

NOTES

History and Compilation of the Holy Quran

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Introduction

The Holy Qurán is the most widely read book in the history of mankind, a source of immense inspiration, guidance and wisdom for millions of Muslims all over the world. It is the pivotal point of *imaan*, faith, and integral to the foundations of an Islamic society being the basis of its *shariah*, Islamic legal injunctions and law. It is a book not just to be read, but to be studied, understood and ultimately revered. This paper is an attempt to provide an introduction to the Holy Qurán so that Muslims and non-Muslims alike can have an insight into its complexity but also understand its necessity to the Islamic faith and its importance to the Holy Prophet's (saw) status. The research regarding this paper is based entirely on the books, lectures and notes of Shaykh-ul-Islam so all credit is due to him for his unending efforts. However since I have had the honor to compile this paper I take the ultimate responsibility of any mistakes that may occur in this compilation, I thus seek forgiveness from Almighty Allah for any errors that may occur.

Meaning of the Word Qurán

The Holy Qur'an is the literal word of Allah (swt), divinely revealed to Prophet Muhammad (saw) through the Angel Gibraeel (as). Before any attempt is made to describe the meanings of the word "Qur'an" the etymological base of the Arabic language needs a brief explanation first. The Arabic language is one of the richest languages in the world word containing many meanings and hidden depths, which have no comparison in the English language. In order to appreciate the true meaning and understanding of a particular word a threefold inquiry has to take place, looking into the:

1. etymological base of each word
2. its grammatical category
3. its contextual location

Etymological Aspect of Each Word

Most Arabic words have a root word consisting of 3 or 4 letters. These root words form the foundation of many nouns, verbs and adjectives. One root word can be responsible for a whole host of words. Any Arabic word that consists of the same 3 letters will have the same root word as its origins. In Arabic a root word is called "*Mada*" meaning subject matter. Every root word has its own individual meaning and the basic meanings travel into every noun or verb that is

created. Once vowel sounds of the Arabic language are inserted into the root word they give a more precise and specific meaning.

Grammatical Category

Secondly every noun, verb or adjective also belongs to a specific grammatical or composite category, which have its own particular properties and meanings. These words carry on those characteristics and meanings in addition to the root word itself. Once the original meaning of the root word is combined with the prevailing grammatical and composite characteristics of that word this is then studied in light of the context of the original matter in discussion.

Contextual Location

Once the above two stages take place then the word in question is studied in light of the context, usage, contents and subject matter of its placement. This will finally lead to the exact and precise meaning of the word and give a true picture of what the writer is trying to convey. One has to remember that in the context of the Holy Qur'an, this is a divinely revealed book of God. As such every word can be taken to have been specially chosen for man to read and then understand as the Arabic language has an enormous breadth of vocabulary. Thus a detailed knowledge of Arabic grammar and linguistics as well as the language itself needs to be understood before any attempt can be made to provide a comprehensive "*tafseer*" or explanation of the Qur'anic verses.

Root Words of the Qur'an

The word Qur'an can be derived from four root words, each with their own individual meanings. The first root word is "*qara'a*" whose literal meaning is to collect or to compile. In this respect the Qur'an is a book which was collected and codified under the divine protection of Allah (swt). When Angel Gibraeel (a.s) used to bring the divine revelation of Allah (swt) to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) he had already been instructed by God to reveal the exact placement of each ayah (in the relevant Surah) as well as the arrangement of the Surah's and their names. Since this was the case it was impossible for others to interfere in the Qur'an in any manner or form. It will remain in its actual and original state until the Day of Judgement the Qur'an itself testifies to its divine protection:

"It is for us to collect and recite it" (75:17)

In the context of the Qur'an, the word *qara'a* is also taken as being the book which contains all knowledge of the universe. Every aspect of life as we know has been codified and collected within it^[1]. An answer to any question man wishes to have answered can be found in the verses of the Holy Qur'an:

“And we have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy and glad tidings to Muslims”. (16:89)

“A detailed exposition of every thing”. (12:11)

“We have omitted nothing from the book”. (6:)

The second root word is “*qar’ana*” meaning a union or conjunction. The root word does not specify what the union consists of, merely that a process of combination is indicated. In reference to the Qur’an this refers to the literal physical existence of the Qur’an and its properties. Imaam Fakr-al-Deen Razi quotes Imaam Sufyan Sorri as stating that the Holy Qur’an was given its own special name because letters are joined to make words, words are joined to make ayahs, ayahs are joined to make surahs and surahs are joined to make the Qur’an. This beautiful combination of literature has produced the most magnificent book in the world.

Another academic implication of the word “*qar’ana*” is that the Qur’an is combined with guidance, the two being inseparable. The Holy Qur’an refers to this combination:

“This is the book: it is guidance sure, without doubt”. (2:2)

“Here is a plain statement. To one, a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah”. (3:138)

“For one who had certainly sent unto them a book, based on knowledge, which we explained in detail; a guidance and mercy to all those who believe”. (7:52)

“There are clear evidences to me, and a guidance and mercy to those of assured faith”. (45:20)

The third root word is “*qira’athun*” meaning to read or recite. In reference to the Qur’an this is one of its most important features. Although other books that claim to be divinely revealed are also read and recited, the Holy Qur’an has a specific characteristic, superiority and individuality compared to them. This is because it is the most widely read book in the world. Millions of Muslims all over the world recite it in their daily prayers 5 times a day. The Qur’an is read and recited daily in what is called ‘*tilawat*’ where Muslims read the Qur’an whenever they have some spare time to get the Blessings of Almighty Allah. During the month of Ramadhan the entire Qur’an is recited over a period of 30 days in the special ‘*tharawih* prayers [2]’, as well as being individually read by Muslims in their homes. Often, during this month of fasting, each member of the household will have completely read and finished the Qur’an at least once if not twice.

