EXAMINING CONTRIBUTION OF SHAYKH MUHAMMAD SALIM MUHAYSIN IN SCIENCE OF QIRA’AT

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses about Shaykh Muhammad Salim Muhaysin as one of the intellectuals of sciences of Qira’at in the 20th century. The focal objectives of this research is to introduce him as one of the prominent scholars of science of Qira’at that had an involvement especially in the sciences of Qira’at Qur’aniyyah. The exposure of this scholar is significant due to the fact that none of the writing has comprehensively introduced him to the public. It is a textual analysis and field work study based research. This study concludes that Shaykh Muhaysin is one of the productive and outstanding scholars of science of Qira’at that had a great contribution to this area of specialization and others via the route of teaching, writing and spreading the knowledge.

Keywords: Muhammad Salim Muhaysin, Scholars of science of Qira’at, 20th century, Productive and outstanding scholars, Qira’at

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite ever changing times, the rise of prominent Qira’at scholars and figures have always contributed to the expansion and development of this discipline. Big names such as Imam Abu A’mru al-Dani (D. 444H), al-Shatibi (D. 590H) and Ibn al-Jazari (D. 833H) have contributed greatly towards the continuity of the science of Qira’at through their invaluable scholarly efforts. All their efforts and contributions serve as a motivating factor for the new generations in order to develop and establish the science of Qira’at. The present study aims to introduce one of the most prominent, productive figures of Qira’at in the 20th century. He is al-Marhum Shaykh Muhammad Salim Muhaysin (1929M-2001M), a Qira’at scholar who was very productive and had in fact, penned one hundred and four books in various fields of Islamic knowledge.

1.1 Family Background

Shaykh Muhaysin’s full name is Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Salim bin Muhaysin. He was born on the 11th of February 1929 in a village known as Qaryah Rawdah in the district of Faqus, Zaqaziq in a country known as Sharqiyyah; a country that is situated on the north of Arab Republic of Egypt. The distance between his birth town and Cairo was estimated to be more than 100km (Salim Muhaysin 1978).

Through his family’s arrangement, Shaykh Muhaysin married a girl called Mahasin. His wife constantly gave him full encouragement and support in whatever that he was doing (Muhammad Ibrahim 2006). They storge hard with the hope that their children would grow up to be good individuals better than they themselves (Yasir Muhammad 2006).
Shaykh Muhaysin and his family moved and finally settled in Hada’iq al-Qubbah, Cairo. His village house was donated to Kulliyyah al-Dirasat al-Islamiyyah in Daydamum, Sharqiyyah so that various religious program and events such as wedding ceremonies could be held in it (Muhammad Fauzi 2006).

When he reached the age of 70 and his contract with the Islamic University of Madinah was coming to an end, Shaykh Muhaysin decided to go back to Egypt. In the last two years of his life, he managed to write 16 books that were all penned in his village, Rawdah (Muhammad Fauzi 2006). In these two years, he did not once go back to Cairo because he wished to give his full concentration on his books. Only during the last 6 months, he finally went back to Cairo and during this time, he was suffering from heart condition. Despite his illness, he refused to be hospitalized albeit persuasions from his children (Muhammad Fauzi 2006). He finally relented in the last 2 weeks of his life, when he was hit with a stroke.

In the year 2001, at the age of 72, after years of dedication and contribution to the field of Qira’at, he finally breathed his last at the dawn of 5th May. He was buried in his village, Qaryah Rawdah-al-Hajir, as requested in his will (Muhammad Ibrahim 2006).

1.2 Personal Characteristics of Shaykh Muhaysin

An individual who is noble and possesses high moral standards will always be a source of inspiration and admiration to others. On top of his numerous intellectual contributions, Shaykh Muhaysin was also a virtuous man of exemplary character. He loved to donate to charity. For example, he had endowed his own house in the village for religious purposes, donated 50 000 Egyptian pound an other amounts of money to renovate his old school as well as to enlarge the compounds of Masjid al Hajr. According to Mdm. Wahibah, wife of Muhammad Fawzi Ibrahim (Shaykh Muhaysin’s cousin), he was a diligent writer and reader. He was often seen wearing clothes that were similar to those worn by the scholars of al-Azhar. He would quickly and directly correct any mistake related to religious issues, and would only speak when it was beneficial (Muhaysin Muhammad 2006).

