



A Survey of the Contributions of Shaykh Hassan Ali Sulaiman Al-Misry to the Spread of Tajwid and Qur'anic Memorization in Sokoto

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Abstract

Narrating a biography of a notable and outstanding individual is one of the ways through which activities of individuals is geared towards copying and implementing his life style. The paper discussed the life and intellectual contributions of *Shaykh* Hassan Ali Sulaiman a renowned Qur'anic scholar, who hailed from Egypt. His contributions to the Qur'anic memorization and *Tajwid* in Sokoto have been exhaustively addressed, like wise his literary contributions, the paper aims at bringing to the light the painstaking works of the scholar under discussion with a view to spread his knowledge for betterment of Muslims in Sokoto. The analytical method and interview were used in conducting the research.

Keywords: Hassan Ali Sulaiman, Survey, Qur'an, Qur'anic memorization, Tajwid

INTRODUCTION

Sokoto state is one of the thirty-seven states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is, geographically, located at the north western region of the country. It shares boarders with Zamfara, Kebbi, Katsina states and some parts of Niger Republic. The state is mostly occupied by Hausa Fulani tribes, and ninety nine percent of the people in the area are Muslims. Thus, Sokoto was the headquarters of the Caliphate established by the 18th century *Jihad* Leaders under the leadership of *Shaykh* Uthman bn Foduye (May Allah have mercy on him) and his lieutenants, after series of wars between the jihadists and the rulers of the Hausa kingdoms.

The *Shaykh* and his lieutenants spent their time not only on *Jihad* and preaching to the people, but also on promoting the Islamic literary activities. They, therefore, devoted their time in writing books on different fields of Islamic knowledge. Among the fields they wrote were the science of *al-Tajwid* and other *Qur'anic* sciences. Malam Abd'Allah as one of the lieutenants of the *Shaykh* as well as his younger brother, wrote many books such as *Fara'id al-Jalilah*" and "*Miftah al-Tafsir* among others. In *Fara'id* for instance, Abd'Allah discussed extensively on the rules of *Al-Tajwid*. While in *Miftah*, *Shaykh* Abd'Allah discussed on the differences of *Qira'at* as well as the rules of *Qur'anic* exegesis. These among others could be seen as the earliest contributions given on *tahfiz* and *Tajwid* rendered by the *Jihad* leaders.

The fall of the Sokoto Caliphate marked the decline of the science of *Tajwid* and its application to the lowest level. As a result of this degeneration, some Muslims in the area thought that the application of *Tajwid* in *Qur'anic* recitation is an innovation or something contrary to the religious teachings. While aware of this negative trend, some scholars gave their contributions towards the revival of the science of *tajwid* and *Tahfiz* as well as its application. However, the nature of their contributions differs. Some of them contributed by preaching on the need for application of *Tajwid* in our daily recitations, advocating that application of *Tajwid* in our recitations is not a *bid'ah* (innovation), but a *Sunnah* of the noble Prophet (SAW). Such scholars are *Shaykh* Abubakar JIbril, *Shaykh* Mode Abubakar, *Shaykh* Aliyu Gidan Kanawa, *Shaykh* Isa Talatar Mafara. The contributions of other scholars were done through direct teaching of the science of *Al-*

Tajwid and its application to various students from within and outside the state. Other contributions can be seen in training many students, more especially the youth, on how to memorize the Glorious Qur'an. Taking this into consideration, this paper examines the contributions of *Shaykh* Muhammad Hassan Ali Sulaiman (*Al-Misry*) in spreading the science of *Tajwid* and Qur'an memorization in Sokoto metropolis.

Definition of Al-Qur'an:

The word Qur'an is derived from the Arabic root *Qara'a* which means read; to study, to teach the art of reciting; to teach how to read; to recite; to investigate; to examine, to search; and to study^[1]. But Technically, it is the speech of Allah sent down upon the last and final Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) through Angel Jibril (A.S) in its precise meaning and precise wording, transmitted to us by numerous persons (*Tawatur*) both verbally and in writing^[2]

Al-Zarqani stated that:

It is an expression revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from the beginning of surah al-Fatiha to the end of surat al-Nass.^[3]

According to Al-Qattan,

Qur'an is the word of Allah revealed to Muhammad (SAW) which its recitation is worship.^[4]

Al-Sa'dy defined Qur'an as:

The book that was revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through the tongue of Angel Jibril.^[5]

It is very clear from the context of this definition that both the verbal and written form of the Glorious Quran is divine. It is therefore compulsory upon the Muslim *Ummah* to recite the Glorious Qur'an as it was revealed, and here the question of *Tajwid* arose.

