

Textual Authority Contestation in the Codification of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf and the Narrative of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s Rejection

Rozaq Shohibul Ichsan, Muhammad Shohib

rozaqshohibulichsan@gmail.com & shohib.surabaya@gmail.com

Magister Pendidikan Agama Islam Universitas Kiai Abdullah Faqih

Abstract

The compilation of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf marks a pivotal stage in the history of the Qur'an, serving as the foundation for the establishment of a unified Qur'anic text across the Muslim community. Despite its historical significance, the codification process has long been associated with debates over textual authority, the legitimacy of variant codices, and the formation of the Qur'anic canon. One of the most frequently discussed issues concerns the reports that ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd opposed the standardization of the Qur'anic text under the leadership of Caliph ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān. This article investigates the nature of these reports by examining how textual authority was negotiated through historical narratives and later scholarly interpretations. Using qualitative library research, the study analyzes classical Islamic sources—including works on *ḥadīth*, *qirā’āt*, and *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*—together with contemporary academic studies. The research applies historical-critical and discourse analysis to evaluate the authenticity, development, and ideological context of the narratives concerning Ibn Mas‘ūd's alleged rejection. The findings suggest that the reported disagreement did not represent a denial of the Qur'an's authenticity but reflected differences of opinion regarding the procedures of codification and the status of personal companion codices prior to the widespread acceptance of the Uthmanic recension. The study further argues that subsequent theological and political discourses contributed to the amplification of these reports, transforming them into competing claims of textual authority within Islamic intellectual tradition. Ultimately, the Uthmanic codification succeeded in institutionalizing a standardized Qur'anic text while accommodating the diversity of authentic *qirā’āt*, thereby ensuring both textual unity and the preservation of the Qur'anic revelation. By reassessing the historical position of Ibn Mas‘ūd, this study offers a

nuanced perspective on the relationship between textual authority, canon formation, and the transmission of the Qur'an in early Islam.

Keywords: textual authority; Qur'anic canonization; Qur'anic codification; Islamic intellectual history.

Introduction

The Qur'an occupies a central position in Islam as the primary source of religious teachings, legal principles, and ethical guidance for Muslims. It is believed by Muslims to be the divine revelation of Allah, whose authenticity and preservation have been safeguarded throughout history.¹ Beyond its theological significance as a sacred text, the Qur'an also constitutes an important subject of historical inquiry due to the complex processes of revelation, memorization, documentation, transmission, and codification through which it was preserved and transmitted across generations. Consequently, the study of the Qur'an's codification has become a crucial component of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Qur'anic Studies), particularly in understanding how the Qur'anic text was compiled, authenticated, and collectively transmitted within the early Muslim community.²

During the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Qur'an was preserved through two primary mechanisms: oral memorization (*hifẓ*) and written documentation. Several Companions were entrusted with recording the revelation, including Zayd ibn Thābit, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd. At the same time, the Prophet permitted the recitation of the Qur'an in multiple dialectical forms (*ahruf*) to facilitate its accessibility among various Arab tribes with distinct linguistic backgrounds. This policy reflected the flexibility of Qur'anic transmission during the formative period of Islam, although the diversity of recitational traditions would later necessitate efforts toward textual standardization in order to maintain communal unity.³

Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, concerns regarding the preservation of the Qur'an intensified. The Battle of Yamāmah, which resulted in the deaths of numerous Qur'an

¹ Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003).

² Ahmad Zaeni, "Tracing the History of Qur'anic Codification," *Al-Mufasssir: Journal of Qur'anic Studies and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2021): 106–118. <https://doi.org/10.32534/amf.v3i2.2474>

³ Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003).

memorizers, prompted Caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq to initiate the first systematic collection of the Qur'anic text. This task was assigned to Zayd ibn Thābit, who employed a rigorous verification process by cross-checking written materials with the memorization of reliable Companions. The resulting collection was subsequently preserved by Abū Bakr, then by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and later entrusted to Ḥafṣah bint 'Umar.⁴

As Islam expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula during the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, new challenges emerged regarding the transmission and recitation of the Qur'an. Muslims in regions such as Syria, Iraq, Armenia, and Azerbaijan adopted recitational traditions learned from their respective teachers. These differences occasionally generated disputes and mutual accusations concerning the correctness of particular readings. Recognizing the potential threat to the unity of the Muslim community, Caliph 'Uthmān established an official committee, headed by Zayd ibn Thābit, to prepare a standardized Qur'anic codex that could serve as a common textual reference for all Muslims.⁵

The codification of the *Muṣḥaf 'Uthmānī* subsequently became one of the most significant milestones in Islamic intellectual history. Copies of the standardized codex were dispatched to major provinces throughout the Islamic realm, while personal codices that differed from the official version were withdrawn from public circulation.⁶ The primary objective of this policy was to preserve the unity of Qur'anic recitation and prevent sectarian disputes arising from dialectical and regional variations. Many Muslim scholars regard this initiative as a collective exercise of *ijtihād* that successfully safeguarded the integrity of the Qur'anic text for subsequent generations.⁷

Despite its historical significance, the standardization of the *Muṣḥaf 'Uthmānī* was not entirely free from controversy. One of the most frequently discussed issues in Qur'anic studies concerns reports suggesting that 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd objected to certain aspects of the

⁴ Taufik Adnan Amal, *Rekonstruksi Sejarah Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2013).

