The Dissemination of the Qur’an in Urban Societies: PPPA Daarul Qur’an and its Social Activities in Yogyakarta

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Abstract: This paper explores one of the leading Islamic educational institutions and its roles in the dissemination of the Qur’an and community development in an urban setting in Indonesia. The rising trend of the program of the memorization of the Qur’an (tahfiz) has attracted young Muslim generations. This empirical study finds that the PPPA Daarul Qur’an develops an Islamic institution that focuses mainly on the production of the Qur’an memorizers and the dissemination of this program throughout the country. With the large support from broader Muslim community and international networking, the institution is now a home for thousand students coming from across the country. In addition to regular study of the Qur’an, the institution also run charity programs that target the poor to offer easy access to Islamic education. By incorporating education and social service, the PPPA plays important roles not only in enhancing Islamic education but also in developing Muslim community.

Keywords: PPPA Daarul Qur’an, tahfiz, urban society, Islamic community.

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Introduction

IN THE BEGINNING OF ISLAM, the Prophet Muhammad conveyed the revealed Qur’an to his companions and asked them to memorize and write it down, as two important religious
observance in the early phase. The tradition of memorizing (taḥfīẓ) the Qur’ān continue up to the present time, including the massif use of technology to assist reading this scripture in Indonesia. As the largest Muslim country in the world, it has a long tradition of taḥfīḍz amongst Muslims in their Islamic institutions across the country.

Early development of taḥfīḍz in Indonesia started from individuals as teacher of this scripture. It thus grew significantly and has been developed into systematical method of memorization and teaching. Most institutions that deal with the memorization is Islamic boarding school, known as pesantren. One of the best Islamic institution in this respect is Pesantren Krapyak in Yogyakarta.

Up to the twentieth century, there were still limited number of Muslims in the country who were interested in, and capable of, memorizing the Qur’ān. The lack was mainly caused by the fear that they were unbale to keep their memorization consistently. According to Islamic theology, Qur’ān memorizers must be able to preserve their memorization and therefore are required to continuously keep doing so. The failure to do so may cause confusion or mistake of reciting the Qur’ān. Therefore, those who could bear such challenge were usually from the family of Quranic teacher or graduate of schools of universities from Middle Eastern countries. However, this perception has been slowly disappearing since a growing number of Islamic educational institution offer a program of the Qur’ān memorization has attracted a high interest.

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4 At the beginning of the 20th century, especially in Java called “pesantren”, in West Sumatra called “surau”, if in Aceh called “Islamic boarding schoo”. In Malaysia called “pondok”. Look in Arief Subhan, *Indonesian Islamic Education Institute of the 20th Century: The Struggle Between Modernization and Identity* (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2012), 75.
from Muslims. Nowadays, the tradition of memorizing the Qur’an can be accomplished by anyone interested, regardless of their background. Now, the program is not only offered at pesantren but also higher educational institutions or universities. Furthermore, the finding of technology has pushed forward the interests on this matter because it creates tool or application that supports or accelerates the ability to memorize the Qur’an.

This research aims to explore one of the Islamic institutions of the memorization of the Qur’an in Yogyakarta, namely Yayasan Daarul Qur’an, Yogyakarta. Through participatory observation, this study focuses on the pesantren programs and the youth activism in it. It discusses factors that drive the interest in the memorization of the Qur’an in the program called Program Pembibitan Penghafal Al-Qur’an/PPPA (Training Program of Memorizers of the Qur’an). Furthermore, it seeks to explore the responses of the society to the pesantren’s social activities and the community’s response to it. Particular analysis will be given to understand the pesantren as a community-based movement that indirectly empowers the community where it is located.

The Development of Tahfiz in Indonesia

Of the Islamic traditions that has been thriving significantly is tahfidz. It becomes a trend in Islamic school especially in urban areas. Many Islamic school offer the program of tahfidz in addition to regular schooling program. As the words of God, Muslims not only want to read and understand it but also to live with it empirically. Tahfidz and other related activities such as reading competition of the Qur’an are seen as one way to meet this objective. Anna Gade observes that Muslims’ activism relating to the Qur’an shows the rise of Islamic awareness among them. The activism includes reading, teaching and memorizing the Qur’an. The motives behind the rising trend in the Qur’an may include several points. First, as a scripture, the Qur’an receives a great

