

## CRITIQUE OF KHATAM AL-QUR'AN; BETWEEN ORTHODOXY AND CUSTOMARY TRADITIONS IN MINANGKABAU

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### Abstract

The tradition of khatam al-Qur'an in Minangkabau represents a synthesis of Islamic principles and indigenous customs, forming a unique cultural framework. Its manifestation varies distinctly between the Minangkabau heartland and its peripheral (rantau/Minangkabau migrants living outside their homeland) regions. On one hand, some practices lean heavily toward Islamic orthodoxy; on the other, they are steeped in customary traditions. Numerous studies have explored the tradition of khatam al-Qur'an in Indonesia, but those within the discourse of custom and Islam in Minangkabau has received relatively little scholarly attention. Therefore, this research seeks to explore the dialectic between Islam and adat (customs) in the celebration of khatam al-Qur'an whether the two remain irreconcilable, or harmoniously blend within the socio-religious life of the Minangkabau people. Employing a normative qualitative approach, this research positions Islam as the benchmark for evaluating the authenticity of khatam al-Qur'an as practiced across Minangkabau society. Data were gathered through fieldwork in both luhak (core regions) and rantau (diasporic extensions) of West Sumatra. The luhak such as Tanah Datar, Agam, and Lima Puluh Kota represent the cultural and historical epicenters of Minangkabau, while the rantau including Padang, Pasaman, and other peripheral areas signify its expansion. Insights were drawn from in-depth interviews with individuals directly involved in the khatam al-Qur'an festivities. Findings reveal that the tradition is observable across all Minangkabau territories. In the rantau, the ceremonies

are generally modest and restrained. Conversely, in the core regions, especially Agam, Tanah Datar, and Lima Puluh Kota, the events are marked by grandeur and solemnity, sometimes at the expense of Islamic values—evident in practices such as the excessive makan bajamba (communal feasting) and parades that obstruct public roads. Khatam al-Qur'an ceremonies should be restructured into purposeful events that foster religious devotion and community unity, with active support from religious leaders, educators, and local authorities.

Tradisi khatam al-Qur'an di Minangkabau merupakan perpaduan antara prinsip-prinsip Islam dan adat istiadat setempat, yang membentuk sebuah kerangka budaya yang unik. Manifestasinya sangat bervariasi antara daerah pusat Minangkabau dan daerah pinggirannya (rantau/perantau Minangkabau yang tinggal di luar kampung halamannya). Di satu sisi, beberapa praktiknya sangat condong pada ortodoksi Islam; di sisi lain, praktik-praktik tersebut sangat kental dengan tradisi adat. Banyak penelitian telah mengeksplorasi tradisi khatam al-Qur'an di Indonesia, namun kajian dalam wacana adat dan Islam di Minangkabau masih relatif sedikit mendapat perhatian akademis. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berusaha mengeksplorasi dialektika antara Islam dan adat dalam perayaan khatam al-Qur'an. Apakah keduanya tetap tidak dapat didamaikan, atau berpadu secara harmonis dalam kehidupan sosial-keagamaan masyarakat Minangkabau. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif normatif, penelitian ini menempatkan Islam sebagai tolok ukur untuk mengevaluasi keaslian khatam al-Qur'an yang dipraktikkan dalam masyarakat Minangkabau. Data dikumpulkan melalui penelitian lapangan di luhak (daerah inti) dan rantau (daerah perantauan) di Sumatera Barat. Luhak-luhak tersebut seperti Tanah Datar, Agam, dan Lima Puluh Kota mewakili pusat-pusat budaya dan sejarah Minangkabau, sementara rantau-termasuk Padang, Pasaman, dan daerah-daerah periferi lainnya. Wawasan ini diperoleh dari wawancara mendalam dengan orang-orang yang terlibat langsung dalam perayaan khatam al-Qur'an. Temuan-temuan menunjukkan bahwa tradisi ini dilaksanakan di seluruh wilayah Minangkabau. Di rantau, upacara-upacara yang dilakukan umumnya sederhana dan terkendali. Sebaliknya, di daerah inti, terutama Agam, Tanah Datar, dan Lima Puluh Kota, perayaan ini ditandai dengan kemegahan dan kekhidmatan, terkadang dengan mengorbankan nilai-nilai Islam—terlihat dari praktik-praktik seperti makan bajamba yang berlebihan dan pawai yang menghalangi jalan raya. Perayaan khatam al-Qur'an perlu direstrukturisasi menjadi acara yang bermakna untuk menumbuhkan kesalehan religius dan mempererat persatuan komunitas, dengan dukungan aktif dari para pemuka agama, pendidik, dan otoritas lokal.

**Keywords:** criticism, Islam and tradition, khatam al-Qur'an, Minangkabau culture

## Introduction

Reciting the Qur'an is an integral aspect of Islamic jurisprudence. Those who engage in its regular recitation are regarded as individuals committed to virtuous deeds. Numerous Qur'anic verses and hadiths extol the virtues of continuous engagement with the Qur'an. The Prophet Muhammad himself engaged in *tadarus*—a mutual recitation and review of the Qur'an—with the Angel Jibril during the month of Ramadan, as referenced in QS. 75:16–19 and QS. 73:4. The hadith further emphasizes the importance of Qur'anic recitation, encouraging believers to elevate their voices, enhance the beauty of their recitation, preserve memorized verses, and strive for complete memorization of the text. The Prophet recited the Qur'an with Gabriel twice before his death, while prominent companions such as Uthman ibn Affan, Zaid ibn Thabit, Ibn Mas'ud, and Ubayy ibn Ka'ab recited the Qur'an once a week (al-Nazili, n.d., p. 55).

