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**Preference for *Rasm Al-Qur'ān* among Tahfīz Students:
A Study of *Living Qur'ān* at the Ma'had Amaliyyah
Qurani Islamic Boarding School in Bandung Regency**



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Abstract

This study discusses the tahfīz students' preferences for two models of rasm Al-Qur'an: rasm 'Uṣmāni and rasm Imlā'i, in the context of the practice of reading the Qur'an in Islamic boarding schools. This study departs from the shift in the discourse of rasm from the normative-theoretical realm to practical issues regarding the usability of the mushaf for its readers. The study was carried out using a living Qur'an approach with qualitative field methods in the Ma'had Amaliyyah Qurani Islamic Boarding School, Bandung Regency. Data were collected through reading observations and semi-structured interviews with 20 tahfīz students using QS. al-Faḥ /48:29 in two mushafs: the 2019 Revised Edition of the Indonesian Standardized Mushaf as a representation of rasm 'Uṣmāni and the 1974 edition of the Pojok Menara Kudus Mushaf as a representation of rasm Imlā'i. The results showed that all respondents preferred MSI because they perceived it as easier and more comfortable to read. This preference was related to familiarity with using the mushaf, visual comfort, and pedagogical needs in the deposit and muraja'ah activities. These findings indicate that the issue of rasm is not only related to orthographic rules, but also to the social practice of Qur'an recitation within the tahfīz community.

Keywords: *Living Qur'an, Rasm Imlā'i, Rasm 'Uṣmāni, Santri Preferences, Tahfīz Al-Qur'an.*

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INTRODUCTION

Qur'an as the Muslims' holy book has passed through a long codification process since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW until its standardization in the era of Caliph 'Uṣmān

bin ‘Affān. The important aspect in this codification is, among others, the *rasm Al-Qur’an* (rasm of Qur’ān), namely the rules for writing the body of the letters of the Qur’ān constituting one of the central studies in the discipline of ‘Ulūm Al-Qur’ān (Al-Suyūṭī, 2008). It should be understood that what is meant by *rasm* is not the type of font, *kebat*, dots, or *harakat*, but is limited to the basic form of the *hijaiyyah* letters as stated in the mushaf circulating currently (Madzkur, 2014). Historically, the study of Quranic *text has generated a long debate among scholars, particularly regarding its legal status: whether it is tauqifi* (a decree from the Prophet) or *ijtihadi* (the result of the Companions’ *ijtihad*). However, in the contemporary era, this debate has shifted to a more practical realm, regarding which mushaf is more usable and more convenient for the general public (Ismail et al., 2018).

Generally, *the rasm* of Qur’ān is divided into two main types. First, *rasm ‘Uṣmāni*, the writing rules following the standards established during the time of ‘Uṣmān ibn ‘Affān with six main rules: *ḥaṣf* (deletion of letters), *ziyādah* (addition of letters), *hamḥ* (writing of *hamzah*), *badal* (replacement of letters), *faṣḥwawaṣl* (separation and connection of words), and *mā fi hi qirā’atan fa kutiba ‘alā i ḥ dā humā* (writing based on one of the two *qiraat*) (Al-Suyūṭī, 2008; Hula & Kasim, 2021). These six rules are the main differences between *rasm ‘Uṣmāni* and Arabic writing in general. Second, *rasm Imlā’i* or *rasm Qiyaṣi*, the rules of Arabic writing following the pronunciation as it is pronounced without reducing or adding letters (Sya’roni, 1999). The difference between the two can be illustrated in words such as *الصَّلَاة* (*al-ṣalāh*) that in *rasm ‘Uṣmāni* is written with an extra *wāw* (*الصلوة*) even though it is not pronounced, while in *rasm Imlā’i* it is written according to the sound (*الصلاة*).

