



Critical Analyses of John Burton’s Theories on the Process of the Compilation of the Holy Qur’ān

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ABSTRACT

The Holy Qur’ān has been revealed to the last Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) by Almighty Allah. So it is the Word of Almighty Allāh which He has promised to guard by Himself. John Burton is an Orientalist. He has written a book regarding the Holy Qur’ān named “The Collection of the Qur’ān”. Like other Orientalists he has tried to create doubts in the minds of people regarding the process of the compilation of the Qur’ān. In the second part of his book Burton has mentioned strange theories about the collection of the Qur’ān. In this article, Burton’s theories on the process of the compilation of the Qur’ān have been reviewed and it has been proved that the Holy Prophet himself got the whole Qur’ān written in his lifetime. Measures adopted for the preservation of the Qur’ān in the Prophet’s lifetime like “memorizing” and “writing,” have been explained with detail. The contribution of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Uthmān in the process of the compilation of the Qur’ān has been mentioned that Hazrat Abu Bakr got the written sheets of the Holy Qur’ān compiled in one book and Hazrat Uthmān is credited to gather the whole Ummah on one agreed upon official mus’haf consisting of seven letters on which the Holy Qur’an has been revealed.

Keywords: *Holy Qur’ān, last Prophet Muhammad, Almighty Allah, Collection of the Qur’ān, Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Uthmān*

Introduction of the Topic:

Almighty Allāh has revealed the Holy Qur’ān and He himself has taken the responsibility to protect it from any kind of error. So He said:

“Verily We have revealed the Qur’ān and verily We will protect it.”¹

So Allah made arrangements for the preservation of the Holy Qur'ān. Hazrat Gabriel, who is called *Ar-Ruh al-Ameen* (the Honest Soul), brought the Holy Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) who is also called *As-Sadiq* and *Al-Ameen* (the Truthful and the Trustworthy) and the companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) who wrote it from the tongue of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H), compiled it, carried it and delivered it to all the people are also honest and obedient people. Their character is above board. Almighty Allāh says in Sūrah `Abas:

“(This Qur'ān is safe) in highly honorable sheets which are most exalted and most purified and (is written) by the hands of noble and obedient scribes.”²

In this article, the completeness, safety and perfection of the Holy Qur'ān has been proved and misconceptions of John Burton have critically been analyzed.

Introduction of John Burton:

John Burton is an orientalist. He was born in 1929. He served as professor of Arabic at The University of Edmburgh, Scotland.³ He wrote three books named “The Collection of the Qur'ān” published by Cambridge University Press in 1977 AD, “The Sources of Islāmīc Law” and “An Introduction to Hadīth” published by The University of Edmburgh, Scotland in 1990 and 1995 AD accordingly.

John Burton's Views about the Topic:

In the second part of his book “The Collection of the Qur'ān”, John Burton has objected on the Qur'ān through the process of its compilation. In the beginning, Burton writes that when the Muslims studied the history of the Qur'ān they had three views:

1. The virtually unanimous opinion that our present Qur'ān texts (the mus'haf) are incomplete.
2. The virtually unanimous acceptance of the proposition that in the early days of Islām, the companions of the Prophet arranged different mus'hafs on their own behalf. These mus'hafs were assembled privately and organized independently. These mus'hafs remained in circulation in early age of Islām.
3. The virtually unanimous assertion that there is conflict between the Qur'ān and the Sunna which are the basic sources of Fiqh.⁴

Burton has mentioned those narrations which according to his own misguided opinion (apparently) show that the Qur'ān is incomplete. He quoted the narration attributed to Hazrat Abdullah bin Umer that he said:

“Let none of you say, “I have got the whole of the Qur'ān.” How does he know what all of it is? Much of the Qur'ān has gone [d h b]. Let him say instead, “I have got what has survived.”⁵

Burton also quoted that Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit said:

“The Prophet (P.B.U.H) died and the Qur'ān had not been assembled into a single place.”⁶

Then Burton mentions Hazrat Umer's fear about the wastage of some part of the Qur'ān and he concludes from it that a part of the Qur'ān has gone. So he writes: "All these elements predispose one to an expectation that the edition prepared by Zaid might be incomplete."⁷ Burton has also raised the question that who was the first who compiled the Qur'ān; Abu Bakr, Umer or Salim? So he writes: "Two questions have therefore been broached: 1. the completeness/incompleteness of the mus'haf; 2. the first two have collected it. This was either Abu Bakr, or Umer or Salim or it might have been Ali."⁸ Burton has also objected that Zaid bin Thabit while compiling the Qur'ān, found the last verse of Sūrah At-Tawba only in the possession of Abu Khuzaima al-Ansari and did not find it with anyone else. So the claim that whole the Qur'ān is mutawatir is wrong rather, it consists of khabr-e-Wahid.⁹

Burton also objects that the Holy Qur'ān was collected into one place after twelve years from the death of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). It is a considerable delay and many of the first-generation Muslims had died till that time.¹⁰ Burton writes: "Whoever, may have been the first to collect the Qur'ān texts, it was certainly not the Prophet to whom they had been revealed."¹¹

