NUZŪL OF THE QURʾĀN AND THE QUESTION OF *NUZŪL* ORDER

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Abstract

In the modern Islamic world, there is growing interest in reading and interpretation of the Qurʾān according to its *nuzūl* order; accordingly, many translations and exegeses, based on *nuzūl* order, are published every day. This fact compels us to consider questions about the descent of revelation, arrangement of the text of the Qurʾān, and its arrangement pursuant to the chronology of revelation, as well as relevant general acceptance. Classical references seldom questioned the reliability of revelation order narrated by *Ṣaḥāba* (Companions), such as ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, and *Tābiʿūn* (Followers), such as Jābir ibn Zayd, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, as well as later personalities, such as Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, al-Wāqidī, and other scholars; moreover, it has never been extensively studied whether all of the sūras (chapters) of the Qurʾān can be chronologically arranged pursuant to the available information. Herein, this study intends to draw attention to the necessity for a serious examination and analysis of such issues regarding the revelation and arrangement of the Qurʾān.

Key Words: *Nuzūl*, *tartīb* al-Qurʾān, *nuzūl* order, *inzāl*, revelation.

Introduction

The revelation of the Qurʾān to Muḥammad is expressed in many *āya*s (verses) through *maṣdar* (verbal noun) such as *nuzūl, inzāl,* and *tanzīl* or verbs derived from these nouns. The word *nuzūl* is mentioned in approximately three hundred verses and is attributed to divine revelations, such as the Torah, Bible, and the Qurʾān, in verses and chapters, as well as to tangible or intangible things such as angels, devils, provisions, water, clothes, meals, benevolence, torment, measures, sultans (strong evidence), peace, and calmness. In Arabic, *nuzūl* means "to descend, to lodge." According to some linguists, its essential meaning is "to descend," while others believe that *nuzūl* actually signifies *ḥulūl*, in other words, "to arrive and settle in somewhere."[1]

According to certain scholars, such as al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1st quarter of 5th/11th century), the utilization of *nuzūl* on the pattern of *ifʿāl* (i.e., *inzāl*) with reference to the Torah and Bible, and on the pattern of *tafʿīl* (i.e., *tanzīl*) with reference to the Qurʾān's revelation, signifies a semantic nuance. Therefore, the verbal noun *inzāl* signifies "descending" both "at once" and "gradually," while *tanzīl* exclusively means "gradual" and "sending down."[2] Nevertheless, some other scholars have claimed that there is no semantic difference between *inzāl* and *tanzīl*, which, according to us also, are synonymous. Indeed, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) related the common acceptance among scholars that the Torah and Bible descended at once but added that contemporaneous scholars rejected such an argument due to a lack of appropriate evidence and justification.[3]

For Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 766/1365), because Allah is non-spatial, and the Qurʾān has a nature of meaning that can replace the divine

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[1] Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Fāris ibn Zakariyyāʾ, *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lugha* (ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn; 3rd edn., Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1979), V, 417; Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2003), VIII, 523.

[2] Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qurʾān* (ed. Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh; Cairo: Maktabat al-ʿAnjlū al-Miṣriyya, 1970), 744.

[3] Abū l-Faḍl Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* (ed. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Bughā; Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), I, 134.

personality, it is not permissible to ascribe the meaning "to make to descend from above" to the verbal nouns of *inzāl-tanzīl* about revelation of the Qurʾān to the Prophet. The lexical meaning of *inzāl* is "to accommodate, to host" (*īwāʾ*) and "to move something downward;" nonetheless, neither meaning seems accurate when the usage is related to discourse/word. Thus, the noun *inzāl* is only figuratively applied for abstract concepts, such as discourse/word.[4]

Such an explanation might work in the context of discourse or belief related to discussions of divine attributes; however, it does not seem accurate with regard to the historical and social context in which the Qurʾān was revealed. Accordingly, some verses read that Allah is in the sky. For example, Q 67:16 indicates that Allah is in the sky, while Q 6:158 and Q 2:210 discuss the advent of Allah or His appearing among the clouds. Q 2:144 indicates how Muḥammad turns his face toward the sky; according to exegetes, this action signifies his waiting for a revelation of the change of Qibla and the consideration that Gabriel sent the revelation from the heavens.[5] In addition, Q 51:22 reads, "*And in the heaven is your provision and whatever you are promised.*" In a well-known ḥadīth, a concubine is asked, "Where is Allah?," whereupon she responds, "He is in the heavens," and then Muḥammad says, "Set her free, for she is a believer."[6]

In his interpretation of the expression *man fī l-samāʾ* in Q 67:16, the Muʿtazilī exegete Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī (d. 322/934) writes the following: "Arabs accepted the existence of Allah, but also believed that He was in heaven. This is why, Allah says, '*Do you feel secure that He who holds authority in the heaven would not cause the earth to swallow you, and suddenly it would sway?*'"[7] In contrast, according

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[4] *Ibid.*, 138.

[5] See Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿĪsā Ibn Abī Zamanīn, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿazīz* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2002), I, 185; Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī Ibn ʿĀdil, *al-Lubāb fī ʿulūm al-Kitāb* (eds. ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998), III, 31-32.

[6] See Abū Saʿīd ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *al-Radd ʿalā l-Jahmiyya* (ed. Badr al-Badr; Kuwait: al-Dār al-Salafiyya, 1985), 38-39.

[7] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr aw Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (eds. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn and Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn; 2nd edn.

to several ḥadīth narratives, Allah descends to the earthly skies every night, and in the small hours, He says, "Isn't there anyone praying to Me; I would respond such prayers …;"[8] some other narratives relate that Allah will descend to Earth on judgment day to hold people accountable.[9]

Mode of Descent of the Qurʾān's Revelation

Many verses and ḥadīths indicates that the revelation of the Qurʾān occurred by descent from heaven to earth. Nevertheless, this explanation is closely related to traditional beliefs and conceptions of first addressees and/or Arabs in Muḥammad's time with regard to abstract beings in general and Allah in particular. More precisely, the imagination of pre-Islamic Arab society conceived Allah and angels as heavenly beings; therefore, the Qurʾān indicates that revelation was sent from heaven down to earth.

Indeed, as indicated in Q 15:17-18, Q 26:210-212, Q 37:7-10 and Q 72:8-9 about *istirāq al-samʿ* (attempt by a *jinn* to steal news from heaven), for Arabs in the time of revelation, it was impossible for a human to be in direct contact with Allah or the space of abstract beings, and such a connection could only be established by virtue of the jinn (demons and angels); pursuant to this conventional belief, such intermediary beings are expressed via words or concepts such as Gabriel, *al-Rūḥ al-amīn* or *Rūḥ al-quds* [Holy Spirit] with regard to descent of the Qurʾān's revelation.

In addition, Q 36:69-70, Q 52:29, and Q 69:41-43 negate the conventional beliefs and arguments of polytheists about *istirāq al-samʿ* (attempts to steal news from heaven) to emphasize the divine nature of the Qurʾān's revelation; moreover, these verses indicate that Muḥammad was not one among seers or poets who were believed to have contact with the jinn and to obtain information from them, that the Qurʾān was sent by Allah, the God of the universe, and that it is not the word of seers or poets.

Then again, Q 15:9 and Q 56:77-79 read that the Qurʾān was sent from the presence of Allah and was protected from intervention by

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Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), XXX, 61-62.

[8]   Al-Bukhārī, "Tahajjud," 14; Muslim, "Ṣalāt al-musāfirīn," 168-172.

[9]   Al-Tirmidhī, "Ṣawm," 39; "Zuhd," 48.

evil beings such as jinn and demons, and only *muṭahhar* (those purified/made purified from evil and sin) beings can have contact with it. The word *muṭahharūn* in Q 56:79 has been interpreted as "angels" by exegetes such as Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿIkrima, Mujāhid, and Saʿīd ibn Jubayr.[10]

In pre-Islamic Arab tradition, abstract/spiritual beings were classified as good and evil or pious and malignant; angels are accepted as good and pious, whereas demons are considered evil and malignant. In addition, during Days of Ignorance, the jinn were categorized as follows: those that lived together with humans were called "āmir," those that interfere with and hurt children were called "arwāḥ," those with evil and stubborn natures were called "shayṭān," those that were extremely evil were called "mārid," and those that committed violence for evil were called "ʿifrīt;" in contrasts, the *jinn*, which are pure and clean and far from evil, were qualified as "angels."[11]

Because the descent and sending of revelation, as well as guidance and administration, are believed to have been performed by means of angels since the former Semitic-Hebrew culture, pre-Islamic Arabs most probably owed this point of view to Ahl al-kitāb in general and to Jews in particular. In Jewish tradition, various words/concepts, such as theophany, visions, and dreams, are employed to express revelation as direct conversation of God with humans; nevertheless, the concept of angels, which are referred to as "angels of Jehovah" or "angels of the Lord" in the Tanakh, possess peculiar importance.

