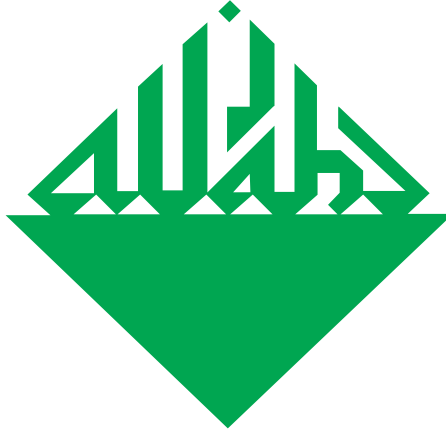


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INDONESIAN IMAGE OF THE OTTOMAN CALIPHATE AND THE NEW REPUBLIC OF TÜRKIYE 1918–1925

Mehmet Özay & Nia Deliana

THE RISE OF TAHFIZ SCHOOLS IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

Jajang Jahroni

الحراك الصوفي والدعوة الإنسانية في إندونيسيا:
حالة العبيد أبي بكر العطاس الزبيدي

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Jajang Jahroni

The Rise of Tahfiz Schools in Contemporary Indonesia

Abstract: *This article discusses the rise of tahfiz schools in contemporary Indonesia which were pioneered by the Salafis and PKS-affiliated groups (PAGs). While tahfiz has been preserved for centuries among traditionalist Muslims, the tahfiz schools the Salafis and the PAGS promoted were integrated into school systems that also offer sciences. As a result, tahfiz schools are popular among urban Muslims who expect their children to be able to read the Qur'an better while at the same time equipping them with sciences. This allows them to enroll at public universities. Even though tahfiz schools are relatively expensive, they never lacked students. Small, middle-size, and large tahfiz schools have been established across the country and exclusive tahfiz schools are equipped with libraries, gyms, computer labs, laundry facilities, cafés, and theatres. These facts have changed the long-established image of madrasa and Islamic schools which were seen as rural and poorly organized. The commodification of Islam is eventually inevitable and tahfiz schools have become an integral part of this process. They have become an important political issue since the 2010s.*

Keywords: Tahfiz Schools, PKS-Affiliated Groups, Salafi, Qur'an, Indonesia.

Abstrak: *Tulisan ini membahas kemunculan sekolah atau pondok tahfiz pada masa Indonesia kontemporer. Sekolah ini digagas oleh kelompok Salafi dan PKS yang mengintegrasikan pondok dan sekolah. Di kalangan Muslim tradisional tahfiz sebenarnya sudah lama ada. Namun sekolah tahfiz yang digagas oleh Salafi dan kelompok PKS ini ajarkan sains. Maka pondok tahfiz menarik perhatian para orang tua yang ingin anak mereka dapat membaca Al-Qur'an lebih baik dan mereka bisa daftar di universitas. Sekolah tahfiz yang kecil, menengah dan besar banyak didirikan di berbagai tempat. Yang eksklusif dilengkapi dengan lab komputer, perpustakaan, pusat kebugaran, café, londri, dan teater. Kenyataan ini ubah kesan sebelumnya di mana pondok atau sekolah Islam identik dengan miskin dan kampung. Komodifikasi Islam akhirnya tak terhindarkan dan tahfiz menjadi bagian terpenting di dalamnya. Tahfiz menjadi salah satu isu politik pada 2010. Banyak politisi mengangkat isu tahfiz untuk dapatkan dukungan.*

Kata kunci: Sekolah Tahfiz, Kelompok Afiliasi PKS, Salafi, Al-Qur'an, Indonesia.

ملخص: تتناول هذه المقالة ظهور مدارس ومعاهد التحفيظ في إندونيسيا المعاصرة. تأسست هذه المدرسة من قبل السلفيين و الجماعات المنتمية إلى حزب العدالة والرفاهية (PKS) التي دمجت المدارس والمعاهد الإسلامية. كان التحفيظ موجوداً منذ فترة طويلة بين المسلمين التقليديين، إلا أن مدرسة التحفيظ، التي أسسها السلفيون وجماعة PKS، تقوم بتدريس العلوم. لذا فإن معهد التحفيظ يجذب انتباه الآباء الذين يريدون أن يتمكن أطفالهم من قراءة القرآن بشكل أفضل وفي نفس الوقت تزويدهم بالعلوم. وهذا يسمح لهم بالتسجيل في الجامعات الحكومية. تم إنشاء مدارس تحفيظ صغيرة ومتوسطة وكبيرة في جميع أنحاء البلاد، وتم تجهيز مدارس تحفيظ الحصرية بالمكتبات وصلالات الألعاب الرياضية ومختبرات الكمبيوتر ومرافق غسيل الملابس والمقاهي والمسارح. وهذه الحقيقة تغير الانطباع السابق بأن المعاهد والمدارس الإسلامية كانت مرادفة للفقر والتخلف. إن تسليع الإسلام أمر لا مفر منه في نهاية المطاف، وأصبحت مدارس التحفيظ جزءاً لا يتجزأ من هذه العملية. أصبح التحفيظ قضية سياسية في عام ٢٠١٠، وقد أثار العديد من السياسيين قضية التحفيظ لكسب الدعم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مدرسة التحفيظ، الجماعات المنتمية إلى حزب العدالة والرفاهية (PKS)، سلفية، القرآن، إندونيسيا.

Over the last decades, there has been a major campaign to promote the Quran among the Muslim communities in Indonesia. This campaign is made by at least two groups. The first is the Salafis, and the second PKS (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*—Welfare and Justice Party)-affiliated groups, abbreviated here as PAGs. In the early period of the New Order, to counter Soeharto's depolitization policy, Muslim groups began to initiate social and religious projects, one of which was the large-scale introduction of the Quran among the Muslim community (Azra 2004). Modernist Muslim groups were convinced that knowing how to read the Quran was an important part of Muslim political identity (Liow 2022; Sunarwoto 2020). Meanwhile, the traditionalists viewed this skill as a true religious practice (Lukens-Bull and Woodward 2021) there is a basic distinction between traditionalist, reformist, neo-traditionalist, and Salafi-Wahhabi understandings of Islam. A unique feature of Indonesian Islam is the importance of mass organizations with tens of millions of followers. There are also Islamic political parties and women's organizations. Their Quranic training has been preserved for centuries in pesantren (boarding schools) or at the houses of Quranic teachers, where it was held after evening prayers.

Previous studies on the abangan, due to their inability to read the Quran, found that these groups were regarded as non-Muslims or less Islamic, which led to political disadvantages. Around the 1980s, Muslim leaders became very concerned that not all Muslims were able to read the holy book satisfactorily (M. V. Bruinessen 2012; Geertz 1976). This would lead to the extremely serious consequence that Muslims were unable to improve their knowledge about Islam; and thus, their knowledge about Islam could not improve and that, in the long run, the quality of their faith would weaken. If their faith was feeble, Muslims might become the target of Christian missionaries who, at that time, were active across the country (Narciso 2008; Shihab 1995). The modernists considered this a serious setback which would result in the gradual decline of the Muslim population in the country. Funded by Saudi Arabia, the modernists initiated a program to send *dai* (Muslim preachers) to remote areas where they taught basic Islamic knowledge to the local population. The ability to read the Quran was included and smart students were offered scholarship to continue their studies in the newly established Saudi Arabian Islamic college LIPIA in Jakarta.