Recent studies provide a rich perspective on the place of *Uṣmāni’s rasm* in the textual tradition of Qur’ān. Van Putten (2019) in *the Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* proves through a study of 14 early Qur’ān manuscripts, all of which share a common orthographic idiosyncrasy (consistent writing characteristics), which can only be explained by the assumption of a single written archetype (a single written source). This finding strengthens that *Uṣmāni’s rasm* is not simply an arbitrary writing convention, but rather a highly structured codified legacy dating back to the first century of the Hijri. Furthermore, Van Putten (2020) in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* reveals that the differences in writing in *rasm* are not merely based on differences in narration, but are also closely related to broader linguistic-

historical dimensions, as seen in the differences in the spelling of the pronunciation of Ibrāhīm/Ibrāhām in various *mushafs*. Van Putten (2023) further demonstrated that the development of the Hijazi orthography underpinning the *rasm* of Qur'ān has very strong traditional roots, so that any changes to it potentially disrupts the integrity of the transmission of sacred text across generations. Nada et al. (2025) also emphasized that *the rasm 'Utšmāni* is not merely a static writing system, but rather a dynamic instrument capable of accommodating phonological diversity and maintaining the integrity of Qur'ān across various *qiraat* traditions.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, the discourse on the *rasm* of Qur'an has developed in the context of official manuscript publishing policies. The Indonesian Standardized Mushaf (Indonesian: *Mushaf Standar Indonesia*)¹ published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs uses the *rasm 'Utšmāni*, while the *Pojok Menara Kudus Mushaf* uses the *rasm* of *Imlā'i* (Ikhsan, 2023). Interestingly, Ikhsan (2023) found that the two mushafs do not consistently apply one type of *rasm* in its entirety. The *Pojok Menara Kudus Mushaf*, basically using *rasm Imlā'i*, turns out that in some pronunciations it also conforms to the rules of *rasm 'Utšmāni*, and vice versa. This finding is in line with Zaini and Mat Jusoh's (2022) concluding that many printed Qur'āns in Indonesia and Malaysia still do not consistently apply the rules of *rasm 'Utšmāni* as a whole, having implications for the possible confusion for readers. Sholihah and Mustakim (2025) examined the dynamics of *rasm Utšmāni* and *rasm Imlā'i* in Indonesia historically and practically, concluding that although *rasm Utšmāni* has become an official policy, *Rasm Imlā'i* is still widely used in educational contexts for reasons of pedagogical convenience. Meanwhile, Rasdi et al. (2023) showed that when *Rasm Utšmāni* was attempted to be applied in new contexts such as the Braille Qur'ān in Malaysia, the need for adaptation arose without sacrificing its basic principles, proving that the debate regarding *rasm* is relevant continuously in various practical contexts.

From a normative perspective, Ismail et al. (2018) argue that *rasm Utšmāni* is the most ideal form of writing to maintain for the Qur'ān writing in the contemporary era, because *rasm Imlā'i* is vulnerable to change as the Arabic language develops, feared to cause estrangement among the community. Madzkur (2019) in his comprehensive bibliographic survey noted that studies on the *rasm* of Qur'ān from classical to modern times develop continuously, but the majority of

¹Hereinafter referred to as MSI

these studies are still normative-textual and have not touched on the empirical dimension of how society actually responds to and uses the two types of *rasm*. Selamat et al. (2018) who studied the understanding of students in Malaysia regarding the science of *rasm* and *dabt* found that respondents' understanding of both disciplines was still very minimal, but the study was limited to testing general understanding without implications for measuring preferences for using one *rasm* in the practice of reading the Qur'ān directly.

In the context of the study of *living Qur'an*, this approach is relevant because it is capable of capturing how the Qur'an is practiced, responded to, and experienced by society in real life, going beyond the limits of textual studies alone (Rafiq, 2021). The study of *living Qur'an*, initiated in UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta around 2005, opened a new methodological space for studying the Qur'an not only from a textual perspective, but also from the Muslim community's perspective on social response to it (Rafiq, 2021). Mansur et.al. (2007) stated that the study of *living Qur'an* encompasses "various social events related to the presence of Qur'an or the existence of Qur'an in a particular Muslim community." The presence of two types of mushaf with different *rasm* in the community of tahfiz students and the question regarding which is more usable are "social events" belonging entirely to the scope of *living Qur'an* study.

