

scarcely take the trouble even to do that. They are no consolidated party, but to Mohammed they are all equally vexatious, because, as soon as danger has to be encountered, or a contribution is levied, they all alike fall away. There are frequent outbursts, ever increasing in bitterness, against the Jews, who were very numerous in Medina and its neighbourhood when Mohammed arrived. He has much less to say against the Christians, with whom he never came closely in contact; and as for the idolaters, there was little occasion in Medina to have many words with them. A part of the Medina pieces consists of formal laws belonging to the ceremonial, civil, and criminal codes; or directions about certain temporary complications. The most objectionable parts of the whole Koran are those which treat of Mohammed's relations with women. The laws and regulations were generally very concise revelations, but most of them have been amalgamated with other pieces of similar or dissimilar import, and are now found in very long sūras.

Such is an imperfect sketch of the composition and the internal history of the Koran, but it is probably sufficient to show that the book is a very heterogeneous collection. If only those passages had been preserved which had a permanent value for the theology, the ethics, or the jurisprudence of the Moslems, a few fragments would have been amply sufficient. Fortunately for knowledge, respect for the sacredness of the letter has led to the collection of all the revelations that could possibly be collected,—the "abrogating" along with the "abrogated," passages referring to passing circumstances as well as those of lasting importance. Every one who takes up the book in the proper religious frame of mind, like most of the Moslems, reads pieces directed against long-obsolete absurd customs of Mecca just as devoutly as the weightiest moral precepts,—perhaps even more devoutly, because he does not understand them so well.

At the head of twenty-nine of the sūras stand certain initial letters, from which no clear sense can be obtained. Thus, before ii. iii. xxxi. xxxii. we find *Alif Lam Mim*, before xl. xlv.

(*Hā Mim*). Nöldeke at one time suggested that these initials did not belong to Mohammed's text, but might be the monograms of possessors of codices, which, through negligence on the part of the editors, were incorporated in the final form of the Koran; he now deems it more probable that they are to be traced to the Prophet himself, as Sprenger, Loth, and others suppose. One cannot indeed admit the truth of Loth's statement that in the proper opening words of these sūras we may generally find an allusion to the accompanying initials; but it can scarcely be accidental that the first verse of the great majority of them (in iii. it is the second verse) contains the word "book," "revelation," or some equivalent. They usually begin with: "This is the book," or "Revelation ('down sending') of the book," or something similar. Of sūras which commence in this way only a few (xviii. xxiv. xxv. xxxix.) want the initials, while only xxix. and xxx. have the initials and begin differently. These few exceptions may easily have proceeded from ancient corruptions; at all events they cannot neutralize the evidence of the greater number. Mohammed seems to have meant these letters for a mystic reference to the archetypal text in heaven. To a man who regarded the art of writing, of which at the best he had but a slight knowledge, as something supernatural, and who lived amongst illiterate people, an A B C may well have seemed more significant than to us who have been initiated into the mysteries of this art from our childhood. The Prophet himself can hardly have attached any particular meaning to these symbols: they served their purpose if they conveyed an impression of solemnity and enigmatical obscurity. In fact, the Koran admits that it contains many things which neither can be, nor were intended to be, understood (iii. 5). To regard these letters as ciphers is a precarious hypothesis, for the simple reason that cryptography is not to be looked for in the very infancy of Arabic writing. If they are actually ciphers, the multiplicity of possible explanations at once precludes the hope of a plausible interpretation. None of the efforts in this direction, whether by Moslem scholars or by Europeans, have led to convincing results. This remark applies even to the ingenious conjecture of Sprenger, that the letters *كاف هـ يـ آين ساد* (*Kāf Hā Yē 'Ain Sād*) before xix. (which treats of John and Jesus, and, according to tradition, was sent to the Christian king of Abyssinia) stand for *Jesus Nazaremus*

*Rez Judæorum*. Sprenger arrives at this explanation by a very artificial method; and besides, Mohammed was not so simple as the Moslem traditionalists, who imagined that the Abyssinians could read a piece of the Arabic Koran. It need hardly be said that the Moslems have from of old applied themselves with great assiduity to the decipherment of these initials, and have sometimes found the deepest mysteries in them. Generally, however, they are content with the prudent conclusion, that God alone knows the meaning of these letters.

