
Abstract
A precise understanding of the orientalists' opinions about the Qur’ānic and Islamic knowledge and a scientific evaluation of their viewpoints is an undeniable necessity for Muslims. Accordingly, the article at hand aims at evaluation of John Burton's research on the collection of the Qur’ān. The study adopts a library research method through an analytic-critical approach, though this should not be taken to mean that descriptive methods have not been used. Burton's research manifests his extensive investigation of the Qur’ānic and Islamic sources. The information that he has reported in his research indicates that the traditions on the collection of the Qur’ān started to extend and evolve in
the third century AH. Nonetheless, he has not tried to explain that whether any source historically substantiates his illustration of the evolution of these traditions or not. This is the most important criticism against Burton's research on the issue of the collection of the Qur’ān.

Keywords: John Burton, The collection of the Qur’ān, Abrogation, Companions' manuscripts.

1. Introduction

The collection of the Qur’ān discussion includes topics such as the quality of the Qur’ān revelation, occasions of revelation, differences of Recitations, and the collection of the Qur’ān. Muslim and non-Muslim Qur’ān researchers have paid special attention to the examination of the traditions on the collection of the Qur’ān. They face numerous questions in this regards, such as "how and when the Qur’ān – whose verses have been revealed separately and in line with necessities of different times and places – has been collected and formed into a book with a clear opening and ending?", "If the prophet of Islam Muḥammad himself undertook the commanding and supervision of the collection of the Qur’ān or future generations and caliphs after the prophet of Islam Muḥammad realized this important task?"

John Burton is an orientalist who has addressed the foregoing questions in a comprehensive article entitled "The collection of the Qur’ān". This article has been published in Leiden's Encyclopedia of the Qur’ān. An evaluation of this article is the topic of the study at hand.

2. Burton's research on the collection of the Qur’ān and its evaluation

The entry "the collection of the Qur’ān" has the following positive and negative points

2.1. Advantages

The most important positive points of this article are as following.

A) An examination of the collection of the Qur’ān article reveals Burton's extensive research on the Islamic sources.

B) The topics in the article have been classified. As a result, it is easy for the reader to understand its content.

2.2. Disadvantages

There are weak points in the entry the collection of the Qur’ān, including the following. Each weak point will be followed by an examination of it.

2.2.1. Incomplete collection of the Qur’ān
Regarding his opinion about incomplete collection of the Qurʾān, Burton writes that the majority of outstanding Muslim exegetes and jurists believe that the Qurʾān never got collected (Burton, 2001,1: 351).

2.2.1.1. Examination

Abrogation of the recitation of some Qurʾānic verses is the suggestion of some commentators and jurists who believe in the incomplete collection of the Qurʾān. In their opinion, some verses were revealed, but as their recitation was abrogated later, they were not entered into the Qurʾān. Therefore, not all of the Qurʾān has been collected. In fact, there are many Sunni traditions on verses and chapters of the Qurʾān which are not present among the existing verses and chapters of the Qurʾān. Since some of these traditions are in valid ʿiṣāṣāt and Masānīd books, rejection of these traditions has not been possible for Sunni scholars. Contrarily, acceptance of the content of these traditions is equal to admitting the occurrence of distortion in the Holy Qurʾān. Therefore, some Sunni scholars have set forth the recitation abrogation issue as a way to evade this trouble and protect the sacredness of the Qurʾān (ĪĀmi, 1989: 305). However, this problem cannot be solved by changing the words and using the term "recitation abrogation" as some Sunni figures have done. The reason is that this issue is only imposition of a kind of interpretation complexity, and it is evident that a change in the title does not alter the content represented by the title. Proponents of recitation abrogation who suggest abrogation of recitation of some verses and chapters should either admit that this has occurred during the lifetime of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad and by him, or accept that the recitation abrogation has happened during the time of those who adopted the leadership and administration of Muslims after him. If the proponents of recitation abrogation attribute this act to the prophet of Islam Muḥammad, they will need to present evidences for their stance.

