

THE MEMORISERS OF THE AL QUR'AN AMONG VISUAL IMPAIRMENT SCHOLARS

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ABSTRACT

The position of those who memorise the Qur'an is special in the sight of Allah. Undoubtedly, some of the less fortunate ones, especially those who are unable to see, are left behind in seizing the advantages and blessings promised by Allah for Qur'an memorisation. It is a logical assumption that the absence of visual experience, in congenitally and totally blind individuals, produces severe cognitive consequences and, in particular, the inability to produce visuo-spatial mental images. However, received empirical support Tomaso Vecchi et.al, (2004) demonstrated that blind individuals may have representations, which are functionally equivalent to the visuo-spatial mental images of sighted individuals. Hence, this paper will identify some scholars who memorised the Qur'an even though their vision is limited. In addition, this study will also briefly provide their biography and academic contribution. This study adopted a qualitative approach using the analytical method by studying some of the relevant documents. This study found that there are successful scholars among those who have visual impairment that able to memorise the entire Qur'an. Furthermore, they have different areas of expertise and their knowledge and wisdom have become a source of reference until today. Among them are Imam as Syatibi an expert in qiraat; Syeikh 'Abd al-Hamid Kishk who earned excellent results in every level of study; Syeikh Dr Fadhl Hassan an expert in the field of the Tafseer Qur'an; and Syeikh Muhammad Rifat who specialises in the field of tarannum. The difference in effort is not a barrier to individual excellence. The greatness of the Qur'an as the greatest miracle proves that even without the eyesight, there are many groups of al-Huffaz and al-Qurra among the visually impaired. This shows that the issues and problems of al-Qur'an proficiency among the people with visual impairment can be enhanced especially in Malaysia by identifying the best methodology for their level and ability. The researcher also hopes that it will provide encouragement and inspiration to the Qur'anic memorisers who have limitations in the use of the senses in particular as well as the Quranic memoriser who have sensual perfection in general.

Key words: Scholar, Memorisers Al-Qur'an, Visually Impairment

INTRODUCTION

Memorising the Qur'an is a commitment that expresses one's effort to please Allah because as Muslims, we believe that the Qur'an is the speech of Allah. In this, precision and accuracy in the articulation of the Qur'anic verses is compulsory.

According to Ingrid Mattson (2008):

"In reciting Al-Qur'an, the very words of Gods are reproduced in the throats of the reciters and perceived in the ears of listeners. With each articulation of Qur'anic phrase, the believer is recreating speech of a God who is alive today as he has been forever. This is not a performance of historical speech but a reticulation of the eternal words of the living God."

Disabled Muslims are also obligated to study the Qur'an, memorise, understand and practise their contents. Islam never denies the rights of an individual as long as it is based on the Islamic law. Muslims with or without disabilities should be recognised by their qualifications and expertise in the fields without any discrimination. There are some Islamic figures among blind people who play an important role in upholding the religion dignity since the early days of Islam development.

'Abdullah Ibn Ummi Maktum is one of the most well-known Islamic figures among the blind people that trigger the implications of the surah Abasa 80: 1-11 was mentioned in the tafseer of surah Abasa 80: 1-11(Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, 2008). The Prophet S.A.W treated Ibn Maktum in a good way and demonstrated that the blind should not be sidelined from the community.

The Qur'an and al-Sunnah have shown the best approach to deal with the blind, Allah says in Surah al-Hujurat: 49:13;

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Meaning: "Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted"

The community should emulate the personality of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W who succeeded in succumbing the Arab jahiliyyah society to the beauty of Islam. 'Abdullah Ibn Ummi Maktum has never been treated inappropriately by the companions of the Prophet S.A.W. Saydatina Aisyah R.A. narrated:

Meaning: 'Ibn Ummi Maktum once called for prayer (adzan) by the Prophet S.A.W although he was a blind man.

