

RECONFIGURING ‘PRINT ISLAM’: The Biographies of Women’s *Mushaf* in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the changing material forms of the Qur’anic mushaf and their significance for reconfiguring ‘print Islam’ in contemporary Indonesia. Scholarship on Indonesian Islamic print culture has largely followed two trajectories: ideological contestation and the formation of Muslim publics, and the expansion of Islamic publishing through commodification, market differentiation, and middle-class religious aspirations. The proliferation of differentiated mushaf suggests a further development, as Qur’anic publications are increasingly produced for particular readers, practices, and aspirations, including recitation, memorisation, mobility, and gender. Drawing on publishing catalogues from Cordoba, Syaamil, Jabal and Alfatih, alongside interviews with Muslim women who own mushaf for women, this article examines women’s mushaf as a significant manifestation of this development, particularly through their gendered aesthetics, female exemplars, thematic guidance, pedagogical features, and portable formats. Drawing on Igor Kopytoff’s concept of the “cultural biography of things,” we argue that the proliferation of differentiated mushaf reconfigures ‘print Islam’ by revealing market differentiation and singularisation as interconnected processes. Although produced and circulated as commodities for



segmented religious markets, individual mushaf acquire distinctive biographies and forms of value through acquisition, gifting, handling, annotation, repeated use, and personal attachment. This perspective shifts attention from print as a medium for circulating religious ideas, forming publics, and addressing differentiated markets to the social lives of printed religious objects as they become particular and meaningful things within everyday religious practice.

(Artikel ini mengkaji perubahan bentuk material mushaf Al-Qur'an dan perannya dalam mengonfigurasi ulang 'Islam cetak' di Indonesia kontemporer. Kajian mengenai budaya 'Islam cetak' di Indonesia selama ini menyoroti dua arah perkembangan, pertama persaingan ideologis dan pembentukan publik Muslim, dan kedua ekspansi penerbitan Islam melalui komodifikasi, diferensiasi pasar, dan aspirasi keagamaan kelas menengah. Penyebaran mushaf yang semakin beragam menunjukkan arah lebih lanjut, ketika Al-Qur'an diproduksi untuk memenuhi kebutuhan pembaca, praktik, dan aspirasi yang semakin spesifik, termasuk resitasi, hafalan, mobilitas, dan gender. Dengan memanfaatkan katalog penerbitan dari Cordoba, Syaamil, Jabal, dan Alfatih, serta wawancara dengan perempuan Muslim yang memiliki mushaf perempuan, artikel ini menelaah mushaf perempuan sebagai salah satu manifestasi penting dari perkembangan tersebut. Telaah difokuskan pada materialitas mushaf termasuk estetika feminin, figur perempuan teladan, panduan tematik, fitur pedagogis, dan format portabel yang membentuk cara bagaimana mushaf dipahami dan digunakan. Dengan menggunakan konsep Igor Kopytoff "cultural biography of things" artikel ini berargumen bahwa penyebaran ragam bentuk mushaf turut mengubah konfigurasi "Islam cetak" dengan menunjukkan keterkaitan antara diferensiasi pasar dan proses 'singularisasi'. Meskipun diproduksi dan diedarkan sebagai komoditas dalam pasar keagamaan yang spesifik seperti perempuan, mushaf individual pada gilirannya juga mempunyai 'biografi sosial' dan 'bentuk nilai' yang khas melalui proses pemilikan, pemberian, pemeliharaan, anotasi, penggunaan berulang, dan keterikatan personal. Perspektif ini menggeser perhatian dari media cetak sebagai sarana penyebaran gagasan keagamaan, pembentukan publik, dan perluasan pasar menuju 'kehidupan sosial objek keagamaan cetak' khususnya bagaimana mushaf menjadi benda yang singular, bernilai, dan bermakna dalam praktik keagamaan sehari-hari)

Keywords: *Print Islam, Market Differentiation, Women's Mushaf, Singularisation*

Introduction

“My mother took me to the store and allowed me to choose the *mushaf* I wanted. There were many Qur’ans with attractive designs, but I was drawn to the *Ummul Mukminin* because it has a zipper, which makes it easy to open and close. It also has a cover with soft, feathery decorations that I found attractive and cute.” Maryam recalled how she came to use the *Ummul Mukminin mushaf*. As a junior high school student in a memorisation (*taḥfidz*) program, she chose a new Qur’an after completing Juz 30. Among the many editions on display, she was drawn to the *Ummul Mukminin* by its zipper, decorated cover, and ease of handling. Her first encounter with the *mushaf* was shaped not only by the Qur’anic text but also by its material and sensory qualities.

