THE MAGNIFICENT
QUR'AN
A Unique History of Preservation
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In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful.

THE Magnificent

Qur'an

A Unique History of Preservation

EXHIBITION

ISLAM
In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful.

"That (this) is indeed an honourable recitation (the Noble Qur'an). In a Book well-guarded. Which none can touch but the purified."

Surah al-Waaqi‘ah (The Event) 56: 77-79.
Front cover: a magnificent 16th century Qur’an from the Iraq region written on beige coloured paper in rayhani script. The left hand page shows the end of Surah al-Israa (The Journey by Night, 17) with the start of Surah al-Kahf (The Cave, 18) opposite.

Back cover: 18th century Qur’an from the Saharan region of Africa written in sakhawi script on thick paper. The start of Surah Taalaa (20) is shown on the left hand page.

End papers: the whole of Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1) in two parts from a Qur’anic manuscript written in rayhani Arabic script, Iraq, 16th century.

Page 1: Arabic calligraphy written in thuluth script reading, “In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful”.

Page 2: magnificent 16th century Qur’anic manuscript copy from the Middle East showing Surah ash-Sharh (The Opening Forth, 94) and Surah at-Teen (The Fig, 95).

Page 5: beautifully illustrated Qur’anic calligraphy from Surah al-Waqi’ah (The Event, 56) verses 77-79 penned in a circu lar style using traditional thuluth script.

Page 7 (opposite): decorative text page containing the first portion of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) from a complete Qur’an dating back to the 17th century copied in the Indian subcontinent using naskh script within a cloud motif.

Pages 8 & 9: decorative carpet pages from volume one of Sultan Baybars’s seven volume Qur’an, dated 1305-06 (held at the British Library, London). The Qur’anic text written in white kufic script is from Surah al-Waqi’ah (The Event, 56) verses 77-80. “That (this) is indeed an honourable recitation (the Noble Qur’an). In a Book well-guarded (with Allah in the heaven, i.e. Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz). Which (that Book with Allah) none can touch but the purified (i.e. the angels). A Revelation (this Qur’an) from the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists).”

Page 10: the start of Surah al-Israa (The Journey by Night, 17) from a Qur’an dated 1269 AH (1891 CE) written in Afghanistan. The text is elegantly written in a traditional naskh script within a cloud motif surrounded by extensively decorated geometric floral design work. The calligraphers name is inscribed on the back page as Ghulam Muhadin.


Pages 12 & 13: elegant muhaqqaq calligraphy of Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1).

Page 14: visually intense Surah al-Falaq (The Daybreak, 113) from a 17th century Qajar Qur’an written in Persia. Exquisitely decorated throughout using precious gold and other colours written in naskh script on handmade polished paper.

Pages 18 & 21: elaborately decorated pages with Surah an-Nas (Mankind, 114) and Surahs al-Khalq (The Creation, 112) and al-Falaq (The Daybreak, 113) from a 16th century Qur’an.

Page 22: close-up view of Surah al-Falaq (The Daybreak, 113) from a large Mamluk Qur’an leaf written in muhaqqaq script, Egypt, 14th century.

Page 24 & 25: close up view of verse 56 from Surah al-Ahzab (The Confederates, 33) taken from a 400 year old Qur’an copied in Iraq. The text is written in a refined rayhani script using black ink and set within a multi-coloured lined border. Large gold coloured roundels act as verse separators.

Page 26: detail of a gold and blue coloured marginal medallion from a 12th century Abbasid Qur’an. The Arabic word for the number ten (ashara) written in eastern kufic script within concentric circles indicates the end of a 10th verse.

Page 27 (third title page): exceptional hand painted late 19th century Qur’anic calligraphy in thuluth script with the words of the sixth verse from Surah al-Insaan (Man, 76); “Aspring wherefrom the slaves of Allah will drink, causing it to gush forth abundantly.”

Page 28: early 20th century Qur’an scroll beautifully hand painted in thuluth script from the Middle East, most likely from Lebanon or Syria. The words are from part of verse 21 of Surah Yusuf (Joseph, 12); “And Allah has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of men know not.”

Page 30: 19th century page from a complete Qur’an beautifully hand written in traditional naskh style Arabic script showing the first few verses of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2). Originating from the Ottoman Empire, it is brilliantly decorated with geometric patterns throughout using precious gold and a variety of other colours. It is written on polished paper and bound in a leather hardcover with gold insets.

Page 32: beautifully illuminated 16th century Qur’an from Persia or Iraq. The start of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) is written in elegant rayhani script on thin polished paper.

Page 34: detailed view of the word ‘Allah’ written in bihari Arabic script using gold ink with a black outline from a 15th century Qur’an copied in India.

Pages 36 & 37: extensive floral design work from an early 20th century Qur’an scroll originating in the Middle East beautifully penned in thuluth script. The calligraphy has been taken from verse 2 of Surah as-Saff (The Ranks, 61); “O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do?” The dimensions of the scroll are 100 cm long by 30 cm wide.

Pages 38 & 39: a series of images showing magnificently illuminated Arabic calligraphy written on a long scroll of thick paper. The dimensions of this scroll dated to 1826 CE are 400 cm long by 20 cm wide. The manuscript begins with the words 'In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful' written in thuluth script, in black ink, followed by verse 255 known as Ayatul Kursi from Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2), written in thick thuluth script in black ink within a cloud motif surrounded by a gold and red floral border.

Page 40: Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1) from a 17th century Qajar Qur’an written in Persia. Richly decorated throughout using precious gold and other colours written in naskh script on handmade polished paper.

Page 42: the first few verses of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) from a 17th century Persian Qur’an.

Page 44: detail of vowel markings from an early 20th century Qur’an scroll.

Notes and abbreviations:

Bibilographic references: are indicated by a number written in superscript and cited in the reference section starting on page 569.

Qur’anic references: the name of the surah (chapter) in Arabic is followed by the English translation, the surah number and the number of the ayah (verse).

**: Arabic supplication ‘may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him’ (translitera
tion - salla Allahu alayhi wa salam). It is a religious recommendation for Muslims to repeat this phrase whenever the name of Prophet Muhammad (**) is mentioned or written. Although we have also endeavoured to write a salutation whenever a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (***) is mentioned, it has not always been possible in every case, so ‘May Allah be well pleased with them all’.

CE: The Common Era, sometimes known as the Current Era, begins with the year 1 on the Gregorian calendar. All of the dates throughout this book are given as Common Era dates unless stated otherwise.

AH: After Hijrah, Islamic dates are reckoned from the Hijrah (the migration of Prophet Muhammad (***) from Makkah to Madinah, in the year 622 CE).

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THE MAGNIFICENT
QUR’AN
The Spoken Word of Allah

EXHIBITION
ISLAM
www.exhibitionislam.com
ولياً نستعين بها فإن أصلط
لما استقلت فر岚 الذين أنجب عليهم
عSIM الخضوع عليه ولا الأصليين
بِشَيْرَةٍ لِّلَّهِ الْخَمِرَةَ
ألَّلَا يَدُوَّرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ عَلَى حَيْمٍ
وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ
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**Foreword**

This stunning book is for those readers with an interest in seeing how the Noble Qur'an has been preserved over the last fourteen centuries. Using fine examples from the magnificent collection of Qur'anic manuscripts held by Exhibition Islam, many of which have been displayed here for the first time, this work shows how the Arabic words of the Qur'an have remained unchanged since its revelation.

The Exhibition Islam Qur'an Collection presented in this book has been carefully collected over a number of years and features a wide array of manuscripts from across the Islamic world. The collection as a whole highlights how the text of the Qur'an has been preserved over the centuries across the globe. Indeed no other book has undergone such rigorous preservation criteria, nor been as widely copied, as the Qur'an. It has an unbroken chain of preservation from the time of revelation in the 7th century to the modern day; both orally and in written form.

One of the finest aspects of Exhibition Islam's collection is that it features Qur'anic manuscripts written during every century of Islam and by a variety of people. Master calligraphers would apply their expertise in producing the most exquisite and lavish manuscripts. Professional scribes would write hundreds or perhaps thousands of manuscripts for sale to the general public. Amateurs would write personal copies which would very often be passed down through their family, generation after generation. No matter who would write the Qur'an, it was a painstakingly difficult process which would require checking and correcting before distribution to ensure the preservation of the Divine Words.

A particularly unique quality is the sheer range of geographic regions which feature as part of the Exhibition Islam Collection. With an area stretching from Spain across to Indonesia and from Africa up to China the wondrous and sometimes lavish calligraphy which has been used to write historical Qur'ans has inspired generations and is showcased in the collection. Many of the Qur'ans are complete and in excellent condition, whilst others are in a very delicate state, or consist of just a few pages or even a rare single folio in some cases.

The type of writing style used by devoted Muslims to copy the Qur'an would have depended on the region as well as personal preference. The collection therefore contains examples of Qur'anic calligraphy ranging from *kufic*, *eastern kufic*, *muhaqqaq*, *naskh* and *maghribi* as well as a number of other distinct regional styles. Whereas many of the manuscripts have very clearly defined script styles, some combine a multitude of scripts to complement and beautify the text, whilst others have hybrid scripts which are unique and unlikely to be found elsewhere.

In more recent times traditional handwriting of Qur'ans has become rare with the widespread use of the modern printing press. Exhibition Islam is also privileged to have in its possession early printed Qur'ans, both in Arabic as well as early translations into European languages. The collection has been further enhanced by the addition of miniature Qur'ans, including a complete Qur'an that has been etched onto a plastic sheet the size of a debit card using modern laser technology.
Exhibition Islam’s Qur’an Collection started with a few manuscripts from the Middle East, North Africa and the Ottoman Empire and slowly expanded to include examples from across the world. Exhibition Islam’s curators then worked diligently to bring into the collection, everyday Qur’ans that not only enhanced the quality of the collection but also told the story of its preservation. Each manuscript is therefore unique, not only in terms of the writing, but also in the materials used such as the type of paper or ink. Some cultures and geographic regions have used locally available materials for the production of paper, whilst other manuscripts have been written on imported machine made paper. The earliest manuscripts are often written on prepared animal skin known as vellum or parchment. The styles of binding also vary considerably according to the region and period. Some African Qur’ans are not bound at all and would have been carried as loose pages in a satchel or pouch.

Thus each manuscript carries its own story, and is a part of the overall process of preservation and transmission of the Divine text. Exhibition Islam is proud to be part of the process of preservation and takes its role seriously in safeguarding these unique and irreplaceable manuscripts, and at the same time making them available for the world to see, witness and testify that the words of Noble Qur’an have indeed not changed since its revelation in the 7th century CE.

Photography of the collection for the production of this book has also been another major task that was carried out by Exhibition Islam’s own design team. An exciting part of the imaging process was handling pieces that are beautifully illuminated with decorative opening and centre pages or that have rare calligraphy styles from remote regions of the world. It was also fascinating to come across calligraphers’ names or the date when the Qur’an was written, or some other notes inscribed in the margins.

Due to the delicate nature and age of many of the manuscripts, flash photography and harsh lighting was avoided. All of the Qur’an manuscripts were therefore, photographed under natural daylight using a high definition digital camera. Most of the Qur’ans and single pages were photographed from multiple angles using macro and extreme close-up lens settings. This process resulted in a huge expansion of Exhibition Islam’s image library, which presented the editorial team with thousands of images to choose from to complete this project. It is also important to note that some of the Qur’ans featured in this book have been printed larger than their actual size for the readers benefit. For the sake of completion we have also included a number of famous Qur’ans held by the Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul and the British Library in London.

The Exhibition Islam Qur’an Collection saw a major launch at The Islamic Cultural Centre in London during 2005. This event was unique because manuscripts from every century of Islam were on display for the first time in the UK. Since then parts of the collection have been showcased in many cities across the world including Copenhagen (Denmark), Tromso and Oslo (Norway), Cape Town (South Africa), Doha (Qatar) and Dubai (UAE).

Lastly, as the Noble Qur’an is such a unique book, we felt that any book which describes some of its Divine aspects should also contain some special features. This is one of the reasons behind the very large format of this current book and the fact that we have given it seven different names displayed on separate title pages.

Exhibition Islam Editorial Team.
Ramadan 1430 AH.
September 2009 CE.
In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful.

"The Most Gracious (Allah)!
He has taught (you mankind) the Qur'an (by His Mercy).
He created man. He taught him eloquent speech."


In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful.

"Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the dominion; and He is Able to do all things. Who has created death and life that He may test which of you is best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving."


Abu Hurayrah reported that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"He who does not thank Allah does not thank people."

(Abu Dawood)

All Praise is due to Allah. He is The Most High. The All-Powerful and The All-Mighty. The All-Knowing and The All-Wise. He is The One True God. The Lord of the Universe and there is no one like Him. We praise Him, seek His help and ask His forgiveness.

We thank Allah for giving us the opportunity to complete this magnificent project. We would also like to thank all of those who have helped Exhibition Islam over the years as well as those who have contributed to the Exhibition Islam Qur'an Collection.

May Allah accept from us all our good deeds. Ameen.

Finally, we kindly request that everyone respects this book with the utmost care due to the presence of Qur'anic verses in Arabic, which Muslims regard as the Spoken Word of Allah, The Most High.

Unless otherwise stated, all of the Qur'anic manuscripts shown in this book form part of the Exhibition Islam Qur'an Collection.
وراءه عليهم السلام ولهما نجات
رضا الله عنهما وسماح
عليهما الله في الجنة
هذين أولياء الله في الجنة
وراءه عليهم السلام ولهما نجات
وراءه عليهم السلام ولهما نجات
“Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O you who believe, send your blessings on him, and salute him with all respect.”

Surah al-Ahzaab (The Confederates) 33: 56.
THE MAGNIFICENT
QUR'AN
A Literary Challenge to Mankind

An Exhibition Islam Book
قَدْ عَلِمْتُكُمْ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ مِن حَمَّامٍ
Munir Ahmad

'O Allah have mercy upon his soul and enter him into Paradise.'

Ameen.
Rashida Begum Alam

'O Lord bestow your mercy upon our dear mother just as she loved us and took care of us when we were young.'

Ameen.
Nasreen Asmat Hussain

'O Allah have mercy upon her and let her dwell in Paradise forever.'

Ameen.
الله
Hafiz Ahmad Ashraf

'O Allah have mercy upon our dear teacher and enter him into Paradise.'

Muhammad Arshad

'O Allah forgive our dear brother and let him dwell in Paradise forever.'

Ameen.
ليست عن الله الرحمن الرحيم
لأنه يرزق بالغلال العليم العليم
الجبريل ملك يعمر الزمن
وأيها الملك نستعين
يريد الصبر للعليم
صبر الله بين نعمة عين
غير عين وراء ولا الضالين
الله أكرم وأفضل
فأها وكيفما تقررها
THE MAGNIFICENT Qur'an
A Timeless Miracle
الله الحليم الرحيم

ذلك الكتاب لا ريب فيه هدي

لم يسبق له مثله من نبأ

الشعرين الملتقيتين

ولقد وقع الصلاوة وهم زويتهم نافقون

ولقد وقع الصلاوة وهم زويتهم نافقون

والدين يؤمنون بما أنزل لكم وما أنزل

مرتفعين وأثراً لأخرون هم نقفون

الله يعلم ما في السماء وما في الأرض

لا إله إلا هو

وربكم عز وجل

لا إله إلا هو

والله علمنا مرضك ما أرسل ليك و ما أنزل
THE
MAGNIFICENT
QUR’AN
Unrivalled Beauty and Tranquillity
THE MAGNIFICENT QUR'AN
The Text that Changed the World
THE MAGNIFICENT
QUR’AN
Manuscripts Through the Ages
لللله
Preface

Guidance, comfort, beauty and inimitability. The Noble Qur'an represents all of these qualities and much more; it forms the very foundation of the Islamic faith, a remembrance in times of joy and anguish, a sea of knowledge and a treasury of wisdom, all in the most exquisite style. Its verses are etched in the hearts and minds of hundreds of millions of people, both young and old. Its melodious recitation can be heard night and day around the globe. For the faithful it provides an insight into our ultimate reality and it represents a unique sign from God Almighty (Allah).

Allah, the Most High, has preserved the Qur'an and guaranteed it from corruption until the end of time. Its meticulous preservation and transmission over the centuries in written form and orally through memorisation has ensured that the Qur'an available today is the same as that which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Allah 2) in the 7th century. The style of Arabic script may have varied over the centuries, but you will not find any two copies of the Qur'an that differ in content, regardless of the era or region in which they were written. The companions of Prophet Muhammad (Allah) memorised the Qur'an directly from him. They subsequently passed it onto their students, who in turn became the teachers for the next generation. This unique cycle of learning and teaching has continued over the centuries to the present day, with the result that there is an unbroken and authenticated chain of transmission stretching back to Prophet Muhammad (Allah) himself. Combined with the availability of vast numbers of hand written historical manuscripts, this represents unequivocal evidence that the Qur'an we have today is indeed the same as that revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Allah).

This book is divided into three sections, the first deals with matters such as the previous Books of Allah, the fact that the Qur'an is the Speech of Allah, its gradual revelation, why the Qur'an is a unique and miraculous text and the challenge in the Qur'an. Interspersed through this section are beautiful examples of hand written Qur'anic manuscripts from different parts of the Islamic world. These have been grouped together by region and arranged in the following order; Ottoman, Middle Eastern, European, African, Persian, Indian subcontinent, Chinese and Far Eastern Qur'anic manuscripts.

The second part of the book 'The Qur'an through the Ages' shows manuscripts that date back to the very first century of Islam and provides a highly visual and fascinating journey through the last fourteen centuries. This section highlights the fact that the Noble Qur'an is unchanged and remains preserved in its original Arabic language, without the addition, omission or alteration of a single word since the time of Prophet Muhammad (Allah). To illustrate this unique point, alongside every historical manuscript, we have shown an image of the corresponding page from a standard modern Qur'an for the purposes of comparison. In addition, there are a series of maps which chart the origin of some of the most important manuscripts from the Exhibition Islam Qur'an Collection; the maps also show the spread of Islam over the centuries.

The third section of the book provides a brief overview of when the Qur'an first came into print. At the end there is a gallery with annotated images featuring more Qur'anic manuscripts held by Exhibition Islam. In this section we have also endeavoured to present examples of Qur'an manuscripts held by the British Library, London.
Introduction

The Qur'an is the sacred book of Islam and is universally regarded by all Muslims as the Spoken Word of Allah, which was revealed by the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ over a period of 23 years. Unchanged since the start of its revelation in the year 610 CE, the Qur'an is unquestionably one of the world's most important and influential texts, providing a source of guidance and inspiration for hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world. For more than 1400 years, the Qur'an has functioned as a principal catalyst in the transformation of capricious societies towards stability, progression and modernity. It contains a universal message for the guidance of all of mankind, and it remains unique in its explanation of the purpose of life.

In Islam, the Qur'an commands the highest rank and status and provides the primary source of Islamic faith and doctrine. The name 'al-Qur'an', is not a name that was introduced by Muslims, rather it is the very name that Allah chose to refer to this Book. The word 'al-Qur'an' is a verbal noun in the Arabic language that literally translates to mean 'the reading'. Historically, however, the word Qur'an has always been used to refer to the Book that was revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Structurally, the Qur'an is divided into 114 chapters (surahs) with over 6,000 verses (ayahs). The Arabic word, ayah actually means 'miracle' or 'sign' emphasising that the sentences are not just verses of a poem but each phrase is a sign from the Almighty Creator. Each of the Qur'an's 114 chapters are given a title according to its contents. The Qur'an opens with a beautiful short prayer known as al-Fatihah (The Opening) with the remaining chapters ordered according to the instructions left by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

In the vast majority of written copies of the Qur'an, the opening surah is usually highly decorated with splendid geometric floral patterns. There are also other useful divisions of the Qur'an, for example the thirty equally sized parts called juz', or the seven equally sized parts called manzil. These divisions are helpful for memorisation and for those who wish to complete recitation of the whole Qur'an within a month or in a week. In many Qur'ans, juz' are further divided into two hizb with each being subdivided into quarters. Surahs are also usually divided into parts called ruku, usually indicated by the Arabic letter ayn with a number in the margin.

The Qur'an has traditionally been recited aloud, but its preservation and transmission over the centuries has been both oral through memorisation and by writing. From the very beginning of its Divine revelation, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was caused to instantaneously memorise the Qur'an as it was being revealed. Initially, the verses were committed to memory and transmitted from believer to believer. Later on, as the number of verses revealed began to increase, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would have one of his many scribes immediately write down the revelation and also gave instructions as to where the verse should be placed. The result was that by the time Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away in the year 632 CE the Qur'an had been completely memorised by numerous companions in the order that it exists today. Moreover, it had also been written down in its entirety on various materials such as bone, papyrus, palm leaves, stone and on fragments of parchment or vellum. All of these factors were vital for the collection of a master Qur'an codex (mushaf) that would occur a few years later.
It is also important when discussing the revelation of the Qur'an to mention the condition of the Arab people living during the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The Arabs were largely nomadic, with only a few tribes living in cities. Family feuds and tribal wars that could last generations were the norm. Women were considered no better than domestic animals, slavery was common place and the poor and helpless in society were treated harshly. Some desert Arab tribes also engaged in the horrible ritual of burying alive their unwanted female infants.

The religion of the Arabs was a curious mixture of polytheism and a belief in Allah. The Kaaba¹ at the heart of Makkah was home to some 360 idols. The great tribe of Quraysh were the custodians of the Kaaba. They dominated the city, maintaining a position of honour and respect amongst all Arabs. On the other hand there were also some virtuous qualities present in the Arab character such as courage, hospitality and a sense of personal and tribal honour that would be enviable even today. The spoken word, as a means of communication was given precedence over the written word. Poetry in particular was regarded as a highly valued art form.

Tribes would compete against each other to see who could produce the most skilled and eloquent poets. During the annual fair of Ukaadh in Makkah, poets would descend upon the sacred city from many parts of Arabia to compete for the honour of having their poem displayed on the door of the Kaaba for the whole of the following year.

It was against this background that Allah revealed the Qur'an in an Arabic language that was so emotive and eloquent that the Arabs could clearly see that this was inimitable; and a miracle from their Lord. Allah challenged people at the time to bring forth something similar to the Qur'an but to this day the challenge has not been met.

“And if you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a chapter similar to it, if you are truthful. But if you do not do it, and of a surety you cannot do it, then fear the fire whose fuel are men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.”

لا يدخر الله في إحسانه إلّا يدورة
ويسّر ذلك لمن يشاء من عّلمه
وإذا تلقى الوصى ما لم يقله
فإنّا نقول: إنّه لله ما في السّموات
وإلى الشّيطان ما في السّموات،
وإنه يغفر المّثلين.

أمين.
Both sides from a 9th century Qur’anic manuscript written on vellum containing five lines of kufic script in gold with sepia outlines. This leaf from the Exhibition Islam Qur’an Collection is from a famous Qur’an written entirely in gold, known to have once been housed in Kairouan, Tunisia. Other leaves from the same manuscript are found in various public and private collections, including the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; the National Library and the National Institute of Archaeology, Tunis; Beit al-Qur’an, Bahrain; the Tareq Rajab Museum and the al-Sabah collection, Kuwait; the Nasser D. Khalili collection, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 2

The strikingly angular and very stylized kufic form of writing in this Qur’an leaf was used extensively during the early Islamic period, but was largely superseded by more rounded cursive styles such as naskh after the 10th century. Kufic script, however, remained in use for surah headings and marginal ornaments as well as for decorative purposes in architectural applications either on stone or mosaic. The text is vocalised using red dots with further diacritics marked in green and blue. Individual verses are separated by gold rosettes circled in blue. The page has undergone some repair work to damaged suffered around the edges. The writing on the right hand page starts with the 6th word (baydhaa) of verse 12 from Surah an-Naml (The Ants, 27) and continues through to the left hand page ending on the last word (mufsidun) of verse 14.
لا يمكنني قراءة النص العربي المكتوب بالخط العربي على الصورة.
Pages from an early Ottoman Qur’an written in two different script styles, 16th century. There are single lines of large muhaqqaq at the top and bottom of each page with ten lines of smaller naskh script in between. Floral shapes above the line are used to designate verse endings. Vowel and punctuation markings are penned in black, red and ultramarine. The shamsa medallions in the margins indicate the start and finish of the 14th section (rum) within the surah. The right hand page starts with part of verse 110 from Surah an-Nahl (The Bee, 16) and continues through to verse 122 on the left hand page.
Fundamental Concepts of Early Islamic Law

The Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever imposes meadow or berm or water or land, it will not be taken from him until it is returned to its rightful owner."

This Hadith highlights the importance of respecting the rights of others in regards to natural resources.

The Islamic concept of.Access to Water and Meadows

The Islamic legal principle of "al-farid" (the single owner) grants the right to exclusive use of natural resources. However, this does not extend to collective use, as resources are considered to be owned by the community as a whole.

Furthermore, the concept of "al-farid" applies only to proprietary rights, not to the collective rights of communities. The communal rights of water and meadows are regulated by the principle of "al-umm" (the collective owner), which grants the right to use natural resources for the benefit of the community as a whole.

In conclusion, the Islamic legal system recognizes the importance of respecting the rights of others in regards to natural resources, while also recognizing the communal rights of communities to use natural resources for the benefit of the community as a whole.
The Need for Messages from Allah

The Qur'an was revealed at a time when humanity was in the depth of darkness. Since the beginning of creation, Allah in His Infinite Mercy has not left humanity without guidance as to how to conduct our lives. He has sent us many messages of guidance through His various prophets and messengers. These noble souls taught people the true purpose of existence (i.e. to worship Allah alone) and they also showed people through example how to live pious lives by following the Divine laws laid down by Allah.

In today's world of materialism, scientific advancement and social decay, much of humanity remains ambivalent towards Allah's Final Message, delivered by the Last Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Indeed, those who turn away from Allah's Message are described in the Qur'an as frightened wild donkeys fleeing a hunter and ignoring all around them.

"Then what is wrong with them (i.e. the polytheists, the disbelievers) that they turn away from (receiving) admonition? As if they were (frightened) wild donkeys. Fleeing from a hunter, or a lion, or a beast of prey."

Surah al-Muddaththir (The One Enveloped) 74: 49-51.

Another very important point to note is that the command to worship Allah alone without associating any partners with Him, as well as following the laws that He has established, has remained the same from the very first prophet, Adam (peace be upon him) through to the last Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ. Allah explains this in the Qur'an by saying:

"He (Allah) has ordained for you the same religion (Islamic Monotheism) which He ordained for Noah, and that which We have revealed to you (O Muhammad ﷺ), and that which We ordained for Abraham, Moses and Jesus saying you should establish religion and make no divisions in it. Intolerable for the disbelievers is that (Islamic Monotheism) to which you (O Muhammad ﷺ) call them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills, and guides to Himself who turns to Him in repentance and in obedience."

Surah ash-Shoora (The Consultation) 42: 13.

The previous Books of Allah

Many of the previous prophets and messengers received guidance from Allah in the form of Divinely revealed books. These were meant for the purposes of teaching the people of that time; a fact that is highlighted throughout the Noble Qur'an:

"Say (O Muslims): "We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and to the offspring of the twelve sons of Jacob, and that which has been given to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord.

We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have submitted (in Islam)."

Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 136.
Opposite
The first five verses of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) from an 18th century Qur'an written in the Ottoman empire. The manuscript is handwritten in naskh and set within a trellis of geometric patterns. Interestingly, the header is written in thuluth script, which is recognized by its large and rounded endings.

Allah also mentions sending revelation to His Prophets in the following verse:

"Verily, We have sent the Revelation to you (O Muhammad ﷺ) as We sent the Revelation to Noah and the Prophets after him; We (also) sent the Revelation to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and offspring of the twelve sons of Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon; and to David We gave the Psalms. And Messengers We have mentioned to you before, and Messengers We have not mentioned to you, – and to Moses Allah spoke directly. Messengers as bearers of good news as well as of warning in order that mankind should have no plea against Allah after the (coming of) Messengers. And Allah is Ever All-Powerful, All-Wise."


In another verse Allah mentions some of the previously revealed books and the fact that the Qur'an confirms these scriptures. The Qur'an, however, is directed at providing the whole of mankind with guidance; not just a specific nation or tribe.

"Allah! None has the right to be worshipped but He, the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists. It is He Who has sent down the Book (the Qur'an) to you (Muhammad ﷺ) with truth, confirming what came before it. And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel, aforetime, as a guidance to mankind. And He sent down the Criterion [of judgement between right and wrong (this Qur'an)]. Truly, those who disbelieve in the verses of Allah, for them there is a severe torment; and Allah is All-Mighty, All-Able of Retribution.

Truly, nothing is hidden from Allah, in the earth or in the heaven. He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. None has the right to be worshipped but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. It is He Who has sent down to you (Muhammad ﷺ) the Book (this Qur'an). In it are verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book; and others not entirely clear.

So, as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking discord, and seeking for its hidden meanings, but none knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it; the whole of it (clear and unclear verses) are from our Lord." And none receive admonition except men of understanding."

Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan) 3: 2 – 7.

The 'People of the Book'

All of the Divinely revealed books preceding the Qur'an have been either lost through the course of history, or changed so drastically that they no longer represent the original revelation. For example, the present day scriptures of the Jews and Christians do not contain their original revealed content. The difference between Muslims and the followers of other faiths is that only the Muslims take their guidance from a complete Divine revelation, that is available in its original language, without having been changed in anyway by man.

The Jews no longer have access to the complete teachings of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and they as a people have rejected two of the major prophets who came after him. Similarly, the Christians have extremely limited knowledge of the original teachings of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) as any written material disappeared a few decades after him. Towards the end of the first century a few biographical works did appear by anonymous authors, but none had first hand knowledge of Jesus's life. These texts form part of the New Testament Bible that we have today. However, these have been altered to such an extent that even though there are many historical manuscripts in existence today, no two are the same.¹

Despite the complete lack of textual integrity, Allah still frequently uses the term 'People of the book (or scripture)' in the Qur'an when referring to the Jews and the Christians. This is because they have definitely received Divine revelation in the past.
However, Allah also makes it clear that these earlier Divine revelations are no longer valid, because they have been superseded by the final revelation, the Qur'an. Even a cursory study of the Qur'an reveals that a large part of it deals with the 'People of the Book'. Allah highlights where they have strayed from His commandments and calls upon them throughout to accept His Final Message that was delivered by His Final Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad ﷺ. For example Allah says:

"Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): ‘O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah (Alone), and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah.’ Then, if they turn away, say: ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims.’"

Surah al-Fatiha (The Opening) 1: 6-7.

"O people of the Scripture! Now has come to you Our Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) making (things) clear to you, after a break in (the series of) Messengers, lest you say: ‘There came to us no bringer of glad tidings and no Warner.’ But now has come to you a bringer of glad tidings and a Warner. And Allah is Able to do all things.”

Surah al-Ma’ida (The Table Spread) 5: 19.

The nature of the previous books

In mankind’s ancient past, writing was largely composed of inscriptions on items such as leather, wood and stone tablets. Pages bound in book form did not exist so written text would have been mostly in the form of separate sheets. The scripture that was revealed by Allah to the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), for instance, is described in the Qur’an as Suhuf or ‘sheets’; as in the following verses:

“Verily, this is in the former Scriptures – The Scriptures (Sheets) of Abraham and Moses.”

Surah al-A’la (The Most High) 87: 18–19.

“Or is he not informed with what is in the Pages (Scripture) of Moses, and of Abraham who fulfilled (or conveyed) all that (Allah ordered him to do or convey)?”


The ‘sheets’ sent down to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), however, are no longer with us and have been lost long ago. Similarly, the scripture that Allah revealed to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was the Taurat, although the Qur’an refers to it both as the ‘book’ and the ‘sheets’. For example, when referring to the Taurat as the book, Allah Says in the Qur’an:
“Then, We gave Moses the Book, to complete (Our Favour) upon those who would do right, and explaining all things in detail and a guidance and a mercy that they might believe in the Meeting with their Lord.”

Surah al-An’aam (The Cattle) 6: 154.

A further example where Allah refers to the Taurat by name, is in Surah al-Maaidah where Allah Says:

“Verily, We did send down the Taurat, therein was guidance and light, by which the Prophets, who submitted themselves to Allah’s Will, judged for the Jews. And the rabbis and the priests, for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah’s Book, and they were witnesses thereto. Therefore fear not men but fear Me (O Jews) and sell not My Verses for a miser­able price. And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such are the disbelievers.”

Surah al-Maaidah (The Table Spread) 5: 44.

After Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), when the Jewish tribes, collectively known as the ‘Children of Israel’ had strayed from Allah’s guidance, Allah sent further revelation to Prophet David (peace be upon him). This noble Prophet then led and guided the Children of Israel back towards the worship of Allah alone.

The particular revelation that was given to Prophet David (peace be upon him) was called the Zabur (Psalms). In the Arabic language zabara has the same meaning as kitaab which means ‘wrote’. The Arabic word Zabur also has the same meaning as kitaab which means ‘book’. So when the word Zabur is mentioned in the Qur’an it usually refers to the book of revelation sent to the Prophet David (peace be upon him).

