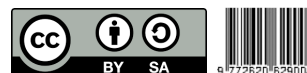


The Meaning and Practice of Reciting Ayat al-Kursi in Daily Life: A Living Qur'an Perspective

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Abstract

The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 255), known as the "Throne Verse" and regarded as the greatest verse in the Qur'an, has become a deeply embedded spiritual practice within Muslim communities worldwide. This qualitative literature-based study examines the meaning and practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi in daily life through the lens of the Living Qur'an approach, which investigates how Qur'anic texts are understood, experienced, and enacted in everyday social and ritual contexts beyond textual exegesis. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of scholarly literature on Ayat al-Kursi traditions across various community settings—including its recitation after obligatory prayers, during itikaf retreats, at Hajj and Umrah departures, in the Nyarang Hujan rain-shifting tradition, as visual ornamentation in mosques, and in protective rituals—this study explores the meanings, functions, and social dynamics embedded within these diverse practices. Thematic analysis of the reviewed literature reveals that the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi serves layered functions: spiritual (seeking divine protection, strengthening faith, and attaining spiritual closeness to God), social (reinforcing communal solidarity, transmitting religious values, and preserving local wisdom), and cultural (integrating Qur'anic text with local aesthetic expressions and traditional practices). The findings demonstrate that Ayat al-Kursi functions as a form of performative tafsir in which the meanings of the verse are materialized through ritual sequences involving recitation, supplication, and embodied practice. This study contributes to Living Qur'an scholarship by demonstrating how a single Qur'anic verse can generate diverse meanings and practices across different community contexts, offering a model for analyzing the Qur'an as a socially enacted and ritually embodied text.

Keywords: *Living Qur'an, Ayat al-Kursi, Throne Verse, daily recitation, protective ritual, performative tafsir, Muslim community.*

INTRODUCTION

The study of the Qur'an and its relationship with Muslim societies has undergone significant development in contemporary scholarship, expanding beyond traditional textual exegesis (tafsir) toward examining how the Qur'an is lived, practiced, and experienced in everyday life. This shift has given rise to the Living Qur'an approach, which focuses on the social and cultural dimensions of Qur'anic reception and practice, investigating how sacred texts are mediated through human agency, ritual practice, and social context. The Living Qur'an perspective recognizes that the Qur'an exists not only as a written text but also as an oral performance, a visual symbol, and a ritual object embedded within social practices. Among the various Qur'anic verses that have become central to Muslim

devotional practice, Ayat al-Kursi (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 255) holds a uniquely prominent position, regarded by Muslims as the greatest verse in the Qur'an based on a prophetic tradition.

Ayat al-Kursi, often translated as the "Verse of the Throne," is a profound theological statement affirming God's absolute sovereignty, eternal existence, and supreme dominion over all creation. The verse declares: "Allah—there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth..." The theological depth of this verse, combined with the prophetic traditions extolling its virtues, has made it one of the most frequently recited and revered passages in the Qur'an. The verse is known for its comprehensive articulation of divine attributes, containing numerous names and attributes of God that together present a complete picture of divine majesty and sovereignty. Its recitation is believed to bring protection, blessings, and spiritual fortification to those who recite it with faith and understanding.

The practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of Muslims across diverse cultural contexts, manifesting in various forms that reflect the adaptability and resilience of this tradition. Some Muslims recite Ayat al-Kursi when leaving home so that they may be protected for the day ahead, while in many Muslim homes a copy of the verse is hung on the wall to provide protection for the household. The verse is recited after obligatory prayers, before sleeping, during spiritual retreats, and in various communal rituals. The tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi reflects the broader concept of Living Qur'an, wherein the meaning and function of the Qur'an are understood and experienced by Muslim communities in their daily lives. This phenomenon demonstrates that the Qur'an is not merely read and studied as a sacred text but is also lived, embodied, and enacted through ritual practices that connect divine revelation with human social reality.

In the Indonesian context, the practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi has taken on distinctive local manifestations that reflect the dynamic interaction between Islamic teachings and local cultural expressions. Research has documented the tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi during itikaf retreats in the last ten days of Ramadan at mosques in Bekasi, where the verse is viewed as a source of spiritual guidance and protection. The verse is also recited during Hajj and Umrah departures at pesantren in Situbondo, where the tradition originates from the teachings of local religious leaders and involves specific ritual sequences including the drawing of an imaginary protective circle. In Probolinggo, Ayat al-Kursi is used in the Nyarang Hujan tradition, a rain-shifting practice that represents a community initiative to seek divine protection while avoiding elements of polytheism. These diverse manifestations demonstrate how a single Qur'anic verse can generate multiple meanings and practices across different community contexts.

The visual and aesthetic dimensions of Ayat al-Kursi reception have also emerged as a significant area of Living Qur'an scholarship. In the Quwwatul Islam Mosque in Yogyakarta, Ayat al-Kursi is visualized as an ornament on the pulpit chair, representing a fusion of Javanese and Kalimantan artistry with the Qur'an. This ornamentation signifies that the Qur'an has entered the realm of aesthetic dimensions, serving both as a reminder to preachers and congregants to remember God and as an expression of profound religious meaning. The visual reception of Ayat al-Kursi demonstrates how the verse transcends its textual form to become embedded in material culture and

architectural space. This aesthetic dimension of Living Qur'an practice reveals the multifaceted ways in which communities engage with and derive meaning from sacred text.