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6 Ibid., 206.
attention from Muslim who not only intend to read and learn it but also to do critical thinking of it. Second, there is a big expectation that memorizing the Qur’an will enhance spirituality, piety and achievement. Third, since the Qur’an is words of God, reading it is considered as worship.\(^7\)

The institution of takfiz in Indonesia has grown significantly. As it enters the 21st century, there are a number of institutions either schools or pesantren that offers the program. One of them is PPPA Daarul Qur’an Nusantara Foundation. It was established by a well-known young Muslim preacher and entrepreneur Yusuf Mansur.\(^8\) The idea of establishment was motivated by the desire to actualize the Prophet tradition regarding the family of God on the Earth.\(^9\) According to the Tradition, the Prophet replied the question about the family of God saying that “The experts of the Qur’an are the family of God”. So one of the objective of the PPPA is to build awareness of Indonesian Muslims to return to the Qur’an and to attain such Prophetic message. It wants to “build Indonesia with the Qur’an”, as its jargon says. To achieve the goal, it makes use of technology and modern media to support the program. It launched a movie to promote the program, in addition to television program of da’wa-tainment and cinema (television series).\(^10\)

**Biographical Sketch of Leader of PPPA Daarul Qur’an**

The project of producing young Muslim generation of the Qur’an is initiated by Jam’an Nurchotib Mansur, known as Yusuf Mansur, a Muslim preacher, memorizer of the Qur’an and business leaders.\(^11\) He was born in a family of Muslim teacher. His father is descendant of Kiai Zahid Mimbar, and his mother is a

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10. Beginning of the Preacing through the movie called “Kun Fayakun” at 2008.
descendant of Kiai Mohammad Mansur, a scholar of a native-Jakarta of Betawi at the end of the 19th century. Yusuf Mansur grew up in a milieu of Islamic boarding school where he spent his childhood to study Islam intensively. His uncle taught him about the atmosphere of boarding school, from which he learnt about memorizing the Qur’an, managing boarding school, chanting and studying Islamic lessons. Due to his talent, he was often invited to give a public sermon (pengajian) when he was still very young so that he was known as “ustadz cilik” (little preacher). After graduating from junior high school, he proceeded to study at State Islamic Senior High School in Petamburan, West Jakarta. He graduated from this school with the predicate of the best graduate in 1992. He became a national Qur’anic reciter when he was a student at Pesantren Daarunnajah, Jakarta, and participated in the study of the Qur’an at this institution. He continued his study at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic Institute, Jakarta and majored in Islamic family law (Akhwal Al-Syakhsiyah).

The idea of the establishment of the PPPA came from the initiative to help an almost collapsed pesantren due to lack of financial support. In the beginning of 2003, Yusuf Mansur received information that an Islamic teacher (ustadz) was unable to run his Islamic school because of financial problem. There were 8 students at the time in the school who were afraid of failure in the memorization program. He thus provided accommodation and asked them to keep studying. Surprisingly, despite lacking facilities, the students successfully memorized the Qur’an. This encouraged him to establish a pesantren of tahlidz and named it the Daarul Qur’an Nusantara Foundation with a special program in training and education of tahlidz. With the program’s slogan of

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13 Yayan, Kun Yusuf Mansur, 24.

"Emerging with the Qur'an and Hadith", the pesantren attempts to realize the teaching of the Qur'an and every aspect of it.\textsuperscript{15}

Yusuf Mansur began preaching and spreading of the virtue of charity through the media in the program called "Tour of the Heart/Wisata Hati". The PPPA is aspired to produce the Qur’an memorizers and build 100 boarding schools in 100 cities of 5 continents.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, the PPPA also aspires to bring up qualified institutions but friendly for poor people. All tuition and fee are paid by the foundation so the students can focus on memorizing the Qur’an. Zamakhsyari Dhofer argued that the purpose of the importance of Islamic education boarding schools is to elevate the moral, train and heightens the spirit, appreciate spiritual values and humanity, teach honest behavior and prepare students for living a simple and good way.\textsuperscript{17} Yusuf Mansur is the "kyai" in the PPPA and plays an important role as, what Geertz termed it, "cultural broker." In addition to teaching Islam, a kyai serves to resolve social problems and guard moral and spiritual of religious community.