These angels are sent to establish communication with humans as abstract beings that act for God and speak on His behalf. Many expressions in the Tanakh identify the angel of God with God Himself due to its connection with the divine source. The identification that was established between the angel and God caused

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10   See Abū l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr* (4th edn., Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1987), VIII, 152.

11   For further information see Jawād ʿAlī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī tārīkh al-ʿArab qabla l-Islām* (Qom: Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1380), VI, 705-725.

people to fear these angels so much that it was considered as dangerous to see the angel of God as to see God in person.[12]

In this regard, the dialogue in the Qurʾān between Mary and the angels[13] and the fear of Mary of the angel, which, in the guise of a human, heralds to her the good news of a child,[14] seems to reflect the perception of angels in Jewish tradition. Indeed, statements in the Qurʾān about many issues, including creation and sharīʿa, fables and revelation, coincide with their counterparts in the Torah and Tanakh. The emphasis in various verses on how the Qurʾān confirms the Torah[15] might be considered related to this question. Conversely, the first Muslims reportedly used to meet and exchange ideas with Jews in Medina; even some famous Companions went to Bayt al-midrās in Medina to participate in Torah discussions with Jewish men of the cloth and had occasional debates with them.[16]

Because Allah was believed to be from heaven within the earliest circle of addressees, it is normal that, in some Qurʾān verses, things such as iron, clothes, and cattle are said to be sent from heaven to earth, just like revelation. Nevertheless, such verbiage is not intended to inform (*fāʾidat al-khabar*) the primary and directly addressed masses but to provide them with another message (*lāzim al-fāʾida*) by means of what is known to them.

In other words, the Qurʾān does not bring forth definitive/descriptive and primary statements about actual facts with regard to the presence of Allah in heaven and descent of many other things from above; rather, the text interprets and formats these words to reflect the imagination of Arab society. As a matter of fact, pursuant to the expression *anzalnā l-ḥadīd* in Q 57:25, which literally means "*we sent down iron,*" there is a narrative ascribed to the companion Ibn ʿUmar. According to the narrative, Allah sent down four things from heaven to earth as benedictions: iron, fire, water, and salt.

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[12] For further information see Muhammet Tarakçı, "Tanah'ta Vahiy Anlayışı," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11/1 (2002), 193-218.

[13] Q 3:42-51.

[14] Q 19:17-18.

[15] Q 3:50; 5:46; 61:6.

[16] See Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī al-musammā Jāmiʿ al-bayān fī taʾwīl al-Qurʾān* (3rd edn., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999), I, 478; III, 217-218.

Another narrative from Ibn ʿAbbās claims that Adam came down to earth with a few objects made of iron, such as an anvil, a hammer, and needles/nails.[17]

Consequently, expressions in the Qurʾān about the form of descent of revelation have a conditional, contextual, and historical content. This fact is also evident in the example that, through the meaning "descent/sending down" of the word *nuzūl/inzāl*, together with the adjective of quality *Qurʾān^an ʿArabiyy^an* (Q 12:2), divine revelation is formulated in harmony with Arab culture and mentality. However, in the history of Islamic thought, Muʿtazilī and Sunnī paradigms have claimed that Allah is independent of time and space with regard to discussions on divine attributes; thereupon, the expression *man fī l-samāʾ* (Allah, who is in heaven) in the related verse is construed to be a figurative metaphor for supremacy and sovereignty pursuant to this absolving approach.[18] Similarly, the ḥadīth on Allah's nightly descent to earth is considered to denote the descent of divine benediction and graces.[19] Nonetheless, during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH, Ahl al-ḥadīth and Salafī (*Ahl al-sunna al-khāṣṣa*) scholars claimed that the omnipresence of Allah, not in heaven but everywhere, was an argument and belief peculiar to Jahmiyya and Zanādiqa (heretics).[20] Therefore, even faith in Allah, which is the strongest and solidest principle of Islamic faith, has interestingly undergone radical changes regarding perception and conception within a few centuries.

Regarding the word *inzāl* in the verses about the sending by Allah of iron, clothes, and cattle from heaven, it is explained as "to create or to bring forth means for a benefaction so that mankind benefits from

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[17] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988), XVII, 169.

[18] Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf al-Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ fī l-tafsīr* (ed. Ṣidqī Muḥammad Jamīl; Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2005), VIII, 296.

[19] Abū l-Saʿādāt Majd al-Dīn Mubārak ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī, *al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth wa-l-athar* (ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī, Sidon & Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya li-l-Tawzīʿ wa-l-Nashr, 2008), V, 35.

[20] See al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿalā l-Marīsī al-Jahmī al-ʿanīd fī-mā iftarā ʿalā llāh fī l-tawḥīd* (ed. Manṣūr ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Simārī; Riyadh: Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 1999), 57-59, 62, 274-280.

it."[21] In the Qur'ān, *inzāl* is employed for revelation, as well as for concrete objects, such as clothes, iron, and cattle; it seems figuratively justifiable to ascribe to it the meaning "to create and introduce to the utilization of man;" nevertheless, we must remark that the original and historical signification in verses about the descent of revelation is "to send down from heaven."

At this stage, ascription of place to Allah might seem problematic in terms of faith. Nevertheless, this relationship did not constitute a problem for Muḥammad and the generation of Companions; rather, it is disturbing for transcendentalist (*tanzīhī*) kalāmī/theological paradigms with regard to divine attributes in the history of Islamic thought and for those who reject anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and corporealism (*tajsīm*). During lifetime of the Prophet, the primary concern among Muslims was not the problem of ascribing place to Allah; rather, the concern was to prevent any dispute regarding His unity (*tawḥīd*) and to negate any kind of polytheism. Therefore, such philosophical and discourse-related problems emerged in the course of a historical process; it would be anachronism to claim that such questions were an issue for the Prophet and his Companions.

Stages of Descent of Revelation

As is known, according to first verse in Sūrat al-Qadr, the Qur'ān was sent down on *Laylat al-qadr* (Night of Power); however, the content and mode of descent are not explained. Due to this vagueness, Islamic tradition has encompassed numerous viewpoints and convictions about how the Qur'ān was revealed. According to common opinion, the Qur'ān was sent down to the sky of the world as a whole on the Night of Power; then, it was gradually revealed to Muḥammad in a series of incidents over the subsequent twenty years.

A second view, related by Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān (d. 150/767), argued that the Qur'ān was sent down to the sky of the world in annual revelations over twenty or twenty-three successive Nights of Power, before the gradual descent of these annual revelations during

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21 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, XIV, 42; XXVI, 213; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, VII, 118; XV, 153; Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, IV, 282-283; Ibn ʿĀdil, *al-Lubāb*, XI, 66; XVI, 474-475; Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr al-taḥrīr wa-l-tanwīr* (Tunis: Dār Saḥnūn, 1997), VIII, 73-74; XXIII, 332.

the corresponding year. According to a third approach, narrated by Abū ʿAmr al-Shaʿbī (d. 104/722), the descent of the Qurʾān from *al-Lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* (Preserved Tablet) down to the sky of the world began on the Night of Power; later, it was gradually revealed in agreement with emerging incidents at various times. The fourth view defended the viewpoint that the Qurʾān was sent down from the Preserved Tablet as a whole; the *ḥafaẓa* angels gradually handed the text to Gabriel on twenty Nights of Power, whereupon Gabriel extended the process over twenty-something years and recited the Qurʾān to Muḥammad.[22]

In all narratives about the aforementioned views and convictions, it is unclear what "sky of the world," or *Bayt al-ʿizza* (House of Honor), signifies. In other words, the open question of the Qurʾān's revelation, after descent from the Preserved Tablet and before reaching the Prophet, remains unanswered. Some references claim that Ibn ʿAbbās was the creator of the idea regarding the descent to *Bayt al-ʿizza*. Pursuant to the narrative, Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The Qurʾān was taken from the seat of *dhikr* and placed at *Bayt al-ʿizza* in the sky of the world. Gabriel gradually brought the Qurʾān from *Bayt al-ʿizza* to the Prophet and slowly read it;"[23] however, this narrative or any other report or work provides almost no information about the content of *Bayt al-ʿizza*.

Such vagueness and ambiguity might provide grounds for an assumption: *Bayt al-ʿizza* was generated as a formula to explain the possibility of access to the Qurʾān's revelation, which is considered eternal in Sunnī tradition, in historical and human contexts. In earlier sources, however, the question "What is the secret behind collective descent of the Qurʾān to the firmament?" was answered with a romantic approach, namely "This is in order to glorify both the Qurʾān and Muḥammad by means of declaring the Qurʾān as the final divine book (revelation) sent down to the inhabitants of the seven heavens and to the last prophet, Muḥammad, the prophet of the most

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[22] Jamāl al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd Ibn ʿAqīla, *al-Ziyāda wa-l-iḥsān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* (al-Shāriqa: Jāmiʿat al-Shāriqa Markaz al-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt, 2006), I, 152-153.

