

How Quranic Surahs were named and order of verses in each Surahs.

Let us begin with the order of the verses in each surah. There is unanimity of opinion among Muslim scholars that this was entirely set by revelation during the lifetime of the Prophet (SAW), and that he left the Muslims with the Quran intact in its current form in terms of each surah being complete, with the correct order of verses, identical to what we recite today. There are numerous reports of the Prophet instructing his scribes where to place particular verses within particular Surahs when those verses were revealed. To the best of our knowledge, there are no instances where Companions differed on the order of verses in a surah.

The questions then become how the Surahs got the names that they currently have, and how did they get the order that we find them today in the *mus-haf* (written copy of the Quran).

Once again, there is a consensus of opinion that the current order of the surahs is precisely the same as that in the Quran as compiled by Uthman, the third Caliph. However, there is some difference of opinion regarding how the surahs got their order in the Quran as compiled under the direction of Uthman.

Probably the most common opinion is that the order of the surahs was taken by the Companions directly from the Prophet (SAW), who taught them the order in which they stand today and this is why Uthman arranged the surahs in the present order. In jurisprudential language, the scholars who hold this point of view say that the order of the surahs is *tawqifi* (meaning that it has been sealed by the Prophet, presumably through revelation).

Interestingly, a second opinion holds the opposite view, namely that the arrangement of the surahs was the work of the Companions (in other words, *ijtihadi*, or through their independent effort). In particular, that it was the arrangement laid down by Zaid ibn Thabit when Uthman asked him to compile the Quran, and the other Companions agreed to this. This, for

example, is the opinion of Imam Malik. The support of this opinion is that different Companions had different arrangements of the surahs in their respective *mus-hafs*, such as the those of Ali ibn Abi Talib, Ibn Masoud, and Ubay ibn Ka'b. These differences, according to the proponents of this opinion, suggest that the arrangement of the surahs was not from the Prophet.

The third opinion is that the order of the surahs was a mix of things learned from the Prophet (SAW), where he gave the arrangement of some surahs to the Companions so they knew which surah came before which, and then the remainder of the order was by independent effort (*ijtihad*) where the Companions filled in the gaps for portions of the order not specified. There is no consensus of opinion as to how many surahs were placed in order by the Prophet, and how many by the Companions, but probably the most prevalent opinion is that almost the entire order of the surahs was by the Prophet.

Regarding the names of the surahs, the best opinion seems to be that they are a mix. Many of the names were given by the Prophet (SAW)), with reports of him mentioning various surahs by name, including Al Baqaraa, Ali 'Imran and Al Kahf. However, the names of all surahs are not found in hadith, and the Companions probably gave many of them their names based on a prominent word or reference or something that particularly caught their attention. It should also be noted that some surahs are referred to by more than one name.