According to one of his disciples, Prof. Dr. Ahmad Khalid Yusuf Shukri, Shaykh Muhaysin was very knowledgeable and learned in the field of sciences of Qira’at and he used to actively write books. The Shaykh loved to help his students regardless whether it was personal and welfare matters or academic –related issues (Ahmad Khalid Syukri 2006).

1.3 Madhhab (School of thought)

In regard to Fiqh-related issues, Shaykh Muhaysin adopted the madhab of Syafie, while in matters of Aqidah, he endorsed the views of Ahl Sunnah wa al-Jama ah. However apart from these two, he was known to strongly adhere to the practices of one particular tariqat, known as Tariqat al-Tijani in Morocco. One their beliefs is to not interfere in any political affairs and to not be concerned about it (Muhammad Salim Muhaysin N.D., ‘Abd al-Mun’im al-Hafni 1993). It was because of his adherence to this tariqat, that he was almost removed from his teaching position in the Islamic University of Madinah.

1.4 Educational Journey

Shaykh Muhaysin’s educational or learning journey began in Ma’had al-Hajir which was less than a kilometre away from his house (Salim Muhaysin 1978). He then enrolled into a tahfiz class that was taught in a village called Qaryah Bani Salih (Salim Muhaysin 1978). His first tahfiz was Shaykh Muhammad al- Sayyid ʿAzzab and he was the one responsible for helping Shaykh Muhaysin to become a competent Haфиз or memorizer of the Quran (Muhammad Fauzi 2006). Once his memorization was steady, Shaykh Muhaysin then started learning the science of Tajwid more seriously and in-depth from Shaykh Muhammad Mahmud in Qaryah Awlad Sarrar which was not very far from his village. His second Tajwid teacher was Shaykh Mahmud Bakr.

Shaykh Muhaysin’s higher educational journey began in the year 1945 after he succeeded in entering Ma’had Qira’at al-Azhar, Cairo in its very year of establishment (1945) (Salim Muhaysin 1978). He studied the science of Qira’at in detail from Shaykh ʿAmir al-Sayyid ʿUthman for 7 years (starting from 1946 till 1953) (Salim Muhaysin 2003). Due to his wonderful ability and prowess, Shaykh Muhaysin was finally awarded a special sanad of Qira’at by his teacher Shaykh ʿAmir and he was given permission teach and develop this
knowledge from then on. Meanwhile his teacher for the sciences of Rasm and the science of Dabt al-Quran was Shaykh Ahmad Muhammad Abu Zit Har, shaykh Ma’had Qira’at al-Azhar.

After years of hardwork for the sake of gaining knowledge, in 1948, Shaykh Muhaysin finally received his Shahadah al-‘Aliyah (for the level of Qira’at Sab’ah). He then continued his education further in the field of Takhassus Qira’at (for the level of Qira’at ‘Asharah) in the year 1953 and succeeded in receiving Shahadah Takhassus Qira’at and ‘Ulm al-Quran by obtaining second place in his examinations.

Later on, despite being busy with his teaching activities, Shaykh Muhaysin was still very enthusiastic about furthering his education. Thus, while he was still teaching in Ma’had Gazza, Palestine (1964-1967), he also continued his studies under Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language in al-Azhar University and went on to receive his first degree in the year 1967 (Salim Muhaysin 2003). In the coming years when he was teaching in the Islamic University in Um al-Darman (1970-1973) and in the Faculty of al-Adab in the University of al-Khartoum, Sudan, Shaykh Muhaysin took the opportunity to do his Master’s degree under the Faculty of al-Adab, Cairo University (Khartoum branch). He then furthered his education to the level of Doctorate in the same university (Muhammad Ibrahim 2006) which he excelled and obtained his certificate in the year 1976.

Shaykh Muhaysin had studied and learnt from many prominent and competent teachers. His earnestness and sincere effort in gaining knowledge did not stop in the field of Quran, in fact it extended to other fields of Islamic Studies such as Fiqh, Tawhid, Tafsir etc.


1.5 Praise and Recognition of Scholars

A slave of Allah who leaves behind good deeds and contributions because of his sincerity to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT would surely be a target a accolades and praises, and would be remembered across time. This definitely described Shaykh Muhaysin, who was greatly praised and commended by many scholars, such as:

1. According to Shaykh Ahmad ‘Abd al-Rahim, Shaykh Muhaysin was a very hardworking student who did not talk much (Ahmad ‘Abd al-Rahim 2006).