Despite the widespread prevalence of Ayat al-Kursi recitation across Muslim communities, scholarly attention to this phenomenon has been uneven, with studies often focusing on specific local practices without providing a comprehensive synthesis. While numerous studies have examined individual Ayat al-Kursi traditions in particular communities, there remains a need for a more comprehensive qualitative literature review that synthesizes the meanings, functions, and social dynamics of Ayat al-Kursi recitation across different contexts. This study addresses this gap by examining the meaning and practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi in daily life through a Living Qur'an approach, drawing upon existing scholarly literature to understand how Muslim communities understand, practice, and derive meaning from this verse across various settings. By synthesizing findings from multiple studies, this research provides a broader understanding of Ayat al-Kursi as a significant form of Qur'anic reception and practice.

The central research questions guiding this study are: (1) How is the practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi manifested across different Muslim communities according to existing scholarship? (2) What meanings do community members ascribe to the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi based on documented studies? (3) What spiritual, social, and cultural functions does the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi serve within these communities as identified in the literature? (4) How does the practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi reflect the broader concept of Living Qur'an in Muslim societies? These questions guide the systematic review and analysis of existing literature on Ayat al-Kursi traditions, enabling a comprehensive understanding of this significant religious practice. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing body of Living Qur'an scholarship by synthesizing empirical insights into how a single Qur'anic verse is enacted, embodied, and socially institutionalized within Muslim communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Living Qur'an

The Living Qur'an approach emerged as a scholarly response to the recognition that Qur'anic studies had long been dominated by textual analysis, focusing primarily on exegesis, philology, and historical criticism. While these approaches remain valuable, they often overlook the lived reality of how the Qur'an functions within Muslim communities. The Living Qur'an perspective shifts attention from the text itself to the ways in which the Qur'an is received, interpreted, and practiced by believers in their everyday lives. This approach recognizes that the Qur'an exists not only as a written text but also as an oral performance, a visual symbol, and a ritual object embedded within social practices. The Living Qur'an perspective draws upon insights from anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies to understand how sacred texts are mediated through human agency and social context.

Living Qur'an scholarship examines the various forms of Qur'anic reception, including recitation (tilawah), memorization (tahfiz), calligraphic representation, and ritual application. This approach investigates how the Qur'an is understood and practiced in everyday life, encompassing the meanings that believers ascribe to the sacred text and the ways these meanings shape their lives. In the Indonesian context, Living Qur'an studies have flourished, examining how Muslim communities

engage with the Qur'an through various traditions and practices. These studies reveal that the Qur'an is not a static text but a dynamic force that shapes and is shaped by the cultural, social, and spiritual lives of its adherents. The Living Qur'an approach thus provides a valuable framework for understanding how Qur'anic verses, such as Ayat al-Kursi, are activated and given meaning through communal and individual ritual practice.

The theoretical foundations of Living Qur'an studies incorporate insights from the sociology of knowledge, particularly Karl Mannheim's distinction between objective, expressive, and documentary meanings. Objective meaning refers to the explicit, personal understanding that participants hold regarding a practice, while expressive meaning refers to the subjective experience and emotions evoked through the practice. Documentary meaning refers to the underlying worldview or perspective revealed through the practice, providing insight into how participants understand the relationship between sacred text and human life. These distinctions enable nuanced analysis of the multiple layers of meaning embedded in religious practices such as the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi. The Living Qur'an approach has been applied to various forms of Qur'anic practice in Indonesia, including recitation traditions, ritual applications, and community-based interpretations.

Recent scholarship on Living Qur'an has emphasized the concept of "performative tafsīr," referring to the ways in which meanings of the Qur'an are materialized through ritual sequences and embodied practices. Rather than being confined to textual interpretation, Qur'anic meaning is enacted, performed, and experienced through communal rituals that involve recitation, supplication, and collective action. This concept challenges the traditional dichotomy between textual exegesis and lived practice, demonstrating that communities engage in a form of interpretation through their ritual practices. Performative tafsīr recognizes that the Qur'an's significance extends beyond its literal meaning to encompass the social and spiritual functions it serves in community life. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi exemplifies this concept, as the meaning of the verse is enacted through ritual sequences that involve recitation, supplication, and protective practices.

Ayat al-Kursi: The Greatest Verse of the Qur'an

Ayat al-Kursi (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 255), known as the "Verse of the Throne," holds a uniquely prominent position in Islamic tradition and Muslim devotional practice. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have described it as the greatest verse in the Book of Allah, a designation that has been affirmed by generations of Muslim scholars. The verse reads: "Allah—there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great." The theological depth of this verse, which affirms God's absolute sovereignty and comprehensive knowledge, makes it a foundational text for understanding Islamic monotheism.

The virtues of Ayat al-Kursi are extensively documented in prophetic traditions and scholarly commentaries. It is narrated that whoever recites Ayat al-Kursi after every obligatory prayer will have nothing preventing them from entering Paradise except death. This tradition, recorded in Sunan al-Thabarani and Sunan al-Nasa'i, has made the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi after prayers a widespread

practice among Muslims. Some narrations also suggest that the person remains in the protection of Allah until the forthcoming prayer. The verse is also known as *ayatul hifz* (the verse of protection), because those who recite it with understanding can obtain Allah's protection. These traditions have contributed to the widespread practice of reciting *Ayat al-Kursi* for various purposes, including seeking protection, blessings, and divine assistance.