Ahimsa-Putra (2012) asserts that *the living Qur'an* can be studied from various anthropological perspectives, including aspects of *aurality* (orality), *textuality* (writtenness), and *performativity*. These three aspects directly touch on the issue of *rasm*. *Rasm* is a matter of *textuality*, how the text of Qur'an is visually presented to its readers. As the different types of *rasm* present different visual experiences for readers, preference for certain types of *rasm* is part of how society interacts with the textual dimension of the Qur'an.

This research's relevance is further strengthened by the fact that the choice of *mushaf* in the context of *tahfiz* (memorization) is not merely an aesthetic preference, but also touches on fundamental cognitive and pedagogical aspects. A research on the Roudlotul Quran Islamic Boarding School in Semarang shows that the consistent use of one type of *mushaf* is a factor contributing to the successful memorization of Qur'an, as different types of *mushaf* result in different page layouts that can complicate and confuse students' visual memory during the memorization process (Fakhruddin et al., 2021). Furthermore, if students accustomed to one type of *mushaf* are suddenly confronted with a different *rasm* type, there is potential disruption to reading fluency that in turn can impact the quality of memorization. This makes empirical

testing of *rasm* preferences not merely a theoretical issue but also an urgent academic need.

Based on the mapping of research gap aforementioned, there are three main novelties this study offers. First, this study is the first *living Qur'an* study specifically examining the preference for *rasm* Al-Qur'an among tahfiz students through direct testing in the field, not just a literature review or survey of theoretical understanding. Second, this study provides empirical data that has been absent in academic discourse regarding the urgency of *rasm 'Uṣmāni* versus *rasm Imlā'i* in Indonesia, the data showing the real tendency of the community of memorizers of the Qur'an in choosing a particular type of *rasm* and the reasons for it. Third, this study integrates the *living Qur'an* approach with the study of *rasm* Al-Qur'an, a methodological combination having never been done explicitly in previous studies, thus opening a new paradigm in the study of *rasm* that is not only normative-textual but also empirical-social.

The problem statements raised in this research are: (1) Which *rasm*, between *rasm 'Uṣmāni* and *rasm Imlā'i*, is more readable to the Qur'an tahfiz students in the Ma'had Amaliyyah Qurani Islamic Boarding School in Bandung Regency?; (2) What are the reasons behind the students' preferences?

This research is important to carry out considering that decisions regarding the *rasm* used in *mushafs* circulating in society should not only be based on normative-theological arguments alone, but should also consider the users' ease and comfort empirically, as instructed by the principle of *yassiru wa lā tu'assiru* constituting one of the main principles in Islamic tradition.

This study is a qualitative field research with a *living Qur'an* approach. Data were collected on October 21, 2023 at the Ma'had Amaliyyah Qurani Islamic Boarding School, Bandung Regency, through reading observations and semi-structured interviews with 20 tahfiz students selected purposively/randomly, adjusted. Each respondent was asked to read QS. al-Fathḥ /48:29 in two *mushafs*, MSI 2019 and MPMK 1974, and then to answer two main questions regarding the more readable *mushaf* and the reasons for their choice. Data were analyzed through reduction, grouping the answer themes, and the interpretation within the framework of *living Qur'an*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. *Rasm 'Uṣmāni* and *Rasm Imlā'i*: Definitions, Rules, and Debates among Scholars

Linguistically, the word *rasm* derives from an Arabic stem meaning “trace” or “traces of

writing,” and in the context of Qur’anic science it refers specifically to the rules for writing the body of the letters (*al-ḥarf*) of the Qur’an, limited to the consonants forming words without including the types of *kbat*, dots (*nuqṭah*), or *harakat* (*dabt*) attached to these letters (Madzkur, 2014; Ikhsan, 2023). This limitation is important to emphasize from the beginning to avoid confusion in understanding the object of *rasm* study.

