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The Minangkabau Khatam Al-Qur'an Tradition (Negotiating Spirituality and Technology in the Digital Age)

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The tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur'an in Minangkabau serves as a milestone in religious transition and a vital anchor of communal identity. However, the current penetration of digital screen culture is significantly undermining this local tradition. Previous studies have largely explored digital piety at the macro level but have overlooked how communal celebrations systematically negotiate their core values in the face of public screen exposure. This study aims to analyze how spirituality and technology are negotiated in the mediatization of khatam celebrations in West Sumatra. Through a qualitative ethnographic approach conducted from May to June 2025 in Bukittinggi, Agam, and Tanah Datar, this study involved 30 key informants (religious scholars, TPA teachers, ninik mamak, parents, and khatam participants). Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and digital visual tracking. The main argument is that the digital transformation of the khatam ceremony does not signify the extinction of tradition, but rather a multi-layered negotiation toward a dynamic cultural equilibrium. Empirical findings reveal that digital mediatization offers opportunities for permanent documentation and diaspora connectivity, while simultaneously raising challenges related to concerns about visual prestige, spiritual shallowness, and cultural commodification. These pressures drive active negotiations: religious scholars safeguard the sanctity of texts, families compromise piety for social status, and adolescents develop hybrid forms of spirituality. Theoretically, this study expands the field of digital religion studies by framing the mediatization of religious celebrations as an arena of active technological negotiation, rather than passive cultural decay.

Keywords: *Khatam Al-Qur'an; Minangkabau; negotiation; digital mediatization; hybrid spirituality*

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INTRODUCTION

The cultural identity of the Minangkabau people in Indonesia is known to be deeply intertwined with Islamic teachings; in fact, it is viewed as synonymous with Islam, such that being Minangkabau in a cultural sense means being a Muslim (Sulhati 2020). This deep integration between custom and religion is firmly reflected in the philosophy of “*adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*,” which affirms that local customs are based on Sharia law, and that Sharia is rooted in the Qur’an (Helfi et al 2025). One concrete manifestation of this cultural fusion is the tradition of khatam al-Qur’an, a communal celebration marking children’s success in completing the recitation of the entire holy book at a mosque or an Al-Qur’an Education Center (TPA). Traditionally, this tradition is not only viewed as a marker of individual spiritual achievement for the children, but also serves as a sociocultural institution that strengthens communal cohesion, fosters solidarity among residents, and reinforces the collective identity of Minangkabau Islam (Kharir and Lizamah 2025).

In traditional Minangkabau cosmology, the khatam celebration is not merely a meaningless ceremony, but a public demonstration that the educational function of the surau has been working simultaneously to regenerate the community’s morality. This in-person tradition, passed down across generations, always involves rich visual elements—ranging from cultural parades featuring traditional attire and ceremonial umbrellas to the resonant sounds of the *talempong* that enliven the village. However, as time goes on and modernity advances rapidly, the tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur’an is now confronted with contemporary dynamics driven by the spread of digital technology. The digital age has introduced widespread visual

documentation and sharing on social media, which is gradually shifting some of the meaning of this ritual from a purely spiritual realm toward a realm of visual representation. Celebrations that were once local and intimate within the *nagari* community are now accessible globally through various digital platforms, thereby expanding the audience’s reach while simultaneously sparking new conceptual tensions between the preservation of spiritual values and the adoption of technology.

These sociocultural changes have given rise to new epistemic challenges regarding the interpretation of religion in the public sphere. Screen culture no longer merely records social reality; rather, it helps produce new norms of behavior that often clash with the values of Islamic simplicity. This phenomenon is closely linked to the rise of “digital religion” a condition in which religious practices are no longer entirely bound to local physical spaces but are instead mediated, shaped, and disseminated through digital spaces (Campbell and Tsuria 2021).

Although the tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur’an in Minangkabau has long been the subject of academic study—particularly in tracing the dialectical interaction between adat and *syarak*, the history of Islamization, and the sociological functions of religious rituals (Abdullah 1966; Azra 2004; Dobbin 2016). Recent research developments have also begun to highlight the digitization of Islam in Indonesia, such as the phenomenon of online Qur’an study groups (Ikhsanudin and Prasetiawati 2024), Behavioral Implications of Using Virtual Holy Scripture Apps (Wafi, Ilhami, and Taufiqurohman 2022), as well as the use of digital networks to maintain the diaspora community’s religious ties with their hometowns (Danil 2021).

Nevertheless, there is a significant research gap in the existing literature. Previous studies have largely focused on macro-organizational digital activities or individual screen habits in offline spaces, thereby overlooking how localized communal celebrations systematically negotiate core values under the pressure of public screen exposure. There is a general tendency in the local literature to position technology merely as a passive tool for documentation. Consequently, the complex sociocultural dynamics surrounding visual representation, social status anxieties, and value compromises within matrilineal Muslim communities as they confront the digitization of rituals remain unexplored (Campbell and Tsuria 2021; Hadler 2008).

