The Recontextualization of the Prophetic Tradition through the Living Hadith Approach: Toward Bridging Text and Context in Contemporary Hadith Interpretation

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Abstract

This study examines the recontextualization of prophetic tradition through the Living Hadith methodological framework, emphasizing its relevance to contemporary hadith interpretation. The approach highlights the dynamic interaction between the text (nass) and its context (waqi'), which is increasingly crucial for understanding how the Prophet's teachings are practiced, lived, and interpreted in modern Muslim societies. Traditional hadith studies have primarily focused on textual authenticity, often overlooking the socio-cultural dimensions in which the hadith function. Living Hadith offers a novel

perspective by shifting the focus from static textuality to everyday practices, behaviors, and cultural expressions inspired by the Prophet's words and example. Through qualitative and hermeneutical analysis, this study explores how the approach serves as both a reflection and a response to contemporary challenges such as pluralism, social justice, and moral transformation. Recontextualization in this framework does not aim to alter the substance of the hadith but to revive its ethical and spiritual meanings within new social realities. Thus, the Living Hadith approach makes a significant contribution to bridging the gap between classical hadith studies and contemporary Muslim life. It enriches hadith interpretation by grounding it in lived experience, ensuring that the prophetic message remains timeless, dynamic, and relevant to the moral consciousness of modern society.

Keywords: Living Hadith; Recontextualization; Prophetic Tradition; Hadith Interpretation; Modernity.

Abstrak

Kajian ini membahas rekontekstualisasi tradisi kenabian melalui kerangka metodologis *Living Hadith*, dengan menekankan relevansinya terhadap penafsiran hadis di era modern. Pendekatan ini menyoroti interaksi dinamis antara teks (*nass*) dan konteks (*waqi'*), yang menjadi semakin krusial dalam memahami bagaimana ajaran Nabi dipraktikkan, dihayati, dan ditafsirkan dalam masyarakat Muslim kontemporer. Selama ini, studi hadis klasik lebih banyak menitikberatkan pada autentisitas teks, sementara dimensi sosial-kultural tempat hadis itu berfungsi seringkali kurang diperhatikan. *Living Hadith* menawarkan perspektif baru dengan menggeser fokus dari tekstualitas statis menuju praktik kehidupan sehari-hari, perilaku, dan ekspresi budaya yang terinspirasi dari sabda dan teladan Nabi. Melalui analisis kualitatif dan hermeneutik, penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana pendekatan tersebut berperan sebagai refleksi sekaligus respons terhadap tantangan modern, seperti pluralisme, keadilan sosial, dan transformasi moral. Rekontekstualisasi dalam kerangka ini tidak dimaksudkan untuk mengubah substansi hadis, melainkan menghidupkan kembali makna etis dan spiritualnya dalam realitas sosial yang baru. Dengan demikian, kajian *Living Hadith* memberikan kontribusi penting dalam menjembatani kesenjangan antara studi hadis klasik dan kehidupan Muslim kontemporer. Pendekatan ini memperkaya penafsiran hadis dengan mendasarkannya pada pengalaman hidup nyata, sehingga pesan kenabian tetap abadi, dinamis, dan relevan bagi kesadaran moral masyarakat modern.

Kata Kunci: Living Hadis, Rekontekstualisasi, Tradisi Kenabian, Penafsiran Hadis, Modernitas.

A. Introduction

Hadith has an important role in the movement of every Muslim's life. Structurally, Hadith is the second source of Islamic law after the Qur'an, functioning as *bayān* for the Qur'anic verses and at the same time capable of establishing legal provisions not explicitly regulated in the Qur'an.[1] Considering the central position of Hadith in Islam, the scholarly assessment of its authenticity and meaning becomes essential, thus making the study of the Prophet's Hadith a necessity (*ḍarūrah*) in Islamic intellectual tradition.[2]

In Indonesia, studies of Hadith are carried out by major Islamic mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Persatuan Islam (Persis), and Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI). The study of Hadith within these organizations generally aims to provide legal answers to social and religious problems emerging within society; therefore, their methods tend to rely heavily on textual approaches.[3] Meanwhile, the study of Hadith at PTKI is significantly influenced by students' academic competence as well as by the vision and mission of each institution.[4]

Azyumardi Azra, in his research on the dissertations of students at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, found that their Hadith studies commonly explore both thematic legal questions and historical dimensions of Hadith transmission or Hadith scholars.[5] Research on theses and dissertations of postgraduate students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau also shows that Hadith studies in these institutions cover several fields, including *sharḥ wa ma'ānī al-ḥadīth*, *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, Hadith methodology, Hadith criticism, and increasingly, studies on *living Hadith*.[6]

Thus, the aspects that become the subject of Hadith studies in Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) are quite varied and can generally be classified into four major categories: Hadith scholarship, historical studies of Hadith or Hadith figures, textual studies, and *living Hadith*. The scientific study of Hadith refers to examinations rooted in the discipline of Hadith sciences, such as issues of *sanad* validity, Imam al-Shāfi'ī's method of reconciling

[1] Muḥammad Muṣṭafá A'ẓamī, *Studies in Ḥadīth Methodology and Literature* (Islamic Book Trust, 2002) ;Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity* (Compilation, Classification and Criticism of Hadith, Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundatio, 2005).