In the 1990s, after completing their studies at Saudi universities, returning students were convinced that reading the Quran was an important subject their educational institutions should provide. This period was marked by the popularity and the melodious voice of Shaikh Abdul Rahman al-Sudais (b. 1960), the most popular prayer leader (*imam*) of the Great al-Haram Mosque in Mecca who had replaced the old-fashioned Muammmar ZA (b. 1954), an international Indonesian Quranic reciter (*qari*) who used the seven traditional reciting styles (*qira'ah sab'ah*).²

Initially, as far as the Salafis and the PAGs were concerned, Quranic reading was one of the subjects taught at schools or madrasa. Later, along with the advancement of their institutions, tahfiz became a major component. To attract more students, it was combined with the national curriculum. This experiment was truly a remarkable maneuver in their effort to meet Muslims' highest expectation to create a new generation of Muslims.

This article is based on fieldworks carried out intermittently from 2020 to 2024. It is an ethnographic study that targeted students, teachers, parents, and local communities where tahfiz schools were located. Interviews were held at schools, mosques, offices, café and restaurants. This was made possible because of the assistance of several people, especially my students, and with fellowships from various institutions including the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and the Center for Research and Community Service (LP2M) of State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. The study was done in Jakarta and its surrounding areas (Bogor, Depok, Tangerang) and Kuningan (West Java).

Tahfiz means memorization, and a hafiz is someone who has memorized a certain portion, or the entirety, of the Quran. Some scholars studied how tahfiz was practiced throughout Islamic history. Benaouda Bensaid is a contemporary Muslim scholar who works on tahfiz. Together with his colleagues, he shows how the words of God assert a great impact on spiritual intelligence (Bensaid, Machouche, Grine, 2014). Jenny Berglund and Bill Gent, working with British Muslim students, discovered that the memorization of the Quran helps student to focus on their supplementary education (Berglund and Gent, 2018).

Throughout the article, I will argue that both the Salafis and the PAGs use Islam as an instrument to achieve their political goals. This

approach is called functionalization, a process of translation in which intellectual objects from one discourse come to serve the strategic or utilitarian ends of another discourse (Starret 1998: 9). One aspect of this process is the inevitable presence of Islam as a commodity through which various products are made to achieve material gains. As I will describe in the sections below, the practice of tahfiz is one part of the commodification of Islam which is currently happening in Indonesia.

The Salafis and the PAGs

While tahfiz is not a new phenomenon in Indonesian Islam, the tahfiz campaign launched by the Salafis and the PAGs changed the orientation of education (Sofyan 2015). Nowadays, more and more parents send their children to tahfiz schools. Tahfiz programs are also offered in non-Salafi and non-PAGs schools while scholarships are being offered to hafiz students at university level and in civil servant recruitment, candidates who are hafiz are being preferred.³

The question of why the Salafis and the PAGs launched such a massive tahfiz program is an interesting one. To answer this, first, one needs to look at the basic principles of the Salafis who emphasize the supremacy of texts and, second, the development of Salafis who experimented with various methods and approaches in their education system over the last decades.⁴ Their campaign on the Quran has attracted great interest of Muslim parents who are themselves poorly trained in, or unable to, read the Quran. They expect their children to have more Quranic knowledge and better reading skills. Third, it is economical. In many cases, once a school introduces tahfiz, it enhances its popularity allowing it to raise its fees. This is the reason why tahfiz schools are found in any neighborhood, having student numbers between 150 (small schools) and 500 (middle-sized schools). Sometimes they are located in shophouses (*ruko*). Large tahfiz schools are located outside neighborhoods, sometimes in mountainous areas, which shows their exclusivity. The acquisition of one school by another is also common which indicates their high economic potential (Daulay and Tobroni 2017).

PKS is an Islamist political party dedicated to realizing its ideological interpretation of Islam within the context of the state and society. It has large affiliate organizations creating an Islamic agenda for the Muslim ummah (Machmudi 2008; Woodward et al. 2013). From the outset,

PAGs viewed education as their top priority. They erected schools starting from kindergarten up to high school level. They include tahfiz as one of the main elements in their educational institutions. As a political party, PKS successfully solidified its presence in Parliament by surpassing the parliamentary threshold (Muhtadi 2008, 2013). Meanwhile, on major Indonesian campuses, PKS cadres have thrived and from where they meet professional needs in various strategic state and private institutions. These professionals have become middle class urban Muslims. They demanded that a certain Islamic education for their children be established which then led to the rise of the tahfiz school. In the early 2000s, schools affiliated with this Islamic party began to be established in various Indonesian major cities. They introduced a more Islamic nuance to the curriculum which is considered secular.

After the introduction of their Islamic political agenda into the national system seemed to have failed, the PKS became more concerned with Islamizing the ummah and they adopted education as their best strategy (Noor 2011). This was marked by, among others, the introduction of integrated Islamic schools.⁵ The Salafis, while still focusing on the issues of bid'ah (religious innovation), included tahfiz in their schools which is more widely appreciated. This inclusion was timely as the Salafis needed support to continue their programs. The issues of bid'ah, previously used to promote their movements, only attracted certain limited Muslim groups. It was too sophisticated for the ordinary people who do not want to get involved in religious debates. Likewise, prophet medicine, which was popular in the early 2000s, gradually declined. It was tahfiz which has a constant even larger captive market.

As soon as tahfiz was introduced, it became popular. It was a cross-class phenomenon attracting a large segment of the Muslim community ranging from lower to middle class urban Muslim professionals. This is the reason for the mushrooming of tahfiz schools in many parts of the country. Parents would send their children to tahfiz schools very young, expecting that they would memorize a portion of the Quran. They realized that although children would eventually lose their memorization, it would, at least, affect their emotional and intellectual development. In many prophetic traditions (hadith), hafiz is highly respected. One hadith says: "The hafiz will install the crown to their parents in the hereafter." These hadith are highly celebrated which

excited many parents to have a hafiz child. Many children fail to become a hafiz. But some children succeed. They are able to memorize the entire Quran, and they really want to become a learned person (*alim*). A friend of mine from Bandung was very proud of his only son, who, while studying secular sciences, was able to memorize the entire Quran. He would travel wide and far to introduce his son to ulama to seek their blessing. Elhurr, as his son is called, made his *tasmi'* (can be translated as hearing) demonstrating his ability to memorize the entire Quran in front of the public. It started at 6 AM and finished at 12 PM, around 18 hours. Now he is enrolled as a second year student at al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt.