Numerous studies have explored the tradition of *khatam al-Qur'an* in Indonesia, such as those by Yulianti (2021), Agustang (2019), and others. However, *khatam al-Qur'an* within the discourse of custom and Islam in Minangkabau has received relatively little scholarly attention. Some researchers, including Wirdanengsih (2019), Helfi and Hendri (2022), as well as Afifah and Fauzan (2022), have addressed this topic. Wirdanengsih examined the *khatam al-Qur'an* event in Minangkabau in terms of its meaning within the Balai Gurah community, focusing on the intersection of Islam and culture. Meanwhile, Helfi and Hendri investigated the unique local practice of conferring traditional titles upon children who are about to complete *khatam al-Qur'an*—a ritual typically reserved for adults entering marriage in broader Minangkabau society, but adapted in some regions for younger participants. Afifah and Fauzan (2022), on the other hand, centered on the low motivation among students who have completed *khatam al-Qur'an* to re-read the Qur'an.

This research seeks to examine the practice of *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau, exploring whether it remains rooted in Islamic doctrine or has diverged from it, as revealed through empirical fieldwork. The practice of *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau reflects a close interweaving of Islamic teachings and customary traditions, giving rise to new cultural expressions that were absent during the era of the Prophet, his companions, and the early generations of Islam. This tradition has been deeply assimilated into local custom, often with a stronger emphasis on cultural elements, whereas in other regions, the Islamic dimension is more prominently emphasized.

Building upon previous studies, this research critically examines the celebration of *khatam al-Qur'an* within the Minangkabau community by using the Qur'an and Hadith as normative benchmarks to assess the religious appropriateness of these festivities. The objective of this study is to evaluate and contribute to the practice of celebrating *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau, ensuring its alignment with the principles and teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. This research is guided by two central questions: First, how is *khatam al-Qur'an* implemented in both the *luhak* (core regions) and the *rantau* (diasporic areas) of Minangkabau? Second, what form does an Islamic critique—grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith—take in assessing the religious validity of these practices as carried out by the Minangkabau community?

There are several arguments supporting the urgency of this research. First, while the concept of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (custom based on Islamic law, and Islamic law based on the Qur'an) is a cornerstone of Minangkabau cultural doctrine, its practical implementation appears to have drifted from the foundational principles of Islam as articulated in the Qur'an and Hadith (Aziz et al., 2020). Second, in the context of *khatam al-Qur'an* celebrations, the customary discourse often takes precedence over the Islamic discourse. Third, increasing emphasis on economic concerns and pragmatic considerations has contributed to the gradual dilution of religious fervor, rendering Islamic practices—including *khatam al-Qur'an*—increasingly perfunctory within the cultural fabric of the Minangkabau community.

## Method

This research employs a normative, descriptive qualitative approach, with a focus on Minangkabau local culture as the object of inquiry. The *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremony—viewed as a cultural-religious synthesis between *adat* and Islam—is evaluated using Islamic teachings as the normative framework. It was done particularly within the context of the Minangkabau philosophical maxim *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (custom is based on Islamic law, and Islamic law is based on the Qur'an).

Data were collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews with various stakeholders involved in *khatam al-Qur'an* activities, aiming to explore both the ritualistic elements and the personal, lived experiences associated with the ceremony. Observational data focused on the preparatory stages leading up to the event—including rehearsals, logistical arrangements, and

symbolic elements—as well as the actual execution of the ceremony. Interviews sought to elicit perspectives on the spiritual, educational, and social meanings attributed to the event.

Respondents included members of *khatam al-Qur'an* organizing committees, local community leaders, and *guru mengaji* (Qur'anic instructors). In addition, it also involved parents of participants, and broader community members who attended or took part in the ceremonies. These diverse viewpoints provided a comprehensive understanding of how the tradition is interpreted, practiced, and valued within the community.

Fieldwork was conducted across both *luhak* (core) regions—specifically Agam, Tanah Datar, and Lima Puluh Kota (commonly referred to as *darek*)—and *rantau* (diasporic) regions such as Padang and Pasaman. This comparative approach enabled the researchers to analyze regional variations in the celebration of *khatam al-Qur'an*. Moreover, it also offers insights into how geographic context influences the balance between cultural expression and religious adherence in Minangkabau society.

## Finding and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study on the practice of *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau, focusing on how this religious ritual has evolved into a culturally embedded tradition with both spiritual and social dimensions. While rooted in Islamic practice, *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau reflects a unique fusion of religious devotion, communal identity, and local custom. The discussion highlights how the ritual has been transformed over time—shifting from a personal act of devotion to a collective event infused with festivity and public celebration—revealing the dynamic interplay between orthodoxy and adat (custom) in shaping religious expression.

### *The Practice of Khatam al-Qur'an in Minangkabau*

In Minangkabau, as in other regions of Indonesia, *khatam al-Qur'an* may be performed either individually or in congregation. When performed individually, it is carried out by someone who has completed reading the Qur'an on their own. In a congregational setting, *khatam al-Qur'an* is often observed during events organized by the *nagari* or in schools across Minangkabau, which over time have evolved into distinctive local traditions. Over the years, the practice of *khatam al-Qur'an* has undergone notable transformations. It has shifted toward more socialized and festive forms, and in some cases, it

includes elements of competition in Qur'anic recitation. These activities are typically held in mosques or *mushalla* (prayer halls), and have become central community events.

Local customs have further shaped the nature of the ceremony. For example, it is now common for participants to bring snacks from home, turning the event into a communal celebration. These events are generally scheduled during school holidays and primarily involve children aged 10 to 13, with the busiest season occurring between mid-June and August each year. In Minangkabau, *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremonies are typically held on Sundays to coincide with school holidays, maximizing community participation. However, regional variations do exist. For instance, in the Payakumbuh area, the ceremony is traditionally conducted on Wednesdays, while weddings are usually held on Fridays in accordance with local consensus. What began as a purely religious rite has become deeply integrated into the cultural fabric of Minangkabau society. The ceremony is now adorned with a variety of traditional and symbolic elements. Historical records show that the practice of *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau dates back to at least 1923 and continues to flourish today (Helfi & Hendri, 2022, p. 351), illustrating its resilience and adaptability.

