

THE HISTORY OF THE QUR'ĀNIC TEXT

From Revelation to Compilation

A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments

MUḤAMMAD MUṢṬAFĀ AL-A'ZAMĪ

AZAMI PUBLISHING HOUSE
RIYADH - SAUDI ARABIA



TURATH
PUBLISHING

Published by

'ilmStore.in

www.ilmStore.in | info@ilmStore.in | +91 9422 00 9767

in arrangement with

Turath Publishing,

79 Mitcham Road,

London SW19 9PD, UK

Azami Publishing House

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

aazmi@yahoo.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

Cover concept by Fatima Azmi and design by Anas Alazami

This edition is printed and bound in India by **'ilmStore.in** and is authorised for sale only in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

*For my dear mother, whose face
I was too young to remember, whose greatest wish for me
(as I was later told) was to memorize the Qur'an, and who
I hope to meet again in the Gardens of Heaven.
May Allah accept from us our best deeds.
Ameen.*

THE AUTHOR

MUḤAMMAD MUṢṬAFĀ AL-AʿZAMĪ, one of the world's premier scholars of Ḥadīth, was born in Mau (U.P.), India in the early 1930s and received his education successively at Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband, India (1952), al-Azhar University, Cairo (M.A., 1955), and University of Cambridge (Ph.D., 1966). He is Professor Emeritus at King Saʿūd University (Riyadh) where he also chaired the department of Islamic Studies; he holds a Saudi citizenship. Al-Aʿzamī served as curator of the National Public Library, Qaṭar; Associate Professor at Umm al-Qurā University (Makkah); Visiting Scholar at University of Michigan (Ann Arbor); Visiting Fellow at St. Cross College (University of Oxford); King Faiṣal Visiting Professor for Islamic Studies at Princeton; and Visiting Scholar at University of Colorado (Boulder). He is also an Honorary Professor at University of Wales (Lampeter). His publications include *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature*, *Ḥadīth Methodology and Literature*, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, *Dirāsat fī al-Ḥadīth an-Nabawī*, *Kuttāb an-Nabī*, *Manhaj an-Naqd ʿind al-Muḥaddithīn*, and *al-Muḥaddithūn min al-Yamāmah*. Among his edited works are *al-ʿIlal of Ibn al-Madīnī*, *Kitāb at-Tamyīz of Imām Muslim*, *Maghāzī Rasūlullāh of ʿUrwah ibn az-Zubayr*, *Muwattaʿ of Imām Mālik*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaimah*, and *Sunan ibn Mājah*. Many of his works have been translated internationally, and his forthcoming works include *The Ageless Qurʾān through the Ages*, and *The Isnād System: Its Origins and Authenticity*. In 1980 he was the recipient of the prestigious King Faiṣal International Award for Islamic Studies.

CONTENTS

Preface.....	xvii
--------------	------

PART I: THE HISTORY OF THE QUR'ANIC TEXT

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER TWO: EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM: A BRIEF LOOK.....	15
1. Pre-Islamic Arabia	15
<i>i. The Geo-Political Condition.....</i>	15
<i>ii. Ibrāhīm and Makkah</i>	16
<i>iii. Quṣayy Gains Full Control of Makkah</i>	19
<i>iv. Makkah: A Tribal Society</i>	20
<i>v. From Quṣayy to Muḥammad</i>	21
<i>vi. The Religious Conditions in Arabia</i>	22
2. Prophet Muḥammad (53B.H.-11A.H./571-632C.E.)	23
<i>i. The Birth of Muḥammad</i>	24
<i>ii. Muḥammad, the Amīn.....</i>	24
<i>iii. Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh.....</i>	24
<i>iv. Abū Bakr and his Acceptance of Islam.....</i>	25
<i>v. The Prophet Preaches Openly.....</i>	26
<i>vi. Quraish Offers Muḥammad Great Temptations</i>	27
<i>vii. Quraish Boycotts Muḥammad and his Clans</i>	28
<i>viii. The Pledge of 'Aqaba.....</i>	29
<i>ix. The Plot to Assassinate the Prophet</i>	30
<i>x. Muḥammad in Madīnah</i>	30
<i>xi. Prelude to the Battle of Badr.....</i>	32
<i>xii. The Execution of Khubaib bin 'Adī al-Anṣārī</i>	33
<i>xiii. The Conquest of Makkah</i>	33
3. Death of the Prophet and Accession of Abū Bakr.....	35
<i>i. Abū Bakr Handles Widespread Apostasies</i>	35
<i>ii. Military Advances in Syria.....</i>	36
4. The Countries and Provinces Conquered During the Reigns of 'Umar and 'Uthmān.....	37
5. Early Muslim History in Non-Muslim Sources	39
6. Conclusion.....	42

