

## **Qur'anic Recitation Tradition as a Pillar of Muslim Identity: A Study of Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong in Southern Thailand**

**Topikurohman , R. Nanang Kuswara , Yasser Muda Lubis**  
PTIQ University Jakarta, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the role of the Qur'an recitation tradition as a cultural and socio-religious practice in maintaining the identity of minority Muslims in Southern Thailand, with a focus on Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Tree Tanjong. Using a descriptive qualitative approach through interviews, observations, and documentation, the results of the study show that recitation is not only an individual worship, but also a collective practice that strengthens social cohesion, transmits religious values, and affirms identity. Ma'had plays a strategic role as an educational, cultural, and spiritual center in maintaining the Qur'anic tradition. Recitation also serves as a dynamic mechanism in identity construction that includes educational, aesthetic, and social dimensions. In the midst of the challenges of globalization and limited resources, the use of digital technology opens up opportunities to strengthen the learning of the Qur'an and its relevance for the younger generation.*

**Keywords :** Qur'anic recitation, Muslim minority, Digitalization, Southern Thailand.

### **Abstract**

*Penelitian ini mengkaji peran tradisi tilawah Al-Qur'an sebagai praktik kultural dan sosio-religius dalam mempertahankan identitas Muslim minoritas di Thailand Selatan, dengan fokus pada Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tilawah tidak hanya menjadi ibadah individual, tetapi juga praktik kolektif yang memperkuat kohesi sosial, mentransmisikan nilai keagamaan, dan meneguhkan identitas. Ma'had berperan strategis sebagai pusat pendidikan, kultural, dan spiritual dalam menjaga tradisi Qur'ani. Tilawah juga berfungsi sebagai mekanisme dinamis dalam konstruksi identitas yang mencakup dimensi edukatif, estetika, dan sosial. Di tengah tantangan globalisasi dan keterbatasan sumber daya, pemanfaatan teknologi digital membuka peluang untuk memperkuat pembelajaran Al-Qur'an dan relevansinya bagi generasi muda.*

**Kata Kunci :** Tilawah Qur'an, Identitas Muslim Minoritas, Digitalisasi, Thailand Selatan

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Yasser Muda Lubis

Email: [yassermudalubis@ptiq.ac.id](mailto:yassermudalubis@ptiq.ac.id)

Available online at <http://journal.iaingorontalo.ac.id/index.php/au/index>

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## A. Introduction

The Muslim community in Southern Thailand faces a complex social reality as a minority living within the cultural and political dominance of a predominantly Buddhist society. In this context, Islamic identity is sustained not only through normative religious beliefs but also through cultural and symbolic practices embedded in everyday life.<sup>1</sup> One such practice that holds a central position is the tradition of Qur'anic recitation. This tradition is not merely a ritual act of reciting the Qur'an; rather, it constitutes a socio-religious practice that fosters communal solidarity, facilitates the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values, and functions as a marker of Muslim identity amid the pressures of modernization and cultural assimilation.<sup>2</sup> Thus, tilawah operates not only within a spiritual domain but also as a cultural mechanism that preserves and reinforces the identity of the Muslim minority community in Southern Thailand.

The tradition of recitation is closely linked to the social and cultural life of the Muslim community in Southern Thailand. Tilawah is not only performed in formal worship settings but also takes place in a range of socio-religious activities, such as religious study circles and Islamic boarding schools.<sup>3</sup> Through this practice, Muslims sustain their commitment to Islamic values while fostering a sense of communal solidarity as a minority community.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the tradition of recitation functions as a medium for the transmission of values, collective memory, and religious identity, which are continuously passed down from one generation to the next.

The continuity of religious traditions in Southern Thailand faces increasingly complex challenges in the contemporary era. Globalization, the expansion of digital

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<sup>1</sup> Sopyan M. Asyari, "Islamic Religious Education and the Preservation of Sociocultural-Religious Identity in the Context of Southern Thailand," *POTENSIA: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 2 (December 2022): 277–97, <https://doi.org/10.24014/potensia.v8i2.21600>.

<sup>2</sup> M. Zaini and Bashori Bashori, "THE TILAWAH TRADITION IN THE INTERPRETATION LITERATURE AND ITS CHANGES IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS STUDY," *MAHABBAH: Journal of Islamic Theology and Thought* 1, no. 2 (July 2025): 181–92, <https://journal.iai-daraswaja-rohil.ac.id/index.php/mahabbah/article/view/127>.

<sup>3</sup> Ismail Suardi Wekke, Siddin Siddin, and Sukree Langputeh, "Islamic Education in Thailand Pattani Muslim Minority: What Are the Institutional Continuity and Change?," *Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Tarbiyah* 4, no. 1 (June 2019): 127–34, <https://doi.org/10.24042/tadris.v4i1.3753>.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Chin Yong Liow, *Islam, Education and Reform in Southern Thailand: Tradition and Transformation* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812309655>.

culture, and the influence of popular culture have reshaped the orientations of the younger generation of Muslims, who are becoming more familiar with global lifestyles, potentially weakening their attachment to local religious traditions.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the dynamics of the long-standing socio-political conflict in Southern Thailand have also affected the stability of Islamic educational and cultural institutions, which have traditionally functioned as key spaces for the formation of identity within the minority Muslim community. These conditions place Islamic educational institutions in a strategic position, not only as sites for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as cultural institutions responsible for sustaining the continuity of traditions and reinforcing the collective identity of the Muslim community.<sup>6</sup>

Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong is one of the Islamic educational institutions that plays a vital role in preserving the tradition of Qur'anic recitation in Southern Thailand. The Ma'had not only carries out formal educational functions but also serves as a social and spiritual space that sustains Qur'anic traditions through various activities, such as learning Qur'anic recitation, memorizing the Qur'an, tadarus, and Qur'anic recitation competitions.<sup>7</sup> These activities position Qur'anic recitation not merely as an individual act of worship but also as an integral part of religious culture that reinforces the solidarity and identity of the Muslim community.