Islam, as practiced in Minangkabau, is considered a *great tradition*—a deeply rooted and culturally embedded religious framework. In contrast, *khatam al-Qur'an*, as a localized ritual, can be categorized as a *little tradition*, reflecting its community-based and regional character (Nurdin, 2016, p. 50). Despite this distinction, the practice is firmly grounded in the region's core philosophical maxim: *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (custom is based on Islamic law, and Islamic law is based on the Qur'an).

The *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremony in Minangkabau brings together both religious and traditional institutions. These two elements operate in parallel to support and legitimize the event. The ceremony is typically celebrated by hosting a communal feast and inviting members of all sectors of society. According to Wirdanengsih, one of the key effects of *khatam al-Qur'an* celebrations is the promotion of social harmony and neighborly goodwill (Wirdanengsih, 2017, p. 55). These celebrations are often accompanied by the ritual slaughter of livestock, such as cows (*jawi*) or buffaloes, especially in regions like Batang Buo (Wirdanengsih, 2019, p. 18). The number of animals slaughtered is often proportional to the number of participants completing the recitation.

Other traditional elements commonly found in these events include *makan*

*bajamba* (communal eating), *manyumbang rang rantau* (donations from relatives living outside the region), *arak-arakan* (parades), *mandoa* (collective prayers), and musical performances featuring *talempong*, a traditional Minangkabau instrument (Akbar, 2021). These customs enhance the celebratory atmosphere of the event. Often, the festivities are not confined to a single location but spread across various *khatam* venues, further enriching the communal experience.

The celebratory nature of *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau finds resonance in early Islamic tradition. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged gatherings at the completion of the Qur'an, acknowledging their spiritual value. It is also reported that Ibn Abbas would attend such occasions, recognizing them as moments when prayers are especially blessed and likely to be answered (Khon, 2013, p. 160).

### ***The Bajamba Eating Tradition: A Tendency Toward Excess***

Among the activities associated with *khatam al-Qur'an* that are enthusiastically embraced by participants and the wider community is the communal meal. In many regions of Minangkabau, this meal is often held in the form of *bajamba*—a shared dining practice where participants sit in a circle and eat from a communal plate—or, alternatively, served individually. This practice is not unique to *khatam al-Qur'an* but also features prominently in other major cultural ceremonies, such as *tagak pangulu* (the appointment of tribal leaders), *manjalang mamak* (visiting the maternal uncle), *baralek* (weddings) attended by *bundo kanduang* (matriarchal figures), and *batuka tando* (marriage proposals), among others.

The tradition of *makan bajamba* (communal eating) is believed to have originated in the Koto Gadang area of the Ampek Koto sub-district, Agam Regency, and entered broader Minangkabau society around the 7th or 13th century AD. *Bajamba* meals are typically served on a *talam*—a large copper platter—shared by five to eight people. Men customarily sit *baselo* (cross-legged), while women kneel during the meal. Participants gather around the *talam*, which is filled with rice and various side dishes, and eat without allowing their lips or hands to touch the shared food or each other.

The technique of eating in *bajamba* style involves tossing the rice directly into the mouth to avoid contaminating the food with saliva. If saliva touches the fingers, it is considered a serious breach of etiquette, as those same fingers are used to grasp food shared among the group. This distinctive method is regarded as a core principle of *bajamba* etiquette in Minangkabau (Navis, 1986,



p. 203). Additional etiquette includes refraining from *mancapak* (chewing loudly) and not washing one's hands until the entire group has finished eating (Wirdanengsih, 2019, p. 20).

In Minangkabau tradition, the *bajamba* meal typically features two primary curry variants: white curry and red curry. White curry is prepared using bamboo shoots and offal—such as buffalo, cattle, or goat—cooked in coconut milk. The preparation involves a blend of spices, including garlic, shallots, lemongrass, coriander, bay leaves, turmeric leaves, galangal, ginger, and coconut milk. It is called *white gulai* because it is made without red chili, resulting in a pale or whitish appearance.

By contrast, red curry is prepared with a relatively large amount of red chili, giving the dish a rich red color. This type of curry is categorized as being in the *Keling* (Indian) style. While white curry typically features offal and bamboo shoots, red curry often includes a mixture of jackfruit and meat. Over time, the *bajamba* menu has evolved beyond just white and red curry to include various dishes and flavors, such as fried fish, *asam padeh* (a spicy, sour meat dish without coconut milk), chicken curry, and others.

Originally, the *bajamba* eating tradition was an integral component of traditional ceremonies held in the *rumah gadang* (Minangkabau traditional house) (Wiemar, 2022, p. 1030). Over time, this custom gradually became incorporated into religious activities, particularly within the context of *khatam al-Qur'an* celebrations. It is therefore fitting to consider *khatam al-Qur'an* as a tradition that has been institutionalized and continuously practiced in Minangkabau culture—one whose spirit is firmly rooted in Islamic values.

*Bajamba* also symbolizes the relationship between men and women within the matrilineal structure of Minangkabau society. What was once a purely customary practice has merged into Islamic religious life, as evidenced by the relocation of activities to mosques, the inclusion of prayers before meals, adherence to Islamic dress codes such as *aurat* coverage, and the segregation of male and female dining spaces. These modifications reflect a conscious integration of Islamic ethics into longstanding cultural traditions.

When *bajamba* is held as part of a *khatam al-Qur'an* celebration in a mosque, the meal is typically served in a space separate from the prayer area. For instance, if the prayer service is conducted on the ground floor, the *bajamba* meal is usually arranged on the upper floor or in another designated room, thereby maintaining the sanctity of the prayer space. Similarly, when the *khatam al-Qur'an* event is held at a school, the *bajamba* meal is generally



organized in a classroom setting, specially prepared for communal dining.