And at the end, he writes with his own decision: "What we have today in our hands is the mus'haf of Muhammad."¹²

The abstract of John Burton's objections is as following:

1. The Qur'ān could not be written in the life of the Prophet because it has not been revealed completely. So its arrangement was not possible.
2. There are many mistakes in the Qur'ān due to abrogation.
3. The Muslims do not have that Qur'ān which the Prophet left.
4. Naskh has compelled the Muslims to exclude the Prophet from the history of the collection of the Qur'ān.
5. The Muslims did not do much research on the text of the Qur'ān.
8. Burton quoted Noldeke's sayings:
"The Prophet could not have had access to writing the revelation nor did he care for it during his mission."
9. When the companions of the Prophet were few in numbers the Qur'ān was not written and when their number increased to a great extent then they started memorizing the revelation.
10. They remained busy in political and war activities so they forgot many verses.¹³

Analysis of John Burton's Views:

John Burton and other orientalist are always in dilemma. They cannot make it clear that what in fact they want to say? They beat around the bushes. What we can understand from their whole discussion is that they want to say that no effort was made to save the Qur'ān in the lifetime of

the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and that there has been made many changes in the Qur'ān in the process of its compilation and it is not complete.

First of all, we prove that the Qur'ān was in safe and sound condition in Prophet-hood era. We will discuss the sources through which the Holy Qur'ān was preserved. We will prove that the Qur'ān was not only memorized but also written and arranged by the guidance of the Holy Prophet himself. Then we shall explain the role and contribution of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Uthman in the compilation of the Qur'ān. After that we shall conclude from the whole detail that John Burton's Objections are void and unjustified.

In fact, the orientalists compare the Qur'ān with their own books. They think that the Muslims' relationship and inclination to the Qur'ān is like the attachment of the orientalists with their books. But there is a huge difference between the Qur'ān and their books because no one is there who has memorized their books but there are millions of people who have memorized the Holy Qur'ān. No one loves any book as a Muslim loves the Holy Qur'ān. No book is preserved as the Holy Qur'ān is preserved. The Muslims believe that the Holy Qur'ān has been preserved completely in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). Not even a single letter of the Qur'ān has gone because Almighty Allāh has himself taken the responsibility to save the Qur'ān from any change and corruption, so He said:

“Verily it is we who have revealed the Zikr (the Qur'ān) and verily we are its Gaurdians.”¹⁴

Before giving arguments, we clarify that we will quote references from the Qur'ān, the Hadīth and the books of seerah and history. Someone may say that the orientalists do not accept these references because they do not believe in these sources. Our reply is that if Burton and other orientalists use these sources to criticize on us, why we cannot quote these sources to reply them and to clear to them that the denial and rejection of their opinions is also present in these sources and they have either misunderstood them or quoted them partially not completely. They should acknowledge all or deny all. If they use these sources to criticize on the Qur'ān and Islām then they should also admit them when these sources reply to their criticism.

It is the rule of research that the decision is made after the complete study of the material not a single part. This rule is not only for Muslims or non-Muslims rather it is the worldwide acknowledged research principle that no one can judge anything or can make a wise decision after partial study of the material or by accepting one part and negating the other part. So it is necessary for the orientalists to accept all rules and regulations made to understand the Qur'ān and the Hadīth. The orientalists have neglected these rules, therefore, they are always in a dilemma that what they should accept and what they should deny. They never agreed upon one opinion even about the concept whether the Qur'ān was written in the Prophet-hood era or not, one group says that the Muslims did not do anything regarding the preservation of the Holy Qur'ān. Other group, like Henry Palmer Edward (1840-1882)¹⁵ and William Muir (1905),¹⁶ say that the complete Qur'ān was in written form in the Prophet's lifetime. One other group says that the Qur'ān was written in the Prophet's life but it was changed during the caliphate of Hazrat

Abu Bakr and one group says that the Qur’ān was correct till the Uthmānic Caliphate and it was Hazrat Uthmān who made changes in it. So they never agreed upon one opinion. This is because they have never made their own research on the Qur’ān rather they have imitated one another. Their whole research is just blind imitation.

There are clear rules and regulations to accept and reject the narrations even a Muslim does not accept any narration until he checks its status on the criteria of saḥīḥ and d’ā’if narration. This is a worldwide acknowledged rule. Everyone who does research on Islām is to follow this rule. If someone quotes some narration he should prove its correctness and if he rejects some narration he should give logical reasons for its rejection and he should also accept the complete narration not a single part which fulfills his intentions and objectives. Otherwise, he will be the example of this verse of the Qur’ān:

“Do you believe in some part of the Book and you deny the some part.”¹⁷

The arguments for the preservation of the Qur’ān in the Prophet-hood era are as following:

Measures Adopted for the Preservation of the Qur’ān in the Prophet’s Lifetime:

There are always two ways for saving anything:

1. Memorization, 2. Writing

By the grace of Almighty Allāh the Muslims have used both techniques to save the Holy Qur’ān.

