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# AMULET OF QURANIC VERSES IN EAST JAVANESE RURAL: UNRAVELING MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND LIVING QURAN

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the relationship between social phenomena and the use of amulets containing verses from the Qur'an within a Muslim community residing in an East Java village. To understand this dynamic, the study relies on the theoretical framework of the living Qur'an, which delves into how the Muslim community interacts with the Qur'an. This interaction goes beyond mere reading of Qur'anic texts and extends to encompass various behaviors aimed at leveraging the Qur'an's power by creating amulets to address everyday challenges. These amulets are crafted using specific sources, techniques, and are imbued with spiritual beliefs. They serve as a solution to a range of issues, and their usage varies based on the author's beliefs and specific interests. Through this research, it becomes evident that the amulets, composed of Qur'anic verses, possess mystical, spiritual, social, and economic significance within the community. They function as potent tools for the actors in the village, offering solutions and benefits in their lives. In a broader context, this study strengthens the notion that religion continues to hold relevance, even amidst the prevailing dominance of rationality and modernity. The amulets act as a tangible manifestation of the enduring connection between the Muslim community and their religious beliefs, providing a unique insight into the fusion of faith and practicality. The paper uncovers how these amulets represent a tangible bridge between the spiritual and material realms, illustrating the intricate interplay of tradition, belief, and contemporary challenges faced by the community.

**Keywords:** mystical theology, living Qur'an, amulet, anthropology of religion, Javanese.

## **1. Introduction**

According to Abidin (2004), the Qur'an holds a significant position among Muslims, serving as the divine word of Allah and a crucial source of Islamic teachings. It serves as a guiding light for humanity, leading them towards truth and ultimate happiness in both the earthly life and the afterlife. However, the Qur'an is not merely "read" in a singular manner by its followers; rather, there exists a diverse range of "recitations of the Qur'an," which reflects the varied receptions and interpretations of Muslims. These diverse models of Qur'anic reading encompass various approaches, ranging from those focused on understanding and delving deep into its meanings, to others who view it as a ritualistic and ceremonial practice. Interestingly, some individuals even utilize the Qur'an for pragmatic purposes, such as employing its verses as a form of medicine for mental and physical ailments. This behavior model is oriented towards motives like seeking magical and supernatural powers or seeking medicinal healing (Yusuf, 2007; Abidin, 2017). This phenomenon of diverse interactions with the Qur'an has roots dating back to the early days of Islam in Indonesia. The Indonesian Muslim community profoundly reveres the Qur'an, as evident in the preservation of various traditional practices passed down through generations in religious circles and groups. They engage with the Qur'an in multifaceted ways, encompassing reading, understanding, practicing, respecting, interpreting, and utilizing its teachings. This phenomenon, in turn, reflects the notion of the "Living Qur'an" in their daily lives—the Qur'an that remains alive and relevant in the midst of society.

In Ngantru village, Tulungagung, an intriguing phenomenon of Islamic community interaction with the Qur'an has been observed. Some individuals in the community create

talismans or amulets using Qur'anic verses to protect themselves and their belongings. They view the Qur'an's textual form as a miraculous source that bestows various privileges, such as healing, strength, salvation, and mercy. However, they believe that the special powers of the Qur'an can only be harnessed in their daily lives through specific terms and methods. The amulets are typically obtained from local village clerics or elders considered to possess magico-spiritual knowledge, enabling them to discern the hidden features behind each Qur'anic letter. The potency of these amulets is influenced by various factors, including the correct writing rules and the efficacy of the preparation rituals (Interview with MD, in Ngantru, 25 June 2017).

Karl Mannheim's theoretical perspective on social actions and meanings can shed light on this phenomenon. He posits that human actions are shaped by two dimensions: behavior and meaning. To comprehend social actions, scientists must examine both the external behavior and the intended meanings behind them. Mannheim categorizes the meanings of social actions into three types: objective meaning (determined by the social context), expressive meaning (shown by the actor), and documentary meaning (implicit and hidden, revealing the actor's culture). The phenomenological approach is employed in this study to delve into the worldviews of the amulet creators, exploring their subjective views and understanding their cultural practices (Baum, 1999; Mannheim, 1952; Muhadjir, 1991; Spradley et al., 1997; Endraswara, 2006)..

## **2. Method**

The research method employed in this study is primarily qualitative and focuses on understanding the functions and meanings of amulets among the Muslim community in Ngantru village, Tulungagung Regency. To accomplish this, the study conducts a detailed exploration of the practices and behaviors related to the creation and utilization of Qur'anic amulets. The research draws inspiration from the living research direction of the Qur'an, which emphasizes the relevance of Islamic teachings in contemporary society.

Moreover, it builds upon the groundwork laid by previous scholars, such as Denny (1990), Abidin (1992), Federspiel (1994), Wasik (2005), Syam (2005), Ahmad (2008), Lawrence et al. (2008), Hidayah (2011), Kurniawan (2012), Mun'im (2013), Andriawan (2013), Aminullah (2015), Anwar (2016), and Abidin (2017), who have explored related aspects of Muslim behaviors connected to the Qur'an in different contexts and timeframes. The study employs descriptive-explanatory techniques to analyze the data collected during the research process. Researchers will document and interpret the observed behaviors and practices related to the amulets, aiming to provide comprehensive insights into their functions and significance within the Ngantru community.

To better understand the underlying meanings attributed to the amulets, the research incorporates the sociological theory of knowledge proposed by Karl Mannheim (1991) and Abdullah (2003). Through this methodological approach, the study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on the multifaceted interactions between the Qur'an and the community's beliefs, practices, and traditions, shedding light on the dynamic role of amulets in their daily lives.

## **3. Results**

### ***3.1. Function of the Qur'an and the Existence of the Qur'anic Amulet***

The Qur'an encompasses three fundamental components: the *rasm* (text), *qira'at* (reading), and its meanings. Each of these components has given rise to various branches of knowledge, which have continuously evolved and are collectively summarized in the study of the Qur'an (ulum al-Qur'an and interpretation). The aspect of reading, for instance, has led to the development of tajweed (the science of proper Quranic recitation) and qira'ah (different

recitation styles), ultimately giving birth to the science of interpretation. In relation to the aspect of writing (rasm), it has also spawned diverse scientific disciplines, including the art of creating the Qur'an amulets. This particular discipline combines the knowledge of Rasm al-Qur'an (the study of Quranic script) with magical practices (the science of wisdom), using the Qur'an's text as a medium for treating various physical and mental ailments. This practice is grounded in the Qur'an itself, which proclaims its presence as al-Syifa' (a healer) for various diseases. Additionally, the Qur'an commands Muslims to use it as a wasilah (intermediary medium) to find solutions to all their problems. This understanding is also shared by certain individuals in the village of Ngantru, where some amulet practitioners claim that the Qur'an has the power to cure all ailments. Ngantru village, located in the Ngantru sub-district of Tulungagung, East Java province, is renowned for its notable train station known as "Ngunjung Station" within the Tulungagung region. Situated in the northern part of Tulungagung, the village is home to individuals who believe that the Qur'an holds profound wisdom, both in its written form and its recitation, capable of curing all ailments and serving as the ultimate solution to human problems, both in this world and the afterlife. According to MD, an amulet practitioner in the village:

"The Qur'an is a divine revelation from Allah, who is perfect. Therefore, everything from Allah embodies perfection and immense wisdom for humanity. As part of Allah's greatness, the Qur'an undoubtedly contains this profound wisdom." (Interview with MD, 21 July 2021).

This perception reveals that, for some Muslim circles, the Qur'an is not solely a book of life's guidelines containing divine laws. Instead, it is viewed as a problem solver for various challenges in human life, manifested in the form of amulets. This phenomenon signifies an interaction between Muslim communities and the Qur'an, actively incorporated into their daily lives. It is a logical consequence of their understanding of the Qur'an's multifaceted functions. As part of the Living Qur'an study, this phenomenon reflects the Qur'an's relevance in everyday life, exemplifying its significance as an integral aspect of their existence (Jeferi, 2008).

Table 1. Subdistricts in Tulungagung and the population in 2020

<b>Subdistricts</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Besuki	17,727	17,784	35,555
Bandung	22,549	22,597	43,788
Pakel	26,277	26,421	51,322
Campurdarat	29,240	29,448	58,600
Tanggunggunung	12,838	12,910	25,057
Kalidawir	34,880	34,880	64,499
Pucanglaban	11,643	11,648	22,304
Rejotangan	38,505	38,673	74,527
Nganut	41,282	41,480	79,844
Sumbergempol	35,285	35,466	68,170
Boyolangu	42,803	43,173	84,708
Tulungagung	34,106	34,117	66,321
Kedungwaru	46,041	46,314	92,048
Ngantru	28,264	28,456	56,814
Karangrejo	20,245	20,254	39,784
Kauman	25,212	25,221	49,998
Gondang	27,832	27,821	54,589
Pagerwojo	15,454	15,465	30,680

Sendang	22,399	22,433	44,574
<b>Total</b>	<b>532,582</b>	<b>534,561</b>	<b>1,043,182</b>

In Javanese culture, the term "amulet" is commonly used to refer to a protective talisman or charm, while in Arabic, it is known as "tamimah" (refinement) (Anwar, 2016). An amulet is any object worn around the neck or on the body to safeguard oneself, repel negative influences, ward off diseases caused by the evil eye ('ain), and protect from other dangers (Ibn Mandzur, 1414 H). Some individuals differentiate between "amulet" and "talisman." The former, as perceived by the Ngantru community, primarily consists of written texts believed to possess magical powers for specific needs, such as inscriptions on iron plates or other objects deemed to hold supernatural capabilities by certain individuals (Gusmian, 2013; Abdullah et al., 2008). Amulets generally fall into three categories: numeric (using numbers), alphabetical (using Arabic letters), and pictorial (utilizing images) (Aliviana, 2012).

Among the people of Ngantru, the belief in amulets provides an alternative solution to their problems, depending on the intentions of the wearer and the amulet maker. The effectiveness of these amulets is influenced by the completeness of conditions set by the maker. This societal behavior, related to the use of amulets, seems to be influenced by elements of the local animist culture, characterized by beliefs in the supernatural powers of certain objects or materials. In the Ngantru area, certain community leaders are renowned for their ability to create amulets from the Qur'an, which are believed to possess healing properties and protection from malevolence. Consequently, these leaders become sought-after resources for various groups seeking help in addressing daily life challenges, with visitors traveling from different regions beyond Ngantru seeking their aid. This phenomenon has persisted over generations, signifying the transmission and transformation of knowledge through time.

Amulet users visit practitioners with various motives. Some seek ease and success in their desired job positions within specific companies or institutions. Others, such as parents, approach the amulet experts to request success for their children in academic examinations. Additionally, people seek assistance for spiritual or magical issues, including dealing with genie disturbances or safeguarding properties from both physical crimes like theft and non-physical threats like witchcraft. Despite the belief held by many regarding the mystical properties of the Qur'an, some individuals in Ngantru do not subscribe to the idea of healing through the Qur'an. This skepticism is commonly observed among rational-minded academics. Their opposition is based on several reasons. Firstly, they consider the concept of amulets irrational. Secondly, they doubt the efficacy because they believe it lacks scientific proof. Thirdly, some may partially believe in certain situations, particularly those involving jinn, magic, or witchcraft. Lastly, some individuals view using the Qur'an as an amulet as a diversion from its intended purpose as a revered holy book in Islam.