[2] Jonathan AC Brown, "Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 36-2: Spring 2019*, no. 64 (2019).

[3] O Fathurrahman, *The Roots of Muhammadiyah's Reformism: A Textual Analysis of Hadith Interpretation in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian dan Penerbitan UIN Jakarta, 2011) ;S Zuhri, *Tradisi Intelektual NU Dan Otoritas Penafsiran Hadis* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2014).

[4] A Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999).

[5] A Azra, *Transformasi Politik Islam: Radikalisme, Demokrasi, Dan Kebangsaan* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2013).

[6] N Hidayat, *Living Hadith Studies in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2019) ;M Ikhsan, *Contemporary Approaches to Hadith Studies in Indonesian PTKI* (Pekanbaru: UIN Suska Press, 2020).

mukhtalif al-ḥadīth, and al-Ḥākim's criteria in determining the authenticity status of narrations.[7]

Historical studies of Hadith or Hadith figures include research on the role of al-Tirmidhī in Hadith transmission, Rashid Riḍā's perspective on Hadith, the position of Hadith in al-Shāfi'ī's *al-Risālah*, and the relationship between Hadith and the Qur'an.[8] Textual studies, on the other hand, focus on understanding the meaning of Hadith texts through established hermeneutical and linguistic principles.[9]

Meanwhile, the study of *living Hadith* represents an integrative-interconnective approach that combines Hadith studies with social sciences such as anthropology, ethnography, phenomenology, and other social-scientific frameworks. This field marks an expansion of earlier Hadith study models and has grown rapidly over the last decade in Indonesian PTKI.[10] The fundamental question that arises is how these contemporary methods are applied and what contributions they offer to the modern understanding of Hadith.

There are several studies that are closely related to the research conducted by the present author. One such study is by Abda Billah Faza, which explores the methodology for the development of *living Hadith* in Islamic education. His research shows that *living Hadith* has not fully entered the domain of Hadith sciences; rather, it remains largely an empirical social study practiced within community contexts and has not yet been optimally integrated into educational settings.[11]

Another relevant work is by Wahyudi Darmalaksana, who examined the development of research on the *living Qur'an* and *living Hadith*. His findings indicate that studies on *living Qur'an* and *living Hadith* have grown significantly outside academic institutions. This development can be observed in various forms of living studies, including living as a theoretical foundation, living as a new research methodology, living as an analytical approach, and even living as a dialectical movement between the sacred text and societal reality—moving from scripture to society and from society back to the spiritual essence of the text.[12]

In contrast to these studies, the present article focuses specifically on the development of *living Hadith* within academic spaces, aiming to position it as an independent and systematic field of inquiry parallel to *living Qur'an* studies. Moreover, this research seeks to offer a comprehensive formulation for *living Hadith* studies so that it can function as an integrated and holistic discipline within the broader landscape of Hadith studies.

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[7] A'ẓamī, *Studies in Ḥadīth Methodology and Literature*;Kamali, *A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity*.

[8] Brown, "Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy";Azra, *Transformasi Politik Islam: Radikalisme, Demokrasi, Dan Kebangsaan*.

[9] Hidayat, *Living Hadith Studies in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education*.

[10] Fathurrahman, *The Roots of Muhammadiyah's Reformism: A Textual Analysis of Hadith Interpretation in Indonesia*;Ikhsan, *Contemporary Approaches to Hadith Studies in Indonesian PTKI*.

[11] A. B Faza, "Methodology for the Development of Living Hadith in Islamic Education," *Jurnal Penelitian Agama* 20(1) (2019): 142–159.

[12] Wahyudin Darmalaksana et al., "Analisis Perkembangan Penelitian Living Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis," *Jurnal Perspektif* 3, no. 2 (December 29, 2019): 134, https://doi.org/10.15575/jp.v3i2.49.

B. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design, combining textual analysis and hermeneutical interpretation to explore the concept of *Living Hadith* as a framework for recontextualizing prophetic teachings. Primary sources include classical hadith collections, while secondary sources comprise contemporary scholarly works on Islamic studies, ethics, and socio-cultural dynamics. The study critically examines the interaction between the textual content of hadith (*nass*) and the social, cultural, and historical contexts (*waqi'*) in which they are practiced. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how prophetic guidance can be meaningfully interpreted and applied in modern Muslim societies without compromising its original ethical and spiritual essence.

Data were analyzed using thematic coding and hermeneutical techniques to identify recurring patterns, values, and moral principles within the hadith that are relevant to contemporary challenges such as pluralism, social justice, and moral transformation. The study also emphasizes the dynamic application of prophetic teachings in daily life, focusing on lived experiences, community practices, and cultural expressions inspired by the Prophet's example. By combining classical textual scholarship with modern contextual analysis, this methodology provides a robust framework for understanding *Living Hadith* as both a reflective and responsive tool in addressing the moral, social, and spiritual needs of contemporary Muslim communities.

