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The Integration of Islamic Values and Banjarese Culture in Bahalarat al-Qur'an Tradition, South Kalimantan

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Abstract : This study explores the bahalarat al-Qur'an (a ritual of atonement and re-consecration) tradition among the Banjar people of South Kalimantan. While most studies on Islamic-local integration focus on agrarian or life-cycle rituals, this research addresses a unique gap by examining how communities respond to unintentional violations of the physical sanctity of the Qur'an. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach framed by Durkheim's theory of cultural integration, the research investigates how reverence and repentance toward the Qur'an are practiced through communal rituals. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation involving religious leaders, elders, and families. Findings reveal that bahalarat al-Qur'an functions as a moral-spiritual mechanism to restore the Qur'an's sanctity while simultaneously serving as a communal ritual that fosters social cohesion. Furthermore, it acts as a pedagogical medium for transmitting adab (etiquette) and moral responsibility, although it is currently evolving from a collective to a more personal practice across generations. This study contributes to the global discourse on the "Living Qur'an" by demonstrating how universal Islamic values of ta'zhim (reverence) and istighfar (repentance) are localized into a distinct ethical-cultural system that preserves the sacredness of the scripture within contemporary indigenous societies.

Keywords: Bahalarat al-Qur'an; Banjar culture; Islamic ethics; cultural integration

Abstrak : Penelitian ini mengkaji tradisi bahalarat al-Qur'an (ritual penyucian kembali dan permohonan maaf) pada masyarakat Banjar di Kalimantan Selatan. Di tengah dominasi studi integrasi Islam-budaya yang berfokus pada ritual agraris, penelitian ini mengisi celah unik dengan menelaah bagaimana masyarakat merespons pelanggaran tidak sengaja terhadap kesucian fisik mushaf Al-Qur'an. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis yang didasarkan pada teori integrasi kultural Émile Durkheim, penelitian ini menelusuri bagaimana penghormatan dan penyesalan terhadap Al-Qur'an diwujudkan melalui praktik ritual komunal. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap tokoh agama, tetua, serta keluarga pelaku tradisi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bahalarat al-Qur'an berfungsi sebagai mekanisme moral-spiritual untuk memulihkan kesucian Al-Qur'an sekaligus menjadi ritual sosial yang memperkuat solidaritas masyarakat. Selain itu, tradisi ini berperan sebagai media pendidikan nilai adab dan tanggung jawab moral, meskipun kini mulai bergeser dari praktik komunal menuju bentuk yang lebih individual di kalangan generasi muda. Artikel ini memberikan kontribusi pada isu riset Al-Qur'an global mengenai "Living Qur'an" dengan menunjukkan bagaimana nilai universal ta'zhim (penghormatan) dan istighfar (permohonan ampun) melokalisasi diri menjadi sistem etika-budaya yang menjaga sakralitas kitab suci dalam masyarakat adat kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Bahalarat al-Qur'an; budaya Banjar; etika Islam; integrasi budaya

INTRODUCTION

The interconnection between religion and culture represents a fascinating field of inquiry, forming a crucible in which faith and cultural practices are interwoven. In the Indonesian archipelago, this fusion is particularly evident in how Muslim communities interact with the Qur'an beyond its textual meaning, transforming it into various "Living Qur'an" traditions (Ahimsa-Putra, 2012; Syamsuddin, 2007). For instance, the *Semaan* Al-Qur'an and *Khataman* traditions demonstrate the integration of communal gatherings with the spiritual merit of engaging with the holy book (Maghfiroh, 2019). Within this context, accommodation and adaptation occur between Islam's normative-transcendent teachings and the contextual-empirical character of local culture, resulting in distinctive religious practices that express Islamic values through local cultural idioms. A profound yet under-researched example of this integration is the tradition of *bahalarat* al-Qur'an (a ritual of atonement and re-consecration) found among the Banjar people of South Kalimantan. This tradition emerges as a cultural response to the need for maintaining the physical sanctity of the mushaf, where unintentional mishandling—such as dropping or stepping over the holy book—is addressed through a localized ritual of repentance (Gade, 2004).