(Muslim: 381)

Prophet Muhammad S.A.W used to appoint him twice as a keeper of Medina while Prophet S.A.W went out for jihad. Once, Ibn Ummi Maktum came to see Prophet S.A.W for some religious guidance. At that moment, Prophet Muhammad S.A.W was busy convincing Quraisy leaders to accept Islam. Ibn Ummi Maktum asked something to Prophet Muhammad SAW and the Prophet frowned and looked away from him. Then Allah reprimanded the action of Prophet Muhammad SAW towards Ibnu Ummi Maktum in the form of revelation of Quran verses (Zahabi, 1985).

The lessons learned from the above situations are:

1. All Muslims are equal; there are no differences between leaders and the blind people;
2. Islam advises the blind people to study;
3. Blindness is not a reason to feel inferior;
4. People should not underestimate blind people; and
5. The authorities need to help the public to change the mindset of the blind and help them to be more confident in the community.

As an example of awareness and understanding among people, University of al-Azhar, Egypt has become the first university to welcome the blind people to continue their studies. The action of this university gives a positive impact on the psychology of people with disabilities. As a result, they become more confident as there will be no discrimination upon them.

However, there are many studies that relate to the level of mastery and performance of the Qur'an among people with visual impairment showing that mastery of Qur'an is still at a weak level.

Based on the study conducted on students from special needs education program at schools, the weaknesses have been identified on the aspects of tajwid, proficiency in Qur'an recitation using Braille (Roshaida Yaacob, 2004), as well as hija'iyah letters proficiency (Norshidah, 2004)

The study on al-Qur'an recitation proficiency among students with visual impairment has been conducted by Khadijah (2008), and the result has shown that only 42% of students achieved moderate proficiency in reciting Quran.

This is align with the study conducted by Hajarul, (2012), the result shown that overall student had not achieved a satisfying level of proficiency in reciting Qur'an based on the principle of nun sakinah. Statistically, the mean of students' proficiency is 19.57, which is very weak.

According to Patton et al,(1991), the visually impaired has a network of personalities, interests and abilities. Most of them have a normal intellectual level and there are also those who have intelligent and smart intellectual levels. Thus, this special people has a bright opportunity in education.

This statement is supported by Ysseldyke and Algozzine, (1995) by denying the opinion of some researchers who say that the vision has an intellectual retardation. According to him, the statement is made on several studies that found the weakness of achievement of visual impairment in most of the Standard Intelligence Test. But this finding is considered invalid because the test is administered to the visually impaired without any modifications. Hence, there are some problems with the test because the items submitted are not relevant and do not conform to those with sight.

According to Norakyairee et al,(2013), as seen from the perspective of understanding, visual impaired students do not face problems as they are able to understand the concept of religious abstract through hearing senses. Even some of them are able to memorize the Qur'an with just hearing, rather than hearing impaired students.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Problem statement, objective, methodology, memorisers Al-Qur'an among visual impairment and the conclusions.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The issues often discussed in the teaching of the Islamic Education of the Quran's Tilawah component in schools in Malaysia are the weakness of students in reciting al-Qur'an. Many studies have stated about the problem. However, most studies focus only on typical students and are still lacking the empirical studies that examine the mastery of special students in visual impairment. However, Norshidah Mohd Salleh et. al, (2004) stated one of the problems faced in the learning of the Qur'an among visual impairment students is the unskillful student of the Quranic Braille code.

Ironically, before the creation of the Braille texts, the blind are dependent entirely on the senses of ear in receiving and processing of information, how many of them memorize the Qur'an through the talaqqi method and able to memorize and read the entire Qur'an well (Mustaffa,2010).

The study also shown that when a person is physically disabled, it is advantageous in other forms. For example, those with disabilities look at their sense of touch more sharper. Even these groups are also able to memorize the Qur'an only by listening to al-Qur'an recitation through audio repeatedly (Noornajihan Ja'afar et al, 2016).

This has also been demonstrated by a group of scientists who claim that those with visual impairment born tend to have superior memory skills when compared to their normal vision counterparts (Charles Q. Choi, 2007). In their study individuals with sight and individuals with visual impairment heard a list of 20 words and were asked to recall them in serial order. The individuals with visual impairment recalled more words than the participants with sight (indicating better verbal memory) and also they were better in serial recalling longer word sequences (Raz et. al, 2007)

Furthermore, the greatness of the Qur'an has proven that even without eyesight, there are many al-Huffaz and al-Qurra ' who have coloured the world of education especially in the Middle East. They not only memorised the al-Qur'an but among them, they have expertise in other sciences and have become icons in Islamic science.

