

## Why the Bible? - Comparative Religions and the Test of Authority.

We in the western Christian church are probably more than familiar with the attacks against the Bible in terms of authorship, dating, and cohesion of the Biblical texts. From the heyday of Heil Geshichte (German higher criticism) as seen in the JEDP hypothesis to the bombastic attacks from more recent critics such as Bart Ehrman, the Bible as God's word is constantly under question.

By contrast and curiously, the ancient texts of the other major world religions seem to be more than acceptable and not subject to more than a cursory review by the same sources. This seminar will examine three major texts from three of the world's religions and see what if any creditability they might have. Under examination will be the Quran of Islam, the Bhagavad Gita of Hinduism and The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti of Buddhism. Are any of them historically credible? Why or why not? How does the Bible stack up against these competitors? An abductive examination will be conducted and see where the evidence for veracity lies.

### Hinduism

1. ^ Arun K. Bansal's research published in Outlook India, September 13, 2004. ["Krishna \(b. July 21, 3228 BC\)".](#)
2. ^ [N.S. Rajaram](#) takes these dates at face value when he opines that "We have therefore overwhelming evidence showing that Krishna was a historical figure who must have lived within a century on either side of that date, i.e., in the 3200-3000 BC period". (Prof. N. S. Rajaram (September 4, 1999). ["Search for the Historical Krishna"](#). www.swordoftruth.com. Retrieved 2008-06-15.
3. ^ Juan Mascaro; Simon Brodbeck (2003), "Translator's introduction to 1962 edition", *The Bhagavad Gita*, Penguin Classics, p. xviii
4. ^ [Zaehner, Robert Charles](#) (1973), *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Oxford University Press, p. 7, "As with most major religious texts in India, no firm date can be assigned to the Gītā. It seems certain, however, that it was written later than the 'classical' Upanishads with the possible exception of the Maitrī which was post-Buddhistic. One would probably not be going far wrong if one dated it at some time between the fifth and the second centuries B. C."
5. ^ John Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* (Leiden, 1998)
6. ^ C. Jinarajadasa (1915). ["The Bhagavad Gita"](#). Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras. India. Archived from [the original](#) on May 23, 2008. Retrieved 2008-09-24. "...an analysis of the epic shows at once by differences of style and by linguistic and other peculiarities, that it was composed at different times and by different hands"

7. ^ For a brief review of the literature supporting this view see: Radhakrishnan, pp. 14-15.

8. ^ Bhagavad Gita Chapter 4, Text 1: *vivasvan manave praha, manur ikshvakave 'bravit*

9. ^ Mascaró, Juan; Simon Brodbeck, *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. xlviii, "Scholars differ as to the date of the Bhagavad Gita; but as the roots of this great poem are in Eternity the date of its revelation in time is of little spiritual importance."

^ [Vivekananda, Swami](#), "[Thoughts on the Gita](#)", *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, [Advaita Ashrama](#), "One thing should be especially remembered here, that there is no connection between these historical researches and our real aim, which is the knowledge that leads to the acquirement of Dharma. Even if the historicity of the whole thing is proved to be absolutely false today, it will not in the least be any loss to us. Then what is the use of so much historical research, you may ask. It has its use, because we have to get at the truth; it will not do for us to remain bound by wrong ideas born of ignorance."

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

The traditional date is start of Kaliyuga.

When did Kaliyuga start? This is the basis for different dates. The common belief in India is Kaliyuga started 5000 years ago (It is important to note that the 5000 year calculation is not found in scriptures).

Academically, the 1500 BC date is generally accepted.

I never heard of the 500 BC date before. That places the Gita as

post-Buddha and there is no evidence for that.

To add to this complexity, the Mahabharata itself says it started out as a small text (Bharata) and then evolved in multiple steps into its final form, the Mahabharata. Many scholars believe the Gita was authored in phases by different people.

So this date issue is not something that will ever be solved to everyone's satisfaction.

Cheers

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### **Bhagavad Gita**

The Bhagavad Gita, usually considered part of the sixth book of the Mahabharata (dating from about 400 or 300 B.C.), is a central text of Hinduism, a philosophical dialog between the god Krishna and the warrior Arjuna. This is one of the most popular and accessible of all Hindu scriptures, required reading for anyone interested in Hinduism. The Gita discusses selflessness, duty, devotion, and meditation, integrating many different threads of Hindu philosophy.

**The Bhagavadgîtâ (SBE 8)** with the Sanatsugâtîya and the Anugîtâ translated by *Kâshinâth Trimbak Telang*, (Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 8) [1882] A scholarly prose translation of the Bhagavad Gita with two other similar, less well known, works from the Mahabharata.

Study guide bhagavad-gita background

### **About Bhagavad-Gita**

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the fundamental texts of Hinduism, and documents the conversation between [Krishna](#) and [Arjuna](#) as Arjuna prepares to go into battle against the [Kauravas](#) for battle of the kingdom of Hastinapura.

The Gita is written in Sanskrit and has been translated into virtually

every language. It is dated sometime between 1000 and 700 B.C.E., close to when recorded history began in India, and when the battle that became the Mahabarata supposedly occurred.

The Vedas, dated earlier (around 1500 B.C.), are considered the most fundamental texts of Hinduism, but the Gita has become a stand-alone text that scholars and devotees return to for its emphasis on self-mastery. Krishna is the sole deity who speaks in the Gita, unlike other Hindu texts which outline a proliferation of divinities. He ascribes himself full omnipotence as well, but most scholars see the Gita fitting in with the tradition of other Hindu texts, where every God assumes the powers of other Gods in order to illustrate the true potency of divinity.

The Gita is now considered as seminal a text as the Koran, the Bible, and other bases of major religions. But the Gita is seen as less a religious than a philosophical text, outlining a way of life.

# SRIMAD BHAGAVAD-GITA

## Introductory Overview

*om ajnana-timirandasya jnananjnana salakaya  
caksur unmilitam yena tasmai sri gurave namah*

I offer my most humble obeisances to my spiritual master who has opened my eyes which were blinded by ignorance with the light of knowledge.

*raja-vidya raja-guhyam pavitram idam uttamam  
pratyak savagamam dharmyam susukham kartum  
avyayam*

This knowledge is the king of all wisdom, the king of all

that is confidential. It is the purest and the topmost and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization it is the perfection of all religion and everlastingly joyful to perform. Bhagavad-Gita, chapter 9, verse 2

Bhagavad-Gita Trust is freely offering this presentation of Srimad Bhagavad-Gita to the Earth as a gift to humanity. It is our humble but earnest request that this information be made easily available to every culture in this world. The knowledge found within the Bhagavad-Gita is incomparable as it gives specific information regarding the purpose of human existence, the immortality of the soul and our eternal relationship with God. This information applies to each and every one of us without exception. Without realization of our divine relationship with the God it is impossible to establish our eternal relationship with Him. This divine relationship is our natural constitutional position and every human beings birthright.

There are three paths which lead directly to establishing a relationship with God. According to the authority of Bhagavad-Gita these paths have been designated as the yoga of perfect actions, the yoga of perfect devotion and the yoga of perfect knowledge. These three paths with

great care and attention have been fully explained in the Bhagavad-Gita which comprises chapters 23 through 40 in the Bhishma-Parva section of Mahabharata.

The Bhagavad-Gita consists of 18 chapters. Each chapter is called a yoga. Yoga is the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness. So each chapter is a highly specialized yoga revealing the path of attaining realization of the Ultimate Truth. The first six chapters have been classified as the Karma Yoga section as they mainly deal with the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness through actions. These chapters are:

Chapter 1 : Visada Yoga

Chapter 2 : Sankhya Yoga

Chapter 3 : Karma Yoga

Chapter 4 : Jnana Yoga

Chapter 5 : Karma Vairagya Yoga

Chapter 6 : Abhyasa Yoga

The middle six chapters have been designated as the Bhakti Yoga section as they principally are pertaining with the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness by the path of devotion.

Chapter 7 : Paramahansa Vijnana Yoga

Chapter 8 : Aksara-Parabrahman Yoga

Chapter 9 : Raja-Vidya-Guhya Yoga

Chapter 10 : Vibhuti-Vistara-Yoga

Chapter 11 : Visvarupa-Darsana Yoga

Chapter 12 : Bhakti Yoga

The final six chapters are regarded as the Jnana Yoga

section as they are primarily concerned with the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness through the intellect.

Chapter 13 : Ksetra-Ksetrajna Vibhaga Yoga

Chapter 14 : Gunatraya-Vibhaga Yoga

Chapter 15 : Purusottama Yoga

Chapter 16 : Daivasura-Sampad-Vibhaga Yoga

Chapter 17 : Sraddhatraya-Vibhaga Yoga

Chapter 18 : Moksa-Opadesa Yoga

Lord Krishna spoke the Bhagavad-Gita on the battlefield of Kuruksetra in 3102 B.C.; just prior to the commencement of the Mahabharata war. This date corresponds to 1700 years before Moses, 2500 years before Buddha, 3000 years before Jesus and 3800 years before Mohammed. So first and foremost it should be clearly understood that the eternal knowledge of the Bhagavad-Gita has not been influenced by Buddhism, Christianity, Hebrewism or Islam; for these religions did not exist at that time and were established milleniums later.

That proof of the date 3102 B.C. can be verified by any knowledgeable indologist in India based on the fact that this was the year when the Pandava King Yudhisthira ascended the throne and was coronated as emperor of the Earth. Also according to the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II, the Battle of Kuruksetra took place in 3102 B.C. with Lord Krishna reciting the Bhagavad-Gita before its commencement. As well precise information of the positions of the constellation at the commencement of the Battle of Kuruksetra have been given in the great historical epic Mahabharata itself, which is based on the

26,920 year astronomical cycle known as the precession of the equinoxes which is the time it takes our solar system to revolve around the central sun.

But who exactly is Lord Krishna? Is He Narayana? Is He Vishnu? Is He Vasudeva as referred to in the Taittiriya Aranyaka 10.1. 6 ? In the Bhagavad-Gita the Supreme Lord Krishna is addressed by Arjuna with 41 different names. Some of these names are Acyuta, Bhagavan, Govinda, Hari, Isvara, Janardana, Kesava, Madhava, Purusottama and Yogesvara as well as Vasudeva and Vishnu. Although Lord Krishna possesses unlimited names due to His unlimited attributes and potencies it should be clearly understood that the Krishna who is so wonderfully presented in the Puranas is one and the same Krishna who spoke the Bhagavad-Gita and is so marvelously glorified in the Mahabharata.

It should be understood that the Bhagavad-Gita is the very essence of Mahabharata. The Bhagavad-Gita literally translates as the Song of God! It was originally revealed in the classical language of Sanskrit spoken on the Indian sub-continent. It was first translated into English in 1785 by Charles Wilkins. It was translated into Latin in 1823 by Schlegel, into German in 1826 by Von Humbolt, into French in 1846 by Lassens and into Greek in 1848 by Galanos. By now it has been translated into all the major languages of the world such as Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Hebrew, Portugese, Arabic, Hindi and Bengali.

Many great and notable individuals from modern times as well as bygone eras have read the Bhagavad-Gita and have extolled its universal message. We are naming some of them:



Albert Einstein stated that when reading the Bhagavad-Gita he thinks about how God created the universe and then everything else seemed so superfluous.

Mahatma Gandhi stated that the Bhagavad-Gita calls on humanity to dedicate mind, body and soul to purity.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer stated that the Bhagavad-Gita has a profound influence on the spirit of mankind by its devotion to God which is manifested in all actions.

Sri Aurobindo stated the Bhagavad-Gita has a new message for every age and every civilization.

Herman Hesse stated that the wonder of the Bhagavad-Gita is its beautiful revelation of life's wisdom which has made philosophy blossom into religion.

Ramanuja has stated that the Bhagavad-Gita reveals the goal of all the Vedic scriptures.

Aldous Huxley stated that the Bhagavad-Gita is the most comprehensive statement of perennial philosophy.

Madhvacarya has stated that the Bhagavad-Gita is apauruseya which means of divine origin and eternal.

Some western scholars have expressed opinions that the Bhagavad-Gita was written after Jesus Christ and the idea of devotion was taken from him. But anyone who has read both the Bible and the Bhagavad-Gita completely can easily discern the vast difference between the two. The Bible being more of a history book relates in the New Testament stories and pertinent facts regarding the life of Jesus. On the other hand the Bhagavad-Gita gives exact information regarding God, the soul, material nature, birth and death, the purpose of human existence and is a practical manual for spiritual revelation and attainment. It is interesting to note that the two foremost doctrines of

Christianity as found in the Bible in Matthew, chapter 22, verses 37 and 39 which say: Love thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind; and love thy neighbor as thyself are not minimized but completely validated by the Bhagavad-Gita. The book Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, volume six, page 696 states, " It is certain that portions of the Bhagavad-Gita in which the doctrine of bhakti or love of God is revealed are pre-Christian and of indigenous Indian origin. This is not only limited to the devotional portions; but the entirety of the Bhagavad-Gita is pre-Christian. Also it has been well noted by sanskrit scholars that in terms of grammatical construction many sentences and the archaic forms of many words do not follow the strict rules of grammar which all sanskrit scholars follow as expounded given by Panini, who lived in the 6th century B.C.

Not only is the Bhagavad-Gita pre-Christian; but it is also pre-Buddhistic as well. That the Bhagavad-Gita is pre-Buddhistic can be determined by the fact that no where is there any reference to Buddhism. Whereas in the Buddhist scripture Niddesa written in 4 B.C. in the Pali Canon is found reference to the worship of Vasudeva and Baladeva, who are Krishna and Balarama respectively. Although some scholars surmise that the mention of nirvana six times gives them reason to assume that this might be contrary. The word nirvana is always compounded with the word brahma as in brahma-nirvanam meaning identified with the Ultimate truth or with the word paramam as in nirvana-paramam meaning identified with the Supreme. In Buddhism the word nirvana is used to mean extinguished or dissolved in terms of loss of separate existence. As the word nirvana by itself is also used in the Mahabharata in the sense of extinction it can be determined that the Buddhists

received this concept of nirvana from earlier Vedic scriptures.

Many of you have been taught by your religions that God is to be feared. Many of you have been taught that this life is all there is and after this life there is nothing more. Others have been taught that after death one goes to heaven or hell. Still others have been taught that it is possible for the soul to be possessed. Some of you believe the possibility of reincarnation and others among you cannot fathom what is true and what is false. Many of you have been conditioned by erroneous conceptions, programmed by false realities and even brainwashed to follow belief systems that intelligently it is difficult to follow.

Now we are giving everyone the opportunity to learn the eternal message of Bhagavad-Gita. All intelligent species of life, human being and otherwise can take advantage of these instructions and benefit eternally by the transcendental knowledge contained within the Bhagavad-Gita and we are confident that this realization will manifest as a reality in the foreseeable future.

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# **The Lotus of the Heart: A Summary of the Upanishads**

**By Alex Krawciw Levin**

Based on the translation by Eknath Easwaran. Page numbers are cited for this version of the Upanishads. Title quote is from the Chandogya Upanishad (191).

The Upanishads are a series of brief writings that originated from hymns and teachings in early Indian civilization, some dating to approximately 1500 BC. Typically, these teachings were an oral tradition illumined teachers passed them down to students seeking truth and knowledge about themselves, their world, and the universe. However, the Upanishads are inspirational to anyone who shares this quest for meaning.

Each Upanishad is, in Easwaran's words, "complete in itself, an ecstatic snapshot of transcendent Reality." Some of them are in story and/or dialog form; some are narratives; others are chants or hymns with poetic rhythms. These sacred texts are primarily inspirational. The Upanishads do not provide easy answers, but rather lead the reader to become conscious of the questions and the questioner, to experience spiritual being-ness and connection to the universe.

The Bhagavad Gita: Teachings and Message

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The Bhagavad Gita , the "Song of God" is one of the most important **Hindu** scriptures. It is revered as a sacred scripture of **Hinduism**, and considered as one of the most important philosophical classics of the world. The Bhagavad Gita comprises 700 verses, and is a part of the Mahabharata. The teacher of the Bhagavad Gita is **Krishna** Who is revered by Hindus as a manifestation of the Lord Himself, and is referred to within as the Bhagavan—the Divine

One. The Bhagavad Gita is commonly referred to as the Gita for short.