1: Preservation of the Qur’ān by Memorizing:

The Muslims did not only memorize the Qur’ān like the memorization of other books rather their inclination and attachment with the Qur’ān was unprecedented. They loved the Holy Qur’ān more than everything and they cared for it more than everything because they knew that it was the Book of their Lord. They did not memorize the Qur’ān for any worldly purpose rather they learnt it by heart to please their Lord and to get rewards from Him. Almighty Allāh has mentioned the learning by heart in the Qur’ān:

“Ney, this Qur’ān consists of clear verses which are (safe) in the hearts of those people who have been bestowed knowledge and only the oppressors deny our verses.”¹⁸

The Muslims not only have memorized it but they also read it in their daily five times Prayer. It is narrated in Saḥīḥ Muslim that Almighty Allāh says: “I have revealed to you such book which cannot be washed by water (from the hearts of its memorizers) and you continue to read it while sleeping and waking.”¹⁹The Holy Prophet used to encourage his companions to learn the Qur’ān and he used to listen from them and appreciate them. So Hazrat Abdullah bin Mas’ud says: “I have learnt seventy Sūrahs directly from the tongue of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H).”²⁰The Arabs possessed a wonderful memory power. They used to memorize thousands of poems in the ignorance era and used to compete with each other on the base of their memorization. The

memory power of Arabs is famous. It is not a new thing. Everyone is aware of it. So they used their memory power to save the Holy Qur’ān in their hearts.

There were hundreds of companions who had memorized the complete Qur’ān. We can estimate the multiplicity of the memorizers of the Qur’ān by only two incidents: Seventy companions of the Prophet who had learnt the complete Qur’ān by heart were killed at Bi’r Ma’una. They were called “Al-Qurra” (the Qur’ān memorizers). The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) invoked curse upon their killers for full one month.²¹

In the war of Yamama also seventy Huffāz-e-Qur’ān (the Qur’ān memorizers) were killed. By these incidents, it can be estimated that there were countless people who had memorized the complete Qur’ān in the Prophet-hood era.

Hazrat Sa’ad bin Munzir requested the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) to allow him to recite the complete Qur’ān within three days.”²²

Hazrat Ali learnt the whole Qur’ān from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and was among those people who have memorized the complete Qur’ān.²³

These facts clarify that how Almighty Allāh made arrangements to preserve the Holy Qur’ān because He had Himself taken the responsibility to guard it.

2: Preservation of the Qur’ān by Writing:

John Burton has emphasized that the only source for the preservation of the Qur’ān was memorization. He is wrong in his opinion because the second source for the preservation of the Holy Qur’ān was writing. There are many arguments in favor of this opinion that the Qur’ān was in written form in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H).

Firstly, Allāh Himself has taken the responsibility to collect the Qur’ān and to guard the Qur’ān from any falsification and fabrication.²⁴ Secondly, Allāh has used for it the word of “Book” and every one knows that book is always in written form. So Allāh said:

“Indeed, it is an honorable Qur’ān in a Book which is well protected. Do not touch it but the purified.”²⁵ Almighty Allāh further, said in the beginning of Sūrah Tur:“(I swear) by Tur (mount) and by (the) Book which is written in unrolled parchment.”²⁶ While explaining these verses Hafiz Ibn-e- Hajar writes: “At first, the Holy Qur’ān was written on the pieces of leather before it was compiled in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr.”²⁷ All the above mentioned verses clearly indicate that the Holy Qur’ān was in written form in the life time of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and the People who carried it, their character was above board. They were highly ranked pious people and careful writers that it cannot be even thought that they could change a single word of the Holy Qur’ān. There can be quoted many other verses from the Qur’ān in favor of this opinion as Allāh said in Sūrah Al-Bayyina Praising his Messenger:

“He is a Messenger from Allāh who recites purified scriptures within which are absolutely true Books.”²⁸

Allama Ibne Hajar explains this verse by saying: “Almighty Allāh has clarified in the Holy Qur’ān that the Qur’ān has been collected in sheets and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) recites those purified sheets.”²⁹The disbelievers of Makah also said that the Qur’ān was being written. So they objected on the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) by saying:

“And they (the disbelievers) say that these are the tales of the ancient peoples that he has had written down and then they are being dictated to him in the morning and afternoon.”³⁰

So the disbelievers objected that the Holy Prophet got the revelation be written and the orientalist object that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) did not get the revelation be written. What a wonderful the contrast is it. Many times in the Qur’ān the word of “Book” has been used for the Holy Qur’ān, for example; in Sūrah Al-Baqara 2:2, Sūrah Āl-Imrān 3:2, Sūrah Yūnus 10:2, Sūrah Hūd 11:2, Sūrah Ar-Ra’d 13:2, Sūrah Al-Kahf 18:1, Sūrah Ash-Shu’arā 26:2, Sūrah An-Naml 27:2, Sūrah Al-Qasas 28:2, Sūrah Luqman 31:2, Sūrah As-Sajda 32:2, Sūrah Fatir 35:31, Sūrah Az-Zumar 39:1,2 and 4, Sūrah Ghafir 40:2, Sūrah Ash-Shura 42:17 and 52, Sūrah Al-Jathia 45:2, Sūrah Al-Ahqāf 46:2 and Sūrah Al-Jumu’a 62:2 etc. Everyone knows that the “book” is always in written form.

