# Quranic Printing Issues in Malaysia: An Examine at Ministry of Home Affairs

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ABSTRACT--- Quranic printing has gone through a few modifications, in parallel with the printing's revolution. The first printed al-Quran was in the year 1530 AD in Venice, Italy. Ever since, several countries took the opportunity to print the al-Quran including Germany, Russia, Iran, India, and Turkey. Nevertheless, the Quranic printing requires strict supervision to ensure the authenticity of al-Quran, which led to some countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan taking the initiative to establish the Quranic Tasheh Committee to supervise all activities relating to Quranic printing in the country. This research focuses on the issues of Quranic printing in Malaysia and makes the Ministry of Home Affairs of Malaysia (MOHA) as an observation place. This research is a qualitative study and chooses research methods of interview and document analysis as the research instruments. Results found that the Quranic Text Control Unit of MOHA has introduced three main steps to ensure that the Quranic text is free from any errors namely mistakes detected in the Muṣḥaf al-Quran, validation of approval code, and hologram stickers.

Keywords--- Quranic Printing, Quranic Tasheh, Main Steps.

# I. AGREEMENT OF ŪTHMANI SCRIPT IN THE MUŞḤAF AL-QURAN

According to the majority of Scholars (Jumhur Ūlama'), the writing of Muṣḥaf al-Quran must follow the Ūthmani Script as it was the oldest version (Tauqifi) and it may not change. It was also referred to as a proof of Prophet Muhammad SAW's memorisation of the Wahy, as revealed by Jibril, when the former re-read the Wahy to his followers or companions. He then commanded his followers or companions to copy and memorise it. Meanwhile, there is also written evidence that shows

that the *Wahy* writers have first consulted Prophet Muhammad SAW regarding the written *Wahy* for any corrections, mistakes and verification, before it was published (Sya'ban Muhammad Ismail, 2012).

It is the responsibility of all Muslim countries to keep and protect the *Muṣḥaf* al-Quran with the *Ūthmani* Script. Preserving the *Muṣḥaf* will also avoid any confusion regarding the *Ūthmani* Script among Muslims like what happened during the time of Ūthman bin Affan RA, where there was a consensus among the Arabs to determine the accuracy of the reading. Because of this, some Islamic States put writing and printing of *Muṣḥaf* al-Quran with the *Ūthmani* Script version as a priority.

The Arab Republic of Egypt prohibits the writing or printing of the *Muṣḥaf* al-Quran without using the *Ūthmani* Script method, with exceptions to certain verses or paperwork for teaching purpose, as it is not considered as a complete *Muṣḥaf* al-Quran. This decision was made during the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting Sessions at the Al-Azhar University (Abd Rahman Abd Ghani, 2009).

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Besides, scholars from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had also agreed to maintain the writing of al-Quran with the *Ūthmani* Script version, in accordance with the available evidences to support the decision. The agreement was made at the 71<sup>th</sup> Conference of Saudi Arabia Scholars which was held on 28 August 1979 (21 *Syawal* 1399H). The conference discussed about the legal techniques of writing al-Quran, either in the *Ūthmani* Script or the *Imla'i* Script. As a result, scholars from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia decided that the *Muṣḥaf* al-Quran must be written in the *Ūthmani* Script, in reference to some Islamic scholars' opinions (Sya'ban Muhammad Ismail, 2012).

Meanwhile, the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of Dialogue Fatwa Committee of National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs of Malaysia, which was held on 5-6 June 1989 (2 Zulkaedah 1409H), agreed on the requirement to write the Holy Quran with the *Ūthmani* Script except for teaching purposes. The scholars had agreed on the prohibition of writing or printing of *Muṣḥaf* al-Quran or certain verses of al-Quran without the Arabic words or writing without using the Arabic writing system like Latin or Roman (Fatwa Kebangsaan, 2019).

# II. REVOLUTION IN QURANIC PRINTING

The discovery of the first printed press in 1436M / 850H proves that the revolution of printing has started widely. The printing industry nowadays not only focuses on the printing of books and magazines, but also involves religious books such as al-Quran (Ahmad Saifuddin, 2018).

