**Question 3: Compilation of Qur’an**

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The Arabic word *Tafseer* is used to mean “explanation of the Qur’aan.” The

science of *Tafseer* is called *Usool at-Tafseer* which refers to the fundamental rules

and information necessary for the correct understanding of the Qur’aan. In this

section on the Fundamentals of *Tafseer (Usool at-Tafseer),* we will look at how

the Qur’aan was written and compiled into one book, as well as the significance

of the knowledge.

**A. ERA OF THE PROPHET** (r) **609-632 C.E.1**

The Qur’aan was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (r) in sections throughout the

twenty-three years of his prophethood. Whenever a problem arose or whenever

Allaah wanted to give the Prophet (r) and his followers special advice, Allaah

would send angel Jibreel with a part of the Qur’aan which he would recite to the

Prophet (r). Thus, the Qur’aan was not revealed all at once in its complete form,

like the earlier books of revelation, but in parts over a period of time.

**Preservation of the Qur’aan**

The Prophet (r) passed on all of the Qur’aan to his companions before he died.

He used a number of different ways to make sure that they memorized and

recorded it exactly as he learned it.

1. The Prophet (r) used to recite aloud various parts of the Qur’aan in the

*Salaahs* (Congregational Prayers). In that way, his followers used to hear

parts of the Qur’aan daily.

3. The Prophet (r) informed his followers that the best of them were those

who learned and taught the Qur’aan. This encouraged them to make even

greater efforts to memorize the Qur’aan and teach it to others.

4. Those who were able to read and write were told by the Prophet (r) to

write down the various sections of the Qur’aan as they were revealed. The

Prophet (r) would tell them the order in which they record the verses.

Because there was no paper in Arabia at that time, the Qur’aan was written down

on anything which was available. The companions wrote the verses ofQur’aan on

date palm leaves, flat stones, tree bark, wood, dried animal skins and even the

shoulder blades of sheep or camels. Thus, the verses of the Qur’aan were

preserved in the hearts of the Muslims, as well as written down, during the

lifetime of the Prophet (r). Since people entered Islaam at various points during

the Prophet’s (r) mission, only a few of them heard all of the Qur’aan directly

from the Prophet (r). Also some companions were able to memorize better than

others. So, even though all of them memorized portions of the Qur’aan, only a

few were able to memorize all of the Qur’aan during the Prophet’s (r) lifetime.

When the Prophet (r) died in the year 632 C.E., the whole of the Qur’aan was not

written down one complete book. It was recorded on various pieces of writing

material and kept in the possession of different followers of the Prophet (r).

**B. THE ERA OF ABU BAKR 632-634 C.E.**

After the death of the Prophet (r), there arose three main groups opposed to

Islaam in the Arabian peninsula.

under the leadership of Caliph Abu Bakr there was three groups created who were against the shariat and true muslims were forced to fight these

three groups in order to re-establish Islaam throughout the Arabian peninsula.

The First Writing

During these wars known as the *Riddah* (apostasy), many of those who had

memorized large portions of the Qur’aan were killed. Those Muslims who had a

lot of Qur’aan in their hearts knew well the rewards which Allaah has promised

those who fight for Islaam. So, they would always be in the front lines of all the

battles.

‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab realized the danger of what was happening and feared that

if something was not done immediately, the Qur’aan would be lost to future

generations of Muslims. So he went to Caliph Abu Bakr and advised him to have

the whole Qur’aan written down in one book in order to preserve it from being

lost. Abu Bakr at first refused to do so, because the Prophet (r) had not told men

to do it. He was afraid of bringing anything new into the religion because the

Prophet` (r) had warned them about changing the religion. Christians had gone

astray before them because they changed the religion which Prophet ‘Eesaa

brought after he left them. So Abu Bakr was very much against making any

changes in the religion which Prophet Muhammad (r) had not told them to do.

However, after thinking over the situation very carefully, he came to realize that

‘Umar’s advice was right and that it was not really a change in the religion. The

Prophet (r) had ordered them to write down the various verses and chapters of

the Qur’aan, while it was being revealed, in order to help preserve it. Compiling

all of what was written into one complete book was then only the completion of

what the Prophet (r) had begunCaliph Abu Bakr asked Zayd ibn Thaabit to be in charge of collecting and writing

down the whole Qur’aan. Zayd at first refused to do it for the same reasons that

Abu Bakr had, but after some time he also came to realize that it was right. Zayd

was chosen

Zayd began the process by collecting all of the material on which the Qur’aan had

been written. He then gathered around him all of those who had also memorized

all of the Qur’aan or large portions of it. He then compared what was written

down with what he and others had memorized. If all agreed, he would then write

it down on pages of leather. In this way the whole Qur’aan was written down

during the reign of the first Caliph. On its completion, Zayd turned it over to

Caliph Abu Bakr who kept it until his death, two years after he had become

Caliph. Just before his death, Abu Bakr turned over the Qur’aan to ‘Umar whom

he had chosen to be the second Caliph. ‘Umar kept this copy of the Qur’aan with

1. him until his death, ten years later, at the hand of an assassin named Abu Lu’lu.’