After bringing the *mushaf* home, Maryam discovered that it contained materials specifically oriented toward Muslim women, including stories of exemplary women, discussions of women’s position in the Qur’an, *fiqh* for women, the Prophet Muhammad’s testaments concerning women, and exegetical notes attributed to Ibn Katsir accompanying verses related to women. The *mushaf* consequently brought together the Qur’anic text with a range of religious materials and gendered representations of Muslim womanhood. What initially attracted Maryam as an appealing object became a medium through which she encountered particular forms of religious knowledge.

Her relationship with the *mushaf* developed further through reading and annotation. Maryam writes notes beside verses that she considers relevant to her everyday life:

“In the *mushaf* I own, I often write small notes containing the essence of verses that feel close to my daily life. Usually, I write verses that I think can strengthen me when facing certain situations. For example, *la taḥzan innallaha ma‘ana* - ‘Do not be sad; indeed, Allah is with us.’ I also write down the meaning next to the verse. So, when I am sad or need encouragement, I do not have to search for the appropriate verse anymore. I just open the *mushaf* and look at the notes.”

One afternoon, Maryam told us about how she came to choose the *Ummul Mukminin mushaf*¹. Her account suggests that her first encounter with the *mushaf* did not begin with the content of the Qur'anic text, but with the experience of the object itself. The zipper, the cover, and its soft, feathery details were among the material features that initially attracted her and distinguished the *mushaf* from the one she had previously used. She described it as “cute,” a seemingly simple expression that nevertheless conveys her affective response to its material form. The *mushaf* that would eventually become part of her memorisation practice thus first appeared to her as an appealing object, something to look at, touch, open, and ultimately make her own.

Maryam's experience offers a window into the changing landscape of 'print Islam' in contemporary Indonesia. Her *mushaf* begins as a commercially produced object purchased in a bookstore, but its meaning develops through continued use. It becomes part of her practices of memorisation, annotation, reflection, and everyday religious life. Her story thus draws attention to what happens to Islamic publications after they leave the marketplace and enter the intimate spaces of their readers.

This question is particularly important given the expansion of Islamic publishing in Indonesia since the late New Order period. The growth of the Muslim middle class², the multiplicity of religious authority,

¹ Interview with Maryam, Yogyakarta, January 8, 2025.

² Kenneth George, “Designs on Indonesia's Muslim Communities,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 3 (1998): 693–713; Ariel Heryanto, “The Years of Living Luxuriously: Identity Politics of Indonesia's New Rich,” in *Culture and Privilege in Capitalist Asia*, ed. Michael Pinches (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 159–187; Ariel Heryanto, “Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture,” in *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Andrew N. Weintraub (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 60–82; Ariel Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014), 24–48; Moeflich Hasbullah, “Cultural Presentation of Muslim Middle Class in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Studia Islamika* 7, no. 2 (2000): 1–58; Lizzy van Leeuwen, *Lost in Mall: An Ethnography of Middle-Class Jakarta in the 1990s* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011); Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia: Television, Identity and the Middle Class* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

and the expansion of Islamic consumer culture have contributed to the proliferation of religious books and other Islamic commodities. Scholars have examined these developments in relation to the commodification of Islam, the emergence of new forms of Muslim identity, and changing practices of piety.³ Islamic publications have become important means through which religious knowledge is circulated and through which Muslims encounter and negotiate particular models of religious life.

The scholarship on 'print Islam' in Indonesia can broadly be situated along two interconnected trajectories. The first approaches print Islam including Islamic newspapers, magazines, books, and other publications as an arena of ideological contestation and the formation of Muslim publics.⁴ The second trajectory shifts attention from ideological

³ Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), 15–39; Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009): 229–250; Daromir Rudnycky, "Market Islam in Indonesia," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009): S183–S201; Daromir Rudnycky, *Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization, and the Afterlife of Development* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Carla Jones, "Fashion and Faith in Urban Indonesia," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 11, no. 2–3 (2007): 211–232; Carla Jones, "Materializing Piety: Gendered Anxieties about Faithful Consumption in Contemporary Urban Indonesia," *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 4 (2010): 617–637; G. Njoto-Feillard, "New Muslim Cultures of Capitalist Enterprise," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia*, ed. Robert Hefner (New York: Routledge, 2018), 165–176; Najib Kailani, "Creating Entrepreneurial and Pious Muslim Subjectivity in Globalised Indonesia," in *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia: Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*, ed. Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and Alexander R. Arifianto (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 198–209.

