

THE TRADITION OF KHATAM QUR'AN AT THE GRAVE OF THE PADANG BOLAK COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the culture of khatam Qur'an at the grave that are preserved by the Padang Bolak people. The study was conducted using an ethnographic approach by directly observing and participating in khatam activities. The results of this study analyze the background of the growth of the khatam tradition in relation to the entry of Islam into the Padang Bolak area, the doctrine of tariqat/suluk being the most important in this section. The khatam process at the grave is usually carried out based on the parents' will for those left behind or at the initiation of the family who feels responsible. Although it is not considered fardhu kifayah, khatam Qur'an at the grave is voluntary in nature as well as a standard of value for the community in the form of devotion to parents. Another conspicuous concern in the procession lies in the accommodation and service which erodes the financial loss of the who got calamity.

Keywords: Khatam Qur'an tradition; local tradition; Padang Bolak.

INTRODUCTION

Allah swt., sent down the Qur'an as *hudan linnas* (guidelines of life for humans), with the intention that humans come out of darkness into brightness (Shihab, 2007). In it there are more than six thousand six hundred verses and collected in 114 surahs which were revealed gradually and gradually over a period of approximately twenty-three years. A Muslim is encouraged to always believe that the Qur'an is a revelation from Allah and is encouraged to interact intensely with the Qur'an either by reading, interpreting, interpreting or finalizing it (Denffer, 2011).

Completing the Qur'an is a process of reading the Qur'an together, either by distributing 1 or 10 *juz* for each person, or other similar distributions. Or through the method of letting one person read and the other person listening alternately and carried out continuously until the end (Syafi'i, 1996). This Qur'an reading activity starts from the beginning of the Qur'an, Surah Al-Fatihah to Surah Al-Naas with a total of 114 surahs read. The implementation that is often done is by reading sequentially, starting from 1 *juz* to 30 *juz*, or by reading simultaneously, which is distributing 30 *juz* according to the number of participants who will carry out *khatam* (Budimansyah, Indonesia, Sauri, & Indonesia, 2017).

Reading the Qur'an fully has long been a classical Muslim tradition, especially if it is traced from the *manaqib* of the scholars. They are not only completed the Qur'an in the form of reading but also created it because at the same time a related tradition grew, namely memorizing the Qur'an (Bizawie, 2015). The memorizers of the Qur'an are certainly more flexible in completing the Qur'an, regardless of time and place, they also do not need manuscripts. Several figures can be mentioned about this school of thought, imams of hadith, and commentators.

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There are many hadiths that explain the virtues of reading the Qur'an. The procedure for its implementation can be done in congregation or read individually. The activity of completing the Qur'an is also carried out in the month of Ramadan, which is carried out together, where everyone will take turns and listen to each other starting from one *juz* on the first night of Ramadan to 30 *juz* at the end of Ramadan. This activity is also usually carried out on Friday nights, namely by reading 5 *juz* every day, so that every Friday night you will complete the Qur'an (Schielke, [2009](#)).

The people's desire to *khatam* the Qur'an gave rise to a special tradition. The traditions carried out by the community usually have historical reasons, philosophical meanings and sociological benefits and have a spiritual basis that encourage everyone to obey the social order system. Tradition is considered to be able to provide motivation and positive values that will encourage people to always believe in and maintain it (Amin, [2002](#)).

One of the traditions of completing the Qur'an carried out by the Padang Bolak community is the Angkola Batak ethnic sub-ethnic, especially those who live in North Padang Lawas Regency and parts of Padang Lawas Regency, that is completing the Qur'an at the grave of the recently deceased. In its implementation, the *khatam* tradition is carried out by reading the Qur'an continuously for three days and three nights without any reading breaks. That is, each verse must be read without interruption (Nasution, Ritonga, Ikbal, & Siregar, [2021](#)).

The tradition of completing the Qur'an for corpses at the grave has become a habit and has become a necessity for some people. This tradition is quite attached which is not only in the regional scope, but the same practice is also still preserved even though there are already different community structures, such as moving places of residence outside the area or city. There are several factors that make this tradition continue to survive until now, including because there is a will from the corpse, there are propositions that underlie this *khatam* tradition, the *khatam* tradition is considered as an effort to help corpses at the grave, and there is a role for scholars in its preservation, especially *tariqat* scholars (Hasibuan & Faza, [2022](#)).

