

## RESPONDING TO THE ORIENTALISTS' AMBIGUITIES TOWARD THE QUR'AN<sup>○</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of God revealed to Prophet Mohammad through the Archangel Gabriel and as such, it is holistic and error free. However, certain orientalist reject this view and proposed loaded questions toward the Qur'an aimed to sow doubt among Muslims regarding the authenticity of the Qur'an. Such orientalist focused on selected content of the Qur'an, its history, translation, different readings, memorization, completion, collection, and different orthographies. This paper critically discusses these issues and tried to responses the orientalist's deviations toward the Qur'an.

**Keywords:** *the Quran, Orientalist, response, Ambiguities, accusation.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The clash between truth and falsehood is as old as time and shall come to an end when time itself stops. The supporters of falsehood exert their level best to confuse and misguide the custodians of truth. Allah reminds us of this through His decree:

*Nor will they cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith if they can. And if any of you turn back from their faith and die in unbelief, their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the Hereafter; they will be Companions of the Fire and will abide therein.* [2: 217, trans. Yusuf Ali]

Since its revelation, the enemies of Islam have opposed the truth that the Qur'an is a revelation from Allah. They claim that the Qur'an is a lie designed and created by other tribes. The Qur'an portrays this accusation:

*And those who disbelieve say: "This (the Qur'an) is nothing but a lie that he (Muhammad SAW) has invented, and others have helped him at it, in fact they have produced and unjust wrong (thing) and a lie." And they say: "Tales of the ancients, which he has written down, and they are dictated to him morning and afternoon".* [25: 4-5, trans. Mohsin Khan]

They also claim that the Prophet was taught the Qur'an by another person: And indeed we know that they (polytheists and pagans) say: "It is only a human being who teaches him (Muhammad SAW)." The tongue of the man they refer to his foreign, while this (the Quran) is a clear Arabic tongue. [16: 103, trans. Mohsin Khan]. They also accused that the Qur'an of consisting of spells from a witch.

*And when the truth (this Qur'an) came to them, they (the disbelievers in this Quran) said: "This is magic, and we disbelieve therein".* [43: 30, trans. Mohsin Khan]

The orientalist appear to have adopted a similar approach to those of the pagans in Mecca in their opposition of Islam and negative attitude towards the Qur'an. They exhausted every effort to argue that the Qur'an is not a revelation from Allah but was the creation of Prophet Muhammad. In doing so, they are repeating the same objections of the early Arab

idolaters, although the Qur'an has rejected all of their assumptions and accusations<sup>1</sup>

## 2. LITRATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Orientalists' Studies On The Qur'an*

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, European intellectuals started to follow the Muslims in studying the Qur'an. European intellectuals focused on the study of its history, translation and general study in various aspects. They also published vital opus regarding the Qur'an<sup>2</sup>.

Such efforts were motivated by several reasons, among them being because the Qur'an claims to be the last divine book. In their approach, these European intellectuals adopted the theory of 'high criticism' they were accustomed to in their study of the Torah and the Bible. The content of the Qur'an that denies the concept of trinity was particularly challenging. Moreover, the impact of the Qur'an in creating a great global human civilization especially in the field of knowledge, also constitutes one of the important factors that lead to their study of the Qur'an<sup>3</sup>.

The orientalist are very concerned about the history of the Qur'an. They became particularly focused on this area of study between the early 19<sup>th</sup> century till the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among the orientalist who wrote about the Qur'an are: Pautheir (1800-1882), whose research was published in Paris in year 1840; Gustav Weil, (1808-1889), *Madkhal Ta'rikhiy Naqdiyy 'ala al-Qur'an*; Noldeke, (1836-1930), *Geschichte des Qorans*; Edward Sell, *The Historical Development of the Qur'an*; Goldziher, *Mazahib al-Tafsir al-Islami*; Brokelman, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi*; Regis Blachere, *Introduction au Coran*; Bell R. *Introduction to the Quran*; Gustav Flugel, Muir *The Life of Mahomet*; Rodwell, Sale, G. *The Preliminary Discourse to the Koran*; Bellamy, Puin, G.R. *Method of Research on Quranic Manuscript*; Wansborough J. *Quranic Studies*; Jeffery A. *Muqaddimatan Fi Ulum al-Quran, al-Masahif, The Textual History of*

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<sup>1</sup> Zaqzuq, M. H. (1987). *al-Islam Fi Tasawwurat al-Gharb*. Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Bani Aamir, M.A. (2004). *al-Mustasyriqun wa al-Qur'an al-Karim*. Irbid: Dar al-Amal Li al-Tauzi' wa al-Nasyr, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 124-125.