These show that the issues and problems of the mastery al- Qur'an among people with visual impairment can be enhanced especially in Malaysia by identifying the best and appropriate methodology based on their level and ability.

Moreover research that related to the Qur'an among visual impairment are very little especially in the study involving memorization of al-Qur'an among them. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will be able to meet current needs in order to help strengthen the learning institute for this vision.

OBJECTIVE

This study is conducted to:

- 1) To identify some scholars who memorise the Qur'an despite their visual impairment.
- 2) To explain their background, education, personalities and their contribution briefly.
- 3) To identify the life journey of the scholars with visual impairment.
- 4) To identify the expertise of the scholars in the other field.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach through document analysis design. Documents are essentially all written materials or movies that are already available in certain places (Noeng 2000; Nana 2005; Sudarwan 2005). This protocol is used to help investigators obtain data objectively through primary and secondary documents without the need for informants or respondents. This method can also provide consistent data because all data is obtained explicitly (Frankel ,2007). Data collection is done through primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are books that related to the history of Islamic civilisation and famous scholars such as al bidayah wa nihayah (Ibn Kathir, 2004) and Siyar A'lam Nubala (Zahabi, 1985). Secondary sources being journals, conference papers, documents, theses and related books. For data analysis, the author uses the text analysis method. This method is used to analyse related data.

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Here are some of the examples that show that blind people who have successfully proven that they are comparable to ordinary people. This brief biographical note covers scholars that have contributed to the development and spread of Islam. The focus of the discussion will be on the life, educational background and the contributions made by those scholars.

1. Imam as-Syatibi

One of the scholarly figures who contributed a lot to the *Qira'at's* knowledge is Imam Syatibi. His real name is al-Qasim ibn Firruh ibn Ahmad ibn Khalaf ibn Abu Qasim Muhammad al-Syatibiy al-Ru'ainiy al-Andalusiy al-Dhorir. Born with visual disabilities at the end of 538 H in Andalus (Spain) in a village called Syatibah (now in the district of Barcelona). The city was very important in Spain at the time of the Islamic era. He was a blind qari, but has impressive intelligence. He became the reference to the people and was a famous Qurra' (Zahabi, 1985).

According to the terminology of the 'Ulama, the word *Qira'at* when used in relation to the Qur'an means a special manner of reciting the Qur'an according to that which was recited by an Imam of *Qira'at*. Therefore, the manner in which the Qur'an is recited will be called *Qira'at* and the recitation itself will be called Tilawah (as-Shabuni, 2011) The cornerstone of the different *Qiraat* is a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W;

"The Qur'an has been revealed in seven Ahruf (categories of differences). (al-Bukhaari, 2287).

There, he memorised the Qur'an and studied *Qiraat* from Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Abu al-'Ash. Later, he went to a nearby village of Syatibi, Balansiah and studied with Ibn Huzail. He studied *Qiraat* knowledge and had also memorised Kitab al-Taysir fi al-Qira'at al-Sab'a by Abu 'Amru ad-Dani and Hadith knowledge. Upon his arrival in Egypt, he was given a high recognition from the scholars in Egypt and was appointed as Head of Lajnah al-Qur'an by the Egyptian king at that time. Although he is not an Arab, his knowledge of Islamic sciences and Arabic is quite deep and wide (Shihab al-Din, 2000). It was narrated that if one reads to him Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim or Al-Muwattha, he could check and corrected the person's reading by relying entirely on his memorisation (al-Zahabi, 1985).

The book entitled '*Hirzul Amaani wa Wajhu al-Tahaani*' among the books of his writings for the lover of Qiraat. The book states about the seven famous Qiraat scholars, compiled in 1173 lines of poetry all of which was a summary of the book at-Taisir. In view of each of the articles he wrote, the final rhyme in this material is from the letter lam (Shaharuddin, 2015).