“Verily, We have sent the Revelation to you (O Muhammad ﷺ) as We sent the Revelation to Noah and the Prophets after him; We (also) sent the Revelation to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the offspring of the twelve sons of Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon; and to David We gave the Zabur.”

Surah an-Nisa (The Women) 4: 163.

Again Allah says in the Qur’an when referring to Prophet David (peace be upon him) and the Zabur:

“And your Lord knows best all who are in the heavens and the earth. And indeed, We have preferred some of the Prophets to others, and to (David) We gave the Zabur.”

Surah al-Isra (The Night Journey) 17: 55.
Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was the last of the long line of prophets and messengers that Allah sent exclusively to the Children of Israel. The revelation which he received is referred to in the Qur'an as the Injeel (Gospel).

Known in the Qur'an as Eesa ibn Maryam (Jesus, son of Mary), Muslims have immense love and respect for this Messenger of Allah. He is regarded as a Prophet, a reformist, the 'anointed one' (Messiah) and the 'spirit of Allah' who was elevated to heaven. He is held in very high esteem by Muslims everywhere and is regarded as one of the greatest Messengers sent by Allah. His name is rarely mentioned without invoking Allah's peace upon him.

Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was born miraculously, he spoke from the cradle as a baby, cured leprosy and those born deaf and blind, raised the dead and blew life into inanimate objects - all by the Will of Allah. Muslims do not believe that he was Allah or part of a trinity or that he was crucified or that he was the son of God. In the Qur'an Allah refers to the Injeel as follows:

"And in their footsteps, We sent Jesus, son of Mary, confirming the Torah that had come before him, and We gave him the Injeel (Gospel), in which was guidance and light and confirmation of the Torah that had come before it, a guidance and an admonition for the pious.

Let the people of the Injeel (Gospel) judge by what Allah has revealed therein.

And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed (then) such (people) are the rebellious i.e. disobedient."

Surah al-Maaidah (The Table Spread) 5: 46–47.

Again Allah Says:

"Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice. And We brought forth iron wherein is mighty power (in matters of war), as well as many benefits for mankind, that Allah may test who it is that will help Him (His religion) and His Messengers in the unseen. Verily, Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty. And indeed, We sent Noah and Abraham, and placed in their offspring Prophethood and Scripture. And among them there are some who are guided; but many of them are rebellious.

Then, We sent after them Our Messengers, and We sent Jesus, — son of Mary, and gave him the Injeel (Gospel). And We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him, compassion and mercy. But the monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them, but (they sought it) only to please Allah therewith, but that they did not observe it with the right observance. So, We gave those among them who believed, their (due) reward; but many of them are rebellious.

O you who believe [in Moses (i.e. Jews) and Jesus (i.e. Christians)]! Fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ), He will give you a double portion of His Mercy, and He will give you a light by which you shall walk (straight). And He will forgive you. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

So that the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) may know that they have no power whatsoever over the Grace of Allah, and that (His) Grace is (entirely) in His Hand to bestow it on whomsoever He wills. And Allah is the Owner of Great Bounty."

يا إياها النديّة إن الفذوان تطيعوا الله أكرموها
على عقابكم فتقلعبوا نوراً بالله موليك
وهوخيراً الناصرين سلقوه قلوبكما للذين
كفرfalse مع ما شكركم بالله ملتمس.
لقد صدقت الله وعله إذ خسروا نهادته
ففالقتهم ومنازعتهم في الفين وعاصمتهم
من أبعد ما رأيكما ماجعل منكم مزية الله
ليس بكم من بر الأجر ولا صرفكم
عنه ليبلبلكم ولقد عفا عنهن
وألون فضل الله والمؤمنين إذ نصعدون ولألونوا
علي أحدهما زيداً دعوا عساكم
أخرى كفاكم بكم غماغم لربكم
نعم ناعلا على ما كتب ولما أصابكم
وأصلح بما تستحقون
وأتمها
At over 700 years old, this late 13th century Qur'an from Syria or possibly Egypt is written in elegant muhaqqaq script with surah headers copied in thuluth using red ink. This impressive Qur'an was written by a master calligrapher on thick, high quality hand made paper and measures 36cm by 25cm. The Qur'an contains 280 pages with thirteen lines of text per page. Over time some of the leaves have been damaged at the corners so have undergone repair work. Individual verses are not numbered; three simple red dots are used to indicate the end of each verse. The red text on the left hand page written sideways in the margin indicates the end of the surah's first section. The pages show the end of Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets, 26) and the start of Surah an-Naml (The Ants, 27).
سورة التمثيل (العشت ورُؤَيْنِ)
Further pages from Exhibition Islam’s Mamluk Qur’an showing Surah an-Nasr (The Help, 110), al-Masadd (The Palm Fibre, 111), al-Iklaas (The Purity, 112), al-Falaq (The Daybreak, 113) and an-Naas (Mankind, 114). The manuscript has one large decorated roundel on the last page and was most probably copied for a mosque or someone of wealth.

One of the most powerful verses of the entire Qur’an known as Ayatul Kursi (The verse of the chair or footstool) in Surah al-Baqarah describing the Creator in all of His Magnificence and Glory. “Allah! la ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), Al-Hayyul-Qayyum (the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists). Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His Permission? He knows what happens to them (His creatures) in this world, and what will happen to them in the Hereafter. And they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.” Surah al-Baqarah, (The Heifer) 2: 255.
A small 10th century Qur'an from Syria or Iraq written in archaic naskh script using black ink. This compact Qur'an is one of the oldest complete extant manuscripts in Exhibition Islam's Collection. The Qur'an consists of 300 pages and is only 8cm long and 4cm wide. Surah headers are written in a larger cursive style script in white within a gold panel. There are fifteen lines of densely packed script per page within a light frame. The text is fully vocalised in black. Tear drop motifs in the margins indicate the end of every fifth verse and gold roundels made up of concentric circles mark every ten verses. Individual verses are separated by simple circles. The Qur'an is leather bound and embossed with a number of decorative emblems. The pages show the last part of Surah ash-Shu'ara' (The Poets, 26) and the start of Surah an-Naml (The Ants, 27).
A hand written kufic leaf and its reverse side originating in the Middle East, 13th century. By this period, kufic script had been largely replaced by more cursive styles of writing, so examples of kufic Qur’anic manuscripts produced during this period are rare. The calligrapher has only made use of very sparse vocalisation in red ink even though the Qur’anic marking system was in wide use by the 13th century.

The image on the opposite page shows Surah adh-Dhaariyaat (The Winds that Scatter, 51) starting from verse 32 and ending with the first three letters of verse 45 on this page.
الولد أبا أداد سلماً النور فوحد مسرع ليدسل على مدحنا
دَهَدَدَالتربة مما تعرد
دَهَدَدَاتللفساد بما ما ظفحنا
مَرْكَارِبَةَما مَرْكَارِبَةَما
وحدهب بما عهد به مَرْكَارِبَةَما
السُلْطَانِ وَدَحَكَبا مَدَا بِهِ
للْيَهْوَةَ وَرَاحَما لِلْعَدِيدَانَاءَ
لَالْيَهْوَةَ وَرَاحَما لِلْعَدِيدَانَاءَ
The Final Revelation from Allah

As the Qur'an represents the final revelation from Allah to all of humanity, it is the most comprehensive and detailed of the Divinely revealed books which Allah chose to send to mankind. The Qur'an has therefore replaced all of the previous Divinely revealed books as it is a message from Allah to all of humanity rather than to a specific set of people such as the Children of Israel. As discussed, the contents of previously revealed books such as the Taurat of Moses, Zabur of David and the Injeel of Jesus (peace be upon them) have been altered by mankind over the ages, so Allah has superseded these with the Qur'an. The replacement of these earlier books was clearly stated by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

“In place of the Taurat I have been given the seven long Surahs (chapters); in place of the Zabur I have been given the Surahs of one hundred ayahs (verses); in place of the Injeel I have been given the seven repeatedly-recited verses (al-Fatihah), and in addition I have been given the mufasaal Surahs (i.e. from chapter Qaf until the end of the Qur'an).”

Narrated by Tabaraani in al-Kabeer.¹

The greatness of the Qur'an rests in the fact that it is Allah's Speech and as such is full of eloquence, beauty and purity. Moreover, as we shall examine later, it defies mankind's ability to produce anything similar to it. As the Qur'an is the greatest of all of the Divinely revealed books it naturally contains within it, a complete way of life and guidance for all of humanity. Allah often uses examples in the Qur'an to convey ideas and concepts to man. The magnificence of the Qur'an is explained by Allah stating that if the Qur'an was sent down upon a mountain, the mountain would be moved or crumble under the sheer power of such a mighty revelation.

“Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbling itself and rent asunder by the fear of Allah.

Such are the parables which We put forward to mankind that they may reflect.”


With regards to the above verse, the 14th century Islamic scholar Ibn Kathir wrote in his famous commentary ² on the Qur'an;

“Allah the Exalted emphasizes the greatness of the Qur'an, its high status and of being worthy of making hearts humble and rent asunder upon hearing it, because of the true promises and sure threats that it contains, 'Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbling itself and rent asunder by the fear of Allah.'”

If this is the case with a mountain which is hard and huge, that if it was made able to comprehend and understand this Qur'an, it would feel humble and crumble from fear of Allah the Exalted, then what about you - O mankind why do your hearts not feel softness and humbleness from the fear of Allah, even though you understand Allah's command and comprehend His Book. This is why Allah said, 'Such are the parables which We put forward to mankind that they may reflect.'

Opposite
The start of Surah ash-Shooraa (The Consultation, 42) from volume twenty five of a 19th century Ottoman Qur'an. The Qur'an is often sub divided into 30 equal volumes or juz' for ease of recitation and memorisation. The page is written in naskh script within a gold coloured rectangular border. Surah headers have been written in thuluth script on gold ground within a blue frame.
Above
A magnificent Qur'an scroll written in large thuluth script during the early part of the 20th century measuring 300 cm long by 25 cm wide. The text is from the verse of the chair or footstool (Ayatul Kursi). The word 'Allah' is written in black within a separate compartment on gold ground.

Opposite page
Thirteen lines of fine black muhaqqaq calligraphy with the first, middle and last lines written in a larger variant of thuluth script, from the early Ottoman period dated to around the 15/16th century. Each section of muhaqqaq text is bordered by exquisitely designed floral panels on either side. The text is fully vocalised with individual verses separated by floral shapes. There are no marginal ornaments to indicate the number of verses. The image shows Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) starting with part of verse 185 to verse 188. Location: Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul.

The following verse further emphasizes the point that Allah makes. If any Divine revelation could move a mountain, or could make the Earth cleave asunder or make the dead speak, then it would be the Qur'an; such is the power and greatness of the revelation of the Qur'an:

"And if there had been a Qur'an with which mountains could be moved (from their places), or the Earth could be cloven asunder, or the dead could be made to speak (it would not have been other than this Qur'an). But the decision of all things is certainly with Allah."

Surah ar-Ra'd (The Thunder) 13: 31.

Reflecting on this verse Ibn Kathir says:
"Allah praises the Qur'an which He has revealed to Muhammad ﷺ and prefers it to all other Divinely revealed Books before it, 'And if there had been a Qur'an with which mountains could be moved.'"

Allah says, 'If there were a Book among the previous Divine Books with which the mountains could be moved from their places, or the Earth could be cleaved asunder, or the dead speak in their graves, it would have been this Qur'an and none else.' Or, this Qur'an is more worthy to cause all this, because of its marvellous eloquence that defies the ability of mankind and the jinn, even if all of them gather their forces together to invent something like it or even a surah like it."

The greatness, beauty, eloquence and purity of the Qur'an is such that enormous mountains can be moved and crumble in submission to Allah, the Creator of all that exists. Mountains, as we know today, are immense objects that can extend deep underground serving like giant pegs to stabilise the Earth's crust. Yet if they can be humbled before Allah, then how is it that man, who is relatively insignificant in size and form, can be so proud and arrogant to reject the message of the Qur'an?

Revelation during Ramadan

The month of Ramadan in the Islamic calendar is intimately tied to the Qur'an in numerous ways. Most significant of all is that Allah chose to reveal all of the previous Divine books that we are aware of during the month of Ramadan; and the Qur'an is no exception. Regarding this phenomena Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"The Suhuf of Ibraheem (Abraham) were revealed on the first night of Ramadan. The Taurat was revealed on the sixth of Ramadan. The Injeel was revealed on the thirteenth of Ramadan. The Zabur were revealed on the eighteenth of Ramadan. And the Qur'an was revealed on the twenty-fourth of Ramadan."

Narrated by Tabaraani in al-Kabeer.³
An 18th century Ottoman Qur’anic commentary of Surah al-A’raaf (The Heights, 7) in scroll form decorated with foliate designs. The ‘Bismillah’ (In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful) is written using diwani script. Diwani was a specialist Ottoman font used extensively by scribes in the Ottoman chancery for official documents. The main text is written in riqa with large lines of thuluth on the sides. Unusually, the scroll decoration is seemingly incomplete as the floral design in the top right corner has not been coloured in.

Allah’s promise to preserve the Qur’an

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, as the final Messenger and Prophet sent by Allah, taught humanity to believe in Allah alone as the One True God, to worship Him Alone, and to enjoin good and forbid evil. As the final Divine revelation, Allah mentions that the Qur’an was sent down in truth in the following verses:

“And We have sent down to you (O Muhammad ﷺ) the Book (this Qur’an) in truth, confirming the Scripture (Books) that came before it and trustworthy in highness and a witness over it (old Scriptures).

So judge among them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you. To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way.

If Allah had willed, He would have made you one nation, but that (He) may test you in what He has given you; so compete in good deeds. The return of you (all) is to Allah; then He will inform you about that in which you used to differ.

And so judge (you O Muhammad ﷺ) among them by what Allah has revealed and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they turn you (O Muhammad ﷺ) far away from some of that which Allah has sent down to you.

And if they turn away, then know that Allah’s Will is to punish them for some sins of theirs. And truly, most of men are rebellious and disobedient (to Allah).”

Surah al-Maaidah (The Table Spread) 5: 48–49.

To guard this eternal truth from corruption, Allah has also promised humanity that He (Allah) would protect and preserve the Qur’an in its original Divinely revealed form. The Qur’an could not be changed as it was to remain the final message from Allah to humanity until the end of time.

“Verily, We, it is We Who have revealed the reminder (i.e. the Qur’an) and surely We will guard it (from corruption).”


The Muslims only follow the Qur’an

A question that often arises is why don’t Muslims accept the previously revealed books that are present nowadays. In response to this, it is important to stress that Muslims follow Islamic Monotheism and so are required to follow only the Qur’an and the authentic teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. As far as the previous books are concerned, they no longer represent their original true forms. Muslims believe that they were sent down by Allah and at one time they were correct, but as discussed previously, during the course of history they have been altered by mankind. This is the reason Muslims do not follow these previous Divinely revealed books. Only the Qur’an remains unchanged and protected by Allah.

Additionally, there is no need to follow the previous books as the Qur’an has been sent to all of mankind rather than just a specific nation, so it has abrogated these books. Hence, the Qur’an presents a complete way of life that covers all of the teachings in the previous books and much more.
The names of the Qur'an

The Qur'anic revelation is of such magnitude that just one or two epithets alone cannot describe it. We begin to gain an understanding of its depth of knowledge and beauty of expression by a variety of descriptive names that are to be found within the Qur'an itself. For instance, Noor (light), Huda (guidance), Rahma (mercy), Majeed (glorious), Mubarak (blessed), Bashar (announcer) and Nadhir (warner) are some of the words used to describe the Qur'an. However, the most commonly used names for the Qur'an are:

1. Qur'an (Recitation)

The name Qur'an is the most commonly used name and it is mentioned seventy-three times within the Qur'an itself. The Arabic word Qur'an is derived from the root Qara'a, which has various meanings, such as to read and to recite. Qur'an is a verbal noun and hence means the 'reading' or 'recitation'. The name Qur'an also signifies memorisation; and history shows that the Qur'an has been preserved through memorisation and writing. In one verse of the Qur'an Allah says:

"Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an in order that you may understand."

Surah Yusuf (Joseph) 12: 2.

2. Kitaab (Book)

The Qur'an is also known as the Kitaab. The name Kitaab refers to written text and comes from the root word Kath, which means to bring pieces (e.g. letters) together. Allah says:

"This is the Book (the Qur'an), whereof there is no doubt..."

Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 2.

3. Furqaan (Criterion)

The name 'Furqaan' meaning the 'Criterion' is mentioned four times in the Qur'an. This refers to the fact that the Qur'an is the criterion between Tawheed (monotheism; The Oneness of Allah) and shirk (polytheism; associating partners with Allah), and the criterion between truth and falsehood as well as good and evil.

The name Furqaan is used for one of the surahs of the Qur'an and contains the following description;

"Blessed is He Who sent down the Criterion (of right and wrong, i.e. this Qur'an) to His slave (Muhammad ﷺ) that he may be a warner to the Alamin (mankind and jinn)."

Surah al-Furqaan (The Criterion) 25: 1.

4. Dhikr (Remembrance or Narrative)

The Qur'an is referred to as Dhikr because it acts as a guidance and remembrance of the purpose of life. The Qur'an describes the purpose of the entire creation, the history of previous nations as well as including descriptions of heaven and hell. Allah Says:

"And this is a blessed Reminder (the Qur'an) which We have sent down; will you then (dare to) deny it?"

Surah al-Anbiyaa (The Prophets) 21: 50.

5. Tanzeel (Revelation)

The Qur'an is the Tanzeel because it is a revelation sent down by Allah to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ so that he could guide humanity. For example, Allah mentions the name Tanzeel in the following verse:

"And truly, this (the Qur'an) is a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds (mankind, jinn and all that exists)"

Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 192.

The name Tanzeel (revelation) describes the true eminence and stature of the Qur'an. It is indeed a revelation from Allah and not just some story or a poem about the days of old.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>سورة في ملبس ورقة إبراهيم فيها، بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>لسنه أبا كنتر</td>
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<td>وكان أبو بكر المعز بن عمرو أن يقولوا من بنيهم من يهودا</td>
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<td>وذكر الله عز يزعم في ملبسه بعد اليوم ما تتفلد فيه</td>
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<td>وتذكر أبا كنتر</td>
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<td>وكان حفيظ مؤخر كذ بنا بالحق لتأجهم في منه</td>
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<td>تبصرها وذك ما لا يحل عليه بنو شيب وأنزلوها من السماء</td>
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The Qur’an is the Speech of Allah

A special characteristic of the Qur’an is that it is the actual speech of Allah which was revealed to the Blessed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Arabic. However, it is important to note that Allah’s speech is infinite and not limited to or by any single language. Allah in fact has infinite power and ability to speak in any language. For instance, Allah spoke to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in Hebrew. With regards to the Qur’an being the Speech of Allah, Muhammad Abd al-Adheem az Zarqaneel in his book Manaahil al-Irfaan fi Uloom al-Qur’an, gives one of the most precise definitions of the Qur’an:

“The Qur’an is the Arabic Speech (kalaam) of Allah, which He (Allah) revealed to Muhammad ﷺ in words and meaning, and which has been preserved in the written copies and has reached us by mutawaatir (reported by a large number of people such that they cannot be mistaken or forge a lie, therefore it is authentic) transmissions, and is a challenge to mankind to produce something similar to it.”⁴ In the Qur’an, Allah also says:

“And if all the trees on the earth were pens and the sea (were ink wherewith to write), with seven seas behind it to add to its (supply), yet the Words (kalaam) of Allah would not be exhausted. Verily, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.”

Surah Luqmaan 31: 27.

This verse has also been explained by Ibn Kathir in his commentary of the Noble Qur’an in the following way:

“Allah says that even if those oceans were ink for the Words of Allah, and all the trees were pens, the pens would be broken and the water of the sea would run dry, and the Words of Allah would remain, for nothing can outlast them. For no one can comprehend the greatness of Allah or praise Him as He deserves to be praised, except the One Who praises Himself. Our Lord is as He says He is and He is beyond what we can say.”

It is important to bear in mind that Allah speaks in a majesty and manner that befits His Greatness. Allah’s speech is known to be the Most Powerful, full of Justice and Wisdom. The Qur’an as His Speech is mentioned in the following verses. Allah first outlines some of the many signs that we see created by Allah in the world, and then asks, whether people believe in the Speech of Allah or something else? He also questions which speech other than His, people will believe in:

“The revelation of the Book (this Qur’an) is from Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. Verily, in the heavens and the Earth are signs for the believers. And in your creation, and what He scattered (through the Earth) of moving (living) creatures are signs for people who have faith with certainty.

And in the alternation of night and day, and the provision (rain) that Allah sends down from the sky, and revives therewith the earth after its death, and in the turning about of the winds (i.e. sometimes towards the east or north, and sometimes towards the south or west sometimes bringing glad tidings of rain and sometimes bringing the torment), are signs for a people who understand.

These are the ayat (verses) of Allah, which We recite to you (O Muhammad ﷺ) with truth.

Then in which speech after Allah and His ayat will they believe?”

Surah al-Jaathiyyah (The Kneeling) 45: 2-6.

With regard to these verses, Ibn Kathir comments:

“Allah directs His servants to contemplate His favours and gifts, as well as His great power that is demonstrated by His creating the heavens and the Earth and the various types and categories of creatures in them.
The night and day alternate, each follows the other in succession, never ceasing to come, as decreed. One brings darkness and one brings light. Allah the Exalted also sends down the rain from the clouds when it is most needed. He is calling the rain, 'provision', because it is the resource that produces various provisions, 'and revives therewith the earth after its death', after it was dry and had no vegetation or life of any kind.

Allah said next, 'and in the turning about of the winds,' sometimes towards the south and sometimes towards the north. Some are easterly winds and some are westerly winds, some bringing sea breezes and some blow from the land, some coming at night and some by day. Some winds bring rain, some cause pollination and some winds just revive the soul, while some others bear no benefit.

'These are the ayat (verses) of Allah' - in reference to the Qur'an with the proofs and evidences that it contains, 'which We recite to you with truth' for they contain the truth from the Truth (i.e. Allah).

Therefore, if they do not believe in Allah's signs nor abide by them, what speech after Allah and His signs will they then believe in?" 

The Speech of Allah is eternal

Speech is one of the known attributes of Allah that is revealed in the Qur'an. Hence, Allah's Speech, like the rest of Allah's Names and Attributes, does not resemble anything in creation. All of His Names and Attributes are eternal and befit the Majesty of Allah and this is also true of the Speech of Allah. It is unique and perfect in every way. As Allah's Names and Attributes are unique, mankind has not been given the mental capacity to fully comprehend the exact nature of Allah's Names and Attributes. Allah's magnificent and beautiful Names and Attributes are mentioned in the following verses:

"And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them..."

Surah al-A'raaf (The Heights) 7: 180.

"There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."

Surah ash-Shooraa (The Consultation) 42: 11.
The opening pages from the famous Sultan Baybars’ Qur’an containing the whole of Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1) superbly written in gold thuluth script surrounded by extensive geometric design work. This splendid Qur’an currently held at the British Library London, is the earliest dated Qur’an of the Mamluk period and was written during the years 1304 and 1306 CE. The text of the opening surah is spread over two pages, a practice that became normal in later Mamluk Qur’ans. There are decorative medallions at the centre of each panel and a hasp in the centre of the page.

Although we cannot understand the precise nature of Allah’s Names and Attributes, we can understand their significance. For example, we know that Allah is alive (Huuy) but we also know that His is not the kind of existence that we experience ourselves. Our lives are controlled by Allah, and are terminated through death, whereas Allah is not restricted or limited by anything. Allah also has the power to give life to His creation, but we cannot do the same. Therefore, whilst we can understand that Allah has a Name or Attribute we cannot comprehend its reality with regards to Allah.

Similarly, we know Allah speaks in a manner which befits His Majesty. Allah mentions His Speech in many verses of the Qur’an. For example, Allah says that He spoke directly to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the following verses:

“...And to Musa (Moses) Allah spoke directly.”

Surah an-Nisa (The Women) 4: 164.

“And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice.”

Surah al-An’aam (The Cattle) 6: 115.

We are also informed in the Qur’an that Allah’s speech is not created:

“Surely, His is the creation and commandment. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)!”

Surah al-A’raaf (The Heights) 7: 54.
In this verse of the Qur'an, Allah distinguishes between the creation and the command which is the Speech of Allah. The Speech of Allah causes the creation to come into being:

"Verily, Our Word to a thing when We intend it, is only that We say: 'Be!'—and it is."

Surah an-Nahl (The Bee) 16: 40.

This verse has been explained by Ibn Kathir as follows: "...meaning, We (Allah) issue the command once, and then it happens. Allah does not need to repeat or confirm whatever He commands, because there is nothing that can stop Him or oppose Him. He is the One, the Compelling, the Almighty; whose Power, Might and Dominion have subjected all things. None has the right to be worshipped except Him, and there is no Lord other than Him."

We understand from this that it is the Speech of Allah which causes the creation to come into being. Therefore, the Speech of Allah cannot be created. In the following statement Prophet Muhammad ﷺ told people to seek refuge in the Speech of Allah from all types of evil. Refuge is sought from the Creator against the creation. If refuge is sought using the Speech of Allah, then His Speech is not created. If the Speech of Allah were created it would have a beginning, but the attributes of Allah do not change and are eternal.

"Whoever dismounts at any place, and says, 'I seek refuge in the kalimaat (speech) of Allah from the evil that is created,' nothing will harm him until he moves from his stop."

Reported by Muslim.
A small Ottoman Qur’an page and its reverse side, 18th century. Hand written in neat naskh script with gold coloured markers acting as verse separators. Vowels are penned in black ink with limited use of red. There are eleven lines of text to the page set within a line-framed border. The page on the right starts on part of verse 116 of Surah TaaHaa (20) and ends on the left folio, part of the way through verse 127.
Ornate Qur’an page from the 17th century written in nastā‘līq script. The start of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) is shown. Use of nastā‘līq for writing Qur’ans is very rare, as this tended to be reserved for interlinear translations and marginal commentary. The page is split into a number of panels and intricately decorated using an array of colours and geometric interwoven designs with blue finials extended into the margin on three sides. Individual verses are separated by simple floral shapes. The surah title and footer text are written in white thuluth. Location: Topkapi Museum, Istanbul.
Mid 19th century pages from an Ottoman Qur'an written in large naskh script. There are thirteen lines of text per page enclosed within a simple orange coloured rectangular frame with unusually large orange coloured circles separating the verses. The page on the right starts with part of verse 10 of Surah ar-Rahmaan (The Most Gracious, 55) and ends on part of verse 54 on this page.
THE FINAL REVELATION FROM ALLAH 91
Allah Says in the Qur'an:

"He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him)..."

Surah al-Hadeed (Iron) 57: 3.

All of Allah's attributes, including His Speech, are a part of Him, so we cannot say that they were created. In conclusion, the Speech of Allah is not created but an integral and eternal part of Him.

Allah's Speech is with sound

Allah speaks with sound that is audible and can be heard. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"When Allah decrees some order in the heaven, the angels flutter their wings indicating complete surrender to His saying which sounds like chains being dragged on rock. And when the state of fear disappears, they ask each other, "What has your Lord ordered? They say that He has said that which is true and just, and He is the Most High, the Most Great."

Narrated by Abu Huraira, reported by Bukhari.

Further clear evidence that Allah speaks with sound is found in the following tradition of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

"On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will grasp the whole Earth and fold the heaven with his right hand, and then He will say, 'I am the King, where are the kings of the Earth.'"

Narrated by Ibn Umar, reported by Bukhari.

Again in this saying, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ tells us that Allah will speak to the creation on the Day of Resurrection, such that all of the creation can hear Him. This tradition of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is related in even more detail in the following saying when referring to the Day of Resurrection.

"... and their Lord will call them with a voice, the one who is close can hear it just as the one who is far can, and He (Allah) will say, 'I am the King'..."

Reported by Ahmad & Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad.

The above saying clearly indicates that Allah will call with His Voice and people will hear the Words of their Lord.
Pages from a small Ottoman Qur’an, 19th century. Lightly decorated using fine gold borders with writing in elegant naskh script. The top and lower left images show pages open on Surah Maryam (Mary, 19). The lower right image shows part of Surah al-Kahf (The Cave, 18). The start of the sixteenth section or juz’ is indicated by the large marginal device.
Allah’s Speech consists of words and letters

The speech of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, consists of words and letters. An example of this is the following verse of the Qur’an:

“Qul hoowa Allaahu ahad...”

Surah al-Ikhlaas (Sincerity) 112: 1.

This verse in Arabic has four words and each word consists of a number of letters. Translated, this verse means: "Say (O Muhammad): ‘He is Allah, (the) One’." Prophet Muhammad ﷺ highlighted that the Qur’an is composed of letters and words when he stated:

“Whoever recites one word from the Book of Allah will have ten rewards. And I do not say that Alif Laam Meem is (counted as) a word, but rather Alif is a word, and Laam is a word, and Meem is a word.”

Reported by Bukhari.

Allah also mentions a word from Him (Allah) to the dwellers of Paradise when Allah says:

“(It will be said to them:) Salaam (peace be on you) – a Word from the Lord (Allah), Most Merciful.”

Surah Yaaseen 36: 58.

In another verse Allah mentions that His word became uppermost over the word of the disbelievers, when Allah says:

“...the Word of Allah that became the uppermost; and Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.”

Surah at-Tawbah (Repentance) 9: 40.
فلأطيعوا الله وآكلموا الرسول فإن ندلوا فأنا على طاعة مطلق
وليك ما تأكلتم وأين تطيعوا نهديكما وما على رسولنا إلا
البلاغ المبين وتعالى الله الذي استوامها وقعلوا
الصلاة والزكوة وأنع الله علية وسلم لينصره الله وتغفر
لكم ما كُسبتم من سوءكم بعده فذٌلت موليك هو الحاضر
القاضي
وليَنِّي النّاسُ يَفْتِنَ النَّاسَ بِمَا ذَهَبَتْ مَا أُخَالَةُ
مَعَهُ مَعَ نَا نَقِيمٌ وَعَلَى خَيرٍ وَلَا يَكْتَسِبُ النَّاسُ
مَا كَانَتْ مِن سَلاَتِ الْكُلُّ وَمَا كَانَتْ مِن عُمُرِ الْمُتَّرِبِينَ
فَيُؤَخِذُونَ مِن بَعْضِ الْعَلَمِ أَفْلَى تَنَادَى نِسْبًا لَّهُمْ
وَلَاتَيَهُمْ مَن قَدْ صَلَحُوا إِلَى مَا كَانَتْ مَنْ صَلَحَ قَدْ لَجَأَ
The Message of the Qur’an

As Islam looks at life as a composite whole it is an essential requirement that life itself be regulated by a code of conduct. In basic terms, the Qur’an represents this code in the form of a comprehensive ‘Book of Divine Guidance’; with its central message concentrating upon the meaning and purpose of life. As such, the Qur’an has the ability to resolve all of the problems that human kind has ever had, or will ever face. Furthermore, it answers the questions of life and death that emanates from the human mind through a variety of methods. The expressive language of the Qur’an is unique and contains power and magnificence combined with fluency, eloquence and purity that is unrivalled. The main theme running throughout the Qur’an is that of Monotheism, i.e. the Unity or Oneness of the Creator. Allah appeals to mankind’s higher intellect and reasoning to comprehend His simple message of worshipping Allah alone without any partner.

Essentially, the Qur’an is a Book, without which mankind can never enjoy real peace, progress, material and spiritual advancement. Moral teachings are presented along with the realities of creation and the relationship between man and Creator. Guidance on all affairs, private or public, individual or collective, spiritual or material, national or international are given in such a beautiful style that has the power to bring those who recite and understand it to tears.

As Islam is a very meticulous faith, Muslims are encouraged to lead very self-disciplined and socially responsible lifestyles. The Qur’an therefore, provides the primary source for the Shari’ah (Islamic Law). History shows that Islamic scholars, jurists, judges, theologians, governors and also scientists have extracted their primary principles and directives from the Qur’an.

The Qur’an also explains that there is no compulsion in religion and deals with many aspects of life and death. It categorically lays down that all human beings are born innocent, but are accountable for their deeds. Due to this, Islam encourages righteousness and prohibits immorality and wickedness.

The Qur’an forbids the root causes of depravity such as intoxicants, usury, adultery and oppression. It also demarcates between the permissible (halaal) and the forbidden (haraam). Appropriate dietary guidelines, instructions on acceptable behavioural patterns and human, environmental and animal rights are also given.

As mentioned previously, Allah describes the Qur’an in many different ways. It is the ‘light’, which enables people to find their way out of ignorance, a ‘healing’ for it cures the ailments of the soul, a ‘criterion’ that distinguishes right from wrong, and a ‘mercy’ that guides mankind to happiness in this life and the next. Furthermore, Muslims believe that the Qur’an is a miracle revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, a miracle that has withstood the test of time. Ever since the Qur’an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, it has remained unchanged and beyond corruption. Hence, there are no abridgements, re-writes or revisions of the Qur’an.

Moreover, the Qur’an has lived through the last one thousand four hundred years pouring out its message to all people of different abilities and levels. It has done so without losing even an iota of its perfect freshness and grace, and its skilful and comprehensible language is very much alive today in the hearts and minds of over a billion people.