⁵ Ahmad Zaeni, "Tracing the History of Qur'anic Codification," 110–114. <https://doi.org/10.32534/amf.v3i2.2474>

⁶ Ulil Hidayah, "Kontroversi Mushaf Utsmani," *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam* 15, no. 1 (2014). DOI: 10.18860/ua.v14i3.2661.

⁷ Moh Isom Mudin, "The History of the Codification of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf: A Critique of Orientalist and Liberal Perspectives," *Tasfiyah: Journal of Islamic Thought* 1, no. 2 (2017): 305–342. <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v1i2.1855>

codification project. As one of the earliest and most respected Companions renowned for his expertise in the Qur'an, Ibn Mas'ūd possessed considerable scholarly authority within the early Muslim community. Some historical reports indicate that he questioned the appointment of Zayd ibn Thābit as head of the codification committee and initially hesitated to surrender his personal codex. However, Muslim scholars have long debated the authenticity and historical context of these reports.⁶

In contemporary scholarship, the narrative surrounding Ibn Mas'ūd's alleged opposition has become a focal point for discussions concerning textual authority, Qur'anic recitation, and the history of codification.⁸ While some Orientalist scholars have utilized these reports to question the authenticity of the *Muṣḥaf 'Uthmāni*, the majority of Muslim scholars argue that such differences should be understood within the broader framework of scholarly disagreement and interpretive diversity among the Companions rather than as evidence of rejection of the Qur'anic text itself. Accordingly, a critical examination of both the chains of transmission (*isnād*) and textual contents (*matn*) of these reports is essential for developing a balanced and historically grounded understanding of Ibn Mas'ūd's position in the history of Qur'anic codification.⁹

Therefore, the study of the *Muṣḥaf 'Uthmāni* and the narrative of Ibn Mas'ūd's rejection is significant not only for understanding the historical development of the Qur'an but also for examining the construction of textual authority in Islam. By combining historical analysis of Qur'anic codification with a critical assessment of the relevant reports, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the formation of the standard Qur'anic codex. Such an approach contributes to the advancement of *'Ulum al-Qur'an* while demonstrating that scholarly disagreements in early Islamic history constituted an integral part of the intellectual processes that ultimately strengthened the foundations of Islamic scholarship.

Research Method

⁸ Andar Nubowo, "Teori Kodifikasi Mushaf Usmani: Telaah Kritis atas Karya Régis Blachère," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125. DOI: 10.18196/aiijis.2014.0033.96-125

⁹ Andar Nubowo, "The Theory of Uthmanic Codification: A Critical Examination of Régis Blachère's Perspective," *Afkaruna* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125. <https://doi.org/10.18196/aiijis.2014.0033.96-125>

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. The qualitative method is appropriate because the study focuses on historical texts, classical narratives, and scholarly reports concerning the codification of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf and the reported opposition of ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd. Through an extensive examination of classical works on ‘*Ulūm al-Qur‘ān*, ḥadīth literature, historical sources, and contemporary academic studies, this research seeks to explore the development of the Qur‘anic text and the debates surrounding its standardization.¹⁰

The study applies a historical-critical approach to analyze the codification of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf within its social, political, and intellectual context during the caliphate of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān. This approach involves examining both the chains of transmission (*isnād*) and the textual content (*matn*) of reports related to Ibn Mas‘ūd’s alleged rejection, while comparing them with other historical accounts that support the standardization process. Such analysis enables a critical assessment of the authenticity, consistency, and historical context of these narratives.¹¹

The data sources are divided into primary and secondary materials. Primary sources include classical works such as *Al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur‘ān*, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, major ḥadīth collections, and historical texts discussing the compilation and standardization of the Qur‘an. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and contemporary studies on the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf and Qur‘anic codification. Data are analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing using a descriptive-analytical framework to achieve a balanced understanding of the issue under investigation.¹²

¹⁰ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2018).

¹¹ Andar Nubowo, “The Theory of Uthmanic Codification: A Critical Examination of Régis Blachère’s Perspective,” *Afkaruna* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125. <https://doi.org/10.18196/aaijis.2014.0033.96-125>

¹² Moh Isom Mudin, “The History of the Codification of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf: A Critique of Orientalist and Liberal Perspectives,” *Tasfīyah* 1, no. 2 (2017): 305–342. <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfīyah.v1i2.1855>

The Narrative of Ibn Mas‘ūd and the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf: A Historical and Critical Reassessment

‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd was one of the most prominent Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) and occupied a distinguished position in the history of Qur’anic transmission. As one of the earliest converts to Islam (*al-sābiqūn al-ammālūn*), he was widely recognized for his profound mastery of the Qur’an and his close association with the Prophet.¹³ Numerous reports indicate that Ibn Mas‘ūd learned and memorized a substantial portion of the Qur’an directly from the Prophet long before many other Companions, making him one of the most authoritative figures in the fields of Qur’anic recitation (*qirā’āt*), interpretation, and teaching. His scholarly influence became particularly evident in Kūfah, where he served as a leading teacher and transmitter of Qur’anic knowledge.¹⁴

