

The Living Qur'an in the *Mandi Safar* Tradition: Internalizing Qur'anic Values in Air Hitam Laut, Jambi

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Abstract

Over time a dialectic has emerged between tradition and a purer understanding of religion. Some people now view the *mandi safar* tradition not as a fate-determining ritual (avoiding idolatry), but rather as an effort to preserve customs (culture) and a means to strengthen bonds of brotherhood among residents. This article aims to examine the internalization of the Qur'an within the cultural ritual of *mandi safar* and to explore its religious and cultural meanings among the community of Air Hitam Laut Village, Sadu Subdistrict, East Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province. The article employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-interpretative approach within the *Living Qur'an* perspective. Data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews with religious leaders, customary figures, and community members, as well as documentation studies. The findings indicate that the *mandi safar* tradition represents an integration of Qur'anic values and local tradition, symbolically manifested through the use of seven *salamun* verses (QS. Yasin: 58, QS. As-Saffat: 79, QS. As-Saffat: 109, QS. As-Saffat: 120, QS. As-Saffat: 130, QS. Az-Zumar: 73, QS. Al-Qadr: 5) as a medium of worship, supplication for protection (*repelling calamity*), and social cohesion. Beyond its religious significance, the ritual also serves cultural and economic functions, reflecting the dynamic and contextual character of Islamic religiosity in Indonesia.

Community Culture; Living Qur'an; *Mandi Safar* Tradition; Qur'anic Internalization.

Abstrak

Seiring perkembangan zaman terjadi dialektika antara tradisi dan pemahaman agama yang lebih murni. Sebagian masyarakat kini memandang mandi safar bukan lagi sebagai tradisi yang menentukan nasib (menghindari syirik), melainkan sebagai upaya pelestarian adat (budaya) dan sarana untuk mempererat tali persaudaraan antarwarga. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bentuk internalisasi Al-Qur'an dalam ritual budaya mandi safar serta makna religius dan kultural yang berkembang di tengah masyarakat Desa Air Hitam Laut, Kecamatan Sadu, Kabupaten Tanjung Jabung Timur, Provinsi Jambi. Artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-interpretatif dalam perspektif Living Qur'an. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi lapangan, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh agama, adat, dan masyarakat, serta studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi mandi safar merupakan wujud integrasi antara nilai-nilai Al-Qur'an dan tradisi lokal, yang diwujudkan melalui penggunaan simbolik tujuh ayat *salamun* (QS. Yasin: 58, QS. As-Saffat: 79, QS. As-Saffat: 109, QS. As-Saffat: 120, QS. As-Saffat: 130, QS. Az-Zumar: 73, QS. Al-Qadr: 5) sebagai sarana ibadah, permohonan keselamatan (tolak bala), dan penguatan kohesi sosial. Selain bermakna religius, ritual ini juga berfungsi kultural dan ekonomis, serta mencerminkan dinamika keberagaman Islam yang kontekstual di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Masyarakat; Living Qur'an; Tradisi Mandi Safar; Internalisasi Al-Qur'an.

INTRODUCTION

The *mandi safar* tradition is understood by the community as a form of spiritual practice aimed at drawing closer to Allah SWT while seeking protection from various forms of calamities

and misfortunes. This tradition is not incidental but has been carried out regularly every year and has developed into an essential part of the community's religious and cultural identity (Nirwana et al., 2024). Its implementation involves mass participation from diverse social groups, including men and women, the elderly and the young, thereby transforming the ritual into a collective religious event. Beyond its spiritual function, the *mandi safar* tradition is also perceived as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for the blessings of life and safety bestowed upon the community. Historically, this belief is linked to pre-Islamic Arab perceptions that regarded the month of Safar as a time associated with misfortune and the descent of calamities.

The theological and traditional foundation of the *mandi safar* tradition is closely associated with Sufi teachings, particularly those attributed to Shaykh Syarfuiddin in his work *Ta'liqah*. The text explains that on the last Wednesday night of the month of Safar, various forms of affliction are believed to descend upon the earthly realm, prompting believers to engage in spiritual efforts to seek Allah's protection (Ramadhani, 2024). One such practice involves writing seven verses containing the word *salamun* from the Qur'an, which are believed to embody prayers for safety and divine blessing. These verses are drawn from several chapters of the Qur'an, including *Yasin*, *Ash-Shaffat*, *Az-Zumar*, and *Al-Qadr*, symbolically representing aspirations for peace, security, and divine mercy. Similar teachings are also found in other classical Islamic texts that emphasize prayer and symbolic religious practices as means of confronting trials and adversity (Fadzli et al., 2025).