When Mohammed died, the separate pieces of the Koran, notwithstanding their theoretical sacredness, existed only in scattered copies; they were consequently in great danger of being partially or entirely destroyed. Many Moslems knew large portions by heart, but certainly no one knew the whole; and a merely oral propagation would have left the door open to all kinds of deliberate and inadvertent alterations. Mohammed himself had never thought of an authentic collection of his revelations; he was usually concerned only with the object of the moment, and the idea that the revelations would be destroyed unless he made provision for their safe preservation, did not enter his mind. A man destitute of literary culture has some difficulty in anticipating the fate of intellectual products. But now, after the death of the Prophet, most of the Arabs revolted against his successor, and had to be reduced to submission by force. Especially sanguinary was the contest against the prophet Maslama (Mubarrad, *Kāmil* 443, 5), an imitator of Mohammed, commonly known by the derisive diminutive *Mosallima*. At that time (A.D. 633) many of the most devoted Moslems fell, the very men who knew most Koran pieces by heart. Omar then began to fear that the Koran might be entirely forgotten, and he induced the Caliph Abūbekr to undertake the collection of all its parts. The Caliph laid the duty on Zaid, the son of Zaid's Thābit, a native of Medina, then about twenty-two years of age, who had often acted as amanuensis to the Prophet, in whose service he is even said to have learned the Jewish letters. The account of this collection of the Koran has reached us in several substantially identical forms, and goes back to Zaid himself. According to it, he collected the revelations from copies written on flat stones, pieces of leather, ribs of palm-leaves (not palm-leaves themselves), and such-like material, but chiefly "from the breasts of men," i.e. from their memory. From these he wrote a fair copy, which he gave to Abūbekr, from whom it came to his successor Omar, who again bequeathed it to his daughter Hafsa, one of the widows of the Prophet. This redaction, commonly called *al-ṣoḥof* ("the leaves"), had from the first no canonical authority; and its internal arrangement can only be conjectured.

The Moslems were as far as ever from possessing a uniform text of the Koran. The bravest of their warriors sometimes knew deplorably little about it; distinction on that field they cheerfully accorded to pious men like Ibn Mas'ūd. It was inevitable, however, that discrepancies should emerge between the texts of professed scholars, and as these men in their several localities were authorities on the reading of the Koran, quarrels began to break out between the levies from different districts about the true form of the sacred book. During a campaign in A.H. 30 (A.D. 650-1), Hudaifa, the victor in the great and decisive battle of Nehāwand—which was to the empire of the Sásánids what Gaugamela was to that of the Achæmenidæ—perceived that such disputes might become dangerous, and therefore urged on the Caliph 'Othmān the necessity for a universally binding text. The matter was entrusted to Zaid, who had made the former collection, with three leading Koraisites. These brought together as many copies as they could lay their hands on, and prepared an edition which was to be canonical for all Moslems. To prevent any further disputes, they burned all the other codices except that of

Hafsa, which, however, was soon afterwards destroyed by Merwān, the governor of Medina. The destruction of the earlier codices was an irreparable loss to criticism; but, for the essentially political object of putting an end to controversies by admitting only one form of the common book of religion and of law, this measure was necessary.

The result of these labours is in our hands; as to how they were conducted we have no trustworthy information, tradition being here too much under the influence of dogmatic presuppositions. The critical methods of a modern scientific commission will not be expected of an age when the highest literary education for an Arab consisted in ability to read and write. It now seems to me highly probable that this second redaction took this simple form: Zaid read off from the codex which he had previously written, and his associates, simultaneously or successively, wrote one copy each to his dictation. It certainly cannot have been by chance that, according to sure tradition, they wrote exactly four copies. Be that as it may, it is impossible now to distinguish in the present form of the book what belongs to the first redaction from what is due to the second.

In the arrangement of the separate sections, a classification according to contents was impracticable because of the variety of subjects often dealt with in one sūra. A chronological arrangement was out of the question, because the chronology of the older pieces must have been imperfectly known, and because in some cases passages of different dates had been joined together. Indeed, systematic principles of this kind were altogether disregarded at that period. The pieces were accordingly arranged in indiscriminate order, the only rule observed being to place the long sūras first and the shorter towards the end, and even that was far from strictly adhered to. The short opening sūra is so placed on account of its superiority to the rest, and two magical formulæ are kept for a sort of protection at the end; these are the only special traces of design. The combination of pieces of different origin may proceed partly from the possessors of the codices from which Zaid compiled his first complete copy, partly from Zaid himself. The individual sūras are separated simply by the superscription—"In the name of God, the compassionate Compassioner," which is wanting only in the ninth. The additional headings found in our texts (the name of the sūra, the number of verses, etc.) were not in the original codices, and form no integral part of the Koran.

