



Original Article

Yahuza al-Iskhriyuti (Judas Iscariot) according to the views of *Quranic mufassirin* scholars

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ABSTRACT

Yahuza al-Iskhriyuti is a name used by Islam in reference to individuals who are not alien to Christianity and have been noted in the books of *Bible*. Judas Iscariot and Yahuza al-Iskhriyuti are two names referring to an individual regarded as a traitor by the Christians following his handing over of Jesus Christ to the Jews to be killed and crucified. In Islam, the event of the killing and crucifixion of Isa a.s. as claimed by Christian also narrated by Allah SWT in the *Quran*. However, Islam has the view that the person murdered and crucified was not Isa a.s., but another person whom Allah SWT created to resemble him. It is just that the identity of the murdered man is only vaguely mentioned by Allah SWT in the *Quran*. Nonetheless, if we refer to the opinions of the experts, there are several names which can be associated with this particular individual. Therefore, this writing aims at revealing who this figure actually is, from the perspective of the *mufassirin* also the role he plays in the killing and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: *Judas Iscariot, members of mufassirin, Bible, Jesus Christ, Christianity*

Introduction

The religions of Islam and Christianity, *samawi* by nature, share some resembling qualities and differences in a lot of aspects. The Bible and the histories of the *Anbiya* selected by Allah SWT to the Christian people are also evident in the *Quran* and they are acknowledged as those who must be led and guided by Muslims. Among the apostles who have become the topic of discussions and debates between the Muslims and Christians is Isa a.s. He was called Jesus Christ in Christianity and regarded as ‘the son of Allah’ based on the Trinity Doctrine which was first introduced by St. Paul.¹

¹ Zakaria @ Mahmood bin Daud, “Agama Kristian Kini Dan Pengasasnya”, Jurnal Usuluddin, Fakulti Usuluddin, Akademi Islam, Universiti Malaya (1995).

The onset of the trinity concept was noted to be after the incident of the arrest of Jesus Christ which led to his murder and crucifixion, as very much claimed in Christianity. This event is mentioned in the *Quran* and found its place somewhere in the *Bible*, but the story illustrates some differences from one another. A remarkable difference lies in the individual who is murdered and crucified in the occurrence. The *Bible* clearly states that Jesus Christ was the one killed and crucified by the Jews and Romans. This incident had opened door for St. Paul in creating the Trinity Doctrine which later becomes an important tenet that they must uphold. In the Trinity Doctrine, this crucifixion of Jesus Christ seeks to liberate all humans from the sins passed down by Adam a.s.² In the *Bible*, there is a verse saying: "Allah, indeed, loves people in this world so much that He gives His only son, so that everyone who believes in him will not meet with self-destruction but will be granted true, eternal life." (John 3:16).

Christianity is convinced that the incident of arrest of Jesus Christ and later, his murder and crucifixion is yielded by the act of betrayal committed by Judas Iscariot. He was the one who provided the exposure of where Jesus Christ and his friends were hiding to the Jews and Roman soldiers. However, in the context of Islam, Isa a.s. was not murdered and crucified, but was rescued and lifted to the sky by Allah SWT. The person murdered and crucified was someone else, whose face was made to resemble the face of Isa a.s. As the *Quran* does not clearly dwell into this individual, then the views of the *mufassirin* in the holy books are very much important, as to see the extent of Judas Iscariot's position in the event of murdering and crucifying of Jesus Christ.

The life of Judas Iscariot according to the *Bible*

Before we go on to elaborate more on Judas Iscariot from the views of the scholars, first of all, the authors will briefly touch on Judas' life story according to the *Bible*. In general, not much can be known about Judas Iscariot in the *Bible* and those little information mostly revolves around his birth date, origin and his death. What seems to be generally known is that Judas Iscariot or Yudas Iscariot is the son of Simon Iscariot (John 6:71) and he was mentioned in the Bible 22 times which is in the Book of Matthew (10:4; 26:14, 25, 47; 27:3), Mark (3:19; 14:10, 43), Luke (6:16; 22:3, 47, 48), John (6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26, 29; 18:2, 3, 5), and Acts(1:16, 25). In terms of its use, the name Judas is commonplace in Palestin in the era of the Primitives. Therefore, to differentiate him with other Judases, the *Bible* writers would normally add to the name, the name Iscariot so that it will be able to clarify who is this Judas that they are talking about. This can be seen in Bible John, which clearly states the name of Judas son to Simon Iscariot (John 6:71).

