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## Contributions of Qariahs to Tarannum Al-Quran in the State of Terengganu

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### Abstract

The eminence of qariahs in the field of tarannum al-Quran has not been studied much. Hence, this study discusses four acclaimed female personalities who have contributed tremendously to the Tilawah al-Quran, specifically in the field of tarannum. These personalities have succeeded in making this country famous and enhanced the quality of reciting the al-Quran in Terengganu. This study aimed to elaborate on the biodata of four famous qariahs in Terengganu, namely Hajjah Sepiah binti Mohamad, Hajjah Masnah binti Awang, Hajjah Azizah binti Zakaria and Hajjah Aminah Omar. It also identifies their contributions to tarannum al-Quran. A qualitative approach that used the semi-structured interview and document analysis methods was employed. The location of this study was primarily in various districts in Terengganu where the respondents lived. Findings show that among their contributions were to embellish this country at the local and international scene, become facilitators during the tahsin al-Quran courses, train students to become successful qari or qariah and produce innumerable proteges.

**Keywords:** Contribution, Qariah, Qari, Tarannum, Al-Quran, Terengganu.

### Introduction

This article discusses four qariahs who have become champions in the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran (MTQ) at the national and international levels, namely Hajjah Sepiah binti Muhammad, Hajjah Masnah binti Awang, Hajjah Azizah binti Zakaria and Hajjah Aminah binti Omar. (Mugweni, Chinyoka, & Chinyoka, 2018)

### Hajjah Sepiah Binti Muhammad

Hajjah Sepiah binti Muhammad was born on 7 March 1950 in Kg Nasi Dingin. She received her early education at Sekolah Kebangsaan Kg. Getang and started to learn the al-Quran from her mother as well as the wife of an Ustaz (Ustaz Ariffin) from Sekolah Kebangsaan Kg. Getang. Besides that, Hajjah Sepiah also learned the al-Quran from Dato' Hajjah Rogayah, who lived in

Masjid Kg. Wakaf Tapai in Marang, Terengganu, for the first time when she was 14 years old (1964) and had become very close to her mentor since then. This was when Dato' Hajjah Rogayah noticed her talent. Hajjah Sepiah said that:

"After reciting the al-Quran, Dato' Hajjah Rogayah had requested some of the people to call me. She asked me to follow along her recital of surah al-Tahrim verse 8 to verse 12. I still remember these verses until today. Then, she invited me to stay in her house in order to sharpen my skills. After one year, when I was 15 years old, I participated in the musabaqah (1965). I managed to learn the tarannum in a very short time, which was within one year. Besides myself, my friends who were also living in the hostel in Dato' Hajjah Rogayah's house were Khatijah from Mersing, Johor, Tuan Chik, Che Ku Melah, and Che Ku Salmi who lived in Kg Getang." (Mohamad, 2015)

Hajjah Sepiah had also attended a state-level course in Terengganu. She further added:

"Among the trainers who took part in the course were Dato' Haji Awang (son-in-law of Haji Mat Lintar), Dato' Yusuf Manaf and Tan Sri Sheikh Ismail al-Hafiz for the tajwid section, while Dato' Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong for the tarannum section. Besides that, I also attended courses held in Kuala Lumpur and Pahang between 1991 and 1999. Even until today I still go to Pasir Mas to learn tarannum from Tuan Haji Nik Jaafar."

### Hajjah Masnah Binti Awang

Hajjah Masnah Awang first learned the fundamentals of tarannum when she was 15 years old from Dato' Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong. She first came to know Dato' Hajjah Rogayah when learning the al-Quran with her in Masjid Kg. Pengadang Baru, Kuala-Terengganu. After Dato' Hajjah Rogayah noticed her talents, she invited Hajjah Masnah to live with her in order to further her knowledge in tarannum. Hajjah Masnah lived in her house together with her other friends.