The content of the Gita is the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna taking place on the battlefield before the start of the Kurukshetra War. Responding to Arjuna's confusion and moral dilemma about fighting his own cousins, Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and prince and elaborates on different Yogic and Vedantiic philosophies, with examples and analogies. This has led to the Gita often being described as a concise guide to Hindu **theology** and also as a practical, self-contained guide to life. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi describes it as a lighthouse of eternal wisdom that has the ability to inspire any man or woman to supreme accomplishment and enlightenment. During the discourse, Krishna reveals His identity as the Supreme Being Himself (*Svayam Bhagavan*), blessing Arjuna with an awe-inspiring vision of His divine universal form.

The basic teachings can be summarized as under:

- 10.** Why do you worry without cause? Whom do you fear without reason? Who can kill you? The soul is neither born, nor does it die.
- 11.** Whatever happened, happened for the good; whatever is happening, is happening for the good; whatever will happen, will also happen for the good only. You need not have any regrets for the past. You need not worry for the future. The present is happening...
- 12.** What did you lose that you cry about? What did you bring with you, which you think you have lost? What did you produce, which you think got destroyed? You did not bring anything - whatever you have, you received from here. Whatever you have given, you have given only here. Whatever you took, you took from God. Whatever you gave, you gave to him. You came empty handed, you will leave empty handed. What is yours today, belonged to someone else yesterday, and will belong to someone else the day after tomorrow. You are mistakenly enjoying the thought that this is yours. It is this false happiness that is the cause of your sorrows.
- 13.** Change is the law of the universe. What you think of as death, is indeed life. In one instance you can be a millionaire, and in the other instance you can be steeped in **poverty**. Yours and mine, big and small

- erase these ideas from your mind. Then everything is yours and you belong to everyone.

- 14.** This body is not yours, neither are you of the body. The body is made of fire, water, air, earth and ether, and will disappear into these elements. But the soul is permanent - so who are you?
- 15.** Dedicate your being to God. He is the one to be ultimately relied upon. Those who know of his support are forever free from fear, worry and sorrow.
- 16.** Whatever you do, do it as a dedication to God. This will bring you the tremendous experience of joy and life-freedom forever.

Some Quotes from famous personalities across the world on the Bhagavad Gita:

### **Albert Einstein**

"When I read the Bhagavad Gita and reflect about how God created this universe everything else seems so superfluous."

### **Aldous Huxley**

"The Bhagavad Gita is the most systematic statement of **spiritual** evolution of endowing value to mankind. It is one of the most clear and comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever revealed; hence its enduring value is subject not only to India but to all of humanity."

### **Mahatma Gandhi**

"When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon, I turn to Bhagavad Gita and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. Those who meditate on the Gita will derive fresh joy and new meanings from it every day."

### **Henry David Thoreau**

"In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita in comparison with which our modern world

and its literature seem puny and trivial."

### **Dr. Albert Schweitzer**

"The Bhagavad Gita has a profound influence on the spirit of mankind by its devotion to God which is manifested by actions."

### **Carl Jung**

"The idea that man is like unto an inverted tree seems to have been current in by gone ages. The link with Vedic conceptions is provided by Plato in his Timaeus in which it states 'behold we are not an earthly but a heavenly plant.' This correlation can be discerned by what Krishna expresses in chapter 15 the Bhagavad Gita."

### **Herman Hesse**

"The marvel of the Bhagavad Gita is its truly beautiful revelation of life's wisdom which enables philosophy to blossom into religion."

### **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

"I owed a magnificent day to the Bhagavad Gita. It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us."

Read more: <http://www.articlesbase.com/religion-articles/the-bhagavad-gitateachings-and-message-1508517.html#ixzz1FIyBGxph>

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Have you ever read the charges that the Bible borrowed from the Bhagavad-Gita? a historical and theological investigation and concludes that it is not the Bible that borrowed from the Bhagavad-Gita but the probability is for the other way. Also, the article highlights how the Bible borrows Biblical concepts over the Bhagavad-Gita.

**External Critique** Eliot Deutsch in his book *The Bhagavadgita* says: "The Gita was composed later than the (early) Upanishads. The period of the Gita's composition would fall between the fifth century B.C. and the second century B.C. The final recension of the work was completed in the Gupta period (fourth to seventh centuries A.D.), and the earliest manuscript is Shankara's commentary in the ninth century. Swami Vivekananda: The book, *Gita*, has been known to the generality of people before Shankarâchârya made it famous by writing his commentary on it. Long before that, there was current, according to many, the concept of the Bodhâyana. If this could be proved, it would go a long way, no doubt, to establish the authenticity of the Gita and the authorship of Vyasa. But the Bodhayana Bhâshya on the Vedânta Sûtra by Râmânûja compiled his Shri-Bhâshya, which Shankaracharya mentions and even quotes in his own commentary, and which was so greatly discussed by the Swami Vivekananda. I have a copy even of that Bodhayana Bhashya could I find while travelling throughout India. Even Ramanuja compiled his Bhashya from a worm-eaten manuscript which he had. Even this great Bodhayana Bhashya on the Vedanta-Sutras is so much enshrouded in uncertainty, it is simply useless to try to establish the existence of the Bodhayana Bhashya. Some infer that Shankaracharya was the author of the Gita, and that it was he who composed the body of the Mahabharata. ( Thoughts on Gita, Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Lectures). **Reasons for their Critique**

**Improbability of it being a part of the Mahabharata: Swami Vivekananda** objects to there be so much discussion about Jnâna, Bhakti, and Yoga on the battle-field, where the warriors stood in battle array ready to fight, just waiting for the last signal? And was any scholar present there to note down every word spoken between Krishna and Arjuna, in the middle of the battle-field." **Unfamiliarity before Shankaracharya:** Alberuni, an Arab scholar who lived (1017 to 1031 A.D), wrote a book *Alberuni's Indica*, cataloguing the religious books and the social system. Though Alberuni mentions Gita fourteen times, he does not mention even the name of Bhagavad-Gita or discusses the idea of Vedanta or the Advaita-Vedanta as mentioned in the day Bhagavad-Gita.

**Lack of Manuscript Evidence:** There has not been a single manuscript of Bhagavad-Gita before Shankaracharya. **Internal Evidence for Late Authorship:** "the Bhagavad-Gita itself presents



evidence of its late composition. For example, verse XV, 15 mentions Vedantakrita (Vedanta). This verse is a clue that the composition of the vulgate text took place when Vedanta came into prominence. Since the promulgation of Vedanta is closely linked to the rise of the Bhagavad-Gita, it is evident that the Bhagavad-Gita has its origin in the same period. Likewise, verse XVIII, 1 compares the Vedic god Rudra with Shankara. The more apt comparison would have been to Shiva when we examine their common characteristics. Rudra has been characterized as fierce, unsurpassed in might, and malevolent. But he is also bountiful, a bestower of blessings, and easily invoked. These characteristics are also those of Shiva, a post-Vedic god who succeeded Rudra. 54 The comparison of Rudra with Shankara instead of Shiva provides an important clue for dating of the Bhagavad-Gita.

To give one more instance, in verse IV, 2 Krishna is telling Arjuna that the Yoga of the Bhagavad-Gita tradition, handed down in regular succession by Rajarshi--who were both Raja (king) and Rishi, had been destroyed (yogo nashtah). The question is: when and by whom was this destruction? When we critically examine this question in the context of the religious and philosophical changes of the period, it becomes apparent that this occurred around 800 A.D. and shortly thereafter" (The Bhagavad-Gita: Rediscovering the Original Bhagavadgita. by Phulgenda Sinha).

The Bhagavad-Gita From the Island of Bali: "The Bhagavadgita From the Island of Bali" by G. Sardesai and published in the Modern Review of July 1914. Sardesai had been in Bali for some time and, after searching through local archives of Indian literature, he found a copy of the Bhagavad-Gita on palm leaves in the Kavi (Balinese) language. This Bhagavad-Gita has only 84 verses and speaks about Samkaya Philosophy of Kapila. This might have been the original Gita. Another copy of the Bhagavad-Gita from Farrukhabad also has only 84 verses and speak about Samkaya Philosophy.

This has been further confirmed by reading the Chapter 2. New Concepts in Bhagavad-Gita. Davies observes, " It may be certainly affirmed that if any one, after reading the popular religious books of the Hindus, should then turn for the first time to the study of the Bhagavadgita, he must be conscious of having come to a new country where nearly everything had changed. The thoughts, the sentiments, and the methods of expression have another character." (Davies, The Bhagavadgita)

### **Some observations**

Bhagavad-Gita as we know now was not present before Shankaracharya. The original Bhagavad-Gita speaks about Samkaya philosophy. Modern Bhagavad-Gita speaks about new concepts.

# Gandhāran Buddhist Texts

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Early Buddhism

### Scriptures

Pali CanonĀgamas

**Gandharan texts**

### Councils

1st Council2nd Council

3rd Council4th Council

### Schools

First Sangha

└ Mahāsāṃghika ┆

Ekavyahāraka ┆ Lok

ottaravāda ┆ Bahuśr

utīya ┆ Prajñaptivāda

└ Caitika └ Sthavir

avāda ┆ Mahīśāsaka

┆ Dharmaguptaka

┆ Kāśyapīya ┆ Sarv

āstivāda └ Vibhajya

vāda └ Theravād

a

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The **Gandhāran Buddhist Texts** are the oldest [Buddhist](#) manuscripts yet discovered, dating from the 3rd century CE.<sup>[1]</sup> They are written in [Gāndhārī](#), and are possibly the oldest extant Indic texts altogether. They are held by European and Japanese institutions and individuals, and are currently being recovered and studied by several universities. The Gandhāran texts are in a considerably deteriorated form (their survival at all is due to fortunate circumstances). Educated guesses about reconstruction have been possible in several cases using both modern linguistic techniques and more traditional textual scholarship, comparing previously known [Pāli](#) and [Buddhist](#) versions of texts. Other Gandhāran Buddhist Texts--"several and perhaps many"--have been found in the last few centuries but lost or destroyed.<sup>[2]</sup>

The texts are attributed to the [Dharmaguptaka](#) sect by Richard Salomon, the leading scholar in the field. The British Library scrolls "represent a random but reasonably representative fraction of what was preserved in the set of texts preserved in the library of a monastery of the Dharmaguptaka sect in Nagarāhāra."

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## The British Library Collection

In 1994 the [British Library](#) acquired a group of some eighty Gandharan manuscript fragments from the 1st century. They were written on [birch bark](#) and stored in clay jars, which preserved them. They have been found in eastern Afghanistan ([Bamiyan](#), [Jalalabad](#), [Hadda](#), which were part of [Gandhara](#)) and were buried in ancient monasteries. A team has been at work, trying to decipher the manuscripts: the first one appeared to date (2009). The manuscripts were written in [Gāndhārī](#) using the [Kharosthī script](#), which is sometimes also called the **Kharosthi Manuscripts**.

The collection is composed of a diversity of texts: a [Dhammapada](#), discourses of Buddha (for example the [Horn Sutra](#)), [Avadanās](#) and [Purvayogas](#), commentaries and [Abhidharma](#) texts.

There is evidence to suggest that these texts may belong to the [Dharmaguptaka](#) school, a [Nikāya](#) [Hinayanist](#) school (Salomon 2000, p. 5). There is an inscription on a jar to that school, and there is other evidence as well. On a semi-related point, the Gandhāran text of the [Rhinoceros Sutra](#) contains a polemic against the [Mahāyāna](#). (Salomon, 2000, p. 127)

[\[edit\]](#)

## The Senior Collection

The Senior collection was bought by [R. Senior](#), a British collector. The Senior collection may be compared to the British Library collection. It consists almost entirely of [canonical](#) sutras, and, like the British Library collection, were written on birch bark and stored in clay jars.<sup>[5]</sup> The jars bear inscriptions referring to Macedonian month names, as is characteristic of the Kaniska era from which they derive.<sup>[6]</sup> There is a "strong suggestion" that the Senior scrolls were written, at the earliest, in the latter part of the first century A.D., or, perhaps, in the first half of the second century. This would make the Senior scrolls slightly but significantly later than the British Library collection, which have been provisionally dated to the first half of the first century.

The Senior collection is superficially similar in character to the British Library collection in that it consists of about two dozen birch bark manuscripts or manuscript fragments arranged in scroll or similar form, written in Kharosthi script and Gandhari language. Both were found inside inscribed clay pots, and both come from the same or nearby sites, in or around Hadda in eastern Afghanistan. But in terms of content, the two collections differ in important ways. Whereas the British Library collection was a diversity of many different genres written by some two dozen different scribes (Salomon 1999: 22-55, especially 22-23), nearly all of the manuscripts in the Senior collection are written in the same hand, and all but one belong to the same genre, namely sutra. Moreover, whereas all of the British Library scrolls were

least some of them were evidently already damaged and incomplete before they were interred (Salomon 1999: 69-71; Salomon 2000: 20-23), some of the Senior scrolls are still more or less complete and have been in good condition when they were buried. Thus the Senior scrolls, unlike the British Library scrolls, form a unified, cohesive, and at least partially intact collection that was carefully interred as such.[7]

He further reports that "largest number of parallels for the sutras in the Senior collection are in Chinese and the corresponding collections in Sanskrit and Chinese." [8]

[[edit](#)]

## The Schøyen collection

The [Schøyen collection](#) consists of [birch bark](#), [palm leaf](#) and [vellum](#) manuscripts. They are thought to have been hidden in the Bamiyan caves, where refugees were seeking shelter. Most of these manuscripts were collected by a Norwegian collector, named [Martin Schøyen](#), while smaller quantities are in possession of Japanese collectors. The oldest manuscripts date from the second to the 8th century CE. In addition to texts in Gandhāri, the collection contains important early sutric material in Sanskrit.[9]

The Schøyen collection includes fragments of [canonical Suttas](#), Abhidharma, Vinaya, and Mahāyāna. Most of these manuscripts are written in the [Brahmi](#) scripts, while a small portion is written in Gandhāri.

Among the early Dharmaguptaka texts in the Schøyen Collection, is a fragment in the Kharoṣṭhī script. It contains Six [Pāramitās](#), a central practice for bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna Buddhism.[10]

[[edit](#)]

## University of Washington

One more manuscript, written on birch bark in a Buddhist monastery of the [Abhidharma](#) tradition, dated to the 5th century CE, was acquired from a collector by the [University of Washington](#) Libraries in 2002. It contains teachings on the Buddha's teachings, on the subject of human suffering.

[[edit](#)]

## The Khotan Dharmapada

In 1892 a copy of the [Dhammapada](#) written in the Gandhārī [Prakrit](#) was discovered near [Khotan](#), [China](#). It came to Europe in parts, some going to [Russia](#) and some to [France](#). In 1898 most of it was published in the [Journal Asiatique](#). In 1962 John Brough published the collected Russian and French editions with commentary.

[[edit](#)]

## Published Material

Scholarly critical editions of the texts of the University of Washington and the British Library are published by the University of Washington Press in the "Gandhāran Buddhist Texts" series,<sup>[11]</sup> beginning with a Gandhāri Rhinoceros Sutra including [phonology](#), [morphology](#), [orthography](#), [paleography](#), etc. The Schøyen Collection is published by Hermes Publishing, Oslo, Norway.

The following scholars have published fragments of the Gandharan manuscripts: [Mark Allon](#), [Timothy Lenz](#) and [Jens Braarvig](#). Some of the published material is listed below:

1999 - *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhara: The British Library Kharosthi Fragments*, by [F. Raymond Allchin](#), and Mark Barnard  
2000 - *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection I, Buddhist Manuscripts*, by Jens Braarvig, Oslo: Hermes Publishing.  
2000 - *A Gandhari Version of the Rhinoceros Sutra: Senior Kharosthi Fragment 5B (Gandharan Buddhist Texts, 1)*, by Andrew Glass and Richard Salomon  
2001 - *The Ekottarikagama-Type Sutras: British Library Kharosthi Fragments 12 and 14 (GBT Vol 2)* by Mark Allon (Editor), Andrew Glass (Editor). Seattle: University of Washington Press.  
2003 - *A New Version of the Dharmapada and a Collection of Previous-Birth Stories: British Library Karosthi Fragments 16 and 17* by Timothy Lenz (Author), Andrew Glass (Author), Bhikshu Dharmamitra (Author). Seattle: University of Washington Press.  
2008 - *Four Gandhari Samyuktagama Sutras: Senior Kharosthi Fragment 5 (GBT, Vol. 4)* by Mark Allon (Author), Mark Allon (Contributor) Seattle: University of Washington Press.  
2009 - *Two Gandhari Songs of Lake Anavatapta (Anavatapta-gatha): British Library Kharosthi Fragment 1 and Senior Kharosthi Fragment 2* by Richard Salomon (Author), Andrew Glass (Contributor). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

[\[edit\]](#)

See also

## The Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project

The Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project was founded at the [University of Washington](#) in September 1996 to promote the study, edition and publication of twenty-seven birch-bark scrolls, written in the Kharoṣṭhī script and the Gāndhārī language, that had been acquired by the British Library in 1994. Further discoveries have greatly increased the number of known Gāndhārī manuscripts.