2. Among the praises given to the works of Shaykh Muhaysin as mentioned by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Qadi ; “Shaykh Muhaysin had penned numerous beneficial, valuable and interesting books” (Salim Muhaysin 1980). One of the comments about his book “Al-Muhadhdhab” was: “I found that what was written (referring to the book) by Shaykh Muhaysin is amongst the best in that field” (Salim Muhaysin 1976).

3. Shaykh Rizq Khalil Habbuh said: “If he (Shaykh Muhaysin) was not my friend, definitely I would have said that book (referring to al-Muhadhdhab) is the easiest and most beneficial book for anyone who wants to master the sciences of Qira’at (Salim Muhaysin 2006).

4. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowment, after the publication of the book “Al-Mujtaba fi Takhrij Qira’ah Abi ‘Amr al-Duri”, praised it by saying that “it was a first great effort of its kind in the field regardless whether in the form of a manuscript or otherwise…” (Salim Muhaysin 2003).

Although generally the praises and accolades received were more directed towards his writings, however this is sufficient to prove that its writer was a great, through, pious Shaykh who loved knowledge and had a strong will to establish and develop the science of Qira’at. Verily, he had contributed a lot to the field of Qira’at and was known as a person who often did things with utmost sincerity.

It was also imperative to highlight here how an individual who has contributed so much to religion and society with dedication and commitment finally received glory and good blessing from His Creator.
According to his son Usamah, while his father was about to take his about termination letter from the Islamic University of Madinah, the director of the university at the time suddenly offered to renew his work contact. In this astonishment, Shaykh Muhaysin enquired the reason behind the offer, and was told by the director that last night he had dreamt about meeting the Prophet PBUH. In the dream, the Prophet PBUH said: Muhaysin is my ‘beloved’ and ‘son’, and he would never ever leave me! (Usamah Muhaysin 2006).

Yasir narrated that he was once with his father visiting al-Imam al-Husayn Mosque in Cairo and suddenly smelt a very fragrant scent. Yasir then asked his father where did the scent came from? Shaykh Muhaysin answered that it was the fragrant scent of the Prophet PBUH! (Yasir Muhammad 2006).

Shaykh Muhaysin once said “ Verily I have taught the science of Qira’at and Tajwid to the children of Muslims for more than 30 years and Iam very thankful to Allah Taala” (Salim Muhaysin 2002). Thus considering that lengthy period time, it is not surprising that he had produced generations of disciples or proteges who inherited the science of Qira’at al-Quran from him. The following are some of Shaykh Muhaysin’s disciples; Prof. Dr. Ahmad Khalid Yusuf Syukri, a lecturer in the Department of Usuluddin, faculty of Syariah, Yarmuk University, Jordan (Qism Dirasat al-Quran and al-Sunnah 2005). He became Shaykh Muhaysin’s disciple while studying in the Islamic University (Ahmad Khalid Shukri 2005). Shaykh ‘Abd. Al-Haq ‘Abd. Al-Daim Sayf al-Qadi, editor of the book ‘Jamal al-Qurra’ wa Kamal al-Iqra’. The editing was his effort to obtain a doctoral degree under the supervision of Shaykh Muhaysin (Al-Sakhawi 1999), Khairul Anuar Mohamad, lecturer in the Faculty of Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah, Islamic Science University of Malaysia and Rudaini Harun, a religious teacher at Maahad Tahfiz al-Quran Negeri Terengganu, Terengganu.

2. Contributions Of Shaykh Muhaysin In The Science Of Qira’at

Shaykh Muhaysin had contributed a lot to the field of Qira’at specially and to the other fields of Islamic Knowledge generally. He often prayed to Allah to give him guidance and strength to serve the field of knowledge and Quran (Salim Muhaysin 1992)

2.1 He Views and Thoughts in Sciences of Qira’at

In brief, the following are some of his thoughts:

1. Al-Quran and Al-Qira’at are two things with the same meanings. The evidences:
   
i). The definitions of al-Quran and al-Qira’at carry the same meaning, which is wahyu (revelation).
   
ii). There are numerous hadith sahih that point to this similarity in meaning, among these are: “,, Jibril said to the Prophet PBUH, verily Allah has ordained you to recite the Quran to your ummah with seven ahruf, thus regardless of any harf they recite, verily they are right” (Al-Qushairi 1987).
   
iii). The root word of the ‘al-Quran’ is: ‘al-Qira’ah’, while the word al-Qira’at is the plural form of: ‘Qira’ah’. Therefore, in his opinion, al-Quran and al-Qira’at are the two same things because they both are revelation (from God) (Salim Muhaysin 1988).

