

QUR'ANIYYUN: IMPLICATIONS TOWARDS THE MINDSET OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

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Abstract. The *Qur'aniyyun* or better known as the Quranic Congregation is a modern anti-Hadith movement. This group claims that the Quran is clear enough and is more than sufficient as a guide in life and rejects the hadith as a source of legal theology. They also deny the general affiliation of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the cornerstone of Islam, but attributes to Him merely the role of being an Apostle who simply conveyed the Quranic verses to man. Some might assume that this anti-Hadith issue is trivial and does not spur any negative implications in everyday life. However, the existence of this group is considered very dangerous because it can undermine faith, destroy the practices of worship, and even taint ones morals and values. Hence, this article discusses the debilitating doctrine that has been spread by the *Qur'aniyyun* to the Islamic masses. Using the content analysis method, this article finds that the *Qur'aniyyun* doubts and questions the status of the hadith due to its narrative point of view and claims that there are many irregularities to it. The secular ideology brought on by this group has succeeded in planting the seeds of doubt on the narrative of the hadith and thus has the potential of misleading the society at large.

Key words: *Qur'aniyyun*, hadith, anti-hadith, Islamic law, secular.

Introduction. The *Qur'aniyyun* (Quranic Congregation) is an anti-Hadith movement that systematically denies the Prophetic traditions of the hadiths and dispels doubts on it. This group claims to be staunch Quranic supplicants who supposedly urge all to return to the teachings of the Quran, while at the same time they incite the masses to stop observing the hadith through doubt (*shubhat*) deliberately designed to confuse the people.

This movement was founded in 1902 in Lahore, (capital of Punjab) by Abdullah Jakralawi (1844-1895). Some of the strongest supporters of the movement include Ghulam Ahmad Barwiz, Al-Hafiz Mohd Aslam, Ahmad Ad-Din, Rashad Khalifa who was famous for the 19-Code and a pioneer from Malaysia, Kassim Ahmad [1]. The anti-Hadith issue is very important to ensure the maintaining of the sanctity of Islam. The ideals spouted by the *Qur'aniyyun* among Muslims can cause damage to their faith. Individuals with weak religious belief will easily be shaken and taken of the right path.

The *Qur'aniyyun* Movement or better known as the Quranic Congregation has long been established in Malaysia. The movement in Malaysia was brought about by Kassim Ahmad (1933-2017), who was a follower of Rashad Khalifa (1935-1990). They choose to only be guided by the Quran and reject the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The *Qur'aniyyun* consider the hadith to be a historical record that could and should be studied by researchers to understand and evaluate the times and era. However, they regard the hadith is a deviation from the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and can not be accepted as a source of Islamic law [2].

The influence of the *Qur'aniyyun* among today's society is increasing mainly due to the lack of understanding about them. This is very dangerous as if it is not overcome, it can undermine the faith of Muslims especially those who lack religious knowledge. The effects of the *Qur'aniyyun* doctrine on society can be seen from various angles. Looking at the angle of *aqidah* (faith), they believe that non-Muslims do not need to say the two *Shahadah* (bearing witness to faith) to convert into Islam. Also, as a result of the *Qur'aniyyun* doctrine, there are a handful of people who do not recognize and accept the inevitable emergence of Imam Mahdi and the Dajjal. This is due to the fact that for the *Qur'aniyyun*, there is no scripture in the Quran concerning or confirming the said matter [3].

Therefore, awareness about the *Qur'aniyyun* is very important so that the community is not easily influenced by this group's thinking. This study was made to expose the public to the controversial thoughts and ideas brought by the *Qur'aniyyun* movement and to clarify to the public to the arguments brought about by this movement in the misleading of Muslims. Sayyid Mawdudi is one of the scholars who fights on this issue. His writings against anti-Hadith movement remained a valued masterpiece which is used by Muslim scholars throughout the world [13].

History and Development of the *Qur'aniyyun*. The history of the emergence and development of the *Qur'aniyyun* can be broken into two periods, the past and modern era.

Past Times

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), seedlings of this ideology emerged among the Quraish people who belied his teachings and tossed unfounded allegations on him. But they were not categorized as an anti-Hadith movement because it was evident that their faith did not belong to the teachings of Islam [2].