It is said that 'Othmān directed Zaid and his associates, in cases of disagreement, to follow the Korais dialect; but, though well attested, this account can scarcely be correct. The extremely primitive writing of those days was quite incapable of rendering such minute differences as can have existed between the pronunciation of Mecca and that of Medina.

'Othmān's Koran was not complete. Some passages are evidently fragmentary; and a few detached pieces are still extant which were originally parts of the Koran, although they have been omitted by Zaid. Amongst these are some which there is no reason to suppose Mohammed desired to suppress. Zaid may easily have overlooked a few stray fragments, but that he purposely omitted anything which he believed to belong to the Koran is very unlikely. It has been conjectured that in deference to his superiors he kept out of the book the names of Mohammed's enemies, if they or their families came afterwards to be respected. But it must be remembered that it was never Mohammed's practice to refer explicitly to contemporary persons and affairs in the Koran. Only a single friend, his adopted son Zaid (xxxiii. 37), and a single enemy, his uncle Abū Lahab (cx.)—and these for very special reasons—are mentioned by name; and the name of the latter has been left

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in the Koran with a fearful curse annexed to it, although his son had embraced Islam before the death of Mohammed. So, on the other hand, there is no single verse or clause which can be plausibly made out to be an interpolation by Zaid at the instance of Abūbekr, Omar, or 'Othmān. Slight clerical errors there may have been, but the Koran of 'Othmān contains none but genuine elements,—though sometimes in very strange order.

Of the four exemplars of 'Othmān's Koran, one was kept in Medina, and one was sent to each of the three metropolitan cities, Cufa, Basra, and Damascus. It can still be pretty clearly shown in detail that these four codices deviated from one another in points of orthography, in the insertion or omission of a *wa* ("and"), and such-like minutæ; but these variations nowhere affect the sense. All later manuscripts are derived from these four originals.

At the same time, the other forms of the Koran did not at once become extinct. In particular we have some information about the codex of Obay. If the list which gives the order of its sūras is correct, it must have contained substantially the same materials as our text; in that case Obay must have used the original collection of Zaid. The same is true of the codex of Ibn Mas'ūd, of which we have also a catalogue. It appears that the principle of putting the longer sūras before the shorter was more consistently carried out by him than by Zaid. He omits i. and the magical formulæ of cxiii. cxiv. Obay, on the other hand, had embodied two additional short prayers, which we may regard as Mohammed's. One can easily understand that differences of opinion may have existed as to whether and how far formularies of this kind belonged to the Koran. Some of the divergent readings of both these texts have been preserved, as well as a considerable number of other ancient variants. Most of them are decidedly inferior to the received readings, but some are quite as good, and a few deserve preference.

The only man who appears to have seriously opposed the general introduction of 'Othmān's text is Ibn Mas'ūd. He was one of the oldest disciples of the Prophet, and had often rendered him personal service; but he was a man of contracted views, although he is one of the pillars of Moslem theology. His opposition had no effect. Now when we consider that at that time there were many Moslems who had heard the Koran from the mouth of the Prophet, that other measures of the imbecile 'Othmān met with the most vehement resistance on the part of the bigoted champions of the faith, that these were still further incited against him by some of his ambitious old comrades until at last they murdered him, and finally that in the civil wars after his death the several parties were glad of any pretext for branding their opponents as infidels;—when we consider all this, we must regard it as a strong testimony in favour of 'Othmān's Koran that no party, not even that of 'Alī, found fault with his conduct in this matter, or repudiated the text formed by Zaid, who was one of the most devoted adherents of 'Othmān and his family.

But this redaction is not the close of the textual history of the Koran. The ancient Arabic alphabet was very imperfect; it not only wanted marks for the short, and in part even for the long vowels, but it often expressed several consonants by the same sign. Hence there were many words which could be read in very different ways. This variety of possible readings was at first very great, and many readers seem to have actually made it their object to discover pronunciations which were new, provided they were at all appropriate to the ambiguous text. There was also a dialectic license in grammatical forms, which had not as yet been greatly restricted. An effort was made by many to establish a more refined pronunciation for the Koran than was usual in common life or in secular literature. The various schools of "readers" differed very widely from one another; although for the most part there was no important divergence as to the sense of words. A few of them gradu-

