

# A VIRTUOUS TASK

*The Compilation of the Qur'ān*



Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān al-Qādirī al-Bareilwī  
Translation & Notes by Muhammad Kalim

TheSunniWay 

*Jam' al-Qur'ān wa bima 'Azūhu li 'Uthmān*  
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Revised Edition

Shaykh al-Islām al-Mujaddid al-A'zam  
Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān al-Qādirī al-Bareilwī

Translation & notes by Muhammad Kalim  
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# ABOUT THESUNNIWAY

## **TheSunniWay**

TheSunniWay is an organisation working towards the advancement of Sunnī Şufī Islām as outlined in the noble works of Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān. Our work includes using modern technology, such as mobile applications and the internet to provide much-needed authentic Sunnī material, as well as printing books and holding educational courses and classes. We have recently started a Dar al Ifta service where people can seek answers for their religious queries. We also aim to provide funding and support for our ‘Ulamā, giving them the perfect platform to work for the noble Dīn. Visit our website to find out more and support our work.

## **Ridawi Translations**

Imām of the Ahl al-Sunnah, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān al-Qādirī has penned countless works, covering a wide array of topics and subjects, in many languages, including; Arabic, Urdu and Persian. Most of his monographs and books, however, are only accessible to those who can read and understand the Imām’s writings in their original language. Translations of the Imām’s expository and comprehensive works are not readily made available in the English Language for the English speaking public to read and benefit from.

Ridawi Translations is an initiative established by TheSunniWay to translate the important monographs of the Imām. The aim is to translate and make available in English works written by the Imām and also works written about the Imām.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته الله was born on 10 Shawwāl 1272 AH (circa 14 June 1856 CE) in Bareilly Sharīf, UP, India. His father, the Ghazzālī of his era, Mawlānā Naqī Alī Khān رحمته الله, and grandfather, Mawlānā Riḍā Alī Khān رحمته الله, were from the eminent scholars and saints of their time. His forefathers migrated from Qandahar, Afghanistan, to Lahore firstly, and then later took up residence in Bareilly.

Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته الله at a glance:

- In 1276 AH (1860 CE), aged four, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته الله completed the reading of the Qur’ān.
- In 1278 AH (1862 CE), aged six, he conversed with an Arab in eloquent Arabic.
- In 1280 AH (1864 CE), aged eight, while studying the renowned book of Arabic grammar, *Hidāyah al-Naḥw*, he wrote a commentary on it in the Arabic language.
- In 1282 AH (1866 CE), aged ten, he wrote an astonishing commentary of the complex and intricate book on the principles of jurisprudence (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*), *Musallam al-Thubūt*.
- On 14 Ramadān 1286 AH (1869 CE), aged 13, 10 months and five days, he completed his study of all the conventional sciences and graduated as a Muftī. He studied the remaining sciences by himself and mastered both Islamic and secular sciences. At that very age, he began teaching and also took up the responsibility of issuing edicts (*fatāwa*).
- In 1286 AH (1869 CE), aged 13, he wrote a monograph on the definition of praise (*ḥamd*) and guidance (*hidāyah*) in the Arabic language entitled, *Dū’ al-Nihāyah fī Plām al-Ḥamd wa al-Hidāyah*.
- In 1294 AH (1877 CE), aged 22, he was blessed with successorship [*khilāfat*] and his spiritual guide, Shāh Āle Rasūl Marehrawī رحمته الله, proudly said, “If on the day of reckoning, Allāh asks me, ‘O offspring of the Prophet ﷺ! What have you brought from the world?’ I will present Imām Aḥmad Riḍā.”
- In 1295 AH (1878 CE), aged 23, he performed his first Ḥajj and received *Ijāzah* in Ḥadīth and Fiqh from various Arab scholars.
- In 1318 AH (1900 CE), aged 46, during the event held under the

supervision of Shāh Amīn Firdausī رحمته اللہ علیہ, *Sajjādah of Khānqah e Mu'azzam*, Bihar Sharīf, in the presence of countless scholars and respectable spiritual guides of the Indian subcontinent<sup>1</sup>, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته اللہ علیہ was hailed as the ‘reviver of the present century’ (ie fourteenth century). Also, the first edition of approximately 100 books of Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته اللہ علیہ were printed by *Tohfa e Hanafiyyah*.