Rasm ‘Utšmāni is a pattern of the Qur’an writing established during the time of Caliph ‘Utšmān bin ‘Affān through a team consisting of Zaid bin Šābit, ‘Abdullah bin Zubair, Sa’id bin al-‘Āṣ, and ‘Abdurrahmān bin Ḥārīš bin Hishām (Al-Suyūṭī, 2008). As stated in the book entitled *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm Al-Qur’ān* by Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 H), *rasm ‘Utšmāni* applies six basic rules differentiating it from conventional Arabic writing: (1) *ḥaṣṣ* (deletion of letters); (2) *zīyādah* (addition of letters); (3) *hamz* (writing of hamzah); (4) *badal* (replacing letters); (5) *faṣl wa waṣl* (separation and connection of words); and (6) *mā fī hi qirā’atan fa kutiba ‘alā ihdā humā* (writing based on one of the two *qiraats*) (Al-Suyūṭī, 2008, pp. 743–744; Hula & Kasim, 2021). These six rules then became the object of study of two main schools of thought in the discipline of *rasm*, namely the school of Abū Dāwud (d. 496 H) in his book entitled *Al-Tabyīn Libijā’i Al-Tanzīl* and the school of Al-Dānī (d. 444 H) in his book entitled *Al-Muqni’ fī Ma’rifati Marsūm Maṣāḥif Ahl Al-Amṣār* (Madzkur, 2019). The Indonesian Standardized pattern of writing Mushaf itself generally corresponds to the narration of Al-Dānī, while the Medina Mushaf refers to the narration of Abū Dāwud (Lajnah Kemenag, 2018).

Meanwhile, *rasm Imlā’i* is the way or rule of writing the Qur’an in Arabic in general, following the letters heard/pronounced (*imlā’*). The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia’s Research and Development Agency stated that this is the difference between *rasm ‘Utšmāni* and *rasm Imlā’i* or often also called *rasm Qiyāsi* (Sya’roni, 1999, p. 10).

From the legal perspective of its use, scholars are divided into three opinions. First, the school requiring the use of *rasm ‘Utšmāni* because it is considered to be *tauqīfī* (a decree from the Prophet), represented by Ibn Mubārak, Imām Mālik, and Imām Aḥmad (Madzkur, 2012). Second, the school viewing *rasm ‘Utšmāni* as a product of *ijtihād* of the companions (*ijtibādī*) so that its use is not absolutely obligatory, represented by Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 H) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 H) (Madzkur, 2012). Third, the school of thought allowing the writing of the Qur’an in a *rasm* other than that of ‘Utšmāni as long as it remains based on the *mushaf* written in that *rasm*

...serving as a control (Madzkur, 2012). This debate, as analyzed by Madzkur (2012), is not essentially counterproductive because the position of the recitation of the Qurʾān is not solely determined by its written form, but also by the unbroken chain of transmission (*isnād*).

2. Map of *rasm Al Qurʾan* in Indonesia: From Manuscripts to Printed Mushafs

a. Rasm in Nusantara Qurʾan Manuscripts: Imlāʾi Dominance and Local Hybridity

To understand why the two types of *rasm* still coexist in Indonesia today, a historical understanding of how the *rasm Al Qurʾan* developed in the archipelago since the manuscript era is necessary. Studies of ancient *Mushaf* manuscripts scattered from Aceh to Nusa Tenggara consistently show the same finding: Nusantara Qurʾān manuscripts generally use the *rasm Imlāʾi* rather than the *rasm Utṣmāni* (Hastuti & Hasan, 2020; Rahmayani, 2019).

Mustopa and Madzkur (2020) in their study of the Bahriyah Mushaf noted that the studies on a number of ancient Nusantara Qurʾan manuscripts spread across various regions of Indonesia found that most of the writing of ancient Qurʾan manuscripts from the 17th century to the end of the 19th century used the *Imlāʾi* rules, except for certain words or pronunciations already known commonly. This fact reflects the pre-standardization conditions where the copyists of Nusantara *mushafs* were more familiar with conventional Arabic writing rules (*imlāʾ*) than with the more specific *rasm Utṣmāni* rules.