In addition, the book he wrote, '*Nazimatuz Zuhr*' explains *Fawasil's* knowledge (stating the number of verses and divisions of the surah in the Qur'an) and also the summary of 'al-Bayan' by Imam Abu Amru ad-Dani. Every phrase of the poet's poetry in his book which he authored greatly facilitated the students of Qiraat knowledge to master and understand because the poem was like a brief note of a thousand one long lecture (Shaharuddin, 2015).

He died at the age of 52, 28 Jamadil Akhir of 590 Hijrah and buried in Jabal Muqattam, Cairo, Egypt (al-Zahabi, 1985). In the eyes of his blind eyes, he was still able to nourish this knowledge and stand firm on matters about the laws of God.

2. Syeikh Muhammad Rif'at

Sheikh Muhammad Rif'at is a very famous *qari* in Egypt. He was born in 1882 at in the village of al Mugharbalin, Darb al-Ahmar, Cairo. Sheikh Muhammad Rif'at suffered frozen bleeding in the head when he was two years old that resulted in both sides of his eyes blind. His father was a policeman and died at his age of 9 years (Mahmud, 2011).

Sheikh Muhammad Rif'at at a very young age studied and memorised quarter of the Qur'an with his father. Then he completed the rest of the study in the form of memorisation and tajwid with his teacher, Sheikh Muhammad Hamidah at a kuttab in Egypt (Mahmud 2011). During childhood, Sheikh Muhammad Rif'at was already called as '*syekh*'. This had encouraged his father to send him to kuttab (centre of the study of the Qur'an) to study and to start the recitation of the Qur'an at the age of five and completed memorisation at the age of six. When Sheikh Muhammad Rif'at grew teenager, he was appointed by the Waqaf Ministry of Egypt as a *qari* at the mosque officially (Tariq, 1994).

Among the factors of his appointment was his interesting reading habit. He also has his own strength from the point of presentation of the reading, charm and character of preoccupied while reciting Qur'an. Therefore, it is not surprising that his voice was often heard in radio cobs and television for the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an around Egypt and beyond Egypt (Mahmud, 2011).

Sheikh Muhammad Rif'at left the treasures, which are recorded in the Qur'an either in the form of cassettes or plates that had been recorded by individual or recording companies. Sheikh Muhammad Rif'at also left the adzan (prayer call) in two versions. The first version uses the *Rast* maqam, while the second version uses the maqam of *Sikah* (Wan Hilmi Wan Abdullah et.al, 2014). Tarannum *Rast* is the form of agility and tenderness as well as firmness and energising while Tarannum *Sikah* is more prone to heart and has sadness and stinginess (Radzi, 2007). His entire recording was 55 recordings of 54 comprising a collection of Quran recitations and only two azan collections (Wan Hilmi Wan Abdullah et.al, 2014). It is a very precious and precious treasure legacy and has made a significant contribution to the world of the Qur'an.

In 1942 when he was overwhelmed by a serious illness that affected his voice channel from functioning well and causing him to no longer read the Qur'an as he used to. The disease lasted for eight years before he passed away on May 9, 1950, at his age of 68 years. (Tariq, 1994). Through his *zuhud* and noble character, all souvenirs and monies given to him on the medium of preaching, he donated all the gifts away before the moment of his death (Wan Hilmi Wan Abdullah et.al, 2014).

3. Syeikh Abdul Aziz ibn Baz

The real name of Syeikh Abdul Aziz ibn Baz is Syeikh Abu Abdillah Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Abdurrahman ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah Ali Baz. Born at 12 Dzulhijjah in 1330 H / 1909 M in Riyadh (Majmu' Fatawa). Initially, he was able to see, then, when he was struck with unfortunate eyes illness in 1346 H, at the age of 16 years old. His views began to become weak and eventually became blind in 1350 H, at the age of 20 years old.

