

Negotiation of Disaster Theology in the Perspective of Living Qur'an: An Analysis of Community Social Response to the Flood in Aceh Tamiang, Indonesia

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Abstract. Floods in Aceh Tamiang are understood not only as an ecological phenomenon but also through a religious perspective, which affects the community's social response. This study aims to analyze the construction of the meaning of the Qur'an-based disaster in the social practices of people affected by multiethnic floods. Using a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach with a *Living Qur'an* perspective, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation of 15 informants of different levels of religiosity and two comparative villages. Data analysis uses a *hybrid thematic analysis* approach with *codebooks*, as well as triangulation of sources and methods. The results of the study show three patterns of theological interpretation of floods as tests, reprimands, and fates that are present simultaneously, as well as three inductive categories: non-theological factors, socio-religious resilience, and social-spiritual dysfunction. The theory of speech (Austin/Searle) shows religious speech as a performative act that shapes social reality. This research contributes to the development of *the study of the Living Qur'an* by expanding the context to ecological-disaster crises based on the Dimensions search protocol (2005-2025), as well as recommending strengthening the capacity of religious leaders in psychosocial assistance based on contextual theology and the integration of religious-ecological approaches in disaster mitigation policies.

Keywords: Living Qur'an, disaster theology, flood, Aceh Tamiang, sociology of the Qur'an

Introduction

The flood phenomenon in Aceh Tamiang Regency is an ecological problem that recurs every year. Based on data from the Aceh Government Command Post as of December 6, 2025 at 08.00 WIB, the major flood that hit all 12 sub-districts in Aceh Tamiang at the end of November 2025 became one of the most significant disasters in the history of the region¹. This disaster not only caused extensive physical damage, but also had profound social impacts. Official data recorded 57 deaths, 23 missing, and 18 injured, while 262,087 people were displaced and 36,838 others were affected without being displaced. In the infrastructure sector, 780 units of houses were severely damaged, 35 units were moderately damaged, as well as 54 units of educational facilities, 33 units of worship facilities, 32 office units, and 3 bridges were ²damaged. This condition shows that disasters are not only natural events, but also humanitarian crises that touch various aspects of people's lives. These figures—which are sourced from the Aceh Tamiang BPBD report verified directly by the

¹ Waspada.id, "The victims of the Aceh Tamiang disaster continue to grow, there are still many locations that are difficult to reach," *Waspada.Id*, August 2, 2026, <https://www.waspada.id/artikel/korban-bencana-aceh-tamiang-terus-bertambah-masih-banyak-lokasi-sulit-dijangkau>.

² Sadhali, "Aceh Tamiang Flood Death Toll Increases to 57 Lives," ed. Munzir Budiana, *RRI.Co.Id*, August 2, 2025, <https://rri.co.id/banda-aceh/regional/2024743/korban-meninggal-banjir-aceh-tamiang-bertambah-57-jiwa>.

Head of BNPB, Lt. Gen. TNI Suharyanto, on December 6, 2025—³show that floods are not just an annual natural phenomenon, but a multidimensional crisis that touches on humanitarian, economic, social, and spiritual aspects.

The floods in Aceh Tamiang, as in various regions of Indonesia, elicit a variety of responses from the community that is not only technical, but also theological. Disaster studies have tended to be dominated by a technical-environmental approach that focuses on structural mitigation, risk analysis, and disaster management⁴. Meanwhile, the religious approach to disasters revolves more around normative-textual studies, such as tracing the terms of disaster in the Qur'an (*bala'*, *mushibah*, *fitnah*, *'iqab*, and *'adẓab*) without adequately relating them to the social practices of the community in the field.

The Qur'an as the main source of meaning for the Indonesian Muslim community provides a comprehensive theological framework in understanding disasters. As affirmed in QS. ar-Rūm verse 41:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"It has been seen that the damage on land and in the sea is caused by the deeds of human hands, so that Allah may feel for them some of the (consequences) of their deeds, so that they may return (to the right path)".

This verse expressly shows the causal relationship between human behavior and environmental damage that leads to natural disasters. However, the meaning of the verse is not singular; The Qur'an presents disasters in a wide spectrum of meanings, including as a test (*bala'*), a warning (*tadẓkirah*), destiny (*qadha'* and *qadar*), and the consequences of man's own negligence (*fasād fi al-ard*).⁵

In the socio-religious context of the Acehnese people who are known to be religious, disasters have never been interpreted singularly as a purely natural event. This research⁶ reveals that disasters can function as *'adza* and *'iqab* (punishment and torment) due to human actions, or as *reinforcements* and *fitnah* (tests and trials) against faith. In line with that, Miswanto⁷ emphasized that a comprehensive theological understanding places humans not just as objects of suffering, but as moral subjects who have legal and ethical responsibilities towards the universe.