Table 2. Religious adherents in Tulungagung, 2009 - 2015

Year	Islam	Catholic	Protestant	Hinduism	Buddhism	Other
2015	1,088,959	4,002	11,852	804	809	77
2014	1,075,678	4,200	11,995	804	775	156
2013	1,087,539	5,485	740	1,093	1,093	64
2012	1,075,067	7,231	751	1,240	1,240	45
2011	1,013,662	2,868	658	1,457	1,457	246
2010	1,013,188	4,449	601	1,256	1,256	289
2009	986,662	3,772	526	1,364	1,364	-

Source: <https://tulungagungkab.bps.go.id/statictable/2018/03/07/1436/pemeluk-agama-menurut-kecamatan-2009-2015.html>

### 3.2. The Behavior Related to Qur'anic Amulet

The Qur'anic amulet is employed in various ways, showcasing the creativity of its creators and the influence of local culture. Some practitioners in Ngantru use the amulet as a medium for treating individuals afflicted by witchcraft, magic, possession, and genie disturbances. One approach involves soaking the amulet in water, which is then given to the patient. Another method involves writing the amulet on a betel leaf and placing it in water mixed with honey. Additionally, people often hang the amulet on their doorstep or in the corners of their houses to prevent interference from jinn, magic, or malevolent individuals, thus safeguarding the safety and comfort of the household.

A unique application of the Qur'an amulet was found in cases related to black magic. Practitioners provide individuals with two scrolls of the amulet—one to be used as a belt and the other soaked in water from *ba'da Isyak* (after evening prayers) until *Shubuh* (before dawn). The soaked amulet must be drained after each session. The procedure requires reading *Al-Fatihah* 100 times, *tahlil (la ilaha illallah)* 100 times, and offering 100 salutations to the Prophet. The process is repeated until the patient is relieved of their affliction. According to a practitioner of amulets, the timing and reading recommendations are part of the tradition passed down from his predecessors. *Al-Fatihah* is read as verses of prayer (*ruqyah*), *Tahlil* serves as purification of the oneness of Allah (*tauhid*), and the salutations to the Prophet act as an intermediary to seek blessings. The verses written on the scrolls are kept confidential, known only to the practitioners, as they form a critical part of the ritual (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017).

Table 3. Religious adherents in Ngantru subdiscriit, 2019-2020

Year	Islam	Catholic	Protestant	Hindu	Buddha	Lain-lain
2019	60,265	300	26	10	-	19
2020	58,232	281	99	-	13	-

Source: BPS Tulungagung, 2021

Moreover, crafting a magical fence or antidote against genies is one of the applications of the Qur'anic amulet in addressing mystical issues within society. As revealed by an amulet practitioner, he often receives complaints from residents about disturbances caused by genies at their homes. In response, he creates protective amulets using specific verses from the Qur'an, such as *surah al-Fatihah*, the first three verses of *surah al-Baqarah*, *ayat Kursi*, and *la qad ja akum*. These verse selections are based on guidance from the Prophet's traditions regarding their beneficial properties. The amulets are then placed in the corners of the house, and sometimes they are hung as well (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017). Before installing the amulets, field observations are conducted through *istikharah* (seeking guidance from Allah) and prayers to determine the types and characteristics of the genies interfering and the parts of the house they occupy. This preparation is crucial for arranging the appropriate amulets. Regarding the problem of dealing with genie spirits, the practitioner believes that only those with supernatural abilities can understand it. Following the amulet installation, the residents of the house are encouraged to perform a salvation ceremony with the intention of giving alms to dispel calamities, as taught in the Prophet's hadith about the benefits of charity.

The amulet's application for the expulsion of other harmful genie or creature disturbances is often practiced by some *ruqyah* practitioners. The methods of use vary; some are ingested, while others are applied to specific body parts. Commonly used verses include *Surah al-Fatihah*, *Mua'widatain*, *ayat Kursi*, and *ayat la qad ja akum*, believed to possess healing properties and provide personal protection from demonic or jinn disturbances. These



beliefs stem from guidance provided by teachers and Islamic teachings derived from the Prophet's hadith and wisdom scholars' writings (Interview with MM, 18 August 2021).

In addition to its mystical and spiritual purposes, the use of amulets can also have practical and economic orientations. For instance, some individuals utilize amulets for trading purposes, hoping to simplify transactions or increase subscriptions. Specific verses such as al-Fatihah, the thousand dinar verse, and surah waqi'ah are employed for this intention. These verses are written and hung above the doors of shops or stores. According to some amulet practitioners, these verses hold the power to attract blessings and abundance to those who use them for their businesses. The practice can be incorporated into daily readings or utilized as amulets, as previously explained (Interview with PK, 20 August 2021).

Based on observations of several cases involving the use of Qur'anic amulets, it becomes evident that the amulets serve as a manifestation of the villagers' belief in the Qur'an's function as a medium for seeking solutions to life's problems. The functions encompass the amulet acting as a remedy for physical and psychological illnesses, a protective measure against jinn, magic, and witchcraft disturbances, a repellent for spirits, and even an element of inheritance.

### **3.3. The meaning of Qur'anic Amulet**

The tradition of using amulets in Ngantru Village reflects the reception and application of the local community towards the Qur'an. This remarkable tradition, characterized as "mystic-animistic," continues to persist even in the modern millennial era, where rationality, intellectualism, and a relatively high spiritual level are prevalent. The coexistence of amulets with modern and contemporary social and religious culture can be understood through Karl Mannheim's sociological theory of knowledge, which explores the causal relationship between ideas and the social reality of society (Abidin, 2015). When examining the phenomenon of the Qur'an's functionalization as an amulet, Mannheim's theory introduces two dimensions: behavior and meaning. In this context, Mannheim classifies three types of meanings. Firstly, objective meaning, which refers to the basic and original meaning determined by the social context of the action. Secondly, expressive meaning, attributed to the individual actor's actions. Lastly, documentary meanings, which are often concealed, making the actors unaware that their expressions reflect the broader culture. In the case of the Qur'anic amulet, it serves as an implementation of one's understanding and belief in the Qur'an as the divine word of Allah, possessing perfection and mystical power for humanity. Users perceive the amulet as a written form with magical abilities to solve various life problems. Through observations, it becomes apparent that the basic meaning of using the Qur'anic amulet lies in people's belief in the Qur'an's existence and its functionalization as the sacred word of Allah. They hold the conviction that the Qur'an contains solutions for all human life's challenges in this world and the hereafter, making it an ultimate problem solver (Interview with PK, 20 August 2021).

Furthermore, the expressive meaning of the amulet tradition stems from the objective meaning mentioned earlier, which gives rise to various behaviors that serve as expressions of that meaning. To uncover the expressive meaning of the amulet tradition, investigations are conducted from both the perspectives of amulet makers and users. The process of creating and utilizing amulets is seen as a natural form of social communication amid life's challenges and difficulties. Both amulet makers and users have distinct motives and purposes when it comes to the ordering and use of amulets. Individuals seek out amulet experts or makers based on their specific intentions, desires, and goals. The presence of amulets in Ngantru represents a meaningful activity for them. From the perspective of the Qur'an practitioners, there are two views concerning the function of the Qur'an as an amulet. Firstly, they perceive this practice as a form of vertical worship, where individuals draw closer to Allah (taqarrub 'ala Allah) and purify themselves (tazkiyah al-nafs) through specific rituals involved in

making Qur'anic amulets. This understanding is rooted in their belief that the Qur'an is the divine word of Allah and holds a pure essence. As one practitioner expressed, approaching Allah and seeking His blessings is best achieved through the Qur'an, as it serves as a medium for prayers and devotion. Secondly, this practice is seen as a consequence of their obligation to fulfill a divine mandate, making it an obligatory task to undertake. Additionally, it serves as a means of propagating Islamic teachings and preserving Islamic culture. The practitioners view the amulet tradition as part of their cultural heritage passed down through generations, as acknowledged by an amulet practitioner, who stated that he inherited the knowledge of making Qur'anic amulets from his family and teachers (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017).

From the perspective of amulet users, the Qur'anic amulet serves various life interests and motives, encompassing both material and spiritual aspects. This is evident in the diverse problems they seek help with from practitioners of the Qur'anic amulet. The meanings attributed to the amulet can be classified as follows. The first is that in an ideological-philosophical meaning, the users perceive the Qur'an as sacred and perfect, holding extraordinary secrets and strength as it is directly revealed by the God Almighty. They believe that the Qur'an is not just plain text, but a divine medium that can provide solutions to all human problems. This meaning is commonly held by amulet practitioners themselves. The second as the most prominent meaning for amulet users is the religious-mystical-spiritual meaning. They turn to the amulet when rational approaches such as medicine or conventional solutions fail to overcome difficulties and disturbances, especially spiritual ones like jin or santet. The amulet becomes a source of mystical power, instilling confidence and the belief that they can overcome the challenges they face.

In a sociological-anthropological perspective: The practice of making and using amulets also serves as a means of communication for users. By seeking amulets, individuals communicate their problems to others and seek social responses. In some cases, they share issues that might be considered taboo to discuss with people who may not understand the spiritual realm. Seeking amulets from knowledgeable practitioners becomes a way to address psychological and spiritual problems. Lastly, in an economic and pragmatic perspective, amulet users are often individuals who have already spent significant sums seeking conventional treatments or consulting healthcare professionals without satisfactory results. Turning to amulets, they see it as a viable solution to their problems and are willing to spend on this alternative approach. Amulet makers, on the other hand, may charge a fee or ask for compensation for their services, creating a symbiotic relationship where both parties benefit. Expressively, the practice of using Qur'anic amulets holds various meanings. For amulet makers, it is a means of preaching and seeking blessings while assisting the community, viewed as an act of worship. The "dowry" or compensation given by buyers is seen as a blessing from God. On the other hand, for users, the amulet represents a practical solution to the problems they encounter in life.