Previous research has extensively examined the relationship between Islamic education and Muslim identity in Southern Thailand. Wekke, Siddin, and Langputeh highlight the continuity and institutional transformations of Islamic education in Pattani as key factors in maintaining the identity of the Muslim minority.<sup>8</sup> Suharjo demonstrates that Islamic educational institutions have made significant contributions to strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing the

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<sup>5</sup> Fahril Husaeni et al., "Study Analysis of the Effectiveness of Using the Digital Al-Quran among College Students in the Dimensions of Globalization Flow," *Atthulab: Islamic Religion Teaching and Learning Journal* 6, no. 1 (July 2021): 26–40, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ath.v6i1.12921>.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Hadi Lubis, Helmiati, and M. Nazir Karim, "Transformation of Islamic Education in Pattani, Southern Thailand: Policies and Their Impacts Amidst Conflict," *Journal of Islamic Education El Madani* 4, no. 1 (December 2024): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.55438/jiee.v4i1.129>.

<sup>7</sup> Asyari, "Islamic Religious Education and the Preservation of Sociocultural-Religious Identity in the Context of Southern Thailand."

<sup>8</sup> Wekke, Siddin, and Langputeh, "Islamic Education in Thailand's Pattani Muslim Minority."

religious identity of the Muslim community in Southern Thailand.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Abdul Hadi Lubis argues that the transformation of Islamic education policy in Pattani is shaped by the dynamics of political conflict, which in turn affect the quality and sustainability of Islamic educational institutions.<sup>10</sup> Asyari further emphasizes that Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in preserving the socio-cultural and religious identity of the Muslim minority community in Southern Thailand.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to previous studies, which have primarily focused on the transformation of Islamic education, political conflict, and institutional continuity in Southern Thailand, this study examines the tradition of Qur'anic recitation as a cultural practice in the construction of Muslim minority identity.

This study aims to analyze the role of Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong in maintaining Muslim identity in Southern Thailand through the tradition of Qur'anic recitation. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of scholarship on cultural practices and collective identity by positioning Qur'anic recitation as an integral component of religious cultural practices within Muslim minority communities. It further expands existing discussions of religious practices, which have largely been understood in ritual and spiritual terms, by situating them within the broader social and cultural context of Muslim communities in Southern Thailand. Empirically, this study presents field-based evidence on the practice of Qur'anic recitation at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong, demonstrating its role as an Islamic educational institution that sustains the continuity of Qur'anic traditions amid the challenges of modernization and globalization.

## **B. Research Methods**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a field study method conducted at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong, Narathiwat,

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<sup>9</sup> Suharjo et al., "Role of Islamic Education in Southern Thailand," *Arus Jurnal Pendidikan* 3, no. 3 (December 2023): 147–55, <https://doi.org/10.57250/ajup.v3i3.288>.

<sup>10</sup> Lubis, Helmiati, and Karim, "Transformation of Islamic Education in Pattani, Southern Thailand."

<sup>11</sup> Asyari, "Islamic Religious Education and the Preservation of Sociocultural-Religious Identity in the Context of Southern Thailand."

Southern Thailand. Informants were selected purposively and consisted of Ma'had leaders, teachers, and community leaders involved in religious activities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The validity of the data was ensured through the triangulation of sources and methods.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong is an Islamic educational institution in Narathiwat, Southern Thailand, that plays a significant role in religious education and in the preservation of Islamic traditions within the Muslim minority community. The institution offers instruction in various Islamic disciplines, including tafsir, fiqh, and hadith, while placing particular emphasis on Qur'anic recitation as an integral component of students' academic and spiritual development. Instruction in recitation is conducted through training in tajwid, tahfiz, and tadarus, as well as through Qur'anic recitation competitions that are organized on a regular basis.

The tradition of recitation developed at the Ma'had is not only embedded in formal educational activities but is also deeply integrated into the socio-religious life of the surrounding community. Various activities such as public religious gatherings, Qur'anic recitation sessions, and the commemoration of Islamic holidays involve students, teachers, and community members in shared religious practices. These activities position the Ma'had as a social and spiritual space that reinforces the Muslim community's commitment to Qur'anic traditions.

Furthermore, the Ma'had plays a crucial role in sustaining the continuity of Islamic traditions amid social changes driven by modernization and globalization. Through its educational programs and tilawah training, the institution seeks to preserve Islamic values while strengthening the identity of the Muslim minority community in Southern Thailand.

## **1. Development Program of Qur'anic Recitation at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong**

The tradition of Qur'anic recitation constitutes an integral component of educational activities at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong. Tilawah is understood not merely as a technical skill in reciting the Qur'an but also as a sustained religious practice embedded in the daily lives of students. This tradition is implemented through structured programs, including tilawah training, Qur'an memorization, Qur'anic recitation competitions, and collective tadarus activities involving the wider community. As noted by the head of the Ma'had curriculum: "The Qur'anic recitation activities we organize provide a platform for the community to actively participate in preserving this tradition. By fostering a proper understanding of how to recite the Qur'an, this appreciation extends to families and the broader community."<sup>12</sup> This statement indicates that the tradition of recitation is not confined to formal educational settings but is also embedded in the socio-religious practices of the Muslim community in Southern Thailand.