There are many narrations, which justify this opinion that the Holy Qur’ān was written in the Prophet’s lifetime. The narrations which prove that the revelation was written are following:

1. Hazrat Bara’ narrates that when the following verse was revealed: “The believers who sit at home and the believers who strive in the cause of Allāh are not equal.”³¹The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) said: “Call Zaid (bin Thabit) for me and tell him to bring to me the board, the inkpot and the scapula bone,” then the Holy Prophet said (to Zaid): “Write: “Those believers who sit are not equal....”³²
2. Hazrat Uthmān narrates that when any verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) he used to call someone who used to write for him the revelation. So the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) said to him: “Put these verses in that Sūrah in which is mentioned this and that (verse).”³³
3. Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit, (one of the writers of the revelation) narrates: “I used to write the revelation for the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). When the revelation was revealed on him, he felt hard heat and drops of hard sweat dripped on his body like pearls when this situation was released, I brought shoulder bone or the piece of any other thing to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) then he kept on dictating and I kept on writing. When I completed writing I felt as my leg was about to break and I would never be able to walk and it was because of the burden of noting the Holy Qur’ān. When I had completed writing, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) said: “Read it.” I read it, if there was any mistake in it, he used to correct and modify it, and then I brought it to the people.”³⁴

In the light of above mentioned narrations, we come to know three important points:

1. When the process of revelation completed, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) at once called someone who used to write revelation and dictated to him the whole revelation and ordered him to write it completely.
2. When the writing of the revelation was completed, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) asked the writer to read aloud the revelation and when the writer recited it loudly, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) rechecked it carefully and if there occurred any fluctuation in it, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) used to correct it. So that there should not be any chance of mistake.
3. When the writing and correction process was completed, the third and the most important task was the adjustment of those verses in the proper place, which is also called the arrangement of the Holy Qur'ān. For this purpose, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself asked the writer to put the newly revealed verses in so and so Sūrah and before and after so and so verses and he obviously, named the Sūrah and the verses when he asked the writer to put the verse in so and so Sūrah and before and after so and so verses. It clearly meant that all the writers of the revelation always kept the complete record of Sūrahs and verses with them and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) used to hear the verses which were before the newly revealed verse and at least one verse after it to clarify where to adjust the newly revealed verse. This whole process was completed with a great care.

Hazrat Abu Huraira narrates that Gabriel used to recite the Holy Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) once a year and he repeated the (complete) Qur'ān with him twice in the last year of his life.³⁵ This Hadīth clearly negates the opinion of John Burton that the Prophet had neglected the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān was not reviewed by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). The above mentioned narration clearly explains that not only the Holy Prophet but also Hazrat Gabriel used to review the Qur'ān once every year but in the last year of the Prophet's life when the revelation of the Qur'ān has almost been completed they reviewed the Holy Qur'ān twice in one year. Obviously, it all was done by the order of Almighty Allāh because He had Himself taken the responsibility to guard the Holy Qur'ān.³⁶

There are many narrations which prove that the Qur'ān was in written shape in the Prophet-hood era. Hazrat Abdullah bin Amr narrates:

“I have collected the Qur'ān and I used to recite the complete Qur'ān in one night. The Holy Prophet ordered me to recite it in the period of seven days.”³⁷

In this narration Hazrat Abdullah bin Amr has clearly said that he had collected the Qur'ān and it was with him in the lifetime of the Prophet.

Hazrat Yūsuf bin Mahak narrates: “I was sitting with Hazrat Ayesha, the mother of the believers when a person came from Iraq and he asked her. “Which kind of shroud is better?” Hazrat Ayesha said: “May Allāh have mercy on you! What does it make difference?” He said: “O mother of the believers! Show me your mus'haf (the copy of the Qur'ān).” Ayesha asked: “Why?” He said: “So that I arrange and compile the Qur'ān according to this mus'haf because people are reciting it without proper order of Sūrahs.” Ayesha said: “What does it make difference which part of the Qur'ān you recite first, (you should know that) first part which was

revealed was a Sūrah from Al-Mufasssal (detailed Sūrahs) in which was mentioned about the Paradise and the Fire. When people accepted Islām then the verses about lawful and unlawful matters were revealed. If it was revealed firstly: “Do not drink khamr (alcoholic mixed drinks)” people would say: “We Shall never give up khamr. “And if it was revealed: “Do not commit Zina (illegal sexual intercourse).” The people would say: “We Shall never leave Zina.” When I was a little girl and used to play the upcoming verse was sent down in Makah to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H): “But the Hour (of Doom) is their promised time and the Hour Shall be more grievous and bitter.”³⁸ And Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Sūrah An-Nisa were revealed to him while I was with him: Then Hazrat Ayesha took out her mus’haf for that person and she dictated to him the verses of the Sūrahs (in their proper sequence).”³⁹