C. Result and Discussion

The study of hadith in Indonesia

Compared to the study of *fiqh*, *tafsir*, Sufism, Islamic education, and other Islamic disciplines, the formal and systematic study of Hadith in Indonesia is relatively new.[13] Van der Berg, who conducted research on pesantren in the Indonesian archipelago in 1886 CE, did not mention Hadith as one of the subjects formally taught in these traditional institutions. Based on this finding, Martin van Bruinessen concluded that Hadith had not yet become an independent subject in pesantren at that time.[14]

Martin further explained that although students frequently encountered Hadith during their studies, this occurred indirectly—because no classical *fiqh* text was written without citing Hadith as supporting evidence. However, the Hadiths cited in these texts had already been processed, contextualized, or interpreted within other branches of Islamic scholarship, and thus were not studied as an independent discipline.[15]

Howard M. Federspiel states that during the Dutch colonial period, discussions related to Hadith were still subsumed under the broader discipline of *fiqh* and had not yet

[13] Z Darussamin, *Ilmu Hadis* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2010).

[14] M. Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, Dan Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam Di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995).

[15] Bruinessen;Azra, *Transformasi Politik Islam: Radikalisme, Demokrasi, Dan Kebangsaan.*

developed as an independent field of study.[16] Similarly, Karel Steenbrink—a Dutch scholar and Western orientalist—reported that during his research on religious manuscripts at the National Library of Jakarta, he did not find original Indonesian works dedicated to Hadith or Hadith sciences. According to him, Indonesian scholars at that time primarily read and taught classical Hadith primers such as *Bulūgh al-Marām* by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Matn al-Arba'īn* by al-Nawawī, and *Matn al-Bayqūniyyah* attributed to al-Suyūṭī, in addition to the classical *fiqh* texts of the Shāfi'ī school.[17]

However, these texts were taught without any critical engagement with their *sanad* or authenticity assessments. Many scholars believed that the *ijtihād* of earlier authorities was definitive, and therefore contemporary scholars felt no need to re-examine whether a Hadith was authentic or not.[18] This condition reflects the broader intellectual tendency of the period, in which Hadith study was oriented toward devotional learning rather than methodological critique—a view also noted by contemporary historians of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia.[19]

Works in the field of Hadith in Indonesia only began to appear at the beginning of the 20th century, and even these early writings did not explore Hadith as an independent scientific discipline. Rather, they served merely as introductory texts reflecting the limited needs and intellectual orientation of Muslim communities at that time.[20] Indonesian Muslims were still more concerned with practical religious issues than theoretical development, which explains why the teaching of Hadith was often integrated with other branches of Islamic sciences.

It was only after the mid-20th century that more systematic works focusing on Hadith sciences *'ulūm al-ḥadīth* and *mustalaḥ al-ḥadīth* began to flourish. This development was led by prominent scholars such as T.M. Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy, whose works helped introduce modern Hadith scholarship to Indonesian academia, and Syuhudi Ismail, who contributed significantly to methodological and critical Hadith studies in the Indonesian context.[21] Their scholarly contributions marked the beginning of a more serious, structured, and academic engagement with Hadith studies in Indonesia.

The intensive development of Hadith studies in Indonesia began around the 1970s, marked by the return of Indonesian Muslim scholars and intellectuals who had completed

[16] Howard M Federspiel, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Late-Colonial Indonesia: The Persatuan Islam Revisited," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 37(64) (1999): 39–62.

[17] J. Stevens Steenbrink, Joseph HM, "Topological Invariance of the Weight Filtration," *In Indagationes Mathematicae (Proceedings)* Vol. 87, N, no. North-Holland (1984): 63–76.

[18] A. Khalik Wood Ramli, A. Termizi, A. Wahab MA Hussein, "Environmental 238U and 232Th Concentration Measurements in an Area of High Level Natural Background Radiation at Palong, Johor, Malaysia," *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* 80(3) (2005): 287–304.

[19] Azra, *Transformasi Politik Islam: Radikalisme, Demokrasi, Dan Kebangsaan*.

[20] Zikri Darussamin, *Kajian Hadis Di Indonesia: Studi Terhadap Karya Tulis Tesis Dan Disertasi PTKIN Tahun 2012–2017* (Pekanbaru: LP2M, 2017).

[21] Masruhan Masruhan and Muh. Fathoni Hasyim, "The Contribution of Muslim Scholars and Islamic Social Organizations in Developing Ḥadith Studies in Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 28, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 856–81, https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i2.1007;M. S Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1994).

advanced studies in Hadith in various Middle Eastern institutions.[22] This intellectual wave was accompanied by the establishment and growth of Islamic Higher Education Institutions—IAIN, STAIN, and later STAI—which formally introduced the Tafsir–Hadith Department as one of their core academic programs. Through these two major factors, the study of Hadith in Indonesia gradually expanded and became increasingly systematic, contributing to the continuous development of Hadith scholarship and its methodological sciences.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia has also been proactive in strengthening Hadith studies by positioning Islamic Religious Higher Education (PTKI) as national centers for Hadith research and academic development. This institutional commitment is reflected in the issuance of the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs (KMA) of the Republic of Indonesia Number 39 of 2015 concerning the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Strategic Plan for 2015–2019, which emphasizes the advancement of Islamic studies, including Hadith scholarship, within PTKI environments.[23]

Textual and contextual hadith studies

As explained earlier, the study of Hadith in Indonesia was originally dominated by textual approaches conducted by major Islamic mass organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and other Islamic groups. During this early phase, Hadith was primarily understood through its literal wording without extensive engagement with contextual or interdisciplinary analyses.

