

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

THE COMPILATION OF THE QURAN

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- Despite the controversy generated by Islamic historical sources, from a Quranic analysis it appears that the complete Quran was fully transcribed, compiled and committed to writing during the life of the Prophet.
- From the Quran's perspective (without question the most reliable historical source contemporaneous to the time of the Prophet), the position that a later copy had to be collated / compiled by the companions of the Prophet seems untenable.
- If one accepts the testimony of the Quran, all debates surrounding the Quran being committed to writing later by the Caliphs, or the burning of certain copies, or to its insinuated redaction, missing verses, political motives, or the idea of companions writing it on leaves, animals skins or debris parchments become futile.

THE QURAN WAS PUT TOGETHER BY GOD'S DECREE DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE PROPHET

025.032

“And those who disbelieve say: Why is the Quran not revealed to him all at once? (It is revealed) thus that We may strengthen thy heart there with; and We have arranged it in right order (Arabic: Ratalnahu tartila)”

- There are some key terms here that enhance understanding and context.

لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا

Ratalnahu tartila

Jumlatan Wahida

Illustration - Joseph Islam

- The phrase 'Ratalnahu tartila' clearly denotes the well constructed action of putting together of component parts into one integral whole endowing the complete scripture with an 'airtight' inner consistency devoid of errors. Further usage of this term is discussed in the next section.
- This response must be understood in the pretext of the charge being made against the Prophet in the same verse.
- The disbelievers ask, 'Why is the Quran not revealed to him all at once?' i.e. as one integral unit (Jumlatan Wahida). Regardless of the obvious charge of the polemics of Islam at the time of the Prophet with this statement which hints at a Prophet of God revealing verses to suit certain conditions, the Quran's statement clearly denies the insinuations and admits to a well planned and arranged structure despite its piecemeal revelation.

075:016-17

"Move not thy tongue concerning the (Quran) to make haste with it. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it"

- The above verse clearly states the purpose of God to collect it (The Quran) / put together and then to order its recitation.

THE QURAN WAS PUT TOGETHER BY THE PROPHET HIMSELF BY GOD'S DECREE

Many English translations completely misrepresent the essence of verse 73:4 stating that the Prophet is being asked to recite the Quran in slow measured tones or chant it in a manner that it should be chanted.

Let us note the Arabic carefully.

073:004

"...and arrange (Arabic: Wa-rattili) the Quran in its arrangement (Arabic: Tartilan)"

Both the words rattilli and tartilan are formed of the same root word RA-TA-LAM which means to put something in order, to make even or well arranged/set together, to make correct or to put in the right state of arrangement.

We noted similar uses of the word in verse 25:32 which connects with the verse above. Therefore the arrangement of the Quran was not only put together in the lifetime of the Prophet, but by the Prophet himself by God's decree and under the Prophet's supervision.

Whether this 'arrangement' is being instructed as a requirement during any recitation the Prophet may have made (as common translations seem to imply by the mention of 'chanting'), the fact that an arrangement is being clearly instructed as an action on behalf of the Prophet is difficult to dispute.

Furthermore, the above verse provides strong indication of the Quran's initial stages of revelation supported by a process of early arrangement as the next verse confirms.

073.005

Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy/weighty Word (Arabic: Qawlan thaqilan)

Therefore, the Quran at the point of verse 73:4 is still in its infancy and the Prophet would be ultimately charged with a 'weighty' word from God completed during the lifetime of his ministry (73:5). As the process of proper arrangement would be a continuous exercise working in tandem with revelation, it is clear that by the time of its completion, the Quran would also be fully arranged in a perfected order.