Tahfiz throughout History

The Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the span of the twenty-three years of his prophethood. Every time he received a revelation, he memorized it. He then delivered it to his Companions and asked them to do the same. So, there was an ample number of people who memorized the Quran. During the reign of Abu Bakar, the first caliph, many hafiz had died on the battlefield. This led to the instruction of the compilation of the written Quran by Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, and it was completed during the reign of Uthman ibn Affan, the third caliph.

Since early Islam, tahfiz has been part of the scholarly credentials (Hafiz et al. 2016). Many great Muslim scholars (ulama) were trained in memorizing the Quran since the early ages. They learned and memorized the Quran under the auspices of a sheikh in combination with other Islamic sciences such fiqh and hadith. So, at relatively young ages, students became hafiz. Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (767-820 CE), the founder of the Shafiite school of thought or madhhab, is said to have been a hafiz at the age of seven; the great Muslim philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazali (d. 1111 CE) at the age of ten.

As a field of academic enterprise, with other Islamic fields of knowledge such as hadith (prophetic tradition), fiqh (law), nahw (grammar), tahfiz had gradually become institutionalized. Hafiz, persons who have memorized the Quran, are highly respected within Muslim communities. They enjoy a many privileges given by rulers as well as by the Muslim communities (Ayyad 2022; Bensaid and Machouche 2017). Chains of teacher-student transmission (*sanad*)

were gradually formed in many parts of the Muslim world. The golden chain of transmission which leads to one particular sheikh was more popular than others to attract new students of the Quran to learn as well as to get the sheikh's blessing. An authoritative sheikh transmitted the Quran to his students and thus authorized them to transmit it to later generations. This is called *ijazah*. Ijazah Quran is a certificate that indicates that one is authorized to transmit and distribute the reading of the Quran (Bizawie 2015; M. van Bruinessen 1995; Kobayashi 1998).

In the waves of Islamization in the Indonesian Archipelago, the importance of Quranic learning has always been emphasized. While the initial phases of the conversion were identified by the utterance of the *shahadah*, circumcision, and the abstinence of pork consumption, these were followed by a set of instructions for the new converts related to their daily religious practices such as prayers, fasting, and the ability to read the Quran. The ability to read the Quran is important as it relates to prayer. In 16th and the 17th centuries Java, Muslim rulers began to establish boarding schools or pesantren where the children of noble families received Quranic instruction (Dhofier 1999). Pesantren Tegalsari, founded in the 17th century by Kyai Ageng Muhammad Besari, pioneered the introduction of the Quran to the Javanese people. In the 18th and 19th centuries, a number of pesantren was established in the Archipelago for further Islamization (Ismail 2011).

Pesantren were instrumental in introducing the Quran to the local population. In fact, many pesantren started as small Quran schools that usually only taught after the evening prayer. Due to growing numbers of students, the sheikh or kyai of these pesantren decided to erect permanent buildings where students stayed. This was the beginning of the boarding schools that thrived in the Archipelago starting in the second part of the 19th century. In Java, two kyai became members of the most important chain of transmitters of the Quran, namely KH. Munawwar (1884-1944) of Gresik, East Java, and KH. Munawwir Krapyak (1870-1941) of Yogyakarta, Central Java. Most of the younger generation of kyai in Java took their Quranic lessons from these two masters, who subsequently transmitted their knowledge to subsequent generations.

Female hafiz are called hafizah. They are usually the wife of a kyai, called nyai in Java and they are very common. Although they are relatively invisible and shielded from public exposure, hafizah have

turned into magnets for female students to come to study. Although female presence in pesantren is relatively new compared to male (C.-M. Hefner 2016, 2019), there is always a small number of female students, mostly the daughters of other kyai from neighboring areas, who sit Quranic training under the auspices of a nyai. *Haflat al-Quran* (Quranic commemoration) is held in the month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, or in Sha'ban, the eighth month. In these months events take place where new graduates are initiated because they have completed their Quranic training. One by one they read certain chapters or verses and, in the last part of the event, they obtain certificates that include their *sanad*, which indicates that they are authorized to teach the Quran to other people.

The fact that women are engaged in the study of the Quran is interesting. Many of them find their career through teaching the Quran and from that, they cross to other professions ranging from civil servant, professor, to politicians. It is the field where women usually have more leeway to flourish balancing male domination on law. This is also the reason why there are so many female Quran reciters (*qariah*) in Indonesia whose popularity goes from the national to international levels. In 1979, Sarini Abdullah won the international Quranic competition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, beating Malaysian domination. This victory marked the golden era of Indonesian female reciters such as Maria Ulfah and Nursiah Ismail. However, after the collapse of the New Order Government, events such as MTQ (*Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran*, Quran Reading Contest) which provided entertainment for the public at all levels from national to regional, district and sub-district, were reduced (Gade 2004, 2004; Rasmussen 2010). It gradually came to be replaced by the Salafi *tartil* reciting style, which is more individual.

Tahfiz versus Tafiqqub

Throughout history, tahfiz was never required of students. Instead, students were urged to acquire deep knowledge (*tafaqquh*) about Islam. This is certainly true within the traditionalist Muslim groups and Nahdhatul Ulama (NU). The instruction of deepening religious knowledge is found in QS 9: 122. However, certain students were allowed to become a hafiz only after they had completed their studies of religious knowledge and only when they were talented. Under the auspices of a hafiz, these students were taught the tahfiz practices and skills to become

a hafiz and also other reading skills. In the course of time, the number of hafiz within traditional Muslim society remained small compared to those who had studied fiqh. A hafiz or hafizah becomes reputed because the public becomes aware that a kyai or nyai is actually a hafiz or hafizah. This is because being a hafiz is part of one's individual virtues rather than a profession. When they have time, hafiz will memorize the Quran for hours to keep their *hifz* (memorization) skills intact. Being a hafiz is a lifetime achievement and hafiz should protect their memorization by constantly practicing it. But this is not an easy task as other activities will occupy their time. This results in a decreasing number of hafiz. Disturbed memorization is believed to be a bad deed and even a sin.⁶

PTIQ (*Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Al-Quran* — College for Quranic Sciences) is an institution of higher education where talented students from all over the country continue to deepen their studies of the Quran. Established in 1971 by NU scholars such as KH Muhammad Dahlan and Prof. KH Ibrahim Hosen, this college is committed to accommodating talented students who previously studied at Quranic schools and who seek to really master the Quran. Meanwhile IIQ (*Institut Ilmu Al-Quran*, Institute for Quranic Sciences) was founded 1977. It is exclusively for women who want to study the Quran. In both institutes, tahfiz is an important part of the curriculum. In previous times, all students were required to sit tahfiz, but now, along with the transformation of both institutions, tahfiz is optional.

Since the rise of the Salafis in Indonesia in the early 1980s, they have used different strategies to promote tahfiz (Jahroni 2015; Wahid 2012). They introduced tahfiz early on because they believed that the ability of Indonesian Muslims to read the Quran was very poor. The low percentage, even the absence of this ability, was interpreted differently and some thought it was shocking. Some even would say that Indonesian Muslim are less Islamic at best, or un-Islamic at worst. This might influence Indonesia's status as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. From time to time, many people have been concerned with the decreasing number of the Muslim population and the transformation of tahfiz took place due to these sociological factors.