Within the history of Qur’anic transmission, Ibn Mas‘ūd is often portrayed as a representative of the strong oral tradition that characterized the early Muslim community. Unlike Zayd ibn Thābit, who was primarily known as one of the Prophet’s official scribes of revelation (*kātib al-wahy*), Ibn Mas‘ūd gained prominence as a master reciter and educator. His personal codex (*muṣḥaf*) functioned primarily as a pedagogical tool designed to facilitate teaching and memorization rather than as an official text intended for universal adoption.¹⁵ Consequently, the existence of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s codex should be understood within the context of local instruction and scholarly practice rather than as a rival to the official codex later standardized under Caliph ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān.¹⁶

The debate concerning Ibn Mas‘ūd’s position toward the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf originates from a number of reports suggesting his dissatisfaction with aspects of the standardization process. One of the most frequently cited narrations records his objection to the

¹³ Harald Motzki, “The Collection of the Qur’an: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments,” *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (2001): 1–34.

¹⁴ Muhammad Mustafa al-A‘zami, *The History of the Qur’anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003)

¹⁵ M. Ulil Abshor, “Kodifikasi Rasm Al-Qur’an (Sebuah Tinjauan Historis),” *Ar-Rosyad: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.55148/arroshad.v1i2.603>

¹⁶ Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2002).

appointment of Zayd ibn Thābit as the head of the codification committee. According to this report, Ibn Mas‘ūd emphasized that he had learned the Qur’an directly from the Prophet at a time when Zayd was still relatively young. Modern scholarship has often interpreted this statement as evidence of opposition to the Uthmanic codification project. However, a more nuanced reading suggests that his concerns were directed toward questions of scholarly authority and methodology rather than toward the authenticity of the Qur’anic text itself.¹⁷

From the perspective of Islamic historiography, the differences between Ibn Mas‘ūd and the codification committee can be understood as part of the broader phenomenon of *ijtihād* among the Companions. The Companions were not merely passive recipients of revelation but active intellectual agents who possessed distinct experiences in transmitting and teaching the Qur’an. Variations in opinion regarding the methods of compilation and standardization therefore reflect legitimate scholarly diversity within the early Muslim community. In this context, Ibn Mas‘ūd’s reservations are better understood as methodological disagreements rather than theological objections to the Qur’an.¹⁸

Another important consideration concerns the differing functions of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf and the personal codices maintained by individual Companions. The Uthmanic codex was intended as a public and authoritative text designed to unify Muslims across the rapidly expanding Islamic empire. By contrast, personal codices such as that of Ibn Mas‘ūd served educational and practical purposes within specific local contexts. Consequently, variations in the arrangement of sūrah, explanatory notes, or synonymous expressions should not be interpreted as evidence of substantive textual differences. Classical scholars of *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* consistently argued that such variations reflected differences in function and transmission rather than divergences in revelation itself.¹⁹

A related controversy concerns reports claiming that Ibn Mas‘ūd’s codex did not include Sūrat al-Fāṭiḥah and the two protective chapters

¹⁷ Andar Nubowo, “The Theory of Uthmanic Codification: A Critical Examination of Régis Blachère’s Perspective,” *Afkaruna* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125. DOI: 10.18196/aiijis.2014.0033.96-125.

¹⁸ Moh Isom Mudin, “The History of the Codification of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf: A Critique of Orientalist and Liberal Perspectives,” *Tasfiyah* 1, no. 2 (2017): 305–342. DOI: 10.21111/tasfiyah.v1i2.1855

¹⁹ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *Al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2004)

(*al-Muʿanwidhatayn*), namely Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās. Some Orientalist scholars have used these reports to challenge the integrity of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslim scholars reject this claim on both historical and textual grounds. Numerous authentic reports demonstrate that Ibn Masʿūd recited, taught, and transmitted these chapters as part of the Qurʾan. Accordingly, many scholars regard the contrary reports as products of transmission errors, misunderstandings, or weak chains of narration.²⁰ The application of *isnād* and *matn* criticism further strengthens this conclusion. From the perspective of transmission analysis, many reports concerning Ibn Masʿūd’s alleged rejection rely on disputed or weak chains of narrators. From the standpoint of textual criticism, the content of these reports frequently conflicts with well-established historical evidence demonstrating the collective acceptance of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf among the Companions. Consequently, the principles of ḥadīth criticism suggest that such reports cannot be accepted uncritically without careful examination of both their chains of transmission and their textual coherence.²¹

The concept of *ijmāʿ al-ṣaḥābah* (consensus of the Companions) also plays a crucial role in assessing the legitimacy of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf. Although differences of opinion may have existed during the initial stages of codification, historical evidence indicates that the Companions ultimately accepted the Uthmanic codex as the standard text of the Muslim community. There is no reliable evidence of a sustained movement of opposition or an organized effort to preserve an alternative canonical text following the completion of the standardization project. This historical reality demonstrates that the Uthmanic codification emerged through collective consultation and broad communal approval rather than unilateral imposition.²²

In contemporary scholarship, the issue of Ibn Masʿūd’s alleged rejection has become an important case study in discussions of textual authority and canon formation in early Islam. Some Western scholars have interpreted the episode as evidence of competing claims to authority during the development of the Qurʾanic canon. However,

²⁰ Ulil Hidayah, “Kontroversi Mushaf Utsmani,” *Ulul Albab* 15, no. 1 (2014). DOI: 10.18860/ua.v14i3.2661.

