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RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT IN THE TRADITION OF THE KETUPAT FESTIVAL: An Analysis of Q.S. An'Am: 162 Among the Javanese Community in Mangga Dua Village, Serdang Bedagai

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Abstract*: The Hari Raya Ketupat tradition in Mangga Dua Village, Serdang Bedagai, represents a socioreligious practice that raises questions about the relationship between local culture and Islamic creed. This study aims to examine how Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 is interpreted to legitimize and transform this tradition within the framework of Living Qur'an studies. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with religious leaders and community members, observation of ritual practices, and textual analysis of Qur'anic verses and Hadith commentaries. The findings show three community interpretations of the ketupat tradition: theo-cultural integration, folk-conformist identity expression, and mytho-symbolic spiritual coping. Religious authorities reinterpret the principle of lillāhi rabbil 'ālamīn to purify intention (niyyah), shifting ketupat from a myth-laden object into a collective symbol of gratitude. This process produces a hybrid legitimacy model described as "Vessel Culture, Spirit Tauhid," where tradition functions as a sociocultural medium while theological authority remains centered on Allah SWT. This study contributes by offering an applied model of how Qur'anic interpretation can mediate tensions between culture and creed in Muslim diaspora communities. Practically, the findings support strategies for religious moderation and culturally sensitive da'wah. Future research can apply this model to other local traditions to explore broader patterns of adaptive Islamic interpretation in multicultural societies.*

Keywords: *Living Qur'an; Q.S. al-An'am: 162; Javanese Diaspora; Religious Moderation; Local Tradition.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, public debates concerning the legitimacy of local religious traditions have become increasingly visible in Indonesian Muslim society. Various cultural rituals that involve symbolic objects are often contested within public religious discourse, particularly through sermons, social media debates, and grassroots religious movements that emphasize doctrinal purification. The local practices that were traditionally understood as part of Islamic heritage have become increasingly subjected to doubt, sometimes even being called superstition, bid'ah, or shirk. Such contradictions reveal one important social religious pattern, whereby local customs undergo perpetual negotiations within the context of Islam (Wan, 2019). According to the Islamic perspective, the actions of the Muslim individual always function as a guide towards performing what is morally correct and devoting oneself wholly to Allah SWT (Shahid dkk., 2025). Theologically speaking, this act of devotion is supported through the idea of nusuki (ritual worship) that serves to reflect the submission of man to his Creator (Salsabiela dkk., 2024). Consequently, the acts of religion that occur within society do not take place just for the sake of the physical action, but as a manifestation of faith in spiritual forms.

Another practice which reflects the dilemma above is the Hari Raya Ketupat practice observed in Javanese diaspora communities. Diaspora communities tend to preserve rituals as symbolic practices which help them maintain the sense of continuity and belonging emotionally in new societies (Hall, 1990). Whereas many individuals in the community view the practice as a sign of gratitude and unity, others believe that some aspects of the ritual, like hanging the ketupat for one year, can go against the concept of tawhid. This difference of opinion reveals that the practice is not only cultural but also involves theological and social issues. The theological foundation that will be used as a major source of analysis in this study includes QS. Al-An'am: 162 as follows:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"Say (Muhammad): Indeed, my prayer, my worship, my life, and my death are for Allah, Lord of the worlds." (QS. Al-An'am: 162).

This verse is a declaration of the total devotion of a believer to Allah SWT, encompassing four dimensions at once: ṣalāt (ritual worship), nusuk (all forms of devotion), maḥyā (daily life), and mamāt (death). QS. Al-An'am: 162 is a theological compass that not only regulates formal worship but also serves as a measure for every cultural expression carried out by the Muslim community. This verse then becomes the starting point in evaluating the Ketupat tradition in Mangga Dua Village: does the practice reflect the principle of lillāh taught by this verse, or does it deviate from it.

Within the Indonesian context, the encounter between Islam and local culture has historically produced a dynamic process of adaptation and reinterpretation. Islamic civilization has been shaped by constant interaction with local cultures, hence enabling religion to adapt to varying social situations while retaining its theological basis (Hodgson, M. G. S., 1974). Similar patterns of accommodation between Islam and local traditions have been widely observed in Southeast Asian Muslim societies, where religious expression

often develops through negotiation with local cultural systems (Woodward, M., 2017). Approach in relation to the living Qur'an sees this exchange as a continuous process where the message of the Qur'an is continuously accepted, interpreted, and practiced through cultural practices. This view correlates with the current trend in Living Qur'an researches, which notes that besides being a book of knowledge and guidance, the Qur'an serves as a lived social reality continuously constructed in cultural contexts (Saleh, 2019). This means that beyond being a source of authority, the Qur'an takes shape as a lived reality, influencing social behaviors, identity constructions, and cultural symbolic expressions. It is important to understand that the principles of the Qur'an are alive and practiced in a certain structure of traditional practices, thus reinforcing the presence of Islam within the private sphere (Abidin, 2009). Purity of the tradition is normally achieved through a dialectical process of preserving old values and adapting to the conditions of the times (Rofijal, 2024). The society is likely to assimilate religious teachings through cultural symbols that are emotionally close to them. Therefore, analyzing the practice of the religion requires a thorough understanding of the way that the Qur'anic text is perceived and utilized by its followers in a certain cultural context.

Nevertheless, the process of cultural adaptation does not often go through without any conflict. The usage of symbols during rituals usually evokes anxiety in connection with the borders between cultural expression and heresy. In many communities, misunderstandings surrounding these boundaries have generated social stigma, religious polarization, and competing interpretations of orthodoxy. Consequently, the study of how Qur'anic values are negotiated within local traditions remains a socially relevant and academically significant topic. There is a fundamental concern that the use of object symbols in cultural rituals can lead the community into the abyss of polytheism if they are not equipped with a proper understanding of Tawhid (Iskandar & Aziz, 2019). This criticism usually arises when a cultural practice is only viewed from its superficial aspects without delving into the depth of the intentions and theological philosophy underlying it. In fact, Islam provides space for 'urf or customs as a social foundation as long as they do not contradict the absolute principles of sharia (Irfandi, 2025). The misunderstanding of the boundaries between tradition and faith is often what triggers negative stigma against practitioners of tradition at the grassroots level.

One way out of this issue is to strengthen the attitude of religious moderation thru open dialog between religious teachings and local traditions. Religious moderation in multicultural societies often emerges through dialogical engagement between doctrinal principles and local cultural practices (Halafoff, A., 2020). The blend of religious values with the culture has shown its capacity for fostering harmony among people and peaceful coexistence (Setinawati dkk., 2025). An approach like this gives space for religion to color and shape culture, without having to erase the local identity that has long been rooted in society (Abidin, 2009). Thru the strategy of "Indigenization of Islam," the community is directed to practice traditions as a form of faith expression (Islami dkk., 2023). The success of managing social harmony greatly depends on the community's ability to manage the space of interaction between cultures and religions in an open and inclusive manner (Dewi, 2024).

In particular, it has been highlighted by the scientific literature that cultural traditions such as ketupat have a solid theological and historical basis in order to serve as the means of cultural transmission. The meaning behind the cultural tradition of ketupat, which was created by Sunan Kalijaga, lies in the fact that ketupat symbolizes forgiveness and blessings since the complex pattern of the coconut leaves represents human failures, while the contents of ketupat are meant to represent the purity of the heart of people (Pohan dkk., 2025). In other words, not only does this cultural practice imply certain rituals and traditions, but it also allows facing social change by providing an opportunity to thank God for the things that happen in our life as well as to strengthen ties between residents and protect their mental health. Therefore, the utilization of the cultural symbols may be perceived as a powerful tool of preserving Islamic religious culture.