**Table 1: Beginning Levels of Learning among the Qariahs**

Qariah	Children 7-12	Adolescent 13-19	Adult 20 and above
Wook binti Hasan	/		
Rogayah binti Sulong		/	
Siti Mas Ismail			/
Razyati Ali	/		
Sepiah binti Muhammad		/	
Masnah binti Awang		/	
Halimah binti Ibrahim		/	
Fatimah binti Ibrahim		/	
Nasirah binti Ibrahim		/	
Norhidayah Abdul Rahman	/		

(Source: Interviews)

The table above shows that the qariahs began to get acquainted with the al-Quran when they were children, adolescents and adults, usually peaking during adolescents. As the Malay

proverb goes, “*melentur buluh biar dari rebung*” (it is wise to teach them from young), children are first taught the fundamentals of the al-Quran, whereas at the adolescent level, the focus is on the fundamentals of tarannum. At this level, the qariahs would have developed a mature voice, which can be further defined and shaped as they would have reached a level of maturity.

Other than Hajjah Masnah, there were also students from Johor, Pahang, Sabah and Sarawak who were living together and learning the al-Quran during the day and tarannum at night with Dato’ Hajjah Rogayah, such as Megat Osman Megat Chik as well as another student from Sabah (Balqis). Hajjah Masnah took about 3 to 4 years to become adept in tarannum. Soon after that Dato’ Hajjah Rogayah invited Hajjah Masnah, who was 19 years old at that time, to recite the al-Quran with tarannum (rhythmic recitation) in front of an audience in several mosques in Hulu Terengganu after the Isyak prayers. This activity was intended to collect donations and contributions for the Darul Falah orphanage (welfare fund), which was located in Kampung Bukit Payung. Hajjah Masnah also contributed towards this effort together with Dato’ Hajjah Rogayah and Dato’ Haji Mohd Salleh or better known by his pen name MISBAHA (Awang, 2014).

Hajjah Masnah familiarised herself with the Majlis Tilawah by taking part in competitions at the district level. After she started competing, the religious office sent her to attend several courses. She was also coached by other tarannum teachers, such as Tuan Haji Nik Jaafar from Malaysia and several others from Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> One tip given by Hajjah Masnah for maintaining good vocals was to observe one’s food intake. She suggested that one should abstain from consuming pungent food, cucumbers and ice cubes as this would affect the quality of the vocals, whereas drinking warm water and having adequate sleep would smoothen the vocals. In addition, she frequently practiced proper breathing exercises by reciting long verses of the al-Quran until she ran out of breath. For example, reciting the Surah al-Fatihah in one breath or stopping as required at a juncture that did not require a breath.

### **Hajjah Azizah Binti Zakaria**

Hajjah Azizah Zakaria lived in Kg. Sungai Tong in Setiu. She learned tarannum al-Quran from Dato’ Hajjah Rogayah at the Kg. Tepoh surau in Kuala Terengganu and was the Terengganu Qariah Champion in 1982, 1992, and 2005 as well as represented the state at the national level (Nik, 2015). In 2014, Hajjah Azizah represented the Setiu district and emerged the runner-up at the Terengganu state level competitions. She died on 8 December 2014 due to intestinal cancer. Hajjah Azizah had actively participated in Islamic religious activities, such as the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran at the district and state levels.

### **Hajjah Aminah Binti Omar**

Hajjah Aminah binti Omar was born on 8 May 1947 in Kampung Telaga, Kuala-Berang, Terengganu and grew up in the same area but later moved to Kampung Tajin in Kuala Berang.

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Hajjah Aminah obtained her primary school education from Sekolah Kebangsaan Telaga and secondary school education from Sekolah Agama Mahmudiah in Kuala Berang, Hulu Terengganu. She married Haji Samad bin Hassan and had seven children, four boys and three girls (Saari, 2007).

In regard to learning tarannum al-Quran, Hajjah Aminah was tutored by Tan Sri Sheikh Ismail bin Muhammad, Ustaz Muda@Jusoh bin Ismail and Dato' Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong. Hajjah Aminah binti Omar was a four-time champion in the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran at the Terengganu state level in 1981, 1983, 1985, and 1987 (Nik, 2015). She also became a champion qariah at the national and international levels in 1983 (Saari, 2007). She died in December 2014 at her home in Kuala Berang.

### Contributions by Qariah in Terengganu

The table below shows all the four qariahs who had participated in the MTQ at the Terengganu state and national levels from 1960 to 2013.