²¹ Harald Motzki, “The Collection of the Qurʾan: A Reconsideration of Western Views.”

²² Harald Motzki, “The Collection of the Qurʾan: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments,” *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (2001): 1–34.

many Muslim scholars argue that such interpretations overlook the collective and *mutawātir* nature of Qur'anic transmission, which relied not only on written documents but also on widespread memorization and communal verification. From this perspective, the differences associated with Ibn Mas'ūd reflect the intellectual dynamics of codification rather than a challenge to the authenticity of the Qur'anic revelation.²³

Overall, the narrative of Ibn Mas'ūd's alleged rejection of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf should not be understood as an expression of opposition to the Qur'an or to the authority of Caliph 'Uthmān. Rather, it must be situated within the broader context of Qur'anic transmission, pedagogical diversity, and scholarly discourse among the Companions. Historical-critical analysis, *isnād-matn* evaluation, and the principle of Companion consensus collectively support the conclusion that the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf faithfully represents the authentic Qur'anic text, while Ibn Mas'ūd remained an integral participant in the preservation and transmission of the divine revelation.²⁴

Muslim Intellectual Responses to the Controversy of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf

The intellectual response of Muslim scholars to the controversy surrounding the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf is rooted in a collective commitment to preserving the authenticity and integrity of the Qur'an as the primary source of Islamic teachings. Since the formative period of Islamic scholarship, Muslim intellectuals have paid close attention to narratives that could potentially cast doubt on the transmission and preservation of the Qur'anic text.²⁵ Consequently, reports concerning variant codices (*maṣāḥif*), differences in recitation, or the attitudes of prominent Companions—including those attributed to 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd—have not been accepted uncritically. Rather, they have been subjected to rigorous scholarly scrutiny through the methodological

²³ Moh Isom Mudin, "Sejarah Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani: Kritik atas Orientalis dan Liberal," *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2017): 305–342, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v1i2.1855>

²⁴ Andar Nubowo, "Teori Kodifikasi Mushaf Usmani: Telaah Kritis atas Karya Régis Blachère," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125

²⁵ Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, "Ṣan'ā' 1 and the Origins of the Qur'an," *Der Islam* 87, no. 1–2 (2012): 1–129, DOI: 10.1515/islam-2011-0025.

frameworks developed within the disciplines of ḥadīth studies and ‘*Ulūm al-Qur’ān*.²⁶

One of the most significant intellectual responses has been the application of *isnād* and *matn* criticism. Muslim scholars have carefully examined reports concerning Ibn Mas‘ūd’s alleged rejection of the Uthmanic codification project by assessing the reliability of transmitters, the continuity of transmission chains, and the coherence of the textual content.²⁷ Through this critical methodology, many scholars concluded that several reports portraying Ibn Mas‘ūd as rejecting the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf are either weak in transmission, historically problematic, or susceptible to contextual misinterpretation.²⁸ This approach demonstrates that the Islamic scholarly tradition possesses an established mechanism for evaluating historical reports rather than accepting them at face value.²⁹

Another major response has emerged through historical contextualization. Contemporary Muslim scholars emphasize that disagreements among the Companions should be understood within the socio-political realities of the first Islamic century.³⁰ The standardization of the Qur’an under Caliph ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān occurred during a period of rapid territorial expansion, when linguistic diversity and regional recitational practices posed significant challenges to communal unity. Within this historical context, expressions of concern or methodological disagreement by certain Companions are interpreted as part of a healthy intellectual discourse rather than evidence of theological opposition to the Qur’an itself.³¹

The concept of *ijmā’* (scholarly consensus) also occupies a central place in Muslim responses to the controversy. Muslim scholars

²⁶ Ulil Hidayah, “Kontroversi Mushaf Utsmani,” *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 3 (2014): 245–266. DOI: 10.18860/ua.v14i3.2661

²⁷ Hythem Sidky, “On the Regionality of Qur’anic Codices,” *Journal of the International Qur’anic Studies Association* 5 (2020): 105–137, DOI: 10.5913/jiqsa.5.2020.a006.

²⁸ Sopyan Hadi dan Rifanto Bin Ridwan, "Controversy and Arguments for The Application of Rasm 'Utsmānī On The Mushaf of The Qur'an," *Al Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 9, no. 1 (2025). DOI: **10.29240/alquds.v9i1.13254**.

²⁹ Andar Nubowo, “Teori Kodifikasi Mushaf Usmani: Telaah Kritis atas Karya Régis Blachère,” *Afkaruna* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125. DOI: 10.18196/aaijis.2014.0033.96-125.