The developments of the Quran in the field of printing began in the year 1530M in Venice, Italy, based on the recitation of riwayah Hafs from Imam Asim and used the al-Nash calligraphy (the printed al-Quran used the *al-Nash* calligraphy, based on the reading *riwayah* Hafs from Imam Asim). However, this publication did not spread widely since the Church has been liquidated short after. Since then, the Quranic printing became widely known.

Ahmad Ali al-Imam (1998) listed some developments in the Quranic Printing that include several countries, as mentioned in *Mabāḥith fi Ulum al-Quran* by Dr. Sabḥī al-Ṣoleh. The earliest printed al-Quran are, among others, listed as below (Sabhī al-Soleh, 1977):

- 1. Al-Quran printed in 1649AD in Hamburg, Germany and monitored by Abraham Hinckelmann.
- 2. Al-Quran printed in 1698AD in Padua, Italy and monitored by Ludovico Marraci.
- 3. Al-Quran printed in 1787AD, 1790AD, and 1798AD, published and monitored by Maulana Uthman in St. Petersburg, Russia. The *Mushaf* was then reprinted in 1803AD, 1819AD, and 1839AD in Kazan, Russia.
  - 4. Al-Quran printed with lithography in 1828AD in Tehran, then in 1833AD in Tabriz, Iran.
- 5. Al-Quran printed in 1834AD, 1842AD, and 1870AD in Leipzig, Germany and monitored by Gustav Flugel.
- 6. Al-Quran printed between 1863AD and 1865AD in India, monitored by Hafiz Muhammad *al-Makhdum* and Mualawi Muhamad Abdul al-Hafiz, and reviewed by Sheikh Maulawi Mahmud Ali.
- 7. Al-Quran printed in 1879AD in Turkey. The publisher of the *mushaf* used calligraphy by Hafiz Uthman, perfect for writing the Quran using *Rasm* Uthmani. This *mushaf* was then issued in Egypt and supervised by Sheikh Ridwan ibn Muhammad al-Mukhalilaty in 1886AD.

8. Al-Quran printed and published in 1918AD by the al-Azhar Mosque, under the instruction of King Fuad, Saudi Arabia and was thoroughly reviewed by Egyptian scholars to get the perfect edition.

Overall, the publishing and printing of the *mushaf* in the early developments of the printing industry were generally based on the recitation narrated by Hafs from Imam Asim. The only difference was in the writing style of the Quran. Some publishers used Imala'i writing and others used Uthmani writing. There are proofs showing that the recitation of al-Quran narrated by Hafs from Imam Asim is acceptable worldwide. Acceptable publications of mushaf al-Qur'an through other narrations are, for example, the recitation of Warsh from Imam Nafi', published in 1930AD in Egypt; the recitation of Qalun from Imam Nafi', published in 1981AD in Tunisia and Libya; and the recitation of Dūrī from Imam Ābu Āmru, published in 1978AD in Sudan (Hamdi Ṣolah al-Hudhud, 2008).

# III. MALAYSIA BECOMES THE SECOND LARGEST MUȘḤAF AL-QURAN PRINTER AFTER THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

With the rapid development in infrastructures and its economic stability, Malaysia's former Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had suggested to make Malaysia the second largest center for Quranic publication after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His suggestion was voiced during the launch of the Center of Muṣḥaf Al-Qur'an Malaysia Publication (CMQMP) in Kuala Lumpur. He said "I believe it is time for us to follow them and become the biggest Al-Qur'an producer after them (Saudi Arabia) in this region" (n.a., 2013). Furthermore, Malaysia will be using the Qur'anic Publication of Malik Fahd, Saudi Arabia as the main reference in publishing the Holy Al-Qur'an.

The announcement had given a very high impact to the Muslim countries, especially to Malaysia. Besides, it also proved as a great challenge to other Islamic countries, especially those in the Middle East like Yemen, Jordan, Egypt and others.

To achieve the goal, the government of Malaysia allocated approximately RM30 million for this purpose during the budget presentation for 2015. The budget was themed as "*Ekonomi Keperluan Rakyat*" and presented in the House of Representatives on 10 October 2014 (n.a., 2014). Unfortunately, the expenses increased from RM30 million to RM60 million until the complex is completed (Siti Aisyah Sukaimi, 2017). This effort emancipated the government's seriousness in making Malaysia as the second largest Islamic country in Qur'anic publications after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

To further achieve the target, the president of Putrajaya Corporation, Tan Sri Aseh Che Mat was given the responsibility to choose the venue to carry out the plan. The chosen location was at Presint 14 Putrajaya, which covers 5.514 acres of land (2020). He added that the place will not only focus in the establishment of the Publication Center, but it will also be known as a research and distribution center of the Holy Al-Qur'an (n.a., 2014).