The theological content of *Ayat al-Kursi* reinforces its spiritual significance through its comprehensive articulation of divine attributes. The verse affirms God's eternal existence (*al-Hayy*), self-subsistence (*al-Qayyum*), absolute sovereignty, and comprehensive knowledge. It contains several of the beautiful names of Allah, making it a concentrated expression of Islamic theology. The verse's description of God's Throne (*kursi*) extending over the heavens and the earth has been the subject of extensive theological discussion, particularly in debates between the *Mu'tazilites* and *Ash'arites* regarding divine embodiment. The verse's affirmation that "neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him" emphasizes God's perpetual vigilance and care for creation. This theological richness makes *Ayat al-Kursi* not merely a text for recitation but a comprehensive message about humanity's relationship with the Almighty.

The significance of *Ayat al-Kursi* extends beyond its theological content to encompass its role in Muslim devotional life. The verse is recited in various contexts: when leaving home for protection, before sleeping for safety throughout the night, after prayers for spiritual reward, and during times of distress for comfort and divine assistance. Some Muslims wear jewelry inscribed with *Ayat al-Kursi* as a religious amulet for protection. The verse's association with protection against evil and harm has made it a central text in protective rituals across Muslim cultures. The widespread practice of reciting *Ayat al-Kursi* reflects its integration into the daily spiritual lives of Muslims, who turn to this verse for comfort, protection, and connection with the divine.

The Practice of Reciting *Ayat al-Kursi* in Daily Life

The practice of reciting *Ayat al-Kursi* has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of Muslims across diverse cultural contexts, manifesting in various forms that reflect the adaptability and resilience of this tradition. One of the most common practices is the recitation of *Ayat al-Kursi* after each obligatory prayer, based on the prophetic tradition that this act ensures divine protection until the next prayer. This practice has become a routine spiritual discipline for many Muslims, integrating the verse into the daily rhythm of prayer and devotion. The recitation after prayers is understood as a means of maintaining spiritual connection with God and seeking continued protection throughout the day. This regular practice reflects how *Ayat al-Kursi* functions as a living text that accompanies Muslims through their daily activities.

The recitation of *Ayat al-Kursi* when leaving home represents another significant daily practice, based on the belief that seventy thousand angels will protect a person from all directions. Some Muslims recite the verse upon leaving home so that they may be protected for the day ahead. In many Muslim homes, a copy of *Ayat al-Kursi* is hung on the wall to provide protection for the household. The verse is also recited before sleeping, based on the prophetic tradition that reciting *Ayat al-Kursi* at night creates an angel who will guard the person until morning. These daily practices reflect how *Ayat al-Kursi* has become integrated into the routine of Muslim life, serving as a source of comfort and protection in the face of daily challenges and uncertainties.

In the Indonesian context, the practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi has taken on distinctive local manifestations that reflect the dynamic interaction between Islamic teachings and local cultural expressions. Research on the tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi during itikaf retreats in the last ten days of Ramadan at the Attaqwa Mosque in Bekasi reveals that this practice has been ongoing since 1977 and involves hundreds of participants. The tradition features a well-organized ritual structure grounded in strong theological foundations, with participants experiencing spiritual benefits such as peace and protection. The study found that community interpretations of the tradition vary, ranging from high to low levels of understanding, but all participants experience spiritual benefits from the practice. This tradition exemplifies how Ayat al-Kursi recitation is integrated into communal religious practice, strengthening both individual spirituality and community cohesion.

The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi during Hajj and Umrah departures at Pesantren Wali Songo in Situbondo represents another significant manifestation of the tradition. This tradition originates from the teachings of Kyai Asnawi to Kyai Sufyan, which were then passed down through generations of religious leaders. The ritual begins with the call to prayer (adhan), followed by the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi while drawing an imaginary circular line using a stick, the recitation of Surah al-Quraisy three times, and concludes with a travel prayer. From the practitioners' perspective, this tradition holds multiple meanings: preservation of the teachings of the salaf scholars, divine safety and tranquility from Allah, and protection from calamities and dangers. This tradition represents the readers' understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an, actualized in practice.

The visual and aesthetic dimensions of Ayat al-Kursi reception have also emerged as a significant area of Living Qur'an scholarship. In the Quwwatul Islam Mosque in Yogyakarta, Ayat al-Kursi is visualized as an ornament on the pulpit chair, representing a fusion of Javanese and Kalimantan artistry with the Qur'an. This ornamentation signifies that the Qur'an has entered the realm of aesthetic dimensions, serving both as a reminder to preachers and congregants to remember God and as an expression of profound religious meaning. The inclusion of Ayat al-Kursi as an ornament on the pulpit chair is because this verse possesses extraordinary meaning and content, explicating the magnificence of Allah over all of His creations. The visual reception of Ayat al-Kursi demonstrates how the verse transcends its textual form to become embedded in material culture and architectural space.

Functions of Ayat al-Kursi Recitation

Scholarly research has identified multiple functions served by the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi within Muslim communities, operating at spiritual, social, and cultural levels. The spiritual functions center on the relationship between the practitioner and God, seeking divine protection, strengthening faith, and attaining spiritual closeness to God. The social functions relate to community building, solidarity, and the transmission of religious values across generations. The cultural functions involve the integration of Qur'anic text with local aesthetic expressions and traditional practices. These layered functions make the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi a rich subject for Living Qur'an analysis. Understanding these functions provides insight into why this particular verse has become so central to Muslim devotional practice across diverse cultural contexts.