⁴ Robert W. Hefner, "Print Islam: Mass Media and Ideological Rivalries among Indonesian Muslims," *Indonesia* 64 (1997): 77–103; Syamsul Rijal, "Media and Islamism in Post-New Order Indonesia: The Case of Sabili," *Studia Islamika* 12, no. 3 (2005): 421–474; Hilman Latief, "Youth, Mosques and Islamic Activism: Islamic Source Books in University-Based Halaqah," *Kultur* 5, no. 1 (2009): 63–88; Najib Kailani, "Forum Lingkar Pena and Muslim Youth in Contemporary Indonesia," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 46 (2012): 33–53; Janet Steele, *Mediating Islam: Cosmopolitan Journalisms in Muslim Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018); Noorhaidi Hasan, ed., *Literatur Keislaman Generasi Milenial: Transmisi, Appropriasi, dan Kontestasi* (Yogyakarta: Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2018).

contestation to the relationship between Islamic publishing, market expansion, and Muslim middle-class aspirations.⁵ Scholars in this field show how the expansion of Islamic publishing since the late New Order became increasingly intertwined with economic liberalisation, the emergence of the Muslim middle class, and aspirations for self-improvement, prosperity, family life, and piety. From this perspective, 'print Islam' became not only a medium for debating Islam but also a market through which religious aspirations could be articulated and materialised.

The transformation of 'print Islam' in Indonesia can be observed in the massive expansion and diversification of Islamic publishing, as religious texts and media have increasingly been shaped by both ideological projects and market-oriented processes. One significant example of this development is the proliferation of Qur'anic *mushaf*, which has expanded far beyond the production of a singular and relatively standardised religious text. Contemporary *mushaf* are increasingly differentiated according to particular users, practices, and aspirations, including recitation, memorisation, translation, tafsir, education, portability, and self-cultivation.⁶ Among the most significant manifestations of this development is the emergence of *mushaf* for women, which explicitly configure the Qur'an for female readers through gendered designs, thematic selections, supplementary religious guidance, and particular material formats.

⁵ C. W. Watson, "Islamic Books and Their Publishers: Notes on the Contemporary Indonesian Scene," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 16, no. 5 (2015): 177–210; Akh Muzakki, *The Islamic Publication Industry in Modern Indonesia: Intellectual Transmission, Ideology and the Profit Motive* (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2009); Najib Kailani, "Creating Entrepreneurial and Pious Muslim Subjectivity in Globalised Indonesia," in *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia: Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*, ed. Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and Alexander R. Arifianto (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 198–209.

⁶ Muhammad Endy Saputro, "Mushaf 2.0 dan Studi Al-Qur'an di Era Muslim Tanpa Masjid", *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 42, no. 2 (2019): 249–262; Fitriatus Shalihah, "Media Islam dan Kesalehan Publik Kajian terhadap Ragam Cetakan Al-Qur'an Kontemporer di Indonesia," *Nun* 7, no. 2 (2021): 313.

The proliferation of such publications demonstrates how the Qur'an has become part of a broader process through which print Islam responds to increasingly differentiated religious publics while simultaneously participating in their formation. Existing scholarship has therefore productively examined women's *mushaf* in relation to gender and the commodification of religion, showing how the publishing industry both responds to and helps produce differentiated religious markets.⁷ At the same time, their emergence points to a more complex trajectory of print Islam in which ideological projects of religious formation increasingly intersect with market logics, making the material production and circulation of Islamic texts an important site for examining how religious identities, practices, and aspirations are articulated in contemporary Indonesia.

This article is situated within scholarly discussions of 'print Islam' in Indonesia as mentioned above, while extending the analytical focus beyond ideological contestation, the formation of Muslim publics, and market differentiation to the changing significance of *mushaf* in everyday religious life. Rather than treating women's *mushaf* primarily as commodities for segmented religious markets, we argue that their proliferation reconfigures 'print Islam' by revealing the relationship between 'commoditisation' and 'singularisation'. Drawing on Igor Kopytoff's concept of "the cultural biography of things,"⁸ we examine how individual *mushaf* acquire distinctive biographies and forms of value through acquisition, gifting, handling, annotation, repeated use, and personal attachment. In this process, mass-produced religious objects may

⁷ Ahsin Dinal Mustafa and Miski, "The Construction of Women's Piety through the Women's Special *Mushaf*," *QOF: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 8, no. 1 (2024): 35–54; Fathurrosyid, Fairuzah, and Wardatun Nadhiroh, "The Printing of the Qur'an, Gender Issues, and the Commodification of Religion: A Case Study of *Mushaf* for Muslimah," *Subuf* 17, no. 1 (2024): 115–139.

⁸ Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.

become particular and meaningful things within the lives of their users, extending their significance beyond their status as market commodities.

The article is structured as follows. It first situates *mushaf* for women within the contemporary Indonesian Islamic publishing landscape. It then examines Cordoba's catalogue to trace the differentiation of *mushaf* according to modes of Qur'anic engagement and targeted readerships. The analysis subsequently turns to Syaamil's *Azalia* and *Yasmina* editions, focusing on how their material and textual configurations produce singular forms of the *mushaf* for women. It then considers *Aisyah* and *Khadijah* as exemplary figures through which gendered religious meanings are articulated, followed by an examination of the *mushaf* as a personal archive shaped by use, memory, and devotional practice. The article concludes by considering how these developments reconfigure print Islam through the biographies of religious objects.

