

## Oral Tradition in The Closing Of Prayer Delivery at The Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation in The Medan Helvetia Subdistrict (Anthropological Linguistics Study)

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the form of oral tradition in the closing of prayer activities at the Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation in Medan through an anthropological-linguistic perspective. The focus of the study is on the use of Shalawat Pembuka Pintu Rezeki (Prayer for Opening the Door to Sustenance) as the closing of the yasinan ritual, which is a unique linguistic and cultural phenomenon. The Research uses a qualitative approach with an anthropological-ethnographic design, employing participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The analysis examined the relationships among language form, cultural context, social function, and symbolic meaning in the practice of oral tradition. The results of the study show that reciting Shalawat serves not only as a religious expression but also as a medium for conveying cultural values that strengthen group identity, solidarity, and the continuity of tradition. Linguistically, the repetition, intonation, language formulas, and performativity in Shalawat are markers of local wisdom and living cultural expressions. This study confirms that oral traditions in religious rituals constitute a form of artistic practice passed down through language and performance.

**Keywords:** Oral Tradition, Prayer Delivery, Anthropolinguistics

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural practices in society are a set of rules, customs, and patterns of behavior that are passed down from generation to generation. These practices not only serve as guidelines for social behavior but also as mechanisms for preserving a community's cultural identity. Established cultures are born through a process of accumulated collective experiences that are continuously maintained and do not appear suddenly (Krisnam in Nursugiharti & Rohim, 2024). One form of cultural practice that is still alive and thriving in Indonesian society is oral tradition.

Oral traditions play an important role as a medium for passing on values, identity, and collective memory across generations. Sibarani (2015) emphasizes that oral traditions serve as a means of cultural education and character building. In the context of Islam, oral traditions such as reciting Yasin, tahlil, and shalawat have become deeply rooted ritual practices that are preserved as part of the spiritual life of Muslim communities.

The language used in religious rituals not only conveys literal meaning, but also carries symbolic values that regulate social relations and the cultural structure of the community that supports them. Duranti (1997) views ritual language as social action that is laden with cultural values, identity, and power. In line with this, Foley (1997) asserts that ritual language is formulaic, passed down from generation to generation, and cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it is embedded. Thus, the practice of reciting shalawat can be understood as a meaningful cultural performance rather than merely an act of worship.

From an anthropological perspective, Sibarani (2015) proposes three main concepts for analyzing oral traditions: performance, indexicality, and participation. Performance relates to how speech is manifested in verbal and nonverbal actions; indexicality refers to the connection between speech and cultural values and identity; while participation indicates the social role of individuals in rituals. These three concepts are relevant to examining the practice of reciting shalawat as an oral tradition alive in religious communities.

To deepen the understanding of ritual language, a semantic approach is used as a complementary analytical tool. Semantics examines the meaning of language both lexically and connotatively (Chaer, 2012). In the text of shalawat, Arabic lexicons such as *ṣallallāhu*, *sallama*, *sayyidinā*, and *Muhammad*

not only have literal meanings, but also contain spiritual and symbolic dimensions. Lyons (1995) asserts that religious language often represents cultural and spiritual values that transcend everyday language.

Several previous studies have shown the relevance of the anthropological approach to the study of ritual language. Salman et al. (2025) found that ritual language and symbols in the Peusijuek tradition serve to reinforce sanctity and social solidarity. Suparman et al. (2021) showed that the Batalah mantra in the Dayak Kanayatn community serves as both cultural legitimization and spiritual protection. Monica et al. (2020) revealed the lexical and symbolic meanings of umpasa in the Saur Matua ceremony of the Batak Toba community. However, these studies focused more on local customs and did not delve deeply into Islamic religious traditions, particularly in their integration with semantic analysis.

The Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation is an Islamic educational institution that has consistently upheld the tradition of offering Friday prayers since 2018. This tradition involves various actors, such as the head of the foundation, the head of the takhtim group, teachers, and students, and has a relatively stable ritual structure, ranging from istighfar to the recitation of closing shalawat. This practice not only serves as worship but also as a means of developing religious linguistic competence and internalizing values of manners, cooperation, and student leadership. The continuity of this practice demonstrates the characteristics of a living tradition (Foley, 1997; Bauman, 2001), namely, a tradition that is alive and adaptive while still maintaining its core cultural values.

This study offers a reflective anthropological approach by integrating the analysis of the meaning of shalawat and prayers into the understanding of the ritual process of sending prayers. This approach positions language not merely as a means of religious communication but as a social practice that reflects cultural values, awareness of meaning, and the formation of the spiritual identity of its supporting community. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of documenting the tradition of sending prayers as part of a living and sustainable oral cultural heritage.