In the subsequent period—especially with the establishment of Postgraduate Programs (PPS) in the 1980s—contextual approaches began to emerge and gradually gained prominence. This shift can be observed from the increasing number of theses and dissertations that no longer examined Hadith solely based on textual meaning, but linked it to external dimensions through linguistic, historical, sociological, socio-historical, anthropological, psychological, semantic, and hermeneutic approaches.[24] These studies also took into account the situational context of the Prophet when the Hadith was pronounced, the conditions surrounding its transmission, the historical and social circumstances during its interpretation, the scope of its meaning, and the function and status of the Prophet as the authoritative source of information.[25]

This methodological transformation demonstrates the significant broadening of Hadith scholarship in Indonesia, marking a transition from a purely textual tradition toward a more interdisciplinary and contextually grounded mode of interpretation.

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[22] Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*;Darussamin, *Kajian Hadis Di Indonesia: Studi Terhadap Karya Tulis Tesis Dan Disertasi PTKIN Tahun 2012–2017*.

[23] R. I Kementerian Agama, *Al-Qur'an. Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya* (Jakarta: Lajnah, 2015).

[24] Muhammad Ramli, "Media Pembelajaran Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits," *Ittihad Jurnal Kopertais Wilayah XI Kalimantan* 13(23) (2015): 133–34.

[25] A. (2005) Ahmad, *Paradigma Baru Memahami Hadis Nabi: Refleksi Pemikiran Pembaruan Prof. Dr. Muhammad Syuhudi Ismail* (Jakarta: Renaisan, 2005).

That means that there are Hadith observations that must be understood textually, individually contextually, and some must be understood through both approaches simultaneously. This classification shows that the contents of the Prophet's Hadith can be temporal, local, or universal, depending on the nature and purpose of the guidance conveyed. In addition, certain actions of the Prophet SAW were performed in His capacity as a human being—*afʿāl al-jibilliyyah*—and therefore do not carry universal legal implications for Muslims. For example, some Hadith traditions reflect personal habits, cultural preferences, or situational decisions tied to the socio-historical context of seventh-century Arabia.[26]

> حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى، قَالَ قَرَأْتُ عَلَى مَالِكٍ عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عَبَّادِ بْنِ تَمِيمٍ، عَنْ عَمِّهِ، أَنَّهُ رَأَى رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم مُسْتَلْقِيًا فِي الْمَسْجِدِ وَاضِعًا إِحْدَى رِجْلَيْهِ عَلَى الأُخْرَى.
>
> Translation:
> "Abbād bin Tamīm reported from his uncle that the Messenger of Allah was lying in the mosque with one foot placed over the other" (al-Bukhārī and Muslim).[27]

The above ḥadīth gives instructions on how the Prophet lay down at that time, namely by placing one foot on top of the other. In this context, it appears that the Prophet SAW was in a relaxed and comfortable position, indicating that the described posture was a situational human practice rather than a normative religious injunction. This understanding aligns with the methodological approach of *maʿānī al-ḥadīth*, which emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between universal prophetic teachings and actions that are temporal or personal in nature.[28] Such an approach is further supported by classical ḥadīth collections that record the event descriptively, without any legal or normative command attached to it.[29]

Regarding textual and contextual understanding, it can be seen in the well-known incident when the Prophet Muhammad SAW instructed the Companions who were sent to confront Banū Qurayẓah that none of them should perform the ʻAṣr prayer until they arrived at the village of Banū Qurayẓah. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, it is reported that as the Companions were still on their way, the time for ʻAṣr prayer was nearing its end. In this situation, some of the Companions performed the ʻAṣr prayer before arriving at Banū Qurayẓah, understanding that the Prophet's instruction was contextual—intended to urge them to hasten toward their destination rather than to redefine the prescribed prayer time.[30] Meanwhile, others adhered to a textual understanding of the Prophet's command and

[26] Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*.

[27] M. I Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʻah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyyah, n.d.) ;Muslim ibn Al-Ḥajjāj, *Al-Jāmiʻal-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʻArabī, n.d.).

[28] Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*.

[29] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*;Al-Ḥajjāj, *Al-Jāmiʻal-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

[30] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*;Darussamin, *Kajian Hadis Di Indonesia: Studi Terhadap Karya Tulis Tesis Dan Disertasi PTKIN Tahun 2012–2017*;Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*.

delayed the ʻAṣr prayer until they reached Banū Qurayẓah, even though its time had passed.[31] When the matter was reported to the Prophet SAW, he approved the actions of both groups, thereby affirming the legitimacy of both textual and contextual interpretations of the ḥadīth. This incident clearly demonstrates that contextual understanding of the Prophet's traditions had already been practiced during the lifetime of the Prophet himself.[32]

To better understand the differences in textual and contextual studies, see the example following: In a narration of *Shahîh al-Bukhâri* it is stated:

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ الهَيْثَمِ، حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ، عَنِ الحَسَنِ، عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ، قَالَ: لَقَدْ نَفَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيَّامَ الجَمَلِ، بَعْدَ مَا كِدْتُ أَنْ أَلْحَقَ بِأَصْحَابِ الجَمَلِ فَأُقَاتِلَ مَعَهُمْ، قَالَ: لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسَ، قَدْ مَلَّكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ بِنْتَ كِسْرَى، قَالَ: «لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَّوْا أَمْرَهُمُ امْرَأَةً»

In another narration,

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ الهَيْثَمِ، حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ، عَنِ الحَسَنِ، عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ، قَالَ: لَقَدْ نَفَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ أَيَّامَ الجَمَلِ، لَمَّا بَلَغَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ فَارِسًا مَلَّكُوا ابْنَةَ كِسْرَى قَالَ: «لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَّوْا أَمْرَهُمُ امْرَأَةً

In this ḥadīth, it is stated that if a government is led by a woman, it will not prosper or achieve success.[33] Through a textual approach, this ḥadīth is understood to indicate that a nation will not attain prosperity if it is led by a woman. This interpretation is based on principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and Arabic linguistic analysis, particularly the phrase *lan yufliḥa qawm* (a people will never prosper), which is understood as a general and definitive expression.[34]

Based on this textual understanding, many classical scholars stipulated that leadership positions such as the caliphate, judgeship, and other public offices should be held by men, grounding their views in the apparent meaning of the ḥadīth.[35] Consequently, women were traditionally understood to bear primary responsibilities in the domestic sphere, such as safeguarding their husband's property and caring for children, in accordance with this interpretation.[36]

[31] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*.

[32] Darussamin, *Kajian Hadis Di Indonesia: Studi Terhadap Karya Tulis Tesis Dan Disertasi PTKIN Tahun 2012–2017*;Shahab Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2017).

[33] M. ʻĪ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan Al-Tirmidhī* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1975) ;A. S Al-Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan Al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 2001).

[34] M. ʻA Al-Syaukānī, *Nayl Al-Awṭār* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1993).

[35] S Sabiq, *Fiqh Al-Sunnah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʻArabī, 1977).

[36] Al-Syaukānī, *Nayl Al-Awṭār*;Sabiq, *Fiqh Al-Sunnah*.

This textual interpretation became a widely held opinion among classical scholars and is often associated with other leadership requirements, such as the condition that a caliph should be from the Quraysh tribe, as mentioned in the Prophetic ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī;

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْيَمَانِ، أَخْبَرَنَا شُعَيْبٌ، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ، قَالَ كَانَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جُبَيْرِ بْنِ مُطْعِمٍ يُحَدِّثُ أَنَّهُ بَلَغَ مُعَاوِيَةَ وَهْوَ عِنْدَهُ فِي وَفْدٍ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عَمْرِو بْنِ الْعَاصِ يُحَدِّثُ أَنَّهُ سَيَكُونُ مَلِكٌ مِنْ قَحْطَانَ، فَغَضِبَ مُعَاوِيَةُ، فَقَامَ فَأَثْنَى عَلَى اللَّهِ بِمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّهُ بَلَغَنِي أَنَّ رِجَالاً مِنْكُمْ يَتَحَدَّثُونَ أَحَادِيثَ لَيْسَتْ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ، وَلاَ تُؤْثَرُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم، فَأُولَئِكَ جُهَّالُكُمْ، فَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالأَمَانِيَّ الَّتِي تُضِلُّ أَهْلَهَا، فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ: " إِنَّ هَذَا الأَمْرَ فِي قُرَيْشٍ، لاَ يُعَادِيهِمْ أَحَدٌ إِلاَّ كَبَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ، مَا أَقَامُوا الدِّينَ "

The requirement that a caliph should be from the Quraysh tribe was valid during the era of the Companions, the Umayyad period, and the early Abbasid era. The ḥadīths concerning Quraysh leadership corresponded to the socio-political conditions of Muslims at that time, in which the Quraysh tribe possessed dominance, authority (*shawka*), and the capacity to lead the ummah effectively.[37] However, historical developments indicate that this condition gradually changed as *ʿaṣabiyyah Qurayshiyyah* weakened, rendering the Quraysh tribe no longer uniquely capable of exercising effective leadership.[38]

In such circumstances, a contextual understanding of the ḥadīth becomes necessary, particularly because prioritizing Quraysh lineage alone is no longer consistent with the Qur'anic principle that the most honored in the sight of Allah are those who are most pious (Qur'an 49:13). This methodological approach aligns with the view that prophetic traditions must be interpreted in light of their socio-historical context and objectives (*maqāṣid*).[39]

A similar contextual reasoning applies to the issue of women's leadership. In earlier periods, women were generally excluded from leadership roles due to limited access to education and lack of public authority in patriarchal societies. In contemporary contexts, however, many women are highly educated and possess recognized authority and leadership competence. Therefore, based on contextual and purposive interpretation of the ḥadīths, women may legitimately assume leadership positions.[40]

[37] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*.

[38] Y Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fī Fiqh Al-Awlawiyyāt: Dirāsah Jadīdah Fī Ḍau'i Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Sunnah* (Maktabah Wahbah, 1990).

[39] Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*;Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fī Fiqh Al-Awlawiyyāt: Dirāsah Jadīdah Fī Ḍau'i Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Sunnah*.