Traditions reporting the abrogation of the recitation of the Qurʾānic verses during the lifetime of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad are isolated reports. All Muslims agree on this. As the Qurʾān itself cannot be confirmed by an isolated report, its abrogation cannot also be confirmed using an isolated report. In addition to the consensus and agreement among Muslims in this regard, it is natural for every vital and important report to quickly spread and get famous among people. Therefore, narration of an incident using an isolated report is a reason for its non-occurrence and the lie or mistake of its reporter, because if it was true, many people would report that important incident and it could get
widely known among people (Khūī, 1975: 304). Consequently, abrogation of the recitation of the Qur’ānic verses during the lifetime of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad which is based on an isolated report cannot be accepted. Moreover, attribution of the recitation abrogation to the lifetime of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad contradicts the content of other traditions that indicate dropping of some verses after the demise of the prophet of Islam. If proponents of the recitation abrogation attribute it to the time of those who were in charge of leading and ruling Muslims after the prophet of Islam, this will be equal to believing distortion in the Qur’ān, because it has been proved in its due place that abrogation of the Qur’ān after the demise of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad is not permissible. The reason is that if abrogation after the demise of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad is not permissible and also, if one believes in the recitation abrogation after the demise of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad, this belief will be the same as believing in the abrogation of the Qur’ān; a belief that has been rejected with firm reasons (Ma‘rifat, 1990, 2: 145; Khūī, 1975: 304). In addition, this belief is in contradiction to the verse "We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it" (Qur’ān, 15:9), because in this verse, God has guaranteed protection of the Qur’ān from any distortion and any deletion or addition (Fakhr Rāzī, 2000, 19: 123; Ṭabarî, 1992, 14: 7; Thalabī Nīshābūrī, 2001, 5: 331-332; Ibn Kathîr, 1999, 4: 453; Jawādī Āmulî, 2006, 1: 99). It is surprising that those who believe in the recitation abrogation have defended the belief that the Qur’ān has not been distorted. They have forgotten this issue that by having belief in abrogation of recitation, they are violating their view on the non-distortion of the Qur’ān (Khūī, 1975: 224).

2.2.2. Similar size of the Allies and the Cow chapters

Relying on a tradition by Ubayy b. Ka‘ab, Burton writes that the Allies chapter is the same size of the Cow chapter and the verse of stoning adulterers has been inside it (Burton, 2001, 1: 353).

2.2.2.1. Examination

Ubayy b. Ka‘ab narrates that the Allies chapter was the same size as the Cow chapter and we recited the verse of stoning adulterers in it (Suyūṭī, 2001, 2: 26-27). This narration cannot be accepted due to the following reasons:

A) It seems that this tradition has been fabricated and attributed to Ubayy b. Ka‘ab, the great companion of the prophet of Islam. The reason for this counterclaim is that his manuscript is not so different
from the manuscripts of other companions, and even the possibility of the foregoing fabricated issue has not been deemed true. By fabrication and attribution of this tradition to him, maybe some have intended to confirm ‘Umar’s claim about the verse of stoning adulterers, so that he is not alone in his assumption (Ma’rifat, 1993: 170).

B) Traditions disagree on the number of the initial verses of the Allies chapter and the verses that have been removed from it. This proves the fictitiousness of suchlike traditions. These disagreements are as following:

a. As noted above, Ubayy has considered the Allies chapter the same size of the Cow chapter. We know that the existing Allies chapter has 73 verses. Considering this point, it can be inferred from the tradition attributed to Ubayy that 213 verses of the Allies chapter have been deleted and its total number of verses has been 286.

b. Yishah narrates that the number of the verses of the Allies chapter has been 200. If we take this narration, then it should be said that 127 verses of the Allies chapter have been removed.

c. Abū Mūsā Ashārī narrates that the Allies chapter has been the same size as the Repentance chapter. It can be understood from this tradition that 56 verses of the Allies chapter have been removed.

d. Huaifah says, "I learned the Allies chapter from the prophet of Islam Muhammad. I later forgot 70 verses of this chapter and never found them." This tradition notes that the number of the verses of the Allies chapter has been in fact 143, out of which 70 verses have been lost (Āmilī, 1989: 343-344).

