



NEW MUSLIM
ACADEMY

HISTORY OF THE COMPILATION OF THE Quran



The Quran is the final word of God that was revealed to the Messenger Muhammad in the Arabic language of 7th century Arabia. God guaranteed the preservation of the Quran as is told in the Quran. From the start of the revelation of its passages, the Quran was preserved. There are three stages in the history of the Quran's compilation.



Stage One:

Stage One: During the Lifetime of the Messenger Muhammad 610–633

The Quran was revealed over the whole duration of the ministry of the Messenger Muhammad. A period of around 23 years. Gabriel, a special Angel from God tasked with communicating the Scripture to God's Messengers throughout history, would deliver certain verses and passages of the Quran at a time. In this way, it was easier for the Messenger Muhammad and his followers to learn the scripture, and apply it gradually.



Stage One:

God says “It is a recitation that We have revealed in parts, so that you can recite it to people at intervals; We have sent it down little by little.” For this reason, God commanded the Messenger Muhammad to not rush or hasten to repeat what was being delivered, instead to trust that God would make the revelation settle in his heart. God says, “Move not your tongue with haste, to recite it. It is for Us to collect it and give you the ability to recite it.”



Stage One:

Oral Transmission

Therefore, the norm in terms of the preservation of the Quran during this first stage was oral transmission and memorisation. The people of the Messenger Muhammad in Arabia were not a people of a written language or previous scripture. They followed an oral tradition. They relied heavily on their memory to preserve their history, poetry and literature. When the Quran was delivered by the Messenger, the primary way to preserve it was memorization. Thus many of the early Muslims, the disciples of the Messenger Muhammad, were known to be proficient in their memorization of the Quran.



Stage One:

Writing the scripture

There were some lettered Muslims who were tasked with writing down the scripture and recording it. The Messenger Muhammad appointed a number of his followers to be scribes of revelation. The Messenger Muhammad would often recite the Quran to them after its delivery and they would memorise it and record it. However, this recording of the Quran was not in a single place or in a single book form. Instead, different parts were held by different people. They recorded the scripture on different materials such as parchment and palm tree leaves.



Stage One:

Order of the verses

The order of the Quranic verses was preserved in the memories of the disciples of the Messenger Muhammad. Disciples such as the four Caliphs Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali along with Ibn Masud, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ubayy ibn Kab and many others were known for their proficiency in the Quran. Each year, Gabriel would come in Ramadan and revise all the revelation with the Messenger Muhammad. In the final year of his life, it was revised twice to ensure the correct order and completion of the Quran.



Stage Two:

During the Reign of Abu Bakr 633–635

After the death of the Messenger Muhammad, Abu Bakr became the Muslim leader, Caliph. During his reign, Abu Bakr had to contend with different people who wanted to undermine the teachings of Islam after the death of the Messenger Muhammad. There were several false prophets that claimed authority. Thus, his reign was marked by a number of battles to ensure the integrity of Islam and protect it from deviant ideas and false beliefs.