[40] Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*;Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights* (Oxford, 2009).

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, in *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, explains that in the seventh year after Hijrah, the Prophet Muhammad SAW sent a letter to the Persian ruler, Kisrā ibn Barwīz ibn Hurmuz ibn Anūshirwān. The letter was delivered by ʿAbdullāh ibn Ḥudhāfah to the Persian governor of Bahrain, al-Mundhir ibn Sāwī al-ʿAbdī, to be forwarded to Kisrā. Upon reading the letter, Kisrā angrily tore it apart and subsequently ordered the governor of Yemen, Bādhān, to dispatch two men to confront the Prophet SAW in the Hijaz. The mission assigned to the two envoys was to bring the Prophet to Kisrā; if he refused, Bādhān was instructed to send troops to kill him. Through these envoys, the Prophet Muhammad SAW conveyed a message to Bādhān stating, "Indeed, my Lord has killed his master tonight." This event occurred on Tuesday, the 10th of Jumādā al-Ūlā, in the seventh year after Hijrah. As foretold, Kisrā was killed by his son, Shīrawayh. Upon learning of the truth of the Prophet's words, Bādhān and his followers embraced Islam.[41]

Before Kisra was killed, he had smelled the attempted treason his son was going to make. For that, he set a trap by putting poison into a chest marked with the words حُقّ الْجِمَاع ، مَنْ تَنَاوَلَ مِنْهُ كَذَا جَامَعَ كَذَا (*Whoever takes something from this chest, he will get such and such*). This letter was read by Shīrawayh approximately six months after the death of his father. Shortly thereafter, he was imprisoned and eventually died. Following these events, the royal family appointed Kisrā's daughter, Buwārān bint Shīrawayh, as ruler. This decision was taken due to the absence of any surviving male heirs, as all of Shīrawayh's brothers had previously been killed by him.[42]

Thus, it can be concluded that the historical background of Abū Bakrah's narration is closely related to the political situation of the Persian Empire at that time. The statement of the Prophet Muhammad SAW should not be understood as a normative declaration that any kingdom or country led by a woman will inevitably be destroyed or fail. Rather, this ḥadīth must be approached contextually. There are at least two possible interpretations of the Prophet's statement: first, it may be understood as a supplication (*duʿā'*) that the Persian leadership would not succeed due to its hostility toward and insult of Islam; second, it may reflect the Prophet's assessment of the prevailing socio-political reality of Persia, which was marked by instability and internal conflict.[43]

This is because, throughout the long history of the Persian Empire, leadership positions were consistently held by men. The appointment of a female ruler therefore represented a clear departure from established political tradition, particularly in a socio-cultural context in which the dignity and public status of women were significantly lower than those of men. Women—especially Buwārān—were widely perceived as lacking competence in managing public and state affairs.[44] A similar social reality also prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula, where women generally did not occupy authoritative public roles.[45]

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[41] A. I Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ Al-Bārī Bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Dār al-Maʿrifah, 2010).

[42] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī.

[43] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī;Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*;Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fī Fiqh Al-Awlawiyyāt: Dirāsah Jadīdah Fī Ḍau'i Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Sunnah*.

[44] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ Al-Bārī Bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*.

[45] W. M Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

A contextual understanding that employs historical, sociological, and anthropological approaches is expected to produce interpretations that are more precise, appreciative, and accommodative of social change as an implication of scientific and technological development. Such an approach constitutes an act of *ijtihād* characterized as a form of human intellectual construction (*human-made*), which may be correct or incorrect. Even if the result is correct, its truth remains relative and open to debate; however, if it is mistaken, the mujtahid is still entitled to a reward. This principle is well established in Islamic legal theory and ḥadīth studies.[46] Based on the preceding examples, it is evident that both textual and contextual analyses place the ḥadīth text as the primary object of study, while differing in methodological approach and interpretive orientation.[47]

The living hadith

Based on etymological understanding, the term *"living"* originates from the English word *live*, which means active, alive, or living. Terminologically, *living ḥadīth* refers to a field of study that examines the practice and manifestation of ḥadīth within social realities. Thus, living ḥadīth does not focus on ideas derived solely from textual interpretation but instead studies how ḥadīth is lived, practiced, and transformed within society. This approach moves from practice to text rather than from text to practice.[48] Accordingly, living ḥadīth may be defined as a sub-discipline within ḥadīth studies that investigates various social phenomena related to the reception and implementation of prophetic traditions among Muslim communities.[49]

The discourse of living ḥadīth (or living sunnah) operates on two analytical dimensions: historical analysis of the Prophet's traditions and sociological analysis of contemporary social practices inspired by those traditions.[50] In simple terms, living ḥadīth can be understood as a phenomenon occurring within society in the form of diverse behavioral models rooted in the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. These behavioral models represent the responses of Muslim communities to their interaction with the Prophet's traditions. This clearly indicates a shift in the field of ḥadīth studies—from purely textual analysis toward socio-cultural studies that place religious communities as the main object of inquiry.[51]

Because the term *living ḥadīth* is understood as a set of phenomena that emerge and develop within Muslim communities, studies of living ḥadīth fall within the category of

[46] Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*.

