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# The Number of Mushafs Attributed to The Caliph Uthman

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**Abstract:** The article examines the number of Mushaf of Uthman and the countries to which they were sent. It also surveys on the sources on a relevant topic and provides conclusions drawn

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## Introduction

The matter of the number of Mushafs of Uthman has been the focus of attention of Western and Eastern researchers for centuries(Altuntaş, n.d.). Because the information on the subject is controversial, mixed with unreliable reports, many have refrained from expressing a firm opinion on the matter or limited themselves to one of the assumptions. Some have cited different views without any analysis. The main reason for this is that a firm opinion about the number of mushafs has not been mentioned in primary sources(Rohmad & Fathah, 2022).

## Methodology

The first reports about the number of Mushaf of Uthman can be found in hadith collections and sources related to rasmul-mushaf. This article is devoted to the analysis of the main of them(Suit, 2020).

Narrated by Abu Ubaid(Ramahi, n.d.):

«Hudhaifa ibn Yaman was fighting with the Iraqis in the ranks of the people of Sham during the conquest of Armenia and Azerbaijan... Finally, they transferred pages to

mushafs. Uthman sent a copy of the same mushaf they created to different sides. Then he ordered to burn or tear the Qur'an written on any page or page other than that" [7:282].

Narrated by Imam Bukhari(Ahmad et al., 2023):

"Hudhaifa ibn Yaman came to Uthman... Hudhaifa said to Uthman: "O Chief of the Believers! See what happens before this Ummah differs in the Book like the Jews and Christians disagreed!" said. Then Uthman said to Hafsa: "Send us the pages." "We will transfer them to Mushafs and then return them to you," the man said. Hafsa sent them to Uthman... After the pages were copied into the mushafs, Uthman returned the pages to Hafsa. From the copies he copied, he sent one copy to each country and ordered to burn the Qur'an in any other pages and copies" [1:1/200](Munir, 2020).

The narrator of this message, Anas ibn Malik (R.A.), is one of those who directly participated in the preparation of the Mushafs of Uthman. Therefore, his words are of great importance as a witness of the event. It is noteworthy for the topic of the article that although the exact number of mushafs is not mentioned in both narrations, phrases are used indicating that there were many of them.

It is known that Islam spread to large areas during the Caliphate of Uthman (R.A.). There were also many large cities in them. Consequently, the phrases "everywhere" and "every country" can also mean that the number of mushafs was quite large. However, some reports indicate that the number of mushafs was very few(Al-Sheikh & Mohd, 2019).

Qur'an scholar Ghonim Qadduri explains this controversial situation as follows: "From the first phrase, it is understood that there are many mushafs. In particular, if we take into account that the goal was to unite the mushafs and the recitation of the Qur'an in Islamic countries, it can be assumed that a copy of the mushaf was sent to each climate or city. However, narrations have come down from the generations after the Companions that indicate the exact number of Mushafs" [10:123]. From this comment of the researcher, it becomes clear that there is no narration from the Companions in which the number of Mushafs of Uthman is clearly indicated. But in the narrations attributed to later generations, it can be seen that an attempt was made to clarify this matter(Santoso et al., 2019).

It is stated that there were at least four and at most nine in the sources that mention the number of Mushafs of Uthman. They are briefly reviewed below.

The information that the number of Mushafs was four was narrated by Ibn Abu Dawud (died. 230/845-316/928) from Hamza ibn Habib Zayyat (died. 156/772). One of the four Mushafs created under the supervision of Uthman ibn Affan was sent to Kufa, and Imam Hamza states that he copied one copy of that Mushaf for himself. [17:1/67]

Abu Amr Daniy, one of the great scholars of recitation and rasmul-mushaf science, also says that the number of Uthman's mushafs was four and mentioned to which cities they were sent. For example, he states that "according to the opinion of most scholars, after

Uthman ibn Affan (R.A.) prepared the Mushaf, he made four copies of it and sent one to Kufa, the second to Basra, and the third to Sham, and kept one with himself" [8:162-163]. Continuing his point, in the form of a weak narration, he informs that the mushaf was also sent to Makkah and points to the presence of a Makkah mushaf in his work. In more than ten places in his book, he describes the characteristics of the mushaf of Makkah (Radiansyah & Shakeer, 2023).