- In 1320 AH (1902 CE), aged 48, he issued a ruling of *kufr* upon four elders of Deoband in *al-Mustanad al-Mu'tamad alā al-Mu'taqad al-Muntaqad*.
- In 1323 AH (1905 CE), aged 51, during his visit to the holy sanctuaries, he presented his ruling of *kufr* extracted from *al-Mustanad al-Mu'tamad* to the scholars of Makkah Mu'azzamah and Madīnah Munawwarah to endorse. The scholars attested the ruling of *kufr* and their attestations along with the ruling of *kufr* were compiled in *Ḥussām al-Ḥaramayn*, which was later published in India.
- In 1324 AH (1906 CE), aged 52, the scholars of Makkah Mu'azzamah, Madīnah Munawwarah and other countries also gave Imām Aḥmad Riḍā the title of ‘reviver’ and praised him as the ‘leader of the leaders’ (*Imām al-A'immaḥ*).
- In 1326 AH (1908 CE), aged 54, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته اللہ علیہ compiled a detailed Arabic commentary, *Jadd al-Mumtār*, on the renowned Hanafī text, *Radd al-Muḥtār* of Allāmah Ibn Abidīn al-Shāmī رحمته اللہ علیہ in five volumes.
- In 1330 AH (1911 CE), aged 58, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته اللہ علیہ blessed the world with an accurate translation of the Qur'ān, *Kanz al-Imān* (the Treasure of Faith). Thereafter, he also blessed the world with a 12 volume jurisprudential encyclopaedia entitled, *al-Atāyā al-Nabawiyyah fī al-Fatāwa al-Riḍawiyyah* (The Prophetic Gifts in the Riḍāwi Edicts). This encyclopaedia is now available in 30 volumes after the translation and addition of monographs written by the Imām.<sup>2</sup>

Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته اللہ علیہ left this mundane world on 25 Safar 1340 AH (28 October 1921) at the age of approximately 67, according to the lunar calendar.

The number of known works written by Imām Aḥmad Riḍā رحمته اللہ علیہ amount to 679, of which 206 monographs are included in the 30-volume edition of *Fatāwa Riḍawiyyah*.

1 Before the splitting of what was then India. Thus including what today is India as well as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

2 Extracted from *Ḥāyat e A'lā Ḥaḍrat* by Allāmah Zafar al-Dīn al-Bihārī.

## PREFACE

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was taken [from this life] whilst the Qur'ān had not yet been gathered into a book.<sup>1</sup>

All praise is for Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds. Blessings and peace be upon our master, our leader, our refuge and protection, Muḥammad, and upon his progeny and his companions.

This concise tract serves as an introductory work on the history of the compilation of the Qur'ān and its compilers. Written in 1322 AH, in reply to two questions about the compilation of the Qur'ān; one received from the author's hometown, Bareilly, and the other from Aẓīmabād (Patna), Imām Aḥmad Riḍā, in his inimitable style – succinct but comprehensive – briefly explains why Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه is referred to as *jami' al-Qur'ān* (compiler of the Qur'ān), how many others are also conferred this title, who are the compilers, upon whose counsel was it compiled, and why it was compiled.

This translation has been done from the Urdu text found in volume 26 of *al-Fatāwa al-Riḍawīyah*, published by Markaz e Ahl e Sunnat Barkāt e Razā, Porbandar, India (2003). Excluding references, the original Urdu text does not contain any other footnotes. Footnotes have therefore been added in certain places to aid understanding and explain terminology, as well as to provide important clarification, which may be beneficial to the reader. A summary of this tract has also been appended to this translation.

Many thanks to all those who reviewed this translation. Any errors that remain are mine alone.

Muhammad Kalim (Preston, UK)

14 Ṣafar 1437

28 November 2015

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<sup>1</sup> Fath al-Bārī 9:12; al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth no. 4986.



کام وہ لے لیجئے تم کو جو راضی کرے  
ٹھیک ہونا مِ رضا تم پہ کروں درود



## QUESTION 1

What do the scholars of the religion and Muftīs of the Sharī‘ah say regarding this matter, that did Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه compile the Qur’ān or did someone else compile it before him as well? Also, it is frequently heard that Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه compiled it, but his compilation was buried; is this true or false?

Answer and be rewarded.

### Answer

The compilation of the Qur’ān, the systematic organisation of the verses, and the completion and separation of the chapters (*sūrah*) occurred in the era of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ by the command of Allāh ﷻ as informed by Jibrīl عليه السلام, and with the command and guidance of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. However, the Qur’ān was preserved in the hearts of the companions; on various parchments; stone tablets; on the skins, scapulae and ribs of goats and sheep; and in other places. However, the entire Qur’ān was not yet compiled in one place.

