

Qur'an Reading Methods in Post-Soeharto Indonesia: The Conservative Turn, Commodified Piety, and the Reconfiguration of Qur'anic Authority

Metode Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia Pasca-Soeharto: Peralihan Konservatif, Kesalehan yang Dikomodifikasi, dan Rekonfigurasi Otoritas Al-Qur'an

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Abstract

Existing studies on Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia have largely examined individual pedagogical models—such as Iqra', Ummi, Yanbu'a, or Baghdadiyah—while paying limited attention to the political-economic forces shaping their emergence, circulation, and legitimacy in the post-Soeharto era. This article addresses that gap by analyzing Qur'an reading methods not merely as instructional tools but as products embedded within shifting configurations of power, market competition, and religious authority. Using a qualitative library-based approach, the study engages historical scholarship, policy documents, institutional publications, and contemporary literature on Islamic education and religious capitalism. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of field and capital and Talal Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition, the article demonstrates that Qur'an reading methods function simultaneously as modes of religious transmission, arenas of symbolic and economic competition, and mechanisms for forming pious subjects. The findings show that commodification does not erode religious normativity but rearticulates Qur'anic authority through standardization, certification, branding, and digital mediation. Positioned as a critical test case, Indonesia reveals how Qur'anic education becomes a dynamic site of negotiation between spirituality, authority, and market logic.

Keywords: *religious commodification; Qur'anic education; Qur'an reading methods; religious authority; post-Soeharto Indonesia*

Abstrak:

Kajian-kajian tentang metode baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia selama ini lebih banyak menelaah model pedagogis tertentu—seperti Iqra', Ummi, Yanbu'a, atau Baghdadiyah—sementara perhatian terhadap kekuatan politik-ekonomi yang membentuk kemunculan, sirkulasi, dan legitimasi metode-metode tersebut pada era pasca-Soeharto masih relatif terbatas. Artikel ini mengisi kekosongan tersebut dengan menganalisis metode baca Al-Qur'an tidak semata sebagai instrumen pembelajaran, tetapi sebagai produk yang terbenam dalam konfigurasi kekuasaan, kompetisi pasar, dan otoritas keagamaan



yang terus berubah. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, penelitian ini mengkaji literatur historis, dokumen kebijakan, publikasi kelembagaan, serta kajian kontemporer tentang pendidikan Islam dan kapitalisme religius. Berlandaskan teori medan dan modal Pierre Bourdieu serta konsep Islam sebagai *discursive tradition* dari Talal Asad, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa metode baca Al-Qur'an berfungsi secara simultan sebagai sarana transmisi religius, arena kompetisi simbolik dan ekonomi, serta mekanisme pembentukan subjek saleh. Temuan penelitian menegaskan bahwa komodifikasi tidak mengikis normativitas agama, melainkan mereartikulasi otoritas Qur'ani melalui standarisasi, sertifikasi, strategi branding, dan mediasi digital. Dengan memosisikan Indonesia sebagai *critical test case*, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Al-Qur'an menjadi arena negosiasi dinamis antara spiritualitas, otoritas keagamaan, dan logika pasar.

Kata Kunci: *komodifikasi agama; pendidikan Al-Qur'an; metode baca Al-Qur'an; otoritas keagamaan; Indonesia pasca-Soeharto*

Introduction

The teaching of Qur'an reading in Indonesia has never operated within a neutral pedagogical sphere. Rather, it has consistently been embedded in the intersection of spiritual aspiration, educational rationalization, and the political economy of religion.¹ Since the fall of the Soeharto regime, the Islamic public sphere has undergone profound restructuring, marked by the diversification of religious authority, the expansion of Islamic educational institutions, and the intensification of competition within an increasingly market-oriented religious environment.² In this context, Qur'an reading methods have gradually shifted from being pedagogical tools for basic literacy into institutionalized products that circulate as symbolic, social, and economic resources within the field of Islamic education.

This transformation positions Indonesia as a critical test case for broader theories of religious commodification³ and commodified piety.⁴ Much of the existing literature on religious markets—often derived from Middle Eastern or Western contexts—assumes that the commodification of religious practices leads primarily to the privatization of piety and the erosion of traditional religious

1 Shinta Nurani et al., "Living Qur'an as New Market Trends of Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.006.01.01>; Kusnadi et al., "Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on Qur'anic Learning in Indonesia (2014–2024)," *QURANICA - International Journal of Quranic Research* 17, no. 2 (2025): 28–60.

2 Daromir Rudnyckyj, "SPIRITUAL ECONOMIES: Islam and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia," *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (2009): 104–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2009.00028.x>.

3 Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

4 Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

authority.⁵ The Indonesian experience complicates this assumption.⁶ Rather than weakening religious authority, the commodification of Qur'an reading methods has actively reorganized the Islamic educational field, redistributing religious capital among state institutions, Islamic organizations, pedagogical entrepreneurs, and middle-class religious consumers.⁷ Qur'anic pedagogy thus becomes a strategic arena where authority, discipline, and market logic intersect.⁸ Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field and capital, Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia can be understood as mechanisms through which symbolic, social, economic, and specifically religious capital are accumulated and converted.⁹ Pedagogical claims such as speed, effectiveness, certification, and standardization function not merely as technical advantages but as symbolic markers of legitimacy that differentiate actors within the Islamic educational field.¹⁰ In the post-Soeharto era, these markers have become increasingly central to institutional competition, enabling certain methods to dominate national networks of Qur'an learning while marginalizing others that lack comparable organizational or economic resources.¹¹

At the same time, this process must also be read through the lens of discursive tradition and ethical formation, as articulated by Talal Asad¹² and Saba Mahmood.¹³ Qur'an reading methods are not value-neutral techniques but disciplinary regimes

- 5 Helen N. Boyle, *Qur'anic Schools: Agents of Preservation and Change* (Routledge, 2004); Rudolph T. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (UNC Press Books, 2014); Bryan S. Turner, "Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses," *The British Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (1974): 230–43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/589314>.
- 6 Daromir Rudnykij, "Market Islam in Indonesia," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. s1 (2009): S183–201, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2009.01549.x>.
- 7 Ahmad Junaidi et al., "Modeling of Marketing: A Strategy to Increase Al-Qur'an Education Institutions Image and Students Interests," *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan* 7, no. 01 (2021): 53–68, <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v7i01.4194>.
- 8 Nurani et al., "Living Qur'an as New Market Trends of Islamic Education in Indonesia"; Anna M. Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Quran in Indonesia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2004); François Gauthier, *Religion in the Market Era: The Rise of Market Islam, the Revenge of Confucius, and Other Stories From a Global Age* (Routledge, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003143611>.
- 9 Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," dalam *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change* (Routledge, 1973); Jason D. Edgerton dan Lance W. Roberts, "Cultural Capital or Habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the Explanation of Enduring Educational Inequality," *Theory and Research in Education* 12, no. 2 (2014): 193–220, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878514530231>.
- 10 Loong Wong, "Market Cultures, the Middle Classes and Islam: Consuming the Market?," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 10, no. 4 (2007): 451–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253860701566440>.
- 11 Donald Porter, *Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203642764>.
- 12 Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Brill, 1996), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004457478_022.
- 13 Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*; Achmad Sofiyul et al., "Robert Hoyland's Epigraphic Approach and Its Implication For The Historical Study Of The Qur'an," *Al-Karim: International Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025): 125–38, <https://doi.org/10.33367/al-karim.v3i2.7347>.

that shape pious subjectivities through repetition, assessment, and moral pedagogy. The Indonesian case demonstrates that commodification does not necessarily dissolve religious discipline; instead, market-oriented Qur'anic pedagogy often intensifies discipline by reframing it in terms of efficiency, measurable progress, and publicly verifiable competence.¹⁴ This challenges the common binary in the literature between “authentic” religious practice and “commodified” religiosity.¹⁵

Historically, Qur'anic instruction in Indonesia developed within pesantren, mosques, and surau, where teaching practices were closely integrated with local cultural forms. Scholars such as Abu Bakar Aceh documented how Qur'anic learning emphasized adaptability to communal contexts rather than standardized curricula.¹⁶ However, the gradual formalization of Islamic education—particularly with the expansion of madrasahs and Qur'anic learning centers—introduced new demands for uniformity, efficiency, and scalability. These demands laid the groundwork for the emergence of standardized Qur'an reading methods that could be widely disseminated across diverse social and geographical contexts.