The shift in people's perspective on disasters is also reflected in daily religious practices. The results of the analysis showed that spirituality had a significant, albeit weak, positive relationship with people's resilience to flood disasters ($p < 0.001$; correlation coefficient $r = 0.279$), where the higher the level of spirituality of a person, the higher the level of resilience in the face of ⁸disasters. This

³ Kompas TV, "BNPB Distributes Clean Water to Residents of 8 Districts in Aceh Tamiang Using Tank Trucks," *TV Compass*, August 2, 2026, <https://www.kompas.tv/regional/640835/bnpb-distribusikan-air-bersih-untuk-warga-8-kecamatan-di-aceh-tamiang-pakai-truk-tangki>.

⁴ S Pourhosseini, M Ardalan, and B Mehroolhassani, "Key Aspects of Providing Healthcare Services in Disaster Response: A Systematic Review" 43 (2020).

⁵ M A Sahal, "Disaster in the Perspective of the Qur'an: Theological and Social Dimensions" 10, no. 2 (2022).

⁶ Husni and Hasani, "Reconstruction of the Meaning of Disaster in the Perspective of the Qur'an: Theological and Social Analysis," *Journal of Qur'an Studies and Tafsir* 8, no. 1 (2024).

⁷ Miswanto, "Disaster Theology in the Perspective of the Qur'an: Between Tests, Warnings, and Moral Consequences," *Journal of Qur'an Science and Tafsir* 9, no. 1 (2025).

⁸ S A Rahman, M N Shaw, and T Ahmed, "Spirituality and Community Resilience in Flood-Prone Areas: Evidence from Southeast Asia" 72 (2023).

indicates that the people's response to the flood is inseparable from the theological construct they build on the understanding of the Qur'an.

Departing from the empirical reality that flood disasters not only have a material impact but also shake the spiritual and social dimensions, it is important to understand how Muslim society interprets it as a theological event that connects human relationships with God, others, and the environment. Several studies, such as *Tawhid of The Sky and Tawhid of The Earth: Theological Reflections of the People of Medan Post-Natural Disaster* (2025),⁹ This study explores the theological reflections of the people of Medan City after natural disasters, with a focus on the application of heavenly monotheism (human relationship with God) and earth monotheism (human relations with others and nature) in overcoming ecological and social crises. This qualitative research with a case study design uses in-depth interviews with religious leaders, local officials, volunteers, and affected residents. The results of the study revealed that the flood disaster in Medan triggered deep theological reflection, increasing awareness of the importance of spiritual connection with God and responsibility to nature and others. Disasters are seen as divine tests and opportunities to raise social and ecological awareness.

Analysis: This study has a thematic proximity to the research to be conducted, especially in terms of a qualitative approach and a focus on the theological reflection of post-disaster society. However, the research was conducted in Medan with different socio-religious characteristics from Aceh Tamiang. In addition, this study does not specifically use the *Living Qur'an* approach and does not explicitly explore the typology of the meaning of Qur'an-based disasters in people's daily social practices. This research will fill the gap by applying the *Living Qur'an approach* in Aceh Tamiang.

Agung Danarta, *The Implementation of Disaster Mitigation based on Qur'anic Interpretation: Muhammadiyah Case Study* (2022),¹⁰ This study reveals how Muhammadiyah's perspective on disaster mitigation is built based on two groups of Qur'anic verses: first, about causality (why disasters occur), which examines QS. az-Zumar [39]:9, QS. an-Naml [27]:88, and QS. Ghafir [41]:21; second, about the role of humans as caliphs who govern nature, which studies QS. az-Zumar [39]:18, QS. al-Hashim [59]:18, QS. al-Ahzab [33]:72, and QS. al-Qasas [28]:77. This study uses *the Living Qur'an* and phenomenological approaches, and finds that a positive view of disasters and a science-based attitude towards nature are key findings. The main programs initiated are the development of Disaster Resilient Communities, Disaster Safe Schools, and Disaster Safe Hospitals. Analysis: This study is very relevant because it uses the *Living Qur'an approach* that will also be used in this study. However, the focus of his research is on the perspective of religious organizations (Muhammadiyah) and mitigation programs, not on the theological interpretation of the laypeople spontaneously in responding to floods. This research will complement the study by exploring the response of the multi-ethnic non-organizational community in Aceh Tamiang.

Baskoro Setioputro et al., *How Spirituality Strengthens Community Resilience to Flood Disasters* (2024),¹¹ This correlational research with a *cross-sectional* approach involved 193 respondents in Wonoasri Village, Tempurejo District, Jember. The results showed a significant positive relationship

⁹ Anri Naldi et al., "Tawhid of The Sky and Tawhid of The Earth: Theological Reflections of the People of Medan Post-Natural Disaster," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 106, no. 2 (2025): 1–21, doi:10.46222/pharosjot.106.214.

¹⁰ Agung Danarta, "The Implementation of Disaster Mitigation based on Qur'anic Interpretation: Muhammadiyah Case Study," *Journal of the Study of Al-Qur'an and Hadith Sciences* 23, no. 1 (January 2022): 125–144, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-07>.