The integration of Islam and local culture in the *bahalarat* al-Qur'an tradition demonstrates how long-standing customary practices are transformed and rearticulated in alignment with Islamic values. *Bahalarat* al-Qur'an is a form of reverence toward the Qur'an practiced by the Banjar community when the physical *mushaf* is accidentally dropped, stepped over, or placed in an improper location. As a gesture of repentance and respect for the sacred text, the community holds a *do'a selamat*, often accompanied by simple meals and the involvement of local religious leaders. While such practices are not found in the normative sources of Islam, they have developed due to the interaction between Islamic teachings and Banjar cultural systems.

The fusion of Islamic values and local culture is a well-established phenomenon in the study of Islam, not only in the Indonesian archipelago but also across the Muslim world. Previous research has shown that Islam consistently engages in a "dialogue" with local socio-cultural contexts. Scholars such as Koentjaraningrat (2000) and Geertz (1973) noted that religious life in Indonesia is inextricably linked to this complex relationship, while Azra (2004) and Dhofier (1980) highlighted how Islam's spread occurred through persuasive cultural accommodation. Beyond Indonesia, similar patterns of "vernacular Islam" are observed globally. For instance, Eickelman (2001) compared Islamic practices in Morocco, where local notions of "maraboutism" or saint veneration merge with orthodox teachings. In South Asia, the work of Eaton (1996) demonstrates how Islam in Bengal integrated with local agrarian symbols to form a unique religious identity. Furthermore, in the context of the "Living Qur'an," global studies such as those by Nelson (2001) on the art of reciting the Qur'an in Egypt or Ware (2014) on the "Walking Qur'an" in West Africa illustrate how the physical and oral presence of the sacred text is deeply embedded in local pedagogical and ethical traditions. As M. Quraish Shihab (2019) stresses, respecting these local values is essential as long as they embody decorum and communal benefits without contradicting Sharia fundamentals.

Alongside these broader perspectives, numerous case studies illustrate how Islam has been integrated with diverse cultural practices across Indonesia, from agrarian rituals such as *Okol* in Madura (Firdausi & Muhsin, 2024) and *Kenduri Blang* in Aceh (Maimunsyah dkk., 2021), to peace traditions in Maluku (Saimima, 2023) and the adaptation of Bakar Batu among Muslim Papuans (Dute, 2022; Makatita & Islamy, 2022). Other studies highlight the

importance of integration in education (Rahman et al., 2020), family values, and even mosque architecture (Ahmad Zainuri, 2021), underscoring the richness of Islamic culture encounters. Yet, most of this scholarship focuses on agrarian or sociocultural rituals, leaving little attention to practices centered on safeguarding the sanctity of the Qur'an—an area where the study of *bahalarat* al-Qur'an offers new insights.

Numerous case studies also has illustrated how Islam has been integrated with diverse cultural practices across Indonesia — from historical processes rooted in the Walisongo era (Adib, 2021) and the concept of Islam Nusantara as cultural acculturation (Muntoha dkk., 2023), to analyses of Islam's transformative impact on local arts, social norms, and architecture (Prasetyo, 2023). Empirical examples include agrarian rituals such as (Firdausi & Muhsin, 2024) and *Kenduri Blang* in Aceh (Maimunsyah dkk., 2021), peace-building customs in Maluku (Saimima, 2023) and the adaptation of Bakar Batu among Muslim Papuans (Dute, 2022; Makatita & Islamy, 2022), and studies of family-based religious education (Rahman dkk., 2020), family values, and even mosque architecture (Ahmad Zainuri, 2021)— all of which underscore the variety and resilience of Islam–culture encounters in the archipelago. Yet, most of this scholarship concentrates on agrarian or sociocultural rituals, historical processes, or material culture, leaving limited attention to community practices focused explicitly on the sanctity of the Qur'an.

The interaction of the Banjar community with the Qur'an extends beyond textual understanding to include aspects of physical and practical reception. As explained by Rafiq (2014), Muslim communities in non-Arabic speaking contexts often accord a special status to the Qur'an through various forms of material and ritual treatment as a manifestation of reverence for the holy book. This unique reception is exemplified in the *bahalarat* tradition, where the physical *mushaf* is treated not merely as a book, but as a sacred object that requires specific protocols of adab (etiquette).

