

The Contribution of Dato' Ismail Bin Hashim in the Field of Qur'anic Tarannum in Malaysia

Mohamad Alwi Bin Ab Rahman*, Nazri Bin Amil, Wan Mohd Ali Imran Bin Othman, Sumaiyah Binti Ramli, Hajar Binti Ahmad Bustaman

Sultan Abdul Halim Mua'dzam Shah International Islamic University, Kedah, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author Email: alwi@unishams.edu.my

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Abstract

This study explores the contributions of the renowned Malaysian figure in Qur'anic tarannum, the late Dato' Ismail bin Hashim, who left a profound legacy in Qur'anic recitation and pedagogy. The objectives of this study are to (i) explicate the concept of Qur'anic tarannum, (ii) examine the biography of Dato' Ismail bin Hashim, (iii) analyse his teaching methodology, and (iv) evaluate his contribution to the development of Qur'anic tarannum in Malaysia. The study adopts a qualitative approach, utilising both library research and fieldwork, including semi-structured interviews with his students and contemporaries. The findings demonstrate that Dato' Ismail bin Hashim employed a practical, theory-integrated pedagogy, focusing on breath control, voice training, exposure to Arab qari recitations, and the creative adaptation of Arabic melodic modes. His approach successfully produced generations of accomplished qari and qariah who represented Malaysia in national and international arenas. The study concludes that his contributions have significantly shaped the trajectory of Qur'anic tarannum in Malaysia, establishing him as a central figure whose influence endures in contemporary Qur'anic education.

Keywords: Qur'anic Tarannum, Dato' Ismail Bin Hashim, Pedagogy, Qur'anic Recitation, Malaysia

Introduction

Qur'anic recitation holds a prominent place in the spiritual and cultural identity of Muslims worldwide. Malaysia, in particular, has gained international recognition for its strong tradition of Qur'anic recitation, especially since the inauguration of the International Qur'an Recital Assembly in 1961 (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia [JAKIM], 2008). This event not only elevated Malaysia's status among Muslim countries but also realised the vision of the nation's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, to promote Malaysia as a model for the Islamic world (Anuar, 2018).

The prominence of Malaysian qari and qariah in international competitions has highlighted the effectiveness of local pedagogical practices in tarannum al-Quran (Qur'anic melodic art). Among the celebrated figures, Dato' Ismail bin Hashim stands out as an icon whose contributions extended beyond personal achievements in competitions to encompass teaching, mentoring, and shaping a new generation of Qur'anic reciters.

This article focuses on his life, teaching methodology, and influence, situating his role within the broader context of Qur'anic tarannum in Malaysia. It seeks to analyse how his pedagogical approach bridged theory and practice, and how his legacy continues to influence Qur'anic education.

Literature Review

Studies on Qur'anic tarannum in Malaysia have primarily emphasised the historical development and the role of key figures. Anuar and Zulkifli (2014) traced the evolution of tarannum in Malaysia, noting its deep connections with Arab traditions and its localisation within the Malaysian context. Najmiah (2017) examined the contributions of Hajjah Rogayah Sulong, highlighting the importance of female figures in sustaining Qur'anic pedagogy. Similarly, Anuar (2018) analysed the life and teaching approach of Ustaz Che Yahaya Daud.

Razali (2018) argued that Malaysian tarannum figures are not merely performers but educators and da'i (preachers) who embedded Qur'anic melodies into broader Islamic pedagogy. Wan Hilmi (2014) identified the influence of Egyptian qari on Malaysian reciters, particularly in stylistic nuances. However, academic studies on Dato' Ismail bin Hashim remain scarce, with most existing works consisting of biographical notes, media coverage, or anecdotal reflections.

This study fills that gap by offering an in-depth analysis of his teaching methodology and examining how his contributions shaped the field of Qur'anic tarannum nationally and internationally.

Biography of Dato' Ismail Bin Hashim

Dato' Ismail bin Hashim was born on 4 December 1935 in Seberang Perak, Alor Setar, Kedah. He was the third of nine siblings in a family that valued Qur'anic learning and vocal artistry. His talent for tarannum emerged at the age of 10, nurtured within the environment of traditional Qur'anic recitation.