When the Battle of *Yamāmah*<sup>2</sup> took place against Musaylamah Kadhāb – the false claimant of Prophethood – in the era of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه; many companions who had memorised the Qur’ān attained martyrdom. Amīr al-Mu‘minīn Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه received divine inspiration (*ilhām*) so he went to the court of the successor of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ (Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه) and said, “Many companions who had memorised the Qur’ān have been martyred in this battle. Similarly, if companions who have memorised the Qur’ān continue to be martyred in other battles, and the Qur’ān remains dispersed, there is fear that a lot of the Qur’ān will be lost. My advice is that you give the order for all of the chapters of the Qur’ān to be collected.” The successor of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ accepted his advice and ordered Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه and other companions who had memorised the Qur’ān to undertake this great task, and – all praise is for Allāh ﷻ – the entire Qur’ān was gathered, [whereby] each chapter was on a different folio. These

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2 Muḥammad ibn Jarīr and others report that the Battle of *Yamāmah* took place in 11 Hijrī. Ibn Qāni’ reports that the battle took place towards the end of 11 Hijrī. Other reports suggest that the battle took place in 12 Hijrī. The reconciliation between these two reports may be that the battle began in 11 Hijrī and ended in 12 Hijrī. And Allāh knows best.

*ṣūḥuf*<sup>3</sup> remained with Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, the successor of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ his entire life, then with Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, and then with the mother of the believers, Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa bint Farūq رضي الله عنها, the wife of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.

In the Arabian Peninsula, every tribe and community differed in the pronunciation of certain words. For example, some would use *alif-lām* for the definite article (*ḥarf al-ta’rīf*), while others used *alif-mīm*, just as the following Ḥadīth has been narrated in this dialect:

ليس من امبر الصيام في امسفر  
Fasting during travelling holds no reward<sup>4</sup>

Some would pronounce the ‘signs of the imperfect tense’ (*‘alāmāt al-mudāri’*) – *alif* (ا), *tā* (ت), *yā* (ي) and *nūn* (ن) – as *maftūḥ* and others as *maksūr*. Some would pronounce the predicate (*khabr*) of *mā* (ما) *shubh bi-laysa*<sup>5</sup> in the accusative case (*manṣūb*), while others would pronounce it in the nominative case (*marfū’*). Some would recite the noun (*ism*) of *inna* (إن), *anna* (أن) etc<sup>6</sup>. in the accusative case, and others would keep it in the nominative case. Certain tribes would always pronounce *mīm* (م) in place of *bā* (ب) and vice versa. Some would pronounce the *tā* (ة) in *rahmah* (رحمة) when stopping (*waqf*) as *hā* (ه), while others would pronounce it as *tā* (ت). On a *manṣūb munawwan*<sup>7</sup>, some would pause using *alif*, and some with just a *sukoon* (°); some would also pause using even a *waw* (و) and *yā* (ي) with *marfū’* and *majrūr* (genetive case) words.

Some tribes would suffice by reciting the letters of *maddah*<sup>8</sup> according to their

3 Sing. *ṣaḥīfa*, pl. *ṣūḥuf*, *ṣaḥāif*: lit. sheets, pages, folios. Generally, *ṣūḥuf* or *ṣaḥīfa* refers to the compilation of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. The manuscript compiled in the era of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq was not compiled into one *muṣḥaf*, but rather each chapter was on a different folio and the chapters were not systematically organised one after the other.

4 Sharaḥ Ma’ānī al-Āthār, HM Saeed Company, Karachi 1:358.

5 *Mā* (ما) that is similar to *laysa* (ليس) in the negative meaning. In the dialect of the tribe of Banī Tamīm, *mā* (and *lā* likewise) is not considered a grammatical regimen (*‘āmil*), hence why they would read the predicate of *mā* in the nominative case. The people of Ḥijāz, however, considered it a grammatical regimen and thus, read the predicate of *mā* in the accusative case.

6 *Al-ḥurūf al-mushabbaha bi al-fi’l*: particles resembling verbs. There are a total of six: *Inna* (إن), *anna* (أن), *ka’anna* (كأن), *lākinna* (لكئن), *layta* (ليت), *la’alla* (لعل).

7 Nunation is the doubling of a short vowel (*fatḥatayn*, *ḍammatayn*, *kasratayn*) on the last letter of a noun. The *alif* is usually written when the noun is in the accusative case (with four exceptions). For example, the noun *bāban* (باب) (door).

8 *alif*, *waw* and *yā*.

corresponding marks<sup>9</sup>. They would recite *a'ūzu* (أَعُوذُ) as *a'uzu* (أَعُذُ), *ta'ālā* (تَعَالَى) as *ta'āla* (تَعَالَ) etc. There were many such disparities in the dialects and styles of pronunciation. The Qur'ān [however] was revealed specifically in the dialect of the Quraysh, as the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was from the Quraysh.

*As your rose family-tree appeared from the orchard of the Quraysh  
The Qur'ān was thus revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh<sup>10</sup>*

In the auspicious time of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, the Qur'ān had been newly revealed, and it was therefore difficult for each tribe and community to immediately change their native style and old habits. It was made easy for each community of the Arabs that they should recite the Qur'ān in their own style and dialect. After the Prophetic era, some people gradually began to believe that the style and dialect they recite in was the style in which the Qur'ān was revealed. To the extent that in the time of Amīr al-Mu'minīn Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, some people became adamant and took to fighting over the matter; one person would say, "The Qur'ān is in this dialect." While another would disagree, "No, it is not in that dialect, it is in such [a dialect]." Every person would claim it had been revealed in their dialect. When this news reached Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, he said, "If this disagreement (*ikhtilāf*) has arisen now, then what hope is there for the future?"