Research specifically addressing *bahalarat* al-Qur'an includes Apriati et.al., (2022), who examined the practice as a medium for instilling religious values in children, especially during *khataman* al-Qur'an (Qur'an recitation completion ceremonies). Their study interprets the tradition as a form of moral education that nurtures devotion and love for the Qur'an, with a focus on its pedagogical function in shaping children's religious character. Another relevant study is Marni's (2023) thesis, which investigated the Banjar practice of *kafarat* as a form of repentance for unintentional acts deemed disrespectful toward the Qur'an. Using an applied ethics approach, Marni framed *kafarat* as a process of internalizing moral norms and religious responsibility. While both studies reveal important spiritual and social dimensions of *bahalarat*, they do not explicitly analyze the practice as a site of integration between normative Islamic teachings and Banjar cultural traditions from a sociological perspective. They do not explore the dialectical process through which Islamic values—especially respect for the Qur'an—interact with Banjar cultural norms to generate social responses such as *bahalarat* when symbolic violations of the sacred occur.

This study therefore approaches *bahalarat* al-Qur'an more broadly, not merely as a pedagogical ritual or symbolic sanction, but as a product of dynamic interaction between religion and culture. Employing a phenomenological approach, it seeks to explore how collective Banjar consciousness interprets the Qur'an, sacredness, guilt, and social ethics. At the theoretical level, Emile Durkheim's theory of cultural integration is employed to analyze how such practices function to preserve social cohesion and reinforce moral values within the community. According to Durkheim, social practices and religious rituals serve not only as a medium of vertical communication between human beings and God, but also

as a cohesive force binding community together. In this sense, the *bahalarat* al-Qur'an tradition is more than a religious expression—it is also a mechanism for strengthening communal solidarity and transmitting moral and spiritual values to younger generations.

Consequently, this research is significant in explaining how the integration of Islamic teachings and Banjar local culture takes place through the *bahalarat* al-Qur'an tradition. It further aims to uncover the noble values embedded within the practice and the religious and social meanings that underlie it. By employing phenomenology and Durkheim's cultural integration theory, the study aspires to provide a comprehensive understanding of the acculturation between Islam and local culture, while also highlighting the importance of preserving local traditions rooted in Islamic spirituality and ethics.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to explore the lived experiences and collective meanings embedded in the *bahalarat* al-Qur'an tradition of the Banjar community. The phenomenological perspective was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of how individuals interpret and give meaning to cultural practices (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Neubauer dkk., 2019). While the descriptive orientation ensures that the findings are presented in a clear and contextualized narrative, a contemporary phenomenological approach also emphasizes the "lifeworld" (*lebenswelt*) of the practitioners in navigating sacred and profane spaces (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The focus of this research is the integration of Islamic teachings and Banjar cultural values as expressed in the practice of *bahalarat*, which refers to acts of reverence toward the Qur'an when it is accidentally disrespected, such as being dropped or placed in an inappropriate location. In this study, "integration" is understood as a dynamic process of accommodation and synthesis between Islamic principles—particularly the ethic of *ta'zhim* (reverence) and *istighfar* (repentance)—and Banjar cultural expressions of respect for sacred texts. This conceptualization aligns with recent studies on "Vernacular Islam," which view integration not as a loss of original identity but as a creative "hybridity" that strengthens local religious resilience (Ammerman, 2021; Lukens-Bull, 2013).

The fieldwork was conducted in South Kalimantan, specifically in Banjar communities where the *Halarat* al-Qur'an tradition is still actively practiced. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in or familiarity with the ritual. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out by attending and recording *halarat* rituals in community settings, while interviews were designed to elicit participants' understandings of the meanings, values, and functions of the practice. Documentation, including field notes, photographs, and audio recordings, was used to complement and verify the findings. The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which involves three interrelated steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The interpretation of the findings was further framed by Durkheim's theory of cultural integration, which explains how the practice sustains social cohesion and moral values. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, triangulation of sources and methods was applied, along with prolonged engagement in the field, peer debriefing, and member checking with key informants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reverence for the Qur'an as the Core of the Tradition

Bahalarat al-Qur'an tradition in Banjar society lies in the profound reverence accorded to the Qur'an as the sacred word of God. Within the community, the Qur'an is not merely regarded as a text to be recited and memorized but as a sacred object that embodies divine presence. Consequently, any act that could be interpreted as diminishing its sanctity—such as dropping the mushaf, accidentally stepping over it, or placing it in a low or inappropriate position—is understood as requiring immediate moral and ritual redress. The practice of *bahalarat* emerges as a communal mechanism to restore the Qur'an's sanctity and, at the same time, to reaffirm the community's devotion to the divine. This sacred orientation was vividly described by Rusmawati, one of the elder respondents:

"Bahalarat Qur'an tuh rajin urang atau kanakan biasanya habis tahampas Qur'an, nya urang bahari tuh mahurmati banar lawan kitab nang suci tuh (Al-Qur'an), saking urang manjunjungnya tinggi adab mambawanya haja dijunjung di atas kapala, kada bulih tu pang mun kada tahu dibasa lawan Qur'an apalagi sawat tahampas lawan talingkang..." (*Bahalarat* Qur'an was common among people and children, especially after reciting. In the past, people truly respected the Holy Book. They even carried it on their heads as a sign of honor. It should never be treated casually, let alone dropped or stepped over) (Interview with Rusmawati, Mei 2022).

Her account illustrates that *bahalarat* is embedded within a broader cultural ethic of adab—a code of reverence and discipline. Carrying the Qur'an above one's head, for instance, symbolizes not only physical care but also the symbolic elevation of the Qur'an above worldly concerns. It reflects the community's worldview that the Qur'an should be placed at the pinnacle of social and spiritual life.

From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon resonates strongly with Emile Durkheim's classic distinction between the sacred and the profane. For Banjar Muslims, the mushaf unequivocally belongs to the realm of the sacred. Any violation of its sanctity, even if unintentional, produces collective anxiety, which must be resolved through a ritual act. In this sense, *bahalarat* operates as a mechanism of moral repair: it reasserts the sacredness of the Qur'an and restores balance within the social and spiritual order.

Beyond its ritual function, *bahalarat* also provides psychological and emotional reassurance for individuals who feel guilty or anxious after mishandling the Qur'an. As one respondent put it, *"Bahalarat itu supaya hati kita jangan was-was, supaya nyaman, sudah minta ampun lawan Allah, sudah minta selamat, jadi hidup kita bisa tenang."* (*Bahalarat* makes our hearts feel calm; after asking God for forgiveness, we feel safe again, and life continues with blessing). This underscores the role of ritual not only as a communal performance but also as an inner moral therapy, reinforcing a sense of accountability before God (Interview with Wahdah, a Qur'an teacher, February 2023).

Scholarly discussions help situate this phenomenon within broader debates on religion and culture. Clifford Geertz's (1993) conceptualization of religion as a cultural system highlights how rituals function as symbolic acts that embody deeper ethical commitments. *Bahalarat* exemplifies this: while not mandated in Islamic scripture, it embodies the Islamic value of repentance (*istighfar*) and reverence (*ta'zhim*), integrated into the cultural idioms of Banjar society. Similarly, Azra's (2002) notion of cultural accommodation in the spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago provides an apt lens: *bahalarat* represents a localized cultural form through which universal Islamic values are expressed and maintained.

Furthermore, the pedagogical function of *bahalarat* is significant. By involving children in the ritual, the community instills a deep sense of reverence for the Qur'an from an early

age. This aligns with the idea of a “hidden curriculum,” where cultural practices function as informal yet powerful mechanisms of moral education. Through *bahalarat*, children learn that mistakes, even when unintentional, carry moral consequences that must be addressed through repentance and corrective action.

It shows that reverence for the Qur'an is not merely an abstract value in Banjar society; it is concretized and continually reaffirmed through *bahalarat*. The ritual embodies the integration of Islamic ethics with local cultural expressions, ensuring that the Qur'an's sacred status is preserved not only in religious doctrine but also in lived communal experience.

Continuity and Change Across Generations

The findings reveal that the *bahalarat* al-Qur'an tradition in Banjar society is undergoing a process of transformation marked by intergenerational differences. While older generations generally view the practice as indispensable and non-negotiable, younger generations tend to adopt simplified forms or, in some cases, gradually abandon it. This dynamic reflects the broader phenomenon of cultural change, in which traditions are continuously renegotiated in response to new contexts, lifestyles, and values.