Women's Mushaf in Contemporary Indonesia

The growth of women's *mushaf* is closely connected to the broader expansion of Islamic publishing and Muslim consumption in post-Reformasi Indonesia. As publishers increasingly segmented the market according to specific audiences, religious practices, and lifestyles, the Qur'anic *mushaf* moved beyond relatively standardised formats toward increasingly differentiated editions.⁹ Since the early 2000s, this diversification has included publications for memorisation¹⁰, children's

⁹ C. W. Watson, "Islamic Books and Their Publishers: Notes on the Contemporary Indonesian Scene," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 16, no. 5 (2015): 177–210.

¹⁰ Among the memorization-oriented Qur'anic editions are *Al-Qur'an Hafalan Mudah Al-Hufaz*, published by Cordoba, and *Tikrar Al-Qur'an Hafalan*, published by Syaamil. See "Al-Qur'an Hafalan Mudah Al-Hufaz," Quran Cordoba; "Tikrar Al-Qur'an Hafalan," Syaamil Quran; and "*Mushaf* Hafalan Al-Hifz," Syaamil Quran (accessed August 12, 2024).

education¹¹, travel, pilgrimage¹², translation, and, increasingly, gender. Within this expanding landscape, women's *mushaf* have emerged as a recognisable category, reflecting the growing recognition of Muslim women as a distinct readership and consumer group.

Women's *mushaf*, however, do not constitute a uniform genre. Publishers differentiate these editions through titles, thematic content, supplementary religious materials, visual aesthetics, and material formats. Some explicitly identify women as their intended readership through titles such as *Al-Qur'an Muslimah* and *Al-Qur'an for Women*, while others invoke prominent women in Islamic history, including *Aisyah*, *Khadijah*, *Hafsah*, and *Shafiyah*. Such naming practices associate Qur'anic engagement with particular models of Muslim womanhood and exemplary female figures.

In addition, their thematic and supplementary contents further distinguish these editions. Depending on the publication, they may include indexes of Qur'anic verses concerning women and family, discussions of women's *fiqh*, selected *hadith*, daily supplications, guidance on marriage and childrearing, and accounts of exemplary women. These features extend the *mushaf* beyond the presentation of Qur'anic text by incorporating materials oriented toward particular areas of women's religious and everyday lives.¹³

¹¹ Children's Qur'anic editions are specifically designed for young readers, particularly preschool and primary school children. Several models of children's Qur'ans are currently available in Indonesia, including *myFirst al-Qur'an* (MyFA) and *I Love My al-Qur'an* (ILMA). For an illustration of *myFirst al-Qur'an*, published by Syaamil, see Syaamil Quran, *My First Al-Quran*. For *I Love My al-Qur'an*, published by Mizan, see YouTube, *I Love My al-Qur'an* (accessed August 13, 2024).

¹² *Mushaf Al-Qur'anul Karim Haji-Umrah* is a specialized Qur'anic edition published by Syaamil Qur'an for Muslims preparing to undertake, currently performing, or having completed the *hajj* or *umrah* pilgrimage, as well as for readers seeking to learn more about the rituals and practices associated with these pilgrimages. See Syaamil Quran, *Al-Quran Spesial Haji Umrah* (accessed August 14, 2024).

¹³ *Ummul Mukminin* Qur'an, for example, portrays the ideal pious woman as one who possesses moral strength (Q. 66:11) and strives to preserve her chastity and purity (Q. 19:20). To illustrate this ideal, it presents exemplary female figures from the Qur'an and early Islamic history, including Eve (*Hawwā*), Hagar (*Hajar*), the Queen of Sheba

Gender differentiation is also expressed through visual and material design. Women's *mushaf* commonly employ pastel or muted colours, floral and decorative motifs, compact dimensions, and specialised bindings, including fabric, synthetic leather, and zipper closures. Colour-coded *tajwid*, highlighted verses, thematic sections, and navigational devices combine aesthetic, pedagogical, and practical functions. Compact and lightweight formats also facilitate portability across domestic, educational, devotional, and professional settings. Taken together, these features demonstrate how contemporary publishers increasingly integrate gender, religious practice, aesthetics, and everyday use into the production and circulation of the *mushaf*.¹⁴

The following sections examine this process through the catalogues of Cordoba, Syaamil, Jabal and Alfatih, four publishers whose women's editions reveal different strategies of gendered differentiation. Their products provide a comparative field through which to trace how women's *mushaf* are configured through thematic content, exemplary female figures, visual aesthetics, pedagogical features, portability, and material design. Examining these editions comparatively makes it possible to move beyond the identification of women's *mushaf* as a market category and toward a more precise account of how publishers materially organise particular forms of Qur'anic engagement.