CHAPTER THREE: REVELATIONS AND THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD	43
1. The Creator and some of His Attributes	44
<i>i. The Purpose Behind Mankind's Creation</i>	45
<i>ii. The Message of the Prophets</i>	45
2. The Final Messenger	46
3. Receiving the Revelations	47
<i>i. The Beginning of Wahy and the Miracle of Qur'ān</i>	49
<i>ii. The Impact of the Prophet's Recitation on the Polytheists</i>	50
4. The Prophet's Roles Regarding the Qur'ān	52
5. Recitation of the Qur'ān in Turns with Jibrīl	54
6. A Few Remarks on Orientalist Claims	55
7. Conclusion	56
CHAPTER FOUR: TEACHING THE QUR'ĀN	59
1. Incentives for Learning, Teaching and Reciting the Holy Qur'ān ...	60
2. The Makkan Period	63
<i>i. The Prophet as Teacher</i>	63
<i>ii. The Companions as Teachers</i>	64
<i>iii. The Outcome of this Educational Policy in the Makkan Period</i> ..	64
3. The Madanī Period	65
<i>i. The Prophet as Teacher</i>	65
<i>ii. Dialects used by the Prophet for Teaching in Madinah</i>	66
<i>iii. The Companions as Teachers</i>	66
4. The Fruit of Educational Policy: The Ḥuffāz	68
5. Conclusion	69
CHAPTER FIVE: THE RECORDING AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE QUR'ĀN ...	71
1. During the Makkan Period	71
2. During the Madanī Period	72
<i>i. Scribes of the Prophet</i>	72
<i>ii. The Prophet's Dictation of the Qur'ān</i>	73
<i>iii. Recording the Qur'ān was Common Practice</i> <i>Among Companions</i>	73
3. The Arrangement of the Qur'ān	74
<i>i. The Arrangement of Verses Within Sūras</i>	74
<i>ii. The Arrangement of Sūras</i>	77
<i>iii. The Arrangement of Sūras in Some Partial Muṣḥafs</i>	78
4. Conclusion	81
CHAPTER SIX: THE WRITTEN COMPILATION OF THE QUR'ĀN	83
1. Compilation of the Qur'ān During Abū Bakr's Reign	84
<i>i. Appointment of Zaid bin Thābit as Compiler of the Qur'ān</i>	84

ii. <i>Zaid bin Thābit's Credentials</i>	85
iii. <i>Abū Bakr's Instructions to Zaid bin Thābit</i>	85
iv. <i>How Zaid bin Thābit Utilized the Written Materials</i>	87
v. <i>Zaid bin Thābit and the Use of Oral Sources</i>	89
vi. <i>Authentication of the Qur'ān: The Case of the Last Two</i> <i>Verses from Sūra Barā'a</i>	90
vii. <i>Placement of the Ṣuḥuf into the State Archives</i>	91
2. 'Umar's Role in the Spread of the Qur'ān	91
3. Conclusion	93
CHAPTER SEVEN: 'UTHMĀN'S MUṢḤAF	95
1. Disputes in Recitation and 'Uthmān's Response	95
2. 'Uthmān Prepares a Muṣḥaf Directly from the Ṣuḥuf	96
3. 'Uthmān Makes an Independent Copy of the Muṣḥaf	97
i. <i>Appointing a Committee of Twelve to Oversee the Task</i>	97
ii. <i>Arranging for an Autonomous Copy</i>	97
iii. <i>'Uthmān Retrieves the Qur'ānic Parchments from</i> <i>'Ā'isha for Comparison</i>	99
iv. <i>'Uthmān Retrieves the Ṣuḥuf from Ḥafṣa for Verification</i>	100
4. The Sanctioning and Distribution of 'Uthmān's Muṣḥaf	102
i. <i>The Final Copy Read to the Companions</i>	102
ii. <i>The Number of Certified Copies Made</i>	102
iii. <i>'Uthmān Burns All Other Manuscripts</i>	103
iv. <i>'Uthmān Sends Reciters Along with Muṣḥafs</i>	103
v. <i>'Uthmān's Instructions with the Muṣḥafs He Sent</i>	104
5. Al-Ḥajjāj and His Contributions to the Muṣḥaf	106
6. Muṣḥafs in the Marketplace	110
7. Conclusion	112
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE EVOLUTION OF READING AIDS WITHIN THE MUṢḤAF	115
1. Sūra Separators	115
2. Āyah Separators	116
3. Conclusion	120
CHAPTER NINE: THE HISTORY OF ARABIC PALEOGRAPHY	123
1. The Historical Background of Arabic Characters	123
2. Studies in Early Arabic Documents and Inscriptions	126
i. <i>The Blurred Line between Nabataean and Arabic Inscriptions</i> ..	126
ii. <i>What Language Did the Nabataeans Speak?</i>	129
iii. <i>The Early Arabic Language Possessed a Distinct Script</i> <i>and Alphabet</i>	131