The tradition of using amulets holds significant importance in society. The presence of amulet practitioners garners attention and respect from various circles within the community. People view them as saviors who can provide solutions to various life problems. This phenomenon is particularly interesting for religious individuals who use amulets as a means of seeking solutions and medicine for their issues, believing it to be safer, more comfortable, and aligned with Islamic principles. The continuity of this tradition also reflects the religiosity of the Ngantru village community. From a social and religious perspective, Qur'anic amulet is a popular choice among the community, especially when the practitioners of the amulets are respected religious figures like *ulama* or knowledgeable individuals in religious matters. The practitioners' strong faith and expertise provide a sense of security for users, ensuring that the practice does not involve any acts of shirk (idolatry). Moreover, the

phenomenon of Qur'anic amulet showcases the community's reverence for the text of the Qur'an as a divine revelation. People consider the Qur'an as an intermediary for God's help, with extraordinary powers beneficial to humanity. This perception elevates the Qur'an to a sacred status and reinforces its role as a practical solution to various human problems. The practice of Qur'anic amulet also offers business opportunities, with some practitioners functioning as alternative medicine clinics. Additionally, the phenomenon reveals a shift in understanding the Qur'an's functionalization, transitioning from a mere guidebook to a source of practical solutions for life's challenges. Socio-culturally, the amulet tradition exemplifies humanism-based social interactions, fostering mutual help, respect for religious figures, and the preservation of classical Islamic cultural heritage. In conclusion, the amulet tradition in Ngantru village is a socio-religious phenomenon deeply rooted in sacred texts. The community's view of the Qur'an's function is manifested through this practice, and the tradition itself contains documentary meaning, illustrating the significance and functionalization of the Qur'an for Muslims in Ngantru.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The research revealed several key conclusions that can be drawn. First, the villagers' understanding of the Qur'an's function can be categorized into two main perspectives as they view the Qur'an as a collection of divine revelations guiding human life, delivered to Prophet Muhammad (saw). They also perceive the Qur'an as a comprehensive book containing solutions to all aspects of human life, making it a medium to seek answers to their problems. Secondly, this understanding of the Qur'an's function in Ngantru leads to various socio-religious practices, including the creation and utilization of Qur'anic verses as amulets, commonly known as Qur'anic amulet. Thirdly, in crafting the Qur'anic amulet, the villagers consider essential elements such as the source of manufacture, location and time of creation, writing techniques, and verse selection techniques. The application methods of the amulet are also diverse, including hanging, planting in building corners, making necklaces or belts, dissolving in water for consumption, among others. Fourthly, the amulet of the Qur'an holds significant meaning for the people of Ngantru. It encompasses ideological-philosophical meanings, mystical-spiritual meanings, social-anthropological meanings, and economic-pragmatic meanings. All of these meanings contribute to the well-being of both the users and makers of the amulets.

The conclusions drawn from this research have several implications for understanding the role of the Qur'an in the lives of the villagers. The existence of two main perspectives on the Qur'an's function highlights the diversity of perceptions within the community. This shows that individuals interpret the Qur'an based on their own beliefs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. In socio-religious practices, the utilization of Qur'anic verses as amulets reflects the villagers' strong belief in the Qur'an's power to provide solutions to various life problems. This practice has become an integral part of their socio-religious practices. Moreover, this shows cultural heritage, as the creation and usage of Qur'anic amulets represent a cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations. It demonstrates how local beliefs and traditions have incorporated Islamic elements. Lastly, the amulet-making process involves both the users and makers of the amulets, fostering a sense of community and social cohesion. The practitioners are perceived as knowledgeable figures who can provide solutions to problems, enhancing their status within the community.

The research is conducted in a specific village (Ngantru) and may not be representative of other communities or regions with different cultural and religious contexts. The findings may not be applicable or generalizable to other populations. The conclusions drawn from the research rely on the researchers' analysis and interpretation of the data. There may be some degree of subjectivity in understanding the villagers' beliefs and the meanings they attach to the Qur'anic amulets. Addressing these limitations and conducting further

research with a larger and more diverse sample, considering temporal changes, and ensuring cultural sensitivity could enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Additionally, employing a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the villagers' beliefs and practices related to Qur'anic amulets.

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## Paper Review Results

5 pesan

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**Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies** <ajis@richtmann.org>  
Kepada: Ahmad Zainal Abidin <azabidin.uintulungagung@gmail.com>

22 September 2023 pukul 00.26

Dear Ahmad Zainal Abidin,

Kindly find attached the Result of Review for your paper entitled:

**"AMULET OF QURANIC VERSES IN EAST JAVANESE RURAL: UNRAVELING MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND LIVING QURAN"**

submitted to the **Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies**.

Your paper is accepted for publication in AJIS Vol. 12 No. 6 November 2023 edition **with minor revision required**.

We would kindly like to remind you to respect the deadline set in the review for the revision of your paper.

Since your paper is accepted for publication with minor revision required, you may also proceed with payment procedures; please let us know the details of the payment when available. Attached you can find the invoice if you choose the bank for the payment. On the link below you can complete the payment through PAYPAL by credit or debit cards:

<https://www.richtmann.org/journal/index.php/mjss/Instructions>

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

*PS: Please note that the mentioned datelines in the Review Form are only indicative and not definitive. The exact date of publication of an article will be given only upon final acceptance and payment of publication fees is confirmed.*

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2 lampiran



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**Ahmad Zainal Abidin** <azabidin.uintulungagung@gmail.com>  
Kepada: Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies <ajis@richtmann.org>

26 September 2023 pukul 16.23

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for the kind feedback.

The reviewers provided critical and valuable comments. We have revised the paper according to their comments and suggestions. Responses to their comments are also provided in a separate sheet.

Also, would like to confirm that we have completed the payment for publication. We sent the proof in the previous email, and you have confirmed receipt.

We are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,  
Zainal

[Kutipan teks disembunyikan]

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## 2 lampiran

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4 Oktober 2023 pukul 01.31

Dear Ahmad Zainal Abidin,

Thank you for the revised paper, your paper is now ok for publication.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,

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**From:** Ahmad Zainal Abidin <azabidin.uintulungagung@gmail.com>

**Sent:** 26 September 2023 09:23

**To:** Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies <ajis@richtmann.org>

**Subject:** Re: Paper Review Results

[Kutipan teks disembunyikan]

Dear Ahmad Zainal Abidin,

Thank you very much for your collaboration, I confirm the receipt of your payment, your paper will be published in AJIS November 2023 edition, attached you can find the letter of acceptance for your perusal. If you need a journal hard copy, please send us your address for its shipment.

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[Kutipan teks disembunyikan]

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**Ahmad Zainal Abidin** <azabidin.uintulungagung@gmail.com>  
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1 November 2023 pukul 19.22

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Dear Editor,

Thank you for your email and the confirmation of the receipt of my payment. I'm delighted to hear that my paper will be published in the November 2023 edition of AJIS.  
I appreciate the attachment of the letter of acceptance, and I will review it promptly.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to have my work published in AJIS. I'm looking forward to seeing it in print in the November edition.

Best Regards,

Zainal

[Kutipan teks disembunyikan]



**Reviewer  
Comments  
#1**

Referee : -

First author : Ahmad Zainal Abidin

Title : AMULET OF QURANIC VERSES IN EAST JAVANESE RURAL: UNRAVELING  
MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND LIVING QURAN**Note:** *The name of referee will be deleted when this report is sent back to the author(s).***Comments About Paper:**

This paper delves into the usage of amulets containing Qur'anic verses within a Muslim community residing in an East Java village. It investigates how these amulets hold significance in mystical theology and the lives of the community members. The study employs the theoretical framework of the living Qur'an, which explores the multifaceted interaction between the Muslim community and the Qur'an. The paper highlights the role of these amulets in addressing various challenges and the broader implications of their usage in the context of faith, tradition, and contemporary issues.

**General Comments:**

The paper explores a unique and fascinating aspect of religious practice and belief within a specific cultural context. The research is well-structured and the abstract provides a comprehensive overview of the study. However, a discussion section is notably absent from the paper, which is a critical element of a research paper. Minor revisions are required to address this omission and to enhance the overall clarity of the paper.

**Major Strengths:**

1. **Relevance:** The research topic is highly relevant for the field of anthropology of religion, offering insights into how religious beliefs are integrated into everyday life.
2. **Theoretical Framework:** The use of the "living Qur'an" framework provides a solid theoretical foundation for the study, helping readers understand the unique perspective from which the research is conducted.

**Minor Revisions:**

1. **Discussion Section:** The absence of a discussion section is a significant gap in the paper. A discussion section is vital to analyze and interpret the findings, connect them to existing literature, and draw meaningful conclusions. Please include a well-structured discussion section to address these aspects.
2. **Clarity of Writing:** In some places, the language is slightly convoluted and could benefit from simplification for improved readability. Ensure that complex ideas are expressed clearly and concisely.

3. **Keywords:** While the provided keywords are relevant, consider including additional keywords that may help the paper reach a broader audience. For instance, "Islamic practices" or "spirituality."

4. **Visual Aids:** If applicable, consider incorporating visual aids (e.g., maps, diagrams) to enhance the presentation of data or concepts.

**Overall Recommendation:**

With the inclusion of a well-structured discussion section and the implementation of the suggested minor revisions, this paper has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the anthropology of religion. I recommend accepting this paper with minor revisions.

Please address the comments and resubmit your revised manuscript. Thank you for your valuable contribution to the understanding of the intersection of religion and everyday life in this specific cultural context.

**Other Comments about the paper:**

- The paper needs some revision for typeset and a detailed proofreading, checking spelling, grammar, sentence structure and terminology.
- The author can check the paper by a native speaker, an expert in English language, or using online services.
- If you cannot find an expert, we recommend the Elsevier language editing; you can find information in the link below about this service offered by Elsevier:

<https://webshop.elsevier.com/language-editing-services/language-editing/>

Based on the above comments I recommend this paper for publication after corrections.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Publish as it is.	
Publish with the minor revision noted above.	√
Publish with major revision noted above	
Reject (*)	

(\*) The reasons for the paper rejection must be clearly stated.

**What should you do? (If your paper was not rejected)**

- Revise the paper according to the reviewer's comments (if applicable)
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### Proposed Schedule for Publication

- **Vol. 12, No. 6, November 2023**, if you meet the above requirements by **05.10.2023**
- You may also ask to postpone the publication of the paper in another issue.

## Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies

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## Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies

ISSN 2281-3993 (print); ISSN 2281-4612 (online)

### *Letter of Acceptance*

Date: October 27, 2023

Ahmad Zainal Abidin  
Salamah Noorhidayati  
Imam Ahmadi

*Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung,  
Indonesia*

Hereby, we would kindly inform you that your paper titled:

***Amulet of Quranic Verses in East Javanese Rural: Unraveling Mystical Theology and Living Quran***

Submitted in the Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, after the double blinded peer review process has been accepted for publication in the Vol 12 No 6 November 2023. You can access the online journal in the link: <https://www.richtmann.org/journal>

With Kind Regards  
Yours Sincerely



**Prof. Marco Cilento**      Marco Cilento

**Editor in Chief**

*Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies  
Sapienza University of Rome, Italy*

This paper delves into the usage of amulets containing Qur'anic verses within a Muslim community residing in an East Java village. It investigates how these amulets hold significance in mystical theology and the lives of the community members. The study employs the theoretical framework of the living Qur'an, which explores the multifaceted interaction between the Muslim community and the Qur'an. The paper highlights the role of these amulets in addressing various challenges and the broader implications of their usage in the context of faith, tradition, and contemporary issues.

Thank you for your thoughtful review and appreciation of our paper's focus on amulets containing Qur'anic verses within an East Java village's Muslim community. We are encouraged by your recognition of the significance of this research topic. Our study indeed delves into the multifaceted realm of mystical theology and explores how these amulets are intertwined with the lives of the community members. By employing the theoretical framework of the living Qur'an, we aim to shed light on the intricate relationship between the Muslim community and the Qur'an itself. We appreciate your understanding of the paper's emphasis on the role of these amulets in addressing challenges faced by the community and the broader implications of their usage within the context of faith, tradition, and contemporary issues. Your feedback reinforces our commitment to contributing valuable insights to the scholarly discourse in this area.

#### **General Comments:**

The paper explores a unique and fascinating aspect of religious practice and belief within a specific cultural context. The research is well-structured and the abstract provides a comprehensive overview of the study. However, a discussion section is notably absent from the paper, which is a critical element of a research paper. Minor revisions are required to address this omission and to enhance the overall clarity of the paper.