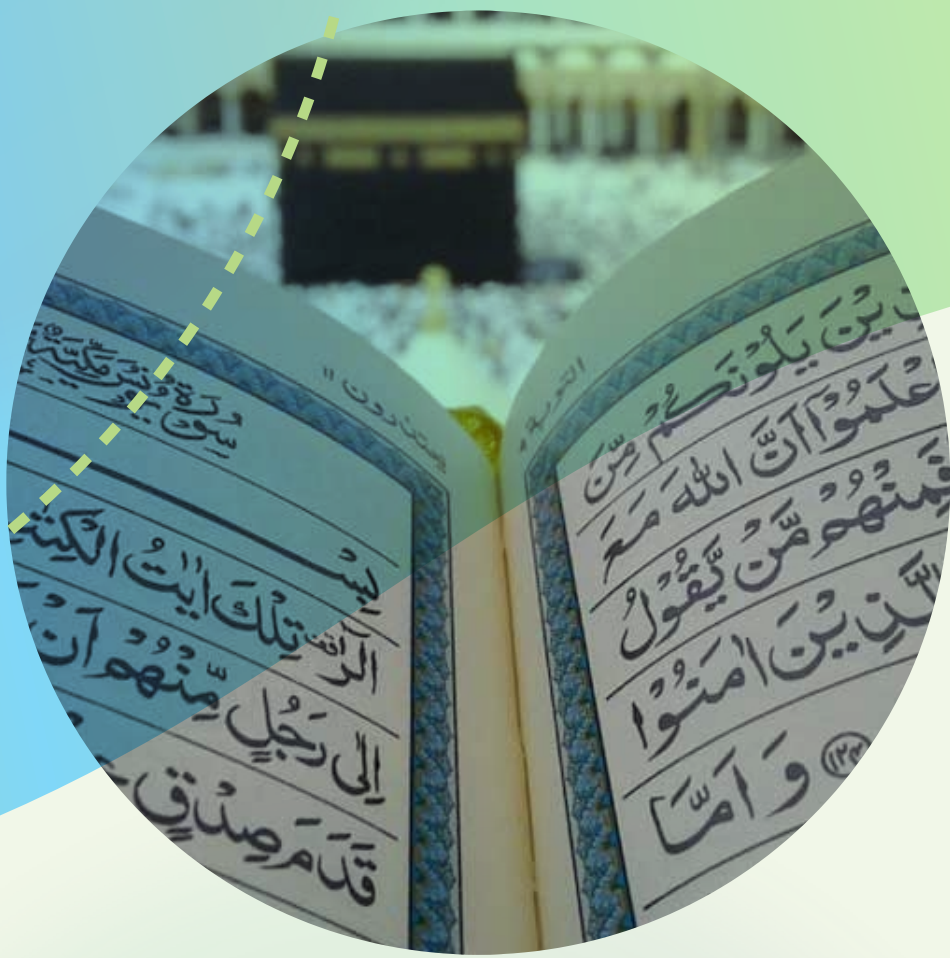
Stage Two:

Compiling into a single book

During one such battle, a number of Muslims who had memorised the Quran were killed in combat. This prompted Umar, who would later become the second Caliph, to urge Abu Bakr to compile the Quran into a single book form. The objective was to ensure that the loss of life of those who preserved the Quran in their memories does not affect the loss of scripture.

Abu Bakr agreed. Abu Bakr charged Zayd ibn Thabit, one of the scribes of the Messenger Muhammad, with the task of compiling the Quran.

Zayd gathered all the parchments and writing materials from all the Muslims who had them.



Stage Two:

The mother copy

Now, for the first time, the Quran was compiled in one book. Remember, this was within two years of the death of the Messenger Muhammad and a time when the majority of his disciples were still living. Thus, the authenticity, precision and accuracy of the Quran would have been assured. One of the major objectives of this compilation was to have ensured the preservation of the Quran in such a way that none could dispute. All the Muslims had attested to its authenticity and verified its integrity. This copy remained in Medina and was not copied or distributed. It was the mother copy or original.



Stage Three:

The Reign of Uthman 644–656

During the reigns of Abu Bakr and then his successor Umar, the Muslim empire expanded rapidly. It spread throughout Byzantium, Persia and beyond. Many new Muslims entered the faith. As many of them being people who were not proficient in Arabic, differences in the reading of the Quran began to emerge. One of the senior disciples of the Messenger Muhammad, Huthayfah, had witnessed this first hand whilst in Azerbaijan. Upon his return to Medina, Huthayfah went to the third Caliph Uthman and told him of his experiences.



Stage Three:

Official Copies

He beseeched Uthman to do something before these differences in recitation lead to enmity and bickering or even worse, bloodshed. Uthman agreed. He would send official copies of the Quran throughout the Muslim world so that there would be no differences.

He instructed a group of four disciples of the Messenger Muhammad, under the leadership of Zayd ibn Thabit to undertake this task. Zayd was the same person appointed previously by Abu Bakr. They took that copy from the time of Abu Bakr and set out making copies.



Stage Three:

Uthman then instructed that one copy should be sent to the governor of every province and all other unofficial copies burned.

In this way, the third and final stage of the compilation of the Quran was completed. Along with the official Quran copies, Uthman also sent teachers to each province to ensure that people read and memorised the Quran correctly. Since that time, every copy of the Quran in the world has come from that authorised copy of Uthman. The tradition of learning the Quran from qualified teachers has continued until our time.