One of the evidences that there are no less than four Mushafs of Uthman is the description of Madinah, Kufa, Basra and Sham Mushafs in the sources of rasmul-mushaf science. This information was narrated by historical persons who directly witnessed and read the mushafs. The news about these mushafs has reached the level of mutawatir. That's why the scholars came to a single opinion about it. Most Western researchers also support this conclusion. In particular, the researcher Theodore Nyoldeke also noted that the number of mushafs was three or four [25:289] (Azmi et al., 2022).

The opinion that the number of Mushafs was five is also relatively widespread. Jalaluddin Suyuti writes in "al-Itqan" that "the matter of the number of Mushafs that Uthman sent to different regions is disputed, and it is said that there were five of them" [4:1/189] (Azizah & Fatichah, 2023).

## Result

Many scholars who commented on Imam Shatibi's poem "Aqila al-atrob al-qasaid" also said that the number of mushafs is five. Abulbaqah al-Baghdadi, one of the commentators on the work, says, "Uthman (R.A.) copied eight Mushafs, five of which are agreed upon, and three of which are disputed" [14:39]. He mentions that there were mushafs of Madinah, Makkah, Sham, Kufa, and Basra, and indicates which countries they were sent to (Zeki et al., 2022).

Abdulghani Tunisi, who lived in the 7th-8th centuries of Hijri, also mentions that there were five mushafs and the regions to which they were sent. After Zayd (R.A.) and his companions finished copying the first Mushaf called "Imam", the caliph ordered him to prepare four more copies. After all the work was completed, he sent one mushaf to the city of Damascus, considered a military fortress of Syria, another to Kufa, and another to Basra. After giving one Mushaf to the people of Medina, he took the first one with him" [19:49]. From this it can be understood that there were two Mushafs of Uthman (R.A.) and Mushaf of Medina in Medina. However, there is no mention of the Meccan Mushaf (Larasingtyas et al., 2024).

Makki ibn Abu Talib al-Qaysi, a famous scholar of Quranic sciences does not support the information that there are five mushafs, but suffices to note that there are such hypotheses.

Scholars commenting on "Aqila", which is considered one of the important sources of rasmul-mushaf, show that there are five Mushafs of Uthman, which contradicts the general meaning of the phrases in the book "al-Muqni" which is its basis. It is noted that in addition to the four copies, which are all recognized as the same in both sources, three more mushafs are supposed to have been written. The fact that the commentators express an opinion against what is clearly stated in the original text means that they have drawn a conclusion from the general content of the work (Kannike, 2020).

It is clear from the above mentioned that most of those who claimed that there were five Mushafs meant the Mushaf of Makkah as the fifth copy. Some rejected this point of view and considered the Madinan Mushaf as other copies belonging to Caliph Uthman (R.A.), bringing their total number to five.

Abu Amr Daniy and Imam Shatibi, one of the major representatives of Rasmul Mushaf science, spoke about the personal Mushaf of Caliph Uthman (R.A.) in their works, but did not claim that it was a separate Mushaf of Medina. However, they described the characteristics of the Meccan Mushaf.

Two commentators of Sahihi Bukhari, Ibn Hajar Asqalani and Badriddin Aini, mentioned that there are different opinions about the number of Uthman's Mushafs and said that five of them are more reliable [8:23/152]. Musa Jorullah, a Tatar scholar, in his treatise dedicated to Mushafs, states that there were five Mushafs of Uthman [15:29].

Another group of scholars says that the total number of early mushafs was six. In fact, this is the most common opinion on this issue. For example, Jabari quotes from the book "Zadul-Qurra"<sup>1</sup> in his review of "Aqila": "When Uthman (ra) collected the Qur'an in one book, he called it "Imam" and copied copies of it. From them he sent one mushaf to Makkah, one mushaf to Kufa, one mushaf to Basra, one mushaf to Syria, and he took one mushaf in Medina" [12:1/371].