This Hadīth tells us that mus’haf with proper order and sequence of Sūrahs and verses was present with Hazrat Ayesha and people used to approach that mus’haf when they needed. Hafiz Ibn-e-Hajar Al-Asqalani has mentioned names of many companions who had mus’hafs (copies of the Qur’ān) with them in the Prophet-hood era.⁴⁰ Hazrat Ubada bin Samit narrates that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) said:

“The best worship of my Ummah is to recite the Qur’ān by seeing in it.”⁴¹

Hazrat Abdullah bin Umer narrates that the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) forbade people from traveling to a hostile people’s country carrying (the copies of) the Holy Qur’ān.⁴²

Hazrat Abu Huraira narrates that the Holy Prophet said:

“The rewards of that good deeds of a believer which reach him even after his death are the following: knowledge which he has imparted and spread it, righteous children whom he has left behind, a mus’haf (a copy of Qur’ān) which he has left as a legacy, a masjid (mosque) which he has built for wayfarers, a canal which he has dug or charity which he has given while he was alive and in his good health, it reaches him when he has died.”⁴³

The above mentioned narrations clearly indicate that the mus’haf was present in written form in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H).

The Contribution of Hazrat Abu Bakr in the Compilation of the Qur’ān:

John Burton believes that the Qur’ān was compiled neither in Prophet-hood era nor in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr. He emphasized that the Qur’ān was not written in the Prophet’s lifetime and no action was taken in this regard in the era of (the first Caliph of Islām,) Hazrat Abu Bakr. Previously, we have proved with references that there were adopted two ways to preserve the Holy Qur’ān; learning by heart and writing. So the complete Qur’ān was in the hearts of many companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and in written form. Now we shall describe the contribution of Hazrat Abu Bakr in the process of the compilation of the Qur’ān. When the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) died, the Qur’ān was in written form but it was in various sheets with different companions and in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr it was collected and

compiled in one mus'haf within the two book-ends. The narration about the compilation of the Qur'ān in the books of Hadīth is as following:

Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit narrates that when many companions of the Prophet were martyred in the war of Yamama, Hazrat Abu Bakr sent someone to call me. (When I went to him) Hazrat Umer bin Khattab was also with him. Hazrat Abu Bakr said: "Umer (bin Khattab) has arrived to me and said: "Many qurrā' (memorizers) of the Qur'ān have been martyred in the war of Yamama and I fear that many other qurrā' of the Qur'ān may be martyred in other battles and thus a huge part of the Holy Qur'ān may be gone. That is why I give suggestion to you that you should order to compile the Qur'ān." I asked Umer: "How can you do that thing which the Prophet of Allāh did not do?" Umer replied (to me): "By Allāh! It is a good task." Umer continued urging me again and again on accepting his proposal till Almighty Allāh opened my heart for doing it, and I started realizing it good which idea Umer had already realized to be good." Hazrat Abu Bakr then said to me: "You (O Zaid) are a wise and young person and we have no suspicion about you, you have been writing the revelation for Allāh's Prophet. So you must collect the Qur'ān and compile it (in one book)". (Hazrat Zaid says) By Allāh! If they had asked me to shift a mountain from one place to the other place it would not have been heavier than this asking me to compile the Holy Qur'ān. Then I asked Hazrat Abu Bakr: "How will you do that thing which Allāh's Prophet did not ever do?" Hazrat Abu Bakr said: "By Allāh! It is a good job." So Hazrat Abu Bakr continued urging me again and again on accepting his proposal till Almighty Allāh Opened my heart for that project for which he had opened the hearts of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umer. So I began to search the Holy Qur'ān. I collected it from palmed stalks, pieces of white stones and also from the hearts of the men (who had memorized it by their hearts). Till I found the ending verses of Sūrah At-Towba with Abu Khuzaima Ansari, and I found these verses with no one other than Abu Khuzaima, and the verses are following: "Indeed there has arrived to you a Messenger (Muhammad) from amongst yourselves. It makes him feel grief if you receive any difficulty (or injury) ..." ⁴⁴ till the end of Sūrah Barā' Then the complete compiled manuscripts of the Qur'ān remained with Hazrat Abu Bakr till his death, then with Hazrat Umer during his lifetime and then (after the death of Hazrat Umer) with Hazrat Hafsa, the daughter of Hazrat Umer. ⁴⁵

This detailed narration clearly indicates that the Holy Qur'ān was in both memorized and written forms in prophet's lifetime and in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr it was compiled in one book within the two ends as Imām Jalal-ud-Dīn Sayyuti has quoted the sayings of Allama Khattabi that he said:

"The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) did not compile the Qur'ān in one book. The Qur'ān had completely been written in the Prophet-hood era. But it has not been compiled together in one place." ⁴⁶