There are now seventy-seven birch-bark scrolls in various collections (primarily the British Library, the Senior Collection, the University of Washington Libraries and the Library of Congress) and numerous smaller manuscript fragments (in the Schøyen Collection, the Hirayama Collection, the Hayashidera Collection and the Bibliothèque nationale de France). These manuscripts date from the first century BCE to the third century CE, and as such are the oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts as well as the oldest manuscripts from South Asia. They promise to provide unprecedented insight into the early history of Buddhism in South Asia as well as its transmission to Central Asia and China. The manuscript editions of the EBMP are published in the Gandhāran Buddhist Texts series by the [University of Washington Press](#).

## Gautama Buddha

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*"Buddha" and "Gautama" redirect here. For other uses, see [Buddha \(disambiguation\)](#) and [Gautama \(disambiguation\)](#).*

### Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha

A statue of the Buddha from [Sarnath](#), 4th century BCE

<b>Born</b>	c. 563 BCE or 623 BCE <a href="#">Lumbini</a> , today in <a href="#">Nepal</a>
<b>Died</b>	c. 483 BCE or 543 BCE (aged 80) <a href="#">Kushinagar</a> , today in <a href="#">India</a>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<a href="#">Shakya</a>
<b>Known for</b>	Founder of <a href="#">Buddhism</a>
<b>Predecessor</b>	<a href="#">Kassapa Buddha</a>
<b>Successor</b>	<a href="#">Maitreya Buddha</a>

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v · d · e

**Siddhārtha Gautama** ([Sanskrit](#): [सिद्धार्थ गौतम](#); [Pali](#): **Siddhattha Gotama**) was a [spiritual](#) teacher who founded [Buddhism](#).<sup>[1]</sup> In most Buddhist traditions, he is regarded as the Supreme **Buddha** (P. *sammāsambuddha*, S. *samyaksambuddha*) of our age, "Buddha" meaning "awakened one" or "the enlightened one." <sup>[note 1]</sup> The time of his birth and death are uncertain: most early 20th-century historians dated his lifetime as c. 563 BCE to 483 BCE,<sup>[2]</sup> but more recent opinion dates his death to between 486 and 483 BCE or, according to some, between 411 and 400 BCE.<sup>[3][4]</sup> By tradition, Gautama is said to have been born in the small state of [Kapilavastu](#), in what is now [Nepal](#), and later to have taught primarily throughout regions of eastern [India](#) such as [Magadha](#) and [Kośala](#).<sup>[5][6]</sup>

Gautama, also known as *Śākyamuni* ("Sage of the [Śākya](#)s"), is the primary figure in Buddhism, and accounts of his life, discourses, and [monastic](#) rules are believed by Buddhists to have been summarized after his death and memorized by his followers. Various collections of teachings attributed to him were passed down by [oral tradition](#), and first committed to writing about 400 years later.



He is also regarded as a god or prophet [in other world religions](#) or denominations, including [Hinduism](#), [Ahmadiyya Islam](#)<sup>[7]</sup> and the [Bahá'í](#) faith.

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## Life

### Traditional biographies

The primary sources for the life of Siddhārtha Gautama are in a variety of different and sometimes conflicting traditional biographies. These include the *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, *Mahāvastu*, and the *Nidānakathā*.<sup>[8]</sup> Of these, the *Buddhacarita* is the earliest full biography, an epic poem written by the poet *Aśvaghoṣa*, and dating around the beginning of the 2nd century CE.<sup>[8]</sup> The *Lalitavistara Sūtra* is the next oldest biography, a *Mahāyāna/Sarvāstivāda* biography dating to the 3rd century CE.<sup>[9]</sup> The *Mahāvastu* from the *Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda* sect is another major biography, composed incrementally until perhaps the 4th century CE.<sup>[9]</sup> Lastly, the *Nidānakathā* is from the *Theravāda* sect in *Sri Lanka*, composed in the 5th century CE by *Buddhaghosa*.<sup>[10]</sup>

From canonical sources, the *Jātaka tales*, *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (DN 14), and the *Acchariyaabbhuta Sutta* (MN 123) include selective accounts that may be older, but are not full biographies. The *Jātaka* tales retell previous lives of Gautama as a *bodhisattva*, and the first collection of these can be dated among the earliest Buddhist texts.<sup>[11]</sup> The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Acchariyaabbhuta Sutta* both recount miraculous events surrounding Gautama's birth, such as the *bodhisattva's* descent from *Tusita* Heaven into his mother's womb.

Traditional biographies of Gautama generally include numerous miracles, omens, and supernatural events. The character of the Buddha in these traditional biographies is often that of a fully transcendent (Skt. *lokottara*) and perfected being who is unencumbered by the mundane world. In the *Mahāvastu*, over the course of many lives, Gautama is said to have developed supramundane abilities including: a painless birth conceived without intercourse; no need for sleep, food, medicine, or bathing, although engaging in such "in conformity with the world"; omniscience, and the ability to "suppress karma."<sup>[12]</sup> Nevertheless, some of the

more ordinary details of his life have been gathered from these traditional sources. In modern times there has been an attempt to form a [secular](#) understanding of Siddhārtha Gautama's life by omitting the traditional supernatural elements of his early biographies.

The ancient Indians were generally unconcerned with chronologies, being more focused on philosophy. Buddhist texts reflect this tendency, providing a clearer picture of what Gautama may have taught than of the dates of the events in his life. These texts contain descriptions of the culture and daily life of ancient India which can be corroborated from the [Jain](#) scriptures, and make the Buddha's time the earliest period in [Indian history](#) for which significant accounts exist.[13]<sup>[Full citation needed]</sup> Karen Armstrong writes that although there is very little information that can be considered historically sound, we can be reasonably confident that Siddhārtha Gautama did exist as a historical figure.[14] Michael Carrithers goes a bit further by stating that the most general outline of "birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death" must be true.[15]<sup>[Full citation needed]</sup>

## Conception and birth

Queen Māyā miraculously giving birth to Prince Siddhārtha. Sanskrit manuscript. [Nālandā](#), [Bihar](#), India. [Pāla](#) period.

Gautama is thought to have been born in [Lumbini](#), in modern day Nepal[16] and raised in the small kingdom or principality of Kapilavastu.[17] According to the most traditional biography,<sup>[which?]</sup> the Buddha's father was King [Suddhodana](#), the leader of [Shakya](#) clan, whose capital was Kapilavastu, and who were later annexed by the growing Kingdom of [Kosala](#) during the Buddha's lifetime; Gautama was the [family name](#). His mother, [Queen Maha Maya](#) (Māyādevī) and Suddhodana's wife, was a Koliyan princess. Legend has it that, on the night Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Maya dreamt that a [white elephant](#) with six white tusks entered her right side,[18] and ten [months](#) later Siddhartha was born. As was the Shakya tradition, when his mother Queen Maya became pregnant, she left Kapilavastu for her father's kingdom to give birth. However, her son is said to have been born on the way, at Lumbini, in a garden beneath a [sal](#) tree.

The day of the Buddha's birth is widely celebrated in [Theravada](#) countries as [Vesak](#).<sup>[19]</sup> Various sources hold that the Buddha's mother died at his birth, a few days or seven days later. The infant was given the name Siddhartha (Pāli: Siddhattha), meaning "he who achieves his aim". During the birth celebrations, the hermit [seer Asita](#) journeyed from his mountain abode and announced that the child would either become a great king ([chakravartin](#)) or a great [holy man](#).<sup>[20]</sup> By traditional account,<sup>[which?]</sup> this occurred after Siddhartha placed his feet in Asita's hair and Asita examined the birthmarks. Suddhodana held a naming ceremony on the fifth day, and invited eight [brahmin](#) scholars to read the future. All gave a dual prediction that the baby would either become a great king or a great holy man.<sup>[20]</sup> [Kaundinya](#) (Pali: Kondanna), the youngest, and later to be the first [arahant](#) other than the Buddha, was reputed to be the only one who unequivocally predicted that Siddhartha would become a [Buddha](#).<sup>[21]</sup>

While later tradition and legend characterized Śuddhodana as a [hereditary monarch](#), the [descendant](#) of the Solar Dynasty of [Ikṣvāku](#) (Pāli: Okkāka), many scholars think that Śuddhodana was the elected chief of a tribal confederacy.

Early texts suggest that Gautama was not familiar with the dominant religious teachings of his time until he left on his religious quest, which is said to have been motivated by existential concern for the human condition.<sup>[22]</sup> At the time, many small [city-states](#) existed in [Ancient India](#), called [Janapadas](#). [Republics](#) and chiefdoms with diffused [political power](#) and limited [social stratification](#), were not uncommon amongst them, and were referred to as [gana-sanghas](#).<sup>[23]</sup> The Buddha's community does not seem to have had a [caste system](#). It was not a monarchy, and seems to have been structured either as an [oligarchy](#), or as a form of republic.<sup>[24]</sup> The more egalitarian gana-sangha form of government, as a political alternative to the strongly hierarchical kingdoms, may have influenced the development of the [Shramana](#) type [Jain](#) and Buddhist [sanghas](#), where monarchies tended toward [Vedic Brahmanism](#).<sup>[25]</sup>

## Early life and marriage

Siddhartha was brought up by his mother's younger sister, [Maha Pajapati](#).<sup>[26]</sup> By tradition, he is said to have been destined by birth to the life of a prince, and had three palaces (for seasonal occupation) built for him. Although more recent

scholarship doubts this status, his father, said to be King Śuddhodana, wishing for his son to be a great king, is said to have shielded him from religious teachings and from knowledge of human [suffering](#).

When he reached the age of 16, his father reputedly arranged his marriage to a cousin of the same age named [Yaśodharā](#) (Pāli: Yasodharā). According to the traditional account,<sup>[which?]</sup> she gave birth to a son, named [Rahula](#). Siddhartha is then said to have spent 29 years as a prince in [Kapilavastu](#). Although his father ensured that Siddhartha was provided with everything he could want or need, Buddhist scriptures say that the future Buddha felt that material wealth was not life's ultimate goal.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Departure and ascetic life

This scene depicts the "Great Departure" of Sidhartha Gautama, a predestined being. He appears here surrounded by a halo, and accompanied by numerous guards, mithuna loving couples, and devata, come to pay homage.<sup>[27]</sup> Gandhara art, Kushan period(1st-3rd century CE)

Prince Siddhartha shaves his hair and become an ascetic. [Borobudur](#), 8th century.

At the age of 29, the popular biography continues, Siddhartha left his palace to meet his subjects. Despite his father's efforts to hide from him the sick, aged and suffering, Siddhartha was said to have seen an old man. When his charioteer [Channa](#) explained to him that all people grew old, the prince went on further trips beyond the palace. On these he encountered a [diseased](#) man, a decaying [corpse](#), and an [ascetic](#). These depressed him, and he initially strove to overcome ageing, sickness, and death by living the life of an ascetic.<sup>[28]</sup>

Accompanied by Channa and aboard his horse [Kanthaka](#), Gautama quit his palace for the life of a [mendicant](#). It's said that, "the horse's hooves were muffled by the gods"<sup>[29]</sup> to prevent guards from knowing of the new bodhisattva's departure. This event is traditionally known as "the great departure".

Gautama initially went to [Rajagaha](#) and began his ascetic life by begging for alms in the street. Having been recognised by the men of King [Bimbisara](#), Bimbisara offered him the throne after hearing of Siddhartha's quest. Siddhartha rejected

the offer, but promised to visit his kingdom of [Magadha](#) first, upon attaining enlightenment.

He left Rajagaha and practised under two hermit teachers. After mastering the teachings of [Alara Kalama](#) (Skr. Ārāḍa Kālāma), he was asked by Kalama to succeed him. However, Gautama felt unsatisfied by the practise, and moved on to become a student of [Udaka Ramaputta](#) (Skr. Udraka Rāmaputra). With him he achieved high levels of meditative consciousness, and was again asked to succeed his teacher. But, once more, he was not satisfied, and again moved on.

[30]

Siddhartha and a group of five companions led by [Kaundinya](#) are then said to have set out to take their austerities even further. They tried to find enlightenment through deprivation of worldly goods, including food, practising [self-mortification](#). After nearly starving himself to death by restricting his food intake to around a leaf or nut per day, he collapsed in a river while bathing and almost drowned. Siddhartha began to reconsider his path. Then, he remembered a moment in childhood in which he had been watching his father start the season's plowing. He attained a concentrated and focused state that was blissful and refreshing, the [jhāna](#).

## Enlightenment

The Buddha sitting in meditation, surrounded by demons of [Māra](#). Sanskrit manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period.

According to the early Buddhist texts,[31] after realizing that meditative jhana was the right path to awakening, but that extreme asceticism didn't work, Gautama discovered what Buddhists call the [Middle Way](#)[31]—a path of moderation away from the extremes of [self-indulgence](#) and self-mortification.[31] In a famous incident, after becoming starved and weakened, he is said to have accepted milk and [rice pudding](#) from a village girl named [Sujata](#). [32] Such was his emaciated appearance that she wrongly believed him to be a spirit that had granted her a wish.[32]

Following this incident, Gautama was famously seated under a [pipal](#) tree - now known as the [Bodhi tree](#) - in [Bodh Gaya](#), [India](#), when he vowed never to arise

until he had found the truth.[33] [Kaundinya](#) and four other companions, believing that he had abandoned his search and become undisciplined, left. After a reputed 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he is said to have attained [Enlightenment](#).<sup>[33][34]</sup> According to some traditions, this occurred in approximately the fifth lunar month, while, according to others, it was in the twelfth month. From that time, Gautama was known to his followers as the *Buddha* or "Awakened One." ("Buddha" is also sometimes translated as "The Enlightened One.") He is often referred to in Buddhism as Shakyamuni Buddha, or "The Awakened One of the Shakya Clan."

According to Buddhism, at the time of his awakening he realized complete insight into the cause of suffering, and the steps necessary to eliminate it. These discoveries became known as the "[Four Noble Truths](#),"<sup>[34]</sup> which are at the heart of Buddhist teaching. Through mastery of these truths, a state of supreme liberation, or [Nirvana](#), is believed to be possible for any being. The Buddha described Nirvāna as the perfect peace of a mind that's free from ignorance, greed, hatred and other afflictive states,<sup>[34]</sup> or "defilements" (kilesas). Nirvana is also regarded as the "end of the world," in that no personal identity or boundaries of the mind remain. In such a state, a being is said to possess the [Ten Characteristics](#), belonging to every Buddha.

According to a story in the *Āyācana Sutta* (Samyutta Nikaya VI.1) - a scripture found in the [Pāli](#) and other [canons](#) - immediately after his awakening, the Buddha debated whether or not he should teach the [Dharma](#) to others. He was concerned that humans were so overpowered by ignorance, greed and hatred that they could never recognise the path, which is subtle, deep and hard to grasp. However, in the story, [Brahmā Sahampati](#) convinced him, arguing that at least some will understand it. The Buddha relented, and agreed to teach.

## Formation of the sangha

Painting of the first sermon depicted at [Wat Chedi Liem](#) in [Thailand](#).

After his awakening, the Buddha met two merchants, named [Tapussa](#) and [Bhallika](#), who became his first lay disciples. They were apparently each given hairs from his head, which are now claimed to be enshrined as relics in the [Shwe](#)

[Dagon](#) Temple in [Rangoon](#), [Burma](#). The Buddha intended to visit [Asita](#), and his former teachers, [Alara Kalama](#) and [Uddaka Ramaputta](#), to explain his findings, but they had already died.

He then travelled to the [Deer Park](#) near [Vārānasi](#) (Benares) in northern India, where he set in motion what Buddhists call the [Wheel of Dharma](#) by delivering his first sermon to the five companions with whom he had sought enlightenment. Together with him, they formed the first [saṅgha](#): the company of Buddhist monks.