Previous research about ketupat traditions can be classified into three significant trends. Firstly, anthropological and cultural studies mostly view ketupat as a representation of thankfulness, unity, and Javanese cultural heritage. Such research focuses on the importance of tradition as an aspect that contributes to building solidarity within a community, ignoring the controversies related to ritual symbol in terms of theology. Secondly, the research on religious acculturation and Islamization is focused on the importance of cultural media in promoting Islamic norms and principles. However, such research does not pay attention to the ways people resolve possible shirk accusation problems. Thirdly, the Living Qur'an paradigm addresses the implementation of Qur'anic principles in real life. However, most studies focus on ritual recitation, healing practices, or textual reception, with limited attention to material cultural symbols as instruments of religious protection or identity preservation (Tsaabita, 2024). Most of the research places ketupat as an object whose function expires immediately after the ritual is completed or the dish is consumed. However, in-depth studies on the transformation of ketupat into a symbol of permanent protection are still very limited. Previous studies have not extensively addressed the dimension of "physical resilience" of cultural symbols as representations of sustained blessings in domestic spaces.

On the other hand, research on the Javanese diaspora shows that moving to a new area is not just about relocating. It should be mentioned that diasporic societies keep symbolic practices as tools for preserving collective memory and maintaining continuity of identity in a new social setting (Levitt, P., 2015). Moreover, this becomes the basis for creating a new identity which combines features of both original and local cultures (Khumairoh dkk., 2025). The migrants, in turn, try to keep the traditions of their hometowns while getting adjusted to their new setting. In this process, local wisdom serves as a cultural asset that helps them build harmony in their new place (Gede Agung dkk., 2024). However, there have not been many studies specifically discussing how migrant communities use physical symbols like ketupat as a form of acceptance of protective verses (hifzh) in their regions of migration. The current development of Islamic studies actually encourages researchers to use approaches from various disciplines, so that social and cultural phenomena like this can be understood more deeply and critically (Muthohirin, 2025).

Despite these contributions, little research has examined how physical cultural symbols are reinterpreted as protective religious media within diaspora communities. More specifically Mangga Dua Village, Serdang Bedagai, the phenomenon of hanging ketupat for an entire year known locally as ketupat setahun remains largely undocumented in Living Qur'an studies (Rofiq, 2024). Until now, there has been no Living Qur'an study that specifically examines the phenomenon of "ketupat setahun" thru the lens of QS. Al-An'am: 162. This gap is what provides the space for this research to explore how physical symbols are used as instruments for safeguarding faith and manifestations of the community's way of life (mahyaya).

This study therefore aims to examine how Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 is interpreted and negotiated within the Ketupat tradition of the Javanese diaspora in Mangga Dua Village, Serdang Bedagai. In other words, this study does not make any theological inferences at the start but rather analyzes the process by which people from the community, as well as religious figures and traditional leaders, legitimize their religion through its practice. The innovation in this study is the identification of the concept of "ketupat setahun" as a performative-protectionist reception that has never been explored in the literature of Quranic Sciences and Tafsir, especially among the Javanese immigrants in North Sumatra. The scope of the research is limited to the community of Mangga Dua Village, Tanjung Beringin District, with a focus on the analysis of the symbolic reception dimension of the concepts of mahyaya (life) and mamati (death) that are entirely based on Allah SWT in accordance with the guidance of QS. Al-An'am: 162. By focusing on the transformation of ketupat from a culinary object into a long-term protective symbol, this research seeks to contribute to Living Qur'an scholarship by exploring how sacred texts are mobilized to negotiate cultural identity, religious authority, and social harmony within diaspora settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative field research design integrating the Living Qur'an approach and phenomenology to explore the religious meaning, symbolic practices, and theological reinterpretation of the Hari Raya Ketupat tradition (Mustaqim, 2017). The Living Qur'an framework is operationalized as a theological reference, a discursive tool of reinterpretation, and an analytical lens to evaluate the alignment between practice and Islamic monotheism. The phenomenological perspective is applied to capture participants' lived religious experiences and guide interpretation of subjective meanings. The main focus of the research is located in Mangga Dua Village, Tanjung Beringin District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra Province. The selection of this location was done purposefully due to the unique characteristics of the 'Hari Raya Ketupat' tradition in the area, which involves the sacralization of time thru the hanging of ketupat for a full year. Fieldwork was conducted for three weeks, complemented with follow-up communication and document analysis to ensure data saturation and triangulation.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling with specific inclusion criteria. Participants were chosen based on: direct involvement in the Ketupat tradition, religious or cultural authority, generational representation, willingness to share experiences

consisting of one Traditional Elder (Javanese Elder), one Local Religious Leader (Ustadz/Imam of the Mosque) as the key informant, and 12 members of the Mangga Dua Village community as the main informants The number of informants was determined using theoretical saturation, indicated by repetition of themes and no emergence of new categories after the 13th–15th interviews. This primary data focuses on the narratives of practices, intentions, and spiritual experiences of the community. Meanwhile, secondary data sources include village profile documents and authoritative literature to strengthen the theological basis. Specifically regarding the textual aspect, the researcher uses tafsir books to analyze QS. Al-An'am: 162 and compiles Hadith literature or Sunnah Nabawiyah as verification instruments. The Hadith literacy used includes hadiths about the permission to express joy during holidays thru local traditions as well as hadiths regarding the prohibition of using objects as amulets (tamīmah). The integration of textual and field data aims to create a dialectic between normative sources and empirical reality.

Three techniques were employed: participatory observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation of ritual artifacts and textual sources. Interviews explored meanings, beliefs, interpretation of QS. Al-An'am:162, and perceptions of faith and tradition. All the collected data were then continuously analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Miles dkk., 2020). The analysis process begins with data condensation to simplify field information, followed by the presentation of data in the form of an organized narrative description. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, where the researcher tests the truth of the discovered meanings by comparing them back to the raw data as well as the holy texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This systematic approach ensures that every conclusion drawn is firmly rooted in the empirical realities of the Javanese diaspora community while also aligning with the theological principles of Islam. The researchers acknowledge their position as Muslim scholars studying Islamic tradition within their own religious framework. To maintain interpretive objectivity, empirical data were analyzed inductively before theological evaluation and reflexive notes were maintained to minimize bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The discussion of the Ketupat Festival in Mangga Dua Village cannot be separated from an ongoing theological debate concerning the sacralization of cultural symbols within Islamic practice. Within contemporary Islamic discourse, the use of physical objects in ritual expressions often generates two contrasting perspectives. On the one hand, cultural symbols are viewed as legitimate media of gratitude and social cohesion; on the other hand, they are frequently criticized as having the potential to lead to symbolic dependence that risks undermining the purity of tawḥīd. The color and shape of ketupat are even interpreted as representations of local identity distinct from foreign cultures, thus demonstrating a process of adaptation and localization in the religious practices of early Muslim communities in Java (Pratama, 2021). This tension becomes the central analytical entry point of this discussion.

Within the positive view of theology, the integration of tradition in the Islamic setting is viewed from the point of 'urf and the indigenization of Islam. In this case, cultural forms are acceptable as long as they don't go against the monotheistic concept. Based on this, the celebration of the Ketupat Festival can be seen as a socio-religious way of expressing gratitude for ending the month of Ramadan. The following religious leader made this assertion during the interview:

"If you don't put up ketupat, your home feels incomplete and unsettled." (IK08, personal communication, April 18, 2026).