[23] Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī Shayba al-ʿAbsī, *Kitāb al-muṣannaf fī l-aḥādīth wa l-āthār* (ed. Muṣṭafā Kamāl Ḥūt; Beirut: Maktabat al-Zamān, 1999), VI, 144.

valuable community."[24] In fact, as the phrase "The Qurʾān was placed at *Bayt al-ʿizza* so as to ensure its access to worldly (historical) context"[25] by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320/932) suggests, the generation of the concept of *Bayt al-ʿizza* was probably devised for its entrance into historical context despite its eternal character; this approach might also have been adopted to prevent strengthening the hand of Muʿtazila with regard to *khalq al-Qurʾān.*

Indeed, all views about the descent of the Qurʾān consist of personal convictions, including that narrated via Ibn ʿAbbās. At this point, one might object that Ibn ʿAbbās cannot provide personal opinions about the status of the Qurʾān prior to its being encountered by man, history and society and that he must have obtained such information about *Bayt al-ʿizza* only from the Prophet; nevertheless, countless narratives in exegeses and ḥadīth sources have indicated how the Companions suggested their opinions and personal convictions regarding issues about the unseen. More precisely, as various views of Companions about the issues regarding unseen, such as divine attributes, judgment day, the afterlife conditions, and creation, indicate, notable personalities provided their opinions since the earliest days of Islam.

In brief, considering both the general significance of verses about *inzāl/tanzīl* of the Qurʾān's revelation and the consequence of twenty-three years of revelation, the argument by al-Shaʿbī, namely "Descent of the Qurʾān from the Preserved Tablet to the firmament began on the Night of Power, before it was gradually sent down pursuant to emerging incidents," seems more reasonable. Conversely, the ambiguities and disputes about what occurred during the transition of revelation from the seat of Allah to the Prophet seem ineradicable. Similarly, it remains controversial whether the Qurʾān descended to the Prophet only in meaning or both in meaning and words.

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[24] Abū l-Qāsim Shihāb al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī, *al-Murshid al-wajīz ilā ʿulūm tataʿallaqu bi-l-Kitāb al-ʿazīz* (ed. Tayyar Altıkulaç; Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), 24; Abū ʿAbd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* (ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm; Sidon & Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 1972), I, 230.

[25] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 132; Ibn ʿAqīla, *al-Ziyāda wa-l-iḥsān*, I, 156.

Pursuant to the dominant conception and conviction, the revelation of the Qurʾān belongs to Allah in terms of both wording and meaning. Gabriel memorized the Qurʾān's revelation from the Preserved Tablet and thus sent it down to the Prophet. According to another, allegedly marginal approach, Gabriel provided the Qurʾān only in meaning, and later, the Prophet formulated the text in Arabic words. A third view defends the idea that Qurʾān was communicated to and inspired in Gabriel in meaning, whereupon the angel translated it into Arabic words and gave it to the Prophet.[26]

Al-Imām al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) ascribed the second argument to Bāṭinī circles, which most probably included certain philosophers as well. Al-Māturīdī cited the Bāṭinī view precisely: "The Qurʾān was sent down to the Prophet not in the form of text, but as a type of inspiration to his heart; then, the Prophet expressed it with Arabic wording for concretization," pursuant to Q 2:97; al-Māturīdī criticized this argument because the Qurʾān provides very strong evidence of its miraculous character. In addition, Bāṭiniyya adopts the approach that "The Qurʾān was sent down to the Prophet in a form without any linguistic character – just like a dream; the Prophet put it in Arabic form through his language" with reference to Q 26:192-195; however, grounded on Q 12:2 – "*Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qurʾān that you might understand*" – al-Māturīdī rejected the foregoing Bāṭinī assumption.[27]

Ahl al-sunna traditionally refused the claim that revelation was sent to the Prophet in the form of pure meaning and called such allegations heresy. The Sunnī view thus intends to refute the Muʿtazilī view of createdness of the Qurʾān and to develop a theory of the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān by describing it as a linguistic miracle in literary terms. The purpose of the latter assumption is to describe the Qurʾān in terms of both meaning and wording and to generate a jurisprudent and faith-related doctrine that Arabic should necessarily be the language of worship in Islam. Nevertheless, our opinion about the content and form of the descent of revelation is

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[26] Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, I, 229-230; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 139.

[27] Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt Ahl al-sunna: Tafsīr al-Māturīdī* (ed. Majdī Bāsallūm; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), I, 517-518; VIII, 85.

closer to that of the philosophers who are categorized as "Bāṭiniyya" by al-Māturīdī, rather than the dominant approach.[28]

The ambiguity and gaps regarding the content and form of the descent of the revelation are also present with regard to issues such as which chapters were revealed in Mecca or Medina, as well as the inner organization and composition of the text of the Qurʾān. Over the twenty years of the revelation process, verses revealed in first decade are called Makkī (from Mecca), while those in the following thirteen years are known as Madanī (from Medina). Nevertheless, there are many disputes regarding how to determine Makkī and Madanī chapters. According to a narrative of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, 27 chapters are Madanī, whereas 87 are Makkī. According to Abū l-Fatḥ Ibn Shīṭā (d. 450/1059), 29 chapters are Madanī, while 85 are Makkī[29]; nevertheless, it is arguable whether the chapters al-Qamar, al-Raḥmān, al-Ikhlāṣ, al-Falaq and al-Nās are Makkī or not. According to Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār (d. 611/1215), 82 chapters are undoubtedly Makkī, and 20 are undoubtedly Madanī, whereas the remaining 12 are disputable.[30]

Such disputes arose due to a lack of interest of the Prophet and Companions in technical issues such as the Makkī or Madanī character of the chapters; accordingly, they arose from a lack of explicit information from him and his Companions. As al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) clearly asserted, the Prophet never said a word about the issue of Makkī-Madanī; moreover, there are no narratives indicating that he ever classified Qurʾān chapters in this regard or told his Companions "Mind that these chapters were sent down to me in Mecca, and those were sent to me in Medina."[31] This lack of direction exists because the Prophet and the Companions conceived the Qurʾān's revelation not as a text to be recorded in terms of time and

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[28] Our views and opinions about the content of revelation will be extensively treated in our books about the history of the textualization of the Qurʾān and relevant problems of historicalness/historicity.

[29] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Funūn al-afnān fī ʿuyūn ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* (ed. Ṣalāḥ ibn Fatḥī Halal; Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 2001), 160.

[30] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 33; Ibn ʿAqīla, *al-Ziyāda wa-l-iḥsān*, I, 206.

[31] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī, *al-Intiṣār li-l-Qurʾān* (ed. Muḥammad ʿIsām Mufliḥ al-Quḍāt; Amman & Beirut: Dār al-Fatḥ li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ & Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2001), I, 247.

place of descent but as a divine guide within their life experiences and struggles against opponents of the invitation to Islam; consequently, the statements/orders in this guide were understood spontaneously and implemented in life practice as natural attitudes and behaviors.

Arrangement of the Qurʾān Text and the Question of Presentation (ʿArḍa)

As is known, the arrangement of chapters within the Qurʾān text from cover to cover is now called the "*Muṣḥaf* arrangement;" in general, the arrangement is attributed to the commission of copiers established under leadership of ʿUthmān. Suitably, it is widely accepted that the arrangement of verses within chapters was undertaken at the discretion of the Prophet and that he established the arrangement at the behest of Gabriel,[32] pursuant to several narratives. Therefore, the arrangement of the verses is made according to divine ordinance (*tawqīfī*). The narratives about presentation (*ʿarḍa*), which indicates mutual recitations by Muḥammad and Gabriel during Ramaḍān of verses and chapters sent down in the relevant year,[33] are used as proof of this general acceptance.

Nevertheless, these narratives, regardless of questions about their authenticity, provide no significant information about the content of *ʿarḍa* (mutual lecture and presentation); instead, they discuss presentation as a very mysterious phenomenon. It is likely that the narratives about presentation were fabricated to fill the gaps with regard to the textualization process of the Qurʾān. Indeed, these narratives include no explanatory information about when the presentation began, how many times it actually occurred over the twenty-three years of descent, who read the Qurʾān during the presentation, how and in which appearance Gabriel participated in the presentation, whether the Companions were present at these sessions or whether Companions such as Ibn Masʿūd and Zayd ibn

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[32] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, I, 57; IV, 218.
[33] See al-Bukhārī, "Badʾ al-waḥy," 5; "Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān," 7; "Badʾ al-khalq," 6; Muslim, "Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba," 98-99.

