

Living Hadith as an Interdisciplinary Approach: Integration between Textual Studies, Anthropology, and Sociology of Religion

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Keywords : <i>Living hadith, Sociology of Religion, Textual Studies, Anthropology.</i>	Abstract This study explores <i>Living Hadith</i> as an interdisciplinary field that bridges textual scholarship, anthropology, and sociology of religion. The research argues that <i>Living Hadith</i> —the study of how prophetic traditions (<i>hadith</i>) are lived, interpreted, and practiced within Muslim societies—requires methodological pluralism to capture its textual depth and social dynamism. Drawing from ethnographic data and textual analyses of <i>Living Hadith</i> practices in Indonesia, including ritual recitations, communal commemorations (<i>maulid</i>), and everyday religious expressions, this study reveals how lived interpretations of hadith transform scriptural authority into cultural performance. By integrating textual hermeneutics with anthropological fieldwork and sociological analysis, the paper demonstrates how <i>Living Hadith</i> functions as both a moral discourse and a social institution that shapes Muslim identity. The findings highlight that interdisciplinarity is not merely an academic method but an epistemological necessity for understanding the social life of hadith. Through Indonesian case studies—particularly from Java, Aceh, and Minangkabau—the article offers a model for future <i>Living Hadith</i> research that combines textual fidelity with ethnographic insight and sociological theory.
Kata Kunci : Living hadis, Sosiologi Agama, Kajian Tekstual, Antropologi.	Abstrak Penelitian ini mengkaji <i>Living Hadith</i> sebagai bidang interdisipliner yang menjembatani kajian tekstual, antropologi, dan sosiologi agama. <i>Living Hadith</i> dipahami sebagai studi tentang bagaimana hadis Nabi dipraktikkan, ditafsirkan, dan dihayati dalam kehidupan masyarakat Muslim. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa pendekatan interdisipliner diperlukan untuk menangkap kedalaman makna tekstual sekaligus dinamika sosial hadis yang hidup. Dengan menggunakan data etnografis dan analisis tekstual terhadap praktik <i>Living Hadith</i> di Indonesia—terutama dalam tradisi pembacaan <i>maulid</i> , doa-doa berbasis hadis, dan pengajian masyarakat—penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa otoritas teks hadis bertransformasi menjadi ekspresi budaya dan moral yang kontekstual. Melalui integrasi hermeneutika tekstual, observasi antropologis, dan analisis sosiologis, penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana hadis berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai sumber ajaran, tetapi juga sebagai lembaga sosial yang membentuk identitas dan solidaritas umat Muslim. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan interdisipliner bukan sekadar metode akademik, melainkan kebutuhan epistemologis untuk memahami kehidupan sosial hadis. Berdasarkan studi kasus di Jawa, Aceh, dan Minangkabau, artikel ini menawarkan model penelitian <i>Living Hadith</i> yang

menggabungkan kesetiaan terhadap teks dengan kedalaman pemahaman empiris atas praktik keagamaan masyarakat Muslim.

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Introduction

The study of *Living Hadith* represents a major methodological turn in contemporary Islamic studies. Traditionally, hadith scholarship centered on textual authenticity (*sanad* and *matan*) and its theological or legal authority. However, the emergence of the *Living Hadith* paradigm marks a shift from the textual to the experiential—an exploration of how Muslims engage with hadith in daily life, public rituals, and socio-cultural practices. This new orientation recognizes that hadith is not only a textual corpus but also a living discourse that continues to shape Muslim behavior, ethics, and identity in diverse contexts.