This interpretation is very close to the theological essence of the Quranic verse Q.S. Al-An'ām: 162 where it says "My prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds." Theologically speaking, this verse acts as a filter where practices are allowed to have cultural meanings as long as their devotion is solely dedicated to Allah Almighty. Hence, cultural practices act as conduits of expression while spirituality is totally reserved for divine worship. However, an opposing theological concern also emerges. Several Islamic scholars warn that the sacralization of objects can gradually shift from symbolic representation to perceived spiritual agency. This concern becomes relevant when field data show that some community members refer to ketupat as a "syarat keselamatan" (a requirement for safety). One informant stated:

"If you don't put up ketupat, your home feels incomplete and unsettled." (IK08, personal communication, April 18, 2026).

These statements point to a gradual transition from expressions of gratitude into psychological dependence on tangible objects. Theologically, such a transition creates the risk of falling prey to tamīmah, an issue that classical Islamic teaching warns against quite strictly. In light of this, the Ketupat Festival can be understood as a continuous process of negotiation between tradition and religious purification.

Through time, the ketupat has become subject to an increasing complexity in the transformation of its meaning among the lives of the Indonesian Muslims. Alongside the ketupat being associated as a symbol for ngaku lepat and laku papat, the ketupat also became an element in social practices that carry significant symbolism, and sometimes even have elements of spirituality which surpasses their mere symbolic roles (Novakarti & Utomo, 2021). This transformation proves that not only is the ketupat a cultural artifact but also a symbol of the dialectical relationship between Islam and the local culture up until today. Therefore, understanding the origins of ketupat becomes important as an analytical foundation to examine how a cultural symbol can undergo shifts in meaning, including when it has the potential to be interpreted theologically in the religious practices of contemporary society (Novakarti & Utomo, 2021).

By placing these two perspectives side by side, the discussion in this section seeks to demonstrate how Q.S. Al-An'ām: 162 operates not merely as a textual reference, but as an interpretive framework through which the Mangga Dua community continuously re-evaluates the meaning of its traditions. The following sections present the empirical findings that illustrate how this theological negotiation unfolds in everyday practice.

Social Reality of the Ketupat Festival Tradition in Mangga Dua Village

One of the Javanese diaspora culture that still exists up to now is The Ketupat Festival that takes place in Mangga Dua village, Tanjung Beringin district, Serdang Bedagai regency. The Ketupat festival is not just a traditional festival celebrated annually for the sake of eating, but rather, it has more dimensions within it. The essence of this practice is the hanging of ketupat above the door frames of the house, whether the front, back, or side doors, for a full year, until the next Hari Raya Ketupat arrives (IK 10, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 15, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026).

Technically, the ketupat used is made from woven yellow coconut fronds shaped like a diamond, filled with rice or glutinous rice, and then boiled for about 1 hour until cooked. After cooling, the ketupat is hung on the doorframe accompanied by a prayer recited silently by the male head of the family. This process is carried out on the seventh day after Idulfitri, known in Javanese tradition as Ketupat .(IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 14, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). As far as the previous year's ketupat is concerned, it is removed and replaced by a new one, annually, through the very same ritual.

This tradition has a well-defined role distribution. The job of making and preparing the ketupat is carried out by women, usually the housewives. On the other hand, the rituals of installing and praying are done by men, either the husband or the eldest male member of the family (IK02, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK03, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026). It is not uncommon for the process of making ketupat to be done collaboratively with neighbors, making it a moment to strengthen the bonds of friendship among residents (IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 14, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026).

In terms of meaning, the people of Mangga Dua Village understand this tradition thru several symbolic layers. The first layer is ngaku lepat (confession of mistakes), where ketupat is interpreted as a symbol of apology and self-purification after Ramadan. The second layer is the function of tolak bala, where the hanging ketupat is believed to be a "condition" for the safety of the household. The third layer, which is more folkloric in nature, is the belief that the ketupat serves as a sign or "food" for the spirits of children who died young or were stillborn (keluron), who are believed to return to their parents' home during the holiday .(IK 01, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 08, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 10, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 15, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK02, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK03, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026). These three layers of meaning illustrate the richness of the socio-spiritual dimensions contained within a traditional practice.

Table 1. Structure of Practices and Meaning of the Ketupat Festival Tradition in Mangga Dua Village

Component	Description	Data Source
Core practice	A woven yellow coconut frond filled with rice, boiled for about 1 hour, and hung on the door frame for a full year.	IK10, IK13, IK14
Actor	Women: create; Men/head of the family: install and pray; Religious and customary leaders: provide legitimacy	IK02, IK03,
Time	The 7th day after Eid al-Fitr (Bakda Kupat); updated annually	IK13, IK14
Symbolic meaning	Confession of guilt, warding off misfortune, and the myth of the keluron spirit	IK01, IK02, IK03, IK08, IK10, IK15

Sociologically, this tradition serves a dual function: as a marker of cultural identity and as a mechanism for maintaining community cohesion. For the older generation, carrying out this tradition is a moral obligation so that the "village does not disappear." (IK 08, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 12, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). While the younger generation is starting to become more critical, their participation remains intact due to social pressure and respect for their ancestors (IK 04, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 12, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). This phenomenon reflects what Rianti et al. (2018) refer to as the function of ketupat as a cultural capital that strengthens the existence of the Javanese diaspora community outside their homeland.

Beyond its sociocultural description, the Ketupat Festival in Mangga Dua Village represents a living arena of theological negotiation between inherited local spirituality and Islamic orthodoxy. The practice of hanging ketupat above doorways illustrates what Living Qur'an scholars describe as the embodiment of scripture in everyday life, where Qur'anic values are not merely interpreted textually but are lived through cultural symbols and social practices. From a theological perspective, the tradition reflects a continuous tension

between symbolic religiosity and doctrinal purity. On the one hand, the community perceives ketupat as a medium of gratitude and protection; on the other hand, Islamic orthodoxy insists that protection and blessing originate solely from Allah. This tension does not produce open conflict but instead gives rise to a process of negotiation and reinterpretation led by local religious authorities. It is important to highlight the role of religious leaders in Mangga Dua village in mediating this negotiation. They do not deny this tradition; instead, they interpret its meaning by using a theological approach in line with QS. Al-An'am: 162, stating that all actions should be carried out only for Allah. Using sermons, meetings at mosques, and personal counseling, they successfully shift villagers' views about the act from believing in its protective nature to devotional niyyah purification. In this way, the hanging ketupat symbolizes cultural recognition of the blessings given by Allah after Ramadhan. Clearly, there exists a process of Living Qur'an here since the relevant verse is used as a theological filter in order to transform the practice into a form of worship. The community's engagement with the verse is therefore not textual but performative, manifested in ritual action, social interaction, and symbolic meaning.

A significant dynamic that can be drawn out of field research is the generational negotiations around the sustainability of the practice itself. While the older generation regards their participation in the celebration as part of their ethical duty towards ancestors, younger members of the community exhibit a more contemplative attitude towards it. Modern Islamic theology and exposure to social media have created awareness amongst youth regarding concepts like syncretism, bid'ah, and purity. This increased critical consciousness, however, does not necessarily imply the abandonment of the tradition on the part of youth. Rather, the latter tend to go through a process of selective reinterpretations and reinterpretations of the festival's significance. A large number of young participants continue observing the ritual simply because of their love for and respect for parents, whereas inside themselves, they regard the act as a cultural heritage. Generational change is very important in comprehending the future of the Ketupat Festival. It does not rely only on the transmission of belief from one generation to another; rather, the survival of the ritual rests heavily on whether it can be redefined within the current Islamic thought. This makes the role of the clergy even more important, for it gives theological ground for the younger generations to continue without compromising their religion.