*The Quran, The Quran as Scripture*; J. Burton, *The Collection of The Qor'an*; Mingana, A. *Transmission of the Koran*; A.J. Arberry, *The Quran Interpreted*; and many others who actively researched and criticized the Qur'an.

George Sale mentioned in his work, *A Preliminary Discourse of The Koran* that "Mohammed was really the author and chief contriver of the Korân is beyond dispute; though it be highly probably that he had no small assistance in his design from others, as his countrymen failed not to object to him."<sup>1</sup> .

Richard Bell believes that Muhammad used the Bible as his source during his writing of the Qur'an, especially the "Old Testament" when he used for writing stories in the Qur'an. Several stories like the story of 'Ad and Thamud were taken from Arabic sources. However, most of the content in the stories composed by Muhammad in order to pursue his teaching as well as strengthen the Islamic religion were taken from Christian and Jewish sources. Bell argued that there were greater opportunities to learn the Old Testament in Medina compared to Mecca because, in Medina, Muhammad can learn from Jewish scholars, especially material related to Prophet Musa's book (the Torah)<sup>2</sup> .

Dozy, a Dutch orientalist mentioned that the Qur'an possesses bad content. He argued that the Qur'an consisted of nothing new, with the odd exception, and that it is a boring book<sup>3</sup>.

From the aspect of different readings of Qur'an (*qiraat*), they claim that there are many *qiraat* in the Qur'an because it is initially without punctuation. For them (including Ignaz Goldziher and Noldeke), *qiraat* was initially the lettering.

They greatly criticized the Othmani Orthography (*Mushaf 'al-Uthmani*). Their criticism consisted of three aspects: its narrations, old manuscripts, and interpretation<sup>4</sup>. Some of them became more aggressive

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<sup>1</sup> Sale, G. (n.d). *The Preliminary Discourse to the Koran*. London & New York: Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Zaquq, M. H. (n.d). *al-Istishraq wa al-Khalfiyyah al-Fikriyyah li al-Sira' al-Hadari*. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Zaquq, M. H. (1987). *al-Islam Fi Tasawwurat al-Gharb*. P. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Suharto, U. (2007). *Pemikiran Islam Liberal*. Malaysia: Dewan Pustaka Fajar, p. 77.

in these aspects due to findings of old manuscripts of the Qur'an in San'a, Yemen by Gerd R. Puin. They even accused Caliph Uthman r.a. of having a political agenda due to burning other types of *mushafs* and only allowing his *mushaf* (Uthmani) to be disseminated in Islamic states.

J. Burton and J. Wansbrough claimed that not only a part but also all news regarding the *mushaf* disseminated in main Islamic cities as well as the range of *qiraat* were actually the stories created by Islamic scholars and Islamic linguists<sup>1</sup>.

According to Edward Sell, critical studies should be conducted on the history of the Qur'an. To this end, Sell published a book titled *The Historical Development of the Quran*.

Arthur Jeffery believed that the history of quranic texts is very problematic because there is nothing from its old original copies of orthography which still remain till today. There is no quranic manuscripts in recent times that remains the same. Moreover, the early quranic manuscripts for instance, did not have any punctuation and was written with Kufi calligraphy which is very different from current writings. Current texts are the result of various changing processes from one generation to another generation<sup>2</sup>.

Such are samples of their accusations toward the Qur'an. Such accusation will never stop and continue until today.