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# IV. TYPES OF MUŞHAF AL-QURAN IN MALAYSIA

The *Muṣḥaf* al-Quran in Malaysia followed the recitations of Imam Hafs from Imam 'Asim's recitations. Since then, these recitation styles became famous among the Muslims in Malaysia. There are several kinds of *Mushaf al-Quran* used in Malaysia as illustrated below (Abd Rahman Abd Ghani, 2009):

1. Muṣḥaf al-Quran al-Karim bi al-Rasm Ūthmani published by Dar al-Fajr al-Islami and Dar al-Khayr, Damascus, Beirut.

This Muṣḥaf completely follows the Ūthmani Script and has close similarity with the Muṣḥaf al-Madinah al-Nabawiyyah. This Muṣḥaf is suitable as a reference after Muṣḥaf al-Madinah al-Nabawiyyah.

2. Muṣḥaf al-Qiraat wa al-Tajwid bi al-Rasm Ūthmani, published by Mu'assasah al-Iman, Beirut.

This *Muṣḥaf* is similar with *Muṣḥaf al-Madinah al-Nabawiyyah* in writing style. However, there are also some differences such as in the color referring to the *Tajweed* laws and some descriptions of the *qiraat*. The *Muṣḥaf* is suitable for those who want to learn the *Tajweed*.

3. *Muṣḥaf al-Quran al-Karim*, published by Percetakan al-Ma'arif Sendirian Berhad, Pulau Pinang and *Maktabah wa Matba'ah* Muhammad al-Huda *wa* Awladih, Bangkok, Thailand.

This Mushaf has similar characteristics with Mushaf al-Madinah al-Nabawiyyah whether in Waqf or Fawasil.

4. Mushaf al-Quran Malaysia published by Yayasan Restu, Sungai Buluh, Selangor.

The writing method of *Ūthmani* Script was applied in this *Muṣḥaf*. This *Muṣḥaf* is a local *Muṣḥaf*, having a combination of calligraphy and colorful conceptions. This is the first *Muṣḥaf* published for Muslims in Malaysia. This Muṣḥaf is also similar with *Muṣḥaf al-Madinah al-Nabawiyyah*, especially in *Syakal* and *Dhob* parts. However, there are some differences in terms of *fawasil*, kind of Juz' and *Hizib*, kind of *sujud Sajadah* and kinds of recitations like *Isymam*, *Tashil* and *Saktah*.

5. Muṣḥaf Tafsir al-Quran published by Syarikat Maghfirah Pustaka al-Madani Enterprise.

This Muṣḥaf was introduced since 2010 and republished more than three times. It uses the Ūthmani Script and is similar with Muṣḥaf al-Madinah al-Nabawiyyah. However, some differences with Muṣḥaf al-Madinah al-Nabawiyyah are also spotted such as the eleven lines in every page.

# V. BACKGROUND OF THE QURANIC TEXT CONTROL UNIT, (QTCU)

#### MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

The Quranic Text Control Unit (QTCU) is an organisation entrusted to monitor, control and approve any publication of the *Muṣḥaf*. The organization is responsible to regulate the printing and publication process of any Qur'anic text, receive complaints and feedbacks from the public for the Government to take any probable action on issues in publication of *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran, and organise seminars on awareness of *Ūthmani* Script in Malaysia. In addition, it also acts as the secretariat for the Board of Control and Printing Licence of Qur'anic Text (BCPLQT) since 1987. The Quranic Text Control Unit was established under the Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure that the Qur'anic text is published according to the laws and protected from any unnecessary elements.