Thus far, we have examined the need for messages from Allah by touching upon the previous Divinely revealed books and we have seen how the Qur’an is the final revelation that supersedes these earlier books. We have also mentioned how the Qur’an is the Speech of Allah and briefly outlined the message that it contains. The next chapters will discuss the wisdom behind the gradual revelation and the miraculous nature of the Arabic language contained within the Qur’an; and why it is impossible for humans to match it linguistically.
An exceptionally well preserved and neatly scripted 14th century Qur'an from the Middle East with leather binding. Written on quality hand made paper using naskh script. Red ink has been used for the madda signs, verse separators and surah titles. The last part of Surah Luqmaan (31) and the start of Surah as-Sajdah (The Prostration, 32) is shown with a detailed view on the opposite page.
Above
Heavily worn incipit pages from a late 17th or early 18th century small Ottoman Qur'an. There are seven lines of text per page bordered on all sides by gold filigree strapwork. A conventional feature of this Qur'an is the tripartite division of the page into central and upper and lower panels. The page margins are highly decorated with colourful floral designs and tassel-like extensions. The pages show the whole of Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1) on the right and the beginning of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) on the left.

Opposite
Detailed view of an unusually decorated page showing the start of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) from a small Qur'an written in Palestine, 18th century. The text is written in naskh script within a cloud-like motif on a plain gold panel surrounded by an arrangement of red and yellow flowers. There is a strong use of blue in the surrounding framework.
A very large 12th century Qur'an from the Pre-Mamluk late Abbasid period. This magnificent 800 year old Qur'an consists of 377 pages and is written in an elegant archaic muhaqqaq style of Arabic script with floral roundels marking the end of each verse. The blue and gold marginal devices with the word asharâ written in eastern kufic script using gold ink, indicate the end of every ten verses. Surah headings are copied in gold and outlined in black. The spine has been renewed at a later date and is bound in leather.

Approximately one third of the Qur'an leaves have substantial repairs typically to the margins but occasionally to the text area. Some of the pages have the marginal devices cut out. In spite of the damage, the Qur'an has many well preserved double pages and is very impressive by virtue of its size, very beautiful calligraphy and illumination. The size and type of paper used, as well as the calligraphy and the illumination indicate that this Qur'an was most likely copied for a wealthy person in the community or an important mosque. The pages are open on Surah ash-Shû'â'aa (The Poets, 26) and show the last word of verse 106 to the end of verse 153.
Two ornate pages from a magnificent Mamluk Qur'an written in large majestic muhaqqaq script dated to the 14th century Egypt. The main text is written fully vocalised within a central compartment of lightly coloured flowing floral designs and bordered by a simple rectangular frame. Single verse divisions are marked by simple rosette shapes. Surah headings are finely embellished in white ornamental kufic script against a blue background. A large marginal hasp with an arabesque-like design dominates the centre of each folio. The folios are 41 cm high by 32 cm wide. Surah al-Falaq (The Daybreak, 113) is written on the right hand page with Surah an-Naas (Mankind, 114) on the left.
The start of the 3rd juz' from Surah al-Baqarah ('The Heifer, 2) verse 253, written in muhaqqiq script and extensively decorated throughout in gold. Most likely from the late Mamluk period written during the 14th century copied on thick hand made paper with heavy staining on the corner of each page indicating frequent use over the centuries. There are just three lines of text per page surrounded by a floral trellis.
At over 600 years old, this unique Qur'an was written in the Anatolian region prior to the Ottoman empire. Each page has seven lines of naskh script with the first, middle and last lines copied in a larger hand, set within a simply ruled frame. The word Allah always appears in red ink throughout this manuscript. Another feature of this Qur'an is the Arabic commentary and notes on recitation written in the margins and between the lines of the main text is in a nasta’liq like script using red and black ink.

This manuscript is unusual in many respects, the additional notes for instance are sometimes written horizontally and even upside down. The material used is thick hand made paper. The manuscript is in several segments and is no longer bound together in one volume as the covers have been lost. The double pages show verses 60-63 of Surah an-Naml (The Ants, 27). The blue text on top of the right hand page indicates the twentieth juz'.
Close-up view of the same Anatolian Qur'an with the words *aman kalaqa* written in red. The text starts from verse 60 of Surah an-Naml ('The Ants, 27'); "Is not He (better than your gods) Who created the heavens and the earth..."
Further pages from the 14th century Anatolian Qur'an featuring: Surah al-Fil (The Elephant, 105), Surah Qarash (106), Surah al-Ma'idah (The Small Kindnesses, 107) and Surah al-Kawthar (A River in Paradise, 108).
This very interesting Qur'an page held by Exhibition Islam is nearly 1,000 years old and originates from the Seljuk period of Islamic history during the time of the Crusades. The manuscript is written on thick linen paper which is typical of the time as an alternative to the more expensive vellum. The page is heavily stained and has undergone repair work around the edges. Scripted in archaic naskh, the page has an additional unusual feature in that the roundels marking the verse endings contain eastern kufic script. The right hand page starts with part of verse 9 from Surah al-Israa (The Journey by Night,17) ending on verse 24 on the left hand page; indicated by the eastern kufic roundel.
الصلوات على الله عز وجل
وأذن النعمة ومنع السوء
وعبد الله مشرداً بالخنيس
وحكى الله وجعلنا الله والنبأ أنبياء
فجعلنا الله علواً وجعلنا الله مبصراً للبعثة أفلا إنساناً كناا ولعلنا
أذن الله وجعلنا الله مبصراً للبعثة أفلا إنساناً كناا ولعلنا
عليهما السبب والحساب وكثير محاسناً فصلنا عليهم
وأذن الله وجعلنا الله مبصراً للبعثة أفلا إنساناً كناا ولعلنا
الscious أثناهم في نفلتتهما وخرج له بعدها العصامة قبلاً بلغته
وأذن الله وجعلنا الله مبصراً للبعثة أفلا إنساناً كناا ولعلنا
ما في خلقه فلا تحسبه خيراً ومرضك فأطاعه عليها ولا
يذنى نذرنا وعرأنا وما حكمنا معذب جبر بعده رضو
وأذن الله وجعلنا الله مبصراً للبعثة أفلا إنساناً كناا ولعلنا
The Three Stages of Revelation

The story of the Qur’anic revelation begins before creation itself. It is important to understand the reality that the Qur’an has always existed before anything was created as the Speech of Allah. The Almighty Creator then chose to reveal the Qur’an to mankind in three stages.

The first stage of revelation

The first stage of revelation was when Allah ordered the writing of His Direct Speech onto the Book which is with Allah, known as the ‘Preserved Tablet’ (al-Lauh al-Mahfuz). This ‘Preserved Tablet’ contains details of everything that will happen until the end of time. Our knowledge of the unseen realms comes from the Qur’an itself where Allah states that the Qur’an is inscribed in al-Lauh al-Mahfuz.

“Nay! This is a Glorious Qur’an, (scribed) in al-Lauh al-Mahfuz (The Preserved Tablet)!"


There is also a tradition of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that speaks about the ‘Pen’: “The first thing that Allah created was the Pen. He (Allah) said to it, 'Write!' It responded, 'O My Lord! And what shall I write?' Allah said, 'Write the destiny of all things until the Day of Judgement.’”

Reported by Abu Dawood.

Hence, we know that the entire Qur’an, along with everything else that has happened, is happening, or is waiting to happen until the Day of Judgement is written on this tablet. How the Qur’an is written and precisely when it was written is knowledge that is with Allah alone.

This provides further proof to mankind that the Qur’an is authentic and free from corruption. Since Allah has revealed that the Qur’an was written even before the creation of the heavens and the Earth into a book that Allah protects; thereby guaranteeing its authenticity.

The second stage of revelation

The second stage of revelation occurred when Allah ordered the Qur’an to be revealed to the lower heavens in a place called al-Bayt al-Izza (The House of Honour). This revelation took place in the month of Ramadan during Laylat al-Qadr (The Night of Decree) as follows.

“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur’an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the Guidance and the Criterion (between right and wrong).”

Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 185.

“Verily, We have sent it (this Qur’an) down in the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree).”

Surah al-Qadr (The Night of Decree) 97: 1.

The blessed night is the Night of al-Qadr in the month of Ramadan. These verses clearly state that the entire Qur’an was sent down by Allah from the ‘Preserved Tablet’ to the lower heavens. The second stage of the revelation of the Qur’an was similar to the revelation of the previous scriptures, in that the entire revelation was completed in one single transmission to the House of Honour. The only difference in this respect was that the previous scriptures were sent down from the lower heavens to the previous prophets on Earth in one single act of transmission.
The third stage of revelation

The superiority of the Qur'an, however, meant that Prophet Muhammad $ had the honour of receiving the Qur'an on Earth gradually over a number of years. The method of revelation usually occurred in one of two ways. The Qur'an was either brought down as ordered by Allah through the Angel Gabriel, or was inspired directly into the heart and mind of Prophet Muhammad $ . Almighty Allah refers to this distinct mode of revelation in many verses of the Qur'an, for example:

"And truly, this (the Qur'an) is a revelation from the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists), which the trustworthy Ruh (Gabriel) has brought down upon your heart (O Muhammad $ ) that you may be (one) of the warners, in the plain Arabic language."

Surah ash-Shu’araa (The Poets) 26: 192-195.

Gradual revelation to Prophet Muhammad $

Allah, the All Powerful Creator, says in the Qur'an:

"Verily, We shall send down to you a weighty Word (i.e. obligations, laws)."

Surah al-Muzzammil (The One Wrapped in Garments) 73: 5.

This verse clearly tells humanity that the revelation of the Qur'an sent down by Allah is a very mighty and powerful revelation that guides humanity to good and forbids evil. It provides a complete and perfect legal system that outlines the rights for all of creation, providing a way of life as defined by Allah. Hence, a revelation of this magnitude cannot be revealed in one go, it is something that must be revealed gradually.

This unique mode of revelation occurred over a period of twenty-three years so that people would learn and understand what the revelation meant, which would in turn strengthen their belief.

"And (it is) a Qur'an which We have divided (into parts), in order that you might recite it to men at intervals. And We have revealed it by stages."

Surah al-Israa (The Journey by Night) 17: 106.

In another verse Allah says:

"And those who disbelieve say: "Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once?" Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages."

Surah al-Furqaan (The Criterion) 25: 32.

Regarding this verse Ibn Kathir comments:

"Allah tells us about the many objections raised by the disbelievers, their stubbornness, and how they spoke of things which were none of their concern. They said: "Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once", meaning, why was this Qur'an, which was revealed to him, not sent down all at one time, as the previous Books, the Taurat, Injeel, Zabur and other Divine books. Allah answered them, telling them that it was revealed in stages over twenty-three years, according to events and circumstances, and whatever rulings were needed in order to strengthen the hearts of the believers, as He says:

"And (it is) a Qur'an which We have divided (into parts)...

Surah al-Israa (The Night Journey) 17: 106.
مَا أَلَى أَنْ لَعَلَّيْنَا أَقْرَرْنَا لَيْلًا عَنَّاهَا مَا أَلَى أَنْ لَعَلَّيْنَا أَقْرَرْنَا لَيْلًا عَنَّاهَا مَا أَلَى أَنْ لَعَلَّيْنَا أَقْرَرْنَا لَيْلًا عَنَّاهَا مَا أَلَى أَنْ لَعَلَّيْنَا أَقْرَرْنَا لَيْلًا عَنَّاهَا
Both sides from a very rare 10th century Qur'anic fragment written in kufic script with a red dotting scheme. The lower fragment shows a floral verse separator painted in gold. The text is from Surah At-Tawbah (The Repentance, 9). The top fragment starts from the middle of verse 115 and ends with the second to last word (shay-in). The text continues on the lower fragment and ends in the middle of verse 116 (wa yumeetu). During the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and up to the 10th century, the majority of Qur'anic manuscripts tended to be written in stylized angular Arabic scripts such as hijazi, ma'il and kufic. At first the Qur'an was usually written without vowel markings. The expansion of Muslim territories led to the addition of vowels and dotting schemes to aid correct pronunciation as well as the development of more rounded cursive scripts such as those of the classic 'Six Pens.'
Allah says: "that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages."

Qatadah said it means: "We have explained it."

Abdur-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam said it means: "We have given its interpretation."

"And no example or similitude do they bring", this means no arguments or doubts, "but We reveal to you the truth, and the better explanation thereof."

They do not say anything in an attempt to oppose the truth, but We respond to them with the truth of that same matter, more clearly and more eloquently than anything they say. Abu Abdur-Rahman An-Nasa’i recorded that Ibn Abbas said, "The Qur’an was sent down all at once to the first heaven on Laylatul-Qadr (The Night of Power), then it was revealed over twenty three years." ¹

In order to establish a complete way of life effectively, it was important to reveal the Direct Words of Allah gradually so that people could learn and cope with implementing fundamental changes in their lives. Allah in His Infinite Wisdom and complete Mercy knew that to send down such a powerful revelation required stages so that basic fundamentals could be established and built upon.

Simply sending down so many Divinely revealed laws all at once was going to be difficult for the majority of people to accept. Therefore, Allah decreed that the Qur’an would be revealed gradually to allow the people to change their lives over a period of time.

Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), the wife of Prophet Muhammad Ṣ commented:

"The first revelations only mentioned Heaven and Hell (the basics of aqeedah (belief)). Eventually when the people were firm in their conviction of Islam, Allah revealed the halaal (permitted) and haraam (prohibited). If the first verse revealed was, 'Do not drink wine', they would have responded, 'We will never give up wine!' And if the first verse revealed was, 'Do not fornicate', they would have responded, 'We will never give up fornication!'" ²

Reported by Bukhari.

Thus, we see that Allah, the Almighty Creator, knew that such powerful and detailed laws required a gradual revelation in order for people to become accustomed to and accept the Divine message. Hence, Allah gave a blessing to Prophet Muhammad Ṣ and his followers through the course of time by revealing the Qur’an gradually. In the following pages we shall examine some of the many other benefits that were associated with the gradual revelation of the Qur’an.
The benefits of gradual revelation

1. Strengthening Prophet Muhammad's resolve.

Prophet Muhammad faced many years of persecution as he delivered the Divine message of Islam within his community. He was often ridiculed and mocked, had dirty things thrown at him, called a liar and even beaten. As a mercy, Allah delivered the Qur'an and thus the message of Islam gradually, to steady and strengthen the resolve of Prophet Muhammad, thus enabling him to spread the message of Islam with determination. This method of revelation also helped to strengthen the faith of his companions so they too could hold firm to the message of Islam and face the many trials with fortitude.

"Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby."

Surah al-Furqaan (The Criterion) 25: 32.

Over the course of the revelation, Allah constantly reminded Prophet Muhammad of the trials of previous prophets, so that he too would be comforted and strengthened by these stories. Allah says in the Qur'an:

“And all that We relate to you (O Muhammad) of the news of the Messengers is in order that We may make strong and firm your heart thereby.”

Surah Hud (Prophet Hud) 11: 120.

Allah also told Prophet Muhammad to be patient in the following verse:

“Therefore be patient (O Muhammad) as did the Messengers of strong will...”

In other verses Allah promises Prophet Muhammad ﷺ help and victory by saying:

“Allah has decreed: “Verily, it is I and My Messengers who shall be the victorious.” Verily, Allah is All-Powerful, All-Mighty.”


2. To simplify memorisation and understanding by the companions.

The gradual mode of revelation of the Qur’an was vital in ensuring its preservation as the Qur’an was much easier to memorise in this manner. The other great benefit was that the people around Prophet Muhammad ﷺ could understand its meaning and implement the verses of the Qur’an correctly. They were also able to then go on and teach the Qur’an to others with relative ease.

We know that the previous Divine revelations were always revealed in a single act of revelation. However, given the enormity of its revelation, the Qur’an would have been difficult to understand if it had been revealed all at once.

3. To prove the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The pagan Arabs and the ‘People of the Book’ made attempts to trick Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by asking him difficult questions which they assumed he had no knowledge of. Allah refers to this in the Qur’an by saying:

“And no example or similitude do they bring (to oppose or to find fault in you or in this Qur’an), but We reveal to you the truth (against that similitude or example), and the better explanation thereof.”

Surah al-Furqaan (The Criterion) 25: 33.
An uncle of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Ibn Abbas said: “Whenever the disbelievers brought a new question to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ Allah would reveal to them an answer; through the Qur'an.”

Indeed there are even examples where the pagan Arabs asked for miracles from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

“And even if We had sent down to them angels, and the dead had spoken to them, and We had gathered together all things before their very eyes, they would not have believed, unless Allah willed, but most of them behave ignorantly.”

Surah al-An'aam (The Cattle) 6: 111.

Furthermore, when the companions themselves had questions and problems, often Allah sent down revelation containing the answer in the Qur'an, which clearly laid out the solution to the problem that had been posed.

4. To prove the Divine nature of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is one of the miracles which Allah gave to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and there are many aspects of its miraculous nature. For instance, Muslims still live and guide their lives by its teachings. The Qur'an, despite the great variation in subject matter, retains throughout a unique consistency of expression. Varying subjects are intimately interwoven and appear to the reader to be interconnected, its rich language maintains rhyme and has a flow to the rhythm and it has revealed many things which were unknown fourteen hundred years ago.

All of this proves the miraculous and Divine nature of the revelation of the Qur'an. If it had been composed by a human being, then over a period of twenty-three years of revelation, some inconsistency in content, language, style, flow, rhythm and so on would have been inevitable. Yet, the Qur'an maintains all of these features in a consistent manner, even when covering diverse subjects such as the Divine laws, attributes of the Creator, the Oneness of Allah, stories of the previous prophets and nations, the natural world and so on and so forth.

Amazingly, to add to the miraculous and Divine nature of the Qur'an, the order of the verses in the Qur'an we have today is not chronological. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would instruct the companions of the location of any new revelation. The Qur'an was thus carefully assembled from fragmented revelations into a perfectly formed and intricate masterpiece and remains to the present day in exactly the same order as instructed by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Allah says in the Qur'an:

“Do they not then consider the Qur'an carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein many a contradiction.”

Surah an-Nisaa (The Women) 4: 82.
Opposite
A Qur'anic scroll originating from the Middle East showing Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1), early 20th century. There are elaborate geometric designs and extensive use of floral patterns throughout this scroll. The manuscript is 7 metres long by 30 cm wide and is written in thuluth script. Unusually there is no 'Bismillah' at the start of the Surah.

Ibn Kathir states in his Qur'an commentary regarding this verse:

"Allah commands them to contemplate about the Qur'an and forbids them from ignoring its wise meaning and eloquent words. Allah states that there are no inconsistencies, contradictions, conflicting statements or discrepancies in the Qur'an, because it is a revelation from the Most-Wise, Worthy of all praise.

Therefore, the Qur'an is the truth coming from the true source, Allah. This is why Allah said in another ayah 'Do they not then think deeply in the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up (from understanding it)'. Allah then said, 'Had it been from other than Allah', meaning, had it been fraudulent and made up, as the ignorant idolaters and hypocrites assert in their hearts, 'they would surely, have found therein contradictions', discrepancies and inconsistencies, (in abundance). However, this Qur'an is free of shortcomings, and therefore, it is from Allah."

5. To reveal the laws of Islam in a gradual manner.

The Qur'an presented the principles and laws of Islam in a gradual manner. If every instruction had been sent down instantaneously this would have been too much for the followers of Islam to understand and implement in their lives. Thus, Allah in His Mercy revealed these in stages to allow understanding and implementation of the Divine revelation.

The early verses that were revealed established the Oneness of Allah (Tawheed), the Supremacy and Singularity of Allah alone, the removal of false gods, by telling people to stay away from the worship of false gods and to worship Allah alone. The rest of the early verses to be revealed established the major pillars of faith (eemaan), belief in resurrection and the Day of Judgement where mankind will stand before Allah and be judged as to how they lived their lives.

After twelve years of building faith and establishing the Oneness of Allah, the principles of worship were slowly introduced. Initially the early Muslims only had to pray in the morning and evening, Allah then later increased these to five times a day. It was two years after the migration to Madinah that the Qur'anic verses dealing with fasting in Ramadan and Zakah (alms giving to the poor etc.) were decreed to the Muslims. Prior to this, even though Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions fasted and gave to charity for the sake of Allah, it was only at this point that it was made compulsory and the minimum amounts were set by Allah.

The last pillar of Islam, the Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) was made an obligation four years later for all of those who were able to perform it. The reason for this gradual revelation of laws and principles of Islam was so that it did not place a great burden on anyone. The companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ could understand and adopt these principles and injunctions over a period of time and alter their lifestyle accordingly, as well as go on to teach other people.

6. To ease the burden on Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The process of revelation and inspiration was a difficult one for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The severity of revelation coming to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ placed great physical pressure upon him and often during the process of receiving revelation he would sweat profusely. Had the Qur'an been revealed in one go this may have been too difficult for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to bear physically.

Al-Harith ibn Hisham asked the Messenger of Allah:

"O Allah's Messenger! How is the Divine Inspiration revealed to you?"

Allah's Messenger replied:

"Sometimes it is (revealed) like the ringing of a bell, this form of inspiration is the hardest of all and then this state passes off after I have grasped what is inspired. Sometimes the Angel comes in the form of a man and talks to me and I grasp whatever he says."

Aishah added: Verily I saw the Prophet ﷺ being inspired Divinely on a very cold day and noticed the sweat dropping from his forehead (as the inspiration was over).

Narrated by Aishah, reported by Bukhari.
THE THREE STAGES OF REVELATION
THE MAGNIFICENT QUR'AN
7. To simplify the writing of the Qur'an.

The slow pace of revelation allowed the early Muslims time to record the Qur'an in written form. Given the lack of literate people and limited availability of writing materials in general, if the entire Qur'an had been revealed at once it may have been difficult to preserve.

Thus, gradual revelation allowed the purity of the teachings of Islam to be preserved. It also allowed the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to contemplate upon the meaning of verses and to ask questions as well as to implement its true meanings. In this way, the first generation of Muslims were able to gain a complete understanding of the Qur'an and were then able to teach other people within the city of Madinah and beyond.

The gradual revelation was also in itself a mechanism to preserve the Qur'an as it could not only be accurately recorded and memorised, but also understood. This provided many educational benefits: it developed the early Muslims mentally, spiritually and physically with written material available to guide them in the correct direction. In turn, the early Muslims taught the succeeding generation in the same gradual manner, thus instilling them with the same principles.

Why were the earlier Divinely revealed books revealed instantaneously?

One question that naturally arises is why were the earlier Divinely revealed books revealed in one go and not gradually like the Qur'an? The answer to this question lies in the purpose and situation for which each of the previous books were sent. The Divinely revealed books sent prior to the Qur'an were sent for short periods of time in history and directed to specific nations or tribes, whereas the Qur'an was sent to all of humanity. The message of the Qur'an has been sent as the last Divinely revealed message until the Day of Judgement. The previous books contained principles which were not time or situation oriented and thus could be revealed all at once during the start or at any other point during the mission of the prophet to whom they were sent. In some cases, earlier prophets were immediately followed by other prophets and in some instances two prophets were even present together.

As each prophet and his Divinely revealed book only represented a part of the overall message, the progression took place from prophet to prophet rather than within the revelation. It is important to bear in mind that the previous Divine books were revealed in one go, as this is what Allah had decreed. Allah understood the situation in which they were being revealed and the purpose behind their revelation.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the last of the prophets and was given the last Divinely revealed book, the Qur'an. This revelation contained the essential message of all the previous books as well as a complete way of life and set of Divine laws by which humanity was expected to live. Therefore, the progression had to take place within the revelation of the message itself as laws were introduced gradually for the reasons stated previously. Hence, each Divinely revealed book was revealed in a manner that best suited its historical situation at the time.
A vellum Qur'an Leaf written in kufic Script, North Africa 10th Century. The body text is written in dark brown ink using an early vowel scheme with markings in red, blue and saffron. The page shows part of Surah ar-Ra'd (The Thunder, 13) starting from the second to last word of verse 19 (al-lāli-l-ba'aš). It ends on the third to last word of verse 25 (wa lāhāum).
Elegant opening pages showing the whole of Surah al-Fatiha (The Opening, 1) and the start of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) from an 18th century North African Qur’an written in sharp maghribi script. The main text is set within a rectangular frame with visually intense header panels each bearing the title of the surah at the top with decorative palmettes extending into the margins. Note the correction made by the scribe on the fourth line of Surah al-Baqarah.

An important point to bear in mind is the fact that handwritten Qur’anic manuscripts would always be thoroughly checked for transcription errors before they were deemed complete.
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بالتراضي نبدأ الاعتداء عليهم وهم كرام كأمهم.
Surah al-Hashr (The Gathering, 59) part of verse 7 to the end of the surah from a Qur'anic leaf written in North Africa during the mid 17th century. The leaf contains fourteen lines of text per page set within a triple lined rectangular frame and written in maghrabi script in brown ink on cream coloured paper. The text is fully vocalised and applied using the system developed by Khāli ibn Ahmad al-Fraheedi (circa 150 AH) with fatha, damma and kasra in red and other markings in saffron. Individual verses are marked by small green/grey devices that sit above the line. The page on the right has one small marginal device that indicates the end of the surah's first section.
في ناطبكم عند ملأ زوجهم واتغوا الله في التحية

فاتقوا الله وليستوا على مسلمه وليستوا على

العاداء لله في الس nhi واستعملوا الله ورسوله

ولبدوا لهم العفو والغفران والذين يذكرون changer ويرتونون على الدنيا

وليستوا على حكمة زعمون تعيسما وليستوا على القوة والضعف

ولبدوا لهم صحة زعمون تعيسما وليستوا على القوة والضعف

وأمروا بعملهم وÆعONO أشد جهلا وÆعONO أشد نية، إبنا أشد عينا، إبنا أشد

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Opening pages from an 18th century Qur'an originating in the African Horn region. The manuscript is hand written in a local variant of *sudani* script with traditional African decoration in earth tones. Unusually for a Qur'an of this period the text has only limited vowel markings. The pages are split into a central compartment containing the main text within a simple frame and a header and footer panel with bolder text written in a much larger hand.

Note the heavily stained bottom corners and the coarse material cover just visible in the bottom right corner. The right hand page contains the whole of Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1) with the first few verses of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) on the left.
The 18th-century African Horn originates from the African Horn region and is bound with coarse leather material. Some animal hair can be seen in the bottom left hand corner.

Surah al-Kahf (The Cave) 18th century. This Quran manuscript contains 110 verses and is limited decoration. 18th-century Quran written in kufic script with marginal notes giving instructions to the reader as an aid to correct recitation.
على أن نحكم جمع الأمور التي نحن العالم

'Connor نص في النصوص الأدنى كما أننا نحكم

السماء والعالم بهما نحن أحرار، وألا نتحكم

واستفادت ونظر وطفله النسج كذبهن عليه

على عبد السماه أسراباً بناء أداً بخير وبأنا

 حوله كأجا يتم تغريبه كمسكر

بطرية في كل يوم يتفكر ونبع

فحج عند الججاز السما وبلقاء عرش

وكرى تلوث فضة فشيد ولي أدا

وأنا أنصب أمهما بفاح وهم في خلاف، و

والتي كسبت الشعاب حبارة

بمسالة وأعينهم عزوه على ملاهم مر والد

مراعي قاوم كأجأ غلبت وفعصهم فلمعا

مرت وممطأم وبدأ العجب الناير في خلاف

أنا
The Challenge in the Qur'an

A literary and linguistic miracle

"Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created. He has created man from a leech-like clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not."

Surah Al-'Alaq (The Clot) 96: 1-5.

These were the first verses of the Qur'an to be revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ over fourteen hundred years ago. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who was known to have been in retreat and meditation in a cave outside Makkah, had received the first revelation of a book that would have a tremendous impact on the world. Not being able to read or write or known to have composed any piece of poetry and not having any special rhetorical gifts, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had just received the beginning of a book that would deal with matters of belief, law, politics, rituals, spirituality, and economics in an entirely new literary form.

This unique literary form is part of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, that led to the dramatic intellectual revival of desert Arabs. Thirteen years after the first revelation, it became the primary reference for a new state in Madinah, providing the new civilisation's political, philosophical, and spiritual outlook. In this chapter, we will begin to examine why the Qur'an is impossible to imitate by reviewing how the language of the Qur'an compares to the normal literary forms of Arabic poetry and prose. Understanding the unique literary form of the Qur'an, provides an essential insight into its miraculous nature.

Human or Divine authorship?

The unique literary form of the Qur'an is the basis to the doctrine of i'jaz al-Qur'an (the inimitability of the Qur'an), which lies at the heart of the Qur'an's claim to being of Divine origin. With this in mind there are two approaches that can show that there are fundamental reasons to believe that the Qur'an is a Divine and a miraculous text. The first approach is rational deduction and the second is the philosophy of miracles.

Rational deduction is the thought process where logical conclusions are drawn from a universally accepted statement or provable premises. This process is also called rational inference or logical deduction.

In the context of the Qur'an's uniqueness, the universally accepted statement supported by eastern and western scholarship is:

"The Qur'an was not matched linguistically by the Arabs at the time of revelation."

From this statement the following logical conclusions can be drawn:

1. The Qur'an could not have come from an Arab as the Arab linguistics par excellence failed to challenge the Qur'an and had even admitted that the Qur'an could have not come from a human being.

2. The Qur'an could not have come from a non-Arab speaker as the language in the Qur'an is Arabic, and the language is a prerequisite to successfully challenge the Qur'an.
A loose page from a Qur'an written during the 18th century on hand-made paper, in Hausa script (a variant of the maghribi style) that was common to the Hausa-speaking Muslims of West Africa. Decorated in a traditional style local to the region the page contains a large panel in the centre as well as roundels on the right hand margin, coloured using a variety of earth tones; saffron, brown and red inks. Small floral shapes outlined in red indicate the end of each verse. The whole of Surah al-Fatiha (The Opening, 1) and a few words of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) are written on the page.

3. The Qur'an could not have come from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ due to the following reasons:

a. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was an Arab himself and all the Arabs failed to linguistically match the Qur'an.

b. The Arab linguists never accused the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ of being the author of the Qur'an.

c. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ experienced many trials and tribulations during the course of his Prophetic mission. For example his children died, his beloved wife Khadija (may Allah be well pleased with her) passed away, he was boycotted, his close companions were tortured and killed, yet the literary character of the Qur'an remains the same throughout. Nothing in the Qur'an expresses the turmoil and emotions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It is a psychological and physiological impossibility to go through the events that the Prophet ﷺ went through without it affecting a personal composition and yet none of the emotions are expressed in the literary character of the Qur'an.

d. The verses of the Qur'an were revealed for specific circumstances and events that occurred and they remain without revision or deletion as literary masterpieces. All literary masterpieces usually undergo revision and deletion to ensure literary perfection, however, the Qur'an has remained the same since its revelation.

e. The hadith (narrations) of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ are in a totally different style than to that of the Qur'an. How can any human being express themselves orally over a twenty three year period in two distinct styles?

4. The Qur'an could not have come from another being such as a jinn because the knowledge of their existence is from the Qur'an. Knowledge of their existence is based upon revelation and not on any empirical evidence. Therefore, if someone claims that the source of the Qur'an to be another being such as jinn, then they would have to prove their existence independently from the Qur'an.

If the Qur'an were used to establish the existence of jinn then this would mean the whole rational deduction exercise would not be required in the first place, as the Qur'an would already have been established as a Divine text because to believe in jinn would mean belief in the Qur'an in the first place.

5. This leaves us with the fact that the Qur'an could only have come from a Divine source, as it is the only logical source. All other explanations have to be discarded as they do not explain the uniqueness of the Qur'an in a comprehensive and coherent manner.

What is a miracle?

The word miracle is derived from the Latin word 'miraculum' meaning "something wonderful". A miracle is commonly defined as a violation of natural law (lex naturalis); however this is an incoherent definition. This incoherence is due to our understanding of natural laws. As Bilynskyj observes "...so long as natural laws are conceived of as universal inductive generalisations, the notion of violation of a natural law is incoherent." 1

Natural laws are inductive generalisations of patterns we observe in the universe. For clarification; induction, also known as inductive reasoning or inductive logic, is a type of reasoning which involves moving from a set of specific facts to a general conclusion. It can also be seen as a form of theory-building, in which specific facts are used to create a theory that explains relationships between the facts and allows prediction of future knowledge. Induction is employed, for example, in using specific propositions such as: all ice I have ever touched was cold. Hence all ice is cold. Problems may occur where hasty inductive generalisations proceed from a premise about a sample to a conclusion about the population. To give a very simple example; a quarter of the pupils in a class are left handed. Therefore, a quarter of the towns population must also be left handed.