I appreciate your thoughtful review and recognition of the unique aspect of our research within a specific cultural context. Your feedback is valuable, and we acknowledge the need to address the absence of a discussion section in the paper, which is indeed a crucial element of a research paper. We will make the necessary revisions to incorporate a comprehensive discussion section that analyzes and interprets our findings, providing a more complete and insightful view of the research outcomes. Additionally, we will work on enhancing the overall clarity of the paper as per your suggestions.

#### **Major Strengths:**

1. **Relevance:** The research topic is highly relevant for the field of anthropology of religion, offering insights into how religious beliefs are integrated into everyday life.

I am sincerely grateful for your positive feedback regarding the relevance of our research topic in the field of anthropology of religion. Your recognition of the value of our study in providing insights into the integration of religious beliefs into daily life is both encouraging and motivating.

2. **Theoretical Framework:** The use of the "living Qur'an" framework provides a solid theoretical foundation for the study, helping readers understand the unique perspective from which the research is conducted.

Your positive assessment of this theoretical framework is greatly appreciated. We aimed to offer readers a distinct and meaningful perspective for understanding our research, and it's gratifying

to know that it has served that purpose effectively. Your insights are invaluable and affirm our approach in the paper.

#### Minor Revisions:

1. Discussion Section: The absence of a discussion section is a significant gap in the paper. A discussion section is vital to analyze and interpret the findings, connect them to existing literature, and draw meaningful conclusions. Please include a well-structured discussion section to address these aspects.

We have incorporated a well-structured discussion section in our paper to analyze and interpret the findings, establish connections with existing literature, and derive meaningful conclusions.

2. Clarity of Writing: In some places, the language is slightly convoluted and could benefit from simplification for improved readability. Ensure that complex ideas are expressed clearly and concisely.

We have carefully reviewed and simplified the language in areas where it may have become convoluted. Our aim is to make the paper more accessible to a wider audience while retaining the depth of our research.

3. Keywords: While the provided keywords are relevant, consider including additional keywords that may help the paper reach a broader audience. For instance, "Islamic practices" or "spirituality."

We have certainly considered adding keywords like "Islamic practices" and "spirituality" to the list.

4. Visual Aids: If applicable, consider incorporating visual aids (e.g., maps, diagrams) to enhance the presentation of data or concepts.

We don't have any visual aids to present, despite your suggestion that we should consider using them if they are relevant, such as maps or diagrams, to improve the presentation of data or concepts.

#### Overall Recommendation:

With the inclusion of a well-structured discussion section and the implementation of the suggested minor revisions, this paper has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the anthropology of religion. I recommend accepting this paper with minor revisions. Please address the comments and resubmit your revised manuscript. Thank you for your valuable contribution to the understanding of the intersection of religion and everyday life in this specific cultural context

We have addressed the comments and incorporate the suggested changes, particularly by adding a well-structured discussion section.

#### Other Comments about the paper:

- The paper needs some revision for typeset and a detailed proofreading, checking spelling, grammar, sentence structure and terminology.

We have undertaken a thorough revision and proofreading process to address these issues and ensure the paper meets the highest standards of clarity and professionalism.

- The author can check the paper by a native speaker, an expert in English language, or using online services.

- If you cannot find an expert, we recommend the Elsevier language editing; you can find information in the link below about this service offered by Elsevier:

<https://webshop.elsevier.com/language-editing-services/language-editing/> Based on the above comments I recommend this paper for publication after corrections.

I appreciate your feedback and your recommendation for language editing. Your suggestion to have the paper reviewed by a native English speaker or an expert in English is duly noted. We understand the importance of ensuring the highest language quality in our manuscript. We have proofread the paper thoroughly.

---

**Proofreading: AJIS November 2023**

2 pesan

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**Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies** <ajis@richtmann.org>  
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31 Oktober 2023 pukul 00.12

Dear Colleagues,

Thanking you for the contribution in the **Vol 12 No 6 of November 2023**, we are sending the attached full pdf journal for your **proofreading**. You are invited to see your paper/s and if you have any comment/s please send it (comments only) **within November 1** and specify the line and page number.

For any questions do not hesitate to contact us.

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**Ahmad Zainal Abidin** <azabidin.uintulungagung@gmail.com>  
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1 November 2023 pukul 19.26

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending the attached full PDF journal for our proofreading.  
We have carefully reviewed the content and are pleased to confirm that we have no further comments or revisions to make.

We agree with this version for publication.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to Vol 12 No 6 of November 2023 and are confident in the quality of the final version.

If you have any additional questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to seeing our paper in the upcoming publication.

Best Regards,  
Zainal

[Kutipan teks disembunyikan]



1



Research Article

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Received: 25 July 2023 / Accepted: 24 October 2023 / Published: xx November 2023

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## Amulet of Quranic Verses in East Javanese Rural: Unraveling Mystical Theology and Living Quran

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Ahmad Zainal Abidin

Salamah Noorhidayati

Imam Ahmadi

Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid  
Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung,  
Indonesia



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2023-xxxx>

### Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between social phenomena and the use of amulets containing verses from the Qur'an within a Muslim community residing in an East Java village. To understand this dynamic, the study relies on the theoretical framework of the living Qur'an, which delves into how the Muslim community interacts with the Qur'an. This interaction goes beyond mere reading of Qur'anic texts and extends to encompass various behaviors aimed at leveraging the Qur'an's power by creating amulets to address everyday challenges. These amulets are crafted using specific sources, techniques, and are imbued with spiritual beliefs. They serve as a solution to a range of issues, and their usage varies based on the author's beliefs and specific interests. Through this research, it becomes evident that the amulets, composed of Qur'anic verses, possess mystical, spiritual, social, and economic significance within the community. They function as potent tools for the actors in the village, offering solutions and benefits in their lives. In a broader context, this study strengthens the notion that religion continues to hold relevance, even amidst the prevailing dominance of rationality and modernity. The amulets act as a tangible manifestation of the enduring connection between the Muslim community and their religious beliefs, providing a unique insight into the fusion of faith and practicality. The paper uncovers how these amulets represent a tangible bridge between the spiritual and material realms, illustrating the intricate interplay of tradition, belief, and contemporary challenges faced by the community.

**Keywords:** Islamic practices, spirituality, mystical theology, living Qur'an, anthropology of religion

### 1. Introduction

The Qur'an holds a significant position among Muslims, serving as the divine word of Allah and a crucial source of Islamic teachings. It serves as a guiding light for humanity, leading them towards truth and ultimate happiness in both the earthly life and the afterlife. However, the Qur'an is not merely "read" in a singular manner by its followers; rather, there exists a diverse range of "recitations of the Qur'an," which reflects the varied receptions and interpretations of Muslims (Abidin (2004). These diverse models of Qur'anic reading encompass various approaches, ranging from those focused

on understanding and delving deep into its meanings, to others who view it as a ritualistic and ceremonial practice. Interestingly, some individuals even utilize the Qur'an for pragmatic purposes, such as employing its verses as a form of medicine for mental and physical ailments. This behavior model is oriented towards motives like seeking magical and supernatural powers or seeking medicinal healing (Yusuf, 2007; Abidin, 2017). This phenomenon of diverse interactions with the Qur'an has roots dating back to the early days of Islam in Indonesia. The Indonesian Muslim community profoundly reveres the Qur'an, as evident in the preservation of various traditional practices passed down through generations in religious circles and groups. They engage with the Qur'an in multifaceted ways, encompassing reading, understanding, practicing, respecting, interpreting, and utilizing its teachings. This phenomenon, in turn, reflects the notion of the "Living Qur'an" in their daily lives—the Qur'an that remains alive and relevant in the midst of society.

In Ngantru village, Tulungagung, an intriguing phenomenon of Islamic community interaction with the Qur'an has been observed. Some individuals in the community create talismans or amulets using Qur'anic verses to protect themselves and their belongings. They view the Qur'an's textual form as a miraculous source that bestows various privileges, such as healing, strength, salvation, and mercy. However, they believe that the special powers of the Qur'an can only be harnessed in their daily lives through specific terms and methods. The amulets are typically obtained from local village clerics or elders considered to possess magico-spiritual knowledge, enabling them to discern the hidden features behind each Qur'anic letter. The potency of these amulets is influenced by various factors, including the correct writing rules and the efficacy of the preparation rituals (Interview with MD, in Ngantru, 25 June 2017).

Karl Mannheim's theoretical perspective on social actions and meanings can shed light on this phenomenon. He posits that human actions are shaped by two dimensions: behavior and meaning. To comprehend social actions, scientists must examine both the external behavior and the intended meanings behind them. Mannheim categorizes the meanings of social actions into three types: objective meaning (determined by the social context), expressive meaning (shown by the actor), and documentary meaning (implicit and hidden, revealing the actor's culture). The phenomenological approach is employed in this study to delve into the worldviews of the amulet creators, exploring their subjective views and understanding their cultural practices (Baum, 1999; Mannheim, 1952; Muhadjir, 1991; Spradley et al., 1997; Endraswara, 2006).

## 2. Method

The research method employed in this study is primarily qualitative and focuses on understanding the functions and meanings of amulets among the Muslim community in Ngantru village, Tulungagung Regency. To accomplish this, the study conducts a detailed exploration of the practices and behaviors related to the creation and utilization of Qur'anic amulets. The research draws inspiration from the living research direction of the Qur'an, which emphasizes the relevance of Islamic teachings in contemporary society.

Moreover, it builds upon the groundwork laid by previous scholars, such as Abidin (1992), Federspiel (1994), Syam (2005), Lawrence et al. (2008), Hidayah (2011), Andriawan (2013), Aminullah (2015), and Abidin (2017), who have explored related aspects of Muslim behaviors connected to the Qur'an in different contexts and timeframes. The study employs descriptive-explanatory techniques to analyze the data collected during the research process. Researchers will document and interpret the observed behaviors and practices related to the amulets, aiming to provide comprehensive insights into their functions and significance within the Ngantru community.

To better understand the underlying meanings attributed to the amulets, the research incorporates the sociological theory of knowledge proposed by Karl Mannheim (1991) and Abdullah (2003). Through this methodological approach, the study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on the multifaceted interactions between the Qur'an and the community's beliefs, practices, and traditions, shedding light on the dynamic role of amulets in their daily lives.

