

# The Qur'ān

## Lesson 9:

## Critical History of the Mushaf



## **Ibrahim Moosa in response to Nicholas Kristof (9/19/2010)**

... I need to apologize to my fellow Americans and all victims of terror who suffered for harm committed in the name of Islam... I apologize for the HURT, PAIN AND LOSS caused to the family members of those who are dead and to the survivors for the deeds committed by people who acted in my name as a Muslim... I think the time for reconciliation in America is overdue: it should be we Muslims who take the first step. .. But we have no moral choice: reconciliation is a duty in Islam.... It took me some time to realize that it is the hurt of 9/11 that is causing many people to be angry at Islam and Muslims.... When performing the act of reconciliation, one should not ask Americans, the British, the Spanish or other nations to apologize for their role in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan for the deaths of thousands in those countries and elsewhere. This is a realization that many of these people have already reached, while the rest will hopefully in time find it in their own hearts and consciences to atone. But it is not for me to say.

For good and evil are not equal:  
repel (evil) with what is better,  
and then the one between you  
and whom was enmity  
will become a bosom friend.

No one will be offered this (gift of reconciliation)  
but those who are constant  
No one will be offered it  
Save those who were gifted with a great good fortune.

(Qur'an 41: 34-35)

# During Prophet's Life

- When the Prophet passed the Qur'ān existed in written form but scattered in loose fragments owned by diff ppl.
- Personal copies: Ubayy b. Ka`b, Ibn Mas'ud, 'Umar, 'Ali, 'Aisha, Ḥafṣa (ie were literate/could write)



# First compilation under Abu Bakr

- 2 years after the prophet's passing, Abu Bakr has Zayd b. Thābit collect writing materials into one body and collate them (according to the order of the Prophet?)
- Zayd's criteria for inclusion: 2 ppl besides himself had to have dictation directly from Prophet

# `Uthmāni Muṣḥaf (1)

- Creates committee of 4 to rewrite the collection as *muṣḥaf*: Zayd b. Thabit, Abdullah b. az-Zubayr, Sa`id b. al-`As and `Abdul Raḥman b. al-Ḥarīth
- When in disagreement as to spelling (orthography) or pronunciation, were to use dialect of Quraysh
- The order of āyahs and surāhs based on ?
- Accomplished in 24-25 AH?
- Sent out *muṣḥafs* with reciters and ordered others burned
- To what extent were the *aḥruf* preserved?



# Uthmāni Muṣḥaf (2)

## Physical features:

- Lack of certain alifs (salāt, zakāt) and waws script is Kufi, w/o nuqāt or tashkīl
- These added by grammarian Abul 'Aswad al-Du'ali (d.69 AH) and his students (verse 9:3 convinced him)
- Later, naskh script developed (cursive) used instead of Kufi by Ibn Muqlah (d.327)



# Important variant *muṣḥafs* (1)

645 `Uthmān employs Zayd again to verify materials and have them copied onto pages in order to create final text (`Uthmānic codex) = the *muṣḥaf*

Prophet passed 632...

Important variant *muṣḥafs*: (Ibn Mas`ud, Ubayy b. Ka`b and Ibn Abbas)

- Ibn Mas`ud (d.653/33)

- |        |                     |                      |
|--------|---------------------|----------------------|
| • 2:70 | U: al-baqara        | IM: al-baqira        |
| • 2:19 | U: kullamā          | IM: kulla mā         |
| • 2:68 | U: ud`u             | IM: sal              |
| • 1:6  | U: ihdinā           | IM: arshidnā         |
| • 2:2  | U: dhālika'l-kitābu | IM: tanzīlu'l kitābi |

# Important variant *muṣḥafs* (2)

-Ubayy b. Ka'b:

Recited sura 98 (al-Bayyina) in a form he claimed to have heard from the Pro-phet. It included two verses unrecorded in the 'Uthmanic text.

- Ibn `Abbas (d.68/687):

•111:4

U: ḥammālata'l-ḥaṭab

IA: ḥāmilatun ul-ḥaṭaba

•1:6

U: ṣirāt

IA: sirāt

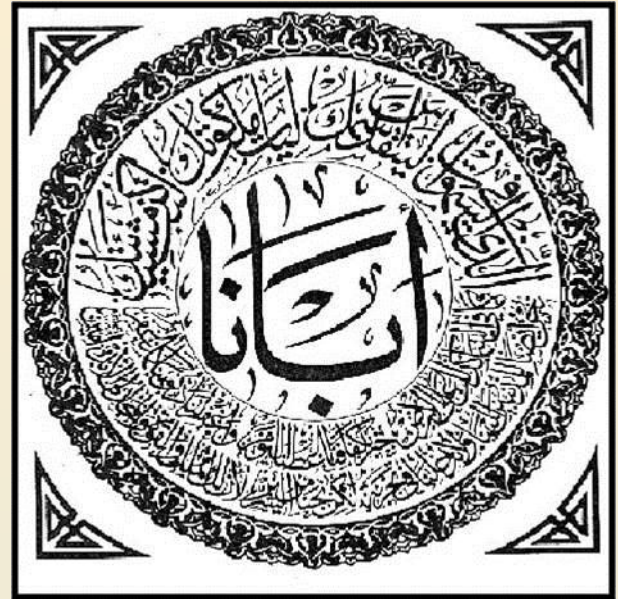
# Variations on Ikhlas (s.112)