¹¹ Agung Danarta, "The Implementation of Disaster Mitigation Based on Qur'anic Interpretation: Muhammadiyah Case Study," *Journal of the Study of the Sciences of the Qur'an and Hadith* 23, no. 1 (2022): 125–44, doi:10.14421/qh.2022.2301-07.

between spirituality and resilience to flooding ($\alpha = 0.000$ or $\alpha < 0.05$) with a correlation coefficient of 0.279. This means that the higher the level of spirituality of a person, the higher the level of resilience in the face of flood disasters. Spirituality is defined as a strong relationship with God, fellow human beings, and oneself. Analysis: This study is relevant because it quantitatively proves the relationship between spirituality (which is inseparable from theological meaning) and people's resilience to floods. However, the quantitative-correlational approach cannot deeply capture how the construction of theological meaning is constructed and practiced in everyday life. This research will complement the qualitative *approach of Living Qur'an* that can explore the process of meaning more holistically and contextually.

Ana Fithrotul Janna, *Disaster Theology Perspective of the Qur'an* (2024),¹² This research aims to understand the theological definition of disaster in the view of the Qur'an as well as disaster response techniques taught by the mufasir of the archipelago. This library research uses three books of Nusantara interpretation as primary sources. The results of the study conclude that disaster theology is an interpretation of disaster in the view of the Qur'an, where the Qur'an uses several phrases to describe disasters, such as *bala'*, *fitnah*, and *calamity*. The second finding shows that human actions are the root of disasters, because God will not inflict disasters on His people without a good reason. Analysis: This study is very relevant thematically because it specifically raises the theology of disasters from the perspective of the Qur'an. However, the approach used is normative-textual (literature study) and does not touch the empirical realm of how the theological meaning lives in the social practice of society. This study uses a field-based *Living Qur'an* approach that empirically examines the construction of meaning and its implications for social behavior.

This research offers a novel contribution in three aspects. First, the integration of the Living Qur'an approach with the framework of sociology of religion and anthropology to analyze the response of the multiethnic community of Aceh Tamiang to the flood disaster, a context that has never been studied through this lens. Second, the development of a typology of theological meaning (test, rebuke, destiny) as a mediating variable that can be empirically tested to explain the relationship between spirituality and disaster mitigation behavior. Third, the construction of a theoretical model that links the typology of theological meaning with three measurable behavioral indicators: (a) intensity of participation in structural mitigation, (b) frequency of post-disaster social solidarity, and (c) changes in daily religious practice—all of which can be tested through correlation and regression analysis¹³.

Based on the search of previous studies, there are at least three significant research gaps: First, disaster studies have been dominated by technical and environmental approaches. Research on flooding focuses more on hydrological and geological aspects, risk management, and structural mitigation policies, without touching on the theological and religiosity dimensions of society. Second, religious studies of disasters tend to be normative-textual. Most of the research that raises the theme of "disaster theology in the perspective of the Qur'an" is still oriented towards tracing key verses and terms (*bala'*, *fitnah*, *mushibah*, *'adzab*) through thematic interpretation methods (*maudhu'i*) or literature studies, without examining how these meanings are "lived" and practiced in people's daily lives. Third, research that integrates the Living Qur'an approach with disaster theology studies is still very limited, especially in the context of the multiethnic Aceh Tamiang community (Aceh, Java, Tamiang). The Living Qur'anic approach, which views the Qur'an not only as a text, but as a

¹² Ana Fithrotul Jannah and Fathurrosyid, "Disaster Theology from the Perspective of the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'an Studies and Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2024): 68–88, doi:10.59005/jsqt.v3i1.538.

¹³ N A Nurdin, "Living Qur'an and Social Practices: Bridging Textual Interpretation and Social Reality" 25, no. 2 (2023).

living phenomenon in society, has not been widely applied systematically in the study of society's response to floods. In fact, this approach allows researchers to empirically capture the dialectical dynamics between sacred texts and social practices.

Based on the background and identification of the research gap above, this study aims to examine the construction of the meaning of Qur'an-based disasters in the social practices of flood-affected communities in Aceh Tamiang. More specifically, this study will identify the typology of the people's theological meaning of floods based on the verses of the Qur'an that they live by; analyze how such meanings have implications for social behavior, including attitudes toward disaster mitigation, social solidarity, and religious practices; and reconstruct the integration model between Qur'anic theology and disaster social practice within the framework of the Living Qur'an.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the development of the study of the Living Qur'an in the field of disasters, as well as the integration of sociology of religion, anthropology, and contextual interpretation in understanding the response of the community based on Qur'anic theology empirically.