Therefore, in accordance with the advice of Amīr al-Mu'minīn Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه and other esteemed companions رضي الله عنهم, it was agreed that there is no longer benefit in allowing each community to recite according to their own dialects, in fact, it has become a cause of tribulations, thus the entire Ummah should be united specifically on the dialect of the Quraysh – the style in which the Qur'ān was revealed – and should be stopped from [reciting in] the other dialects.

The *ṣuḥuf* of the successor of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, which were preserved by Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها bint Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, should be brought and copies should be made, and each chapter should be compiled into a *muṣṣhaf*<sup>11</sup>. The copies should then be sent to every Islamic country so that everyone follows this dialect. The manuscripts or copies that certain people

<sup>9</sup> ie the corresponding marks of each of the aforementioned letters of madd are: *fatha* (َ) for *alif*, *ḍammah* (ُ) for *waw* and *kasrah* (ِ) for *yā*.

<sup>10</sup> Translation of the Fārsī stanza.

<sup>11</sup> Sing. *muṣṣhaf*, pl. *maṣāḥif*: codex. *Muṣṣhaf* refers to the codex compiled by Sayyidunā 'Uthmān, whereby the chapters were systematically organised one after the other. The Qur'an we have is the compilation made by Sayyidunā 'Uthmān, and referred to as '*al-Muṣṣhaf al-Sharīf*' – the Holy Qur'ān (Codex).

have written in accordance with their own styles of recitation, contrary to this, should be erased, with the intention of eradicating tribulation. On the basis of this correct opinion, Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه sent a request to Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها, for the *ṣuḥuf* of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه, with the message that “Send to us the *ṣuḥuf* of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه; we will make copies of it and send it to different cities, thereafter the original will be returned to you.” Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها sent them.

Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه ordered Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr رضي الله عنه, Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Ās رضي الله عنه and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥārith ibn Hishām رضي الله عنه to make copies. These copies were sent to al-Makkāh al-Mu‘azzamah, Shām, Yemen, Baḥrain, Baṣra and Kūfa, and one remained in al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah. The original *ṣuḥuf* that were compiled by Sayyidunā Abū Bakr Siddīq رضي الله عنه, from which the copies were made, were returned to Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها. In relation to these *ṣuḥuf*, the report that they were buried or somehow destroyed – Allāh ﷻ forbid! – is absolutely false. These *ṣuḥuf* were physically preserved in the era of Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, then in the era of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, then in the era of Imām Ḥasan رضي الله عنه, then finally in the era of Amīr Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه; until Marwān took them and ripped them.

In summary, the actual compilation of the Qur’ān had already been carried out with the command of Allāh ﷻ and according to the instruction of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. What remained was compiling all of the chapters into one place; which Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه completed, acting upon the advice of Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. Thereafter, *maṣāḥif*<sup>12</sup> were made from the copies of this very compilation of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه and were distributed to Islamic countries by Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, upon the advice of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, and directed the entire Ummah to unite upon the original dialect of the Quraysh. It is for this very reason Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه is referred to as the *Jamī‘ al-Qur’ān*<sup>13</sup>. Otherwise, the true compiler of the Qur’ān is Allāh ﷻ, as He ﷻ says:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ

*Indeed upon Us is the responsibility of compiling it [the Qur’ān] and reciting it.*<sup>14</sup>

From the apparent, it is the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ [who compiled the Qur’ān],

12 *Maṣāḥif*, plural of *muṣḥaf*; see footnote 10.

13 ‘The compiler of the Qur’ān.’

14 Qur’ān 75:17.

and in terms of compiling it in one place, then the first compiler of the Qur’ān is Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه.

Ḥākim reports in al-Mustadrak according to the conditions of al-Bukhārī and al-Muslim; narrated from Zayd ibn Thābit al-Ansārī رضي الله عنه:

[When] we were with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, we would compile the Qur’ān on parchments.<sup>15</sup>

Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī رحمته الله states in al-Itqān:

The entire Qur’ān was written in the time of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. However, it was neither compiled in one place nor were the chapters formed.<sup>16</sup>

It is reported in Ṣahīh al-Bukhārī from Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه:

Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه called for me during the Battle of *Yamāmah*. I presented myself and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was also present with him. Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه said, “‘Umar came to me and told me that many reciters of the Qur’ān have been martyred in the Battle of *Yamāmah*; and I fear that if Qur’ān reciters are martyred in such numbers in future battles, then a lot of the Qur’ān will be lost. My view is that you give the order to compile the Qur’ān.” Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه said, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه then said [to me], “You are a young, intelligent man and we do not accuse you of anything. You used to write the revelation for the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ; search for the Qur’ān and gather it.” Thus, I looked for the Qur’ān and gathered it from palm branches, stone tablets and people’s hearts. These *ṣuḥuf* remained with Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه until Allāh ﷻ took him unto Him ﷻ; then with ‘Umar رضي الله عنه for the rest of his worldly life; then with Ḥafṣa رضي الله عنها, the daughter of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. [summarised].<sup>17</sup>

The summary of this long Ḥadīth is that after the Battle of *Yamāmah*, Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه advised Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه to compile the Qur’ān; Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه ordered Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه to gather all of the chapters from different parchments into one, and this [copy] remained by Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه, then by Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, then by Umm al-Mu’minīn رضي الله عنها.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه states:

The greatest of the people in the [compilation of the] *maṣāḥif*, in terms of reward, is Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه—the mercy of Allāh ﷻ be on Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه; he was the

15 Al-Mustadrak of Ḥākim, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut 2:229.

16 Al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, Egypt 1:57.

17 Ṣahīh al-Bukhārī, Qadīmī Kutub Khāna, Karachi 2:745-746.

first of those who compiled the Book of Allāh ﷺ.<sup>18</sup>

Imam ‘Ārif Billah Muḥāsabī رحمته الله states in Kitāb Fahm al-Sunan:

The writing of the Qur’ān was not a new task, as the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had commanded for it to be written down, but it was detached; written on parchments, scapulae and palm branches. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه then ordered for it to be copied from every article to one place. These sheets (*aurāq*) were in the blessed house of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, unbound. [So] the compiler gathered them and knitted them with a string, so that nothing could be lost from it.<sup>19</sup>

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī:

Ḥudhayfa ibn Yamān رضي الله عنه came to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه when the people of Shām were battling for the conquest of Armenia and Azerbaijan with the people of Iraq; and their [the Syrians’ and Iraqis’] divergences in *qirā’ah* alarmed Ḥudhayfa رضي الله عنه. He said to Uthmān رضي الله عنه, “O Amīr al-Mu’minīn! Save this Ummah before they disagree regarding the Book like the Jews and the Christians disagreed.” ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه sent a message to Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها: “Send the *ṣuḥuf* to us so that we may copy it into the *muṣḥaf*, then we will return it to you.” Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها sent them to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه who ordered Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr رضي الله عنه, Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥārith ibn Hishām رضي الله عنه to copy it into the *maṣāḥif*. ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه said to the group of three *Qurayshīs*<sup>20</sup>, “When there is a dispute between you [three] and Zayd ibn Thābit regarding anything from the Qur’ān, then write it according to the dialect of the Quraysh, as the Qur’ān was revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh.” They did so and when they finished copying the *ṣuḥuf* into the *muṣḥaf*, ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه returned those *ṣuḥuf* to Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها. He sent a copy of the *muṣḥaf* that they had copied to every corner [of the empire] and ordered all other [versions or copies] of the Qur’ān in each *ṣuḥuf* or *muṣḥaf* to be burned.<sup>21</sup>

Look! This Ḥadīth from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is an upright witness that Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه had requested the *ṣuḥuf* of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه from Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها upon hearing about the divergences in dialect and vocabulary and, from these copies, he made it into a *muṣḥaf* and disseminated

18 Al-Itqān, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, Egypt 1:57. Narrated by Ibn Abū Dāwūd in al-Maṣāḥif with a fair (*ḥasan*) chain from ‘Abd Khayr who said, “I heard ‘Ali say...” and then narrated this Ḥadīth.

19 Ibid. 1:58.

20 ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr, Sa’īd ibn ‘Āṣ and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥārith ibn Hishām.

21 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Qadīmī Kutub Khāna, Karachi 2:746. Narrated by Anas ibn Mālīk.

them throughout the Muslim countries. He then, after copying them, returned these *ṣuḥuf* to Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها.<sup>22</sup>

Ibn Ashittah reports in Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif:

During the era of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, there was disagreement regarding the *qirā'ah*, to the extent that there were disputes between the young students and their teachers. This reached 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه who said, "If you are belying the Qur'ān and making mistakes in it in front of me, then those who are distant from me must be belying and making mistakes in it to a greater extent. O companions of the Prophet ﷺ! Gather and write for the people, one Imām [a universal Qur'ān]." Thus, the companions gathered and wrote the Qur'ān.<sup>23</sup>

Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه states:

Do not speak about 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه except goodness, for by Allāh ﷻ! He did not do anything regarding the Qur'ān but that he did it after consulting with us. He said to us, "What do you say regarding this *qirā'ah*? I have been informed that certain people are saying to others, 'My dialect is better than yours,' and this is close to kufr." We said, "What is your view?" He replied, "My view is that all of the people should agree upon one *muṣḥaf* so there are no longer any factions and disagreements." We said, "How great is your view!"<sup>24</sup>

It is stated in al-Itqān:

Ibn al-Tīn and others said that the difference between the compilation of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه and the compilation of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه is that the compilation of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was done in the fear that parts of the Qur'ān would be lost with the departure of those who memorised it, as the Qur'ān had not been compiled in one place. Therefore, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه compiled the Qur'ān into *ṣuḥuf* and organised the verses of the chapters according to what the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had set. [On the other hand] The compilation of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه was done when there was much disagreement in the aspects of *qirā'ah* — as the Arabs began reciting in their different styles and in their various tongues due to the wide scope of vocabulary; the pronunciation of some would be considered incorrect to others. 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه feared that the situation regarding this would intensify, so he copied all of the *ṣuḥuf* into a *muṣḥaf* with a systematic

22 Contrary to the view that the *ṣuḥuf* of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq were burned.

23 Al-Itqān, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, Egypt 1:59. Ḥadīth narrated by Ibn Ashittah from the chain of Ayyub from Abū Qalābah, who said a man from Banī 'Āmir referred to as Anas ibn Mālik, informed me..., then narrated this Ḥadīth.

24 Ibid. Narrated by Abū Bakr ibn Abū Dāwūd with a sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) chain from Suwayd ibn Ghaffah, who said, "Alī said..." then narrated this Ḥadīth.

organisation of chapters, and restricted the dialect of the Quraysh from all of the dialects on the basis that the Qur’ān was revealed in their dialect. Although at the beginning there was permission granted to read the Qur’ān in other dialects to remove difficulties and discomfort, when ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه saw that the need for that no longer remained, he restricted one dialect.<sup>25</sup>

Imam Badr al-Dīn al-‘Ayni رحمته الله states in ‘Umdat al-Qārī, the commentary of al-Bukhārī:

...This was the reason for the compilation of the Qur’ān into the *muṣḥaf* by ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. The difference between *ṣuḥuf* and *muṣḥaf* is that *ṣuḥuf* are those transcribed pages (*awrāq*) in which the Qur’ān was compiled in the time of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه; the chapters were separate, every chapter was arranged with its verses separately, however, they were not organised one after the other. When it was copied, [whereby there was] one chapter after another in an organised order, it became a *muṣḥaf*. And there was no *muṣḥaf* before the time of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه.<sup>26</sup>

It is reported in ‘Umdat al-Qārī and in al-Itqān from Abū Bakr ibn Abū Dāwūd:

I heard Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī say, “‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه wrote seven *maṣāḥif*. He sent them to al-Makkah al-Mukarramah, to Shām, to Yemen, to Bahrain, to Baṣrah and to Kūfa, and one was kept in al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah.”<sup>27</sup>

Al-Imām Qaṣṭalānī states in Irshād al-Sārī, the commentary of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī:

(...Until they had copied the *ṣuḥuf* into the *muṣḥaf*, when ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه returned the *ṣuḥuf* to Ḥafṣa رضي الله عنها) They remained with her until she passed away. Thereafter, when Marwān was the governor of al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah on the part of Amīr Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه, he ordered for them to be acquired and torn up, and said, “I only did this because I feared a time would come over the people when doubters would doubt it.”<sup>28</sup>

It is further stated:

The writing [of the Qur’ān] was done in the Prophetic time. The compiling into the *ṣuḥuf* was done in the time of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه and the copying into the *maṣāḥif* was done in the era of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. Indeed, the entire Qur’ān

25 Ibid. 1:59–60.

26 ‘Umdat al-Qārī Sharaḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Idārah al-Tabā‘ah al-Munīriyyah, Egypt 20:18.

27 Ibid.

28 Irshād al-Sārī Sharaḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, Beirut 7:449. Narrated by Ibn Abū Dāwūd and others.

was written down in the time of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, however, it was not together in one place, neither with organised chapters.<sup>29</sup>

And Allāh ﷻ knows best.



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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 7:446.

## QUESTION 2

What do the scholars of the religion state regarding this matter, that from which perspective is Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه called the Compiler of the Qur’ān? Write the answer in light of the books of *aḥādīth* and annals (*tārikh*).

Answer and be rewarded.

