


Compilation of the Qur'an during Caliph Abu Bakr?

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Q: How was the compilation of the Qur'an realized during the time of Caliph Abu Bakr?

Following the death of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, it was realized that many of those who had died in military campaigns had been memorizers of the Qur'an, with around 70 dying in the Battle of Yamama alone; Umar ibn al-Khattab suggested to Caliph Abu Bakr that the entire Qur'an be compiled and written down. Abu Bakr entrusted this task to Zayd ibn Thabit, who had worked as a scribe for Prophet Muhammad. Zayd ibn Thabit was a leading scholar and memorizer of the Qur'an. After carrying out this task meticulously, Zayd ibn Thabit prepared the official compilation of the Qur'an; however, he did not depend solely on his own memory, but rather searched for written texts from two separate persons as two proofs of each verse. Abu Bakr also openly demanded that every person in the city who had a portion of the Qur'an that had been written down bring it to Zayd ibn Thabit. At the same time, Umar first verified whether the Qur'anic portion in hands of the Companions had been written in the presence of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and then checked that such a revelation had been committed to memory by the Companions. Zayd ibn Thabit showed great care and dedication in this sacred task, and required two independent witnesses before accepting that a certain Qur'anic portion had been written in the presence of the Prophet. The main aim in this undertaking was not only to confirm the Qur'anic portion with one that had been memorized but also to ensure that it had been written in the Prophet's presence.

In connection with this precision, utmost care and dedication, it is impossible not to see the manifestations of Divine will and God's help, as mentioned in the verse, "Indeed it is We, We Who send down the Reminder, and it is indeed We Who are its Guardian" (Hijr 15:9).

The pages which were compiled during the time of Caliph Abu Bakr were known as a mushaf. This word literally means a manuscript that is bound between two covers as a single volume. After Abu Bakr, this mushaf was transferred to Caliph Umar and stayed with him during his lifetime; later being transferred to his daughter Hafsa. As a matter of fact, this was not the first time the Revelation had been recorded. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, had himself done the same thing when he was alive. But, the difference

between the two undertakings is that during the Prophet's lifetime the Revelation had been written on sheets of various materials, whereas it was written and compiled between two covers during the period of Caliph Abu Bakr.