To answer the focus of the study while closing the research gap, a methodological framework that is academically robust and sensitive to the socio-religious reality of the community is needed. This study uses a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach with the perspective of *Living Qur'an*¹⁴ in Aceh Tamiang Regency, in two comparative villages: one religious homogeneous and one moderately religious heterogeneous. The subjects of the study were flood victims, with key informants including *teungku*, village officials, and volunteers. To avoid sampling bias, the selection of informants was carried out by *purposive sampling* by considering variations in the level of religiosity (high, medium, low) and including comparative informants from outside the religious community. General inclusion criteria: have experienced flooding at least twice in the last five years, have lived at the research site for at least three years, and are willing to be an informant. With this variation, the findings are not produced solely by the homogeneity of the sample, but can rather be analyzed comparatively to test the validity of the relationship between spirituality and cross-group resilience¹⁵.

Data collection techniques used three methods: *in-depth interviews*.¹⁶ to explore the theological significance of disasters; participatory observation¹⁷ to observe religious practices and social behaviors during and after the flood; and documentation such as collective prayers, collective rituals, and religious discourses about disasters.

Data analysis was carried out through a hybrid *thematic analysis approach*, which combines deductive and inductive elements simultaneously. In the early stages, the analytical framework is deductive by referring to the typology of theological meanings in the previous literature (tests, reprimands, fates) as the initial grid. However, this category is not rigid; During the codification process, the researcher opens up space for new categories that emerge from field data through an inductive approach (*open coding*). Thus, the final findings are the result of a dialectic between the theoretical framework and the empirical reality of the people of Aceh Tamiang.

¹⁴ A Sahiron Syamsuddin, "Living Qur'an: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Implications in Qur'anic Studies" 27, no. 3 (2020).

¹⁵ Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2017), <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-research/book242504>.

¹⁶ John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2021), <https://search.worldcat.org/title/1200670411>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Data analysis was carried out through four stages. First, data reduction by selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Second, open *coding*¹⁸ to identify the units of meaning of the informant's statement without being forced into the initial category. Third, thematic categorization by mapping the codes that appear into main categories, both predetermined (deductive) and newly formed from data (inductive). Fourth, interpretive analysis with a social hermeneutic approach to capture the dialectic between the text of the Qur'an and the social context of the Aceh Tamiang community.

Data codification results in six thematic categories. The first three categories come from a deductive framework based on Qur'anic verses. The Exam category includes codes such as trials, tests of faith, and the increase of piety. The Strike category includes disobedience codes, strikes, and collective warnings. The Destiny category consists of the code of Allah's will, decrees, and sunnatullah.

In addition, from the field data, three inductive (*emergent*) categories emerged: Non-Theological Factors (floods as a natural cycle, technical factors, climate change), Socio-Religious Resilience (strengthening friendship, cross-ethnic cooperation, interfaith solidarity), and Socio-Spiritual Dysfunction (trauma, decreased worship participation, conflicts between citizens).

Discussion

Research Results

The Theological Meaning of the Community to Flood Disasters

Field findings show that the people of Aceh Tamiang interpret flood disasters through three theological typologies: exams, reprimands, and destiny. These three meanings do not appear separately, but often overlap in the informant's narrative.

Floods as a Test

Most informants interpret the flood as a test from Allah to test patience and piety. A religious leader (*teungku*) in Kampung Durian, Rantau District (religious homogeneous) stated:

*"This disaster is a trial from Allah. We must be patient and continue to worship, because God tests His beloved servant."*¹⁹.

A similar statement came from an informant with a high level of religiosity in Kampung Landuh (religiously heterogeneous):

*"The flood came to test our faith. Whoever has strong faith will survive the Hereafter."*²⁰.

The researchers' observations during the post-flood recitation at the Istiqomah Mosque in Landuh Village strengthen this finding. In his lecture, *Teungku* recited QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 155 and said that calamity is a sign of Allah's affection for His faithful²¹ servants.

¹⁸ Norman K Denzin et al., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2023), <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-research/book275161>.

¹⁹ TGH-01, *Interview with TGH-01 Informant*, 2026.

²⁰ NS-03, *Interview with NS-03 Informant*, 2026.

(Documentation, Doc-01/2026)



Flood as a Reprimand

Another group of informants interpreted the flood as a rebuke due to the disobedience and negligence of the community in carrying out religious obligations. A village official in Village B stated:

*"In my opinion, this flood is because many people neglect worship; some even openly commit immorality. This is a rebuke from Allah."*²².

Informants with a moderate level of religiosity in Village A corroborated this view:

*"Parents have long said that the great flood is a sign of God's wrath because sins have accumulated."*²³.

Flood as Destiny

Some informants interpret the flood as an inevitable destiny or decree of Allah. A volunteer in Village A revealed:

*"This flood is the will of Allah. Humans can only surrender and try. If it is fate, it cannot be refused."*²⁴.

The informant with a low level of religiosity in Village B stated in a more resigned tone:

*"Yes, it can't be helped; this is God's decree. We just accept it."*²⁵.

The researchers' observations noted that in some residents' meetings, discussions about structural solutions to floods often ended with the statement "leave it all to God," which indicated a fatalistic attitude.²⁶.