He received his primary education at Kedawang Malay School, Langkawi, later moving to Ayer Hitam Malay School, before pursuing secondary education at Maktab Mahmud, Alor Setar. Despite modest academic performance, his devotion to the Qur'an was exceptional.

His competitive journey began with the Tilawah al-Quran Semalaya in 1956, where he was crowned champion. He went on to win the national championship nine times and the international title seven times (Arkib Negara Malaysia, 2019). He also became the first Malay qari to recite on radio and television broadcasts in Egypt and Sudan, showcasing Malaysian talent to the Muslim world.

His teachers included his father, Mohd Hashim Musa, and Sheikh Ibrahim al-Ibyari, an Egyptian scholar residing in Kedah. Under their tutelage, he mastered various tarannum melodies, blending traditional Arab influences with his own creativity.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design. Data were gathered from two primary sources: (1) library research, including archival materials, official documents, and recordings of recitations; and (2) fieldwork through semi-structured interviews with his students, colleagues, and contemporary Qur'anic scholars.

Triangulation was applied to validate findings, while thematic analysis was used to interpret data, focusing on his teaching methodology and its implications for Qur'anic pedagogy.

Teaching Methodology of Qur'anic Tarannum

Overcoming Nervousness

Dato' Ismail taught practical techniques to manage stage anxiety, including reciting selawat (praises upon the Prophet), pressing the chest, and massaging the ears before recitation (Ilias, 2019). Controlled breathing exercises were also emphasised.

Emphasis on Arabic Melodies and Creativity

He encouraged his students to closely emulate Arab melodies, particularly the Egyptian burdah closely, while also allowing adaptation from other cultural tunes, such as Hindustani and Japanese, when appropriate (Kassim, 2019).

Talaqqi and Musyafahah (Oral Transmission)

Central to his pedagogy were the traditional practices of talaqqi (direct learning from a teacher) and musyafahah (oral imitation), in which students listened, repeated, and received immediate corrections (Baharom, 2019).

Repetition and Mastery

He stressed repetition as a means of mastery, urging students to practice both in class and independently until proficiency was achieved (Ilias, 2019).

Sincerity and Spiritual Intention

He highlighted the importance of sincerity, discouraging the commercialisation of Qur'anic recitation and reminding students to recite solely for Allah's sake (Ismail, 2019).

Vocal Health and Maintenance

Dato' Ismail taught techniques for vocal preservation, including avoiding iced drinks, maintaining sufficient rest, bathing in water for vocal relaxation, and using natural oils before recitation (Ilias, 2019).

Breathing Control Techniques

His innovative methods included underwater breath training, walking while holding breath, and drinking water in a single breath to expand lung capacity (Baharom, 2019).

Reference to Prominent Qari

He advised students to listen to renowned Egyptian qaris such as Mustafa Ismail and Abdul Basit, while developing an authentic style unique to themselves (Ismail, 2019).

Analysis of Contributions

Individual Development

Through his methods, he produced generations of qari and qariah who excelled in competitions and became respected educators in their own right.

Pedagogical Influence

His integration of theory and practice became a model of tarannum pedagogy in Malaysia, passed down through his students who continue to replicate and refine his methodology.

National and International Recognition

His multiple championships and invitations to recite abroad not only elevated his personal reputation but also positioned Malaysia as a centre of excellence in Qur'anic tarannum.

Conclusion

Dato' Ismail bin Hashim's role in shaping Qur'anic tarannum in Malaysia is indisputable. He was not only a celebrated qari but also an influential teacher whose methodology combined spirituality, vocal science, and cultural adaptability. His approach nurtured generations of Qur'anic reciters who continue to uphold Malaysia's global reputation in Qur'anic arts.

This study demonstrates that his legacy is enduring, both through the achievements of his students and the continued relevance of his pedagogical techniques in contemporary Qur'anic education. He remains a central figure whose life and contributions merit further scholarly attention, especially in comparative studies of global Qur'anic tarannum traditions.

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