The scale of this transformation is evident in official data. In 2022, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs recorded at least 271 Qur'an reading methods in use across Qur'anic learning institutions nationwide.¹⁷ This proliferation reflects not only pedagogical innovation but also ideological alignment and political-economic competition. Qur'anic learning centers (TPQ), Qur'anic kindergartens (TKA), and Rumah Tahfidz increasingly function as sites for the production and circulation of religious capital, where pedagogical choices are often intertwined with organizational affiliation, state recognition, and access to funding and certification.¹⁸ Research on the development of primary Qur'anic reading methods in Indonesia still reveals a gap in analyzing the politicization and commodification of religion. Zailul Milal Bizawie, in his studies, has comprehensively examined the history and transformation of religious traditions in Indonesia, including the pesantren network and its influence on the spread of Qur'anic reading methods. However, his work does not fully explore how affiliations between religious institutions and political interests shape

14 Jajang Jahroni, “The Rise of Tahfiz Schools in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Studia Islamika* 31, no. 2 (2024): 305–35, <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v31i2.41150>.

15 Ouarda Dsouli et al., “Spiritual capital: The co-evolution of an ethical framework based on Abrahamic religious values in the Islamic tradition,” *Journal of Management Development* 31, no. 10 (2012): 1058–76, <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621711211281843>.

16 Abubakar Aceh, *Sejarah Al-Quran* (Ramadhani, 1958).

17 Sofian Effendi, *Ensiklopedi Metode Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia* (Direktorat Pendidikan Diniyah dan Pondok Pesantren Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI 2022, 2022), <http://repository.iiq.ac.id/handle/123456789/2570>.

18 Nurani et al., “Living Qur'an as New Market Trends of Islamic Education in Indonesia.”

Qur'anic instruction.¹⁹ Sri Guno Najib Chaqoqo, in his research, has focused on the contestation of authority surrounding Qur'anic reading methods, particularly between two popular approaches—*Yanbu'a* and *Qira'ati* in pesantren environments, and the *Iqra'* method in formal *TPQ* institutions. Chaqoqo analyzes how these three methods compete not only within the realm of religious education but also in terms of religious authority and legitimacy. This contestation is shaped by intellectual networks and political relationships among pesantren, religious leaders, and formal institutions involved in Qur'anic education.²⁰ These dynamics illustrate that the adoption and adaptation of Qur'anic reading methods are often inseparable from broader contests over religious authority.

The widespread adoption of the *Iqra'* method illustrates this dynamic. Initially developed by K.H. As'ad Humam as a practical response to Qur'anic illiteracy, *Iqra'* gained national prominence through its institutionalization by the *Badan Komunikasi Pemuda Remaja Masjid Indonesia* (BKPRMI) and its alignment with state-supported educational agendas.²¹ Over time, its mass production, standardized training systems, and certification mechanisms transformed it into a nationally recognized pedagogical brand.²² Similar processes can be observed in ideologically affiliated methods such as *An-Nahdliyah* and *Ummi*, which demonstrate how Qur'anic pedagogy becomes a site for negotiating religious identity, institutional authority, and market legitimacy.

Despite a growing body of scholarship on Qur'anic education and religious commodification, existing studies have largely treated Qur'an reading methods as either historical phenomena or pedagogical innovations.²³ What remains underexplored is how these methods function as instruments of religious capitalism that simultaneously discipline pious subjects, consolidate institutional authority, and generate economic value.²⁴ By foregrounding Qur'an reading methods as both

19 Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Sanad Qur'an dan Tafsir di Nusantara : Jalur, Lajur dan Titik Temunya* (Tangerang: Pustaka Compass, 2022).

20 Sri Guno Najib Chaqoqo, "The Primary Text For Teaching The Qur'an: Contestation Of Authorities In Magelang" (Disertasi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2023), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/60927/>.

21 Yuki Nakata, "Constructing New Stages of Education for Muslim Children: Impacts of the Dissemination of the Iqro' Method Textbook on Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia," *EDUCARE* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1, <https://doi.org/10.2121/edu-ijes.v2i1.207>; Porter, *Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia*.

22 Akh. Muzakki, "Islam as a Symbolic Commodity: Transmitting and Consuming Islam through Public Sermons in Indonesia," dalam *Religious Commodifications in Asia* (Routledge, 2007).

23 Sofian Effendi, *Sejarah dan Perkembangan Metode Pembelajaran Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia*, Pascasarjana Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta, 2021, <http://repository.iiq.ac.id/handle/123456789/1662>.

24 Kusnadi et al., "Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on Qur'anic Learning in Indonesia (2014-2024)"; Ku Mohd Syarbaini Ku Yaacob et al., "Trends and Themes in Al-Quran Teaching and Learning: A Bibliometric Analysis," *QURANICA - International Journal of Quranic Research* 17, no. 2 (2025): 143-71.

pedagogical and political-economic practices, this study addresses that gap.

Accordingly, this article asks: (1) how has the teaching of Qur'an reading in Indonesia been transformed in the post-Soeharto era in relation to commodification, institutional competition, and shifts in religious authority; and (2) through what political-economic mechanisms do certain Qur'an reading methods secure legitimacy within the contemporary Islamic educational field? By engaging Indonesia as a critical test case, this study not only contributes to empirical knowledge of Qur'anic pedagogy but also advances theoretical debates on commodified piety, religious capitalism, and the formation of pious subjects in Muslim-majority societies.

This study adopts a qualitative library-based research design with a historical-sociological approach to examine the transformation of Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia, particularly in the post-Soeharto era.²⁵ Qur'anic pedagogy is analyzed not merely as an instructional practice but as a socio-religious field shaped by institutionalization, market logic, and struggles over religious authority. The primary source corpus comprises 38 documents published between the pre-independence period and 2022, with primary emphasis on the post-Reformasi era (1999–2022).²⁶ The primary materials consist of 15 monographs on Qur'anic education *and* sanad-based transmission, 6 encyclopedic works on Qur'an reading methods, 8 government policy documents issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs,²⁷ 9 institutional manuals and training materials produced by major method networks (Iqra', Ummi, Yanbu'a, Wafa, Baghdadiyah, and Tilawati). The study is supplemented by 29 peer-reviewed journal articles published through 2025 that address Islamic education, religious commodification, and the political economy of Islam in Indonesia. Descriptive quantitative data—indicating the expansion of Qur'an reading methods from 40 methods in the pre-1945 period, to 110 methods during 1946–1998, and 121 methods after 1999—are employed to contextualize and strengthen the qualitative analysis.²⁸

25 Barbara M. Wildemuth, *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2016).

26 Effendi, *Ensiklopedi Metode Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia*; Effendi, *Sejarah dan Perkembangan Metode Pembelajaran Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia*.