All five become [arahants](#), and within the first two months, with the conversion of [Yasa](#) and fifty four of his friends, the number of such arahants is said to have grown to 60. The conversion of three brothers named Kassapa followed, with their reputed 200, 300 and 500 disciples, respectively. This swelled the sangha to more than 1000.

## Travels and teaching

Buddha with his protector [Vajrapani](#), [Gandhāra](#), 2nd century CE, Ostasiatische Kunst Museum  
For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha is said to have traveled in the [Gangetic Plain](#), in what is now [Uttar Pradesh](#), [Bihar](#) and southern [Nepal](#), teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to [outcaste](#) street sweepers, murderers such as [Angulimala](#), and cannibals such as [Alavaka](#). From the outset, Buddhism was equally open to all races and classes, and had no [caste](#) structure, as was the rule in Hinduism. Although the Buddha's language remains unknown, it's likely that he taught in one or more of a variety of closely related Middle Indo-Aryan dialects, of which [Pali](#) may be a standardization.

The sangha traveled through the subcontinent, expounding the dharma. This continued throughout the year, except during the four months of the [vassana](#) rainy season when ascetics of all religions rarely traveled. One reason was that it was more difficult to do so without causing harm to animal life. At this time of year, the sangha would retreat to monasteries, public parks or forests, where people would come to them.

The first vassana was spent at [Varanasi](#) when the sangha was formed. After this, the Buddha kept a promise to travel to [Rajagaha](#), capital of [Magadha](#), to visit



King [Bimbisara](#). During this visit, [Sariputta](#) and [Mahamoggallana](#) were converted by [Assaji](#), one of the first five disciples, after which they were to become the Buddha's two foremost followers. The Buddha spent the next three seasons at Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery in Rajagaha, capital of Magadha.

Upon hearing of his son's awakening, Suddhodana sent, over a period, ten delegations to ask him to return to [Kapilavastu](#). On the first nine occasions, the delegates failed to deliver the message, and instead joined the sangha to become arahants. The tenth delegation, led by [Kaludayi](#), a childhood friend of Gautama's (who also became an arahant), however, delivered the message.

Now two years after his awakening, the Buddha agreed to return, and made a two-month journey by foot to Kapilavastu, teaching the dharma as he went. At his return, the royal palace prepared a midday meal, but the sangha was making an alms round in Kapilavastu. Hearing this, Suddhodana approached his son, the Buddha, saying:

"Ours is the warrior lineage of Mahamassata, and not a single warrior has gone seeking alms"

The Buddha is said to have replied:

"That is not the custom of your royal lineage. But it is the custom of my Buddha lineage. Several thousands of Buddhas have gone by seeking alms"

Buddhist texts say that Suddhodana invited the sangha into the palace for the meal, followed by a dharma talk. After this he is said to have become a [sotapanna](#). During the visit, many members of the royal family joined the [sangha](#). The Buddha's cousins [Ananda](#) and [Anuruddha](#) became two of his five chief disciples. At the age of seven, his son [Rahula](#) also joined, and became one of his ten chief disciples. His half-brother [Nanda](#) also joined and became an arahant.

Of the Buddha's disciples, Sariputta, Mahamoggallana, [Mahakasyapa](#), Ananda and Anuruddha are believed to have been the five closest to him. His ten foremost disciples were reputedly completed by the quintet of [Upali](#), [Subhoti](#), Rahula, [Mahakaccana](#) and [Punna](#).

In the fifth vassana, the Buddha was staying at Mahavana near [Vesali](#) when he heard news of the impending death of his father. He is said to have gone to Suddhodana and taught the dharma, after which his father became an arahant.

The king's death and cremation was to inspire the creation of an order of nuns. Buddhist texts record that the Buddha was reluctant to ordain women. His foster mother [Maha Pajapati](#), for example, approached him, asking to join the sangha, but he refused. Maha Pajapati, however, was so intent on the path of awakening that she led a group of royal Sakyan and Koliyan ladies, which followed the sangha on a long journey to Rajagaha. In time, after Ananda championed their cause, the Buddha is said to have reconsidered and, five years after the formation of the sangha, agreed to the ordination of women as nuns. He reasoned that males and females had an equal capacity for awakening. But he gave women additional rules ([Vinaya](#)) to follow.

Devadatta tries to attack the Buddha. Picture of a wallpainting in a Laotian monastery.

## **Assassination attempts**

According to colorful legends, even during the Buddha's life the sangha was not free of dissent and discord. For example, [Devadatta](#), a cousin of Gautama who became a monk but not an arahant, more than once tried to kill him.

Initially, Devadatta is alleged to have often tried to undermine the Buddha. In one instance, according to stories, Devadatta even asked the Buddha to stand aside and let him lead the sangha. When this failed, he is accused of having three times tried to kill his teacher. The first attempt is said to have involved him hiring a group of archers to shoot the awakened one. But, upon meeting the Buddha, they laid down their bows and instead became followers. A second attempt is said to have involved Devadatta rolling a boulder down a hill. But this hit another rock and splintered, only grazing the Buddha's foot. In the third attempt, Devadatta is said to have got an elephant drunk and set it loose. This ruse also failed.

After his lack of success at homicide, Devadatta is said to have tried to create a [schism](#) in the sangha, by proposing extra restrictions on the [vinaya](#). When the Buddha again prevailed, Devadatta started a breakaway order. At first, he managed to convert some of the bhikkhus, but Sariputta and Mahamoggallana are said to have expounded the dharma so effectively that they were won back.

## **Mahaparinirvana**

The Buddha's entry into [Parinirvana](#). Sanskrit manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period.

The sharing of the relics of the Buddha, Zenyōmitsu-Temple Museum, Tokyo

According to the [Mahaparinibbana Sutta](#) of the Pali canon, at the age of 80, the Buddha announced that he would soon reach Parinirvana, or the final deathless state, and abandon his earthly body. After this, the Buddha ate his last meal, which he had received as an offering from a blacksmith named [Cunda](#). Falling violently ill, Buddha instructed his attendant [Ānanda](#) to convince Cunda that the meal eaten at his place had nothing to do with his passing and that his meal would be a source of the greatest merit as it provided the last meal for a Buddha. [\[35\]](#) Mettanando and von Hinüber argue that the Buddha died of [mesenteric infarction](#), a symptom of old age, rather than food poisoning. [\[36\]](#) The precise contents of the Buddha's final meal are not clear, due to variant scriptural traditions and ambiguity over the translation of certain significant terms; the [Theravada](#) tradition generally believes that the Buddha was offered some kind of pork, while the [Mahayana](#) tradition believes that the Buddha consumed some sort of truffle or other mushroom. These may reflect the different traditional views on [Buddhist vegetarianism](#) and the precepts for monks and nuns.

Ananda protested the Buddha's decision to enter Parinirvana in the abandoned jungles of [Kusīnāra](#) (present-day Kushinagar, [India](#)) of the [Malla](#) kingdom. Buddha, however, is said to have reminded Ananda how Kushinara was a land once ruled by a righteous wheel-turning king that resounded with joy:

44. Kusavati, Ananda, resounded unceasingly day and night with ten sounds—the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the rattling of chariots, the beating of drums and tabours, music and song, cheers, the clapping of hands, and cries of "Eat, drink, and be merry!"

The Buddha then asked all the attendant [Bhikkhus](#) to clarify any doubts or questions they had. They had none. According to Buddhist scriptures, he then finally entered Parinirvana. The Buddha's final words are reported to have been: "All composite things pass away. Strive for your own liberation with diligence." His body was cremated and the [relics](#) were placed in monuments or stupas,

some of which are believed to have survived until the present. For example, The [Temple of the Tooth](#) or "Dalada Maligawa" in [Sri Lanka](#) is the place where what some believe to be the [relic of the right tooth of Buddha](#) is kept at present.

According to the Pāli historical chronicles of Sri Lanka, the [Dīpavamsa](#) and [Mahāvamsa](#), the coronation of [Aśoka](#) (Pāli: Asoka) is 218 years after the death of Buddha. According to two textual records in Chinese (十八部論 and 部執異論), the coronation of Aśoka is 116 years after the death of Buddha. Therefore, the time of Buddha's passing is either 486 BCE according to Theravāda record or 383 BCE according to Mahayana record. However, the actual date traditionally accepted as the date of the Buddha's death in Theravāda countries is 544 or 543 BCE, because the reign of Aśoka was traditionally reckoned to be about 60 years earlier than current estimates.

At his death, the Buddha is famously believed to have told his disciples to follow no leader. [Mahakasyapa](#) was chosen by the sangha to be the chairman of the [First Buddhist Council](#), with the two chief disciples [Mahamoggallana](#) and [Sariputta](#) having died before the Buddha.

## Physical characteristics

*Main article: [Physical characteristics of the Buddha](#)*

Gandhāran depiction of the Buddha from Hadda, Central Asia. Victoria and Albert Museum, [London](#).

An extensive and colorful physical description of the Buddha has been laid down in scriptures. A [kshatriya](#) by birth, he had military training in his upbringing, and by Shakyian tradition was required to pass tests to demonstrate his worthiness as a warrior in order to marry. He had a strong enough body to be noticed by one of the kings and was asked to join his army as a general. He is also believed by Buddhists to have "the 32 Signs of the Great Man".

The Brahmin Sonadanda described him as "handsome, good-looking, and pleasing to the eye, with a most beautiful complexion. He has a godlike form and countenance, he is by no means unattractive."(D,I:115).

"It is wonderful, truly marvellous, how serene is the good Gotama's appearance,

how clear and radiant his complexion, just as the golden jujube in autumn is clear and radiant, just as a palm-tree fruit just loosened from the stalk is clear and radiant, just as an adornment of red gold wrought in a crucible by a skilled goldsmith, deftly beaten and laid on a yellow-cloth shines, blazes and glitters, even so, the good Gotama's senses are calmed, his complexion is clear and radiant." (A,I:181)

A disciple named Vakkali, who later became an Arahant, was so obsessed by Buddha's physical presence that the Buddha is said to have felt impelled tell him to desist, and to have reminded him that he should know the Buddha through the Dhamma and not through physical appearances.

Although there are no extant representations of the Buddha in human form until around the 1st century CE (see [Buddhist art](#)), descriptions of the physical characteristics of fully enlightened buddhas are attributed to the Buddha in the [Digha Nikaya's Lakkhaṇa Sutta](#) (D,I:142).[37] In addition, the Buddha's physical appearance is described by [Yasodhara](#) to their son [Rahula](#) upon the Buddha's first post-Enlightenment return to his former princely palace in the non-canonical Pali devotional hymn, *Narasīha Gāthā* ("The Lion of Men").[38]

## Teachings

*Main article:* [Buddhist philosophy](#)

Seated Buddha, Gandhāra, 2nd century CE.

Some scholars believe that some portions of the [Pali Canon](#) and the [Āgamas](#) contain the actual substance of the historical teachings (and possibly even the words) of the Buddha.[39][40] This is not the case for the later [Mahāyāna sūtras](#). [41] The scriptural works of [Early Buddhism](#) precede the Mahayana works chronologically, and are treated by many Western scholars as the main credible source for information regarding the actual historical teachings of Gautama Buddha. However, some scholars do not think that the texts report on historical events.[42][43][44]

Some of the fundamentals of the teachings attributed to Gautama Buddha are:

- The [Four Noble Truths](#): that suffering is an ingrained part of existence; that the

origin of suffering is craving for sensuality, acquisition of identity, and annihilation; that suffering can be ended; and that following the [Noble Eightfold Path](#) is the means to accomplish this.

- The Noble Eightfold Path: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
- [Dependent origination](#): the mind creates suffering as a natural product of a complex process.
- Rejection of the [infallibility](#) of accepted [scripture](#): Teachings should not be accepted unless they are borne out by our experience and are praised by the wise. See the [Kalama Sutta](#) for details.
- [Anicca](#) (Sanskrit: *anitya*): That all things that come to be have an end.
- [Dukkha](#) (Sanskrit: *duḥkha*): That nothing which comes to be is ultimately satisfying.
- [Anattā](#) (Sanskrit: *anātman*): That nothing in the realm of experience can really be said to be "I" or "mine".
- [Nibbāna](#) (Sanskrit: *Nirvāna*): It is possible for sentient beings to realize a dimension of awareness which is totally unconstructed and peaceful, and end all suffering due to the mind's interaction with the conditioned world.

However, in some Mahayana schools, these points have come to be regarded as more or less subsidiary. There is disagreement amongst various [schools of Buddhism](#) over more complex aspects of what the Buddha is believed to have taught, and also over some of the [disciplinary rules](#) for monks.

According to tradition, the Buddha emphasized ethics and correct understanding. He questioned everyday notions of divinity and salvation. He stated that there is no intermediary between mankind and the [divine](#); distant gods are subjected to [karma](#) themselves in decaying heavens; and the Buddha is only a guide and teacher for beings who must tread the path of [Nirvāna](#) ([Pāli](#): Nibbāna) themselves to attain the spiritual awakening called [bodhi](#) and understand reality. The Buddhist system of insight and [meditation](#) practice is not claimed to have been divinely revealed, but to spring from an understanding of the true nature of the mind, which must be discovered by treading the path guided by the Buddha's teachings.

## Other religions

Buddha depicted as the 9th [avatar](#) of god [Vishnu](#) in a traditional [Hindu](#) representation.

*Main article: [Gautama Buddha in world religions](#)*

Gautama Buddha is also described as a god or prophet in [other religions](#). Some Hindu texts say that the Buddha was an [avatar of the god Vishnu](#), who came to Earth to delude beings away from the Vedic religion.[45]

The Buddha is also regarded as a [prophet](#) by the [Ahmadiyyas](#)[46][47][48] and a [Manifestation of God](#) in the [Bahá'í](#) faith.[49] Some early Chinese Taoist-Buddhists thought the Buddha to be a reincarnation of [Lao Tzu](#).<sup>[50]</sup> The [Catholic Church](#) integrated the Buddha into their faith through [St. Josaphat](#).

See also

- [Bodh Gaya](#)
- [Buddha as an Avatar of Vishnu](#)
- [Buddha as viewed in other religions](#)
- [Buddhahood](#)
- [History of Buddhism](#)

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### Notes

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*budho* past [participle \(passive\)](#) of *bujhaṇu* ‘ to understand ’ from *búdhyatē*, West [Pahārī buddhā](#) preterite of *bujñā* ‘ to know ’; [Sinhalese](#) *buj* (*j* written for *d*), *budu*, *bud* – , *but* – ‘ the Buddha ’."

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- [What Was The Buddha Like?](#) by Ven S. Dhammika

## **Was Christ a Myth Derived from Buddha?**

**Introduction:** There are many who make the following claim:

**“The story of Jesus Christ is just copied mythology about Buddha.”**

**The purpose of this page is to examine the actual Buddhist writings in order to determine whether or not this claim is true.**

**We will address each specific parallel in turn after this introduction.**

Christmyth theories such as these are frustrating to research, because the ones who assert these claims hardly ever give any primary sources to back it up. Typically, they will make a long list of all the ways Christ and Buddha are similar. Then, they will document the similarities by making reference to books such as *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions* by Doane. Then, when the curious investigator attains a copy of Doane’s book, they find only more of the same - a long list of similarities between Christ and Buddha, and references to other books, but not to Buddhist writings. If these claims are true, if Christ is only a fabricated myth derived from previous legends about someone else, then why can’t those who assert such a theory prove it by referring us to primary sources?

But what if we do find some ancient Buddhist writing that supports this claim? Would it then be proven that Christ is only a legend stolen from Buddhism?

To answer that question, we would need to determine three things.

31. Age of the Buddhist writings and legends. Do they predate Christ? This is addressed below.
32. Are there multiple points of convergence between the Buddhist and the Christian sequence of events among similar stories?
33. Are there enough similarities to overcome the probability of coincidence? The Pali Canon, is 12,000 printed pages in length! - roughly 11 times the size of the Bible! On top of that monstrosity is the extensive *Mahayana* literature, the variant Chinese and Tibetan canons, lengthy commentaries on the Pali Canon, the Sanskrit literature, and the Tantric materials. In such a volume of data, we would expect to find at least a few similar stories shared by Christ and Buddha resulting purely by coincidence.