Furthermore, if the definition of a miracle is a violation of this natural law, in other words a violation of the patterns we observe in the universe, then an obvious dilemma occurs. The dilemma is that why can't we take this perceived violation of the pattern as part of the pattern itself? Hence, a more coherent description of a miracle is not a 'violation' but an 'impossibility'. William Lane Craig rejects the definition of a miracle as a "violation of a natural law" and replaces it with the coherent definition of "events which lie outside the productive capacity of nature". 2 In summary, this means that miracles are acts of impossibilities concerning causal or logical connections.
Arabic literary forms

Classical scholars such as al-Baqillani and al-Rummani view the Qur'an as having its own unique literary form.3 This view is also supported by western scholarship which can be found in the writings of famous orientalists such as Arthur J. Arberry, Professor Bruce Lawrence and D.J. Stewart.4 Every expression of the Arabic language falls into the literary forms of prose and poetry. There are other 'sub' forms that fall into the above categories such as kahin; a sub-form of rhymed prose. However, all literary forms can be categorised as either prose or poetry. According to Muslim and Non-Muslim scholarship, however, the Qur'an cannot be described as any one of these known forms of Arabic speech.

1. What is Arabic poetry?

Poetry is a form of literary art in which language is used for its aesthetic and evocative qualities in addition to, or in lieu of, its apparent meaning. Poetry may be written independently, as discrete poems or may occur in conjunction with other arts; as in poetic drama, hymns, lyrics or prose poetry. Poetry often uses particular forms and conventions to suggest alternative meanings in the words, or to evoke emotional or sensual responses. Devices such as assonance (repetition of vowel sounds), alliteration (repetition of consonants), onomatopoeia (a word that imitates or suggests the source of the sound that it describes) and rhythm are sometimes used to achieve musical or incantatory effects. The use of ambiguity, symbolism, irony and other stylistic elements of poetic diction often leaves a poem open to multiple interpretations. Similarly, metaphor, simile and metonymy create a resonance between otherwise disparate images.

In Arabic, poetry (ash-shi' r ul-arabiyah) is a form of metrical speech5 with a rhyme. The rhyme (qa'fiah) in Arabic poetry is achieved by every line of the poem ending upon a specific letter. The metrical aspect of Arabic poetry is due to its rhythmical pattern (arud). Arabic poetry has sixteen rhythmical patterns called 'al-bihar', literally meaning 'The Seas' in Arabic. This term has been used to describe the rhythmical divisions as a result of the way the poem moves according to its rhythm, just like the waves in the sea.

The following is a list of the rhythmical patterns, which all Arabic poetry adheres to, or is loosely based upon; at-tawil; al-bassit; al-wafir; al-kamil; ar-rajs; al-khaff; al-hazaj; al-muttakarib; al-munsarih; al-nuktatab; al-mutadarak; al-madid; al-mujtath; al-ramel; al-khabab; as-saria'.

Each one of the al-bihar has a unique rhythmical pattern. The al-bihar were first codified in the 8th century by al-Khalil ibn Ahmad and have changed little since. The al-bihar are based on the length of syllables. A literary analysis of any Arabic poem will conclude that it adheres to, or is based upon, these rhythmical patterns. This is supported by Louis Cheikho who collected pre-Islamic and post-Islamic poetry and concluded that all of the poems conformed and were based upon the al-bihar.6 An example of Arabic poetry is the ancient Arabian poem called 'Abu-l-'Ata of Sind':

"Of thee did I dream, while spears between us were quivering and sooth of our blood full drop had drunken the tawny shafts I know not, by heaven I swear and true is the word I say this pang is it love sickness or a spell from thee if it be a spell, then grant me grace of my love-longing if the other the sickness be then none is the guilt of thine."7

2. What is Arabic prose?

Prose is the ordinary form of written language and everyday speech. The word 'prose' is derived from the Latin prosa, which literally means 'straightforward'. Prose is therefore, adopted for the discussion of facts, topical reading, as it is often articulated in free form writing style. Thus, it may be used for books, newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias and so on. Prose lacks the formal structure of meter (the basic rhythmical structure of a verse) which is typical of poetry; instead it is composed of full sentences, usually divided into paragraphs and then smaller segments known as meta-paragraphs. Some works of prose can contain traces of metrical structure, so a blend of the two forms of literature is known as a 'prose poem'.

The top image shows the binding is heavily damaged and the opening surah is missing. The first few verses of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) are circled by a single rough line. The bottom image shows Surah al-Araaf (The Heights, 7), starting from the 3rd word of verse 97 and ending on the second to last word of verse 127. The body text is written in black ink and annotated with additional commentary in the margin in dark red.
In Arabic, prose can be described as non-metrical speech; which means that it does not have a consistent rhythmic pattern like poetry. Arabic prose can be divided into two categories; *saj'* which is rhymed prose and *mursal* which is straight prose or 'normal speech'.

**Saj’**
In his book, *Ulum al-Qur’an* (An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’an), Von Denffer, provides the following description of *saj'*: “A literary form with some emphasis on rhythm and rhyme, but distinct from poetry. *Saj’* is not really as sophisticated as poetry, but has been employed by Arab poets, and is the best known of the pre-Islamic Arab prosodies. It is distinct from poetry in its lack of meter, i.e. it does not have a consistent rhythmic pattern and it shares with poetry the element of rhyme, though in many cases somewhat irregularly employed." 8

Although *saj’* differs from poetry in that it lacks a consistent rhythmic pattern, there is some form of pattern based upon the accent in each division of *saj’.* Accent based rhythmic patterns are based upon stresses rather than the number of syllables. Additionally *saj’* is distinct from poetry and other forms of Arabic speech due to its concentrated use of rhetorical features. 9 Rhetorical features are literary and linguistic devices intended to please or persuade, that differ from normal speech. Examples of rhetorical features include sound, rhythm, ellipsis and grammatical shift (*iltifaat*). 10

In summary the definition of *saj’* is that it has a,

i) Accent based (or stress-timed) rhythmic pattern
ii) End rhyme
iii) Concentrated use of rhetorical features

**Mursal**

*Mursal* can be defined as a literary form that goes on, but is continued straight throughout without any divisions, either of rhyme or of anything else. *Mursal* is meant as a way of expression that closely resembles everyday spoken language. Examples can be seen in speeches and prayers intended to encourage or motivate the masses.

In summary the definition of *mursal* is that it has,

i) No rhythmical pattern
ii) No rhyme
iii) A resemblance to straight forward speech

**Why is the Qur’an a Miracle?**

What makes the Qur’an a miracle, is that it is impossible for a human being to compose something like it, as it lies outside the productive capacity of the nature of the Arabic language. The productive capacity of nature, concerning the Arabic language, is that any grammatically sound expression of the Arabic language will always fall within the known Arabic literary forms of prose and poetry. All of the possible combinations of Arabic words, letters and grammatical rules have been exhausted and yet its literary form has not been matched linguistically. The Arabs, who were known to have been Arabic linguists *par excellence*, failed to successfully challenge the Qur’an. Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, who was a notable British Orientalist and translator, states:

"...and that though several attempts have been made to produce a work equal to it as far as elegant writing is concerned, none has as yet succeeded." 11

The implication of this is that there is no link between the Qur’an and the Arabic language; however this seems impossible because the Qur’an is made up of the Arabic language. On the other hand, every combination of Arabic words and letters have been used to try and imitate the Qur’an. Therefore, this leaves only one conclusion; a Divine explanation is the only coherent explanation for this impossible Arabic literary form – the Qur’an. Hence, it logically follows that if the Qur’an is a literary event that lies outside the productive capacity of the Arabic language, i.e. an impossibility, then by definition, it is a miracle.
لا يمكنني قراءة النص العربي المكتوب بالخط العربي القديم من الصورة المقدمة. من المحتمل أن تكون النص تعليمي أو شعري، ولكني لا أستطيع قراءته بشكل طبيعي.
نور أعماق العالٍ
لْيَرَبُّ خِيْمَةً
كَيْفَ يَجْزِيُ الْعَآبِيِّينَ
وَهُمُ العَزَّيْزُ الْمَجْهُورُ
أَوَّلَاهُمْ مَعْلُوْلُونَ مَا لَا مَعْلُوْلُونَ عِنْدَ اِلْلَّهِ
مَعْنَا عَنْدَ اِلْلَّهِ مَا لَا مَعْلُوْلُونَ عِنْدَ اِلْلَّهِ
ثُمَّ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ تَجْزِي الْمُتَّقِينَ بِمَلَائِكَةَ وَرَبِّينَ
سَفِرًا هُما مِّنْ وَرَثَتِهِمْ وَرَزَقَ
فَعَلَّمُهُمَا لَمَّا كَانَ مِثْلُهُمَا وَقَدْ رَزَقْنَاهُمَا
ذَلِكَ سَوْارًا لِّلَّهِ إِنَّا مَعَهُ قَدْ نُهِيَ قَالَ
ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّهُ يُحْذِرُ الْكَافِرِينَ
The challenge in the Qur'an

In the following verses Allah has challenged the whole of mankind to try and produce a single chapter like the Qur'an. This challenge, which has remained unmet, captivated the minds of the Arabs at the time of revelation. They rationally assessed that if an Arab cannot challenge the Qur'an and nor could a non-Arab, then the only source of the Qur'an is the Creator. The Qur'an states:

“If you are in doubt of what We have revealed to Our Messenger, then produce one chapter like it, call upon all your helpers, besides Allah, if you are truthful.”

Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 23.

“Or do they say: “He (Prophet Muhammad, ﷺ) has forged it (this Qur'an)?” Nay! They believe not! Let them then produce a recitation like it (the Qur'an) if they are truthful.”

Surah at-Toor (The Mount) 52: 33-34.

According to Qur'anic commentators such as Ibn Kathir, Suyuti and Ibn Abbas, these verses issue a challenge to produce a chapter that imitates the unique literary form of the Qur'an. The tools needed to meet this challenge are the finite grammatical rules and the twenty eight letters that make-up the Arabic alphabet; these are independent and objective measures available to all. The fact that it has not been matched since it was revealed does not surprise scholars familiar with the Arabic language and that of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an was revealed over 1430 years ago and the challenge to produce something like the Qur'an has remained to this day. Throughout the centuries, thinkers, poets, theologians and literary critics have attempted to challenge the Qur'an. Some of these challengers in the past have included: Musaylamah; Ibn Al-Mukaffa; Yahya ibn Al-Hakam al-Ghazal; Sayyid ‘Ali Muhammad; Bassar ibn Burd.

Without going into an extensive analysis of why Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have agreed that those who have attempted to challenge the Qur'an have failed, the following summary should suffice. Even though the challengers have had the same set of 'tools', which are the twenty eight Arabic letters, finite grammatical rules and the blue print of the challenge – which is the Qur'an itself; they have failed to:

1. Replicate the Qur'an's literary form
2. Match the unique linguistic nature of the Qur'an
3. Select and arrange words like that of the Qur'an
4. Select and arrange similar grammatical particles
5. Match the Qur'an’s superior eloquence and sound
6. Equal the frequency of rhetorical devices
7. Match the level of content and informativeness
8. Equal the Qur'an’s conciseness and flexibility

According to Qur’anic commentators such as Ibn Kathir, Suyuti and Ibn Abbas, these verses issue a challenge to produce a chapter that imitates the unique literary form of the Qur'an.
The following few lines shows a translation of Musaylamah's attempt to challenge the Qur'an by trying to write something similar to Surah al-Feel (The Elephant, 105). Another important point to consider here is that the miracle of the Qur'an is the Arabic language itself. So when the Qur'an is translated into another language, although the general meaning becomes apparent, the actual miracle is lost.

The elephant.
What is the elephant?
And who shall tell you what the elephant is?
He has a ropy tail and a long trunk.
This is a [mere] trifle of our Lord's creations.

It can be clearly seen, with reference to the Arabic original, that the style of Musaylamah's speech is in the kahin style of rhymed prose. It lacks informativeness and the words and phrases that have been used can be replaced with other words that will express greater meaning as well as producing a more eloquent discourse. In stark contrast, the words of the Qur'an are such that they cannot be replaced by something else.

Hence, from a literary and stylistic point of view, this attempt failed to replicate the Qur'an. The totality of every chapter is a special characteristic of the Qur'an, each having its own unique form and its unique use of literary devices. The Qur'an's inimitable eloquence is based upon:

i. Eloquent use of language to please and persuade;

ii. Its perfect choice of words expressions with the best of verbal forms;

iii. Accuracy of meaning;

iv. Apt selection of pronouns and rhetorical devices;

v. Interrelation between style, structure and meaning.

The list above is not exhaustive and represents just some of the reasons why it has not been possible to emulate the Qur'an to this day.
The Qur’an is impossible to match linguistically

The inability to produce anything like the Qur’an, due to its unique literary form, is the essence of the Qur’anic miracle. The argument posed by Muslim theologians and philosophers is that, with the finite set of Arabic linguistic tools at humanity’s disposal, there is no effective challenge, then providing a naturalistic explanation for the Qur’an’s uniqueness is incoherent and doesn't explain its inimitability. This is because a human author is only able to produce the known literary forms in the Arabic language. The development of an entirely new literary form is beyond the scope of the natural capacity of any human author, hence a Divine entity, Allah, is the only sufficient comprehensive explanation. The evidence for this is that for over a millennia, the speech and writings of the Arabs have always fallen within the known forms and expressions of the Arabic language. However, the Qur’an breaks this natural pattern due to its uniqueness. Taha Husayn, a prominent Egyptian litterateur, in a public lecture summarised how the Qur’an achieves its own unique form:

"But you know that the Qur’an is not prose and that it is not verse either. It is rather Qur’an, and it cannot be called by any other name but this. It is not verse, and that is clear; for it does not bind itself to the bonds of verse. And it is not prose, for it is bound by bonds peculiar to itself, not found elsewhere; some of the binds are related to the endings of its verses, and some to that musical sound which is all its own.

It is therefore neither verse nor prose, but it is "a Book whose verses have been perfected and expounded, from One Who is Wise, All-Aware." We cannot therefore say it is prose, and its text itself is not verse. It has been one of a kind, and nothing like it has ever preceded or followed it."  

Hence, the Qur’an is truly a unique expression of the Arabic language. Nothing has come before or after it that can match its literary form and style. This next section will discuss how the Qur’an compares to Arabic poetry and prose.
Is the Qur'an poetry?

The Qur'an cannot be simply described as poetry because the totality of each surah does not conform to any of the al-bihar and in many places does not exhibit the same regular rhythmic patterns of the al-bihar. Surah al-Kawthar (A River in Paradise, 108) is a good example to show how the Qur'an is not Arabic poetry:

Inna a'tayna kal kawthar
Verily, We have granted you al-Kawthar.
Fasalli li rabbika wanhar
Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice.
Inna shani-aka huwal abtar
For he who hates you, he will be cut off.

The syllables of these verses do not correspond to any pattern similar to the al-bihar of Arabic poetry. In fact, there is no syllabic rhythmical pattern in this surah. Mohammad Khalifa in The Authorship of the Qur'an concludes, "Readers familiar with Arabic poetry realize that it has long been distinguished by its wazn, bahar, arud and qaftiyah (i.e. exact measures of syllabic sounds and rhymes), which have to be strictly adhered to even at the expense of grammar and a shade of meaning at times. All of this is categorically different from Qur'anic literary style." 14

Is the Qur'an ordinary prose (mursal)?

As discussed previously Arabic prose can be defined either as rhymed (saj') or normal speech (mursal). If we compare mursal with the Qur'an, we find that the construction of the Qur'an is not just straightforward speech. This is due to the use of rhyme, rhythm, depth of meaning and unique stylistic features abundant throughout the Qur'an. Mursal is just normal speech that does not employ any of the above features. A superficial analysis on Surah al-Kawthar will conclude that it cannot be described as normal speech.

Inna a'tayna kal kawthar
Verily, We have granted you al-Kawthar.
Fasalli li rabbika wanhar
Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice.
Inna shani-aka huwal abtar
For he who hates you, he will be cut off.

These verses employ an end rhyme as can be seen by the letters in red. The repetition of the ending 'ka' (you) is responsible for creating the chapter's rhythm. By highlighting just this surah's rhyme and rhythm, clearly shows that the Qur'an is not straightforward speech.
طيب عليكم الصلاة كما كنت عليكم اليوم في مثل هذا، فكلما كنت على تعلمكم وعلمكم عن يدكم، وعلمتكم علماءكم.}

الخير وصلحكم مريضاً وعلمتكم عدوداً كم كارثكم مريضاً.

الدار البيضاء في سنة سبعة مراى بعاصم.

تعلمو وشرم رضواناً، انزل فيه الغرام والتأسف بينكم.

والخير فارغ شهيد منكم.

والخير فارغ شهيد منكم.

وعلمنا العلماء ونذكر الله بكم العصر، ونعمل العادة ونذكر الله بكم العصر.

والخير فارغ شهيد منكم.

ووعذر سنقل الكتاب، ونذكر لله عز وجل عن فريق في جيب كغوة الدائم إذا دعا

فليس يجيلوا.
السموون والارض هو العزى والجليل.

ولاتكونوا من الذين فرعوا.

فأتذا الفرقى دقعه والمسكينى بإلباب السبيل.
Is the Qur'an rhymed prose (saj')?

The Qur'an has its own unique form so it cannot be described as the normal rhymed prose that is evident in other works of Arabic literature. There are three major opinions based upon modern and classical scholarship on how the Qur'an achieves its own unique literary form of rhymed prose or saj':

1. **Unique fusion of metrical and non-metrical speech**

   The Qur'an achieves this unique literary form by fusing together metrical and non-metrical speech. This fusion of metrical and non-metrical composition is present throughout the whole of the Qur'an and cannot be found in any Arabic text, past or present. This is summarised by the famous Arabic literary scholar Arthur J. Arberry, "For the Koran is neither prose nor poetry, but a unique fusion of both." 16

2. **The Qur'an transcends saj'**

   The Qur'an shares similar features with saj', specifically in the early Makkah surahs, but it completely transcends many aspects of what defines saj'. What makes the Qur'an unique in this context is:

   a. Greater tendency to mono-rhyme

   The Qur'an differs from saj' due to its use of mono-rhyme, meaning that its rhyming scheme conforms to a few rhymes rather than a selection of many rhymes. According to one analysis, just over half of the Qur'an ends with the same letter. This particular use of rhyme, in a text the size of the Qur'an, has not been replicated in any Arabic text. Devin J. Stewart states:

   "Qur'anic saj' has a much greater tendency to mono-rhyme than does later saj'. A small number of rhymes...are predominant in the Qur'an whereas rhyme in later saj' shows greater variation." 18

   b. Does not conform to a particular style

   The general description of saj' is that it has an end rhyme. However, the Qur'an does not conform to a constant or consistent rhyme, which reflects the work of ar-Rummani who states that the Qur'an's use of language is semantically orientated and does not conform to a particular style. Semantically orientated means the use of language is driven by meaning, in other words the message that is being portrayed, in contrast to the language of the poets when they used words and phrases primarily for sound and rhythm rather than any coherent meaning.

   This is also reflected by Devin J. Stewart's analysis, he states, "The Qur'an allows inexact rhymes which are not found in later saj'" 20

   c. Greater range of saj' phrases

   The divisions of saj' or single phrases of saj' are called saj'aat. The Qur'an differs from normal saj' as it has a greater range of short and long saj'aat. Devin J. Stewart states, "Both in the Qur'an and in later saj' we see that shorter saj' is much more common, but the range in the Qur'an is greater." 22
d. Higher frequency of rhetorical features

The Qur’an is a ‘sea of rhetoric’. The Qur’an exhibits an unparalleled frequency of rhetorical features, surpassing any other Arabic text, classical or modern. The use of rhetoric in the Qur’an stands out from any other type of discourse. The following examples show that the Qur’an employs a wider range and frequency of rhetorical features than any other rhymed prose past or present.

i. Alliteration.

This is a literary or rhetorical stylistic device that consists of repeating the same consonant sound within several words in close succession. For example repetition of kum in the following verse:

```
الله وَرَسُولُهُ فَقِدْ قَذَفْ فَأَرَزَقَ أَنْعَمًا
```

"He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins.

And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed achieved a great achievement."

Surah al-Ahzaab (The Confederates) 33: 71.

Another example of alliteration occurs in Surah al-Mursalaat when the letter meem is repeated in quick succession:

```
مَنْ يُقْتَلُ عَلَى الصَّالِحِينَ مَهَابٌ مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْأَخِرَةِ مُرْحِبٌ
```

"Did We not create you from a despised water?

Surah al-Mursalaat (Those sent forth) 77: 20.

ii. Analogy

This can be a spoken or textual comparison between two words (or sets of words) to highlight some form of semantic similarity between them. For example:

“And cushions set in rows. And rich carpets spread out.”

Surah al-Ghaashiyah (The Overwhelming) 88: 15-16.

“Therefore, treat not the orphan with oppression. And repulse not the beggar.”

Surah ad-Duhaa (The Forenoon) 93: 9-10.

iii. Antiphrasis

This is a figure of speech that is used to mean the opposite of its usual sense, especially ironically. For example:

“Then pour over his head the torment of boiling water. Taste you (this)! Verily, you were (pretending to be) the mighty, the generous!”

Surah ad-Dukhaa (The Smoke) 44: 48-49.

iv. Antithesis

This is a counter-proposition and denotes a direct contrast to the original proposition. For example:

“Those who disbelieve, theirs will be a severe torment; and those who believe and do righteous good deeds, theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward.”

Surah Faatir (The Originator of Creation) 35: 7.
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v. Asyndeton

This term is used for a stylistic scheme in which conjunctions are deliberately omitted from a series of related clauses. For example in the following verses the subject matter switches within the same verse without any linkage:

“Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see.
Then, He rose above the Throne.
He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running (its course) for a term appointed.

He manages and regulates all affairs; He explains the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) in detail, that you may believe with certainty in the Meeting with your Lord.”

Surah ar-Ra’id (The Thunder) 13: 2.

vi. Assonance

A refrain of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming within phrases or sentences. For example the words eeyaa bahum and hesaa bahum in the following two verses:

“Verily, to Us will be their return; Then verily, for Us will be their reckoning.”


vii. Cadence

Cadence is the rhythmic rise or fall of the voice when a text is read aloud. This powerful feature is one of the most beautiful attractions of the Qur’an and is present throughout. It is a major phonetic and cohesive element which makes the Qur’an impossible to imitate. No other text has done this before, especially in such frequency and in combination with assonance and the many other phonetic devices such as assimilation, nasalisation, etc.

viii. Chiasmus

In rhetoric, chiasmus is the figure of speech in which two or more clauses are related to each other through a reversal of structures in order to make a larger point, for example:

“You make the night to enter into the day, and You make the day to enter into the night,
You bring the living out of the dead and, You bring the dead out of the living.
And You give wealth and sustenance to whom You will, without limit.”

Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan) 3: 27.

ix. Epizeuxis

In linguistics, an epizeuxis is the repetition of words in immediate succession, for vehemence or emphasis. For example in Surah ash-Sharh we read:

“Verily, along with every hardship is relief, verily, along with every hardship is relief.”

Surah ash-Sharh (The Opening Forth) 94: 5-6.

x. Equivoque

This is the use of a term with more than one meaning or sense. For example use of the word ‘mountains’ in the following verse:

“See you not that Allah drives the clouds gently, then joins them together, then makes them into a heap of layers, and you see the rain comes forth from between them; and He sends down from the sky hail (like) mountains, and strikes therewith whom He wills, and averts it from whom He wills. The vivid flash of its (clouds) lightning nearly blinds the sight.”

Surah an-Noor (The Light) 24: 43.
عاقبة الذين يقللهون

منهمًا ما سُدِّقوهُ قاتلًا في طاعة نهدهم أعنف علهم ما كان أكله
لذًا جعلت رسمها بالبيئات فجاها ما عنيدهم فإن علم كان
تيمهم أسكتًا يا لمن اتحرون فلا أذن بأحدًا كالآمنة
إليته وحنا وحقًا لنا ما سكتًا يا متكيتين فاتركن سمعهم

إياهم الله وأياً باستسنات الله الذي

خلقهم عباده سورة فصلت يحيى أنعم رحمة فاتركن

حمر نورًا من النور الجدير بكتاب فضالت الله فاتركن

لقيهم نفثًا بشيء من حيًا فأعلموا أخذاً لعله منهم
xi. Homonymy

This is a group of words that share the same spelling and the same pronunciation but can have a different meaning. For example, in the following verse the word *makara* can have both good and bad meaning. In the context of the verse we see the evil plotting and planning of those who wished to kill Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) as opposed to Allah's plan to protect Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

> "And they (disbelievers) plotted (to kill Jesus), and Allah planned too. And Allah is the Best of those who plan."

Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan) 3: 54.

xii. Hyperbole

A term for when statements that are deliberately exaggerated to underline a point. For example:

> "Verily, those who deny Our verses and treat them with arrogance, for them the gates of heaven will not be opened, and they will not enter Paradise until the camel goes through the eye of the needle (which is impossible).

Thus do We recompense the *Mujrimun* (criminals, polytheists, sinners)."

Surah al-A’raaf (The Heights) 7: 40.

> "When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats, and you were harbouring doubts about Allah."

Surah al-Ahzaab (The Confederates) 33: 10.

xiii. Isocolon

A figure of speech in which parallelism is reinforced. For example:

> "Let the rich man spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. Allah will grant after hardship, ease. And many a town (population) revolted against the Command of its Lord and His Messengers; and We called it to a severe account, and We shall punish it with a horrible torment (in Hell in the Hereafter). So it tasted the evil result of its affair (disbelief), and the consequence of its affair (disbelief) was loss (destruction in this life and an eternal punishment in the Hereafter). Allah has prepared for them a severe torment. So fear Allah and keep your duty to Him, O men of understanding, who have believed! Allah has indeed sent down to you a Reminder (this Qur’an)."

Surah at-Talaaq (The Divorce) 65: 7-10.

xiv. Metaphor

A metaphor is a term that concisely compares two things, saying that one is like the other. For example:

> "And We shall turn to whatever deeds they (disbelievers, polytheists, sinners) did, and We shall make such deeds as scattered floating particles of dust."

Surah al-Furqan (The Criterion) 25: 23.

> "And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour. And lower to them the wing of submission and humility through mercy, and say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was young.'"

xv. Metonymy

This device is used in rhetoric in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept. So for example in the following verse when describing the story of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), the Arabic word for ark or ship is not in the verse but is implied by Allah's mention of planks and nails:

“And We carried him on a (ship) made of planks and nails”


xvi. Palindrome

This is a word or phrase that can be read both forwards and backwards, for example ‘race car’ or ‘radar’. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was unlettered, so for him to construct palindromes in the Qur'an such as these would have been a very lengthy task of trial and error, especially when we consider that the Qur'an was revealed as an oral transmission and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would merely recite the revelation as soon as he had received it without editing or revising. Allah says in verse 3 of Surah al-Muddaththir (The One Enveloped, 74):

"And magnify your Lord (Allah)!

Wa rabbaka fakabbir

The example above of an Arabic palindrome is all the more remarkable because it maintains the Qur'an's consistent unique style, and retains a coherent meaning which is often lost in normal Arabic poetry. When we take a closer look, we see the verse is composed of a palindrome. The word rabbaka (Lord) written backwards forms kabbara meaning 'magnify'.

xvii. Parenthesis

This is an explanatory or qualifying word, clause or sentence inserted into a passage with which it doesn't necessarily have any grammatical connection. For example:

“But those who believed, and worked righteousness – We tax not any person beyond his scope – such are the dwellers of Paradise. They will abide therein forever.”

Surah al-A'raaf (The Heights) 7: 42.

xviii. Polyptoton

This stylistic scheme occurs when words are derived from the same root and repeated (e.g. 'strong' and 'strength'). In the Qur'an for example Allah says sabab-naa maa a sabbaa and shaqaqq-nal arda shaqqaa:

“We pour forth water in abundance. And We split the earth in clefts.”


xix. Rhetorical questions

This type of question is a figure of speech in the form of a question posed for its persuasive effect without the expectation of a reply (for example, Why me?). Rhetorical questions encourage the listener to think about what the (often obvious) answer to the question must be. When a speaker states, “How much longer must our people endure this injustice?”, no formal answer is expected. Rather, it is a device used by the speaker to assert or deny something. In the Qur'an, Allah uses rhetorical questions in many places, for example:

“Is there any reward for good other than good?”

Surah ar-Rahmaan (The Most Gracious) 55: 60.

“Then he turned to their alilah (gods) and said: “Will you not eat (of the offering before you)?”

Surah as-Saaffaat (Those Ranged in Ranks) 37: 91.
لا يوجد نص يمكن قارننه بشكل طبيعي بالرغم من أن الأحرف والكلمات مرئية بشكل واضح.
xx. Synecdoche

This is closely related to metonymy and is a figure of speech that denotes a part of something but is used to refer to the whole thing. For example, 'a pair of hands' referring to a worker. In the following Qur'anic verse there are many different aspects to consider. Firstly, a synecdoche when the word *raqaba* meaning 'neck' is used to refer to the whole i.e. a slave. Then the charitable act itself being likened to a steep path, in other words a difficult course of action.

The psycholinguistics behind the verse alone opens up for consideration various aspects of human psychology, behaviour and comprehension in relation to language. Lastly, the use of the word *raqaba* achieves the effect of maintaining the rhyme created by the previous key word, *'aqaba* (the steep path).

> "And what will make you know the path that is steep? (It is) freeing a neck."

Surah al-Balad (The City) 90: 12-13.

3. Qur'an bound stylistic variations

Stylistic variation is the use of different features of language in a myriad of ways. Continuing with the comparison between the unique literary form of the Qur'an and Arabic rhymed prose or *saj*, we find that the Qur'an uses literary and linguistic devices in such a way that has not been used before with unparalleled communicative effect.

The use of stylistic variation or stylistic differences, includes, but is not limited to:

1. Semantically driven assonance and rhyme
2. Grammatical shifts (*iltifāat*, in Arabic)
3. Interrelation between sound, structure and meaning
4. Choice of words
5. Unique linguistic genre
6. Word order

To illustrate these points further take the following two Qur'anic verses which are structurally identical but stylistically distinct:

> "These are the limits set by God, so do not approach them" 25

> "These are the limits set by God, so do not transgress them" 26

The first verb 'approach' occurs in the context of following a very serious prohibition in the same verse:

> "...but do not associate with your wives while you are in spiritual retreat in the mosques." 27

The second verb 'transgress' of the second verse entails flexibility signified by the conjunctions in the previous phrases 'either' and 'or':

> "A divorce is only permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness." 28

In the context of stylistic variation the above example can provide empirical evidence for the view that the Qur'an uses words and phrases specifically to provide an accurate and intended meaning.

How are stylistic variations unique to the Qur'an?

The Qur'an achieves its unique literary form by transcending the use of language that is common to *saj*. S. M. Hajjaji-Jarrah in her article “The Enchantment of Reading: Sound, Meaning, and Expression in Surat Al-Adiyat", which discusses how the Qur'an achieves its uniqueness due to stylistic differences, states: "... Qur'anic 'Arabiyya brings forth a dazzling assembly of word meaning and sound defying the conventions of both the Arabian saj' and the literary rules of classical Arabic literature." 29

The following examples provide linguistic and literary evidence for the Qur'an's stylistic distinction.
ليتُ الله أن يحمِّل عبْدَة رَبِّيِّهِ إذا كَانَتْ نُذُوحَاتِيَّةً
سُتقَدَ عَلَى أَرْجُحٍ يُنَزِّهَهُ عَلَى مَعِينٍ، وَأَشْعَلَ النَّارُ شَهِيدًا
رُجَاءً وَفِي الْعَظْمِ مَيْتًا، وَشَفَاءُ الْإِنسَانِ وَكَانَ بَعْضُهُ مُعَفِّفًا
فِي ضَيْجِيِّنَا، وَلَخَفْتُ الْأَوَّلَ مِنْ زِرَائِهِ، وَكَانَ لَمَّا أَعَفَّهُ مَرَّنِي
وَلَبِينَى وَلَبِينَى لِيَعْقُوبَ فَلْجَعَلْهُ رَضِيَّاً أَرْبَى أَنْ يَانِشكَى
بِغَلَامِهِ، فَخَوِي لَكَعْلَةٌ مِنْ قَلْبِي، فَقَالَ بِالْهَلَوَةِ عِلْمًا
وَكَانَ مَعَهُ عِفْرَةً فَوَبَلَغَهُ مَنْ لَمْ تَعْضِهْ لَهُ أَلَّا ذَلِكَ فَالْبَيْكَوْ
Two rare Qur'an leaves from Sultanate India, 15th century. These rare leaves are written in an unknown script that was possibly the precursor to bihari. The writing style has clear influence from the Middle East and China, and has similar characteristics to bihari, muhaqqaq and naskh. Traditional bihari script shares some similarities with sini-muhaqqaq scripts of China that were used to transcribe Qur'ans in Muslim parts of China from the late 15th century onwards, and the proto-bihari script shown above may well be a transitional script. The letters noon and yaa, for instance, have the flat characteristics of muhaqqaq, and the short strokes of the letters meem, waw and kaaf appear to be the prototype for the later development of bihari script. The pages are from different parts of the Qur'an. The right hand page starts with Surah Saba (Sheba, 34) and starts from the fifth word from the beginning of verse 14 (maa dillahum). It ends with the seventh word from the beginning of verse 18 (baarakaat fee haal). The left hand page has verses from Surah al-Ahzab (The Confederates, 33) starting on the sixth word (wa nisaa-il mu'nineena) from the beginning of verse 59 and ending with the first word (khaalideena) of verse 65.