Changing Urban Landscapes

In the late 1980s, middle class Muslims in Indonesia were convinced that most Indonesian Muslims could not read the Quran properly.

Being better educated and with a higher economic status, these middle classes expected their children to be able to read the Quran better. The Salafis and PAGs used these feelings to promote tahfiz. The result was incredible. In the late 1990s, there emerged schools that specialized in tahfiz and in the early 2000s, tahfiz schools were erected in many urban neighborhoods in the country.

Over the last two decades, a number of Islamic organizations and the urban Muslim population co-existed due to their mutual engagements (M. V. Bruinessen 2013; Wanto et al. 2022). It may be said that the urban landscapes turned into places where new Islamization takes place. The Salafis and the PAGs contribute to, and are part of, this development. Given their opportunity to forge social and political structures, they participate in the reproduction of public discourses. Through this participation, they expect to be able to influence decision-making processes and the power distribution pertinent to their interests and to maintain their position as a new emerging authority (Eickelman 1979).

Changing urban landscapes are the result of the vigorous economic development that took place during the New Order Government (Hegarty 2021). From its inception in the mid-1960s, the New Order regime focused on economic development. Its intention was to calm down the situation in Indonesia, which had just gone through a period of political turmoil following the bloody coup d'état in September 1965. One important step Soeharto's presidency made in the beginning was his decision to invite economists, headed by Widjojo Nitisastro, to sit on his economic advisory board (Wie 2002). This board was tasked to find ways to recover from the economic crisis, to stabilize the value of the Rupiah, to slow down the inflation rate, and to make long-term strategic economic plans. The result was incredible. In a short time, Soeharto managed to overcome the economic problems and the country made significant progress. In the following years, economic growth was stable at an average of about 7 percent per year (Zanden and Marks 2012).

In the 1980s, Indonesian social landscapes began to change significantly. New urban economic centers emerged in and outside Java. The first Muslim generations were born that were educated under the New Order and they played an important role in shaping public policies. They were actively engaged in social transformation, and they

distanced themselves from politics. After the imposition in the early 1980s of the Pancasila as the sole foundation for political and social organizations, many Muslim groups shifted from politics to social activism (Bush 2009). This shift marked the era of civil Islam, a form of Islam that promoted larger participation in shaping public life. This form of Islam is deemed supportive for the sustainable development of the democratic system (R. W. Hefner 2000).

Tahfiz Schools

In many traditional communities, children usually learn the Quran after the evening prayer. They go to the house of the Quranic teacher in the neighborhood. One by one they read the Quran following the teachers' instruction. By using a stick, students point out precisely the letters the teachers point out them starting from *alif* (the first Arabic letter) to *ya* (the last letter). Once familiar with the letters, they learn *haraka* (diacritic) so the letter can sound a, i, or u. Only then they start to read the Quran, which usually begins with the last chapter called *juz amma*. This traditional method was considered ineffective as many kids read the Quran by lip-sync (*apal cangkem*) (Wilson 2002).

In the 1990s, the new *iqra* method was introduced.⁷ Using this method, students take only a few months, even weeks, to read the Quran, compared to the traditional method which took longer, ranging from one to two years. What is important in this development is that Quranic classes were revitalized in the form of TPA (*Taman Pendidikan Al-Quran*, Quranic Kindergarten) held in the morning and in the afternoon. It is a semi-formal institution with the duration of one to two years. Since then, Muslim parents were proudly saying that their children already finished the TPA and they would display their children's pictures taken at their graduation in their homes.

The tahfiz schools that flourished in the early 2000s are in fact a continuation of this TPA model. Furthermore, unlike many traditional madrasa, these schools also teach modern sciences such as math, physics, and biology, which are important parts of national curriculum. The background of this teaching is that Muslim students should also master sciences which allow them to obtain a better profession such as doctor, engineer, etc.

While accommodating the national curriculum, which allows students to enroll in public universities, the Salafi and the PAG schools

also emphasize a religious curriculum (Makruf and Asrori 2022), so there are two curricula in one school, the composition of which varies from one school to another. Most range between 40 to 60 percent. Some go even further to 30 to 70 percent. In other words, the religious curriculum is primary and the national curriculum is secondary (Hasan 2022). By using this strategy, students are still able to focus on their religious curriculum. During the examination season, students study the national curriculum in order to be able to sit the tests, which is made possible by affiliating the schools to public schools. During this study phase, subjects related to the religious curriculum are reduced except tahfiz.⁸

There are three tahfiz schools which are the subjects of this research: (1) Ibn Umar Tahfiz Plus School located in Ciputat, South Tangerang, not far from the State Islamic University (UIN) of Jakarta, (2) Al-Hijaz School in Kelapa Dua, Depok, West Java, about 15 kilometers to the South of Jakarta, and (3) Uthman ibn Affan College, in Cipayung, East Jakarta. These schools represent the current tahfiz schools in Indonesia.

Ibn Umar, a Tahfiz Plus School

Ibn Umar Tahfiz Plus School (IUTPS) was founded by Ustadz Abdul Rahim Ayub in 2009. He is a Salafi figure who was previously the governor of the Jama'ah Islamiyah (JI), a jihadist organization with a network in Southeast Asia. He was the assuming director of the JI school in Melbourne, Australia for 17 years. Frustrated with JI, he joined various Middle Eastern Muslim groups. He then decided to follow the al-Salaf al-Salih which he believes is the true path of Islam. He has been a Salafi preacher ever since. Realizing that he could not find a suitable school for his daughters, he decided to establish his own school, based on the Sunnah which later on came to be known as IUTPS. This was made possible by the generosity of a Salafi named Auliya Mulki Umar, who donated a piece of land in Legoso, Ciputat.

Being a Salafi school, IUTPS applies certain rules such as the segregation between male and female students. Female students wear a niqab (hijab), male student wear isbal. Teachers, security guards, and staff members have long beards, which is considered sunnah (recommended). IUTPS has classes at all levels, starting from kindergarten and going up to elementary, secondary, and high school levels. In 2021, the total number of students was 500. Female students

(*akhwat*) at the high school level are located in Ciputat, male students (*ikhwan*) at Pamulang, about 5 kilometer to the South. Many of its students come from areas such as Jakarta, Tangerang, Bogor, Bekasi, Depok, Bandung, Palembang, and Banjarmasin.

IUTPS uses a boarding system. Most of its students are living in the dormitory. This enables to intensify the tahfiz program which needs the students to be highly concentrated. Some students go back and forth to their homes, but they have to follow the full-day school program, from 7.30 AM to 3.00 PM. Each level has a different tahfiz workload. Elementary students memorize one chapter, middle school students five chapters, and high school students 15 chapters. The daily activities for boarding students start at 3 AM in the morning when students go to the mosque and pray tahajjud. Waiting for morning prayer, around 4.30, they exercise recommended litanies and chanting. Others practice their tahfiz.