³⁰ Hamdani Anwar, "Kontroversi seputar Wacana Mushaf ‘Utsman," *Refleksi: Jurnal Kajian Agama dan Filsafat* 5, no. 1. DOI: **10.15408/ref.v5i1.40454**.

³¹ Ahmad Zaeni, “Melacak Sejarah Kodifikasi Al-Qur’an,” *Al-Mufasssir* 3, no. 2 (2021): 106–118. DOI: 10.32534/amf.v3i2.2474.

maintain that the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf ultimately gained the acceptance of the wider community of Companions, who collectively possessed both religious authority and moral credibility. Although differing opinions may have existed during the early stages of codification, no authentic historical evidence indicates that Ibn Mas‘ūd or any other Companion continued to reject the standardized codex after its official adoption. Consequently, the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf is understood not as a product of political domination but as the outcome of a collective scholarly consensus aimed at safeguarding the unity of the Muslim community.³²

Muslim intellectuals have also responded by distinguishing between the functions of official and personal codices. Classical and contemporary scholars argue that personal codices maintained by Companions such as Ibn Mas‘ūd served pedagogical purposes and were primarily intended to facilitate teaching, memorization, and local transmission. In contrast, the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf was produced as an authoritative public text designed to ensure uniformity across the expanding Islamic world. This distinction helps explain the existence of minor variations in arrangement, annotations, or explanatory notes without implying substantive differences in the Qur'anic revelation itself.³³

In response to Orientalist critiques, Muslim scholars have developed what may be described as a critical-apologetic approach. Rather than rejecting academic inquiry altogether, they engage critically with Western scholarship while defending the historical authenticity of the Qur'an. Scholars such as Muhammad Mustafa al-A‘zami, Harald Motzki, and others have demonstrated that many Orientalist assumptions often overlook the sophisticated mechanisms of preservation embedded within the Islamic tradition, including mass memorization (*tawātur*), oral transmission, and written documentation.³⁴ This response highlights the importance of evaluating Qur'anic history through methodologies that take seriously both Islamic and modern academic perspectives.

³² Moh Isom Mudin, “Sejarah Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani: Kritik atas Orientalis dan Liberal,” *Tasfiyah* 1, no. 2 (2017): 305–342. DOI: 10.21111/tasfiyah.v1i2.1855.

³³ M. Ulil Abshor, “Kodifikasi Rasm Al-Qur’an (Sebuah Tinjauan Historis),” *Ar-Rosyad* 1, no. 2 (2021). DOI: 10.55148/arrosyad.v1i2.603.

³⁴ Muhammad Mustafa al-A‘zami, *The History of the Qur’anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003).

Modern Muslim scholarship has further expanded this discussion through interdisciplinary approaches that combine classical Islamic sciences with contemporary methodologies such as historiography, manuscript studies, textual criticism, and philology. Recent studies of early Qur'anic manuscripts and codices have generally reinforced the conclusion that the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf accurately represents the textual tradition transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad. Such findings demonstrate the adaptability of Islamic scholarship in engaging with modern academic developments while remaining grounded in its normative foundations.³⁵

Furthermore, Muslim intellectual responses emphasize the ethical dimension of scholarly disagreement within Islam. Differences of opinion among the Companions are often viewed as evidence of intellectual vitality rather than division. In this framework, the debates associated with Ibn Mas'ūd are understood as reflecting methodological diversity and scholarly engagement rather than challenges to the authority of the Qur'an. This perspective underscores the ability of the early Muslim community to accommodate diverse viewpoints while maintaining collective commitment to the preservation of revelation.³⁶

Overall, Muslim intellectual responses to the controversy of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf reveal a consistent pattern characterized by historical verification, critical analysis, contextual interpretation, and communal consensus. These approaches collectively affirm that the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf is not merely a written document but also a symbol of the Muslim community's collective effort to preserve the divine revelation. Consequently, critiques directed at the Uthmanic codification can be addressed through rigorous scholarly argumentation without disregarding the complex historical and intellectual processes that shaped the development of the Qur'anic text.³⁷

Muslim Intellectual Responses to the Narrative of Ibn Mas'ūd's Rejection

³⁵ Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'an: A Reconsideration of Western Views," *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (2001): 1–34.

³⁶ Nicolai Sinai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017)

³⁷ Mashfiyatus Shidqiyyah and Muhammad Shohib, "Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani dan Dinamika Kontroversinya dalam Sejarah Islam," *Al-Zayn* 4, no. 2 (2025). DOI: 10.61104/alz.v4i2.4684.