Definition of *Ilm-al-Tajwid*:

There are different opinions regarding the definition of *Ilm-al-Tajwid*. Some scholars defined *Tajwid* based on its concept while other scholars differentiate the practical aspect from the theoretical in their definitions. According to Debs, the word *Tajwid* means proficiency, or doing something well." It is derived from the Arabic word "*jayyid*" which means good, while technically, is a science which explains how to articulate every letter from its point of articulation as well as applying its rules.^[6]

According to Tahir, "*Tajwid* is simply a subject that deals with the rules and regulations governing the pronunciation of the letters and words of the Glorious Qur'an."^[7]

Al-Khusary classified the definition of *Tajwid* into two; Theoretical aspect and practical aspect. He defines the theoretical aspect as "the knowledge of principles and rules designed by the *Tajwid* scholars, put into writing by the *Qurra'a*, such as *makharij al-Huruf* (points of articulation), *sifat-al-huruf* (letters Attributes) e.t.c., while the practical aspect is the application of the rules and good pronunciation of the Qur'anic words and this can be done through giving each and every Qur'anic letter its rights and dues"^[8]

¹. Abubakar, Kasim, *Memorization of the Glorious Qur'an a guidance for beginners*, Sifawa Press, Sokoto, Nigeria, 2008,page1

². Ibid. page.2

³. M.A al-Zarqani, *Manahil al-Irfan fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, Maktabat al-Madinah, (ND) vol. I, page 20

⁴. M. al-Qattan, *Mabahith fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, Maktabat al-Ma'rif, 200. C.E vol. page, 15

⁵. M.A Al-Sa'dy, *Ikhtisas al-Qur'an*, Maktabat al-Rushd, Riyad, Saudi Arabia, 1989 C.E page. 32

⁶. Abdul-wahab Debs, *Questions and Answers on Tajweed*, Dar al-Salam, Cairo, Egypt.2005, page.17

⁷. H.I.Tahir, *Tajwid principle of Qur'anic recitation, Bab-Es-salam Home*, Lagos Nigeria,2006,page.1

⁸. M.K.Al-Khusary, *Ahkamul-Qirat al-Qur'an*, Dar-Ibn al-Haitham, Al-Qahirah, Egypt,2009,page,60-61

⁹. Al-Baihaqy, vol.10. page.229

¹⁰. Garba Abdullahi op.cit, page.53

¹¹. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Darul -Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, volume II, page 954.

Tahfiz and Tajwid during the Life Time of the Prophet (SAW) and his Companions (RA):

Qur'an as a Book of Allah which was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was given much emphasis in making it preserved. One of the famous ways followed in preserving the Glorious Qur'an was putting it in to memory. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) laid down numerous methods that can simplify the memorization of the Glorious Qur'an. The most famous ones used by the messenger of Allah were boosting the morale and encouragement of the Muslim *Ummah*. He mentioned the virtues of Qur'anic memorization and its memorizers, the rewards of Qur'anic memorization and its memorizers. Sometimes he used to consider the portions of the Glorious Qur'an memorized by an individual as a dowry of a Muslim woman in marriage contract. These and so many other encouragements were attributed to the development of Qur'anic memorization during the Prophetic era. A number of the companions of the noble Prophet (SAW) memorized the Glorious Qur'an at that time. *Imam* al-Qurtuby reported that about seventy memorizers were killed at the battle of *Yamamah* and the same amount was killed in the battle of *Ma'unah*. This suggests that there were a lot of Companions of the noble Prophet (SAW) who memorized the Glorious Qur'an. Therefore the Companions of the Prophet (SAW) depended much on their memorization than writing copies of the Qur'an.