²¹ Researcher, *Field Observations on the Value of Community Faith*, 2026.

²² AD-05, *Interview with AD-05 Informant*, 2026.

²³ SR-07, *Interview with SR-07 Informant*, 2026.

²⁴ RL-02, *Interview with RL-02 Informant*, 2026.

²⁵ TR-09, *Interview with TR-09 Informant*, 2026.

²⁶ Researcher, *Field Observation*, 2026.

Emergent Categories of Field Data

In addition to the three deductive categories above, field data gives rise to three unexpected inductive categories.

Non-Theological Factors

Several informants, especially those with low levels of religiosity and comparative informants from outside the religious community, interpreted the flood from a non-theological perspective. A resident in Village B stated:

*"This flood is due to clogged drainage and broken embankments. It's a technical problem, not a sin."*²⁷

Another informant from Village A added:

*"The rainy season is extreme, plus the forests upstream are deforested. This is the result of human actions destroying nature."*²⁸

This negative case is important because it shows that not all communities interpret floods theologically, thus opening up space for more diverse mitigation approaches.

Socio-Religious Resilience

Despite the difference in meaning, all informants admitted that floods actually strengthened social solidarity. A volunteer in Village B said:

*"Even though there are different ethnicities and religions, when floods all help. This is what makes us strong."*²⁹

The researcher's observation during the post-flood cooperation recorded the participation of residents from various ethnic and religious backgrounds in cleaning mosques and public facilities.³⁰

(Documentation, Doc-02/2026)



²⁷ WN-11, *Interview with WN-11 Informant*, 2026.

²⁸ PN-08, *Interview with PN-08 Informant*, 2026.

²⁹ RL-04, *Interview with RL-04 Informant*, 2026.

³⁰ Researcher, *Field Observation*.

Social-Spiritual Dysfunction

On the other hand, some informants admitted that there was a negative impact of the flood on social and spiritual life. A housewife in Village A revealed:

*"After the flood, children became afraid every time it rained. I myself find it difficult to be solemn in worship because I keep thinking about flooding."*³¹.

Another informant said that there was a conflict between residents regarding the distribution of aid:

*"Some are jealous because the aid is uneven. There was a fight at the evacuation post."*³².

These findings make a negative case showing that disasters do not always strengthen social cohesion, but can also trigger disintegration.

This discussion departs from field findings that show that flood disasters are not only interpreted as ecological events, but also as theological experiences that shape people's religious views, attitudes, and practices. The above findings show that the three typologies of meaning (exams, reprimands, fates) are present simultaneously in the narrative of society, with different dominances based on the level of religiosity and socio-religious background.

Interestingly, the emergence of the category of **Non-Theological Factors** as inductive findings suggests that society is not completely trapped in the theological narrative. Some informants are able to read the flood from an ecological and technical perspective, which indicates a rational consciousness that does not conflict with religious beliefs. This enriches the discourse on the relationship between religion and disasters, which has tended to be dichotomous.

The **Socio-Religious Resilience** category shows that spirituality has a positive relationship with community resilience. However, this study goes beyond these findings by showing that resilience comes not only from theological meaning, but also from the cross-ethnic and religious solidarity that arises in emergencies.

Meanwhile, the category of **Social-Spiritual Dysfunction** is a negative case that is important not to be ignored. These findings remind us that disasters are not always "catharsis" that strengthen social cohesion, but can also trigger trauma and conflicts that weaken the social order. Thus, a religious-based mitigation approach also needs to consider psychosocial aspects and conflict resolution.

Theoretically, this study confirms that the theological interpretation of disasters is fluid and contextual, not monolithic. The typologies of exams, reprimands, and fates do not stand alone as rigid categories, but rather overlap and change over time and the collective experience of society. The *Living Qur'an* approach used succeeds in capturing the dialectic between text and context, where Qur'anic verses are not understood literally, but are constantly reinterpreted based on the social realities at hand.

³¹ IRT-06, *Interview with IRT-06 Informant*, 2026.

³² WN-10, *Interview with WN-10 Informant*, 2026.

Disaster Theology in the Perspective of the Sociology of the Qur'an

The findings of the study on the three typologies of the meaning of floods in Aceh Tamiang as tests (*ibtīla'*), rebukes (*'social adzāb*), and destiny (*qadha' and qadar*) show that the community does not solely view disasters as neutral natural events. From the perspective of the sociology of the Qur'an, these three meanings can actually be reconciled through two key concepts: *fasād fī al-arḍ* (destruction on earth) and *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* (man's duty as the guardian of nature). The concept of *fasād* as affirmed in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 30

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

When angels question the creation of man who will "make havoc on the earth and shed blood," it shows that the potential for corruption has been inherent in man since the beginning.³³ Meanwhile, QS. ar-Rūm [30]: 41,