Furthermore, the failure to account for this aspect of the negotiations portrays indigenous communities as passive subjects, vulnerable to being swept away by the tide of modernization without any internal resilience. In reality, the Minangkabau people are known for their remarkable sociological adaptability to external changes, provided that the fundamental principles of Islam remain intact. To address this gap, the novelty of this study lies in its analytical approach, which positions the tradition of khatam al-Qur'an as an arena of active negotiation between spirituality and technology. Unlike previous research that views digitization as a neutral recording tool, this study examines how the structure of religious celebrations is reshaped by media logic, creating new cultural spaces that redefine the boundaries of piety and traditional authority.

To construct a coherent analytical framework, this study employs the concept of digital religion as its primary theoretical framework (Campbell and Tsuria 2021). This theory views digital media not as a mere communication tool but as an active ecosystem that reconfigures the boundaries

of online religious rituals. As a supporting perspective, this framework is reinforced by the theory of the mediatization of religion to explain how the logic of media compels sacred celebrations to adapt to the aesthetics of the screen (Hjarvard 2011). In addition, the concepts of visual religion and ritual criticism are used to evaluate how visual representations challenge the depth of understanding of sacred texts (Grimes 2014).

This study aims to analyze how spirituality and technology are negotiated in the mediatization of the Al-Qur'an completion ceremonies in West Sumatra, with a focus on mapping the operational shift from physical to digital spaces and evaluating the adaptive responses of local actors. This empirical study makes a specific theoretical contribution to the sociology of digital religion by detailing the mechanics of negotiation between the values of spirituality and technology in local religious celebrations. Furthermore, this study offers a new perspective on the study of Islamic transformation by demonstrating how traditional communities are able to establish a dynamic cultural equilibrium in the digital space without falling into passive cultural decay.

Literature Review

The Tradition of Khatam Al-Qur'an in the Minangkabau Sociocultural Context

Studies on the tradition of khatam Al-Qur'an in Minangkabau are deeply rooted in the historical dialectic between cultural adaptation and religious orthodoxy. The body of literature on sociology and the history of Islam in West Sumatra generally positions religious rituals as the anchor of social cohesion within the community Abdullah (1966). For example, it asserts that religious traditions in Minangkabau are the product of a dynamic acculturation process that reconciles the tensions between Islamic

values and customary law. This negotiation between Sharia and customary law did not take place overnight, but rather through a long process of intellectual and social upheaval, which ultimately gave rise to a cultural consensus that established the Book of Allah as the highest constitutional authority for indigenous communities. Historically, the Islamic revival movement of the 18th and 19th centuries played a major role in transforming this social structure, as Islamic scholars reconstructed the surau as an institutional base for education that gave rise to cultural traditions such as the khatam Al-Qur'an (Azra 2004; Dobbin 2016).

From an anthropological perspective, this celebration is a conventional rite of passage that marks the transition of a child's religious status from a student of the holy scriptures to a responsible, full-fledged member of the Muslim community (Hadler 2008; Turner et al. 2017). Through cultural symbols such as traditional attire, the umbrella of honor, and the *bajamba* feast, this celebration transforms individual theological achievements into a bond of collective solidarity within the *nagari* (Helfi et al. 2025; Kharir and Lizamah 2025). However, these classic studies have fundamental methodological and conceptual limitations. They tend to view Minangkabau traditions in a static, offline context, in which the social functions of celebrations are situated solely within the boundaries of physical, geographical space.

Such conventional historical-anthropological studies often overlook the fact that contemporary religious public spaces have converged on a massive scale with cyberspace. Sacred symbols, originally produced for a local physical audience in mosque courtyards, are now visually commodified for a boundless audience in the virtual world. Previous studies failed to anticipate how symbolic transformation occurs when the sacred space of the surau

undergoes deterritorialization. Consequently, conventional theories of social integration (Abdullah 1966; Azra 2004) is no longer sufficient to address contemporary challenges, in which Minangkabau communal identity is no longer maintained through physical presence at places of worship, but is instead reproduced digitally through the screens of mobile phones.

Digital Transformation in the Religious Practices of Local Communities

As technology becomes more widespread, academic attention has begun to shift toward the digitization of religious practices. Contemporary research shows that digitization is no longer viewed merely as a mechanical tool, but rather as a process of constructing new meanings that influence religious experiences and social integration (Ikhsanudin and Prasetiawati 2024). This integration between the virtual world and modern religious behavior has proven to give rise to new sociological insights, including the emergence of virtual sacred text applications (Wafi et al. 2022) as well as the role of rituals in strengthening bonds of religious solidarity within diaspora communities abroad (Danil 2021).

In addition, the digital space opens up new avenues for participation, allowing migrants to remain emotionally connected to the cultural dynamics of their hometowns—an important cultural aspect for the Minangkabau people, who have a tradition of migration. Furthermore, this change has led to a shift from traditional dining styles, such as the *bajamba* meal, to the *basaprah* buffet system in order to save time when uploading digital content (Fakhlina and Fauzi 2017), and introduce new elements, such as a marching band, to enhance the visual appeal of the celebration (Helfi et al. 2025). Although these studies have successfully captured the early

dynamics of the encounter between Islam and technology at the local level, critical analysis reveals a significant blind spot.