Thābit, who – according to some narratives – participated in the presentation, saw Gabriel in person.[34]

Grounded on Companions such as ʿĀʾisha and Ibn ʿAbbās, ḥadīth sources relate that the presentation occurred once yearly during Ramaḍān and twice in the final Ramaḍān of Muḥammad; according to the narrative via Abū Hurayra, the Prophet used to confine himself in a mosque (*iʿtikāf*) for ten days every year, but he stayed in the mosque for twenty days in the year of his death.[35]

Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh claimed that the practice of presentation might have begun after the assignment of Ramaḍān as the month of fasting during the Medina period;[36] some researchers, however, have interestingly argued that "the mentioned month was already called Ramaḍān before fasting became an obligation. The month was not called Ramaḍān because of fasting; on the contrary, the fast was rendered an obligation in this month because the latter was already considered sacred."[37]

Prior to Islam, the four months, namely, Dhū l-qaʿda, Dhū l-ḥijja, Muḥarram, and Rajab, were known as "forbidden (*ḥarām*) months" and were considered holy; however, we have no historical data regarding whether Ramaḍān had such a status. Indeed, the importance of Ramaḍān emerged upon the revelation of Q 2:183 and subsequent verses, which designated fasting as a religious obligation. Fasting was made an obligation (*farḍ*) in 2 AH.

In his *Laṭāʾif al-maʿārif*, Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) treated the obligatory or preferable worships and remembrances (*adhkār* [pl. of *dhikr*]) for each month as those of Muḥarram; about Ramaḍān, his writings consisted significantly of rituals such as fasting, Qurʾān

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[34] For comprehensive information and assessment, see Ziya Şen, "Arza ve Mahiyeti," *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 42 (2015), 43-64.

[35] Al-Bukhārī, "Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān," 7; Abū l-Faḍl Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (eds. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Bāz, ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Shibk, and Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī; Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2000), IX, 54-55.

[36] Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh [as Muhammed Hamidullah], *İslâm Peygamberi* (translated into Turkish by Salih Tuğ; Ankara: İmaj İç ve Dış Ticaret, 2003), II, 700.

[37] Ziya Şen, *Kur'an'ın Metinleşme Süreci* (Istanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2007), 120; Muhsin Demirci, *Kur'ân Tarihi* (Istanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2005), 114-115.

chanting, confinement, and worshipping on Night of Power.[38] In contrast to Ramaḍān, the months of Muḥarram and Rajab were considered important and holy as in the Days of Ignorance. Indeed, the history of traditions, such as the fast of ʿĀshūrāʾ and the sacrifice of Rajab, dates from the pre-Islamic era.

In the Days of Ignorance, Ramaḍān was classified among the usual or ordinary months, including Shaʿbān and Shawwāl. Conversely, Arabs in the Days of Ignorance had the tradition of *taḥannuth* in Ramaḍān, as the reclusion of Muḥammad to the Cave of Ḥirāʾ in the same month shows.

Taḥannuth is unclear in terms of significance and concept; many Muslim scholars have explained it as worship (*taʿabbud*) and self-justification (*tabarrur*).[39] According to a narrative related by Ibn Rāhawayh (d. 238/853) and Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038) through ʿĀʾisha, the Prophet's experience of *taḥannuth* in the Cave of Ḥirāʾ during Ramaḍān is explicitly described as *iʿtikāf* (*anna Rasūl Allāh nadhara an yaʿtakifa shahrᵃⁿ bi-Ḥirāʾ*).[40]

Pursuant to a citation by Abū l-Faraj al-Halabī (d. 1044/1635) from ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr, the Prophet used to stay in the Cave of Ḥirāʾ for approximation one month every year. This ritual was a type of continuation of *taḥannuth* practiced by devout Qurayshites during the Days of Ignorance. The Prophet's first retreat to Ḥirāʾ coincided with the times of his marriage to Khadīja. In those days, like his grandfather ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, he used to be engaged in charities, such as providing food for the poor. During the Days of Ignorance, Ḥirāʾ

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[38]　See Abū l-Faraj Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Laṭāʾif al-maʿārif fī-mā li-mawāsim al-ʿām min al-waẓāʾif* (ed. Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās; 5th edn., Damascus & Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1999), 283-388.

[39]　For further information see M. J. Kister, "et-Tehannüs: Kelime Anlamı Üzerine Bir Araştırma" (translated into Turkish by Ali Aksu), *Tasavvuf: İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 2/4 (2000), 215-230.

[40]　Abū Yaʿqūb Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Makhlad Ibn Rāhawayh, *Musnad Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh* (ed. ʿAbd al-Ghafūr ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Ḥusayn Burr al-Balūshī; Medina: Maktabat al-Īmān, 1990-1991), III, 970-971; Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Isḥāq al-Iṣfahānī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (eds. Muḥammad Rawwās Qalʿajī and ʿAbd al-Barr ʿAbbās; 2nd edn., Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1986), I, 215.

was known as a type of hermitage and place of worship for charitable persons; consequently, it had established place for the poor.[41]

Pursuant to these data, the Prophet's self-confinement during Ramaḍān never had a technical purpose, such as reviewing of the Qurʾān's text or, as claimed in several sources, elimination of invalid verses; instead, he retreated to be alone with Allah and to surrender to Him so as to fill himself with spiritual power. Muḥammad must have contemplated and questioned himself about the heavy responsibilities the Qurʾān placed on him; indeed, these facts are emphasized in Q 73:1-10.

In light of the foregoing assessments, narratives about the presentation might be fabricated so as provide ground for the authenticity of the Qurʾān's text and the prescription of its arrangement according to divine ordinance (*tawqīfī*) under the inspiration of the self-confinement (*iʿtikāf*) ritual during Ramaḍān. Self-confinement definitely includes a soft of review; nevertheless, despite the narratives about the presentation, this review is not about correction, redaction or proofreading of the Qurʾān's text but about revision by Muḥammad of his responsibilities as prophet and messenger.

As a narrative from Zayd ibn Thābit, the best known and reliable *riwāya* about the textualization process of the Qurʾān, clearly asserts, Muḥammad never conceived the Qurʾān as a text to legislate for future Muslims. Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain the following response by Abū Bakr upon ʿUmar's suggestion to collect the Qurʾān: "How can I carry out an affair that Rasūl Allāh did not?!" This is why al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) made the following remark: the Qurʾān's verses were not transformed into a collection of sheets between two covers (*muṣḥaf*) during the lifetime of Muḥammad. Because such a process would require continuous changes in the arrangement of the text, the collection of the Qurʾān as a written text was delayed until the end of the descent period. Following the death of the Prophet, the collection and reproduction were performed by

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[41]   Abū l-Faraj Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Burhān al-Dīn ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥalabī, *Insān al-ʿuyūn fī sīrat al-Amīn al-Maʾmūn* (*al-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya*), (3rd edn., Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Azhariyya, 1932), I, 271-272.

Companions such as Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān.[42]

During the thirteen-year Mecca period, there was no solid information about when and how the Qurʾān was first textualized, let alone whether the presentation actually occurred between the Prophet and Gabriel every Ramaḍān. Apparently, Muslim scholars constructed a retrospective history to prove the traditional conviction that not a single word in the Qurʾān changed until our day; thus, they opted for a history of the Qurʾān without allowing for any gaps or obscurities.

For us, the arrangement of verses into smaller chapters, mostly descended in Mecca, was made according to divine ordinance (*tawqīfī)* as the interval letters (*fāṣila)* and rhymes (*sajʿ*) show. Moreover, the Qurʾān is a text said during prayers such as *ṣalāt* since the very beginning. Therefore, many chapters and verses must be said in a certain order at least. Accordingly, the verses and/or verse groups in more voluminous chapters about multiple, extended incidents, such as al-Baqara, Āl ʿImrān, and al-Nisāʾ, were probably arranged in an *ijtihādī* (through independent reasoning) manner, in other words, at the discretion of the copiers.

This argument seems even stronger because many verses in longer chapters, such as al-Baqara, Āl ʿImrān, al-Nisāʾ, and al-Māʾida, for example, Q 2:238-239 have a wording and meaning structure unsuitable for establishing a connection via priority-subsequence. The same possibility includes disputes during the collection and reproduction of the Qurʾān regarding the determination of the places of verses, such as Q 33:23 and/or Q 9:128-129, which are subsequently noticed or uttered near a single Companion, or questions about the probability of arranging such verses as a separate chapter.[43]

Various narratives through the Companions have indicated that the Qurʾān was generally revealed in groups of four or five verses and passages. According to hundreds of narratives about the reasons for its descent, the verses were sent down in separate passages, in

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[42] Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, I, 262.

[43] See al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, I, 49; Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʿath Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif* (ed. Arthur Jeffery; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937), 30-31.

connection with incidents during the revelation period. Therefore, the arrangement of verses in voluminous chapters such as al-Baqara and Āl ʿImrān might have been established by bringing together various passages about a main theme as much as possible. For example, it is well known that first 100 verses in al-Baqara are about the Jews of Medina, while the first 80 verses in Āl ʿImrān treat the Christians of Najrān.[44] Thus, verses in the aforementioned sections of al-Baqara and Āl ʿImrān might, at first glance, address different themes; nevertheless, because the main theme and addressees are the same, it was considered reasonable to arrange them with a type of interior integrity, and the organization must have been realized in this manner.