This opinion actually rejected the view of Imam al-Zarkashi who stated that al-Quran and al-Qira’at are two different things, based on the argument that the Quran is a revelation sent to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH as an explanation and mukjizat (miracle), whereas Qira’at is the dispute on the wordings of the revelation as evident in its ahruf and way of reading, such as whether it is recited as takhffif, tashdid and others (Al-Zarkasyi 1988). The author believes that there are points of similarities and differences between Quran and Qira’at. The similarity lies in the fact that both are revelation from Allah SWT, while the difference is that Qira’at, with its various styles of recitations are not found in all the wordings of the Quran at one particular time, in fact, it is found on certain wordings only.

1 The dispute in explaining the meaning Ahraf Sab’ah: Shaykh Muhaysin strongly preferred (Salim Muhaysin 1988) the opinion that was narrated by Saidina ‘Ali and Ibn ‘Abbas RA which stated that the meaning of Ahraf Sab’ah in many hadith sahih is the revelation of Qira’at according to the dialect of each Arab ethnicity (Salim Muhaysin 1988).
Definition of Qira’at: According to Shaykh Muhaysin, the science of Qira’at is: “A science/ knowledge that details the practicalities of the wordings according to the different ahruf as attributed to its narrators (Salim Muhaysin 1978).

2.2 Contributions to the Academia and Society

The academic contributions of Shaykh Muhaysin are not limited to the land of Egypt. The following highlights the timeline of his academic contributions (Usamah Muhaysin 2006, Salim Muhaysin 1992). As soon as he obtained his degree in Takhassus Qira’at in the year 1952, he was appointed by al-Azhar as a lecturer/ educator for Ma’had Qira’at al-Azhar, Cairo branch. He then taught in Ma’had al- Dini in Wadi Madani, Sudan from the year 1954 to 1956. In the year 1956, he returned Egypt and resumed back his duty in Ma’had Qira’at al-Azhar. At the same time, he was also appointed as one of the consultants for the Quran revision committee, which was under the supervision of al-Azhar University and was chaired by his own teacher, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Qadi. From 1960 to 1964, he was a visiting lecturer in Ma’had Ghazzah, Palestine.

After finishing his contract with Ma’had Ghazzah, he went back to Egypt to teach once again in Ma’had Qira’at al-Azhar. Not long after that, he was appointed as one of the supervisory committees for Quranic Recording, under the Egypt Broadcasting Unit in 1965. He then taught in the Islamic University of Umm Darman, Sudan starting from the year 1970 till 1973, and in al-Khartum University from 1973 to 1976. While he was in Sudan, he often appeared in programs that discussed about religious issues. Beginning from year 1976, he was appointed as a lecturer for the Islamic University of Madinah and his contract extended for 13 years. He had supervised and checked more than 100 Masters theses and Doctoral dissertations (Khairul Anwar Mohamad 2007).

The following are some of his writings in Science of Qira’at:


2. Al-Irshadat al-Jaliyyah fi al-Qira’at al-Sab’ min Tariq al-Shatibiyyah, 3 volumes. Published by Al-Azhar Al-Sharif University, Ma’hads of Al-Azhar Unit, Matabi’ Dar al-Sha’b, Cairo (N.D.) and Dar Muhaysin, Cairo (2003/1423H).


4. Al-Tadhkirah fi al-Qira’at al-Thalath wa Tawjihiha min Tariq al-Durrah, 2 volumes. Maktabah Kaherah, Cairo (1978/1298H) and Dar Muhaysin.Cairo.

5. Al-Tabsirah ‘an ma Zadat al-Tayyibah ‘ala al-Shatibiyyah wa al-Durrah. Dar Muhaysin, Cairo (2003/1423H)


Among the many Qira’at books of Shaykh Muhaysin used by local and foreign institutes of higher education are “Al-Muhadhdhab fi al-Qira’at al-‘Ashr wa Tawjihiha min Tariq Tayyibah al-Nashr” and “Al-Irsyadat al-Jaliyyah fi al-Qira’at al-Sab’ ma’ Tawjih al-Qira’at”. Meanwhile some of his other books once used by these institutes include:


20 Al-Mukhtar, Sharh al-Mutawatirah fi al-Qira’at al-‘Ashr wa Tawjihihma min Tariq al-Shatibiyyah al-Nashr, 2 volumes. Published by Al-Azhar Al-Sharif University, Ma’hads of Al-Azhar Unit, Matabi’ Dar Muhaysin, Cairo (2003/1423H).