Meanwhile, the origin of the name Iscariot cannot be ascertained. However, following one of the established theories, Iscariot means "the Keriot people" that refers to a city or territory in Yudea. In the Jesus era, Yudea is one part of the Palestinian land which was at the time, reigned by the Roman Empire (Luke 3:1). It was also named the Land of Yehuda dan and among the cities under Yudea was Betlehem (Matthew 2:1) which was the birth

² Ibid

place of Jesus and Gaza (Acts 8:26). If this theory is proven, this shows that Judas is the only one follower of Jesus who came from the southern part of Palestine, while eleven others came from Galilea which is north Palestine.

Among the twelve followers or *al-hawariyyun* of Isa a.s. (Jesus Christ), Judas Iscariot was held accountable to take care of the finance which he had kept in a special box. It is, thus his job to buy the necessities for his group members. Despite this, he sometimes took advantage of the situation by stealing the money from the box for his personal use (John 12:6).

The stealing habit in Judas Iscariot is depicted in the *Bible* when Maria applying some ointment on Jesus' feet using expensive oil. Judas had reprimanded Maria for not selling the oil for three hundred dinar and the money could be given to the poor. The *Bible* views this critically, in a way that this incidence does not demonstrate Judas' concern on the poor people, but in actual fact to hide the fact that he is actually a thief. In the *Bible*, it is stated that: "Six days before Paskah Jesus came to Betania, the home of Lazarus was awakened by Jesus from among the dead. There he was celebrated in a feast and Marta came to serve him, and one of Jesus' meal companions was Lazarus. Thus, Maria takes half a kati of expensive oil, then dabbed it on Jesus' foot and wiped it off with her hair; and nice aroma had lingered in the room. But Yudas Iscariot, one of Jesus' students, who would be giving it to him, said "Why isn't this oil sold for three hundred dinar and the money not given to the poor?" This was said by him not because he really cared for the poor, but only because he was a thief; as he often took the money he had kept in the bag" (John 12:3).

Other than being regarded as a thief, Judas is also seen as a traitor. In the *New Testament* there are sixteen mentions (Matthew 10:4; 26:16, 25; Mark 3:19; 14:10-11; Luke 6:16; 22:4, 6; John 6:71; 12:4; 18:2, 5; Acts 1:16, 18, 25) of his sins and acts of betrayal towards Jesus. Such betrayal is caused by the provocations of the Devil who had long dominated him from the very beginning. This had been explained by Jesus in one of their many conversations: "Answered Jesus, 'Is it not I who have chosen you twelve? Yet, one of you appears to be a Devil.' He was talking about Yudas the son of Simon Iskariot, because he is one from the twelve persons that will betray him." (John 6: 70-71).

Syaitan (devil) had penetrated into Judas before dinner, which is before Jesus was arrested by the Jews to be killed. This is narrated in John: "Then the Devil entered Yudas who is called Iskariot, one of the twelve; he went and consulted with the priests' Head and the leader of the soldiers about how he could turn Jesus in to them." (Luke 22:3).