The *bajamba* meal during the *khatam al-Qur'an* event is organized by a dedicated committee responsible for providing all the necessities for communal dining, ensuring that everyone involved is well-served. Guests, particularly community leaders—usually men—are given priority and are seated at the front. These honored guests are provided with all the amenities needed for a comfortable meal, including a complete white *seprah* (eating mat) and a selection of desserts, often featuring various fruits.

The meal typically begins with a *pasambahan*, a traditional rhymed dialogue, often exchanged between tribal leaders, as is customary in Minangkabau ceremonial events. Once the *pasambahan* concludes, the forum leader signals the beginning of the meal, prompting the other leaders to follow. Throughout the meal, if any of the leaders require additional side dishes or other items, the male committee members are readily available to fulfill these needs.

Similarly, the general public participating in the *bajamba* meal is also provided with attentive service. If the guests are exclusively male, male committee members are responsible for bringing additional rice, curry, and other essentials to the table. Conversely, when women are present, female committee members serve the guests, maintaining a gendered approach to hospitality in accordance with traditional Minangkabau customs. The pattern of *bajamba* dining during *khatam al-Qur'an* in Minangkabau differs from communal eating patterns in other regions.

In Minangkabau, the *talam* used for *bajamba* is filled with relatively generous portions of rice and side dishes. Participants usually place all the available menu items onto the *talam* to be shared communally. These side dishes are arranged in the center of the platter, and when coconut milk-based dishes are included, the sauce often overflows and blends across the entire serving surface.

However, this practice of combining various side dishes—despite differences in flavor, texture, and appearance—often results in significant amounts of leftover food. Participants may avoid dishes they personally dislike; for instance, those who are not fond of offal may push it aside, while others may leave behind rice soaked in coconut milk. This selective consumption behavior contributes to substantial food waste, with untouched portions of both rice and side dishes remaining at the end of the meal. The tradition of leaving behind large quantities of leftovers during *bajamba* meals is not only wasteful but also runs counter to the ethical values promoted by Islam—particularly those related to

gratitude, moderation, and respect for sustenance. Such practices highlight a need for greater awareness and adjustment to align cultural rituals more closely with Islamic ethical teachings.

Many Qur'anic verses and hadiths prohibit extravagance, particularly the waste of food. For example, the Qur'an explicitly forbids wasteful behavior in Surah Al-Isra (17:26–27) and advises moderation in Surah Al-A'raf (7:31). The prohibition against wasting food—which is also understood as wasting wealth—is further emphasized in the hadith narrated by Bukhari (No. 1477) (al-'Asqalani, 2001, p. 398), in which the Prophet explicitly warns against squandering wealth, including food. A narration by Muslim (No. 4578) likewise stresses the importance of utilizing food fully. Additional narrations, such as that of Ibn Abi Shaibah (No. 36788), describe severe consequences for communities that fail to appreciate Allah's blessings, including those punished with famine for treating food with disrespect—such as using bread for ritual purification.

The volume of food wasted during *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremonies is considerable. If all the leftovers were collected, they could amount to nearly one-third of the total food initially prepared, including rice, meat, jackfruit, bamboo shoots, and other items. Such wasteful practices are especially common in communities that uphold the *poria party* paradigm, in which the *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremony is treated as an *alek nagari*—a grand communal event involving significant expenditure. As a result, participants often consume food indiscriminately, paying little attention to the costs involved or to the leftovers they leave behind.

This culture of wastefulness is not limited to ordinary community members. Officials—including religious leaders who publicly advocate for moderation and responsible consumption—also participate in these practices. Even the *panghulu* (traditional leaders) engage in what is colloquially referred to as *mambao tungkek rabah* (taking part in wrongdoing), or are likened to fishermen weighed down by their catch—unable to escape a behavior they themselves should be addressing. Ideally, these traditional and religious leaders should collaborate to curb food waste (Navis, 1986, p. 203), but in practice, they too partake in the consumption of leftovers, perpetuating the problem.

In certain regions, there is also a lack of concern for the full utilization of slaughtered animals. For instance, in the Batang Buo area, internal organs such as intestines and stomachs are often discarded because they are considered difficult to clean and process. This results in further waste, not only of food

but of valuable resources.

Some communities make attempts to repurpose leftovers. In these cases, the remaining food from the *bajamba* meal is collected and fed to livestock such as chickens and ducks, or used as fish feed in ponds (Sidi, interview, 2024). However, in many other instances, leftover food is simply discarded—thrown into mosque backyards or nearby gutters—resulting in foul odors and potentially clogging local waterways. These outcomes raise environmental concerns and reflect a troubling disregard for Islamic principles of cleanliness, gratitude, and sustainability.

The phenomenon of food wastage is not limited to Batang Buo but is widespread across several other areas, including Agam (Kayu Tanduak, Pakan Sinayan, Guguak Randah, Garegeh), Tanah Datar (Pagaruyuang, Nagari Tuo, Pariangan, Lintau), and beyond. While both Islam and Minangkabau custom encourage communal meals such as *bajamba*, the practice of leaving large quantities of edible food untouched runs contrary to the values espoused by both traditions. Minangkabau culture places a strong emphasis on thriftiness and the optimal use of available resources, as reflected in proverbs such as “*indak kayu, janjang dikapiang*” (if there’s no wood, even a ladder will be used for firewood) and “*hati gajah samo dilapah, hati tungau samo dicacah*” (an elephant’s heart is divided, and even a mite’s heart is shared).

Interestingly, *khatam al-Qur’an* celebrations in *rantau* (diaspora) areas—such as Rao in Mapat Tunggul Subdistrict, East Pasaman—differ significantly from those in the *luhak* (core) regions. According to Afrizal (Interview, 2024), in these areas, *khatam al-Qur’an* is observed as a simple and modest event, devoid of lavish feasts, parades, or excessive expenditures. The ceremony is carried out solely in the place of study or the mosque, without the slaughtering of goats, public processions, or other additional festivities.