The closest instructions in realizing this tradition are addressed to the corpse's biological child. With an ingrained tradition, in turn without any pretensions if someone dies, their biological child will take the initiative to complete the Qur'an. In its implementation, it may be directly projected within the family environment, but in many practices of the *khatam* Qur'an tradition among the people of the Padang Bolak are more familiar with the system of using services, they are generally from among students who are considered more credible in reading the Qur'an.

The existence of a will from the corpse, the desire to serve one's parents as well as respect for cultural values and traditions that have been considered as part of the teachings of the Islamic religion, are allegedly the factors that make this tradition still carried out. The purpose of finishing the Qur'an is one of the implementations of doctrine and spirit in religion. The people of Padang Bolak have a strong belief that abandoned humans can provide benefits for those who have died through religious practices in the name of the corpse.

In addition, the *khatam* tradition can help the corpse in dealing with the questions of the angels and with the presence of the Qur'an readers, it is hoped that the corpse will feel confident in answering the questions from the angels. In addition, the scholars in North Padang Lawas also consider this *khatam* tradition to have been carried out by the companions of the Prophet, this teaching has developed in the period until this modern century.

Communities in this area have a wealth of traditions and culture that are still maintained and continue to be preserved. The interaction between Islamic teachings and customs doesn't experience conflict and is often compromised, in accordance with the philosophy adopted by the community which reads "*Hombardo Adat Dohot Ugamo*" which means customary rules and religious teachings coexist. As one of the areas where the majority of the population adheres to Islam, the teachings of Islam greatly affect all aspects of people's lives (Natal, 2019).

The phenomenon of *khatam Qur'an* at the grave in this area is unique and distinctive because the extremism shown is quite radical. This form is seen because the perception that has been built has taken root and is considered an obligation for the family of the deceased. This *khatam* also costs a lot of money and must be fulfilled even if it is obtained by way of debt. In addition, the timing of the *khatam* requires that must be carried out immediately before the last 7 footsteps of the people who delivered the body left the burial area. *Khatam* is also a form of acculturation between culture and religion. This shows that this culture is not only based on geological boundaries but is rooted in the form of traditional heritage that transcends geographical areas. This research is intended to reflect on cultural teachings in cross-marriage of religious values. This condition is quite relevant in the study of cultural defense during erosion due to westernization attacks that offer a new culture.

RESEARCH METHOD

In accordance with the elements of this research which aims to trace the implementation of the *khatam Qur'an* at the graves of the Padang Bolak community, this study puts forward an ethnographic approach that focuses on ongoing cultural studies. The data search was carried out using the observatory participant concept where researchers directly interacted with community members and the *khatam Qur'an* people, this was to find out the implementation motive of the *khatam Qur'an*. In addition, researchers participate in *khatam* activities as a form of in-depth investigation of the practices carried out. The primary source of this research comes from local people who are domiciled in North Padang Lawas consisting of traditional officials, curia, and other layers of society. Other sources such as expert research and reference books are still possible in the context of the same study to find a comparison of values in each cultural marginalization applied by the people of the Padang Bolak community.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islam and the Padang Bolak Community

Historical data states that Islam entered the Archipelago Region around the VII century, but orientalist estimate the XII century as proposed by Snouck Hurgronje.

According to Islamic archaeologists, the east coast of North Sumatra has been visited by Arab merchants who also brought Islam in the first century Hijri. The continuous influence of Islam has colored all aspects of the life of the Batak people in this area (Candrasasmita, [1985](#)).