The role of Judas Iscariot in the killing of Jesus Christ according to the *Bible*

In the *Bible*, there are stories about the Jews' plans to capture and kill Jesus. He was arrested in the garden of Getsemani (Mark 14:32) and was brought by Jews leaders to

Pilatus, the Governor of Judea in Jerusalem to be put on trial on the premise that he had intervened in the Jewish religion.³

However, the stories that are included in the *Bible* are not strong enough to offer proof of the truth, due to the disguise and resemblance with the person murdered. Nevertheless, all the books in the *Bible* have come to an agreement about the Christians' confidence about the role played by Judas Iscariot in this event.⁴ The greatest role played by Judas as found in the books of Matthew, Luke, Mark and John would be his betrayal towards Jesus. With only thirty dirham, he had turned Jesus in to the Jews dignitaries to be killed and later, crucified. However, Judas did not benefit from the money, because he died not long after his act of betrayal.

The death of Judas

In the *New Testament*, there are two versions about how Judas Iscariot met his death. In Matthew there is an account of Judas regretting what he did and that he had returned the money to the Jews and later he had hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5). Meanwhile, in another narration, there is a story about the consequence of his betrayal, where he had fallen causing his body to be smashed and his intestines extracted (Acts 1:18). As the two versions are different from one another, there is an uncertainty about the actual happening of his passing.

Yahuza al-Iskhiriyuti (Judas Iscariot) from the perspective of the *mufassirin*

Judas Iscariot is one foreign name to the Muslims because it is not stated in any part of the *Quran*. Even when Allah SWT narrates about the event of the capturing of Isa a.s. by the Jews in the *Quranic* chapter, al-Nisa', his name is not found anywhere. Therefore, his life story and background were unable to be elaborated, even though there are several scholars who have linked this with this event, on that will be discussed later in this paper.

In general, the *Quran* does not clearly narrate about the murder and crucifixion of Isa a.s. because it is not a history book or a novel. What is mentioned by the *Quran* is that Isa a.s. was not a normal human being, not God and he did not die crucified. With this, the *Quran* has denied the murder of Isa a.s. through crucifixion as has been stated in the *Bible*. The negation is clearly captured by Allah SWT in the *Quran*: "And [for] their saying: 'Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Isa the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah, and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him; but another was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption, and they did not kill him, for certain'." (*Quran* 4:157- 158).

³ H. Hasbullah Bakry. Nabi Isa dalam al-Qur'an dan Muhammad dalam Bible. Kota Bharu: Pustaka Aman Press. 1979.

⁴ al-Fadhili, Dawud 'Ali. Usul al-Masihiyah kama Yusawwiruha al-Quran al-Karim. Maktabah al-Ma'arif. 1986.

This verse talks about the evil conspiracy of the Jews and Romans who were determined to kill Isa a.s., but he was taken care of by Allah SWT by lifting him to the sky in the forms of body and soul. Consequently, they had killed and crucified another person mistakenly thought of as Isa a.s. In actual fact, Allah SWT had replicated the face of Isa a.s. in another man. This is one issue of debate between the Muslims and the Jews and Christians. The *Quran* handed down six hundred years ago after the event denied that the person was Isa a.s. Therefore, who is the man who was actually murdered and crucified? Is he Judas Iscariot who has been thought of as a traitor by the Christians or were there any other individuals who could be linked with this incidence? As the answer to this issue is not found in the *Quran*, then the views of the *mufassirin* on the verses 157- 158 of al-Nisa' were closely referred.

Based on the reference on the interpretations, the authors find that not all scholars elaborate on this event in detail and associate it with Judas Iscariot. Among the text intended is the *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* which recounts the story from Ibn Abbas r.a. which is harmonious with the narration of the *Quran* that Isa a.s. was not murdered and crucified.

The story is as such: *"Some of the stories about the Jews condemned by Allah SWT are when Allah SWT who sends Isa a.s. to them, they start to feel envious with the advantages or miracles that he was able to demonstrate, his ability to cure diseases and give life to the dead by God's permission. Then they hurt and lied to Isa a.s. that he and his mother were not able to live in peace in the country. Not only that, they had gone to see the king of Damsyiq who was the worshipper of the stars in the sky. The Jews had said this to the people of of Damsyiq named Yunan: "In Bait al-Maqdis there is a man who deviates Man and has done a lot of damage to the King and his people". The King of Damsyiq was furious and had written a letter to his governor in Bait al-Quds to arrest, crucify the man and have thorns placed on his head so that he would not do any more of his evil acts. Then the governor of al-Quds with a group of Jewish people went to the house where Isa a.s and his friends went hiding, altogether about twelve people. When he came to know about this matter, he had said to his companions: Who among you, who is willing to have his face replicated with mine and he would be my friend in Heaven? A youth who happened to be the youngest among the companions of Isa a.s, was selected after three rounds of voting. Then the man had his face replicated by Allah to resemble the face of Isa a.s, before he was seized and crucified."*⁵