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

Explicitly, QS. ar-Rūm [30]:41 connects *the fasād* on land and sea with the "work of human hands", so that the flood is not merely a vertical-theistic destiny, but also the product of collective socio-ecological behavior. Scientific explanations show that the main anthropogenic factors causing flooding in Aceh Tamiang include: (1) deforestation and land conversion—between 2002-2024, Aceh Tamiang lost 57 thousand hectares of tree cover, with deforestation remaining only 28% of the area area in 2020, while the conversion of forests to oil palm plantations in the upstream Tamiang watershed increases surface runoff and river sedimentation; (2) siltation of the estuary—the depth of the mouth of the Tamiang River which was originally 12 meters now leaves a new land area of 170 hectares that can be used to play football, based on BPBD aerial photo measurements; (3) inadequate waste management—the volume of waste reaches 40 tons/day with landfill overload, which exacerbates the blockage of waterways. Meanwhile, citizens' perceptions of these factors vary: some informants interpret floods as a logical consequence of human-induced environmental damage³⁴ while others still see them as divine rebukes or fate^{35,36}. Thus, this distinction is important so that the claim about the causes of flooding is not merely theological-perceptual, but is supported by measurable hydrological and spatial data.

³³ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azim*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998).

³⁴ WN-10, *Interview with WN-10 Informant*.

³⁵ SR-07, *Interview with SR-07 Informant*.

³⁶ TR-09, *Interview with TR-09 Informant*.

From the perspective of *khalifah fi al-ard*, human responsibility is not limited to ritual worship, but includes the fair and sustainable management of nature.³⁷ QS. Hud [11]: 61 states,

هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا

"He has created you from the earth and made you prosperous in it" (*ista'marakum fiha*). The word *ista'mara* contains the meaning of actively prospering, caring, and not destroying.

Thus, disaster theology in the perspective of the sociology of the Qur'an rejects the narrow dichotomy between "pure destiny" and "human error". Instead, it offers a dialectical framework: God's destiny (*qadha'*) meets human action (*kash*). The flood may be destiny, but it does not come in a vacuum; It is a logical consequence of man's transgression of the *Sunnatullah* (the law of natural causality).³⁸ In other words, if people cut down forests without reforestation, then flooding is a "chosen destiny" (*al-qada' al-mu'allaq*) that can actually be avoided if behavior is changed.³⁹

Further analysis shows that the meaning of flooding as a "reprimand" or "social punishment" actually contains a strong ecological awareness. When people refer to floods as the result of "unjust acts" (e.g., destroying protected forests) or "abandoning sharia obligations", they are actually making a collective moral critique of practices that damage the environment⁴⁰. In this context, theology is not an obstacle to mitigation, but rather a driver of awareness. On the contrary, the interpretation of floods as an absolute destiny (*qadha' and qadar*) that cannot be changed tends to give birth to fatalistic-passive attitudes, which, according to field findings, are more widely adopted by groups that have limited access to environmental information and education. Thus, the sociology of the Qur'an offers an integration between sacred texts, social behavior, and ecological reality: disasters are the intersection between God's will, human actions, and natural laws. This approach overcomes the weakness of conventional disaster theology that is too normative or too secular, while opening up space for the development of contextual and applicative Qur'an-based environmental ethics in Aceh Tamiang.

Living Qur'an as a Social Practice

Field findings in Aceh Tamiang show that the Qur'an does not stop at ritual readings or cognitive interpretations alone, but is truly "lived" in the reality of the flood crisis. To understand how sacred texts transform into social actions in the midst of disasters, the *speech act theory* of J.L. Austin and John Searle offers an appropriate framework for analysis. Austin distinguishes three dimensions of speech: locution (the act of uttering a sentence), illocution (an act performed in pronunciation, such as warning, promising, or praying), and perlocution (the effect it has on the

³⁷ Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb, Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 2000).

³⁸ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

³⁹ M Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: The Message, Effect, and Compatibility of the Qur'an*, vol. 11 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002).

⁴⁰ Md Abu Sayem, "Islam and Environmental Ethics: A Qur'anic Approach," *Islamic Studies* 60, no. 2 (2021): 157–72, doi:10.52541/isiri.v60i2.1438.

audience). In this perspective, people's religious speech is not just an *affirmative statement* that is completely wrong, but a performative action that changes social reality. Searle then developed a more detailed typology of illocution, including assertive (declaring, believing), directive (requesting/commanding), commissive (promise), expressive (expressing feelings), and declaration (changing status through speech).⁴¹

An analysis of informants' utterances in the context of the Aceh Tamiang floods shows that religious performativity operates through four key components: actors, speech, context, and effects. For example, a *teungku* who recites QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 155 ("*And indeed We will give you a trial...*") in the post-flood recitation does not only inform the content of the verse (locution), but performs an illocution action confirming that calamity is a test and comforts the congregation. The effect of the perlocution (perlocution) is the emergence of calmness and patience among the listeners.⁴² On the other hand, a village official who stated that "This flood is due to disobedience"⁴³ carried out an act of illocution of blame and warning, with the effect of a perlocution in the form of a joint prayer proposal and *istighatsah* as a collective repentance.