He has also quoted the sayings of Harith Muhasibi that he wrote in "Fehm-us-Sunan" that the Qur'ān was not written in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr because the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself used to order his companions to write the Qur'ān. So it was not a new thing

but the Qur’ān was in different leather sheets, boards of shoulder bones and leaves, so Hazrat Abu Bakr ordered to collect them in one place and it had been written in the shape of different pages and the collectors gathered them and sewed them with a thread in a compiled file in such form that no part of it should get lost.”⁴⁷

The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) did not order to compile the Qur’ān in one book because the Qur’ān was being revealed therefore, it was not clear that how much Qur’ān is to be revealed and where to place the new revealing verses. Furthermore, the possibility of naskh was also a reason for not binding the Qur’ān in one book. When the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) passed away and both the possibilities were over, then the first caliph of Islām, Hazrat Abu Bakr fulfilled this responsibility by the grace and guidance of Almighty Allāh as he says: “Till Allāh opened my chest for this project.” The collection of the Qur’ān by Hazrat Abu Bakr can be explained in other words that the Qur’ān had been written in the Prophet’s lifetime on different sheets and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) did not issue an official copy of the Qur’ān within the two ends of the book in a volume shape because the Qur’ān was being revealed. So after the death of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H), Hazrat Abu Bakr ordered Zaid bin Thabit to prepare an official copy of the Qur’ān which people should use for reference and it would be a consensus book.

Imām Jalal-ud-Dīn As-Sayyuti, Imām Zurqani and Hafiz Ibn-e-Hajar Asqalani have explained this action of compiling of the Qur’ān by Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit to gather the different sheets from the writers of the revelation on which they had written the verses of the Qur’ān. Some other companions also had their personal mus’hafs but they did not write them as carefully as the writers of the revelation (Katiban-e-wahy) wrote under the special observation of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself checked and rechecked their written texts. The other companions had mixed interpretive points, footnotes and some relevant prayers which the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) had taught them, for their self-memory, as someone had written dua-e-qunut (for witr prayer) with the Qur’ānic verses. So Hazrat Abu Bakr prepared an agreed upon book with great care from the mus’hafs of those writers of the revelation whom the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself appointed for this specific purpose and to whom he himself dictated and after completing the dictation, he himself rechecked their written text with great care.⁴⁸

Imām Sayyuti has also quoted the narration of Ibn-e-Abi Dawūd, he narrates that Yahya bin Abdu-ur-Rahman bin Hatib said that Hazrat Umer came and announced in the mosque: “Who has learnt anything of the Qur’ān from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H), he should bring it.” And the writers were writing these verses on the sheets, boards and palm branches, and Hazrat Umer did not accept anything from anyone until he brought two witnesses with him. This indicates that Hazrat Zaid was not satisfied with finding the verse written in sheets until two witnesses testified that they listened that verse from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). Though Hazrat Zaid had himself learnt the whole Qur’ān by heart but he used to do so for taking strict and extreme precautions.⁴⁹ Imām Zarkashi writes:

“On this patron, the process of the complement of the Qur’ān was completed under the supervision and observation of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umer and other glorious companions. There is ijma’ (consensus) of the Ummah on it without any negation. And it was an eternal good deed which the history will remember with beautiful words that Hazrat Abu Bakr supervised it, Hazrat Umer suggested it, Hazrat Zaid enforced it and the other companions supported and endorsed them in it.”⁵⁰

The Contribution of Hazrat Uthmān in the Compilation of the Qur’ān:

John Burton and his fellow orientalisks have also objected on the participation of Hazrat Uthmān in the process of the compilation of the Qur’ān. They blame that Hazrat Uthmān made changes in the Qur’ān. He altered verses of the Qur’ān according to his political need. He burnt all the mus’hafs which were prepared in the Holy Prophet’s lifetime and the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr. He changed its arrangement, so Uthmānic mus’haf is also incomplete. Let us review the contribution of Hazrat Uthmān in the process of the collection of the Qur’ān. Burton has not studied the complete history of the collection of the Qur’ān. He just, followed his ancestors and imitated them blindly. In fact, in the beginning of Islām, there were different tribes in Arab. They had little bit difference in language. They used to speak different words for one thing. So Allāh revealed the Qur’ān and allowed to read it in seven letters to make its understanding easy for them because they were new to embrace the Islām. Hazrat Abdullah bin abbas narrates that the Holy Prophet said:

“Gabriel recited to me the Holy Qur’ān in one way. I asked him (to recite the Qur’ān in other ways) and kept on requesting him to recite it in further ways and he continued to recite it in different ways till he finally recited it in seven different letters.”⁵¹

In the caliphate of Hazrat Uthmān the Islāmic kingdom had spread to a very long area. Not only Arabs but the Ajam’s (non Arab) areas had also become the part of the Islāmic government. The Holy Qur’ān was the center and axis of the Muslims. The permission of reciting the Qur’ān in different ways was also available to facilitate people and seven letters were also present. The companions used to recite the Qur’ān in those seven letters and they taught their students according to those seven letters.