The Qur’an Programs at PPPA

In urban societies, many people are successful in their carrier, yet lack in spirituality. Many of them even are practicing religion in very strict way. The very fact suggests that preaching in urban societies is much more difficult than that in traditional or rural areas. Hence, that is logic that preaching in urban backgrounds demands preachers to provide the preaching with spiritual satisfaction.\textsuperscript{18}

It is noteworthy that the method of preaching Islam adopted by the PPPA only engages universal Islamic values and is not...


\textsuperscript{16} The Construction Of 100 Boarding School Was Conceived In Order To Strengthen The Movement To Build Indonesia Through Formal Education. Look at Ahmad Ahmad Jameel, “100 Pesantren di 100 Kota dan 5 Benua,” Kabar Daqu, March 2017, 43.

\textsuperscript{17} Subhan, Indonesian Islamic, 84.

\textsuperscript{18} M. Quraish Shihab, Grounding Qur’an: The Function and Role of Revelation in the Life of Society (Bandung: Mizan Top Media, 1992), 620.
strictly connected to certain mass religious organizations. As the result, many people are getting inspiration from the PPPA preaching, be it old and young generation, urbanized-indigenous, bourgeoisie-proletariat, or higher-lower educational level. The material of preaching touch upon daily life problems. This strategy receives a positive response from Muslims.19

In popularizing the Qur’an in urban settings, the PPPA offers programs of Islamic subject and learning, especially memorizing the Qur’an.20 These include education and propagation (da’wa), social science and humanitarian field and community development. The education and preaching program develop the Rumah Tahfidz Center (Home Tahfidz Center), the Beasiswa Tahfiz Qur’an/Scholarship Tahfiz Qur’an (BTQ), Sympathetic Teachers, Mobile Qur’an and Qur’an Call.21 While the Humanitarian field focus on social service such as providing ambulance access and the Santri Siaga Bencana/SIGAB (Disaster Preparedness Muslim Students). The PPPA also develops the program of the village of the Qur’an (Kampoeng Qur’an), Economic Empowerment and Daarul Qur’an (DAQU) Entrepreneur.

One of the programs that has attracted both children or adults to join is the Qur’an Call beginning in 2011. This program spread into several cities to provide reading or memorizing the Qur’an deposit “by phone”. Teachers who serve are also encouraged to memorize and understand the Qur’an.22 By offering such programs, this pesantren wants to adopt technology in spreading the Qur’an and using it to learn about this scripture in a myriad way.

In developing community-based development of tafīz al-Qur’ān, be it social and preaching programs, the PPPA is trusted as a charity manager to administer donations professionally and accountably. The PPPA provides easy transaction of donors in accordance to the needs of the donatur. The donation should not

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19 Yayan, Kun Yusuf Mansur, 60.
20 Usually called “muraja’ah”.
be piped directly to recipients, but use ATM (Cash Platform Independent) to Sedekah Online programme. Charity using ATM is allowed under religious law with the terms delivery the charity to a clear purpose.\textsuperscript{23} There is also a program of picking up charity; donators may send their full name and complete address and phone number to the Office of the PPPA in the nearest branch and will be contacted by the PPPA employees to pick the charity.\textsuperscript{24}

In addition, the PPPA also offers health service, called DaQu Health Clinic Program. This program is to meet the needs of the community health services adequately, easily, accessibly, comprehensively, and friendly to people, especially the poor. There is also a garden charity program that aims to turn vacant land granted to the society into a productive land,\textsuperscript{25} productive alms and charity for pregnant women.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{The PPPA’s Programs and its Responses}

The dynamic and fast development of the PPPA in Indonesia is possible because of Muslims’ positive responses to its programs, such as freely accessible of the Qur’an Call. This program facilitates urban people to learn the Qur’an easily and effectively since they are familiar with technology that support it.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Expert Council Centre for the study of the Qur’an, \textit{The Qur’an and Answer} (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2013), 103–104.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Mansur and Mahfud Junaedi, \textit{Reconstruction of the History of Islamic Education in Indonesia} (Jakarta: Ministry of Religious Affairs General Directorate of Institutional Islam, 2005), 176.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} The land will be managed productively with modern and professional farm management is handled by PPPO (Center for Development of Organic Farming).
  \item \textsuperscript{26} In support of missionary activity and the glorification of the Quran in the long run then built units Social Business aims to guarantee the independence and sustainability of the program. See the “Kabar Daqu: Memberi dan Berbagi untuk para Penghafal al-Qur’an,” \textit{Kabar Daqu}, 2013, 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} “Qur’an Call Standby for Country,” \textit{Majalah Daqu}, April 2016, 8–9.
\end{itemize}
The public response and support are given through Daqu Card. Daqu Card is created the PPPA and its business partners such as: Waroeng Steak and Shake Group, Ayam Bakar Mas Mono, Public Sambal Cibiuk, Eating Holy Soto Kauman, MOZ5 Salon Muslimah, Rabbani, and PT. Winner Tech. Support is also given by CIMB Niaga Syariah by providing scholarship of the program on memorizing Qur'an.