THE RELIGION WAS COMPLETED DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE PROPHET

- In the famous verse of Surah Maida (Chapter 5), often quoted with reference to the favour bestowed by 'perfecting the Deen' [1], one must ask the obvious question as to how it was possible to complete a 'Deen' (a system / religion) without the bedrock of instructions formulated and referenced by scripture? One must therefore posit the possible conclusion that for a 'Deen' to be complete, the scripture must have taken its final form. [2]

005.003

"Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than God; that which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety. This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear Me. **This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.** But if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, God is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful"

THE QURAN WAS WRITTEN DOWN BY NOBLE SCRIBES AT THE TIME OF THE PROPHET

080.013-16

"(It is) in sheets / pages held (greatly) in honour (Arabic: fi suhufin mukarrama), Exalted (in dignity), kept pure and holy (Arabic: marfu'atin mutahhara), (Written) by the hands of scribes. (Arabic: bi'aydi safara), honourable and pious and just (Arabic: kiramin barara)"

verse 16 (end)

verse 15 (end)

verse 14 (end)

verse 13 (end)

فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ

kiramin barara

bi'aydi safara

marfu'atin mutahhara

fi suhufin mukarrama

Illustration - Joseph Islam

An analysis of key terms:

bi'aydi

(written) by the hands / in the hands

بِأَيْدِي

safara

(of) scribes

سَفَرَةٍ

kiramin

noble / who are honourable

كِرَامٍ

barara(tin)

dutiful/ pious

بَرَرَةٍ

Illustration - Joseph Islam

(A, K.) = سَفَرُ الْكِتَابِ, (S, A,) aor. ʔ, inf. n. سَفَرٌ,
 (S,) He wrote the book, or writing. (A. [See

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

- Other Quranic references also strengthen this position:

068.001

Nun. By the Pen and the (Record) which (men) write,-

096.001-5

“Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honourable, **Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not**”

098.002-3

“A messenger from God, reciting purified pages. Wherein are laws (or decrees) right and straight”

025.005

“And they say: The stories of the ancients - **he has got them written** - so these are read out to him morning and evening”

Please note that albeit an accusation of plagiarism is being made by the disbelievers against the Prophet, there is more than an allusion that the Quran was already committed (being committed) to written form.

Please see related article [3] below.

COMMITTING THE HOLY QURAN TO WRITTEN PARCHMENTS

There remains a belief amongst some Muslims that many of the verses of the Quran were somewhat precariously committed to materials such as bones and leaves and the Quran was not properly compiled until after the death of the Prophet.

The suggestion that such a central sacred text of the new believing community would not be committed to protected written parchments during the life of the Prophet seems difficult to accept from a Quranic perspective. Equally difficult to accept is the insinuation that the Arabs were so primitive that they would not be able to commit such a holy text to certain scrolls or parchments during the life of the Prophet.

The fact that followers of previous scriptures had committed their text to parchments is difficult to escape and is confirmed by different verses of the Quran. These were writing materials that the Arabs were fully conversant with during the Prophetic ministry.

006:091 (part)

"...You make it into parchments (**qaratisa***), you disclose some of it and you conceal much of it ..."

*Qirtas - parchment, papyrus, sheet or scroll of paper, writing, what one writes upon. Please also see 6:7

052:003

"...In parchment (**raqqin***) unrolled ..."

* The word 'Raqq' from its root has the inherent meaning of something thin or of little thickness as compared to its breadth and length; something thin, fine, flimsy, delicate. This most definitely refers to a well refined parchment especially prepared for writing. For example, the Arabic phrase "raqqu kalamuhu" (His speech was or became tender, soft, sweet, graceful or elegant) carries that element of refinement in the word 'raqqu' from the same root.

Therefore, such writing material was present during the Prophetic ministry and therefore one would arguably be inclined to accept the assertion that a new powerful believing community was able to commit their text completely to appropriate parchments in a protected form.

Committing sacred text to fine parchments or scrolls is an ancient practice.