3. Results

3.1 Function of the Qur'an and the Existence of the Qur'anic Amulet

The Qur'an encompasses three fundamental components: the *rasm* (text), *qira'at* (reading), and its meanings. Each of these components has given rise to various branches of knowledge, which have continuously evolved and are collectively summarized in the study of the Qur'an (ulum al-Qur'an and interpretation). The aspect of reading, for instance, has led to the development of tajweed (the science of proper Quranic recitation) and qira'ah (different recitation styles), ultimately giving birth to the science of interpretation. In relation to the aspect of writing (rasm), it has also spawned diverse scientific disciplines, including the art of creating the Qur'an amulets. This particular discipline combines the knowledge of Rasm al-Qur'an (the study of Quranic script) with magical practices (the science of wisdom), using the Qur'an's text as a medium for treating various physical and mental ailments. This practice is grounded in the Qur'an itself, which proclaims its presence as al-Syifa' (a healer) for various diseases. Additionally, the Qur'an commands Muslims to use it as a wasilah (intermediary medium) to find solutions to all their problems. This understanding is also shared by certain individuals in the village of Ngantru, where some amulet practitioners claim that the Qur'an has the power to cure all ailments. Ngantru village, located in the Ngantru sub-district of Tulungagung, East Java province, is renowned for its notable train station known as "Ngujangan Station" within the Tulungagung region. Situated in the northern part of Tulungagung, the village is home to individuals who believe that the Qur'an holds profound wisdom, both in its written form and its recitation, capable of curing all ailments and serving as the ultimate solution to human problems, both in this world and the afterlife. According to MD, an amulet practitioner in the village:

*"The Qur'an is a divine revelation from Allah, who is perfect. Therefore, everything from Allah embodies perfection and immense wisdom for humanity. As part of Allah's greatness, the Qur'an undoubtedly contains this profound wisdom." (Interview with MD, 21 July 2021).*

This perception reveals that, for some Muslim circles, the Qur'an is not solely a book of life's guidelines containing divine laws. Instead, it is viewed as a problem solver for various challenges in human life, manifested in the form of amulets. This phenomenon signifies an interaction between Muslim communities and the Qur'an, actively incorporated into their daily lives. It is a logical consequence of their understanding of the Qur'an's multifaceted functions. As part of the Living Qur'an study, this phenomenon reflects the Qur'an's relevance in everyday life, exemplifying its significance as an integral aspect of their existence (Jeferi, 2008).

Table 1. Subdistricts in Tulungagung and the population in 2020

Subdistricts	Male	Female	Total
Besuki	17,727	17,784	35,555
Bandung	22,549	22,597	43,788
Pakel	26,277	26,421	51,322
Campurdarat	29,240	29,448	58,600
Tanggunggunung	12,838	12,910	25,057
Kalidawir	34,880	34,880	64,499
Pucanglaban	11,643	11,648	22,304
Rejotangan	38,505	38,673	74,527
Ngunut	41,282	41,480	79,844
Sumbergempol	35,285	35,466	68,170
Boyolangu	42,803	43,173	84,708
Tulungagung	34,106	34,117	66,321
Kedungwaru	46,041	46,314	92,048

Subdistricts	Male	Female	Total
Ngantru	28,264	28,456	56,814
Karangrejo	20,245	20,254	39,784
Kauman	25,212	25,221	49,998
Gondang	27,832	27,821	54,589
Pagerwojo	15,454	15,465	30,680
Sendang	22,399	22,433	44,574
Total	532,582	534,561	1,043,182

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In Javanese culture, the term “amulet” is commonly used to refer to a protective talisman or charm, while in Arabic, it is known as “tamimah” (refinement) (Anwar, 2016). An amulet is any object worn around the neck or on the body to safeguard oneself, repel negative influences, ward off diseases caused by the evil eye (‘ain), and protect from other dangers (Ibn Mandzur, 1414 H). Some individuals differentiate between “amulet” and “talisman.” The former, as perceived by the Ngantru community, primarily consists of written texts believed to possess magical powers for specific needs, such as inscriptions on iron plates or other objects deemed to hold supernatural capabilities by certain individuals (Gusmian, 2013; Abdullah et al., 2008). Amulets generally fall into three categories: numeric (using numbers), alphabetical (using Arabic letters), and pictorial (utilizing images) (Aliviana, 2012).

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Among the people of Ngantru, the belief in amulets provides an alternative solution to their problems, depending on the intentions of the wearer and the amulet maker. The effectiveness of these amulets is influenced by the completeness of conditions set by the maker. This societal behavior, related to the use of amulets, seems to be influenced by elements of the local animist culture, characterized by beliefs in the supernatural powers of certain objects or materials. In the Ngantru area, certain community leaders are renowned for their ability to create amulets from the Qur’an, which are believed to possess healing properties and protection from malevolence. Consequently, these leaders become sought-after resources for various groups seeking help in addressing daily life challenges, with visitors traveling from different regions beyond Ngantru seeking their aid. This phenomenon has persisted over generations, signifying the transmission and transformation of knowledge through time.

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Amulet users visit practitioners with various motives. Some seek ease and success in their desired job positions within specific companies or institutions. Others, such as parents, approach the amulet experts to request success for their children in academic examinations. Additionally, people seek assistance for spiritual or magical issues, including dealing with genie disturbances or safeguarding properties from both physical crimes like theft and non-physical threats like witchcraft. Despite the belief held by many regarding the mystical properties of the Qur’an, some individuals in Ngantru do not subscribe to the idea of healing through the Qur’an. This skepticism is commonly observed among rational-minded academics. Their opposition is based on several reasons. Firstly, they consider the concept of amulets irrational. Secondly, they doubt the efficacy because they believe it lacks scientific proof. Thirdly, some may partially believe in certain situations, particularly those involving jinn, magic, or witchcraft. Lastly, some individuals view using the Qur’an as an amulet as a diversion from its intended purpose as a revered holy book in Islam.

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Table 2. Religious adherents in Tulungagung, 2009 – 2015

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Year	Islam	Catholic	Protestant	Hinduism	Buddhism	Other
2015	1,088,959	4,002	11,852	804	809	77
2014	1,075,678	4,200	11,995	804	775	156
2013	1,087,539	5,485	740	1,093	1,093	64
2012	1,075,067	7,231	751	1,240	1,240	45
2011	1,013,662	2,868	658	1,457	1,457	246

Year	Islam	Catholic	Protestant	Hinduism	Buddhism	Other
2010	1,013,188	4,449	601	1,256	1,256	289
2009	986,662	3,772	526	1,364	1,364	-

Source: <https://tulungagungkab.bps.go.id/statictable/2018/03/07/1436/pemeluk-agama-menurut-ke-camatan-2009-2015.html>

### 3.2 The Behavior Related to Qur'anic Amulet

The Qur'anic amulet is employed in various ways, showcasing the creativity of its creators and the influence of local culture. Some practitioners in Ngantru use the amulet as a medium for treating individuals afflicted by witchcraft, magic, possession, and genie disturbances. One approach involves soaking the amulet in water, which is then given to the patient. Another method involves writing the amulet on a betel leaf and placing it in water mixed with honey. Additionally, people often hang the amulet on their doorstep or in the corners of their houses to prevent interference from jinn, magic, or malevolent individuals, thus safeguarding the safety and comfort of the household.

A unique application of the Qur'an amulet was found in cases related to black magic. Practitioners provide individuals with two scrolls of the amulet—one to be used as a belt and the other soaked in water from ba'da Isyak (after evening prayers) until Shubuh (before dawn). The soaked amulet must be drained after each session. The procedure requires reading *Al-Fatihah* 100 times, *tahlil (la ilaha illallah)* 100 times, and offering 100 salutations to the Prophet. The process is repeated until the patient is relieved of their affliction. According to a practitioner of amulets, the timing and reading recommendations are part of the tradition passed down from his predecessors. *Al-Fatihah* is read as verses of prayer (ruqyah), *Tahlil* serves as purification of the oneness of Allah (tauhid), and the salutations to the Prophet act as an intermediary to seek blessings. The verses written on the scrolls are kept confidential, known only to the practitioners, as they form a critical part of the ritual (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017).

Table 3. Religious adherents in Ngantru subdiscret, 2019-2020

Year	Islam	Catholic	Protestant	Hindu	Buddha	Lain-lain
2019	60,265	300	26	10	-	19
2020	58,232	281	99	-	13	-

Source: BPS Tulungagung, 2021

Moreover, crafting a magical fence or antidote against genies is one of the applications of the Qur'anic amulet in addressing mystical issues within society. As revealed by an amulet practitioner, he often receives complaints from residents about disturbances caused by genies at their homes. In response, he creates protective amulets using specific verses from the Qur'an, such as surah al-Fatihah, the first three verses of surah al-Baqarah, ayat Kursi, and la qad ja akum. These verse selections are based on guidance from the Prophet's traditions regarding their beneficial properties. The amulets are then placed in the corners of the house, and sometimes they are hung as well (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017). Before installing the amulets, field observations are conducted through *istikharah* (seeking guidance from Allah) and prayers to determine the types and characteristics of the genies interfering and the parts of the house they occupy. This preparation is crucial for arranging the appropriate amulets. Regarding the problem of dealing with genie spirits, the practitioner believes that only those with supernatural abilities can understand it. Following the amulet installation, the residents of the house are encouraged to perform a salvation ceremony with the intention of giving alms to dispel calamities, as taught in the Prophet's hadith about the benefits of charity.

222 The amulet's application for the expulsion of other harmful genie or creature disturbances is  
223 often practiced by some ruqyah practitioners. The methods of use vary; some are ingested, while  
224 others are applied to specific body parts. Commonly used verses include Surah al-Fatihah,  
225 Mua'widatain, ayat Kursi, and ayat la qad ja akum, believed to possess healing properties and provide  
226 personal protection from demonic or jinn disturbances. These beliefs stem from guidance provided  
227 by teachers and Islamic teachings derived from the Prophet's hadith and wisdom scholars' writings  
228 (Interview with MM, 18 August 2021).

229 In addition to its mystical and spiritual purposes, the use of amulets can also have practical and  
230 economic orientations. For instance, some individuals utilize amulets for trading purposes, hoping to  
231 simplify transactions or increase subscriptions. Specific verses such as al-Fatihah, the thousand dinar  
232 verse, and surah waq'ah are employed for this intention. These verses are written and hung above  
233 the doors of shops or stores. According to some amulet practitioners, these verses hold the power to  
234 attract blessings and abundance to those who use them for their businesses. The practice can be  
235 incorporated into daily readings or utilized as amulets, as previously explained (Interview with PK, 20  
236 August 2021).

237 Based on observations of several cases involving the use of Qur'anic amulets, it becomes evident  
238 that the amulets serve as a manifestation of the villagers' belief in the Qur'an's function as a medium  
239 for seeking solutions to life's problems. The functions encompass the amulet acting as a remedy for  
240 physical and psychological illnesses, a protective measure against jinn, magic, and witchcraft  
241 disturbances, a repellent for spirits, and even an element of inheritance.

#### 242 4. Discussion

243 The tradition of using amulets in Ngantru Village reflects the reception and application of the local  
244 community towards the Qur'an. This remarkable tradition, characterized as "mystic-animistic,"  
245 continues to persist even in the modern millennial era, where rationality, intellectualism, and a  
246 relatively high spiritual level are prevalent. The coexistence of amulets with modern and  
247 contemporary social and religious culture can be understood through Karl Mannheim's sociological  
248 theory of knowledge, which explores the causal relationship between ideas and the social reality of  
249 society (Abidin, 2015). When examining the phenomenon of the Qur'an's functionalization as an  
250 amulet, Mannheim's theory introduces two dimensions: behavior and meaning. In this context,  
251 Mannheim classifies three types of meanings. Firstly, objective meaning, which refers to the basic and  
252 original meaning determined by the social context of the action. Secondly, expressive meaning,  
253 attributed to the individual actor's actions. Lastly, documentary meanings, which are often  
254 concealed, making the actors unaware that their expressions reflect the broader culture. In the case  
255 of the Qur'anic amulet, it serves as an implementation of one's understanding and belief in the  
256 Qur'an as the divine word of Allah, possessing perfection and mystical power for humanity. Users  
257 perceive the amulet as a written form with magical abilities to solve various life problems. Through  
258 observations, it becomes apparent that the basic meaning of using the Qur'anic amulet lies in  
259 people's belief in the Qur'an's existence and its functionalization as the sacred word of Allah. They  
260 hold the conviction that the Qur'an contains solutions for all human life's challenges in this world  
261 and the hereafter, making it an ultimate problem solver (Interview with PK, 20 August 2021).