Through this approach, the ritual of sending prayers is understood not only as a religious obligation but also as an educational medium, a means of transmitting values, and a space for the formation of a reflective religious identity. By placing language at the center of analysis, this study expands the study of Islamic religious traditions while filling a gap in Research on how ritual practices, language structures, and social identity formation intersect in the context of local Islamic educational institutions.

Based on the above explanation, Research on oral traditions in the practice of sending prayers, particularly in the recitation of closing salawat, is important to conduct. This study aims to (1) describe the performance of oral traditions in the recitation of closing salawat for sending prayers at the Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation; (2) analyze the lexical and connotative meanings in the closing salawat text through a semantic approach; and (3) explain the cultural, religious, and educational functions of this practice through an anthropological approach. This Research is expected to contribute theoretically to language and cultural studies and, practically, to the development of Islamic education grounded in oral traditions.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to understand phenomena in depth and in context, in accordance with the natural conditions of the research object. Case studies are understood as a research strategy that focuses on gathering detailed, intensive, and comprehensive data and information on a particular event, group, or social practice (Yusuf, 2014). This approach allows researchers not only to describe phenomena but also to interpret the meanings, values, and cultural dynamics behind oral tradition practices in their social and religious contexts. Therefore, the case study method was chosen to reveal the distinctive characteristics, uniqueness, and complexity of the tradition of delivering closing prayers, which is the focus of this study (Stake, 1994).

Data collection techniques were carried out in several ways. First, participatory observation was conducted to obtain a direct picture of the ritual situation, patterns of interaction between actors, activity structures, and verbal and nonverbal performances in the practice of closing prayer delivery. This observation was important to capture the context of ritual language use as it occurred naturally. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with three key informants: the head of the takhtim group, serving as the prayer leader; the accompanying teacher, serving as the activity supervisor; and a member of the takhtim, serving as a ritual participant. The selection of informants was based on their strategic roles in implementing and guiding, and on their direct experience with the tradition being studied. Third, documentation techniques were used by collecting photos of activities, archives,

institutional records, and other supporting documents to strengthen and complement the data from observations and interviews.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously, with reference to the Miles and Huberman (1984) model, as cited in Sugiyono (2021), which comprises three main stages. The first stage is data reduction, the process of selecting, focusing on, and simplifying data relevant to the study of oral traditions in the closing prayers at the Al-Yahdi Foundation in Medan Helvetia District. The second stage is data presentation, which involves organizing data into descriptive narratives and thematic tables to facilitate researchers' understanding of the patterns, relationships, and meanings that emerge. The third stage is conclusion drawing and verification, which is the process of systematically formulating research findings through data review, cross-referencing sources, and testing the consistency of interpretations.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the tradition of sending prayers at the Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation has been carried out regularly since 2018. In this activity, there is a clear division of roles: the head of the foundation as the main prayer reader, one of the teachers as the director of the reading process, the group leader as the leader of the Shalawat reading, and the members as participants. This activity reflects the existence of a social hierarchy and division of authority in religious rituals.

The prayer-sending activity is held in a classroom next to the foundation's office. Teachers sit on chairs, while members sit on the floor due to limited facilities. However, these limitations do not hinder the ritual's continuity.

Structurally, the prayer ritual follows a predetermined sequence, beginning with the recitation of istighfar, Surah Al-Fatiha, Surah Al-Yasin, Tahtim, Tahlil, and closing with the recitation of Shalawat. The supervising teacher emphasizes that the recitation must be done with tartil, paying attention to tajwid, and upholding manners throughout the activity. The only change was in the type of closing Shalawat chosen by the *ustadz* (one of the teachers), while the main structure of the ritual remained unchanged.

An interview with the group leader revealed that the leadership system is run through deliberation. Group members generally show solidarity, though attendance is occasionally delayed. The group leader hopes this tradition will continue to be observed to preserve religious rituals at the Al-Yahdi Foundation.

The accompanying teacher said that regular participation in prayer rituals improved the abilities of the members (students). The members (students) became more fluent in reading the Qur'an, better understood the order of recitation, and showed increased self-confidence. In addition, the surrounding community responded positively to the presence of the Tahtim group, as it was seen as supporting religious life in the local community.

Interviews with members revealed that some joined in 2024, primarily motivated to study together in a religious atmosphere. Members did not experience any significant difficulties because the recitation was guided directly by the *ustadz* (one of the teachers). The Shalawat segment was the most popular because its melody was considered melodious and offered a sense of inner peace. Members interpret Shalawat as a means of remembering the Prophet Muhammad SAW and strengthening spiritual bonds.