According to experts, Samudera Pasai was the first kingdom to accept Islam in Indonesia. The people of the archipelago are interested in the noble values contained in Islamic teaching and along with that many communities are interested in learning and adhering to the religion adopted by these traders. It is recorded in history that the first community to become acquainted with Islamic teachings was the Barus community in the Central Tapanuli area. This is related to the Barus as a producer of camphor and Frankincense (Hall, [2001](#)). These two types of crops have been traded to the Chinese, Indians, and Middle Easterners since the 7th century. Middle Eastern traders are all Muslims who contact their trading partners, especially resin workers, most of whom come from the Batak group. With these contacts there was an early Islamization of a handful of Batak people and further marriages between Arab traders, residents, and resin workers. Through this marriage, a new generation of Muslim families was born around the city of Barus. This is suspected to be the first possibility of the Batak people knowing Islam (Gultom, [2010](#)).

In 1818 Padri troops (Bonjol) came to invade from Minangkabau to Batak Land with the aim of spreading Islam. At that time, the hard-lined sect of Islam from the Hanbali school was in power in Minangkabau under the leadership of Tuanku Nan Renceh (Sibarani, [1980](#)). The arrival of the Padri soldiers is the third wave in the history of Islamic broadcasting in the Batak Land. They came from West Sumatra to enter the Tanah Batak area to carry the mission of Islam through conquest or war. Such a step was taken considering that the Batak people at that time had difficulty accepting Islam in a peaceful manner. This is evident where the Batak tribe for 400 years has continued to reject Islam. Meanwhile, people who live far from the mountains of Bukit Barisan or who sit on the beach have accepted Islam in peace (Parlindungan, [1964](#)).

The arrival of the Padri soldiers to the Batak lands was led by Tuanku Rao, a Bonjol warlord. Before arriving in the Batak area, the Padri troops first unoccupied the Padang Lawas area, South Tapanuli and at the same time carried out Islamization of the people who lived there. However, it should be noted that the area had previously been converted to Islam by a group of people who came from the Malacca sultanate in 1451. This can be seen from the existence of the sultanate of Kota Pinang which is quite close from these two areas. In the attack, the plan was to bring Sisingamangaraja X alive to Minangkabau with the intention that he would be Islamized there and at the same time precede the Acehese plan to Islamize him. They thought that it was an impossibility that the Toba and Silindung Batak areas would be successfully converted to Islam without having Sisingamangaraja X first converted to Islam (Zainal, [2014](#)).

War broke out in 1818 between Sisingamangaraja X's troops and the Padri troops led by Tuanku Rao. In the end, Sisingamangaraja X's troops were defeated and Sisingamangaraja X himself died in the battle (Aizid, [2016](#)). The war mission which was originally intended to spread Islam to the Batak Land, especially Toba and Silindung, turned out to be ineffective and had no effect on the hearts of the Batak people. The

proof is that Islam in the area is not so popular as a tradition until one time Batak missionaries came to bring Christianity to the Batak Land.

Unlike their cousins in the north, the people of Padang Bolak have known Islam first, this is proven by the proximity of this area to the sultanate of Kota Pinang in South Labuhan Batu and Islam to this area was brought by a different figure, Tuanku Tambusai, through a different route, namely through Sibuhuan Padang Lawas and spread in a gentler way. The Batak people who live in the Padang Lawas area embraced Islam peacefully and massively, including in this case the Padang Bolak community, this is illustrated by the motto of the people of this area which reads *Hombardo Adat Dohot Ugamo*, religion and custom stand side by side.

The starting history of this tradition is inseparable from the role of the ulama who spread Islamic teachings, especially the Tariqat Naqsyabandiyah in the Padang Bolak area. According to the leadership of the Balangka Islamic Boarding School, the beginning of the emergence of the tradition of completing the Qur'an in the cemetery is also part of the practice of Islamic teachings, especially Sufism, which is combined with community culture. The figure who introduced this tradition was Sheikh Ahmad Daud, a charismatic cleric who is also a figure of Tariqat Naqsyabandiyah in Southern Tapanuli. Sheikh Ahmad Daud also pioneered the forerunner to the establishment of several Islamic boarding schools in North Padang by establishing the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in 1920 AD (Nasution, [2017](#)).