27 Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Nomor 91 Tahun 2020 tentang Lembaga Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (LPQ)," Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2020; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Nomor 2769 Tahun 2022 tentang Lembaga Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (LPQ)," Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2022; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "surat Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam nomor D-881/DJ/PP.03/04/2022," Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2022; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "BUKU PEDOMAN MUSABAQAH AL-QUR'AN DAN AL-HADIS," Direktorat Penerangan Agama Islam Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022.

28 Effendi, *Sejarah dan Perkembangan Metode Pembelajaran Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia*; Indal Abror, *Metode*

The discussion proceeds in two analytical moves. First, a historical comparison maps pedagogical shifts from slow, teacher-centered, and *sanad*-based instruction to accelerated, standardized, and digitally mediated methods targeting both children and adults. Second, a thematic analysis examines commodification and legitimacy, focusing on certification, curriculum standardization, branding, and fee-based programs, as well as the role of the state, Islamic organizations, pesantren networks, and political actors. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of field and capital and Asad's notion of discursive tradition, the study demonstrates how Qur'an reading methods function simultaneously as regimes of piety and as sites of capital conversion within Indonesia's contemporary religious education market.²⁹

The Conservative Turn in Indonesia after the Fall of the Soeharto Regime

The term *conservative turn* refers to the tendency of certain communities or groups to adopt more conservative and stringent religious orientations, often in tension with liberal and pluralistic values.³⁰ In Indonesia, this phenomenon became increasingly pronounced following the 1998 reform era, when expanded political and religious freedoms created space for the emergence and consolidation of various conservative Islamic movements. This conservative turn has produced significant ideological shifts among Indonesian Muslims, with segments of the population embracing more puritanical interpretations and practices of the faith.³¹

During this conservative turn, more literalist and textualist interpretations of Islam gained prominence, supported in part by the spread of ideologies promoted by transnational movements such as Salafism and Wahhabism.³² This development is closely tied to the impact of globalization, through which religious ideas from

Pembelajaran Al-Qur'an: Kumpulan Metode-Metode Belajar Huruf Al-Qur'an (Suka Press, 2022), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/57385/>.

29 Nur Afifah binti Abas dan Mohd Nizam bin Sahad, "A Comparative Study Between Reflexive Thematic Analysis in Social Sciences and Qur'anic Thematic Analysis in Qur'anic Sciences," *Ma'ālim Al-Qur'ān Wa al-Sunnah* 17 (December 2021): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmq.v17i2.326>; Didik Andriawan dan Safa Alrumayh, "Quran, Sufism and Social Culture Awakening of Medieval Türkiye: The Case of Akhism," *Al-Karim: International Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025): 139–56, <https://doi.org/10.33367/al-karim.v3i2.7859>.

30 Din Wahid, "Kembalinya Konservatisme Islam Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 21, no. 2 (2014): 2, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v21i2.1043>.

31 Moch Nur Ichwan, "Official Ulema and the Politics of Re-Islamization: The Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama, Shari'atization and Contested Authority in Post-New Order Aceh1," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 22, no. 2 (2011): 183–214, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etr026>.

32 Wahid, "Kembalinya Konservatisme Islam Indonesia"; Abd Aziz Faiz, "Friday Free Lunch, Muslim Middle-Class Piety and Non-Secular Sociality in Yogyakarta Mosque," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 36, no. 2 (2025): 223–38, <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v36i2.7009>.

the Middle East increasingly flowed into Indonesia via various channels, including print media, digital platforms, and educational institutions. The influence of this conservative current is evident in the attitudes of certain religious groups toward social issues such as pluralism, interreligious tolerance, and minority rights.³³ The increasingly exclusive and conservative stances adopted in these areas often stand in contrast to the more inclusive orientations that had previously characterized segments of Indonesian Muslim society.

Bruinessen notes that this conservative turn has affected not only religious practices but also the proliferation of new religious institutions, including Islamic schools, modern pesantren, and a wider range of da'wah organizations.³⁴ The establishment of these institutions represents a response to the growing demand for religious education and understanding among an increasingly pious society. Moreover, various religious groups have expanded their influence across multiple spheres of life, including politics and the economy. Many religious figures are now actively involved in political processes, employing religion as a tool of campaigning and a source of legitimacy, both in electoral contests and in shaping public policy.³⁵

Research conducted by Mufid shows that this religious resurgence is not confined to the spiritual sphere alone, but also shapes Indonesia's social and cultural dynamics. Communities experiencing this revival tend to place religion at the center of their everyday identities.³⁶ This is reflected in lifestyle changes that increasingly emphasize religious symbols, such as the adoption of stricter Islamic dress codes, consumption patterns aligned with religious teachings, and rising participation in da'wah activities and other forms of religious engagement.

Hefner emphasizes that the post-Reform political transition toward a more open democracy created significant opportunities for religious groups to expand their roles in the public sphere. Greater freedoms of religious and political expression enabled a wide range of religious organizations to grow rapidly and to participate more actively in shaping public policy and national discourse.³⁷ Hefner views this

33 Luthfi Assyaukanie, "Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the 'Conservative Turn,'" *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 49, no. 3 (2013): 394–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2013.850644>.

34 Martin Van Bruinessen, *What Happened to the Smiling Face of Indonesian Islam?: Muslim Intellectualism and the Conservative Turn in Post-Subarto Indonesia*, Working Paper (2011), <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/handle/10356/94249>.

35 Martin van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

36 Ahmad Syafii Mufid, *Tangklukan, Abangan, Dan Tarekat: Kebangkitan Agama Di Jawa* (Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2006).

37 Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400823871>.

conservative turn as, in many respects, a positive development, insofar as it opens space for religious pluralism and freedom of belief. He argues that these developments reflect the inclusive character of democracy, allowing diverse groups—including religious communities—to engage more fully in political and social processes.³⁸ The forces of globalization and advances in information technology further reinforce this argument by facilitating faster and broader circulation of religious ideas, as well as expanding access to transnational religious networks.

However, Hefner's perspective is not fully shared by all scholars. Bruinessen, for instance, argues that the conservative turn in Indonesia reflects the rise of a more exclusive and conservative ideological orientation, which may ultimately constrain the space for pluralism. In his view, the conservative current that emerged after the reform era has, in fact, intensified tensions among Indonesia's diverse religious groups. The increasingly dominant conservative Islamic movements tend to promote more literalist and stringent interpretations of religion, which can contribute to the marginalization of minority or more moderate religious communities.³⁹

Furthermore, Pink highlights in her study that this religious resurgence has a significant impact on individual identity and the social well-being of communities. The transformation of religious values associated with the conservative turn often involves a search for new forms of identity grounded in what are perceived as "pure" and "authentic" religious teachings. However, this shift also generates tensions among different segments of society, particularly between more moderate or liberal groups and those adopting more conservative orientations.⁴⁰

In this context, the works of Hefner, Bruinessen, and Pink open a broader academic debate on the implications of religious resurgence for the future of pluralism and democracy in Indonesia. While some scholars argue that expanded religious freedom and greater political participation represent positive achievements of the reform era, others express concern that the rise of conservatism may undermine the foundations of tolerance and inclusivity that have long characterized Indonesian society. This debate underscores the complexity of the relationship between religion, politics, and social change in the post-Reform period, as well as the need for rigorous analysis to understand how these dynamics will shape Indonesia's future.

38 Robert W. Hefner, "CHAPTER FOUR. Of Faith and Commitment: Christian Conversion in Muslim Java," dalam *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. by Robert W. Hefner (University of California Press, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520912564-006>.

39 Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam*.

40 Johanna Pink, ed., *Muslim Societies in the Age of Mass Consumption: Politics, Culture and Identity between the Local and the Global*, 1. publ. (Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2020).