In the local context of Air Hitam Laut Village, Jambi, these teachings are actualized through the Mandi safar tradition conducted on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar and led by a kyai who holds religious authority and social charisma within the community. The ritual is carefully organized through the establishment of a committee to ensure that the procession proceeds in an orderly and solemn manner (Sukriyah, 2024). The seven verses of *salamun* are mentioned in several surahs and verses, namely in QS. Ya Sin: 58, QS. As-Saffat: 79, QS. As-Saffat: 109, QS. As-Saffat: 120, QS. As-Saffat: 130, QS. Az-Zumar: 73, QS. Al-Qadr: 5. In the implementation of the tradition of these seven verses are written on leaves or paper using easily dissolvable ink and then placed into river water or a designated container. This water is subsequently used for bathing with the sole intention of worship and devotion to Allah SWT. The practice is not understood as reverence toward the medium itself, but rather as a symbolic expression of prayer and reliance upon Allah through the sacred verses of the Qur'an.

The community's belief in the use of the seven *salamun* verses reflects a diversity of symbolic interpretations shaped by each individual's social and religious background. The Qur'an is perceived not only as a text for ritual recitation but also as a source of spiritual values believed to provide tranquility and protection in the face of life's challenges (Frahan, 2026). The distinctiveness of the *mandi safar* tradition in Air Hitam Laut Village, Jambi, particularly in its use of written Qur'anic verses and ritual procedures sets it apart from similar traditions practiced in other regions. This phenomenon illustrates the close relationship between religious teachings and the socio-cultural construction of local communities (Najib & Abshor, 2025). The continued preservation of this ritual from year to year demonstrates that the Mandi safar tradition remains relevant, meaningful, and deeply embedded in the collective religious life of the community to this day.

Based on the background of the problem that has been described, this study aims to comprehensively examine the practice of using the Qur'an in the *mandi safar* tradition in Air Hitam

Laut Village as a form of religious expression within the local community. In addition, this research seeks to identify and interpret the meanings attributed by the community to the use of specific Qur'anic verses in the ritual, viewed from spiritual, symbolic, and socio-cultural perspectives. Furthermore, the study endeavors to analyze the relationship between its findings and the broader discourse on religious rituals in Indonesia, thereby contributing theoretical and empirical insights to the study of Islam and local religious traditions.

METHOD

This study is a field-based qualitative research employing a descriptive-analytical approach grounded in Clifford Geertz's symbolic-interpretative framework, complemented by phenomenological and ethnomethodological perspectives (Sugiyono, 2019). These approaches are utilized to explore religious practices as they are experienced and interpreted by the community, rather than merely describing them in normative terms (Sugiyono, 2021). The primary focus of the research is to uncover the symbolic meanings underlying the use of the seven *salamun* verses within the *mandi safar* tradition. The study was conducted in Air Hitam Laut Village, Sadu District, East Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province, an area recognized for its strong Islamic educational institutions, particularly the local pesantren, which plays a central role in shaping the religious and social life of the community. Data collection took place during the month of Safar, coinciding with the ritual held on the last Wednesday of Safar in 2020.

The research subjects consisted of the local community, including religious leaders, community elders, village officials, students of the pesantren, and participants in the ritual. Primary data were obtained through participant and non-participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and in-depth ethnographic interviews, while secondary data were drawn from village archives, documentation, and relevant literature (J. W. Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Documentation in the form of photographs, recordings, and written materials was used to support and validate the field data. Data analysis followed systematic stages of data reduction, data display, and verification or interpretation, linking empirical findings with the theoretical framework employed (J. Creswell, 2017). The final stage of the study involved compiling a research report as an essential academic output, serving both as a form of scholarly accountability and as a means of ensuring the credibility and validity of the research process and its findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Living Qur'an and the Religious Ritual of *Mandi Safar*

The phenomenon of the *Living Qur'an* demonstrates that the Qur'an is not merely positioned as a sacred text to be read and interpreted normatively, but is continuously enlivened through diverse social, cultural, and religious practices within Muslim communities. The ways in which Qur'anic verses are utilized vary widely, ranging from means of healing, protection against misfortune, and sources of inner tranquility, to elements embedded in symbolic and ritual practices. Such diversity in function is closely shaped by the social, cultural, and historical contexts of each community (Kholifah et al., 2025). In this sense, the Qur'an emerges as a living text whose meanings and functions extend beyond linguistic structure into the lived experiences of believers. The *Living Qur'an* perspective therefore departs from the reality of "the Qur'an in everyday life,"

emphasizing how sacred verses are understood, experienced, and contextualized by Muslims in their daily interactions.