Tilawah training at the Ma'had is conducted in stages, ranging from basic to advanced levels, with a strong emphasis on correct tajwid (Qur'anic pronunciation rules). This structured approach enables students to develop their recitation skills progressively. As one instructor explained: "This program teaches Qur'anic recitation with proper tajwid. The training is conducted in stages, from basic to advanced levels."<sup>13</sup> This training demonstrates that recitation is positioned as a central component in developing students' religious competencies, while also serving as a means of sustaining the tradition of Qur'anic recitation over time.

In addition, the Ma'had organizes a tahfiz al-Qur'an program that runs concurrently with recitation training. This program emphasizes not only memorization but also the understanding and application of Qur'anic verses in everyday life. As one informant stated: "Students not only memorize but also strengthen their Qur'anic reading skills. With a structured method, they become more disciplined, diligent, and demonstrate better moral conduct in their daily

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<sup>12</sup> Anan Nisoh, "Interview with Anan Nisoh, Head of Ma'had Curriculum," August 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Anan Nisoh, "Interview with Anan Nisoh, Head of Ma'had Curriculum," August 2024.

lives”.<sup>14</sup> This finding suggests that Qur’anic learning at the Ma’had is not solely oriented toward memorization but is also closely linked to the formation of students’ religious character through the internalization of Qur’anic values.

Qur’anic recitation competitions also form an integral part of the tilawah development program at the Ma’had. These competitions serve as platforms for students to enhance their recitation skills while building confidence in public performance. As one instructor noted: “We organize these competitions to motivate students to continue practicing. Participation helps them develop confidence in public speaking, while also promoting the importance of Qur’anic recitation within the community”.<sup>15</sup>

The organization of these competitions indicates that the tradition of tilawah is not only maintained within the internal environment of the Ma’had but is also introduced to the wider community as part of the religious culture of the Muslim population.

Qur’anic recitation activities are also conducted regularly, particularly during Ramadan and Islamic holidays. These activities involve students, teachers, and community members in collective Qur’anic reading. As one informant explained: “We hold Qur’anic recitation gatherings on various occasions. Through collective recitation, social bonds among students, teachers, and the community are strengthened”.<sup>16</sup> The collective practice of tadarus reflects the socio-religious dimension of the tilawah tradition, which reinforces social cohesion within the Muslim community in Southern Thailand.

The various Qur’anic recitation programs implemented at Ma’had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong demonstrate that Qur’anic traditions are not merely preserved as individual acts of worship but are also embedded as cultural practices within the Muslim minority community. These traditions are sustained through educational processes, socio-religious activities, and active community involvement, ensuring their continuity amid the challenges of social change and modernization.

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<sup>14</sup> Nisoh.

<sup>15</sup> Nisoh.

<sup>16</sup> Nisoh.

## **2. Implementation of the Tradition of Qur'anic Recitation in the Community**

Qur'anic recitation serves not only as a ritual act of worship but also as a significant symbolic practice that supports Muslim identity in Southern Thailand. Through this tradition, Muslim communities affirm their identity amid the forces of modernization and the dominance of the majority culture. By teaching, reciting, and interpreting the Qur'an from an early age, recitation becomes a medium of education, artistic expression, and a form of spiritual cohesion that sustains the continuity of Islamic identity. As one informant stated: "The tradition of Qur'anic recitation is the primary medium for introducing Islamic values from an early age. Children are taught how to recite the Qur'an with proper tartil and tajwid, thereby fostering an emotional attachment to the sacred text."<sup>17</sup> Thus, recitation functions both as a foundation for religious education and as a means of maintaining the Islamic identity of the younger generation.

In addition to its educational function, recitation also serves as a medium of Islamic artistic expression. The aesthetic quality of Qur'anic recitation not only nurtures a deep appreciation for the Qur'an but also becomes a source of cultural pride among Muslims in Southern Thailand. As expressed by an informant: "The art of reciting the Qur'an with melodious tones and rhythms represents a form of devotion to Islamic teachings. The beauty of the sound and delivery of the verses creates a profound and calming effect, touching the heart and strengthening faith".<sup>18</sup> This statement highlights the role of recitation in fostering pride and reinforcing Muslim identity through both aesthetic and spiritual dimensions.

Tilawah also functions as a means of preserving the authenticity of Islamic teachings, particularly through the use of Arabic as the language of the Qur'an. Although local languages are predominantly used in daily communication, the ability to read and understand the Qur'an remains an essential component of religious identity. As one informant explained: "The tradition of tilawah helps preserve the Arabic language. It serves as a bridge connecting the community with authentic Islamic teachings, ensuring that religious understanding remains rooted

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<sup>17</sup> Ismail, "Interview with Ismail, as a Lecturer at Ma'had," August 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Ishmael.

in its original sources”.<sup>19</sup> In this way, tilawah reinforces Muslim identity while safeguarding religious heritage.