## **Age of the Buddhist Writings and Legends**

Buddha lived in northern India about 500 years before Christ. His life story and teachings were preserved orally by his followers for about 400 years before they were finally written down in the 1st Century BC, an unfortunate occurrence which will forever call into question how well the truth about Buddha was preserved. These earliest Buddhist writings mostly come to us from the *Theraveda* branch of Buddhism, which

compiled what is known as the Pali Canon, or *Tipitaka*, which means “Three Baskets.” There are similarities between Christ and Buddha in the Pali Canon.

Before the Pali Canon was written, various schisms emerged about 250 BC. Eighteen schools developed. Oral tradition became diversified and legendary. One branch, the *Mahasanghikas*, originated a completely new way of looking at the Buddha which was in conflict with the orthodoxy of the *Theraverda*. A monk named Mahadeva produced a split at the time of Asoka which resulted in the formation of the *Mahasanghika* sect. (Conze 119) Instead of being a man who attained enlightenment, Buddha was now a heavenly being who only appeared to be human. In this respect, they were similar to the ancient Christian Gnostic docetists. From this non-orthodox doctrine, the other main branch of Buddhism, the *Mahayana*, evolved over the next several hundred years. The present form of *Mahayana* Buddhism did not evolve until the 200's AD. (Thomas xx)

It is largely from these later *Mahasanghika* and *Mahayana* writings that many similarities between Christ and Buddha are derived. Some assert that the legends must be older than Christ regardless of when they were written because the oral tradition certainly predates Christ. For the orthodox *Theraveda* branch, this may be true. But for the *Mahayana* branch, we are not sure when the oral traditions began. It is quite possible that the legends are no older than the writings themselves, in which case they cannot be proven to predate Christ, and, in many cases, can be proven to post-date Christ. Even the *Theraveda* branch was not immune from inserting legends into their later writings and commentaries.

We will address the dating of scriptures as we address the specific similarities that follow.

## **Jesus Christ and Buddha: The Similarities**

*“The similarities are not of a kind that suggest cultural borrowing. They are not at the level of specific images or language. They are structural.” - Marcus Borg, author of *Jesus and Buddha: The Parallel Sayings* (Borg, xiii)*

### **Did Buddha Feed a Multitude?**

### **Did Buddha Walk on Water?**

-

*He walks upon the water without parting it, as if on solid ground. Anguttara Nikaya 3.60, (Borg, 149)*

The *Anguttara Nikaya* is part of the Pali Canon written in the first century before Christ. This saying appears in a list of supernatural powers the Buddha possesses, such as going through walls, diving into the ground, flying, touching the sun and moon, and hearing voices of spirits. (Thomas, 182)

*The Teacher with his five hundred monks finished his meal. The great guildmaster and his wife also ate as much as they wished, but there was no end to the cakes, and even when the whole monastery of monks and eaters of broken meat had received, there was no sign of finishing. - Jataka 78, compare to Matthew 14:13-21 where Jesus feeds the multitude.*

*He arrived at the bank of the river Aciravati in the evening. As the ferryman had drawn the boat up on the beach, and had gone to listen to the doctrine, the disciple saw no boat at the ferry, so finding joy in making the Buddha the object of his meditation, he walked across the river. His feet did not sink in the water. He went as though on the surface of the earth, but when he reached the middle, he saw waves. Then his joy in meditating on the Buddha grew small and he began to sink. But making firm his joy in meditating on the Buddha, he went on the surface of the water, entered the Jetavana, saluted the teacher, and sat on one side." - Jataka 190, compare to Matthew 14:28-31 where Peter tries to walk on water but fails.*

The *Jataka* itself is early enough, being a part of the Pali Canon written in the first century before Christ. However, both instances appear only in the introduction to the Buddha's discourse.

Thomas says about both these instances, "There is no likelihood in its being old, as these introductions appear to be often the invention of the commentator." The commentaries on the *Jataka* were not written until the 300's AD (Skilton, Otterbein) or the 400's AD (Bullitt). Thomas does, however, admit that the idea of walking on water is pre-Christian (Thomas 241, 246, 182) because of



the *Anguttara Nikaya* above. In both *Jataka* cases, the similarity occurs only in the introductions, which is very short compared to the actual discourses of the Buddha that follow the introductions. (Kawasaki).

**Conclusion:** The *Anguttara Nikaya* predates Christ, but is not specific to the story line and so it only bares a passing resemblance. The two *Jataka* tales are similar enough to the gospels, but the date is too late to be much use for the christmyth theory.

### **Simeon and Asita**

The story of Asita is often compared to that of Simeon in Luke 2:25-35. Like Simeon, Asita is going to die soon. The 33 gods reveal the whereabouts of the baby Buddha to Asita. Similarly, the Holy Spirit reveals to Simeon that he would not die before seeing Christ. Asita speaks wonders about Buddha, as Simeon does about Christ, but each with significantly different words. Unlike Simeon who lives in the city of Jerusalem, Asita lives up in the Himalayan Mountains. Unlike Simeon who has the baby Jesus brought to him in Jerusalem and sees him in the temple, Asita searches out the baby Buddha and finds him at his parents' house. Unlike Simeon who attains peace with his own imminent death after seeing Christ, Asita continues to mourn his own imminent death.

Asita's story is part of the *Nalakasutta* of the *Suttanipata* (Thomas, 38), which is one of the earliest Buddhist writings (Skilton, 41, 82). The *Suttanipata* is part of the Pali Canon (buddhanet.net) and was therefore

written in the first century before Christ. However, Thomas contends that even though the *Suttanipata* predates Christ, it cannot be proven that the story of Asita predates Christ. His rationale: Asita's story bares resemblance to late Sanskrit accounts, the sutta itself never references Asita's story, and that no one believes the introductions to the poems in the sutta to be as old as the poems themselves. (Thomas, 38-39) Again, we have a situation similar to the *Jatakas*. No one doubts the fact that the core of the writing predates Christ, but there is good reason to believe the parallel is part of a post-Christian addition.

Whatever the date of Asita's story, its likeness to Simeon's story is considered by many to be the most striking similarity between the early Buddhist literature and the gospels.

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The Tripitaka [Sanskrit] [Pali: Tipitaka] is the Canon of the Buddhists, both Theravada and Mahayana. It is possible to speak of several Canons such as the Sthaviravada, Sarvastivada and Mahayana in different languages like Pali, Chinese and Tibetan. The word is used basically to refer to the literature, which is directly or indirectly ascribed to the Buddha himself.

It is generally believed that whatever was the teaching of the Buddha, conceived under Dharma, was rehearsed soon after his death by a fairly representative body of disciples. The later systematic division, into *Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma* is based on this collection. Sharing a common Vinaya, the early Buddhist disciples appear to have remained united for about a century.

The Council of Vesali or the second Buddhist Council saw the break up of this original body and eighteen separate schools were known to exist by about the first century B.C. It is reasonable to think that some of these schools would have opted to possess a Tripitaka of their own or rather their own recension, perhaps with a considerably large common core.

It has long been claimed that the Buddha, as he went about teaching in the Gangetic valley in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E., used Magadhi or the language of Magadha as his medium of communication. It has since been made to identify this Magadhan dialect with Pali, the language in which the texts of the Theravada school are recorded. Hence we speak of a Pali Canon, i.e., the literature of the Sthaviravadins which is believed to be the original word of the Buddha.

At any rate, this is the only complete recension we possess and the Pali texts seem to preserve much more than most of the extant Buddhist works in other languages. Further, the Sthaviravadins have a number of major divisions of Pali Buddhist literature which are non-Canonical. They are:

1. Post-Canonical Pali literature including works like *Petakopadesa* and *Milindapanha*, the authorship of which is ascribed to one or more disciples.

2. Pali Commentarial literature which includes:

(a) Atthakatha or Commentaries, the original version of which is believed to have been taken to Ceylon by Thera Mahinda, the missionary sent by Asoka and

(b) the different strata of Tika or Sub-Commentaries, contributions to which were made by Buddhists in Lanka, India and Burma.

Besides this Pali recension of the Sthaviravada school there are fragmentary texts of the Sarvastivada and Mulasarvastivada which are preserved in Sanskrit. A large portion of their Vinaya texts in Sanskrit are preserved in the Gilgit manuscripts. But a more complete collection of the Sarvastivada recension (perhaps including the Dharmapuptaka and Kasyapiya), i.e., a Sanskrit Canon, must have possibly existed as is evidenced by the translations preserved to us. These include complete translations of the four agamas (the equivalent of the nikayas). Of the Ksudraka (Pali: Khuddaka), only some texts are preserved in Chinese. In addition to the Chinese translations seem to preserve, to the credit of the Sarvastivadins, a vast Vinaya literature consisting of an independent collection of seven Abhidhamma treatises. Thus what could be referred to as a Sanskrit Canon ranges between fragments of texts preserved in Sanskrit and the more representative collection preserved in Chinese. It may be mentioned here that a version of the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya texts, even more faithful than the Chinese version, is preserved in Tibetan. Of the Abhidharma, the Prajnaptisastra appears to have been translated into Tibetan.

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Visit the Web site: [Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project](#)

The British Library / University of Washington Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project was founded in September 1996 in order to promote the study, editing, and publication of a unique collection of fifty-seven fragments of Buddhist manuscripts on birch bark scrolls, written in the Kharosthi script and the Gandhari (Prakrit) language that were acquired by the British Library in 1994. The manuscripts date from, most likely, the first century A.D., and as such are the oldest surviving Buddhist texts, which promise to provide unprecedented insights into the early history of Buddhism in north India and in central and east Asia.

*Volume 6, Book 61, Number 509:*  
Narrated Zaid bin Thabit:

Abu Bakr As-Siddiq sent for me when the people! of Yamama had been killed (i.e., a number of the Prophet's Companions who fought against Musailama). (I went to him) and found 'Umar bin Al-Khattab sitting with him. Abu Bakr then said (to me), "Umar has come to me and said: "Casualties were heavy among the Qurra' of the! Qur'an (i.e. those who knew the Quran by heart) on the day of the Battle of Yalmama, and I am afraid that more heavy casualties may take place among the Qurra' on other battlefields, whereby a large part of the Qur'an may be lost. Therefore I suggest, you (Abu Bakr) order that the Qur'an be collected." I said to 'Umar, "How can you do something which Allah's Apostle did not do?" 'Umar said, "By Allah, that is a good project. "Umar kept on urging me to accept his proposal till Allah opened my chest for it and I began to realize the good in the idea which 'Umar had realized."

Then Abu Bakr said (to me). 'You are a wise young man and we do not have any suspicion about you, and you used to write the Divine Inspiration for Allah's Apostle. So you should search for (the fragmentary scripts of) the Qur'an and collect it in one book).' By Allah If they had ordered me to shift one of the mountains, it would not have been heavier for me than this ordering me to collect the Qur'an. Then I said to Abu Bakr, "How will you do something which Allah's Apostle did not do?" Abu Bakr replied, "By Allah, it is a good project." Abu Bakr kept on urging me to accept his idea until Allah opened my chest for what He had opened the chests of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. So I started looking for the Qur'an and collecting it from (what was written on) palmed stalks, thin white stones and also from the men who knew it by heart, till I found the last Verse of Surat At-Tauba (Repentance) with Abi Khuzaima Al-Ansari, and I did not find it with anybody other than him. The Verse is:

'Verily there has come unto you an Apostle (Muhammad) from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty..(till the end of Surat-Baraa' (At-Tauba) (9.128-129) Then the complete manuscripts (copy) of the Qur'an remained with Abu Bakr till he died, then with 'Umar till the end of his life, and then with Hafsa, the daughter of 'Umar.

## History of the Qur'an

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The study of the **origins and development of the Qur'an** can be said to fall into two major schools of thought, the first being a [traditional](#) Islamic view and the second being a skeptical or non-traditionalist view, finding its origins in the works of orientalist scholars.

The traditionalist view, including both Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship, ascribes to the view that the [Qur'an](#) began with [divine revelation](#) to [Muhammad](#) in 610. All of these revelations were either memorized or written down during the lifetime of Muhammad. These revelations were subsequently collected and were standardized in today's version by the caliph [Uthman](#) c. 653/654. The text was later given vowel pointing and punctuation in the seventh and eighth centuries.[1]

Though all the skeptical views reject the reliability of early Islamic literature on the issue,[2] they diverge as to how the Qur'an (in its present form) came to be. These views are generally opposed by Muslim academia.[3]

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## The traditionalist view

According to the traditional Muslim view, the origin and development of the [Holy Qur'an](#) began with Muhammad receiving divine revelations in 610. According to traditional Muslim history the verses of the Qur'an were written on palm trees and fiber and memorized during the life of Muhammad and collected shortly after his death. During the caliphate of Uthman the Qur'an was standardized in 653. Slight developments in dotting and other punctuation happened during the seventh and

eighth centuries.[1]

Muslim and some western scholars hold this account to be true.[4][5]

[[edit](#)]

## Muhammad

*See also:* [Wahy](#)

The Qur'anic revelation started one night during the month of [Ramadan](#) in 610 AD, when Muhammad believed that the angel [Gabriel](#) visited him, and considered himself responsible for inscribing these messages from God.[6]

Muslim scholars believe that prophet Muhammad was illiterate, as mentioned in the Qur'an itself,

"Those who follow the messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them....."[Qur'an](#) 7:157.

However, the Arabic word translated here as 'illiterate' also means 'gentile'.[\[7\]](#)

He would memorize the Qur'an by ear, and later recite it to his [companions](#), who also memorized it. Before the Qur'an was written down, speaking it from memory prevailed as the mode of teaching it to others. This fact, taken in the context of seventh century Arabia, was not at all an extraordinary feat. People of that time had a penchant for recited poetry and had developed their skills in memorization to a remarkable degree. Events and competitions that featured the recitation of elaborate poetry were of great interest.[\[8\]](#) Some scholars, like [William Montgomery Watt](#) and [Maxime Rodinson](#) believe that Muhammad was literate and educated.[\[9\]\[10\]](#)

[[edit](#)]

## Written text

The initial revelations were written on different sorts of parchments, tablets of stone, branches of date trees, other wood, leaves, leather and even bones.[\[11\]](#)

[\[12\]](#)

[Sahaba](#) began recording Suras in writing before Muhammad died in 632.

Allusions to written portions of the Qur'an can be found in many events.