<i>iv. The Emergence of Various Scripts and the Issue of Dating</i>	
<i>Kūfīc Muṣḥafs</i>	135
3. Conclusion	139
CHAPTER TEN: ARABIC PALEOGRAPHY AND ORTHOGRAPHY	
IN THE QUR'ĀN	141
1. Writing Styles During the Time of the Prophet	144
2. Studies on the Orthography of 'Uthmān's Muṣḥaf	144
<i>i. Irregularities in the Writing of Alif</i>	144
<i>ii. Irregularities of Alif in the Ṣan'ā' Fragments and their</i>	
<i>Orthographic Impact</i>	149
3. The Nuqaṭ (Dotting) Scheme in Early Muṣḥafs	151
<i>i. Early Arabic Writings and Skeletal Dots</i>	151
<i>ii. The Invention of Diacritical Markings</i>	156
<i>iii. Parallel Usage of Two Different Diacritical Marking Schemes</i>	159
4. Sources of the Skeletal and Diacritical Dotting Systems	160
5. Orthographic and Paleographic 'Irregularities' in Early	
Non-Qur'ānic Script	163
6. Conclusion	165
CHAPTER ELEVEN: STUDIES OF EXISTING MUṢḤAFS ASCRIBED	
TO 'UTHMĀN	167
1. Differences Among 'Uthmān's Six Official Muṣḥafs	167
2. Studies on the Muṣḥaf of Mālik bin Abī 'Āmir al-Aṣḥabī	170
3. Existing Muṣḥafs which are Ascribed to Caliph 'Uthmān	172
<i>i. The Copy in Tashkent</i>	173
<i>ii. The Copy at Topkapı Sarayı</i>	176
<i>iii. The Copy at Türk ve İslâm Eserleri Müzesi</i>	177
<i>iv. The Copy at al-Mashhad al-Ḥusainī Mosque</i>	179
<i>v. The Copy at the Institute of Oriental Studies</i>	180
4. Differences Between 'Uthmān's Master Copies and	
Existing Muṣḥafs Attributed to him	182
5. Other Muṣḥafs from the First Century A.H.	186
6. Conclusion	188
CHAPTER TWELVE: CAUSES OF VARIANT READINGS	
1. The Qirā'at is Sunna	190
2. The Need for Multiple Readings: Simplifying	
Recitation for Unaccustomed Masses	191
3. Main Cause of Multiple Readings (Variants): the Orientalist View	193
4. Secondary Cause of Multiple Readings (Variants)	197
5. Altering a Word for its Synonym During Recitation	199
6. Conclusion	201

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE MUSLIM EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY	203
1. The Hunger for Information	204
2. Personal Contact: A Vital Element for Learning.....	204
3. Beginning and Development of the Isnād System	205
<i>i. The Phenomenon of Isnād: Proliferation.....</i>	207
4. The Authentication of Isnād and Ḥadīth	209
<i>i. Establishing Trustworthiness</i>	209
<i>ii. The Unbroken Chain.....</i>	213
<i>iii. Supporting or Negating Evidence</i>	213
<i>iv. A Test Case with a Misleading Isnād.....</i>	214
5. The First Generations of Scholars	215
6. Preserving Books from Adulteration: A Unique System.....	216
<i>i. Conditions for Utilizing a Book</i>	219
<i>ii. Glosses: the Addition of External Material</i>	219
<i>iii. Establishing Authorship</i>	220
7. Certificates of Reading	222
<i>i. The Importance of Reading Notes</i>	223
8. Impact of Ḥadīth Methodology on Other Branches	228
9. Isnād and the Transmission of the Qur'ān.....	228
10. Conclusion.....	229
 CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE SO-CALLED MUṢḤAF OF IBN MAS'ŪD.....	 231
1. First Point: The Arrangement of Ibn Mas'ūd's Muṣḥaf.....	232
2. Second Point: The Text Differed from the 'Uthmāni Muṣḥaf.....	233
3. Third Point: Three Sūras were Omitted.....	234
<i>i. Analysis of the Contents of Ibn Mas'ūd's Muṣḥaf.....</i>	236
<i>ii. Ibn Mas'ūd's Beliefs</i>	237
4. When Can Any Writing be Accepted as Part of the Qur'ān?	238
<i>i. Principles for Determining Whether a Verse Belongs to</i> <i>the Qur'ān</i>	239
<i>ii. Examples of Scholars Punished for Violating these Principles ..</i>	242
5. Conclusion.....	243