[47] Darussamin, *Kajian Hadis Di Indonesia: Studi Terhadap Karya Tulis Tesis Dan Disertasi PTKIN Tahun 2012–2017*;Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fī Fiqh Al-Awlawiyyāt: Dirāsah Jadīdah Fī Ḍau'i Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Sunnah*.

[48] S Zuhri, *Guruku Orang-Orang Dari Pesantren* (LKBH Press, 2011) ;M. A Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam Dalam Teori Dan Praktek* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2002).

[49] A Mustaqim, *Metodologi Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* (Idea Press, 2016).

[50] Zuhri, *Tradisi Intelektual NU Dan Otoritas Penafsiran Hadis*;A Rafiq, *Sejarah Al-Qur'an: Dari Pengwahyuan Hingga Kompilasi* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2014).

[51] Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam Dalam Teori Dan Praktek*;Mustaqim, *Metodologi Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*.

socio-religious phenomena. Consequently, research on living ḥadīth requires paradigms and approaches drawn from the social sciences in order to observe and explain how prophetic traditions are practiced and lived in everyday Muslim life.[52] One approach that is particularly relevant to this context is the phenomenological approach, as it emphasizes understanding religious phenomena as they are experienced and manifested by the community.[53]

The epistemological foundation of this approach is articulated by Gerardus van der Leeuw, who asserts that the task of phenomenology is to observe and understand events as they appear. In this framework, three fundamental principles apply: (1) something is manifested; (2) something is visible; and (3) because something appears as it is, it constitutes a phenomenon. Appearance here indicates a correspondence between what is observed and what is received by the observer, without imposing subjective modification or interpretation.[54]

The term *living ḥadīth* was popularized by Barbara Metcalf through her influential article entitled *"Living Ḥadīth in the Tablīghī Jamāʿat"*, which examines how prophetic traditions are practiced and lived within the Tablighi Jamaʻah movement.[55] However, upon closer examination, the term *living ḥadīth* is in fact a development of the earlier concept of *living sunnah*, and more fundamentally, it represents the continuation of the practice of the *tābiʿīn* and the Companions embodied in the Madinan tradition pioneered by Imām Mālik. Imām Mālik regarded the practice (*ʿamal*) of the people of Madinah as a legitimate source of Islamic law, thereby positioning lived religious practice as an authoritative legal reference.[56] From this perspective, the concept of living ḥadīth is not entirely new; rather, its novelty lies primarily in the terminology employed.[57]

More specifically, the emergence of the term living Ḥadīth can be categorized into four elements. *First*, living ḥadīth is one of several modern academic terms used to describe a phenomenon that has existed historically. For example, the tradition of the Madinah community functioned as a *living sunnah*; when such practices were later verbalized and textualized, they came to be understood as *living ḥadīth*. This view is based on the assumption that the scope of *ḥadīth* is broader than *sunnah*, which literally denotes habitual practice.[58]

Second, whereas classical ḥadīth studies primarily focused on textual analysis of *sanad* and *matan*, the study of living ḥadīth begins with social practice and emphasizes how communities enact prophetic traditions in real life. Consequently, living ḥadīth cannot be

[52] Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam Dalam Teori Dan Praktek*;Mustaqim, *Metodologi Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*.

[53] Zuhri, *Tradisi Intelektual NU Dan Otoritas Penafsiran Hadis*.

[54] G van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (Harper & Row, 1963).

[55] R Metcalf, P., & Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[56] Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwaṭṭaʾ* (Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2004).

[57] Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam Dalam Teori Dan Praktek*;Mustaqim, *Metodologi Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*.

[58] Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam Dalam Teori Dan Praktek*;Zuhri, *Guruku Orang-Orang Dari Pesantren*.

fully represented by approaches such as *fahm al-ḥadīth* or *maʿānī al-ḥadīth*, which remain text-centered. The key distinction lies in orientation: *fahm al-ḥadīth* and *maʿānī al-ḥadīth* move from text to understanding, whereas living ḥadīth moves from practice to text, focusing on how people interpret and respond to *sanad* and *matan* in daily life.[59]

Third, in classical ḥadīth criticism, a text must meet specific criteria of authenticity—such as *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, *ḍaʿīf*, or *mawḍūʿ*. In contrast, living ḥadīth studies do not primarily emphasize the technical classification of authenticity. What matters is that the practice is believed by the community to be rooted in a prophetic tradition and is not based on fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) material.[60]

Fourth, living ḥadīth opens a new domain within ḥadīth studies. At the beginning of the 2000s, studies focusing solely on *sanad* experienced a degree of stagnation, while *matan* studies remained heavily dependent on *sanad* analysis. Living ḥadīth shifts attention toward examining rituals, traditions, practices, and social behaviors inspired by the Prophet's traditions as they appear in society. In simple terms, living ḥadīth refers to social phenomena manifested in various behavioral patterns rooted in, or responding to, the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.[61]

A similar conceptual development can also be found in Qur'anic studies through the notion of the *living Qur'an*. This demonstrates a broader epistemological shift in Islamic studies—from text-centered approaches toward socio-cultural approaches that place religious communities as the primary object of study.[62]

Early history of living hadith

The term *living ḥadīth* emerged relatively recently in the Islamic intellectual discourse, particularly toward the end of the twentieth century. Conceptually, this terminology can be traced to the ideas of the Pakistani Islamic philosopher Fazlur Rahman. His formulation arises from a historical understanding of the Prophet's *sunnah*, in which he argues that *sunnah* and ḥadīth underwent significant historical development. According to Fazlur Rahman, *sunnah* represents a dynamic and continuous intellectual-moral tradition that has existed since the early period of Islam and has been practiced collectively by the Muslim community. In this sense, *living sunnah* closely resembles the concept of *ijmāʿ* and the agreed-upon practices of the Muslim community.[63]

Although ḥadīth functions as the verbal articulation and documentation of the *sunnah*, Fazlur Rahman highlights a significant distinction between the *living sunnah* of the

[59] Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*;Mustaqim, *Metodologi Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*.