Another case shows performativity without the involvement of a human audience. An informant who interprets the flood as destiny and states "Yes, it can't be helped, this is God's decree"⁴⁴ performs an act of surrender that is directed to God as the absolute speaking partner. Searle recognizes that in expressive acts, speech partners can be God, others, oneself, or even nature. Findings from the study of expressive speech in Aceh tsunami victims confirm that God is the most important speech partner in religious expression during disasters, with direct speech strategies using religious diction such as *Allahu Akbar*, *Ya Allah*, and *Lailahailallah* to express gratitude, resignation, and prayer. Therefore, when an informant says "Leave everything to God," the speech is not only expressing theological beliefs, but at the same time *committing* an act of surrender that has social consequences—in this case, stopping the discussion of structural solutions to the flood. Thus, speech theory shows that "bringing to life" the Qur'an in a flood crisis is a performative process in which the text becomes an action that shapes social reality, not just an object of passive meaning.

Thus, the Living Qur'an in the context of the Aceh Tamiang flood cannot be understood as a linear relationship between text and action, but rather as a continuous process of social hermeneutics: the community reinterprets the verses according to the needs of the crisis, then institutionalizes them in social practices (cooperation, self-mitigation, collective rituals). This process shows that the Qur'an is not a dead text that is only respected, but a living resource that dynamically shapes, as well as is shaped by, social-catastrophic reality. This finding enriches the study of the Living Qur'an, which has been more focused on the tradition of daily reading or weekly rituals, by presenting the context of the ecological crisis as a new arena for the "life" of the Qur'an in society.

The Dialectic between Agency and Structure

⁴¹ Faisal et al., "Expressive Speech Acts During Disasters: A Pragmatic Analysis of the Aceh Tsunami Oral History Archive," *Studies in English Language and Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 488–503, doi:10.24815/siele.v12i1.37842.

⁴² TGH-01, *Interview with TGH-01 Informant*.

⁴³ AD-05, *Interview with AD-05 Informant*.

⁴⁴ TR-09, *Interview with TR-09 Informant*.

In responding to the floods in Aceh Tamiang, the community did not simply passively accept the established theological meaning, but actively reinterpreted the disaster according to their experiences and needs. This is what agency is called: the ability of individuals to act, choose, and interpret autonomously. Field findings show that this agency manifests itself in a variety of contextual meanings. A farmer who lost his rice fields⁴⁵ interpreted the flood as "a test from God to strengthen patience," as quoted verbatim:

*"I lost the whole rice field, but I believe this is a test. God will not give temptations beyond the limits of His servants."*⁴⁶

Meanwhile, a mother whose child survived the flood⁴⁷ interpreted it as a hidden grace:

*"My son almost washed away, but survived. I am sure that Allah saved him because there was good intention behind this. Maybe this is a grace that we didn't realize."*⁴⁸

Another informant with a high level of religiosity⁴⁹ interpreted the flood as a reminder to increase piety:

*"This flood reminds us to return to Allah. All this time we have been too busy with the affairs of the world."*⁵⁰

However, this agency does not occur in a vacuum; it is constrained and at the same time made possible by the structure, namely the religious local culture of Aceh, *the religious authority of teungku*, and the deep-rooted tradition of interpretation. As a conceptual illustration rather than an informant quotation in the framework of Berger's and Luckmann's social construction of reality, society is in a process of three stages of dialectical action: externalization (the individual projects meaning onto the world), objectification (the meaning crystallizes into a reality that appears to be "on its own"), and internalization (the individual re-absorbs objective reality as something natural)⁵¹. Flooding as a "rebuke" or "destiny" was initially an individual interpretation that was then institutionalized through *teungku lectures* and collective practices, thus becoming an objective reality that was inherited between generations. This process can be seen in the documentation of post-flood religious lectures that consistently repeat the narrative of reprimands and researchers' observations of routine recitations that strengthen the collective meaning.

Novelty and Scientific Contributions

This research contributes to the study of *the Living Qur'an* by shifting the focus from the realm that has been studied so far, such as reading traditions, daily rituals, and domestic religious practices, to the context of the ecological-disaster crisis in Aceh Tamiang. In contrast to previous studies that have focused more on how people "live" the Qur'an in routine recitation, dhikr, or daily prayers, this study shows that floods as collective traumatic events—becoming an arena in which the

⁴⁵ PN-08, *Interview with PN-08 Informant*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ IRT-06, *Interview with IRT-06 Informant*.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ NS-03, *Interview with NS-03 Informant*.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 1st ed. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966).