As well as being read and recited, the Qur’an acts as a practical guide in all affairs of Muslims, be they social, cultural, legal, economic or political. Unlike its biblical counterpart, the Qur’an does not merely contain stories of Prophets or an analogue of Islamic history. Rather it contains

an array of topics to be of use in ones daily life. Codes of behavior and their limits are explained, mutual rights and responsibilities of men, women, children are laid down as well as international principles to be used to govern communities, countries and nations. The Qur'an acts as a practical guide of life to Muslims in the personal and official spheres of life. To make it more accessible to different nations and peoples of various countries, it has been translated in almost every language of the world.

Furthermore, from the period of the Holy Prophet (saw) up until the present day some 1400 hundred years later, millions of Muslims have learnt the Qur'an off by heart[3]. It is unimaginable how many people must have learnt the Qur'an over the last 14 centuries, suffice to say no other book can claim to have these particular traits attached to it. And this trend and inclination will continue till the Day of Judgement.

The fourth and final root word of the word Qur'an is "*qira'in*" which is the plural of "*qarina*" which meaning evidence, argument or symbol. In the context of the Qur'an this is taken to mean how one verse interprets, elaborates and gives arguments and evidences for previous verses. In ayah 5 of surah Al-Fatiha[4] for example, man is told to ask Allah for the right path: "*Guide us Thou on the right path*".

The following verse then answers this request and explains what the right path is:

"The path of those whom You have favored. Not those who have earned your anger or gone astray". (1:6-7)

So the Qur'an is self-evident and self-explanatory. If one verse gives a general meaning than the other gives a more specific definition. Similarly if one verse gives an absolute commandment then the other verse will gives its exceptions and qualifications. The Holy Qur'an testifies to this fact:

"Oh mankind! Verily there has come to you a convincing proof from your Lord for we have sent into you a light (that is manifest)". (4:174)

Moreover the Qur'an contains 100's of evidences of its own truthfulness being the best evidence of the truth of its claim. That is why a challenge was given to the non-believers that if all of mankind and jinn kind were to come together to create a similar or equal book to that of the Qur'an they would fail, this being an impossibility:

"Say. If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support." (17:88)

Fourteen hundred centuries have passed and no change or alteration has taken place in the Holy Qur'an. The text that is present today is exactly the same text that was revealed to Prophet

Muhammad (saw). This is so despite hundreds of attempts by non-Muslims to try and insert alterations and changes into the Qur'an. That is why Allah (swt) himself gives it divine protection:

"We have, without doubt, sent down the message; And We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)". (15:9)

Just as there have been no alterations made to the Qur'an, similarly there are no conflicts or contradictions in the text of the Holy Qur'an. If one reads the beautiful verses each one compliments the next. The surahs and ayah's of the Qur'an work in consistent harmony with each other. The Holy Qur'an is truly a uniform piece of work. In contrast the Encyclopaedia of America for example states that there are about 30,000 errors in the text of the bible and in its various versions. Although the accuracy of this type of observation is open to debate, what is clear is that any book that claims to be divinely revealed would surely not even entertain one error let alone hundreds or thousands of errors. The very nature of God, His Omnipotence, All Knowing and Most Powerful nature presupposes that His divinely given book would be clean of all mistakes. Indeed the Holy Qur'an is a living testament to that fact.

Names of the Holy Qur'an

The Qur'an has been referred to by many different names in the holy text. The word Qur'an itself can be found in the scriptures:

"We do relate unto you the most beautiful stories, in that We reveal to thee this (portion of the) Qur'an: Before this thou too was among those who knew it not." (Yusuf, 12:3)

"Nay this is a glorious Qur'an (inscribed) in a tablet preserved". (Al-Buruj, 85:21-22)

However Allah Almighty refers to the Holy Qur'an using several other names:

al-nur the light (7:157)

al-hukm the judgment (13:37)

al-dhikr the reminder (15:9)

al-kitab the scripture (21:10)

al-furqan the criterion (25:1)

al-tanzil the revelation (26:192)

Further descriptive titles include *mubarak* (blessing)[\[5\]](#), *mussadiq* (confirmation of truth)[\[6\]](#), *mubin* (explanation)[\[7\]](#), *hakim* (wisdom)[\[8\]](#), *majid* (glorious)[\[9\]](#) and *karim* (honoured)[\[10\]](#)

Divine Revelation

Definition of “Wahi”

The Arabic word *wahi* comes from the root word *waha* and is used to describe divine revelation. It has a variety of different meanings in the Arabic language, being interpreted as “a quick or divine indication”, “to give or convey a message” or “gentle speech”. In Islamic terminology, *wahi* can be precisely defined as God’s divine message conveyed to Allah’s chosen persons (Prophets). This message can be conveyed openly or in a hidden and concealed manner, imparting wisdom and knowledge that is beyond the material and physical realities of man. The renowned scholar, Hafiz ibn Hajr as-Qalani defines *wahi* as that knowledge regarding the Shariah that Allah conveys to His Prophets. Imaam Qastalani states that *wahi* is information given to the Prophets by Allah Almighty, in the form of a book, through Angels or through dreams. Descriptions of *wahi* are also given in the Holy Qur’an:

“So we sent this inspiration to the mother of Musa” (28:7)

“Remember thy Lord inspired the Angels (with the message): I am with you” (8:12)

“Nor does He say (ought) of his own desire. It is no less than inspiration sent to him”. (53:3-4)

“This is part of the tidings of the unseen which we reveal unto thee (oh Prophet) by inspiration”. (3:44)

Literacy of the Holy Prophet (saw)

The very first revelation of the Holy Qur’an took place on the 15th night of Ramadhan in the year 610 AD. At this time the Holy Prophet (saw) had reached the age of 40. For many years it had become his practice to visit a small cave in mount Hira, situated around 3 miles from the city of Makkah. The Holy Prophet (saw) would retreat to this cave in solitude and meditate there for many days. He would take supplies of food and water and engage in long prayers. As the years progressed these periods of solitude became more pronounced extending his stay from days into weeks. During the month of Ramadhan Holy Prophet (saw) would keep fasts and spend the entire month in this spiritual state of solitude.

It was during one of these periods, in the year A.D 610 that the first revelation of the Qur’an began. In a Hadith related by Ayesha[11] (r.a) the Angel Gibraeel (a.s) came to the Holy Prophet (saw) and said *ikra*, “Read!”. He replied: “I am not a reader”. The Angel then held him, pressed him hard and released him and again said *ikra*, “Read!”. The Prophet replied: “I am not a reader”. The angel held and pressed him hard for a third time and said:

“Read, in the name of your Lord who created. It is He who created man from clots of blood. Read! Your Lord is the most bounteous, Who has taught the use of the pen. He has taught man what he did not know”. (Al-Alaq, 96:5)

These were the very first verses of the Qur'an recited to Prophet Muhammad (saw). In recent times, in interpreting this Hadith many scholars have called the Prophet (saw) illiterate. In translating the above Hadith they quote the Prophet (saw) as saying "I cannot read" or "I do not know how to read". However this translation does not support what took place at that time. It does not make sense to interpret the Holy Prophet's (saw) words of "*Ma ana bi qarain*" as 'I cannot read' since the angel did not give him a book to read or a parchment of paper to read from. If the Holy Prophet (saw) had been given something to read then it would make sense to translate the words as 'I cannot read'. However in this instance Angel Gibraeel (a.s) was only asking the Holy Prophet (saw) to repeat the word 'Read' after him. In order to fulfill this request the question of literacy is irrelevant since even a child can say the word 'read' if asked. Thus the more accurate translation of the Holy Prophet's (saw) words is "I am not a reader" which is still a literal translation of "*ma an bi qarain*". So why did he refuse to follow the Angel immediately? What is clear is that Allah Almighty had already imbued the Holy Prophet (saw) with the concept of *Tauheed*, the oneness of God. He never worshipped idols but believed in the God of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s). As this was the case the Prophet (saw) refused to read until he knew what he was being asked to say. This was a new era in his Prophethood, and the Holy Prophet (saw) knew this. Since he already believed in Allah (swt) he wanted to ensure that whatever he was asked to recite, being divine revelation, it must come from Allah the Almighty and none else. As soon as Angel Gibraeel (a.s) recited the entire verse, asking him to read in the name of his Lord, only then did the Holy Prophet (saw) recite the same.

Other commentators also wrongly interrupt the adjective of "*Ummi*", that was ascribed to the Holy Prophet (saw) in the Qur'an, as meaning un-lettered. This is a wrong and misguided view. The exact meaning of "*Ummi*" means someone who has had no formal education, or been instructed or taught by a tutor or teacher. The word "*Ummi*" comes from the root word of "Umm" meaning mother, root or origin. The Arabs of that time used the word *ummi* to describe themselves since no formal system of education was available meaning most Arabs had no recourse to learn how to read and write. So a person who has not been educated through the traditional means of the time was labeled *Ummi* i.e. someone who remains in their original form, original purity and originality as at birth. However in the case of the Holy Prophet (saw), it is true that he did not have any formal education or tuition. Nevertheless he was not confined to the normal modes of learning. God had decided to make him the last and final Prophet to be sent to mankind. As such Allah (swt) became responsible for his education teaching him all things necessary. The Holy Qur'an states:

“It is He who has taught the Qur’an. He has created man. He has taught him the intelligent speech”. (55:2-4)

All ‘*Mufasareen*’, commentators on the Holy Qur’an, unanimously agree that this verse refers to the Holy Prophet (saw), in that Allah taught His Prophet the Qur’an and intelligent speech. As we have seen earlier, one of the many meanings of the Qur’an is that it is the book encompassing all knowledge of the universe. So the Holy Prophet (saw) was not an ignorant or illiterate man but had been divinely educated by God Himself. Allah (swt) had bestowed him with intuitional guidance which is apparent from his personality. The Holy Prophet (saw) never worshipped idols nor did he indulge in gambling or drinking. He had a famous reputation for being truthful and honest and had no hint of any immoral practice in his daily life. All these traits were present in his personality before he received the call to Prophethood. This is even more amazing when one studies his life in the background of the pagan Arab society. The majority of the individuals did not distinguish between virtue and vice but were left to their own devices. Traits such as honesty, truthfulness and spirituality are created through the prevailing conditions of the time and were virtually non-existent in pre-Islamic Arabia. Since there was no recourse to alternative education or training the pagan Arabs had so indulged in many uncivil practices. However the Holy Prophet (saw) had already been guided by Allah (swt) Himself and so was not left to be conditioned by the Arab culture and society.