Contemporary research (Danil 2021; Wafi et al. 2022) are stuck in an instrumental approach that views technology as a neutral medium for transmitting religious messages. They have not yet explored the structural dimensions of ritual transformation—namely, how “*media logic*” actively reshapes rituals, costumes, program schedules, and even the inner orientation of participants to make them camera-friendly. The logic of contemporary media demands speed, visual appeal, and high online engagement metrics—qualities that can be fundamentally at odds with the values of reverence and inner sincerity that form the essence of a traditional ritual. Previous studies have also overlooked the psychosocial negotiations of parents caught between the demand to quietly raise pious children and the urge to showcase their family’s social prestige on social media timelines.

The Theoretical Framework of Digital Religion and Research Gaps

To address this analytical gap, this study situates the transformation of the Khatam celebration within the global theoretical debate on digital religion. The concept of digital religion is not merely the study of religion on the internet, but rather a framework that examines how digital spaces reconstruct theological essence, authority, communal boundaries, and the authenticity of religious practices in the modern world (Campbell and Tsuria 2021). New media offer unique religious affordances that provide opportunities for permanent cultural documentation on a global scale, but at the same time have the potential to reduce the sacredness of rituals to mere visual commodities (Campbell and Tsuria 2021; Helland 2007). his theoretical framework is closely intertwined with the

theory of the mediatization of religion, which asserts that the media act as an independent environment that compels religious institutions to conform to their visual aesthetic norms (Hjarvard 2011; Lundby 2018).

Through the lens of mediatization, religion is forced to adopt the language of popular media in order to remain relevant and appealing to younger generations who have grown accustomed to screen culture. his conceptualization is further explored through the approaches of visual religion and screen culture, which remind us that excessive religious visualization fuels the emergence of performative religiosity—where religious expression is more focused on making a public impression on social media than on inner reflection (Hoover 2002; Lövheim 2013). From a media anthropology perspective, Birgit Meyer emphasizes the concept of religious aesthetic formation, in which the visual impact of a celebration often competes fiercely with the depth of its spiritual essence (Meyer 2009). When sacred celebrations are posted online, they are prone to falling into a state of simulacra, in which visual representations on the screen replace and obscure the authentic spiritual reality of the process of learning the Qur’an itself (Baudrillard 1994; Heryanto 2014).

This is where the research gap and the theoretical contribution of this study come into play. Until now, the theoretical discourse on global digital religion has been dominated by case studies of Western societies characterized by individualism (Campbell and Tsuria 2021; Hoover 2002). Conversely, the local Minangkabau literature on Islamic sociology remains mired in the romanticism of the physical integration of adat and *syarak* (Abdullah 1966; Azra 2004) without considering the cultural impact of digital screens.

This study bridges these two extremes by offering a new perspective on how a communal, matriarchal Muslim society negotiates its spirituality. Matriarchal communal societies have very strict social control mechanisms based on kinship structures, so the adoption of digital screen technology in these settings triggers collective tensions that are far more complex than those in individualistic societies. The primary theoretical contribution of this research is to unravel the mechanics of this negotiation of values, demonstrating that the adoption of technology by traditional societies does not result in passive cultural decay or mere market commodification (Heryanto 2014), rather than giving rise to a “hybrid spirituality” that serves as an adaptive strategy to preserve the existence of local Islamic identities in the digital age.

Conceptual Framework

The transformation of the Minangkabau tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur'an in the digital landscape requires a conceptual framework capable of analyzing the interaction between local religious traditions and the logic of new media. To meet the need for theoretical refinement, this study focuses on Digital Religion as its primary theoretical framework (Campbell and Tsuria 2021). Through this theoretical framework, the celebration of completing the recitation of the Qur'an is no longer positioned within a binary opposition that diametrically pits spirituality against technology, but rather as a dynamic arena of negotiation where the processes of mediatization, adaptation, and compromise of religious values occur simultaneously in order to achieve a new cultural equilibrium.

Within the framework of Digital Religion, digital technology is understood as an active ecosystem that provides digital religious affordances, which fundamentally

transform ritual practices, symbolic meanings, and the religious identities of local communities. As the khatam tradition transitions into cyberspace, Minangkabau Islamic identity undergoes deterritorialization; the boundaries of piety, originally confirmed by the physical surau community, now extend to a global digital audience. This transformation of practice occurs through the restructuring of the aesthetics of the celebration to suit the needs of the screen, while the transformation of meaning shifts from quiet inner reflection to a mediated performance of public piety. This process theoretically gives rise to hybrid spirituality, a state in which the sacred values of tradition are not eroded by modernity but rather adaptively intertwine with digital screen culture (Campbell and Tsuria 2021).

