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**The Qari Icons and Their Influences in The Evolution of Tarannum Art in Kedah: A Historical Review**


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| Article Info  | ABSTRACT  |
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| <p><b>Article history:</b><br/>Received: 2 March 2023<br/>Revised: 16 March 2023<br/>Accepted: 28 March 2023<br/>Published: 1 April 2023</p>  | <p>The art of tarannum al-Quran is a Muslim's precious heritage. Thus, this paper focuses on the evolution of the Hijazi and Misri streams in the art of tarannum al-Quran in Malaysia. The emphasis is given to the state of Kedah which is one of the early places of birth of this art in the country. Besides, this paper also highlights the aspects of the flow, styles, and recitation art of the famous qarīs in this state, as well as the song transformation from the past to the present. This article includes two disciplines of study, namely library and field studies where several methods were used to collect the data including document analysis, interviews, and observations. The result shows that Kedah is one of the earliest pioneer states, and the catalyst of tarannum art, which triggers the transformation of al-Quran songs in Malaysia.</p> |
| <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>Quran<br/>Tarannum<br/>Hijazi<br/>Misri<br/>History of Kedah</p> <p></p> |   |

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## INTRODUCTION

Art is an expression related to beauty and subtlety that touch the human soul. It involves various forms of activities, behaviors, works, and so on to highlight various effects (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1994). On the other hand, the appreciation of art is a part of feelings that derives from the human senses and soul. Humans invent based on their desires, and those desires arise from a strong collaboration between soul and knowledge, as described by Bakar (1997).

*"The soul knowledge is divided into two parts, namely the sense of the senses and the spiritual sense, the spiritual sense is divided into the sense of religion, ethics, aesthetics, intellect, social and sense of self."*

The art of *tarannum* derives from the Arabic word, which means beautifying the voice through recitation (Manzur, 1990). Apart from that, *tarannum* is also represented by the word *al-Ghina'* or *al-Lahn* which means to sing a recitation. In terms of terminology, *tarannum* can be considered the art of reciting the Quran with certain songs or rhythms. It is sung along with the verses by using special melodies in line with the miracles of the Holy Quran (Salim, 2004). Additionally, Haji Nik Jaafar bin Nik Ismail, a *tarannum* expert in Malaysia, defines the art of *tarannum* al-Quran as a science of voices that diversifies sounds according to certain tones, beats, and rhythms to add beauty to the recitation of the Quran (H. N. J. bin N. Ismail, 1998).

### The Growth of Tarannum Al-Quran Streams in Malaysia

Tarannum al-Quran has been brought to Malaysia 500 years ago, along with the arrival of Islam in the Archipelago region (Bakar, 1997). This notion is evidenced by the existence of traditional Quran home tuitions and institutions known as *Pondok* in the Archipelago region and Malaysia. The growth began with the arrival of Islamic preachers from the Middle East and the return of graduates studying in Mecca and Medina to teach the Quran to the locals. Besides, the royal palaces also play an important role in the dissemination of Quranic-based knowledge, where they become the centers of the art of *tarannum* al-Quran. In fact, these palaces have their own *qaris* known as the royal *qaris* (Bakar, 1997).

Through these royal *qaris*, the community learned the correct and effective recitation of the Quran, especially in terms of the Arabic *lahjah* pronunciation of certain sentences. They have occasionally narrated good melodies of Quran recitation, in form of the Arabic *tarannum* art either during the formal Quran teaching to the community, in *khatam* al-Quran ceremonies, wedding feasts, or religious festivals. Among these figures are (i) Muhammad Yusof Kedondong in Kelantan, (ii) Haji Muhammad (Mat Lintar) in Terengganu, (iii) Haji Muhammad Ribat in Kedah, (iv) Haji Sulaiman in Johore, (v) Haji Khalid in Selangor, and (vi) Muhyiddin (Datuk Canai Intan) in Perak (Bakar, 1997).

In the early 20th century, the art of *tarannum* al-Quran has grown rapidly in Indonesia, especially in *Hijazi* songs which have produced figures such as K.H. Arwani, K.H. Sya'roni, K.H. Munawir, K.H. Abdul Qadir, K.H. Damhuri, and many more. Consequently, it is likely to have an impact on Malaysia as a neighboring country in the development of *tarannum* al-Quran art (Lembaga Bahasa Dan Ilmu Al-Quran, 1987). The peak of the *tarannum* al-Quran in Malaysia was reached when the National Al-Quran Recitation Ceremony was organized for the first time in 1960 by the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj. This was followed by the organization of the International Al-Quran Recitation Ceremony in the next year. The organization of these two prominent events has become a catalyst for the growth of the art of *tarannum* al-Quran in Malaysia, year by year (Said, n.d.).