The spiritual functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation are central to its practice and significance for individual practitioners. The recitation serves as a means of seeking divine protection, with the verse understood as a powerful safeguard against harm and evil. The practice generates spiritual experiences that foster tranquility and a sense of safety, providing emotional and spiritual support to practitioners. The recitation also serves to strengthen faith, as the theological content of the verse reinforces core Islamic beliefs about God's sovereignty and power. The regular recitation of Ayat al-Kursi after prayers and before sleeping functions as a form of spiritual discipline, maintaining the practitioner's connection with the divine throughout the day. The spiritual functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation connect it to broader Islamic concepts of devotion, remembrance (dhikr), and divine protection.

The social functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation are evident in the communal practices documented in the reviewed literature. The tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi during itikaf retreats involves hundreds of participants, creating a sense of shared spiritual purpose and community cohesion. The recitation during Hajj and Umrah departures at pesantren involves the entire community, reinforcing social bonds and transmitting religious values across generations. The practice serves as a vehicle for preserving the teachings of religious leaders and maintaining continuity with past generations. The social functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation ensure its continuity across generations, as community members value the social connections and shared identity it provides. The communal dimension of Ayat al-Kursi recitation transforms what could be an individual practice into a collective expression of faith and solidarity.

The cultural functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation reflect the dynamic interaction between sacred text and local cultural contexts. The integration of Ayat al-Kursi into the Nyarang Hujan rain-shifting tradition in Probolinggo represents a community initiative to seek divine protection while avoiding elements of polytheism. The tradition is understood as an effort to move rain not containing elements of polytheism because from the start of its implementation, it only came from elements of trust (worship) to Allah and tawasul to Rasulullah with incense media. The visual ornamentation of Ayat al-Kursi on the pulpit chair in the Quwwatul Islam Mosque represents a fusion of Javanese and Kalimantan artistry with the Qur'an. These cultural functions demonstrate how Ayat al-Kursi is adapted to local contexts while maintaining its core religious significance, creating distinctive local manifestations of Islamic devotion.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative literature-based research design to investigate the meaning and practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi in daily life through the lens of the Living Qur'an approach. The qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this study as it enables deep exploration of meanings, experiences, and social dynamics as documented in existing scholarly literature. The research adopts a descriptive-qualitative methodology with a thematic analysis orientation, seeking to synthesize and interpret findings from multiple studies on Ayat al-Kursi traditions. By drawing upon existing scholarly literature rather than primary fieldwork, this study provides a comprehensive synthesis of knowledge about the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi across diverse community contexts. The literature-based approach enables the integration of findings from multiple studies, offering a broader understanding than individual case studies can provide.

The data for this study consist of scholarly literature on the recitation and practice of Ayat al-Kursi, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, research reports, and academic theses. The literature search was conducted across major academic databases including Google Scholar, Garuda (Indonesia's national academic repository), and specialized Islamic studies journals, using keywords such as "Ayat al-Kursi," "Living Qur'an," "Qur'anic recitation tradition," "Throne Verse," and "protective ritual." The search focused on literature published in Indonesian and English, with particular attention to studies conducted in Indonesian contexts where Ayat al-Kursi traditions are particularly prevalent. Studies were selected based on their relevance to the research questions, focusing on empirical investigations of Ayat al-Kursi recitation in Muslim communities. A comprehensive body of literature was identified and analyzed for this review, providing a rich foundation for thematic analysis.

The analysis employed thematic analysis following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke, involving six phases: familiarization with the literature, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and narrative synthesis. Codes were generated both deductively, based on the theoretical framework of Living Qur'an and Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, and inductively, emerging from the content of the reviewed literature. Key themes identified through this process include the ritual structure of Ayat al-Kursi recitation, meanings ascribed to the practice, spiritual functions, social functions, cultural functions, and the Living Qur'an dimensions of the practice. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of patterns across diverse studies, capturing both commonalities and variations in Ayat al-Kursi practice. The analysis process involved iterative reading and re-reading of the literature, with themes refined through reflection and synthesis.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies consistent with qualitative literature-based research were employed. Credibility was enhanced through comprehensive coverage of the literature, ensuring that diverse perspectives and findings were represented in the analysis. Transferability was addressed by providing thick description of the various Ayat al-Kursi traditions documented in the literature, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to other contexts. Dependability was established through systematic documentation of the literature search and analysis process, creating an audit trail that allows the research process to be externally scrutinized. Confirmability was assured by maintaining a reflexive approach, acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role in the thematic analysis. The Living Qur'an theoretical framework, combined with Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, provided a consistent lens for interpreting the literature throughout the analysis process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Ayat al-Kursi Traditions in the Literature

The reviewed literature reveals that the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi is a widespread and deeply embedded practice across Muslim communities, manifesting in diverse forms while maintaining core ritual elements. The tradition serves as a prime example of Living Qur'an, demonstrating how the Qur'an is not merely read but lived, embodied, and enacted through individual and communal ritual practice. Across different studies, the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi follows recognizable patterns while accommodating local variations, reflecting both continuity and adaptation. The practice is characterized by individual recitation (after prayers, before sleeping, when leaving home) and communal recitation (during itikaf, Hajj departures, and protective rituals). The diversity of

documented practices demonstrates the remarkable adaptability of Ayat al-Kursi recitation across different cultural and social contexts.