The discourse surrounding ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd’s alleged rejection of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf has occupied a significant place within the fields of ‘*Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, Qur’anic historiography, and Islamic intellectual history. For Muslim scholars, this issue extends beyond the mere authenticity of historical reports; it also concerns the methodological principles through which Islamic scholarship evaluates controversial narratives related to the preservation of divine revelation. Consequently, classical and contemporary Muslim intellectuals have generally approached this issue within broader frameworks of Qur’anic preservation, communal consensus (*ijmā’*), and the diversity of scholarly opinions among the Companions. Rather than viewing the reported disagreement as evidence against the authenticity of the Qur’an, they interpret it as part of the intellectual dynamics that accompanied the formation of the canonical text.³⁸

One of the earliest scholarly responses emerged through the disciplines of ḥadīth criticism and ‘*Ulūm al-Qur’ān*. Classical scholars such as al-Suyūṭī, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Qurṭubī, and al-Zarkashī consistently emphasized that reports concerning Ibn Mas‘ūd’s opposition should not be accepted at face value. Instead, these reports must be subjected to critical examination of both their chains of transmission (*isnād*) and textual content (*matn*). Through such analysis, many scholars concluded that the reports often cited as evidence of rejection either suffer from weaknesses in transmission or require contextual interpretation. Accordingly, they argued that these narrations cannot be used to challenge the authority of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf, which was accepted by the broader community of Companions.³⁹

A further dimension of Muslim intellectual engagement is reflected in the application of historical-contextual analysis. Contemporary scholars argue that any disagreement attributed to Ibn Mas‘ūd must be situated within the historical circumstances of the first Islamic century. The codification project initiated by Caliph ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān occurred during a period of rapid territorial expansion, linguistic diversity, and increasing variation in recitational practices across different regions of the Muslim world. Within this context, expressions of concern regarding codification procedures are interpreted as methodological or administrative disagreements rather than theological

³⁸ Ulil Hidayah, “Kontroversi Mushaf Utsmani,” *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 3 (2014): 245–266. DOI: 10.18860/ua.v14i3.2661

³⁹ Andar Nubowo, “Teori Kodifikasi Mushaf Usmani: Telaah Kritis atas Karya Régis Blachère,” *Afkaruna* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125. DOI: 10.18196/aaijis.2014.0033.96-125.

objections to the Qur'anic text itself. Such an interpretation highlights the intellectual agency of the Companions while preserving the integrity of the revelation they collectively transmitted.⁴⁰

Muslim scholars have also responded by emphasizing the central role of *ijmā' al-ṣaḥābah* (the consensus of the Companions) in establishing the authority of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf. Although historical sources record instances of discussion and differing viewpoints during the codification process, there is no reliable evidence indicating sustained resistance to the standardized text once it had been officially adopted. The eventual acceptance of the Uthmanic codex by the leading Companions—including those associated with alternative personal codices—has therefore been regarded as a powerful indication of its legitimacy. From this perspective, the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf represents not an act of political imposition but a collective scholarly endeavor aimed at preserving communal unity and textual consistency.⁴¹

Another important aspect of Muslim intellectual responses concerns the distinction between personal codices and the canonical state codex. Scholars have consistently argued that the personal codices of Companions such as Ibn Mas'ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, and others were primarily pedagogical tools designed to facilitate teaching and memorization. These codices often contained explanatory notes, variations in arrangement, or reading aids that reflected local instructional practices. By contrast, the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf was intended as a public and authoritative reference for the entire Muslim community. Recognizing this distinction helps explain textual variations without implying the existence of competing Qur'anic canons.⁴²

In response to Orientalist scholarship, Muslim intellectuals have developed a critical yet constructive engagement with modern academic approaches. Scholars such as Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A'zamī, Taufik Adnan Amal, and others have challenged the assumption that reports concerning Ibn Mas'ūd necessarily undermine the authenticity of the Qur'an. They argue that many Orientalist interpretations neglect the central role of oral transmission, mass memorization (*tawātur*), and

⁴⁰ Moh Isom Mudin, “Sejarah Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani: Kritik atas Orientalis dan Liberal,” *Tasfiyah* 1, no. 2 (2017): 305–342. DOI: 10.21111/tasfiyah.v1i2.1855.

⁴¹ Muhammad Najib, “Pembakuan Mushaf Uthmani,” *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* 13, no. 1 (2016): 25–46. DOI: 10.22515/ajpif.v13i1.40.

⁴² Ahmad Zaeni, “Melacak Sejarah Kodifikasi Al-Qur'an,” *Al-Mufassir* 3, no. 2 (2021): 106–118. DOI: 10.32534/amf.v3i2.2474.

communal verification in the preservation of the Qur'anic text. Furthermore, contemporary manuscript studies have increasingly demonstrated a high degree of textual stability among the earliest Qur'anic codices, lending additional support to the traditional Muslim understanding of Qur'anic preservation.⁴³

Recent scholarship has expanded this discussion through interdisciplinary approaches that integrate classical Islamic sciences with modern historiography, philology, manuscript studies, and textual criticism. Muslim researchers increasingly engage with evidence from early Qur'anic manuscripts, including the Ṣan'ā' palimpsest, the Birmingham manuscript, and other early codices, to demonstrate that the process of codification did not fundamentally alter the content of the Qur'an. Instead, these studies suggest that the Uthmanic project sought to regulate orthography and preserve communal unity while maintaining the integrity of the revealed text.⁴⁴

Another significant feature of Muslim intellectual responses is the emphasis on scholarly ethics and the management of disagreement. Islamic intellectual tradition generally views differences among the Companions as evidence of scholarly vitality rather than sectarian division. Accordingly, narratives associated with Ibn Mas'ūd are often interpreted as reflections of methodological diversity within a shared commitment to preserving revelation. This perspective enables scholars to acknowledge historical complexity without compromising the theological principle of the Qur'an's authenticity.⁴⁵

From the perspective of Islamic epistemology, the debate surrounding Ibn Mas'ūd ultimately reinforces the collective nature of religious authority in Islam. The preservation and canonization of the Qur'an did not depend upon the judgment of a single individual but emerged through a process of consultation (*shūrā*), consensus (*ijmā'*), and communal verification. Consequently, the authority of the Uthmanic

⁴³ Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation* (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003); Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'an: A Reconsideration of Western Views," *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (2001): 1–34.