e. The aforementioned traditions refer to loss of numerous verses of the Allies chapter. We know that when the Qur’ānic verses were revealed, the prophet of Islam Muhammad summoned the scribes of the divine revelation to write down those verses (Zarkishī, 1956, 1: 237&256; Zarqānī, 1995, 1: 240; Darwazah, 2007: 36; Kūrānī, 1997: 238-241; Haythamī, 1982, 1: 152; Shāhīn, 2005: 97; ujjatī, 2005: 20). Therefore, considering the abovementioned traditions, how is it possible that the major part of the Allies chapter has been lost and forgotten? How all of the companions have forgotten such a huge volume of the verses of this chapter? If some say that the lost verses of the Allies chapter have come under recitation abrogation and so have not been entered into the existing Qur’ān, they can be responded that
recitation abrogation is baseless and this has been proved in the previous lines (Khūrī, 1975: 224-226; Maṭrifat, 1990, 2: 145).

3.2.2. Loss of some parts of the Qur’ān

Regarding loss of some parts of the Qur’ān, Burton writes that after the demise of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad, internal wars occurred and Zuhrī narrates that the memorizers of the various parts of the Qur’ān were killed. These parts of the Qur’ān had not been written and the successors of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad had not collected them yet. Therefore, the aforementioned parts of the Qur’ān got lost. (Burton, 2001, 1: 355).

2.2.3.1. Examination

The aforementioned tradition by Zuhrī is not acceptable. Was the Qur’ān memorized by these reciters only, and other great reciters, especially those who were still alive during the time of the prophet of Islam Muḥammad, were not aware of them? A more essential question is that who were these martyred reciters who are not known as having this status? (Maṭrifat, 1993: 164)

To write down the revelation, the prophet of Islam Muḥammad selected those individuals who knew writing. In addition, he motivated those who were not competent in writing to learn it. Whenever a verse was revealed, he called one or some scribes and asked to them to write down the revelation (Bāqillānī, 1971: 99; Khūrī Baghdādī, 2001: 68-69; Jalāfarīyān, 1994: 35; Ibn Abī Dāwūd Sajistānī, 2004: 31; Ibn Ḳāṭīyyah, 1972: 40). Historians have recorded the names of those scribes, and according to the related studies, the scribes have been more than forty (Shāhīn, 2005: 97; Zanjānī, 1983: 20; ʻuṭjatī, 2005: 202; Ḳubāṭī Ḳāliḥ, 1979: 69).

The Prophet of Islam Muḥammad precisely supervised the work of the revelation scribes, as some narrations stipulate that after the revelation was written down, his highness asked the revelation scribe to read aloud what he had written. Then, if there was any fault in the written text, the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad corrected it (Haythamī, 1982, 1: 152).

Each part of the Qur’ān that was revealed to the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad was written down by the scribes on separate sheets who then put the content of those separate pages into the seamed manuscripts previously prepared for this and connected the different parts of the Qur’ān under the supervision of his highness. (Darwazah, 2007: 36; Tirmidhī, 1992: 333; Mutṭaqī Hindī, 1989, 1: 536)
In the light of the foregoing points, it can never be accepted that parts of the Qurʾān have been lost due to the failure to write them down.

2.2.4. Collecting the last verse of the Repentance chapter from Abū Khazaimah Anārī

Relying on a narration by Zayd b. Thābit on collecting the last verse of the Repentance chapter from Abū Khazaimah, Burton writes that more than a year after the demise of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad, Zayd collected the Qurʾānic verses from the minds and written accounts of people. He had not found the last verse of the Repentance chapter, but finally collected it from Abū Khazaimah (Burton, 2001, 1: 355)