During the time of the Companions RA, there was a man named Umaiyah bin Khalid who tried to find a solution to this problem by referring to the Quran alone. He discussed this solution with Abdullah bin Umar RA. However, Ibn Umar RA reminded him to accept and carry out what the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) brought forth through his teaching. However, this ideal was only within the scope of one's personal views and did not develop into a group or movement [2].

Al-Hasan explained, while Imran bin Hussain was teaching the hadith, there was someone who demanded not to teach the hadith as the Quran alone was adequate. Imran then replied, "*You and your friends can read the Quran. Could you teach me the prayers and its conditions? Or the Zakat and its conditions? You are always absent. While the*

Prophet (pbuh) had obligated the Zakat (alms) this way ... this is so” then the man replied: “Thank you, I do realize”. The next day, he became a jurist [2].

Modern Times

The *Qur’aniyyun* movement had existed in India, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia and Malaysia. They appeared in 1906 with the title *Jamiah Al-Qur’an*, or the Quranic congregation, whose movement was headed by Abdullah Chakrawali and Khawaja Ahmad Din. According to them, the Quran alone is clear and sufficient in explaining something and they did not need the hadith as a reference [1].

In Malaysia, the *Qur’aniyyun* movement was being pioneered by a founding member of the Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSRM), Kassim Ahmad. He did it jointly with some of his friends, namely, Othman Ali. They tried to attract the attention of Muslims by expounding the theory that the teachings of Islam are adequately explained by the Quran alone along with scientific research using the mind and rejecting the hadith of the Prophet, deeming it unnecessary. Kassim Ahmad then set up the *Jemaah Al-Qur’an of Malaysia* (JAM) on 11 June 1995. But JAM could not be established due to the opposition from various Islamic NGOs. Kassim Ahmad as the main driver of the *Qur’aniyyun* in Malaysia is believed to have been influenced by the teachings of Rashad Khalifa (1935), an Egyptian Plant-Biochemistry expert who lived in the United States [4].

Rashad Khalifa had presented his paper entitled *Islam: The Past, the Current and the Future* in the Christian and Jewish Missionary Seminar on 8 to 17 June 1983 in the United States. After presenting the paper, he officially established the The Quranic Society movement based in Tucson. In his writings, he made many misleading statements. He argued that the hadiths are the devil’s creation, thus believing in the hadith means believing in the teachings of the devil [5]. His deviant arguments and ideals can be seen in his writings such as *Miracle of the Qur’an: Significance of the Mysterious Alphabets*, *The Computer Speaks: God Message to the World*, *Qur’an: The Final Scripture*, *Quran: Visual Presentation of the Miracle*, *Quran, Hadith and Islam*, and *Quran: The Final Testament* [4].

Rashad Khalifa was the individual responsible for expanding the arguments put forth by Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqi (1889-1929) who established anti-Hadith theory. Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqi, who originated in Egypt, was the person who began to spread the *Qur’aniyyun* ideology [12]. This is evident when he wrote *Islam is Only the Al-Qur’an* in the *Al-Manar* magazine, which was run by Sayyid Rashid Rida. In the article, he refers only to the Quran and deemed that the Sunnah need not be referred to as a source of Islamic law [5].

Meanwhile, in Indonesia the anti-Sunnah group, known as the *Qurani Group*, had existed since the 1980s. The party responsible for the spread of anti-Sunnah ideology in Indonesia were the Dutch [6]. The early figures of the movement included Lukman Sa’ad, Muhammad Ircham Sutarto, Nazwar Shamsu and Dailami Lubis. The *Qur’aniyyun* movement centre in Jakarta had many followers and later spread to Bogor, West Java, Tegal Central Java, and Padang West Sumatra [7].

Confusion brought about by the *Qur’aniyyun*. In assuring that the masses are influenced by this ideology, the *Qur’aniyyun* have raised various aspects of confusion in order for the masses to question the position of the hadith as a source of Islamic reference. Among the aspects of confusion spread by the *Qur’aniyyun* are as follows:

1. The Hadith is the source of Disunity and Confusion among the Islamic Community

Kassim Ahmad in his writings explicitly threw various accusations against the hadith. He argued that the hadith is false and that the hadith is the source of weakness and the deterioration of the Muslim community. Among his allegations against the hadith is as follows [8]:

- i. The Hadith or *Sunnah* is a false doctrine that emerged about 200-250 years later, and was associated with the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).
- ii. The Hadith or *Sunnah* is false teachings that have and continue to be the cause of greatest confusion and disunity among Muslims for more than a thousand years.
- iii. The cause of disunity is the hadith.
- iv. The split created by the hadith has been legalized and institutionalized, and so the hadith replaced and transformed creative thought in Islam.