This Islamic boarding school is the center of education for the scholars in this region. And became the first center of Islamic Religious Education in the North Padang Lawas area. The alumni of this educational institution will be sent to Padang Panjang to deepen the teachings of Islam, especially in the field of Sufism and will eventually be given permission to establish Islamic boarding school by own. Most of the boarding school that are here were built still on the recommendation of this sheikh and the spread of this *khatam* tradition here is usually called reading Qur'an at the grave, brought by his students, because most of the scholars in this back-and-forth field are students of Sheikh Ahmad Daud. And then several new Islamic boarding schools were established which also taught *tariqat* to students who came from among the parents. A special feature of the boarding school in North Padang Lawas is the existence of a special institution for the elderly.

Historical Tradition of *Khatam Qur'an* in Padang Bolak Community

Completing the Qur'an at the grave in the Padang Bolak community is different from most other communities who hold Qur'an recitations at the grave as well as the procedures and terms used are different, but the purpose and intent of this is the same. The length of time for the completion of the Qur'an also varies from one day and one night, three days and three nights and a maximum of seven days and seven nights. This activity is carried out to maintain the traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation by the community. There are several factors behind the people of Padang Bolak carrying out the tradition of completing the Qur'an on the grave, such as the presence of a will from the corpse, an understanding of Hadith, a sense of wanting to help the dead and the role of the clergy. There are also those who believe that by reciting the Qur'an after burial can make the corpse at the grave feel calm, all these

things are a form of human endeavor to Allah to forgive the sins of their deceased family. In fact, completing the Qur'an on the grave by some people of Padang Bolak is also intended to make the corpse easier and more calm when answering the angel's questions and to avoid the grave punishment (Chairullah, [2019](#)).

Because of the Will from the Corpse

The will is not a new thing in the social formulation of mankind. Wills exist in various ethnic groups, religions, races, and regions (Nugraheni, Ilhami, & Harahab, [2010](#)). The context that is built is to give messages to those left behind, sometimes it is material, requests, consensus, matchmaking, and religion is no exception. The will tradition which is generally attached to humans is in turn also reflected in the people of the back and forth. In old age, one of the messages that parents almost never leave to their children in the Padang Bolak community is not to forget to carry out the *khatam* of the Qur'an at his grave when he has died.

This phenomenon is based on two things, first, because the people of the Padang Bolak community are the majority Muslim; second, fostering high religious awareness of the sacredness the Qur'an as a source of value that can be transmitted in the form of acts of worship; third, the teachings of *tariqat* that have developed in the Padang Bolak in detail instruct this implementation as an alternative in helping the dead; Fourth, the practice that has developed from time to time has in turn formed a tradition that is sufficient to teach the people of Padang Bolak.

The Support of Theorem

People who have died means that they have completed their processes and activities in the world. Islamic teachings say that humans do not have any ability to continue their deeds when they die. At the same time, Islam then provides an opportunity for the living to still be able to transfer additional records of good deeds for the deceased. One of the value doctrines is taken from the "prayer of a pious child". In addition, the teachings of *tariqat* in the people of Padang Bolak strengthen the above argument with another hadith which states that the deceased still listens to the footsteps of every human who crosses the grave. This doctrine is quite alive in the community so that it is used as a basis for *qathi's* argument in carrying out the completion of the Qur'an at the grave.

Helping the Corpse

One of the characteristics of the Padang Bolak community is respecting parents/lineage by placing them in the highest position. It accumulates in the clan system and the interrelated structural structure of society. This kinship is stronger if you have a bloodline, whose relationship by one clan only can be so close as your own brother. The pinnacle of this structure lies in the parents. The award is not only when he is still alive, but also when he is dead, his parents are still a subject of attention and consideration in the social practice of the Padang Bolak community. The advice of parents becomes a standard and a source of values that continues to live in the community (Siregar, [2021](#)).

The offer of Islam in the concept of trans-functioning charity towards death becomes a value standard that is quite pleasing during the cultural values of the people of Padang Bolak. Cultural doctrines on the sacredness of ancestors are accommodated in Islamic law for then confidently help the corpse in facing a new life. This practice also later became the concept of "filial piety" if there is a generation that is limited in time to do it while the parents are still alive.