Conceptually, the term *Living Qur'an* refers to an academic field that examines social and religious phenomena inspired by the Qur'an, manifested in traditions, rituals, patterns of behavior, and cultural symbols. Scholars argue that *Living Qur'an* studies do not prioritize the Qur'anic text as the primary source of data, but rather focus on social responses to the Qur'an's presence. What is examined is not the textual meaning of the verses themselves, but how these verses are received, interpreted, institutionalized, and practiced within society. In this framework, *Living Qur'an* reflects a dynamic interaction between divine text and human reality, allowing the Qur'an to be perceived as "living" through concrete actions, traditions, and symbolic expressions that develop within Muslim communities.

From a historical perspective, *Living Qur'an* practices can be traced back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. This is evident in practices such as *ruqyah*, the use of specific Qur'anic verses for healing, and the emulation of the Prophet's conduct as the embodiment of the Qur'an itself (Nurwahida, 2025). The companions internalized Qur'anic teachings not only through textual transmission but also through direct empirical experience alongside the Prophet, which they later translated into religious and social practices (Zulfikar, 2025). However, at this early stage, such phenomena had not yet been systematized as a scholarly discipline. The academic study of *Living Qur'an* emerged later, when both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars began to focus on social phenomena arising from Muslims' interactions with the Qur'an, including traditions of recitation, writing, memorization, and the ritual use of selected verses for healing and protection.

In practical terms, *Living Qur'an* illustrates how the Qur'an functions as a comprehensive guide influencing nearly every aspect of human life, including worship, law, economics, health, and culture. One of its most prominent manifestations is the use of Qur'anic verses as instruments of physical and psychological healing, grounded in the belief that the Qur'an possesses *shifa'* (curative power) (Nurhalimah et al., 2024). This practice is supported not only by communal experience but also by Islamic tradition, prophetic traditions, and the historical development of Islamic medicine. Across many Muslim societies, the Qur'an is understood as a source of spiritual solace, emotional therapy, and healing for ailments of the heart and mind, enabling its function to transcend formal ritual and enter deeply personal and communal spheres of life.

Within the context of the *mandi safar* tradition, the *Living Qur'an* is vividly manifested through the use of the seven *salamun* verses as symbolic expressions of prayers for safety and protection from calamity. These verses are not perceived merely as textual entities but as sacred symbols imbued with profound spiritual meaning. This practice illustrates how the Qur'an is integrated into local cultural frameworks while maintaining its religious significance. Through Geertz's (1973) symbolic-interpretative approach, the ritual can be understood as a religious system of symbols that shapes both patterns of thought (*mode of thought*) and patterns of behavior (*mode of conduct*) within the community (Husna, 2024). Consequently, the *mandi safar* tradition represents not only a religious observance but also a form of cultural religiosity, reflecting how the Qur'an genuinely "lives" within the collective consciousness, actions, and traditions of the Air Hitam Laut community across generations.

An Overview of Air Hitam Laut Village and the Religious Tradition of the *Mandi Safar* Tradition

Air Hitam Laut Village is a coastal area located in Sadu Subdistrict, East Tanjung Jabung Regency, with a population of approximately 2,497 people as of the end of 2019, distributed across four hamlets. The population composition is relatively balanced between men and women, with the main livelihoods dominated by fishermen, fishing laborers, farmers, and agricultural laborers, indicating a strong dependence on both marine and terrestrial natural resources. Ethnically, the majority of the population belongs to the Bugis ethnic group, historically known as coastal and seafaring communities, which has shaped a socio-cultural character closely tied to maritime life. The village's geographical conditions, which directly border the sea and a conservation area, further influence settlement patterns, economic structures, and the social solidarity of the community.

From a historical and religious perspective Air Hitam Laut Village developed from a pioneer settlement in the 1960s that initially faced limited accessibility, economic pressures, and a lack of religious education. Social transformation became evident with the establishment of Islamic educational institutions and an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), which played a significant role in shaping the community's religious life and reducing social conflict. Religious practices in the village are expressed not only through formal worship but also through religious traditions such as *Mabbarasanji*, *Suro'macca*, and *mandi safar*, reflecting an acculturation between Islam and local culture. In particular, *mandi safar* has become a collective religious ritual understood as a spiritual endeavor to seek protection from calamities during the month of Safar, while simultaneously strengthening social cohesion and the local community's religious identity.