### *1.1 The Efforts Of Muslim Scholars Toward Orientalists' Ambiguities.*

From the beginning of the Quranic revelation, Muslim scholars and experts have paid close attention to the study of the Qur'an including responses to the ambiguities cast by those who doubt its authenticity as a revelation. Many works have been dedicated to responding to the claims of the orientalist towards the Qur'an either directly or indirectly. Among them are: Abdul Sabur Syahin. (2005), *Tarikh al-Qur'an*; Abdullah Darraz, (1985), *al-Naba' al-'Azim*; Ali Shahin, (1998), *al-I'lam bi Naqdi ma Jāa fi Kitab Maqalah fi al-Islam*; Bani Aamir, M.A. (2004), *al-Mustasyriqun wa al-Qur'an al-Karim*; Fadal Hassan Abbas, (2010),

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<sup>1</sup> Welch. (1983). vol. 5, 407

<sup>2</sup> Jeffery, A. (1952). *The Quran as Scripture*. New York: R. F. Moore, p.34

*Qadaya Qur'aniyyah fi al-Mausu'ah al-Britaniyyah: Naqd Mata'in wa Radd Syubuhah*; Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff & Fikri Mahmud, *Wacana al-Quran: Membongkar Dakwaan Palsu Orientalis Terhadap al-Qur'an*; Ghanim Qadduri al-Hamad, (1982), *Rasmu al-Mushaf*; Mahmud Hamdi Zaquq (1987), *al-Islam Fi Tasawwurat al-Gharb*; Mohammad Khalifa, (1983), *The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism*; Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki, *Mauqif al-Muslim min al-Dirasat al-Istisyraqiyyah*; Muhammad Muhammad Abu Laylah (2002), *al-Quran al-Karim min al-Manzur al-Isytishraqi*; Muhammad Mustafa Al-A'zami (2003), *The History of The Qur'anic Text - From Revelation to Compilation*; Mustafa al-Sibaie (1998), *al-Istisyraq wa al-Mustasyriqun*; and Subhi Saleh (1985), *Mabahith Fi Ulum al-Quran*.

### 3. RESPONDING TO THE ORIENTALISTS' ACCUSATIONS TOWARD THE QUR'AN

#### 3.1 Creation of Quran by Prophet Muhammad

Some Orientalist accused that the Qur'an is created by Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. Among them are:

- a) Noldeke: who claimed that he said: "The prophethood of Muhammad rise from the extreme dream, direct inspiration from the senses, and not from maturity mind. If it was not because of his intelligence/ wisdom, he be sure was not capable to face his enemies."<sup>1</sup>
- b) Bosworth et. al: said in the book of Encyclopedia of Islam: "The Qur'an is not from Allah." (C.E. Bosworth et. al., op.cit.)
- c) Willz: "Muhammad himself has written a book containing orders and stories called the Qur'an but claimed it was revealed by god. When we observed the Qur'an from both of literature and

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<sup>1</sup> Noldeke, T. (2004). *Tarikh al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Konrad Adenaur Stiftun, p. 387.

philosophical perspectives, it can be said that it is not related to God”<sup>1</sup>.

d) Julius Wellhausen : claimed: “The Qur’an was from Muhammad”<sup>2</sup>

e) Gustav Lubon : claimed: “The Qur’an was written by Muhammad”<sup>3</sup>

These are the classical accusations. Allah Himself has addressed this issue in several places in the Qur’an (al-Nahl: 101, al-Furqan: 4, al-Sajdah: 3, Saba’: 8 dan 43, al-Isra 88).

If the Qur’an was written by Prophet Muhammad pbuh, then other Arabs would be capable of producing something similar, but have failed to do so. The Prophet kept repeating his challenge towards them but none of them could meet this challenge. They were also given the opportunity to conspire with each other to compose something that can challenge the Qur’an as working in groups may assist them in their goal. However, the fact remains that no one or none of the groups could compose a single verse similar to the Qur’an despite having been revealed in their language and being expert linguists.

### ***3.2 Criticizing the contents of revelation***

Some orientalists criticized the comprehensive address of the Qur’an. They argued that much of its content especially in regards to history were missing. In his ‘Tarikh al-Qur’an’ Noldeke introduced the subtopic titled ‘The Revelation for Muhammad but did not exist in the Qur’an.’<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the Encyclopedia of Islam mentioned that “with no doubt, it is sure that several paragraphs in the Qur’an were missing.” In addition, Encyclopedia Britannica mentioned “parts of the Qur’an are imperfect”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bani Aamir, M.A. (2004). *al-Mustasyriqun wa al-Qur’an al-Karim*.p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> Wellhausen, J. (1958). *Tarikh al-Daulah al-Arabiah*. Cairo: al-Alif Kitab, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Lubon. (1979). *Hadharat al-Arab*. Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arab, p.111.