It follows that Ketupat Festival can be considered an active platform where Qur'anic values are constantly being negotiated, internalized, and embodied. This is one example of a community turning theological conflict into religious moderation and creating the ability for culture and religion to coexist within the same space of worshiping Allah. This perspective strengthens the contribution of the Living Qur'an approach by showing that scripture is continuously reinterpreted in response to social change and cultural continuity.

Typology of Community Religious Understanding toward Tradition

Field findings indicate that religious understanding of the Ketupat Festival in Mangga Dua Village is neither homogeneous nor static. Instead, it reflects a negotiated religious landscape shaped by theological concerns, cultural memory, emotional needs, and the

interaction between multiple sources of authority. Based on the analysis of interview data, at least three typologies of understanding can be mapped. To strengthen analytical clarity, this study refines the classification of community understanding into three typologies based on explicit conceptual criteria and analytical indicators.

The first typology is the Theocultural understanding, which is generally held by religious leaders and village officials. The tradition is accepted conditionally, as long as it functions purely as a symbolic medium of gratitude and does not possess independent metaphysical power. This practice is acceptable and significant to them as long as the intention of doing it is completely to express appreciation to Allah SWT. The local religious figures argue that (IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026) the validity of such a tradition relies on its intention since ketupat is just a cultural icon that does not bestow blessings. Where local traditions can serve as a medium of faith expression as long as they do not contradict the principle of monotheism. To avoid conceptual overlap, the typology is constructed using three analytical dimensions: Source of Religious Authority, Orientation of Motivation, position of Ketupat Object. However, this group also recognizes the theological vulnerability of the practice.

The second typology is the Traditional-Conformist understanding, which is more commonly found among the older generation and traditional leaders. Statements such as 'tradition existed before religion reflect a narrative that positions tradition as an autonomous authority. For them, engaging in tradition is not merely based on theology but more on loyalty towards their ancestors and sustainability of their community. The traditional leader (TAK) stated that the existence of tradition predates the arrival of religion in their region, so both must go hand in hand. This reveals a latent conflict of authority between religious authority and traditional authority

The third typology is the Mythological-Symbolic understanding, which is more dominant among housewives and ordinary citizens. This group understands ketupat thru the lens of folklore and inherited beliefs. The hanging ketupat is believed to be a medium of communication with the spirits of deceased family members, especially children who died young or were stillborn. From a sociological perspective, this typology fulfills an important emotional function. However, from a theological perspective, it creates the strongest potential tension with Islamic monotheism, a way to still feel close to family members who have passed away .(IK 15, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). Although it lacks support in authoritative religious texts, this belief has a real psychological power in the daily lives of the community.

Table 2. Typology of Community Religious Understanding toward the Ketupat Tradition

Typology	Basis of Understanding	Main Function	Actor Groups
Teo-Cultural	Islamic doctrine & purification of intention	Reconciliation of religion and culture	Religious leaders & village officials

Adat-Conformist	Javanese collective memory	Maintaining identity and solidarity	Older generation & traditional leaders
Mythological-Symbolic	Folklore & myths of spirits	Spiritual and emotional coping	Housewives & the general public

The diversity of typologies above shows that the tradition of Hari Raya Ketupat in Mangga Dua Village cannot be understood in a singular way. It is a space where various theological, cultural, and mythological perspectives meet and negotiate dynamically. Nevertheless, there is an important point of convergence: all groups agree that this tradition needs to be preserved to maintain community harmony, even tho the reasons behind it differ.

The coexistence of these three typologies reveals that the Ketupat Festival is a site of ongoing negotiation rather than a static tradition. Potential tensions include theological tension, authority tension, and generational tension. This refined typology demonstrates that the preservation of the Ketupat Festival is sustained not by uniform belief, but by plural interpretations that are continuously negotiated

The Role of Local Authorities in Building the Legitimacy of Tradition

The Ketupat Festival tradition does not endure merely because of inherited customs, but also due to the presence of two pillars of local authority that actively provide legitimacy to its continuity, namely traditional leaders and religious figures. Field findings, however, show that their relationship is not entirely harmonious but shaped by ongoing negotiation and reinterpretation.

Field interviews indicate that the theological reinterpretation promoted by religious leaders does not completely replace older mythological beliefs. Instead, both systems of meaning often coexist within the community. Several informants acknowledged that the explanation provided by the ustadz that ketupat is merely a symbol of gratitude has influenced how they verbally frame the tradition. However, in practice, many still maintain older understandings regarding protection and spiritual presence. This phenomenon demonstrates that theological purification functions more as a reinterpretive layer rather than a complete transformation of belief. Younger informants often reproduce the narrative of gratitude and intention, yet they continue the ritual out of fear of misfortune if the practice is abandoned. This coexistence indicates that reinterpretation reshapes discourse more quickly than it changes deep-seated belief.

The traditional leaders position themselves as guardians of Javanese cultural heritage in the diaspora. This attitude, however, makes the religious leaders face a precarious situation as an outright denial of tradition could create opposition in society. In order to defend the local traditions against any possible cultural homogenization brought in by the outsiders, the traditional leaders use historical reasoning which argues that this particular tradition

had been practiced long before religion became part of their society. (Tokoh Adat, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). In this view, hanging ketupat is a cultural "requirement" that cannot be ignored if a household wants to achieve safety and sustainability in life.

On the other hand, religious figures play the role of guardians of the theological corridor. Unlike completely rejecting tradition, religionists prefer adopting a slow reinterpreting tactic. The use of such a tactic indicates a prudent attempt by religious leaders to steer the people without directly opposing traditional leaders. Such a tactic clearly shows how authority is negotiated in symbolic terms. Here, religious leaders aim to establish theology as the authority without disturbing the society's peaceful environment. In the light of QS. Al-An'am: 162, religionists show that all things, including culture, can only be considered as worship when aimed at Allah SWT alone. Instead, ketupat becomes a tool for offering collective thanksgiving to God following Ramadan (IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 14, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). Such a move is described in the study of religious moderation as the tactic of Islamization of local traditions to ensure their content is Islamic (Abidin, 2009).

While both groups present a similar public message, interviews show slight discrepancies in priorities. Whereas traditional leaders emphasize continuity and safety within the community, religious leaders emphasize doctrinal correction. This difference creates a form of implicit negotiation rather than full consensus. The legitimacy of the tradition therefore emerges from compromise rather than absolute agreement.

Table 3. The Role of Local Authorities in the Legitimization of the Ketupat Tradition

Actor	Basis of Argumentation	Form of Legitimacy	Main Focus
Traditional Leader	Historical priorities & ancestral heritage	Cultural	Maintaining Javanese identity & community safety
Religious Figure	Q.S. Al-An'am: 162 & the concept of intention (niyyah)	Normative-Islamic	Purification of faith & the meaning of gratitude
The Synergy of Both	Dialectic of tradition and religion	Hybrid	Social harmony thru the Living Qur'an

This relationship can be explained in terms of the notion of cultural hybridity and negotiation of religious identity. It cannot be expected that in the diasporas, religious identity will be created only through enforcement of doctrines. In its turn, the religious identity is constantly negotiated in everyday culture. Thus, the celebration of Ketupat is a place of intersection of cultural heritage, Islamic orthodoxy and unity. At the same time, the above discussion can be viewed as an illustration of the notion of religious moderation.