Here, by saying that five copies of the Mushaf were copied by the Imam, it is as if the total number of Mushafs was six. However, after a few lines, he contradicts this opinion and says that the phrase "he took one Mushaf with him" means Mushaf of Madinah, not Imam Mushaf. It is difficult to understand what he actually meant by this (Fatchiatuzahro et al., n.d.).

Jabari does not limit himself to commenting on the words of the author of the work, but concludes as follows: "It is clear that Shatibi's narrations in "Aqila" are taken from six mushafs... The narrations in "Al-Muqni" also support the message that the number of mushafs was six" [12:1/372].

Ashraf Tal'at also considers the information about the number of Mushafs to be six, and "There is a difference of opinion regarding the number of Mushafs of Uthman. It is true that there were six of them. Our Sayyid Uthman ibn Affan (R.A.) sent one copy of them to Makkah, one to Sham, one to Kufa, one to Basra, and he took one copy in Madinah and another copy for himself [9:31].

The author of a number of scientific projects dedicated to the study and publication of ancient mushafs, the Turkish researcher Tayyor Alti Guloch in his work entitled "The first mushafs" states that the number of Mushafs was at least six. He explains this opinion by the fact that there are a total of six narrations in the sources belonging to Uthman ibn Affan [24:63-64].

Umar Hamdan interprets the opinion of Allama Ja'bari and others that there were six Mushafs as a result of a misunderstanding of the texts attributed to Daniy and Shatibi. However, such a conclusion does not seem satisfactory. Because from the words of Ja'bari, it can be understood that he came to this conclusion not from a specific statement of Imam Daniy or Shatibi, but from the narrations given in the description of rasmul-mushaf. Others have mentioned this as well. The reason is that both Abu Amr Daniy and Shatibi, who put his book in order, in their works, in addition to the four mushafs that they all unanimously recognized, also mention the characteristics of the "Imam" and "Makkah" mushafs.

One of the Egyptian scholars, Ali Muhammad Zabba', in his work on rasmul-mushaf, says: "There is a disagreement about the number of Mushafs of Uthman." The truth is that there are six of them, and our Sayyid Uthman (R.A.) sent one of them to Makkah, one to Sham, one to Kufa, and one to Basra. He left a manuscript in Madinah, and Nofe' narrated from it. He took another Mushaf with him, from which Abu Ubayd Qasim ibn Sallam narrated. This is what they call "Imam" [11:5].

One of the sheikhs of Al-Azhar, Abdul Fattah Qazi, in his treatise on Mushafi Sharif, emphasizes that there were six Mushafs of Uthman and fully supports the words of Ali Zabba regarding the cities to which they were sent [5:26].

Sheikh Ismail Makhdum in his work "History of the Mushaf of Uthman in Tashkent" refers to the number of Mushaf of Uthman and states that the reports that there were six of them are the most reliable [22:31]. In the book "Mushaf of Uthman in Tashkent" published by the Research Center of the Islamic University of Tashkent, it is concluded that there were six Mushafs of Uthman and they are mentioned by name: Makki, Shami, Basri, Kufi, Madani and Khalifa's personal Mushaf [21:14].

The opinion that the number of Mushafs of Uthman was seven is also common among researchers. For example, Ibn Abu Dawud says: I heard Abu Hatim Sijistani say, "Uthman compiled the Qur'an and wrote the manuscripts in seven copies. He sent one to

Mecca, another to Syria, another to Yemen, another to Bahrain, another to Basra, and another to Kufa. "He took one in Medina" [17:2/239].

Abu Amr Daniy gives this opinion with a somewhat doubtful expression, saying that it is said that the number of Mushafs was four: "There is also a saying that Uthman prepared Mushafs in seven copies and sent one copy to Makkah, one copy to Yemen, and one copy to Bahrain. But the first opinion (the statement that there are four mushafs - H.A.) is more correct, and the imams also came to this conclusion" [6:9]. Badriddin Zarkashi also approved this opinion in his book "al-Burhan" [13:344].