### The Streams of Tarannum Al-Quran Art in Malaysia

The *tarannum* al-Quran art in Malaysia, like most other countries, applies two main streams, which are *Hijazi* and *Misri*.

### *The Hijazi Stream*

Historically, the art of *tarannum* originated from the eastern Arabian Peninsula or Hijaz and later flourished in and around Mecca. The art of *tarannum* requires agility in addition to the high tone and rhythm. This is perhaps related to the cultural atmosphere of the local community living in the desert and hilly areas (Lembaga Bahasa Dan Ilmu Al-Quran, 1987). In Malaysia, the *Hijazi* stream was introduced before the second world war by the royal *qaris* such as Muhammad Yusof Kedondong in Kelantan, Haji Muhammad (Mat Lintar) in Terengganu, Haji Muhammad Ribat in Kedah, Haji Sulaiman in Johore, Haji Khalid in Selangor, Muhyiddin (Datuk Canai Intan) in Perak and a few more pioneer reciters until the end of the 1940s (Bakar, 1997).

*Hijazi* stream is a combination of several songs, formulated by the term *Bihumrin Jasad* (بحمر جسد). In elaboration, (i) the alphabet *Ba* (ب) refers to the *Bajankah* song, (ii) the alphabet *Ha* (ح) refers to the *Husainiy* song, (iii) the alphabet *Mim* (م) refers to the *Mayyah* song, (iv) the alphabet *Ra* (ر) refers to the *Rakbiy* song, (v) the alphabet *Jim* (ج) refers to the *Jiharkah* song, (vi) the alphabet *Sin* (س) refers to the *Sikah* song, and lastly (vii) the alphabet *Dal* (د) refers to the *Dukah* song (Ahmad, 2007).

### *The Misri Stream*

*Misri* is an Egyptian style that appeared and grew in the Nile valley. This stream has a tone and rhythm that is softer and more touching compared to the *Hijazi* stream. This may be based on the cultural atmosphere of the community and the state of Egypt itself, which is famous for the fertility of the Nile valley as well as the freshness of its air (Bakar, 1997). During the post-1940s era, the *Misri* stream was very popular and dominated most Islamic countries, especially Malaysia. This phenomenon is likely caused by the emergence of several iconic *Misri qaris* such as Tuan Aji Ahmad Ma'sum Pergau, Tuan Haji Zabidi Aman, Haji Saleh Bilah, Haji Mukti, and others who are known as the young force or *Angkatan Muda* (Bakar, 1997).

*Misri* stream is a combination of several songs, formulated by the term *Bihusrin Jasad* (بحصر جسد). To elaborate, (i) the alphabet *Ba* (ب) refers to the *Bayyati* song, (ii) the alphabet *Ha* (ح) refers to the *Hijaz* song, (iii) the alphabet *Sod* (ص) refers to the *Soba* song, (iv) the alphabet *Ra* (ر) refers to the *Rast* song, (v) the alphabet *Jim* (ج) refers to the *Jiharkah* song, (vi) the alphabet *Sin* (س) refers to the *Sikah* song and (vii) the alphabet *Dal* (د) refers to the *Nahawand* song.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In Malaysia, the development of *tarannum* study can be traced back to the early days of Islamic education in the country. Historically, Islamic education in Malaysia was primarily focused on the memorization and recitation of Quranic verses. However, over time, there has been an increasing interest in the study and appreciation of *tarannum*, which is seen as an important part of Islamic culture and heritage (Zakaria et al., 2021). In the early days, *tarannum* study in Malaysia was mainly carried out in religious schools and madrasahs (N. Omar, 2016). Mosques have played an important role in the development of *tarannum* in Malaysia. Mosques are not only places of worship but also centers of learning and culture, and they have traditionally been important venues for the practice and performance of Islamic vocal music, including *tarannum* (Tamuri, 2021).