The issue about the individual who was murdered and crucified is also explained by Imam al-Baydhawi in his interpretation. In one of his narrations, it is clearly stated that the man was Yahuza who was one of the many followers of Isa a.s. who had betrayed him. Meanwhile, in another narration, the name of the man is not mentioned, but there is a brief mention of him as a Jewish guard, whose face resembled that of Isa a.s.⁶

In the interpretation of al-Tabari, there are several tales that discuss this issue. The first one states that Isa a.s. together with seventeen *al-Hawariyyun* people had been in hiding in a house. Nevertheless, this secret was only known by the Jews and they had ambushed

⁵ al-Dimasyqi, Imad al-Din Abi al-Fida' Ismail bin 'Umar bin Kathir al-Qursyi. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Riyadh: Dar al-Salam Li al-Nasyr wa al-Tawzi', 2001.

⁶ al-Baydhawi, Nasir al-Din Abi Said 'Abd Allah. *Tafsir al-Baydhawi*, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah. 1988.

the house. As soon as they entered it, Allah SWT had made all the faces in the same house to look like the face of Isa a.s.

About the names of *al-Hawariyyun* of Isa a.s., Imam al-Tabari did mention their names who totalled twelve people. They were Butrus, Ya'kub bin Zabdi, Yuhannas brother of Ya'kub, Andarawus, Filibbus, Abrathalma, Matta, Tumas, Ya'kub bin Halqiya, Tuddawas, Fatatiya and Yudas Zakariya Yuta. However, there is a narration from Ibn Ishaq stating that there is another thirteenth person named Sarjis. According to al-Tabari, Sarjis was the man whose face was similar to the face of Isa a.s. Afterwards, Allah SWT had lifted Isa a.s. up to the sky.⁷

Imam al-Tabari had also recorded another story which mentions that Yudas Zakariya Yuta, one of the *Hawaris* of Isa a.s. was bribed by the Jews around thirty dirham to show them which one was Isa a.s. so that they would be able to detect him. With the signal of Yudas kissing the Apostle, the Jews would then be able to know him. But the one kissed by Yudas was actually with his face sharing a resemblance with Isa's face and finally Sarjis was killed and subjected to the crucifixion. However, Yudas really regretted his actions, and later he committed suicide using a rope.⁸

In *Tafsir al-Kasyaf*, there is a mention of two individuals who were murdered and crucified. The first one was a *hawari* of Jesus who offered himself to have his face replicated with Isa's face. The second individual was among the Jews themselves who had betrayed Isa a.s. and the person had his face replicated with the Apostle's face.⁹

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi did mention that the person who was killed was named Titayus. He was instructed by Yahuza, the head of the Jews to kill Isa a.s.¹⁰ Al-Sya'rawi, while interpreting the verses of al-Nisa', states that there was a man named Tatyanus was killed and crucified as his face resembled that of Isa a.s. Another story states that Sarkhas was Isa's follower who was killed and crucified after he had expressed his willingness to be made to look like Isa a.s. The third story establishes that after the Jewish knew that Isa a.s. was rescued by Allah SWT to the sky, they had had to kill someone to prevent from the mass to idolize and worship Isa a.s.¹¹

In *Tafsir al-Manar*, Muhammad Rasyid Ridha had explained that Yahuza al-Iskhiriyyuti was the person whose face resembled the face of Isa a.s. and he was killed and crucified by the Jews.¹² This opinion is also agreed by Sayyid Qutb in his interpretation, but it was not

⁷ al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir. Jami' al-Bayan 'An Ta'wil Ay al-Quran, al-Qahirah: Dar al-Salam. 2005.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Abu Qasim Jarullah Mahmud bin 'Umar al-Zamakhsyari al-Khawarizmi. al-Kasyaf 'an Haqiq al-Tanzil wa 'Uyun al-Aqawil fi Wujuh al-Ta'wil, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah. 1972.