Figure 1. Prayer Ritual at the Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation

This study shows that the prayer ritual at the Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation is not merely a routine religious activity, but also a medium for forming collective identity and social solidarity through language and repetitive ritual structures.

From an anthropological perspective, the practice of collectively reciting prayers demonstrates the function of language as a unifying tool for the community and a marker of religious identity (Duranti, 1997). The consistent ritual structure creates predictable communication patterns, facilitating the internalization of religious values for new members.

Semantically, the closing Shalawat text:

صلى الله وسَلَّمَ عَلَى نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ

Table 1. Lexicon in the Closing Prayer

Word	Lexical Meaning	Connotative Meaning (Religious)	Cultural Meaning (Ritual)
صلى	He bestows mercy	Prayer for Allah to bestow mercy upon the Prophet	Ritual is a social act that conveys respect
الله	God in Islam	Source of Grace, center of spirituality	Affirmation of divine authority in rituals
وَسَلَّمَ	And gave salvation	A prayer for protection and peace for the Prophet	Strengthening the spiritual connection of the community with the holy figure
عَلَى	Upon/to	Prayer guidance to the Prophet	Indicating the spiritual orientation of the ritual
نَبِيٍّ	Prophet/messenger	The Prophet's position as the conveyor of revelation	A symbol of unity among the people in rituals
سَيِّدِنَا	Our revered leader	The highest title of respect for the Prophet Muhammad	Strengthening spiritual solidarity with the descendants of the Prophet
مُحَمَّدٌ	The name of the Prophet Muhammad	The central figure of Islam: an object of love and an example to follow	Affirming the continuity of tradition through the chain of companions
وَآلِهِ	And his family	Honoring the Ahlulbait	Extending spiritual solidarity to the descendants of the Prophet

وَصَحْبِهِ	And his companions	Recognizing the generations who spread Islam	Affirming the continuity of tradition through the chain of companions
أَجْمَعِينَ	All of them	Including all companions without exception	Marking inclusivity in prayer and ritual traditions

The salawat shows that this recitation has theological, cultural, and social meanings. The words *sallā* and *sallama* contain the meaning of asking for mercy and salvation, while the word *Allāh* affirms the source of divine authority. The mention of *nabiyyi* and *sayyidinā* indicates that the Prophet Muhammad is the highest spiritual leader. The word *Muhammad* is at the center of the religious identity that unites the Muslim community.

The mention of *ālihi* (family) and *ṣahbihi* (companions) extends the scope of the prayer to two important groups of inheritors of the Prophet's teachings, thereby reflecting the identity of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*. Meanwhile, the word *ajma‘īn* emphasizes the inclusiveness of the prayer for all companions without exception. From the perspectives of Duranti (1997) and Foley (1997), this linguistic structure serves as a cultural index that marks spiritual direction, religious authority, and social solidarity within the Muslim community. Thus, this Shalawat is not merely a closing recitation, but a cultural act that preserves collective memory and religious identity.

Although the tradition of sending prayers is consistently practiced, this study also found several implicit problems, including limited facilities, excessive reliance on the head of the foundation and the ustadz, and the potential passivity of members in understanding the meaning of the recitation. These conditions indicate that ritual practices still emphasize the preservation of actions rather than the reflective deepening of linguistic and cultural meanings. In addition, the lack of internal documentation and academic studies has led to this tradition being passed down from generation to generation without structured conceptual development.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the tradition of sending prayers at the Al-Yahdi Klambir V Foundation is a cultural-religious practice carried out consistently and rich in meaning, not only as a form of routine worship but also as a medium for forming collective identity and strengthening social relations within the Islamic educational community. Through a series of *istighfar*, *Surah Yasin*, *tahlil*, and *shalawat* recitations, ritual participants not only experience religious linguistic learning but also internalize spiritual values, discipline, and togetherness, thereby strengthening relationships among participants. From an anthropological perspective, the language of ritual in the practice of sending prayers functions as a social act that affirms religious identity and community solidarity, while a semantic analysis of the closing *shalawat* reveals theological, cultural, and social meanings that make it a spiritual index as well as a means of preserving the collective memory of the ummah. These findings fill a gap in studies that have tended to emphasize the normative aspects of rituals, showing that the practice of sending prayers also contributes to building social solidarity and the sustainability of Islamic traditions in local religious education environments. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of anthropological linguistics and Islamic oral tradition studies by positioning religious rituals as dynamic linguistic and cultural phenomena. In practice, this study's findings show that the tradition of sending prayers can serve as a means of character education, strengthen social relations, and preserve Islamic values amid social change.

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