⁴⁴ Hythem Sidky, "On the Regionality of Qur'anic Codices," *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association* 5 (2020): 105–137. DOI: 10.5913/jiqsa.5.2020.a006; Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, "Ṣan'ā' 1 and the Origins of the Qur'an," *Der Islam* 87, no. 1–2 (2012): 1–129. DOI: 10.1515/islam-2011-0025.

⁴⁵ Niken Ayu Wulandari, "Controversy Over the Ottoman Mushaf," *THARWAH: Journal of Islamic Civilization and Thought* 2, no. 2 (2023). DOI: 10.47766/tharwah.v2i2.1026.

Muṣḥaf derives from the collective testimony of the early Muslim community rather than from the position of any one Companion. This understanding remains central to Muslim intellectual responses to contemporary critiques of Qur'anic codification.⁴⁶

Overall, Muslim intellectual responses to the narrative of Ibn Mas'ūd's rejection reveal a sophisticated tradition of critical engagement grounded in historical analysis, ḥadīth criticism, textual verification, and communal consensus. Far from being merely apologetic, these responses demonstrate the capacity of Islamic scholarship to engage controversial historical narratives through rigorous methodological frameworks. In this sense, the debate over Ibn Mas'ūd serves not as evidence against the authenticity of the Qur'an but as a testament to the intellectual mechanisms developed by Muslim scholars to safeguard the integrity of revelation throughout history.⁴⁷

Novelty and Research Findings

Research on the codification of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf and the narrative concerning the alleged rejection by 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd has long occupied an important position within the fields of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Qur'anic historiography, and Islamic intellectual studies. Previous scholarship has generally focused on the historical process of Qur'anic compilation, the standardization of the Muṣḥaf during the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, and the authenticity of reports related to the personal codices of the Companions. Other studies have concentrated on responding to Orientalist critiques that employ reports about Ibn Mas'ūd's alleged opposition to challenge the authenticity and authority of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf. However, much of the existing literature remains largely descriptive-historical or apologetic in nature, paying relatively limited attention to the relationship between these reports and the broader process through which textual authority and canonical legitimacy were established in early Islam.

⁴⁶ Sopyan Hadi and Rifanto bin Ridwan, "Controversy and Arguments for the Application of Rasm 'Uthmānī on the Mushaf of the Qur'an," *Al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 9, no. 1 (2025). DOI: 10.29240/alquds.v9i1.13254.

⁴⁷ François Déroche, *The One and the Many: The Early History of the Qur'an* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Nicolai Sinai, "When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Qur'an Reach Closure?" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 2 (2014): 273–292. DOI: 10.1017/S0041977X14000211.

Against this backdrop, the present study offers a distinct perspective by approaching the narrative of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s alleged rejection not merely as a historical dispute concerning variant codices, but as part of a broader contestation of textual authority during the canonization of the Qur’an. From this perspective, the debate surrounding the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf reflects a complex process of scholarly negotiation among leading Companions regarding the formation of an authoritative textual standard for the Muslim community. Consequently, the focus of this study extends beyond determining the historical accuracy of individual reports to examining how such narratives were constructed, transmitted, and interpreted within different intellectual traditions in order to explain the relationship between individual scholarly authority and collective religious authority.

The novelty of this research also lies in its use of an integrated historical-critical approach that combines *isnād* analysis, *matn* criticism, and socio-historical contextualization. This methodological framework allows for a more comprehensive examination of the issue by assessing not only the reliability of the transmitted reports but also the political, social, and intellectual circumstances that shaped their emergence and reception. Through this approach, the study distinguishes between legitimate differences of *ijtihād* among the Companions and later polemical constructions that developed in subsequent scholarly and ideological debates. As a result, the alleged rejection of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf by Ibn Mas‘ūd is interpreted not as a rejection of the Qur’anic revelation itself, but rather as part of the intellectual discourse surrounding the procedures and mechanisms of codification.

The findings of this study indicate that the reports frequently cited as evidence of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s opposition do not substantiate claims of his rejection of the Qur’an or of the legitimacy of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf. Instead, these reports primarily reflect differences concerning methodological approaches to Qur’anic transmission and the exercise of scholarly authority during the codification process. In this regard, Ibn Mas‘ūd emerges as a highly respected Qur’anic authority whose views should be understood within the framework of scholarly deliberation among the Companions rather than as an expression of resistance to the emerging consensus of the Muslim community.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the authority of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf was ultimately established not through the dominance of a single individual or political authority, but through a collective process involving consultation, verification, and consensus

(*ijmā'*) among the Companions. The standardization of the Muṣḥaf therefore represents a communal and epistemological endeavor aimed at preserving the integrity of the Qur'anic text and maintaining the unity of the Muslim community. The existence of differing opinions during the early stages of codification does not undermine this legitimacy; rather, it illustrates the vibrant intellectual culture of early Islam, in which debate and consultation formed essential components of collective decision-making.