PART II: THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLICAL SCRIPTURES

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: EARLY HISTORY OF JUDAISM: A BRIEF LOOK	249
1. Jewish History Prior to Establishing the Kingdom	249
2. Jewish History After Establishing the Kingdom.....	256
<i>i. The Divided Kingdoms.....</i>	257
<i>ii. The Destruction of the First Temple (586 B.C.) and the</i> <i>Babylonian Exile (586-538 B.C.).....</i>	261

iii. <i>The Restoration of Jerusalem and the Founding of the Second Temple (515 B.C.)</i>	262
iv. <i>The Hellenistic Rule (333-168 B.C.), the Maccabean Revolt (168-135 B.C.) and the Destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.)</i>	262
3. Conclusion	264
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS CORRUPTION	265
1. History of the Old Testament	265
i. <i>History of Torah According to Jewish Sources</i>	266
ii. <i>History of the Torah According to Modern Scholars</i>	268
2. The Sources of Jewish Literary Culture	270
i. <i>Original Language of the Old Testament was Not Called Hebrew</i>	270
ii. <i>The Early Jewish Script: Canaanite and Assyrian</i>	271
iii. <i>The Sources of the Torah</i>	272
3. History of the Oral Law	273
4. History of the Hebrew Text: The Masorah	275
i. <i>Only Thirty-One Surviving Masoretic Texts of the OT</i>	275
5. In Search of an Authoritative Text	277
i. <i>The Role of the Council of Jamnia - Late First Century C.E.</i> ...	278
ii. <i>The Old Testament Text was known in a Variety of Differing Traditions</i>	278
iii. <i>Approximately 6000 Discrepancies Between the Samaritan and Jewish Pentateuchs Alone</i>	279
iv. <i>Unintentional Corruptions of the Text</i>	280
v. <i>No Qualms Felt in Altering the Text for Doctrinal Reasons</i> ...	281
vi. <i>No Single Authoritative OT Text Existed Till 100 C.E.</i>	282
vii. <i>Jewish Scholars Established the Text of the OT in the Tenth Century, Actively Destroying Earlier Manuscripts</i>	282
viii. <i>The Masorah and Textual Integrity</i>	283
6. The Jewish Revival: a Legacy of Islamic Literary Advancements..	284
i. <i>Pointing and Vocalization Induced by Islamic Achievements</i> ..	284
ii. <i>Masoretic Activity Flourished in the West Under Islamic Influence</i>	285
iii. <i>The Talmud and Islamic Influence</i>	286
7. Establishing the Date for a Fixed, Authoritative OT Text	288
i. <i>Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Western View</i>	288
ii. <i>The Counter View: The Termina Datum of Qumran and Other Caves is False</i>	289
8. God's Covenant: Examples of Deliberate Textual Corruption ...	292
9. Conclusion	297

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: EARLY HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY: A BRIEF LOOK	301
1. Did Jesus Exist?	301
<i>i. References to Jesus in Non-Christian Books from the</i>	
<i>First Century</i>	302
<i>ii. The Historical Christ in Christian Circles</i>	302
<i>iii. Christ and His Mother-Tongue</i>	304
<i>iv. Christ: the Moral Attributes of God?</i>	304
2. Jesus' Disciples	305
3. Jesus and his Message: Repent, for the Kingdom of	
Heaven is at Hand	306
<i>i. Jesus and the Scope of his Message</i>	306
<i>ii. Christian Creeds</i>	307
<i>iii. The Implications of the Term 'Christian' in the Early Days</i>	309
4. The Persecution of Early Christians	309
5. Belief Systems in Early Christianity	310
6. Conclusions	311

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE NEW TESTAMENT: ITS ANONYMOUS