This evaluation also applies for several voluminous Madanī chapters, such as al-Nisāʾ, al-Māʾida, al-Nūr, al-Aḥzāb, and others. For instance, chapter al-Aḥzāb was sent down in various passages coincident with numerous incidents over a couple of months: it covers the smear campaign by polytheists, hypocrites, and the Jews of Medina against Muḥammad and believers at the time of Battle of the Trench (*Ghazwat al-khandaq*), also known as the Battle of Confederates (*Ghazwat al-aḥzāb*), which began on 7 Shawwāl 5 AH (1 March 627) and ended on 1 Dhū l-Qaʿda 5 AH (24 March 627). Although the chapter is primarily about the Battle of the Trench, it also treats, as its name suggests, in various verse groups (between, for example, 30 and 34 and between 5 and 62), the marriage of the Prophet to Zaynab bint Jaḥsh, the Battle of Banū l-Muṣṭaliq (2 Shaʿbān 5 AH/27 December 626 - 1 Ramaḍān 5 AH/24 January 627), and the disturbance due to the *Ifk* incident.

Reports of the determination by Muḥammad of the exact place of verses in relevant chapters are also controversial and require a cautious approach. Hence, it does not seem reasonable to rely on narratives such as "Whenever several verses were revealed to Rasūl Allāh, he called one of the revelation clerks and told them, 'Place these verses in that part of the chapter with so-and-so theme'"[45] or "Rasūl Allāh said: 'Gabriel came to me and ordered me to place a

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[44]   Abū Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya* (eds. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ Shalabī; Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 2004), II, 131; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, III, 162.

[45]   Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, IX, 29, 52.

verse into that part of so-and-so chapter'"[46] to claim that the Prophet personally established the arrangement of all of the verses, on the one hand, while arguing that, during the collection process in the time of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and Zayd ibn Thābit went to the mosque and said, "Whoever has a written verse with him should bring them to us together with two witnesses," on the other hand, does not seem reasonable.

If the Prophet, in person, determined the place of each verse of the Qurʾān in the relevant chapter, the arrangement of the Qurʾān should have been arranged at the time of revelation, and the Qurʾān would have been an organized text as early as during Muḥammad's lifetime. Nevertheless, the collection process, which began with the suggestion by ʿUmar and with the initially hesitative but later convicted attitude of Abū Bakr, shows that this was not the case.

Consequently, we believe that the conventional opinions and general acceptance about arrangement were only determined afterward. Moreover, according to some narratives, ʿUmar and Zayd ibn Thābit collected Qurʾān verses from palm branches, fine stones, and memories of people on the condition of the testimony of two men, while according to others, Abū Bakr assigned twenty-five men from Quraysh and fifty among Anṣār and ordered them, "Put the Qurʾān on paper and submit it to Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ, for he is fluent in Arabic."[47]

In contrast, some other narratives indicate that the verses were arranged in *ijtihādī* and not *tawqīfī* manner. For example, one narrative reads that Khuzayma ibn Thābit or Abū Khuzayma al-Anṣārī brought two verses, whereupon ʿUmar said, "If there were three of these verses, I would turn them into a new chapter; search for a (suitable) chapter in the Qurʾān and place these two verses in it." Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) offered the following assessment: "As this narrative apparently puts forth, the Companions arranged/amended verses in chapters pursuant to their own conceptions. However, other narratives show that the Companions

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[46] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, IV, 218.

[47] Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Yaʿqūb ibn Jaʿfar ibn Wahb al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī* (ed. ʿAbd al-Amīr ʿAlī Mahnā; Beirut: Sharikat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 2010), II, 22.

had no discretion about the arrangement of verses except for divine ordinance (*tawqīf*)."[48]

Another narrative relates that Zayd ibn Thābit undertook a lengthy search for Q 33:23 and finally found it from Khuzayma;[49] yet another narrative allows for the following indications by Yūsuf ibn Māhak: "I was with ʿĀʾisha, the mother of believers. Then a man from Iraq appeared and said, 'O, the mother of believers! Show me your own *muṣḥaf*. ʿĀʾisha asked why, whereupon the ʿIrāqī responded, 'I must compile/arrange the Qurʾān pursuant to your *muṣḥaf* because the Qurʾān is read without proper arrangement and order.' ʿĀʾisha gave the following answer: 'You can read or recite regardless of which chapter (*sūra*, passage) in the Qurʾān preceded it; that is all right.'"[50]

For Ibn Ḥajar, the question by the ʿIrāqī to ʿĀʾisha is about the arrangement of chapters, before adding that it might also be about the individual determination of verses in each chapter, based on the phrase "ʿĀʾisha had him write verses in chapters (*fa-amlat ʿalayhi āy al-suwar*)" in the ḥadīth.[51]

Narratives about the *tawqīfī* character of arrangement of verses are authentic in terms of certitude; however, they might be specifically about the arrangement of several passages or verse groups within voluminous chapters. Indeed, it seems neither realistic nor persuasive that Muḥammad ordered individual assignments for each verse in chapters as voluminous as al-Baqara, Āl ʿImrān, al-Nisāʾ, al-Māʾida, al-Tawba, etc., which were sent down at various times during ten-year Medina period, even before their completion.

The view on the *ijtihādī* arrangement of verse groups in larger chapters can also be refuted, based on the Prophet having been used to reciting the Qurʾān in prayers and that he could not have done so if the verses were not in a certain order. Nonetheless, remember that these chapters were not sent down at once; therefore, neither the Prophet nor the Companions recited them as a whole from the very beginning. In addition, Muḥammad reportedly advised keeping recital during prayers as short as possible; accordingly, he most

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48   Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, IX, 20.

49   Al-Bukhārī, "Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān," 3.

50   Al-Bukhārī, "Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān," 6.

51   Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, IX, 50.

probably did not recite chapters of dozens of pages, such as al-Baqara, Āl ʿImrān, al-Nisāʾ, and al-Māʾida, during ṣalāt, especially with the community.

Regarding the arrangement of verses, in agreement with the opinions of most scholars, *Muṣḥaf*, which begins with al-Fātiḥa and ends with al-Nās, was arranged through *ijtihād* by the Companions.[52] Under this arrangement, al-Fātiḥa is placed in the beginning like a soft of preface, while the subsequent 113 chapters, we can say, are ordered from longer to shorter or larger to smaller. Nonetheless, some scholars have defended that the arrangement of chapters is not *ijtihādī* but *tawqīfī*. The narratives, which include the information that the Prophet classified chapters as *al-sabʿ al-ṭiwāl* (seven long chapters), *miʾūn* (those with approximately one hundred verses), and *mathānī* (with fewer than a hundred verses)[53] seem to support the *tawqīfī* argument; nevertheless, such narratives should also be cautiously treated. If the organization of chapters depended on the notification and determination by Muḥammad, asked about placing the chapter al-Anfāl in the eighth position although it is shorter and smaller than al-Tawba, as well as the lack of Basmala in the beginning of the latter, ʿUthmān would not have given the following answer reported by al-Bāqillānī:

> Because the chapters al-Anfāl and al-Tawba are similar in terms of content (theme and expression), I considered al-Tawba to be a continuation of al-Anfāl; Rasūl Allāh passed away before giving us any explanations about these chapters. Therefore, I placed the two consecutively in *muṣḥaf* but did not separate them with Basmala.[54]

Conversely, there are several narratives about disputes over some verses, such as Q 33:23 and Q 9:128-129, during the activities of the copying committee under the presidency of Zayd ibn Thābit; some of these narratives are given in *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875), which are considered authentic

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[52] Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Zubayr al-Gharnāṭī, *al-Burhān fī tartīb suwar al-Qurʾān* (ed. Muḥammad Shaʿbanī; n.p.: al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1990), 182; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 194.

[53] Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām, *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān wa-maʿālimuhᵘ wa-ādābuhᵘ* (ed. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Khayyāṭī; n.p.: al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1995), II, 29.

[54] Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Intiṣār*, I, 281-282.

and prestigious works in the Sunnī tradition. In addition, there are reportedly authentic/reliable narratives about the presence of the "*rajm* verse" and some texts that are allegedly verses. Accordingly, it is known that the private *muṣḥaf* of Ibn Masʿūd, the famous Companion, did not include the chapters of al-Fātiḥa and al-Muʿawwidhatayn (al-Falaq and al-Nās), while in the private *muṣḥaf* of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, there are Qunūt prayers, as well as two other chapters, called al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd, in addition to 114 chapters. Moreover, it is controversial whether al-Fīl and Quraysh, al-Ḍuḥā and al-Inshirāḥ collectively constitute one chapter or are individual chapters.[55]

In addition, the position of Basmala in *muṣḥaf* and the lack of Basmala at the beginning of al-Tawba have always been controversial issues. Moreover, there have been disputes about the number of verses in the Qurʾān and in individual chapters. According to relevant sources, the Qurʾān consists of 6000, 6204 (counted by experts in al-Baṣra), 6210 (counted by experts in Mecca, via Ubayy ibn Kaʿb), 6214 (final count by experts in Medina), 6216 (via Ibn ʿAbbās), 6217 (first count by experts in Medina), 6219, 6225, 6226 (counted by experts in Damascus), and 6236 (counted by experts in al-Kūfa) verses.[56]

For al-Suyūṭī, the number of verses in all of the chapters is controversial pursuant to different counts by experts in Mecca, Medina, Damascus, al-Baṣra, and al-Kūfa, except for forty chapters, so much so that there are two different enumerations in Medina, based on Abū Jaʿfar Yazīd ibn al-Qaʿqāʾ (d. 130/748) and Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar Ibn Abī Kathīr (d. 180/797), respectively. The former is called the "first enumeration by experts in Medina (*ʿadad ahl al-Madīna al-awwal*)," while the latter is known as the "final/later enumeration by experts in Medina (*ʿadad ahl al-Madīna al-akhīr*)." According to the chain of narratives, the enumeration by experts in Mecca is attributed to the Companion Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, the enumeration in Damascus is attributed to Abū l-Dardāʾ, the enumeration in al-Kūfa is attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the enumeration in al-Baṣra is attributed to the

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55   Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, I, 251; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 204-217.