Immediately before his conversion in 615, [Umar ibn al-Khattab](#) caught his sister



reading the Qur'anic text ([Ta-Ha](#)) from parchment. Muhammad said that reading the Qur'anic text earns a believer twice as much reward as reciting it from memory yet he prohibited carrying written copies of it into battle.<sup>[11]</sup> He sent some copies of the Qur'an to different tribes and cities in order to teach people the religion of Islam.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

At [Medina](#), about forty companions are believed to have acted as scribes for the Qur'an. Twenty-two such persons are mentioned by name in the Hadith. Among them were well known persons, such as [Abu Bakr](#), [Umar](#), [Uthman](#), [Ali](#), [Ibn Masud](#), [Abu Huraira](#), [Abdullah bin Abbas](#), [Abdullah bin Amr bin al-As](#), [Aisha](#), [Hafsa](#) and [Umm Salama](#).<sup>[11]</sup>

Narrated [Qatada](#): *I asked Anas bin Malik: 'Who collected the Qur'an at the time of the prophet?' He replied, "Four, all of whom were from the Ansar: [Ubai bin Ka'b](#), [Muadh bin Jabal](#), [Zaid bin Thabit](#) and [Abu Zaid](#)".*<sup>[Bukhari [Sahih al-Bukhari 6:61:525](#)]</sup> Also, after the fall of Mekkah, [Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan](#) also became a scribe of the Prophet after he accepted Islam.<sup>[13]</sup>

The Sahaba wrote down the revelations under Muhammad's guidance:

Narrated al Bara: *There was revealed 'Not equal are those believers who sit and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah' {{The Holy Quran-usc|4|95}}*. The prophet said: 'Call Zaid for me and let him bring the board, the ink pot and the scapula bone.' Then he said: 'Write: Not equal are those believers...'<sup>[Bukhari [Sahih al-Bukhari 6:61:512](#)]</sup>

Muslim scribes believed that they would receive heavenly reward by writing down the Qur'an.<sup>[12]</sup>

[\[edit\]](#)

## **Abu Bakr**

During the life of Muhammad, parts of the Qur'an, though written, were scattered amongst his [companions](#), much of it as private possession. After Muhammad's death, [Abu Bakr](#) initially exercised a policy of [laissez faire](#) as well. This policy was reversed after the [Battle of Yamama](#) in 633.<sup>[14]</sup> During the battle, 700 [Muslims who had memorized the Qur'an](#) were killed. The death of Sālim, however, was most significant, as he was one of the very few who had been

entrusted by [Muhammad](#) to teach the Qur'an. Consequently, upon [Umar's](#) insistence, Abu Bakr ordered the collection of the hitherto scattered pieces of the Qur'an into one copy.[15]

[Zaid ibn Thabit](#), Muhammad's primary scribe, was assigned the duty of collecting all of the Qur'anic text. This was his reaction:

*"...By Allah, if he (Abu Bakr) had ordered me to shift one of the mountains it would not have been harder for me than what he had ordered me concerning the collection of the Qur'an... So I started locating the Qur'anic material and collecting it from parchments, scapula, leafstalks of date palms and from the memories of men."*<sup>[Bukhari]</sup> [Sahih al-Bukhari 6:60:201](#)

He also said:

*"So I started looking for the Holy quran and collected it from (what was written on) palm-leaf stalks, thin white stones, and also from men who knew it by heart, till I found the last verse of Surat at-Tauba (repentance) with Abi Khuzaima al-Ansari, and I did not find it with anybody other than him. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol.6, p.478).*

The task required ibn Thabit to collect written copies of the Qur'an, with each verse having validated with the oral testimony of at least two companions. Usually the written copies were verified by himself and [Umar](#) - both of whom had memorized portions of the Qur'an. Thus, eventually the entire Qur'an was collected into a single copy, but it still wasn't given any particular order.[14]

This compilation was kept by the Caliph Abu Bakr, after his death by his successor, Caliph [Umar](#), who on his deathbed gave them to [Hafsa bint Umar](#), his daughter and one of Muhammad's widows.[14]

[\[edit\]](#)

## **Ali ibn Abu Talib**

According to Shia as well as some Sunni scholars Ali compiled a [mushaf](#), a complete version of [Qur'an](#),<sup>[16]</sup> within six months after the death of Muhammad. When the volume was completed it was brought to [Medina](#), where it was shown. The order of chapters of Ali's volume were rejected by some and Ali.<sup>[17]</sup>

[\[edit\]](#)

## Compilation

By the time of the caliphate of [Uthman ibn Affan](#), there was a perceived need for the compilation of the Qur'an. The Caliphate had grown considerably, bringing into Islam's fold many new converts from various cultures with varying degrees of isolation. These converts spoke a variety of languages but were not well learned in Arabic and so a complete written text of the Qur'an had to be compiled.

Another reason for compiling the Qur'an was that many of the Muslims who had memorised portions of the Qur'an were dying, especially in battle.

Uthman is said to have begun a committee (including Zayd and several prominent members of Quraysh) to produce a standard copy of the text. Some accounts say that this compilation was based on the text kept by Hafsa. Other stories say that Uthman made his compilation independently, Hafsa's text was brought forward, and the two texts were found to coincide perfectly.<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup>

Until this time there was reportedly only one written text of the Qur'an. According to Islamic accounts, this text was faithful to its original version. Non-Muslim scholars believe that, while this is entirely possible, there must at least have been slight variations produced from some corruptions.<sup>[6]</sup>

Thus, this became known as *al-mushaf al-Uthmani* or the "Uthmanic codex".<sup>[18]</sup>

Uthman's reaction in 653 is recorded in the following:

*"So 'Uthman sent a message to Hafsa saying, "Send us the manuscripts of the Qur'an so that we may compile the Qur'anic materials in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you." Hafsa sent it to 'Uthman. 'Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, 'Abdullah bin AzZubair, Said bin Al-As and 'AbdurRahman bin Harith bin Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies. 'Uthman said to the three Quraishi men, "In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit on any point in the Qur'an, then write it in the dialect of Quraish, the Qur'an was revealed in their tongue." They did so, and when they had written many copies, 'Uthman returned the original manuscripts to Hafsa. 'Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt. Said bin Thabit added, "A Verse from Surat Ahzab was missed by me when we copied the Qur'an and I used to hear Allah's Apostle reciting it. So we*

*searched for it and found it with Khuzaima bin Thabit Al-Ansari. (That Verse was): 'Among the Believers are men who have been true in their covenant with Allah.'*<sup>[1]</sup><sup>[Bukhari]</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari* 6:61:510

Although the order of his earlier script differed from the Uthmanic codex, Ali accepted this standardized version.<sup>[17]</sup>

Some scholars suggest that the early Uthmanic texts of the Qur'an differed in terms of punctuation from the version traditionally read today. It is believed that early versions of the text did not contain diacritics, markers for short vowels, and dots that are used to distinguish similarly written Arabic letters such as r[ر] & z[ز] or t[ت] & ṭ[ٹ] or f[ف] & q[ق]. One claim is that dots were introduced into the writing system sometime about half a century after the standardization of the Uthmanic text around 700 A.D.<sup>[19]</sup>

When the compilation was finished, sometime between 650 and 656, Uthman sent copies of it to the different centers of the expanding Islamic empire. From then on, thousands of Muslim scribes began copying the Qur'an.<sup>[12]</sup>

[\[edit\]](#)

## Canonization

It is a point of contention among Muslims that the entire Qu'ran was preserved by Uthman, but some hadith attest that some verses could not be found,<sup>[20][21]</sup> that variant copies were burnt,<sup>[22]</sup> and that a saying of Muhammad was misremembered as a Qu'ranic verse.<sup>[23]</sup><sup>[original research?</sup>

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## Oldest surviving copy

*Main article:* [Sana'a manuscripts](#)

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Fragments from a large number of Qur'an codices were discovered in [Yemen](#) in 1972. They are now lodged in the House of Manuscript in [Sana'a](#). Carbon-14 tests date some of the parchments to 645–690 CE.<sup>[24]</sup> However, the text itself is somewhat younger, since carbon-14 estimates the year of the death of an organism, and the process from that to the final writing on the parchment involves an unknown amount of time. [Calligraphic](#) datings have pointed to 710–

715 CE.[25] It was common for parchment to be reused, older text having been shaved or washed off.

One of the three [Qur'ans issued by Uthman](#) is, according to Islamic tradition, preserved at [Tashkent](#). The [Topkapi manuscript](#) in Istanbul is also considered to have been commissioned by [Uthman](#).[26]

According to the Hadith (Al-Bukhari, Vol6, #510), four Uthmanic manuscripts were prepared, after 653CE/31AH and before Uthman's death 656CE/34AH. Al-Kindi (d. 850CE/236AH) wrote in the early 3rd century AH, that only the Damascus copy remained and that was currently in Malatja. Various dates have been given for when the Damascus manuscript perished, and various manuscripts at different times have claimed to be the Damascus manuscript. The last of these remained alleged [Damascus manuscripts](#) with a traceable past was in Damascus until the fire of 1892CE/1310AH.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

There have also been large numbers of manuscripts alleged to be the Damascus manuscript — or even one of the other perished manuscripts. However, there is no sufficient evidence to prove such a link.[27]

Having studied early Qur'an manuscripts, John Gilchrist states: "The oldest manuscripts of the Quran still in existence date from not earlier than about one hundred years after Muhammad's death." [28] He comes to this conclusion by analysing the state of development of the script used in the two of the oldest manuscripts available at the time he is writing, the Samarkand and Topkapi codices. The codices are both written in the [Kufic script](#). It "can generally be dated from the late eight century depending on the extent of development in the character of the script in each case." [29] This technique has been criticised by some Muslim scholars, who have cited many instances of early Kufic and pre-Kufic inscriptions. The most important of these is 240m of Qur'anic inscriptions in Kufic script from the founding of the [Dome of the Rock](#) in [Jerusalem](#) (692CE/70AH). [30] Inscriptions on rock Hijaaze and early Kufic script may date as early as (646CE/24AH). Clearly early Kufic scripts existed in the seventh century. The debate between the scholars has moved from one over the date origin of the script to one over state of development of the Kufic script in the early manuscripts and in datable 7th Century inscriptions.

12th century [Andalusian](#) Qur'an

As for the copies that were destroyed, Islamic traditions say that [Abdallah Ibn Masud](#), [Ubay Ibn Ka'b](#), and [Ali](#), Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, had preserved versions that differed in some ways from the Uthmanic text. Muslim scholars record certain of the differences between the versions; those recorded consist almost entirely of orthographical and lexical variants, or different verse counts. All three (Ibn Masud, Ubay Ibn Ka'b, and Ali) are recorded as having accepted the Uthmanic text as final.<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup>

Uthman's version was written in an older Arabic script that left out most vowel markings; thus the script could be interpreted and read in various ways. This basic Uthmanic script is called the [rasm](#); it is the basis of several traditions of oral recitation, differing in minor points. The Qur'an is always written in the Uthmanic [Rasm](#) (Rasm al Uthman). In order to fix these oral recitations and prevent any mistakes, scribes and scholars began annotating the Uthmanic rasm with various [diacritical marks](#) indicating how the word was to be pronounced. It is believed that this process of annotation began around 700 CE, soon after Uthman's compilation, and finished by approximately 900 CE. The Qur'an text most widely used today is based on the [Rasm Uthmani](#) (Uthmanic way of writing the Qur'an) and in the Hafs tradition of recitation, as approved by [Al-Azhar University](#) in Cairo in 1922. (For more information regarding traditions of recitations, see *Qur'anic recitation*, below.)

[\[edit\]](#)

## Views

[\[edit\]](#)

## Traditionalists

Some secular scholars accept something like the traditional Islamic version; they say that Muhammad put forth verses and laws that he claimed to be of divine origin; that his followers memorized or wrote down his revelations; that numerous versions of these revelations circulated after his death in 632 CE, and that Uthman ordered the collection and ordering of this mass of material in the time

period (650-656).<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup> These scholars point to many characteristics of the *Qur'an* — the repetitions, the scientific mentions, the arbitrary order, the mixture of styles and genres — as indicative of a human collection process that was extremely respectful of a miscellaneous collection of original texts.<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup> Examples of traditionalists would be [Richard Bell](#), [Montgomery Watt](#), and [Andrew Rippin](#).

[\[edit\]](#)

## Skeptical scholars

Other secular scholars, such as [John Wansbrough](#), [Michael Cook](#) and [Patricia Crone](#), were less willing to attribute the entire Qur'an to Muhammad (or Uthman), arguing that there "is no hard evidence for the existence of the Koran in any form before the last decade of the seventh century...[and that]...the tradition which places this rather opaque revelation in its historical context is not attested before the middle of the eighth." "There is no proof that the text of the Qur'an was collected under Uthman, since the earliest surviving copies of the complete Qur'an are centuries later than Uthman. (The oldest existing copy of the full text is from the ninth century.<sup>[31]</sup>) They contend that Islam was formed gradually over a number of centuries after the Muslim conquests, as the Islamic conquerors elaborated their beliefs in response to Jewish and Christian challenges.<sup>[32]</sup>

Wansbrough wrote in a dense, complex, almost hermetic style<sup>[[clarification needed](#)]</sup>, and has had much more influence on Islamic studies through his students than he has through his own writings<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup>. His students Crone and Cook co-authored a book called [Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World](#) (1977), which was extremely controversial at the time, as it challenged not only Muslim orthodoxy, but the prevailing attitudes among secular Islamic scholars.

Crone, Wansbrough and Nevo argue that all the primary sources which exist are from 150–300 years after the events which they describe, and thus are chronologically far removed from those events<sup>[33][34][35]</sup>

The absence of contemporaneous corroborating material from the very first century of Islam has raised numerous questions as to the authenticity of the account provided by later traditionalist sources. All that is preserved from this time period are a few commemorative building inscriptions and assorted coins.

[36] Skeptical scholars point out that the earliest account of Muhammad's life by [Ibn Ishaq](#) was written about a century after Muhammad died and all later narratives by Islamic biographers contain far more details and embellishments about events which are entirely lacking in Ibn Ishaq's text.[37]

Patricia Crone, studying the origins of the Qur'an, has focused on the examination of the vast body of the [Greek](#), [Armenian](#), [Hebrew](#), [Aramaic](#), [Syriac](#) and [Coptic](#) accounts of non-Muslim neighbors of the 7th and 8th centuries which in many cases contradict the traditional Islamic narratives. She argues that the consistency of the non-Muslim sources spread over a large geographic area would tend to rule out a non-Muslim anti-Islamic motive to these sources.[38]

The skeptic approach has been further expanded by [Christoph Luxenberg](#), who supports claims for a late composition of the Qur'an, and traces much of it to [sources other than Muhammad](#). Luxenberg is known for his thesis that the Qur'an is merely a re-working of an earlier Christian text, a [Syriac lectionary](#). [39] (See also the articles [Gerd R. Puin](#), and [Alexander in the Qur'an](#).)

[Fred Donner](#) has argued for an early date for the collection of the Qur'an, based on his reading of the text itself. He points out that if the Qur'an had been collected over the tumultuous early centuries of Islam, with their vast conquests and expansion and bloody incidents between rivals for the caliphate, there would have been some evidence of this history in the text. However, there is nothing in the Qur'an that does not reflect what is known of the earliest Muslim community. [40]

In 1972, during the restoration of the Great Mosque of [San'a](#), in [Yemen](#), laborers stumbled upon a "paper grave" containing tens of thousands of fragments of parchment on which verses of the Qur'an were written. Some of these fragments were believed to be the oldest Qur'anic texts yet found.

In well known Professor [G.R. Hawting](#)'s academic review and in partial support of Puin's book, *Hidden Origins of Islam: New Research into Its Early History*, [36] Hawting says Puin refers "to some puzzling evidence that must be taken into account by anyone concerned by a period that is, indeed, in many ways obscure." [41]

The variations from the received text that he found seemed to match minor



variations in sequence reported by some Islamic scholars, in their descriptions of the variant Qur'ans once held by Abdallah Ibn Masud, Ubay Ibn Ka'b, and [Ali](#), and suppressed by Uthman's order.<sup>[42][43]</sup>

[\[edit\]](#)

## Similarities to the Bible

*Main article: [Biblical narratives and the Qur'an](#)*

Skeptical scholars account for the many similarities between the Qur'an and the Jewish and Hebrew Scriptures by saying that Muhammad was teaching what he believed a universal history, as he had heard it from the Jews and Christians he had encountered in Arabia and on his travels. These scholars also disagree with the Islamic belief that the whole of the Qur'an is addressed by God to humankind. <sup>*[clarification needed]*</sup> They note that there are numerous passages where God is directly addressed, or mentioned in the third person, or where the narrator swears by various entities, including God.<sup>[44]</sup>

[\[edit\]](#)

Completeness

This article **may contain [original research](#)**. Please [improve it](#) by [verifying](#) the claims [removed](#). More details may be available on the [talk page](#). *(September 2007)*

There are three arguments which suggest that the Qur'an is not complete.<sup>[45]</sup> Some Muslims, Sunni and Shia alike, believe that the Qur'an itself was never [abrogated](#), but instead that the Qur'anic verse <sup>[Qur'an 2:106]</sup> is referring to Muhammad's recitations being abrogations of the [Torah](#) and the [Injil](#). However, the consensus of the early and most authoritative Tafsir writers hold to the perspective that the verse in fact refers to abrogation of the Qur'an.<sup>[46][47][48]</sup>

According to both Shia and Sunni authentic traditions, there are a number of authentic [hadith](#) that make reference to disputes over the Uthmanic edition of the Qur'an. These disputes include variant readings of individual ayats, missing ayats, missing surahs and surahs of substantially different lengths..<sup>[49]</sup> pp. 5–39.

[\[edit\]](#)

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- ^ Patricia Crone, [The Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam](#), pp. 203-30), where she argues that much of the classical Muslim understanding of the Koran rests on the work of storytellers and that this work is of very dubious historical value. These storytellers contributed to the tradition on the rise of Islam, and this is evident in the steady growth of information: "If one storyteller should happen to mention a raid, the next storyteller would know the date of this raid, while the third would know everything that an audience might wish to hear about it." 53 Then, comparing the accounts of the raid of Kharrar by Ibn Ishaq and al-Waqidi, Crone shows that al-Waqidi, influenced by and in the manner of the storytellers, "will always give precise dates, locations, names, where Ibn Ishaq has none, accounts of what triggered the expedition, miscellaneous information to lend color to the event, as well as reasons why, as was usually the case, no fighting took place. No wonder that scholars are fond of al-Waqidi: where else does one

find such wonderfully precise information about everything one wishes to know? But given that this information was all unknown to Ibn Ishaq, its value is doubtful in the extreme. And if spurious information accumulated at this rate in the two generations between Ibn Ishaq and al-Waqidi, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that even more must have accumulated in the three generations between the Prophet and Ibn Ishaq."