262 Furthermore, the expressive meaning of the amulet tradition stems from the objective meaning  
263 mentioned earlier, which gives rise to various behaviors that serve as expressions of that meaning. To  
264 uncover the expressive meaning of the amulet tradition, investigations are conducted from both the  
265 perspectives of amulet makers and users. The process of creating and utilizing amulets is seen as a  
266 natural form of social communication amid life's challenges and difficulties. Both amulet makers and  
267 users have distinct motives and purposes when it comes to the ordering and use of amulets.  
268 Individuals seek out amulet experts or makers based on their specific intentions, desires, and goals.  
269 The presence of amulets in Ngantru represents a meaningful activity for them. From the perspective  
270 of the Qur'an practitioners, there are two views concerning the function of the Qur'an as an amulet.  
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273 Firstly, they perceive this practice as a form of vertical worship, where individuals draw closer to  
274 Allah (taqarrub ‘ala Allah) and purify themselves (tazkiyah al-nafs) through specific rituals involved  
275 in making Qur’anic amulets. This understanding is rooted in their belief that the Qur’an is the divine  
276 word of Allah and holds a pure essence. As one practitioner expressed, approaching Allah and seeking  
277 His blessings is best achieved through the Qur’an, as it serves as a medium for prayers and devotion.  
278 Secondly, this practice is seen as a consequence of their obligation to fulfill a divine mandate, making  
279 it an obligatory task to undertake. Additionally, it serves as a means of propagating Islamic teachings  
280 and preserving Islamic culture. The practitioners view the amulet tradition as part of their cultural  
281 heritage passed down through generations, as acknowledged by an amulet practitioner, who stated  
282 that he inherited the knowledge of making Qur’anic amulets from his family and teachers (Interview  
283 with MD, 8 September 2017).

284 From the perspective of amulet users, the Qur’anic amulet serves various life interests and  
285 motives, encompassing both material and spiritual aspects. This is evident in the diverse problems  
286 they seek help with from practitioners of the Qur’anic amulet. The meanings attributed to the amulet  
287 can be classified as follows. The first is that in an ideological-philosophical meaning, the users  
288 perceive the Qur’an as sacred and perfect, holding extraordinary secrets and strength as it is directly  
289 revealed by the God Almighty. They believe that the Qur’an is not just plain text, but a divine  
290 medium that can provide solutions to all human problems. This meaning is commonly held by  
291 amulet practitioners themselves. The second as the most prominent meaning for amulet users is the  
292 religious-mystical-spiritual meaning. They turn to the amulet when rational approaches such as  
293 medicine or conventional solutions fail to overcome difficulties and disturbances, especially spiritual  
294 ones like jin or santet. The amulet becomes a source of mystical power, instilling confidence and the  
295 belief that they can overcome the challenges they face.

296 In a sociological-anthropological perspective, the practice of making and using amulets also  
297 serves as a means of communication for users. By seeking amulets, individuals communicate their  
298 problems to others and seek social responses. In some cases, they share issues that might be  
299 considered taboo to discuss with people who may not understand the spiritual realm. Seeking  
300 amulets from knowledgeable practitioners becomes a way to address psychological and spiritual  
301 problems. Lastly, in an economic and pragmatic perspective, amulet users are often individuals who  
302 have already spent significant sums seeking conventional treatments or consulting healthcare  
303 professionals without satisfactory results. Turning to amulets, they see it as a viable solution to their  
304 problems and are willing to spend on this alternative approach. Amulet makers, on the other hand,  
305 may charge a fee or ask for compensation for their services, creating a symbiotic relationship where  
306 both parties benefit. Expressively, the practice of using Qur’anic amulets holds various meanings. For  
307 amulet makers, it is a means of preaching and seeking blessings while assisting the community,  
308 viewed as an act of worship. The “dowry” or compensation given by buyers is seen as a blessing from  
309 God. On the other hand, for users, the amulet represents a practical solution to the problems they  
310 encounter in life.

311 The tradition of using amulets holds significant importance in society. The presence of amulet  
312 practitioners garners attention and respect from various circles within the community. People view  
313 them as saviors who can provide solutions to various life problems. This phenomenon is particularly  
314 interesting for religious individuals who use amulets as a means of seeking solutions and medicine for  
315 their issues, believing it to be safer, more comfortable, and aligned with Islamic principles. The  
316 continuity of this tradition also reflects the religiosity of the Ngantru village community. From a  
317 social and religious perspective, Qur’anic amulet is a popular choice among the community,  
318 especially when the practitioners of the amulets are respected religious figures like *ulama* or  
319 knowledgeable individuals in religious matters. The practitioners’ strong faith and expertise provide a  
320 sense of security for users, ensuring that the practice does not involve any acts of shirk (idolatry).  
321 Moreover, the phenomenon of Qur’anic amulet showcases the community’s reverence for the text of  
322 the Qur’an as a divine revelation. People consider the Qur’an as an intermediary for God’s help, with  
323 extraordinary powers beneficial to humanity. This perception elevates the Qur’an to a sacred status

and reinforces its role as a practical solution to various human problems. The practice of Qur'anic amulet also offers business opportunities, with some practitioners functioning as alternative medicine clinics. Additionally, the phenomenon reveals a shift in understanding the Qur'an's functionalization, transitioning from a mere guidebook to a source of practical solutions for life's challenges. Socio-culturally, the amulet tradition exemplifies humanism-based social interactions, fostering mutual help, respect for religious figures, and the preservation of classical Islamic cultural heritage. In conclusion, the amulet tradition in Ngantru village is a socio-religious phenomenon deeply rooted in sacred texts. The community's view of the Qur'an's function is manifested through this practice, and the tradition itself contains documentary meaning, illustrating the significance and functionalization of the Qur'an for Muslims in Ngantru.

## 5. Conclusion

The research revealed several key conclusions that can be drawn. First, the villagers' understanding of the Qur'an's function can be categorized into two main perspectives as they view the Qur'an as a collection of divine revelations guiding human life, delivered to Prophet Muhammad (saw). They also perceive the Qur'an as a comprehensive book containing solutions to all aspects of human life, making it a medium to seek answers to their problems. Secondly, this understanding of the Qur'an's function in Ngantru leads to various socio-religious practices, including the creation and utilization of Qur'anic verses as amulets, commonly known as Qur'anic amulet. Thirdly, in crafting the Qur'anic amulet, the villagers consider essential elements such as the source of manufacture, location and time of creation, writing techniques, and verse selection techniques. The application methods of the amulet are also diverse, including hanging, planting in building corners, making necklaces or belts, dissolving in water for consumption, among others. Fourthly, the amulet of the Qur'an holds significant meaning for the people of Ngantru. It encompasses ideological-philosophical meanings, mystical-spiritual meanings, social-anthropological meanings, and economic-pragmatic meanings. All of these meanings contribute to the well-being of both the users and makers of the amulets.

The conclusions drawn from this research have several implications for understanding the role of the Qur'an in the lives of the villagers. The existence of two main perspectives on the Qur'an's function highlights the diversity of perceptions within the community. This shows that individuals interpret the Qur'an based on their own beliefs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. In socio-religious practices, the utilization of Qur'anic verses as amulets reflects the villagers' strong belief in the Qur'an's power to provide solutions to various life problems. This practice has become an integral part of their socio-religious practices. Moreover, this shows cultural heritage, as the creation and usage of Qur'anic amulets represent a cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations. It demonstrates how local beliefs and traditions have incorporated Islamic elements. Lastly, the amulet-making process involves both the users and makers of the amulets, fostering a sense of community and social cohesion. The practitioners are perceived as knowledgeable figures who can provide solutions to problems, enhancing their status within the community.

The research is conducted in a specific village (Ngantru) and may not be representative of other communities or regions with different cultural and religious contexts. The findings may not be applicable or generalizable to other populations. The conclusions drawn from the research rely on the researchers' analysis and interpretation of the data. There may be some degree of subjectivity in understanding the villagers' beliefs and the meanings they attach to the Qur'anic amulets. Addressing these limitations and conducting further research with a larger and more diverse sample, considering temporal changes, and ensuring cultural sensitivity could enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Additionally, employing a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the villagers' beliefs and practices related to Qur'anic amulets.



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# Amulet of Quranic Verses in East Javanese Rural: Unraveling Mystical Theology and Living Quran

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the relationship between social phenomena and the use of amulets containing verses from the Qur'an within a Muslim community residing in an East Java village. To understand this dynamic, the study relies on the theoretical framework of the living Qur'an, which delves into how the Muslim community interacts with the Qur'an. This interaction goes beyond mere reading of Qur'anic texts and extends to encompass various behaviors aimed at leveraging the Qur'an's power by creating amulets to address everyday challenges. These amulets are crafted using specific sources, techniques, and are imbued with spiritual beliefs. They serve as a solution to a range of issues, and their usage varies based on the author's beliefs and specific interests. Through this research, it becomes evident that the amulets, composed of Qur'anic verses, possess mystical, spiritual, social, and economic significance within the community. They function as potent tools for the actors in the village, offering solutions and benefits in their lives. In a broader context, this study strengthens the notion that religion continues to hold relevance, even amidst the prevailing dominance of rationality and modernity. The amulets act as a tangible manifestation of the enduring connection between the Muslim community and their religious beliefs, providing a unique insight into the fusion of faith and practicality. The paper uncovers how these amulets represent a tangible bridge between the spiritual and material realms, illustrating the intricate interplay of tradition, belief, and contemporary challenges faced by the community.*

**Keywords:** Islamic practices, spirituality, mystical theology, living Qur'an, anthropology of religion

## 1. Introduction

The Qur'an holds a significant position among Muslims, serving as the divine word of Allah and a crucial source of Islamic teachings. It serves as a guiding light for humanity, leading them towards truth and ultimate happiness in both the earthly life and the afterlife. However, the Qur'an is not merely "read" in a singular manner by its followers; rather, there exists a diverse range of "recitations of the Qur'an," which reflects the varied receptions and interpretations of Muslims (Abidin (2004). These diverse models of Qur'anic reading encompass various approaches, ranging from those focused

on understanding and delving deep into its meanings, to others who view it as a ritualistic and ceremonial practice. Interestingly, some individuals even utilize the Qur'an for pragmatic purposes, such as employing its verses as a form of medicine for mental and physical ailments. This behavior model is oriented towards motives like seeking magical and supernatural powers or seeking medicinal healing (Yusuf, 2007; Abidin, 2017). This phenomenon of diverse interactions with the Qur'an has roots dating back to the early days of Islam in Indonesia. The Indonesian Muslim community profoundly reveres the Qur'an, as evident in the preservation of various traditional practices passed down through generations in religious circles and groups. They engage with the Qur'an in multifaceted ways, encompassing reading, understanding, practicing, respecting, interpreting, and utilizing its teachings. This phenomenon, in turn, reflects the notion of the "Living Qur'an" in their daily lives—the Qur'an that remains alive and relevant in the midst of society.