<sup>4</sup>Abu Shahbah, M. (1987). *al-Madkhal Lidirasat al-Qur’an al-Karim*. Riyadh: Dar al-Liwa’, p. 285.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Muslims admitted that the Qur'an does not consist of all revelation given by Allah to His Prophet, but all that has been transferred into the *Mushaf* (Qur'an) is revelation, and reading it is considered as an act of worship.

The Prophet s.a.w. himself mentioned that there are Quranic verses that have been deleted. The Qur'an itself explains the necessity of this in surah Al-Nahl: 101 and al-Baqarah: 106 for example.

In a hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas: "Umar ibn al-Khattab claimed that the best reciter among us is Ubai and the most expert in laws is Ali, and we will not take Ubai's words which he says: 'I will not leave anything that I heard from Prophet Muhammad s.a.w; but Allah has said that: "Whatever verses that explained what We have revoke, or We left (or We postpone), We actually make them better or equivalent." [2: 106]"<sup>1</sup>

### 3.3 Doubts on memorization of memorizers of Qur'an

The orientalists claim that "We are really know about the witnessing of Zaid bin Thabit which has no doubt that he was really written all the verses and words that he heard from Muhammad, but most of the words were memorization from others. It was happened several years before Zaid had been ordered to write and transfer all the verses and words from the professional readers of Qur'an (the qurra'). Therefore, how they can memorize all the words and reserved their memories whilst they might neglect and forgot?"<sup>2</sup>

The writing of the Qur'an was completed during the era of Prophet Muhammad pbuh as the words of the Qur'an came directly from Allah, through the Archangel Gabriel, and were communicated to Prophet Muhammad who communicated it to his companions. Prophet Muhammad pbuh was very concerned with the memorization of the Qur'an and took care to ensure that they were properly copied and understood. Before his death Prophet Muhammad pbuh recited the complete Qur'an to Gabriel. The prophet worried over forgetting

<sup>11</sup> Al-Bukhāri, M. I. (2001). *al-Jami' al-Musnad al-Ṣāhih al-Mukhtasar Min Umur Rasulillah SAW Wa Sunanihi Wa Ayyamihi - Ṣāhih al-Bukhāri*. Beirut: Dār Tuq al-Najāt, no.4121

<sup>2</sup> Bani Aamir, M.A. (2004). *al-Mustasyriqun wa al-Qur'an al-Karim*.p. 295.



certain words during the revelation so Allah promised that he would never forget the words from revelation. This was explained through His words: [سَنْفُرُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَى] [87:6] and [75: 16-19]. According to the Jalalayn Interpretation, this means, “Do not burden yourself and do not read them (revelation words) hastily because you would never forget.”<sup>1</sup> Syeikh Al-Sabuni explained this matter by saying “O Muhammad, We will read these words for you then you will memorize them in your heart and you would never forget them.”<sup>2</sup>

In light of the above, there was no mistake during the revelation as narrated by Ibn Abbas:

*“Whenever Gabriel came to Allah’s Apostle, he would keep quiet (and listen), and when the Angel left, the Prophet would recite that revelation as Allah promised him.”*<sup>3</sup>

During and after revelation, the companions kept memorizing the words of the Qur’an in their heart. The Qur’an was memorized by many of the companions, among them the four Caliphs, Ubai ibn Ka’b, Abdullah ibn Mas’ud, Zaid ibn Thabit, Abu Musa al-Asy’ari, Abu al-Darda’ and others. Some of the companions wrote Quranic verses on animal bones, skins, date leaves and soft rocks. After every the revelation the Prophet s.a.w used to call the scribes of the revelation to write the revealed words and organize them in specific places in the Qur’an as taught by Gabriel a.s.<sup>4</sup> The scribes of the Qur’an were very honest. They handled it with care and diligence.

Thus, there is no doubt towards the credibility of Zaid r.a. in collecting and writing all the words of the Qur’an as questioned by the orientalists.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Mahalli, J. D. & al-Suyuti, J. D. (n.d.), *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah. p. 803

<sup>2</sup> Al-Sabuni, M. A. (1997). *Sofwah al-Tafasir*. Cairo: Dar al-Sabuni, vol. 3, p. 522.

<sup>3</sup> al-Bukhāri, no. 4548 & 4656, Muslim, no. 679.

<sup>4</sup> Juseh, M. R. (2008). *Tarikh al-Qur’an & Rasm Uthmani*. Malaysia: Pusat Khodim al-Musha, p. 56.