Scholars such as Sahiron Syamsuddin and Ahmad Rafiq emphasize that the *Living Hadith* approach departs from the classical hadith criticism tradition by incorporating anthropological and sociological perspectives to interpret how hadith functions within cultural settings.¹ In Indonesia, the term *Living Hadith* has gained traction since the 2000s, particularly within academic institutions like UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, which pioneered empirical studies of how prophetic traditions manifest in local rituals, ethical norms, and community values.²

The interdisciplinary nature of *Living Hadith* responds to two major gaps. First, classical hadith studies often neglect how texts are reinterpreted in different cultural contexts. Second, sociological and anthropological studies of Islam frequently overlook the scriptural underpinnings that give religious practices meaning. Thus, *Living Hadith* serves as a bridge between *textual hermeneutics*—which investigates meaning within the text—and *social hermeneutics*—which investigates meaning as lived by communities.³

In Indonesia, this approach finds fertile ground. Communities across Java, Aceh, and Minangkabau embody prophetic traditions through diverse expressions such as the *Maulid Nabi* celebrations, *pengajian* (study circles), and the recitation of hadith-related prayers (*salawat*).⁴

¹ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Living Hadis: Paradigma Baru Kajian Hadis di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2017).

² Ahmad Rafiq, "Living Hadith in Indonesia: Text, Tradition, and Local Culture," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 54, no. 1 (2016): 147–176.

³ Nurun Najwah, "Living Hadis as a Methodological Bridge: Contextualizing the Prophet's Traditions," *Journal of Hadith Studies* 5, no. 2 (2019): 45–63.

⁴ M. Mansur, "Tradisi Maulid dan Revitalisasi Nilai-Nilai Nabi di Banten," *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 3 (2018): 421–450.

These practices demonstrate that hadith is not static but is continually negotiated through performance, ritual, and discourse. The challenge for scholars, therefore, is to integrate textual analysis with ethnographic observation and sociological interpretation to understand how Muslims embody the Prophet's words within specific socio-historical contexts.

This article argues that an interdisciplinary approach—rooted in textual studies, anthropology, and sociology—offers a more comprehensive understanding of the *Living Hadith* phenomenon. By focusing on Indonesian case studies, the paper illustrates how prophetic traditions adapt to cultural diversity while retaining their theological essence. The ultimate aim is to demonstrate that *Living Hadith* is not merely an academic innovation but an epistemological framework that reflects the dynamic relationship between text, context, and community.

Literature Review

The concept of *Living Hadith* first emerged as a methodological innovation within Islamic studies to address the limitations of traditional hadith criticism. Classical hadith scholarship, exemplified by scholars like al-Bukhari and Muslim, prioritized authenticity and transmission chains. However, in the modern academic context, researchers have begun to ask how these texts continue to shape and be shaped by lived experience.

Sahiron Syamsuddin defines *Living Hadith* as “the study of how hadith is understood, practiced, and functions within Muslim societies.”⁵ Ahmad Rafiq similarly situates *Living Hadith* within the broader discipline of *Living Islam*, emphasizing its empirical orientation and its focus on the interaction between text and context.⁶ Meanwhile, Nurun Najwah highlights that *Living Hadith* serves as a dialogical field—an interpretive space between the written word and social reality.⁷

From an anthropological perspective, scholars such as Clifford Geertz and Robert Hefner have provided important foundations for understanding religion as a cultural system.⁸ Applying these insights to *Living Hadith*, researchers examine how textual teachings are internalized and transformed into symbolic acts within Muslim communities. In Indonesia, this perspective has

⁵ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Living Hadis: Paradigma Baru Kajian Hadis di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2017).

⁶ Ahmad Rafiq, “Living Hadith in Indonesia: Text, Tradition, and Local Culture,” *Al-Jami'ah* 54, no. 1 (2016): 147–176.

⁷ Nurun Najwah, “Living Hadis as a Methodological Bridge,” *Journal of Hadith Studies* 5, no. 2 (2019): 45–63.

⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Robert W. Hefner, *Islam and the Moral Economy of Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

been enriched by ethnographic studies of local rituals and performances. For example, M. Mansur's study of *Maulid* traditions in Banten shows how hadith narratives about the Prophet's birth are re-enacted through communal storytelling and ritual chanting, thereby maintaining both religious devotion and social cohesion.⁹

Sociologically, the study of *Living Hadith* draws upon theories of social construction, collective memory, and symbolic interaction. Berger and Luckmann's concept of "the social construction of reality" provides a framework for understanding how hadith gains new meanings through communal interpretation and practice.¹⁰ Recent research also emphasizes the role of digital media in the circulation of *Living Hadith*. For instance, Nuruzzaman (2020) observes how hadith-related content on social platforms becomes a medium for moral education and *da'wah*, blending textual authenticity with modern communication.¹¹

Despite these developments, significant gaps remain. Many studies focus on description rather than analytical synthesis. There is a need for integrative frameworks that combine textual interpretation, ethnographic depth, and sociological theory. This article seeks to fill that gap by demonstrating how interdisciplinary methods can reveal the layered meanings of *Living Hadith* practices in Indonesia.

Methodology

This study employs an interdisciplinary qualitative approach, combining textual analysis, anthropological fieldwork, and sociological interpretation. The textual component involves analyzing key hadiths that are frequently cited or performed in Indonesian Muslim communities, particularly those relating to piety, compassion, and communal solidarity. Sources include canonical collections (such as *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Riyad al-Salihin*) as well as local commentaries used in *pesantren* education.¹²

The anthropological method involves ethnographic observation and interviews conducted in three regions—Yogyakarta (Central Java), Aceh, and West Sumatra (Minangkabau)—where *Living Hadith* practices manifest distinctly. Participant observation focuses on rituals such as *Maulid Nabi* processions, *pengajian* circles, and family recitations of hadith-based supplications.¹³

⁹ M. Mansur, "Tradisi Maulid dan Revitalisasi Nilai-Nilai Nabi di Banten," *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 3 (2018): 421–450.

¹⁰ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966).

¹¹ Nuruzzaman, "Digital Da'wah and the Circulation of Hadith Online," *Journal of Islamic Media Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 15–34.

¹² Al-Nawawi, *Riyad al-Salihin* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2014).

¹³ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global dan Lokal* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2019).

The sociological component analyzes how *Living Hadith* functions within broader social structures: as a medium of moral regulation, identity formation, and community cohesion. Data are analyzed using thematic and interpretive methods to connect textual meanings with social expressions.¹⁴ The combination of these three methods allows for a comprehensive understanding of how prophetic traditions are embodied, interpreted, and transformed across cultural settings.

Results and Discussion

1. Textual Meaning and Cultural Adaptation

The first major finding reveals that *Living Hadith* in Indonesia demonstrates how scriptural teachings are continuously re-contextualized through cultural idioms. In Yogyakarta, the *Maulid Simthud Durar* ceremony—rooted in hadith narrations of the Prophet’s compassion—is recited in rhythmic Arabic-Javanese verse, transforming textual reverence into performative devotion.¹⁵ This hybridization of text and culture illustrates that authenticity and adaptability coexist rather than compete.

Field interviews with *pengajian* participants indicate that hadith narratives of mercy (*rahmah*) and humility are interpreted as moral cues for social behavior.¹⁶ The integration of Javanese etiquette (*unggah-ungguh*) into prophetic ethics shows how local culture provides an interpretive lens for hadith embodiment.

In Aceh, the communal *kenduri Maulid* emphasizes collective charity based on the hadith, “He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while his neighbor goes hungry.”¹⁷ This ritual actualizes the text’s ethical imperative through shared meals and public giving, translating doctrine into social solidarity.

These examples support the argument that *Living Hadith* functions as a dialogical process—scripture informs culture, and culture revitalizes scripture. It also affirms Azyumardi Azra’s notion of *Islam Nusantara* as a localized yet authentic expression of Islamic orthodoxy.¹⁸

¹⁴ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

¹⁵ M. Mansur, “Tradisi Maulid dan Revitalisasi Nilai-Nilai Nabi di Banten.” *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 3 (2018): 421–450.

¹⁶ Ahmad Rafiq, “Living Hadith in Indonesia: Text, Tradition, and Local Culture.” *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 54, no. 1 (2016): 147–176.