Religious traditions associated with the month of Safar in Indonesia demonstrate a wide diversity of forms, terminologies, and modes of practice that are strongly shaped by the socio-cultural contexts of each region. These rituals are known by various local names, such as *Mandi Safar*, *Rebo Wekasan*, *Rabu Pungkasan*, and *Rabu Abeh*; however, substantively they share a common purpose, namely as a form of spiritual endeavor (*ikhtiar*) to seek protection from calamities, misfortunes, and misfortune believed to descend during the month of Safar (Syifa, 2026). To date, Safar-related ritual practices are predominantly found and studied within the Indonesian context, while comparable research outside Indonesia remains very limited. The following section presents several forms of Safar rituals practiced across different regions of the Indonesian archipelago, illustrating the dynamic interaction between Islamic teachings, Sufi traditions, and local culture.

1. *Rabu Capuk* (Riau Province)

In North Rupat Island, Bengkalis Regency, Riau the *mandi safar* tradition is known as *Rabu Capuk*, which is symbolically understood as a Wednesday that leaves adverse or negative effects if not approached with spiritual vigilance (Ashsubli, 2018). On this day, local communities observe various prohibitions, such as refraining from fishing, cutting wood, or engaging in heavy labor, as these activities are believed to potentially lead to accidents or misfortunes that are difficult to heal. In the ritual practice, the community writes seven Qur'anic verses beginning with the phrase *salamun*, namely QS. *Yasin* (58), QS. *Asb-Shaffat* (79, 109, 120, 130), QS. *Az-*

Zumar (73), and QS. *Al-Qadr* (5), which are then immersed in water to be used in the bathing procession as a symbol of seeking protection and safety from Allah SWT. This ritual is understood not merely as an individual religious practice but also as a means of strengthening social solidarity and intercommunal brotherhood, marked by collective *dhikr*, cultural processions, the use of blessed water (*wafa*), as well as communal feasting and bathing in the sea as the closing of the ritual sequence.

2. *Rabu Pungkasan* (Lampung Province)

The *Rabu Pungkasan* tradition in Lampung is primarily practiced within Islamic boarding school environments and is understood as a *tolak bala* (repelling misfortune) ritual rooted in Sufi teachings and particular interpretations of the Qur'an (Safitri, 2020). Supporters of this tradition refer to Allah's word in QS. *Al-Qamar* [54]:19, which mentions the descent of a violent wind on a "day of continuous calamity," interpreted as the day when afflictions descend on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar. The ritual is performed through *salat tolak bala*, the recitation of Surah *Yasin*, and the repetition of the verse *salamun* 313 times as a symbolic plea for protection and spiritual victory. This tradition illustrates how Sufi-oriented interpretations of Qur'anic verses shape protective religious practices centered on hope and reliance upon Allah SWT.

3. *Rabu Abeh/Tolak Balak* (Aceh Province)

The *Rabu Abeh* tradition in Aceh is a cultural practice that predates Islam and later underwent a process of Islamization through the integration of Islamic values. This ritual is carried out on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar and is understood as a collective effort to ward off calamities, diseases, and natural disturbances believed to intensify during this month (Yusuf et al., 2023). The ritual procession concludes with communal prayers to Allah SWT and *mandi safar* in the sea, which is believed to cleanse individuals from illness and misfortune. In recent developments, elements considered incompatible with Islamic monotheism have gradually been abandoned, while the recitation of prayers and Qur'anic verses has become increasingly emphasized as the core of the ritual.

4. *Arba' Mustakmir* (South Kalimantan Province)

In South Kalimantan Province, Safar-related practices are known as *Arba' Mustakmir*, emphasizing religious tradition rather than magical ritualism. The Banjar community understands that the Qur'anic verses recited in this ritual are not the source of safety themselves but serve as *wasilah* (means) to seek protection from Allah SWT (Urokhmat, 2024). Common devotional practices include the recitation of the *shahadat*, *istighfar*, QS. *Al-Baqarah* [2]:255 (*Ayat al-Kursi*), and QS. *Al-Fil* recited seven times. In certain communities, the supplication of Prophet Yunus from QS. *Al-Anbiya'* [21]:87 is additionally recited 2,375 times, believed to grant protection just as Allah saved Prophet Yunus from the belly of the whale.

5. *Mandi Safar* (Sulawesi Province)

In Sulawesi Province, particularly in Momo Village, the *mandi safar* tradition has been transmitted across generations and is believed to originate from the teachings of a Makassarese Islamic scholar (Ramadiputra, 2019). The ritual begins with the writing of six *salamun* verses, namely QS. *Yasin* (58), QS. *Asb-Shaffat* (79, 109, 120, 130), and QS. *Al-Qadr* (5), which are then

immersed in water to be used as the bathing medium. During the thanksgiving phase, QS. *Al-Ikhlâs*, *Al-Falaq*, *An-Nas*, *Al-Fatihah*, and selected verses from QS. *Al-Baqarah* are recited. This tradition reflects the community's belief that the month of Safar carries potential misfortune, thus necessitating sincere spiritual effort and supplication to Allah SWT.