### Answer

The true compiler of the Qur’ān is Allāh سبحانه; Allāh سبحانه says:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ

*Indeed upon Us is the responsibility of compiling it [the Qur’ān] and reciting it.*<sup>30</sup>

Thereafter, the first, complete and perfect manifestation of the Compiler (Allāh سبحانه) became [the next compiler of the Qur’ān]<sup>31</sup>. The verses of the Qur’ān, in the beautiful arrangement that Muslims have, are according to the organisation in the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*), in accordance with the conveyance of Jibrīl عليه السلام, and the guidance of the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم; having been compiled into their respective chapters in his auspicious time. The Qur’ān was revealed over 23 years in separate verses as per the requirements for ‘*ibādāh*. Some verses of a particular chapter would be revealed, then verses from another chapter would be revealed, then again of the previous chapter. The Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم would say each time, “These verses belong to such and such a chapter. Place it after such and such a verse and before such a verse.” This is the way the chapters of the Qur’ān would be formed. The Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم would recite it in this order, and after listening to him, the companions رضي الله عنهم would also recite it in that very order in *ṣalāh* and in *qirā’ah*.

The Qur’ān was revealed solely in the single dialect of the Quraysh. The numerous tribes of the Arabs differed in their style [of pronunciation], in letters; pauses and some parts of words. The Quraysh would retain the signs of the imperfect tense (*‘alāmāt al-mudārī’*) as *maftūḥ*; whereas certain other tribes would pray *alif*, *tā* and *nūn* as *maksūr*, such as *nī’budu* (نِعْبُدُ) *nisti’īm* (نَسْتَعِينُ); according to the Quraysh, *tābūt* (تابوت) was with a *tā* (ت)<sup>32</sup> at the end, but according to other

30 Qur’ān 75:17.

31 Ie The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم.

32 Referred to as *tā e qarshat* in the Urdu text. *Tā e qarshat* is the letter *tā* of the *qarshat* portion of the abjad numeral sequence.

tribes, it was with a *hā* (هـ)<sup>33</sup>. Such differences were very common, but it did not impair the meaning of the Qur’ān, neither its words.

To immediately leave one’s native dialect which had settled upon the tongue was very difficult. Therefore, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ acquired concession from his Lord to allow the various tribes [to recite in] their own dialect. Every blessed Ramaḍān, Jibrīl ؑ would revise the Qur’ān – as much of it as had been revealed – with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, a sublime Sunnah, which is still – All praise is for Allāh ﷻ – established by the ḥuffāz of the Ahl al-Sunnah and will remain until the order of Allāh ﷻ comes (ie the day of reckoning – Qiyāmah), and they will be firm upon this. In the final year, the Conveyor of Revelation (Jibrīl ؑ) revised the Qur’ān twice with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, using the original Qurayshī dialect, in which the Qur’ān was revealed. This final revision indicated that the concession had been abrogated and the command now remained in the original dialect of the revelation.

Although the chapters had been arranged in the era of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, they were not gathered in one place. It was on various parchments, scapulae of sheep and other places, except in those hearts in which the entire Qur’ān was preserved. Such was the situation until the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ veiled himself from the sights of the people.

The Battle of *Yamāmah* took place in the caliphate of the rightful successor, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ؓ, in which many companions who had memorised the Qur’ān were martyred. The True Protector and Eternal Compiler (Allāh ﷻ), to fulfil His ﷻ truthful promise of “And verily we are its protectors”<sup>34</sup> first placed this noble exigency in the heart of he whose opinions concur with the revelation and the divine Book, Sayyidunā ‘Umar ؓ. Sayyidunā ‘Umar ؓ entreated Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ؓ that “many ḥuffāz have been martyred in the Battle of *Yamāmah*, and I fear that if the Qur’ān remains like this; in various parchments, and the ḥuffāz attain martyrdom, vast portions of the Qur’ān will be lost from the hands of the Muslims. My view is that you give the order for the compilation of the Qur’ān.” At first, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ؓ was reluctant; “why should we do something the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ did not carry out?” Sayyidunā ‘Umar ؓ replied that “though the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ

33 Referred to as *hā e hawwaz* in the original Urdu text. *Hā e hawwaz* is the letter *hā* of the *hawwaz* portion of the abjad numeral sequence. The abjad numeral sequence (vocalised) is as follows:

Abjad **hawwaz** ḥuṭṭī kalaman sa’faṣ **qarashat** thakhadh ḍaḥagh.

34 Qur’ān 15:9.

did not carry it out, but, by Allāh ﷻ! it is a good thing.” In the end, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ concurred and after calling Zayd ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī ﷺ, the instruction of the caliphate regarding the compilation of the Book of Allāh ﷻ was issued. Zayd ibn Thābit ﷺ also had the same reluctance, “that how can we carry out a task that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ himself did not do.” Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ provided the very same reply, that “though the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had not done so, but, by Allāh ﷻ! it is a good thing.” This matter was finalised by consensus of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ, Sayyidunā ‘Umar ﷺ, Zayd ibn Thābit ﷺ and all of the companions ﷺ, and the Qur’ān was gathered from the different places.