To construct a coherent analysis, this main framework is supported by three underpinning theoretical concepts. First, Stig Hjarvard's theory of the mediatization of religion is used to examine how technology acts as an independent agent that introduces “*media logic*” into the structure of conventional celebrations, such as the standardization of lighting, stage decorations, and camera-friendly attire (Hjarvard 2011). Second, Victor Turner's theory of the rite of passage is applied to examine how the liminal space of children's religious status transition has now expanded from the village setting to cyberspace (Turner et al. 2017). Third, Jean Baudrillard's critical approach to simulacra is used as an analytical warning to detect potential spiritual shallowness, where the grandeur of visual representations on social media risks obscuring the essential substance of the Qur'an learning process itself (Baudrillard 1994).

In a contextual sense, all of these theoretical interactions are integrated with the philosophy of life of the people of West Sumatra, namely *adat basandi syarak*,

syarak basandi Kitabullah (Helfi et al. 2025). Within the Minangkabau customary framework, the khatam celebration was historically designed as a communal instrument to openly test the conformity of customary practices with Islamic law. Therefore, the negotiation framework in this study specifically highlights how this local philosophy is redefined by various actors (religious scholars, parents, and adolescents) as the means of assessment shifts from the physical testimony of community leaders to digital metrics such as the number of views, likes, and shares on social media. The operational integration and analytical indicators of this conceptual framework are systematically presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Conceptual Model and Indicators for Analyzing the Khatam Al-Qur'an Tradition

Theoretical Framework	Focus of Analysis	The Relationship to the Transformation of the Khatam al-Qur'an Celebration	Practical Indicators for Data Analysis
<i>Digital Religion & Hybridity</i> (Campbell and Tsuria 2021) -Key Theories	How communities use digital affordances to negotiate the authenticity of their religious identities	Transforming the construction of the meaning of celebration from quiet piety to mediated hybrid spirituality	• Use of local hashtags (#Batamek Kaji) • Motivation al narratives for online da'wa • Expressions of pride in Muslim identity by teenagers on social media
The Mediatization of Religion(Hjardard 2011) - Supporting Concepts	The integration of media logic (visual aesthetics, digital documentation) into religious celebrations	Revamping the physical aspects of celebrations to meet the visual standards of new media formats	• Use of commercial event planning services • Changes to the stage layout, lighting, and camera positions

			• Change in the food service system from bajamba to basaprah • Changes to the stage layout, lighting, and camera positions • Change in the food service system from bajamba to basaprah
Momentum of Status Transition(Turner et al. 2017) - Supporting Concepts	The process of transition in an individual's social and religious status within society	Expanding the space for children's religious transition from the local geographic sphere to the global virtual sphere	• The presence and emotional engagement of the diaspora through live streaming • Recognition of the religious status of children across regional borders
<i>Simulacra & Simulation</i> (Baudrillard 1994) - Supporting Concepts	The dominance of visual representations that threaten and supplant original reality	Triggering a shift in values from theological substance toward the hyperreality of visual prestige	• Parents' concerns about their children's social status online • Participants' focus on the grandeur of the costumes rather than the fluency of their recitation

Source: Author's conceptual, 2025

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with an ethnographic approach to explore the transformation of the tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur'an in the sociocultural life of the

Minangkabau people. The ethnographic approach is specifically applied to analyze the dynamics of value negotiation between traditional piety, customary practices, and digital technology through direct fieldwork (Creswell and Poth 2018). By living alongside the community, researchers can capture how these negotiations manifest in the daily actions of the actors—aspects that would be impossible to capture through non-field methods. This study focuses on elucidating the dynamics of change in the structure of religious celebrations resulting from the penetration of screen technology into Minangkabau religious public spaces.

Intensive fieldwork was conducted over a two-month period, from May to June 2025. This time frame was deliberately chosen because it coincides with the peak season for post-Eid al-Fitr celebrations marking the completion of the recitation of the Qur'an in West Sumatra, when the use of digital technology by organizers and families is at its highest level. The timeframe of the digital transformation observed in this study spans from the onset of the digitization of local rituals in the early 2000s to the use of cutting-edge social media in 2026. Site selection was purposeful, focusing on three cultural regions in West Sumatra chosen for their representative variations in khatam practices: Bukittinggi (representing an urban area with the adoption of modern marching bands and massive smartphone penetration), Agam Regency (representing the preservation of agrarian traditions such as *mandabiah jawi*), and Tanah Datar (representing the strength of oral traditions through *pasambahan*). To ensure data depth, purposive sampling was applied based on criteria such as direct involvement in organizing committees, holding traditional or religious authority, or status as a family member of a khatam participant, resulting in a total of 30 key informants (Table 2). Anonymity protocols were strictly

enforced by assigning codes INF-01 through INF-30.