Manner and Forms of Revelation

The Holy Qur’an was revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw) in a variety of different ways.

1. In the form of dreams:

Prophet Muhammad (saw) would sometimes receive divine revelations of the Holy Qur’an in the form of dreams. Ayesha (ra) narrates that the beginning of *Wahi* began in the form of true dreams. Whenever the Holy Prophet (saw) would see a dream its true meaning and significance it would become clear by the morning (Bukhari).

2. Revelation revealed directly into the heart :

The Holy Prophet (saw) also used to receive revelation directly into the heart. Imaam Hakim narrates that the Holy Prophet (saw) stated: “Angel Gibrael conveyed a message into my heart. That no man can die until his ‘*rizk*’ or resources have been completed. So Man should fear God and try all means to achieve his resources. If there is a delay in receiving your due then do not go astray to achieve it for whatever you will receive will be through Allah and what he has already ordained”[\[12\]](#).

3. Revelation disclosed upon the sound of a bell:

Another method of revelation was at the sound of a bell. The Holy Prophet (saw) would hear the ringing of a bell or a musical sweet sound, which would be immediately followed by divine revelation. According to Hadrat Ayesha (r.a) once the divine revelation began, Angel Gibraeel (a.s) would come at various times with different ayahs of the Qur'an. According to her, the Holy Prophet (saw) himself stated that: "Sometimes *wahi* comes to me after a bell rings and that is a heavy time for me". (Bukhari)

This method of revelation appears to be the most difficult type for the Holy Prophet (saw) to bear. If he (saw) was mounted on a camel and received revelation after the ringing of a bell, the camel would be unable to bear its weight and be forced to come down upon its knees[13]. On another occasion it is narrated by Hadrat Zaid bin Thabit (r.a) that the Holy Prophet's (saw) thigh was resting on his thigh at the time of receiving *wahi*. The force of the revelation was so strong that it felt as if his own thigh was breaking[14]. Hadrat Ayesha (r.a) also reports that during these occasions the Holy Prophet's (saw) brow would sweat or that his face would become very red[15].

4. Revelation Brought by an Angel in the Form of a Man:

One of the most common ways of receiving revelation was through Angel Gibraeel (as). The Holy Qur'an states:

Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gibraeel – for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe, - Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and apostles, to Gibraeel and Michale, - Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject faith" (Al-Bakarah: 2:97-98)

Angel Gibraeel (a.s) would sometimes come to the Holy Prophet (saw) in the form of a man[16]. Hadrat Umme Salma (r.a) reports that: "once I saw Dhaya Qalbi in front of the Prophet (saw) talking to him. The Prophet (saw) then asked me: "Do you know who this man is?" I replied: "That was Dhaya Qalbi" By God I thought it was him but the Prophet of God (saw) later announced in his Kutbah it was the Angel Gibraeel"[17].

5. Revelation Through an Angel in his True Form:

Angel Gibraeel also came to the Holy Prophet (saw) in his actual angelic form. Hadrat Abdullah ibn Masood (r.a) narrates that Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: "When I saw Angel Gibraeel he had 600 wings"[18].

6. Revelation Directly from God:

God has directly communicated with some of His Prophets as with Prophet Musa (a.s) on Mount Toor. The Holy Prophet (saw) spoke directly with Allah (swt) during his ascent into the

heavens, the Miraj. There, Allah (swt) gave divine revelation to his Holy Prophet (saw) concerning the obligatory prayers.

It is interesting to note how the differing methods of communication reach their climatic end with ‘Kalam Elahi’, Allah directly speaking to His beloved. Initially Allah (swt) beckons His Prophet (saw) gently through dreams. Then revelation is communicated directly into his heart. Thereafter the Angel Gibraeel (a.s) comes with revelation in the form of a man. As the Holy Prophet (saw) draws closer and closer to Allah (swt) Angel Gibraeel (a.s) is shown in his full glory to him. Finally Allah (swt) calls His beloved Prophet (saw) to the heavens and talks to him directly in the finale of the Miraj-un-Nabi.

Process of Divine Revelation

The Beginning of Revelation

According to its own testification the Holy Qur’an was revealed in the month of Ramadhan on the night of power. “Ramadhan is the (month) in which we sent down the Qur’an,..”(Al Baqara 2:185)

“We have indeed revealed this (message)in the night of Power” (Al-Qadr 97:1).

At first glance these verses appear to be at odds with Islamic history suggesting the Holy Qur’an was revealed in one go on the night of *laila al qadr*, the night of power, rather than in stages. However this point is clarified by Hadrat Abdullah ibn Abbas[19] who states that the Qur’an was revealed in one go from *lauh al-mahfuz*, 'the tablet of destiny' to the lower heaven, *bait al izzat*, 'house of honour' on the night of *Qadri* (power). It was from this lower heaven that the Qur'an was revealed in stages onto the earth, the first revelation having taken place on the night of power. The Holy Prophet (saw) then quoted an ayah Of Qur’an to support this view:

“(It is) a Qur’an which we have divided (into Parts from time to time), in order that thou mightiest recite it to men. At intervals we have revealed it by stages”

(Al-Sail 17:106).