QTCU was relocated for a few times over the years. In early 1993, QTCU was located at the Division B, Ministry of Internal Security, Islamic Centre Complex, Jalan Perdana, Kuala Lumpur (Ministry of Home Affairs 2015). Later, the department was moved to the Division C, Ministry of Home Affairs, also known as the

Qur'anic Text Control Unit at level 11, in the building of the Arab Malaysian Development Berhad (AMDB), Damai Complex, Jalan Lumut Kuala Lumpur. The unit was officially relocated again to the Ministry of Internal Security in August 2005 and placed under The Publication and Qur'anic Text Control Division, levels 4, block D2, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya ('Abd Rahman 'Abd Ghani 2009). Currently, QTCU is located at Level 5, Block D1, Complex D, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya (Ministry of Home Affairs 2015).

#### VI. STRUCTURE OF ORGANIZATION

Most of QTCU's staffs possess qualifications in Islamic studies, either from local or international universities. Moreover, most of the staffs are seconded from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (also known as JAKIM). As a governmental organization, QTCU is also involved with staff movement process such as staff's relocation and transfer according to their service period. An example is the Deputy Undersecretary position which has been filled by six different persons (Munir Salleh, 2014).

The Qur'anic Text Control Unit is chaired by the Undersecretary of Publication and Qur'anic Text Control Division and assisted by the Deputy Undersecretary. There are two officials 41 graded staffs known as the Assistant Secretary, a 27 graded assistant officer (*Penolong Pegawai Hal Ehwal Islam*), and five officer clerks under various grades.

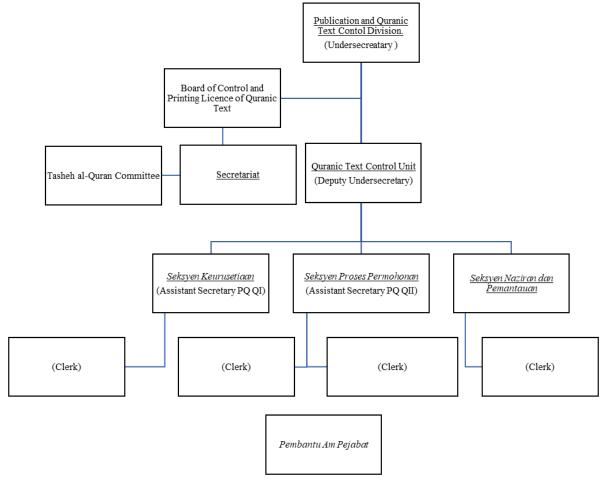


Figure 1: Organization Charts of Quranic Text Control Unit

# VII. QURANIC PRINTING ISSUES

In line with the developments of the printing industries, the publication of *mushaf* al-Quran is no exception. There are a lot of *mushaf* al-Quran publishers nowadays. If the publication is not monitored, mistakes and errors will most likely happen. According to Mohd Hasbie al-Shiddieque Ahmad (2015), five types of errors in Quranic printing have been detected namely not having any approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs, duplication from other approvals, translation without the Arabic text, publication using *Imla'i* calligraphy, and errors in Malay translation. Therefore, the issues related are as follows:

#### 1) Mistakes Detected in the Mushaf al-Quran

The Government of Malaysia will penalize the printing or publishing companies that are irresponsible in publishing the materials especially in the publication of *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran. The launching of the Printing of Quranic Text 1986 Act together with the establishment of Taṣḥeḥ Al-Quran Committee (TQC) have successfully minimised the mistakes found in the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran. This is proven from the interview done with the Deputy Chairman of TQC, Azhari Othman (2014), who lamented the high number of mistakes found in the Quranic text before the launching of the Printing of Quranic Text 1986 Act and Taṣḥeḥ Al-Quran Committee by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Therefore, one of the main objectives in the establishment of the Printing of Qur'anic Text 1986 Act is to ensure that all forms of Quranic texts or Quranic digitals are secured from any mistakes, regardless of being printed and published locally or imported from other Islamic countries (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2012).

According to Mrs Hashimah Nik Jaafar (2014), the former Undersecretary of the Publication and Quranic Text Control Division MOHA, to gazette something such as the mistakes in the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran, it must be mutually agreed by the Board of Control and Printing Licence of Quranic Text (BCPLQT) that the mistakes are in contrary with the *Ūthmani* Script method and the Printing of Qur'anic Text Act. For instance, any *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran that are not endorsed by the Government of Malaysia but freely published and distributed to the society. This is relatable to the behaviour of the publishers who decline to get approvals before printing and publishing the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran.