Similarly, in Simpang Tiga and Ophir (Luhak Nan Duo Subdistrict), as well as in Padang Laweh and other areas located along the border between West Sumatra and North Sumatra provinces, *khatam al-Qur’an* is marked by simplicity. According to Pujo Rahayu (Interview, 2024), these communities do not organize long processions, do not involve the general public, and do not prepare extravagant meals. In the Ophir area, food for the *khatam al-Qur’an* celebration is brought by the parents of the participants and shared together in the mosque or *mushalla*, which also serves as the Qur’anic learning center (Lika Kurniawati, Interview, 2024).

### ***Reciting the Azan Before the Khatam al-Qur'an Parade***

The recitation of the *azan* during the *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremony typically takes place in the morning, preceding the ceremonial parade that winds through the *nagari*. This call to prayer is usually performed around 08:00 or 09:00 AM local time. Unlike the *azan* that precedes congregational prayers, it is not followed by the *iqamah*. The timing and pace of the *azan* are influenced by the readiness of the *khatam* participants and their entourage.

While the children who complete the *khatam al-Qur'an* serve as the central figures of the ceremony, they are accompanied by additional participants, including parents, members of the marching band, organizing committee members, teachers, and other community members, all gathered to enliven the occasion. Participants assemble in the mosque courtyard to attend the opening ceremony, which is conducted by the event committee. The *azan* is recited prior to the formal proceedings, followed by speeches from the committee chairperson, the school principal, and mosque management. The ceremony culminates in the official launch of the *khatam al-Qur'an* procession, typically officiated by the regent or mayor, who is invited several days in advance.

In Batang Buo, a village in Biaro Gadang, Agam District, the *azan* is chanted at the moment the procession sets off—a tradition not commonly practiced in other Minangkabau regions such as Pagaruyuang or Pariangan. In the *luhak* of Tanah Datar, the *khatam al-Qur'an* procession is accompanied by a different form of celebration. Instead of the *azan*, the event is enriched by the performance of *salawat dulang*—rhythmic praises to the Prophet accompanied by percussion instruments. This practice is upheld in areas like Pagaruyuang and Pariangan, which are revered as the ancestral heartlands of the Minangkabau people, according to the *Tambo Minangkabau*.

From an Islamic perspective, the *azan* is a fundamental ritual call to prayer (*adhan*), signaling the time for the obligatory *salat* and inviting believers to turn away from worldly concerns in obedience to Allah (al-Maqdisi, n.d., p. 292). The Qur'an itself refers to the *azan* in the context of how it was mocked by non-believers, specifically in Surah al-Ma'idah (5:58): "And when you call them to prayer, they take it in ridicule and amusement." Believers are expected to respond to the *azan* by promptly performing their prayers, abandoning trade and other worldly activities, as emphasized in Surah An-Nur (24:37). Similarly, the command to hasten toward prayer upon hearing the *azan* is reinforced in Surah Al-Jumu'ah (62:9).

The establishment of the *azan* was practiced by the Prophet Muhammad

himself, who instructed Bilal to perform the call to prayer. This directive is recorded in several hadith sources, including Bukhari No. 604 (al-Bukhari, n.d., p. 206), Abu Dawud No. 706 (al-Qazwini, n.d., p. 232), and Ahmad No. 23088 (Ibn Hanbal, 2001, p. 178). The hadith regarding the *azan* was later authenticated by al-Albani in his work *Shahih al-Jami' al-Saghir* and is also included in *takhrij* collections such as *Mishkat al-Masabih* (al-Albani, 1985, p. 393).

Beyond its primary role in signaling the five daily obligatory prayers, the *azan* is also permitted in certain exceptional circumstances. These include situations such as encountering jinn, repelling witchcraft, or responding to frightening events, as evidenced by a narration from Jabir ibn Abdillah, recorded by al-Nasa'i (Riyadhi, 2022, p. 11). These uses, however, remain limited to specific religious or protective contexts and are grounded in hadith with clear indications of purpose.

However, the use of the *azan* outside of its legitimate religious contexts—such as before a *khatam al-Qur'an* procession—is not substantiated by the Qur'an or authentic hadiths. There are no reports from the Prophet's companions (*sahabah*), the *tabi'in*, or the *tabi' tabi'in* that suggest the *azan* was employed in cultural or ceremonial settings of this nature. Using the *azan* to inaugurate a *khatam al-Qur'an* event appears to be an attempt to give a shari'ah-based formal tone to what is, at its core, a cultural celebration. This blending can create an impression of religious endorsement for a practice not rooted in prophetic tradition.

The *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremony in Minangkabau culture represents a complex synthesis of Islamic religious practice and local *adat* (custom). The influence of Islam is clearly visible in the role played by religious scholars (*ulama*) and Qur'an teachers (*ustaz*), who are responsible for teaching recitation, evaluating students' proficiency, and leading the ceremonial components of the event. Acts such as communal prayers and fundraising initiatives—often framed as religious obligations to draw support, including donations from Minangkabau migrants throughout Indonesia and abroad—also highlight the strong Islamic presence.

At the same time, the influence of *adat* is evident in the involvement of the *Kerapatan Adat Nagari* (Nagari Customary Assembly), the conferral of customary titles upon children who have completed their Qur'anic studies, and the inclusion of traditional cultural elements such as *talempong* (traditional Minangkabau musical ensembles) and marching bands. This fusion of religious

and cultural elements reflects the Minangkabau philosophical adage: “*Adat basandi syara', syara' basandi Kitabullah; syara' mangato, adat mamakai*” (Custom is founded upon shari'ah, and shari'ah is founded upon the Qur'an; shari'ah instructs, custom applies).