Imaam Faqir-uddin-Razi, Imaam Hafiz ibn Qaseer and Imaam Qurtubi state that those parts of the Qur’an which were to be revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw) in one year would first be revealed in the heavens on the Night Of Qadr in advance. Sheikh Sarwardi however is of the opinion that once the Holy Qur’an was revealed in one go in the heavens it was then given in the custody of Angle Gibraeel (a.s) who would reveal it in stages to the Holy Prophet (saw) when required. However the majority of scholars, including Imaam Shaitibi and Imaam ibn Hajr as-Qalani[20] conclude that the Holy Qur’an was first revealed in its entirety in the heavens[21] and then revealed in stages to Prophet Muhammad (saw) in the methods already outlined above.

Revelation in Stages

The Qur'an was not revealed in one instance but through a piecemeal process with small numbers of ayahs revealed at any one time. Hadrat ibn Ashtar[22] states that normally one to two ayahs were revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw) at any one time. Other scholars such as Imaam Bahiqui, Hadrat Omar (rad) and Hadrat Ali (rad)[23] are of the opinion that four to five ayahs would be revealed at any one time.

As revelation started the pagan Arabs witnessed the piecemeal process and used this as a tool to attack the new Muslims. They taunted them asking them why the Qur'an was not revealed in one go if it was a Divine book:

"Those who reject faith say: Why is the Qur'an not revealed to him all at once"? (Al-Furqan, 25:32)

The Qur'an then eloquently answers its critiques: *"Thus (it is revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart thereby, and we have rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually."* (Al-Furqan, 25:32) *"(It is) a Qur'an which We have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou mightiest recite it to men at intervals: We have revealed it by stages."* (Al-Isra'il, 17:106)

As the Muslims began to grow in number they became faced with many different problems. So often in response to specific situations that arose Qur'anic ayahs were revealed to the new Muslim community. The Holy Prophet (saw) brought a revolutionary message to the pagan Arabs. The aim of Islam was to change the entire society and culture of that time. The Arabs had been worshipping idols for hundreds of years and Makkah had become the focal point of all worshippers throughout the Arab peninsula. An annual pilgrimage took place where hundreds of Arabs would gather together and celebrate their idols and pagan traditions. These ancient religious traditions which engulfed every aspect of Arab life now had to be challenged and redressed by a new moral, social, political and religious order.

The message of Islam intended to change the prevailing system, giving rights to the poor, needy, orphans and women. It preached morals and virtuous acts putting constraints on evil and vice. A new political system was advocated based on meritocracy rather than patriarchy. So the divine message of Allah (swt) was revealed slowly to allow the new Muslim Arabs to change and accept the new faith. The very first verses revealed were intended to strengthen the faith of the new Muslims. Having worshipped idols all their life it was important to lay the foundations of the unity of God and spread the message of His oneness. Once the belief of the Muslims had become strong and they were able to practice Islam more freely in Madinah, the

majority of the laws and legislation were revealed. It was upon these new principles that the Islamic State of Madinah was created.

Revelation in stages also created a constant link between Allah (swt) and His beloved Prophet (saw) giving moral support in times of need and distress:

“Thus (it is revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart..” (Al-Furqan, 25:106).

Angel Gibraeel (as) would come with news of future victories and successes providing vital motivation to the Companions who faced great opposition from the Kufar. This created an unimaginable link between the Companions and their new leader and guide, the Holy Prophet. They would constantly witness their Holy Prophet (saw) receiving divine revelation from Allah (swt) which intern had a two fold effect. Firstly it created a living link between Allah (saw) and the new Muslims. They had given up their entire livelihoods including their wealth, prestige and status. Many families were split as some family members embraced Islam whilst other rejected the new faith. As a result the new Muslims faced many hardships and obstacles. So witnessing a living link between Allah (swt) and His Beloved Prophet (saw) gave them renewed motivation and inspired them to follow him (saw) even more:

“It is He who hath sent His Apostle with guidance and the religion of truth, to proclaim it over all religion, even though the pagans may detest it.” (Al-Tauba, 9:33) “But God willed to justify the truth according to His words, and to cut off the roots of the unbelievers.” (Anfal,8:7)

Secondly, revelation in stages also strengthened their concept of Tauheed, belief in the oneness of God. Often the Holy Prophet (saw) and his Companions were put in positions where defeat was imminent and no alternative was left but to beseech Allah (swt) for help. When divine revelation was sent as a response to this, the Companions realized that only Allah (swt) could help them in times of distress and need. He was the All Omnipotent and All Powerful and worked through the intercession of His Beloved Prophet (saw). This was an important lesson for the Companions to learn. They had spent their entire lives in idolatry, beseeching man made statues for help and assistance rather than the one true God. Their existence was dependant upon pleasing their Gods through ritual sacrifices and traditions that spanned many centuries. Makkah was the heart and soul of the pagan society, being home to the annual pilgrimage where thousands of people came from all parts of the Arabian Peninsular to worship the idols kept in the Kaábah and pay tribute to their keepers. This old allegiance needed to be destroyed and replaced by an allegiance to the One True God and His Beloved Messenger (saw). Through practical demonstrations of beseeching for help in times of need the Companions of the Holy Prophet (saw) now had living examples of the power and mercy of God, knowing for certain only He was the source of all things. Another interesting aspect of the revelation process is the