Abu Amr al-Dani's comments regarding the Mushafs of Uthman seem to be controversial. In the introduction of his book, he says that he wants to describe the Mushafs of Madinah, Makkah, Kufa, Basra, Sham and other Iraqi lands [6:130]. He also mentions the feature of the "Imam" mushaf along with the Medina mushaf in his work. If these are added together, the number of mushafs will reach seven, even if they do not include the mushafs of Bahrain and Yemen. However, the author does not mention this number anywhere.

Imam Shatibi points out that there are seven Mushafs in "Aqilah", and like Abu Amr Daniy, he cites the next three with the phrase "reportedly":

كوف وشام وبصر، تملأ البصري  
وسار في نسخ، منها مع المدني

"There were several copies of the manuscripts copied by Uthman (R.A.). They are Madani, Kufi, Shami, Basri mushafs. They are pleasing to the eye.

ضاعت بما نسخ في نشرها قطرا  
وقيل مكة والبحرين مع بن

It is also said that it was sent to Makkah, Yemen and Bahrain. Their copies disappeared when they spread to other countries.

Makki ibn Abu Talib al-Qaysi says that there were seven manuscripts without going into detail: "When the manuscript was prepared, it was written in seven copies. There is also a saying that there were five copies, but there are more people who narrated the first sentence (that there were seven)" [19:49].

Mufasssir Ibn Kasir also supports the idea that there are seven mushafs, "...Uthman (R.A.) wrote one mushaf for the people of Syria and another for the Egyptians. He sent one Mushaf to Basra and another to Kufa. He sent one Mushaf to Makkah and the same to Yemen. He left one in Medina. These Mushafs are called "Imam Mushafs". But perhaps not all of them, not even one of them, is in Usman's signature. They were written by Zayd bin Thabit. Even so, he expresses the opinion that it was named as "Mushafs of Uthman" due to the fact that it was written under the command of Uthman (R.A.) during his time [2:4/217].

Abulbaqa Ali ibn Uthman narrates from Abu Ali in his commentary on "Aqila": "Uthman (R.A.) ordered Zayd ibn Thabit to teach from the Mushaf of Madinah. He also sent Abdullah ibn Sa'ib with the Makki mushaf, Mughira ibn Shihab with the Shami mushaf,



Abu Abdurrahman with the Kufi mushaf, and Amir ibn Abdukais with the Basri mushaf. He also sent one mushaf to Yemen and one to Bahrain. However, we have not heard any news about these two mushafs. That is probably why the imams of the seven recitations came only from the previous five countries" [14:39-40].

## Discussion

One of the scholars of our time, Subhi Salih, after giving different opinions about the number of Mushafs of Uthman, concludes that "we agree that the committee decided to make seven copies of the Mushafs, and we agree with the statement that Uthman sent six of them to different regions and took one with him" [18:84].

Researcher, Russian scientist Efim Rezvan, who conducted in-depth scientific research on the "Katta Langar" mushaf, talks about the history of Uthman's Mushafs, pointing out that there were seven of them. However, when the Mushafs are sent to seven countries, he mentions Egypt instead of Yemen, which is usually mentioned in second place [23:93].

Jabari and Abulbaqah in the commentary of "Aqila" indicate that the number of mushafs was eight [12:371]. This is explained by a quote from "Zodul-Qurra". They also add the Bahraini and Yemeni mushafs to the six mushafs whose characteristics are described in "Aqila" and state that "the author narrated about these eight mushafs".

According to them, there is no doubt that the number of mushafs was four in the introduction of the author, that is, Imam Shatibi, and there is a narration that three more mushafs were sent to Makkah, Bahrain and Yemen. Thus, the number of mushafs mentioned in the work reaches six. If the suspected Bahraini and Yemeni mushafs are added to these six, the total number of copies will reach eight.

Jabari explains that the fact that the characteristics of the Bahraini and Yemeni mushafs are not mentioned in the sources cannot be a strong reason to deny them: "It is not impossible that Shatibi's narrations in "Aqila" included the Yemeni and Bahraini mushafs, because one may correspond to the Mushaf of Basra, and the other to the Mushaf of Makkah. » [12:1/372].

In his article on the subject, Umar Hamdan states that it is a mistake to attribute Jabari's opinion that there were eight Mushafs to Imam Shatibi [20:39-40]. Indeed, it is not correct to interpret this as the opinion expressed by Imam Shatibi. However, Ja'bari's words can be understood as the total number of Mushafs mentioned and described by Shatibi, as indicated above, and, in our opinion, this is more correct.