Tabel 2. Profile of Informants in Ethnographic Research

Informant Code	Actor Category	Total	Role/Contribution of Informants
INF-01 through INF-09	Khatam Participants	9	Visual Perceptions of Social Media, Hybrid Spirituality, and Device Use
INF-10 through INF-16	TPA/Qur'an Study Teacher	7	A Technical Evaluation of Qur'an Instruction and the Impact of Digital Media on Motivation
INF-17 through INF-21	Parents of Participants Who the khatam Al-Qur'an	5	Social motivation, family prestige pressures, and the cost of the parade's aesthetics
INF-22 through INF-27	Traditional Leaders/ <i>Ni niak Mamak</i>	6	Preserving the philosophical values of adat- <i>syarak</i> in the rituals of the khatam ceremony
INF-28 through INF-30	Religious Leader	3	A Theological Perspective on the Sacredness of Rituals vs. Online Visualizations
Total		30	A comprehensive representation of the three regions of the Minangkabau area

Source: Author's data, 2025

The research data was sourced from both primary and secondary data. Primary data collection was conducted using three main techniques. First, participatory observation, in which the researcher was directly involved in the series of events surrounding the khatam tradition, recording the social interactions of the participants and noting the adaptations made to the stage layout and lighting to

accommodate the camera. Second, in-depth interviews using a semi-structured protocol to explore the depth of informants' subjective meanings regarding the negotiation of prestige and spirituality. Third, digital documentation in the form of online tracing of photos, videos of the celebrations, and live streams uploaded by informants on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through document analysis of local village archives, "Adat Salingka Nagari" documents, reports from Islamic educational institutions, and academic literature.

All qualitative data and interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). The analysis process began with data familiarization through repeated readings of the transcripts, followed by data reduction and initial coding. Next, these codes were grouped into macro-thematic categories (such as "Visual Prestige Anxiety," "Hybrid Spirituality," and "Media Logic") directly linked to the main framework of Digital Religion to examine how media affordances redefine traditional authority. To ensure data validity, validity procedures were conducted through source triangulation (comparing statements across groups of informants, such as clerics and adolescents) and methodological triangulation (cross-referencing parents' interview responses with visual evidence from their social media posts). Research ethics were strictly adhered to; the researchers obtained both written and verbal informed consent from all informants, with mandatory additional consent from parents for child informants. All informants' identities were anonymized using a coding system to protect the subjects' privacy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Traditional Foundations of the Khatam al-Qur'an Celebration as a

Sacred Physical Space and a Source of Social Cohesion

Based on ethnographic data collected through in-depth interviews with senior informants in Bukittinggi, Agam Regency, and Tanah Datar, a strong narrative reconstruction emerged indicating that, prior to the widespread penetration of digital technology, the Minangkabau tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur'an centered on the spirituality of the surau and communal sincerity as the core of the ritual. Informants emphasized that in the past, these celebrations were centered in mosques or Al-Qur'an Education Centers (TPA) without the visual distractions of electronic devices. A series of traditional processions, such as parades around the village in traditional attire and carrying ceremonial umbrellas, are interpreted in a sacred manner as a form of cultural appreciation for a child's success in completing the recitation of the holy book, which is then concluded with a *bajamba* feast as an expression of collective gratitude (Azra 2004). The depth of this conventional spirituality is clearly reflected by one of the senior religious scholars in Bukittinggi.

"In the past, khatam was purely a matter of the heart and a sign that one had completed studying the Qur'an at the surau. Children were tested on their recitation in public; the atmosphere was solemn and deeply moving. Parents would prepare refreshments through collective effort—not to show off their wealth to the neighboring village, but as a sign of gratitude that their child had been spared from being illiterate in the Qur'an. There was no thought of taking photos here and there; our focus was on praying together." (Interview with IINF-28)

A critical analysis of the INF-28 narrative indicates that the structure of religious fulfillment in the past was immanent and localized within a limited communal space. The measure of a ritual's

success depended on the accuracy of the articulation of the letters' points of articulation before an authoritative in-person panel of examiners, rather than on the artificial impressions of outsiders. The empirical data above is reinforced by the testimony of a traditional leader in Tanah Datar (Interview with INF-22), who stated that before digital screens became dominant, the essence of the khatam lay in communal legitimacy, whereby the *ninik mamak* directly assessed the accuracy of the child's tajwid before declaring him or her to have passed according to customary law. The empirical account above illustrates how the traditional khatam Al-Qur'an ceremony functions as a legitimate rite of passage within the social structure of Minangkabau society. From an anthropological perspective, successfully completing the recitation of the Qur'an marks a child's transition from the status of a basic-level religious student to social recognition as a full, responsible member of the local religious community (Hadler 2008). Observations of the community's collective memory show that this achievement has never been viewed as a source of individual ego satisfaction, but rather as a triadic success: the family that educates, the surau/TPA institutions that teach, and the village community that keeps the religious atmosphere alive.

Furthermore, field findings confirm that the social dimension of this tradition, prior to the digital era, served as an organic bond for social cohesion. The involvement of local residents is tangibly manifested in the form of material donations, the provision of food supplies, and even collective efforts to erect a simple stage in the mosque courtyard. This pattern of offline interaction aligns with classical analyses of the dialectic between the adaptation of Islamic law and customary norms in Minangkabau, where Islamic values are practiced in harmony with the

spirit of *kaba* and communal solidarity (Abdullah 1966). Thus, this local historical empirical data demonstrates that, prior to being mediated by digital technology, the khatam of the Qur'an successfully maintained a balanced dual function: upholding the sacredness of personal spirituality while simultaneously reinforcing intimate social solidarity within the physical space of the *nagari*.