In Malaysia, many mosques have dedicated spaces for the practice and performance of *tarannum*, and they often host events and competitions that showcase the skills of talented vocalists. These events provide a platform for *tarannum* enthusiasts to share their passion and showcase their talent, while also promoting the art form to a wider audience. Mosques also provide a supportive environment for the teaching and learning of *tarannum*. Many mosques have dedicated teachers and instructors who offer lessons and guidance to students of all ages and skill levels. These teachers often have a deep knowledge of the history and traditions of *tarannum*, and they are able to impart this knowledge to their students through both formal instruction and informal mentorship. Moreover, many mosques in Malaysia have established partnerships with formal institutions, such as universities and music schools, to provide more comprehensive and structured programs

for the study of *tarannum* (Mustari et al., 2017). These partnerships help to raise the profile of *tarannum* and ensure that it receives the recognition and support it deserves as an important cultural heritage of Islam.

However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in *tarannum* among the general public, which has led to the establishment of dedicated institutions and programs for its study. Today, there are several institutions in Malaysia that offer formal courses and training in *tarannum*, including the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), and the Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM). These institutions offer courses and programs ranging from basic to advanced levels of *tarannum* study. In addition to formal institutions, there are also many private teachers and schools that offer *tarannum* lessons and training. These teachers and schools often have their own unique approach to teaching *tarannum* and may specialize in different styles or forms of *tarannum*. Overall, the development of *tarannum* study in Malaysia reflects the growing interest in Islamic arts and culture, and the desire to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of Islam. Through the efforts of dedicated educators and enthusiasts, *tarannum* has become an important part of the cultural landscape of Malaysia and continues to inspire and enrich the lives of many people. Table 1 and Table 2 summarize some of the major studies related *tarannum* and its *qaris* in Malaysia.

Table 1: Major Studies Related to Tarannum Al-Quran in Malaysia

| <b>AUTHOR</b>                          | <b>TITLE</b>   | <b>FOCUS</b>                             | <b>AREA</b>                   |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| (Ahmad Shafiq Mat Razali et al., 2018) | <i>Sejarah Tokoh Tarannum di Malaysia</i>  | Tarannum Figures                         | Malaysia                      |
| (Hasbullah et al., 2022)               | <i>Ilmu Tarannum di Malaysia: Amalan Dan Kaedah Melagakannya</i>   | the art of Tarannum                      | Malaysia                      |
| (N. Omar, 2016)                        | <i>Perkembangan Pengajian Tarannum Al-Quran di Terengganu Pada Zaman Pra-Merdeka Sehingga Tahun 2014</i>                   | Development of Tarannum Al-Quran Studies | Terengganu                    |
| (Haris@harith, 2018)                   | <i>Pengajian Taranum Al-Quran di Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia: Kajian Aplikasi Kaedah Pengajaran Qari di Malaysia</i> | Tarannum Al-Quran Studies                | Teacher Institute             |
| (Daud et al., 2022)                    | The Privilege of Taranum Sheikh Muṣṭafā Ismā‘īl: An Analysis of The Rules of Song And Sound Techniques                     | Rules of song and sound techniques       | General                       |
| (Nasir Mohamad Salleh et al., 2020)    | Taranum Al-Quran Teaching Model Design: Analysis of Selected Teaching Models   | Teaching model design                    | Higher education institutions |
| (Anuar et al., 2021)                   | <i>Taranum al-quran berteraskan makna ayat: satu tinjauan awal ke atas uslub bacaan mujawwad syeikh mustafa ismail</i>     | <i>Uslub Tilawah</i>                     | General                       |
| (Wan Hilmi et al., 2019)               | <i>Ketokohan haji hasan musa dalam seni tarannum di malaysia dan kaedah tilawah al-quran al-lahjah al-arabiyyah</i>        | Tarannum Figures                         | Malaysia                      |
| (Mohamad Alwi et al., 2021)            | Methodology Of Dato 'Ismail Bin Hashim in Teaching Tarannum Al-Quran in Malaysia   | Tarannum Figures                         | Malaysia                      |
| (Anuar et al., 2020)                   | <i>Signifikan penganjuran majlis tilawah al-quran di malaysia terhadap perkembangan seni tarannum tanahair.</i>            | <i>Tilawah Program</i>                   | Malaysia                      |