In Ngantru village, Tulungagung, an intriguing phenomenon of Islamic community interaction with the Qur'an has been observed. Some individuals in the community create talismans or amulets using Qur'anic verses to protect themselves and their belongings. They view the Qur'an's textual form as a miraculous source that bestows various privileges, such as healing, strength, salvation, and mercy. However, they believe that the special powers of the Qur'an can only be harnessed in their daily lives through specific terms and methods. The amulets are typically obtained from local village clerics or elders considered to possess magico-spiritual knowledge, enabling them to discern the hidden features behind each Qur'anic letter. The potency of these amulets is influenced by various factors, including the correct writing rules and the efficacy of the preparation rituals (Interview with MD, in Ngantru, 25 June 2017).

Karl Mannheim's theoretical perspective on social actions and meanings can shed light on this phenomenon. He posits that human actions are shaped by two dimensions: behavior and meaning. To comprehend social actions, scientists must examine both the external behavior and the intended meanings behind them. Mannheim categorizes the meanings of social actions into three types: objective meaning (determined by the social context), expressive meaning (shown by the actor), and documentary meaning (implicit and hidden, revealing the actor's culture). The phenomenological approach is employed in this study to delve into the worldviews of the amulet creators, exploring their subjective views and understanding their cultural practices (Baum, 1999; Mannheim, 1952; Muhadjir, 1991; Spradley et al., 1997; Endraswara, 2006).

## 2. Method

The research method employed in this study is primarily qualitative and focuses on understanding the functions and meanings of amulets among the Muslim community in Ngantru village, Tulungagung Regency. To accomplish this, the study conducts a detailed exploration of the practices and behaviors related to the creation and utilization of Qur'anic amulets. The research draws inspiration from the living research direction of the Qur'an, which emphasizes the relevance of Islamic teachings in contemporary society.

Moreover, it builds upon the groundwork laid by previous scholars, such as Abidin (1992), Federspiel (1994), Syam (2005), Lawrence et al. (2008), Hidayah (2011), Andriawan (2013), Aminullah (2015), and Abidin (2017), who have explored related aspects of Muslim behaviors connected to the Qur'an in different contexts and timeframes. The study employs descriptive-explanatory techniques to analyze the data collected during the research process. Researchers will document and interpret the observed behaviors and practices related to the amulets, aiming to provide comprehensive insights into their functions and significance within the Ngantru community.

To better understand the underlying meanings attributed to the amulets, the research incorporates the sociological theory of knowledge proposed by Karl Mannheim (1991) and Abdullah (2003). Through this methodological approach, the study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on the multifaceted interactions between the Qur'an and the community's beliefs, practices, and traditions, shedding light on the dynamic role of amulets in their daily lives.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Function of the Qur'an and the Existence of the Qur'anic Amulet

The Qur'an encompasses three fundamental components: the *rasm* (text), *qira'at* (reading), and its meanings. Each of these components has given rise to various branches of knowledge, which have continuously evolved and are collectively summarized in the study of the Qur'an (ulum al-Qur'an and interpretation). The aspect of reading, for instance, has led to the development of tajweed (the science of proper Quranic recitation) and qira'ah (different recitation styles), ultimately giving birth to the science of interpretation. In relation to the aspect of writing (rasm), it has also spawned diverse scientific disciplines, including the art of creating the Qur'an amulets. This particular discipline combines the knowledge of Rasm al-Qur'an (the study of Quranic script) with magical practices (the science of wisdom), using the Qur'an's text as a medium for treating various physical and mental ailments. This practice is grounded in the Qur'an itself, which proclaims its presence as al-Syifa' (a healer) for various diseases. Additionally, the Qur'an commands Muslims to use it as a wasilah (intermediary medium) to find solutions to all their problems. This understanding is also shared by certain individuals in the village of Ngantru, where some amulet practitioners claim that the Qur'an has the power to cure all ailments. Ngantru village, located in the Ngantru sub-district of Tulungagung, East Java province, is renowned for its notable train station known as "Ngujang Station" within the Tulungagung region. Situated in the northern part of Tulungagung, the village is home to individuals who believe that the Qur'an holds profound wisdom, both in its written form and its recitation, capable of curing all ailments and serving as the ultimate solution to human problems, both in this world and the afterlife. According to MD, an amulet practitioner in the village:

*"The Qur'an is a divine revelation from Allah, who is perfect. Therefore, everything from Allah embodies perfection and immense wisdom for humanity. As part of Allah's greatness, the Qur'an undoubtedly contains this profound wisdom."* (Interview with MD, 21 July 2021).

This perception reveals that, for some Muslim circles, the Qur'an is not solely a book of life's guidelines containing divine laws. Instead, it is viewed as a problem solver for various challenges in human life, manifested in the form of amulets. This phenomenon signifies an interaction between Muslim communities and the Qur'an, actively incorporated into their daily lives. It is a logical consequence of their understanding of the Qur'an's multifaceted functions. As part of the Living Qur'an study, this phenomenon reflects the Qur'an's relevance in everyday life, exemplifying its significance as an integral aspect of their existence (Jeferi, 2008).

Table 1. Subdistricts in Tulungagung and the population in 2020

Subdistricts	Male	Female	Total
Besuki	17,727	17,784	35,555
Bandung	22,549	22,597	43,788
Pakel	26,277	26,421	51,322
Campurdarat	29,240	29,448	58,600
Tanggunggunung	12,838	12,910	25,057
Kalidawir	34,880	34,880	64,499
Pucanglaban	11,643	11,648	22,304
Rejotangan	38,505	38,673	74,527
Ngunut	41,282	41,480	79,844
Sumbergempol	35,285	35,466	68,170
Boyolangu	42,803	43,173	84,708
Tulungagung	34,106	34,117	66,321
Kedungwaru	46,041	46,314	92,048
Ngantru	28,264	28,456	56,814
Karangrejo	20,245	20,254	39,784

Subdistricts	Male	Female	Total
Kauman	25,212	25,221	49,998
Gondang	27,832	27,821	54,589
Pagerwojo	15,454	15,465	30,680
Sendang	22,399	22,433	44,574
<b>Total</b>	<b>532,582</b>	<b>534,561</b>	<b>1,043,182</b>

In Javanese culture, the term “amulet” is commonly used to refer to a protective talisman or charm, while in Arabic, it is known as “tamimah” (refinement) (Anwar, 2016). An amulet is any object worn around the neck or on the body to safeguard oneself, repel negative influences, ward off diseases caused by the evil eye (‘ain), and protect from other dangers (Ibn Mandzur, 1414 H). Some individuals differentiate between “amulet” and “talisman.” The former, as perceived by the Ngantru community, primarily consists of written texts believed to possess magical powers for specific needs, such as inscriptions on iron plates or other objects deemed to hold supernatural capabilities by certain individuals (Gusmian, 2013; Abdullah et al., 2008). Amulets generally fall into three categories: numeric (using numbers), alphabetical (using Arabic letters), and pictorial (utilizing images) (Aliviana, 2012).

Among the people of Ngantru, the belief in amulets provides an alternative solution to their problems, depending on the intentions of the wearer and the amulet maker. The effectiveness of these amulets is influenced by the completeness of conditions set by the maker. This societal behavior, related to the use of amulets, seems to be influenced by elements of the local animist culture, characterized by beliefs in the supernatural powers of certain objects or materials. In the Ngantru area, certain community leaders are renowned for their ability to create amulets from the Qur’an, which are believed to possess healing properties and protection from malevolence. Consequently, these leaders become sought-after resources for various groups seeking help in addressing daily life challenges, with visitors traveling from different regions beyond Ngantru seeking their aid. This phenomenon has persisted over generations, signifying the transmission and transformation of knowledge through time.

Amulet users visit practitioners with various motives. Some seek ease and success in their desired job positions within specific companies or institutions. Others, such as parents, approach the amulet experts to request success for their children in academic examinations. Additionally, people seek assistance for spiritual or magical issues, including dealing with genie disturbances or safeguarding properties from both physical crimes like theft and non-physical threats like witchcraft. Despite the belief held by many regarding the mystical properties of the Qur’an, some individuals in Ngantru do not subscribe to the idea of healing through the Qur’an. This skepticism is commonly observed among rational-minded academics. Their opposition is based on several reasons. Firstly, they consider the concept of amulets irrational. Secondly, they doubt the efficacy because they believe it lacks scientific proof. Thirdly, some may partially believe in certain situations, particularly those involving jinn, magic, or witchcraft. Lastly, some individuals view using the Qur’an as an amulet as a diversion from its intended purpose as a revered holy book in Islam.

**Table 2.** Religious adherents in Tulungagung, 2009 – 2015

Year	Islam	Catholic	Protestant	Hinduism	Buddhism	Other
2015	1,088,959	4,002	11,852	804	809	77
2014	1,075,678	4,200	11,995	804	775	156
2013	1,087,539	5,485	740	1,093	1,093	64
2012	1,075,067	7,231	751	1,240	1,240	45
2011	1,013,662	2,868	658	1,457	1,457	246
2010	1,013,188	4,449	601	1,256	1,256	289
2009	986,662	3,772	526	1,364	1,364	-

**Source:** <https://tulungagungkab.bps.go.id/statictable/2018/03/07/1436/pemeluk-agama-menurut-kecamatan-2009-2015.html>

### 3.2 The Behavior Related to Qur'anic Amulet

The Qur'anic amulet is employed in various ways, showcasing the creativity of its creators and the influence of local culture. Some practitioners in Ngantru use the amulet as a medium for treating individuals afflicted by witchcraft, magic, possession, and genie disturbances. One approach involves soaking the amulet in water, which is then given to the patient. Another method involves writing the amulet on a betel leaf and placing it in water mixed with honey. Additionally, people often hang the amulet on their doorstep or in the corners of their houses to prevent interference from jinn, magic, or malevolent individuals, thus safeguarding the safety and comfort of the household.

A unique application of the Qur'an amulet was found in cases related to black magic. Practitioners provide individuals with two scrolls of the amulet—one to be used as a belt and the other soaked in water from ba'da Isyak (after evening prayers) until Shubuh (before dawn). The soaked amulet must be drained after each session. The procedure requires reading *Al-Fatihah* 100 times, *tahlil (la ilaha illallah)* 100 times, and offering 100 salutations to the Prophet. The process is repeated until the patient is relieved of their affliction. According to a practitioner of amulets, the timing and reading recommendations are part of the tradition passed down from his predecessors. *Al-Fatihah* is read as verses of prayer (ruqyah), *Tahlil* serves as purification of the oneness of Allah (tauhid), and the salutations to the Prophet act as an intermediary to seek blessings. The verses written on the scrolls are kept confidential, known only to the practitioners, as they form a critical part of the ritual (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017).