The cooperation is also involved overseas foundation, such as Qatar Islamic Online University where the PPPA acts as authorized representative of it in Jakarta. One output program from this cooperation is "One Day One Verse". The program receives enthusiastic response from abroad and the PPPA sends its students to teach the program in such countries as Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Hong Kong.

28 Everyone who is committed to distribute alms regularly through the PPPA Daqu, will obtain Daqu Card.
32 There are 11 students sent to represent the PPPA Daarul each students Koran, accompanied by 1 and 1 representative of the ustadz management. Look in “Ambassadors of the Qur’an Go International,” Majalah Daqu, August 2010, 26–27.
The presence of the PPPA programs attract the Muslim communities that in turn respond to it attentively, like mutual legal relationship, through charity. Charity is kind of social contribution that Islam strongly encourages. According to the Islamic belief, charity for the sake of God will be rewarded. In Sura al-Ḥadīd (18) the Qur’an declares "Verily, those who give out charity both men as well as women, and lend to God a good loan, will be multiplied (return) to them, and they will receive the reward of his Majesty." 

The social role of the PPPA and the society support of it through charity bring about further significant development. From 2007 up to the present, the PPPA has undergone dramatic changes. As the Quran Memorizing Indonesia (IMQ) indicates, within few years, the PPPA program has attracted not only students who study the Qur’an intensively in this institution but also workers, businessmen, and executive directors of some companies, who want to learn and memorize Qur’an.

The first graduation of the IMQ shows the successful of this program. On May 8, 2010, three thousands and five hundred students graduated. In the subsequent years, the number of participants multiplied. In the subsequent year the graduation ceremony was held at the mosque of Taman Mini Indonesia Indah/TMII (Indonesian National Park) due to increasing attendants. Because of deep enthusiastic, where parents and relatives wanted to participate, the third graduation was held in the Central Java Grand Mosque where around twenty five

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36 A letter can be deposited memorise among other surat al-Mulk, Yaasiin, ar-Rahman, and the al-Waqi‘ah. This first major graduation ceremony was also attended by the Secretary General of the body of Tahfidz al-Quran International based in Jeddah i.e. Dr. Anas Ahmad Karzun, also attended the Al-Subki ustadz Bugury. See in, “Akbar Graduation Indonesia Memorize,” *Majalah Daqu*, July 2010, 14–17.
37 Held in the mosque at-Tin, Complex TMII, East Jakarta.
thousand gathered for the graduation in May 19th, 2012. The number of participants, both the gradate and their parent and relatives, increased significantly in the subsequent years. The forth graduation was not centered in one place, but in various Rumah Tahfidz (center of memorization of the Qur’an), tahfidz boarding schools, and informal gatherings throughout Indonesia. So was the fifth graduation. There was change in the ceremony of the sixth and seventh graduation where the grand graduation ceremonies were held. In 2016, it was reported that the total participants of the seventh graduation, held in 20 provinces, reached 200,000.

The Islamic Movement-Oriented Community

The PPPA is one of the Islamic movements in Indonesia that seeks to transform society from within by utilizing educational opportunities, markets, as well as the media. There are two sub-horizontal movements included in the strategy of an Islamic

\[38\] In the third great graduation was attended also by Sheikh Ali Jaber and Sheikh Muhammad from Medina.

\[39\] The graduation events recorded as memorizing the Koran with the amount of participant and get notes in Museum Rekor Indonesia (MURI). At this graduation participants make memorizing the surat al-Baqarah verse 1-50 and surat an-Naba. Participants who follow anyone from Malaysia and Singapore. Attended also by Shaykh Sa’d al-Ghamidi, Imam of Masjid an-Nabawi, Medina and some scholars and priests of the Middle East as Chairman Ha’iah Al-Natural Litahfidil Qur’anil Karim Sheikh Ali Basfar (Jeddah), there was also a Sheikh Ali Jabir. Look in the “Graduation Kaleidoscope Akbar Indonesia Memorize 1-6,” Majalah Daqu, October 2015, 19.