Table 2: Major Studies Related to Qaris in Malaysia

| AUTHOR                    | TITLE   | FOCUS         | AREA               |
|---------------------------|---|---------------|--------------------|
| (Anuar et al., 2020)      | <i>Ketokohan dan Sumbangan Johan-johan Qari Tilawah al-Quran Peringkat Antarabangsa Malaysia di Malaysia dari Tahun 1961-1995</i> | Contributions | Malaysia           |
| (Fahmi & Ghani, 2021)     | <i>Peranan Qori Dan Qoriah Dalam Meningkatkan Minat Belajar Seni Baca Al Quran Masyarakat di Aceh</i>                             | Roles         | Aceh               |
| (Hilmi et al., 2021)      | <i>Faktor Penerimaan Islam dan Kesan Dakwah Qari-Qari Mesir Melalui Tilawah Al-Quran Terhadap Golongan Non-Muslim</i>             | Factors       | Egypt and Malaysia |
| (Latif et al., 2021)      | <i>A Preliminary Study of Basic Vocal Training Methods among Malaysian Young Qari</i>   | Methods       | Malaysia           |
| (N. B. Omar et al., 2019) | <i>Contributions of Qariahs to Tarannum Al-Quran in the State of Terengganu</i>   | Contributions | Terengganu         |
| (Latif et al., 2021)      | <i>Faktor-Faktor Kejayaan Qari Negeri Terengganu Dalam Kesenian Lagu Al-Quran</i>   | Factors       | Terengganu         |

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses historical methods based on a qualitative approach, where the data was gathered through an interview and from secondary sources related to the art of tarannum. An interview was conducted with the judge of the song section, Kedah Quran Recitation Ceremony to get preliminary information related to the research questions. Based on the result of the interview, the researchers then referred to the secondary books using the keywords "who" and "where" to identify and chronologically arrange the *qari* figures in Kedah.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The state of Kedah, located in the north of peninsular Malaysia is one of the earliest states to accept the advent of Islam during the 9th century (Halimi, 1990). According to history, the first king of Kedah to convert to Islam was Maharaja Derbar Raja II (Adil, 1980; Arshad, 1968; A. A. Ismail, 1965). He is said to have been converted to Islam by a Yemeni scholar named Sheikh Abdullah bin Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh Qaumiri in the year 1136 AD (513 AH). After embracing Islam his name was changed to Sultan Muzaffar Shah. His decision was later followed by all dignitaries and local peoples (Halimi, 1990). With the advent of Islam to Kedah, the Quran became the basis of Islamic law. Moreover, the application of the Quran is not just for reading but up to the extent of its artistic values, especially related to the art of *tarannum* al-Quran from a generation to the next.

Several reliable sources mentioned that the art of *tarannum* al-Quran in Kedah boomed after the opening of the Zahir Mosque in Alor Setar in 1910 AD (1331 AH). This is the starting point where the mass Quran recitation that adapts its artistic values started during the reign of His Majesty Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah ibn al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin al-Mukaram Shah with his Majesty Tuanku Mahmud ibn al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin al-Mukaram Shah as the Speaker of the Kedah State Assembly where he was very concerned and ordered the recitation of the Quran every night of Ramadan at the mosque. With the opening of Masjid Zahir, several Quran recitation competitions were held at various levels to improve the quality of Quran recitation among Muslims in the state. Among the assessment criteria during the competition are songs, voices, manners, and *makraj*, where the judgment was led by the late Sheikh Ismail bin Haji Salleh, chairman of Maj'ma Sheikh al-Islam Kedah (Ahmad, 2007; M. N. bin M. Zain, 1990).

As a result of the opening of the Zahir Mosque and the organization of the Quran Recitation Ceremony, the art of *tarannum* al-Quran indirectly appeared and gradually grew in Kedah. The field of *tarannum* al-Quran

art in Kedah was very obvious in the early 1920s. This was due to the arrival of a leading Egyptian *qari*, Sheikh Ibrahim bin Yusuf al-Ibyari (1863-1970) to this state to teach the Quran to the community. He was initially a Quran teacher at Madrasah al-Masyhur, Penang, and was later invited by the Kedah government to serve as the Chief Imam of Masjid Zahir and to be a Pelendit (beautifying) teacher of al-Quran (D. N. M. Zain, 1990). The result of his hard work has paid off as the achievements of the *qaris* and *qariahs* were so excellent that they placed Kedah as one of the first states to pioneer the field of *tarannum* al-Quran in Malaysia.

