



Preservation of the Qur'an

On Wednesday 22nd July 2015, the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham announced their discovery of one of the oldest texts of the Qur'an in the world. After radiocarbon-dated testing which is said to be 95.4% accurate, research estimated the parchments to be from between 568 – 645 AD. This news which occurred on the same day as David Cameron's counter-extremism speech filled the hearts of many Muslims with joy, whilst raising suspicions in the eyes of others. Therefore, it is a good time to revisit the compilation of the Qur'an texts and various concepts which can be gained from this action.

(إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾)

“Lo! We revealed the Reminder, and Lo! We verily are its Guardian.” [TMQ Al-Hijr: 9]

This ayah within Surah al Hijr formed the basis of the compilation of the Qur'an shortly after the death of RasoolAllah (saw). Whilst the Qur'an had been written, these had not yet been bought together in a single volume by the Muslims.

After the Battle of Yamamah, where the Muslims defeated Musaylimah al Kathaab, Abu Bakr feared for the preservation of the Qur'an due to the martyrdom of numerous companions. The man who they chose for this weighty responsibility was Zaid ibn Thabit, the personal scribe of the Prophet (saw). Zayd was well known for his trustworthiness and his wide knowledge of Qur'an and was also the fortunate few who was chosen to attend meetings between the Prophet (saw) and Jibreel where they would recite the Qur'an. Zaid (may Allah be pleased with him) accepted this task and adopted a stringent methodology to compile the Qur'an.

Abu Bakr told Umar and Zaid, **“Sit at the entrance to the (Prophet's) Mosque. If anyone brings you a verse from the Book of Allah along with two witnesses, then record it.”** [Abu Dawud]

Ibn Hajr explains in Fathul Bari that this method entailed two people testifying that a particular verse was within the Qur'an and that it had been written down in the Prophet's (saw) presence. When parchments which fulfilled the above conditions were found, they were further checked against the memories of companions who had learnt the verses directly from the Prophet (saw).

“So I gathered the Qur'an from various parchments and pieces of bone, and from the chests of man i.e. their memories” [Al Burhan, Al-Zarakhshi]

This ensured the participation of all the companions as crosschecking between all individuals was a necessity. Zaid even ensured that his own knowledge of verses did not influence the compilation of the Qur'an. This occurred with the last ayah of Surah al-Tawba where he did not include it until he found a parchment from Abu Khuzaima al-Ansari [Fat'ih ul Bari].

These actions resulted in the compilation of the Qur'an, which was termed *Su'huf* (parchments) and was placed in the archives of the Khilafah. Under the Khilafah of Umar ibn Al-Khattab, this *Su'huf* became the primary reference for the Muslims and various companions were sent to other areas of the Khilafah to teach the Muslims. As Umar selected no direct successor, the inheritor of the *Mus'haf* became his daughter Hafsa who became its guardian.

Uthman's *Mus'haf*

It was during the reign of Uthman bin Affan where the *Mus'haf* we have today was codified and made the official *Mus'haf* of this Ummah. This was made at the request of Hudhaifa bin al-Yaman in 25 AH who noticed dialectal differences between the people of Iraq and ash-Shaam in their recitation of the Qur'an. This prompted Uthman to make copies of the *Mus'haf* and send it to the different wilayat within the Islamic State to ensure it was recited correctly. Uthman firstly asked Hafsa to provide him with the *Su'huf* and ordered Zayd ibn Thabit, Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, Said ibn al Aas and Abdul Rahman ibn Harith ibn Hisham to rewrite the *Su'huf* to make copies. He also explained that if there are any disagreements, the official dialect used should be Quraish. This resulted in the *Mus'haf* we have today which was sent to seven different areas within the Islamic State. Therefore, Uthman's actions were of making copies of what was with Hafsa. **Therefore, the *Mus'haf* we have today is the exact same *Mus'haf* which was held by Hafsa and within it are the exact same contents.**

The Transmission of Qur'an Establishes Certainty

The subject of *riwayah* (narration) covers the reportage of the text and includes the number and the integrity of its reporters. For any text, the *riwayah* can either be *Qati'* (certain/conclusively proven) or *dhanni* (inconclusively proven) and is dependent on the number of chains of narrations. If these chains are numerous (the number is defined differently by different scholars) then the text is said to be *mutawaatir*. When we analyse the transmission of the Qur'an, it is clear that it is *mutawaatir* and therefore, reaches the point of certainty. The Qur'an itself was not just narrated to few select companions, it was related to hundreds and thousands of people who spread all around Arabia. Each generation related it to another generation, and it is therefore unfathomable that an entire generation can relate something to another generation without any change in contents, unless each individual believed the contents to be certain in their transmission.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Muhammed Ubaid**