Classes for all levels start at 7.30 AM. For 120 minutes, all students study tahfiz. They recite and memorize short chapters of the Quran. This pattern is followed each day except Friday where all activities stop at 11.30 AM to prepare for Friday prayer. After noon prayer, around 3.30 PM, male and female students do their exercises in separate places. After evening prayer, around 7.30 PM, students go to the study rooms to study various subjects. Under the guidance of a *mushrif* (male trainer, *mushrifah*: female trainer), students analyze various subjects. Here and there, however, there are always students who engage in tahfiz.

Apart from tahfiz, students are given extracurricular activities to perform. This includes archery and horse riding. While archery equipment can be provided easily, horse riding is very expensive. Most tahfiz do not have horses and stables and horses and instructors are rented. During the weekend, parents visiting schools may bring their children who can enjoy these exercises as well. The presence of these extracurricular activities is said to be based on the sunnah. The Prophet Muhammad urged Muslim parents to teach their children three skills: archery, horse riding, and swimming. During the weekend, students practice these skills in the schoolyard while swimming has been dropped. This is due to the fact that public swimming pools does not apply gender division.

Sewing is another skill taught to female students. The importance of this skill is echoed by the Prophet Muhammad. Female students use their leisure time to learn this and after they have become skillful they produce garments to be sold to the public, the profit of which can add

to the school's income. It is important to note that most tahfiz schools create business activities to pay for their expenditures and these include a laundry, minimart, and selling water. The consumers are mostly members of the Salafi communities, sympathizers and local Muslim people.

Al-Hijaz

Al-Hijaz is a foundation established by Wahdah Islamiyah, the largest Salafi organization in South Sulawesi which has many branches across the country. Most of its ustadz and ustadzah are Wahdah alumni who specialized in various Islamic fields of knowledge. The foundation is located in Depok, West Java, not far from the headquarters of BRIMOB (Brigade Mobil, *Indonesian Mobile Brigade*). When visiting this school, one immediately has the impression that this is a Salafi school. There are announcements reminding visitors about gender segregation. Female students and teachers wear a niqab, a dark color garment of black and blue covering up their bodies guarding them from the public gaze. Male teachers use a white cap, shirts popularly called *baju koko*, and trousers with the edge up above their ankles (*isbal*). From a distance, one can see horses, a stable, and an archery arena. But those who use them are not students, but rather Pondok Laras restaurant customers seeking amusement.

The school was established based on the idea that not all Muslims live in accordance with the guidance of the Sunnah. For this reason, the institution calls upon Muslim to return to the true path of Islam as expounded by the pious Salaf generation. It started with Pak Joko's initiative to donate his land to the Wahdah. At the beginning, Al-Hijaz was supported by the Al-Haramayn Foundation, a Saudi affiliated organization which distributes charities to Muslim organizations. But then, along with the declining support, the institution was forced to become self-sustaining. This is the reason it developed a business network including a laundry, minimart, mineral water, sales point, publications, etc. Al-Hijaz has schools at several levels starting from pre-school, up to kindergarten, elementary and middle schools. Tahfiz is included at all levels.

There are always a number of police officers, wearing full uniform, taking Quranic classes at Al-Hijaz. To them, it is said that it is 'better late than never'. They barely learned the Quran during their childhood because of a less-Islamic environment or they were *abangan* referring

to those nominal Muslims who do not abide to the sharia. Apart from the Quran, they also learn how to perform the ablution, say prayers, fast, etc. Al-Hijaz has a tremendous role in advocating Islam to them and turning them into so-called 'reborn Muslims'. This is the result of the sociological process where people working in previously secular professions, such as the police, army, and businesses, etc., come into contact with Islam and become Muslims as a result of intensive *dakwah* (proselytization) by a number of Islamic organizations (Meuleman 2011; Rudnyckij 2009). Their presence in turn offers various kinds of support to the organizations. Some of these police officers have reportedly memorized some chapters or short verses of the Quran. Some even act as *ustadz* for their colleagues who want to study Islam.

At all times, students memorize the Quran in their dormitory, in class, or in the mosque. Their voices echo in every corner of their school. This is part of the students' daily activities. They repeat (*muraja'a*) or memorize new chapters (*ziyada*) of parts of the Quran during their *tahfiz*. These sessions take place from morning to noon prayers. During the *tahfiz*, students are urged to use only one particular book as changing books might confuse their memorization. Sometimes, students change their book two or three times, because their book got damaged or lost, before they memorized the entire Quran. Al-Hijaz alumni are among the best hafiz and many schools in Indonesia and Malaysia recruit them to become *tahfiz* teachers.

Ma'had Uthman ibn Affan (MUIA)

Ma'had Uthman ibn Affan is located in East Jakarta. It was established in 2001 by Persatuan Islam (*Persis*—Muslim Unity), a modernist organization, in cooperation with the Darul Birr Foundation from the United Arab Emirates. This is surprising considering the fact that *Persis* had been dormant for decades. *Persis* was established during the formative era of Indonesian nationalism in 1923 (Laffan 2003) but it declined in the aftermath of Indonesian Independence in 1945. After 1945, it was only concerned with eradicating *bid'ah* and *khurafat* (both related to religious innovation) and failed to pay sufficient attention to so-called Islamic modernism. So, MUIA means a serious revival for the organization in the spirit of Islamic modernism. In 2002, the school officially changed its name to Asian Muslim Charity Organization (AMCF). The name was probably changes because

the Darul Birr Foundation wanted to hide its presence from public exposure.

MUIA is a college tahfiz and offers 2–4-year education programs with tahfiz as an additional study package. I visited the school in 2010, during my dissertation research. I met students with Sundanese accents, most of whom were alumni of various Persis schools in East Priangan comprising Bandung, Cianjur, Garut, Tasikmalaya, and Ciamis, which had become the Persis stronghold. Most of the students were given scholarships provided by AMCF. This is the reason why there are so many students registering with this college. MUIA's concept closely resembles that of LIPIA (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab—Colleague for Islamic Sciences and Arabic) established by the Saudi Arabia Government, located in Jakarta.

The current MUIA is still the same except that the availability of scholarships has significantly declined. The school needs to seek support from Muslim donors particularly those with a Persis background. Books are still provided by the school. Tuition waives are no longer available but students, mostly from low income families with rural backgrounds, can still afford to pay the fees. Beside tahfiz, students also need to master Arabic and other Islamic knowledge. The alumni of this school reportedly work as teachers at Persis schools and boarding schools and they also work as preachers. As a result of this, Persis seems to have more energetic members to continue its commitment as a modernist organization.

Beside tahfiz, MUIA facilitates students who want to continue their studies at Saudi Arabian universities. The Islamic University of Medina has so far been the students' most preferred destination. In this university, students are trained to become scholars in Islam under the auspices of Saudi Wahhabi scholars. In turn the alumni spread the Wahhabi ideology to other parts of the Muslim world which has led to global Salafism. Salafism, not Wahhabism, is indeed the term coined by Wahhabi scholars because of the pejorative notion clinging to the term Wahhabism. Some Salafi groups even begin to use the term 'Ahl al-Sunnah' which denotes their inclination to the practice of the Sunnah. The later sounds softer and means a lot to ordinary Muslims.