6. *Rebo Wekasan* (Kudus, Central Java Province)

The *Rebo Wekasan* tradition in Kudus is deeply rooted in the history of Islamic propagation and is centered at the Wali Al-Makmur Mosque (Dzofir, 2017). The ritual sequence includes the complete recitation of the Qur'an (*kebataman al-Qur'an*), the *banyu salamun* procession, and collective prayers led by local ulama. The *banyu salamun* water distributed to the community is believed to acquire blessings after prayers and Qur'anic recitations, particularly QS. *Yasin* (58) and other *salamun* verses. This tradition serves as a symbol of gratitude, hope for protection, and a tangible manifestation of the Living Qur'an within Javanese cultural space.

7. *Rebo Wekasan* (Jember, East Java Province)

In Jember, the *Rebo Wekasan* tradition developed from two main sources: local ancestral practices and pesantren-based rituals referencing classical Islamic texts (Wusko, 2022). Qur'anic verses used in this ritual include QS. *Al-Kawthar*, *Al-Ikhlâs*, *Al-Falaq*, and *An-Nas* during *salat tolak bala*, as well as QS. *Yasin* (58), QS. *Ash-Shaffat* (79-80), QS. *Ar-Ra'd* (24), and QS. *Al-Qadr* (5) for the preparation of water amulets. The water infused with these verses is then consumed as a symbolic means of protection from calamity. This practice is understood as an ancestral heritage that carries both religious and symbolic significance.

8. *Rebo Kasan* (Garut, West Java Province)

The *Rebo Kasan* tradition in Garut is conducted through a structured series of ritual stages, beginning with the preparation of water and food to be blessed at the mosque (Makmunzir, 2023). The core ritual consists of a two-unit *salat tolak bala* with recitations of QS. *Al-Fatihah*, QS. *Al-Kawthar* repeated fifteen times, QS. *Al-Ikhlâs*, *Al-Falaq*, and *An-Nas*. This is followed by prayers, *tawassul*, and the sending of blessings upon the Prophet as a plea for safety and well-being from Allah SWT. The tradition functions as both a medium for religious education and a means of strengthening social solidarity within the community.

9. *Rebo Kasan* (Banten, West Java Province)

In Banten, the *Rebo Kasan* ritual is led by religious figures and carried out collectively through community deliberation (Urokhmat, 2024). The ritual involves the writing of talismanic scripts (*rajab*) and seven *salamun* verses, namely QS. *Yasin* (58), QS. *Ash-Shaffat* (79, 109, 120, 130), QS. *Az-Zumar* (73), and QS. *Al-Qadr* (5). Following the communal bathing procession, the ritual continues with congregational *salat tolak bala* and the recitation of QS. *Yasin* and *Al-Mu'annidhat*. The entire ritual sequence is understood as a spiritual endeavor aimed at attaining protection in life and strengthening social cohesion.

10. *Rebo Wekasan / Saparan* (Cirebon, West Java Province)

The *Rebo Wekasan* tradition in Cirebon is practiced within pesantren settings and is believed to be an ancestral legacy that must be preserved (Nurjannah, 2017). The ritual begins with acts of charity, followed by a four-unit *salat tolak bala* and the recitation of QS. *Al-Kawthar*

seventeen times, QS. *Al-Ikhlās* five times, QS. *Al-Falaq*, and QS. *An-Nas*. The safety verses written on palm leaves or paper consist of seven *salamun* verses, namely QS. *Yasin* (58), QS. *Asb-Shaffat* (79, 109, 120, 130), QS. *Az-Zumar* (73), and QS. *Al-Qadr* (5), written according to strict and sacralized procedures. This tradition affirms *Rebo Wekasan* as a form of the Living Qur'an that integrates ritual discipline, spiritual ethics, and local wisdom.