¹⁰ Muhammad al-Razi Fakhr al-Din al-'Allamah Diya' al-Din 'Umar. Tafsir al-Kabir wa Mafatih al-Ghaib, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. 1985.

¹¹ al-Sya'rawi, al-Syeikh al-Imam Muhammad Mutawalli. Tafsir al-Sya'rawi, Misr: al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyah, n.d.

¹² Muhammad Rasyid Ridha. Tafsir al-Manar, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.

only his face that resembled the face of Isa a.s., but his voice had also demonstrated a change.¹³

Based on the various narrations readily available in the interpretations mentioned, the authors are able to conclude that all the scholars agreed that Isa a.s. was not murdered and crucified, but it was actually another person whose face resembled the face of the Isa a.s. There are three different identities whose face had been made to resemble the face of the Isa a.s. The first was one of the followers or *al-hawariyyun* of Isa a.s. whose name was different from one story to another. Among the names were Titanus, Sarjis and Yudas Zakariya Yuta, Titayus, Tatyanus, Yahuza al-Iskhiriyyuti also Sarkhas. Despite this, the difference can still be referred to the same person, which was Judas Iscariot. Here this individual was killed and crucified either willingly or otherwise, a punishment imposed by Allah SWT due to his act of betrayal.

The second originates from the Jews themselves who had become a spy to their clan. After Isa a.s. was raised to the sky by Allah SWT, their faces were made to resemble Isa a.s. that the Jews regarded them as the actual Isa a.s., and subsequently they were executed and crucified. Meanwhile, the third identity was an unknown one and this happened after the news of Isa a.s. raised to the sky was made known to the public. To prevent from the news from circulating and for fear that the people would turn their adulation and worship to Isa a.s., then the Jews had had to execute certain someone to be in control of the situation.

All in all, Isa a.s. (Jesus Christ) was not murdered and crucified as stated in the *Bible*, but he was elevated to the sky by Allah SWT. In reality, the one murdered and crucified was actually other individuals aforementioned. However, to identify who is the exact individual, we have to let Allah SWT perform His supreme powers, as this matter is almost non-existent in Islam. Because of that, a lot of scholars have perused the source of the *Bible* to talk about this issue in their books.

Conclusion

When the *Quran* firmly rejects the event of crucifying the Isa a.s., this indicates that Islam has negated one of the most important tenets in Christianity which is the concept of sacrifice of Jesus Christ who seeks to free human from the generational sins. The reality has it that the Jews have murdered another person whose face resembles that of Isa a.s., and Muslims are confident that Isa a.s. was not murdered and crucified, but was lifted by Allah SWT to the sky. The murdered man had been a different person with only the faces sharing some resemblance. Who the person was, is not to be stressed, because it is only something which is *juz'iyah* in characteristics. The thing that is most important is that we believe in what has been "told" by Allah SWT in the *Quran* and have validated it without doubt. We also believe that he is still alive as there was no evidence from Allah SWT stating that he

¹³ Sayyid Qutb. *Fi Zilal al-Quran*, Beirut: Dar al-Syuruq. 1978.

was dead. The life of Isa a.s. in heaven is not something strange and was narrated by Rasulullah SAW during the incidence of Isra' Mi'raj. Even in modern times, there are people who have been transcended up the sky. What differentiates this is the specific time and manner. Thus, if human mind and heart are able to accept the supremacy of Allah SWT, what had happened to Isa a.s is no laborious task for Allah SWT.

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