PAGs Tahfiz Schools

PAGs tahfiz schools differ from Salafi schools because they are more sophisticated. In general, they are modern in terms of management,

organization, and facilities. They are equipped with libraries, computers, labs, stadiums, gyms, stables, swimming pools, and archery fields, which reminds one of the middle-class schools in the West. All this has financial consequences for the parents because they have to pay higher tuition fees. Food, and laundry and health services are provided by the school. All students have to study according to a very detail order. Furthermore, some of the schools are built in mountainous areas which makes the students feel comfortable.

It is worth noting that PAGs schools are very concerned with secular sciences such as math, biology, physic, and computer sciences. The mastery of these sciences is deemed important for the sake of the ummah (Muslim community) which, in many ways, has lagged behind compared to the West. But how can these sciences be taught to students considering the fact that they have many subjects to study? Based on my observations, the PAGs teaching and learning process is quite similar to that in Salafi schools. Students are urged to study Islamic knowledge and tahfiz whereas math, physics, and biology are given approaching the examination season. Equally important is that students are introduced first and foremost to the Quran. They are taught about the Quran before they learn anything else. This is the way the Prophet Muhammad taught his Companions. Here are two examples of PAGs schools.

Husnul Khotimah Boarding School (HKBS)

The Husnul Khotimah Boarding school is located in Kuningan, West Java. It was established by the Husnul Khotimah Foundation and is led by Sahal Sunahan. Nowadays, the school has 4,500 students coming from all over Indonesia. So far it has produced 7,500 alumni who have spread across the country and abroad. Offering middle school, high school, and bachelor's degrees, HKBS is committed to produce high quality Muslim generations and to create Muslim preachers. Most of its teachers are alumni from Middle East universities such as the Islamic University of Medina, Al-Azhar in Cairo, and Al-Ahqaf in Yemen. Furthermore, many of its founders are high officials of the PKS (Welfare and Justice Party) such as Hidayat Nurwahid, Satori Ismail, Surahman Hidayat, Yusuf Suspendi, and Achidin Noor. Other teachers are alumni of Indonesian universities such as the Institute of Technology in Bandung (ITB), UGM in Yogyakarta, and the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB) in Bogor.

HKBS has intimate connections with the Al-Haramain Foundation led by Hidayat Nurwahid. When it was reported that Al-Haramain had a link with radical Muslim groups, Nurwahid explained that people should not confuse Al-Haramain with the Al-Haramain in Saudi Arabia; they are two different foundations and there was no connection between them. The motto of the school is “modern school based on dakwah (proselytization) and tarbiyah (education)”. HKBS seeks to teach its students how to perform their ibadah (ritual) properly, to have an upright character, to have broad knowledge, and to be able to control their emotions. The school demands its students to be involved with their communities and act as good preachers. Looking at the structure of the school, one will get the impression of the strong influence of PKS nuances. The party’s symbols can be found both in its structures and in its logo. The gate is made in the form of two crescents informing the attendants that they come into a PKS school. Male students wear white a *thawb*, females a dark colored *abaya*.

HKBS combines the national and internal curriculum. Because it implements the national curriculum, students are able to register at public universities in Indonesia and abroad. The school has the authority to manage certain lessons, seminar, and tutorials deemed necessary for strengthening the party’s ideology. This includes *fiqh al-dakwah* (the science of proselytization), *sirah nabawiyah* (the history of the prophet), and *tsaqafah islamiyah* (Islamic civilization). These subjects differentiate the PAGs schools from Salafi ones. Furthermore, students are required to take co-curricula which includes book reading (qira’at al-kutub), entering a study and young science club, and engage in various martial arts. Tahfiz is part of the curricula required for every student. The load of tahfiz differs for every level. Talented students who manage to memorize the entire Quran are given scholarships including admission fees for study at universities abroad.

HKBS can be categorized as a medium-sized school. The enrolment fee is around 21,000,000 Rupiah and the monthly payment is 1,000,000 Rupiah. The school provides an auditorium, computer and science labs, gyms, clinics, and martial arts arenas. By using freeways, people from Jakarta and Bandung and neighboring areas can easily send their children to this school. The new Kertadjadi airport in Cirebon makes this school even more accessible.

Rafah

Rafah has been the PKS's struggle base on education for years. It is located in Bogor, West Java, an area where traditionalist Islam meets the modernists. Bogor no longer has a prominent traditionalist boarding school as the prominent Darul Fallah, a traditionalist pesantren in Bogor, suffered a serious decline in the 1980s so Rafah's presence is welcomed. One of its founders, Nasir Zein, is a PKS figure (Fadlillah, 2008). He is an alumni of Pesantren Gontor, a modern boarding school in Ponorogo, East Java. After completing his advanced education in Medina, Saudi Arabia, he pledged to establish a boarding school which he did after his father-in-law supported him by giving him a piece of land. In 2009, Rafah started its operation by opening education at all levels from elementary to high school. It offers tahfiz, English and Arabic, and organizational skills. From the outset, Rafah has been dedicated to creating a Quranic generation (*generasi Qur'ani*), a term referring to people who permanently fill their hearts with, and love for, the Quran, having broad knowledge and being moderate in social life.

In 2011, Rafah was recognized by the Islamic University of Medina. This means that its students can continue their studies there. This is a remarkable achievement as many PAGs and Salafi schools regard the University of Medina as the paramount of high-quality education. Most of the Saudi sheikhs are alumni of this university. It also has network that covers Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam. Every year, Rafah invites male and female guest scholars, mostly from English-speaking countries, to teach English and other international subjects. A limited program is offered to students to continue short courses in Malaysia, England, and the United States. By following these courses, students gain new experiences relevant to their futures.

In Rafah, every student has to rise at 3.00 AM to perform the night prayer (*tahajud*) continued by morning prayer at 4.30. Afterwards, students practice their memorization of the Quran until 6.30. Each student is required to memorize at least 10 chapters (*juz*) of the Quran. Being influenced by Gontor, where Arabic and English fluencies are recommended, Rafah also requires its students to master these two languages. Every day, they are taught new words from their teachers, and every week there are English or Arabic classes where they have to hold a speech in English or Arabic in front of their friends.

After evening prayer, students repeat their memorization and around 10 PM all activities stop.

Rafah is a middle-sized school. Enrollment is Rp 13,940,000 and the monthly fee is Rp 1,850,000. The facilities include a science and computer lab, a minimarket, café, clinic, laundry, kitchen, and sport facilities.