**Table 2:** Victories by Qariahs in the State Level Majlis Tilawah al-Quran (by year)

Num.	Name of the Qariah	Year
1.	Hajjah Sepiah@Safiah Muhammad	1967, 1968 and 1988
2.	Hajjah Masnah Awang	1994, 1996 and 1999
3..	Hajjah Azizah Zakaria	1982 and 2005
4	Hajjah Aminah Omar	1981,1983, 1985 and 1987

The table below shows the qaris and qariahs representing the district of Hulu Terengganu.

**Table 3:** Qari and Qariah Representing the District of Hulu Terengganu

Qari	Qariah
Jusoh @Muda bin Ismail	Aminah binti Omar
Muhammad Noor bin Muhamad	Wook binti Hasan
Ismail bin Embong	Sepiah binti Muhamad
	Nasirah binti Ibrahim

(Source: Interview)

Three qaris and four qariahs had represented Hulu Terengganu at the MTQ between 1960 and 2013, including Hajjah Sepiah Muhammad and Hajjah Aminah Omar.

### Contributions by Hajjah Sepiah to Tarannum

Hajjah Sepiah contributed to tarannum by becoming the champion in the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran at the state, national and international levels as well as becoming a qariah in the Islamic world. In 1967 and 1968 Hajjah Sepiah became the champion during the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran at the

Terengganu state level competition. In 1981 she was the champion at the Hulu Terengganu district level competition. Then in 1988, 1994 dan 1997, Hajjah Sepiah became the runner-up at the Terengganu state level competition. The climax of her achievements was when she became the champion at the state, national and international levels in 1988. Overall, she actively took part in the MTQ from 1960 to the 1980s. Her victories indicate her expertise, perseverance, earnestness and skills in tarannum al-Quran.

**Table 4:** Victories of Hajjah Sepiah binti Muhammad at the state level

Num.	1	2	3
Year	1967	1968	1998

(Source: Council of Islam and Malay Tradition of Terengganu (MAIDAM))

The table above shows that Hajjah Sepiah was a 3-time champion at the national level in 1967, 1968 and 1998. She first became a champion when she was 17 years old.

**Table 5:** Champion Qaris and Qariahs from 1960 to 1969

Name	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Muda Ismail	/						/	
Yusof Abdullah			/	/	/			
Yasin Embong						/		
Salleh bin Awang		/						
Wook bt Hasan		/				/		
Sepiah Muhammad							/	/
Rogayah Sulong	/		/	/	/	/		

(Source: Interview)

The table above shows that Hajjah Sepiah's compatriots had also become champions during the MTQ from 1960 to 1969. It also shows that Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong had dominated the MTQ at the state level, whereas the next two years saw Hajjah Sepiah Muhammad winning the competition.

**Table 6:** Victories at the International Level

Num.	1
Year	1998

(Source: History of the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran at the National and International Levels, p 20-21)

Hajjah Sepiah, who was 48 years old then, became the champion in the MTQ at the international level. Meantime, she became an al-Quran teacher for adults and taught tarannum al-Quran every week at Masjid Kg Tengkuawan and converted a part of her house into a surau and a place for teaching the al-Quran. She opened a tarannum class for 15 adolescents aged between 16 to 20, specifically for teaching the intricacies of tarannum (Mohamad, 2015; Elike, Agha, 2018). Besides that, she also trained participants who intended to take part in Tilawah competitions at the MTQ.

Hajjah Sepiah also contributed to the community that comprised mainly of school students, adolescents and adults by teaching the al-Quran and tarannum. She prepared a specific place for teaching al-Quran and tarannum, which was located next to her house. Her surau was filled with students wanting to learn the al-Quran and tarannum. In addition, qaris and qariah who were keen on improving their efficacy in rhythmic al-Quran were given special classes on this topic.