The reviewed literature documents Ayat al-Kursi traditions across various community settings, including mosque communities, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and local cultural traditions. Studies have examined the tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi during *itikaf* retreats at the Attaqwa Mosque in Bekasi, during Hajj and Umrah departures at *Pesantren Wali Songo* in Situbondo, at the beginning of Muharram at *Pondok Pesantren Al-Falah Putera* in Banjarbaru, and in the *Nyarang Hujan* rain-shifting tradition in Probolinggo. The visual ornamentation of Ayat al-Kursi on the pulpit chair in the *Quwwatul Islam* Mosque in Yogyakarta represents another significant form of reception. This diversity of research sites and practices demonstrates the pervasiveness of Ayat al-Kursi traditions across Indonesian Muslim society, reflecting the broad appeal and adaptability of this verse.

Ritual Structure and Practice

a. Individual Recitation Practices

The most widespread form of Ayat al-Kursi recitation is individual practice, integrated into the daily routine of Muslims. The recitation after each obligatory prayer is based on the prophetic tradition that whoever recites Ayat al-Kursi after every obligatory prayer will have nothing preventing them from entering Paradise except death. This practice has become a routine spiritual discipline, integrating the verse into the daily rhythm of prayer and devotion. The recitation when leaving home is based on the belief that seventy thousand angels will protect a person from all directions. Some Muslims recite the verse upon leaving home so that they may be protected for the day ahead. The recitation before sleeping is based on the tradition that reciting Ayat al-Kursi at night creates an angel who will guard the person until morning. These individual practices reflect how Ayat al-Kursi has become integrated into the routine of Muslim life, serving as a source of comfort and protection.

The meanings ascribed to individual recitation practices are primarily spiritual and protective. Practitioners understand the recitation as a means of seeking divine protection and maintaining spiritual connection with God throughout the day. The regular recitation after prayers is understood as a means of ensuring divine protection until the next prayer. The recitation when leaving home is understood as a means of securing protection for the journey ahead. The recitation before sleeping is understood as a means of ensuring safety throughout the night. These individual practices reflect a worldview in which the Qur'an is understood as a source of divine protection accessible through regular recitation. The integration of Ayat al-Kursi into daily routines demonstrates how the verse functions as a living text that accompanies Muslims through their daily activities.

b. Communal Recitation during Itikaf

The tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi during *itikaf* retreats in the last ten days of Ramadan at the Attaqwa Mosque in Bekasi represents a significant communal manifestation of the practice. This tradition has been ongoing since 1977 and involves hundreds of participants, featuring a well-organized ritual structure grounded in strong theological foundations. The background of the study focuses on religious practices that integrate the text of the Qur'an into daily life, with Ayat al-Kursi being viewed as a source of spiritual guidance and protection. The tradition is understood by participants as a means of seeking spiritual purification and divine proximity during the blessed days of Ramadan. The ritual structure provides a framework for communal participation, creating a sense of shared spiritual purpose and community cohesion.

Community interpretations of the tradition vary, ranging from high to low levels of understanding, but all participants experience spiritual benefits such as peace and protection. The study found that the tradition serves both theoretical contributions to the study of the Living Qur'an and practical contributions to enriching Islamic heritage and strengthening religious communities. The communal

dimension of the itikaf tradition transforms individual recitation into a collective expression of faith and solidarity. The tradition exemplifies how Ayat al-Kursi recitation is integrated into communal religious practice, strengthening both individual spirituality and community cohesion. The well-organized ritual structure reflects the institutionalization of the tradition within the mosque community.

c. Recitation during Hajj and Umrah Departures

The tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi during Hajj and Umrah departures at Pesantren Wali Songo in Situbondo represents another significant communal manifestation of the practice. The objective of this research is to uncover the readers' interpretations and understandings of this tradition, which provide insight into the patterns of human reception of the Qur'an. In Qur'anic studies, the study of reception is termed "Living Qur'an," which examines the Qur'an's phenomenon as a living text within Muslim communities, manifested in practices, traditions, and rituals. The tradition originates from the teachings of Kyai Asnawi to Kyai Sufyan, which were then passed down through generations of religious leaders to the current caretaker of Pesantren Wali Songo.

The ritual begins with the call to prayer (adhan), followed by the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi while drawing an imaginary circular line using a stick, the recitation of Surah al-Qura'isy three times, the iqamah (second call to prayer), and concludes with a travel prayer (dua safar). The drawing of an imaginary circular line using a stick represents a performative enactment of protection, creating a symbolic boundary of divine safeguarding around the departing pilgrims. From the practitioners' perspective, this tradition holds multiple meanings: preservation of the teachings of the salaf scholars (early pious predecessors), divine safety and tranquility from Allah, and protection from calamities and dangers. The tradition represents the readers' understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an, actualized in practice. This tradition falls under the model of functional reception of the Qur'an, where the verse is activated for specific protective purposes.

d. Recitation at the Beginning of Muharram

The tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi at the beginning of Muharram at Pondok Pesantren Al-Falah Putera in Banjarbaru represents another significant manifestation of the practice. The recitation is performed every year on the first of Muharram as a form of welcoming the Islamic New Year, integrated into the communal life of the pesantren. The research focuses on three main aspects: the implementation of the tradition, the meanings ascribed by religious teachers (ustaz), and the motivations of students (santri) in participating in the activity. The findings reveal that Ayat al-Kursi is recited communally every first of Muharram after Dhuha prayer, led by an ustaz, and followed by all students with a total of 360 recitations. This activity has become an annual tradition that is preserved and meaningful for the entire pesantren community.