170 THE MAGNIFICENT QUR'AN
ما يلقوه من ذوي من شيطان وهو العزيز الحكيم
وكل الأمثال نظرها للناس وما يعقلها إلا
العلماء حاقد الله السهو
ولا يلبس بالحق بل ابت في كل لائحة لقومين
فألما أوفي بلغت
كأت الكتاب دائر الصلاة ط
إذ الصلاة تنهى عن الجناة وذكر الله
أكبر ويعبد ما يضيقه
ولا يخلد لها أهل الكتاب

172 THE MAGNIFICENT QUR'AN
Example 1: Word order, sound and meaning

The following is an example of how the Qur'an combines words, sounds, meaning and order to achieve its communicative goal, the result of which is sublime rhetoric, unsurpassed eloquence and a unique literary form. Let us examine the text from verses 3 and 4 of Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan, 3):

"...And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel, Aforetime, as a guidance to mankind. And He sent down the Criterion..."

In the original Qur'anic sentence, the repetition of the word anzala and the placement of al-furqana are essential devices employed to enhance the communicative, psycholinguistic and rhetorical effect. The repetition of the word anzala is to confirm the revelation of the Criterion and that it is indeed a Divine scripture while the placement of the word al-furqana at the end of the sentence is to confirm that the Criterion is the last and final scripture. Abd al-Qadir Ahmad 'Ata refers to examples like these as 'the chemical composition of the Qur'an which indicate the delicate and balanced stylistic variation in the Qur'an.'

Example 2: Grammatical Shift (iltifaat)

Professor Abdel Haleem in his article 'Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: Iltifaat and related features in the Qur'an,' highlighted another inimitable feature of the Qur'an, the extensive use of grammatical shifts. This feature is an effective rhetorical device that enhances the texts literary expression and achieves the communicative goal; it is an accepted, well researched part of Arabic rhetoric. One can find references in the books of balagha (Arabic Rhetoric) by al-Athir, Suyuti and Zarkashi.

These grammatical shifts include changes in person, change in number, change in addressee, change in tense, change in case marker, using a noun in place of a pronoun and many other changes. An example of this complex rhetorical feature is exhibited in the following verse. It changes to talking about Allah, in the third person, to Allah Himself speaking in the first person plural of majesty:

"There is no good in most of their secret talk, only in commanding charity, or good, or reconciliation between people. To anyone who does these things, seeking to please God, We shall give a rich reward."

Surah an-Nisaa (The Women, 4): 114.
Surah al-Kawthar provides another good example of the use of grammatical shift.

"Verily, We have granted you al-Kawthar. Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice. For he who hates you, he will be cut off."


In this surah, there is a change from the first person plural 'We' in the first line to the second person '...your Lord'. This change is not an abrupt shift; it is calculated and highlights the intimate relationship between Allah and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The use of 'We' as described above is used to emphasize the Majesty, Power and the Ability of Allah, whereas 'Your Lord' is used to indicate and emphasize intimacy, closeness and love; this is an apt use as the preceding concepts are about prayer, sacrifice and worship 'So to your Lord pray and sacrifice'. Furthermore, the purpose of this chapter is also to console Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; using intimate language enhances the psycholinguistic effect. A final shift occurs from the second person to the third person singular.

These shifts contribute to the dynamic style of the Qur’an and are obvious stylistic features and accepted rhetorical practice. The Qur’an uses this feature in such a way that conforms to the theme of the text (semantically driven) while enhancing the impact of the message it conveys.

It is not surprising that Neal Robinson in his book ‘Discovering the Qur’an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text’ concludes that the grammatical shifts used in the Qur’an, ‘...are a very effective rhetorical device.’

The Qur’an is the only form of Arabic prose to have used this rhetorical device in an extensive and complex manner. Professor Abdel Haleem states, ‘...it employs this feature far more extensively and in more variations than does Arabic poetry. It is, therefore, natural to find... no one seems to quote references in prose other than from the Qur’an.’

Hence, the Qur’an is stylistically distinct from any known form of Arabic speech. It uses linguistic and literary devices in such a way that have not been used before.
THE CHALLENGE IN THE QUR'AN 175
17th century Qur'an page and its reverse side from Iraq or Persia. There are fourteen lines of text per page written in a very neat black naskh script on thick paper. Round gold coloured circles act as verse markers and some of the vowel markings have been penned in red ink. The pages are decorated with a golden trellis of floral designs in the margins. The page on the right starts partway through verse 7 of Surah an-Nisaa (The Women, 4) ending on the left hand page on part of verse 15. The single blue and gold roundel in the margin indicates the end of the surah's first section.
A further example of Qur'anic precision is found in a verse that mentions two of the attributes of Allah; al-Ghafoor (The Forgiving) and ar-Raheem (The Merciful). In the Qur'an we find that these two names of Allah are mentioned together more than seventy times, with the word al-Ghafoor always preceding ar-Raheem. However, in Surah Saba verse 2 (see below), we find that ar-Raheem is mentioned before al-Ghafoor. So the question arises as to why this might be.

"In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are to Allah, to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. His is all praise and thanks in the Hereafter, and He is the All-Wise, the Well-Acquainted (with all things). He knows that which goes into the earth and that which comes forth from it, and that which descends from the heaven and that which ascends to it. And He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-Forgiving."

Surah Saba (Sheba) 34: 1-2.

If we examine the content and structure of the whole verse in detail we see that the two attributes of Allah ‘Mercy and Forgiveness’ alternate as shown in the representation below. Allah begins verse two with the word “He knows” which has a direct connection with why ar-Raheem is mentioned first in this case.

If we carefully analyse this verse Allah says that "He knows that which goes into the earth..." If we consider the types of things that go into the earth such as seeds that are buried in the ground, worms, insects, drops of rain and the fact that human beings will also go into the earth when they die. Once in the ground we will need to rely on the Mercy of Allah. Then Allah says, “and that which comes forth from it”. Vegetation, springs and rivers gushing forth are examples of all the types of things that come out of the earth. Similarly human beings will too come out from the earth when they are resurrected from their graves. At that time we will need to rely on Allah's attribute of al-Ghafoor (forgiveness).

The verse continues and Allah says “and that which descends from the heaven". Consider for a moment what comes from the skies such as drops of rain, Divine commandments in the form of revelations, Allah's graces, favours and provisions. We see that all of these things are a mercy from Allah. Rain is a mercy, revelation is a mercy and provisions are a mercy. The verse then ends with “and that which ascends to it. And He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-Forgiving”. Our deeds, supplications, and souls depart this word and all ascend to heaven and what is required in these instances from Allah is his forgiveness. Thus, each part of the verse connects with these two names and the verse has to end on ar-Raheemul Ghafoor in contrast to all other occurrences in order to maintain the correct sequence.

This verse provides another excellent example of the precision and balance present throughout the Qur'an, coupled with a level of awareness of what is being said and the implications behind the words that would have been impossible for Prophet Muhammad to produce by himself and remain consistent over a period of twenty three years.
Example 4: Maintenance of rhythm

An example of textual precision and maintenance of rhythm in the Qur'an is found within the story of Prophet Moses (Musa, peace be upon him). Prophet Moses is mentioned together with his brother Prophet Aaron (Harun, peace be upon him) in numerous places in the Qur'an. So for example in Surah A'raaf (The Heights), verses 121 and 122 we read:

“They said: “We believe in the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists). The Lord of Moses and Aaron.”

The order of the names is different in this verse so that the rhythm of the recitation is maintained. The previous Qur'anic text shows that the verses preceding verse 70 all end on the letter alif. Hence, ending verse 70 with the name Musa, helps to maintain this style and rhythm.

Example 5: Singular and plural words

One of the many fascinating aspects of the Qur'an is that it never ceases to astound those who study it. As each layer of knowledge is unravelled further levels of understanding and comprehension are revealed. The fact that Allah the Creator has a very fine and subtle knowledge of human nature in terms of how we think and feel is highlighted throughout the Qur'an. For example, whenever Allah uses the word sama’ (listen) in the Qur'an it is usually in its singular rather than the plural form as in Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) verse 7 we read:

“Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, (i.e. they are closed from accepting Allah's Guidance), and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be a great torment.”

The highlighted text above shows that although the words qulooobihim (hearts) and absaarihim (eyes) are in their plural forms the word sami’him (hearing) is singular. This is due to the fact that if we listen to speech, our hearts and minds all react on an individual basis, whereby we will translate and understand the speech according to our own personal understanding and comprehension of what was said. This type of subtlety is lost when the Qur'an is translated into another language, so the true linguistic miracle and magnificence of the Qur'an can only be fully appreciated from the original Arabic.
Example 5 (continued): Singular and plural words

Another example of the use of singular and plural words occurs in Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets, 26). The following verses reveal how the people of the Prophets Noah and Lot (peace be upon them) and the people of Ad, Thamud and al-Aikah all denied the Messengers of Allah.

"The people of Noah denied the Messengers."

Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 105.

"(The people of) Ad denied the Messengers."

Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 123.

"(The people of) Thamud denied the Messengers."

Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 141.

"The people of Lot denied the Messengers."

Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 160.

"The dwellers of Al-Aikah denied the Messengers."

Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 176.

In all of these verses the apparent meaning is clear that all of these people denied their Messengers. However the choice of the plural word al-mursaleen (Messengers) rather than singular ar-rasool is more appropriate here. This is due to the fact that even if you deny one of Allah’s Messengers it is as if you have denied them all because they all came with the same message, namely, Islam. As in the following verse where Allah says;

"Verily, those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and wish to make distinction between Allah and His messengers (by believing in Allah and disbelieving in His messengers) saying, “We believe in some but reject others,” and wish to adopt a way in between.

They are in truth disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating torment.

And those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them (messengers), We shall give them their rewards; and Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

Surah an-Nisaa (The Women) 4: 150-152.
16th century page from a Persian Qur'an written in naskh alternating with neatly framed Persian translation in red nasta'liq. Surah headings are in red with additional commentary written in black and red in the margin. The page contains Surah al-Insan (Man, 76), part of verse 11 to part of 21.

Example 6: Qur'anic imagery and word choice

There are many examples in the Qur'an of a particular word being used rather than another word with a similar meaning that phonetically enhances the description in the text during its recitation. For instance, Allah says in Surah al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage, 22) verse 31:

"Hunafa' Lillah (i.e. worshipping none but Allah), not associating partners (in worship) to Him; and whoever assigns partners to Allah, it is as if he had fallen from the sky, and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had thrown him to a far off place."

Here (hunafa' lillah) means, sincerely submitting to Him alone, shunning falsehood and seeking the truth. Allah then says "not associating partners unto Him". Then Allah gives a likeness of the idolator in his misguidance and being doomed and being far away from true guidance, and says: whoever assigns partners to Allah, it is as if he had fallen from the sky, and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had thrown him to a far off place."

The interesting point to note here is that the verse ends with the word saheeq, rather than an alternative word, baeed. Both of these have a very similar meaning: remote, distant and faraway. However, the word saheeq is used because it ends in the letter qaf, which is a 'heavy' letter in the Arabic alphabet as opposed to the 'lighter' daal at the end of the word baeed. In this case the verse ends on a much harder note, which strengthens and underlines the stark events being portrayed in the verse.

The verse represents a very accurate picture and apt description of one who associates partners with Allah. He falls from the sublime height of faith to land in utter destruction. Finishing the verse with the letter qaf shows the severity of the matter, and that when the person is thrown to the faraway place the landing is not soft, rather he is smashed on the ground with a crack. This type of example highlights further the unique inter-relationship between the precise choice of Qur'anic words, their resonance and how this effects the meaning of a particular verse.

This whole passage conjures up a vivid scene of a person falling down from the sky from a great height about to be violently broken into pieces or he may be swept away by the wind or thrown into a bottomless depth. What is striking is the rapid and violent movement, with scenes happening in quick succession and then disappearing completely.
مَن يُقَامُ عَلَى الْحَقِّ وَلَا يُقَامُ عَلَيْهِ الْفِيَفَاءَ
وَيُنَبِّئُ بِجَنَّةِ الْمُقْرِنَةِ وَلَا يَقِلُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
كَمْيَةً مِّنَ الْخَيْرِ وَالْجَهَرَةِ
Example 7: The challenge

Surah al-Kawthar is the shortest surah in the Qur’an with only three short verses and like all of the other chapters in the Qur’an, has an unmatched selection of words, pronouns, word order and meaning. Moreover, anyone attempting to take up the challenge of the Qur’an only needs to produce something comparable to it. By briefly analysing this chapter’s first verse it provides an insight into how this matchless and eloquent discourse is achieved.

i. Emphasis and choice of pronoun

Verily, We have granted you al-Kawthar.
Inna a’tayna kal kawthar
Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice.
Fasalli li rabbika wanhar
For he who hates you, he will be cut off.
Inna shani-aka huwal abtar

The use of the words (Verily, We) at the start of al-Kawthar is emphatic; also the plural is used to indicate power, certainty, ability, greater quantity or sometimes to stress the status and greatness (li-ta’zim al-mutakallim aw ihtimaman bidhikr rabbika wa ta’ziman). This is an apt choice of pronoun as its persuasive force can not be matched by any other pronoun. The effect is “The Creator, who has power to do anything, has indeed given you....”

ii. Word choice

The term a’tayn has been used instead of aataaina’ because of a subtle difference. The difference as defined by Ibn Manzoor in his Lisan al-Arab is that the Qur’anic choice indicates ‘to hand over with one’s own hand’ whereas the non Qur’anic selection does not provide this meaning.

This choice of word is apt as it strengthens the sentence emphasizing the surety of giving, ability, greatness, power and intimacy (to console and strengthen Prophet Muhammad ₿). The verb has also been used in the past tense which indicates that it has already happened and makes it definitive. This further accentuates the meaning of surety, power and greatness. This also expresses certainty of a promise; in this case Prophet Muhammad ₿ will have al-Kawthar, or abundance.

The root stem for the word al-Kawthar are the letters kaf, tha and ra (kathara). This signifies plentiful, multitude, overflowing, rich, unstinting and unending. Other derivations of this root include:

1. katha-ratun: Multitude
2. katheerun: Much, many, numerous
3. ak’taru: More numerous (emphasis)
4. kath-thara: To multiply
5. takathur: Act of multiplying
6. is-thak-thara: To wish for much

Al-Qurtubi states that the Arabs used ‘kawthar’ to denote anything which is great in quantity or value. This word can not be replaced with another, as its meaning can not be matched equally with any other Arabic word.

Following pages
Detail view of Surah al-Kawthar (A River in Paradise, 108) from a majestic 16th century Persian Qur’an written in a rayhani script on thin highly polished paper. The surah title is enclosed in a rectangular panel embellished in white within a gold foliate panel, stating the title and the number of verses.
iii. Word arrangement

The placement of al-Kawthar is an attribute; plentiful and abundance. However, this word has been placed at the end of the verse with no word after to be attributed to it, as al-Qurtubi points out, this indicates that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has been given an abundance of everything. Islamic scholars state that if Allah had bestowed one thing in great multitude then that would have been mentioned. However, due to giving Prophet Muhammad ﷺ an abundance of everything, nothing is mentioned to indicate everything or many things. Also, within the science of eloquence and rhetoric, mentioning all things would be superfluous and not a good use of language.

iv. Multiple meaning

The word al-Kawthar has been given multiple meanings by the scholars. These meanings include:

1. A river of Paradise from which rivers flow.
2. The fountain on the Day of Judgement from which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ will quench the thirst of his people.
3. His prophethood.
4. The Qur'an.
5. The way of life called Islam.
6. The multitude of his companions; no other prophet had as many companions as Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
7. Elevated status. No one is more researched, more mentioned, more praised and more loved than Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
8. It is a multitude of goodness.
Just by briefly looking at Surah al-Kawthar’s first line it can be seen that the words, word order and pronoun have been carefully selected to enhance the meaning. Any attempt to change the words or word order will truly cease to sound like the Qur’an, and the powerful meaning would be lost. As we have discussed, the Qur’an is unique in that it does not follow the normal pattern of Arabic poetry and prose. The flow of the Qur’an is not interrupted by the repeated detail contained in many of its verses. In fact, part of the beauty of the Qur’an can be attributed to its precise detail and accuracy.

Hence, the overview presented here shows how the Qur’an transcends all forms of Arabic rhymed prose (saj’). In fact theologians and Arab linguists hold that the Qur’an does not contain just ordinary saj’, and is in fact unique to all types of saj’. Their reasoning is that in the Qur’an, the use of language is semantically orientated and its literary structure is distinct, whereas in saj’, conformity to style is a primary objective.

No human being has ever composed a book that discusses such diverse topics in a language with so much rhythm, beauty and style. Further examples of the Qur’an’s unique literary form are too many and varied to list and are beyond the scope of this book, but can be found in a multitude of other works on this subject.

In conclusion, the Qur’an is a literary and linguistic miracle. It has challenged those who doubt its Divine authorship and history has shown that it is indeed a miracle as there can be no natural explanation to comprehensively explain its unmatched unique expression. As tangible signs, Qur’anic verses are expressive of an inexhaustible truth. They signify meanings layered within meanings, light upon light and miracle after miracle. Examples of other miraculous aspects of the Qur’an, such as the scientific accuracy where it deals with many natural phenomena, can be found in “The Islam Guide, pp. 191-264”. 39
Beautifully illustrated 16th century Qur'an from Persia or Iraq written in elegant rayhani script on thin highly polished paper. Surah al-Balad (The City, 90) is written on the right hand page and Surah ash-Shams (The Sun, 91) on the left. The text on every page is enclosed within a blue, gold and orange frame. Surah headers are with floral designs using a variety of colours with the header text written in white. Verses are separated by coloured circles drawn above the line. Alternating blue and gold ornaments in the margin indicate the end of every 5th and 10th verse.
لا أتَّبِعُ الكَحِيلَ ولا أتُّصِبُّ الْبَلَدَ، وَلَا عَلَى هَذَا الْحَيَّ زَاَكِبَ، وَلَا نَفْرَعُ فِي هَذَا الْحَيَّ، وَلَا مَخَّفُوْلُونَا فِيهِ أَيْضًا اِنْتَ نُفَرُّ. هُدِّيَتُنَا، أَيْضًا وَمِنْذَ زَيَّدَنَا وَهَكَيْلًا يَكْفِيْنَا، فَلَا أَفْتَرِقُونَا مَأَكِلُكَ وَالْأَهْلُ، فَلَّا أَفْتَرِقُونَا. يَكْفِيْنَا، فَلَا أَفْتَرِقُونَا مَأَكِلُكَ وَالْأَهْلُ، فَلَا أَفْتَرِقُونَا.
Visually intense opening pages from a 17th century Qur'an copied in the Indian subcontinent providing a striking example of symmetry, layout and design. There are four lines of text per page within a cloud type motif and very unusually it contains only the first 6 verses of Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1). The manuscript is written in naskh style Arabic script. The border is heavily illustrated with a bed of floral design work using a multiple array of colours that is fully symmetrical on a central axis. The text is vocalised with simple red circles marking the end of a verse.
Following pages
Detailed view of the opening page from an elaborately decorated 19th century Qur'an with the whole of Surah al-Fatiha (The Opening, 1) written on polished paper. The text is typically set within a cloud-motif upon gold ground enclosed by a strapwork frame.
The design scheme of these centre pages from a magnificent Qur’an written in Afghanistan, dated 1269 AH (1891 CE) is similar to most Qur’ans from this region. The text is elegantly written in a traditional naskh script within a cloud motif surrounded by a repeating sea of coloured flowers. The name of the calligrapher is inscribed on the back page as Ghulam Mahudin. The surah starting on the right hand page is Bani Israel (‘The Children of Israel, 17’). The writing in red ink in the far margin indicates that this Surah is in the 15th juz’ of the Qur’an.
Two sides from a single Qur'an page written in the Caucasus, most likely Chechnya, 19th century. The text is written in a bold naskh style with some vowel markings in red ink. Individual verses are separated by red circles. The folio on the opposite page starts with Surah al-Mu'minun (The Believers, 23) and continues over the page ending on part of verse 27. The large marginal ornament indicates the start of the eighteenth juz' of the Qur'an.
فقال لقوم أن الدن حرم في صلواتهم خاصون، والذين يدعون اللهو وعوضون. والذين هم مرهقون للذكر والصلاة. والذين هم لم يفهموا حافظين. إلا الذين واجههم أو ملكتikan بأعمالهم قابضين. 폐ل أمهم قبر بعث وزل دل ذلك فأذره. العادون والذين هم كمالاتهم وعهدهم عطائهم. الذين هم على صلة نفسيتكم. أفطروهم. والورثون الذين يثون الفيدي وملهم فهم الحال. والذين خلقنا الأنسان من س لم يذن طين. ثم جعلنا فيهم نطفة. في كل تكين. ثم خلقنا النطفة علقتا. فخلقنا العقلة موضع خلقنا الضعفة. عطاما فكمون العظام جعلنا أن نذا خلقاً التور. فصنع الله أحسن حسبنا. ثم أتم بعد ذلك. لينون. ثم أحكم موضع الفجرة. فبعثون. وألقي حلقنا قف فكم أو قر طائر ونماصتنا عند أحلق.
سورة البقرة

لا بأس به، إن الله يعلم ما بين أيدي الناس، يعلم ما في السر وباطن. 

اللهم إني أستعين عليك بذكرك وحلف ثوبك، وفاطمة بنت مسعود، وشیخ الإسلام، و попу، وعمرو بن العاص، وعمر بن الخطاب، وعثمان بن عفان، وabdullah بن عوف، وabdullah بن عباس، والملأاء والمؤذنين، والناس، والملائكة، والنّور، ورسول الله ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والقادر ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣ้ายه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣeditaryه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣ้ายه ﷺ، والخليفة ﷺ، وأمه ﻣয
Compilation and Preservation

The Qur'an is the only Divinely revealed religious book in existence that can claim to have been preserved in its original form. This very unique phenomenon is supported by a wealth of historical evidence and occurred over three distinct stages. The first stage was during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the second during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and the third during the Caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan (May Allah be pleased with them). The end result is that the Qur'an available today is the same as that during the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Moreover, the fact that the Qur'an itself has been preserved in an unrivalled way unlike any other book in history, fulfils the promise of Allah to preserve the Qur'an from corruption. In support of this fact we read in the Qur'an that Allah has taken it upon Himself to guard and protect it.

"Verily, We have sent down this Remembrance (the Qur'an) and We are of a surety going to protect it (from tampering)."


Furthermore Allah says:

“And verily, it is an honourable well-fortified respected Book (because it is Allah’s Speech, and He has protected it from corruption).

Falsehood cannot come to it from before it or behind it, (it is) sent down by the All-Wise, Worthy of all praise (Allah).”

Surah Fussilat (They are explained in detail) 41: 41-42.

Indeed, not only has the actual text been carefully and faithfully preserved, but the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also preserved background information and many fine details related to each verse; so that its precise meaning could be understood. History shows that the Qur'an was preserved in two ways: 1) memorisation by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his noble companions and 2) writing down of the chapters and verses by the companions as they were revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Memorisation of the Qur'an during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

The fact that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ could neither read nor write represents one of the greatest proofs that he did not write the Qur'an himself, but that it was a revelation from Allah.

“He it is Who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them (from disbelief and polytheism), and teaching them the Book (this Qur’an) and wisdom. And verily, they had been before in manifest error.

And He has sent him (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) also to others among them (Muslims) who have not yet joined them (but they will come). And He (Allah) is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.”

Surah al-Jumu’ah (Friday) 62: 2-3.
The start of Surah Qaf (50) beautifully hand written in traditional naskh style Arabic script from a complete Indian Qur’an dating back to the 17th century. The manuscript is highly decorated throughout with extensive gold and floral detail. The dark spots seen on the lower left of the page are bore marks made by an insect.

Opposite page
Another page from the same Qur’an as above showing Surah al-Fatihah (The Opening, 1).

These verses indicate that Allah chose to send a prophet that could not read or write to deliver His final message to all of mankind. As Allah says in the following verse:

Say: “O mankind! verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allah.”

Surah al-A’raaf (The Heights) 7: 158.

Prophet Muhammad’s lack of literacy skills was in itself a great sign from Allah that provided a proof for the Divine Message. This had the affect of assuring people that he could not add or take away from Allah’s message, as he was only able to recite what was revealed to him. The people around him would hear the recitation and record it. The Arab nation at the time was largely illiterate and possessed little knowledge of reading and writing, relying heavily instead on the use of memorised poetry. In fact, it is said that during the early Islamic period, there were only seventeen literate people in the whole of Makkah.

From the very beginning of Islam, therefore, the companions of Prophet Muhammad would memorise the Qur’an as it was being revealed so they could recite it in their prayers. Prophet Muhammad was greatly concerned regarding the preservation of the Qur’an so he actively encouraged the recording of the Qur’an throughout his lifetime; a practice that continues to this very day. The fact that in the year 626 CE, seventy companions who had memorised the Qur’an were killed at the well of Ma’oonah whilst on a teaching mission, provides clear evidence of the great number of Muslims who had already memorised most if not all of the Qur’an during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad.
Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was also very concerned that he may forget the verses of the Qur'an that had been revealed to him. So he would sometimes begin to repeat the verses revealed to him even before the revelation had finished. Allah then reassured him that he would not forget the revelation by telling him:

"Move not your tongue concerning (the Qur'an, O Muhammad ﷺ) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to give you (O Muhammad ﷺ) the ability to recite it (the Qur'an)."

Surah al-Qiyaamah (The Resurrection) 75: 16-17.

It is also known that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to spend large portions of the night in worship by reciting the Qur'an, and Allah provided His Mercy and sent the following revelation:

"Verily, your Lord knows that you do stand (to pray at night) a little less than two-thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third of the night, and also a party of those with you. And Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that you are unable to pray the whole night, so He has turned to you (in mercy). So, recite you of the Qur'an as much as may be easy for you."

Surah al-Muzzammil (The One Wrapped in Garments) 73: 20.
Surah Bani Israel (The Children of Israel, 17) starts half way down this manuscript written in naskh from India, dated to around 1616 CE by the calligrapher Abdullah al-Khadim. The format is typical of Qur’anic manuscripts from a much earlier period. The page is split into a number of rectangular compartments. There are nine lines of Arabic script per page with the first, fifth and ninth lines written in a larger hand. The side panels have been left blank, but are often decorated with ornaments. The upper marginal ornament on the left hand side indicates the end of the previous surah’s last ruku, whereas the lower ornament denotes the start of the fifteenth juz'.
Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would memorise the Qur’an as it was being revealed, but he would also recite it to others at every opportunity. For example the first man to embrace Islam outside of the Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ family was Abu Bakr. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ called him to Islam by reading verses from the Qur’an. Abu Bakr then brought some of his friends including Uthman ibn Affan, Abdur-Rahman ibn Auf, az-Zubair ibn al-Awwan, Talha and Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with them all) to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and again he recited verses from the Qur’an and they all entered into Islam.

Similarly, many others such as Abu Ubaidah, Abu Salama, and Abdullah ibn al-Arqam (may Allah be pleased with them all) visited Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to enquire about Islam and he explained it to them and again recited the Qur’an and they accepted Islam.

It was also the practice of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to recite the Qur’an to Angel Jibreel every year during the month of Ramadan. Angel Jibreel would then recite it back to him. However, in the year 632 CE when Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away, he recited it twice to Jibreel and the angel recited it twice back to him. It was during this last recital, that one of his main scribes, Zayd ibn Thabit was present. Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her), the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, reported Prophet Muhammad ﷺ confided in her:

"Jibreel used to recite the whole Qur’an to me every Ramadan, but this year he recited it to me twice. I do not see (any explanation for this) except that my time (of death) is near."

(Recorded by Bukhari).

The Writing of the Qur’an in Makkah

As we have seen there is an abundance of historical evidence concerning the preservation of the Qur’an through memorisation by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions in Makkah. It is also an established fact that at his request the Qur’an was written down during his lifetime. The practice of writing started very early in Islamic history. We know for example, that some of the first Muslims would study the chapters and verses of the Qur’an in written form. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), one of Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ closest companions, stated that verses revealed in Makkah were recorded in Makkah.

Furthermore, Abdullah ibn Sa’d ibn Abi as-Sarh is named as one of the scribes officially engaged in recording the Qur’an during the Makkah period. Khalid ibn Sa’id ibn al-As is another official scribe who recorded the Qur’an in the early days of revelation and he stated:

"I was the first to write down 'Bismillah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim' (In the Name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful)."

In another narration, when Rafi ibn Malik al-Ansari attended the gathering at al-Aqaba just prior to the Muslim migration to Madinah in the year 622 CE, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ handed him all of the verses that had been revealed during the previous decade in written form. These would have been written on various materials such as stone, parchment, bones and palm leaves.
Two Qur'an leaves from a late 15th century Qur'an written in bihari script. There are fifteen lines of text per page within a red and black ruled line panel. Diacritical markings are in black and the word 'Allah' is picked out in gold throughout. Small rosettes denote single verses. The brightly coloured marginal ornament made up of a series of concentric circles indicates the end of the second section. The page on the right has part of verse 14 from Surah Saba (Sheba, 34) through to verse 22 on the left.

Once back in Madinah, Rafi gathered his tribe together to read these pages to them. So we see that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ not only encouraged the memorisation of the Qur'an, but also the reading of the Qur'an from a written source.

In a narration on this subject Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "A person's recitation without the aid of a mushaf (written copy) elicits a reward of one thousand degrees, but his recitation using a mushaf doubles that reward to two thousand."

(Narrated by Aus ath-Thaqafi narrated, recorded by at-Tabari and al-Baihaqi)

One of the most famous examples of the Qur'an having been written down in the early stages of Islam in Makkah, is during the sixth year of Prophethood when Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) read a parchment containing the first few verses of Surah TaaHaa and accepted Islam.

Umar ibn al-Khattab had heard the Prophet ﷺ reciting the Qur'an at the Sanctuary in Makkah; the Prophet ﷺ was reciting Surah al-Haaqqah (69) and Umar narrated: "Then Islam came into my heart."

The recitation had a profound impact on him, as if he had been awoken suddenly from a deep stupor. However, at this point Umar did not become a Muslim. Conflicting emotions between accepting Islam and conforming to the ways of his ancestors held Umar back from becoming Muslim. Sometime later Umar’s emotions got the better of him and he set off with the intention of killing Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

However, he would have an encounter along the way that would transform his life forever and see him eventually become one of Islam’s greatest personalities, greatly respected to the present day. On his way he met a man who informed him that his sister and her husband had become Muslim. Umar was furious and stormed to his
Enlarged image of a *bihari leaf* from a late 15th century Qur'an written in India showing Surah al-Ahzaab (The Confederates, 33); part of verse 52 to part of verse 53. The marginal device marks the end of the surah's sixth section.
sister’s house. As he drew nearer, he heard the voice of Khabbab ibn Aratt, who was reciting Surah TaaHaa (20) to both of them from some written pages. Khabbab perceiving the noise of his footsteps went further into the house, and Fatimah, Umar’s sister, took hold of the page and hid it. But Umar had already heard the voice. “What sound was that I heard just now?” He said, entering angrily. Both his sister and her husband replied, “You heard nothing.” “Nay,” he said swearing fiercely, “I have heard that you have turned away from your religion.”

He moved forward towards his brother-in-law and beat him severely, but Fatimah rushed to the rescue of her husband. Thereupon, Umar fell upon his sister in rage and struck her on the head. The husband and wife could not contain themselves and cried aloud: “Yes we are Muslims, we believe in Allah and His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, so do what you will.” When Umar saw the face of his dear sister smeared with blood, he felt pity and said: “Let me see what you were reading, so that I may perceive what Muhammad has brought.”

Fatimah was satisfied with the assurance, but said: “O brother, you are unclean on the account of your idolatry, none but the pure may touch it. So go and wash first.” He did so, and took the page and read the opening verses of the Surah TaaHaa from the Qur’an until he reached:

“Verily, I am Allah! None has the right to be worshipped but I, so worship Me, and perform As-Salat (the prayers) for My remembrance.”

Surah TaaHaa 20:14.
Late 18th to early 19th century Qur'an from the Indian subcontinent elegantly written in *naskh*. Very lightly decorated with a simple multi-coloured border. The double pages start half way through verse 23 of Surah Hud (Prophet Hud, 11) on the right and ends with the second last word of verse 37.
Beautifully scripted *naskh* leaf from a Qur'an handwritten in Kashmir during the 19th century on gold sprinkled paper. The page is enclosed by a frame border with fourteen lines of text per page with each line set within a cloud motif that is typical of Qur'anic manuscripts from this region. Coloured florets act as verse separators. The page starts with the last three words of verse 129 from Surah al-An'aam (The Cattle, 6) and ends part way through verse 136.
Umar read the verses with great interest and was highly fascinated by them. “How excellent it is, and how graceful! Please guide me to Muhammad,” he said.  

There are also many other examples of the Qur'an being taught in Makkah and beyond by the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The companions were very devout believers in the message of Islam and were keen to see Islam spread. As the Muslims faced severe persecution there was a great sense of unity and purpose amongst the early Muslims and they helped each other immensely. These early bonds also extended to the teaching of the Qur'an, and many of the companions after learning the Qur'an from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ helped others to learn the Qur'an by providing extra tuition. Ibn Mas'ud was one of the first Muslims to teach the Noble Qur'an in Makkah.