Elders frequently voiced concern about the waning observance of *bahalarat* among younger community members. Masriah, a seventy-year-old respondent, expressed her anxiety in strong terms:

“...*wahini han ngaran kanakan wahini rasa kada tadangar lagi nang manggawi kakaitu, sadikit sadikit kada tarasa hilangan hudah adat-adat nang digawi urang tuha bahari... Nah cu, urang tuha sudah maninggalan, sudah kadadaan, siapa lagi nang mawaris gawian-gawian nang kakaini amun kada kakanakan wayahini...*” (Nowadays, children hardly practice this anymore. Little by little, the customs of the elders are disappearing. When the old people pass away, who will continue these practices if the young no longer care?) (Interview with Masriah, June 2022)

Her statement reflects a widespread sentiment that the loss of ritual form is not merely a cultural issue but also a moral and spiritual one. For the older generation, *bahalarat* is more than a symbolic act; it is a vital expression of reverence for the Qur'an and a safeguard for communal piety.

The elders recalled that in the past, children were taught strict codes of conduct regarding the Qur'an—carrying it on their heads as a sign of honor or ensuring that it was placed on a high shelf. Such practices embodied the community's worldview that the Qur'an must occupy the highest possible position in both physical and symbolic terms. In contrast, younger people today often carry the Qur'an casually, placing it in school bags or holding it with other books. This practical convenience, while not intended as disrespect, is perceived by elders as a decline in the symbolic expression of reverence.

Interestingly, younger respondents did not necessarily reject the values underlying *bahalarat*. Instead, they tended to reinterpret them in more individual and simplified forms. One student explained:

“*Kalau Qur'an jatuh, biasanya saya langsung ambil, cium, terus baca istighfar saja. Kalau sampai bikin acara selamatan kadang-kadang jarang sudah, soalnya kan repot juga kalau harus kumpul keluarga.*” (If the Qur'an falls, I just pick it up, kiss it, and recite istighfar. Organizing a gathering is rare these days—it takes time and resources) (Interview with Rusmawati, Mei 2022).

This reflects a shift from collective ritual to individual devotion. Respect for the Qur'an remains, but its expression is less communal and more personal. From the perspective of

cultural theory, this aligns with Koentjaraningrat's (2000) observation that modernization often alters the external forms of tradition while leaving core values intact. Similarly, Azra (2002) has argued that Islam in the archipelago evolves through cultural accommodation, whereby universal Islamic principles are maintained but adapted to new social realities. Such generational shifts are not unique to the Banjar.

Clifford Geertz (1976) noted similar patterns of divergence between older and younger cohorts in his study of Javanese religion, which were influenced by education, urbanization, and changing social structures. In the Banjar context, this means that while reverence for the Qur'an remains a shared value, the ritualized expression of *bahalarat* is increasingly subject to individual choice. Nevertheless, the decline of communal ritual has significant social implications. A local religious leader emphasized:

"Bahalarat itu bukan hanya soal minta ampun kepada Allah, tapi juga soal kumpul keluarga, kumpul tetangga. Kalau hanya baca istighfar sendiri, nilai kebersamaan itu hilang." (Bahalarat is not only about asking forgiveness from God, but also about bringing families and neighbors together. If it is only done individually, the value of togetherness is lost.)

This highlights the risk that the erosion of ritual form may diminish the social and pedagogical dimensions of *bahalarat*. In Durkheimian terms, the ritual not only reaffirms the sacredness of the Qur'an but also functions as a mechanism of social solidarity. Its weakening among the younger generation suggests a broader challenge of cultural transmission in contemporary Banjar society.

Thus, we see that *Bahalarat* illustrates the dialectic of continuity and change: the tradition persists in essence but is reinterpreted in practice. Older generations insist on the importance of ritual form, while younger generations emphasize practicality and individual devotion. This intergenerational negotiation raises important questions about the future of local Islamic traditions—whether they will endure as collective rituals or transform into simplified, individualized practices. Either way, the core values of reverence and repentance remain central, demonstrating the resilience of Islamic ethics even amid cultural transformation.