The Commodification of Qur'an Reading Methods

The expansion of Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia reflects not merely pedagogical change but a broader transformation of what Pierre Bourdieu conceptualizes as a *religious-educational field*.⁴¹ The institutionalization of Qur'anic education through *Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an* (TPQ) since the 1980s—supported by state regulation—marked a shift from informal, community-based transmission toward a structured and competitive arena shaped by state policy, Islamic organizations, and market logics.⁴² TPQ received governmental support through the Joint Decree of the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Religious Affairs in 1982. Beyond its pedagogical role, TPQ contributed to the capitalization of Qur'anic education, transforming what had traditionally been an informal and community-based practice into an increasingly organized field with social and economic dimensions.⁴³

Initially, Qur'anic instruction was transmitted across generations by religious scholars without explicit economic motives. However, as modern societal needs evolved and demand for high-quality religious education increased, Qur'anic education gradually transformed into a valued economic commodity.⁴⁴ In many regions, these institutions function not only as centers of religious instruction but also as providers of fee-based educational services, effectively turning Qur'anic education into an emerging industry.⁴⁵ This transformation has been driven by the need for more formalized and measurable religious education, supported by both government initiatives and private-sector involvement.⁴⁶ The following data provides

41 Stephen Grusendorf, "Bourdieu's Field, Capital, and Habitus in Religion," *Journal of Sociology and Christianity* 6, no. 1 (2016), <https://sociologyandchristianity.org/index.php/jsc/article/view/84>; Thomas Medvetz dan Jeffrey J. Sallaz, *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu* (Oxford University Press, 2018); Helena Kupari, "Lived religion and the religious field," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35, no. 2 (2020): 213–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2020.1759901>.

42 Pradjarta Dirdjosanjoto, *Memelihara Umat ; Kiai Pesantren-Kiai Langgar di Jawa* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 1997).

43 Ahmad Jamil dan Naswan Abdo Khaled, "The Genealogy of Authoritive Transmission of Sanad Al-Qur'an in Java Islamic Boarding Schools," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 20, no. 2 (2022): 2, <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v20i2.8332>; Alsabith Manayangattil, "From Migration to Muslim Social Transformation: A Qur'anic Sociological Perspective on Ummah Formation in Madinah," *Al-Karim: International Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025): 211–32, <https://doi.org/10.33367/al-karim.v3i2.5514>.

44 Rama Dinan Krishnan dan Nurdyansyah Nurdyansyah, "Management of the Qur'an Education Park Institution in Improving Al-Qur'an Education:," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 (November 2022): 10.21070/ijis.v10i0.1647-10.21070/ijis.v10i0.1647, <https://doi.org/10.21070/ijis.v10i0.1647>.

45 Moh Zainal Fanani dan Mubaidi Sulaeman, "From Philosophy to Praxis: Managing the Living Qur'an, BTQ Program and Policy Urgency in Islamic Higher Education," *Khazanah Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 3 (2025): 220–37, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kpi.v7i3.46404>.

46 Raudhah Saragih et al., "The Management of Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Learning at Homeschooling Public Learning Center," *Nidhomul Haq : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 3 (2021): 3, <https://doi.org/10.30605/nidhomul-haq.v6i3.12345>.

an overview of the historical development of Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia across different periods:

Table 1. Periodization of Qur'an Reading Methods in Indonesia: Numbers, Characteristics, and Representative Models

No	Historical Period	Number of Methods	Characteristics & Patterns of Innovation (More Detailed)	Representative Methods
1	Pre-Independence (up to 1945)	40 methods	• Dominance of classical <i>turāth</i> methods such as Baghdadiyah. • Characterized by memorization, <i>talaqqī-musyāfahah</i>, and strong dependence on the teacher. • Lack of systematic written modules; instruction was primarily oral and rooted in pesantren tradition. • Very slow development, with minimal variation and predominantly local characteristics. • Emphasis on <i>makhārij al-ḥurūf</i> and step-by-step mastery of letter pronunciation and spelling.	Baghdadiyah / Qa'idah Baghdādiyyah, Local Pegon/Jawi variants Pegon/Jawi, Kyai-based methods (local manuscript)
2	Post-Independence (1946–1998)	110 methods	• The emergence of printed methods, structured modules, and more systematic pedagogical approaches. • The initial pluralization of Qur'an reading methods began after the 1970s. • "Fast-reading" approaches were introduced, though not yet dominant. • The rise of modern methods such as Iqra', which gradually replaced Baghdadiyah. • The development of differentiated models, including TPA-based methods, <i>majelis taklim</i> methods, and regionally specific approaches. • Notable influence from government institutions and major Islamic organizations (the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama).	Iqra' (1988), Tartili (1992), Al-Banjari (1994), Tunjuk Silang, Tombak Alam

No	Historical Period	Number of Methods	Characteristics & Patterns of Innovation (More Detailed)	Representative Methods
3	Post-Soeharto era (1999 onward)	121 methods	• Reformasi era: a period of extensive innovation marked by the emergence of hundreds of new methods. • The rise of institution- or brand-based methods (Ummi, Wafa, Tilawati, Yanbu'a). • Dominance of "fast-reading" approaches, along with visual-audio techniques, color-based learning, and active-collaborative pedagogies. • The development of methods with clearly defined curricula and quality-management systems. • Intensified competition among institutions, leading to the formation of a "Qur'an reading method market." • Pesantren developed alternative or competing methods, such as Yanbu'a. • The emergence of ultra-fast methods (1-hour, 3-hour, and 6-hour mastery programs). • Digitalization became increasingly evident after 2010.	Yanbu'a, Ummi, Tilawati, MQS (Sidogiri), Wafa, Mama Papa, XX Jam, Mahiro, among others

Source: Sofian Effendi, *Ensiklopedi Metode Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia* (2022).

A comparison between Qur'an reading methods before and after the year 2000 reveals substantial shifts in pedagogical approaches, learning objectives, and instructional processes. Prior to 2000, existing methods were generally traditional, gradual, and characterized by long and sequential stages of learning.⁴⁷ From the 2000s onward, a significant transition occurred toward more modern, accelerated, and technologically integrated methods, reflecting broader socio-educational developments. One of the most notable differences between the two eras lies in the pace of learning. Before 2000, methods such as Baghdadi and Qira'ati required extensive time to master. These approaches demanded that learners progress systematically through multiple stages, often taking months or even years to develop

47 Bizawie, *Sanad Qur'an dan Tafsir di Nusantara*.

proficient Qur'an reading skills.⁴⁸ In contrast, the post-2000 period witnessed the emergence of numerous methods that emphasized speed and efficiency. Some even promised mastery within hours or days, such as the "10-Hour Al-Fadhil Method," which claims to produce results in a remarkably short time frame.⁴⁹

Another significant difference concerns flexibility and learner autonomy. Methods prior to the year 2000 were highly dependent on the physical presence of a teacher who provided direct instruction. Students required intensive face-to-face guidance, and learning activities were typically confined to predetermined schedules. In contrast, post-2000 methods offer far greater flexibility. Many approaches enable learners to study independently, without the need for direct interaction with a teacher, at any time and in any location. These include online and application-based methods that make Qur'an learning more accessible. These formats allow learners to study at their own pace and according to their own schedules.⁵⁰ The use of technology also constitutes a major distinguishing factor between the two eras. Before 2000, Qur'an reading instruction was largely manual, relying on printed books and often requiring physical teaching aids such as blackboards or paper. After 2000, however, technology began to be widely integrated into Qur'anic pedagogy. Mobile applications, online programs, and digital tools have become essential components of newer methods. With applications such as *Marbel Mengaji* or "AQU Bisa Al-Qur'an," learners can engage with interactive and appealing digital platforms designed to support Qur'an literacy.⁵¹



Figure 1. Promotional examples of technology-assisted Qur'an reading methods

48 Effendi, *Ensiklopedi Metode Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia*.

49 Abror, *Metode Pembelajaran Al-Qur'an: Kumpulan Metode-Metode Belajar Huruf Al-Qur'an*.

50 Muhammad Sofyan, "The Development of Tahfiz Qur'an Movement in the Reform Era in Indonesia," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1, <https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v4i1.64>.