A majority of Shaykh Muhaysin’s books in the field of Qira’at found in the libraries of both public and private Institutes of Higher Education such as UKM, UM, USIM, UIAM, KUIS and others.

2.3 His Books

Among the many Qira’at books of Shaykh Muhaysin used by local and foreign institutes of higher education are “Al-Muhadhdhab fi al-Qira’at al-‘Asir wa Tawjihihma min Tariq Tayyibah al-Nashr” and “Al-Irsyadat al-Jaliyyah fi al-Qira’at al-Sab’ min Tariq al-Shatiniyyah”. Meanwhile some of his other books once used by these

Among the foreign institutes that have used and are still currently using the books of Shaykh Muhaysin as either a primary source of reference or as one of the basic sources in learning the ten and seven types Qira’at on both Bachelors and Masters levels is, the Faculty of al-Quran al-Karim, al-Azhar University, Tanta branch. It has made books such as Al-Muhadhdhab and Al-Irshadat al-Jaliyyah a primary reference for its Qira’at Studies (Jami’ah al-Azhar al-Syarif 1993). Ma’had Qira’at al-Azhar, in all of its branches over the entire country, has also used these two books as primary source of reference for their postgraduate and specialization studies (Al-Idarah al-’Ammah li al-Ma’ahid al-Azhariyyah 1991). Meanwhile the Department of Arabic Language, under the Faculty of Adab, University of Khartum in Sudan has made the book “Al-Mustanir” as one of the major sources of reference for Master and degree students (Salim Muhaysin 1989).

Additionally, the University of al-Imam Muhammad binSa’ud al-Islamiyyah in Saudi Arabia has used the book “Al-Fath al-Rabbani fi ‘Alaqah al-Qira’at bi al-Rasm al-‘Uthmani” as one of its primary references in teaching the Science of Rasm ‘Uthmani, whereas the Islamic University of Madinah has also made “Fi Rihab al-Qira’at” as one of its references in its Qira’at Studies (Salim Muhaysin 2003). Besides that, the Sudanese government also made the books “Risalah al-Bahiyyyah” and “Al-Mujtaba” as a sources of reference for the general public in order for them to understand and learn more about the Qira’at of Abu ‘Amru (Salim Muhaysin 2003).

In Malaysia, the book “Al-Irshadat al-Jaliyyah” is often the primary choice of reference for degree students in the field of Qira’at Studies in several public institutes of higher education. For example, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), through its ‘Introduction to Qira’at and Hafazan’ course, which is made obligatory for students under the Faculty of Islamic Studies, and ‘Qira’at Studies’ course, which is compulsory for those under the Department of al-Quran and al-Sunnah, has made that book as one of its basic sources of references (UKM 2006). Another example, Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) also used “Al-Irshadat al-Jaliyyah” as one of its basic references at the Bachelors level for two course; ‘Introduction to Qira’at and Hafazan’, which is a core course for the Faculty of al-Quran and al-Sunnah (KUIS 2006).

II. CONCLUSION

Shaykh Muhaysin was an invaluable figure who had spent much of his time providing his service and knowledge. When he passed away, he left behind a legacy and a treasure of knowledge extremely beneficial for the use of the new generations. His contributions in the form of writings are not only limited to the science of Qira’at per se, but in fact covered a wide variety of other sciences such as Arabic language, Tauhid, Fiqh and others. His enthusiasm and dedication are evident in the 104 books he had penned in various fields of knowledge. In regard to teaching, he had taught in many institutions and universities in Egypt, Sudan, Palestine and Saudi Arabia.

Several of his works were made and used as a primary source of reference in learning especially in the field of Qira’at. It can be said that his works were valuable to many students seeking that knowledge.

He was also an invidual with an active mind and often gave his ideas and views about issues related to the science of Qira’at. Although there are pros and contras in his views, it did not affect his credibility as prominent Qira’at figure.

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