56   Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dānī, *al-Bayān fī ʿadd āy al-Qurʾān* (ed. Ghānim Qaddūrī al-Ḥamad; Kuwait: Manshūrat Markaz al-Makhṭūṭāt wa-l-Turāth wa-l-Wathāʾiq, 1994), 79-82; al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, I, 249.

follower (*tābiʿī*) Abū l-Mushajjar ʿĀṣim al-Juḥdarī (d. 128/746).[57] In the light of all these data, the number of verses in chapters is controversial even among the Companions.

Although the Qurʾān's verses reportedly descended at different times for different reasons, and many verse groups, particularly in longer chapters, are disconnected in terms of expression and relation, some exegetes, such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480) in the classical period and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (d. 1997) in the modern era, have asserted that each verse has a strict relationship with another verse or group of verses, and each chapter has a strict bond to another chapter or chapters pursuant to literal *iʿjāz,* which we consider to be an exaggerated approach; these exegetes have even developed a sub-discipline called *al-tanāsub bayna l-āyāt wa-l-suwar* or *tanāsub al-āy wa-l-suwar* (harmony among the verses and chapters of the Qurʾān) within the scope of sciences of the Qurʾān (*ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*). In return, al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834) and some other exegetes have considered these efforts, such as comprehensive studies about *tanāsub* by al-Biqāʿī, to be useless preoccupations, indicating that they are "unacceptable views about the book of Allah."

Following the anecdote about Adam and heaven in Q 2:30-39, verse 40 begins to treat the story of Moses and the Israelites; al-Shawkānī extensively analyzed the relationship between these two groups of verses. According to him, the Qurʾān's verses, which were sent down for twenty-years with regard to countless incidents, naturally comprise controversies rather than connections between them. Different verses might declare the same thing to be *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* in different periods; some verses are about believers, while some are about disbelievers, past communities, or people and groups at the time of revelation; some verses treat worship, whereas some deal with practical issues; some are about incentives while some seek to frighten, and some treat torment and reward. Al-Shawkānī argued that not only the longer and voluminous chapters but also the medium-sized chapters were sent down upon various incidents pursuant to historical context.

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[57] Al-Dānī, *al-Bayān*, 67-71; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 211. Abū ʿAmr al- Dānī (d. 444/1053) also mentions a seventh enumeration extracted from Khālid ibn Maʿdān (d. 103/721) the famous *tābiʿī* from Homs. See al-Dānī, *al-Bayān*, 70.

According to al-Shawkānī, the search for a relationship between verses or chapters is based on the assumption that the revelation of the Qurʾān follows a path in parallel with the *muṣḥaf* arrangement. However, anyone more or less interested in and informed about the Qurʾān knows that this is not the case. Chapters like al-ʿAlaq, al-Muddaththir and al-Muzzammil are reportedly among the earliest to descend; they are, however, located in the latter parts of the *muṣḥaf*.

It is well known that al-ʿAlaq, al-Muddaththir and al-Muzzammil were the first revealed chapters; they are, however, located in the latter parts of the book. Therefore, the search for relationships between verses and chapters is based not on the revelation order of the Qurʾān but on the order established by the Companions during the activities of collection and dictation. Consequently, it is useless and barren to preoccupy oneself with the problem of *tanāsub al-āy wa-l-suwar*. Allah characterized the Qurʾān in Arabic and sent his *kalām* in line with the linguistic traditions of Arabs. For instance, an Arabian speaker touches upon various subjects during a speech. The modes of address, expression, and style in the Qurʾān are similar.[58]

The Qurʾān, as a whole, is evidently a consistent and related text in itself. Indeed, the greatest objective and cause for the Qurʾān are unity and justice, while it essentially seeks to abolish polytheism and cruelty. The Qurʾān is related to these two themes from beginning to the end. Nevertheless, the relationship indicated in *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* literature regards the semantic connection between the passages of a text written at a desk. Such connections can be established between many verses and even successive chapters. However, there is no such necessity within the arrangement of the book; in addition, connections discovered through reasonable deductions are not necessarily signs of literal inimitability (*iʿjāz*).

Question of *Nuzūl* Order

Despite all of the disputes over the collection of the Qurʾān, it is beyond any doubt that the *muṣḥaf* was arranged at the time of ʿUthmān, and since then, this arrangement has been conveyed successively through recital and writing. In contrast, it is impossible

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[58] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-qadīr al-jāmiʿ bayna fannay al-riwāya wa-l-dirāya min ʿilm al-tafsīr* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, n.d.), I, 72-73.

to say the same thing about the revelation order of the Qurʾān. Relevant references provide various revelation orders attributed to Companions, Followers or subsequent scholars, such as ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās and Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr, or even to Jābir ibn Zayd (d. 93/712), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), or al-Wāqidī (d. 159/776 ?).[59] Some recent studies have discussed a revelation order attributed to ʿUthmān; nevertheless, no references have been provided for such arrangement.[60]

Interestingly enough, the arrangement order attributed to ʿUthmān is identical to the arrangement that constitutes the basis of *al-Tafsīr al-ḥadīth* by ʿIzzat Darwaza. Darwaza, however, does not attribute this arrangement to ʿUthmān; instead, he provides notes of information on the chapters with regard to time and place of revelation in the *muṣḥaf* written by the calligrapher Muṣṭafā Naẓīf Kadırgalī and published by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad Ḥanafī, together with a statement by the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior and approval of Egyptian Qurʾān scholars.

This *muṣḥaf* was also published a few times in Istanbul before and after the rule of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II, before becoming popular

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59 See Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb Ibn al-Ḍurays, *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān wa-mā unzila min al-Qurʾān bi-Makka wa-mā unzila bi-l-Madīna* (ed. ʿUrwa Badīr; Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1987), 33-34; Abū l-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist* (ed. Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān; 2nd edn., Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1997), 42-43; Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Nisābūrī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā faḍl ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* (ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm Kāẓim al-Rāḍī), *al-Mawrid: Majalla Turāthiyya Faṣliyya* 17/4 (1988), 307; Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa wa-maʿrifat aḥwāl ṣāḥib al-sharīʿa* (ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Amīn Qalʿajī; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988), VII, 142-144; al-Dānī, *al-Bayān*, 135; Abū ʿAlī al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), X, 164-165; Abū l-Fatḥ Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Mafātīḥ al-asrār wa-maṣābīḥ al-abrār* (ed. Muḥammad Ādharshab; Tehran: Mīrāth Maktūb, 2008), I, 19-13; al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, I, 193; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 81-83; Arthur Jeffery (ed.), *Muqaddimatān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān: wa-humā muqaddimat Kitāb al-mabānī wa-muqaddimat Ibn ʿAṭiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1954), 8-13; Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ Ḍāmin, *Nuṣūṣ muḥaqqaqa fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān al-karīm* (Baghdad: Markaz Jamāʿat Mājid li-l-Thaqāfa, 1991), 88-93.

60 İsmail Cerrahoğlu, *Tefsîr Usûlü* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1983), 86-87.

across the entire Muslim world. The same *muṣḥaf* was published several times in Egypt. Darwaza explained why he based the arrangement of descent on this version as follows: "In this *Muṣḥaf*, the indications of the succession of a certain chapter after another prove that the committee of scholars who examined and approved the version have assessed various narratives and determined preferences among them before deciding on the order of revelation." [61] He also emphasized that some chapters are contradictory to the mentioned arrangement with regard to the time of revelation.

The rough uniformity of various revelation arrangements in *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, exegeses and history books could be considered evidence for the sameness of their sources. Most probably, this source is Ibn ʿAbbās. Indeed, various works have attributed different arrangements of revelation to Ibn ʿAbbās. The arrangements attributed to Jābir ibn Zayd and Abū Ṣāliḥ also likely belong to Ibn ʿAbbās because Jābir ibn Zayd was a disciple of Ibn ʿAbbās who praised him, saying "Once you have Jābir with you, why do you come to me to ask questions?"[62] Regarding Abū Ṣāliḥ ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ṣāliḥ, he was the most reliable narrator of several narratives about exegesis that are attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās.

