

Home > The Collection and Preservation of the Qur'an > Their Conflict with Other Traditions Related to the Compilation of the Qur'an

Their Conflict with Other Traditions Related to the Compilation of the Qur'an

These traditions are in conflict with all those tradition which stress that the Qur'an was recorded and compiled during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. It has been reported by a group which include: Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ahmed b. Hanbal, Tirmidhi, Nas'ai, Ibn Haban, al-Hakim, al-Bayhaqi, Ziya al Maqdasi, who report from Ibn Abbas as following:

"I asked Uthman b. Affan: 'Why have you joined al-Anfal with Baraah, excluding the line of Bismillah from between them, while the former is shorter than 100 verses, and the later exceeds a hundred, and then you placed them among the seven long Surahs? What made you do that?'"

Uthman said:

"At times, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to come up with the revelation of Surahs containing numerous verses, then when revelation came in small parts, he used to call his scribe and say: "Place this part among the Surah which says so and so": and when verses were revealed, he instructed: "Place these among the Surah which mentions such and such thing". Al-Anfal was from among the early revelations at Madina, and Bara'ah was from what was revealed last. – Their contents were similar, so I presumed that they belonged to each other. The Prophet (ﷺ) never clarified this in his lifetime, so I joined them, without Basmalah in between and placed them among the seven long Surahs". 1

Tabrani reports, and so does Ibn Asakir from Asha'bi.

"The Qur'an was compiled in the days of the Prophet (ﷺ) by six men from the Ansar. They were Ubay b. Ka'ab, Zaid b. Thabit, Muadh b. Jabal, Abu al-Darda', Sa'd b. Ubaid, and Abu Zaid. And Ibn Jariyah had taken it except two or three Surah". 2

And Qataadah says:

"I asked Anas b. Malik: 'Who collected the Qur'an at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ)?' He said: 'Four of them,

all from Ansar. They were Ubay b. Ka'b, Muadh b. Jabal, Zaid b. Thabit and Abu Zaid'.³

Masruq, when recalling Abdullah b. Umar and Abdullah b. Masud said:

"I have always loved him. I heard the Prophet ('s) say: Take the Qur'an from four: from Abdullah b. Masood, Salim, Muadh and Ubay b. Ka'b".⁴

Nasai has a report based on authentic chain from Abdullah b. Umar who said:

"I gathered the Qur'an, and read it every night. The Prophet heard about it, so he said: "Read it in a month ..."⁵

We will mention the compilation of the Qur'an by Umm Waraqah later.

One might argue that the collection or compilation mentioned in these reports denote committing the Qur'an to memory, and not to the papers. This presumption cannot be corroborated. Besides, it is a known fact that there were numerous believers at the time of the Prophet ('s) who knew the Qur'an by heart, so how can the memorising of the Qur'an be confined to four or six names? Those who have studied carefully the lives of the companions of the Prophet ('s) would know it for certain that the Qur'an was ready compiled during the days of the Prophet ('s) and that the number of its compilers were too many to be ignored.

The report by al-Bukhari through Anas stating that when the Prophet ('s) died, the Qur'an had not been compiled by anyone except four: Abu al Darda, Muadh b. Jabal, Zaid b. Thabit and Abu Zaid, is a report which ought to be discarded and rejected because it contradicts not only the earlier reports, but also what al-Bukhari himself reported. Moreover, the report cannot be accepted because it is difficult to conceive that the reporter knew all the Muslims at the time of the death of the Prophet ('s), and that in spite of the great number of the Muslims, scattered all around, he was able to find only four who had collected the Qur'an. This is a mere conjecture.

To summarize the whole situation, one may ask:

(a) With all the foregoing reports, how can one believe that Abu Bakr was the first to compile the Qur'an, after he had become a Caliph?

(b) And if we accept the report, it is strange that Abu Bakr should ask Zaid and Umar to collect the Qur'an from leather parchments, pieces of papers and from the people's memory, while Abdullah, Muadh and Ubayy were present alive among the people, especially when the Prophet ('s) had himself recommended that the Qur'an be taken from them?

(c) Of course, they could not have anything from Salim because he was one of those killed at the battle of *Yamamah*. But Zaid, one of the compilers of the Qur'an, was there, and Abu Bakr had certified his character as young, intelligent and without blemish. So what was the need of resorting to others?

(d) Finally, the widely acknowledged and authentic tradition about *thaqalayn* leaves us with no doubt that the Qur'an existed in a complete book form. We shall point this out later.

-
1. Muntakhab Kanz al Ummal, v2, p.48
 2. Muntakhab Kanz al Ummal, v2, p.48
 3. Sahih, Bukhari, chapter: "Qura" from the Prophet's companions, v6, p.202
 4. Sahih, Bukhari, chapter: "Qura" from the Prophet's companions, v6, p.202
 5. al Itqan, v1, p.124

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/the-collection-and-preservation-of-the-quran-extract-ayatullah-adul-qasim-al-khui/their-conflict>