So long so the people knew the reality of reciting the Holy Qur’ān in seven ways there was no problem with them but when the Islāmic kingdom spread and new Muslims especially non Arabs started reciting the Holy Qur’ān. They felt difficulty to decide which dialect and letter they should adopt for reciting the Holy Qur’ān because everyone could not be aware of this fact that the Qur’ān had been revealed in seven dialects. So people started declaring their own recitation to be correct and others recitation to be wrong. There was a great danger of disputes among the Muslims and that people will commit a great sin by declaring the revealed correct letters of the Qur’ān to be wrong.

On the other hand, there was no standard mus’haf in the whole Islāmīc world which could be criterion for the whole Muslim ummah except the mus’haf which was compiled by Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit and it was in Medina, because all the other mus’hafs were written individually and there was no arrangement of collecting the seven letters in them.

So the only standardized and reliable solution for these disputes was to spread such mus’haf in the whole Islāmīc world in which all the seven letters were collected so it could be decided that which recitation was correct and which recitation was incorrect? This great deed to save the Muslim ummah from disputes on the base of the text of the Qur’ān happened by the hands of Hazrat Uthmān, the third caliph of Islām. The details of this incident are present in narrations. Its detail in Sahīh-al-Bukhari is as following:

“Hazrat Anas bin Malik narrates that Hazrat Huzaifa bin Yamān arrived to Hazrat Uthmān bin Affan. At that time the people of Sham (Syria) and the people of Iraq were waging battle to conquer Āzarbyjan and Armenia. Hazrat Huzaifa bin Yamān was much worried about the differences of the people of Sham (Syria) and the people of Iraq in the recitation of the Holy Qur’ān. So he requested Hazrat Uthmān: “O Ameer-ul-Mumineen! (Chief of the believers) save this Ummah before they disagree about the Qur’ān, as the Jews and the Christians differed (about their books) before” So Hazrat Uthmān sent a request to Hazrat Hafsa asking her: “Send the manuscripts of the Holy Qur’ān to us, so that we may copy them in a perfect mus’haf and then return those manuscripts to you.” Hazrat Hafsa sent the manuscripts to Hazrat Uthmān. Hazrat Uthmān ordered Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit, Abdullah bin Zubair, Abd-ur-Rahman bin Harith bin Hisham and Sa’id bin al-Ās to rewrite those manuscripts in the perfect copies. So they did so. Hazrat Uthmān said to the three men from Quraish (Abdullah bin Zubair, Sa’id bin al-Ās and Abd-ur-Rahman bin Harith): “If you differ with Zaid bin Thabit in writing any point in the Holy Qur’ān then write it according to the dialect of Quraish because the Holy Qur’ān was revealed in the tongue of Quraish.” So they did so. When they had compiled the manuscripts into many mus’hafs, Hazrat Uthmān sent back the original manuscripts to Hazrat Hafsa, and he sent to every Muslim area one copy of those mus’hafs which they had copied (from the mus’haf of Hazrat Hafsa) and he also ordered that all the other sheets or mus’hafs consisting of Qur’ānic materials be burnt (to avoid disputes).”⁵²

We come to know many points from this narration:

1. There started disputes among the Muslims because of reciting the Qur’ān in different dialects. As Allama Badr-ud-Dīn Aini has quoted the words of Hazrat Huzaifa with detail in his book *Umdat-ul-Qari Sharah Sahīh al-Bukhari*, that Hazrat Huzaifa returned from an invasion and he did not enter his home till he went to Hazrat Uthmān and requested him: “O Chief of the believers! Save the people (from the threatening dispute).” Hazrat Uthmān asked: “what

happened?” He said: “I participated in the invasion of Armenia and I observed the people of Syria reciting according to the dialect of Hazrat Ubayy bin Ka’b which the people of Iraq have not listened ever and I saw the people of Iraq reciting according to the dialect of Hazrat Abdullah bin Mas’ud which the people of Sham have not heard ever. So they are calling each other to be disbeliever.”⁵³

2. Secondly, people had their individual mus’hafs which had only one dialect and which were mixtures of Qur’ānic verses, footnotes and different prayers. The agreed upon mus’haf which was prepared in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr was only with Hazrat Hafsa. So it was an urgent need to send to every Muslim province the copy of an official mus’haf which should be free from mixture and should consist of all the seven dialects.

3. Hazrat Uthmān did not make any changes in the verses, neither had he included any verse nor did he exclude any verse. He just ordered to prepare seven copies of that mus’haf which was compiled by the order of Hazrat Abu Bakr. This mus’haf was with Hazrat Hafsa. He borrowed it from her and copied it. There was no difference of text between the mus’haf of Hazrat Abu Bakr and that of Hazrat Uthmān. There was only difference of *rasm-ul-khat* (calligraphy). The base of the mus’haf of Hazrat Uthmān was the mus’haf of Hazrat Abu Bakr.