Khabbab, as we have already discussed, taught the Qur'an to Fatimah (Umar ibn al-Khattab’s sister) and her husband Sa’id ibn Zayd. The early Muslims also went on to teach the verses of the Qur'an to many tribes outside of Makkah. Companions such as Mus'ab ibn Umayr helped to teach the Qur'an to the people of Madinah, even prior to the migration of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to that city. Zayd ibn Thabit, who would later become one of the scribes of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, when he was presented to the Prophet ﷺ upon his arrival in Madinah, had already memorised sixteen chapters of the Qur'an by the age of eleven. Similarly, Bara stated that he was familiar with the Qur'an from Surah Qaf, even before Prophet Muhammad ﷺ arrived in Madinah. Furthermore, Al-Waqidi stated that the Masjid of Bani Zuraq was the first mosque to be honoured by the recitation of the Qur'an.
The evidence shows that the faithful preservation of the Qur'an, both in written form and memorisation, from its first revelation in Makkah is a well documented fact. The Qur'an was being committed to memory by many companions of Prophet Muhammad as it was revealed. As well as memorising the Qur'an it was also being written down from the very start of its revelation for the purposes of personal study and teaching others, even during the persecution that the Muslims suffered in Makkah in the early days of Islam.

Furthermore, not only did the companions record the entire Qur'an, they were also in the habit of recording in minute detail the place of revelation, the reason and meaning behind each revelation, even down to the detail of the first person to write 'Bismillah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim'.

Teaching and memorisation in Madinah

When Prophet Muhammad arrived in Madinah in the year 622 CE, life changed completely for the Muslims. In Makkah, the Muslims had been under constant persecution by the pagan Makkans, but now in Madinah all the affairs of life rested in their hands. They were free to build a just society based upon the teachings of the Qur'an. One of the first tasks that Prophet Muhammad sought to undertake was the construction of a mosque that would act not only as a house of worship but as a sanctuary for the poor and a centre of education.

Prophet Muhammad continued his practice of encouraging teaching and memorisation of the Qur'an by placing a strong emphasis on education. He set up a school to provide food and shelter to students who would learn literacy.
Up to nine hundred people took up this offer of education. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself would teach the Qur'an whilst companions such as Abdullah ibn Sa'id ibn al-As, Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit and others taught reading and writing in general.

Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit reported: “Whenever a person migrated to Madinah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would assign him to one of us so that we could teach him the Qur’an. Eventually the masjid became so noisy because of all the recitation of the Qur’an that the Prophet ﷺ ordered us to lower our voices so as not to distort the meaning (by mixing all of these verses).”

On the same topic of teaching Anas ibn Malik commented: “The Prophet ﷺ came to us while we were reciting, among us Arabs and non-Arabs, blacks and whites...”

Similarly, Abdullah ibn Mughaffal al-Muzani narrates: “When someone of Arab stock migrated to Madinah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would assign someone from the Ansar to that individual saying: ‘let him understand Islam and teach him the Qur’an’.

“The same was true with me,” he continued, “as I was entrusted to one of the Ansar who made me understand the religion and taught me the Qur’an.”

There are numerous other reports from the companions stating that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ recited such and such chapter to them personally, including renowned personalities like Ubayy ibn Ka’b, Abdullah ibn Salam, Hisham ibn Hakim, Umar ibn al-Khattab and Ibn Mas’ud.

18th century South East Asian Qur’an neatly written in simple black and red naskhi/jawi script. Unusually this manuscript is covered in a traditional cloth rather than leather. The pages show Surah an-Nasr (The Help, 110) to Surah an-Naas (Mankind, 114).

Following pages
A page from a 30 volume Chinese Qur’an written in sini script, late 17th century, showing part of verse 37 to 38 from Surah Fussilat (They are explained in detail, 41). The green and red lantern shaped ornament with the word sajdah indicates that there is a prostration.
The first compilation of the Qur'an

As a result of all of Prophet Muhammad’s tireless work and devotion to his mission, by the time he passed away in the year 632 CE, the entire Qur’an had been completely written down as well as memorised by many of his companions, all directly from the Prophet himself. Many of the Muslims had not only memorised the complete Qur’an but had also substantial written copies of their own. Hence, the information contained within the Divine revelation was protected and clearly available; if any companion needed clarification he could simply ask another companion as numerous copies of chapters and verses of the Qur’an were available in written form. In addition, many of the companions who had memorised the Qur’an were present and they could relate the Qur’an easily and eloquently.

It is also important to note that Prophet Muhammad did not compile the Qur’an into a single reference volume between two covers during his lifetime. This was simply due to the fact that the Qur’an was still being revealed, however the arrangement of the chapters and verses of the Qur’an that we are familiar with today is based upon the instructions of Prophet Muhammad himself and are not arranged in some haphazard manner as a few have claimed over the years.  

When Prophet Muhammad passed away, Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq was elected by the companions as the first Caliph of Islam. During the Battle of Yamaamah (12 AH), around seventy companions who had memorised the Qur’an were martyred. Umar ibn al-Khattab was alarmed at the high number of companions being killed so he approached Abu Bakr and said: “Many of those who had memorised the Qur’an have died and I am scared lest more die in later battles. This might lead to the loss of the Qur’an, unless you collect it.”

Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq replied, “How can I do that which the Prophet did not do?”

Umar ibn al-Khattab however, continued to convince Abu Bakr by highlighting the merits of such an action. Abu Bakr was the first man to accept Islam and understood the needs of the Muslim community well, so he agreed to Umar’s suggestion. Abu Bakr and Umar decided that Zayd ibn Thabit was the most suitable person to be put in charge of such an important task. Zayd had been one of the primary scribes of Prophet Muhammad and as he had also been present at the Prophet’s last recital to Angel Jibreel during Ramadan, he would have been familiar with the exact arrangement of the Qur’anic surahs. Abu Bakr told him, “You are an intelligent young man, and we do not doubt you. You used to write the revelation for the Prophet so we want you to collect the Qur’an.” Umar also agreed to lend his full assistance.

The conditions set upon Zayd ibn Thabit were very strict. Even though many had memorised the Qur’an, a written record of the verses had to be seen before it could be included in the official reference copy. The other companions were told of the project and ordered to bring their written parts of the Qur’an. Those who had memorised the Qur’an were also requested to take part in the project. Caliph Abu Bakr issued a general decree for every eligible person to participate. The task was carried out at the Prophet’s Mosque, which had become a central gathering place.

Umar ibn al-Khattab stood at the gates of the Mosque and announced that anyone possessing written verses dictated from the Prophet must bring them. Bilal ibn Rabah (may Allah be well pleased with him) announced the same thing through the streets of Madinah.
 sách 1}
Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, nominated Umar ibn al-Khattab as the next Caliph on his deathbed and entrusted the copy of the master reference Qur'an to Umar. During Umar's reign as Caliph, Islam spread rapidly with the territories of Islam expanding five fold. This naturally meant that the Qur'an also spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula. Caliph Umar continued the practice enshrined by the Prophet by sending out teachers of the Qur'an to the new regions. At least ten companions were sent to Basra and Ibn Masud was sent to Kufa to teach the Qur'an.

As Islam spread to Syria, the governor in Syria, Yazid ibn Sufyan, complained to Umar about the masses of Muslims requiring education in the Qur'an and Islam. So, Umar sent Mu‘aadh, Ubada and Abu ad-Darda to Syria and instructed them to proceed to Hims. After achieving their aims Ubada stayed in Hims, Abu ad-Darda went onto Damascus and Mu‘aadh went to Palestine. Abu ad-Darda lived in Damascus for many years and established a highly reputed study circle with over 1600 students. From Madinah, Umar sent Yazid ibn Abdullah ibn Qusayt to teach the Qur'an to the outlying bedouins and Abu Sufyan was designated as an inspector to proceed to the tribes and discover the extent to which they had learnt. Umar ibn al-Khattab also appointed three companions in Madinah to teach children, each was given a monthly salary of fifteen dirhams. When Umar was fatally wounded in the year 644 CE, he left the master reference copy of the Qur'an with his daughter Hafsah.
The Uthmanic compilation

After the death of Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan was elected as the third caliph of Islam by the Muslims. Under his rule, Islam spread even further to many places such as Azerbaijan and Armenia. It was here that Hudhaifa ibn al-Yaman had observed regional differences over the pronunciation of the Qur'an; differences which had caused friction. He was greatly concerned and on his return to Madinah he went to Uthman ibn Affan and said:

"O Caliph, take this Ummah [community] in hand before they differ about their books like the Christians and Jews."

Uthman was alarmed by this news and convened a gathering of the leading companions of the Blessed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. After consultation Uthman informed them that in his opinion official reference copies of the Qur'an should be compiled and sent to all of the provinces of Islam; all of the Qur'an fragments were destroyed soon afterwards so that there would be one standard reference copy of the Qur'an within the Muslim community worldwide to avoid disputes.

The leading companions agreed to this idea. Ali ibn Abi Talib said concerning this incident, "O People! Do not say evil of Uthman, but only say good about him. Concerning the burning of the copies, I swear by Allah, he only did this after he had called all of us. He asked us, 'What do you think (should be done) concerning these recitations (in Azerbaijan)? For it has reached me that each party is claiming their recitation is better and this (attitude) might lead to disbelief.' We asked him, 'What do you suggest we do?'

He responded;

'I think we should consolidate the Muslims on one mushaf, so that there will not be any disagreements or disunity.' We said, 'Verily this idea of yours is an excellent idea.'

Uthman went to great lengths to produce the volume he had ordered. Although the Qur'an that Abu Bakr had ordered to be compiled existed with Hafsah, Uthman initially chose not to use this. Instead he instructed that an independent copy be produced from the numerous reliable sources that he had available to him, namely the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The only written material that was accepted from the companions for inclusion was if it had been transcribed in the presence of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself and then double checked by him.

Similarly, only those companions who had memorised the Qur'an directly from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ were used to double check the written material. All of the written and memorised material was then verified against each other before being transcribed into a master copy. This unique process of inclusion and verification led to the production of an accurate Qur'an volume that included the entire Qur'an that had been revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Only when this task had been completed did Uthman ibn Affan have this copy checked against the first copy held by Hafsah.

Uthman went to these considerable lengths to accomplish this task, despite the fact that an official master reference copy existed from the time of Abu Bakr. The reason for this was to show that the Qur'an being prepared under orders from Uthman and the one from the time of Abu Bakr were exactly the same. In addition both copies were the same as the numerous fragments held by the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This process of checking and cross referencing against many sources ensured the authenticity of the Qur'an as a written document as well as perfectly matching with memorised sources. Thus, Uthman ibn Affan not only helped to preserve the Qur'an in its entirety but he also ensured that the Qur'an was universally accepted without question.
An example of a large South East Asian Qur'an, most likely Javanese, with traditional geometric design work in dark red ink, late 18th to early 19th century. Typical of most Qur'ans from this region, the body text in written in black ink with the surrounding decoration in red. Written in Jawi script on machine made paper, this Qur'an has undergone some damage. The covers have been lost and the opening surah is missing. The image shows the start of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2).

Another important point to note is that Uthman was able to draw upon a far larger pool of companions of Prophet Muhammad in making his reference volume compared to when the original master reference copy had been produced. Many companions had been away on expeditions during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and thus had been unable to participate in the collection of the first master reference copy made during his rule. The fact that the whole process of Uthman's compilation is so well documented in Islamic literature helps to remove any misconceptions that may surround the episode. For instance Ibn Sirin (died 732 CE) reports that:

“When Uthman decided to collect the Qur'an, he assembled a committee of twelve companions from both the Quraysh and the Ansar. Among them were Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Zayd ibn Thabit.”

Various sources reveal the names of the committee of twelve as;


Uthman appointed these twelve to manage the monumental task of collecting and tabulating all of the verses written onto parchment in the presence of Prophet Muhammad. Once the task of assembling an independent copy had been completed, Uthman ordered this independently produced Qur'an to be checked against the first official master reference copy produced during the reign of Abu Bakr. Zayd ibn Thabit says, “...Uthman then sent a message to Hafsah, asking to borrow the original manuscript which had been entrusted to her; she gave it to him only after he vowed to return it. In comparing these two, I found no discrepancies. So I gave it back to Uthman and he, with an elated spirit, ordered the people to make duplicate copies of the Mushaf.”

It is interesting to note the active role women played in early Islamic society. Fourteen hundred years ago women in other parts of the world were rarely entrusted with any religious material, however in the Islamic world women played an active role in religion. In this case we see the original master reference copy of the Qur'an was safeguarded by one of the wives of Prophet Muhammad.

With an authenticated copy produced from independent sources and checked against the first copy, Uthman then had this copy proof read again in the presence of many companions. Uthman then asked the scribes to write down the Qur'an, indicating that Uthman wanted the people to make their own copies for their own personal use from his master reference volume. This also eliminated the possibility of accusations that the master copy could have been distorted whilst in the custody of a single person.

Caliph Uthman ibn Affan then took another important decision which the companions accepted. He declared that as official copies of the Qur'an had been prepared and sent out and people had also made their own copies as well, then the need for fragments of the Qur'an held by numerous companions no longer existed. So he ordered the burning of all other loose manuscripts and fragments. As many companions of Prophet Muhammad were constantly on expeditions and absent when certain verses were revealed their personal fragments may have been incomplete. So an additional benefit as a result of this action was that it ensured against the possibility of people copying these incomplete personal fragments. Only the complete manuscript that had been agreed upon by all of the companions was to be copied.

Mu'asab ibn Sa'd asserts that the people were pleased with Uthman's decision; at the very least no one voiced any objection. Ali ibn Abi Talib said: "By Allah, he did what he did with these fragments in the presence of us all (i.e. and none of us objected)."
A large 19th century Qur'an from South East Asia written using an elegant local variant of naskh by an accomplished scribe. There are thirteen lines of text per page written within a framework of black and red ruled lines. The simply drawn red, yellow and green marginal devices act as section markers. The faint horizontal lines running through the paper that are just visible in the detailed view on the opposite page, reveals that the paper is machine made, most likely imported from Europe. The pages show the last part of Surah an-Nahl (The Bee, 16) and the start of Surah Bani Israeel (al-Israa) (The Children of Israel, 17).

Uthman then sent a number of official copies to various parts of the Muslim world so they could be used as master references. It is believed that eight copies were made, six were sent out, one was kept in Madinah and Uthman kept a copy for himself. Copies are believed to have been sent to Kufa, Basra, Syria, Makkah, Yemen and Bahrain. In addition Uthman sent a Qari (teacher) with each copy to instruct people how to recite the Qur'an properly. Zayd ibn Thabit was asked to remain and teach in Madinah, but other companions were sent to different places; 'Abdullah ibn as-Sa'ib was sent to Makkah, Al-Mughira ibn Shihab was sent to Syria, Amir ibn Abd Qais was dispatched to Basra and Abu Abdur-Rahman as-Sulami was sent to Kufa.34

Each of these teachers recited to the people of his respective city in the manner that he had learnt it through authenticated multiple channels going back to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Sending a Qur'anic scholar with every Qur'an, therefore, ensured that proper recitation and teaching was dependant on the learning through direct contact with teachers who could trace their source of knowledge directly back to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Thus, Uthman ensured the official copies of the Qur'an existed as a standard around the Muslim world, and from this many thousands upon thousands of public and private copies of the Qur'an were produced and continue to be produced to this present day. In summary, Uthman ensured that the Qur'an was preserved in the same state as it was Divinely revealed. To this day all written copies are based upon the standard official copy of the Qur'an which Uthman had ordered be produced. Uthman also ensured that the manner of recitation was based upon teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; thus ensuring nothing was lost or altered in pronunciation. The Divine Protection of Allah, the wisdom of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the decisions by Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with them) as well as all of the other companions ensured that the Qur'an available today is the same Qur'an which was Divinely revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ over 1,400 years ago. As a sign of Allah's promise to preserve the Qur'an, the fact that the Qur'an has survived intact into the modern technological age has meant that its future preservation is now even more secure than at any other time in Islamic history.
Summary of the Compilation and Preservation of the Qur'an from 610 to 656 CE.

Allah, The Most High

Angel Jibreel

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ 610-632 CE

Caliph Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq 632-634 CE

The companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught the Qur'an to the next generation.

Many Companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ learnt and memorised the Qur'an directly from him during his lifetime.

Zayd ibn Thabit was instructed by Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq and Umar ibn al-Khattab to compile a master copy of the Qur'an.

Zayd ibn Thabit carried out the task with great diligence. He requested every companion of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to bring him their written verses of the Qur'an. He only accepted written material that had been dictated by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself.

In addition he carried out a thorough checking process on the written material. Each verse had to be verified by at least two of the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who had memorised the Qur'an directly from the Blessed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself.

The first complete master reference copy of the Qur'an was compiled within two years of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passing away. It was held by Umar ibn al-Khattab after Abu Bakr passed away. After Umar was martyred in the year 644 CE the master Qur'an was kept by his daughter Hafsa. It was destroyed after Hafsa passed away.

By the time Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away in 632 CE the complete Qur'an had been written down on various materials such as leather, palm leaf, bone and stone. These Qur'anic fragments were used to prepare a complete master copy of the Qur'an during the Caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan.

The complete Qur'an was written down by numerous companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ during his lifetime in Makkah and Madinah. Some of the scribes of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Madinah were:

- Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq
- Uthman ibn Affan
- Umar ibn al-Khattab
- Ali ibn Abu Talib
- Abu Ayyub al-Ansari
- Ubayy ibn Ka'b
- Zayd ibn Thabit
- Aban ibn Sa'id
- Abu Umama
- Abu Hudhaifa
- Abu Sufyan
- Abu Salama
- Abu Abbas

(May Allah be pleased with them all.)

Whenever Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received revelation of the Qur'an one of the scribes would be called to write the verses down. The Prophet ﷺ would then check that the verses had been written correctly by asking the scribe to recite the verses back to him.

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The companions of the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in turn taught the Qur'an to the next generation. In this way the Qur'an has been passed through the generations through teaching and memorisation.

By the time Uthman ibn Affan became Caliph, the Islamic world had spread to encompass a vast region. In order to prevent disputes arising over the correct pronunciation of the Qur'an, he ordered that an official reference Qur'an should be written and sent to the main areas of the Muslim world. For this task he appointed a committee of 12 companions.


(May Allah be pleased with them all.)

Uthman instructed the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to make their own personal copies of the Qur'an. Uthman then ordered that all loose fragments of the Qur'an to be burnt, after consulting with the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Uthman’s master reference Qur’an was completed and was proof read in front of many companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Uthman’s Qur’an was compared to the first manuscript held by Hafsah and no discrepancies were found.

Qur'anic fragments were used to prepare the Qur'an volume ordered by Caliph Uthman.

Caliph Uthman ibn Affan 644-656 CE

Uthman ibn Affan instructed the scribes in Madinah to make eight official copies of the Qur'an. These copies were then sent to various parts of the Islamic world. Uthman also dispatched a Qari (reciter) along with each copy to teach people how to recite the Qur'an correctly. Copies were sent to: Kufa, Basra, Syria, Makkah, Yemen and Bahrain. The two remaining copies were kept in Madinah, one of these was for the Caliph himself.

From the Qur'an teachers Zayd ibn Thabit is known to have stayed in Madinah. Abdullah ibn as-Sa'ib was sent to Makkah. Al-Mughira ibn Shihab was sent to Syria. Amir ibn Abd Qais was sent to Basra. Abu Abdur-Rahman as-Sulami went to Kufa. (May Allah be pleased with them all.)

All present day copies of the Qur'an are based on this early compilation and remain unchanged from their original form as revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The result today is that there exists an unbroken chain of oral transmission leading directly back to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
Decorative opening pages from a 30 volume Chinese Qur’an written in classical sini script, late 17th century or possibly early 18th century CE. Apart from the last two words, the whole of verse 60 from Surah an-Naml (The Ants, 27) is written across both pages: “Is not He (better than your gods) Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water (rain) from the sky, whereby We cause to grow wonderful gardens full of beauty and delight? It is not in your ability to cause the growth of their trees. Is there any illah (god) with Allah? Nay, but they are a people who ascribe equals (to Him)!”

There are three lines of large sini style text per page set within a plain panel surrounded by a framework of dark green and gold geometric designs. The shamsa roundels in the margins are for decorative purposes only.
Superbly illustrated centre pages with the start of Surah Bani Israel (The Children of Israel, 17) from a 17th century Qur'an written in naskh script from the Indian subcontinent with some influence from Persia. There are seven lines of text per page within a ruled central panel surrounded by a sea of multi-coloured flowers. This particular Qur'an lacks the traditional cloud-motif around the body text. The fine artwork and symmetry present the reader with a dramatic display. The text is written on polished paper and is well bound with a fine hard leather cover.
A 16th century section (12th juz') of the Qur'an written in bihari script from India. Each page contains 13 lines of text written in black ink. Simple circular patterns mark the end of each verse. The pages are open on the end part of Surah Hud (11) and the start of Surah Yusuf (Joseph, 12). The elongated letter 'ayn drawn in the left margin marks the end of the surah's first part.
A similar 16th-century Qur‘an volume (28th juz') to the one shown on the previous page; again hand written in bihari script from India. Each page contains 13 lines of text written in black ink. Simple red shapes mark the end individual verses. This section has some damage in the form of bore holes caused by insects. The pages are open on the start of Surah al-Jumu‘ah (Friday, 62).
لا أرى إلا ما أراه تسمى وما أمى ما ينتظرون لي وسر
نبت على كل من تُقاومهم السُهم، وفَرْأة وراءه ومن أتراك
التي تقيع واتراك أرسله لك مرتين، كفتي، أيضًا إلى ما
أنت عنه أثور جامعًا، زهرة المحمد الذي تمثل النور في
فيروز، رزق حمّام، أحق مع أمّ أهلك بالقول، فأدّم
عليك يا أُثماني برضي، أثور قام بين ما زوّجك
الإله، يا أُثماني أمّي، هبة أبت من قبلك، لصالح رئاول
لتمثل النين ولا تستغيثي، نبكي، مرّت بئس لى ولا
فكر في شيء من ترضي، فستعجلون فرع في الأنام
الشوارع، وهو ليست يظلم

Sura al-Anbiya, Verse 21
Two examples of typical Indonesian style opening pages from Qur'an's dated to around the late 18th to early 19th century. The opening text on the top Qur'an is set within a frame panel surrounded by dense foliate decoration. The second example is brightly coloured with orange and blue geometric shapes.
Further Indonesian Qur’ans written in a local variation of naskh script, dated to the early 19th century. The top manuscript has fifteen lines of text per page set within red and black ruled lines. Saffron coloured markers have been used to differentiate individual verses. The start of Surah al-Ankaboot (The Spider, 29) and the last few verses of Surah al-Qasas (The Narration, 28). The text of the lower example is set within a traditional geometric design with central hasp shapes projecting into the margins.
الحمد لله وحده لا شريك له ونبا وCre: مبسط

إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر ونبا وCre: مبسط

إننا نحن نزلنا الذكر ونبا وCre: مبسط

إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر ونبا وCre: مبسط
The Qur'an Through the Ages

Allah's promise to preserve the Qur'an is supported by an enormous wealth of historical evidence in the form of Qur'an manuscripts that date back to the very first century of Islam. A book that has resisted any alterations for over fourteen centuries is itself sufficient proof of its Divine origin. Qur'anic manuscripts form one of the largest groups of historical manuscripts in the world, with numerous high quality examples surviving to this present day.

Islamic history spans a vast area of the world stretching over three continents. From the Mamluks of Egypt and Mughals of India to the Sultans of Damascus and Muslim Spain along with the countless scribes, calligraphers, lay people and the numerous great scholars of the past, they have all played their part in helping to preserve the Qur'an. Regardless of the era or the region in which Qur'anic manuscripts have been copied over the last 1400 years, or the style of writing used, it is well established that no two copies differ in their content. In fact the original manuscripts compiled by Uthman ibn Affan are still in existence today with copies held in the Topkapi Saray museum in Istanbul and in Tashkent.

Two of the main hallmarks of Islamic civilisation over the centuries have been the contribution to the development of mathematics and science, and in the arts with the extensive use of calligraphy. Beautifully written verses of the Qur'an have adorned the interior and exterior walls of mosques and minarets for centuries.

From the 7th century, writing in Arabic script became the main theme of Islamic visual culture as Islam spread to encompass a vast area of the globe. The origins of written Arabic script, however, can be traced to at least as far back as the 3rd century CE; there are numerous examples of ancient rocks in Arabia engraved with Arabic writing. 1

As discussed previously, by the time Uthman ibn Affan became the third Caliph of Islam, a definitive reference copy of the Qur'an was compiled, written in large consonant heavy kufic script from the original writings of the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Eight copies of the scripture were written in total and then sent to all provincial parts of the Islamic world to ensure that all copies of the Qur'an were exact. The original reference copy of the Qur'an, upon which all subsequent copies are based, was retained in Madinah. It remained in Madinah until it was taken to Istanbul in the early part of the twentieth century. The results of Uthman's endeavours are clear in at least two ways. Firstly, every Muslim province gained access to the Qur'an and secondly, this ensured that the skeletal text would not be altered in any way.

Development of writing styles

During the first and second centuries of Islam (7 - 8th century CE) sloping and angular writing styles had gained prominence. Hijazi script is usually considered to be one of the earliest types of Arabic writing known. Sometimes referred to as ma'il, or leaning script, the main characteristic of hijazi is its slight slant to the right. One of the oldest known extant manuscripts of the Qur'an compiled during the 8th century (circa. 150 AH) is written in this rare script. Known as the Ma'il Qur'an (see the image on the following page) this codex contains over two thirds of the Qur'anic text.

Opposite

The image shows the development of Qur'anic reading aids through the ages. Although the script type used today may have developed over time to make the Qur'an easier to read, the actual Arabic words have remained the same. All four fragments are the same verse, "Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian." Surah al-Hijr (The Rocky Tract) 15:9. The top most fragment from the Qur'an is from the early Islamic period and lacks skeletal dots and vowel markings. The second, third and fourth lines show the addition of reading aids to help correct pronunciation. The reading aids have no impact on the meaning of the words, which have remained the same for over 14 centuries. The image has been adapted from the cover of Professor Muhammad al-Azami's monumental work; The History of The Qur'anic Text. UK Islamic Academy, 2003.
A vellum page from a Ma‘il Qur’an written in ma‘il (or hijazi) script originating from the Hijaz region of Arabia and dated to around the 8th century CE (1st/2nd century AH). This type of script was popular in the Arabian peninsula at the time of revelation of the Qur’an. The text is consonant heavy and written in a continuous format without separation between verses. There are no diacritical marks or letter dots. Every tenth verse is marked by a red hollow circle surrounded by dots. Given the remarkable age of the manuscript it is enlightening to see that the text of the Qur’an has not changed at all. The page starts with verse 183 from Surah ash-Shu‘araa (The Poets, 26) to the end of 209. Location: British Library, London.
The Mu'āil Qur'an is written on vellum in single column format using large letters devoid of diacritical marks (tashkeel) and dots (nuqāt). There are circular marks to indicate the endings of the verses. Another characteristic of these early Qur'anic manuscripts was that at the end of a line, a single word was often broken into parts, with half of the word starting on the next line.

The other main group of scripts in use during the early Islamic period were the geometric scripts known as kufic. Due to its strikingly angular and very stylized form, kufic was also used extensively in architectural decoration either on stone or mosaic. We also know that Caliph Uthman ibn Affan's original manuscripts were written in this type of style and would have lacked skeletal dots or any other markings. The Qur'an held in Tashkent (see the following pages) is thought to be one of the original Uthmanic copies as it is devoid of any vowel markings or verse separators. Similarly, the Qur'anic manuscript held in the Topkapi Palace museum in Istanbul (see pages 271 & 273) is most likely one of Uthman's originals, possibly even Uthman's personal copy that stayed in Madinah for centuries and then found its way to Istanbul around 100 years ago. Some historians regard this Qur'an as a copy of Uthman's original made a few decades later due to the presence of a limited dotting scheme and some verse markers; although these could have been added to the manuscript at a later date. However, Caliph Uthman ibn Affan himself was most likely familiar with these devices as Malik ibn Abi Amar al-Abashi had included surah and verse separators in his own personal copy of the Qur'an during preparation of the official Uthmanic copies.  

Caliph Uthman's decision to minimise written vowels and avoid the use of verse separators and dots was most probably meant as a deterrent to those who would try to memorise the Qur'an by themselves without proper guidance. Therefore, it is quite plausible that the Qur'anic manuscript held at the Topkapi museum in Istanbul is indeed Uthman's personal copy, even though it does contain a limited marking scheme. Regardless of the above, the manuscript is at the very least a complete 7th century copy of one of the original Uthmanic Qur'ans, upon which all subsequent Qur'ans are based.

**Development of Qur'anic reading aids**

As Islam spread and grew beyond the Arabian peninsula, it became apparent that in order to aid correct pronunciation of the Qur'an, a system of reading aids would have to be developed. In 688 CE Abu al-Aswad ad-Du'ali introduced a system of diacritical markings, known as tashkeel in Arabic, to indicate short vowels. Ad-Du'ali introduced four markings that took the form of red coloured dots above or below letters to differentiate them from skeletal dots that were usually written in black ink. The manuscript shown above is a very characteristic example of the Ad-Du'ali system. In this manuscript the base text of the Qur'an is easily discernable from the additional markings. The tashkeel are in red and the nuqat dots are written in a fine pen in black ink. A single dot placed after, on or below the letter represented a damma, fatha or kasra, whereas two dots indicated double vowels, i.e. damma tanween, fatha tanween, or kasra tanween.
Copy of the consonant heavy Qur'an commissioned by Caliph Uthman ibn Affan. The text is devoid of dots and diacritical markings and is written in a large kufic type script without any separation between verses. One of the eight copies of the Qur'an made by Caliph Uthman originally sent to Damascus was carried away as a war trophy to Samarkand by Timur Lenk (1336-1405). In 1868 the Russians occupied the city and the copy was transferred to St Petersburg. After the downfall of the Czarist regime, a Muslim General, Ali Akbar Topchibashi, sent a soldier to the Imperial Palace to retrieve the Qur'an and despatched it to Tashkent, where it has remained to this day.

In 1905, Czar Nicholas II published about 50 copies of a facsimile edition in St Petersburg. The rare copy shown in the image above was acquired by Exhibition Islam and is based on a microfilm copy of one of the St Petersburg prints. Although numerous pages have been lost over the centuries from the original copy held in Tashkent, it is inspiring to see that the facsimile copy clearly shows that the original Qur'anic text is identical to the Qur'an in circulation today. The page on the right hand side starts part of the way through verse 29 from Surah al-A'raf ('The Heights, 7') on the word wadh u'hoo. The text continues through to verse 32 on the left hand page ending on the words yaa-mal qiyamaa.
Right
A 9th century CE Qur'an page in a compact western kufic script from North Africa. Written on vellum using brown ink with red, yellow and green diacritics for help with recitation. This manuscript provides a good example of how kufic script began to develop a more rounded appearance; kufic scripts were eventually superceded by more rounded cursive styles from the late 10th century onwards. The page also highlights the widespread use of reading aids to help with correct pronunciation. These were adopted as the result of the spread of Islam outside of the Arabian peninsula. The page starts with the word ragadan from the middle of verse 35 and ends in the middle of verse 41 on ma-a-kum wa lāa from surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2).

Verse endings are marked by a pyramid of three gold dots. The larger circular design indicates the tenth verse. Furthermore, by this time words also tended to be written together and were no longer split over two lines. Another point of interest is the fact that calligraphers would vary the amount of markings depending on the reading abilities of the person for whom the manuscript was being prepared.

Around a century later the marking scheme introduced by Ad-Du'ali was further developed by Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Fraheedi, who replaced the coloured dots with shapes resembling the different symbols that we are familiar with today. With the passage of time, as Islam spread to non-Arab parts of the world, the inclusion of vowel markings, dotting schemes, surah and verse separators became the norm to aid correct pronunciation of the Qur'an. It must be stressed that these additions bore no effect on the pronunciation of words or the meaning of verses.

The 10th century onwards saw a number of changes to Qur'an formats taking place in terms of size, decoration and materials used, together with the development of more rounded or cursive styles of writing alongside hijazi and kufic. Other developments included the widespread use of chapter headings, verse separators, illumination and marginal ornaments to indicate prostration, or various subdivisions of the Qur'an such as a manzil (division into 7 equal parts) or juz' (division into 30 equal parts). Many of these developments were due to the greater use of paper rather than vellum, which was costly. In fact it was the mass production and use of paper throughout the Islamic world that helped to not only preserve the Qur'an, but also drove literacy in general and made possible the Golden Age of Islamic Science that lasted well into the 16th century. Even as early as the 10th century, Muslim centres of learning such as Cordoba in Spain and Baghdad in Iraq boasted hundreds of libraries, each containing thousands of volumes. The extent and advancement of Islamic scientific achievements becomes self evident as history shows that there were probably more books in these two cities alone than the whole of Western Europe put together.
As Islam spread beyond the Middle East, the cursive styles of writing began to supersede the older hijazi and kufic scripts by the late 10th century CE. Naskh script developed by Ibn Muqlah (886-940 CE) became one of the most popular scripts for writing Qur'an manuscripts mainly due to its legibility. By the middle of the 11th century the older script styles were mainly being employed for decorative purposes and decoration of surah headers and for marginal devices throughout most of the Islamic world.