The above accusation has led to negative implications towards the Muslim community who have since before acknowledged and realized the fact that the Hadith was one of the main sources of Islamic teachings and is the cause of unity among Muslims.

2. The Quran forbids believing in the Hadith

The *Qur’aniyyun* figures concluded and believed that the Quran prohibits Muslims from believing in the hadiths. This opinion was approved by Kassim Ahmad as reflected in his writings. To reinforce that opinion, he quoted several Quranic verses which were cited only in its translated form such as:

“Inilah wahyu Tuhan yang kami bacakan kepadamu dengan sebenarnya, hadis yang manakah selain wahyu ini yang mereka percaya?”

This *Surah al-Jathiyah* verse 6 means the Quran is the revelation of Allah which we recite to you in truth, which of the hadiths other than this revelation do they believe?.

Kassim Ahmad then interpreted his own translation, saying that verse 6 of the *Surah al-Jathiyah* prohibits us from believing in hadiths other than the Quran itself [8]. The above negative allegations bring bad implications to Muslims who believe in Allah and His Messenger the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It is also a manifestation of the practice of the first pillar of Islam and the fourth pillar of faith. Which in this case, is the pronouncement of the two *Shahadah* and believing in the Messenger of Allah, which are both His holy words.

3. Obedience to the Prophet (pbuh) is Obedience to Allah

Qur'aniyyun followers believe that obedience to the Prophet (pbuh) is obedience to God which is further proven from the verses of the Quran that urges mankind to submit to God alone. To support this argument, they quoted the Quranic verses from *Surah Luqman* verse 22, *Surah Saba* verse 46, *Surah al-Zumar* verse 54 and *Surah al-Hujurat* verse 10 [8].

They wrongly interpreted the meaning of these Quranic verses. There are incomplete sentences and questionable translation which changes the true meaning held, thus changing the meaning of the verses. Particularly in the passage from *Surah Saba* 'verse 46, which was translated as follows [8]:

"Katakanlah, aku menggesa kamu melakukan sesuatu perkara, bahawa kamu sepenuhnya tunduk kepada Tuhan berpasang-pasang atau seorang diri kemudian berfikir."

This translation means *"Take for instance, I urge you to do something, that you are fully bowed to God in pairs or individually and then think."*

The above negative accusation brings a bad implication on the Muslim community, as they all know and acknowledge that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the Last Messenger of Allah, with the grand mission to expound Islamic law to all his people. Thus, the orders of the Prophet (pbuh) reflect on the command and will of Allah which is revealed through His word in the Quran.

4. The Quran does not Require any Explanation

For the *Qur'aniyyun*, the Quran does not require the hadiths as a supplement to give further clarification or explanation, as the Quran is perfect. To support this argument, they quote some of the holy scriptures contained in the Quran in its translated form, of which the translation is according to their own interpretation, among them are [8]:

"Kami tidak meninggalkan sesuatu pun dalam Kitab ini"

Means: *"We do not leave out anything from the Book"* (surah al-An'am verse 38) again,

"Apakah kan kucari selain Allah sebagai sumber undang-undang sedangkan Dialah yang menurunkan Kitab ini dengan terperinci."

Means: *"What do I seek besides Allah as the source of the law while He is the one who sent us the Book in all its detail."* (surah al-An'am verse 114)

and,

"Perkataan Tuhan telah sempurnalah dengan sempurna dan adilnya. Tiada satu pun yang boleh merubah kata-kata-Nya."

Means:

"The word of God is perfect and fair. None can change His words." (surah al-An'am verse 115)

The above allegation leads to negative implications for Muslims, as they understand that the Quran is the fundamentals, while the hadith functions as a description of the contents of the Quran. Both are inseparable and need one another, as explained by Allah in *Surah Al-Nahl* verse 44.