The nature of *Tajwid* during the life time of the Prophet (SAW) was quite different from our present time, in the sense that the theoretical aspect of *Tajwid* was not in existence at the period, but the practical aspect was given much emphasis. More so, the Messenger of Allah (SAW) ordered his Companions to recite the Glorious Qur'an with good recitation. He was reported to have remarked:

He is not of us he who does not chant nicely with the recitation of the Qur'an (*Tajwid*)^[9]

Qatadah (May Allah have Mercy on him) narrated:

I asked Anas bn malik (R.A) about the recitation of the Prophet (SAW), he said: he used to prolong (certain sound) very much^[10]

He also recommended that whenever a person wants to learn the Qur'an he should learn from the well known reciters. That is why he recommended some of his Companions to be the teachers of the Glorious Qur'an during his time. The Prophet (SAW) added:

Learn the recitation of the holy Qur'an from (any of these) four people: Abd'Allah Ibn Mas'ud, Salim the free slave of Abu Hudhaifa, Ubaiy bn Ka'ab, and Mu'adh bn Jabal. (RA)^[11]

The Companions of the Prophet (SAW) were not left behind in promoting *Tajwid* and Qur'anic memorization during their own time. They used most of their time in memorizing Qur'an, teaching their children and the general public. They also put more efforts in preserving the Qur'an and its proper recitation. The compilation and the standardization of the Glorious Qur'an are examples of their efforts. The issue of *Tajwid* with regards to its theoretical aspect, was also the same with the time of the noble Prophet (SAW). However there is a narration which stated that during the time of Caliph Ali bn Abi Talib (RA) when the non-Arabic speaking Muslims became more in the cycle of the Muslim *Ummah*, mistakes became so apparent in the course of reciting the Glorious Qur'an. Ali bn Abi Talib (R.A) ordered Abi Aswad Al-Du'aly to write down certain rules and guidelines of reciting the Glorious Qur'an^[12]. These rules and guidelines are known, today, as the science of *Al-tajwid*, and this marked the beginning of theoretical *Tajwid*.

Shaykh Muhammad Hassan Ali Sulaiman (Al-Misry)

Shaykh Muhammad Hassan Ali Sulaiman is one of the earliest scholars who visited and stayed long in Sokoto teaching Qur'an, *Tajwid* and other Qur'anic sciences.

His Biography:

His full name is Muhammad Ali Hassan Sulaiman, and hailed from a renowned family of Knowledge background. His father was among the scholars of Al-Azhar University in Egypt. *Shaykh* Ali Hassan was among the graduates of Al-Azhar University where he read and mastered Qur'anic sciences. Among his colleagues were Muhammad Siddiq Minshawy the renowned Qur'anic reciter and *Shaykh* Sadiq Qamhawy the author of "*Al-Burhan*" the famous *Tajwid* book. *Shaykh* Ali Sulaiman studied Quran from many Quranic scholars among them were *Shaykh* Khalil al-Khusary.^[13]

Shaykh Ali Hassan Suleman was among the early scholars sent to Nigeria by Egypt in the early sixties in response to the request by the then Premier of the Northern Region Sir Ahmad Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto. *Shaykh* Ali Hassan Sulaiman was posted, in the first place, to Ilorin the headquarters of the present Kwara state as a teacher of Arabic and Islamic Studies. He was later transferred to College of Arts and Arabic Studies Sokoto (presently *Shaykh* Abubakar Gummi Memorial College)^[14].

Shaykh Sulaiman utilized the opportunity accorded him to teach students Qur'an and *Tajwid* individually at his house located in the college. He was later appointed as Vice Principal (Arabic) in the same college but that does not discourage him from the efforts he was making in teaching the correct way of reciting the Glorious Qur'an. *Shaykh* Sulaiman was subsequently appointed as Arabic Supervisor in the State Ministry of Education. He continued with this appointment until when he was appointed as the Chief Imam, Sermoner, Mufasssir and Qur'an teacher in the city of Ra'asul khaimah Abu Dhabi, in United Arab Emirate. He continued his life there up to the time when answered the call of his Lord the Almighty on Thursday 14th *Rabiul-Awwal* 1419 A.H (6th August 1998)^[15]. May Allah (SWT) have mercy on him.

His Contributions to the Qur'anic Memorization and *Tajwid* in Sokoto:

According to Malam Bello *Goni*^[16], *Shaykh* Sulaiman was the first foreign Scholar to teach *Tajwid* and different *Qira'at* of the Glorious Qur'an in Sokoto. He taught *Tajwid* in different places within the state capital, apart from lessons he conducted on *Tajwid* and Arabic studies he did at his place of primary assignment and some centers where he was delivering lessons on *Tajwid*: the following are some of the centres he taught Qur'an and *Tajwid*:

- a. At his house situated in College of Arts and Arabic Studies (now *Shaykh* Abubakar Gummi Memorial College), where he used to teach different levels of students who were interested in learning *Tajwid* and *Ilm-al-Qira'at*
- b. 'Yar Akija *Nizzamiyyah* Primary School: He also taught *Tajwid* and *Tahfiz* (Qur'anic memorization) in this school. Among the students that were attending the sessions were the then Grand *Khadi* of Sokoto state Professor (late) Halliru Binji, Malam Aliyu gidan Kanawa, Malam Mode Abubakar and Malam Muhammad Bello Boyi
- c. The mosque of Sultan Abubakar College.
- d. Yelwa Garden Mosque (now Sultan Muhammad Maccido Jumu'at Mosque)
- e. Mosque of late Halliru Binji's house
- f. At the house of Baraden Sokoto, Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki (later the Sultan of Sokoto) at Miyetti Allah
- g. He was also appointed as *Imam* and teacher of *Tajwid* and Qur'anic studies at the mosque of the Sultan Palace during the regime of Sultan Ibrahim Dasuki
- h. He served as the trainer and judge of the Sokoto state participants of the National Qur'anic Recitation Competition held for many years.
- i. He served as the Chief Judge of the National Qur'an Recitation Competition at local state and national level from 1986- 1994.
- j. He used to recite the Glorious Qur'an while Professor Halliru Binji made the commentary for opening and closing of broadcasts of Rima Radio Sokoto.
- k. He made available on cassette *Juzu' Amma, makharijul – Huruf, Sifatul-Huruf* and the poems of *Shatibiyyah* (A book on different *Qira'at* of the Qur'an for the benefit of Qur'anic students.^[17]

His Literally Contributions

Shaykh Muhammad Ali Hasan Sulaiman wrote many books on both Islamic and Arabic studies. Among the books he wrote on *Tajwid* and Qur'anic studies were:

1. *Al-wajiz fi –Tarikh Kitab al-Aziz*. In this book the *Shaykh* gave an account of the revelation of Qur'an, its compilation and standardization.
2. *Kitab fi Tajwid*
3. Poems on Al-Qur'an

Other books written by the *shaykh* on other fields include but not limited to:

- (i) *Al-Hadl fi adab al-Arabi* (A book on Arabic literature)
- (ii) *Taisir al – Adab* (A book on Arabic literature)
- (iii) *Asrar al-Balagah* (A book on Arabic Eloquence)
- (iv) *Nahwu Nahwin* (A book on Arabic Grammar)

The Students of the *Shaykh*

Shaykh Sulaiman was blessed and attracted with a quite number of students. Being the first foreign scholar to teach *Tajwid* and Qur'an sciences, he received many students from within and outside Sokoto state. The following are some of his students in Sokoto.

1. Professor (Late) Halliru Binji, former Grand *Khadi* of Sokoto State.
2. Malam Aliyu Gidan Kanawa
3. Malam Muhammad Bello Muhammad Boyi (*Goni*)
4. Malam Mode Abubakar

5. Malam Umar Muhammad Boyi
6. (late) Malam Nasir Ibrahim
7. Malam Lili Asarakkawa
8. Malam Yahya Muhammad Boyi
9. Malam Abdul –Rahman Sayudi
10. Malam Mustapha Ibrahim Bakane
11. Malam Bello Abdul-Hakim Galadanci
12. Malam Musa Kwoifa.

The impact of his contributions to the people of Sokoto

The call for the application of *Tajwid* in Qur’anic recitation faced numerous challenges and criticisms from among many people in the state at the early time.

Allah in His ultimate mercy supported the efforts of the *Shaykh* and other Scholars in the area; as a result many achievements were recorded in many aspects. The following are some of the achievements:

Educational Impact:

1. As a result of tireless effort of the *Shaykh* in the state, people understand the necessity of learning *Tajwid* in order to improve their recitation of the Qur’an within and outside their daily prayers. Likewise the *Shaykh* succeeded in establishing students highly intellectuals that carried out the task of spreading *tajwid* and Qur’an memorization in the state. Like Malam Bello Muhammad Boyi, Malam Bello Abdulhakim Galadanci, Malam Nasir Usman and Malam Musa Kwoifa among others.
2. Due to the need of the people towards *Tajwid* and *Tahfiz* and its importance, the National Qur’anic Recitation Competition was introduced by the Centre for Islamic Studies Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto in 1986, and the *Shaykh* was the head of the panel of Judges.
3. The government of the state introduced an integrated Qur’anic education in some of its schools in 1997, under the Arabic and Islamic Education Board with the aim of producing talented youth that are balanced in terms of Qur’an and Western education.
4. Many books were written on *Tajwid* and *Tahfiz* For example books written by Malam Muhammad Bello (Goni) ibn Muhammad Boyi
 - i. *Al-Lawami’ al–Durar fima yataallaqu bi al-Huruf wa al-Ayat wa al–Suwar* (published): This book contains a summary of the places where *Suwar* of the Glorious Qur’an were revealed, the number of *Ayat* of each *Surah*, number of it’s words, letters and the letters its *Ayat* usually end with.
 - ii. *Tahdhir al–Qurra’a min mahalik al-Riya’a* (published): is a book of five chapters which extensively discussed the need for Qur’anic memorizers to purify their intentions in the process of memorizing the book of Allah, and to avoid any act of *riya’*.(show off/eye service)
 - iii. *Nabdhatun Yasirah ta ta’allaqu bi Ta’a lim al-Qur’an wa Ta’allummih* (Is a book on methodology and ethics and virtues of Qur’an teachers) (published).
 - iv. *Almusil ila-Ahkam al-Murattabah ala Qasral Munfasil* (this is a book on conditions of prolongation in Qur’anic recitation) (published)
 - v. *Al-Tuhfah fi Riwayat Shu’abah*. (Unpublished) its poems.
 - vi. *Sharhu –Tuhfat al-atfal* (a commentary on *Tuh-fat al-Atfal*)
 - vii. *Al-Mudihu linazmi ma kha’lafa Qalun warshan min dariq Al-shadibiyah* (it will soon be published)
 - viii. *Al-Ta’aliq al-Yasir ala Miftah al-Tafsir* (commentary on *Miftah al-tafsir*)(2 volumes)
 - ix. *Radd Al-Fikr ila Riwayat Susi an ‘Abi Amr* (2 volumes)
 - x. *Al-durar al-lami’ fi Riwayati Warsh an Nafi’u* (1 volume)

Others include:

Malam Muhammad Sani Abdullahi who wrote two books on *Tahfiz* and *Tajwid*

- (i) *Tazwid al – Shubban bi Tajwid al-Qur’an*
- (ii) *Jagoran Mai Harda Izuwa Hardar Alkur’ani Mai Girma.*, and

Mal. Muhammadu Dan Hajo Zagga of College of Legal Studies Sokoto, also wrote book on *Tajwid* in Hausa language titled *Dausayin Tajwidi*.

Religious Impact:

The contributions of these dedicated scholars and Institutions brought about changes religiously in the cycle of Muslim *Ummah*. The acceptance of *Tajwid* as religious obligation by the people of Sokoto is one of the religious impact witnessed within the period.

As a result of wide spread of *Huffaz*^[18] that are reciting the Glorious Qur'an in accordance with *Tajwid*. People in Sokoto engaged in observance of *Tahajjud* prayer in the month of *Ramadan*, in various Mosques. In the early 80th and 90th, there were very few mosques in the State where *Tahajjud* prayers were performed. IET Sokoto is the earliest and famous center of *Tahajjud* prayer where memorizers of the Qur'an lead people in *Tahajjud* prayers and Qur'an is usually completed within the last ten days of Ramadan. Now there are many *Masajid* in the state in which *Tahajjud* is performed, led by *Huffaz* and Qur'an is being completed within the last ten days of *Ramadan*. Majority of *Jumu'at* mosques in the state capital are the centers of *Tahajjud* prayers. This is an indication of the rise of number of memorizers within the period.

Moral Impact:

Memorizing the Glorious Qur'an has to do with dedication and abiding by the Islamic rules and regulations,^[19] this helped in rehabilitating Muslim youths and keeping them busy in reciting the Glorious Qur'an, observance of five daily prayers and attending centers of Islamic knowledge. This reduces the behavior of areaboysm among the youths in the metropolis.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the paper brought to light the contributions of *Shaykh* Hassan Ali Suleman in spreading the knowledge of *Tajwid* and Qur'an Memorization in Sokoto metropolis likewise the significance of seeking Qur'anic knowledge and discriminating it to others, which is in line with the prophetic saying that reads:

The best among you is the one that learn the Qur'an and teach it to others

It is also suggested that one should strive very hard towards learning Qur'anic sciences and teaching others.

List of Informants:

1. Malam Bello Abdul Hakim Galadanci 49 years, civil servant, interviewed at his House in Nakasari Area Sokoto on 30/4/2015
2. Malam Bello Muhammad Boyi 45 years, interviewed at his office in Ma'ahad al-Qur'an wa al-durus al-Qur'aniyyah Hubbare area on (2/5/2015)

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