Hafiz Ibn Jazari, one of the accomplished scholars of the science of recitation, also writes supporting the opinion that there are eight mushafs. "He copied several copies from them (from the pages of Abu Bakr) and sent one to Basra, another to Kufa, and another to Syria. One mushaf remained in Madinah, and one more in the caliph himself. And that was

the Mushaf called "Imam". He also sent one Mushaf to Makkah, one to Yemen and one to Bahrain" [16:1/7].

There are those who claim that the number of mushafs was nine, but there are very few of them. One of them - the historian Ishaq Ya'qubi writes the following: "Uthman sent one Mushaf to Kufa, Basra, Medina, Mecca, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and Jazira. Then he ordered the people to read from this single copy" [3:2/170]. In his account, he does not mention "Imam" Mushaf, but states that the Mushaf was sent to Egypt and Jazira, in addition to those mentioned earlier. If "Imam" Mushaf is added to these, the number of Mushafs will reach ten. However, the author did not state this. Most researchers do not consider reliable the report that the Mushaf was sent to Egypt and Jazira.

Umar Hamdan, one of the researchers of our time, approaches the issue of the total number of mushafs in his own way and suggests to study this process in stages when considering the reports about the number of Mushafs of Uthman . According to him, in the first stage, four mushafs were copied, and then, depending on the need, more copies were written and distributed to the required areas [20:71]. According to him, he puts forward the opinion that the first stage lasts from 25 to 30 Hijri, the second stage corresponds to years 30-33, and the third stage corresponds to years 33-34 . However, the researcher presents this as an assumption rather than a solid fact and does not provide sufficient evidence for some of his ideas.

The reason for the emergence of the Mushafs of Uthman and their intended purpose was to eliminate the differences regarding the Qur'an and to gather the Ummah around one Mushaf. In order to achieve this result, it was necessary to send a large number of mushafs to the central regions. After the conflicts in the big cities were quickly resolved through the copies of the Qur'an copied by the special committee, this experiment was used in the next big cities.

The mention of Anas ibn Malik (R.A.) that "he sent one copy of the copied copies to each country", according to another narration, "then Uthman returned the pages to Hafsa and sent one copy to each of the Muslim armies", also shows that there were many copies. However, in the narrations that openly mention the number of mushafs, it is logical to conclude that there were no more than 7-8 of them.

The above opinion is supported by the fact that the secretaries involved in copying the Mushafs started with two people, and then increased to twelve as the need dictated. This is also emphasized by Ghonim Qadduri. In particular, it is possible that mushafs were sent to Egypt and the Euphrates island, and to various cities of Syria. However, since the later mushafs were copied from the first four or six mushafs, their characteristics related to the rasmul-mushaf were not transmitted.



Ibn Mujahid chose the reciters from the cities where the mushafs were sent to compile the seven recitations. Among them are recitation imams from Medina, Mecca, Kufa, Basra and Sham. However, recitation teachers from Bahrain and Yemen were not selected. This can also be explained by the fact that there are no specific mushaf and recitations in these countries.

Dr. Umar Hamdan proposed to divide Uthman's mushafs into three stages over the years. It is assumed that in the first stage, four famous mushafs - Medina, Kufa, Basra and Sham mushafs were written, and in the second stage, mushafs were sent to Mecca, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt and the Euphrates island, and a separate mushaf was written for the people of Medina. In the third stage, it states that the Mushaf was sent to Hums, Tabariyya, Antartus, Tartus, and the teachers who taught the Mushafs that had been assigned were also sent to the places up to that time.

Another approach can be proposed without denying this distribution. The Mushafs of Uthman can be divided into two stages from a scientific-practical point of view, not chronologically. The first is the stage of creating imam mushafs, which have some differences in spelling, aimed at maintaining diversity in recitation. This is the period of the Mushafs of the Imams, Madinah, Makkah, Kufa, Basra and Sham. Their description is quoted in the sources. The second stage of Mushafs includes the editions copied from these six Mushafs during the time of Uthman (R.A.). It is natural that they are also called Mushafs of Uthman. However, since they are duplicates, their properties have not been studied separately. It can be noted that it would not be correct to attribute the mushafs copied after the death of Uthman (R.A.).