(*Bilqīs*), *Khadijah*, and *Aisyah*. Similarly, the *Yasmina* Qur'an features narratives of eight exemplary pious women, including Āsiyah, Ḥafṣah, Fāṭimah, Khawlah, Zaynab, and others. These editions provide biographical sketches and moral exemplars of female figures associated with the Qur'anic tradition, collectively constructing an idealised model of Muslim womanhood, particularly with regard to women's roles as wives and mothers. Beyond offering moral guidance, the paratexts of women's Qur'ans also underscore the importance of religious devotion and ritual practice for women. See Latief Awaludin, *Al-Qur'an Wanita Ummul Mukminin (Halaman Tambahan)*, 48–59; Al-Qur'an Terjemah Wanita *Yasmina* (Bandung: Sygma, n.d.), 18–44.

¹⁴ See the *Khadijah mushaf* at Rizky Barokah; the *Yasmina* women's Qur'an at Syaamil Quran; and the *Ummul Mukminin* women's Qur'an at Gramedia (accessed August 14, 2024).

The Differentiation of the *Mushaf*

Cordoba's Qur'anic catalogue provides a useful illustration of the increasing differentiation of the *mushaf* within contemporary Indonesian print Islam. Its publications are organised into several series, including *Recitation, Memorisation, Tafsir, Translated Qur'an, and Qur'an Jacket*¹⁵, through which Qur'anic editions are configured according to particular practices, users, and forms of engagement. The differentiation is expressed materially through variations in size, typography, page organisation, colour, cover design, and supplementary features. Editions in the *Recitation Series*, for instance, incorporate large typography, colour-coded *tajwid*, and *naqf-ibtida* markers to facilitate fluent reading, while the *Memorisation Series* employs colour-coded sections, keywords, thematic prompts, and *murajaah* controls to organise repetition and memorisation.¹⁶ Variations in format further correspond to different contexts of use, including children's education, *tahfiz* learning, domestic recitation, congregational activities, and mobile religious practice. The catalogue consequently reveals a publishing logic in which the material form of the *mushaf* is increasingly calibrated to particular modes of Qur'anic engagement.

Within this broader process of differentiation, gender appears as an increasingly significant principle of Qur'anic product design. Cordoba does not, however, organise its gendered publications into a formally bounded "Women's Mushaf Series."¹⁷ Instead, references to women and feminine modes of use are distributed across existing product categories

¹⁵ See Cordoba Quran, Seri Quran Tilawah; Cordoba Quran, Seri Hafalan; Cordoba Quran, Seri Quran Tafsir; and Cordoba Quran, Seri Terjemah Perkata (accessed August 20, 2024).

¹⁶ See Cordoba Quran, Seri Quran Tilawah and Cordoba Quran, Seri Hafalan (accessed August 20, 2024).

¹⁷ Between 2012 and 2022, Cordoba International Indonesia published a women-specific *mushaf* titled *Al-Qur'an Cordoba Special for Muslim Women "Auliya."* The *mushaf* includes 319 thematic interpretations addressing four broad areas, beliefs, laws, *ibrah* (moral lessons), and women figures—which are presented as particularly relevant to women. See Ahsin Dinal Mustafa and Miski Miski, "The Construction of Women's Piety through Women's Special Mushaf," *QOF* 8, no. 1 (2024): 35–54.

through thematic orientation, visual conventions, material formats, and anticipated patterns of use. *Muslimah Entrepreneur (Niaga Muslimah)* in the *Series of Thematic Tafsir* offers one example. Its combination of business-related *hadith*, Islamic regulation on economic activity, motivational materials, and selected Qur’anic verses situates religious engagement within the sphere of women’s economic and entrepreneurial activity. Its soft pink, lilac, turquoise, and beige palette further marks the edition through a recognisably feminine visual vocabulary. The publication thus connects religious guidance with a particular representation of Muslim womanhood in which economic activity, religious commitment, and feminine identity are brought into relation.



Women’s mushaf of Cordoba

Gender is configured differently in female variants of *Al-Hufaz* within the *Qur’an Jacket Series*. These editions retain the memorisation apparatus found across Cordoba’s *Memorization Series*, including colour-coded memorisation blocks, keywords, motivational prompts, and *mura’ah* controls, while incorporating feminine jacket designs and formats. Agenda-style, fabric, and zippered covers combine aesthetic differentiation with practical concerns of portability and protection.

In this context, the jacket is not merely an external decorative feature but part of the material configuration of the *mushaf*, shaping how it can be carried, stored, handled, and incorporated into everyday routines. Similarly, some compact editions in the *Translated Series* employ pastel colours and lightweight formats that implicitly evoke feminine aesthetics and mobile personal use, even when women are not explicitly identified as the intended readership. Gender differentiation can therefore operate through explicit naming as well as through less categorical visual and material cues.