Furthermore, the tradition of Qur’anic recitation contributes to the development of spiritual resilience within Muslim communities. In the context of challenging social and political conditions, recitation serves as a source of inner strength. As a community leader noted: “By listening to and reciting the Qur’anic verses, we gain serenity, resilience, and inspiration to face various challenges in life”.<sup>20</sup> He further emphasized that recitation can function as an effective medium of da’wah: “This tradition can also be part of preaching activities that strengthen the community’s Islamic identity. The messages of the Qur’an are conveyed in a beautiful and accessible manner”.<sup>21</sup>

The tradition of Qur’anic recitation occupies a vital place in the lives of Muslims in Southern Thailand. It is not only preserved as a ritual practice but is also enacted through educational processes, artistic expression, da’wah activities, and broader socio-religious engagements within the community. The continuity of this practice demonstrates that Qur’anic traditions remain deeply embedded in the social and cultural life of the Muslim minority. Through this tradition, Muslims in Southern Thailand sustain their attachment to Islamic values while preserving their religious identity amid ongoing social change and modernization.

### **3. The Tradition of Qur’anic Recitation as a Cultural Practice in the Construction of Muslim Identity**

The tradition of Qur’anic recitation (tilawah) preserved and developed at Ma’had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong extends beyond the realm of formal education and becomes embedded in the cultural practices of the Muslim community in Southern Thailand. This tradition is continuously enacted through religious study circles, tadarus (collective recitation), Qur’anic recitation competitions (musabaqah), and various socio-religious activities involving the surrounding community. In this context, tilawah is understood not merely as a ritual activity but as a form of religious cultural practice that fosters social bonds,

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<sup>19</sup> Ishmael.

<sup>20</sup> Ishmael.

<sup>21</sup> Ishmael.

strengthens intercommunal relations, and sustains the continuity of Qur'anic traditions in the lives of the Muslim minority.

One observable impact of this practice is the increasing public interest in the Qur'an. Regularly organized Qur'anic recitation classes have attracted participants from diverse age groups, including children, adolescents, and adults. As one community leader noted: "Alhamdulillah, we observe a very positive impact. One tangible outcome of this Ma'had program is the increased interest among people from various groups in studying and practicing the teachings of the Qur'an. The recitation classes we organize regularly have attracted not only children but also adolescents and adults".<sup>22</sup> This finding indicates that Qur'anic recitation has become a living tradition embedded in everyday life, both within mosques and family settings, as well as in broader religious activities.

The tradition of recitation also contributes to the formation of social character and moral values within the community. Through engagement with Qur'anic teachings, individuals become more aware of the importance of honesty, patience, and mutual respect in social interactions. As expressed by an informant: "Through teaching the importance of honesty, patience, and mutual respect, the community becomes more conscious of applying Islamic values in daily social life." This perspective is further reinforced by another community leader: "We observe a strong spirit of mutual assistance and solidarity, particularly in facing the challenges of life as a minority group".<sup>23</sup> Thus, the tradition of recitation not only nurtures individual piety but also cultivates a harmonious social culture.

The Ma'had plays a significant role in fostering solidarity and a sense of togetherness within the Muslim community. Activities such as majelis taklim, collective religious studies, and the commemoration of Islamic holidays function as important platforms for strengthening social relationships among community members. As one informant explained: "Activities such as majelis taklim, joint religious studies, and the commemoration of Islamic holidays serve as a means of strengthening relationships among community members. This solidarity is an important factor that helps the community remain steadfast in maintaining its

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<sup>22</sup> Ishaq, "Interview with Ishaq, as a Local Community Leader," August 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Suhaila Hayeekaji, "Interview with Suhaila Hayeekaji, a Local Community Leader," August 2024.

Islamic identity”.<sup>24</sup> Such solidarity functions as social capital that enables the Muslim community to remain resilient amid the pressures of modernization and the challenges associated with minority status.

The tradition of recitation and the religious education developed by the Ma'had have contributed to improving the quality of religious education among the younger generation. Through structured educational programs, children and adolescents not only learn to read the Qur'an but also develop a deeper understanding of its teachings. As one informant stated: “The educational programs organized by the Ma'had provide opportunities for us, especially children and adolescents, to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of religion”.<sup>25</sup> This foundation equips the younger generation with the capacity to navigate the challenges of globalization while maintaining their Islamic identity.

The impact of the tilawah tradition sustained by Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong can be observed in three main aspects: (1) increased public awareness and participation in Qur'anic learning, (2) the formation of moral character and harmonious social relations, and (3) the strengthening of solidarity and the improvement of religious education among the younger generation. These findings demonstrate that Qur'anic recitation is not merely a ritual practice but also a means of social and spiritual transformation that reinforces Muslim identity in everyday life.

#### **4. Challenges and Opportunities in Preserving the Tradition of Qur'anic Recitation in the Digital Era**

The preservation of the tilawah tradition at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong faces a range of challenges, including the influence of modernization, limited study time, varying levels of family support, and constraints in facilities and funding. At the same time, significant opportunities emerge, particularly in the growing awareness of Islamic identity and the potential use of digital technology. These dynamics indicate that the tilawah tradition is a living and adaptive practice that must be continuously sustained to remain a central pillar of Muslim identity.

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<sup>24</sup> Hayeekaji,.

<sup>25</sup> Hayeekaji,.

One of the primary challenges is the influence of modernization. As one informant noted: "One of the main challenges is the influence of modernization. Many young people are now more interested in modern entertainment, leading to a decline in their interest in reciting the Qur'an".<sup>26</sup> This condition reflects a tension between the increasing dominance of global culture and the continuity of local religious traditions.