However, the hybridity of *rasm* is a more appropriate phenomenon to describe the condition of Nusantara manuscripts than a simple black-and-white categorization between *Utṣmāni* and *Imlāʾi*. Aini (2023) in her study of the Qurʾan manuscript in Rejoagung Village, Ngoro, Jombang, found that the *rasm* used was a mixture of *rasm Utṣmāni* and *rasm Imlāʾi* in the same document, indicating that the copyist applied her own idiosyncrasies in the copying process. Similarly, a study of the Ismahayana Landak Mushaf manuscript in West Kalimantan proved the existence of two *rasm* rules simultaneously in a single manuscript (Sary & Sayadi, 2021). Similarly, a study conducted Hermawan et al. (2023) on the Lingga Kingdom Qurʾan Manuscript on Penyengat Island, Riau Islands, found the same pattern: a mixed *rasm* with dynamics between the *Utṣmāni* standard and *Imlāʾi* writing habits. The results of this study are confirmed by findings from the Qurʾan Manuscript collection of KH Nasrun from the Popongan Klaten Islamic Boarding School also showing similar inconsistencies (Harahap et al., 2025).

This hybridity phenomenon occurred for several reasons. First, the copyists of Nusantara mushafs generally studied general Arabic writing (*imlā'*) and did not necessarily possess in-depth knowledge of the specialized science of 'Uṣmāni rasm. Second, the absence of binding official standards before the modern era allowed copyists to follow their own local customs and traditions. Third, the oral transmission of rasm from teacher to student without always being accompanied by standardized reference texts contributed to this inconsistency (Madzkur, 2019).

b. The Entry of Printed *Mushafs* and the Transformation of the Rasm Map: The Era of Bombay Dominance

A significant transformation in the map of *rasm Al Qur'an* in Indonesia occurred when lithographic printing technology entered the archipelago in the mid-19th century. The first printed Qur'an (*Mushaf*) in Indonesia was the Palembang edition of 1848 by Haji Muhammad Azhari bin Kemas Haji Abdullah, then reprinted in 1854 and distributed to various Muslim countries in the archipelago (Madzkur et al., 2017). This is the oldest known printed Qur'an in Southeast Asia until today.

Entering the late 19th and early 20th centuries, printed manuscripts from India (Bombay) began to dominate the circulation of manuscripts in Indonesia. Mustopa et al. (2019) in their monumental study entitled "*Jejak Mushaf Al-Qur'an Bombay di Indonesia* (Traces of the Bombay Qur'an in Indonesia)" found that first-generation Indonesian publishers such as Abdullah bin Afif Cirebon, Mathba'ah Islamiyah Bukittinggi, and Salim Nabhan Surabaya all chose the Bombay printing model as a reference for printing. The dominance of the Bombay manuscripts was due to several factors: the letters were bold and readable, the *waqf* signs were more complete and diverse than those of Egyptian or Turkish manuscripts, and the strong distribution network of Arab traders in the archipelago became an effective distribution channel. From a *rasm* perspective, the Bombay manuscripts used *rasm Imlā'i*, thus strengthening and inheriting the tradition of *rasm Imlā'i* that already existed in ancient manuscripts to the era of printed manuscripts.

At the same time, Turkish-printed (Bahriyah) mushafs also began to enter Indonesia, bringing with them a different *rasm* character. Mustopa and Madzkur (2020) explain that this Bahriyah mushaf uses a *rasm* model closer to the *rasm Imlā'i*. From this, the *Mushaf Pojok Menara Kudus* was born, which became one of the objects in this study. In the 1970s, the Menara Kudus Printing House began printing *mushaf pojok* (corner mushafs) to meet the needs of students

memorizing the Qur'ān at the Tahfiz Yanbu'ul Qur'ān Pesantren in Kudus, and this mushaf is a reproduction of the Turkish-printed mushaf, seen from the writing model, *rasm*, punctuation, and *waqf* signs used (Mustopa et al., 2019). Thus, the existence of the Mushaf Pojok Menara Kudus using *rasm Imlā'i* is not merely an editorial policy of the publisher, but also an organic continuation of the Turkish-Bombay mushaf tradition having long been rooted in Indonesia, particularly among traditional Javanese Islamic boarding schools.