### *3.4 Doubts on the completion of the Qur'an by Referring to the different ideas of the companions toward collecting the Quranic verses*

The orientalist claimed that Ibn Mas'ud, who was considered "a man who knows Qur'an the most" assumed that the copies of Qur'an initiated by Caliph Uthman (Mushaf Uthmani) was not authentic. Ibn Mas'ud refused to give his manuscript to be burned. He also ordered the Iraqis to hide their manuscripts with the following words: "O the Iraqis, kindly hide and cover your Qur'an manuscripts. Indeed, the first surah (al-Fatihah) and last two chapters in the Qur'an had been deleted because they were not from Book of Allah".

In answering this accusation, it can be asked of the orientalist: what is the significance obtained by the companions when they added these three chapters if the verses were not from the Book of Allah? Does it make sense if they deliberately insert a part as opening of the Qur'an and insert another two short parts as the ending of the Qur'an whilst the Muslims perceive reading the Qur'an as an act of worship? Moreover, among the Muslims are those who memorized the Qur'an and several of them were witnesses to the revelation. Furthermore, if Muslims added sentences to the Qur'an, how would such insertions be identified? The orientalist claimed that there were three obvious insertions which were arranged in obvious places in the Qur'an, namely in the beginning and end. If this indeed occurred then it would have been a definite cause of anger and commotion among Muslims, which history witnesses did not occur.

If amendments were made to the Qur'an, then why would Ibn Mas'ud, who they claim is the most knowledgeable person on the Qur'an, remain silent? If he was concerned with the actions of Uthman r.a, then why did he not voice his displeasure publicly and insist on changes? In light of the evidences, it is near certain that Ibn Mas'ud did not act in a manner proposed by the orientalist.

Regarding this matter, Imam Nawawi commented: "The Muslims have reached a consensus (ijma') that *al-Mu'awwizatain* (Surah An-Nas and Surah Al-Falaq) and *al-Fatihah* are parts of the

Qur'an. Those who disobey are blasphemy. What was claimed by Ibn Mas'ud is false and not authentic."<sup>1</sup>

Ibnu Hazm a great critical philosopher commented: "This is deception and accusation towards Ibn Mas'ud, but there are authenticity regarding *qiraat 'Asim* from Zirr as well as the existence of surah An-Naas, Al-Falaq and Al-Fatihah in the Qur'an."<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, according to Abu Bakar al-Baqilani, It is not authentic that surah al-Fatihah, al-Nas, al-Falaq were not from the Qur'an and were not memorized, but they have been deleted from the *mushaf* in term of its writing, it was not because of the prophet refused or cannot accepted them as parts of the Qur'an, but it is said that do not writing them in the Qur'an was his *sunnah*, unless, what had been ordered by him (Prophet)."<sup>3</sup>

Uqbah ibn Amir al-Juhani reported: The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said to me: "There have been sent down to me verses the like of which had never been seen before. They are the Mu'awwadhatain (Surah An-Naas and Surah Al-Falaq)."<sup>4</sup>

Ibnu Qutaibah also said: "surah al-Fatihah has been deleted from the Quran not because of the assumption by Ibn Mas'ud which assumed it was not a part of the Qur'an but it was because he felt that the Qur'an was written and compiled between two sheets. He was afraid that it can cause doubt, forgetfulness, amendmets, addition and diminution."<sup>5</sup> This means that according to his thought, surah al-Fatihah is free from doubt, addition and diminution because it is a short Surah and it is obligatory to memorize and learn it due to it being a necessary component of prayer for every Muslim.

Abu Said ibn al-Ma'la reported: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Shall I teach you the greatest surah in the Qur'an. He

<sup>1</sup> Al-Nawawi, Y. Sh. (1997). *al-Majmu'*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, vol. 3, p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Shahbah, M. (1987). *al-Madkhal Lidirasat al-Qur'an al-Karim*. P. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Baqilani, A. B. (2001). *al-Intisar Li al-Qur'an*, Cairo: Matba'ah Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, p. 90

<sup>4</sup> Muslim, no: 1348-1349.

<sup>5</sup> Ibnu Qutaibah, A. M. (2007). *Ta'wil Musykal al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, p. 49.