Ustaz interpret the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi as a form of seeking protection from Allah, spiritual strengthening, and opening the Islamic New Year with good deeds. The motivations of students in participating are diverse, encompassing biogenetic, sociogenetic, and theogenetic motivations. The tradition reflects the implementation of the Living Qur'an concept, where the sacred verse is not only read but also brought to life in the form of socio-religious practice. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi 360 times represents a significant ritual commitment, reflecting the importance ascribed to this verse in the spiritual life of the pesantren community. The tradition serves both spiritual and social functions, strengthening the faith of participants while reinforcing communal bonds within the pesantren.

e. Visual Reception: Ornamentation of Ayat al-Kursi

The visual reception of Ayat al-Kursi, as documented in the ornamentation of the pulpit chair in the Quwwatul Islam Mosque in Yogyakarta, represents a distinctive form of Living Qur'an practice. The decorative carving of Ayat al-Kursi displayed on the pulpit is a result of the reception of a fusion between Javanese and Kalimantan artistry with the Qur'an. The ornamentation of Ayat al-Kursi in

the form of a chair signifies that the Qur'an has entered the realm of aesthetic dimensions. This visual reception demonstrates how the verse transcends its textual form to become embedded in material culture and architectural space, serving both aesthetic and religious functions.

The findings of the research are twofold: firstly, the inclusion of Ayat al-Kursi as an ornament on the pulpit chair is because this verse possesses extraordinary meaning and content, explicating the magnificence of Allah over all of His creations. Secondly, it serves as a reminder to the preachers and congregants to always remember Allah and His omnipotence, as well as to encourage the congregants to frequent the mosque for worship. The presence of the Ayat al-Kursi ornament on the chair not only signifies aesthetic values but also holds a profound history and encapsulates religious values found within the Qur'an. This visual reception represents a form of cultural integration where Qur'anic text is incorporated into local artistic traditions, creating a unique expression of Islamic devotion.

f. The Nyarang Hujan Rain-Shifting Tradition

The use of Ayat al-Kursi in the Nyarang Hujan rain-shifting tradition in Sidomukti, Probolinggo, represents a distinctive local manifestation of the Living Qur'an. This tradition involves using Ayat al-Kursi as a means of moving rain when a celebration event is in progress, reflecting a community initiative to seek divine protection. The main problem addressed is that the endeavor to ask God for protection so that it is kept away from various disasters does not mean refusing rain. The use of Ayat al-Kursi in this tradition is an effort to move the rain not to contain elements of polytheism or contradict Islamic teachings because from the start of its implementation, only came from the elements of trust (worship) to Allah and tawasul to Rasulullah with incense media.

The Nyarang Hujan tradition represents a form of community initiative to move rain when an event is in progress. This tradition demonstrates how Ayat al-Kursi is integrated into local cultural practices, serving as a means of seeking divine protection while maintaining Islamic theological integrity. The community's understanding of the tradition reflects a pragmatic approach to religious practice, where Qur'anic recitation is activated for practical purposes while maintaining commitment to Islamic monotheism. The integration of Ayat al-Kursi into local tradition demonstrates the adaptability of Islamic practice to diverse cultural contexts, creating distinctive local manifestations of Qur'anic reception.

Meanings Ascribed to Ayat al-Kursi Recitation

a. Objective Meaning

The objective meaning of Ayat al-Kursi recitation refers to the explicit understandings that participants hold regarding the practice, based on Karl Mannheim's framework. For most practitioners, the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi is understood as a means of seeking divine protection and spiritual closeness to God. The practice is seen as an act of devotion and obedience, a way to fulfill religious obligations and earn divine reward. In the context of Hajj and Umrah departures, the recitation is understood as a means of seeking divine safety and tranquility from Allah, as well as protection from calamities and dangers. The preservation of the teachings of the salaf scholars represents another objective meaning, connecting the practice to the continuity of Islamic tradition.

The objective meanings ascribed to Ayat al-Kursi recitation are rooted in both textual tradition and community practice. Practitioners draw upon prophetic traditions extolling the virtues of Ayat al-Kursi to justify and explain their practice. The understanding that Ayat al-Kursi is the greatest verse of the Qur'an provides a theological foundation for its special status in devotional practice. The belief that recitation brings protection, blessings, and spiritual fortification reinforces the practice's religious significance. The objective meanings are also shaped by community tradition, as participants learn the significance of Ayat al-Kursi recitation through participation and instruction. The integration of textual tradition and community practice creates a rich understanding of the verse's meaning and significance.

In the context of the Nyarang Hujan tradition, the objective meaning is understood as an effort to move rain without containing elements of polytheism, as the practice from its implementation only came from elements of trust (worship) to Allah and tawasul to Rasulullah. This understanding reflects a careful negotiation between local cultural practice and Islamic theological principles. In the context of Muharram recitation at the pesantren, ustaz interpret the practice as a form of seeking protection from Allah, spiritual strengthening, and opening the Islamic New Year with good deeds. These diverse objective meanings reflect the adaptability of Ayat al-Kursi recitation to different contexts and purposes while maintaining its core religious significance.

b. Expressive Meaning

The expressive meaning of Ayat al-Kursi recitation refers to the subjective experience of participants, the feelings and emotions evoked through the practice. Participants across diverse studies reported experiencing feelings of peace, safety, and spiritual tranquility through the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi. The practice generates spiritual experiences that foster a sense of divine protection and inner peace, providing emotional and spiritual support. In the context of itikaf retreats, participants experience spiritual benefits such as peace and protection, reflecting the emotional and psychological dimensions of the practice. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi is described by participants as a source of comfort and solace, particularly in times of uncertainty and distress.