Another challenge relates to the demands of formal education, which limit students' time to engage in Qur'anic learning. As expressed by an informant: "The dense curriculum is also an obstacle. Children have limited time to engage deeply in Qur'anic recitation".<sup>27</sup> Such time constraints reduce opportunities for sustained religious learning, particularly in practices that require consistency and repetition, such as recitation.

The diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of students also present challenges. Not all students receive adequate support from their families in learning Qur'anic recitation. As one informant explained: "There is also the factor of students' backgrounds. Not all students come from families that support recitation learning, resulting in differences in motivation and ability".<sup>28</sup> This condition necessitates a more adaptive, patient, and individualized approach in the teaching process.

Limited resources including facilities, teaching staff, and funding further constrain the optimal implementation of tilawah programs. As one informant stated: "Limited facilities, teaching staff, and funding hinder the optimal implementation of the tilawah program. However, we strive to address this through inter-institutional collaboration and community support".<sup>29</sup> Despite these limitations, collective commitment remains a key resource in sustaining the tradition.

Alongside these challenges, there are significant opportunities for strengthening the tilawah tradition. Increasing public awareness of the importance of Islamic identity provides strong social support for its preservation. As one informant noted: "We see a significant opportunity as people are increasingly

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<sup>26</sup> Nisoh, "Interview with Anan Nisoh, Head of Ma'had Curriculum."

<sup>27</sup> Ismail, "Interview with Ismail, as a teacher at Ma'had."

<sup>28</sup> Nisoh, "Interview with Anan Nisoh, Head of Ma'had Curriculum."

<sup>29</sup> Nisoh.

aware of the importance of maintaining their Islamic identity through the tradition of tilawah".<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the development of digital technology offers new possibilities for expanding and enhancing tilawah learning. Digital media can be utilized to provide more interactive and engaging learning materials, particularly for younger generations. As one informant explained: "The development of digital technology can be utilized to expand the reach of tilawah learning digital media can serve as an effective tool to attract the interest of the younger generation".<sup>31</sup> Through the integration of technology, the tilawah tradition can adapt to contemporary contexts while maintaining its core values.

Despite challenges related to modernization, academic demands, diverse student backgrounds, and limited resources, Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong possesses significant opportunities to sustain the tilawah tradition. Community support and the strategic use of digital technology play a crucial role in ensuring that this tradition remains vibrant and continues to function as a strong foundation of Muslim identity in Southern Thailand.

### **1) The Tradition of Qur'anic Recitation as Collective Identity of the Muslim Minority**

The findings of this study indicate that the tradition of Qur'anic recitation plays a crucial role in supporting Muslim identity in Southern Thailand. For minority Muslim communities, religious practices such as Qur'anic recitation function not only as forms of individual worship but also as collective symbols that affirm identity amid the forces of modernization and the dominance of majority culture. The recitation of Qur'anic verses taught, preserved, and transmitted at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong serves as a distinctive marker that differentiates the Muslim community from others, while simultaneously strengthening internal social bonds.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding can be understood through the concept of collective identity as proposed by Manuel Castells. Castells argues that collective identity is constructed through ongoing social and cultural practices

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<sup>30</sup> "Interview with Ishaq, as a Local Community Figure."

<sup>31</sup> Ismail, "Interview with Ismail, as a teacher at Ma'had."

maintained within a community.<sup>32</sup> Identity does not emerge naturally; rather, it is formed through continuous social interaction and shared collective experiences. In the context of the Muslim minority in Southern Thailand, the tradition of Qur'anic recitation represents a cultural-religious practice that sustains the community's attachment to its Islamic identity.

Qur'anic recitation is therefore not merely an act of vocalizing sacred verses but also a social practice that generates shared experiences within the community. Activities such as tadarus (collective recitation), Qur'anic recitation competitions (musabaqah), religious study circles (pengajian), and structured learning sessions create interactive spaces that bring together students, teachers, and community members. These practices foster a sense of togetherness and social cohesion, as the community collectively engages with the Qur'an as a central symbolic reference. From the perspective of collective identity, such shared experiences form the foundation of communal solidarity.<sup>33</sup>

This phenomenon can also be interpreted through the perspective of Peter L. Berger, particularly his concept of religion as a "sacred canopy". Berger posits that religion functions as a system of meaning that provides order, legitimacy, and coherence in social life.<sup>34</sup> Through religious symbols, values, and practices, religion constructs a symbolic canopy that protects individuals and communities from uncertainty, cultural disruption, and disorientation associated with modernization. In the context of the Muslim minority in Southern Thailand, the tradition of Qur'anic recitation can be understood as part of this symbolic system that sustains meaning and reinforces collective identity.

The practice of tilawah manifested in activities such as pengajian, tadarus, tahfiz, and musabaqah creates socio-religious spaces that bring individuals together in shared religious experiences. These activities function not only as acts of worship but also as mechanisms for cultivating collective awareness of shared values, norms, and identity. From Berger's perspective, such collective religious

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<sup>32</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Wiley, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans, eds., *Social Movements and Culture*, 3. print, Social Movements, Protest, and Contention 4 (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1990).

practices contribute to the maintenance of social order by legitimizing the value system upheld by the community.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, tilawah operates as a religious symbol that reinforces the attachment of the Muslim community in Southern Thailand to Islamic traditions amid ongoing social change.