- ^ [Patricia Crone](#), [Slaves on Horses](#), pp. 15-16. *All the while that Islamic historians have been struggling with their inert tradition, they have had available to them the Greek, Armenian, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Coptic literatures of non-Muslim neighbors and subjects of the Arab conquerors, to a large extent edited and translated at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, and left to collect dust in the libraries ever since. It is a striking testimony to the suppression of the non-Islamic Middle East from the Muslim sources that not only have these literatures been ignored for questions other than the chronology of the conquests and the transmission of Greek philosophy and science, but they have also been felt to be rightly ignored. Of course these sources are hostile, and from a classical Islamic view they have simply got everything wrong; but unless we are willing entertain the notion of an all-pervading literary conspiracy between the non-Muslim peoples of the Middle East, the crucial point remains that they have got things wrong on very much the same points. That might not, it is true, have impressed the medieval Muslims who held the Jews and Christians capable of having maliciously deleted from their scriptures precisely the same passages relating to the coming of Islam; but as the Jews and Christians retorted, given their wide geographical and social distribution, they could scarcely have vented their anti-Muslim feelings with such uniform results. It is because there is agreement between the independent and contemporary witnesses of the non-Muslim world that their testimony must be considered; and it can hardly be claimed that they do not help: whichever way one chooses to interpret them, they leave no doubt that Islam was like other religions the product of a religious evolution.*
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## The Qur'anic Manuscripts

There has been a polemic going on that the Qur'an does not have manuscripts from the first century of *hijra*. However, this is not true. Many fragments of early Qur'anic manuscripts were shown by Orientalists notably Nabia Abbott in her work [The Rise of the North Arabic script and its Kur'anic development, with a full description of the Kur'an manuscripts in the Oriental Institute](#) (1939,

University of Chicago Press). There she discusses some of the Quranic manuscripts, dated from second half of the first century *hijra* onwards, at the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. The aim of this page is to highlight some of the early Qur'anic manuscripts to refute the claim that the Qur'an lacks manuscripts from the first century of *hijra*.

The dig at the Great Mosque in Ṣan'ā', Yemen, had found a large number of manuscripts of the Qur'an dating from first century of *hijra*. The date of building the Great Mosque in Ṣan'ā' goes back to 6th year of *hijra* when the Prophet Muhammad entrusted one of his companions to build a mosque. The mosque was extended and enlarged by Islamic rulers from time to time. In 1385 H/1965 CE heavy rains fell on Ṣan'ā'. The Great Mosque was affected and the ceiling in the north west corner was damaged. During the survey, the workers discovered a large vault full of parchment and paper manuscripts of both the Qur'an and non-Qur'anic material.

The UNESCO, an arm of the United Nations, had [compiled a CD](#) containing some of the dated Ṣan'ā' manuscripts as a part of "[Memory of the World](#)" programme. In this CD there are many Qur'anic manuscripts written in the *hijazi* script which are dated from 1st century of *hijra*, one of them belonging to early 1st century. Many more manuscripts have been dated from the period 1st / 2nd century of *hijra*. We will be showing only a few examples below.

A few more examples of the 1st and 1st / 2nd century *hijra* Qur'anic manuscripts can be found in the book *Maṣāḥif Ṣan'ā'* (1985, Dār al-Athar al-Islāmiyyah). This book is a catalogue of an exhibition at the Kuwait National Museum, with articles by Husa Sabah Salim al-Sabah, G. R. Puin, M. Jenkins, U. Dreibholz in both Arabic and English. It is expected that the Ṣan'ā' manuscripts will throw a great deal of light on the early Islamic history of calligraphy and illumination and even the various [ahruf](#) (they were seven) in which the Qur'an was revealed.

A few words of caution concerning the dating of the Qur'anic manuscripts need to be mentioned. It is to be remembered that assigning a date to an undated early Qur'anic manuscript is rarely simple especially in the absence of *wakf* marking. There is a tendency to assume that those in large scripts and without vowels are of the earliest date. This assumption, true to some extent, is nevertheless misleading in two respects. It ignores that fact that small as well as large *maṣāḥif* of the Qur'an were among the earliest written and that both types continued to be written thereafter. Though the assumption that manuscripts with the vowels must be considered later than those without is true in some cases, it is not always so, for some very early manuscripts of the Qur'an, originally written without vowels, may well have been voweled later. Furthermore, the first vowel system came into use shortly after the first *maṣāḥif* were written. There are also examples of later *maṣāḥif* which were unvoweled even after 3 centuries after *hijra*!

As a matter of caution, we stress the fact that we are only showing a single leaf of the manuscripts in the cases below. A manuscript may contain additional *sūrahs*. The reader is advised to go through the references for additional information.

*Assalamu-‘alaykum wa rahamatullahi wa barakatuhu:*

## **1. Introduction**

Radiocarbon, or Carbon-14 dating was developed by W. F. Libby, E. C. Anderson and J. R. Arnold in 1949.<sup>[1]</sup> This radiometric dating technique is a way of determining the age of certain archaeological artefacts of a biological origin up to about 50,000 years old. It is perhaps one of the most widely used and best known absolute dating methods and has become an indispensable part of an archaeologist's tool-kit. In 1960, Libby was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry for radiocarbon dating.<sup>[2]</sup>

In this paper we would briefly discuss the principles and practice of radiocarbon dating. This will enable the reader to gain an appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of this process. Is carbon dating applied to the Qur'anic manuscripts? Can radiocarbon dating provide more accurate results than traditional palaeographic techniques and associated methods? We will also focus on these questions in the final section of our discussion.

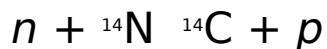
## **2. Principles And Practice**



Carbon has two stable, nonradioactive isotopes: carbon-12 ( $^{12}\text{C}$ ), and carbon-13 ( $^{13}\text{C}$ ). In addition, there are tiny amounts of the unstable radioactive isotope carbon-14 ( $^{14}\text{C}$ ) on Earth. These isotopes are present in the following amounts  $^{12}\text{C}$  - 98.89 %,  $^{13}\text{C}$  - 1.11 % and  $^{14}\text{C}$  - 0.00000000010 %. In other words, one carbon 14 atom exists in nature for every 1,000,000,000,000  $^{12}\text{C}$  atoms in a living being.

### **ORIGIN OF CARBON-14**

When cosmic rays enter the earth's atmosphere, they undergo various interactions with gas molecules which results in the production of fast moving neutrons. These energetic neutrons dissociate a nitrogen molecule into atoms and then reacts with these atoms to form  $^{14}\text{C}$ . The reaction can be written as:<sup>[3]</sup>



where  $n$  is a neutron and  $p$  is a proton.

The highest rate of  $^{14}\text{C}$  production takes place at stratospheric altitudes of 9 to 15 km. Unlike the commonly available carbon,  $^{12}\text{C}$ ,  $^{14}\text{C}$  is unstable and slowly decays, changing it back to nitrogen and releasing energy. This instability makes it radioactive.

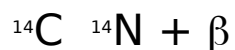
### **ASSIMILATION OF CARBON-14 IN THE EARTH'S BIOSPHERE**

The  $^{14}\text{C}$  isotope is brought to the earth by atmospheric

activities (such as storms) and becomes fixed in the biosphere. Since  $^{14}\text{C}$  reacts just like  $^{12}\text{C}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  isotopes of carbon, it becomes part of a plant through photosynthesis reactions. Animals eating these plants in turn absorb  $^{14}\text{C}$  as well as the stable isotopes (i.e.,  $^{12}\text{C}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$ ). This process of ingesting  $^{14}\text{C}$  continues as long as the plant or animal remains alive. Because  $^{14}\text{C}$  is so well mixed up with  $^{12}\text{C}$ , the ratio between  $^{14}\text{C}$  and  $^{12}\text{C}$  is the same in a leaf from a tree, or a part of an animal body.  $^{14}\text{C}$  also enters the Earth's oceans in an atmospheric exchange and as dissolved carbonate. The entire  $^{14}\text{C}$  inventory is termed the *carbon exchange reservoir*.<sup>[4]</sup>

## **DEATH, DECAY & DATING**

As soon as a plant or animal dies, the metabolic function of carbon uptake is ceased. There is no replenishment of radioactive  $^{14}\text{C}$  and the amount of  $^{14}\text{C}$  gradually decreases through radioactive decay as given by the following equation.



After the emission of a  $\beta$  particle,  $^{14}\text{C}$  is changed into stable and non-radioactive nitrogen,  $^{14}\text{N}$ . In other words, the  $^{14}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$  ratio gets smaller and smaller over time. So, we have something like a "clock" which starts ticking the moment a living being dies. Thus the radiocarbon dating method can, in principle, be uniformly applied throughout the world.

Libby, Anderson and Arnold were the first to measure the rate of this decay and found that the half life of  $^{14}\text{C}$  was

5568 years, i.e., in 5568 years half the  $^{14}\text{C}$  in the original sample will have decayed. After another 5568 years, half of that remaining material will have decayed, and so on. A  $^{14}\text{C}$  half-life of  $5568 \pm 30$  years is known as the *Libby half-life*.<sup>[5]</sup> Later measurements of the *Libby half-life* indicated the figure was approximately 3% lower; a more accurate half-life was  $5730 \pm 40$  years. This value is known as the *Cambridge half-life*.<sup>[6]</sup>

After 10 half-lives, there is a small amount of radioactive carbon left in a sample. In about 50,000-60,000 years, therefore, the limit of this technique is reached. It must be emphasized that the  $^{14}\text{C}$  decay is constant and spontaneous. In other words, the probability of decay for an atom of  $^{14}\text{C}$  in a sample is constant, thus making it amenable to the application of statistical methods for the analysis of counting data.

## LIMITATIONS OF RADIOCARBON DATING

No technique is perfect and radiocarbon dating is no exception. Although with this technique almost any sample of organic material can be directly dated, there are a number of limitations which makes the technique imperfect.

41. **Size of the sample:** The size of the archaeological sample is important, the larger the better, as purification of the sample removes some matter.
42. **Sample handling:** The handling of samples must be done with care in order to avoid contamination by more recent carbon. The samples should be packed in air-tight and chemically neutral materials to avoid

picking up new  $^{14}\text{C}$  from the atmosphere or packaging.

43.  **$^{14}\text{C}$  to  $^{12}\text{C}$  ratio:** It is assumed that the ratio of  $^{14}\text{C}$  to  $^{12}\text{C}$  was constant in the earlier periods. This, however, is not true.<sup>[7]</sup> Radiocarbon samples taken and cross dated using other techniques like dendrochronology have shown that the ratio of  $^{14}\text{C}$  to  $^{12}\text{C}$  has varied significantly during the history of the Earth. Such a variation can be due to changes in the intensity of the cosmic radiation bombardment of the Earth. The  $^{14}\text{C}$  level is affected by variations in the cosmic ray intensity which is affected by variations caused by solar storms. A good example is the increased level of  $^{14}\text{C}$  in the atmosphere today as compared to about 20 years ago – a result of the recent depletion of the ozone layer. Also after the advent of the industrial era, the massive burning of fossil fuels released a lot of carbon dioxide that was depleted in  $^{14}\text{C}$  (*Suess Effect*).<sup>[8]</sup> This would make things which died at that time appear older in terms of radiocarbon dating. These variations are compensated by using standard calibration tables developed in the past 15-20 years in various radiocarbon laboratories.
44. **Limits due to exponential decay:** As mentioned earlier, the decay of  $^{14}\text{C}$  is exponential in nature. This results in significant upper and lower limits. Radiocarbon dating is not very accurate for fairly recent deposits as very little decay has occurred. This gives rise to large standard deviations or errors in the date obtained. As for the practical upper limit, it is about 50,000 years. This is because so little  $^{14}\text{C}$  remains after almost 10 half-lives that it may be hard to detect and obtain an accurate reading,

irrespective of the size of the sample.

## **MATHEMATICS, MEASUREMENT AND CALIBRATION**

The radioactive decay of  $^{14}\text{C}$  follows what is called an exponential decay. Here the amount of  $^{14}\text{C}$  decreases at a rate proportional to its value. Mathematically, it can be expressed in the form of a differential equation, where  $N$  is the quantity of  $^{14}\text{C}$  and  $\lambda$  is called the decay constant.<sup>[9]</sup>

Solving this differential equation gives the standard form of the decay equation:

$N_0$  = number of radiocarbon atoms at time  $t = 0$ , i.e., the origin of the disintegration time right after the death of plant or animal,  $N$  = number of radiocarbon atoms remaining after radioactive decay during the time  $t$ ,  $\lambda$  = radiocarbon decay constant.

Perhaps the most famous of all the radiocarbon measurement techniques is the *Accelerator Mass Spectrometry* (AMS).<sup>[10]</sup> Just like other mass spectrometry studies, AMS is performed by converting the atoms in the sample into a beam of fast moving ions. The sample is first ionized by bombarding it with caesium ions and then focused into a fast-moving beam. The ions then enter the accelerator. The accelerator is used to help remove ions that might be confused with  $^{14}\text{C}$  ions before the final detection. The ions are filtered and finally the  $^{14}\text{C}$  ions

enter the detector where they can be counted. In AMS, the radiocarbon atoms are directly detected instead of waiting for them to decay as in *Gas Proportional Counting* (GPC) or *Liquid Scintillation Spectrometry* (LSS).<sup>[11]</sup> Therefore, the sample sizes are typically very small, generally in the order of a few milligrams.

Raw radiocarbon measurements are usually reported in years *Before Present* or *BP*. *Before Present* (*BP*) years are the units of time, counted backwards to the past, used to report raw radiocarbon ages and dates referenced to the *BP* scale origin in the year 1950 CE.<sup>[12]</sup> There are two reasons as to why 1950 CE was established as the origin year for the *BP* scale. Firstly, in this year the calibration curves for carbon-14 dating were established and secondly, the year 1950 predates atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, which altered the global balance of  $^{14}\text{C}$  to  $^{12}\text{C}$  (Atom Bomb Effect).<sup>[13]</sup>

The radiocarbon measurements reported in terms of *BP* years is directly based on the proportion of radiocarbon found in the sample. Its calculation is based on the assumption that the atmospheric radiocarbon concentration has always been the same as it was in 1950. As we have noted earlier, this is not true. The  $^{14}\text{C}$  to  $^{12}\text{C}$  ratio varied by a few percent over time. Hence this requires a need of calibration. Calibration of radiocarbon determinations is, in principle, very simple. The radiocarbon measurement of a sample is compared with a tree ring with the same proportion of radiocarbon. Since the calendar age of the tree rings is known, this gives the

age of the sample. In practice, there are limitations. The measurements on both the sample and the tree rings have a limited precision. This will give rise to a range of possible calendar years. Furthermore, since the atmospheric radiocarbon concentration has varied in the past, there might be several possible ranges. In order to understand how radiocarbon dating works in practice, let us study a few examples from the Qur'anic manuscripts.

### **3. Carbon-14 Dating Of Qur'anic Manuscripts**

The mention of radiocarbon dating of Qur'anic manuscripts in the literature is rare. Apart from perhaps the biggest drawback of this technique being very expensive, there are issues such as a wide range of calendar years in which a manuscript could have been written. This resulted in a faster development of the "traditional" methods of Qur'anic palaeography that utilized script, ornamentation and illumination which were then compared with their dated counterparts in architecture. The radiocarbon dating, on the other hand, even if it is carried out, is rarely mentioned. This will become clear when we discuss the Qur'anic manuscripts which were radiocarbon dated.

### **A QUR'ANIC CODEX FROM ST. PETERSBURG, KATTA LANGAR, BUKHĀRĀ AND TASHKENT**

*Figure 1: A folio from the "Qur'an of 'Uthmān" (Manuscript E20) at the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg, Russia showing the last part of Surah al-Sāffat (verses 158-182) and beginning of Surah Sād (verses 1-8).*

The [E20 manuscript](#), housed in the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, comes from Uzbekistan (Figure 1). A detailed history of this manuscript was published by Efim Rezvan in 2000.<sup>[14]</sup> In the same year, he also published a radiocarbon dating of this manuscript.<sup>[15]</sup> A radiocarbon analysis was conducted on parchment fragments, the results of which are depicted in Figure 2.