He had memorised the Qur'an before reaching his puberty and then he acquired knowledge from many of the great scholars of the Kingdom. He sought knowledge through the process of traditional education which is to study Islamic law and Islamic literature through scholars and Islamic scholars because at that time the existing educational system has not expanded. Among his teachers were:

1. Syeikh Hamid ibn Faris, a representative of Baitul Mal, Riyadh.
2. Syeikh Sa'd, Qadhi Bukhara a Makkah scholar.
3. Samahatus Syeikh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abdul Lathief al-Syeikh who studied many religious pieces of knowledge such as *aqidah*, *fiqh*, *hadith*, *nahu*, *faraid*, *tafsir*, *sirah* for about ten years (Abu 'Abdullah, 2017).

Due to the knowledge he gained from the scholars, he had become a contemporary scholar and has been a reference until today. He had also held various official posts relating to religious problems such as judge around 14 years until 1357 H/1937 M, as an educator at Ma'had Ilimi Riyadh in *ulmu fiqh*, *tauhid* and *hadith* from 1372 H/ 1952 M until 1380 H/1960 M, as the Deputy Rector of the Islamic University of Madinah in 1381-1390 H/ 1961-1969 M, and the public leader related to knowledge research, *fatwa*, *da'wah* and religious guidance in 1395 H/1977M.

Although he was always busy with missionary activities, he still had time to write books, and he also write on issues and problems as a guide to the Muslim community. Among his works are *The Obligation of Following the Sunnah*, *The Ideological Attack*, *The Life and Call of Imam Muhammad ibn Abdil-Wahhaab*, *Three Treatises on the Prayer* and so on. Moreover, there are many more books which can be read and printed at the Sheikh's official website. This was in addition to his many fataawaa (religious verdicts) that were collected, compiled and published www.binbaz.org.sa. which range in numerous volumes (Abu 'Abdullah, 2017).

Shaykh Abdul Aziz ibn Baz died in Riyadh town, before dawn on Thursday, 27 Muharram 1420 H, coinciding with May 13, 1999 M at his age of 90 and buried in Makkah (Majmu' Fatawa).

4. Syeikh 'Abd al-Hamid Kishk

Sheikh 'Abd al-Hamid Kishk was born on March 10, 1933, in a small village near Alexandria, Egypt. His father died before he reached his school age. He was born healthy and well and had a palsy in his eyes and lost his sight ability around the age of 11 years old (Ab. Hamid, 1986). He was very well known throughout the world on his outspoken stance against injustice and oppression in the Muslim world, brave speech during Friday prayers following his firm stand on injustice and oppression that took place in the Muslim world.

He finished memorising the Qur'an at the age of eight. Then, he moved to the al-Azhar Institute until he graduated from the secondary of school. Through his determination and wisdom, he has achieved excellent results in every level of study since his schooling in al-Azhar Institute

Afterwards, he pursued higher education at the al-Azhar University, Egypt in the Usuluddin department and was appointed as Imam to deliver preach throughout Egypt (Ab. Hamid, 1986).

He often delivered Friday's preach and religious studies at various mosques, and even hundreds of his preach were recorded in cassettes and translated into writing. His aggressiveness in preaching and delivering talk led him to prison several times. His knowledge is manifested by the production of dozens of great works by him even though he was blind. Even this did not silent him, for up to 1996, this blind man wrote over 115 books and booklets, including a tafsir known as 'Fi Rihab al-Tafsir' (Abeer Qadi, 2015).

He died on the 25th of 1417H Rejab equivalent to December 6, 1996 M at his 63rd birthday which was on Friday while in prostration (Ab. Hamid, 1996).

5. Syeikh Fadhlul Hassan Abbas

Sheikh Fadhlul Hassan Abbas was born in Saffuriyya, Palestine in 1932M. He began to study religion since childhood. He was among the most prominent Sunni scholars in Jordan and also a scholar in the field of interpretation, hadith, arabic and balaghah. Also known as a mufassir Jordan (Jamal Mahmoud, 2017).

He had finished memorising the Qur'an when he was ten years old. He was in Egypt's middle school and later, completed the study in Usuluddin at al-Azhar University. He was also the youngest graduate student in 1952 that was 20 years old. He graduated with doctorate holder from al-Azhar University, Egypt in the year 1972 (Rhabitul Ulama', 2013).