These findings are consistent with the work of Ismail Suardi Wekke, who argues that the continuity of Islamic education in Pattani extends beyond formal instruction and serves as a means of preserving the religious identity of Muslim minorities under socio-cultural pressure.<sup>36</sup> Islamic educational institutions function as social spaces that sustain religious traditions, values, and practices. In this study, the tradition of Qur'anic recitation emerges as a central component of this continuity. It is not limited to ritual practice but operates as a cultural-religious system transmitted collectively through education, religious gatherings, tadarus, and recitation competitions, supported by both institutions and the broader community.

Drawing on the frameworks of Castells' collective identity and Berger's sacred canopy, it can be concluded that the tilawah tradition at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong performs a dual function: first, as a socio-cultural practice that binds the Muslim minority community together and second, as a symbolic system that safeguards the community from the pressures of modernization and the dominance of majority culture. Tilawah thus functions not only as an individual act of worship but also as a collective symbol that sustains identity, strengthens internal solidarity, and affirms the presence of Muslims in Southern Thailand within the broader social landscape.

## **2) The Role of Islamic Educational Institutions as Conservators of Religious Tradition**

Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong functions not only as a formal educational institution but also as a cultural and spiritual center that actively sustains the tradition of Qur'anic recitation. Its presence provides an important

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<sup>35</sup> Titus Hjelm, "Peter L. Berger and the Sociology of Religion," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 18, no. 3 (August 2018): 231–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X18761217>.

<sup>36</sup> Wekke, Siddin, and Langputeh, "Islamic Education in Thailand's Pattani Muslim Minority."

platform for the Muslim minority in Southern Thailand to maintain their collective identity through religious practices embedded in everyday life.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Ismail Suardi Wekke, who demonstrates that Islamic educational institutions in Pattani function as centers for preserving the culture and identity of Muslim minorities. Madrasas and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) serve as both social and symbolic spaces that ensure the continuity of religious practices despite political and cultural pressures from the majority.<sup>37</sup> In the context of Ma'had Pohon Tanjong, the tradition of tilawah represents a tangible form of this cultural continuity, facilitating the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values.

Tilawah education at the Ma'had can also be understood as a form of character and spiritual formation. Ahmad Zaki explains that tilawah learning based on maqamat and tartil not only enhances technical proficiency but also deepens students' spiritual understanding. Students engaged in systematic recitation practice develop not only accuracy and aesthetic quality in recitation but also discipline, religious sensitivity, and a profound attachment to the Qur'an.<sup>38</sup> Thus, tilawah functions as an integrative educational medium that encompasses technical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

An additional dimension is the aesthetic aspect of Qur'anic recitation. The beauty of tone and rhythm in recitation can lead both students and the wider community toward deeper religious experiences.<sup>39</sup> The aesthetics of recitation are not merely artistic expressions but also serve as a means of internalizing meaning and strengthening spirituality. Osman Mutluel emphasizes that the art of Qur'anic recitation possesses transformative power, as it integrates the values of beauty and sacredness within a single spiritual experience.<sup>40</sup> In the context of the Ma'had,

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<sup>37</sup> Wekke, Siddin, and Langputeh.

<sup>38</sup> Ahmad Zaki, Muhammad Alfikri Ananda, and Said Rasyid Habibi, *Developing the Ability to Read the Qur'an With Rhythm (Tilawah Al-Qur'an) at Sanggar Guidance Segambut, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia*, nd

<sup>39</sup> Hariish Faturrohman, *RELIGIOUS SPIRITUAL EDUCATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH JOINT RECITATION ACTIVITIES (Case Study at MA Kreatif Al-Mubaarak, Bengkulu City)*, 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Osman Mutluel, "The Holy Quran In The Context Of Aesthetic Behavior," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 29, no. 10 (October 2024): 46–52, <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2910094652>.

recitation training serves as a medium of religious aesthetic education, enabling students not only to read the text but also to experience its spiritual depth through sound and rhythm.

From a sociological perspective, Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong can be understood as a socio-religious institution that performs both educational and identity-forming functions.<sup>41</sup> Religious institutions act as social spaces through which values, symbols, and practices are continuously transmitted to community members.<sup>42</sup> In the context of the Muslim minority in Southern Thailand, the Ma'had plays a central role in sustaining the continuity of Qur'anic traditions through routine activities such as recitation, memorization, religious study, and structured learning.

This role demonstrates that Qur'anic recitation extends beyond individual spirituality and performs a significant social function in strengthening communal solidarity.<sup>43</sup> Collective practices such as Qur'anic reading sessions, tadarus, and recitation competitions foster social interaction and reinforce bonds among students, teachers, and the wider community. These activities cultivate a shared religious experience that enhances social cohesion and functions as a mechanism of social integration through common symbols and rituals.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, the Ma'had serves as a key site for the preservation of religious culture. Through the teaching and practice of Qur'anic recitation, Islamic values are not only transmitted normatively but also embodied in the daily lives of students and community members. This process illustrates the crucial role of religious institutions in transmitting collective memory, religious knowledge, and cultural

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<sup>41</sup> Anharul Ulum and Bima Fandi Asy'arie, "Islamic Religious Education in Forming Muslim Identity in the Modern Era," *Ri'ayah: Jurnal Sosial Dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 1 (June 2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.32332/riayah.v9i1.8498>.

<sup>42</sup> A. Azra, "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia : Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian'Ulamâ'in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 1992, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-transmission-of-Islamic-reformism-to-Indonesia-Azra/6fac167dd44695a8ae8c5c8ea302a458ecf338f8>.