The interaction between these authorities produces what can be called a hybrid legitimacy pattern. Rather than the result of complete harmony, this pattern represents a negotiated equilibrium that allows diverse interpretations to coexist without open conflict, traditions are maintained not only because they hold cultural value but also because they have been "purified" theologically by religious authorities. This pattern becomes an important foundation for the continuity of traditions amidst the criticism often coming from groups that consider these traditions incompatible with Islam.

Problematic of Faith

Although the Ketupat Festival tradition in Mangga Dua Village has obtained cultural and theological legitimacy through the purification of intention promoted by local religious authorities, the field data demonstrate that this practice remains a site of ongoing negotiation, contestation, and reinterpretation among different social actors. Rather than representing a single doctrinal deviation, the phenomenon reveals a spectrum of belief shaped by generational, sociological, emotional, and theological factors. This section therefore expands the analysis by comparing perspectives across community groups and by situating the findings within broader debates on Islam, cultural accommodation, and religious moderation in Indonesia.

The first problem is connected with the usage of the concept of "syarat" (condition), which has an ambiguous connotation within the context of the community in question. The information gathered during the field study implies that this concept involves several stages of beliefs ranging from purely symbolic and cultural to theologically-oriented interpretations. This information is important since it allows considering the full range of religious experiences existing within this community. Historically, ketupat was used as a way of spreading Islamic culture by shifting people's cosmological beliefs in the direction of monotheism. Yet, ethnographic research shows that the meanings given to ketupat no longer represent (Pratama, 2021). The single theological connotation but rather serve various social and emotional purposes. At the beginning, ketupat was used as a sign of gratitude to Allah SWT who freed the society from dependence on gods. Yet, field studies suggest that ketupat has become instrumental again.

The use of the word 'syarat' shows that ketupat is more than a mere representation of culture. The ketupat has acquired what can be termed as 'suggestive power,' which can affect the safety of its household members (Pratama, 2021). From a sociological point of view, any material object that is viewed as a necessary element in acquiring security becomes a powerful symbol within the society (Novakarti & Utomo, 2021).

From the theological point of view, the likelihood that the ketupat could possibly be regarded as a condition necessary for safety creates a contradiction in dogma that should be addressed with proper guidance. Nonetheless, ethnographic studies indicate that this notion is not applicable in all cases. The concept functions within a continuum starting from cultural manifestation, to psychological assurance, to even instrumental interpretation. Understanding this range of possibilities precludes hasty assumptions while considering at the same time the possible doctrinal issue. Indeed, this relates to acculturation that did not succeed in its aim of converting the culture to Islamic faith, rather than undermining the role of Allah alone as the protector because of reliance on material objects (Nasution dkk., 2023a). Thus, it can no longer be viewed as a cultural practice but as a syncretic one, threatening the essence of monotheism.

From a fiqh perspective, the possibility that an object may be perceived as possessing protective power is traditionally discussed within the discourse of tamīmah. Religious leaders in the village are aware of this doctrinal concern and continuously attempt to reinterpret the practice by emphasizing intention, thereby shifting the meaning of ketupat back toward symbolic gratitude rather than causal protection.. This is clearly prohibited in the hadith narrated by Ahmad and Abu Ya'la: "Whoever hangs a tamīmah, Allah will not complete his affairs" (H.R. Ahmad; authenticated by Al-Hakim). Religious leaders themselves acknowledge this risk and continuously strive to correct the understanding of the community (IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026).

The second issue is the belief about the spirits of deceased or miscarried children (keluron). The belief in spirits represents another important dimension of the tradition. (IK 01, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 15, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). These kinds of beliefs are not founded on any Qur'anic scripture or even on any hadith literature. It is capable of changing the understanding of the issue of God's sovereignty in cases where there are matters regarding life and death that are mentioned in QS. Al-An'am: 162. Though there is no foundation of these practices in Islam, it can be analyzed ethnographically that the purpose of this belief is purely symbolic as means of coping with their grief and suffering. The ketupat serves as a means of coping for parents who went through pregnancy termination or child mortality.

The third problem stems from the dominance of historical arguments made by traditional leaders. Historical reasoning that tradition has existed before the emergence of religious organizations embodies the part that cultural memory plays in the formation of diaspora identity. Instead of considering tradition as higher than religion, this reasoning portrays the process of reconciling the efforts of heritage conservation and theological interpretation within the religious moderation paradigm. Over time, however, this rationale may become a hindrance to the cleansing of religion unless complemented by religious education (Setinawati dkk., 2025). Noting that real religious moderation is not accepting every tradition at its face value, but discussing it with religious considerations.

A comparative study of various social groups shows that the Ketupat Festival serves both as a symbol of culture and as a tool for building social cohesion, as well as an emotion-based symbol of psychological resistance. The youth attend festivals not because of their

metaphysical conviction in any sense, but out of a need for social cohesion and out of reverence towards elders. Thus, we see that cultural traditions not only thrive based on faith but through social commitment and community attachment. In the larger framework of Indonesian Islam, the Ketupat Festival exemplifies the long-running dialectical relationship between religious reform, cultural adaptation, and religious moderation.

Reinterpretation of Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 within the Framework of Tradition

Analysis of Al-Qur'an Sura al-An'ām: 162 within the background of Ketupat Festival celebration of Mangga Dua Village should be done by examining in depth the way this sacred text is interpreted as the basis for giving a theological justification of culture. The verse acts as the theological basis which supports the assertion of the total submission of the believer towards Allah SWT, since:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"Say (Muhammad): "Indeed, my prayer, my worship, my life, and my death are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds." (Q.S. al-An'ām: 162).

The verse above encompasses the ritual dimension (ṣalāt), the existential (nusuk and maḥyā), and the transcendental phase of humanity (mamāt) (az-Zuhaili, 1991; Ibn Kathir, 2000). Exegetically, this verse contains four pillars of absolute devotion. Ṣalāt and nusuk represent the purification of mahdhah worship from the contamination of polytheism, while maḥyā and mamāt affirm that all religious energy during life and the faith carried until death belong to Allah (al-Maraghi, 1946). The spirit of this totality lies in the principle of Lillāh, an absolute sincerity that eliminates any mediator between man and his God (al-Maraghi, 1946).

In terms of a wider theoretical approach, this reinterpretation should be understood in terms of the reception approach to textual interpretation, whereby the Qur'an is regarded as a text that is being constantly received, interpreted, and negotiated in particular socio-cultural settings. Modern reception studies claim that the meaning of a religious text is established via its continuous interaction with society and culture (McAuliffe, 2017). Vernacular religion refers precisely to this process by which religion is practiced through the interaction between scriptural norms and cultural reality.

After being subjected to such a theology-driven symbolic reinterpretation, the ketupat becomes a symbol of thanksgiving and no longer possesses its own spiritual potency. This is best explained as a symbolic compromise between Islamic teachings, Javanese culture, and the emotional needs of the diasporic community. The first analytical connection appears in the transformation of intention (niyyah). In terms of religious authority from the sociology perspective, religious leaders play the role of mediators in resolving the conflict between orthodoxy and local tradition. Instead of discarding the tradition, they use the strategy of purification by intention to make it continue as a social event but change its theological significance. Nonetheless, this also shows the internal diversity among members of the group, especially between the old and young members.