The basic naskh style of script was developed further into a number of other forms; each with their own regional characteristic. The main types were thuluth, muhaqqaq, tawqi, rayhani and riqa. The scripts of North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Muslim Spain (maghribi, sudani, sahrawi and andalus) differed quite notably in their character, especially in their use of multiple colours and their deep and curved loops below the baseline. In India, during the Mughal period, a distinctive script known as bihari was developed, whereas in China, a variant known as sini script was being used. From these, many other variants have developed over the centuries such as, nast’aliq, shikaste, diwani, ta’liq, ijaze and jawi.

The following section of the book shows how the words of the Qur'an have not changed over time regardless of the century in which the manuscripts were written. We have endeavoured to show example manuscripts, some only consisting of a leaf or a fragment and others a complete Qur'an, from every century of Islam to the present day. A corresponding page from a standard modern printed Qur'an has been given alongside each manuscript for the purposes of comparison. Although some of the historical manuscripts are written in the warsh mode of recitation, the modern printed copy is hafs throughout. A translation of the meaning has also been provided for the relevant verses, although space has not allowed for complete pages to be translated in every case. Furthermore, there are a number of maps in between the sections that depict the spread of Islam as well as showing the origins of some of the manuscripts.

Right
Qur'ân leaf written in western kufic script written on vellum using brown ink with red, yellow and green diacritics for help with recitation, 10th Century CE North Africa. Verses 30-35 of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) are shown.

Opposite page
The Arabic text for "In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful" taken from twenty different Qur'ans showing examples of different script styles over the centuries. Note that the 14th century Mamluk ornamental kufic is a surah header panel from Surah an-Naas (Mankind, 114).
The spread of Islam

Islamic World by 632 CE. This was the year that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away.
7th Century CE
They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: "That is an Adha (a harmful thing for a husband to have a sexual intercourse with his wife while she is having her menses), therefore, keep away from women during menses and go not into them till they are purified (from menses and have taken a bath)."

And when they have purified themselves, then go into them as Allah has ordained for you. Truly, Allah loves those who turn to Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves.

Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth, when or how you will, and send (good deeds, or ask Allah to bestow upon you pious offspring) for your own selves beforehand. And fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give good tidings to the believers (O Muhammad ﷺ).

And make not Allah's (Name) an excuse in your oaths against your doing good and acting piously, and making peace among mankind. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower (i.e. do not swear much and if you have sworn against doing something good then give an expiation for the oath and do good).

Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 222-224.
A page from an original reference Qur'an compiled by Uthman ibn Affan.
(Allah said to Prophet Job): "Strike the ground with your foot. This is (a spring of) water to wash in, cool and a (refreshing) drink. And We gave him (back) his family, and along with them the like thereof, as a Mercy from Us, and a Reminder for those who understand.

And take in your hand a bundle of thin grass and strike therewith (your wife), and break not your oath. Truly, We found him patient. How excellent a slave! Verily, he was ever oft-returning in repentance (to Us)!

And remember Our slaves, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (all) owners of strength (in worshipping Us) and (also) of religious understanding. Verily, We did choose them by granting them the remembrance of the Home (in the Hereafter)

And they are with Us, verily, of the chosen and the best! And remember Ishmael, Elisha, and Isaiah, all are among the best. This is a Reminder. And verily, for the pious is a good final return (Paradise). - 'Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens), whose doors will be opened for them."

Surah Saad 38: 42-50.
Page from an original reference Qur'an compiled by Uthman ibn Affan.
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): "He is Allah, (the) One. Allah-us-Samad [Allah – the Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need, (He neither eats nor drinks)]. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none coequal or comparable to Him."

Surah al-Ikhlas (The Purity) 112.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Say: "I seek refuge with (Allah), the Lord of the daybreak, From the evil of what He has created, And from the evil of the darkening (night) as it comes with its darkness; (or the moon as it sets or goes away), And from the evil of those who practise witchcraft when they blow in the knots, And from the evil of the envier when he envies."

Surah al-Falaq (The Daybreak) 113.
A 1300 year old Qur’anic manuscript written in hybrid kufic-hijazi script on leather parchment.
**Description:** Qur'an leaf in a hybrid *kufic-hijazi* script written on vellum. The page is an unusually large and well preserved example of some of the earliest Arabic writing. The page is slightly wrinkled due to the affects of damp.

**Reference:** Surah's al-Kafiroon, 109 (from verse 3), an-Nasr, 110 and al-Masad, 111.

**Islamic period:** 1st century AH.

**Origin:** Hijaz region, Arabia.

**Location:** Exhibition Islam Collection.

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**In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.**

Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): "O al-Kafirun (disbelievers in Allah, in His Oneness, in His Angels, in His Books, in His Messengers, in the Day of Resurrection, and in Al-Qadar)!

I worship not that which you worship,

Nor will you worship that which I worship.

And I shall not worship that which you are worshipping,

Nor will you worship that which I worship.

To you be your religion, and to me my religion

(Islamic Monotheism)."

**Surah al-Kafiroon (The Disbelievers) 109.**
A 1300 year old Qur'anic manuscript written in hybrid kufic-hijazi script on leather parchment.
8th Century CE
And it is not the Shayateen (devils) who have brought it (this Qur'an) down. Neither would it suit them nor can they (produce it). Verily, they have been removed far from hearing it.

So, invoke not with Allah another god lest you should be among those who receive punishment. And warn your tribe (O Muhammad ﷺ) of near kindred.

And be kind and humble to the believers who follow you. Then if they disobey you, say: "I am innocent of what you do."

And put your trust in the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful, Who sees you (O Muhammad ﷺ) when you stand up (alone at night for Tahajjud prayers).

And your movements among those who fall prostrate (to Allah in the five compulsory congregational prayers). Verily, He, only He, is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.

Surah as-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 210-220.
A page from one of the oldest Qur'an manuscripts penned on vellum in a slanted hijazi script also known as ma'il.
And O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise, and eat thereof as you both wish, but approach not this tree otherwise you both will be of the Zalimun (unjust and wrong doers).

Then Shaitan (Satan) whispered suggestions to them both in order to uncover that which was hidden from them of their private parts (before); he said: "Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you should become angels or become of the immortals."

And he [Shaitan (Satan)] swore by Allah to them both (saying): "Verily, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both."

So he misled them with deception. Then when they tasted of the tree, that which was hidden from them of their shame (private parts) became manifest to them and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise (in order to cover their shame). And their Lord called out to them (saying): "Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you: verily, Shaitan (Satan) is an open enemy to you?"

Surah al-A'raf (The Heavens) 7: 19-22.
Qur'anic leaf written in a slanted *hijazi* script on vellum.
(He is Allah) Owner of High Ranks and Degrees, the Owner of the Throne. He sends the Revelation by His Command to any of His slaves He wills, that he (the person who receives Revelation) may warn (men) of the Day of Mutual Meeting (i.e. the Day of Resurrection).

The Day when they will (all) come out, nothing of them will be hidden from Allah. Whose is the kingdom this Day? (Allah Himself will reply to His Question;) It is Allah's, – the One, the Irresistible! This Day shall every person be recompensed for what he earned. This Day no injustice (shall be done to anybody). Truly, Allah is Swift in reckoning.

And warn them (O Muhammad ⲫ) of the Day that is drawing near (i.e. the Day of Resurrection), when the hearts will be choking the throats, and they can neither return them (hearts) to their chests nor can they throw them out. There will be no friend, nor an intercessor for the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers), who could be given heed to. Allah knows the fraud of the eyes, and all that the breasts conceal.

Surah Ghaafir (The Forgiver) 40: 15-19.
Qur’anic leaf written in a kufic script on vellum.
There was no other answer given by his people except that they said: "Drive out the family of Lot from your city. Verily, these are men who want to be clean and pure!" So, We saved him and his family, except his wife. We destined her to be of those who remained behind. And We rained down on them a hail of stones. So, evil was the rain of those who were warned. Say (O Muhammad): "All praise and thanks are Allah’s, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)! Is Allah better, or (all) that they ascribe as partners (to Him)?" (Of course, Allah is Better).

Is not He (better than your gods) Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water (rain) from the sky, whereby We cause to grow wonderful gardens full of beauty and delight? It is not in your ability to cause the growth of their trees. Is there any god with Allah? Nay, but they are a people who ascribe equals (to Him)! Is not He (better than your gods) Who has made the earth as a fixed abode, and has placed rivers in its midst, and has placed firm mountains therein, and has set a barrier between the two seas (of salt and sweet water)? Is there any god with Allah? Nay, but most of them know not!

Surah an-Naml (The Ants) 27: 56-61.
Folio from a Qur'an manuscript on parchment with 17 lines of kufic script in brown ink, no original letter-pointing, occasional later additions of letter-pointing in a grey ink and no vocalisation.
10th century CE (p. 305).
The Spread of Islam
- Islamic World by 632 CE. This was the year that Prophet Muhammad passed away.
- Islamic World by 661 CE, at the end of the period of the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam.
- Islamic World by 750 CE, at the end of the Ummayyad Caliphate.
9th Century CE
And if they had believed and guarded themselves from evil and kept their duty to Allah, far better would have been the reward from their Lord, if they but knew!

O you who believe! Say not (to the Messenger) Ra’ina but say Unzurna (make us understand) and listen. And for the disbelievers there is a painful torment.

Neither those who disbelieve among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) nor Al-Mushrikun (the idolaters, polytheists, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah, pagans) like that there should be sent down to you any good from your Lord. But Allah chooses for His Mercy whom He wills. And Allah is the Owner of Great Bounty.

Surah Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 103-105.
Over 1,000 years old, this Qur'an leaf is written in traditional sharp and angular *kufic* script on white vellum.
O Musa (Moses)! Verily, it is I, Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. "And throw down your stick!" But when he saw it moving as if it was a snake, he turned in flight, and did not look back. (It was said:) "O Musa (Moses)! Fear not; verily, the Messengers fear not in front of Me. Except him who has done wrong and afterwards has changed evil for good; then surely, I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

And put your hand into your bosom, it will come forth white without hurt. (These are) among the nine signs (you will take) to Pharaoh and his people. Verily, they are a people who are Fasiqun (rebellious, disobedient to Allah). But when Our verses (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) came to them, clear to see, they said: "This is a manifest magic."

And they denied them (those verses) wrongfully and arrogantly, though their own selves were convinced thereof [i.e. those (verses) are from Allah, and Musa (Moses) is the Messenger of Allah in truth, but they disliked to obey Musa (Moses), and hated to believe in his Message of Monotheism]. So, see what was the end of the Muhsidun (disbelievers, evildoers, liars and disobedient to Allah).

Surah an-Naml (The Ant) 27: 9-14.
This *kufic* leaf is from a famous manuscript written entirely in gold, known to have once been housed in Kairouan, Tunisia.
10th Century CE
Those whose lives the angels take while they are in a pious state (i.e. pure from all evil, and worshipping none but Allah Alone) saying (to them): “Salamun Alaikum (peace be unto you) enter you Paradise, because of that (the good) which you used to do (in the world).”

Do they (the disbelievers and polytheists) await but that the angels should come to them (to take away their souls (at death)), or there should come the command (i.e. the torment or the Day of Resurrection) of your Lord? Thus did those before them. And Allah wronged them not, but they used to wrong themselves. Then the evil results of their deeds overtook them, and that at which they used to mock, surrounded them.

And those who joined others in worship with Allah said: “If Allah had so willed, neither we nor our fathers would have worshipped aught but Him, nor would we have forbidden anything without (Command from) Him.” So did those before them.

Then! Are the Messengers charged with anything but to convey clearly the Message?

Surah an-Nahl (The Bee) 16: 32-35.
Qur'an leaves with black *eastern kufic* script written on thick hand made paper.
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Alif-Lam-Mim. The revelation of the Book (this Qur'an) in which there is no doubt, is from the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)! Or say they: “He (Muhammad ﷺ) has fabricated it?” Nay, it is the truth from your Lord, so that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you (O Muhammad ﷺ), in order that they may be guided.

Allah is He Who has created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them in six Days. Then He rose over (Istawa) the Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty). You (mankind) have none, besides Him, as a Wali (protector or helper) or an intercessor. Will you not then remember (or receive admonition)?

He manages and regulates (every) affair from the heavens to the earth; then it (affair) will go up to Him, in one Day, the space whereof is a thousand years of your reckoning (i.e. reckoning of our present world's time). That is He, the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen, the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful.

Surah as-Sajdah (The Prostration) 32: 1-6.
A page from a Qur’an written in eastern kufic script over 1000 years ago.
11th Century CE
The building which they built will never cease to be a cause of hypocrisy and doubt in their hearts unless their hearts are cut to pieces (i.e. till they die). And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

Verily, Allah has purchased of the believers their lives and their properties for (the price) that theirs shall be Paradise. They fight in Allah's Cause, so they kill (others) and are killed. It is a promise in truth which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded. That is the supreme success.

(The believers whose lives Allah has purchased are) those who turn to Allah in repentance (from polytheism and hypocrisy), who worship (Him), who praise (Him), who fast (or go out in Allah's Cause), who bow down (in prayer), who prostrate themselves (in prayer), who enjoin (on people) Al-Ma'ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism of all kinds and all that Islam has forbidden), and who observe the limits set by Allah (do all that Allah has ordained and abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which Allah has forbidden). And give glad tidings to the believers.

Surah at-Tawbah (The Repentance) 9: 110-112.
Abbasid Qur'an page written in naskh on paper dyed with a henna colour.
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

By the sun and its brightness.
By the moon as it follows it (the sun).
By the day as it shows up (the sun’s) brightness.
By the night as it conceals it (the sun).
By the heaven and Him Who built it.
By the earth and Him Who spread it.

By Nafs (Adam or a person or a soul), and Him Who perfected him in proportion;
Then He showed him what is wrong for him and what is right for him. Indeed he succeeds who purifies himself. And indeed he fails who corrupts himself (i.e. disobeys what Allah has ordered, by rejecting the true Faith of Islamic Monotheism or by following polytheism, or by doing every kind of evil wicked deed).

Surah ash-Shams (The Sun) 91: 1-10.
Qur'anic leaf written in eastern kufic script on thick henna-coloured paper.
12th Century CE
Pharaoh said: "O chiefs! I know not that you have an ilah (a god) other than me. So kindle for me (a fire), O Haman, to bake (bricks out of) clay, and set up for me a Sarhan (a lofty tower, or palace) in order that I may look at (or look for) the Ilah (God) of Moses; and verily, I think that he (Moses) is one of the liars."

And he and his hosts were arrogant in the land, without right, and they thought that they would never return to Us. So, We seized him and his hosts, and We threw them all into the sea (and drowned them). So, behold! (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) what the end of the Zalimun [wrongdoers, polytheists and those who disbelieved in the Oneness of their Lord (Allah)] was, and rejected the advice of His Messenger (Moses). And We made them leaders inviting to the Fire: and on the Day of Resurrection, they will not be helped. And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection, they will be among Al-Maqbuhun (those who are prevented from receiving Allah's Mercy or any good; despised or destroyed).

And indeed We gave Moses – after We had destroyed the generations of old – the Scripture (the Torah) as an enlightenment for mankind, and a guidance and a mercy, that they might remember.

Surah al-Qasas (The Narration) 28: 38-43.
Exceptionally rare Andalusian Qur'an fragment written in elegant maghribi script on vellum.
And set not up (or worship not) any other ilah (god) along with Allah [Glorified is He (Alone), Exalted above all that they associate as partners with Him]. Verily, I (Muhammad ﷺ) am a plain warner to you from Him.

Likewise, no Messenger came to those before them but they said: "A sorcerer or a madman!" Have they (the people of the past) transmitted this saying to these (Quraysh pagans)? Nay, they are themselves a people transgressing beyond bounds (in disbelief)!

So turn away (O Muhammad ﷺ) from them (Quraysh pagans), you are not blameworthy (as you have conveyed Allah's Message). And remind (by preaching the Qur'an, O Muhammad ﷺ), for verily, the reminding profits the believers.

And I (Allah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone). I seek not any provision from them (i.e. provision for themselves or for My creatures) nor do I ask that they should feed Me (i.e. feed themselves or My creatures).

Surah adh-Dhaariyaat (The Winds that Scatter) 51: 51-57.
Andalusian Qur’an fragment written in elegant maghribi script on white vellum.
The Spread of Islam

Islamic World by 632 CE. This was the year that Prophet Muhammad passed away.

Islamic World by 661 CE, at the end of the period of the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam.

Islamic World by 750 CE, at the end of the Ummayyad Caliphate.

Islamic World by 1500 CE.

Qur'an manuscripts written between the 13th and 16th centuries CE.
13th Century CE
Mankind was one community and Allah sent Prophets with glad tidings and warnings, and with them He sent down the Scripture in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed. And only those to whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it after clear proofs had come to them through hatred, one to another. Then Allah by His Leave guided those who believed to the truth of that wherein they differed. And Allah guides whom He wills to a Straight Path.

Or think you that you will enter Paradise without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They were afflicted with severe poverty and ailments and were so shaken that even the Messenger and those who believed along with him said, "When (will come) the Help of Allah?" Yes! Certainly, the Help of Allah is near!

They ask you (O Muhammad ﷺ) what they should spend. Say: "Whatever you spend of good must be for parents and kindred and orphans and Al-Masakin (the needy) and the wayfarer, and whatever you do of good deeds, truly, Allah knows it well.

A very large Qur'an page magnificently written in a bold muhaqqaq style of Arabic script.
And what you suffered (of the disaster) on the day (of the battle of Uhud when) the two armies met, was by the Leave of Allah, in order that He might test the believers. And that He might test the hypocrites, it was said to them: “Come, fight in the way of Allah or (at least) defend yourselves.” They said: “Had we known that fighting will take place, we would certainly have followed you.” They were that day, nearer to disbelief than to Faith, saying with their mouths what was not in their hearts. And Allah has full knowledge of what they conceal.

(They are) the ones who said about their killed brethren while they themselves sat (at home): “If only they had listened to us, they would not have been killed.” Say: “Avert death from your own selves, if you speak the truth.” Think not of those who are killed in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision.

They rejoice in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty and rejoice for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind (not yet martyred) that on them no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice in a grace and a bounty from Allah, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers.

Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan) 3: 166-171.
A very large Qur'anic leaf from the late Abbasid period written in muhaqqaq script.
14th Century CE
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Alif-Lam-Mim-Ra. These are the Verses of the Book (the Qur'an), and that which has been revealed to you (Muhammad ﷺ) from your Lord is the truth, but most men believe not.

Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then, He rose above (Istawâ) the Throne. He has subjected the sun and the moon (to continue going round), each running (its course) for a term appointed. He manages and regulates all affairs; He explains the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) in detail, that you may believe with certainty in the Meeting with your Lord.

And it is He Who spread out the earth, and placed therein firm mountains and rivers and of every kind of fruit He made Zawjain Ithnain (two in pairs - may mean two kinds or it may mean: of two varieties, e.g. black and white, sweet and sour, small and big). He brings the night as a cover over the day. Verily, in these things, there are Ayat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.) for a people who reflect.

Surah ar-Ra’d (The Thunder) 13: 1-3.
Complete Qur'an manuscript from the Middle East handwritten in naskh script.
O my Lord! They have indeed led astray many among mankind. But whoso follows me, he verily, is of me. And whoso disobeys me, still You are indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by Your Sacred House (the Kaaba at Makkah) in order, O our Lord, that they may perform As-Salat (the prayers). So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks.

O our Lord! Certainly, You know what we conceal and what we reveal. Nothing on the earth or in the heaven is hidden from Allah. All praise and thanks are Allah's, Who has given me in old age Ishmael and Isaac. Verily, my Lord is indeed the All-Hearer of invocations.

O my Lord! Make me one who performs As-Salat (the prayers), and (also) from my offspring, our Lord! And accept my invocation. Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and (all) the believers on the Day when the reckoning will be established.

Surah Ibraheem (Abraham) 14: 36-41.
Large Qur'an leaf written in mughaqqaq script with interlinear Persian translation written in nastâ'liq.
15th Century CE
And the Book (one's Record) will be placed (in the right hand for a believer in the Oneness of Allah, and in the left hand for a disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah), and you will see the Mujrimun (criminals, polytheists, sinners), fearful of that which is (recorded) therein. They will say: "Woe to us! What sort of Book is this that leaves neither a small thing nor a big thing, but has recorded it with numbers?" And they will find all that they did, placed before them, and your Lord treats no one with injustice.

And (remember) when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves to Adam." So they prostrated themselves except Iblis (Satan). He was one of the jinn; he disobeyed the Command of his Lord. Will you then take him (Iblis) and his offspring as protectors and helpers rather than Me while they are enemies to you? What an evil is the exchange for the Zalimun (polytheists, and wrong doers, etc).

I (Allah) made them (Iblis and his offspring) not to witness (nor took their help in) the creation of the heavens and the earth and not (even) their own creation, nor was I (Allah) to take the misleaders as helpers. And (remember) the Day He will say: "Call those whom you pretended were partners of Mine." Then they will cry to them, but they will not answer them, and We shall put Mauqib (a barrier) between them.

Surah al-Kahf (The Cave) 18: 49-52.
A fragile Qur'an page written in traditional bihari script on dark coloured hand made paper.
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the Alamīn (mankind, jinn and all that exists).

The Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)

You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).

Guide us to the Straight Way

The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray.

Surah al-Fatiha (The Opening) 1: 1-7.
Very small Qur'an written in traditional *maghribi* script.
16th Century CE
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

The revelation of this Book (the Qur’an) is from Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. Verily, We have sent down the Book to you (Muhammad ﷺ) in truth. So, worship Allah (Alone) by doing religious deeds sincerely for Allah’s sake only.

Surely, the religion (i.e. the worship and the obedience) is for Allah only. And those who take Auliya’ (protectors, helpers, lords, gods) besides Him (say): “We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah.” Verily, Allah will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Truly, Allah guides not him who is a liar, and a disbeliever.

Had Allah willed to take a son (offspring), He could have chosen whom He willed out of those whom He created. But Glorified is He! (He is above such things.) He is Allah, the One, the Irresistible. He has created the heavens and the earth with truth. He makes the night to go in the day and makes the day to go in the night. And He has set the sun and the moon (on a fixed course) for an appointed term. Verily, He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving.

Beautifully decorated Qur'an leaf written in the special script of Bihar.
Truly, those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah, and in His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ) and do righteous good deeds, for them will be an endless reward that will never stop (i.e. Paradise).

Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): “Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two Days? And you set up rivals (in worship) with Him? That is the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists).”

He placed therein (i.e. the earth) firm mountains from above it, and He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance (for its dwellers) in four Days equal for all those who ask (about its creation).

Then He rose over (Istawa) towards the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth: “Come both of you willingly or unwillingly.” They both said: “We come willingly.”

Then He completed and finished their creation (as) seven heavens in two Days and He made in each heaven its affair. And We adorned the nearest (lowest) heaven with lamps (stars) to be an adornment as well as to guard. Such is the Decree of the All-Mighty, the All-Knower.

Surah Fussilat (They are Explained in Detail) 41: 8-12.
Impressive example of a 400 year old Qur'an leaf written in bihari script.
Qur'an manuscripts written between the 17th and 20th centuries CE.

The Spread of Islam

- Islamic World by 632 CE. This was the year that Prophet Muhammad passed away.
- Islamic World by 661 CE, at the end of the period of the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam.
- Islamic World by 750 CE, at the end of the Ummayyad Caliphate.
- Islamic World by 1500 CE.
17th Century CE
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

"Alif-Lam-Ra. These are the Verses of the Clear Book (the Qur’an that makes clear the legal and illegal things, legal laws, a guidance and a blessing). Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur’an in order that you may understand.

We relate to you (Muhammad ﷺ) the best of stories through Our Revelations to you, of this Qur’an. And before this, you were among those who knew nothing about it (the Qur’an). (Remember) when Joseph said to his father: “O my father! Verily, I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon – I saw them prostrating themselves to me.” He (the father) said: “O my son! Relate not your vision to your brothers, lest they should arrange a plot against you. Verily, Shaitan (Satan) is to man a manifest enemy!

"Thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of dreams (and other things) and perfect His Favour on you and on the offspring of Ya’qub (Jacob), as He perfected it on your fathers, Ibraheem (Abraham) and Ishaq (Isaac) aforetime! Verily, your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

Surah Yusuf (Joseph) 12: 1-6.
A Qur’an written in black ink using naskh script on handmade paper.
Draws near for mankind their reckoning, while they turn away in heedlessness. Comes not to them an admonition from their Lord as a recent Revelation but they listen to it while they play. With their hearts occupied (with evil things). Those who do wrong, conceal their private counsels, (saying): "Is this (Muhammad ﷺ) more than a human being like you? Will you submit to magic while you see it?" He (Muhammad ﷺ) said: "My Lord knows (every) word (spoken) in the heavens and on earth. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower." Nay, they say: "These (Revelations of the Qur'an which are inspired to Muhammad ﷺ) are mixed up false dreams! Nay, he has invented it! Nay, he is a poet! Let him then bring us an Ayah (sign as a proof) like the ones that the former (Prophets) were sent (with)!

Not one of the towns (populations), of those which We destroyed, believed before them (though We sent them signs); will they then believe? And We sent not before you (O Muhammad ﷺ) but men to whom We revealed. So ask the people of the Reminder if you do not know.

*Surah al-Anbiyya (The Prophets) 21: 1-7.*
A large 300 year old Qur’an from the Dagestan region written using a local variant of the naskh script on thick paper.
18th Century CE
Verily, Abraham was an Ummah (a leader having all the good righteous qualities, or a nation), obedient to Allah, Hanif (i.e. to worship none but Allah), and he was not one of those who were Al-Mushrikun (disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah). (He was) thankful for His (Allah’s) Favours. He (Allah) chose him as an intimate friend) and guided him to a Straight Path (Islamic Monotheism).

And We gave him good in this world, and in the Hereafter he shall be of the righteous. Then, We have sent the Revelation to you (O Muhammad ﷺ): “Follow the religion of Abraham Hanif (Islamic Monotheism) and he was not of those who ascribe partners to Allah.

The Sabbath was only prescribed for those who differed concerning it, and verily, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection about that wherein they used to differ. (O Muhammad ﷺ) Invite (mankind) to the way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Revelation and the Qur’an) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He is the Best Knower of those who are guided.

Surah an-Nahl (The Bee) 16: 120-125.
A rare Qur'an leaf from Beijing in China handwritten in *sini* script on handmade paper.
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Say: "I seek refuge with (Allah), the Lord of the daybreak, From the evil of what He has created, And from the evil of the darkening (night) as it comes with its darkness; (or the moon as it sets or goes away), And from the evil of those who practise witchcraft when they blow in the knots, And from the evil of the envier when he envies."

Surah al-Falaq (The Daybreak) 113.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Say: "I seek refuge with (Allah) the Lord of mankind, The King of mankind – The Ilah (God) of mankind, From the evil of the whisperer (devil who whispers evil in the hearts of men) who withdraws (from his whispering in one's heart after one remembers Allah). Who whispers in the breasts of mankind. Of jinn and men."

Surah an-Naas (Mankind) 114.
Magnificently decorated portion of a Qur'an, handwritten in *naskh* script on polished paper.
19th Century CE
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Alif Lam Mim. This is the Book (the Qur'an), whereof there is no doubt, a guidance to those who are Al-Muttaqun [the pious believers of Islamic Monotheism who fear Allah much (abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden) and love Allah much].

Who believe in the unseen and perform As-Salat (the prayers), and spend out of what We have provided for them [i.e. give Zakat (obligatory charity), spend on themselves, their parents, their children, their wives, and also give charity to the poor and also in Allah's Cause].

And who believe in that (the Qur'an and the Sunnah) which has been sent down (revealed) to you (Muhammad) and in that which was sent down before you (the Torah and the Gospel) and they believe with certainty in the Hereafter. (Resurrection, recompense of their good and bad deeds, Paradise and Hell). They are on (true) guidance from their Lord, and they are the successful.

Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 1-5.
Incipit pages from a complete handwritten Qur'an originating from the Ottoman Empire.
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Alif-Lam-Ra. (This is) a Book which We have revealed to you (O Muhammad ﷺ) in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness (of disbelief and polytheism) into light (of belief in the Oneness of Allah and Islamic Monotheism) by their Lord’s Leave to the path of the All-Mighty, the Owner of all praise.

Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth! And woe to the disbelievers from a severe torment. Those who prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter, and hinder (men) from the path of Allah (i.e. Islam) and seek crookedness therein – they are far astray. And We sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them. Then Allah misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

And indeed We sent Musa (Moses) with Our Ayat (signs, proofs, and evidences) (saying): “Bring out your people from darkness into light, and remind them of the Blessings of Allah. Truly, therein are Ayat (evidences, proofs and signs) for every patient, thankful (person).”

Surah Ibraheem (Abraham) 14: 1-5.
A complete Qur’an written in a variant of naskh script from the Far East.
20th Century CE
In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Alif-Lam-Mim-Ra. These are the Verses of the Book (the Qur’an), and that which has been revealed to you (Muhammad ﷺ) from your Lord is the truth, but most men believe not. Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then, He rose above (Istawa) the Throne. He has set the sun and the moon (on their courses) for a term appointed. He manages and regulates all affairs; He explains the Ayat (verses, lessons, signs, revelations etc.) in detail, that you may believe with certainty in the Meeting with your Lord. And it is He Who spread out the earth, and placed therein firm mountains and rivers and of every kind of fruit He made things in pairs. He brings the night as a cover over the day. Verily, in these things, there are verses for a people who reflect.

And in the earth are neighbouring tracts, and gardens of vines, and green crops (fields), and date palms, growing into two or three from a single stem root, or otherwise (one stem root for every palm), watered with the same water; yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat. Verily, in these things there are Ayat (evidences, signs) for the people who understand.

Surah ar-Ra’id (The Thunder) 13: 1-4.
A printed Qur’an in the naskh style of Arabic script with interlinear Urdu translation in nastaliq.
And when it is said to them: "Come, so that the Messenger of Allah may ask forgiveness from Allah for you," they twist their heads, and you would see them turning away their faces in pride. It is equal to them whether you (Muhammad ﷺ) ask forgiveness or ask not forgiveness for them, Allah will never forgive them. Verily, Allah guides not the people who are the Fasiqun (rebellious, disobedient to Allah). They are the ones who say: "Spend not on those who are with Allah's Messenger, until they desert him." And to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites comprehend not.

They (hypocrites) say: "If we return to Al-Madinah, indeed the more honourable (Abdullah ibn Ubai ibn Salul, the chief of hypocrites at Al-Madinah) will expel therefrom the meaner (i.e. Allah's Messenger ﷺ)." But honour, power and glory belong to Allah, and to His Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ), and to the believers, but the hypocrites know not. O you who believe! Let not your properties or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. And whosoever does that, then they are the losers.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

A fine example of a Qur'an printed in Egypt with simple surah separators and open circles to mark verse endings.
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا تَبْنِئُهُ فِي هَٰذِهِ الْأَرْضِ

لَأَلْبَدَّ مِنْهُ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغُنْفَةِ

الصَّلَاةِ وَمَا رَزَقَاهُمُ الْمَلَأُ

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِأَنْبَاتِ النَّارِ وَرَمَيْتَهَا

وَآتَكَ بِالآخِرَةِ هَمْ نُوقِفُ آوَلَانِ

عَلَى هَٰذِهِ الْأَرْضِ إِنَّمَا هَٰذُ الْأَوَّلُ
The Qur'an in Print

Most of the Qur'ans in use today are printed copies based on the standard reference Qur'an commissioned by Caliph Uthman ibn Affan as described previously. There are many prints, large and small, elaborate or plain, expensive or inexpensive, yet they all retain the same Arabic text that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Some are bilingual forms with the Arabic on one side and a translation of the meaning into another language on the other. The Qur'an is also available in many different sizes. Most are of a reasonable book size, but there exist extremely large format Qur'ans usually for display purposes and very small Qur'ans that are often carried when travelling. The complete Qur'an has also been laser etched onto business card sized sheets of plastic.

As early as the 10th century the Qur'an was being printed from carved wooden blocks using one block per page. The pattern of writing and printing of the Qur'an was further standardised when the printing press with movable type was first used in Europe. The oldest surviving Qur'an using this movable type of press was printed in Venice between 1537 and 1538 CE. In 1694 CE, a Qur'an was printed by Abraham Hinkellmann in Hamburg, Germany, but it contained major printing errors on almost every page.

The first Qur'an printed by Muslims was in St Petersburg, Russia, in 1787 CE. These were followed by further editions from Kazan (1828 CE), Persia (1833 CE), Cairo (1890 CE), as well as Istanbul (1877 CE). An Egyptian standardised version of the Qur'anic text was first printed in Cairo in 1925 under supervision of scholars from al-Azhar University. Qur'ans were also being widely printed in Turkey that combined handwritten beautifully illuminated text with modern offset printing technology.