51 YAYASAN TADABBUR QURAN INDONESIA, "Belajar Al-Quran Dari 0 Sampai Mahir Metode AQU," 2022, <https://tadabburqu.id/program/belajar-al-quran-dari-0-sampai-mahir-metode-aqu/>.

Finally, there is a notable difference in terms of learning targets. Prior to the year 2000, most Qur'an reading methods were primarily designed for children, with a strong emphasis on introducing the basic skills of Qur'anic literacy from an early age. Methods such as *Iqra'* were especially popular among young learners. After 2000, however, new methods began to emerge that targeted not only children but also adolescents and adults.⁵² Approaches such as the *Ummi Method* were specifically developed for individuals seeking rapid learning or wishing to improve their recitation skills later in life.⁵³ Overall, the shift in Qur'an reading methods before and after 2000 demonstrates a significant evolution. Traditional approaches—slow, teacher-dependent, and limited in scope—have been increasingly replaced by modern methods that are faster, more flexible, technologically integrated, and more diverse in their intended learners. This transition has broadened the range of available learning formats and expanded access to Qur'anic education in contemporary society. The following graph illustrates this development:

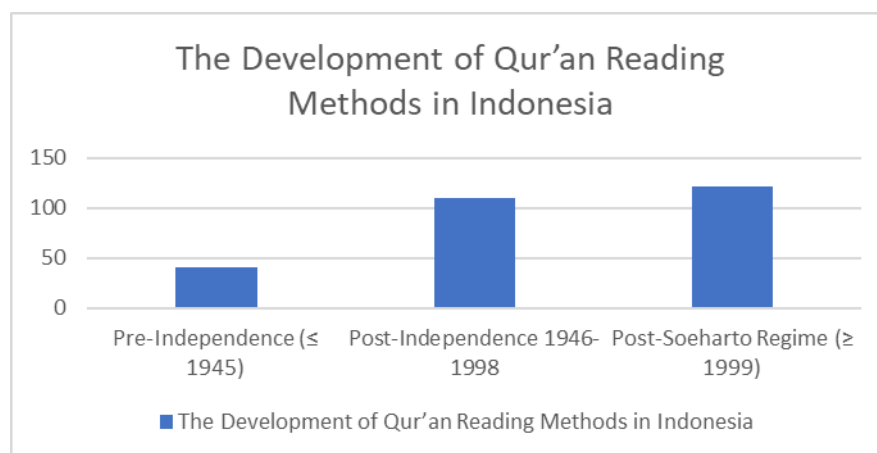


Figure 2. Development of Qur'an Reading Methods in Indonesia

Overall, the graph illustrates that innovation in Qur'an reading methods has increased in tandem with Indonesia's broader sociopolitical transformations. Whereas Qur'anic instruction in the pre-independence era was largely traditional and relatively stable, the post-independence period—especially the Reformasi era—witnessed the emergence of increasingly diverse, expansive, and institutionalized approaches to Qur'an learning.

52 Kemenag, "Metode Baca Al-Qur'an Iqro'," <https://kemenag.go.id>, accessed 22 Oktober 2024, <https://kemenag.go.id/kolom/metode-baca-al-qur-an-iqro-HBXHy>.

53 Kemenag, "Metode Baca Al-Qur'an Ummi," <https://kemenag.go.id>, accessed 23 Oktober 2024, <https://kemenag.go.id/kolom/metode-baca-al-qur-an-ummi-tnDqT>.



Figure 3. Institutional promotion of Qur'an reading methods in the post-Soeharto era

In the post-Soeharto era, Qur'anic education has increasingly become an economic commodity through the rise of increasingly commercialized programs, such as private tutoring courses, packaged Qur'an-learning programs, and intensive *tahfidz* training. These programs are often promoted using modern marketing strategies and offered at relatively high fees, targeting economically advantaged segments of society. This development indicates that Qur'anic education functions not only as a means of deepening religious understanding but also as a commercial opportunity.⁵⁴ Beyond its economic dimension, Qur'anic education has also become a form of social capital. In an increasingly complex society, the ability to read and understand the Qur'an is frequently perceived as a marker of social status and religious identity. Many parents view providing high-quality Qur'anic education for their children as part of their effort to cultivate a positive social image within their community.⁵⁵

54 Ikmal Mulia Harahap, "Huffazh Center Indonesia: Study and Development of Tahfidz Al-Qur'an at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 2 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i2.5184>.

55 Elsa Yulianingsih, "Preferensi Orangtua Dalam Memilih Sekolah Anak: Preferensi Orangtua Dalam Memilih Sekolah Anak," *At-Tarbiyah Jurnal Pendidikan, Kebudayaan Dan Keislaman* 5, no. 2 (2024): 2.



Figure 4. Promotion of a Qur'an reading method through user and partner-institution networks

Achievement in Qur'an memorization or the ability to recite the Qur'an with *tartil*—correctly and melodiously— has become a source of personal prestige that elevates an individual's social status within the community.⁵⁶ Moreover, Qur'anic education has also become a political instrument within the social dynamics of Muslim society. Political parties and social groups frequently incorporate Qur'anic education into their political agendas to secure voter support.⁵⁷ Educational programs related to the Qur'an, particularly those sponsored by the government or specific organizations, often carry political dimensions that serve to reinforce particular ideologies or extend political influence within the community.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the dominance of “fast-reading” and “ultra-fast” methods in the Reformasi era represents a strategic response to shifts in habitus. Speed, flexibility, and technological integration function as markers of symbolic distinction, appealing to urban, time-constrained learners. Pedagogical efficiency thus operates not only as an instructional goal but also as a form of symbolic capital that enhances institutional prestige and market visibility. This shift also reflects changes in learner and parental dispositions. Qur'anic literacy is increasingly perceived as a resource for social mobility and pious self-presentation. Mastery of *tartil* recitation, memorization achievements, and affiliation with reputable methods elevate social status within Muslim communities. In this context, Qur'anic education operates simultaneously as religious practice and social investment.

56 Rholand Muary dan Puteri Atikah, “Tahfidz Al Quran Class: Religion Commodification And Popular Culture In Muslim Middle Class,” *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik Malikussaleh (JSPM)* 4, no. 1 (2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.29103/jspm.v4i1.10097>.

57 Ulyan Nasri dan Arif Mulyohadi, “Salafi Islamic Education: Teaching Methods, Traditions and Ideologies in Lombok Boarding Schools: (Case Study at Dar al-Qur'an and al-Hadith al-Majidiyyah al-Syafi'iyah Institute in Nahdlatul Wathan Lombok),” *Syaikhuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pranata Islam* 14, no. 02 (2023): 02, <https://doi.org/10.58223/syaikhuna.v14i02.7029>.

State involvement and organizational endorsement further structure this field. Government programs and affiliations with major Islamic organizations function as mechanisms of symbolic legitimation, enabling certain methods to dominate the market. Consequently, the Qur'an reading method market is not a neutral or free arena, but a regulated field shaped by power relations and unequal access to capital.