c. MSI Standardization and the Shift in Dominance Toward *Rasm 'Utšmāni*

A major shift in the map of the *rasm* of the Indonesian Qur'an occurred after the birth of the Indonesian Standardized Mushaf (MSI) through the Muker Ulama Al-Qur'ān I-IX (1974-1983) ratified through KMA No. 25 of 1984. The establishment of this MSI officially made the *rasm 'Utšmāni* which was accurate based on the formulation of Al-Suyūṭī in *al-Itqān* the national standard for publishing mushafs in Indonesia with a tendency to follow the narration of Al-Dānī (Madzkur, 2014). Historically, the establishment of the MSI refers to the Bombay-printed mushaf having long been familiar to Indonesian society, but was later more strictly accurate and adjusted to the rules of *rasm 'Utšmāni* (Mustopa et al., 2019).

It is noteworthy that the government did not establish a single type of mushaf, but rather three standardized types of mushaf simultaneously: (1) *Rasm 'Utšmāni Mushaf* for the general public; (2) the *Babriyah Mushaf* with a tendency toward *Rasm Imlā'i* maintained to uphold the tradition of certain tahfiz Islamic boarding schools; and (3) the Braille Mushaf for the blind (Mustopa & Madzkur, 2020). Thus, the government's standardization policy implicitly recognizes the existence of two types of *rasm* simultaneously in the Indonesian national mushaf ecosystem, rather than eliminating one of them.

Regarding the Indonesian Standardized Mushaf itself, Ikhsan (2023) found that the MSI did not entirely apply consistently the *rasm 'Utšmāni*. In some pronunciations, writings were also found conforming to *Imlā'i* rules. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Zaini and Mat Jusoh (2022) concluding that neither the Indonesian nor the Malaysian mushafs fully and consistently applied one type of *rasm*. This inconsistency phenomenon reflects the historical complexity of the compilation of the MSI based on the Bombay mushaf as the initial reference, so that traces of *Imlā'i rasm* from the Bombay tradition still remain in certain pronunciation positions, despite the general principle directed toward *rasm 'Utšmāni*.

d. Contemporary Rasm Map and Its Relevance to This Research

In the contemporary era, the map of *rasm Al Qur'an* in Indonesia can be mapped into two main streams. The first stream is the mushaf with *rasm 'Uṣmāni*, present mainly through the Indonesian Standardized Mushaf (MSI) in various editions including the 2019 revised edition; the Madinah Mushaf from Mujamma' Malik Fahd used by certain tahfiẓ students; and various mushafs with colored *tajwid* generally referring to the MSI. The second stream is the mushaf with *rasm Imlā'i*, present mainly through the Pojok Menara Kudus Mushaf still widely used in traditional tahfiẓ Islamic boarding schools, particularly in Java and East Java, and the Bahriyah Mushaf constituting one of the three official standardized mushafs in Indonesia.

This map is the background context why this study selected the 2019 MSI as a representation of *rasm 'Uṣmāni* and the 1974 Pojok Menara Kudus Mushaf as a representation of *rasm Imlā'i*. Both choices are not arbitrary academic representations, but rather represent two main streams of mushaf writing traditions truly alive and competing in Indonesian pesantren communities, particularly in the tahfiẓ santri community constituting the sample in this study. Sholihah and Mustakim (2025) emphasized that although *rasm 'Uṣmāni* has become an official policy, *rasm Imlā'i* survives continuously because of its strong historical and pedagogical roots in the traditional pesantren environment. This historical context is what makes the preference of tahfiẓ students for certain types of *rasm* not only a personal phenomenon, but also part of the response of the Indonesian Muslim community to two centuries-old legacies of mushaf writing traditions, a phenomenon studied appropriately through the living Qur'an approach as operationalized in this research.

3. Brief Profile of Ma'had Amaliyyah Qurani Islamic Boarding School

Initially, the Ma'had Amaliyyah Qur'ani Islamic Boarding School was an institution for memorizing the Qur'an focusing on orphans and the poor under the auspices of the Barokah Insan Indonesia Foundation (BISSA), where BISSA had a vision and mission to contribute and play a role in producing young generations of Islamic preachers in society (Nupasti, 2023b).