<sup>43</sup> Ach Fadoli, Sakinah Naziha, and Wasik, "Reception of the Qur'an on Social Media: Case Study of Qur'an Interpretation on the Instagram Account @quranreview," *WARAQAT: Journal of Islamic Sciences* 7, no. 2 (December 2022): 150–59, <https://doi.org/10.51590/waraqat.v7i2.338>.

<sup>44</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, "Religious Diversity and Blasphemy Law: Understanding Growing Religious Conflict and Intolerance in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 1 (June 2017): 105–26, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.551.105-126>.

identity across generations.<sup>45</sup> For Muslim minorities in Southern Thailand, such preservation is particularly vital given the pressures of majority cultural dominance and the effects of modernization and globalization.

The Ma'had functions as a source of social and religious legitimacy for the Muslim community.<sup>46</sup> Its institutional authority positions it as a central reference point for maintaining tilawah practices and broader Islamic traditions. In a complex socio-political context, this role provides both symbolic and social stability, ensuring that religious traditions continue to be practiced, sustained, and transmitted collectively. Thus, Islamic educational institutions such as Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong play a dual role not only as providers of formal education but also as guardians of religious identity within the Muslim minority community.

### **3) Recitation as an Aesthetic and Cultural Expression**

The tradition of Qur'anic recitation practiced at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong not only reinforces religious identity but also functions as a form of aesthetic and cultural expression. In this context, recitation is understood not merely as a technical skill involving tartil and tajwid, but as an art form that integrates the beauty of sound, spiritual appreciation, and cultural meaning.

Research by Ahmad Zaki demonstrates that maqam-based recitation learning can enhance students' attachment to the Qur'an and foster pride in Islamic traditions. The study highlights that the rhythm and aesthetic qualities of Qur'anic recitation exert a profound psychological influence, strengthening the emotional bond between the reciter, the sacred text, and the listening community.<sup>47</sup> In the context of the Ma'had, this approach is firmly embedded, as recitation is taught not only as an individual competency but also as a shared cultural heritage that must be collectively preserved.

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<sup>45</sup> Abdul Ghofur et al., "Modernization of Islamic Boarding Schools in Contemporary Islamic Education: Management, Sociology, and Axiology of Local Culture," *EDUSHOPIA: Journal of Progressive Pedagogy* 3, no. 1 (January 2026): 011–020, <https://doi.org/10.64431/edushopia.v3i1.484>.

<sup>46</sup> Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Pluralism, Liberalism, and Islamism: Religious Outlook of Muhammadiyah," *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 3 (December 2018): 433–70, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v25i3.7765>.

<sup>47</sup> Zaki, Ananda, and Habibi, *Developing the Ability to Read the Qur'an With Rhythm (Tilawah Al-Qur'an) at Sanggar Guidance Segambut, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia*.

Osman Mutluel emphasizes that the aesthetic dimension of Qur'anic recitation plays a significant role in deepening religious understanding. The beauty of sound in recitation is not solely intended to embellish the delivery but also to enhance the comprehension and internalization of meaning. According to this perspective, the aesthetics of recitation create a spiritual space that integrates sensory perception with religious experience, allowing recitation to function as a transformative practice.<sup>48</sup> This interpretation resonates with the experience at the Ma'had, where students and community members engaged in collective recitation perceive it simultaneously as a spiritual expression and a form of cultural aesthetics.

Recitation also performs an important social and cultural function.<sup>49</sup> Qur'anic recitation competitions (musabaqah), which are regularly organized within the Ma'had community, provide platforms for skill development while simultaneously strengthening social solidarity. These activities serve multiple purposes: as instruments of religious education, as forms of communal engagement, and as expressions of cultural pride for the Muslim minority. In this sense, recitation not only reinforces identity but also creates social spaces that enhance community cohesion.

From a sociological perspective of religion, the practice of tilawah can be interpreted as a symbolic form that unites the dimensions of beauty and sacredness.<sup>50</sup> The aesthetic quality of recitation facilitates the internalization of Qur'anic meanings while simultaneously binding collective emotions within the community. This demonstrates that recitation functions as a cultural medium that connects generations, fosters cultural pride, and reinforces religious identity. At Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong, recitation thus emerges as a synthesis of art, culture, and spirituality a living tradition within the Muslim minority community of Southern Thailand.

Tilawah may be understood as a form of cultural capital that strengthens minority Muslim identity. The aesthetic experience of Qur'anic recitation not only

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<sup>48</sup> Mutluel, "The Holy Quran In The Context Of Aesthetic Behavior."

<sup>49</sup> Sunarto Sunarto and Muwahidah Nurhasanah, "Providing a Tilawah Program as a Solution to Initiate a Culture of Reading the Quran," *Student Research Journal* 2, no. 1 (2023): 18-25.

<sup>50</sup> Zaini and Bashori, "THE TILAWAH TRADITION IN TAFSIRI LITERATURE AND ITS CHANGES IN THE DIGITAL ERA."

shapes individual spirituality but also generates collective pride and solidarity through shared practices and public performances. The beauty of recitation serves as a cultural symbol that connects generations, cultivates a sense of belonging, and affirms Muslim identity within the broader social landscape. In this way, tilawah operates simultaneously as art, culture, and spirituality, sustaining the dignity and continuity of the Muslim community.