The establishment was also urged by concern on the contents of the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran that have not gone through the checking process with TQC in order to make sure that the contents are free from any errors.

This was confirmed when the researcher asked about the misuse of the approval. She answered: "We can seize and dispose the publications that violate the law. Firstly, we will discuss the matter with the Board (BCPLQT) before disposing the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran that misused the final proof's approval code. We cannot allow such publication to be distributed freely in our market if the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran does not contain our approval code. Chances of any mistakes in the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran are high, especially during the printing process" (Hashimah Nik Jaafar, 2014).

She also showed some examples of binding process that may contribute to the mistakes in the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran. She said: "if you get the approval to print the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran on an A5 size paper, yet you use and print the text on an A4 or A3 sizes, it is possible to find mistakes in the *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran. The mistakes may occur in

the form of missing or incomplete verses. We have clarified such mistakes during the printing process and been receiving complaints about the missing verses" (Hashimah Nik Jaafar, 2014).

#### 2) Validation of Approval Code

The Ministry will not confiscate the approval code of Quranic text publications or printing once the companies agree with the terms and conditions or requirements imposed. Hence, the code will be invalid if the publications or printing entities cannot fulfil the requirements. It is noted that the approval of Quranic text is different from other approvals such as the approval for film category.

This was mentioned Mrs Hashimah. She repeatedly affirmed that the approvals endorsed by the Ministry will not expire and it will be valid for a long period, with exception of any changes in the pure Quranic text.

Furthermore, she added: "There is no expiry date for the final proof. However, if the publishers make some amendments on the final proof and publish it, we will issue summon. But to be honest, once it has been reviewed and approved, it will be considered as correct and it could only be eliminated in proper ways. In other words, we cannot say the final proof is only valid for 3 months. It is different with films as it has its own expiry date. It is up to the publishers to publish the *Muṣḥaf* whenever they want. They can even use the final proof in 10 years' time" (Hashimah Nik Jaafar, 2014).

To date, there is one case whereby the approval code has been cancelled in the agreement between the Ministry and publication company.

#### 3) Hologram Stickers

Furthermore, another step taken by the Government of Malaysia was by introducing the hologram stickers, which was introduced in 2011. The purpose is to avoid any form of deceptions and it is compulsory for the printing and publishing companies to have the stickers in their *Muṣḥaf*. The hologram stickers were fully implemented in March 2014 (n.a., 2014). It is also one of the rules and regulations imposed by the ministry and the Government of Malaysia. Another reason underlying the enforcement of the sticker is to avoid any abuse on the Quranic text approvals (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2014).

According to Mrs Hashimah, (2014), the implementation of the hologram stickers was compulsory beginning 2010 onwards. The *Muṣḥaf* published in 2010 were not compulsory to have them as some of them had been sold.

Mrs Hashimah (2014) added, "As of now, we will use the hologram stickers. Many of the publishers already attached the stickers in their published *Muṣḥaf*. Over time, we do some checking at stores and we will know if the stickers are used in 2010. If we find *Muṣḥaf* that was published in 2009, summon will not be issued as most of them were already being sold. But, if the publisher re-published the *Muṣḥaf* in 2010, we will advise them to use the hologram stickers.

The Committee of Quranic Publication Malaysia (CQPM) regards the implementation of hologram stickers to every *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran as burdensome to printing and publishing companies. This is due to the additional 50 percent cost for each *Muṣḥaf* (n.a., 2014). However, the former Deputy Undersecretary of the Publication and Quranic Text Control Division MOHA, Mr Munir Md Salleh mentioned in the opening ceremony of the Revision and Evaluation of Quranic Text sessions 3/2014 that the Cabinet has agreed with the implementation of hologram stickers in *Muṣḥaf* Al-Quran. In the meantime, he also mentioned the agreement and support the

department gained from the Secretariat of Publication and Quranic Text Control Division (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2014).

# VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the collection of the Qur'an involves several changes since the days of the Prophet Muhammad SAW until when the Quranic publication was introduced. The Quranic publication started in handwritten *Mushaf* and has since developed into the printed version, in line with the developments of the publication industry. However, controlling and monitoring are necessary to ensure that the Quranic texts issued are secured from any mistakes. Several issues have been identified and actions have been taken to reduce mistakes and errors in the Quranic publication.

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