continual appearance of Angel Gibraeel (a.s) as the intermediary between Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw). Angel Gibraeel (a.s) would come again and again amongst the Companions, bringing divine revelation from the heavens. They witnessed how he would sit with respect and reverence in the company of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the manner in which he would converse with him. Although he is considered the leader of the heavenly angels, he too was shown to be subordinate to the Holy Prophet (saw). The Companions observed a heavenly being, pure, perfect and made of light, deal with veneration and esteem with their Holy Prophet (saw). This amounted to invaluable training for them for if an angel sent from Allah (swt) had such respect for their new leader surely they too should follow in his way and imbue the same feelings in their lives too. Consequently Angel Gibraeel (a.s) became a role model of moral conduct and etiquettes when dealing with the Holy Prophet (saw). This in itself is a reflection of the high status of Prophethood. Allah (swt) intended that the Companions should learn to love, respect and revere the Holy Prophet (saw) so that that there would be no room left for any other worldly love and attachment. Only this type of passion, of undying love and loyalty could motivate them to change their existing way of life. If this new faith entailed being separated from family and friends, caused them to endure severe hardships, engage in torturous journey's and eventually ask the ultimate sacrifice of their lives for the cause of Islam, the Companions were prepared to do this for the sake of their love to the Holy Prophet and belief in his message.<

Recording of Revelation

The first method of recording the verses of the holy Qur'an was through memorization. Upon receipt of wahi the Holy Prophet (saw) would immediately commit all passages revealed to him to his memory, which is known as hifz: "...an apostle from God, rehearsing scriptures, kept pure and holy...(98:2) Thereafter he would recite the same to his Companions. Hadrat ibn Mas'ud was the first to recite the Qur'an publicly in Makkah. The Arabs of this time were generally an illiterate nation but were great fans of poetry and tales. Being a predominantly oral culture the Arabs would memorize poems and tales in order to communicate it to others. They had a heightened sense of memory in comparison to other nations. Therefore once the Muslims were taught a passage of the Qur'an they immediately confined it to memory quite easily and this practice was encouraged by the Prophet (saw). Hadrat Uthman bin Affan narrates the Prophet (saw) as saying the most superior amongst the Companions were those who learn the Qur'an and then taught it to others.[\[24\]](#) The same passages were also regularly recited in the five daily prayers, so remembrance of the verses was a daily occurrence. It was also a practice of the Holy Prophet (saw) to listen to Qur'anic recitation from the Companions.

Hadrat Ibn Masud (rad) in particular narrates how the Prophet (saw) once shed tears after listening to his recitation of Surah Nisa[25].

During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (saw) scribes also carefully wrote the passages of the Qur'an on a variety of different writing materials. These varied from pieces of parchment to leather[26] and leaves. However once any passage was recorded the Holy Prophet (saw) would personally check the written records and insure that all the words were correct and in the correct order.

Whenever an ayah was revealed, he (saw) informed the Companions of the name of the relevant Surah and where it was to be placed in the Qur'an. Hadrat ibn Abbas[27] reports that Hadrat Othman bin Affan stated that when the Holy Prophet (saw) received revelation he would call a companion to write it down and then tell them where to place the ayah in the Qur'anic order. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal [28] reports the narration of Hadrat Othman bin abi-ul-Aas (rad) as stating: "I was once sitting with the Holy Prophet (saw) when he received revelation. Then he lowered his eyes and the Holy Prophet (saw) stated that 'Angel Gibraeel has come to me and ordered that I should place this ayah[29] with this Surah. Imaam Malik[30] details how the inhabitants of Yemen were sent collected written sheets of the Qur'an (*mushaf*) by some Muslims with orders given to keep it clean and safe, confirming the writing down of the Qur'an in some form during the Holy Prophet's (saw) lifetime. The Qur'an also describes itself as a *kitab*, a book well guarded[31] indicating an organized compilation in some shape.

Since the Holy Prophet (saw) instructed the Companions where to place each ayah, they themselves never interfered in the divine order. Hadrat ibn Zubair (rad) narrates that he asked Hadrat Othman (rad) why he placed one ayah in the Qur'an when another had revoked it. Hadrat Othman (rad) replied that he did not have the authority to change the order, which had been divinely revealed[32].