\[40\] The letter must be deposited in contrast to the previous year, letters to be participants memorized surah Muhammad and surah al-Baqarah 50-100 verses. In this graduation ceremony was attended by dozens of Sheikh and scholars from home and abroad, among others: Sheikh Muhammad Abdul Karim (Dean of Faculty of the University of Sudan Qur’an, Imam Sheikh Adil Haram (Makkah), Sheikh Dr. Khalid Barokat (Expert Lecturer University of Lebanon) Sheikh Ahmad Syamsan (Faculty of Qur’an University of Medina).

\[41\] There are three surah that were tested include: Surah Qaf, Surah As-Shaff, and Surah Al-Baqarah verse 101-157.

\[42\] The participants are must revising three Surah; al-Hasyr, al-Munaafiqun, and al-Jumu’ah. Interview with Abdur Rahman as Division of Database and Development Home Tahfiz in PPPA Daarul Qur’an Center.
movement.\textsuperscript{43} \textit{First}, society and individuals can be mutually interacted and use communication networks as a strategy to forge identity and world view. \textit{Second}, driving force of social consciousness amongst Muslim through the empowerment of ritual, such as prayer, fasting, as well as reading and memorizing the Qur'an.

The spirit of the Islamic propagation movement driven by the PPPA to the general public or employees of the PPPA itself is one of the basic preaching models that aims to internalize Islamic values and changes. The process of this change is involved techniques and strategy that facilitate modernizing and popularizing this institution. "Popularizing the Qur’an in urban areas including the preaching is not easy as it is hard to find a professional preacher cadres. The strategy gives examples by means of developing community programs."\textsuperscript{44}

To produce generation of Qur’an memorizers in Indonesia and improve their quality, the PPPA invites overseas public figures such as the Great Imam of the Prophet mosque and the Grand Mosque Masjidil Haram as the jury in the graduation of the pesantren. This indicates that the expansion of the network to support the quality of students encourage further collaboration such as Sudan. In developing such network, the PPPA also create close relationship with some South/East Asia countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong. This means that in the Qur'an there is one common vision of the PPPA to establish civilization and a community-based on taḥfīz al-Qur’an.

The rise of the PPPA indicates dynamic Muslim community. Furthermore, from the perspective of both the students and the board, as well as the society or community that support the PPPA, it is obvious that this institution attempts to develop the country through the program on the Qur’an memorization and the production of young Muslim citizens. Combining both the spirit of community development and religious teaching, the PPPA


\textsuperscript{44} Interview with Maulana Kurnia Putra as the Branch Manager of the PPPA Daarul Qur’an in Yogyakarta, on 8th August, 2017.
emerges as one leading Islamic institution that contributes not only to the Muslim community but also to the country.

**Conclusion**

This paper has focused on the existence of the PPPA that has been successful in eliminating views about the hardship in the memorization of the Qur’an. Up to the present time, there are thousands of Indonesian Muslims who memorize the Qur’an. Amongst them are the young generation that the PPPA, which is concerned very much with the dissemination of the Qur’an to wider audience not only student but also Muslims in general who want to read and memorize it. To support this goal, the PPPA has launched affirmative programs regarding the memorization of the Qur’an.

Beside, the PPPA also runs social and charity program. It further establishes a strong networking and relationship with Islamic overseas institutions. By inviting guest lectures and imams from the Middle East to give lecture or examine the students regularly and irregularly, the PPPA wants to show its commitment and strong cooperation worldwide.

In short, the role of the PPPA is closely related to three main areas. The first is to assure that memorizing the Qur’an is not impossible even for lay Muslims. The second is to show that the concern on the memorizing Qur’an, in addition to reward and knowledge, can enhance personal reputation and status and that the Islamic institution can develop not only education but also business and charity. The third is to pave a new path of da’wa activism. Unlike traditional da’wa, which mostly relies on charismatic Muslim preachers, in the urban setting, Islamic preaching can be conducted through the establishment of the Islamic institution that train young Muslim generations.

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