2.2.4.1. Examination

Zayd's narration claims that part of the Qurʾān was recognized as part of the Qurʾān and included in it as a result of the testimony of one person. This claim is extremely dangerous and there is no doubt in its falseness, because the frequently narrated traditions stipulate that the whole Qurʾān has come from the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad to us. Moreover, there were hundreds of people who had memorized the whole Qurʾān (Zarkishī, 1956, 1: 242; Ṣubī Ṣāliḥ, 1979: 67). Is it reasonable that while these many memorizers of the Qurʾān existed, it was only Abū Khazaimah Anārī who knew the last verse of the Repentance chapter and all other memorizers had ignored this verse, and even people such as ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, Ubayy, and Ibn Masʿūd did not know it? (Āmilī, 1989: 111-112)

What has been the motivation of the collection of the Qurʾān using the date palm branches, white stones, and people's minds? Zayd b. Thābit could refer to the Qurʾān that had been collected by the revelation scribes during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad, the Qurʾān that had been written down on the palm leaves and scraps following the command of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad (Zarkishī, 1956, 1: 237-256; Suyūṭī, 2001, 1: 126; Ṣākim Nīshābūrī, 1995, 2: 611; Mīr Muḥammadī, 1979: 105-106). Definitely, no verse – including the last verse of the Repentance chapter – had been forgotten to be recorded in it and so, there has been no need to Abū Khazaimah (Āmilī, 1989: 112).

Had the last verse of the Repentance chapter not been written down in the presence of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad? Wasn’t Zayd b. Thābit – who himself was a revelation scribe – aware of that verse? Had the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad taught that verse only to Abū Khozaimh or to all other Muslims? (Askarī, 1996, 2: 85)
In the light of the fact that the Companions were in Međinā and recited the Qur’ān day and night, is it acceptable that only two years after the demise of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad, a verse of the Qur’ān vanishes from the minds of all of them except for one individual?

It has been narrated that the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad determined the least time needed for every person to recite the whole Qur’ān (Dārimī Samarqandī, 1987, 2: 562; Zarkishī, 1956, 1: 471; Abū Dāwūd Saijstānī, 1992, 2: 54-55; Tirmidhī, 1992: 221; Muṭṭaqī Hindī, 1989, 1: 612-613; Suyūṭī, 2001, 1: 226; Haythamī, 1982, 7: 171). Were the people who recited the whole Qur’ān during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad were ignorant of the last verse of the Repentance chapter?

2.5.5. The verse of stoning adulterers

Regarding the verse of stoning adulterers, Burton writes, ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib said that the verse of stoning adulterers had been revealed, but the memorizers of this verse and other verses were killed in war. (Burton, 2001, 1: 355).

2.2.5.1. Examination

To say that ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib considered the verse of stoning adulterers as part of the Qur’ān cannot be accepted, because it has been narrated that his highness whipped Sharāḥ Hamdāniyah on Thursday and stoned him on Friday. His highness said, "I whipped him based on the Book of God and stoned him based on the tradition of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad." This argument clearly shows that from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb's viewpoint, the stoning decree is a prophetic tradition, not a qur’ānic verse (Balāghī, 1999, 1: 23).

In addition, some points about the verse of stoning adulterers are worth noting.

1. When quoting the text of the verse of stoning adulterers, traditions are different and dissimilar (Khūṭī, 1975: 220-221)

2. Weakness of the composition of the text can be seen in the verse of stoning adulterers. This is a sign that this verse is not related to the sacred realm of the noble Qur’ān (Ī Ṭāmilī, 1989: 352; Balāghī, 1999, 1: 22).

3. It has been claimed that the verse of stoning adulterers has been part of the Qur’ān and has been abrogated after its recitation. However, the obligation of stoning the adulterer still remains as a principle of the Islamic jurisdiction. The evidence and document for the foregoing claim comes from the isolated traditions that have no effect on the issues such as abrogation, because the consensus of Muslims is on the
point that as the Qur’ān itself cannot be confirmed by an isolated tradition, the abrogation of the Qur’ān also cannot be proved using an isolated tradition. In addition to the consensus of Muslims, any sensitive and important issue naturally gets widespread and well-known. Therefore, narration of an incident using an isolated tradition shows that it has not happened and that its narrator has fabricated a lie or has made mistake. The reason is that if an important incident had really happened, many people would have narrated it and its news would have got widely spread among people. Therefore, how can one prove the verse of stoning adulterers through an isolated tradition and claim that this sentence has been part of the Qur’ān; a qur’ānic verse whose recitation has been abrogated but its ruling has remained valid? Yes, ‘Umar provided a sentence as the verse of stoning adulterers and claimed that it belonged to the Qur’ān, but as he was the only person to bring this verse, Muslims did not accept it and did not record it in the Qur’ān, but the later scholars said this sentence has been a qur’ānic verse whose recitation has been abrogated but its ruling has endured (Khūţī, 1975: 304; Burūjirdī, 1996: 111).