The younger generation of those who have more orientation towards the scriptures finds doubt whether the process of reinterpretation changes beliefs or only repositions tradition in the religious discourse. As stated in IK13 (2026), as long as the installation of ketupat has an intention to be grateful to Allah, then such a practice is compatible with the concept of Lillāh in the verse. This is reinforced by IK14 (2026), which positions pure intention as the determinant of the tradition's validity. Thru this filter, ketupat is then reinterpreted merely as a symbol of gratitude or a physical medium, not as an object with inherent power. This effort to clarify the meaning is considered important so that the belief of some traditional leaders (TAK, 2026) who view ketupat as a "condition" for safety does not develop into a practice of shirk, while still believing that only Allah is the sole source of all blessings .(IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026).

Furthermore, this verse becomes an important instrument in negotiating local mythology, particularly related to the belief in "arwah keluron" which is claimed to require ketupat (IK 01, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 15, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). In widening the scope of exegesis, the reinterpreting of the verse needs to be contrasted with those reformist approaches which place an emphasis on strict theological purification. Within this approach, however, the constant dependence on the existence of the objects of culture may still be considered as problematic despite its justification in terms of intent. They offer the knowledge to the community that all issues related to the soul lie within the control of God, so that citizens need not attribute any great importance to cultural objects in the context of the hereafter (IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). Conversely, the social ritual of bonding through ketupat is regarded as a concrete way of showing one's dedication to God in the realm of social activity (maḥyā) (IK 04, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 12, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). Insofar as the aim is to bring about unity and solidarity among members of the group, this will be deemed as a positive action done through the means of worship in society. The overall effect of Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 within the village of Mangga Dua is therefore a theological basis for maintaining Javanese culture while making sure that Allah is always the purpose of everything (IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026).

a. Confirmation of Hadith and Its Commentary

The analysis of the Ketupat Festival tradition in Mangga Dua Village cannot be viewed solely thru the perspective of the Qur'an; it requires confirmation thru hadith literature to delineate the boundaries between permissible cultural expressions (mubāḥ) and practices that may deviate (shirk or tasyabbuh). This section focuses the analysis on the hadith regarding the prohibition of using amulets (tamīmah) as a form of criticism against the function of the "condition" of ketupat, as well as the hadith regarding the permissibility of expressing the joy of the holiday thru local traditions as a basis for cultural legitimacy.

The confirmation of Hadith in this study is not intended to determine a rigid binary judgment of permissibility or prohibition. Rather, its goal is to study the way prophecy is read and understood in the interplay of culture, emotion, and theology within the celebration of the Ketupat Festival.

One significant part of this tradition is that of hanging ketupat, which according to community leaders and their people, is done out of "necessity" to protect the family from harm. Normatively, this practice intersects with the prohibition of hanging certain objects with the belief that they ward off disasters. This is emphasized in the following hadith:

عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ رضي الله عنه قَالَ سَمِعتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: مَنْ عَلَّقَ تَمِيمَةً فَلَا أَتَمَّ اللَّهُ لَهُ، وَمَنْ عَلَّقَ وَدَعَةً فَلَا وَدَعَ اللَّهُ لَهُ.

"From 'Uqbah bin 'Amir r.a., he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: "Whoever hangs a tamīmah (amulet), Allah will not fulfilll his need, and whoever hangs a wad'ah (seashell amulet), Allah will not leave him in peace" (Narrated by Ahmad and Abu Ya'la; authenticated by Al-Hakim).

In another narration from the same narrator, it is mentioned with a clearer text: مَنْ عَلَّقَ فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ ("Whoever hangs something [amulet], then he has committed shirk"). The commentary by Hafiz Al-Munzir explains that tamīmah, terminologically, is an object hung with the belief that it can independently ward off calamities. This belief is categorized as "ignorance and misguidance" (jahlu wa dhalālah) because the authority to avert harm belongs solely to Allah (al-Fayumi, 2018). Ibn Abd Barr in Al-Tamhīd added that this prohibition strictly applies to objects hung before the calamity for preventive purposes (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 2017). Analytically, if society believes that hanging ketupat has intrinsic power as an absolute "condition" for safety (Tokoh Adat, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026) then the practice is at risk of being classified as minor shirk because it makes something a cause, whereas Allah has not made it a cause for salvation.

Several hadith are frequently mobilized by local religious leaders to support the permissibility of cultural celebration. However, in practice, these hadith function not merely as legal justification but as interpretive tools through which communities negotiate the meaning of tradition.

On the other hand, the tradition of Hari Raya Ketupat as a manifestation of post-Ramadan joy is reinforced by a hadith that tells of a female slave singing in Aisha's (r.a.) house during the holiday:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رضي الله عنها أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: يَا أَبَا بَكْرٍ إِنَّ لِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ عِيدًا وَهَذَا عِيدُنَا.

"From Aisha r.a., that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "O Abu Bakr, indeed every people has their own holiday, and this is our holiday" (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Ibn Asyur explained that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) saying is a concession (rukhshah) because the holiday is a day of joy and entertainment that is permitted by custom (urf) (Ibn Ashur, 2007). Al-Qasthalani added that expressions of joy, as long as they remain within the limits recognized by Sharia, should not be denied .(al-Qasṭallānī, 1996). This hadith provides space for the social aspects of the ketupat tradition in Mangga Dua Village. As long as ketupat is only positioned as a "symbol of tradition," a

means of socializing, and a medium for community cooperation (guyub) to express gratitude, then this practice is valid as a local cultural expression in celebrating the holiday (this is our holiday).

A local religious leader explained:

"Ketupat is not a protector. It is only a reminder to remain grateful to Allah after Ramadan." (IK13)

The analysis of this hadith provides clear boundaries for the residents of Mangga Dua Village in carrying out their traditions. Currently, the ketupat tradition is in a rather critical position; it can either become merely an allowed custom or risk deviating from religious teachings. Therefore, local religious leaders emphasize the importance of realigning intentions as conveyed in Q.S. al-An'am: 162. The goal is for ketupat not to be considered to have protective power like an amulet (tamīmah). If the intention is not maintained, the use of this ketupat can easily fall into practices prohibited by the Prophet Muhammad. However, if the intention is purely for Allah (lillāh), this tradition becomes a means of collective gratitude that strengthens community harmony without compromising Islamic faith.

b. Dialectics of Phenomena and Nass

It will be erroneous to perceive the encounter of the Ketupat tradisi and the teachings from the Qur'an in binary terms of adherence and deviance from the scripture. Rather, there is a dynamic continuum involving the dialectics of theological precepts, emotional need, cultural heritage, and identity among others in shaping the relation between the Ketupat tradisi and Qur'anic teachings.

In accordance with Living Qur'an, religious practice does not arise from the teachings from scriptures alone. Rather, religion results from an ongoing process of dialogue between scriptural authority and human experience. In Mangga Dua Village, the verse of Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 operates as the interpretive lens for constantly re-interpretation of traditional practice.