Iptek and Imtak

Iptek is the abbreviation of *ilmu pengetahuan* and *teknologi* (science and technology). It was coined by the late B.J. Habibie, one of Indonesia's most outstanding figures who was Minister of Science and Technology during the Soeharto and subsequently acted as appointed as Vice President. Habibie was concerned by the fact that science was not quite popular in Indonesia. Supported by Soeharto, he then created several projects to promote science. In the 1980s, Habibie had become a role model for the children. Not only he was considered smart like Einstein, he also created an airplane. This was amazing. At the time, children, being asked about their future professions, would answer 'like Habibie'! They wanted to become Habibie. But things gradually changed when Habibie introduced another element, that is *Imtak*, into his project.⁹

Imtak is the abbreviation of *iman takwa* (faith and Godfearing). To promote science among the Muslim community, Habibie combined science and religion. Without this approach, Habibie believed, the Muslim community would hardly ever study science. In a later development, however, the Salafis and the PAGs used this strategy with a different understanding and used it to promote religion with science packaging. During my teaching at an Islamic boarding school I witnessed that science subjects were tightly packed and given to students approaching examination seasons.

As we saw in the previous sections, Islamic knowledge dominates the overall structure of the teaching. This, in the long run, may impede specialization and there is not enough time for students to study sciences. Recently Muslim scholars asked themselves why Indonesian Muslim schools tended to produce generalists rather than specialists. A generalist is someone with a wide array of knowledge on a variety of subjects regardless of whether these subjects are useful or not. A specialist is someone who concentrates primarily on one particular

subject or activity, or a person highly skilled in a particular activity and restricted field. Looking at the way knowledge is reproduced in most Islamic schools in Indonesia, be they public or private, big or small, the answer is that Muslim schools tend to produce a generalist and this is not surprising (Hefner 2008).

In the Islamic higher education system, *iptek* and *imtak* can be seen as the so-called “integration of science and religion.” The State Islamic University (UIN) of Jakarta is committed to integrate science and religion (Abbas 2021; Jabali and Makruf 2002) and this model was imitated by other UINs across the country. While UIN Jakarta promotes integration, UIN Yogyakarta came up with the idea of the ‘spider web’ and UIN Malang with the ‘tree of knowledge’. As a result, the UIN has produced *gado-gado* (eclectic) scholars, named *gado-gado* after a traditional Indonesian food very much like salad, where various vegetables are mixed with peanut butter. This was aggravated by *The Islamization of Knowledge*, a book written by Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi (1921-1986), a Palestinian-American scholar who was concerned with the bad impact on Muslims of secularism in the West. The impact of this book among Muslim scholars was enormous and made Muslim education experts redesign their curriculum by incorporating certain parts of Islamic knowledge.

The integration of *iptek* and *imtak* eventually led to the refurbishment Islamic schools. There are at least two important features which mark these new schools. The first is that they are urban and exclusive. The image of the poor and rural madrasa as illustrated by earlier studies has gradually disappeared and changed into an image of modernity. They are now endowed with security officers, air-conditioned classes, concrete multi-story buildings, chauffeurs, congested cars, and parking spaces. Monthly payments now range between 500,000 to 5,000,000 Rupiah, an amount of money low-income families cannot afford. Many schools charge entry even higher enrollment fees which allow them to purchase land and expand their buildings. Unlike poor schools, they reject BOS (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah*, School Operational Assistance) provided by the government due to their inflexible procedures.

The rise of these schools is part of urban santrification which refers to the rise of urban middle class Muslims who are inclined to live in accordance with Islamic values and yet included in nation-statehood of Indonesia. They are the first Muslim generations that were educated

under the New Order. They are modern and religious. These new urban Muslims are looking for new schools able to create modern young Muslim generations. The presence of these Islamic schools, previously illustrated as poor and unorganized, has gradually started to compete with public and Catholic schools. Along with this expansion, Islamic symbols emerged, most notably wearing the hijab, which clearly define Muslim women.

Tahfiz and Beyond

Tahfiz schools never suffered lack of students. Small and big tahfiz schools are established in big cities and they offer a variety of programs. Whereas some schools offer sciences and tahfiz, others promise their graduates that their alumni can continue their studies in Saudi Arabia campuses, and that excellent students can be admitted without tests. Tahfiz has become so popular that it has become a political issue. Many politicians promise programs that promote tahfiz among their Muslim supporters. The most important action in this was made by Ridwan Kamil, the current governor of West Java, who, in 2019, launched “satu desa satu hafiz” (one village one hafiz) (Farhan and Ika 2018). From his office in Bandung, he dispatched 1,500 hafiz teachers to be sent across the province. They were expected to teach the Quran to the villagers, each at least teaching ten students in two years. At the end of the program, new batches would be sent to continue the program. By doing this, new hafiz would be recreated.

The idea of one village one hafiz was also supported by KH Maruf Amin (Putra 2018), who, at the same year, ran for the vice presidency, mated with the incumbent President Joko Widodo. Since then, tahfiz has become a national issue which spread across the country. Many local authorities launched programs especially on tahfiz schools which could use state budget. The Kuansing District in West Sumatra promised to build one tahfiz school in each sub-district. The same program was also made in Sidrap, Buton, Kampar, Amuntai, Pasaman, Sidoarjo, Garut, Aceh, etc. In the election of 2024, Mahfud MD, who ran for the vice presidency, mated with Ganjar Pranowo, visited Nurul Hidayah, a tahfiz boarding school in Sukabumi, West Java. Although, he said, his visit had nothing to do with politics, the visit was made during the campaign season, and the boarding school publicly supported him. It inevitably affected local tahfiz schools to take the same actions.

Tahfiz also rushes into state strategic institutions such as the police and the military. These two institutions regard cadets with tahfiz backgrounds to have the proper aptitude and mentality. They open special recruitment for them. Indeed, hafiz have been prioritized in civil service recruitment for years. The largest project ever launched on tahfiz was made by Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) which directly organizes various tahfiz programs. In 2019, in front of local bureaucrats in Lampung, Nurcholish Setiawan, the Secretary General of MORA, promised to push tahfiz to become a national program. This means that more budget will be allocated and that various, comprehensive, programs on tahfiz will be made. Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the Minister of Religious Affairs (2014-2019) believed that tahfiz will be sustainable although political support from President Joko Widodo would decline. It is said that many PDIP (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*—Indonesian Struggle Democratic Party), a nationalist political party to which Joko Widodo belongs, secretly criticized this project.

“Tahfiz is like a Prima donna,” writes Ulil Albab, a teacher and researcher from Lumajang, East Java.¹⁰ It has a domino effect which affects many aspects. Right now, he says, many schools, be they private or public, open tahfiz classes. Many TV channels broadcast young hafiz, demonstrating their ability to memorize certain portions of the Quran, which, to most Muslim audiences, is touching and emotional. Furthermore, tahfiz also pushes some campuses to offer special admission for hafiz and to provide scholarships. Big campuses reportedly provide full or partial scholarships to hafiz. IPB is reportedly the largest campus that supports hafiz. It is widely understood that this campus has so far been a sanctuary for many Islamist student organizations. UI (*Universitas Indonesia*—The University of Indonesia) denounced allegations that it provides special admission for hafiz candidates. Unlike IPB, this campus has so far been regarded as the vanguard of non-sectarianism. Meanwhile, numerous Islamic campuses offer scholarships for hafiz (Alfa 2024). Muhammadiyah modernist campuses have long waived tuition fees for hafiz cadres who enroll in the Faculty of Medicine.