One may not be able to pray except by referring to the hadiths of the Prophet (pbuh). This is because the Quran does not detail the process and rites of prayer. This fact in itself clearly shows that the Quran and the Hadith are unlikely to be separated. Anyone claiming that the Quran alone is sufficient and does not need hadith, is indeed lost, as he does not follow the command of the Quran which orders to hold fast to the hadith and follow the *sunnah* (Surah Al-Nisa: 65).

5. The Leadership of the Prophet (pbuh) as a human being differs from his Leadership as a Prophet

In the interpreting of *Surah al-Nisa* verse 59, *al-Hasyr* verse 7 and *Surah al-Nisa* 'verse 45 of the Quran, Kassim Ahmad said in his writing as follows [8]:

"..... note also that God uses the word Prophet and does not use the word Muhammad in that verse. This clearly shows

that it is the Messenger's message that we are to obey, and not the word Muhammad."

Furthermore, Kassim Ahmad made the following assumption [8]:

"After his passing, his leadership and the obedience to his leadership as the leader of the first Muslim community ceased on its own. But as the Messenger of the revelation contained in the Quran, his leadership and obedience to him shall continue until the Day of Judgment. The confusion between these two different roles of His is that which causes the disparity between the Quran and the Hadith of Sunnah."

In this case, he quotes the word of Allah in *Surah al-Nisa* verse 59 as his argument:

"O faithful believers! Obey Allah, obey His Messenger, and the authorities (uli al-amri) among you, unless there is a difference in opinion, then look back to Allah and the Messenger, if you have faith in Allah and the afterlife, that is more important (for you) and brings better blessings."

However, he interpreted the above verse as follows [8]:

"In this verse, Muhammad holds two roles, as the Prophet is bearing the message of the Quran and as a leader to his people. As leader of his community with the authority (uli al-amri) he wields, he must be adhered to by the people, whether as head of state, head of government, judicial or warlord. As a leader, obedience to him is conditional, that is depending on whether or not his commands contradict the Qur'an, as well as the conditions of his administration which is limited only to his society."

This ideology further negatively impacts the Muslim community. As in the minds of the people, prophets and apostles are the people chosen to be God's messenger to lead and guide humans onto the right path. It is obvious that the prophets and apostles are exemplary leaders and historical figures in human civilization. In a more specific context, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the last prophet and head of the prophets, and of course having a distinctive position especially in matters of leadership. As a superior leader, his life and personage is often highlighted by many writers from ancient times till present, either by Islamic or non-Muslim scholars. It is no surprise then when Michael H. Hart (1978) placed the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the 'first' man, in the list of humans he analysed, to be the most influential person in the history of world civilization. To Muslims, his position is much more special as he is the *qudwah* or perfect role-model for Muslims in all dimensions of life.

6. Worship can be implemented without the Restriction of the Hadith

In the case of worship, the *Qur'aniyyun* groups have caused much confusion to Muslims. The confusion raised pertaining to the method of prayer, prayer times, the exemptions or *rukhsah* during prayers, method of ablution and so on [8]. In the prayer method, the *Qur'aniyyun* claim that the existing prayers are taken from the prayers done by the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) AS. Among others, they say:

"Anyone who studies the Quran will know that religious worship, prayer, fasting, zakat and haj was taught by God to Prophet Ibrahim AS and his followers who then passed it down from generation to generation to Prophet Muhammad and his followers" [8].

They invite Muslims to study the Quran through their writings by referring to *Surah al-Baqarah* verse 128 which they translate as follows [8]:

"O God, make us Muslim (bow) to You, and from our descendants let us be born as a race of Muslims (revering) to You. Teach us how to practice our prayers, and forgive us; You are ever-forgiving and ever-loving."

The above, negatively impacts Muslims as the Quran and the hadiths are intertwined with each other, indiscriminately. There is no reason to doubt the hadith, as there is no reason to doubt the Quran. Because if there is doubt regarding the hadith it signifies doubt towards the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the truth of his words and the message he brought. And this is directly doubting Allah and His commands. The Islamic Scholars, especially the Companions, have in mutual agreement decreed that the hadith has its own authority in particular on issues which are not explicated clearly in the Quran, in addition to being a source of explanation, support and parsimonant to the laws in the Quran. This fact alone shows that the hadith is in second place only after the Quran itself [9].

7. Trusting the Hadith as a Source of Law is *Shirk*

The *Qur'aniyyun* claims that believing the hadith as a source of Islamic law is *shirk*. In fact they say that Allah Himself described it as such. They argued [8]:

“On the other hand, making hadith or sunnah as a source of Islamic law along with the Quran, as recommended by ahl al-hadith, God it to deem it as associated with Him.”