The tradition of Mandi Safar, practiced collectively across various regions in Indonesia such as Jambi, Riau, and Maluku represents a form of religious expression that integrates Islamic theology with local cosmology within the framework of the *tolak bala* (*daf' al-bala'*) ritual. From an academic perspective, this tradition is interpreted as a mechanism for the 'purification of space and time,' utilizing sacred symbols such as the inscription of the seven *salamun* verses on leaves to neutralize collective anxiety regarding the misfortunes believed to descend during the month of Safar. Within the dynamics of a multicultural society, the ritual has transformed from a mere mystical practice into an instrument of social cohesion that fosters communal values (*ukhawah wathaniyah*) and local cultural identities adaptive to modernity. Although normative discourses regarding its legal originality within Islam persist, the existence of *mandi safar* remains a robust intangible cultural heritage that integrates aspects of religiosity, aesthetic value, and educational functions for the younger generation amidst the current of globalization.

The Calamity-Repelling in the Mandi Safar Tradition in Air Hitam Laut Village

Human beings are cultural creatures who possess the ability to create ideas, meanings, and symbolic practices that later develop into cultural activities and traditions. At the same time, humans are also deeply shaped and influenced by the cultural environment that surrounds them, including shared values, norms, and collective beliefs (Gading, 2025). As social beings, humans continuously strive to adjust themselves to others in order to maintain social harmony, security, and emotional stability within their communities. This reciprocal relationship between humans and culture illustrates that culture is not merely a product of human creativity, but also a powerful structure that governs social behavior and shapes collective identity across generations.

From an anthropological perspective, religion is understood as a cultural system consisting of beliefs, symbols, and ritual actions that are collectively constructed and practiced by a community. Religion functions as a framework through which societies interpret the sacred, respond to metaphysical uncertainties, and organize their spiritual experiences. Religious teachings are not only accepted as abstract doctrines but are actively interpreted and embodied through daily practices, rituals, and traditions (Ahasdiandra, 2026). Consequently, religious life is inseparable from cultural expressions, as religious meanings are continuously negotiated and contextualized within specific social and historical settings.

Traditional rituals continue to exist and endure because they fulfill important social and spiritual functions for the communities that uphold them. Rituals reinforce shared values, strengthen social cohesion, and provide psychological reassurance in the face of uncertainty, misfortune, or perceived threats (Khotim, 2024). In the context of the *mandi safar* tradition, the use of Qur'anic verses reflects the community's understanding of the Qur'an as a source of spiritual healing and divine guidance, rather than as a magical object. This perception aligns with the broader Islamic view of the Qur'an as guidance and mercy for believers, as emphasized in Surah Yunus (10:57):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

“O mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers.” (Q.S. Yunus: 57)

Contemporary interpretations of Surah Yunus, verse 57, position the Qur'an as a manifestation of holistic therapy that integrates educational, psychological, and sociological dimensions to address existential crises in the modern era (Sukandar et al., 2024). This transformation begins with the mau'izhah phase, understood as the reconstruction of moral literacy amidst information disruption. It then progresses to the shifa' function, serving as a religious psychotherapeutic instrument clinically capable of reducing anxiety and spiritual emptiness through the stabilization of affect and cognition.

Methodologically, the use of the universal invocation “*ya ayyuhan-nas*” (O mankind) underscores the inclusivity of the Qur'anic message, which transcends theological boundaries. In this context, the functions of *buda* (guidance) and *rahmah* (mercy) are projected as ethical navigation compasses for establishing a just and harmonious social order. Consequently, this verse is no longer viewed merely as a dogmatic text, but as a functional paradigm offering solutions to mental pathologies and social decadence within contemporary society.

Which underscores the Qur'an's role in nurturing inner well-being and spiritual clarity. The practice of *mandi safar* in Air Hitam Laut Village illustrates how religious symbols are preserved and transmitted through collective participation and shared interpretation. The ritual is performed consciously, with the intention of supplication (*doa*) and reliance upon Allah, rather than belief in the ritual itself as an independent source of power. This theological understanding resonates with the message conveyed in Surah Al-Isra (17:82):

وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٨٢﴾

“And We reveal through the Qur'an that which serves as a shifa' (healing/ remedy) and a mercy for those who have faith; however, for the unjust, it only serves to increase their spiritual and moral ruin.” (Q.S. Al-Isra: 82)

Which highlights the Qur'an as a means of healing and mercy for believers. Within this framework, *mandi safar* is perceived not as a compulsory religious obligation, but as a form of spiritual effort (*ikhtiar*) embedded in local tradition. Overall, the persistence of the *mandi safar* ritual reflects the community's attempt to harmonize religious faith, cultural heritage, and social solidarity. The ritual serves as a medium for expressing collective hope, reinforcing communal bonds, and maintaining continuity between past and present generations. Rather than standing in opposition to Islamic teachings, the tradition is understood by its practitioners as a culturally mediated expression of devotion and trust in Allah. In this sense, *mandi safar* represents a living form of religious practice, where sacred texts, local culture, and social life intersect in a dynamic and meaningful way.