The Making of 'Singular' *Mushaf*: *Azalia* and *Yasmina*

The Syaamil Quran catalogue extends the pattern identified in Cordoba by presenting the *mushaf* in multiple forms designed for different modes of Qur'anic engagement. Its editions encompass recitation, memorisation, *tajwid* learning, translation, thematic interpretation, devotional practice, and gender, with variations in size, typography, page organisation, supplementary materials, and cover design. *Quba*, for example, facilitates everyday recitation through large typography and colour-coded *tajwid*, while *Tikrar* structures the page around repetition and memorisation through colour-coded sections, *muraja'ah* columns, and *tikrar* markers.

Within this broader range of Qur'anic variants, *Azalia* and *Yasmina* represent a particularly explicit configuration of women's *mushaf*. Syaamil presents both as special editions for women, combining the Qur'anic text and Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs translation with materials directed toward women's religious concerns. *Azalia* includes blocks of verses concerning women and family, an index of family-related verses, *hadith* on women and family, a summary of women's *fiqh*, *asbab al-nuzul*, *fadilah al-ayat*, and direction for memorisation. *Yasmina* similarly incorporates verses concerning women, a family index, accounts of exemplary women in the Qur'an, memorisation advices, and devotional

materials. These additions do not modify the Qur’anic text, rather they situate the *mushaf* within a selected repertoire of religious knowledge and practice through which Qur’anic engagement is oriented toward women’s religious and everyday concerns.

This orientation is reinforced by the material forms of the two editions. *Azalia* and *Yasmina* are available in multiple sizes and cover configurations, including compact A6 editions, hardcover versions, zippered jackets, agenda-style and embroidered covers, and, in the case of *Azalia*, a handmade suede variant. Such variation demonstrates that “for women” is not a single material category but one that accommodates

different preferences, circumstances, and modes of use. Compact formats facilitate portability and personal use, while larger and more elaborate versions can support sustained reading and devotional settings. Colour, cover materials, size, and format therefore work together with specialised contents to make the intended readership and anticipated uses of these editions recognisable.

Nor are *Azalia* and *Yasmina* interchangeable simply because they belong to the same



Azalia and Yasmina

category. *Azalia* places comparatively greater emphasis on women’s *fiqh*, *hadiith*, *asbab al-nuzul*, thematic indexing, and the virtues of particular verses, whereas *Yasmina* gives greater prominence to verses concerning women and family, exemplary women, devotional guidance, and memorisation. Their different material configurations

likewise shape how the editions can be possessed, carried, stored, and used. Syaamil thus produces not a single “women’s Qur’an,” but a family of related objects that give material form to different conceptions of women’s Qur’anic engagement.

The *Mushaf* through Exemplary Women: *Khadijah* and *Aisyah*

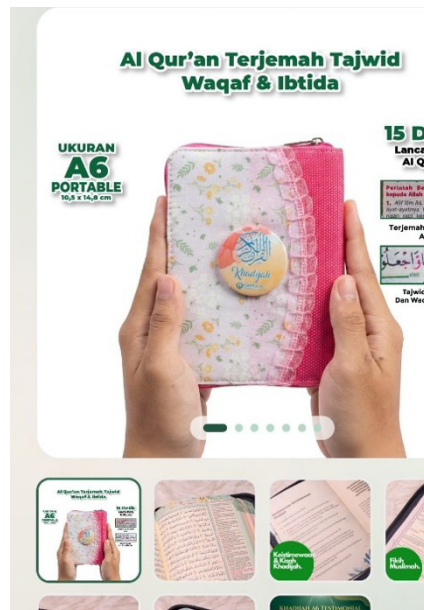
Jabal and Alfatih Publishers extend the pattern identified in Cordoba and Syaamil by making gender a particularly explicit principle in the configuration of the contemporary *mushaf*. Its catalogue includes editions such as *Khadijah* and *Aisyah*, which combine the Qur’anic text with selected *hadith*, thematic materials, explanatory guidance, and distinctive visual and material forms. What distinguishes these editions is not simply that they are marketed toward women, but that they organise the *mushaf* around the figures of Khadijah and Aisyah as exemplary Muslim women. Their names provide more than product identification: they invoke historically authoritative female figures whose religious lives and virtues become resources for imagining appropriate forms of Muslim womanhood.¹⁸

The use of Khadijah and Aisyah as the principal markers of these editions situates Qur’anic engagement within particular models of female religious subjectivity. Aisyah is associated with knowledge, intellectual authority, and the transmission of religious learning, while Khadijah evokes devotion, loyalty, family, and exemplary support for the Prophet. By attaching these figures to the *mushaf*, Jabal and Alfatih connect Qur’anic reading with established Islamic narratives of exemplary womanhood. The editions therefore do not merely identify women as a market category; they provide symbolic frameworks through which women can relate Qur’anic engagement to particular ideals of piety,

¹⁸ Jabal Publisher stated that the Aisyah *mushaf* had been printed in multiple print runs, with approximately 16,000 copies produced in each run. Interview with Jabal Publisher, August 14, 2024. Meanwhile, the Khadijah *mushaf* had sold more than 10,000 copies, according to Alfatih Publisher. Interview with Alfatih Publisher, August 15, 2024.

family, knowledge, and religious conduct.