AUTHORSHIP AND CORRUPTION	313
1. The Lost Gospel Q - A Challenge	313
2. The Authorship of the Present Four Gospels	314
3. Are the Gospels Inspired?	315
4. Transmission of the New Testament	316
<i>i. The Creation of Different Text Types</i>	317
<i>ii. Dates of Recensions</i>	318
5. Textual Corruption	318
<i>i. Variant Readings in the New Testament</i>	318
<i>ii. Scribal Alterations</i>	322
6. The Erasmus Bible and the Comma Johanneum	323
7. Contemporary Corruption of the Text	325
8. Early Manuscripts Negate Prevalent Christian Doctrines	328
9. Conclusion	331

PART III: AN APPRAISAL OF ORIENTALIST RESEARCH

CHAPTER NINETEEN: THE ORIENTALIST AND THE QUR'ĀN	335
1. The Urgency of Proving Distortions in the Qur'ān	335
2. Orientalist Criticism of the Qur'ān's Compilation	336
3. Transmutation of Islam into Foreign Idioms	337
4. Allegations of Biblical Forgery	338
<i>i. Accusations of Botched Appropriation</i>	338
<i>ii. A Counterfeited Bible</i>	340

5. Deliberate Distortion of the Qur'ān	341
<i>i. Blachère's Attempted Distortion of the Qur'ān</i>	341
<i>ii. Mingana's Attempted Distortion of the Qur'ān</i>	342
6. Puin and the San'ā' Fragments	345
<i>i. Are the San'ā' Fragments the Only Proof of the Qur'ān's</i> <i>Completion by the First Century?</i>	347
7. Conclusion	350
CHAPTER TWENTY: ORIENTALIST MOTIVATIONS:	
A STUDY OF SUBJECTIVITY	353
1. The Jewish Analogue	353
<i>i. The Validity of an Anti-Semitic Work</i>	353
<i>ii. Can an Anti-Judaic Scholar be Impartial When Dealing</i> <i>with a Jewish Theme?</i>	354
<i>iii. Are Jewish Scholars Free to Study Jewish Topics?</i>	355
2. The Muslim Counterpoint	357
<i>i. Israeli Suppression of Palestinian History</i>	357
<i>ii. An Orientalist Pioneer and Deceiver of Muslims</i>	358
3. Searching for Impartiality	359
<i>i. A Historical Perspective: Jews, Christians and Romans</i>	359
<i>ii. Impartiality in Modern Studies</i>	361
4. Pressure and Purpose	363
<i>i. Colonialism and the Demoralization of Muslims</i>	363
<i>ii. The Jewish Question and the Fabrication of a New History</i> ...	365
5. Conclusion	370
CHAPTER TWENTY ONE: EPILOGUE	373
GLOSSARY TERMS	377
BIBLIOGRAPHY	387
INDEX	403



In the Name of Allāh, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

PREFACE

This work comprises a short introduction to the history of the Qurʾān, its recording and its collection. The reader may therefore be puzzled as to why one third of the material in this book tackles the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT),¹ wondering what significance this has on the Qurʾān's history. This significance shall, I hope, be made clear as the chapters progress, since I have attempted to present only those details which have a direct bearing on the current subject matter.

The idea of authoring a book about the Qurʾān, about its collection and immaculate preservation, had long germinated in my mind, and towards the close of the millennium I finally began working on this book alongside another entitled *Islamic Studies: What Methodology?* It was journalist Toby Lester's article in *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 1999) however, and the chaos it had the potential to sow among Muslims, which prompted a greater concentration on this work. His article suggested that Muslims, despite believing in the Qurʾān as the unadulterated Book of Allāh, were thoroughly incapable of defending this view in any scholarly fashion. The gauntlet was thrown, and I felt it necessary to take on this challenge and explain the stringent methodology used by early Muslim scholars in accepting a text as genuine, or rejecting it as fake. This has led to the unavoidable repetition of some material in both books. As most of the scholars that Lester quotes are of Judeo-Christian background, I also considered it fitting to cover the histories of the Old and New Testaments by way of comparison. This will help the reader to regard the disparity of opinions between Muslim and Orientalist scholars with a fair measure of insight.

With their insistence on a purely oral transmission, most Orientalists reject all reports that relate to the recording and compilation of the Qurʾān during the Prophet Muḥammad's lifetime. Many of them even deny that any final compilation occurred during Abū Bakr's reign, while some accept the role of the third caliph ʿUthmān in this regard. Only *fifteen years* lapsed between the Prophet's death and ʿUthmān's distribution of written copies of the Qurʾān to different provinces of the Muslim world. Viewing this

¹ Certain works now designate these as the First and Second Testaments, most likely to eliminate any suggestion of one having superior authority over the other.