One has to remember that the Qur'an is not just a book of prayers but a practical guide to life. It instructs man in every sphere, be it on the modes of marriage, the penal system, business codes and ethics as well as the personal sphere of human relationships. As such the holy Qur'an is often termed the "living Qur'an" due to its continual usage in daily life. So every passage that was revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw) was continually quoted and read, either in the daily prayers or in the daily affairs of life. In this way it was impossible for any mistakes or errors to occur in any of the words or passages as the words of the Qur'an were always in use. It was indeed a living book. Allah (swt) is also the ultimate guarantor and protector of the Qur'an ensuring it to be free from any error and interference:

“We have without doubt sent down the message and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)”. (Al-Hijr, 15:9)

Revelation Period and Division of Qur’anic Surahs

As stated earlier the first revelation of the Holy Qur’an took place on the 16th Ramadhan, A.D 610. The period of revelation spanned 22 years, 2 months and 22 days. There is a traditional division of the surahs between those that were revealed in the city of Makkah, (Makki surahs) and those that were revealed in the city of Madinah (Madani surahs). The following table highlights the split in the revelation period between these two cities:

PERIOD	YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS
REVELATION PERIOD	22	2	22
MAKKI PERIOD	12	5	13
MADANI PERIOD	9	9	9

Out of the 114 surahs revealed, the majority of them were revealed in the city of Makkah. A ‘Makki’ Surah is classified as such if its beginning was revealed in Makkah even if parts of it were later revealed during the Madani phase. Imaam Zarkashi[\[33\]](#) is of the opinion that 85 surahs were revealed in Makkah. Other commentators believe 86 were revealed whilst others give a slightly higher number. Difference of opinion lies regarding whether Surah 1, Al-Fatiha and Surah 83, Al-Mutaffin were revealed in Makkah or Madinah. The Makki Surah’s were revealed over a period approximately lasting 12-13 years, from the first call of Islam up until the *Hijrah*, migration to the city of Madinah. Most of the Makki Surah’s are shorter in length and deal with concepts regarding Tauheed, oneness of God; good morals and conduct and life in the Hereafter – heaven and hell. The Makki ayah’s also contain passages regarding the Christian and Jewish scriptures, detailing which Prophets have been sent by Allah (swt) in the past.

A ‘Madani’ Surah is characterized as those Surah’s which have their beginning passages revealed in Madinah. According to Imaam Zarkashi[\[34\]](#) 29 Surah’s were revealed in Madinah. Other commentators give a figure of 28 whilst others have given a slightly higher figure. The Madani Surah’s were revealed over a period of nine to ten years beginning from the Hijrah[\[35\]](#), to the eventual demise of the Prophet (saw). These Surahs are often longer than their Makki counterparts. When the Holy Prophet (saw) arrived in the city of Madinah he set up the first Islamic state in the history of Islam. As such the Qur’anic Surah’s in this period of time deal with the practical aspects of living. Much of the injunctions of Shariah law were revealed in Madinah including laws relating to marriage, divorce, laws of probate and criminal sanctions.

They dealt with the new burgeoning community of the indigenous *Ansars*[\[36\]](#) and newly arrived *Muhajiroon*[\[37\]](#) as well as mankind in general.

Over the 22 year period a total of 114 Surahs were revealed. These are roughly arranged according to length with the longest surahs being placed at the beginning of the Qur'an and the shorter ones at the end. The main exception to this rule is with regard to the opening chapter of the Qur'an, Surah Al-Fatiha having only 8 ayahs. The surahs are not however placed in chronological order since early Makki Surahs are placed near the end of the Holy Qur'an and the later Madani Surahs being placed in the beginning of the Qur'an. This order was divinely given by Allah through Angel Gibraeel (a.s) to the Holy Prophet (saw).[\[38\]](#)

For liturgical purposes the Qur'an has been further divided into thirty parts, each part being called a *Juz*, for easy use of reference. During the Holy month of Ramadhan one part is read daily with the intention of completing all 30 parts in the month. The Surah's (chapters) are subdivided into sections known as Rukuhs and each section is divided into verses known as Ayahs. The final revelation took place on the 9th day of Dhul Hajj, in the 10th year of Hijrah. This was the 63rd year of the Holy Prophet's (saw) life. The final verse to be revealed was :

“This day we have perfected for you your religion. And have completed My bounties for you, And have approved Islam as the religion for you”. (5:3)

In this year, during the month of Ramadhan, Angel Gibraeel (a.s) came twice to the Holy Prophet (saw) and they recited the entire text together twice. Since that year no Qur'anic verse has been added or deleted from the original text. It is and will remain in its pristine condition until the Day of Judgment .

Compilation of Divine Revelation

The compilation of the Holy Qur'an took place in three stages:

1. During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (saw)
2. During the caliphate of Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad)
3. During the caliphate of Sayyidina Othman bin Affan

In the Lifetime of the Holy Prophet (saw)

There is ample evidence showing that the entire Qur'an was written down in the Prophets (saw) lifetime. As stated earlier when he (saw) received revelation he would instruct scribes to record the revelation on parchments of paper or pieces of leather. He would also indicate in which Surah each ayah was to be placed[\[39\]](#). The Companions never interfered in the arrangement of the ayahs and Surahs which are the same in copies of Qur'ans available today. Hadrat Zaid bin Thabbit was one of the most prominent of the scribes and has reported that he, along with other companions would compile the Qur'an in the presence of the Holy Prophet (saw)[\[40\]](#). During

this time the names of the Surahs were also known. Angel Gibraeel (a.s) would also come to the Holy Prophet (saw) every Ramadan to listen to him reciting the Qur'an, and listened to him twice in the year of his demise[\[41\]](#).