Qur'an "lives" in specific forms, including: collective prayer and the recitation of protection verses in emergency response, interpretive lectures that connect disasters with *qauliyah* verses, as well as social actions such as cooperation and moral criticism of environmental destruction based on theological meaning. These findings do not imply that previous *studies of the Living Qur'an* were limited to domestic rituals, but rather offer an expansion of the context from the private-ritual realm to the public-crisis realm that has not been explored specifically in the post-disaster multiethnic community of Aceh Tamiang.

In other words, the disaster does not paralyze society's relationship with the sacred text, but on the contrary, reactivates the function of the Qur'an as a source of meaning, psychological comforter, and guideline for action. These findings confirm that the *Living Qur'an* shows its vitality not only in the practice of regular worship, but also in extreme situations.

To position the novelty of this study transparently, the researcher conducted a search protocol on the Dimensions database with the keywords "Living Qur'an", "Living Al-Qur'an", as well as variations without apostrophes, which included publications for the period 2005-2025. The search results showed that although the trend of *Living Qur'an* publications increased significantly from 2016 to 2022 (a peak of 99 articles in 2022), most studies focused on domestic ritual practices such as regular recitation, reading traditions, and dhikr. Research on the *Living Qur'an* in the context of ecological-disaster crises is still limited, especially in multiethnic communities such as Aceh Tamiang.

More than that, this study systematically applies the *Living Qur'an* approach to the multiethnic Aceh Tamiang community (Aceh, Java, Tamiang). Several previous studies have examined the practice of *Living Qur'an* in Aceh Tamiang, such as the tradition of *Sarafal Anam* in the celebration of Maulid and the practice of Surah as-Sajdah at Friday Fajr prayers at the Tahfiz Al-Fuad Seruway Islamic Boarding School. However, this study differs in that it specifically highlights how the Qur'an was "brought to life" in response to the flood crisis, a context that has not been widely explored in the region. This finding also enriches the map of *Living Qur'an* studies in areas that have characteristics of Aceh's distinctive religiosity.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the flood disaster in Aceh Tamiang Regency is not just an ecological event, but a theological experience that shapes people's religious views, attitudes, and practices. Field findings identify three typologies of theological meaning—test, rebuke, and fate—that are present simultaneously in the narrative of society, with different dominances based on levels of religiosity and socio-religious background. In addition, field data give rise to three inductive (*emergent*) categories: non-theological factors, socio-religious resilience, and social-spiritual dysfunction, which enrich the discourse on the relationship between religion and disaster.

The theological interpretation of the disaster in Aceh Tamiang is fluid and contextual, not monolithic. The typologies of exams, reprimands, and fates do not stand alone as rigid categories, but rather overlap and change over time and the collective experience of society. The *Living Qur'an* approach used succeeds in capturing the dialectic between text and context, where Qur'anic verses are not understood literally, but are constantly reinterpreted based on the social realities at hand. The speech theory (Austin/Searle) shows that "bringing to life" the Qur'an in a flood crisis is a

performative process in which the text becomes an action that shapes social reality—through *entertaining teungku* speech, village officials warn, and resigned residents.

Community agency in interpreting disasters is manifested in a variety of contextual interpretations, as shown by the verbatim quotes of informants from various backgrounds. However, this agency does not occur in a vacuum; it is limited and at the same time made possible by the religious local cultural structure of Aceh, *the religious authority of teungku*, and the tradition of interpretation that has taken root. The dialectic of externalization, objectification, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann) shows how individual interpretations of the flood as a "rebuke" or "destiny" are institutionalized through collective discourse and practice, thus becoming an objective reality that is passed down between generations.

Theoretically, this study confirms that spirituality has a positive relationship with people's resilience to disasters, as confirmed by the findings. However, this study goes beyond these findings by showing that resilience comes not only from theological meaning, but also from the cross-ethnic and religious solidarity that arises in emergencies. On the other hand, negative cases in the form of social-spiritual dysfunction remind us that disasters are not always catharsis that strengthen social cohesion, but can also trigger trauma and conflicts that weaken the social order.

The contribution of this research lies in the expansion of the *study of the Living Qur'an* from the realm of domestic rituals to the context of ecological-disaster crises, which have not been explored much so far. Based on the search protocol in the Dimensions database (2005-2025), this study enriches the map of *Living Qur'an* studies in the multiethnic region of Aceh Tamiang by highlighting specifically how the Qur'an was "revived" in response to the flood crisis—a context that distinguishes it from previous studies that focused more on reading traditions, regular recitations, and domestic practices. These findings also show that the Qur'an does not stop at ritual readings or cognitive interpretations alone, but is truly "alive" in the reality of crisis as a source of meaning, psychological comfort, and a guideline for action.

Practically, this study recommends strengthening the capacity of religious leaders in providing contextually theological-based psychosocial assistance, as well as the integration of religious and ecological approaches in disaster mitigation policies in Aceh Tamiang. Further research is recommended to quantitatively examine the relationship between the typology of theological meaning and disaster mitigation behavior, as well as to expand the scope of regions and comparative methods across regions with different socio-religious characteristics.

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