Accordingly, the principal contribution of this study lies in its reconstruction of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf controversy through the lens of textual authority and Qur'anic epistemology. It argues that the narrative of Ibn Mas'ūd's alleged rejection is more accurately understood as part of a broader negotiation of scholarly authority during the canonization of the Qur'an than as evidence of textual conflict or corruption. This finding reinforces the view that the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf emerged through a process of collective epistemological and social consensus among the Companions, while also demonstrating that intellectual disagreements in the formative period of Islam contributed to, rather than weakened, the preservation and transmission of the Qur'anic revelation.

Conclusion

1. The narrative of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd's alleged rejection of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf does not indicate a rejection of the Qur'an itself, but rather reflects methodological and pedagogical differences among the Companions during the process of Qur'anic codification. A critical examination of historical reports demonstrates that these differences should be understood within the context of scholarly *ijtihad*, rather than as evidence of textual conflict or opposition to the standardized Muṣḥaf.
2. The authority of the Uthmanic Muṣḥaf was established through collective consultation, verification, and consensus (*ijmā'*) among the Companions, making it the authoritative and universally accepted Qur'anic text. This study highlights that the controversy surrounding Ibn Mas'ūd is best understood as a contestation of textual authority within the canonization process rather than a challenge to the authenticity of the Qur'an, thereby reaffirming the integrity and preservation of the Qur'anic revelation throughout Islamic history.

3. The novelty of this study lies in its reinterpretation of the Ibn Mas'ūd narrative through the lens of textual authority and Qur'anic epistemology, demonstrating that the controversy reflects a process of negotiating scholarly authority in the canonization of the Qur'an rather than a dispute over the authenticity of the Qur'anic text itself.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abshor, M. Ulil. "Kodifikasi Rasm Al-Qur'an (Sebuah Tinjauan Historis)." *Ar-Rosyad: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.55148/arrosyad.v1i2.603>.

Al-A'zami, Muhammad Mustafa. *The History of the Qur'anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation*. Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003.

Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn. *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004.

Amal, Taufik Adnan. *Rekonstruksi Sejarah Al-Qur'an*. Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2013.

Anwar, Hamdani. "Kontroversi seputar Wacana Mushaf 'Utsman." *Refleksi: Jurnal Kajian Agama dan Filsafat* 5, no. 1. <https://doi.org/10.15408/ref.v5i1.40454>.

Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2018.

Déroche, François. *The One and the Many: The Early History of the Qur'an*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021.

Hadi, Sopyan, and Rifanto bin Ridwan. "Controversy and Arguments for the Application of Rasm 'Uthmānī on the Mushaf of the Qur'an." *Al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 9, no. 1 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v9i1.13254>.

Hidayah, Ulil. "Kontroversi Mushaf Utsmani." *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 3 (2014): 245–266. <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v14i3.2661>.

Ibn Abī Dāwūd, Abū Bakr. *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*. Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2002.

Mashfiyatus Shidqiyyah, and Muhammad Shohib. "Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani dan Dinamika Kontroversinya dalam Sejarah Islam." *Al-Zayn* 4, no. 2 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.61104/alz.v4i2.4684>.

Motzki, Harald. "The Collection of the Qur'an: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments." *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (2001): 1–34.

Mudin, Moh Isom. “Sejarah Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani: Kritik atas Orientalis dan Liberal.” *Tasfīyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2017): 305–342. <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfīyah.v1i2.1855>.

Muhammad Najib. “Pembakuan Mushaf Uthmani.” *Al-A‘raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* 13, no. 1 (2016): 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v13i1.40>.

Nubowo, Andar. “Teori Kodifikasi Mushaf Usmani: Telaah Kritis atas Karya Régis Blachère.” *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2014): 96–125. <https://doi.org/10.18196/aijjs.2014.0033.96-125>.

Sadeghi, Behnam, and Mohsen Goudarzi. “Šan ‘ā’ 1 and the Origins of the Qur’an.” *Der Islam* 87, nos. 1–2 (2012): 1–129. <https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2011-0025>.

Sidky, Hythem. “On the Regionality of Qur’anic Codices.” *Journal of the International Qur’anic Studies Association* 5 (2020): 105–137. <https://doi.org/10.5913/jiqsa.5.2020.a006>.

Sinai, Nicolai. *The Qur’an: A Historical-Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Sinai, Nicolai. “When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Qur’an Reach Closure? Part I.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 2 (2014): 273–292. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X14000211>.

Wulandari, Niken Ayu. “Controversy Over the Ottoman Mushaf.” *THARWAH: Journal of Islamic Civilization and Thought* 2, no. 2 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.47766/tharwah.v2i2.1026>.

Zaeni, Ahmad. “Melacak Sejarah Kodifikasi Al-Qur’an.” *Al-Mufassir* 3, no. 2 (2021): 106–118. <https://doi.org/10.32534/amf.v3i2.2474>.