Internalization of the Living Qur'an in the Mandi Safar Tradition in Air Hitam Laut Village, Jambi

The implementation of the *mandi safar* ritual in Air Hitam Laut Village has multilayered objectives and cannot be understood merely as a ritual practice, but rather as a socio-religious

action rich in meaning. Fundamentally, this ritual functions as a medium of cultural da'wah and as a means of strengthening social bonds among community members, both within the village and with people from outside the area (Mustajab & Septiara, 2025). Based on interview data, a local religious leader emphasized that from its inception, this ritual was never intended to be a mandatory religious injunction, but rather a culturally grounded form of da'wah. He stated, *"This ritual is not part of Islamic law, but a tradition. Its purpose is not to instill fear, but to invite people to pray together and strengthen one another so that social harmony is maintained"* (Interview: KH. Arsyad, 20 October 2020). This statement illustrates that *mandi safar* serves as a space for symbolic da'wah, where Islamic values are transmitted through togetherness, collective prayer, and social example rather than rigid normative instruction.



Figure 1. Eight young men carrying the tower

Within the framework of da'wah, the *mandi safar* ritual operates as a persuasive and communal channel for conveying Islamic teachings (Lubis et al., 2022). Da'wah is manifested through Qur'anic recitations, collective supplications, and reflection upon verses emphasizing peace and divine protection, such as *Surah Yasin (36): 58*. A descendant of the ritual's initiator explained, *"Through Mandi Safar, we want to show that Islam is peaceful and gentle. People do not come only to bathe, but to pray and gather together"* (Interview: Nur Komaria Sitte, 26 October 2020). This confirms that the ritual functions as a form of social da'wah, presenting Islam as an inclusive, harmonious religion capable of dialoguing with local culture without losing its doctrinal essence.

Beyond da'wah, the strengthening of *silaturahmi* (social and kinship ties) is a central objective of the *mandi safar* tradition. The community understands this event as an important moment for reunion and social interaction, in line with the Qur'anic emphasis on maintaining kinship as found in *Surah An-Nisa (4): 1* and *Surah Al-Anfal (8): 75*. One villager explicitly stated, *"Mandi Safar is not only about ritual; it is about meeting one another, greeting each other, and renewing relationships. Many families who rarely meet are able to gather again"* (Interview: Nur Hidayah, 10 November 2020). Social interaction during this ritual extends beyond the village itself, reaching neighboring districts and even visitors from outside the region, making the ritual an effective mechanism for reinforcing social cohesion within a plural society.

Another significant objective of the *mandi safar* ritual is community economic empowerment. Its implementation creates opportunities for economic activities, including small-scale trading,

boat transportation services, and the development of cultural tourism. A village official explained, “Every time Mandi Safar is held, small traders benefit. Boat transportation becomes busy, and this helps improve the villagers’ income” (Interview: Awaluddin, 10 November 2020). Thus, the ritual not only holds religious meaning but also contributes to strengthening the local economy by mobilizing social and cultural capital.

From the perspective of internalizing Qur’anic verses, the *Mandi Safar* ritual demonstrates how sacred texts are actively lived and practiced within social life. Verses containing the word *salāmun* are intentionally selected because they symbolize prayers for peace, safety, and divine protection, as exemplified in *Surah Ash-Shaffat* (37): 79. A religious figure clarified, “The verses used are not talismans; they are prayers. The word ‘salāmun’ represents hope for safety, not mystical belief” (Interview: KH. Arsyad, 20 October 2020). This explanation highlights that the Qur’anic verses function as spiritual intermediaries (*wasilah*), not as magical objects, thereby remaining within the theological framework of Islam.

For the general community, the Qur’anic verses used in the ritual are perceived as a form of *ikhtiar* (spiritual effort) and collective supplication. One resident expressed, “We do not know when calamities may occur, but there is nothing wrong with praying and making an effort. These verses strengthen our hearts” (Interview: Awaluddin, 10 November 2020). This interpretation aligns with Islamic teachings on optimism and trust in God, as reflected in *Surah Al-Baqarah* (2): 216, which emphasizes that what appears harmful may contain hidden goodness. In this sense, *Mandi Safar* becomes a means of internalizing values of hope, resilience, and *tawakkal* within the community.