This objection of the Wahhābīs — upon which half of their sect is based — that does someone know more about what is good for the religion than the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that he will carry out an act which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ did not carry out himself has been proven to be unacceptable with the consensus of the companions ﷺ. All praise is for Allāh ﷻ, the Lord of the worlds.

Despite the chapters of the Qur’ān having been compiled into one collection from various places – and this collection remained with Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ, then with Sayyidunā ‘Umar ﷺ and then finally with Umm al-Mu’minīn Ḥafṣa ﷺ – three tasks still remained:

1. For those *ṣuḥuf* to be copied into one universal *muṣḥaf*;
2. For the copies of this *muṣḥaf* to be distributed to the major Muslim cities of the main parts of the Islamic empire, and;
3. For the traces of differing dialects in the written Qur’ān – which various people possessed due to the prior concession, and were different to that of the true, original, as-sent-from-Allāh ﷻ, proven, established and unabrogated dialect (the Qurayshī dialect) – to be effaced in order to avoid tribulation.

The Rightful Protector and Eternal Compiler (Allāh ﷻ) took this task from his third servant, Amīr al-Mu’minīn, the compiler of the Qur’ān, Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān ﷺ, and the compilation of the Qur’ān, as per the Divine promise, was finished and complete. For this very reason, Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān ﷺ is referred to as the Compiler of the Qur’ān – *Jāmi’ al-Qur’ān*.

**And Allāh ﷻ knows best.**

*‘Abd al-Muṣṭafā Aḥmad Riḍā al-Bareilwī*

## SUMMARY

(translator)

During the physical lifetime of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.

- The entire Qur’ān was written down in the physical life of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, however, it was not compiled together in one place; rather, it was on parchments, scapulae, palm branches and in other places; preserved by various people.

During the caliphate of the first caliph, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه.

- Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه expressed his deep concerns about the Qur’ān becoming lost due to the vast number of companions attaining martyrdom in the Battle of *Yamāmah*. Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, acting upon the counsel of Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, who persuaded him to have the Qur’ān compiled in one place so that nothing from it could be lost, ordered for the Qur’ān to be compiled. He asked Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه specifically to supervise and conduct this task – and so he did. The Qur’ān was thus compiled in one place, however, the chapters were not systematically organised one after the other (how we have it in the Qur’ān today). Instead, it was on separate folios. This compilation is referred to as ‘*ṣuḥuf*’ or ‘*ṣaḥīfa e ṣiddīq*’ (folios of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه).

During the caliphate of the third caliph, Sayyidunā ‘Uthman رضي الله عنه.

- Sayyidunā ‘Uthman رضي الله عنه was angered by the utterances of some Arab tribesmen who would claim that their style of recitation was better than that of another tribe. He was informed that certain people believed that their style of recitation was the style in which the Qur’ān was revealed, which was incorrect, as the Qur’ān was only revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh. Other tribes and communities were at first permitted to recite in their own dialects and styles to avoid difficulty and discomfort. Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, determined to remove all dispute within the recitation of the Qur’ān, ordered for the *ṣuḥuf* of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه, with Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣa رضي الله عنها at the time, to be copied into a *muṣḥaf*, copies of which were to be disseminated throughout the entire Islamic empire. He had this *muṣḥaf* compiled only in the dialect and style of the Quraysh, as it was in this dialect that the Qur’ān was revealed. He ordered for the Ummah to unite on this one *muṣḥaf* and to no longer use the other dialects or styles. He did this so that the Ummah would unify on

one universal version of the Qur'ān and to eliminate all dialectal disputes that were prevalent in his time, which perhaps would have intensified if it were not for the formation of such a universal *muṣḥaf*. This *muṣḥaf* compiled by Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه is referred to as **the** *muṣḥaf*, and is the Qur'ān we have today.



*TheSunniWay*  
*Ridawi Translations*



# A VIRTUOUS TASK

## *The Compilation of the Qur'ān*

“Indeed upon Us is the responsibility of compiling it [the Qur'ān] and reciting it.” [Qur'ān 75:17]

The Qur'ān was revealed over a period of 23 years. During this period, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ ordered for each verse to be written down as it was revealed. His personal scribes would write it down and place the verses wherever the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ would indicate.

However, the entire Qur'ān was not compiled into one canonical codex during the era of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Rather, when the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ left this mundane world, the Qur'ān remained detached on various parchments, although many companions had memorised it entirely.

Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān wrote this expository monograph, *Jam' al-Qur'ān wa Bima 'Azūhu li 'Uthmān – A Virtuous Task: The Compilation of the Qur'ān* – explaining how the Qur'ān was compiled; who the compilers were; and more specifically, why Sayyidunā 'Uthmān possesses the title 'The Compiler of the Qur'ān'.

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