Nupasti stated (2023b) "The Amaliyyah Qur'ani Islamic Boarding School is located in Pameutingan Village, Baleendah. This area is called the *beling* area (an area vulnerable to criminality),

initially inhabited by many people with poor social backgrounds so that rarely anyone wanted to pass through or live in this area. Before the inauguration of the Amaliyyah Qur’ani Islamic Boarding School, it was originally called Saung Tahfidz with the memorization of the Qur’an and Arabic being its flagship program. Along with the change of name Amaliyyah Qur’ani all those involved in this community will expectedly become people who can always practice the contents contained in the Qur’an. In addition, Amaliyyah Qur’ani is usually abbreviated as AQU or I meaning that this is a place for me, me or all of us to learn.”

Technically, the students at the Islamic Boarding School are can use freely any Mushaf (but with a printed version of 15 lines per page) to memorize the Al-Qur’an, intended to facilitate the deposit and *murajaah* process, so that all Islamic Boarding Schools can be uniform in the process of depositing and memorizing the Al-Qur’an (Nupasti, 2023a).

4. Interview and Observation Results

The research object used in this test is QS. al-Fath/48:29 displayed in two different mushafs, the Indonesian Standardized Mushaf (MSI) as a representation of *rasm ‘Uṣmāni* and the *Pojok Menara Kudus Mushaf* (MPMK) as a representation of *rasm Imlā’i*. The selection of this verse is based on the consideration that the verse contains a variety of letter forms and word arrangements representative enough to observe the readers’ response to the differences in *rasm* appearance. A visual comparison of the two forms of writing can be seen in Figure 1.

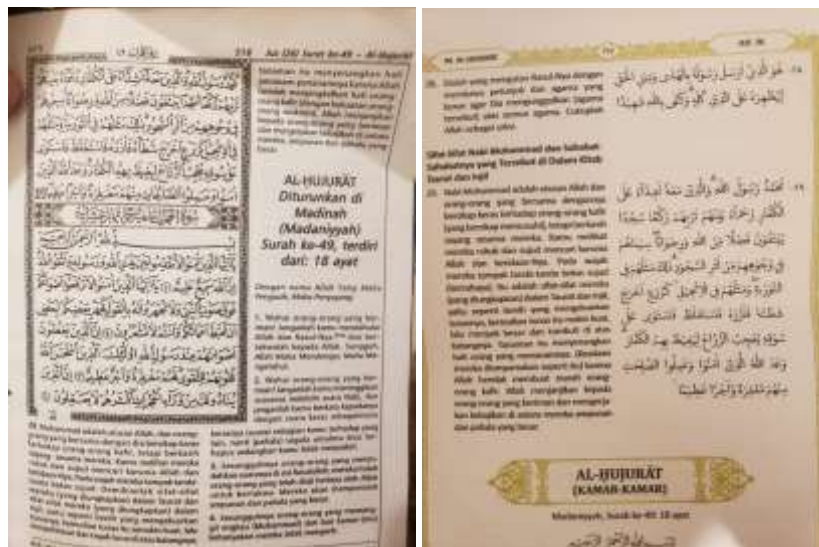


Figure 1 QS. al-Fat ḥ/48: 29 at MSI and MPMK

From the results of interview, the respondents’ reasons can be categorized into three main

patterns. First, it is the reason of familiarity, because the students interact more frequently with the MSI type of mushaf in reading, depositing, *murāja'ab*, and *sima'an* activities. The intensity of repeated interaction with one type of *mushaf* creates certain visual habits, so that the appearance of the wording on the MSI feels more familiar and is recognized more quickly. In the context of *tahfīz*, this habit is very important because the memorization process relies not only on sound and pronunciation, but also on visual memory of the position of the verses, the form of the wording, and the arrangement of the pages. Therefore, when respondents are faced with a *mushaf* they use more often, the reading process becomes smoother because it is supported by previously created visual memory.