The expressive meanings of Ayat al-Kursi recitation are connected to the ritual experience and the spiritual sensations it evokes. The individual recitation after prayers and before sleeping creates a sense of connection with the divine, providing comfort and reassurance. The communal recitation during itikaf and Hajj departures enhances its expressive dimension, as participants share the experience with others. The rhythmic recitation of the verse creates a calming and meditative atmosphere, facilitating spiritual experience. The sense of collective devotion and shared purpose reinforces feelings of belonging and emotional connection. The expressive meanings of Ayat al-Kursi recitation thus extend beyond individual experience to encompass collective emotional states, providing a space for spiritual seeking and emotional expression.

c. Documentary Meaning

The documentary meaning of Ayat al-Kursi recitation refers to the underlying worldview or perspective revealed through the practice, as analyzed through Mannheim's framework. The tradition reflects a particular understanding of the relationship between sacred text and human life, wherein the Qur'an is not merely a book to be read but a living guide to be embodied and enacted. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi reveals a worldview in which the Qur'an is understood as a source of divine protection and blessing, accessible through regular recitation and ritual practice. This worldview emphasizes the continuity between textual revelation and lived practice, as the verse's meaning is activated through ritual enactment. The documentary meaning also reflects the social and cultural values of the community, including the importance of communal solidarity, religious continuity, and cultural preservation.

The documentary meaning of Ayat al-Kursi recitation reveals how communities understand their relationship with the divine and with each other. The tradition embodies a theology of divine protection, where God is understood as accessible through ritual practice and devotional recitation. The emphasis on communal recitation reflects a social theology where religious practice is inherently collective as well as individual. The integration of local cultural elements with Islamic practice reveals a worldview in which religious and cultural identities are mutually constitutive. The documentary meaning thus provides insight into the broader religious worldview of Muslim communities, as expressed through their ritual practice. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi functions as a vehicle for expressing and reinforcing these worldview commitments, connecting individual practice to communal identity and cultural heritage.

Functions of Ayat al-Kursi Recitation

a. Spiritual Functions

The spiritual functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation are central to its significance for practitioners, serving as a means of seeking divine protection, strengthening faith, and attaining spiritual closeness to God. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi is understood as a form of devotion that brings practitioners closer to God, enabling them to experience divine presence and protection. The tradition provides a structured way for community members to engage with the Qur'an regularly, maintaining their connection with divine revelation. The recitation is believed to bring protection from harm, forgiveness of sins, and spiritual fortification, as documented in the reviewed studies. In the context of itikaf retreats, the recitation serves as a means of spiritual purification and divine proximity during the blessed days of Ramadan. In the context of Muharram, the recitation serves as a means of opening the Islamic New Year with good deeds and seeking divine protection for the year ahead.

The spiritual functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation are reinforced by the theological content of the verse, which affirms God's sovereignty, power, and comprehensive knowledge. The recitation of the verse serves as a reminder of core Islamic beliefs, reinforcing faith and commitment. The practice generates spiritual experiences that foster tranquility and a sense of safety, providing emotional and spiritual support to practitioners. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi functions as a form of spiritual discipline, maintaining the practitioner's connection with the divine throughout the day. The spiritual functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation connect it to broader Islamic concepts of devotion, remembrance (dhikr), and divine protection (hifz). The verse is known as *ayatul hifz* (the verse of protection), reflecting its central role in seeking divine safeguarding.

b. Social Functions

The social functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation are evident in the communal practices documented in the reviewed literature, playing a crucial role in strengthening social cohesion and maintaining community solidarity. The tradition of reciting Ayat al-Kursi during itikaf involves hundreds of participants, creating a sense of shared spiritual purpose and community cohesion. The recitation during Hajj and Umrah departures at pesantren involves the entire community, reinforcing social bonds and transmitting religious values across generations. The practice serves as a vehicle for preserving the teachings of religious leaders and maintaining continuity with past generations. The regular scheduling of communal recitation provides consistent opportunities for community members to interact, share experiences, and reinforce social bonds.

The social functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation are evident in the way it brings community members together across generations. The participation of religious leaders, elders, and youth in the same ritual creates intergenerational connections and facilitates the transmission of religious knowledge and values. The tradition provides a context for mutual support and assistance, as community members share their spiritual needs and concerns during the gathering. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi reinforces social networks and communal bonds, contributing to community resilience. The social functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation ensure its continuity across generations, as community members value the social connections and shared identity it provides. The communal dimension of the tradition transforms individual devotion into a collective expression of faith and solidarity.

c. Cultural Functions

The cultural functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation reflect the dynamic interaction between sacred text and local cultural contexts, demonstrating how Islamic practice adapts to diverse cultural settings. The integration of Ayat al-Kursi into the Nyarang Hujan rain-shifting tradition represents a community initiative to seek divine protection while maintaining Islamic theological integrity. The tradition reflects the harmonious interaction between sacred text and local culture, proving that the Qur'an serves as a living guide for Muslim communities in the form of traditions that continue to

thrive. The visual ornamentation of Ayat al-Kursi on the pulpit chair in the Quwwatul Islam Mosque represents a fusion of Javanese and Kalimantan artistry with the Qur'an. This integration of local artistic traditions with Qur'anic text creates a distinctive expression of Islamic devotion that reflects regional cultural identity.