4. It has been narrated that after the demise of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad, ‘Umar brought the verse of stoning adulterers to Zayd ibn Thābit, but Zayd did not accept it because ‘Umar was alone and had no other witness for his claim. It can be inferred from this narration that the verse of stoning adulterers did not belong to the Qur’ān, since the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad had scribes who wrote down the verses revealed to his highness. The Companions also had manuscripts that they had written during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam Muḥammad. Moreover, there were individuals who memorized the whole Qur’ān. Therefore, no part of the Qur’ān could have been missed. If the verse of stoning adulterers was really a part of the Qur’ān, why none of the revelation scribes, Companions, or memorizers of the whole Qur’ān did not approve ‘Umar’s claim that the verse of stoning adulterers belonged to the Qur’ān? (Āmilī, 1989: 348)

5. The Companions' solidarity in disagreeing with ‘Umar's claim caused him to doubt his own assertion. As a result, he did not dare to order recording of the verse of stoning adulterers in the Qur’ān in his reign. This justification is not acceptable that he did not do so because he feared that people might say he had added a verse to the Book of God, because it is well-known that if ‘Umar wanted to do something, fear
of people's opinion did not prevent him from undertaking it. Therefore, the authenticity of the verse of stoning adulterers cannot be proved for the one who claimed it, because he doubted it (Mařifat, 1993: 162).

6. Regarding the verse of stoning adulterers, it has been claimed that the recitation of this verse has been abrogated, but its ruling has remained valid. In response to this claim it can be said that the only way to prove a ruling is the text related to it. Therefore, with obviation of the text, the ruling will also be removed, and no advantage can be perceived for obviation of a recitation alone, since with the survival and non-abrogation of the ruling, what benefit can have the abrogation of the recitation? (Arī, 1973: 224) If consideration of public interest has necessitated revelation of this verse, and this verse has involved a fixed legislative ruling, why has recitation of such a verse been abrogated, while consideration of the public interest necessitates maintenance of its recitation as a proof for its judicial decree? (Mařifat, 1990, 2: 287)

2.2.6. Inclusion of two extra verses in the Ubayy b. Ka‘ab’s manuscript

Regarding the Ubayy b. Ka‘ab's manuscript, Burton writes that it has been said there were two chapters in Ubayy's manuscript that are not seen in the ‘Uthmānic manuscript. (Burton, 2001, 1: 359).

2.2.6.1 Examination

One of the incorrect attributions to Ubayy b. Ka‘ab is addition of two so-called Khallāt (rejection) and Ḥafḍ chapters to the end of his manuscript. These two chapters are usually called as the "Supplication chapters", "Supplication prayers", or the "Dawn prayer", while sometimes they are simply called "Prayer" (Rāmyār, 2001: 349; Khūtī, 1975: 304).

Due to the following reasons, the belonging of these chapters to the Qur‘ān is unacceptable.