According to Tuan Haji Kasim bin Haji Ahmad who is one of the *qari* figures and the jury in the Kedah Quran Recitation Ceremony, the *qaris* during the 1920s only adapted the *Hijazi tarannum* stream, where the tone of the Quran recitation was more like the narration (sounds alike to *berzanji*) without having a specific tone, rhythm, and rhyme as the current *tarannum* songs. Religious graduates from the land of the Hijaz (Mecca and Medina) were the main reference of *tarannum* al-Quran in Kedah at that time. The arrival of Sheikh Ibrahim bin Yusuf al-Ibyari has changed the pattern of the art of *tarannum* al-Quran in Kedah. Since then, *qaris* in Kedah have started to manipulate their recitations from a strong tone to a soft melody.

Correspondently, this *tarannum* evolution has consistently produced many successful *qaris* in this state, especially between the years 1910 to 1930. Among them are (i) Tuan Haji Ku Saari from Bukit Patung, (ii) Tuan Haji Tahir from Yan, (iii) Tuan Haji Ahmad Sharif from Kuala Muda, (iv) Tuan Haji Ku Abdullah from Yan, and (v) Tuan Haji Hashim bin Musa (a father to Allahyarham Dato Haji Ismail bin Hashim) from Seberang Perak. On the other hand, the prominent *qaris* from 1930 to 1950 were (i) Tuan Haji Abdul Wahab bin Ahmad (Wahab Melayu) from Kuala Kedah, (ii) Tuan Haji Zakaria bin Arifin from Sanglang, (iii) Tuan Haji Zakaria bin Abdul Rahman from Kubang Rotan, (iv) Tuan Haji Mahmud bin Jaafar from Tokai, and (v) Tuan Haji Mahmud bin Shafie from Sanglang.

After the independence of Malaya from the British in 1957, there have emerged many well-known *qaris* in Kedah such as (i) Tuan Haji Abdul Hamid bin Desa from Tandop, (ii) Tuan Haji Abdul Rahman bin Arshad from Tandop, and (iii) Ismail bin Yaakob from Baling. Later, the years between 1960 to 1990 are considered as the golden age of *tarannum* in Kedah, with the emergence of several figures who were locally and internationally well-known, for example, (i) Dato' Haji Ismail bin Haji Hashim, (ii) Tuan Haji Abdul Hak @ Abdul Ghani bin Abdullah, (iii) Tuan Haji Kasim bin Haji Ahmad, (iv) Tuan Haji Jaafar bin Abdullah, (v) Tuan Haji Kamaluddin bin Saad, and (vi) Tuan Haji Abdullah Sirajuddin bin Ahmad. Finally, from the 1990s to the present, several popular *qaris* in Kedah are still active in practicing and promoting *tarannum* like (i) Tuan Haji Othman Azumi bin Ahmad, (ii) Tuan Haji Hashim bin Abd Ghani, (iii) Tuan Haji Abd Samad bin Abd Wahab, (iv) Tuan Haji Hashim bin Said, (v) Ustaz Abd Razak bin Hassan, (vi) Ustaz Mohd Termizi bin Mustafa, and (vii) Ustaz Alauddin bin Abdul Hak.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In this article, it has been identified that the involvement of *qaris* in Kedah in the field of *tarannum* al-Quran art began as early as the arrival of Islam in the region. Following the wide application of the Holy Quran in the state's administration and the implementation of Islamic law, the art of *tarannum* was also rapidly evolved. The palace became the center of the spread of the Quran, including its artistic and cultural elements such as *tarannum* art. Furthermore, this article also discovered some famous royal reciters or *qaris* who trigger the *tarannum* evolution such as Allahyaryam Tuan Haji Muhammad Ribat who is popular for his soft voice. As previously discussed, the comprehensive involvement of *qaris* in Kedah can be seen in the 1920s, in conjunction with the opening of the Zahir Mosque as well as the organization of the Quran Recitation Ceremony by the Kedah government. This factor was the main catalyst that boosts the development of *tarannum* al-Quran in the state where the *qaris* demonstrated several types of songs under the reading atmosphere at the time. To sum up, it is hoped that this review will be beneficial to those who are interested in *tarannum* history, for the sake of preserving this valuable Islamic art. Besides, this article should be a stepping-stone for future researchers to conduct more studies related to *tarannum*.

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