112:1

- U: “Qul huwallahu ahad”
- IM, `Ubayd, `Umar omit: “qul”
- Anas b. Malik, Zaid b. Thabit, etc.  
read: “al-wahid”

112: 3

- U: “Lam yalid wa lam yūlad”
- `Aisha, Umm Salama and Salim read:  
“lam yūlad wa lam yūlid”



## “Early Debates on the Integrity of the Qur'ān: A Brief Survey” by Hossein Modarressi

Some medieval reports specifically addressed the official 'Uthmanic rescension of the Qur'an. They reported that many prominent Companions could not find in that official text portions of the revelation they had themselves heard from the Prophet, or found them in a different form. Ubayy b. Ka'b, thought that the original version of sura 33 (al-Ahzab) had been much longer, from which he specifically remembered the stoning verse that is missing from the 'Uthmanic text. (30) His claim was supported by Zayd b. Thabit, (31) by 'A'isha (who reported that during the Prophet's lifetime the sura was about three times as long, although when 'Uthman collected the Qur'an he found only what was made available in his text), (32) and by Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman (who found some seventy verses missing in the new official text, verses that he himself used to recite during the lifetime of the Prophet)...

# The Controversy

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNdvsLh128Q>

**The Controversy:** What exactly was the process of gathering and promulgation? Did later Muslims rewrite the early history?

Before Sana'a, 3 ancient copies:

- Library of Tashkent in Uzbekistan, 8<sup>th</sup>
- Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, Turkey, 8<sup>th</sup>
- British Library in London, late 7<sup>th</sup>
- But the Sa'na manuscripts older: script originates from the Hijaz

# The Controversy

Gerd Puin:

“My idea is that the Koran is a kind of cocktail of texts that were not all understood even at the time of Muhammad. Many of them may even be a hundred years older than Islam itself. Even within the Islamic traditions there is a huge body of contradictory information, including a significant Christian substrate; one can derive a whole Islamic anti-history from them if one wants. The Qur’an claims for itself that it is ‘mubeen,’ or clear, but if you look at it, you will notice that every fifth sentence or so simply doesn’t make sense. Many Muslims will tell you otherwise, of course, but the fact is that a fifth of the Qur’anic text is just incomprehensible. This is what has caused the traditional anxiety regarding translation. If the Qur’an is not comprehensible, if it can’t even be understood in Arabic, then it’s not translatable into any language. That is why Muslims are afraid. Since the Qur’an claims repeatedly to be clear but is not—there is an obvious and serious contradiction. Something else must be going on.”

quoted from: Lester, Toby (January 1999). “What is the Koran?” *The Atlantic Monthly*

# The Controversy

Like other early Arabic literature, the Sa'na Koran was written without any diacritical marks, vowel symbols or any guide to how it should be read, says Puin. "The text was written so defectively that it can be read in a perfect way only if you have a strong oral tradition." The Sa'na text, just like other early Korans, was a guide to those who knew it already by memory, he says. Those that were unfamiliar with the Koran would read it differently because there were no diacritical and vowel symbols.

As years went by, the correct reading of the Koran became less clear, he says. People made changes to make sense of the text.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2000/aug/08/highereducation.theguardian>

**So what does Puin's Scholarly work actually show?**

“The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qur’an of the Prophet” by Behnam Sadeghi and Uwe Bergmann, in *Arabica* 57 (2010)

C-1, like Ibn Mas`ud and Ubbay b. Ka`b’s versions, formed parallel textual traditions

Comparing `Uthmanic and parallel versions can help come up with the Qur’anic prototype (the Prophet’s Qur’an)

The sequence of verses and sentences were fixed in the Prophetic prototype

The sequences of Surah: some chosen by the Prophet some not

`Uthmanic tradition is actually a better reproduction of the Prophetic prototype than C1 or any of the other companion versions

# Questions:

How worrisome are these issues of variability?

If we are to believe Sadeghi and Bergmann's results about the ordering of all the surahs, what can be said about the authority of the current Qur'an, if anything?