This orientation is reinforced by the contents and material forms of the editions. The *Khadijah* and *Aisyah* incorporate supplementary religious materials, including selected *hadith*, thematic guidance, and discussions concerning women's religious and family lives. Their compact formats, decorative covers, feminine colour schemes, and portable designs further situate the *mushaf* within everyday practices of possession and use. Pedagogical features such as colour-coded *tajwid*, highlighted passages, and thematic divisions likewise configure the editions as objects intended not only for reading but for particular modes of learning and religious engagement. Symbolic references to exemplary women thus operate alongside material and pedagogical features to produce a recognisable form of the *mushaf* oriented toward female users.



Khadijah and Aisyah Mushaf

At the same time, these features should not be understood solely as mechanisms of market segmentation. The invocation of *Khadijah* and

Aisyah gives these editions a symbolic identity that can travel beyond the moment of purchase and acquire significance through their subsequent social lives. A copy of *Aisyah mushaf* may be received as a gift, carried to Qur'anic study, kept beside the bed, annotated during a particular period of religious learning, or associated with an important relationship or stage of life. Similarly, *Khadijah mushaf* may become connected to memories of family, marriage, motherhood, devotion, or personal religious development. Although each copy begins as one instance of a reproducible commercial edition, its trajectory through particular relationships and experiences can distinguish it from other copies of the same *mushaf*.

The *Mushaf* as a Personal Archive

The production of a *mushaf* as a commodity does not necessarily determine the status it will acquire in the lives of its users. Although printed *mushaf* are produced as reproducible objects for circulation and exchange, individual copies may gradually become distinguished from other copies of the same edition through the relationships, practices, and experiences that accumulate around them. This process of singularisation is central to Igor Kopytoff's concept of the "biography of things." For Kopytoff, objects do not possess fixed meanings or values; rather, their significance changes as they move through different social contexts. An object may enter circulation as a commodity, yet through particular trajectories it can become increasingly particular, attached to specific persons, memories, relationships, and experiences.¹⁹

The *mushaf* provides a particularly revealing instance of this process. At the point of production, copies of the same edition are materially reproducible and potentially interchangeable. Once acquired, however, a particular copy enters a different trajectory. It may be purchased for

¹⁹ Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 73-77.

personal use, received as a gift, carried to Qur'anic study, placed beside the bed, taken on journeys, annotated, marked, or repeatedly handled. These practices gradually inscribe an individual history onto the object. What distinguishes one copy from another is therefore not necessarily a difference established by the publisher, but the history that develops around it through use.

The biographies of the *mushaf* become particularly visible in the small and ordinary practices through which their owners handle, mark, and personalise their copies. During conversations with them, their *mushaf* did not appear as pristine or finished objects. Their pages had been opened and reopened, marked with *sticky notes*, annotated by hand, highlighted with different colours, and circled particular verses. These marks were traces of previous encounters with the Qur'an, but they also organised future acts of reading, recitation, memorisation, and reflection. Through repeated use, the physical pages gradually accumulated aspects of their owners' religious lives.

Halwa²⁰ told us that the pages of her *mushaf* provide a way of keeping track of her reading. She explained that she usually reads the Qur'anic text together with its translation and tries to complete an entire page before stopping. When she cannot finish, she places a marker between the pages so that she knows where to continue:

“Sometimes when I read the Qur'anic verses, I read them together with the translation. So, I feel like I have to finish a whole page. If I haven't finished, I put a *note* there as a bookmark. I use this to mark where I stopped.”

As she explained this, Halwa pointed to the coloured tabs extending from the edge of her *mushaf*. She referred to them as her *rainbow sticky note*. The different colours were not simply decorative. They helped her distinguish between different forms of engagement with the Qur'an, including *tadarus* and memorisation. A marker indicated where she had stopped and, at the same time, recalled what she had been doing when she

²⁰ Interview with Halwa, Yogyakarta January 13 2025

left the page. The physical organisation of the *mushaf* had thus become intertwined with the history of Halwa's own reading.

Meanwhile, Amanda²¹ had developed an even more elaborate system. Her *rainbow sticky note* functioned almost as a personal index to her devotional practices. Purple marked the point to which she had read the translation, pink indicated *tilawah*, and green identified her daily reading. She also associated particular *verses* such as *al-Rahman*, *al-Waqi'ah*, and *al-Mulk* with her nightly routine:

"I do the same thing. I usually mark the pages with these (*rainbow sticky notes*). The purple ones show how far I have read in the translation, while the pink ones mark my *tilawah*. The green ones are for my daily reading. I also usually read *al-Rahman*, *al-Waqi'ah*, and *al-Mulk* every night."