(PBUH) said, "It is Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil 'Alamin (i.e., Surah Al-Fatihah) which is As-Sab' Al-Mathani (i.e., seven repeatedly recited Verses) and the Great Qur'an which has been given to me."<sup>1</sup>. These hadiths are strong evidences that prove that those verses are part of the Qur'an. Besides that, the narration of Ibn Mas'ud is singular (*āḥād*) which cannot contradict *mutawatir* narrations.

Moreover, the orientalist's claim that he (Ibn Mas'ud) advised Iraqis to hide their manuscripts of the Qur'an is irrelevant, because if they obeyed his order, where did they hide those manuscripts? There is no *mushaf* manuscript that is different from the Mushaf Uthmani. History also shows that during the rebellion of the Iraqis toward Uthman's administration, the Iraqis mentioned several weaknesses of Caliph Uthman but none of the weaknesses were related to the modification (*tahrif*) of the Qur'an. Such would have constituted a potent argument (if their accusation is correct) justifying their disobedience to Caliph Uthman r.a. Assuming it is true that Ibn Mas'ud wrote to the Iraqis to hide their manuscripts, why did he not refer this matter to the people of Medina while he lived there?!

### 3.5 Doubts on witnesses of Quranic verses

Orientalists claimed that 'Umar (r.a) received all the verses with two people as witnesses and that he might reject an authentic verse if this condition was not met in fear that the verse may be altered. This claim can not be right because the Qur'an is Thabit (Imperturbable) by way of Mutawatir (all the narrators are unanimous in reporting it with the same words without any substantial discrepancy). It is said that many of the Prophets Sahabah (companions) has a habit of always speaking true (they do not lie). There are many hafiz of the Qur'an (people who memorises the Verse of the quran) amongst the Sahabah, including the Four (Caliphs). Such is the method to preserve the suhuf or scribe. They collected all the memorised verses from the hafizs and the scribes. Thus, it is impossible for Umar (r.a) to act in such a way.

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<sup>1</sup> al-Bukhari, no: 4622

Umar (r.a), acting as the supervisor in the efforts to collect (all the verses of the Qur'an) during the times of Abu Bakr (r.a) mentioned (is there another person to verify this Verse) to Zaid as a way to ensure that the verse is truly 'Sahih' (Authentic). (He) doesn't only accept from a written verse but there must be two witnesses whom have heard the verse from Rasulullah (s.a.w) even though Zaid is a hafiz. This is a precaution (Ihtiyat) as advised by Abu Bakr (r.a) to Umar (r.a) and Zaid when they were asked to sit near the door of the mosque whilst doing this work<sup>1</sup>.

There could be no question that an authentic (Sahih) verse is rejected by way of having only one witness as the minimum requirement. If there is no or not enough witnesses whom have heard it straight from Rasulullah (s.a.w), it is sufficient grounds for rejection. When the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Rasulullah (s.a.w), he would read it straight to his Sahabah who in turn, would memorise, write down and spread the verses amongst themselves. Thus, there would be many of the Sahabah who would qualify as witnesses, should it be a true verse.

In the possibility that there is an acceptance of an altered verse that is witnessed by two people is highly unlikely as the Sahabah are taught directly by the Prophet (s.a.w.). History has proven that their lives are of the highest virtues and therefore they would never commit any lie towards Allah Almighty and his Prophet. For them to lie, omit or alter a Quranic Verse is unthinkable because they are also faced with other hafiz such as Zaid and Umar (r.a). They are also witnessed by several other scholars who also witnessed the writing of the verse in front of the Prophet (s.a.w) and/or witnessed the birth of the verse<sup>2</sup>.

The thoroughness and meticulousness shown by all the Sahabah, including Umar (r.a) in ensuring authenticity of the verse can be seen when Umar (r.a) reading a Verse in Al-Taubah (Repenting) 9:100 without using the word 'wau' ( و ). He was immediately corrected

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<sup>1</sup> al-Suyuti, (1974). P. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

by Zaid (r.a) and Ubai Ibni Kaab (r.a) who verified the verse corrected. Umar (r.a) accepted with an open heart <sup>1</sup>.