### Contributions of Hajjah Masnah Awang to Tarannum

Hajjah Masnah had represented the district of Marang during the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran between 1960 and 2013. The qaris and qariahs who represented the district of Marang are shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Qari and Qariah Representing the District of Marang**

Qari	Qariah
Hafas Ali	Masnah Awang
Tirmizi Ali	Raziyati Mohd Ali

(Source: Interviews with qaris and qariahs from Terengganu from 2012 to 2013)

Hajjah Masnah had immensely contributed to tarannum and had her own style of teaching tarannum. She believed in teaching harakat gradually until students became proficient. The students must attain the correct vocal cord and voice box for a particular harakat before moving on to the next harakat. She actively taught tarannum at Dewan Masjid Kg Rawai in Bukit Payung on Saturday mornings to about 15 boys and girls.

On Mondays, Hajjah Masnah taught the al-Quran in Masjid Kg. Rawai and on Tuesdays, she taught al-Quran in Masjid Kg. Alor Limbat. She actively taught the al-Quran at the Terengganu State Religious Office every Wednesday and the Marang District Religious Office as well as Masjid Kg. Jerung every Thursday evening. Her days were fully occupied with teaching the al-Quran. These teaching activities had produced many teachers specialising in the al-Quran and tarannum in the district of Marang. Some of her tips to safeguard the voice were to avoid pungent food as it might affect the smoothness of the voice as well as cucumbers and ice cubes. In addition, she believed that drinking warm water and getting enough sleep can produce an elegant voice. She also carried out exercises to prolong her breathing, such as reading long verses of the al-Quran. For example, reciting Surah al-Fatihah in one breath or stopping at a juncture that does not require a breath.

**Table 8: Champion Qari and Qariah from 1990 to 1999**

Name	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
Ismail Embong					/					
Yusof Embong			/	/						
Mohamad Ismail								/	/	
Mazlan Ibrahim										/
Muhammad bin Awang Teh		/				/				

Daud bin Che Man	/									
Haji Ali@Alias bin Abdul Rahman						/				
Siti Mas Ismail	/		/		/					
Azizah Zakaria			/							
Halimah Ibrahim							/	/		
Masnah Awang					/		/			/
Hasnah Sulong		/								

(Source: Interviews)

Table 8 above shows that Hajjah Masnah Awang was a three-time MTQ champion at the Terengganu state level. Her victories portray her capabilities, earnestness and perseverance in tarannum al-Quran.

### Contributions by Hajjah Azizah Zakaria to Tarannum

Hajjah Azizah Zakaria had represented the state of Terengganu in MTQ at the national level from 1982 to 2005.

**Table 9:** Qaris and Qariah from the District of Kuala Terengganu

Qari	Qariah
Hj. Ibrahim bin Taib	Rogayah binti Sulong
Hj. Mohamad Yasin bin Embong	Nik Maliah binti Ismail
Hj. Muhammad Nor bin Muhammad	Hajjah Siah @Embat binti Mohd Amin
Hj. Daud bin Mat Saman	Ramlah binti Salleh
Ramli bin Haji Ahmad	Safiah binti Muhamad
Hj. Salleh bin Awang	Fatimah binti Ibrahim
Hj. Muhammad Yusof bin Abdullah	Hasnah binti Sulong
Mohamad bin Ismail	Azizah Zakaria
Haji Yusop bin Embong	Zaharah binti Embong
Engku Ali bin Muhamad	
Ismail bin Embong	

(Source: Interviews with qaris and qariahs from Terengganu between 2012 and 2013)

The table above shows that 11 qaris and 9 qariahs had represented the District of Kuala Terengganu from 1960 to 2013. Hajjah Azizah Zakaria also represented the District of Kuala Terengganu in MTQ and had become the state champion.

**Table 10:** Champion Qaris and Qariahs from 2000 to 2009

Nama	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Mazlan bin Ibrahim	/									
Muhammad bin Awang Teh		/					/			
Hafas Ali				/				/	/	/
Tarmizi Ali					/	/				



Azizah Zakaria						/				
Nasirah Ibrahim					/		/			
Raziyati Mohd Ali								/	/	
Fatimah binti Ibrahim										/

(Source: Interviews)

According to the table above, there are 8 qaris from 2000 to 2009. Among the up-and-coming candidates who emerged during this decade were Hafas Ali, Tarmizi Ali, Nasirah Ibrahim and Raziyati Mohd Ali. The candidate who became champion the most number of times at the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran was Hafas Ali, with 4 championships to his credit. Three of the candidates were the students of Dato' Hajjah Rogayah, namely Muhammad Awang Teh, Azizah Zakaria and Nasirah Ibrahim. Hajjah Azizah Zakaria had always actively participated in the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran alongside the up-and-coming candidates although she was active in the tarannum during the 1980s. This shows the spirit and encouragement given by Hajjah Azizah Zakaria in honouring the prestigious al-Quran and her deep desire to be proficient in reciting the al-Quran.