The Qur'an has also been printed in Arabic braille as well as a translation of the meaning in English Braille. A very well-known and common print of the Qur'an is the Madinah mushaf. This mushaf adopts the hafs qiraa, which is the most common mode of recitation in the Islamic World. Another mode of recitation is known as warsh. This style of recitation is common to much of Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Nigeria and Malaysia. Whereas, almost all of the printed copies of the Qur'an today adopt the naskh style of script, those that adopt the warsh qiraa are typically printed in maghribi style script, which can be difficult to read for the untrained eye. For example, the letter qaf is usually written with two dots above it, however in maghribi script there is only one dot, whereas the letter faa has one dot below it rather than above as in the naskh script. The other less common modes are Qaloon (Libya, Tunisia and parts of Qatar), ad-Doree (parts of Sudan and West Africa) and Ibn'Amir (parts of Yemen). A full explanation of the different modes of Qur'anic recitation can be found in 'An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan'.

A final point to note here is that although over the centuries Muslims have tended to beautify and highly decorate Qur'anic manuscripts (and mosques), this was not necessarily a practice that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ encouraged. On the contrary there is even a saying of his that seems to discourage this;

"When you decorate your mosques, and beautify your mushafs, then destruction will be upon you!"
Above
Qur'an sections (juz') from a late 19th century 30 volume Qur'an printed in the Middle East. The start of Surah an-Noor ('The Light', 24) is shown on the right hand page.

Opposite
Opening pages from an Ottoman Qur'an printed during the early part of the 20th century.
Early 20th century Ottoman Qur’ans extensively decorated in gold colour. Each page is numbered and is set within a multi-lined border. Surah headers are within a traditional floral design and small floral devices act as verse numbers. Some of the pages also have marginal devices. The top image has the end of Surah al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage, 22) and the start of Surah al-Muminoon (The Believers, 23). The lower image shows Surahs al-‘Asr (The Time, 103), al-Humazah (The Slanderer, 104), al-Feel (The Elephant, 105), Quraysh (106), al-Maa’oon (The Small Kindnesses, 107), al-Kawthar (A River in Paradise, 108) and the start of Surah al-Kaafirun (The Disbelievers, 109). The image on the opposite page shows the start of Surah al-‘Alaq (The Clot, 96).
Printed Qur'an from the 1930's with pages open on Surah's al-Isra (The Night Journey, 17) and al-Kahf (The Cave, 18). Mass printing of Qur'ans only really started after the 1850's, first in Egypt and then in Turkey. The verses are numbered in this Qur'an and there is a marginal device in the upper left hand margin, functionally placed to inform the reader to prostrate during recitation.
( pitched )

"أَنْ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَارُوا أَنْ هُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَٰلِكَ "
An example of an early 20th century Qur'an printed in the Ottoman empire. The pages are numbered but note the lack of verse numbers with a small gap instead (Gurnah Longman 54).
قرآن: سورة البقرة، الآية 161

глядن على فتحة فتحة لغة يحيى

سورة البقرة: 161

13th CENTURY AH TARTARSTAN

THE QURAN IN PRINT 415
Mid-20th century printed Qur'an from the Indian Subcontinent (personal copy of the late Rashid Begum Almi). There are 12 lines of large black script against an orange background with white panels containing an Urdu translation.

The Qur'an also features additional commentary in the margins. The right hand page has the starting of Surah al-A'raf (The Heights).
لا ينفي الله سبليماً قاف مع الخضر

لله الرحمن الرحيم

أذيننا وقمتم

عليهم السلام

سأغلىون

عليهم السلام

سعف الله الأمور

وهما 3. إياها وليميا

فتح آمنوت 1 بصر

الطير وهو
Above
Complete leather bound Qur’an printed in Tartarstan dated 1917 CE. The pages are open on the last part of Surah az-Zumar (The Groups, 39) and the start of Surah Ghaafir (The Forgiver, 40).

Opposite page
16th century Qur’an leaf written in classical bihari script from India. The word Allah has been highlighted in gold throughout. The surah header text is outlined in white and written in gold thuluth within gold cartouches set within a band of strongly coloured panels. A large gold roundel with the letter ayn in white within red and blue concentric circles is visible in the upper left margin and indicates the end of a section. The page shows the start of Surah ar-Room (The Romans, 30).
Decorative centre pages from a Qur’an written in Afghanistan dating back to the late 18th century.

There are 10 lines of strong black naskh script per page set within a decorated panel.

The text alternates between the Qur’an and an interlinear farsi translation in a smaller red nasta’liq style script.

A wave of geometric floral patterns surround the main text compartment.

Individual verse endings are marked by simple circles. The right hand page shows the start of Surah Qaf, 50.

This Qur’an is extremely well bound between two hard leather covers.
A complete 18th century Qur'an from the Horn of Africa, most likely Ethiopia.

There are 17 lines of a variant sahrawi style Arabic script on each page, written in a compact format by a fine hand.

Verse endings are simply marked by three red dots.

Staining at the corners due to continuous use of the Qur'an over the years.
The page starts with the last few verses of Surah Faatir, 35 (The Originator of Creation).

Surah headings are penned in red ink with the last two words of the previous surah incorporated into the header. The header indicates the start of Surah YaaSeen, 36.

Some punctuation marks have been highlighted in red ink.

The first word of the next page is repeated here to aid easy recitation.
18th century Qur'an from the Saharan region of Africa.

Written on very thick paper; most of the pages are frayed at the edges.

There are 12 lines of a variant sahrawi style Arabic text on each page written in black ink with a thick pen.

Text is enclosed within a simple orange coloured line border.

This Qur'an has been damaged by water at some point in time with many of the pages heavily stained.

Heavy staining at the corners due to continuous use of the Qur'an over the years.
The page starts with part of verse 39 through to part of verse 46 from Surah al-Anfaal, 8 (The Spoils of War).

Single large roundel with the word 'jaz' within concentric circles indicates the start of the tenth part.

Individual verses are marked simply with three orange coloured dots.

Some of the punctuation marks have been highlighted in orange ink.

The first word of the next page is functionally placed here to aid easy recitation.
Complete Qur'an from the Saharan region of Africa

There are ten lines of strong sahrawi Arabic text on each page written in black ink.

The Qur'an is bound in a coarse leather cover. Some animal fur is visible in the bottom left corner.

Written on very thick machine made paper. There is heavy staining on the corner of each page due to extensive use over the years.
The names of the juz' and the surah are simply written on the top corner of every page.

A small dark circle in red ink indicates the end of each verse.

Surah headers are written in red ink. This page has the start of Surah TaHa, 20. The header also indicates that the surah was revealed in Makkah and has 135 verses.
Exceptionally rare example of a Qur'an bifolium written on vellum from Andalusia (Muslim Spain), 12th century.

There are five lines of text per page written in large maghribi script in brown ink which is very typical of many Spanish Qur'ans.

Gold coloured shell and floret with red and blue pointing designate the end of the verse.

The pages show signs of water damage in a number of places.
Gold coloured hops-shaped border

The pages start with part of verse 77 from Surah an-Najm, 53, (The Star) and end on part of verse 30.

Vowel markings have been printed in red and green ink.
A Qur'an bifolium written on vellum from Andalusia (Muslim Spain), early 13th century.

There are six lines of text to the page written in large maghribi script using dark ink which is very typical of Spanish Qur'ans.

Gold coloured shell and floret shaped markers designate the end of a verse.

The pages show signs of water damage in a number of places. There is also evidence of some worm holes.
The page starts with part of verse 14 from Surah Saba, 34 (Sheba) and ends on part of verse 16.

Staining visible at the corner of the page due to extensive usage over time.

Diacritic markings and vowel points are in red, green, orange and blue ink.
Finely decorated end pages of the sixth juz' from a 17th century 30 volume Qur'an written in China (Location: British Library).

The lantern motif with a diamond at the centre accommodates just three lines of text and is quite typical of large Chinese Qur'ans.

The Arabic text is written in a variation of muhaqaq script known as sinit script that shows clear influence from Chinese art.

The structure of the lantern motif is outlined in gold with use of blue, red and green ink for the internal decoration.
The text is the end of verse 82 from Surah al-Ma'idah, 5 (The Table spread with Food). The last word *sadaqa* is not part of the verse but most probably is a shortened form of *sadaqatullahi al-adheem* (Allah says the Truth).

Vocalisation and body text is written in black ink with only minimal use of red.

*Sinî* script is distinguished by its relatively thin upstrokes and long terminals that project below the line.
Exquisitely illuminated pages from a 17th century thirty volume Qur'an written in China.

The central text panel is surrounded by a lantern type structure of finely ruled lines.

Local flora and vegetation have inspired the type of decoration used in the upper panel.

Decorative gold and green coloured floral palmette protrudes into the margin.

Each page has only three lines of large text written in sini script with gold coloured ink. The format is typical of many Chinese Qur'ans.

The pages have become heavily stained and worn at the corners.
The decorative features on both pages are drawn as mirror images of each other.

The page starts with the first few words of the 24th sura (verse 32 and part of 33 from Surah az-Zumar, 39 (The Groups).

Vocalisation and body text is written in black ink, with only minimal use of red.
A Qur'an written in Dagestan during the early 18th century.

The text is written in a large bold naskh style within a simply designed page.

There are 15 lines of text per page written on thick paper enclosed within a framework of finely ruled lines.

These two words have been written in the margin as they were initially left out by mistake by the scribe.

The word ashar (ten) written with red ink in the margin indicates the end of ten verses.

All of the pages are heavily stained at the corners due to heavy usage over the years.
The page starts with Surah at-Tawbah, 9 (The Repentance) verse 93 and continues through to the other page ending halfway through verse 101.

A marginal ornament drawn in a local style indicates the start of the 11th juz'. The first word of the new section has been crudely highlighted.

The Qur'an has undergone some major repair work on a number of pages.

The next word in the verse is written at the bottom of the page to aid smooth recitation.
The first part of a two volume Qur'an copied in Dagestan, 18th century.

Only one of the opening pages is decorated with red and green floral design work.

The letter seen has been left out by mistake from the word wa-min-nuṣṣi-man, (and there are people who...) but has been added later in the margin.

Heavy usage of the Qur'an over time has resulted in wear and staining at the corners.
The opening pages have the whole of Surah al-Fatihah, 1 ('The Opening') and the start of Surah al-Baqarah, 2 ('The Heifer').

The text is written in a large naskh script using black ink.

Red circles drawn above the line indicate the end of a verse.

The next word in the verse is functionally placed at the bottom of the page to aid smooth recitation.
Conventionally decorated opening pages from a very fragile Indian Qur'an written during the 17th century.

Most of the pages are damaged beyond repair and in a very delicate and fragile condition.

Surah headers are written in red with the main surah text in an elegant naskh script.

There are six lines of text within a cloud motif upon a light green background. The text panel is enclosed by a thickly drawn border.

The decoration style is typical of many Mughal palace Qur'ans from this era, with central hasp shapes projecting into the margin.

Tassel-like projections protrude into the margin from three sides.
Surah Fatimah, 1 (The Opening) is written on the right hand page, with the start of Surah al-Baqarah, 2 (The Heifer) on the opposite page.

Hardback cover is heavily damaged and in very fragile condition.

Simple red dots separate the verses and lines of text are set within cloud motifs.

The binding has come loose over time and is now beyond repair.
A very large 17th century Qur'an from the late Mughal period of Islamic rule in India. The size and elegance of this Qur'an indicates that it probably belonged to a mosque or was owned by a wealthy family.

Qur'anic text and vowel marks are written in large black naskh script by a very skilled calligrapher.

The surah header calligraphy indicates the start of Surah al-Ankaboot (The Spider, 29) and that it was revealed in Makkah.

The hard back cover has been covered with cloth at a more recent date.
The Arabic words *amman kalaqa* and the number twenty indicates the 20th *juz*.

Some punctuation marks are highlighted in red ink for emphasis.

The letter *ayn* signifies the end of a section within the surah.

Small open red circles mark verse endings.

The next few words in the verse are repeated at the bottom to aid smooth recitation.
An unusual Qur'an section with many lines per page from 18th century India.

The word *as-hara* (ten) in the margin indicates the first ten verses of the surah.

Written in a compact *naskh* script with some textual markings highlighted in red ink.

The text is enclosed within a large single lined rectangular compartment.

Identical staining on each page shows where readers have turned the pages over the years.
The word *sajdah* written in red is functionally placed in the margin to instruct the reader to prostrate at this point during recitation.

The word *ashura* indicates the 110th verse of Surah al-Israa, 17 (The Journey by Night).

Header panel indicates the start of Surah al-Kahif, 18 (The Cave) written in red ink.

The next word in the verse is written at the bottom of the page to aid smooth recitation.
Late 18th to early 19th century Indonesian Qur’an.

Text is written in a large cursive hand on water marked machine made paper, most likely imported from Europe.

Open red circles without numbers are used to mark the end of each verse.

Surah title text is in red within a simply ruled lined panel.

The page is divided into a number of panels consisting of simple lines.
The page starts with Surah al-'Asr, 103 (The Time) and continues with Surah al-Humazah, 104 (The Slanderer); Surah al-Feel, 105 (The Elephant); Surah Qaraysh, 106; Surah al-Maa'oon, 107 (The Small Kindnesses); Surah al-Kawthar, 108 (A River in Paradise) and Surah al-Kaafirun, 109 (The Disbelievers).

Vocalisation and text is written in black ink with only minimal use of red.

The Bismillah (In the Name of Allah) text is elongated across the whole width of the text panel.
Decorative end pages from a South East Asian Qur'an, early 19th century.

The text compartment is split into three sections; the header and footer panels and a central text compartment.

The body of the text is fully vocalised and written in a naskh style.

Traditional decorative floral design work surrounds the text compartment. A lattice framework encloses the central text panel.
Surah al-Falaq, 113 (The Daybreak) is written on the right hand page with Surah an-Naas, 114 (Mankind) opposite.

The page seems to have been repaired at some point in time and overlaid upon a page containing previous text that is just visible in the centre.

Surah information panels are written in an unvocalised script in white upon a red background.
18th century South East Asian Qur'an most likely from the Java region.

The text is neatly written in a simple black naskh/jawi script on machine made paper.

The calligrapher has used an acidic ink that has caused it to bleed through the page.

Heavy staining at the corners where readers have turned the pages over the years.
The page starts on Surah al-Mu'minun, 23 (The Believers).

The text written sideways, in the margin, in red, indicates the start of the eighteenth juz'.
Enlarged view of a rare miniature Qur'an printed in Kashmir, dated 1893.

The Qur'an pages are numbered and octagonal in shape.

The Qur'anic text has been printed within a triple line octagonal border.

This manuscript is unusual as there is no vocalisation and the text is written in a minute style of naskh script known as ghubur (dust).

The manuscript is bound with an octagonal leather hardback cover. Its small size would suggest that it was most likely used during travel.
The page starts part of the way through Surah al-Humazah, 104 (The Slanderer) through to part of Surah an-Nasr, 110 (The Help) on the opposite page.

The surah header text is not differentiated from the main body of the text. Verses are separated by simple circular shapes.

The Bismillah (In the Name of Allah) text is printed with an elongated letter س.
Beautifully written double pages from a Qur'an dated 1036 CE (427 AH) from Iraq (British Library, London).

Compactly written in an archaic version of naskh script on hand made light brown coloured paper.

Small gold roundels within the text denote the end of each verse. The verse markers are missing in places, for example at the start of the surah.

The name of the Surah (Saad, 38) is written in a decorated header panel using kufic script with a white outline. The last word of the previous surah is incorporated within the header.

Large overlapping roundels inscribed with kufic text indicate the end of every tenth verse.

A sajdah marginal device with an arabesque design is functionally placed to inform the reader to prostrate at the end of the 24th verse.
The page shows the start of the 20th verse from Surah as-Saffaat (Those Ranged in Ranks, 37).

Small palmettes in the text margin, in the shape of the letter ha, indicate the end of every fifth verse.

The first word of the following page is written in the bottom margin to aid recitation.
A very large 12th century Qur'an from the Pre-Mamluk late Abbasid period.

Written on large sheets of high quality thick hand made paper.

This magnificent Qur'an consists of 377 pages and is written in a majestic archaic muhaqqiq style of Arabic script.

Illuminated floral shapes mark the end of individual verses.

The acidic nature of the ink has caused the marginal device on the reverse side to show through.
The page shows the end of the 26th verse from Surah an-Noor, 24 (The Light) through to the start of verse 34 on the opposite page.

Marginal device with the word ashara written in gold kufic within blue and gold concentric circles denotes the end of ten verses.
Very ornate double pages from the 14th century Mamluk Qur'an of Sultan Faraj ibn Barquq (British Library).

The chapter header indicates the start of Surah al-Anfaal, 8 (The Spoils of War) and is written in monumental kufic in white within an ornate rectangular panel.

The left hand page has an almond shaped feature with the word nisf bizh meaning half (of the) quarter, in white kufic, marking the beginning of one half of the sixty parts into which this Qur'an is divided.

Written in a refined rayhani (literally, sweet basdi) script. Like nastaliq, rayhani is a small script (its larger counterpart is mahnuq) written with serifs on alif and lam, looped letters that are open, as well as long tails and rounded bowls.

The text is written in a continuous format without any great separation between verses. Large coloured roundels above the line mark verse endings.
The page contains the last part of Surah al-A'raf, 7 (The Heights) starting with the last two words of verse 204.

A large pointed roundel forms a decorative marginal ornament.

Some of the vowel markings have been written in red ink.

The instruction for the reader to prostrate during recitation is indicated by the word sajdah, written in blue kufic script and set within an interesting architectural feature.
A small 20th century Qur'an scroll measuring 4.4 cm in width with a length of 740 cm.

The scroll contains the complete Qur'anic text enclosed between red parallel lines.

Surah Fatihah (The Opening, 1) and the start of Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) are written within shield shaped compartments.

The Qur'anic text is written in a cursive hand without any vowel markings.

The scroll was most likely used by a traveller and could be kept rolled up in a leather pouch.
The end of the scroll showing Surah al-Masad, 111 (The Palm Fibre) through to Surah an-Naas, 114 (Mankind).

Following convention the scroll also contains an end prayer to be recited after completing the recitation of the Qur'an.
A Qur'an bifolium from the North African region, 9th century.

The text is written in western kufic script using brown ink and is vocalised throughout in red.

There are thirteen lines of text on this page written on light coloured vellum.
Staining at the edges appears to be due to the affects of water damage.

Large decorated roundels are used to separate individual verses.

The page starts with part of verse 41 from Surah Baqarah, 2 (The Heifer) and ends partway through verse 54 on the word fiyada; the bu from the end of the word is written on the following page. Splitting words was the norm with kufic scripts but was discontinued with the adoption of cursive scripts.

A gold marker in the shape of a shell indicates the start of a new hizb division.
A complete 14th century North African Qur'an written in maghribi script.

Maghribi script is written in black ink and vocalised throughout with green and saffron markings.

The word hizb written in ornamental kufic in white upon blue ground and enclosed within concentric circles indicates the end of a section.

The Qur'an is bound in a thick leather case with design work embossed in gold.

Floral verse markers coloured in gold separate individual verses.
Surah headings are written in *andalusian kufic* script with arabesque decorative ornaments on the margins.

The page shows the start of Surah an-Naml, 27 (The Ants); partly obscured by the next page.

A multi-coloured teardrop shaped marginal ornament with the word *sajidah* written in gold *kufic* is functionally placed to indicate that the reader must prostrate during recitation.
A small section containing only Surah Yaaseen, 36, copied in the Ottoman empire, 18th century.

There are eleven lines of text per page copied in naskh script in black ink on very thick paper.

The small size and light leather binding of this manuscript indicates that it was most likely carried for use during travel.

The text is enclosed within a large rectangular compartment.

The Qur'an has been exposed to water damage as the ink has smudged in a number of places.
A large semicircular panel with floral design work in a number of colours is placed above the surah header text.

The surah header panel is written in red ink and gives the name of the surah, Yaseen, 36, citing the fact that it was revealed in Makkah and the number of verses.

Individual verses are separated by large gold coloured circles.

The first word of the following page is written in the lower margin as an aid to continuous recitation.
Decorative opening pages from a Qur'an originating in the Ottoman Empire, 19th century.

Both pages are dominated by bright floral design work using a variety of colours.

The details of the surah are written in a basic naskh script in red without vowels.

This page has the start of Surah al-Baqarah, 2 (The Heifer) written in naskh script.

Single verse divisions are indicated simply by a group three red symbols.

In some places the red symbols are used in a repetitive pattern and seem to serve a decorative rather than a functional purpose.
Opening page of the Qur’an with the whole of Surah al-Fatiha, 1 (The Opening) written in naskh.

The text is enclosed within a thick double lined red and black frame filled with gold and black edging.

Note that the word aameen is not part of the Qur’an but is sometimes included at the end of the Surah al-Fatiha.

The word bismi from the following page is written in the lower margin as an aid to continuous recitation.
A Qur'an bifolium originating in Persia written during the 14th century.

There are nine lines of Qur'anic text per page written in large muhaqqaq script.

The text is written in a continuous format with small gold coloured floral shapes above the line marking the end of a verse.

A blue and gold coloured marginal device indicates the end of the surah's first ruku.

The pages are heavily stained most likely due to the effects of water.

A pear shaped marginal ornament shows every tenth verse.
The page has the last part of Surah al-Ankaboot, 29 (The Spider) and the start of Surah ar-Room, 30 (The Romans) ending on part of verse 16 of the latter on the other page.

Surah headers are written in gold with some of the vowel marks highlighted in blue.
Beautifully decorated 16th century Qur'an from Persia or possibly Iraq.

Every page is set within an orange and gold coloured multi-line frame.

Qur'anic text is written in an elegant rayhani script, with coloured circles separating individual verses.

The surah header text is embellished in white upon gold foliate work and indicates the start of Surah al-Ma'aarij, 70 (The Ways of Ascent).

Alternating blue and gold marginal ornaments indicate every fifth and tenth verse.
This page has text from Surah al-Haaqqah, 69 (The Inevitable) starting half way through verse 17.

An interesting point to note here is how the scribe has mistakenly left out a few verses (19-24) and then made the correction by writing sideways in the extended text frame. This type of occurrence highlights how Qur’ans would always be thoroughly checked for mistakes upon completion.

The first word of the following page is functionally repeated beneath the text compartment to aid smooth recitation.
Written in black naskh script, with interlinear Qur'anic translation in Persian, written in nastaliq script using red ink.

Alternating blue and gold marginal medallions indicate every fifth and tenth verse.

The word khamsa (five) is written in thuluth script after every five verses in gold ink within a blue medallion.

The word ashara (ten) indicates every ten verses in blue ink within a gold coloured medallion.

Magnificent double pages from a 17th century Qur'an from Persia written in naskh. (Location: British Library).
Verse endings are marked using a simple circular design in blue and gold.

Ornate header frame is written in white tahlīl script and shows the start of Surah an-Nabā, 78 (The News).

Large marginal ornamentation indicates the start of the 30th juz' of the Qur'an.

The first word of the following page is written in the bottom margin to aid recitation.
Printed Qur'an from Kazan, Turkestan, dated 1860 CE.

The text is printed in a clear script within a rectangular lined border.

Details of the start of the next surah, al-A'raf, 7 (The Heights) are given either side of the last verse of the previous surah.

Individual verses are separated by simple floral shapes.
Qur'an Binding and Markers

Previous pages
Detail view of the first few verses from Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2), written in large muhaqqaq style script, late 16th to early 17th century, Uzbekistan.

Left
A series of dark brown leather bound Qur'an volumes from a set of thirty, North Africa, 18th century.

Opposite page
Black leather covered Qur'an with gold coloured decorative work embossed on the front, back and the flap, China, 17th century.
Maghribi Qur’an juz’ with a heavily worn dark leather cover, 18th century North African. The binding has come apart and the pages are no longer held together.

18th century Ottoman Qur’an section bound in a dark leather cover with a flap.
Small dark red leather covered Qur'an with a flap. The Qur'an is embossed with an emblem in the centre, North African, 17th century.

A Qur'an commentary covered with tan coloured leather and embossed with green emblems, 17th century.

Qur'an covered in dark brown leather with a flap from the African Horn region written in a compact sahrawi script, 18th century. The binding is heavily damaged and the Qur'an is loosely held together.
At over 700 years old this late 13th century Qur'an from Syria or possibly Egypt has been rebound in dark brown leather and embossed with gold emblems.


18th century naskh Qur'an leather bound showing heavy damage and wear.

Dark red leather bound Qur'an section embossed with a central emblem. Ottoman, 17th century.
A very well preserved 1000 year old Qur'an written in small archaic naskh from Syria or Iraq. Rebound with a dark leather cover and embossed with floral designs.

18th century Indonesian Qur'an missing the covers. The multiple binding strings are visible on the spine.

Dark leather covered Ottoman Qur'an, 18th century. The cover has become heavily damaged and worn and is in quite a brittle state.
18th century African Qur'an juz' covered in dark brown leather.

Dark red coloured Ottoman Qur'an, 18th century. Covers are embossed with three emblems.

Loosely bound Qur'an with a heavily worn brown leather cover. Indonesia, 18th century.

Leather covered Qur'an with decorative floral design. Qajar, 18th century.
The first translation into the English Language was by Alexander Ross in 1648 from the French translation of Du Ryer. He did not know Arabic and was not thoroughly proficient in French which would explain the poor quality of the translation.

The first translation of the meanings of the Qur'an into a European language was the Latin translation made by Robertus Ketenensis and Hermannus Dalmatia at the behest of Peter the Venerable, the president of the Cluny Monastery in France in 1143 CE. After 500 years of private circulation within the church, it was finally published in Basel, Switzerland in 1543 CE. Early translations were done in Latin and German. Andre Du Ryer, who had been the French Consul in Egypt and had considerable knowledge of both the Turkish and Arabic languages, first translated the Qur'an into French. This was printed in Paris in 1647. The version was inaccurate and contained frequent transpositions, omissions, and even additions. In 1783, Savary published what is considered to be a much better translation. The above image shows the first edition of the translation by Savary.
18th century Qur'an from Syria or Iraq with a hard cover.

Simply bound dark brown hard leather cover, 17th century Ottoman Qur'an juz'.

18th century Qur'an from Syria or Iraq with a hard cover.

Opposite page
The leather cover of this Qur'an has been extensively damaged over the course of time and requires major repair work to be carried out. The binding remains fairly intact. Handwritten in local naskh script from South East Asia, 18th century.

Dark brown leather covered Qur'an embossed with floral designs from China, 17th century.
Concentric circles enclosing the word "juz" to denote the start of a new Qur'an part, North Africa, 18th century.

Blue and red ruku device with the letter ayn enclosed within concentric circles. From a Qur'an written in bihari script, India, 16th century.

Blue and gold teardrop device with a cloud-like outline used to indicate the end of a section from a bihari Qur'an, India, 16th century.

Ruku medallion with the letter ayn enclosed within concentric circles. From a Qur'an written in bihari script, India, 16th century.
Tenth verse marker with the word *ashara* written in *eastern kufic* upon gold ground indicating the end of ten verses, India, 16th century.

Ornate blue, gold and red *shamsa* device marking the start of a new *juz* from a complete 17th century Indian Qur'an.

The word *hizb* written in ornamental *kufic* in white upon a red background and enclosed within concentric circles, North Africa, 14th century.

Decorative star shaped marginal device indicating the start of a new section within a surah, Persia, 17th century.
Brightly coloured *sajdah* marker indicating that the reader must prostrate at the end of the verse, North Africa, 15th century.

Brightly coloured triangular shaped decorative textual marker with central floral design upon red ground, Ottoman, 20th century.

Ornamental *ruku* marker consisting of blue and gold concentric circles within a floral motif, India, 16th century.

Blue and gold decorative marginal roundel with gold and red foliate work on blue, marking the start of a *ruku*, India, 17th century.
Triangular marker in green with the words sadaqallahul adheem (Allah says the Truth) Ottoman, 20th century.

Tenth verse marker with the word ashara written in eastern kufic script within blue and gold concentric circles, Abbasid, 12th century.

Beige, green and red marginal roundel used to designate the end of every ten verses from a Dagestani Qur'an, 18th century.

Gold, red and blue coloured ornamental juz' marker drawn in the shape of a cloud motif, 17th century, India.
Unusual brown and blue coloured decorative floral ornament typical of Qur’ans from the Herat region, Afghanistan, 16th century.

Bright tenth verse marker written in the margin with a delicate central floral work, from a Qur’an written in rayhani script, Persia, 16th century.

Decorative palmette with golden arabesque lattice from a surah header panel, North Africa, 18th century.

Unusually extended marginal ornament indicating the start of a new juz’; from an Indian Qur’an, early 19th century.
Preface

1. In Islam, the proper name of God is the Arabic term 'Allah'. This is the personal name of 'The One and Only True Deity', who created the universe and all that it contains. Moreover, the word 'Allah' expresses the uniqueness of 'Allah' more accurately than the word 'God', which can adopt a plural form, whereas the word 'Allah' has no plural or gender. Furthermore, from an Islamic viewpoint, Allah is also the most precious name of God.

2. Regarded as a jewel amongst stones, and the most beloved of Allah's creation, Muhammad is the last Prophet of Islam (570-632 CE); he is also known as the 'Seal of the Prophets'. When Muslims write Prophet Muhammad's name, they usually include the statement 'May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him' or مَسْتَحْيِيَة في القرآن، ١/٣٥٠.

Introduction

1. The Kaaba is the most sacred site in Islam and is located inside the Sacred Mosque (Masjid-al-Haram) in Makkah, Arabia. The Kaaba is at the very heart of the Islamic world and represents the focal point toward which Muslims all over the world pray five times a day. It was built by the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them).


The Need for Messages from Allah

1. For a detailed review of the early history of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, see: Muhammad M. al-Azami, The History of the Qur'anic Text, UK Islamic Academy, 2003, chapters 14-16.

The Final Revelation from Allah


The Three Stages of Revelation


The Challenge in the Qur'an

The Challenge in the Qur’an (continued)


5. Metrical speech is a form of speech that employs a strict rhythmical pattern, that is, it follows a type of poetic metre.


21. *ibid*, p.84.

22. *ibid*, p. 90.


24. *ibid*.


27. Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 187.


The Challenge in the Qur'an (continued)


Compilation and Preservation


8. Mahmood Salim Ubaydaat, Dirasaat 'uloom al-Qur'aan, Dar Ammaar, Jordan, 1990, p.120.


13. ibid, p. 62.

14. ibid, p. 62.

15. ibid, p. 64.


Compilation and Preservation (continued)


20. Bukhari has recorded the incident of the compilation of the Qur'an, as have others.


27. Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. 4987.


30. ibid, p. 93.

31. ibid, p. 94.

32. ibid, p. 96.


The Qur’an in Print


3. For an explanation of this saying see: ibid. p. 146.

The Qur’an Through the Ages


2. ibid, p. 100.

3. ibid, p. 140.

Qur’an translation

The English translation of the Qur’anic verses used in this book have been taken from: *Interpretation of the Meaning of The Noble Qur’aan in the English Language* by Dr. Muhammad Taqiuuddeen al-Hilaalee, Ph.D. and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Published by DARUSSALAM ©, Riyadh.
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Late 16th to early 17th century Qur'an from Uzbekistan written in large muhaqqaq style script. The text is fully vocalised in black with some limited use of red ink. The surah header panel has red and black text with a white outline upon a multicoloured foliate background. The page shows the end of Surah al-Mumtahanah (The Woman to be examined, 60) and the start of Surah as-Saff (The Row or the Rank, 61).

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بِهِنَّ أَيَّادِي وَجَانَبَينِ يُبَشِّرُنِي بِفَرَايِبِي وَهَلِينَي بِفَرَايِبِي وَهَلِينَي بِفَرَايِبِي وَهَلِينَي
فَبِأَيْدِي وَلَيْسَ مَعِيُّ مِنْ إِنْسَان ۖ فَلَيْسَ مَعِيُّ مِنْ إِنْسَان
قَالَ أَنْ تَلْوَىَ الْقُوُّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ فَقَلَتْ لَتَلْوَىَ الْقُوُّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ فَقَلَتْ لَتَلْوَىَ الْقُوُّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
فَوَلَوْاْ أَفَاعِلْنَا أَعْظَمَ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰهُمْ فَقَلَتْ لَتَلْوَىَ الْقُوُّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
سُوْرَةُ الصَّدَّيقِ مَعَ مَهَابِنِ الفُؤُودِ أَلْبِيعُ عَشْرُ يَاتَٰاَمَا لَنَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ
بِنَ لَا نَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ لَا نَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ لَا نَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ لَا نَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ لَا نَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ لَا نَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ لَا نَتَقَؤُلَلَلَّهُ
"O Allah forgive our living and our dead, those who are with us and those who are absent, our young and our old, our menfolk and our womenfolk.

O Allah, whomever you give life from among us give him life in Islam, and whomever you take away from us take him away in Faith. O Allah, do not forbid us their reward and do not send us astray after them".

(Abu Dawood, 3/211)
Peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Last Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad

a mercy to mankind
and the best of all creation.
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