### ***Khatam al-Qur'an Procession that Potentially Leads to Road Congestion***

Beyond its spiritual significance, the *khatam al-Qur'an* procession serves to inspire participants and to showcase the ceremony as a manifestation of Islamic values and cultural heritage. The event is meticulously organized to involve various sectors of the community, ensuring broad participation. This engagement is reflected in multiple dimensions: the success and length of the parade, the generosity shown in prize distribution, and the quality of the food and hospitality services offered.

The parade's success is often measured by the impressive length of the procession, which highlights the community's enthusiasm and collective spirit. Historically, processions of this kind have roots in pre-Easter festivities celebrated by Catholic Christians in Europe and America (Rusdianto & Busro, 2022, p. 76), though they have since been adapted to align with Islamic customs and local traditions. Numerous groups participate in the *khatam al-Qur'an* parade: leading the procession is a decorated vehicle bearing a large replica of the Qur'an, symbolizing the completion of recitation.

Following closely behind are students carrying banners representing their schools' involvement. These are succeeded by younger students—typically from grades one through three—riding elaborately decorated bicycles. Next, groups of older students march on foot, often accompanied by parents or guardians who protect them from the sun or rain. The participants are dressed in traditional Arab-style garments, complete with circular headbands, while younger children wear immaculate white robes. Musical groups such as drum bands or *talempong* ensembles contribute to the festive atmosphere. Concluding the procession are mothers and other members of the wider community, whose presence adds further color and energy to the event.

In Lima Puluh Kota, particularly in Balai Jariang village within Payakumbuh city, a unique tradition persists wherein *khatam al-Qur'an* parade participants ride horses or share *bendi* or *delman* (horse-drawn carriages), as recounted by a former village chief. Similarly, in the Mandar region, festive events such as *pa'rawana* and *Sayyang Pattuddu* involve parading *khatam* participants atop horses, guided by family members (Gunawan, 2017, p. 118). A distinctive feature of

Lima Puluh Kota and Payakumbuh is the participation of women wearing *tikuluak tanduak*, elaborately folded cloth headpieces shaped like buffalo horns, adding symbolic significance and visual splendor to the procession (Arifah, interview 2024). The *khatam al-Qur'an* parade in these regions usually begins at 08:00 a.m., following a predetermined route through the community.

Secondly, the array of prizes awarded to *khatam al-Qur'an* participants reflects the scale of community support, particularly from donors in both local and *rantau* (diaspora) communities. The quantity and value of gifts are directly proportional to the generosity of these benefactors, resulting in considerable variation across different events. For example, during the *khatam al-Qur'an* held on June 26, 2024, the Batang Buo Qur'anic Education Park, under the coordination of committee member Arsiyanti, distributed a remarkable assortment of gifts, including gold stars, prayer mats, Qur'ans, notebooks, pens, bags, Winnie the Pooh mats, and wall clocks. Arsiyanti attributed this abundance to substantial donations from *rantau* contributors, all of which were designated specifically for participant gifts (Arsiyanti, interview 2024).

Furthermore, Osviati, the treasurer of the *khatam al-Qur'an* committee, reported a significant increase in the total amount of funds collected from donors in 2024 compared to the previous year. These funds were used to purchase school supplies and other practical gifts for the participants (Osviati, interview 2024). In other areas, such as Balai Jariang in North Payakumbuh, the best *khatam al-Qur'an* participant receives a highly symbolic and valuable prize—a cow—prepared in advance by the organizing committee (Arifah, interview 2024). The types and value of gifts vary based on the committee's financial resources, community trends, and the locality of each *luhak* in the Minangkabau region.

Lastly, the success of food and consumption services is demonstrated by the committee's ability to cater effectively to both *khatam* participants and the wider community. Following the ritual slaughter of buffaloes or goats, organizers serve elaborate and festive meals, with dishes such as goat *cancang* (spicy sautéed meat) accompanied by a variety of side dishes. These generous offerings ensure a celebratory atmosphere that befits the significance of the occasion and fosters a strong sense of communal unity.

The *khatam al-Qur'an* processions organized by local communities often take place along crowded highways, which are commonly utilized as central spaces for social engagement. However, the occupation of major thoroughfares by these processions significantly increases the risk of severe traffic congestion,



creating substantial challenges for motorists and motorcyclists alike. For instance, during a *khatam al-Qur'an* event in North Payakumbuh, the procession extended from Balai Jariang to the office of the Mayor of Payakumbuh (Arifah, interview 2024). The use of public roads for *khatam al-Qur'an* activities is a widespread practice throughout the Minangkabau region, often without consideration for traffic flow or public access.

The frequent closure and reopening of highways to accommodate these processions is counterproductive to the Qur'anic principle of facilitating ease and convenience for others, especially for road users. The Prophet Muhammad explicitly forbade his companions from lingering on roads in ways that might obstruct or disturb passersby. This is exemplified in a hadith narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and recorded by Imam Bukhari, which highlights the importance of respecting public spaces and avoiding actions that may inconvenience others (al-Bukhari, 1422, p. 132). The appropriation of public roads, therefore, raises ethical concerns from both Islamic and civic perspectives, as every individual has the right to access public infrastructure—a principle known as *haq al-murur* (the right of road users) (Busyro, 2022, p. 174).

The respect for the rights of road users is further underscored in a hadith narrated by Muslim (Hadith No. 35), in which the Prophet praised the act of removing obstacles from pathways and promised heavenly rewards for those who do so. His teachings extended not only to human interactions but also to the treatment of animals, as he prohibited establishing camps on roadways to avoid blocking even creeping creatures. This concern is documented in hadiths narrated by both Muslim and Malik (Hadith No. 1804). Additional prohibitions against idling or congregating on roadways—unless accompanied by measures to eliminate harm—are found in the narrations of Bukhari and Muslim (Hadith No. 6229 and No. 2161, respectively).