It is difficult to rely on the accuracy and validity of the revelation order in classical sources. As Darwaza indicated, there is no revelation order that extends over the lifetime of the Prophet. In addition, information in narratives makes contradictory statements about the Makkī or Madanī character of several chapters. According to some narratives, al-Raʿd, al-Ḥajj, al-Raḥmān, al-Insān, al-Zalzala, al-Falaq, al-Nās, al-Ikhlāṣ, al-Kawthar, Quraysh, al-ʿAṣr, al-ʿĀdiyāt, al-Qadr, al-Muṭaffifīn and al-Fātiḥa are classified as Makkī, while some others considered them Madanī.[63]

Such disputes arise from the insufficiency of information about when and upon which incident the chapters and verse groups were

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[61] Muḥammad ʿIzzat Darwaza, *al-Tafsīr al-ḥadīth* (Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2008), I, 12-14, 17.

[62] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUthmān al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (eds. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf et al.; 2nd edn., Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1981-1988), IV, 482.

[63] Darwaza, *al-Tafsīr al-ḥadīth*, I, 125.

sent down. Moreover, not all of the verses of the Qurʾān were sent for definite reasons. Pursuant to the findings of scholars, only approximately 500 verses descended due to a particular reason for revelation. For Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (d. 1176/1762) and certain other scholars, a large number of narratives that relate motives of revelation in exegesis do not provide the actual reason for the revelation; instead, they are exegesis-related narratives to establish connections between verses and subsequent incidents or to interpret such incidents in light of the verses.[64]

Commentaries and Islamic biographies provide very little information about the incidents that led to the revelation of particularly the Makkī chapters and verses or the historical environments around these incidents because, during his thirteen years in Mecca, Muḥammad struggled for survival against polytheists and thus considered the Qurʾān as divine guidance to transform man and society in daily life, rather than a text to be legislated for future Muslim generations. The same interpretation also pertains to his Companions. Moreover, the generation of Companions never construed the Qurʾān's revelation to be a text independent from the Prophet and his Sunna.

Muḥammad did not consider the Qurʾān to be a text to be collected into a book and legislated for posterity in this format. One of the strongest pieces of evidence for this fact is the famous narrative of Zayd ibn Thābit, which tells how the activity of the collection of the Qurʾān began during the caliphate of Abū Bakr. According to the narrative, because a great number of ḥāfiẓ Companions were martyred during the Battle of al-Yamāma and other wars, ʿUmar feared that the Qurʾān might disappear from public memory, whereupon he offered to Caliph Abū Bakr to collect the Qurʾān as a written text. Abū Bakr was, however, initially hesitant regarding such an activity, asking "How could I do something that Rasūl Allāh did not?"[65]

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[64] Abū ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Quṭb al-Dīn Shāh Walī Allāh Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Dihlawī, *al-Fawz al-kabīr fī uṣūl al-tafsīr* (Damascus: Dār al-Ghawthānī li-l-Dirāsāt al-Qurʾāniyya, 2008), 69-70.

[65] Al-Bukhārī, "Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān," 3.

Regarding the arrangement of revelation, we must be doubtful about the soundness of different revelation arrangements, which, in particular, belong to Ibn ʿAbbās. As is known, commentaries that based on narratives provide many incompatible reasons from Ibn ʿAbbās for revelations about the same verse; similarly, there are many controversial explanations for numerous verses and wordings. Narratives including that of Ibn ʿAbbās have created significant confusion in exegeses of the Qurʾān because they relate several explanations for the interpretation of almost every verse; accordingly, al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) had to indicate that, among the information from Ibn ʿAbbās, nothing is solid but for approximately a hundred news (*khabar*).[66] Consequently, although critics of ḥadīth and narratives attempted to evaluate, in terms of documentation/authenticity, exegetic lines attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, such studies could not eliminate the aforementioned confusion.[67]

Indeed, it is unclear whether Ibn ʿAbbās obtained information about the revelation order of the Qurʾān's chapters from the Prophet or from a Companion such as ʿAlī or whether he established the arrangement personally based on his own knowledge and competence. If the revelation arrangements provided by Ibn ʿAbbās were based on his personal ideas and convictions, they would be, as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981) noted, valuable arrangements but reliable only in a self-proclaimed manner.[68] In contrast, considering that Ibn ʿAbbās was born three years prior to the Hegira and was a 12-to 13-year-old boy at the time of the death of Muḥammad, he is unlikely to have witnessed the times or circumstances of the revelation of the Qurʾān's chapters.

In brief, various revelation arrangements indicated in classical sources cannot provide precise or final information about the chronology of the descent of chapters. At this point, one can only provide rough and general information about whether a chapter is Makkī or Madanī. However, for such a categorization, it is necessary not to based it on individual narratives but to attempt to establish a

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[66] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, II, 1233.

[67] See Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-l-mufassirūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam, n.d.), I, 53-56.

[68] Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *İslam'da Kur'an* (translated into Turkish by Ahmed Erdinç; Istanbul: Bir Yayıncılık, 1988), 129.

relationship between the information in relevant narratives, social circumstances during the Mecca and Medina periods, and the content of chapters; accordingly, one should search and scan earlier biographies and battle histories.

Conversely, the revelation arrangement of many, particularly Madanī, chapters includes interpenetration. For instance, several references have indicated al-Baqara to be the first chapter to be sent down in Medina. In contrast, some narratives have indicated verses 278, 281, and 282 of al-Baqara to be the last verses revealed. [69] Therefore, al-Baqara was sent down in passages over ten-year period in Medina; in the process, the revelation of chapters such as Āl ʿImrān, al-Nisāʾ, al-Māʾida, al-Anfāl, and al-Tawba also continued in a similar manner.

Moreover, during the first years after the Hegira, many significant incidents, such as the change of Qibla (2 AH), the command of fasting during Ramaḍān (2 AH), Expeditionary force (*sariyya*) of Baṭn al-nakhla (2 AH), Patrol of al-Abwāʾ (2 AH), Patrol of Buwāṭ (2 AH), Patrol of Dhū l-ʿUshayra (2 AH), Expulsion of Banū Qaynuqāʿ (2 AH), Battle of al-Sawīq (2 AH), Battle against Banū Ghaṭafān (3 AH), Battle of Banū Sulaym (3 AH), Battle of Uḥud (3 AH), Battle of Ḥamrāʾ al-asad (3 AH), Expedition of al-Rajīʿ (4 AH), Expedition of Biʾr Maʿūna (4 AH), and Siege of Banū Naḍīr (4 AH), occurred, and verses about some of these events are scattered over various chapters, such as al-Baqara, Āl ʿImrān, al-Anfāl, and al-Ḥashr.

For a complete and flawless revelation order, verses and various verse groups about foregoing incidents should be chronologically sorted; however, we lack sufficient and satisfactory information to provide such an arrangement. In addition, it is arguable how useful it would be to arrange a Qurʾān text without integrity, in contrast to the current *muṣḥaf* organization. In brief, the conventional arrangements, which position al-Baqara first among the Madanī chapters, are mostly arbitrary and have no function other than providing a rough idea about the revelation process of the Qurʾān.

For us, it is vital to know deeply the attitudes of the Prophet for better understanding of transformative messages for individuals and the community in the Qurʾān, as well as to analyze the Book in this

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[69]   See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, I, 86-87; Ibn ʿAqīla, *al-Ziyāda wa-l-iḥsān*, I, 180.

regard, because the message of the Qurʾān is interpenetrated with the life experiences of Muḥammad and his Companions. Therefore, knowledge about the true stories of addressees in the beginning is very important for a better understanding of the Qurʾān's messages for humanity and for a higher sense of what the Qurʾān wants us to feel. However, such understanding and conception cannot be obtained through rough arrangements about revelation; therefore, it is impossible to achieve such an understanding through the reading of translations prepared pursuant to such a revelation order. For this purpose, a scientific exegesis, which emphasizes the attitude of the Prophet and incidents in his lifetime, seems necessary.

History of Studies on the *Nuzūl* Order

There are multiple revelation arrangements in the tafsīr and ʿulūm al-Qurʾān literature; in the classical era, this variety was overlooked and considered unnecessary, and the *muṣḥaf* arrangement was used as a basis. Nevertheless, the introduction to exegeses of chapters included brief references regarding whether the relevant chapter is Makkī or Madanī. Connections with the non-textual context of the Qurʾān were mostly established through narratives about issues such as *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *nāsikh-mansūkh*; passages lacking any narrative about the reason for their descent were generally interpreted in consideration of history and articulation.

Obedience to the *muṣḥaf* arrangement in the classical exegetic tradition might have been due to the holiness attributed to the *muṣḥaf* arrangement in a sense and acceptance of this arrangement as a type of miracle pursuant to relevant indications in the ʿulūm al-Qurʾān literature; in contrast, it might be in line with the principle in tafsīr and *fiqh* that "reliance is based not on the particularity of cause but on the universality of wording."