In the time of Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad)

A detailed account of this is contained in an account given by Zaid bin Thabbit in Sahih Bukhari. After the demise of the Holy Prophet (saw) an imposter called Muslimah announced falsely his own Prophethood. Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad) sent a Muslim expedition against him and a harsh battle took place in 632 A.D (11 A.H) at the place of Yamamah[\[42\]](#) during which hundreds of *hafiz* were martyred. Sayyidina Umar bin Kattab (rad) became concerned at the heavy loss of casualties, fearing that a large part of the Qur'an could be lost if the rate of martyrdom increased. He expressed these fears to the Caliph Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad) and asked him to compile the Qur'an into a permanent book form. Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad) was at first shocked at the request and said he could not do something that the Holy Prophet (saw) had never done in his own lifetime. However Sayyidina Umar (rad) continued to persuade him until Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad) said his heart was opened by Allah (swt) and he agreed to the suggestion.

Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad) called upon Hadrat Zaid bin Thabbit (rad) to collect and compile the Qur'an into one volume. Hadrat Zain bin Thabbit was also astonished at this request and declared it would have been easier for him to shift a mountain than to do such a task. He too questioned how they could do something that the Holy Prophet (saw) had never done. Sayyidina Abu Bakr (rad) replied this was a good thing and began to persuade him until Allah (swt) opened the heart of Hadrat Zaid bin Thabbit (rad) who agreed to do this too.

Hadrat Zaid bin Thabbit (rad) set about completing the task. He collected all the written parts of the Qur'an from date leaves, parchment and pieces of leather and also listened to many of the *hafiz* who recited verses from their memories. After having carefully compared and cross checked each ayah, he compiled the written Qur'an into one single volume. Sayyidina Abu Bakr became its official custodian, passing on to Sayyidina Umar bin Kattab (rad) during his caliphate. After his demise the Qur'anic volume was passed into the custody of his daughter Hadrat Hafsa (rad).

In the time of Sayyidina Uthman bin Affan (rad)

As the Islamic empire increased it incorporated many different nations and tribes who did not speak and understand Arabic. As a result difference in reciting the Qur'an and pronunciation began to occur. It is reported by Hadrat Anas bin Malik[\[43\]](#) that Hadrat Hudaifah bin Yaman (rad) had been involved in the victories of the Muslim run Sham, now modern day Syria, and

Iraq over Armenia and Azerbaijan. He heard the differences in the recitation of the Qur'an by the inhabitants there. Upon his return he related these concerns to Sayyidina Uthman (rad) who expressed a deep apprehension at this new development. They both feared conflicts could arise, replicating the problems that had occurred in the authenticity of the Bible and Torah. Sayyidina Uthman took action and asked Hadrat Hafsa (rad) for the original volume of the Qur'an promising to return it to her once copies were made. She sent it immediately to him. Hadrat Zaid bin Thabit, having been responsible for the first compilation (rad) was appointed as the head of a committee to make exact and perfect copies of the original. The other committee members consisted of Hadrat Abdullah bin Zubair, Hadrat Sa'id bin Al A'as and Hadrat Abdur Rahman bin Harith (rad). Hadrat Uthman gave them instructions that if any of the three disagreed upon any point with Hadrat Zaid (rad) then the relevant ayah should be written in the language of the Quraish as that was the tongue in which the Qur'an was revealed. Once copies were made the original was returned to Hadrat Hafsa (rad). The new copies were then distributed to every Muslim province with the orders that all other copies of the Qur'an, be they full or partial copies, were to be burnt and replaced by this original one. Since that day the Holy Qur'an has remained in its original pristine form and will remain as such in the future by the Grace and Blessings of Allah Almighty.

References :

- [1] The Qur'an covers a diverse variety of subjects ranging from cosmology, astronomy and the classical sciences to law, philosophy and jurisprudence as well as all fiscal and financial matters
- [2] Extra prayers read during the month of Ramadhan after the last obligatory prayer, Esha
- [3] Such people are called *hafiz*
- [4] The opening surah of the Qur'an
- [5] Al-Qur'an (6:93)
- [6] Al-Qur'an (6:93)
- [7] Al-Qur'an (12:1)
- [8] Al-Qur'an (36:2)
- [9] Al-Qur'an (50:1)
- [10] Al-Qur'an (56:77)
- [11] One of the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet (saw)
- [12] Al-Mustadarak lil-Hakim
- [13] Immam Thirmidhi: Kitab-ul-Tafseer
- [14] Imam Bukhari
- [15] Imam Bukhari
- [16] Imam Bukhari

- [17] Imam Bukhari: Fazail-ul-Qur'an
- [18] Imam Muslim: Bab-ul-Miraj
- [19] Imaam Haqim, Bahiqui, Nisai and Tibrani all report this Hadith in their respective books
- [20] Fatah-al-Bukhari Fee Sharah al-Bukhari
- [21] known as Bait-il-Izzat, House of Honor
- [22] in Kitab-ul-Mushef
- [23] see also ibn Asquini, Abu Syed Qudri, Abu-ul-Ali
- [24] Immam Bukhari
- [25] ibid
- [26] see Hadrat Zaid bin Thabbit's narrative in 'Al-Mustadaraak, Kitab-ul-tafseer'
- [27] Kansul-Amal, pg.79
- [28] Isnade Hassan
- [29] Al-Atqan:212
- [30] Muwatta
- [31] (56-77:80)
- [32] Imam Bukhari, Kitab-ul-tafseer: pg 358
- [33] Imam Zarkasi, Al-burhan fi ulumul Qur'an
- [34] ibid
- [35] also marks the start of the Islamic calender
- [36] original inhabitants of the city of Madinah
- [37] migrants from Makkah to Madinah