

³⁸ Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allah ibn Abī Dāwūd, Sulaymān al Sijistānī, *Al Sunan* (Multan, 1402 AH), 3.

³⁹ As-Sūli, *Ada al-Kuttab*, 165

⁴⁰ Zayd bin Thābit said that I collected the Qur‘ān from *Asab* and *Likhāf*. see this report in Bukhārī, *Al-Jām‘e al-Sahīh, Kitāb Fadāil al-Qur‘ān*, No.4986. Suyūti also defines the meaning of *Usub* as the branch of date palm leaf used for writing purpose. See *Al-Itqān fi ‘Ulūm al -Qur‘ān* ,1/168. Edward William Lane writes while defining *Asīb* “a Palm-branch which the leaves have been removedor

Likhāf (لَخَاف); plural of *Lakhfah* (لَخْفَة): stone⁴¹

Riqa' (رِقَاع): plural of *Ruq'ah* (رِقْعَة): scraps of paper, skin or leather⁴²

Qita' al-Adīm (قِطْع الِادِيم): pieces of leather⁴³

Aktāf (اِكْتَاْف); plural of *Katif* (كِتْف): shoulder bones of camels⁴⁴

Aqtāb (اِقْطَاب); plural of *Qatib* (قِطْب). Saddle wood⁴⁵

Evidences of Written Text of the Quran

Consequently, the complete Quran had been written down on above said material under the supervision of the Prophet (peace be upon him) though it was not in a book form but in the shape of different parchments. In addition to above, many Companions had written down the verses for their personal record. That was being practiced from the very beginning of Islam as is evidenced by a famous report regarding 'Umar's embracing Islam. There are many other evidences about the written form of Qur'ān in possession of the Companions during the Prophet's lifetime. 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) says:

ان رسول الله ﷺ نهى ان يسافر با لقرآن الى ارض العدو.⁴⁶

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has disallowed the carrying along of the Qur'ān in enemy land.

the part, of a palm branch, ...see detail in Lane: Edward William, Arabic English Lexicon, 5/2041, Islamic Book Center, Lahore.

⁴¹ Ibn Manzūr Al-Afrīqī, says that *Likhāf* was a flat and thin white stone. See for detail *Lisān al-'Arab* 9/513.

⁴² See Al-Suyūti *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al -Qur'ān*, 1/168.

⁴³ Al-Afrīqī, *Lisan al-Arab*, 8/131.

⁴⁴ As Suyūti, *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al -Qur'ān*, 1/168 see detail in *Lisan al-Arab* 9/294.

⁴⁵ *Aqtab* is a sort of pack-saddle for a camel see Lane: Edward William, Arabic English Lexicon, 7/2485. also see *Al Itiqān* 1/168 and *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1/.660.

⁴⁶ Bukhārī, *Al-Sahīh Book of Jihad*, 1/419-20.

Another tradition reports the sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him):

قراءة الرجل في غير المصحف ألف درجة وقرأته في المصحف تضاعف على ذلك ألفي درجة.⁴⁷

If anyone recites the Quran without seeing the transcript the reward is one thousand times and if he reads it from the transcription the reward is two thousand times.

The evidence of existence of the complete Quran is found in the Prophet's sermon to the people on occasion of last pilgrimage, he said:

I have left with you something which if you will hold it fast you will never fall into error: a plain indication, the Book of God (Quran) and the practice of his Prophet...⁴⁸

It is also evident that the wives of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and mothers of the believers; 'Ā'ishah and Hafsa had their own scripts written after the Prophet had died'.⁴⁹

Companions Eagerness for Recording the Quran

The practice of recording and writing down the verses was so widespread among the Companions that Prophet had to declare that no one should record anything from him except from the Quran and "whoever has written anything from me other than the Quran should erase it"⁵⁰ by which he meant that Qur'ānic and non-Qur'ānic (Ḥadīth) materials must not be written on the same sheet, so as to avoid any confusion. In fact those who were unable to

⁴⁷ Al-Hayathmi, Nuruddin, 7/165.

⁴⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sirah Al-Nabviyyah*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), 651.

⁴⁹ Mālik, *Muwatta*, No.307, 308.

⁵⁰ Muslim, *Sahih*, az-Zuhd:72 also Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *al-Masāhif*, 4.

write often appeared in the Mosque, vellum and parchment in hand, requesting volunteers who might record for them.⁵¹ The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself supervised the order and arrangement of the verses within the Suras of the Holy Quran:

There were periods in the life of the Prophet when several Suras were revealed simultaneously to him. So whenever a part of a Surah would be revealed, he would call someone from among those who used to write for him and would say: Place these in the Surah, in which this and this are mentioned.⁵² In the light of above testimonies we can conclude that:

- It was the Prophet's custom to summon the scribes to record the latest verses.
- There were a sufficient number of scribes.
- The Prophet was very much conscious for recording of the revelation.
- A complete copy of the Qur'ān was prepared under the Prophet's supervision.

In the light of authentic sources it is evident that the entire Quran was available in the written form during the holy Prophet's lifetime. It is regretful to negate all above evidences and have inference that the Quran did not exist in written form during the Prophet's lifetime can be concluded only by a person who has closed the doors of justice and wisdom for himself. The orientalists' allegations and doubts based on the tradition that Abū Bakr's recession came into existence because the complete Quran was collected and arranged in written form are clearly far-fetched and totally untenable.

⁵¹ Ibrāhīm bin Muhammad Al-Baihaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubra* (Haiderābād: Majlis Dā'ira tul Ma'ārif al-'Usmānīa, 1344 AH) 6/6.

⁵² Bukhārī, *Sahīh, Fadāil al-Qur'ān*, 7.