The Qur’aan was then turned over to his daughter, Hafsah, who was also one of

the Prophet’s (r) wives. Hafsah kept the Qur’aan in her house in al-Madeenah,

but she made it available to anyone who to make copies from it, or check the

accuracy of what they had memorized.

**C.THE ERA OF ‘UTHMAAN 644-656 C.E.**

After the death of the second Caliph, ‘Umar, a committee made up of six of the

most famous companions of the Prophet (r) chose ‘Uthmaan ibn ‘Affaan to be

the third Caliph.

During the reign of Caliph ‘Umar (634-644 C.E.), the Islamic state expanded

beyond the borders of the Arabian peninsula into Egypt, Syria and Iraq. In the

subsequent reign of Caliph ‘Uthmaan, the expansion continued on into Persia,

India, Russia, China, Turkey and across North Africa. Many of the people of

these regions accepted Islaam and learned the recitation of Qur’aan from the early

Muslims. The Qur’aan was revealed to the Prophet (r) in seven different Arabic

1. dialects, and the early Muslims taught the Qur’aan in its different readings.

The Second Writing

In the Muslim provinces, some Arabs began to boast that their dialect was

superior to that of others. Also, when new Muslims made mistakes in their

recitation of the Qur’aan, it was sometimes difficult to tell whether it was really

an error or whether it was one of the seven readings which were taught by the

Prophet (r). These problems eventually became a source of confusion in the

Muslims provinces outside of Arabia. One of the prophet’s companions

(*Sahaabah*) by the name of Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan noticed the confusion

while he was in Itaq, and feared that it might lead to a breakup of the Muslim

nation and the changing of the Qur’aan. On his return to the capital, he informed

Caliph ‘Uthmaan of what he had heard and seen. Caliph ‘Uthmaan realized the

seriousness of the situation and called the major *Sahaabah* together in order to

find a solution to the problem. They decided to make official copies of the

Qur’aan from the one compiled in Caliph Abu Bakr’s time and limit the people to

its recitation.

‘Uthmaan asked Hafsah for the original copy of the Qur’aan and called on Zayd

ibn Thaabit to head a committee of four Qur’anic scholars who would take on the

task of making the official copies. When the copies were completed, the original

was returned to Hafsah. A total of seven copies were made and one was sent to

Makkah, another to Syria, one to Basrah, one to Kufah, one to Yemen, one to

Bahrain and one was kept in the capital, al-Madeenah. Caliph ‘Uthmaan sent an

official reciter of the Qur’aan with each copy in order to clear up any problems

which might later arise. He also ordered that all other copies of the Qur’aan be

1. destroyed, as people had made notes in their personal copies and some copies

were incomplete. All new copies were then made from the official copy called

*Mus-haf Uthmaan,* and in that way the Qur’aan was saved from any kind of

change or loss. This process was completed in the year 646 C.E., two years after

‘Uthmaan became the new Caliph.

1. **MEMORIZATION OF THE QUR’AAN**

Although the total number of *Sahaabah* who had memorized all of the Qur’aan

and read it back to the Prophet (r) before his death were only eight, many others

memorized it after his death. In fact, with every succeeding generation of

Muslims, the numbers of those who memorized all of the Qur’aan has increased.

Today there are literally hundreds of thousands of Muslims throughout the world

who have done so.

There is no other book, religious or otherwise, which has been memorized on this

scale in recorded history. The Qur’aan is about four fifths the length of the New

Testament of the Christians, yet not a single person in recorded history is known

to have memorized the New Testament completely. In fact, if all of the books in

the world were somehow to be destroyed, the only book which could be rewritten,

word for word without a single mistake is the Glorious Qur’aan.

Significance Of The Qur’aan’s Preservation

Allaah promised in the Qur’aan that He would take on the responsibility of

protecting His finalWord from loss. He said,

**“Verily We have revealed the Reminder (Qur’aan) and verily We**

**shall preserve it.”3**

Thus, the Qur’aan has been preserved in both the oral as well written from the

1. way no other religious book in history has been.