Structural Shifts Toward Digital Mediatization and Screen Culture

The advent of the digital age has transformed the tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur'an (khatam) in Minangkabau from a local communal celebration centered around the surau into a mediated religious event. The most striking change at the research site is the widespread use of visual media to document the celebrations. Whereas documentation once relied solely on collective memory, today nearly every stage of the khatam is recorded and live-streamed via Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This practice has successfully expanded the audience's reach to a global scale, bringing together the cultural pride of the local community with the Minangkabau diaspora abroad. However, this digital mediation has also altered participants' perspectives. A TPA teacher in Bukittinggi (INF-10) observed this behavioral change:

"Now the children's and parents' attention is divided. During the Qur'an recitation exam in the mosque, cell phone cameras and tripods are set up everywhere. The children are no longer just anxious about reciting the verses smoothly, but are busy glancing at the cameras or making sure they look their best during the live stream on the village's Facebook page." (Observation from INF-10)

The shift in children's focus from the physical text of the Qur'an to the lens of a digital camera demonstrates that the

conventional sacred space has been penetrated by the demands of online performativity. Children are trained from an early age to be camera-aware, a psychological prerequisite for existing within contemporary screen culture. The quote above illustrates how smartphone use disrupts children's inner focus. This mediatization has also spurred an aesthetic evolution in contemporary screen culture. In the Bukittinggi region, the documentation of religious rituals no longer relies solely on cell phone cameras but now incorporates aerial visual technology (drone shots), as documented on the Instagram platform @langikbukittinggi. The iconic Minangkabau landscape—featuring mosques with *gonjong* roofs and expanses of green rice paddies—is presented cinematically to evoke an affective response from netizens in the form of cultural nostalgia for their hometowns among the diaspora community. On the other hand, the linguistic distinctiveness of the Minangkabau region is mediated by the emergence of the traditional term “Batamek Kaji,” which is deliberately shared on social media to assert the authenticity of tradition amid the onslaught of modern terms such as “Haflah” or “Wisuda Tahfiz.”

When these field findings are dissected using a theoretical analytical framework, this phenomenon confirms the operation of the core framework of Digital Religion (Campbell and Tsuria 2021). Technology does not act as a neutral recorder, but rather provides digital affordances that redefine the sacred space of the celebration. The observation from INF-10 regarding children dividing their focus between the flow of the verses and the camera angle is a tangible implication of the penetration of religious mediatization as conceptualized by Stig Hjarvard (2011). Visual media logic has forced religious

celebrations which were originally sacred offline to shift in accordance with the standardization of public screen formats.

The Dominance of Visual Aesthetics, the Commodification of Vendors, and Prestige Competition

The digital space's demand for visually appealing content drives up the aesthetic costs of celebrations. Organizing committees and families tend to embellish the processions with lavish decorations, expensive matching outfits, and grand stages. As a result, the success of a ritual is often measured by its visual grandeur on social media, sparking a competition for prestige among families or villages. This social pressure was confirmed by one of the participants' parents in Bukittinggi:

“Honestly, there’s a huge social burden. If our child’s celebration is just ordinary, while neighbors post videos of their child’s khatam ceremony with lavish decorations and a royal carriage on Facebook, it feels like we’re being judged as less successful. In the end, we’re willing to hire expensive decorators and buy matching family outfits just to look presentable and elegant when we’re photographed and the photos are posted later.” (Interview with INF-17)

This psychological ambivalence among parents confirms that the metrics of religious happiness have shifted to the external, public realm of social media. Social comparisons between families, facilitated by Facebook's algorithms, have created new financial pressures for matriarchal family units in Minangkabau. The psychosocial burden revealed by INF-17 is directly proportional to field observations regarding the emergence of a shift in key actors. Before the digital era, the primary actors in khatam ceremonies were limited to Qur'an teachers, religious scholars, community elders, and family members. Today, new actors have emerged who shape the course of these rituals: professional

photographers, videographers, and even event organizers. Their presence marks the process of the commodification of religion and screen culture, in which sacred rites are transformed into forms of popular Islamic culture consumed by the public (Heryanto 2014). Media logic dictates that the parade's route be organized not for the children's comfort, but for the sake of an aesthetically pleasing camera angle.

Theoretically, the dominance of aesthetics which parents complained about at INF-17 and the intervention of commercial vendors reflect Jean Baudrillard's (1994) critique of simulacra. When visual representation surpasses substance, the Khatam celebration becomes trapped in digital hyperreality. The images, uniforms, and lavish decorations on Facebook construct a "false reality" of religious success, which risks shifting the essence of learning the Qur'an into a mere visual spectacle aimed at seeking online validation (Baudrillard 1994; Heryanto 2014). In this state of hyperreality, the theological essence of completing the Qur'an namely, a child's ethical commitment to putting the teachings of the holy book into practice is at risk of being overshadowed by the flashes of commercial photographers' cameras.