Ritual Structure and Social Cohesion

The *bahalarat* al-Qur'an ritual in Banjar society is not only a personal act of repentance but also a structured communal event that reinforces social solidarity. The study found that when a mushaf is accidentally dropped or treated improperly, families often respond by organizing a small gathering—typically involving neighbors, relatives, and local religious leaders. This ritual generally includes the recitation of *doa selamat* (prayers of blessing and forgiveness), collective recitation of short Qur'anic verses, and, in some cases, the distribution of simple food such as sticky rice (*lakatan*) or local dishes. One respondent explained the significance of this structure:

"Kalau bahalarat, biasanya kami mengundang ustadz sama tetangga. Dibacakan doa bersama, kadang Al-Fatihah, Yasin, lalu makan sedikit. Yang penting itu minta ampun sama Allah dan menunjukkan hormat kepada Qur'an." (If we do bahalarat, we usually invite the ustadz and neighbors. We read prayers together, sometimes Al-Fatihah and Yasin, and then eat a little food. The important thing is to ask Allah for forgiveness and to show respect to the Qur'an.)

The ritual thus consists of several symbolic layers: the verbal component (prayer and Qur'anic recitation), the social component (inviting the community), and the material component (sharing food). Each element reinforces the meaning of the act. Prayers

reestablish the sacred bond with God, the presence of neighbors affirms collective responsibility, and food-sharing strengthens ties of reciprocity within the community.

From a Durkheimian perspective, the structure of *bahalarat* exemplifies the role of ritual in producing and maintaining social cohesion. According to Durkheim, collective rituals reaffirm the distinction between the sacred and the profane while simultaneously binding individuals into a moral community. In the Banjar context, *bahalarat* is a moment in which the sanctity of the Qur'an is publicly reasserted, and the moral boundaries of the community are collectively renewed.

The collective dimension of the ritual also has pedagogical implications. By participating in *bahalarat*, children and young people learn not only the value of respecting the Qur'an but also the importance of community solidarity. As one elder explained:

"Kalau anak-anak ikut bahalarat, mereka belajar bahwa menghormati Qur'an itu bukan hanya urusan pribadi, tapi urusan bersama. Mereka belajar bahwa agama itu kita jalani ramai-ramai, bukan sendiri-sendiri." (When children join *bahalarat*, they see that respecting the Qur'an is not only personal but also shared. They learn that faith is something we live together, not alone).

This indicates that *bahalarat* serves as what scholars of education call a "hidden curriculum," where moral lessons are transmitted through participation in cultural practices rather than through formal teaching.

The sharing of food further amplifies this sense of solidarity. Anthropologists often note that food-sharing rituals play a critical role in fostering reciprocity and reinforcing social bonds. In *bahalarat*, food does not serve merely as nourishment but as a medium of blessing (*barakah*) and social cohesion. Eating together after the prayers transforms the act of repentance into a communal experience of forgiveness and renewal.

Comparative scholarship provides useful parallels. Geertz's (1976) study of communal rituals in Java highlights how religious ceremonies often function as "social dramas" that enact and reaffirm shared values. Similarly, Turner's (1995) concept of "communitas" is relevant here: *bahalarat* creates a temporary space in which social hierarchies are blurred, and participants experience a sense of equality before God.

The ritual structure of *bahalarat* transforms a potentially private act of repentance into a collective reaffirmation of both religious and social values. Through prayer, communal gathering, and food-sharing, the Banjar community not only restores the sanctity of the Qur'an but also reinforces its internal cohesion. The ritual thus functions as a nexus where spiritual reverence and social solidarity converge, embodying the integration of Islamic ethics with Banjar cultural practices.

The practice of *bahalarat* demonstrates that the Qur'an in the life of the Banjar people functions as a 'Living Qur'an,' where text and practice merge into a dynamic scriptural function. In Rafiq's (2021) view, the Qur'an does not only serve as an informational source of law but is also tangibly present in people's daily lives, involving emotional and spiritual dimensions through various rituals. Within this framework, *bahalarat* acts as a transformative mechanism that converts an act of unintentional negligence into a collective spiritual restoration, reinforcing the sacred boundary between the mundane and the divine.