The evaluation shows that in order to establish oneself in tarannum, a qari must learn more about the tarannum than the teacher. This will enable the qari to consolidate his skills. Besides that, one needs to choose a teacher who is experienced and competent because a teacher with relevant expertise can produce skilled and competent students.

### Contributions by Hajjah Aminah Omar to Tarannum

In regard to teaching al-Quran and tarannum, Hajjah Aminah had been teaching the al-Quran to the community from a very young age. One of her students who had achieved considerable success was Ustazah Nasirah, who was the champion qariah at the Terengganu state level and went on to represent the state at the national level. One of the tips by Hajjah Aminah was the need to further understand the art of reciting the al-Quran since the contemporary environment is complimented with a variety of gadgets, equipment and facilities used for understanding the al-Quran.

**Table 11:** Champion Qaris and Qariahs from 1980 to 1989

Name	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Mohamad bin Ismail								/		
Rashid Ali				/					/	
Daud Mat Saman	/									
Muhammad bin Awang Teh		/	/				/			
Che Ku Salleh bin Che Ku Long					/					
Ali@Alias bin Abdul Rahman						/				
Ismail bin Embong										/
Siah@Embat	/						/		/	

Azizah Zakaria			/						
Aminah Omar		/		/		/		/	
Halimah Ibrahim					/				/

(Source: Interviews)

The table above shows the victories achieved by qaris and qariah at the Terengganu state level competitions from 1980 to 1989. The table also shows the victory achieved by Hajjah Azizah Zakaria in 1982 and that by Aminah Omar in 1981, 1983, 1985, and 1987.

In addition, the table above also shows the achievements of 11 participants, 7 out of which were students of Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong (Muhammad bin Awang Teh, Siah@Embat, Azizah Zakaria, Sepiah Muhammad, Aminah Omar and Halimah Ibrahim).

Hence, it can be concluded that Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong's students had dominated this era by becoming champions during the Majlis Tilawah al-Quran. The qariah with the most number of victories was Aminah Omar, followed by Siah@Embat and a qari, Muhammad bin Awang Teh. Among the teachers of tarannum who had played a significant role in this era were Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong and Haji Ahmad Ma'sum Pergau. All four qariah were students of Hajjah Rogayah Sulong and they received exclusive lessons in the al-Quran from her. They all lived in her house and learned the al-Quran dan tarannum day and night. Others living in Hajjah Rogayah's house were students from Sabah and Sarawak, who were sponsored by their respective governments.

## Conclusion

Hajjah Sepiah Mohamad, Hajjah Masnah Awang, Hajjah Azizah and Hajjah Aminah Omar had played a significant role in teaching and propagating tarannum al-Quran. They obtained knowledge and expertise through fundamental education and religious development (*tarbiyah*) imparted by their teacher, Dato' Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong. She had polished their talents and potential until they had become experts in tarannum, a field rarely explored by normal individuals in art of rhythmic al-Quran.

Moreover, all four eminent qariah mentioned above were the protégé of a famous teacher, namely Dato' Hajjah Rogayah binti Sulong. The relationship with their teacher was close and they frequently visited each other over the years. Love for the al-Quran had rejuvenated their determination to carry on seeking knowledge and comprehensively explore the al-Quran as well as teach the al-Quran to the younger generation.

Therefore, this article shows that women have significantly contributed to tarannum al-Quran at the national level. The good deeds of these women are evident in the production of hidden talents and accentuated their love for the holy al-Quran. These four eminent qariah were chosen because they had embellished the good name of the country at the international arena.

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