Cultural Variations in Local Traditions and the Construction of Hybrid Spirituality

Field data show that the adoption of this technology is intertwined with local customs in each region (Adat Salingka Nagari). In Tabek Patah (Tanah Datar), this tradition continues to uphold the formal *pasambahan* ritual (Pratama, Hamidin, and Zulfadhli 2013). In Campago Guguak Bulek (Bukittinggi), the celebration featured a marching band parade (Helfi et al. 2025). Meanwhile, in Balai Gurah (Agam), the festival is enriched by the *Jawi mandabiah* ritual (the slaughter of a cow)

and *manyumbang* (Susilawati, Afnibar, and Batubara 2023). Although the Nagari Customary Council (KAN) in some areas, such as Kamang Hilia (Agam), has sought to codify standard rules for the khatam ceremony since the adoption of the Consensus Document (2002) and the Adat Salingka Nagari (2008).

These written rules from KAN were originally established to prevent financial waste (*tabzir*) resulting from excessive traditional parades. However, the binding force of these local customary laws has proven to be weakened when confronted with residents' desire for a presence in the virtual world. Nevertheless, changes in the practice of organizing khatam Al-Qur'an ceremonies continue to occur as a consequence of social dynamics and the development of digital media (Wirman 2013). Practical changes remain inevitable. The practice of eating together has evolved from the "bajamba" format which emphasizes in-person physical togetherness to the "basaprah" system, which is considered more practical for saving time, accompanied by the replacement of traditional dishes (such as *lamang*, *pinyaram*, and *kalamai*) with modern dishes (Fakhlina and Fauzi 2017).

When these offline cultural variations are uploaded to cyberspace, a convergence occurs that gives rise to hybrid religiosity (Campbell and Tsuria 2021). This transformation has two sides: it strengthens the existence of tradition through permanent, global-scale documentation, while simultaneously carrying the risk of spiritual shallowness resulting from religious celebrations that are positioned more as public spectacles than as the fulfillment of sacred texts. The Minangkabau community, too, finds itself in the position of negotiating the authenticity of the surau's noble values amid the onslaught of visual demands from digital culture. Through the integration of

Victor Turner's (2017) "Rite of Passage" theory, digitization has been shown to extend the liminal phase of a child's transition. The sacred space of graduation confirmation is no longer isolated to the village mosque but has become hybrid, as it is connected in real time to the global digital space.

The Impact of Digital Media on the Spiritual Values of Traditions

The digital transformation of the Minangkabau tradition of completing the recitation of the Qur'an has triggered a profound reconfiguration of the spiritual values underlying the ritual. To avoid assumptive bias, this study measures changes in spirituality based on three operational indicators: (1) the fundamental religious motivations of participants and their parents; (2) the depth of engagement with the Qur'anic text; and (3) the quality of sacredness and solemnity in the conduct of the ritual procession. Based on these indicators, digital mediation has been shown to have dualistic, intertwined effects in the field. On the positive side, digitalization provides new religious affordances that expand the functions of religious outreach and the preservation of cultural memory (Assmann 2011; Campbell and Tsuria 2021).

First, permanent visual documentation serves as a digital cultural archive that preserves traditions across generations. Second, digital publications have transformed into a space for the dissemination of contemporary Islam, where posts featuring excerpts from verses and children's recitation performances inspire the Qur'anic education ecosystem in cyberspace. Third, live streaming of celebratory processions successfully strengthens transnational religious identity, intimately connecting the religious sentiments of local communities with the Minangkabau diaspora across the globe (Helland 2007). For Minangkabau migrants

in Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur, watching a live video of their nephew completing the recitation of the Qur'an in their hometown evokes a sense of religious emotion and inspires them to send financial aid (remittances) to the local mosque's fund.

However, a serious challenge arises when the logic of visual media triggers a shift from spiritual substance toward ceremonial celebration. In terms of religious motivation and ritual solemnity, the massive volume of online content poses the risk of spiritual banality. Children's primary focus—which should be on understanding the verses they are reciting is often distracted by the demands of performing in front of smartphone cameras. Sacred rituals are vulnerable to being caught up in the commodification of the commercial service industry, which prioritizes market aesthetics (Heryanto 2014). As a result, some members of the younger generation who grew up in the digital age tend to view completing the recitation of the Qur'an as a short-term social and visual celebration, rather than as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement in the mosque that must be internalized in their daily behavior.