(a)

(b)

*Figure 2: (a) The radiocarbon concentration in the sample, calibration using the tree rings and depiction of possible ages of the sample in the form of a history (see text below). (b) A histogram showing the possible ages of the E 20 manuscript.<sup>[16]</sup>*

The main elements of Figure 2(a) are as follows:

- The left-hand axis shows radiocarbon concentration expressed in years *Before Present* or *BP* and the bottom axis shows calendar years derived from the tree ring data.
- The dotted curve on the left, marked with a blue arrow, indicates the radiocarbon concentration in the sample.



- The continuous curve, marked with a green arrow, shows the radiocarbon measurements on the tree rings.
- The dotted histogram, marked with a red arrow, shows possible ages for the sample; the higher the histogram the more likely that age is. This histogram is enlarged in Figure 2(b).

In the case of this manuscript the radiocarbon result is  $1150 \pm 50$  *BP*. This indicates that the age is 1150 *BP* with a standard uncertainty of  $\pm 50$  years. The age of 1150 *BP* is calculated on the simplistic assumption that the amount of radiocarbon in the atmosphere has always been the same. This is not quite the case except that it is a rough indication of the age. Hence the measurement must be calibrated against samples of known ages, for example, the tree rings. The radiocarbon data and the calibration curve are used to plot the probability distribution of the age of the manuscript.

In the case of the E 20 manuscript from St. Petersburg, the 68.3% confidence level ( $1\sigma$ ) yields the ranges, 781–791 CE, 825–843 CE, 859–903 CE and 915–977 CE. The 95.4 % confidence level ( $2\sigma$ ) yields 775–995 CE. A palaeographic analysis of this manuscript proposed a date around the final quarter of the 8th century CE.<sup>[17]</sup> This dating was also agreed by François Déroche.<sup>[18]</sup> However, Alain George believes this to be an instance where the radio carbon dating does not closely match the features of the manuscript. Commenting on the script and decoration, he suggests a date nearer the turn of the 1st century AH (late 7th, early 8th century CE).<sup>[19]</sup>

It should be highlighted that when conducting radiocarbon analysis, almost any date within the specified range generated by the confidence level is equally possible scientifically. It is not the case that the range can be averaged to find the most probable date. Thus, given the wide range of calendar years, radiocarbon dating rarely provides unexpected information to an experienced palaeographer; however this is not always the case as we will see next.

### **THE AL-WALĪD MANUSCRIPT FROM ṢAN‘Ā’, YEMEN (INV. NO. 20-33.1)**

This is perhaps one of the most well-studied Qur'anic manuscripts and comes from Dār al-Makhṭūtāt, Ṣan‘ā’, Yemen. Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer from the University of Saarland, Germany, studied this manuscript in great detail from the point of view of script, ornamentation and illumination.<sup>[20]</sup> It is one of the [earliest known and firmly dated manuscript from the late 1st century](#) of *hijra* written in the *kufic* script. This monumental Qur'anic manuscript has the dimensions of 51 cm in length by 47 cm in width (Figure 3). Its origin appears to be from Syria.

*Figure 3: A folio of the "Great Umayyad Qur'an" from Ṣan‘ā’, (Yemen).<sup>[21]</sup>*

Using palaeography, ornamentation and illumination of this manuscript, von Bothmer dated it to the last decade of the 1st century of *hijra*, around 710–715 CE, in the

reign of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd. However, the radiocarbon dating of this manuscript suggests a date between 657 and 690 CE.<sup>[22]</sup> Again he confirms the dating of this manuscript elsewhere by pointing out that:

Certain features of the manuscript and the iconography intimate that this work was made for a member of the Umayyad family; historical circumstances suggest that caliph al-Walid himself may have commissioned it. However, the carbon dating points to a slightly earlier date.<sup>[23]</sup>

Here it is interesting to note that both the palaeographic considerations and radiocarbon dating have arrived at nearly the same conclusion, i.e., this manuscript dates to the last part of the 1st century of *hijra*. However, as von Bothmer has noted, the radiocarbon dating gives a slightly earlier date. This could be due to the fact that the radiocarbon dating gives the death of animal and not when the manuscript was actually written.

The interesting thing to note about this Qur'an from al-Walīd's time is its uncanny resemblance to a number of large Qur'anic manuscripts typified as "Group 2" by Estelle Whelan. The most famous of them is the *Chester Beatty 1404*.<sup>[24]</sup> The *Chester Beatty 1404* manuscript has very similar features that are reminiscent of the Umayyad period. Moritz published details of the twenty ornamented pages.<sup>[25]</sup> This manuscript was dated to 1st century of *hijra* by A. S. Yahuda.<sup>[26]</sup> Moritz, in the legends to his photographs, dated it to the 2nd / 3rd century *hijra*.<sup>[27]</sup> On the other hand, Josef von Karabacek dated it to the 3rd century.<sup>[28]</sup> However, now a firm dating of a Qur'an belonging to "Group 2" from al-Walīd's time suggests that the Chester Beatty 1404 manuscript also dates from similar period, i.e., either late 1st century or early second century of *hijra*. Furthermore, this also lends support to

the early dating of the numerous primitive *ḥijāzī* manuscripts.

## **A MONUMENTAL QUR'ĀNIC MANUSCRIPT IN TASHKENT ATTRIBUTED TO CALIPH 'UTHMĀN**

Approximately one third of the Qur'an from which this massive folio originates - [the 'Uthmān Qur'an, is housed in Tashkent in Uzbekistan](#) (Figure 4). Late in the 19th century the manuscript was in St. Petersburg, Russia, where it was studied by the Russian orientalist A. F. Shebunin and in 1905 a facsimile of it was published. It would appear that during this period in St. Petersburg, a number of folios were separated from this manuscript and subsequently ended up under the hammer at Christie's<sup>[29]</sup> with some folios appearing in Sam Fogg's collection of Islamic art.<sup>[30]</sup>

This is a massive Qur'anic manuscript on vellum with a size of approximately 68 cm x 53 cm, showing a well-formed *kufic* script without pointing or diacritics (Figure 4). The verse endings are marked by small panels of diagonals lines; the tenth verse is marked with a square medallion illuminated in blue, green, red and manganese with a stellar design. Shebunin dated this manuscript to the late first / early second century *hijra*.<sup>[31]</sup> On the basis of the orthography as observed in the 1905 facsimile, Jeffrey dated it to the early ninth century.<sup>[32]</sup> More recently, Déroche had assigned a date to the second half of the eight century.<sup>[33]</sup> The carbon-dating of a folio from this manuscript was carried out at Oxford. The result showed

a 68% probability of a date between 640 CE and 765 CE, and a 95% probability of a date between 595 CE and 855 CE.<sup>[34]</sup> Commenting on this result, Rezvan noted that the paleographic dating of this manuscript also indicated a date at the turn of the 8th / 9th century CE.<sup>[35]</sup>

*Figure 4: A folio from a massive Qur'an attributed to caliph 'Uthmān. It was found in North Africa .<sup>[36]</sup>*

The extra-ordinary size of the folios from this Qur'an is unparalleled in publications in the Western world. Folios from the Tashkent manuscript were sold at Christie's (London) as Lot nos. 225, 225a on 22nd October 1992;<sup>[37]</sup> and Lot nos. 29, 30 on 21st October 1993.<sup>[38]</sup> In the years 2000 and 2003, a couple more folios appeared in Sam Fogg's *Islamic Manuscripts / Islamic Calligraphy* catalogues.<sup>[39]</sup>

## **AN 'UMAYYAD' FRAGMENT OF THE QUR'ĀN**

This [private-owned fragment of the Qur'an](#) was published recently by Yasin Dutton [Figure 5(a)].<sup>[40]</sup> On the basis of palaeography and radiocarbon analysis, he dated it to the second half of the 1st century of *hijra* / late 7th or early 8th century CE.

**The 20 Versions of the Qur'an today. (7 are recorded in the**

## Hadith.)

Qur'an of today is different than what Muhammad revealed!

## Islam: Truth or Myth? [start page](#)

### The Muslim Claim that the Qur'an is unchanged:

No other book in the world can match the Qur'an ... The astonishing fact about this book of ALLAH is that it has remained unchanged, even to a dot, over the last fourteen hundred years. ... No variation of text can be found in it. You can check this for yourself by listening to the recitation of Muslims from different parts of the world. (Basic Principles of Islam, Abu Dhabi, UAE: The Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan Charitable & Humanitarian Foundation, 1996, p 4)

## Many Variant Readings of the Quran

45. "Muslims attack the Bible on the grounds that it sometimes has conflicting wording from different manuscripts. Yet this is exactly the case with the text of the Quran. There are many conflicting readings on the text of the Quran as Arthur Jeffery has

demonstrated in his book, Material for the History of the Text of the Quran" (New York, Russell F. Moore, 1952).

46. Mentions Variant readings in the Koran: Dashti, 23 Years, p. 28
47. Mentions Variant readings in the Koran: Mandudi, Meaning of the Quran, pp. 17-18
48. Mentions Variant readings in the Koran: McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia, V152).
49. "[the Koran] had a large number of variants, not always trifling in significance" (Islam, p. 189).
50. "It is interesting to note that in scholarly Muslim journals, there is beginning to be a grudging acknowledgment of the fact that there are variant and conflicting readings on the text of the Quran" (One example would be Saleh al-Wahaihu, "A Study of Seven Quranic Variants," International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Vol. V (1989), #2, pp. 1-57).
51. "The Muslin accounts of the history of the Quran texts are a mass of confusion, contradiction and inconsistencies" (Burton, Collection, p. 231).
52. "Abdollah renounced Islam on the ground that the revelations, if from God, could not be changed at the prompting of a scribe such as he. After his apostasy he went to Mecca and joined the Qorayshites" (Dashti, 23 Years, p. 98).
53. "There being some passages in the Quran which are contradictory, the Muhammadan doctors obviate any objection from thence by the doctrine of abrogation; for they say that God in the Quran commanded several things which were for good reasons afterwards revoked and abrogated" (E. Wherry, A Comprehensive Commentary on the Qurun, p. 110).

54. "It is to us astounding how so compromising a procedure can have been permitted to be introduced into the system by friends and foes (Canon Sell in his work, Historical Development of the Qura, Madras: Diocesan Press, 1923, pp. 36-37).
55. "When Muhammad died there existed no singular codex of the sacred text" (Caesar Farah, Islam: Beliefs and Observations, New York; Barrons, 1987, p. 28).
56. "One thing only is certain and is openly recognized by tradition, namely, that there was not in existence any collection of revelations in the final form, because, as long as he was alive, new revelations were being added to the earlier ones" (The Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam p. 271).

The proof the Muslim claim is false, is in this book:

### **Translation of front cover:**

Making Easy the Readings of What H  
Sent Down

Author Muhammad Fahd KhaaruunTh  
Collector of the 10 Readings From Al-  
Shaatebeiah and Al-Dorraah and Al-T

Revised by Muhammad Kareem Ragh  
Chief Reader of Damascus

Daar Beirut

[Click photos for enlargement](#)



As you can see, the boxed text is the text of the Qur'an and the margins at the left and the bottom are variant readings. There are more known variants than this book includes. Even worse, there are more than readers in existence, but this book limits the variants to only these 10 readers.

Click photos for  
enlargement

## **What Muslim and non-Muslim scholars say about the known variations/versions within the Qur'an being used in the world today:**

- "owing to the fact that the kufic script in which the Koran was originally written contained no indication of vowels or diacritical points, **variant readings are recognized by Muslims as of equal authority.**" (N.J. Dawood, The Koran, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1983, p 10, introduction to Dawood's translation of the Koran)
- "Lists of the differences between the two transmissions are long, ... (however) The simple fact is that none of the differences, whether vocal (vowel and diacritical points) or graphic (basic letter), between the transmission of Hafs and the transmission of Warsh has any great effect on the meaning. Many are differences which do not change the meaning at all,

and the rest are differences with an effect on meaning in the immediate context of the text itself, but without any significant wider influence on Muslim thought. One difference (Q. 2/184) has an effect on the meaning that might conceivably be argued to have wider ramifications." (Adrian Brockett, 'The Value of the Hafs and Warsh transmissions for the Textual History of the Qur'an', *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p 34,37)

- "the Reading of Abu `Amr in the version of al-Duri ... prevails in the Sudan, Nigeria, and Central Africa." (Labib as-Said, *The Recited Koran: A History of the First Recorded Version*, tr. B. Weis, et al, Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1975, p. 84)

(C)ertain variant readings existed and, indeed, persisted and increased as the Companions who had memorised the text died, and because the inchoate (basic) Arabic script, lacking vowel signs and even necessary diacriticals to distinguish between certain consonants, was inadequate. In the 4th Islamic century, it was decided to have recourse (to return) to "readings" (*qira'at*) handed down from seven authoritative "readers" in order, moreover, to ensure accuracy of transmission, two "transmitters" (*rawi*, pl. *ruwah*) were accorded to each. There resulted from this seven texts (*al-qira'at as-sab'*, "the seven readings"), each having two traditions (*riwayatan*) with only minor variations in phrasing, but all with meticulous vowel-points and other necessary diacritical marks. ... The authoritative "readers" are:

**Nafi** (from Medina; d.169/785) **Ibn Kathir** (from Mecca; d.119/770)  
**`Amr al-'Ala'** (from Damascus; d.53/770) **Ibn `Amir** (from Basra; d.119/770)  
**Hamzah** (from Kufah; d.156/772) **al-Qisa'i** (from Kufah; d.189/800)  
**Bakr `Asim** (from Kufah; d.158/778)

The predominant reading today, spread by Egyptian Koran readers `Asim in the transmission (*riwayah*) of Hafs (d. 190/805). In Morocco however, the reading is that of Nafi` in the *riwayah* of Warsh (d. 190/805) and Maghrebin Korans are written accordingly. (Cyril Glassé, *The Coran: An Encyclopedia of Islam*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989, p 324)

## 20 versions of the Qur'an!

Here is a list of the ten readers, each of which have two versions

<b>The Readers and their Transmitted Versions</b>	
<b>The Reader</b>	<b>The Transmitter</b>
<b>"The Seven" readers</b>	
Nafi`	Warsh
	Qalun
Ibn Kathir	al-Bazzi
	Qunbul
Abu `Amr al-'Ala'	Al-Duri
	al-Suri
Ibn `Amir	Hisham

	Ibn Dhakwan
Hamzah	Khalaf
	Khallad
al-Qisa'i	al-Duri
	Abu'l-Harith
Abu Bakr `Asim	Hafs
	Ibn `Ayyash

**"The Three" readers**

Abu Ja`far	Ibn Wardan
	Ibn Jamaz
Ya`qub al-Hashimi	Ruways
	Rawh
Khalaf al-Bazzar	Ishaq
	Idris al-Haddad

There are even more Readers than these but these are considered the most authoritative.

## Seven different versions of the Koran:

- "What is said about Al-Mutaawwilin (those who form wrong opinions of disbelief about their Muslim brothers). Umar bin Al-Khattab said, "I heard Hisham bin Al-Hakim reciting Surat-al-Furqan during the lifetime of Allah's Apostle (SAW). I listened to his recitation and noticed that he recited it in several different ways which Allah's Apostle (SAW) had not taught me. So I was about to jump over him during his prayer but I waited till he finished his prayer whereupon I put, either his upper garment or my upper garment, around his neck and seized him by it and asked him, "Who has taught you this Sura?" He replied, "Allah's Apostle (SAW) has taught it to me." I said (to him), "You have told a lie! By Allah, Allah's Apostle (SAW) has taught me this Sura which I have heard you reciting." So I dragged him, to Allah's Apostle (SAW), I said, "O Allah's Apostle! I have heard this man reciting Surat-al-Furqan in a way which you have not taught me, and you did teach me Surat-al-Furqan." On that Allah's Apostle (SAW) said, "O Umar, release him! Recite, O Hisham." So Hisham recited before him in the way as I had heard him reciting. Allah's Apostle (SAW) said, "It has been revealed like this." Then Allah's Apostle (SAW) said, "Recite O Umar." So I recited it. The Prophet (SAW) said, "It has been revealed like this." And then he added, "This Quran has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways, so recite it which ever way easier for you." (See Hadith No. 514 Vol. 6) Vol. 9 - Apostates - Chapter 9 27/30)