087:018-19

"Indeed , this surely is in the former scrolls / scriptures (**suhufi**). The scrolls / scriptures (suhufi) of Abraham and Moses"

Sahifa - A written piece of paper, writing, thing written, letter.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE QURAN'S PROTECTION WAS WITH GOD NOT MAN

015.009

"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)"

THE QURAN LEGITIMISES ITS OWN STUDY

The Quran clearly states with regards itself that:

- It is a clear proof (6:157)
- That it is a book in which its verses are explained in detail (41:3)
- It is a manifest light (42:52)
- That it fully explains to mankind in all kinds of ways and similitudes (39:27;17:89;18:54:)

Readers are asked to 'tadabur' on the Quran (Ponder, reflect, study ardently till the matter is completely clear) and follow it in strict terms:

passed]: (T: [see عَجَزَ:]) and in the Qur [iv. 84] it is said, أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ Will they, then, not consider the meanings of the Kur-án, and endeavour to obtain a clear knowledge of what is in it? (Bd:) and again, in the Qur [xxiii. 70], أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ Have they, then, not thought upon, (TA,) and endeavoured to understand, (K,) what has been said to them in the Qur-án? for تَدَبَّرٌ signifies the thinking, or meditating, upon [a thing], and endeavouring to understand [it]; syn. تَفَكَّرٌ and تَفَهَّمٌ: (TA:) and تَدَبَّرَهُ he looked into it, considered it, examined it, or studied it, repeatedly, in order to know it, or until he knew it. (Msb in art. اَمَل.)

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [2]

- Think, meditate, endeavour to understand it, research it and study it repeatedly in order to know it.

023.068

“Do they not ponder (Arabic: Tadaburu) over the Word (of God), or has anything (new) come to them that did not come to their fathers of old?”

047.024

“Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Quran (Arabic: Tadabaruna), or are their hearts locked up by them?”

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

Tadabaruna

Illustration - Joseph Islam

- See also 4:82, 38:29

050:045

“We know best what they say; and you are not one to overawe them by force. So admonish with the Quran such as fear My Warning!”

FINAL THOUGHTS

- It is clear from many references that the Quran has a simple message, that it is an unambiguous scripture and that all humankind is invited to reflect, ponder and meditate on its verses. The Quran is not merely restricted to man appointed ‘specialists’ or ‘clergy’ that can potentially guide the text to fit their own motives. Rather, it is a duty for all to seek and extract its core and peripheral messages. There is clearly more than a tacit allusion that there exists a divine legitimacy to study the Quran for oneself through the consistency of the primary text itself.
- From the Quran’s own consistency and message, it seems clear that the Quran took its final written form including its collation during the time of the Prophet. It was the **written** and **oral** transmission working in tandem which most likely assisted in its preservation.

Please note the following comment by Dr. Adrian Alan Brockett and his view after conducting a comprehensive study of the Hafs and Warsh transmissions of the Quran.

“...Thus, if the Qur'an had been transmitted only orally for the first century, sizeable variations between texts such as in the hadith and pre-Islamic poetry would be found, and if it had been transmitted only in writing, sizeable variations such as those in different transmissions of the original document of the Constitution of Medina would be found. But neither is the case with the Qur'an. There must have been a parallel written transmission limiting variation in the oral transmission to the graphic form, side by side with a parallel oral transmission preserving the written transmission from corruption. The oral transmission of the Qur'an was essentially static, rather than organic. There was a single text, and nothing, not even allegedly abrogated material, could be taken out, nor anything be put in...” [3]

Related Articles:

- (1) [What is the True Definition of 'Deen' from a Quran's Perspective?](#)
- (2) [Was the 'Favour' Only Completed for Muslims?](#)
- (3) [A Deeper Look at the Word 'Iktatabaha'](#)
- (4) [The Seven Ahruf, Recitations \(Qiraat\), Hafs and Warsh](#)

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 4, Page 1370

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[2] Ibid., Volume 3, Page 844

[3] BROCKETT. A.A, Studies in Two Transmissions of the Quran, University of St. Andrews, Department of Arabic Studies, Ph.D. thesis 1984, Chapter Conclusion, Page 142

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