To reduce traffic congestion during *khatam al-Qur'an* processions, a practical and respectful solution would be to streamline the parade route, allowing sufficient space for the continued flow of vehicular traffic. Where previous events may have occupied an entire road or even half of it, future processions could be designed more compactly and efficiently. Additionally, parade routes should be carefully reconsidered and redesigned to align with Islamic principles of compassion, public welfare, and social responsibility, while still conveying the moral values and religious significance of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The implementation of *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremonies in the heartland

of Minangkabau holds a prominent and revered place within the community. In contrast, celebrations held in the *rantau*—areas outside the traditional Minangkabau core—lack the vibrancy and grandeur observed in regions such as Luhak Agam, Tanah Datar, and Lima Puluh Kota. For example, in Padang’s Kuranji sub-district, according to Yeni, a teacher residing in Padang City, the *khatam al-Qur’an* is marked by the absence of parades or public processions. Furthermore, the rewards given to participants are minimal, often limited to basic school supplies such as notebooks, lacking the grand prizes that typically serve as strong motivators for students to excel in Qur’anic recitation and performance (Yeni, interview 2024).

Similarly, Rahmi, a native of Padang Laweh in the Luhak Nan Duo sub-district of West Pasaman, recounts that *khatam al-Qur’an* celebrations in her region are equally modest. Participants, who include both children and high school teenagers, generally receive only basic stationery as gifts. The processions accompanying the event are simple and understated. While these parades do cause some traffic disruption, the level of congestion is significantly less than what is typically observed in the central regions of Minangkabau (Rahmi, interview 2024).

### ***Closing of Khatam al-Qur’an Parade in the Graveyard***

Another aspect that is often overlooked in *khatam al-Qur’an* celebrations is the closing segment of the parade, which ends at the cemetery. Upon completing the designated route—carefully planned to accommodate the stamina of the young participants and to stay within the boundaries of the village—the procession concludes with a pilgrimage to the graves of individuals who made significant contributions to religious education in the community. This final act not only honors the legacy of local religious figures but also reinforces the community’s collective memory and intergenerational respect for Islamic figures.

This pilgrimage serves as a profound expression of Islamic traditions related to the pursuit of knowledge, migration, pilgrimage, and other sacred journeys within Muslim heritage (Marbun, 2017, p. 639). For example, in Batang Buo, the procession ends with a speech delivered by the school principal or a designated teacher, who introduces the grave being visited. The speaker explains the identity of the deceased, highlights their contributions to religious education, recounts notable life achievements, and shares other historical details. This act of remembrance is intended to cultivate respect for past educators and inspire students to lead meaningful lives marked by service and legacy.

Importantly, the grave visit during the *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremony differs from the veneration practices associated with visiting the tombs of saints, which sometimes involve ritualistic supplications for blessings—a practice critically examined by scholars such as F. De Jong (Beck & Nasoetion, 1993, p. 2). Instead, this visit is educational and commemorative in nature, aligned with Islamic values of honoring knowledge and its bearers. It serves as a spiritual and moral reminder for students and community members to respect the legacy of religious educators while avoiding practices not rooted in prophetic tradition.

The ceremony at the cemetery concludes with a prayer led by the principal, invoking blessings upon the departed souls who contributed to the advancement of religious education. Following the prayer, students and the descendants of the deceased exchange greetings, fostering a spirit of communal solidarity and continuity. The participants then return to the *khatam al-Qur'an* venue to partake in a shared communal meal, closing the ceremony with a sense of unity and gratitude.

The practice of grave pilgrimage was introduced by the Prophet Muhammad as a moral lesson for the living and as a means to remind believers of the afterlife, as narrated by Imam Muslim (al-Shan'ani, n.d., p. 114). The original purpose of grave visitation was to awaken awareness of death and the transient nature of worldly life. However, over time, this practice has gradually shifted toward venerating and even idolizing the deceased—a development that sharply diverges from Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings. Such transformations distort the initial intent of grave pilgrimage, turning it into an act of undue exaltation rather than reflection and remembrance. Moreover, the habitual focus on venerable figures from earlier eras—particularly those who lived during the Japanese occupation or the Old Order period—can inadvertently hinder the emergence of new role models among the younger generation. By fixating on past heroes, communities may fail to recognize or nurture contemporary achievers who make significant contributions at local, national, or even international levels.

Regions that incorporate grave pilgrimages into *khatam al-Qur'an* celebrations include Batang Buo, Balai Gurah, Nagari Biaro Gadang, Guguak Randah, and several other areas across Agam. In Batang Buo, for instance, the pilgrimage typically centers on the grave of Buya A. Gaffar Rusdy (1926–1984), an inspirational figure credited with reviving religious education in Batang Buo, Pilubang, and neighboring areas. Buya Gaffar was a student of Sjech Ibrahim

Musa of Parabek and later developed Islamic education initiatives in his native Batang Buo (Inyiak Kari, interview 2024).

Similarly, in Balai Gurah, the grave of Sjech Abdul Latif Syakur is the primary pilgrimage destination. A distinguished scholar who studied under Sjech Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi in Mecca, Sjech Abdul Latif Syakur (1881–1963) was a respected educator, preacher, and journalist (Putra, 2017, p. 601). The accessibility of his grave, located near the main road, makes it particularly convenient for *khatam al-Qur'an* participants. Another eminent figure from Balai Gurah, Tuanku Nan Tuo, is also highly revered; however, due to the remote location of his grave, it is not included in the standard pilgrimage itinerary during *khatam* celebrations (Beni Firdaus, interview 2024).

In contrast, *rantau* regions such as Pasaman (Rahmi, interview 2024), Padang, and other areas do not include the tradition of visiting graves of notable figures as part of *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremonies. In these locations, the *khatam* proceeds without this additional ritual element, reflecting a divergence in local practices related to religious remembrance and cultural expression. This variation highlights the dynamic nature of Minangkabau traditions, which continue to evolve in response to differing regional values, social contexts, and interpretations of religious observance.

