

# The Authenticity of the Quran I

## The Recording and Perfect Preservation of the Quran

"The Glorious Quran, the Muslims' religious Scripture, was revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the angel Gabriel. The revelation occurred piecemeal over a period of twenty-three years [1]. The Quran is distinct from the recorded sayings and deeds (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad, which are instead preserved in a separate set of literature collectively called the "Ahadith".

Upon receiving revelation, the Prophet engaged himself in the duty of conveying the message to his Companions through reciting the exact words he heard in their exact order. The Quran's rhythmic style and eloquent expression make it easy to memorize, particularly in an Arab society which prided itself on orations of lengthy pieces of poetry.

Michael Zwettler notes that "in ancient times, when writing was scarcely used, memory and oral transmission was exercised and strengthened to a degree now almost unknown" [2]. Large portions of the revelation were thus easily memorized by a large number of people in the community of the Prophet.

The Prophet encouraged his Companions to learn each verse that was revealed and transmit it to others [3]. The Quran was also required to be recited regularly as an act of worship, especially during the daily meditative prayers. Through these means, many repeatedly heard passages from the revelation recited to them, memorized them and used them in prayer.

Each Ramadan, the Prophet would repeat after the angel Gabriel (reciting) the entire Quran in its exact order as far as it had been revealed, while in the presence of a number of his Companions [4]. In the year of his death, he recited it twice [5]. Thereby, the order of verses in each chapter and the order of the chapters became reinforced in the memories of each of the Companions present.

As the Companions spread out to various provinces with different populations, they took their recitations with them in order to instruct others [6]. In this way, the same Quran became widely retained in the memories of many people across vast and diverse areas of land.

The entire Quran was however also recorded in writing at the time of revelation from the Prophet's dictation by some of his literate companions, the most prominent of them being Zaid ibn Thabit [7]. The verses were recorded on leather, parchment, scapulae (shoulder bones of animals) and the stalks of date palms [8].

Indeed, memorization of the Quran emerged into a continuous tradition across the centuries, with centers/schools for memorization being established across the Muslim world [9]. The Quran is perhaps the only book, religious or secular, that has been memorized completely by millions of people [10]. Leading orientalist Kenneth Cragg reflects that "this phenomenon of Quranic recital means that the text has traversed the centuries in an unbroken living sequence of devotion. It cannot, therefore, be handled as an antiquarian thing, nor as a historical document out of a distant past. The fact of hifz (Quranic memorization) has made the Quran a present possession through all the lapse of Muslim time and given it a human currency in every generation, never allowing its relegation to a bare authority for reference alone" [11]."  
[12]

## References

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- [4] Sahih al-Bukhari Vol.6, Hadith No.519
- [5] Sahih al-Bukhari Vol.6, Hadith Nos.518 & 520
- [6] Ibn Hisham, Seerah al-Nabi, Cairo, n.d., Vol.1, p.199
- [7] Jalal al-Din Suyuti, Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, Beirut: Maktab al-Thaqaafiyya, 1973, Vol.1, p.41 & 99
- [8] al-Harith al-Muhasabi, Kitab Fahm al-Sunan, cited in Suyuti, Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, Vol.1, p.58
- [9] Labib as-Said, The Recited Koran, translated by Morroe Berger, A. Rauf, and Bernard Weiss, Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1975, p.59

[10] William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.80

[11] Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'an*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973, p.26

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[12] <http://www.ilaam.net/Articles/AuthenticQuran.html>