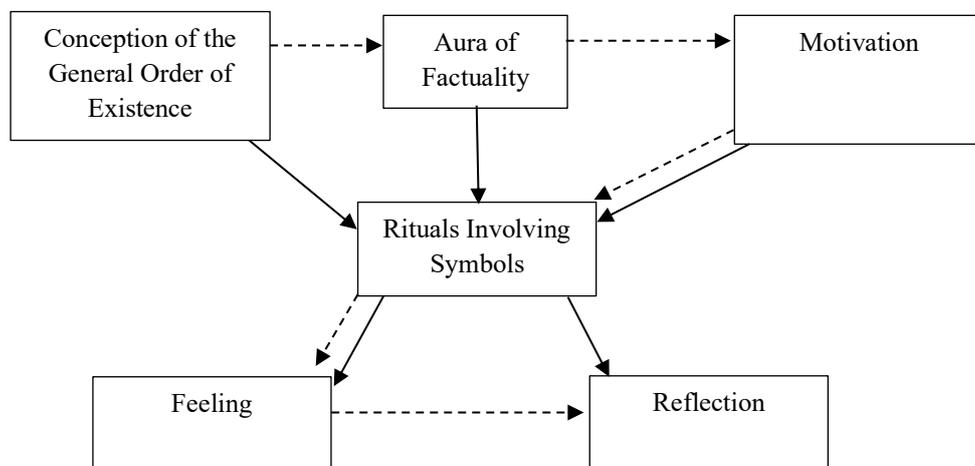


Figure 2. Symbolic Process of Religious Ritual Formation and Meaning-Making

In the fields of sociology and the anthropology of religion, the Symbolic Process of Religious Ritual refers to the mechanism by which humans employ symbols, actions, and physical objects to communicate profound spiritual meanings (Mubayanah & Amin, 2024). Within this framework, the relationship between the Mandi Safar tradition and the symbolic process can be elucidated through Clifford Geertz’s theoretical perspective, which posits that religion is a system of symbols that acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence (Hidayat & Saputra, 2025).

The findings of this study affirm that religious ritual practices in Indonesia, including the Mandi Safar Ritual in Air Hitam Laut Village, cannot be separated from the role of religious

symbols particularly Qur'anic verses in shaping the meaning and lived experience of religiosity within the community. From the perspective of interpretive anthropology, human beings are understood as *animal symbolicum*, namely creatures who live, think, and interact through symbols. Qur'anic verses in this case, the seven verses beginning with the word *salamun* are not perceived merely as normative texts, but also as symbols whose meanings are constructed through social processes, language, and religion. Through these symbols, the community builds social relationships, reinforces collective identity, and organizes its cultural and religious life. This process of meaning-making is cultural rather than universal and is strongly influenced by local contexts, which explains why religious ritual practices manifest in diverse forms despite originating from the same sacred text.

These findings further indicate that worship (*ibadah*) and ritual constitute two interrelated and inseparable entities in the religious life of Indonesian Muslims. Rituals function as symbolic media that reflect spiritual values, gratitude, submission, and hope toward God, as emphasized by ritual theorists who argue that ritual practices tend to endure and resist change because they serve to preserve continuity of meaning and religious identity. In the context of Mandi Safar, the use of Qur'anic verses as symbols for warding off calamity and seeking protection demonstrates patterns similar to Safar rituals in various other regions of Indonesia, although they are expressed through different customs and procedural forms in accordance with local wisdom. Nevertheless, this study also underscores the importance of critical awareness to ensure that religious ritual practices remain within the framework of Islamic values, avoid syncretism that may obscure doctrinal purity, and at the same time remain open to dialogue between religion, culture, and the ever-evolving dynamics of social life throughout history.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the function of the Qur'an in the *mandi safar* tradition practiced by the community of Air Hitam Laut Village, this study concludes that the ritual represents a deep internalization of ancestral traditions through the integration of cultural customs and religious values within an annual communal ceremony. The use of seven Qur'anic verses beginning with *salamun* namely verses from Surah Yasin, As-Saffat, Az-Zumar, and Al-Qadr, symbolizes both devotional practice and a cultural medium for seeking protection from misfortune, reflecting the community's coastal context and collective worldview. Religiously, these verses function as acts of worship and as *wasilah* for supplicating divine safety, while culturally they embody a shared mechanism of *tolak bala* that aligns Air Hitam Laut with similar Safar rituals found across Indonesia, albeit expressed through locally specific forms, symbols, and procedures. The *mandi safar* tradition in Air Hitam Laut also extends beyond spiritual and social dimensions by fostering interreligious tolerance, strengthening social bonds, and contributing to the local economy, thus positioning the ritual not only as a living expression of the Qur'an but also as a potential foundation for cultural tourism and community-based development initiatives.

DECLARATION OF USING AI

The Authors used CHATGPT to improve language and readability. The Authors reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content.

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