The Indonesian case thus both confirms and complicates prevailing theories of commodified piety. Rather than eroding religious authenticity, commodification often reinforces legitimacy when mediated through recognized institutions and moral discourse. Economic capital does not replace religious capital; instead, it is reframed as a means of enhancing quality, reach, and prestige. Yet this transformation also produces new inequalities. As Qur'anic education becomes increasingly packaged and priced, access to high-status religious capital becomes stratified along class lines. While commodification expands pedagogical innovation, it simultaneously risks marginalizing economically disadvantaged groups.

Overall, the evolution of Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia demonstrates a reconfiguration of the religious–educational field in which religious, economic, and social logics intersect. By applying Bourdieu's framework, this study advances debates on religious commodification by showing how Islamic education functions as a site of symbolic struggle and capital conversion, rather than as a simple narrative of market domination or spiritual decline.

Qur'an Reading Methods as a Discursive Tradition, State Regulation, and Religious Markets in Post-Reform Indonesia

Talal Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition provides a useful lens for understanding Qur'anic reading methods as technologies of moral formation rather than as neutral pedagogical instruments.⁵⁸ From this perspective, methods of Qur'an reading operate through disciplined practices that shape bodily comportment, regulate learning rhythms, and establish evaluative standards of piety. The Indonesian case complicates the common assumption that commodification necessarily dilutes religious discipline. On the contrary, many modern Qur'anic methods intensify discipline by reorganizing time, bodily practice, and moral assessment in line with efficiency and measurability.⁵⁹ Claims such as "learning to read the Qur'an in six hours" exemplify how piety is rearticulated through neoliberal temporal regimes, where speed and productivity become markers of religious achievement. Importantly,

58 Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," dalam *Religion in Today's World* (Routledge, 2013).

59 Jamil dan Khaled, "The Genealogy of Authoritative Transmission of Sanad Al-Qur'an in Java Islamic Boarding Schools."

these regimes do not displace Islamic norms but rather recalibrate how discipline and authority are enacted within contemporary Qur'anic pedagogy.

These dynamics became especially visible after the fall of the Soeharto regime, when Indonesia's political and social transformations reshaped the landscape of religious education. In this post-authoritarian context, civil society organizations played a decisive role in institutionalizing and legitimizing Qur'anic reading methods as disciplined pedagogical systems.⁶⁰ Organizations such as Team Tadarus Angkatan Muda Masjid dan Mushalla (*AMM*) and the Indonesian Mosque Youth Communication Agency (*Badan Komunikasi Pemuda Masjid Indonesia, BKPRMI*) played a pivotal role in maintaining and expanding the legitimacy of Qur'anic reading methods they had developed, such as the *Iqra'* method.⁶¹ *AMM*, initiated by K.H. As'ad Humam in Yogyakarta, originally aimed to develop a practical method to combat Qur'anic illiteracy among Muslims. The *Iqra'* method developed by *AMM* gained widespread acceptance among the public, even before the Reformasi era, thanks in large part to the support and promotion of *BKPRMI*.⁶² Through events like the *Latihan Manajemen Dakwah* (Preaching Management Training) organized by *BKPRMI*, the *Iqra'* method became increasingly well known and eventually standardized across numerous Qur'anic Education Parks (*Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an*, TPA) and Qur'anic Kindergartens (*Taman Kanak-kanak Al-Qur'an*, TKA) throughout Indonesia.⁶³ The collaboration between *AMM* and *BKPRMI* in introducing and distributing the *Iqra'* method significantly contributed to its public legitimacy within Indonesian Muslim communities.

However, after the fall of the Soeharto regime, political changes influenced the government's approach to religious education. With greater openness in public discourse, discussions began to emerge around the diversity of methods for teaching Qur'an reading and the ideological influences behind them.⁶⁴ During this era, the government became more actively involved in regulating religious education as part of policies promoting a moderate and modern understanding of Islam. This shift had the potential to displace traditional or locally developed methods that had previously grown independently—including those propagated by *AMM* and

60 Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*; Natana J. DeLong-Bas, "The Qur'an: Ritual, Practice, Embodiment, and Culture," dalam *Routledge Handbook of Islamic Ritual and Practice* (Routledge, 2022).

61 Ida Tejawiani et al., "Manajemen TK/TP Al-Qur'an Badan Komunikasi Pemuda Remaja Masjid Indonesia (BKPRMI) Kalimantan Tengah," *JIIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 6, no. 3 (2023): 2092–100.

62 Ikhwan Jamil, "Pengelolaan Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an Kota Banda Aceh (Studi Komparatif Pada Kemenag Dengan Lpptka)" (thesis, UIN Ar-Raniry Fakultas Dakwah dan Komunikasi, 2023), <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/29715/>.

63 Porter, *Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia*.

64 Effendi, *Sejarah dan Perkembangan Metode Pembelajaran Baca Al-Qur'an di Indonesia*.

BKPRMI—in favor of approaches deemed more aligned with the prevailing ideology or governmental preferences of the time.⁶⁵

AMM and BKPRMI, in this context, played a key role in maintaining the legitimacy of the Iqra' method amid these waves of change. Through their networks of mosques and religious education institutions, they continued to support this method as part of the Qur'anic learning heritage in Indonesia, despite facing new discourses and policies that at times prioritized other approaches.⁶⁶ Their presence and role became crucial in preserving the diversity of Qur'an learning methods in Indonesia, while also serving as a form of resistance against the potential monopoly of more centralized, state-controlled methods. In this way, AMM and BKPRMI were not only instrumental in spreading the Iqra' method but also in upholding its legitimacy amid the political transformations that followed the New Order era.

The government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has also promoted standardization and certification for Qur'an teachers and Qur'anic education institutions. Regulations governing Qur'anic education encourage nationally recognized standards while continuing to accommodate methods such as Iqra', Yanbu'a, and Tartili across diverse institutional settings.⁶⁷ Qur'anic education in Indonesia is influenced not only by political discourse but also by economic dynamics. Qur'an education has undergone commodification, with growing public demand for high-quality religious instruction. This has created space for the development of Qur'an reading methods as economically valuable commodities, particularly with the emergence of private institutions offering paid Qur'an learning programs, both in-person and through online platforms.

The commodification of religion in the context of Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia can be understood as a process in which religious education—such as Qur'anic Literacy and Writing (BTQ), is no longer solely a means of spiritual development, but has also evolved into a commodity with social and economic value.⁶⁸ In this regard, Qur'anic Education Centers (TPQ) and similar institutions play a vital role in expanding public access to Qur'anic education, while also contributing

65 Porter, *Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia*.

66 Ismaidah Khoirunisaa et al., "Pengembangan Mutu Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Non-Formal: Eksplorasi Strategi BKPRMI Pada Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 7, no. 1 (2022): 77–88, [https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2022.vol7\(1\).8679](https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2022.vol7(1).8679).

67 Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Nomor 91 Tahun 2020 tentang Lembaga Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (LPQ)" (2020); Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Nomor 2769 Tahun 2022 tentang Lembaga Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (LPQ)" (2022).

68 Faisal Bin Husen Ismail et al., "The Practice of Reading Al-Qur'an among Muslim Youths," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 1, no. 2 (2022): 105–27, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v1i2.1062>.

to the creation of a competitive religious education market, where BTQ programs are promoted as tools for enhancing piety and as symbols of social status.⁶⁹

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has recorded that Qur'an learning programs are supported by various actors, such as Religious Counselors, Majelis Taklim (Islamic study groups), Islamic organizations, and the Qur'anic Recitation Development Institute (LPTQ), and are increasingly optimized through social media. This indicates that Qur'anic education is moving toward a more structured and large-scale system, backed by both government and religious institutions. At the same time, there are signs that these programs have become part of a broader system of capitalization, in which institutions expand their influence in society through religious education, creating demand for access to BTQ institutions.