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate how the practice of Ketupat tradition in Mangga Dua Village is in line with religious sources. According to field observations, the continued practice of ketupat rituals in Mangga Dua Village cannot be attributed to theological reasons alone. The ritual is entrenched emotionally and culturally. For many participants, the ritual represents continuity with ancestors, protection of the household, and reassurance in the face of uncertainty. It turns out that the relationship between the two does not always show perfect harmony. A kind of debate or tension arises between the desire to maintain identity as Javanese society and the obligation to adhere to the principles of Islamic faith. To facilitate understanding of these dynamics, here is a theoretical mapping in the form of a matrix:

Table 4. Dialectical Matrix of Empirical Findings and Normative Sources

Practice Dimension	Empirical Findings (Interviews)	Normative Source (Naṣṣ)	Nature of the Relationship
Ritual Motivation	Manifestation of gratitude (shukr) post-Ramadan (IK13, IK14)	Q.S. 6:162: The Principle of Lillāh (Total Devotion).	**Suitability:** In harmony with the pure intention of gratitude.
Object Function	Ketupat as a "condition" for safety and warding off misfortune (TAK; IK08, IK11).	Hadith Tamīmah: Prohibition of hanging talismans.	**Tension:** The risk of shifting from a symbol to an amulet (tamīmah).
Eschatology	Myth of "Arwah Keluron": Ketupat as food/sign of spirits (LK01, LK02, IK03, LK08IK15)	Q.S. 6:162: The Concept of Mamāt (God's Sovereignty over Death).	**Contradiction:** Does not have a basis in an authoritative text (nash).
Cultural Expression	Javanese Identity & Eid Joy (TAK, LK04, LK13, LK14).	Hadith Id: Permission to celebrate Eid with local traditions.	**Suitability:** Recognized as a cultural rukhshah (concession).

In practice, this tradition finds its convergence with religious texts (naṣṣ) when interpreted as an expression of gratitude (shukr) to Allah. Religious leaders (IK13) and village officials (IK14) consistently use the message of Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 to emphasize that this tradition is part of worship with a cultural dimension and is entirely directed toward Allah. This view is also supported normatively thru the Hadith of Id, which provides space for every community group to express their joy thru local traditions, as long as they do not contain elements of immorality. Here, ketupat acts as "cultural capital," which helps to create strong social bonds among the Javanese immigrants in

Mangga Dua village without going against the core tenets of Islamic laws. Such an expression comes more out of emotions and culture rather than any sort of religious dependency.

One of the important elements that have emerged from the data is the link between rituals and experiences of pain, insecurity, and uncertainties. The beliefs around keluron (spirits of dead babies) illustrate the role of symbolic rituals as group coping strategies for grief. Hanging ketupat operates as a symbolic act that helps families maintain emotional bonds with deceased loved ones and transform private grief into shared communal memory. From a sociological perspective, such rituals provide emotional stability, continuity of memory, and social solidarity. Ritual therefore functions not only as religious expression but also as a culturally embedded coping strategy.

There is a clash of meanings regarding the use of the term "syarat" by traditional leaders and local residents. Sociologically, this term indicates that ketupat is considered a tool (instrument) to achieve safety (slamet). However, theologically, this practice conflicts with the Hadith of Tamīmah, which prohibits the use of objects as talismans to ward off misfortune. Although in the discussion of fiqh, there are scholars who permit tabarruk (seeking blessings) after a calamity occurs, the act of placing ketupat as a precautionary measure before the calamity comes is more inclined toward the understanding of amulet (tamīmah). If the residents believe that the ketupat has its own power to ward off misfortune, then this action falls into the category of ignorance and misguidance (jahlu wa dhalālah). Religious leaders (IK13) strive to correct the community's intentions to quell existing differences of opinion. However, in practice, the residents still believe that ketupat has a practical function as a tool to protect their homes.

One of the most striking contradictions is found in the community's belief regarding the spirits of children who died during miscarriage (keluron). Some residents believe that the hanging ketupat serves as a means to "feed" or communicate with the spirit of their deceased child, so that the child does not feel forgotten .(IK 01, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 02, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 03, komunikasi pribadi, 27 Maret 2026; IK 08, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 15, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). This belief fundamentally contradicts the principle of Q.S. al-An'ām: 162, which asserts that all matters of life and death (maḥyā wa mamāt) are entirely under the sovereignty of Allah. Contemporary interpretation emphasizes the absence of any mediator between humans and their God in matters of the fate of souls. Thus, this practice can be understood as a deviation from Islamic teachings, although its emergence is not unrelated to the psychological condition of the community trying to cope with the grief of losing a child.

This concept can be connected with general scholarly debates about lived religion, cultural hybridity, and syncretism in religion. In this regard, the Ketupat tradisi is a part of the identity negotiation where Indonesian diasporic groups try to preserve cultural traditionality and at the same time adhere to Islamic orthodoxy. Instead of diluting Islam

theologically, this form of cultural hybridity demonstrates how Muslim groups create an Islamic identity locally through discourse negotiation.

Etymologically, tamīmah is defined by Al-Mubarrad as al-ma'ādzah or something that is hung by someone as a place of refuge or protection (Al-Mubarrad, 1997). Terminologically, Ash-Shan'ani emphasizes that tamīmah includes anything that is hung, whether in the form of a necklace, stone, paper with writing, or other objects, with the aim of warding off misfortune or illness (Ash-Shan'ani, 2011). In the context of the Lebaran Ketupat tradition in Mangga Dua Village, the habit of hanging ketupat above the door can be considered an amulet (tamīmah). This happens if the community believes that the ketupat has its own power to protect the house. The risk of the cultural tradition's meaning changing into an amulet practice arises when the belief in the oneness of God (Tawhid) begins to fade. As a result, the object is no longer seen as a symbol, but rather as an object capable of providing protection or causing harm independently (Nasution dkk., 2023b).

The dialectic in Mangga Dua Village shows that the tradition of Hari Raya Ketupat is in an ambivalent position. On one hand, it is a manifestation of the Living Qur'an that strengthens the sense of gratitude and identity of the community (IK 13, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026; IK 14, komunikasi pribadi, 18 April 2026). However, on the other hand, there are remnants of old elements (from pre-Islamic beliefs) that still persist, and it could become a religious issue if the community starts to regard objects like ketupat as having their own power, rather than just being symbols. However, the community tends not to openly question this, because this tradition is considered important for maintaining harmony and collective peace. Therefore, this tradition persists not solely because it is undoubtedly correct from a religious standpoint, but because of its significant role in strengthening social bonds and maintaining inner peace, especially for Javanese descendants who have migrated to this area. Taken together, these findings show that the relationship between the Ketupat Festival and Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 operates as a spectrum of negotiation rather than a binary of acceptance or rejection. The Living Qur'an functions here as a mediating framework that allows theological purification, emotional coping, and cultural continuity to coexist within a shared orientation toward devotion to Allah.

Theological Reconstruction of the Ketupat Tradition

The theological reconstruction of the Ketupat Festival should be understood not as a purely doctrinal purification project, but as a socially negotiated process shaped by the interaction between religious authority, cultural memory, and everyday religious experience. By making Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 the foundation, this tradition does not need to be eliminated thru a confrontational approach, but rather its meaning should be reoriented to align with the principle of Tawhid. This reconstruction strategy is based on the transformation of societal consciousness from object functionalism to pure theocentrism.

The process of theological reconstruction promoted by local religious leaders does not operate as a linear or fully accepted transformation. Field data show that community members respond to this reinterpretation in diverse ways. Several younger participants

acknowledged that sermons and religious gatherings gradually shifted how they verbally explain the tradition, emphasizing gratitude and intention rather than mystical protection. However, this discursive change does not automatically translate into a complete transformation of belief. Many informants continue to perform the ritual while simultaneously holding residual cosmological assumptions inherited from earlier generations. This finding indicates that theological reconstruction functions more as a negotiated reinterpretation than a total replacement of vernacular belief.