The Arena for Negotiation Among Actors Toward a Digital Cultural Equilibrium

The tension between preserving the sacredness of rituals and the demands of digital visualization does not lead to the loss of local values, but rather gives rise to a dynamic process of value negotiation among various levels of actors. Based on data analysis of 30 informants, this process of cultural compromise is mapped out in layers. At the Educational Institution Level, religious scholars and Qur'an instructors act as guardians of spiritual authenticity. The majority of religious figures interviewed—3 religious figures and 7 TPA teachers or Qur'an instructors—consistently emphasized that the essence of khatam lies

in the quality of recitation and the child's long-term commitment to the Qur'an. Nevertheless, they do not rigidly reject technology; rather, they selectively adopt social media as a tool for motivating learning, reflecting the positive progression of the logic of religious mediatization (Hjarvard 2011). This theological perspective was clearly articulated by a TPA teacher in Agam:

"We always remind the children in class that fancy clothes and impressive videos on Facebook won't increase their rewards for reciting the Qur'an. The key is for the children to remain steadfast in reading the Qur'an after this event is over. But we also use the Nagari social media platform to share their recitations, so that other children will be inspired to join the TPA." (Interview with INF-11)

At the domestic level, the most dynamic negotiations take place within the family, where parents find themselves in an ambivalent position between fulfilling digital social prestige and fulfilling religious moral responsibilities. A total of five parent informants acknowledged a strong urge to showcase visual splendor on social media, yet they balanced this by requiring their children to participate in voluntary fasting rituals and intimate family Quran recitation sessions before the day of celebration. This phenomenon illustrates how digital media reconstructs the sacred domestic space to make it more adaptive (Helland 2007).

Meanwhile, among the younger generation, digital technology serves as their primary lens through which they interpret religious expression. Visual documentation in the form of Instagram photos (INF-04 and INF-07) is no longer merely an accessory but an integral part of their self-identity in the digital public sphere. Although deeply embedded in screen culture, digitalization does not necessarily erode their religious consciousness. For most young people,

digital posts serve as a form of social recognition that fosters pride in being Muslim a contemporary innovation in which tradition adapts to the context of the times without losing its spiritual roots (Grimes 2014).

Finally, at the communal level, collective consensus has fostered a harmonious integration between digital platforms and established offline traditions. The presence of documentation and live-streaming teams is accepted as a necessity of the times to embrace the religious sentiments of the Minangkabau diaspora, thereby extending cultural solidarity from the physical to the virtual realm. The tension between the resilience of tradition and popular industrialization ultimately gives rise to a new format known as hybrid religiosity.

The main contribution of this chapter empirically demonstrates the novelty of this study: the encounter between Minangkabau culture and digital culture does not lead to the destruction of local values, but rather to an active process of negotiation. This new form of spirituality stands firmly on three empirical pillars: the internalization of the noble values of the surau through the thorough study of sacred texts; the expression of religious performativity through curated social media posts; and the expansion of Minangkabau communal cohesion, tightly bound under the philosophy of "adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah" in the global public sphere.

CONCLUSION

This ethnographic study directly addresses the research objectives by demonstrating that the encounter between the Minangkabau tradition of khatam al-Qur'an and screen technology does not result in the extinction of local values, but rather in an active process of value negotiation among various actors. Through

data collection from 30 key informants in Bukittinggi, Agam, and Tanah Datar, this study concludes that this interaction gives rise to a new cultural equilibrium in the form of hybrid religiosity. Empirical data demonstrate that, on the one hand, digital mediation offers opportunities to expand the sphere of Islamic outreach and strengthen the identity of the transnational diaspora. However, field evidence from statements by TPA teachers and parents confirms a tendency toward a shift in orientation toward the visual aesthetics of the stage, an escalation of pressure for family social prestige on social media, and the risk of cultural commodification by commercial event organizers which has the potential to distract children's minds while they are reading sacred verses. Specifically, this study makes an important theoretical contribution to the development of the study of digital religion and local Islam in Southeast Asia. This research successfully expands the boundaries of global digital religion theory which has long been dominated by the individualistic characteristics of Western societies by presenting a model of how communal-matriarchal Muslim societies maintain the authenticity of their religion in cyberspace. Furthermore, this paper fills a gap in the literature on local Islam in Indonesia by offering a new perspective: the continuity of the philosophy "adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah" in the modern era is no longer determined by the physical isolation of the surau, but rather by the community's adaptive capacity to engage in cultural negotiations regarding the logic of media.

The practical implications of this research urge Islamic educational institutions (TPA) and traditional leaders (*ninik mamak*) to formulate standardized guidelines for the adaptive preservation of traditions namely, selectively integrating digital documentation tools as a means of promoting da'wa without compromising the legitimacy of offline quality testing of sacred

scripture recitations. The limitations of this study lie in its geographical scope, which is restricted to three inland (*darek*) regions of Minangkabau in West Sumatra; consequently, the dynamics of mediatization within the Minangkabau Muslim community in coastal areas have not been documented. Additionally, the digital visual tracking in this study is limited to the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Given these limitations, a recommendation for future research is to expand the geographical scope of comparison to coastal areas in order to capture variations in the negotiation of adat and *syarak*. Future researchers are also advised to explore the use of new-generation short-form video platforms such as TikTok to analyze, at a more granular level, the influence of media algorithms on the religious performativity of the younger generation.

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