### 3.6 Doubts on Quran based on different Orthographies

Noldeke assumed that different *orthographies* consist of several mistakes. For instance, the writing of ta' (التاء) in some *mushafs* is *maftuhah* and in others is written in *marbuta* ("bound tā"). Likewise, sometimes alif (الف) is written and sometimes it would be eliminated. This is also the case of the word 'wau' (واو) which is sometimes written and sometimes omitted. Also it is written in nunnation for two *kasrah* some times and 'nun' (نون) in other *mushafs*.<sup>2</sup>

This assumption made by Noldeke is due to his ignorance of *principals of Othmani's Orthography* and its secrets. The differences of words in the Quranic writing depends on differences in the meanings of the words. It is beneficial in the aspect of *balaghah (rhetoric)*, language and grammar. Imam Abu al-Abbas Ahmad al-Azdi or popularly known as Ibn al-Bina' al-Murakisiyi discussed this matter. His book entitled *Asrar al-Rasm al-Uthmani* was renamed by al-Qastalani as *al-Dalil min Marsum al-Tanzil*.<sup>3</sup>

The origin of writing should be in accordance with what has been spoken without any addition, reduction, modification, substitution as well as maintain *the ibtida', waqaf, fasl* and *wasl*. In this matter, the *Mushaf 'Uthmani* is different in some part of its words due to the hidden wisdom and secrets behind it. This matter has been stated in six methods which are deletion (*hadhf*), addition (*ziyadah*), the hamza, changing (*badal*), joining and separating (*al-fasl wal wasl*), and variant canonical readings (*ma fiihi qiraataan*).

These methods were not made in nonchalance, however Noldeke and other orientalists did not know about the wisdom and secrets behind the methods. Many Islamic scholars assumed that

<sup>1</sup> al-Zanjani, (1969), p. 36

<sup>2</sup>Noldeke, T. (2004). *Tarikh al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Konrad Adenaur Stiftun, pp. 443-444.

<sup>3</sup> Qadduri, Gh. H. (1982). *Rasmu al-Mushaf*. Baghdad: Lajnah Wataniah, p. 223.

practicing this *orthography* is obligatory. According to Syeikh Muhammad al-Syanqiti, the Qur'anic *orthography* is a *sunnah* which is followed and agreed by the four *mazhabs* (*schools*), and there is consensus from the *mujtahid* (*Islamic eminent scholar*). It is a matter of *ijma'* (*consensus of the Muslim scholars*) as embedded in the writing till it is consecutively recorded (*mutawatir*) though it is not known by younger people in eastern/Arab countries<sup>1</sup>

### *3.7 Different readings of the Qur'an as a cause of doubt of the Qur'an to orientalist*

Noldeke claimed that the reason for the discrepancy for part of the different readings of Qur'an ('qiraat) is due to the scribes' mistakes when they were writing the Mushaf Uthmani (Quranic Verse published by Uthman Ibni Affan r.a). The mistake was allowed to enable the Arabs to correct it in their tongue. He further asserted that it is part of the history related by some of the Prophet's (s.a.w) Sahabah such as Uthman (r.a), Ibn Abbas (r.a) and Aisyah (r.h). He further claimed that the early Muslim's had noticed the discrepancies in the Mushaf Uthmani. His reasons are that Uthman (r.a) told the committee when they detected the mistake to 'allow it as the Arabs will correct them in their tongue later.'

This hadith came from two historical evidences categorised as 'Sanad Da'if (Weak) and of 'Mudhtarib Material' (Shaky). The second historical evidence came from Yahya Ibni Ya'mar through Uthman (r.a) but is without witness. This hadith was rejected by most Ulama' including Abu Al-Qasim, al-Syatibi, al-Ja'bari and Abu Amru al-Dani. Al-Dani once said, ' This update does not have any supporting evidence and therefore cannot be accepted as proof.' In short, for al-Baqillani, the hadith is categorised as Mursal (Hurried) and therefore rejected<sup>2</sup> .