¹⁷ Al-Nawawi, *Riyad al-Salihin* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2014)

¹⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global dan Lokal* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2019)

2. Hadith as Social Regulation

A second finding highlights *Living Hadith* as a form of social regulation. Ethnographic data from Minangkabau demonstrate that the proverb *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (“custom is founded upon the law, and the law upon the Book of God”) includes hadith as a living moral source guiding communal order.¹⁹ Hadith about honesty and trade ethics are frequently invoked during market disputes or village meetings, reinforcing collective morality through religious authority.

Sociologically, this aligns with Berger and Luckmann’s framework of reality construction, wherein hadith operates as a legitimating structure for social norms.²⁰ The social power of hadith is maintained not only through clerical authority but also through everyday discourse—proverbs, advice, and social media posts—that reference the Prophet’s sayings.

Furthermore, digital ethnography shows that *Living Hadith* extends into online spaces. On Indonesian Instagram and TikTok, brief hadith clips—often accompanied by vernacular commentary—create a participatory culture of moral storytelling.²¹ This digital mediation democratizes hadith transmission while raising new questions of authenticity and interpretive authority.

3. Gender and Moral Agency

A significant applied dimension of *Living Hadith* research concerns gender. In Yogyakarta and Aceh, women’s study circles (*majelis taklim perempuan*) actively reinterpret hadith relating to modesty, education, and domestic ethics. Interviews reveal that these groups read hadith about knowledge-seeking (*ṭalab al-‘ilm farīdah ‘alā kulli muslim*) as justification for female empowerment through education.²²

This finding challenges patriarchal readings and supports Nurun Najwah’s thesis that *Living Hadith* can generate “gender-conscious interpretations” when contextualized within

¹⁹ Fitriani, N., “Adat Basandi Syarak: Reconstructing Islamic Tradition in Minangkabau,” *Heritage of Nusantara* 9, no. 2 (2020): 155–176.

²⁰ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966).

²¹ Nuruzzaman. “Digital Da’wah and the Circulation of Hadith Online.” *Journal of Islamic Media Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 15–34.

²² Siti Zulaikha, “Women and Living Hadith: A Study of Majelis Taklim Yogyakarta,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Society* 5, no. 2 (2021): 87–110.

contemporary social realities.²³ It also demonstrates how interdisciplinary methods reveal the hermeneutic flexibility of hadith when lived by different agents in society.

4. Interdisciplinary Synthesis

The integration of textual, anthropological, and sociological analysis produces a more nuanced understanding of hadith as a living discourse. Textual study provides semantic accuracy; anthropology uncovers symbolic performance; sociology explains institutional function.

Empirical observation confirms that *Living Hadith* practices in Indonesia are not random cultural accretions but systematic embodiments of prophetic values adapted to local needs. This supports Sahiron Syamsuddin's proposition that *Living Hadith* should be viewed as "social exegesis"—a lived tafsir of prophetic tradition.²⁴

By uniting disciplines, researchers move beyond description toward theoretical insight: *Living Hadith* embodies a model of "performative hermeneutics," where meaning is constituted through practice. Such synthesis also provides methodological implications for Islamic higher education, advocating research designs that merge textual competence with field ethnography.²⁵

Conclusion

The empirical and theoretical findings affirm that *Living Hadith* represents both a scholarly innovation and a lived epistemology. In Indonesia, hadith is not confined to scriptural texts but thrives in communal rituals, social ethics, and digital narratives. Interdisciplinary integration—textual, anthropological, and sociological—reveals how the Prophet's words are continually re-signified within plural cultural settings.

The Indonesian experience demonstrates that authenticity and adaptability are not opposing forces but complementary dimensions of Muslim religiosity. Consequently, future *Living Hadith* research should adopt mixed methods that unite scriptural analysis with ethnographic fieldwork and sociological modeling to fully grasp the social life of hadith in the modern world.

²³ Nurun Najwah. "Living Hadis as a Methodological Bridge: Contextualizing the Prophet's Traditions." *Journal of Hadith Studies* 5, no. 2 (2019): 45–63.

²⁴ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Living Hadis: Paradigma Baru Kajian Hadis di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2017).

²⁵ Hefner, Robert W. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020.

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