Why is tahfiz phenomenal? According to Syathori Ismail, a founder of a tahfiz school, the current tahfiz practice in Indonesia has largely been misunderstood. Tahfiz has become a commodity. Schools offers tahfiz simply to support their competitiveness. Once tahfiz is put in

place, they raise their tuition fees. This is not right. Furthermore, Ismail asserts that throughout history, the most important goal of Islamic education is to understand (*tafaqquh*), not to memorize. Now, memorization is primary, understanding is secondary. How can one understand the Quran if one does not have a basic understanding of Arabic? So Arabic and Arabic sciences are more important than tahfiz as they are prerequisites. Furthermore, he emphasizes that Muslims have five obligations towards the Quran: (1) to read it (*membaca*), (2) to understand it (*memahami*), (3) to practice it (*mengamalkan*), (4) to memorize it (*menghafalkan*), and (5) to reflect it (*tadabbur*). Based on his observation, many tahfiz students do not understand basic Arabic, many of them cannot even perform the ablution properly.

While tahfiz is practiced, in his school tafaqquh is also encouraged. Students should learn Arabic because only then will they understand and appreciate the beauty of the Quran. They also learn other Islamic knowledge such as fiqh, so they can perform the ablution properly. Ismail applies cross-subsidies in his school. Talented and smart student from low-income families are supported and encouraged to takhassus (specialize) on the Quran. They are expected to become Quranic scholars with a deep knowledge of the Quran, but also familiar with modern sciences.

The current image of Indonesian Islam, according to Ali Muhajid, an ordinary Muslim parent, is filled with hafiz, ustadz, and sheikh.

“Our kids don’t have a role model such as Habibie like we used to have. I don’t send my son to tahfiz school simply because it is unnecessary. Luckily, I taught him the Quran. He just memorized some short verses. And that’s enough. Now he is on his own.”

Another parent named Iswadi, who previously sent his kid to tahfiz school, still believes in the benefit of tahfiz. For many years, each Ramadhan, he would happily ask his son to demonstrate his memorization in front of his big family. Everybody would be listening, and they were amazed, especially his old mother. She always hugged his son affectionally and told everybody else to imitate him. Although he was somewhat disappointed with the erosion of his son’s memorization, he was convinced that what he was doing was right. The benefit of education, he says, can be seen for a long time to come. The Quran is like a home. Whenever his son might get lost, which he certainly did not expect to happen, he knows where to go home.

Concluding Remarks

Some scholars believe that tahfiz is some sort of popular culture (Inayatussahara and Hasan 2023; Jannah 2022). It is a set of beliefs, values, and practices that is well-liked and practiced everywhere by certain people at any given time. It is closely related to the rise of middle-class Muslims over the last decades. It is one package with Islamic symbolism that was previously withheld during the New Order. The rise of middle class urban Muslims allows tahfiz to evolve. They are the first Muslims educated by the New Order. Their rise led to urban santrization.

Salafis and the PAGs play an important role in raising Salafi tahfiz. They turned tahfiz into a devise to adjust to changing social and political conditions. It changed the orientation of Islamic education. Many urban Muslims think tahfiz is important for their children. They expect them to be able to read the Quran better than themselves. Moreover, tahfiz has changed the previously established traditional Quranic reciting styles.

The impact of this is that the commodification of Islam is inevitable. Most tahfiz schools are expensive and exclusive. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm of the public to send their children to tahfiz schools has never diminished. Furthermore, tahfiz has become a political issue and many politicians promote tahfiz programs to gain support, and many institutions open special admission for hafiz. Even though many scholars have criticized tahfiz schools, they remain to evolve in contemporary Indonesian Islam.

Endnotes

- The author wishes to thank Professor Dick van der Meij for correcting the English.
- 1. Salafis do not use the *qir'ah sab'ah*. Instead they only use three basic melodies that is *hijaz*, *sikah* and *nabawan*, which are easier.
- 2. The entire Quran consists of 30 parts (juz) with 114 chapters (surah). There are different opinions among Muslim scholars about the number of verses of the Quran. The majority thinks there are 6.236 verses.
- 3. Waves of Salafism came to the Indonesian Archipelago since the second half of the 18th century. The first wave was brought by returning pilgrims from West Sumatra which led to the Padri Movement. The second wave occurred in the early twentieth century and led to the Muhammadiyah organization, founded in 1912 in Yogyakarta, Central Java. The third wave occurred in the late 1980s as a result of the accommodative politics adopted by Saudi Arabia rulers in the aftermath of the 1979 siege of the Holy Grand Mosque of Mecca by religious extremists.
- 4. Integrated Islamic schools are created at all levels from elementary to high schools. They are basically combinations between schools and madrasa. Tahfiz has become more popular since the late 1990s. To meet its needs, in the early 2000s, PAGs created boarding schools.
- 5. "However, it is not necessary for the believers to march forth at once, only a party from each group should march forth, leaving the rest to gain religious knowledge then enlighten their people when they return to them so that they too may be aware of evil."
- 6. The Iqra method uses six books, each containing readings from elementary to increased advanced levels. This method became so popular that to measure their friends ability of reading the Quran, children inquired which Iqra book they were reading. After a child had finished all the Iqra books, it would be allowed to read the Quran. In the 1990s, there were paid trainings for Iqra instructors.
- 7. The religious curriculum includes a set of Islamic sciences such as fiqh, theology, hadith, tafsir (exegesis), history, Arabic, and tahfiz.
- 8. Habibie is an example of a reborn Muslim. In his youth, he was a secular, meaning that he was not really concerned with Islam. He began to become a more serious Muslim when he founded ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia, Indonesian Muslim Scholar Association) in 1990.
- 9. Ulil Absar, "Menjamurnya Program Tahfiz," in <https://radarijember.jawapos.com>. Accessed on July 1, 2024.

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Jajang Jahroni, *Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) of Jakarta, Indonesia*. Email: jajang.jahroni@uinjkt.ac.id.

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3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
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5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
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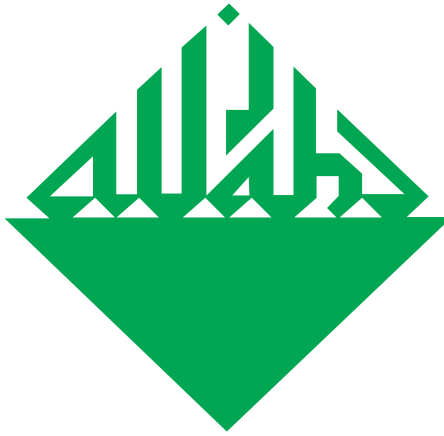
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FORCED MARRIAGE AND SEX TRAFFICKING UNDER THE GUISE OF NIKAH SIRI IN INDONESIA

Zezen Zaenal Mutaqin & Yayan Sopyan

REVISITING WOMEN'S PIETY MOVEMENTS IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

Wasisto Raharjo Jati, Syamsurijal, Halimatusa'diah, Ihsan Yilmaz & Dini Rahmiati
