**Revelation and Processing the Quran**

Prophet Muhammad first received revelation while he was in Mecca, which marked the first 13 years of his life as the prophet. The surahs and passages revealed to him during this time are known as Meccan Surahs. The next period of revelation occurred after Muhammad and his companions migrated from persecution to Medina, which lasted ten years. Passages and surahs revealed during the prophet’s time in Medina are known as Medinan surahs, a span of 23 years (610-632 CE).

**Transmitting revelation to the community**

Prophet Muhammad transmitted the Quran to its community in two primary ways:

**The Oral tradition**

With the aid of Angel Gabriel, Muhammad first memorized the revelation and then taught it to its followers. Arabian society at that time had very strong oral tradition. When Muhammad recited and taught the Quran, his companions committed the verses to memory. The prophet encouraged memorisation of the book. Most of the companions memorised large parts of the Quran. Some of his companions, including three of his wives, memorised the whole Quran. The prophet also encouraged those who had memorised the Quran to teach it to others.

**The written tradition**

The Quran is unique among religious scriptures of the world in that the entire book was written down by several scribes during the lifetime of the prophet, who directed his organisation himself. It is reported that in Medina Muhammad had over 29 scribes who wrote down every revelation the prophet received. The prophet himself directed which verse belonged to in which surah.

**Assembling the Quran as a book**

Two years after the death of Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim community under the caliphate of Abubakr was drawn into a few internal and external battles. In one such battle, known as the battle of Yamama. Several companions who had memorised the Koran were killed. Umar, who succeeded Abu Bakr after he had passed, feared that as these companions died, preservation of the Quran would weaken, since the written pages existed with individual scribes and not as a collected book. Umar advised Caliph Abubakr that the Quran should be collected in book form in order to preserve the scripture.

Abubakr had to be convinced to take on this huge project as the prophet did not give any instructions to produce the Quran as a book after his passing. Umar convinced Abubakr that compiling the collection of the scribes into book form would preserve the Quran from any future corruption or tragedy.

Zaid bin Thabit was employed to prepare the manuscripts of the Quran and prepared them for collection as a book. He was the prophet’s main scribe and was the ablest to do so. Zaid bin Thabit called for all those with written records of the Quran to bring their collection forward.

The submissions had to meet four criteria:

\*The recordings must have been written originally in the presence and with the instruction of prophet Muhammad

\*Two witnesses had to testify that the writings were indeed made in the presence of the prophet

\*The writings could not include passages of the Quran that were clearly abrogated by the prophet

\*All recordings had to be checked against the memory of those who had memorised the whole Quran

Scribes gathered and copied all the manuscripts that passed the submission requirements. The one book was then given to Abu Bakr. When Abu Bakr passed away the book was given to Umar, as succeeding Calif. After Umar's assassination, the book went to Hafsa, the daughter of Umar and the widow of Muhammad.

During the Caliphate of Uthman, the 7 dialects in which the Quran was revealed led to disruption amongst the Muslims. Reciters of each dialect claiming superiority over the others. This was quickly dealt with by a committee set up of those knowledgeable about the Quran including Zaid ibn Thabit. They adopted the Quraysh dialect, the one that Prophet Muhammad used and produced a final version known as the “Uthmani” that exists up to this day. Uthman ordered all the other copies of the Quran to be burnt.

Copies of this version were distributed amongst the major centres of the Islamic world along with the learned men to teach the correct dialect. Three copies of the original also exist today and the seven dialects of reciting the Quran are still known. However, Uthmani recitation serves as the unifying dialect of recitation for all Muslims.