As Amanda moved between the different colours, the organisation of her *mushaf* became a way of recounting her devotional routine. The distinctions between translation, *tilawah*, daily reading, and nightly recitation had been transferred onto the pages of the book. What began as a standardised printed object had gradually acquired a system meaningful specifically within Amanda's own practice. Her *mushaf* had become a material record of how she engaged with the Qur'an.

One colour, however, carried a different significance. Amanda used blue *sticky notes* to mark verses that she found personally motivational and might need at particular moments:

"There's also the blue ones. I use those to mark verses that I might need at certain moments, like what Halwa mentioned earlier. I mark in blue the verses that I find encouraging or motivational."

The expression "I might need at certain moments" points to the anticipatory character of these markings. Unlike the tabs that organised her established reading routines, the blue markers were placed in expectation of future circumstances. Amanda marked particular verses so that she could readily return to them when she needed encouragement or

²¹ Interview with Amanda, Yogyakarta January 13 2025

guidance. The *mushaf* therefore preserved not only the traces of the past.

These seemingly mundane interventions reveal how the biography of a *mushaf* develops through its incorporation into everyday life. Halwa's markers record where she has stopped reading, while Amanda's coloured tabs distinguish different devotional practices and her blue markers identify verses to which she may return in moments of need. Each mark adds another layer to the history of the particular copy. The pages become a record not only of the Qur'anic text but also of the reader's encounters with it.

The accumulation of such traces gradually differentiates an individual copy from the commodity that initially entered the market. A *mushaf* produced as one among many identical copies can, through repeated handling and personal inscription, become increasingly associated with one person's routines, experiences, and memories. Its biography is therefore not contained in the object at the moment of production. It emerges through the object's trajectory: where it goes, who handles it, how it is used, and what experiences become attached to it.

In this context, singularisation does not occur outside or against commodification. Rather, the commodity provides the starting point from which singularisation can take place.²² The publisher produces a reproducible *mushaf* for circulation, while the user's subsequent engagement gives a particular copy a history that cannot simply be replicated. The significance of Halwa's and Amanda's *mushaf*, therefore, lies not only in the editions they purchased or received but in what has happened to those particular copies over time. Through use, marking, attachment, and memory, the *mushaf* moves from being a commodity among commodities to becoming a particular object with a biography of its own.

Conclusion

This study has examined the transformation of 'print Islam' through the proliferation of differentiated *mushaf* in contemporary Indonesia.

²² Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 73-77.

Earlier forms of Islamic print played an important role in ideological contestation and the formation of Muslim publics, while the expansion of Islamic publishing subsequently produced increasingly differentiated markets and targeted readerships. The examination of Cordoba, Syaamil, Jabal and Alfatih shows how these developments have extended into the material differentiation of the Qur'an itself, as publishers configure *mushaf* around particular modes of recitation, memorisation, interpretation, devotion, and gendered religious engagement. The emergence of women's *mushaf* is particularly illustrative of this shift, demonstrating how Qur'anic print has become simultaneously a medium of religious communication, a differentiated market product, and a materially configured object embedded in particular forms of Muslim life.

The close examination of these publishers further reveals that differentiation operates through a combination of textual, aesthetic, material, and functional properties. Typography, colour, page organisation, portability, and supplementary religious materials collectively shape how particular readers are invited to encounter and practise the Qur'an. These features also participate in articulating particular imaginaries of Muslim womanhood, through references to the wives of the Prophet, women's *fiqh*, family-oriented materials, and other forms of gendered religious guidance. Such configurations indicate that market segmentation does not simply identify an existing female readership; it also participates in defining the kinds of religious engagement and subjectivities associated with Muslim women.

Conversations with our interlocutors who own and use *mushaf* for women further illuminate how these objects acquire meanings beyond their status as commercial products. Although these *mushaf* are produced within an expanding Islamic publishing market, their significance extends beyond production and purchase. Once in circulation, they may be bought, received as gifts, carried, read, displayed, kept, and incorporated into everyday religious practices, where they become associated with

personal experiences and devotional meanings. Their religious and social significance, therefore, emerges not simply from how they are produced or marketed, but through the relationships, practices, and contexts in which they are used and experienced.

Taken together, these findings point toward a broader reconfiguration of 'print Islam', from an analytical focus on print as a vehicle of ideology, a means of forming Muslim publics, or a mechanism of market differentiation toward attention to the "biographies of religious things". Kopytoff's notion of the biography of things provides a useful lens for understanding how a *mushaf* moves across different regimes of value namely from a differentiated commodity within a publishing catalogue to a singularised object embedded in devotional practices, personal attachments, and gendered religious lives. The contemporary spread of women's *mushaf* thus reflects not simply the commodification of Islam, but the emergence of materially differentiated religious objects whose meanings develop through their circulation and use. Consequently, 'print Islam' is not only about what print communicates or whom it addresses, but also about what printed religious objects become as they enter and acquire biographies within the lives of their users.

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