Second, it is the visual reason, that the form of words and layout of the MSI were felt to be more recognizable to respondents. Although theoretically *rasm Imlā'i* is often considered closer to the rules of Arabic writing following the sounds of speech, in practice of the students' reading, the MSI display is instead considered more comfortable. This implies that ease of reading is not always determined by the correspondence of letters to sounds alone, but also by the eye's habituation in recognizing certain graphic patterns. For *tahfīz* students, visual comfort is not just a matter of the aesthetics of the mushaf, but is also directly related to the speed of identifying words when reading or memorizing. Thus, differences in the writing form between *mushafs* apparently affect the tempo and fluency of reading.

Third, it is pedagogical reason, that MSI is considered more supportive of the needs of *tahfīz* learning, particularly in maintaining the smoothness of recitation deposit and *murāja'ab*. In the pesantren environment, the mushaf functions not only as a reading medium, but also as a pedagogical tool supporting the rhythm of memorization. Mushafs that are more familiar and more easily recognized visually tend to provide a sense of security to students when reading in front of their teacher or when reviewing memorization independently. On the contrary, when students are faced with a mushaf having a less familiar appearance, the reading process becomes more careful, slower, and potentially disrupts the stability of memorization. In this sense, the preference for MSI is also related to the *mushaf's* practical function as a means of Qur'anic education other than as a written text.

The results of author's observations during the reading process confirm the interview findings. Reading the verses presented in the MSI, the respondents generally demonstrated greater fluency. On the contrary, reading the same verses in the MPMK, all respondents appeared to

experience slight tempo delays, greater caution, or brief pauses before continuing. Although these pauses did not always result in fatal errors, this phenomenon is enough to demonstrate that the differences in text presentation affect the rhythm of the reading. In other words, respondents' preferences were not only declarative in the interviews but also empirically evident in directly observed reading practices.

This finding is important to note because it shows that the issue of *rasm* does not stand alone as a technical writing problem, but it is intertwined with the social practice of reading the Qur'an in the Islamic boarding school environment. In the context of *the living Qur'an*, the *mushaf* is present not merely as a text to be read, but also as an object to be used, accustomed to, memorized, and responded to concretely in everyday life. The students' preference for a particular type of *mushaf* reflects the living relationship between the Qur'an's text and its readers' experience. Therefore, the preference for MSI in this study can be understood as a form of textual reception of the Qur'an, how the santri community interprets and experiences easy access to the sacred text through the material form of the *mushaf* they use.

Thus, the results of current study indicate that the students' preference for MSI is not solely due to the status of *rasm 'Uṣmāni* as an official standard, but is also more related to the process of habituation in the practice of *tahfiẓ*. Familiarity, visual comfort, and the pedagogical function of the *mushaf* jointly shape the tendency of respondents' preferences. This finding also confirms that discussions about *rasm Al-Qur'an* in the contemporary era cannot be placed solely on the normative-textual level, but also needs to consider the empirical dimension of how the *mushaf* is actually used and responded to by its reading community.

The results of the author's visit and observations at the Ma'had Amaliyyah Qurani Islamic Boarding School, constituting the context of this research, can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.



Figure 2 documentation of the *sima'an* of the *Qur'an*



Figure 3 documentation of the *sima'an* of the *Qur'an*

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that in the context of 20 students studying *tahfiz* at the Ma'had Amaliyyah Qurani Islamic Boarding School, the *mushaf* with *rasm 'Uṣmānī*, namely the Indonesian Standardized Mushaf (MSI), is perceived as more readable than the one with *rasm Imlā'i*, namely the *Pojok Menara Kudus Mushaf* (MPMK). This preference is evident not only in interview responses,

but also in directly observed reading practices, where respondents tend to be more fluent in reading MSI and more careful in reading MPMK. These findings indicate that preference for *rasm* is related to the familiarity of using the *mushaf*, visual comfort, and the pedagogical function of the *mushaf* in the daily practice of tahfīz. From the perspective of *living Qur'an*, these results confirm that the *mushaf* is not merely present as a text, but also as a material object that is used, accustomed to, and responded to in the religious life of the *santri* community. However, these findings are contextual and limited to the community studied, so they are not intended to be generalized directly to the wider community without further research in more diverse contexts.

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