The cultural functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation illustrate how religious practice is both shaped by and shapes local cultural expressions, creating distinctive manifestations of Islamic devotion. The integration of the verse into local ritual occasions such as the Nyarang Hujan tradition demonstrates the incorporation of Qur'anic recitation into existing cultural practices. The visual ornamentation of the verse in mosque architecture represents a form of cultural reception where Qur'anic text is incorporated into local artistic traditions. The cultural functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation thus reflect the adaptability of Islamic practice to diverse cultural contexts, creating distinctive local manifestations that maintain core religious significance while expressing regional cultural identity.

Ayat al-Kursi as Performative Tafsir

The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi exemplifies the concept of performative tafsir, wherein the meaning of the Qur'an is enacted and embodied through ritual practice. Rather than being confined to textual interpretation, the practice performs the meaning of Ayat al-Kursi through recitation, supplication, and embodied engagement. The ritual sequences of recitation, protective visualization, and supplication materialize the verse's meaning in social practice, connecting textual revelation with lived experience. In the Hajj departure tradition, the drawing of an imaginary circular line using a stick while reciting Ayat al-Kursi represents a performative enactment of divine protection. In the itikaf tradition, the communal recitation transforms individual devotion into a collective performance of faith. These performative dimensions transform Ayat al-Kursi from a written text to a lived reality, engaging participants bodily, vocally, and socially.

The concept of performative tafsir challenges the traditional dichotomy between textual exegesis and lived practice, recognizing that communities engage in a form of interpretation through their ritual practices. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi demonstrates that the meaning of the verse extends beyond its literal content to encompass the social and spiritual functions it serves in community life. The tradition enacts the verse's message of divine protection, sovereignty, and power through the ritual of recitation and supplication. The performative tafsir of Ayat al-Kursi is shaped by local cultural contexts, integrating the Qur'anic text with community values and symbolic expressions. The visual ornamentation of the verse in mosque architecture represents a performative dimension where the verse's meaning is enacted through aesthetic expression. This perspective enriches our understanding of how the Qur'an functions in Muslim communities, recognizing the interpretive significance of ritual practice.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative literature-based study has examined the meaning and practice of reciting Ayat al-Kursi in daily life through the lens of the Living Qur'an approach, synthesizing findings from diverse scholarly studies on this significant religious practice. The review reveals that the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi is a deeply embedded and multifaceted practice that serves spiritual, social, and cultural functions across different community contexts. The tradition manifests in various forms, including individual recitation after prayers, before sleeping, and when leaving home, as well as communal recitation during itikaf retreats, Hajj and Umrah departures, Muharram observances, and protective rituals. The visual ornamentation of Ayat al-Kursi in mosque architecture represents another significant dimension of reception. These diverse manifestations reflect the adaptability and resilience of this tradition across different cultural and social contexts.

The meanings ascribed to Ayat al-Kursi recitation are layered and interconnected, encompassing objective, expressive, and documentary dimensions that together constitute its significance for practitioners. At the objective level, participants understand the recitation as a means of seeking divine protection, spiritual closeness to God, and preservation of religious tradition. At the expressive level, the practice generates feelings of peace, safety, and spiritual tranquility, providing emotional and spiritual support. At the documentary level, the tradition reveals a worldview in which the Qur'an is understood as a source of divine protection and blessing, accessible through regular recitation and ritual practice. These multiple layers of meaning demonstrate the richness and complexity of Ayat al-Kursi recitation as a form of Living Qur'an practice.

The spiritual functions of Ayat al-Kursi recitation center on seeking divine protection, strengthening faith, and attaining spiritual closeness to God, serving as a form of devotion that brings practitioners closer to the divine. The social functions of the tradition are equally significant, strengthening communal solidarity, facilitating intergenerational connections, and transmitting religious values. The cultural functions reflect the dynamic interaction between Qur'anic text and local cultural contexts, demonstrating how Islamic practice adapts to diverse settings while maintaining its core significance. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi exemplifies the concept of performative tafsīr, wherein the meaning of the Qur'an is enacted and embodied through ritual practice rather than confined to textual interpretation. This performative dimension enriches our understanding of how the Qur'an functions in Muslim communities, recognizing the interpretive significance of ritual practice.

This study contributes to the growing body of Living Qur'an scholarship by synthesizing empirical insights into how a single Qur'anic verse is enacted, embodied, and socially institutionalized within Muslim communities. The findings demonstrate how local epistemologies shape Qur'anic meaning-making beyond textual exegesis, offering a model for analyzing the Qur'an as a socially enacted and ritually embodied text. The recitation of Ayat al-Kursi provides a compelling example of how believers engage with the Qur'an in everyday life, transforming sacred text into lived experience through individual devotion and communal ritual. The study has implications for understanding the dynamic relationship between text and practice in Muslim communities, as well as the role of tradition in sustaining and transmitting religious values across generations.

The limitations of this study include its reliance on existing scholarly literature, which may not capture all manifestations of Ayat al-Kursi recitation across the full diversity of Muslim communities. Future research should complement this literature-based study with primary fieldwork to explore Ayat al-Kursi traditions in communities not yet documented in the scholarly literature. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts would enhance understanding of how the verse's recitation adapts to diverse settings. Research examining the psychological and health impacts of regular Ayat al-Kursi recitation would provide insight into the broader benefits of this practice. Interdisciplinary approaches—such as psychology or health sciences—could assess the broader impact of embodied Qur'anic rituals on practitioners' well-being. Ultimately, the recitation of Ayat al-Kursi stands as a significant example of how the Qur'an continues to live in the hearts and practices of Muslim communities, connecting divine revelation with human experience through the power of devotional recitation and embodied ritual.

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