Syeikh Fadhlul Hasan was appointed a teacher at the Faculty of Syria in the year 1966 and assigned the Science of Interpretation, Hadith, Tauhid, Arabic and al-Qur'an recitation. Then he moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) between 1975 until 1978. During the time, he received a master's degree from al-Azhar al- Shariff in the year 1976 and was among the three successful students. Syeikh Fadhlul Hasan returned to the Faculty of Syariah at the University of Jordan as head of the Department of Fundamentals of Religion and also delivering various lessons in his home and also appeared through the radio and broadcasted over 400 episodes in reading the Qur'an and his interpretation.

Some of the Syeikh Fadhlul Hasan's writing are Proficiency Proof in The Science of al-Qur'an, Miracle of the Holy Qur'an, Stories of The Holy Qur'an and its revelations, The Systematic Interpretation of The Holy Qur'an and others. Besides that, he also supervises the letters, following up on the scientific research, completing his scientific writing until he died on February 9, 2011, at the age of 79 (Jamal Mahmoud, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The above examples show that blind people can position themselves on par with sighted people if they are given space and opportunity to show their talents and abilities. This is in line with previous evidence showing that individuals with severe visual impairment have superior memory abilities because they have trained themselves in serial strategies to compensate for the absence of visual information (Raz et. al, 2007). Recent, neuro imaging data highlighted that blind people may use mental images in association with sensory modalities other than vision, with the involvement of both visual and somatosensory areas (Tomaso Vecchi, 2014).

Through this exposure, it may slightly alter the negative perception of the people towards blind people and at the same time triggers their self-confidence to deal with society of the country. Indeed, the effort to memorise the Qur'an has never been

compulsory to all Muslims yet there are people who are willing to commit themselves to memorise the Qur'an. Allah s.w.t. made an exclusive invitation for us to memorise the holy versus. The emphasis that the Qur'an is made easy for memorisation has been clearly written in the Qur'an. In Surah Al-Qamar, for instance, Allah s.w.t made not once but four (4) times of similar initiations. This shows how important it is to memorise the Qur'an and blessing from Allah s.w.t are also the key to one's success the whole Qur'an.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

And we have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?

(Surah Al-Qamar: 17; 22; 32; 40)

The patience of the blind people in living difficulties are the most hardship they have to take, and will be rewarded with a paradise that is inhabited by a devout man.

Hence, bringing these special people closer to the Qur'an is the best way to educate their souls and to improve the quality of their Qur'an literacy despite the fact that they cannot see. However, based on previous study, when a person is physically disabled, then it is advantageous in other forms. For example, those who are losing sight realise that their sense of touch have become sharper.

Therefore, their touch when reading the al-Qur'an through the codes of the Braille alphabet is more active than the normal people and likewise with the hearing senses. This special group is able to memorise the Qur'an only by listening to al-Quran through the audio playback repeatedly.

In Malaysia, JAKIM strives to elevate the Quran by establishing Darul Quran. The establishment of an awareness of the blind people with the opportunity to join the Tahfiz Al-Quran Certification and Diploma program in the making of al- hafiz among the best quality and excellent vision

Hence, experiencing visual impairment is not a reason to stop these scholars from exploring the Qur'anic knowledge and became the icons and centre of reference of the Muslim community in their period. When vision is missing, other modalities and higher cognitive functions can become hyper-developed through a mechanism called sensory compensation (Agnieszka Sorokowska , 2017).

Thus, they are the source of inspiration to the younger generation in the world and particularly in Malaysia. People need to give opportunities to special needs community in general and especially blind people to show their abilities in all areas, especially academics and hold all levels of qualified positions for them to comply with ordinary people.

Meanwhile, blind people need to look forward, not to underestimate the lack of self-esteem but look at their ability to contribute and serve the nation. With the change in thinking and shifting the paradigm of the people and the disabled, it is not surprising that someday they will be among those who are capable of holding important positions in this country.

The article presents that the visual impairment person are able to effectively memorise, for instance the memorization strength of the islamic scholar has become the centre view of this article. May this be an inspiration towards the disabled people to make use the generous gift from Allah in preserving the purity of Qur'an.

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