1. Examination of the texts of the Khallāt and Ḥafḍ chapters shows how these are dissimilar to the Qur‘ān regarding the style and rhetoric, and are incoherent and disorderly. Their order and structure has no resemblance to the qur‘ānic structure and it cannot be accepted that this incongruence has gone unnoticed by a person like Ubayy. Are the verses of these two chapters like the qur‘ānic verses, at a level to be a sign of the majesty of God? Are they at a level that human cannot

2. Nowhere has it been claimed that during the collection of the Qur’ān, someone presented the Khalāṣ and ʿaṣf chapters as part of the Qur’ān. During the reign of Abū Bakr, Ubayy himself took part in the collection of the Qur’ān. If Ubayy really believed that those two chapters were part of the Qur’ān, he should have presented them during the collection of the Qur’ān. Moreover, the group that was appointed by ʿUthmān during his caliphate to collect the Qur’ān wrote down what belonged to the Qur’ān and left what was not part of it. This is itself a reason that Khalāṣ and ʿaṣf were not part of the Qur’ān (Rāmyār, 2001: 350; Mařifat, 1993: 172).

3. It seems that Khalāṣ and ʿaṣf – in case the claim of their claimant is true – have been prayers that were articulated by the Prophet of Islam Muammad during the supplication of his prayers, and Ubayy has offered them at the end of his manuscript according to a tradition in writing the Qur’ānic scripture in which some prayers were presented at the end of manuscript (Mařifat, 1993: 171).

3. Conclusion

Investigation of Burton's article on the collection of the Qur’ān reveals the following points.

1. Reflection on Burton's words shows that his method of analyzing the traditions on the collection of the Qur’ān is based on his principle that the Qur’ān is more like a source for extraction of divine and jurisprudential teachings needed by Muslims. Therefore, his method of analyzing this issue, like other western Qur’ān researchers, is not based on the principle that the Qur’ān is merely an eternal literary work.

2. In Burton's opinion, the set of Muslim traditions on the collection of the Qur’ān after the demise of the Prophet of Islam Muammad are congruent with each other and are void of contradiction, because all of them collectively deliver this message to their audience that whoever has first collected the Qur’ānic texts in the Islamic history, he has undoubtedly not been the Prophet of Islam Muammad. Second, existence of contradiction among those traditions can be conceived only if the nature of the role of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān, as the main players in the collection of the Qur’ān after the demise of the Prophet of Islam Muammad, is considered the same. However, a precise reflection on the content of these traditions shows that each of
these people had a different role and their activities completed the other ones. That is to say, ‘Umar suggested the collection of the Qur’ān, while Abū Bakr fulfilled that suggestion through putting the collection of the Qur’ān in practice, but he did not publish the collected text among Muslims. By forming the existing order and arrangement among the chapters as well as publishing the texts collected by Abū Bakr, ‘Uthmān completed Abū Bakr’s actions. In fact, by doing so, ‘Uthmān consolidated Muslims – who have been afflicted with disagreements and conflicts due to the lack of a unified manuscript – through a unified text.

3. Burton's studies on the collection of the Qur’ān topic reveals his extensive research in the resources of the qur’ānic and Islamic sciences.

4. Burton's studies about the traditions on the collection of the Qur’ān are in general void of a historical aspect. He classifies traditions to create a discussion and debate, though he believes that this debate has existed among Muslim scholars for long. He considers some reports as reactions to some others. The information he uses in his study demonstrates that the traditions on the collection of the Qur’ān have extended and evolved from third century AH on, while according to meticulous studies, these traditions did also exist in the resources of the second century AH. This is the main criticism to Burton's studies on the topic of the collection of the Qur’ān.

الملخص:

يُلخص على المسلمين معرفة نظريات المستشرقين عن المعارف القرآنية والإسلامية
ونقدها المنهجي، ويسعى هذا المقال إلى إلقاء الضوء على أفكار برتون في ما يتعلق بجمع القرآن عبر استخدام المنهج التحليلي النقدي كما لم تغفل الدراسة المناهج الوصفية، كما جأت الدراسة إلى آراء المفكرين المسلمين إلى جانب التركيز على نظريات برتون عن جمع القرآن. وأثبتت برتون من خلال دراسته المعمقة في المصادر القرآنية والإسلامية أن أحاديث جمع القرآن أخذت في التوسع في القرن الثالث للهجرة النبوية، لكنه لم يوضح إذا كان هناك مصدر يبرهن رسمته خارطة تطور هذه الأحاديث مما يشكل أهم مأخذ على دراسته في هذا المجال.

References
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