One of the impacts of the commodification of religion is the emergence of competition among educational institutions, particularly in offering Qur'an reading methods that are perceived as superior.⁷⁰ Modern methods such as *Iqra'*, *Ummi*, and *Yanbu'a*, which are claimed to be more effective and efficient, have gained popularity in urban communities that demand quick and practical learning approaches.⁷¹ Urban life, often filled with busy schedules, requires flexible learning solutions, making these modern methods—which promise results in a short period—more appealing. However, their popularity is not solely due to efficiency; it is also driven by marketing strategies that capitalize on the practical needs of society, especially among the upper-middle class, who tend to associate quality with cost or the use of technology.

On the other hand, traditional methods such as *Baghdadiyah* are still maintained by religious educational institutions affiliated with traditional Islamic movements, especially in rural areas and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools).⁷² This method is viewed as a heritage rich in spiritual values, not merely a technique for reading the Qur'an. Pesantren that use traditional methods often emphasize the importance of spiritual depth and a profound understanding of religious values, which are considered more important than speed in learning.⁷³ This method is also often associated with conservative Islamic movements that resist excessive modernization

69 Ianatut Thoifah et al., "Classification of Indonesian Students' Ability to Read Al-Qur'an: The Role of Educational Institutions," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 2 December 2021, 269–89, <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v19i2.3027>.

70 Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice*.

71 Nur Rohman, "Anna M. Gade dan MTQ di Indonesia: Sebuah Kajian Metodologis," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* 13, no. 1 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v13i1.42>.

72 Saeful Anam, "Karakteristik Dan Sistem Pendidikan Islam: Mengenal Sejarah Pesantren, Surau Dan Meunasah Di Indonesia," *JALIE; Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2017): 146–67, <https://doi.org/10.33754/jalie.v1i1.52>.

73 Abror, *Metode Pembelajaran Al-Qur'an: Kumpulan Metode-Metode Belajar Huruf Al-Qur'an*.

in religious education.

However, there is an irony in this dynamic. Although modern methods are more commonly associated with progressive urban communities, some Qur'anic educational institutions with conservative orientations have also adopted modern methods such as *Iqra'*, *Ummi*, and others to accelerate the learning process for their students.⁷⁴ This indicates that modern methods do not necessarily indicate ideological progressiveness; they may instead respond to practical needs in religious education. In this case, the capitalization of Qur'an reading methods becomes more complex, as even conservative institutions feel the need to accommodate modern methods for the sake of effectiveness.

From an economic perspective, the discourse on the commodification of Qur'an reading methods also touches upon the issue of legitimacy. More expensive methods or those utilizing modern technology may be perceived as higher in quality due to the public's tendency to associate cost or technology with superior results.⁷⁵ For example, methods delivered through digital applications or private tutoring are typically marketed as more premium solutions compared to traditional methods taught communally in pesantren. On the other hand, traditional methods remain valid in the eyes of religious authorities, even though in the modern context they often have less commercial appeal. The legitimacy of traditional methods is more rooted in spiritual authority rather than efficiency or technological sophistication.

The legitimacy of Qur'an reading methods in post-Reform Indonesia has also been shaped by political, social, and economic dynamics, including the growth of the Integrated Islamic School Network (Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu, JSIT), political support for Islamic education associated with the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), and the development of the *Ummi* method. These developments illustrate overlapping, rather than necessarily formal, relationships among educational networks, political currents, and branded pedagogies.⁷⁶ Some schools within JSIT use methods such as *Ummi* and integrate Qur'anic instruction into curricula grounded in Islamic values. In this setting, political and social networks can increase the visibility of particular pedagogical models without necessarily indicating direct institutional control over those methods.

74 Agus Priyatno, *Transformasi Manajemen Pesantren Penghafal Al-Qur'an di Pesantren Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus* (Penerbit A-Empat, 2020).

75 Aenal Fuad Adam, "Kapitalisasi Agama Menuju Pasar, Komodifikasi Dan Komersialisasi Agama," *Musamus Journal of Public Administration* 1, no. 2 (2019): 17–24.

76 Muhammad Yusup, "Eksklusivisme Beragama Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu (JSIT) Yogyakarta," *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 13, no. 1 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.14421/rejusta.2017.1301-05>.

The *Ummi* method has gained popularity among urban communities seeking an efficient approach that retains structured teacher training and religious discipline. Its expansion through schools and institutional training networks reflects wider demand for efficient yet normatively grounded Qur'anic instruction.⁷⁷ From an economic perspective, methods such as *Ummi* also illustrate the commodification of Islamic education. Training materials, textbooks, certification, and courses generate economic value while supporting institutional claims to quality and consistency.⁷⁸ In this context, legitimacy emerges from the interaction of social networks, institutional adoption, religious authority, and market mechanisms, particularly in urban educational settings.

Thus, the dynamics of legitimizing Qur'an reading methods in Indonesia are not solely about public acceptance of various methods, but are also deeply intertwined with political, social, and economic factors that influence one another. The government and conservative Islamic groups tend to reinforce the legitimacy of traditional methods, while modern methods gain legitimacy through commercial value and responsiveness to contemporary demands. Ultimately, the debate over Qur'an reading methods is not merely about pedagogical approaches, but also about how politics, market logic, and religious authority shape public preferences for what is perceived as a more "effective" or more "authentic" method.

Commodified Piety and Qur'anic Authority in Post-Soeharto Indonesia: A Theoretical Reassessment

This study positions Indonesia as a critical test case for theories of religious commodification and the formation of pious subjects. Unlike much of the existing literature on commodified piety and religious markets—largely grounded in Western or Middle Eastern neoliberal contexts—the Indonesian case reveals a distinct configuration in which mass Qur'anic literacy movements, pesantren networks, Islamic organizations, political actors, and state regulation intersect within a Muslim-majority society.⁷⁹ This configuration allows for an examination of how theories of

77 Yunizar Ramadhani, "Ideologi Keagamaan, Partai Politik, dan Pendidikan Islam: Refleksi Pemikiran Hasan Al-Banna di Sekolah Islam Terpadu Ukhuwah Banjarmasin," *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 1 (2021): 78–92, <https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v5i1.2455>.

78 Sri Belia Harahap, *Strategi Penerapan Metode Ummi Dalam Pembelajaran Al-Qur'an* (Scopindo Media Pustaka, 2020).

79 Muhammed Bilgehan Aytac, "A Decolonizing or Recolonizing Mindset? Semiotic Analysis of a Qurban Donation Appeal to Africa in Turkey," dalam *Postcolonial Marketing Communication: Images from the Margin*, ed. by Arindam Das et al. (Springer Nature, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-0285-5_9; Syafik Ubaidila dan Mubaidi Sulaeman, "Decolonization of Islamic Education and Efforts to Achieve Academic Independence: A Case Study of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Kediri," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 36, no. 2 (2025): 363–84, <https://doi.org/10.33367/kgvvg516>.

religious commodification operate, adapt, and are reshaped when religious authority is plural, institutionally embedded, and socially expansive rather than marginal or privatized.