The conceptual model of "Spirit" can be operationalized through three interrelated mechanisms. First, the process of desacralization refers to the gradual removal of perceived metaphysical agency from the ketupat object through sermons, religious counseling, and everyday discourse. Second, the emergence of pure theocentrism represents the reorientation of ritual intention (niyyah) toward Allah as the sole source of protection and blessing. Third, the role of ketupat is that of a mnemonic symbol where it is able to keep the memories of gratitude after Ramadan alive without being considered an independent spiritual object anymore. Such mechanisms illustrate the process of ritual transformation.

In spite of the positive aspects, there are some serious drawbacks with regard to this model of religious development. First, emotional bonds, intergenerational memories, and inherited views of the universe are very deep in the minds of religious people. Some informants reported their concerns about possible bad luck if the rite were not performed, even though the religious understanding had been reinterpreted from a theological perspective.

a. Reorientation of Total Worship (Principle of Lillāh)

Based on the authority of Q.S. al-An'ām: 162, all dimensions of life (maḥyā) and worship (nusuk) must be centered solely on Allah as the Lord of the worlds. The theological reconstruction necessitates the desacralization of objects, where the ketupat is viewed purely as a cultural symbol or physical medium, not as a "talisman" (tamīmah) with intrinsic power to ward off misfortune. The value of an action in Islam greatly depends on the intention (niyyah). If this practice is intended as a form of gratitude (shukr) for God's blessings after Ramadan, then it transforms from merely a remnant of mythology into a manifestation of submission to God.

b. Conceptual Model: "Vessel Culture, Spirit Tauhid"

This model offers a framework to preserve tradition as a cultural identity while maintaining the steadfastness of faith thru three integrative pillars:

1) Symbolic Pillar (Ketupat as Mnemonic): Ketupat is positioned as a visual reminder of the philosophy of ngaku lepat (acknowledging mistakes) and laku papat (four noble actions). Tradition serves as a means of character education and a guardian of the collective memory of the Javanese diaspora without having to become a mystical object.

2) Eschatological Pillar (Transformation of Prayer): The belief regarding the "spirits of miscarried children" (keluron) is reconstructed from the myth of feeding spirits into

the practice of Shadaqah and Prayer. Theologically, devotion to deceased family members (mamāt) is channeled thru the Shari'ah path, not thru speculative material symbolism.

3) Social Pillar (Ibadah Maḥyā): The communal activity of making ketupat is viewed as a form of social worship in the dimension of life (maḥyā). This is in line with the spirit of the hadith regarding the joy of Eid, which provides space for local cultural expressions as long as they do not violate the principle of monotheism.

c. Theoretical Contribution: Contextual Interpretation and Nusantara Islam

This reconstruction provides an important theoretical contribution to the study of Islam in Indonesia in two main aspects. First, as a form of Contextual Interpretation (Living Qur'an), the phenomenon in Mangga Dua proves that Q.S. 6:162 can serve as an instrument of negotiation for the community to maintain their identity amidst the currents of purification. This shows that the sacred text is dynamic in addressing the psychological and social needs of the community. Second, it strengthens the position of Nusantara Islam as the Middle Path (Wasathiyah). This model offers a typology of religiosity that is non-confrontational toward culture, yet remains critical of aspects that harm the faith. By integrating hadiths regarding the diversity of holiday traditions and the prohibition against amulets (tamīmah), this reconstruction offers a synthesis between legal formalism and local wisdom.

This theological reconstruction positions the Ketupat Festival tradition not as a threat to faith, but as a cultural instrument of gratitude. By affirming the principle that life and death belong only to God, the hanging ketupat in Mangga Dua Village transforms into a "monument of gratitude" that strengthens human relationships (hablum minannas) while also reinforcing the servant's sincerity toward their God (hablum minallah).

Table 4. Dialectics of Field Findings with Normative Sources

Practice Dimension	Field Findings	Normative Sources	Nature of Relationship
Ritual motivation	Gratitude post-Ramadan (IK13, IK14)	QS. 6:162 — principle of lillāh	In harmony, when the intention is pure
Object function	Ketupat as a "condition" for safety (TAK, IK08, IK11)	Hadith tamimah — prohibition of amulets	Potentially problematic

belief in spirits	Ketupat as a sign/food for the deceased (IK01,IK02,IK03,IK08,IK15)	QS. 6:162 — God's sovereignty over death	needs to be clarified
Cultural expression	Javanese Identity & Eid Joy (TAK, IK13, IK14)	Hadith Id — local expression of rukhshah	in harmony, recognized by Sharia

The table above summarizes the dialectical position of the Hari Raya Ketupat tradition as a whole. This tradition is not entirely problematic, but it is also not entirely free from the risk of deviation. It is in a dynamic position and continuously requires guidance from local religious authorities so that potentially deviant meanings can be corrected, while positive cultural values are maintained and celebrated.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the Ketupat Festival tradition in Mangga Dua Village is a manifestation of the Living Qur'an that dynamically negotiates the collective memory of Javanese identity with the purity of Islamic faith. Thru critical dialectics, it was found that this practice endures not because of static syncretism, but thru a pattern of hybrid legitimacy that transforms ketupat from merely a mythological "requirement" into a collective instrument of gratitude (shukr). Analysis of Q.S. al-An'ām: 162 and the explanation of hadith proves that the principle of total devotion (lillāh) can serve as an effective theological filter to purify the intentions of the community without having to erase ancestral heritage.

However, the findings also reveal that this harmonization is neither total nor uncontested. Empirical data show the coexistence of multiple layers of belief, ranging from intention-centered theological reinterpretation to lingering mythological understandings of ketupat as a medium of protection or spiritual presence. Theological purification promoted by religious authorities often reshapes public discourse more rapidly than it transforms deeply embedded belief systems. This indicates that the Ketupat Festival remains a site of ongoing tension and negotiation between cultural preservation, mythological memory, and doctrinal purification. Rather than eliminating ambiguity, the reinterpretation process produces a layered and hybrid religious landscape.

Generational dynamics further complicate this process. While older participants view the tradition as a moral obligation tied to ancestral identity, younger Muslims increasingly reinterpret the practice as cultural heritage rather than spiritual necessity. This shift reflects the growing influence of formal religious education, social media, and reformist Islamic discourse. Yet, instead of abandonment, the tradition persists through selective reinterpretation and social negotiation. This finding suggests that the sustainability of local

traditions increasingly depends on their ability to be continuously recontextualized within contemporary Islamic discourse.

Nevertheless, this research has several limitations. First, the study is geographically limited to a single diaspora community in Mangga Dua Village, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the relatively short duration of fieldwork limits the ability to observe long-term transformation of beliefs across generations. Third, the research primarily captures the perspectives of local actors and does not deeply explore responses from external reformist Islamic groups who may challenge the legitimacy of such traditions.

The theoretical position of this research asserts that the steadfastness of faith in the Javanese diaspora space is maintained thru the model "Vessel Culture, Spirit Tauhid." In this model, tradition is positioned purely as a sociocultural medium (vessel), while spiritual authority remains fully centered on Allah SWT as the sole protector and giver of salvation. The scientific contribution of this research lies in strengthening the study of contextual interpretation, which shows that sacred texts are not rigid but capable of reconstructing problematic social realities into harmonious cultural worship practices. As a recommendation, this research emphasizes the importance of the role of local religious authorities in continuously purifying meanings. This is crucial to prevent the shift of cultural symbolism back to the functionalism of amulets (tamīmah) that could harm the purity of monotheism in the future.

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