To reinforce this argument, they suggest that Muslims observe the words of Allah which they translated as follows [8]:

“Mereka mengikut patung-patung yang menentukan bagi mereka undang-undang yang tidak pernah diluluskan oleh Tuhan.”

Which means “They who follow the statues determine for them laws that have never been approved by God”.

Qur’aniyyun scholars claim that the verses above are clear and require no further explanation. They bravely claim that sticking to the hadith or making it a source of law is shirk. The opinion or allegations of the *Qur’aniyyun* on this matter will not be commented on as its clearly falsehood and are claims issued by a non-knowledgeable person in the field [8].

The above allegations bring negative implications since it involves the issue of shirk. The bizarre fact is that the *Qur’aniyyun* claim they believe in Allah and the Quran. For them the Quran is the only source of knowledge in Islam and they only follow the teachings of the Quran. Now, it is evident that Allah has ordered all men to obey the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in all his words and deeds. If they choose to reject the hadith as a source of law (religious arguments), this means they choose not to believe in the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Quran. Strictly speaking, if they still hold to these ideals then the position of their faith is whether in line with Islam or as an infidel is uncertain. If they still do not want to follow the Prophet (pbuh) and reject the hadith then they certainly have no exemplary role model and so the direction of their interpretation of the Quran will be deviant [10].

8. Rejecting the *Qada* and *Qadar* (fate and destiny)

The *Qur’aniyyun* rejects the belief in *Qada* and *Qadar* (preordained predestination), which is one of the most important pillars of the faith. This is because the *Qada* and *Qadar* is stated in the hadith and is considered contrary to what is found in the Quran [2].

Among the principles of the Akidah held by the Muslims that have been criticized by the *Qur’aniyyun* is the belief in *Qada* and *Qadar*. They had always tried to criticize the Muslims and try to cast doubt on it, especially for those who are weak in faith. When in a bad or unprofitable situation, the *Qur’aniyyun* attributes it to the Muslim’s attitude towards *Qada* and *Qadar*.

Qada and *Qadar* is a supernatural matter that is closed to humans. As a human being, we do not know that anything that is destined by Allah until it happens. Believing in *Qada* and *Qadar* encourages a person to earnestly achieve what he wants and take care from doing something undesirable [8].

In addition, this negative allegation impacts Muslims for the worse as it suggests that a large number of Muslims who are hungry for knowledge and remedies in this earthly life may have been surrounded by *Qada* and *Qadar* problems. They may have been able to understand their problems after referring to those who are experienced in the field. On the contrary, for the *Qur’aniyyun*, they declare war on destiny due to their superficial knowledge. They blame fate for all the bad things that happened to them. Fate is also used as an excuse to commit immoral sins while they are aware that they are given the ability to decide on whether or not to do something good or bad. In fact, it is clearly described in the Quran, by the hadiths and the respected scholars, that an open minded attitude and a sincere heart to accept the truth free from the agenda of evil desires is the main factor which can guide a person out of the problems of fate [11].

Conclusion. The *Qur’aniyyun* has in not a small way influenced the Muslim community. The implications of this group of thought can be seen from two angles; in faith (aqidah) and in law (Sharia). From the point of *aqidah*, the implication is clear on the beliefs of Muslims when there is doubt on the basic teachings of Islam. This is evidenced by the claims that it is not obligatory for a non-Muslim to speak the two *Shahadah* to convert into Islam. In addition, there is doubt shed on the privilege of the Prophet (pbuh) as well as matters relating to the unseen and supernatural aspect. In terms of Islamic law or *Sharia*, the implications of *Qur’aniyyun* ideology can be seen from the point of worship when there are those who claim that prayers should only be done three times. In addition, there are some matters not acknowledged and rejected by the *Qur’aniyyun* among them is *Qada* and *Qadar*, the *sunnah* of the Prophet in wearing robes and turban while keeping a beard, and more. Hence, further studies have to be done to ensure the issue of the *Qur’aniyyun* ideology is exposed to society. It is hoped that the authorities will be able to eradicate the *Qur’aniyyun* from expanding their misguided understanding among the Muslim community in Malaysia.

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