Recently, the process and order of *nuzūl* of the Qurʾān have become a popular and interesting subject in the Muslim world. One of the probable factors underlying this tendency might be the influence of Orientalist approaches on Qurʾānic studies as a reflection of the multidimensional defeat of the Muslim world by the West. Orientalist works by, for example, Gustav Weil (d. 1889), William Muir (d. 1905), Theodor Nöldeke (d. 1930), Hartwig Hirschfeld (d. 1934), Richard Bell (d. 1952), and Régis Blachère (d. 1973), have mostly considered the Qurʾān as a text generated by Muḥammad; accordingly, they have attempted to read and understand the Qurʾān

as an autobiography of Muḥammad. Consequently, the Qurʾān text has been regarded as significant evidence about the life experience and psychology of Muḥammad.

The division of the Qurʾān text with regard to revelation as a historical document intends to analyze the psychology of Muḥammad, on the one hand, and to follow the progress of Islam, on the other hand. Nevertheless, the conventional *muṣḥaf* arrangement does not actually serve the use of the Qurʾān as a historical reference because it includes neither a thematic nor chronological composition. For the utilization of the Qurʾān text as a historical document, the chapters and verse groups should be appropriately dated to establish a chronological order of revelation.[70]

Modern translations and exegetic works based on revelation order have primarily emerged from India and Egypt; this fact might be shown as proof for the influence and inspiration of the Orientalist tradition. Certainly, India and Egypt are Muslim regions that have been subjected to Western invasions. In his English translation of the Qurʾān first published in 1911 on the Indian subcontinent, Mīrzā Abū l-Faḍl (d. 1956) arranged the chapters pursuant to their order of revelation grounded on Nöldeke's arrangement, except for two chapters. Then again, Mawlānā Muḥammad ʿAlī (d. 1951), the leader of the Qādiyānīs in Lahore, on the Indian subcontinent, attempted to date chapters of the Qurʾān. First, in the prologue of his *The Holy Qurʾān with English Translation and Commentary* in 1917, there was a title entitled "Makkī and Madanī Chapters," in which he divided the Makkī chapters into three sub-periods and the Madanī chapters into four sub-periods.

Mawlānā Yaʿqūb Ḥasan Saʿīd (d. 1940) was another personality to have published a similar translation-exegesis in India. Yaʿqūb, who was imprisoned by the invading British and remained in jail between 1921 and 1923, studied the Qurʾān in the process and finally published two works, *Kitāb al-hudā* and *Kashf al-hudā*. These works, which included exegeses of verses on several themes, considered the revelation process.

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[70] For further information see Hadiye Ünsal, *Erken Dönem Mekki Surelerin Tahlili* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2015), 98-119; Ömer Özsoy, *Kur'an ve Tarihsellik Yazıları* (Ankara: Kitâbiyât Yayınları, 2004), 151-164.

Many Egyptian Muslim scholars and researchers were also interested in the arrangement and exegesis of the Qurʾān pursuant to the chronology of revelation. For instance, Yūsuf Rashīd wrote an article in the 1950s about the necessity to arrange the Qurʾān pursuant to the chronology of revelation. Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz (d. 1958) wrote another paper to criticize the aforementioned article, defending the necessity of obedience to the *muṣḥaf* arrangement.[71] Due to concerns emphasized by such and similar debates, Muḥammad ʿIzzat Darwaza opted to obtain a *fatwā* from Abū l-Yusr ʿĀbidīn and al-Sheikh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda on the admissibility of exegetic writing pursuant to revelation order before beginning to write his exegesis entitled *al-Tafsīr al-ḥadīth* (Damascus 1961-1963), which was based on revelation order.

Apart from Darwaza, the ʿIrāqī ʿAbd al-Qādir Mullā Ḥuwaysh (d. 1980) also realized an exegesis pursuant to the revelation order of the Qurʾān and published it under the title of *Bayān al-maʿānī* (Damascus 1962-1968) in six volumes. The fifteen-volume *Maʿārij al-tafakkur wa-daqāʾiq al-tadabbur* by the Syrian ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ḥabannaka al-Maydānī (d. 2004) is a similar work. Al-Maydānī completed the exegesis of the Makkī chapters; nevertheless, he did not live long enough to write exegeses of the Madanī chapters. Asʿad Aḥmad ʿAlī, born in Latakia, Syria, in 1937, also organized his *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-murattab* pursuant to the revelation order.[72]

Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī was another modern Muslim academician who prepared an exegesis in line with the revelation order. In his three-volume commentary, entitled *Fahm al-Qurʾān al-ḥakīm*, al-Jābirī followed the principle of explaining and commenting on the Qurʾān in line with opinions. His work comprised genuine and accurate findings and determinations; nevertheless, his mind-blowing interpretations, such as "carrying on with a partner prior to sexual intercourse and stroking the skin of the woman gently in

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[71] See Muhammed Abdullah Draz, "Kur'ân-ı Kerîm'in Nüzûl Sırasına Göre Tertîb Edilmesi Teklifine Edebî Eleştiri" (translated into Turkish by Ahmed Nedim Serinsu), *Kur'an Mesajı: İlmi Araştırmalar Dergisi* 2/19-20-21 (1999), 191-209.

[72] For comprehensive information and assessment about these works, see Ṭāhā Muḥammad Fāris, *Tafāsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm ḥasaba tartīb al-nuzūl* (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ, 2011), 423-922.

preparation for sexual intercourse" for the word *ḍaraba*[73] in the section about the expression *wa-ḍribūhunna* in Q 3:34, overshadowed the scientific worth of the work.

Similar studies were conducted in Turkey during the Republican Era. One of them was entitled *Beyânu'l-Hak: Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Nüzul Sırasına Göre Tefsiri* by the late M. Zeki Duman. *Kur'an Yolu İniş Sırasına Göre Anlam ve Tefsiri* by Şâban Piriş and the eleven-volume *Nüzul Sırasına Göre Tebyînu'l-Kur'an İşte Kur'an* (Istanbul 2008-2010) by Hakkı Yılmaz can be mentioned in the same category. In addition to the foregoing, many Turkish translations have been published in line with the revelation order.

One of the main factors underlying all of these works is the modern Muslim view that the Qurʾān is a self-sufficient source, as well as the formation of a serious awareness of the distance among Sunna, ḥadīth, and tradition. In this regard, it is ironic that the problem of translation and exegesis according to revelation order, which necessarily requires the consideration of the Prophet and his attitudes, is popular especially in circles adopting a Qurʾān-based approach to Islam.

Most probably, the tendency among advocates of Qurʾān-based Islam toward exegesis pursuant to revelation order is about exploring a new field as a palliative approach to the problems of stringency and restrictedness due to countless repetitive lectures on the Qurʾān in the *muṣḥaf* arrangement and lack of other satisfactory religious references. Otherwise, it is not explicable to omit any reference except for the Qurʾān as the source of religion and religious provisions, on the one hand, while planning to read it pursuant to its own history of revelation and attitudes, on the other.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

We can hardly discuss unanimously accepted revelation order or the arrangement of the Qurʾān. Moreover, it does not seem possible to establish such an arrangement in the light of the extant data. Above all, we lack sufficient information and knowledge about when every

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[73] See Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī, *Fahm al-Qurʾān al-ḥakīm: al-Tafsīr al-wāḍiḥ ḥasaba tartīb al-nuzūl* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2009), III, 222, 251-252.

Qurʾān verse and chapter were transmitted. The reliability of the present data is contestable. Indeed, various revelation arrangements, provided by Companions and Followers, display significant differences; moreover, they are problematic in terms of documentation/certitude.

This being the case, we have observed an increasing tendency for understanding and interpreting the Qurʾān pursuant to the chronology of revelation. Regarding translations and exegeses, the preparation of or a lecture about a translation or exegesis pursuant to the revelation order does not provide the expected advantage or efficacy; furthermore, the intention for reading a translation undertaken in agreement with the revelation order remains unclear for us.

In case such a reading aims at obtaining a grasp of messages in the Qurʾān about humanity, the same can definitely be obtained through a *muṣḥaf*-based arrangement. In case the objective is to learn better the experiences and struggles of Muḥammad as a prophet, one must refer to exegeses, ḥadīth sources, biographies, and history books for that purpose.

Lists of the *nuzūl* order are available in various sources; nevertheless, they have no greater function than providing restricted information and a rough idea about the time of the revelation of chapters. In fact, such lists might be helpful for an exegesis that seeks to understand and explain the Qurʾān within its peculiar context of descent and to interpret it for modern humanity. Arrangements in such a study might indeed be functional for determining the semantic restrictions and extension of the meaning of wordings in the Qurʾān and significant themes and key concepts, as well as for monitoring the progression of suspended judgments. In contrast, a translation or exegesis prepared pursuant to a self-proclaimed *nuzūl* order cannot provide even such secondary advantages.

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