It is clear that after the Uthman Mushaf spread throughout the Islamic world, the copies copied from them, as well as the copies of the Qur'an written in the style of the Mushaf of Uthman, and not in the usual spelling, were sometimes called "Uthman Mushaf". The naming of the books attributed to Uthman (R.A.) can also be explained through these views.

In conclusion, regardless of the differing reports regarding the total number of Mushafs of Uthman, it is an unhealthy approach to view this as a conflicting or negative phenomenon. This is explained by the variety of historical sources used by different researchers. Taking into account that the process of copying the Mushaf has been carried out for years, it is quite natural that there are different opinions about its total number. Therefore, it is reasonable to accept these data as complementary rather than contradictory.

According to the absolute majority, there were at least four, and most likely no less than six Mushafs of Uthman. Indeed, in the works of Imam Daniy and Shatibi, as well as Ibn Abu Dawud, specific information is given about Imam, Medina, Mecca, Kufa, Basra and Sham - a total of six Mushafs. However, they strongly emphasized that four of them were

the Mushafs of Medina, Kufa, Basra, and Sham, and did not express a definitive opinion about the Mushafs of Imam and Makkah. Understanding this subtlety remains a challenge for most researchers.

Abu Amr Daniy, his student Ibn Abu Dawud Sijistani and Imam Shatibi were scholars of Sharia, so they approached the issue from the point of view of Islamic sciences. In scientific terms, they firmly confirmed the messages that have been transmitted at a level that is *mutawatir* knowledge, that is, reliable information like knowledge generated by feeling, that is, they used cautious expressions when expressing their opinion about those who did not reach this level, that is, they were known by the *zanni* knowledge. Such an expression is also used to express a high probability, and it is also a mistake to take it as completely doubtful.

As for the reason why the scholars did not claim the information about the Mushafs of Imam and Makkah as definitive information, they narrated the information about the Mushafs of Madinah, Sham, Basra and Kufa through reliable sources from historical persons who directly witnessed these copies (Abdullayev, 2021). Each narrator named the Mushaf he saw with a specific name. For example, Hamza ibn Habib Zayyot, who narrated the characteristics of the Mushafi of Kufa, said that he personally read the Mushafi in its entirety and that his eyes were hurting from reading it so much, while it is known that Ibn Amir Dimashqi thoroughly reviewed Sham Mushaf and wrote a separate work dedicated to it (Khotimah & Kauni, 2023). They emphasized that the Mushaf they studied was sent by Uthman (R.A.). However, this is not the case with the Mecca Mushafi. Those who narrated about it do not directly say "I saw it in the Mushaf of Makkah", but use the expressions "This is the case in the Mushaf of Makkah" or "This is the case in the Mushaf of the people of Makkah". Although these narrations support the information that a separate Mushaf was sent to Makkah, they do not reach the level of reports about these four Mushafs in scientific terms. This explains the weakness of the message about the Makkah Mushaf reported by most of the scholars (Abdulmajid, 2023).

## Conclusion

Although Imam Mushaf, the personal Mushaf of Uthman (R.A.) is reported to have been studied directly by Abu Ubayd and others, there is no firm opinion that it is an independent copy other than the Medina Mushaf. There is some doubt about whether it is the same Mushaf of Madinah. Therefore, although the probability of its existence is considered high, it is not as firmly stated as about the four primary mushafs.

It is not correct to interpret the differences between the Mushafs as a conflict in meaning or phrase. Such a situation is only a difference in spelling, which is explained by the characteristics of the Arabic script of that time. This phenomenon can happen with any language.

Clarifying the number of Mushafs of Uthman and studying them still remains to be one of the urgent scientific tasks. Searching for a solution to this problem is of particular importance in evaluating the Mushafs attributed to Uthman (R.A.). Therefore, expanding the scope of such researches, including sources related to this issue into scientific consumption are important issues before the science of Qur'anic studies.

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