Moral-Ethical Dimensions of Bahalarat

Another key dimension of the *bahalarat* al-Qur'an tradition lies in its moral and ethical implications. The act of performing *bahalarat* is not merely a symbolic gesture of respect toward the Qur'an; it is also perceived as an acknowledgment of moral responsibility before

God. When individuals accidentally mistreat the *mushaf*—whether by dropping it, stepping over it, or placing it improperly—they do not interpret it simply as a technical error but as a violation of *adab* (proper etiquette) toward the sacred. This violation, even if unintentional, creates a sense of moral indebtedness that must be addressed through ritualized repentance. Several informants emphasized this ethical orientation. One respondent remarked:

“Bahalarat itu bukan hanya karena Qur’an jatuh, tapi karena kita merasa sudah salah lawan sesuatu yang suci. Dengan melakukan itu, kita minta ampun supaya hati bersih dan hidup tetap barakah.” (*Bahalarat* is not only about the Qur’an falling, but about us realizing that we have wronged something sacred. By doing it, we ask for forgiveness, so that our hearts are clean and our lives remain blessed).

This testimony underscores that *bahalarat* operates at the intersection of religious discipline and personal conscience. The ritual allows individuals to reaffirm their ethical accountability not only to God but also to the broader community, which shares the same reverence for the Qur’an.

From a theological standpoint, this practice resonates with the Islamic concept of *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness). In classical Islamic teaching, repentance (*tawbah*) involves three components: recognition of the mistake, remorse for the act, and commitment to avoid repetition. *Bahalarat* mirrors this triadic structure in cultural form: by recognizing the improper act toward the Qur’an, performing prayers of repentance, and reestablishing respectful behavior, participants internalize these ethical values in both personal and communal life.

Furthermore, the ritual reinforces the idea that mistakes—though inevitable in human life—must always be accompanied by corrective action. In this sense, *bahalarat* functions as a moral pedagogy, teaching individuals that negligence toward the sacred carries consequences and requires active redress. This moral lesson is particularly powerful for children, who learn through observation and participation that ethical conduct is not optional but an integral part of religious life.

From a sociological perspective, this aligns with Durkheim’s view that rituals are mechanisms for reinforcing collective morality. The sacred object—in this case, the Qur’an—becomes a focal point through which shared ethical norms are enacted and transmitted. By ritualizing the response to an accidental violation, the community makes explicit the expectation that reverence must be continuously practiced and that lapses must be corrected (Durkheim, 2008).

Scholarly comparisons highlight the broader implications of this phenomenon. Harun Nasution (1995) emphasized that Indonesian religiosity is deeply shaped by local systems of value and ethics, which often manifest in unique cultural expressions. Similarly, Quraish Shihab (2007) argued that respecting local traditions is permissible if they uphold ethical and spiritual values aligned with Islamic principles. *Bahalarat* embodies this principle, as it integrates Islamic notions of repentance with Banjar cultural expressions of respect and moral responsibility.

The moral-ethical dimension of *bahalarat* reveals that the tradition is not a mere ritualized formality but a deeply internalized practice that cultivates conscience, responsibility, and reverence. It transforms accidental errors into opportunities for moral growth, both individually and collectively, ensuring that the Qur’an remains not only a sacred text but also a living source of ethical guidance in Banjar society.

Variations, Debates, and the Dynamics of Practice

Although *bahalarat* al-Qur'an is widely recognized among the Banjar, the study found that its practice is neither uniform nor uncontested. Instead, it manifests in diverse forms and has become a subject of debate within the community. These variations and disagreements underscore the dynamic nature of the tradition, demonstrating how it adapts to different social, economic, and generational contexts.

Some families emphasize a more elaborate form of *bahalarat*, involving collective prayers, the presence of a religious leader, and the provision of food such as sticky rice (*lakatan*) or other simple dishes. Others prefer a minimal form, limited to picking up the mushaf, kissing it, and reciting istighfar. A respondent, Saudah (67 years old), explained:

"Cukup dengan mengambil Qur'an, mencium, dan meletakkannya di tempat tinggi, itu sudah tanda hormat. Tapi kalau ada yang ingin menambah doa atau makanan, itu juga boleh." (It is enough to pick up the Qur'an, kiss it, and put it in a high place—that is already considered respect. But if someone wants to add prayers and food, that is also fine.)

This indicates that *bahalarat* exists on a spectrum—from simple, private gestures to more formalized communal events. The choice often depends on the family's resources, social ties, and personal interpretation of what constitutes sufficient respect.