The conservative turn in post-Soeharto Indonesia constitutes a relevant sociohistorical condition that helps explain the reconfiguration of Qur'anic pedagogy examined in this study. Following the 1998 reform era, the expansion of political openness and religious freedom created conditions for the consolidation of conservative Islamic orientations emphasizing textual literalism, ritual discipline, and moral regulation. As noted by scholars such as Bruinessen and Hefner, this period witnessed not only the proliferation of conservative movements influenced by transnational currents—particularly Salafi and Wahhabi ideologies—but also a broader transformation of Muslim public life, in which religious norms increasingly shaped education, lifestyle, consumption patterns, and political engagement.⁸⁰ The conservative turn thus cannot be understood merely as a theological shift; it represents a reordering of authority, identity, and social practice within Indonesian Islam.

Within this transformed landscape, Qur'an reading pedagogy emerged as a central arena for negotiating conservative aspirations and institutional legitimacy. The growing emphasis on “correct,” standardized, and efficient Qur'anic literacy reflects a conservative concern with doctrinal authenticity and moral discipline, while simultaneously responding to heightened public demand for religious education in an increasingly pious society. As Bruinessen observes, the conservative turn coincided with the rapid expansion of Islamic schools, modern pesantren, and da'wah organizations, many of which positioned Qur'anic literacy as a foundational marker of religious correctness.⁸¹ This study demonstrates that the proliferation of Qur'an reading methods—such as Iqra', Ummi, Yanbu'a, and Tilawati—should be read against this backdrop, where pedagogical innovation is inseparable from efforts to define orthodoxy and regulate religious practice.

At the same time, the Indonesian case challenges the assumption that conservatism operates in opposition to commodification or market rationality. Rather than rejecting market logics, conservative actors have actively engaged with them, adopting standardized curricula, certification schemes, branded learning systems,

80 Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam*; Wahid, “Kembalinya Konservatisme Islam Indonesia”; Ichwan, “Official Ulema and the Politics of Re-Islamization”; Kikue Hamayotsu, “Conservative Turn? Religion, State and Conflict in Indonesia,” Text, Pacific Affairs, a division of the University of British Columbia, December 2014, <https://doi.org/10.5509/2014874815>; Wasisto Raharjo Jati dan Ihsan Yilmaz, “The Recent Traditionalist Turn in Indonesian Islam After Conservatives: How Its Engagement towards Urban Muslims,” *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* 8, no. 2 (2023): 2, <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v8i2.2116>.

81 Bruinessen, What Happened to the Smiling Face of Indonesian Islam?

and fee-based training programs. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this reflects a strategic conversion of religious capital into symbolic and economic capital within an increasingly competitive field of Islamic education. Qur'an reading methods function not merely as neutral pedagogical tools but as positions within this field, allowing institutions and networks to accumulate legitimacy, visibility, and material resources.⁸² The success of certain methods is thus tied not only to their pedagogical claims but also to their capacity to mobilize institutional infrastructure, political alliances, and market mechanisms.

This dynamic is further illuminated by Talal Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition and Saba Mahmood's analysis of discipline and ethical self-formation.⁸³ From this perspective, the commodification of Qur'anic pedagogy does not signify the weakening of religious norms. Instead, it entails a rearticulation of Islamic discipline under contemporary conditions. Accelerated learning claims, standardized evaluation, and certification regimes reorganize time, bodily practice, and moral assessment in ways that align with neoliberal temporalities while remaining embedded within Islamic ethical frameworks. In this sense, modern Qur'an reading methods intensify rather than dilute disciplinary practices, producing pious subjects whose religiosity is measured, regulated, and publicly recognizable.

The coexistence of traditional pesantren-based methods and modern, market-oriented pedagogies further underscores the flexibility of Islamic discursive traditions in accommodating social change. Traditional methods continue to emphasize patience, repetition, and submission to authoritative teachers, while modern methods reorganize discipline around efficiency, targets, and institutional accountability.⁸⁴ Importantly, as this study shows, conservative institutions themselves often selectively adopt modern methods to meet practical demands, demonstrating that pedagogical choices are shaped less by rigid ideological binaries than by strategic responses to shifting configurations of authority, demand, and competition within the religious field.

By situating the conservative turn within the broader processes of commodification and institutional competition, this article advances theoretical debates on religious capitalism and pious subject formation. The Indonesian case

82 Ismail et al., "The Practice of Reading Al-Qur'an among Muslim Youths"; Djunaedi dan Muzayyanah DF, *Sejarah Qira'at al-Qur'an di Nusantara*; Inayatul Mustautina, *Sejarah Ilmu Tajwid Al-Qur'an di Nusantara (Kajian Terhadap Kitab-Kitab Tajwid Al-Qur'an di Nusantara)*, Institut Ilmu Al Quran (IIQ) Jakarta, 2018, <http://repository.iiq.ac.id/handle/123456789/726>.

83 Ovamir Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 656–72.

84 Chaqoqo, "The Primary Text for Teaching the Qur'an."

illustrates that conservatism, market logic, and religious discipline are not mutually exclusive but mutually constitutive. Qur'anic pedagogy emerges as a key site where conservative moral projects are translated into institutional practices, marketable forms, and disciplinary regimes that shape everyday piety. In doing so, this study complicates linear narratives that equate commodification with secularization or conservatism with resistance to modernity. Instead, it reveals a dynamic arena in which spirituality, authority, and capitalism intersect, are negotiated, and are continually reconfigured in post-Soeharto Indonesian Islam.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that the development of Qur'an reading methods in post-Soeharto Indonesia cannot be understood merely as pedagogical variation but must be situated within a broader structural transformation of the Islamic religious–educational field. Qur'anic pedagogy, which was previously community-based and largely non-commercial, has evolved into an institutionalized arena characterized by commodification, intensified institutional competition, and the reconfiguration of religious authority. The expansion of Qur'anic education institutions, the rise of branded methods, and the implementation of certification regimes, standardization, and digital platforms reflect the intersection of neoliberal religious markets, urban middle-class religiosity, and political contestation among Islamic actors.

By integrating Pierre Bourdieu's theory of field and capital with Talal Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition, this study shows that Qur'an reading methods operate simultaneously as instruments of religious transmission, arenas of symbolic competition, and mechanisms for the formation of pious subjects. From a Bourdieusian perspective, Qur'anic education emerges as a competitive field in which religious capital is converted into symbolic—and often economic—capital through certification, institutional legitimacy, pedagogical differentiation, and branding strategies. The legitimacy of methods such as *Iqra'*, *Ummi*, *Yanbu'a*, and *Tilawati* is therefore not determined solely by pedagogical effectiveness but is produced through interlocking sociopolitical and economic mechanisms involving the state, Islamic organizations, *pesantren* networks, political actors, and educational entrepreneurs.

At the same time, following Talal Asad, this study argues that commodification does not simply empty religion of its normative force. Rather, it rearticulates Qur'anic orthodoxy and authority through disciplinary practices that regulate modes of recitation, learning pace, curricula, and publicly recognized standards of piety. Qur'anic pedagogy thus produces not only technical literacy but also pious subjects aligned with contemporary regimes of religiosity. By positioning Indonesia as a

critical test case, this article advances debates on commodified piety and religious capitalism by demonstrating that Qur'anic education in Muslim-majority societies operates as a dynamic arena of negotiation between spirituality, religious authority, and capitalist logic—one that simultaneously enables pedagogical innovation while generating new forms of inequality in access to highly valued religious capital.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP), Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Beasiswa Indonesia Bangkit (BIB) program for their support during this research.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the conceptualization, analysis, and preparation of the manuscript and approved the final version.

Funding

This research was supported by the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP), Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Beasiswa Indonesia Bangkit (BIB) program, a collaboration between LPDP and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

No new datasets were generated. The sources analyzed in this library-based study are listed in the references.

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