Ulama's Doctrine

Tariqat that grew up in the Padang Bolak community had a basic role in the practice of *khatam*, the Qur'an at the grave. The initial form can be seen from the high interest of elderly parents to take part in the *suluk* program in nursing homes which are scattered in almost all Islamic boarding schools in Padang Bolak. One of the instilled doctrines is how to continue to obtain good deeds even though they are at the grave, among the most effective of these offers is to offer the reading of the Qur'an to the dead through the completion of the Qur'an.

The Procession of the Khatam Qur'an Tradition on the Grave

Khatam Preparation

Initially there will be a consultation with the bereaved family regarding the implementation of *khatam*, especially if the person concerned has a will to hold a *khatam* before he dies. In the deliberation, the technical *khatam* will be discussed starting from who the implementing officers are, how much is the budget, and how many days the *khatam* will be carried out.

This modern, the general agreement that appears is to take the services of religious leaders with credible communities, in this case the *santri*. The family will establish a contractual relationship with the *kyai* to then arrange the technical implementation, starting from the day, the number of students, and it is also possible to negotiate regarding the financial capabilities of the maid expert. Financial matters are quite urgent in the procession of completing the Qur'an because the implementation will be intense, especially in terms of the required accommodation.

The determination of the day in which the Qur'an is finished on the grave usually considers the presence of Friday which requires humans to pray in congregation in the mosque which also means having to leave the grave location. While the ethics taught in *khatam* should not be interrupted by continuous reading until the end of the Qur'an, and it takes several days. The general target time required is at least 3 days and 3 nights. Therefore, the implementation of *khatam* generally starts from Saturday, or with other more efficient calculations according to agreement.

There are certain criteria that must be met by students who are appointed as *khatam* officers, including, students must be adults, usually from the Aliyah level, fluent and voluble in reading the Qur'an, have a healthy body condition, and these students must be recognized as good students in morals. After determining the number of days and the officers who carry it out, a ceremony of handing over responsibility to the *kyai* is held in a contract that has been commonly taught in the Padang Bolak community. During the procession, the family prepares facilities for reading the Qur'an, such as

food, drinks, cigarettes, water for ablution and bathing, and makes an emergency hut as a resting place for circulation.

The implementation of the *Khatam* the Qur'an at the Grave

Khatam Qur'an begins after the implementation of the fourth *fardu kifayah*, namely burying. The *khatam* officer is usually at the location when the funeral is held. Shortly after the burial process has completed, the *khatam* officer will immediately start the *khatam* procession. They have also prepared themselves with all the necessary equipment such as clothes and other necessities. The number of participants is usually not less than 6 (six) people and not more than 15 (fifteen) people, depending on the abilities and requests of the magi. There are several ways and conditions in the implementation of this *khatam*, as follows.

Reading should not be Interrupted

The principle that is quite assertive taught in the implementation of the *khatam*, of the Qur'an in burials in the Padang Bolak community is that the reading of the Qur'an must be continuously chanted without any pause. Therefore, since the start of the procession, there are at least 3 participants who must be on standby to monitor the readings and at the same time pay attention to the instructions from the readers if there is a transfer of the reading relay to the next reader. This is quite unique when it is associated with the lighting conditions at night which are sufficient to allow for a power outage. Participants usually prepare automatic lighting such as flashlights and others. If this happens suddenly, the participants immediately continue to recite the verses of the Qur'an that they have memorized even though they are not continuous with the verses that were read before. This is to avoid pauses and breaks in reading the Qur'an to the dead.

Sharing and Reading Group Turns

The *khatam* of the Qur'an on the grave is carried out by several officers with a minimum of 6 (six) officers. The recitation of the Qur'an is not recited at the same time but sequentially and alternately. Usually, the technique used is based on team groups that coordinate each other with a total of 3 people each group. Each group will do procession the number of *juz* of the Qur'an, as each group will execute 2 to 3 *juz* then change to the next group.

Regarding the division of reading *juz*, this is also a concern because it is feared that there will be repetition of readings in the same *juz*. There are various methods used to avoid repetition of readings in the same *juz*, or there is one part of the Qur'an that escapes reading, namely, by making notes on the selected *juz*, because some officers do not read the Qur'an in the order of the chapters and of course this is prone to repetition in the same *juz*. Some regions choose to read the Qur'an sequentially from the beginning to the end of the Qur'an to avoid repetition.