A significant debate arises concerning whether *bahalarat* requires a form of kafarat (atonement) in the form of food distribution. Some community members argue that failing to honor the Qur'an must be compensated with a material offering, sometimes even likening it to zakat in scale. Others reject this interpretation, insisting that the Qur'an and Islamic law do not prescribe such a requirement. For them, istighfar and sincere repentance suffice. A local religious leader clarified:

"Bahalarat itu adat, bukan syariat. Jadi jangan dianggap wajib. Kalau mampu, boleh bikin selamatan besar, tapi kalau tidak, cukup doa dan istighfar. Jangan sampai memberatkan." (Bahalarat is adat, not shari'a. It should not be treated as an obligation. If one has the means, one may provide food, but if not, prayer and forgiveness are enough. It must not become a burden).

This reflects an awareness within the community that *bahalarat* is a cultural expression rather than a binding religious duty, though the symbolic act of food-sharing remains meaningful for many.

Generational differences further complicate the picture. Older members often prefer the formalized ritual, complete with communal meals, while younger people tend to opt for simplified versions. A young respondent explained:

"Sekarang kalau Qur'an jatuh, biasanya langsung diambil, dicium, baca istighfar saja. Kalau harus bikin acara selamatan itu repot. Jadi biasanya cukup doa." (Nowadays, if the Qur'an falls, we just pick it up, kiss it, and recite istighfar. Organizing a selamatan is rare—it's too much trouble. The essence is respect, and we can do that personally).

This highlights a shift from collective, ritualized expressions to individualized, practical gestures. Respect for the Qur'an remains, but its articulation is shaped by modern constraints of time, mobility, and resources.

These variations and debates reveal that *bahalarat* is not a static tradition but a dynamic one, constantly reinterpreted and renegotiated. While some see the simplification of the ritual as a decline, others view it as an adaptation that preserves the core values of reverence and repentance while making the practice more accessible.

From a theoretical perspective, this resonates with Geertz's (1960) notion of religion as a cultural system, where the form of ritual may change but its symbolic meaning persists. It

also aligns with Turner's (1969) insight into ritual as a site of negotiation, where community members reinterpret symbols according to their lived realities. In Durkheimian terms, even simplified forms of *bahalarat* still function to reaffirm the sacredness of the Qur'an and to sustain social cohesion, albeit in less communal ways.

The variations, debates, and generational differences surrounding *bahalarat* illustrate its resilience as a living tradition. Rather than eroding its significance, these dynamics demonstrate the adaptability of Banjar religiosity, where Islamic values are integrated with local culture in ways that remain relevant across changing contexts. Whether elaborate or simple, communal or individual, *bahalarat* continues to reaffirm the Qur'an's sanctity and to provide a cultural framework for moral and social life.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that the core of *Bahalarat* tradition lies in the deep reverence (ta'zhim) toward the Qur'an, where even unintentional acts of mishandling the *mushaf* are perceived as violations of sacred etiquette that must be ritually redressed. The practice functions not only as a religious act but also as a social mechanism, reaffirming both spiritual devotion and communal solidarity. The discussion highlighted five major dimensions of *bahalarat*: reverence for the Qur'an as its central value; continuity and change across generations; the ritual's structure and its role in fostering social cohesion; its moral-ethical functions as a pedagogy of repentance and responsibility; and the variations, debates, and negotiations that demonstrate its dynamic and adaptive character. Taken together, these findings affirm that *bahalarat* is not a static ritual but a living cultural-religious practice that continually integrates Islamic principles with Banjar cultural contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, the study shows how Durkheim's theory of cultural integration and social solidarity remains relevant in explaining the dual function of *bahalarat*: safeguarding the sacredness of scripture and reinforcing collective moral bonds. At the same time, the findings resonate with Geertz's understanding of religion as a cultural system and Azra's notion of cultural accommodation in the Islamization of the archipelago. This research shows that *bahalarat* al-Qur'an represents the resilience of local Islamic traditions in Indonesia. Despite generational shifts and ongoing debates, the tradition continues to embody the values of reverence, repentance, and community solidarity. Its adaptability ensures that the Qur'an's sanctity is preserved not only as doctrine but as lived practice within Banjar society. Future research could extend this study by comparing *bahalarat* with similar practices in other Muslim communities, analyzing its transformation under modern influences such as urbanization and digitalization, or exploring its pedagogical role in greater depth. Such studies would further enrich our understanding of how local traditions sustain, reinterpret, and transmit Islamic values across changing contexts.

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