4. The base of its language was the language of Quraish. Therefore, Hazrat Uthmān set up a committee consisting of three men from Quraish and one katib-e-wahy (the writer of revelation) because the Qur’ān was revealed in the language of Quraish.

5. In the mus’haf of Uthmān such calligraphy was adopted which contained all the seven dialects and letters in which the Qur’ān had been revealed as Allama Badr-ud-Dīn Aini quoted the sayings of Abu-al-Hassan Ali al-Asha’ri that he said: “There is ijma’ (agreement) of all the Muslims that no one can stop any person from reciting the Holy Qur’ān in any dialect from the dialects in which Allāh has revealed the Qur’ān. The Ummah has no authority to stop any one from availing the benefit from the facility which Allāh has bestowed upon this Ummah but the reality is that all the seven dialects are available in our (today’s mus’haf) recitation.”⁵⁴

Imām Ibn-e-Hazam writes:

“Who says that Hazrat Uthmān abolished the six dialects, he has told a lie. If Hazrat Uthmān had done so or he had even decided to do so, he had gone out of Islām in no time. Rather, the fact is that all the seven dialects are present in (our mus’haf) recitations.”⁵⁵

6. Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit, the Prophet’s authorized writer of the revelation was in-charge of both committees while compiling the Qur’ān in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Uthmān. If Hazrat Uthmān had made any changes in the verses of the Qur’ān, Hazrat Zaid would have challenged it.

7. These mus’hafs were not prepared by the willingness of Hazrat Uthmān alone rather they were copied from the agreed upon mus’haf of Hazrat Abu Bakr.

Ibn-e-Abi Dawūd has quoted the sayings of Hazrat Ali in his book “Kitāb-ul-Masahif” that Hazrat Ali said:

“Do not say about Hazrat Uthmān except good. By Allāh! Whatever he did regarding the mus’haf, he did it with our agreement. He (Hazrat Uthmān) asked us: “What do you suggest about these recitations? It is because I have been informed that some people said: “My recitation is better than your recitation.” This may become disbelief.” We (the companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) said: “Then what is your suggestion?” Hazrat Uthmān said: “I think we should gather people on one mus’haf (containing all the dialects) so that there should be no sect and dispute among the Muslims.” We said: “You have thought a very good idea.”

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So the mus’haf of Hazrat Uthmān was compiled with the agreement of all the companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H).

8. Hazrat Uthmān sent the copy of this official and agreed upon mus’haf to all the provinces of the Muslim world and ordered to burn all other mus’hafs containing mixed materials and having one dialect. So there should not be any chance of dispute regarding the book of Allāh.

Conclusion:

To conclude this article it can be said that the Holy Qur’ān has been completely written and arranged in the Prophet’s life time by his own guideline. In this article, It has been clarified in the light of the Qur’ān and the Hadīth that two main sources of preserving any important thing were adopted to preserve the Holy Qur’ān; memorizing and writing. The Holy Prophet himself got the complete Qur’ān written down. John Burton, in his book *The Collection of the Qur’ān* makes repetition of the same objections again and again. According to him the Qur’ān was not written in the Prophet’s life time. But he is totally wrong in his opinion and the narrations which Burton has quoted are either d’aif or they mean that the Qur’ān was written in the Prophet’s lifetime but was not compiled in one book as the narration which is attributed to Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit that he said: “The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) died and the Holy Qur’ān had not been gathered in a single place.”⁵⁷ Or they are about that part of the Qur’ān which has been abrogated by Almighty Allah as the narration which is attributed to Hazrat Abdullah bin Umer that he said: “None of you should claim that he has got the complete Qur’ān. How does he know what the complete Qur’ān is? Because much part of the Qur’ān has gone rather, he should say that he has got what has survived.”⁵⁸ Burton’s objection that the Qur’ān consists of Khabr-e-Wahid, is also void because the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) declared the witness of Abu Khuzaima equal to two witnesses.⁵⁹ Burton has also quoted the narration regarding it.⁶⁰ Burton has repeated the question again and again that who was the first to collect the Qur’ān; Abu Bakr, Umer, Salim or Zaid? The reply to this question is that Salim and other companions compiled their personal mus’hafs while Hazrat Umer was first to suggest to compile the Qur’ān, Hazrat Abu Bakr as a caliph, was first to order to compile the Qur’ān, Hazrat Zaid was first to prepare an official mus’haf of the Qur’ān and Hazrat Uthmān was first to gather the whole umma on one agreed upon official mus’haf consisting of all the seven dialects and saved the Umma from a huge dispute regarding

the text of the Qur’ān. So the Holy Qur’an in our hands is the Word of Almighty Allāh which is complete, safe and being guarded by Himself.

Recommendations:

1. Islāmīc and Qur’ānic teachings should be declared as the compulsory part of every field of education.
2. There should be made a great campaign on Print, Electronic and Social media to create awareness regarding Islām and to root out misconceptions spread by orientalist against the Islam and the Holy Qur’ān.
3. O.I.C. should be renewed and this organization should play an active role in spreading the true and positive image of Islām.

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