#### **4) Globalization Challenges and Digitalization Opportunities**

Amid the expanding influence of global culture and contemporary lifestyles, Muslim minority communities in Southern Thailand including those associated with Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong face significant pressures in maintaining the tradition of Qur'anic recitation (tilawah). Globalization often promotes the dominance of secular educational models and popular culture, which may weaken younger generations' engagement with classical religious practices.

Michael Feener highlights that the modernization of Islamic education in Southeast Asia reflects a dynamic interplay between adaptation to technological developments and the preservation of local religious traditions.<sup>51</sup> Social change and digital transformation require Islamic educational institutions to innovate pedagogically without undermining the foundational values and practices that define their religious heritage. In this context, the tradition of Qur'anic recitation at the Ma'had demonstrates that modernization does not necessarily threaten religious practice; rather, it can be harnessed to enhance and expand modes of Qur'anic learning.

The integration of digital media into recitation learning enables students to engage more flexibly through audio, video, and interactive applications. Such tools facilitate the practice of tajwid and the appreciation of recitational modes (maqamat), while accommodating the evolving learning preferences of digitally literate younger generations. Consequently, digital platforms broaden access to Qur'anic learning and support more individualized and continuous engagement

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<sup>51</sup> R. Michael Feener, *Muslim Legal Thought in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

beyond formal classroom settings.<sup>52</sup> Importantly, the use of digital technology does not replace traditional face-to-face modes of instruction but complements them. Core practices such as talaqqi (direct teacher-student transmission), collective tilawah, and communal recitation remain central to the pedagogical process at the Ma'had. This demonstrates that technological adaptation has been undertaken without diminishing the spiritual and social dimensions that characterize the tilawah tradition.

These findings are consistent with the work of Uswatun Hasanah, who shows that digital media can enhance students' motivation by presenting Qur'anic learning materials in more engaging, interactive, and accessible formats. Additionally, digital tools support repetition, independent practice, and the reinforcement of recitation skills beyond formal instructional contexts.<sup>53</sup> The use of digital media also facilitates repetition, independent practice, and strengthening Quranic reading skills outside the formal classroom.

When strategically integrated, globalization and digitalization should be understood not merely as challenges but as opportunities for strengthening the tilawah tradition and sustaining Muslim minority identity. In this regard, Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong occupies a strategic position as a mediator between tradition and modernity. It preserves the authenticity of Qur'anic recitation as a foundation of identity while adopting digital innovations to ensure continued relevance among younger generations.

From the perspective of Manuel Castells, this adaptive strategy reflects both a "resistance identity", which seeks to preserve core cultural and religious values amid dominant external influences, and a "project identity", which actively constructs a future-oriented identity rooted in tradition while engaging with modernity. Thus, the integration of digital technology within the tilawah tradition represents not a rupture but a transformation one that enables continuity,

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<sup>52</sup> Suryadi Nasution et al., "Santri 5.0: Islamic Education In The Digital Era And Global Challenges In Mandailing," *Journal of Research and Thought on Islamic Education (JRTIE)* 8, no. 1 (April 2025): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jrtie.v8i1.3502>.

<sup>53</sup> Uswatun Usnur et al., "The Role of Information and Communication Technology in the Development of Islamic Education," *At-Tarbiyah: Journal of Islamic Research and Education* 3, no. 2 (April 2026): 200–206, <https://journal.staittd.ac.id/index.php/at/article/view/842>.

resilience, and innovation within the Muslim minority community of Southern Thailand.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the tradition of Qur'anic recitation at Ma'had Al-'Ulum Addiniyyah Pohon Tanjong plays a central role in affirming Muslim identity among minority communities in Southern Thailand. Through an analysis of institutional, educational, and cultural dimensions, the findings confirm that recitation functions not only as a religious practice but also as a socio-cultural mechanism for sustaining identity resilience. The study further reveals that the Ma'had performs multiple interconnected roles: as a transmitter of religious knowledge, a custodian of cultural heritage, and a mediator between local identity and the forces of global change.

The contribution of this research lies in enriching the discourse on Islamic education and minority identity in Southeast Asia by foregrounding the practice of tilawah, which has received relatively limited scholarly attention. While previous studies have emphasized institutional continuity, political dynamics, and broader educational reforms, this study positions tilawah as a critical locus where identity is negotiated, maintained, and continuously reconstituted. In doing so, it deepens our understanding of how local religious traditions function as a bulwark against cultural erosion in the context of globalization.

From a theoretical perspective, this study highlights the importance of integrating approaches from identity studies, religious education, and cultural resilience. Tilawah should not be understood as a static ritual practice but as a dynamic and adaptive instrument capable of sustaining and transforming the identity of Muslim minority communities. This perspective is significant not only for advancing academic scholarship but also for informing policymakers and practitioners concerned with the sustainability of Islamic traditions in minority contexts.

From a practical standpoint, the findings point to the potential of integrating digital technology into tilawah learning to ensure that the tradition remains accessible, engaging, and relevant to younger generations. At the same time, they underscore the importance of strengthening the role of the Ma'had as a cultural

mediator, particularly in regions where Muslim communities navigate complex socio-political pressures as minorities.

For future research, comparative studies of tilawah practices across different Muslim minority communities—especially within Southeast Asia—are needed to examine how this tradition is negotiated within diverse cultural settings. In addition, empirical investigations into the role of digital platforms in the transmission and transformation of tilawah would provide deeper insights into the intersection between tradition and modernity. Such research would not only enrich scholarly discourse but also offer practical strategies for sustaining Islamic identity in an increasingly globalized world.

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