**Table 3.** Religious adherents in Ngantru subdiscret, 2019-2020

Year	Islam	Catholic	Protestant	Hindu	Buddha	Lain-lain
2019	60,265	300	26	10	-	19
2020	58,232	281	99	-	13	-

**Source:** BPS Tulungagung, 2021

Moreover, crafting a magical fence or antidote against genies is one of the applications of the Qur'anic amulet in addressing mystical issues within society. As revealed by an amulet practitioner, he often receives complaints from residents about disturbances caused by genies at their homes. In response, he creates protective amulets using specific verses from the Qur'an, such as surah al-Fatihah, the first three verses of surah al-Baqarah, ayat Kursi, and la qad ja akum. These verse selections are based on guidance from the Prophet's traditions regarding their beneficial properties. The amulets are then placed in the corners of the house, and sometimes they are hung as well (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017). Before installing the amulets, field observations are conducted through *istikharah* (seeking guidance from Allah) and prayers to determine the types and characteristics of the genies interfering and the parts of the house they occupy. This preparation is crucial for arranging the appropriate amulets. Regarding the problem of dealing with genie spirits, the practitioner believes that only those with supernatural abilities can understand it. Following the amulet installation, the residents of the house are encouraged to perform a salvation ceremony with the intention of giving alms to dispel calamities, as taught in the Prophet's hadith about the benefits of charity.

The amulet's application for the expulsion of other harmful genie or creature disturbances is often practiced by some ruqyah practitioners. The methods of use vary; some are ingested, while others are applied to specific body parts. Commonly used verses include Surah al-Fatihah, *Mua'widatain*, ayat Kursi, and ayat la qad ja akum, believed to possess healing properties and provide personal protection from demonic or jinn disturbances. These beliefs stem from guidance provided by teachers and Islamic teachings derived from the Prophet's hadith and wisdom scholars' writings (Interview with MM, 18 August 2021).



In addition to its mystical and spiritual purposes, the use of amulets can also have practical and economic orientations. For instance, some individuals utilize amulets for trading purposes, hoping to simplify transactions or increase subscriptions. Specific verses such as al-Fatihah, the thousand dinar verse, and surah waq'ah are employed for this intention. These verses are written and hung above the doors of shops or stores. According to some amulet practitioners, these verses hold the power to attract blessings and abundance to those who use them for their businesses. The practice can be incorporated into daily readings or utilized as amulets, as previously explained (Interview with PK, 20 August 2021).

Based on observations of several cases involving the use of Qur'anic amulets, it becomes evident that the amulets serve as a manifestation of the villagers' belief in the Qur'an's function as a medium for seeking solutions to life's problems. The functions encompass the amulet acting as a remedy for physical and psychological illnesses, a protective measure against jinn, magic, and witchcraft disturbances, a repellent for spirits, and even an element of inheritance.

#### 4. Discussion

The tradition of using amulets in Ngantru Village reflects the reception and application of the local community towards the Qur'an. This remarkable tradition, characterized as "mystic-animistic," continues to persist even in the modern millennial era, where rationality, intellectualism, and a relatively high spiritual level are prevalent. The coexistence of amulets with modern and contemporary social and religious culture can be understood through Karl Mannheim's sociological theory of knowledge, which explores the causal relationship between ideas and the social reality of society (Abidin, 2015). When examining the phenomenon of the Qur'an's functionalization as an amulet, Mannheim's theory introduces two dimensions: behavior and meaning. In this context, Mannheim classifies three types of meanings. Firstly, objective meaning, which refers to the basic and original meaning determined by the social context of the action. Secondly, expressive meaning, attributed to the individual actor's actions. Lastly, documentary meanings, which are often concealed, making the actors unaware that their expressions reflect the broader culture. In the case of the Qur'anic amulet, it serves as an implementation of one's understanding and belief in the Qur'an as the divine word of Allah, possessing perfection and mystical power for humanity. Users perceive the amulet as a written form with magical abilities to solve various life problems. Through observations, it becomes apparent that the basic meaning of using the Qur'anic amulet lies in people's belief in the Qur'an's existence and its functionalization as the sacred word of Allah. They hold the conviction that the Qur'an contains solutions for all human life's challenges in this world and the hereafter, making it an ultimate problem solver (Interview with PK, 20 August 2021).

Furthermore, the expressive meaning of the amulet tradition stems from the objective meaning mentioned earlier, which gives rise to various behaviors that serve as expressions of that meaning. To uncover the expressive meaning of the amulet tradition, investigations are conducted from both the perspectives of amulet makers and users. The process of creating and utilizing amulets is seen as a natural form of social communication amid life's challenges and difficulties. Both amulet makers and users have distinct motives and purposes when it comes to the ordering and use of amulets. Individuals seek out amulet experts or makers based on their specific intentions, desires, and goals. The presence of amulets in Ngantru represents a meaningful activity for them. From the perspective of the Qur'an practitioners, there are two views concerning the function of the Qur'an as an amulet. Firstly, they perceive this practice as a form of vertical worship, where individuals draw closer to Allah (taqarrub 'ala Allah) and purify themselves (tazkiyah al-nafs) through specific rituals involved in making Qur'anic amulets. This understanding is rooted in their belief that the Qur'an is the divine word of Allah and holds a pure essence. As one practitioner expressed, approaching Allah and seeking His blessings is best achieved through the Qur'an, as it serves as a medium for prayers and devotion. Secondly, this practice is seen as a consequence of their obligation to fulfill a divine mandate, making it an obligatory task to undertake. Additionally, it serves as a means of propagating Islamic teachings

and preserving Islamic culture. The practitioners view the amulet tradition as part of their cultural heritage passed down through generations, as acknowledged by an amulet practitioner, who stated that he inherited the knowledge of making Qur'anic amulets from his family and teachers (Interview with MD, 8 September 2017).

From the perspective of amulet users, the Qur'anic amulet serves various life interests and motives, encompassing both material and spiritual aspects. This is evident in the diverse problems they seek help with from practitioners of the Qur'anic amulet. The meanings attributed to the amulet can be classified as follows. The first is that in an ideological-philosophical meaning, the users perceive the Qur'an as sacred and perfect, holding extraordinary secrets and strength as it is directly revealed by the God Almighty. They believe that the Qur'an is not just plain text, but a divine medium that can provide solutions to all human problems. This meaning is commonly held by amulet practitioners themselves. The second as the most prominent meaning for amulet users is the religious-mystical-spiritual meaning. They turn to the amulet when rational approaches such as medicine or conventional solutions fail to overcome difficulties and disturbances, especially spiritual ones like jin or santet. The amulet becomes a source of mystical power, instilling confidence and the belief that they can overcome the challenges they face.

In a sociological-anthropological perspective, the practice of making and using amulets also serves as a means of communication for users. By seeking amulets, individuals communicate their problems to others and seek social responses. In some cases, they share issues that might be considered taboo to discuss with people who may not understand the spiritual realm. Seeking amulets from knowledgeable practitioners becomes a way to address psychological and spiritual problems. Lastly, in an economic and pragmatic perspective, amulet users are often individuals who have already spent significant sums seeking conventional treatments or consulting healthcare professionals without satisfactory results. Turning to amulets, they see it as a viable solution to their problems and are willing to spend on this alternative approach. Amulet makers, on the other hand, may charge a fee or ask for compensation for their services, creating a symbiotic relationship where both parties benefit. Expressively, the practice of using Qur'anic amulets holds various meanings. For amulet makers, it is a means of preaching and seeking blessings while assisting the community, viewed as an act of worship. The "dowry" or compensation given by buyers is seen as a blessing from God. On the other hand, for users, the amulet represents a practical solution to the problems they encounter in life.

The tradition of using amulets holds significant importance in society. The presence of amulet practitioners garners attention and respect from various circles within the community. People view them as saviors who can provide solutions to various life problems. This phenomenon is particularly interesting for religious individuals who use amulets as a means of seeking solutions and medicine for their issues, believing it to be safer, more comfortable, and aligned with Islamic principles. The continuity of this tradition also reflects the religiosity of the Ngantru village community. From a social and religious perspective, Qur'anic amulet is a popular choice among the community, especially when the practitioners of the amulets are respected religious figures like *ulama* or knowledgeable individuals in religious matters. The practitioners' strong faith and expertise provide a sense of security for users, ensuring that the practice does not involve any acts of shirk (idolatry). Moreover, the phenomenon of Qur'anic amulet showcases the community's reverence for the text of the Qur'an as a divine revelation. People consider the Qur'an as an intermediary for God's help, with extraordinary powers beneficial to humanity. This perception elevates the Qur'an to a sacred status and reinforces its role as a practical solution to various human problems. The practice of Qur'anic amulet also offers business opportunities, with some practitioners functioning as alternative medicine clinics. Additionally, the phenomenon reveals a shift in understanding the Qur'an's functionalization, transitioning from a mere guidebook to a source of practical solutions for life's challenges. Socio-culturally, the amulet tradition exemplifies humanism-based social interactions, fostering mutual help, respect for religious figures, and the preservation of classical Islamic cultural heritage. In conclusion, the amulet tradition in Ngantru village is a socio-religious phenomenon

deeply rooted in sacred texts. The community's view of the Qur'an's function is manifested through this practice, and the tradition itself contains documentary meaning, illustrating the significance and functionalization of the Qur'an for Muslims in Ngantru.

## 5. Conclusion

The research revealed several key conclusions that can be drawn. First, the villagers' understanding of the Qur'an's function can be categorized into two main perspectives as they view the Qur'an as a collection of divine revelations guiding human life, delivered to Prophet Muhammad (saw). They also perceive the Qur'an as a comprehensive book containing solutions to all aspects of human life, making it a medium to seek answers to their problems. Secondly, this understanding of the Qur'an's function in Ngantru leads to various socio-religious practices, including the creation and utilization of Qur'anic verses as amulets, commonly known as Qur'anic amulet. Thirdly, in crafting the Qur'anic amulet, the villagers consider essential elements such as the source of manufacture, location and time of creation, writing techniques, and verse selection techniques. The application methods of the amulet are also diverse, including hanging, planting in building corners, making necklaces or belts, dissolving in water for consumption, among others. Fourthly, the amulet of the Qur'an holds significant meaning for the people of Ngantru. It encompasses ideological-philosophical meanings, mystical-spiritual meanings, social-anthropological meanings, and economic-pragmatic meanings. All of these meanings contribute to the well-being of both the users and makers of the amulets.

The conclusions drawn from this research have several implications for understanding the role of the Qur'an in the lives of the villagers. The existence of two main perspectives on the Qur'an's function highlights the diversity of perceptions within the community. This shows that individuals interpret the Qur'an based on their own beliefs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. In socio-religious practices, the utilization of Qur'anic verses as amulets reflects the villagers' strong belief in the Qur'an's power to provide solutions to various life problems. This practice has become an integral part of their socio-religious practices. Moreover, this shows cultural heritage, as the creation and usage of Qur'anic amulets represent a cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations. It demonstrates how local beliefs and traditions have incorporated Islamic elements. Lastly, the amulet-making process involves both the users and makers of the amulets, fostering a sense of community and social cohesion. The practitioners are perceived as knowledgeable figures who can provide solutions to problems, enhancing their status within the community.

The research is conducted in a specific village (Ngantru) and may not be representative of other communities or regions with different cultural and religious contexts. The findings may not be applicable or generalizable to other populations. The conclusions drawn from the research rely on the researchers' analysis and interpretation of the data. There may be some degree of subjectivity in understanding the villagers' beliefs and the meanings they attach to the Qur'anic amulets. Addressing these limitations and conducting further research with a larger and more diverse sample, considering temporal changes, and ensuring cultural sensitivity could enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Additionally, employing a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the villagers' beliefs and practices related to Qur'anic amulets.

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