### ***Playing Qur'anic Tapes Until Midnight***

*Khatam al-Qur'an* typically follows a routine agenda prepared by the organizing committee in each region. The event is a major village celebration that involves widespread community participation. In addition to the core committee—often comprising *nagari* officials—it also engages mosque youth and teenagers who contribute to the success of the event in various ways. One notable form of their involvement is mutual cooperation in decorating the stage used for the Qur'anic recitation, including arranging ornaments and trimmings to enhance the visual appeal of the venue.

This stage decoration activity is usually carried out by youth and teenagers at night. The work begins after the *Isha* prayer and often continues until midnight, or even into the early hours of the morning, especially on Sunday nights. During the decoration process, it is common for the youth to play *kasidah* cassettes or Qur'anic recitations over loudspeakers, which can be heard throughout the surrounding neighborhood. However, the extended use of tapes and speakers late into the night can cause disturbances for nearby residents.

This pattern is not unique to *khatam al-Qur'an* preparations. Similar practices are observed during other religious events, such as *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* competitions organized by mosque youth, or during Ramadan when loudspeakers are used to awaken residents for *sahur*. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of oversight from mosque management or event committees regarding the duration, content, and volume of loudspeaker use. Ideally, clear guidelines should be implemented—for instance, limiting Qur'anic readings to 10 minutes before the call to prayer, presenting religious lectures for no more than 15 minutes via recordings, and adjusting the speaker system to suit indoor and outdoor needs. Such arrangements would help ensure that religious activities centered at the mosque do not inadvertently become sources of excessive noise and disruption for nearby residents.

While staying up late to celebrate religious events is not forbidden, it is essential to balance this with consideration for the community's need for rest, especially as people prepare for the next day's responsibilities. Not all residents have flexible schedules that allow for lost sleep. Many are market vendors who must open their stalls early, employees with long commutes, laborers with physically demanding jobs, and others with time-sensitive routines.

To address these concerns, organizers and mosque administrators must pay attention to existing regulations, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Circular Letter No. 05 of 2022. It outlines proper usage of loudspeakers in mosques and *mushalla*. These guidelines aim to ensure that mosques function as centers of peace, spiritual reflection, and community harmony—not as unintended sources of disturbance from the time of congregational prayers to various Muslim holiday celebrations.

The uncontrolled use of loudspeakers during religious activities is also felt by residents of non-Muslim backgrounds. While Minangkabau culture is deeply rooted in Islamic values and traditions, the region has also become home to diverse non-Muslim communities. Notable examples include the growing presence of Batak Christians along the borders of Bukittinggi City—in areas such as Batang Buo, Garegeh, Aur Kuning, Talao, and others (Helfi et al., 2021, p. 37). Additionally, the influx of Nias residents from North Sumatra—many of whom are Christians or adherents of indigenous beliefs—further contributes to the region's religious diversity.

In this pluralistic context, the frequent and sometimes excessive use of mosque loudspeakers—audible throughout Bukittinggi, Agam, and surrounding areas—has the potential to generate social tensions. These practices may

be perceived as a monopolization of public space by the Muslim majority, potentially disturbing or alienating residents of other faiths. The absence of regulatory oversight or community dialogue on this issue risks undermining the inclusive social fabric that Minangkabau society seeks to uphold.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to foster a deeper understanding of religious moderation within the Minangkabau community. Efforts must be directed toward harmonizing public religious expression with respect for multicultural and multi-religious dynamics. This approach aligns with the community's broader commitment to maintaining social harmony in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

## Conclusion

The celebration of *khatam al-Qur'an* across the Minangkabau region reveals clear contrasts between the core areas and the *rantau* (diaspora) regions. In core regions such as Agam, Tanah Datar, and Lima Puluh Kota, *khatam al-Qur'an* is celebrated with considerable enthusiasm and grandeur, as seen in the extensive preparations, vibrant parades, and the distribution of significant prizes. In contrast, *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremonies in *rantau* areas tend to be more modest, often lacking the broad community support and festive atmosphere characteristic of the heartland.

However, the exuberance surrounding *khatam al-Qur'an* celebrations in the core areas risks drifting away from the core teachings of the Qur'an, giving greater precedence to customary traditions (*adat*) than to Islamic values. In many cases, *adat* appears to overshadow the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah, thereby challenging the well-known Minangkabau philosophy of "*adat basandi syara', syara' basandi Kitabullah*"—a philosophy that, in this context, demands critical re-evaluation. Without thoughtful reflection and balance, there is a real danger that these celebrations may lose their intended spiritual significance and become mere cultural spectacle.

Several practices highlight this imbalance between cultural expression and religious principles in *khatam al-Qur'an* celebrations. These include organizing *bajamba* (communal meals) that may become excessive, using the call to prayer (*adhan*) merely as a signal to begin parades rather than its intended liturgical function, conducting processions that block highways and create significant traffic congestion, and operating mosque loudspeakers late into the night without consideration for the peace and rest of surrounding residents. Such practices, while rooted in communal enthusiasm and tradition,

risk overshadowing the core Islamic values of moderation, respect for others, and proper religious observance.

These sub-events within *khatam al-Qur'an* festivities, which often disregard the essential values of the Qur'an and Hadith, clearly require careful reconsideration. There is an urgent need to reposition *khatam al-Qur'an* ceremonies so that they evolve into meaningful gatherings that promote religious devotion, community spirit, and social harmony. Achieving this transformation will require the active involvement of all stakeholders—including religious leaders, community figures, educators, and local government officials—who must contribute thoughtful and constructive input.

Future improvements should ensure that *khatam al-Qur'an* practices align more closely with Islamic ideals. These include emphasizing the avoidance of wastefulness (*israf*), fostering peace within the community, encouraging mutual tolerance among diverse groups, and upholding the rights and well-being of all individuals involved. By grounding these celebrations in the ethical and spiritual values of Islam, communities can preserve both the religious significance and cultural richness of the tradition in a balanced and meaningful way.

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