Furthermore, this accusation is so unreasonable due to Uthman (r.a)'s sincerity in all his affairs related to the Qur'an. He was diligent in preserving, reading and learning the Qur'an to the point such that he earned the respect of other Sahabah. He also placed terms on the

<sup>1</sup> Al-Shinqiti, M. A. (1972). *Adwa' al-Bayan*. Cairo: Matba'ah al-Madani, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Baqilani, A. B. (2001). *al-Intisar Li al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, p. 536.

committee (the committee that collects the verses to form a single book) that if there be any discrepancy, it should follow the Quraisy tongue. He validated and supervised the whole project personally, instead of relying solely on the committee. Hence, when there was an argument in the method of writing the word 'Tabut' (either to use the letter 'ta' or 'ha', he was able to decide quickly and decisively. Another example was provided by his assistant, Hani al-Barbariy, in how he performed the inspection of the submitted Mushaf. He was very diligent and he did not allow even one letter to pass without having been checked thoroughly<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, it is not true that Uthman (r.a) knew about the mistakes made and allowed it to continue when he was the person responsible in correcting and /or editing the mistakes made by the scribes and decided which was true or false and maintain and uphold the truest verse<sup>2</sup>

So if we assume that Uthman (r.a) truly committed such an act, it goes to question that would not the other Sahabahs have spoken out and not permit such an unspeakable act to happen, when they are persons known to always uphold the truth? Especially if the item in question is the authenticity of the Qur'an. They would not have kept silent and would oppose such act wholeheartedly. This will, in turn create uproar at that time. However, there has been no such historical evidence that would suggest such an uproar<sup>3</sup> In fact, what Uthman meant was the discrepancies in the 'Lahn' (pronunciation, in the Lafadz (pronouncement), and in the form of Qiraat that were allowed. For instance, the changes in the word 'Al-Sirat' where the word should be either be written with 'Sad' (ص) or 'Sin' (س). In this case, both spellings are accepted as correct. In this case, both spellings are accepted as correct.

Noldeke claimed that Aisyah gave her commentary towards the writing of several verses in the Qur'an which contained mistakes in regards to language, she said: "This is a work of the writer, they do

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Salam, Q. (1995), p. 286

<sup>2</sup> Al-Zurqani, M. A. (n.d). *Manahil al-'Irfan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabiyy, vol. 1, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Shahbah, M. (1987). *al-Madkhal Lidirasat al-Qur'an al-Karim*. P. 363.



mistake in the writing.” Noldeke put some examples (Noldeke, 2004: 444):

- a) (الصابرون) replace by (الصابرين) (Al-Baqarah: 177)
- b) (والمقيمين) replace by (والمقيمون) (Al-Nisa': 162)
- c) (والصابثون) replace by (والصابئين) (Al-Maidah: 69)
- d) (إن هذان لساحران) replace by (إن هذين لساحران) (Taha: 63)

Noldeke claimed that the Muslims accepted these mistakes due to their naivety in glorifying the Qur'an, which caused the existence of several qiraat and interpolation in the Qur'an.

It can be seen that such concerns are the result of a lack of understanding of the Arabic language and its various linguistic styles. The truth is that the Qur'an was revealed in a language used by various groups of Arabs though the Quraishi language was the dominant stain. The hidden wisdom behind this is Allah S.W.T. wants to make the Qur'an as the greatest book of Arabic language and unite all Arabs. Imam Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi commented that what is mentioned associated with Aisyah's commentary is not authentic<sup>1</sup>.

It is known that the companions were closely concerned about the Qur'an to the extent that Allah praised them for their knowledge of the holy Qur'an. They earnestly learned the Qur'an directly from Prophet Muhammad s.a.w or with people who learned directly from him s.a.w. They would not tolerate if there are mistakes in it. The conflict between Umar ibn al-Khattab and Hisyam bin Hakim is clear evidence in this matter.

The same goes for the story related to Uthman r.a. that he would never let any mistake occur in the writing of words written by the Mushaf Committee except he himself corrected and improved it.

There are many stories that support this. The most vital point is that Allah Himself preserves His holy book as he commanded Gabriel to meet the Prophet yearly so that the prophet can recite with him. In the final years of the prophet's life, this occurred twice. All of this

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<sup>1</sup> Ridhwan, U. I (1992). *Ara' al-Mustasyriqin Haula al-Qur'an al-Karim wa Tafsihihi*. Riyadh: Dar Tayybah, pp. 559-561.

happened to ensure that the Qur'an is free from any mistake and can be read as the first time it was revealed.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

What has been reviewed in this article was an evaluation in order to respond to the accusations and questions made by the orientalists toward the Qur'an. It can be seen from the above analysis that doubt toward the Quran is largely the result of failure to properly understanding the Quran, its language and orthography. However, it seems that there are some people who make such accusations based on their hatred and animosity to Islam or religion in general. Muslim thinkers should try to answer their questions with tolerance and though the logical deductive method.

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