The Fee Terms for Khatam Officers

Regarding financing, it is an inseparable part in the implementation of completing the Qur'an at the grave. The context of financing involves two things, first,

where is the source of funds, and second, how much funds are needed. Parents in their old age in the Padang Bolak community, the communication content usually does not escape their conversation from how the process of completing the Qur'an can be carried out in his burial after dies. Therefore, these parents usually have specifically prepared the necessary costs, saved, set aside property by making a will to the family. Another possible source is from descendants such as children and grandchildren, they usually have a high initiative in making this tradition possible.

In terms of calculating funds, this case becomes quite complex because it involves the service and the number of members who were determined. The service is intended to be related to the facilities needed, such as having a non-permanent tent as a place for the procession that allows it to avoid the heat of the sun and rain, a tent or hut where members circulate to change clothes as well as a place to rest, shop for groceries such as food, drinks, cigarettes, anti-mosquito lotion. The estimate cost is at least IDR 3 to 7 million.

After all the *khatam* processions have been carried out, the family gives fee which in this case is called alms to the *khatam* officers and *kyai*. As previously explained, there is usually no agreement and determination regarding this *khatam* salary from the start. Generally, the amount is adjusted based on the standard of work fee in other service jobs such as construction workers with a standard wage of around 100 to 150 per day. This *khatam* salary remains flexible depending on the ability of the family without any standard used.

Regarding this fee issue, some people in Padang Bolak perceive the *khatam* the Qur'an as a luxurious and elite procession that requires special abilities to make it happen. The calculation of the *khatam* fee is often considered expensive, which often leads to the option of a debt record for the bereaved family. If not, what then appears is a kind of punishment for the host to carry out the *khatam* the Qur'an with personnel from family circles who are often not fluent in reading the Qur'an.

If examined based on the socio-religious aspect, most people are significantly influenced by Islamic teachings, both in terms of practice and behavior. They then assume that this tradition actually originates from Islam, so they consider it not only an ordinary tradition that is passed down from generation to generation, but also a practice that has religious guidelines (Zamzani, 2020). The *khatam* tradition on the grave, its essence clearly shows that it is influenced by Islamic teachings, which are then considered a local Islamic tradition because they are deeply rooted among the people of Padang Bolak, both in the *santri* community, *kyai*, and among clerics.

Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) reveals that the authority acceptance over religious rituals begins when the ritual begins to be practiced (Geertz, 1973). In another approach, the study of the completion of the Qur'an is more often part of the living hadith, because the main source of its implementation comes from the hadith of the prophet which is elaborated in practices that are structured in local cultural aspirations.

Nowadays, the practice of completing the Qur'an in general is starting to be carried out, not only by Islamic boarding schools based on the Qur'an, but also among the general public who carry out the procession of completing the Qur'an with their own uniqueness (Sakhok, 2019). One of the people who carry out the tradition of

completing the Qur'an with its own characteristics is the Padang Bolak community in North Padang Lawas Regency. This *khatam* tradition is carried out with many changes from the initial practice during the time of the Companions, but what remains the same is the purpose of the *khatam* of the Qur'an.

On the other hand, the *khatam* of the Qur'an in the Padang Bolak community increases the authority of the *kyai*. The *kyai* and their communities become places of public complaints that are highly trusted in the authorization of religious practices. This practice has also become a job trend for *kyai* which is routinely carried out as well as being a promising source of finance.

CONCLUSION

Khatam Qur'an on the grave is a tradition of the Padang Bolak community that has rooted for a long period of time. The growth of the *tariqat* and *suluk* communities seems to be the basic doctrine that can accommodate culture and religion in reflecting the entity of parents in the Angkola Batak tradition. This practice is voluntary in nature, although there are forms of forced preservation. The *khatam* tradition is rooted not only because of the strong cultural circle in raising the parental entity but also because the religious practice that is neat is embedded in the hearts of the people. This practice not only accommodates the interests of the host on the other hand it maintains the authorization of the *kyai* in accordance with the message of the Qur'an in a high degree position.

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