[60] Zuhri, *Guruku Orang-Orang Dari Pesantren*;Mustaqim, *Metodologi Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*.

[61] Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam Dalam Teori Dan Praktek*;Mustaqim, *Metodologi Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*.

[62] Rafiq, *Sejarah Al-Qur'an: Dari Pengwahyuan Hingga Kompilasi*;Zuhri, *Guruku Orang-Orang Dari Pesantren*.

[63] F Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979).

first generations of Muslims and the later formalization of ḥadīth literature. In his view, *living sunnah* is a living, evolving process that continuously responds to social realities, whereas ḥadīth possesses a more formal and fixed character, seeking to preserve the permanence of that evolving *living sunnah* through textual synthesis, particularly until the third century Hijri.[64]

Forms of living hadith

The concept of *living Hadith* refers to a field of study that places Hadith within the social reality of Muslim communities, rather than viewing it merely as a normative religious text. This approach examines how Hadith is practiced, transmitted, and interpreted in everyday religious life, emphasizing social practices inspired by the Prophetic traditions.[65] Thus, *living Hadith* can be understood as a study of social and religious phenomena rooted in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.

The study of *living Hadith* belongs to the category of social and religious phenomena within Muslim societies. Consequently, social science approaches are highly relevant in observing and explaining how Hadith is implemented in communal life. Among these approaches, phenomenology is considered particularly appropriate, as it focuses on phenomena as they appear in lived experience. This perspective seeks to observe and describe religious practices as they are perceived and experienced by participants, without imposing external interpretations or theoretical reductions.[66]

The term *living Hadith* gained wider recognition through Barbara Metcalf's study entitled *Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at*, which illustrates how Hadith functions as a living tradition within a specific religious movement.[67] However, conceptually, this term represents a further development of the idea of *living sunnah*, which had been previously articulated by Fazlur Rahman. Rahman argues that sunnah is not a static set of textual formulations but a dynamic and continuous tradition that has evolved throughout Islamic history. In his view, the *living sunnah* represents a communal consensus and practice, comparable to *ijmā'*, while Hadith serves as a formalized verbal articulation of that tradition.[68]

Furthermore, M. Alfatih Suryadilaga categorizes *living Hadith* into three main forms: written tradition, oral tradition, and practical tradition. Written traditions appear in the form of religious expressions displayed in public spaces, oral traditions are manifested in recitations and communal religious practices, and practical traditions are embodied in ritual and social customs inspired by the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.[69] These forms demonstrate that

[64] F Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[65] M. A Suryadilaga, *Metodologi Penelitian Living Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* (Yogyakarta: Teras, 2007).

[66] J. W Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (Pearson, 2015).

[67] Metcalf, P., & Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual.*

[68] Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition.*

[69] Suryadilaga, *Metodologi Penelitian Living Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis.*

living Hadith expands the scope of Hadith studies from textual analysis toward socio-cultural investigation, positioning religious communities as the primary subjects of study.

Study of living hadith and integration with social sciences

To study *living Hadith*, several approaches may be employed, one of which is phenomenology. Phenomenology is a scientific approach that examines observable phenomena as they appear in lived experience. In this context, researchers seek to explain the general meaning derived from the lived experiences of several individuals in relation to a particular concept or phenomenon. The primary aim of phenomenology is to analyze individual experiences and synthesize them into a description of the universal essence or core meaning of a phenomenon.[70]

Through a phenomenological approach, events or social symptoms can be described as they are actually experienced and manifested within Muslim communities. This enables researchers to understand how Hadith functions in everyday religious life, not merely as a textual norm but as a lived and practiced tradition. Therefore, the study of *living Hadith* can be categorized as a socio-religious phenomenon, as it focuses on religious practices that emerge and develop within specific social and cultural contexts.[71]

Narrative study has become an increasingly explicit type of qualitative research method. Narrative is generally understood as a text that is recorded through the explanation of actions or phenomena that are interconnected and organized according to time, events, or chronological sequence. Through this understanding, narrative research can be defined as a form of inquiry that presents stories—whether spoken, discussed, or written—based on sequences of time, place, and events.[72]

Narratives describe phenomena that emerge and are interrelated, forming meaningful patterns within a particular context. Fundamentally, narrative research encompasses various forms and employs multiple analytical practices, drawing upon diverse disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, history, and literary studies.[73]

An ethnographic study is a type of research closely related to the culture of a particular population group. Ethnography focuses on a community that shares similar cultural characteristics. It can be defined as a qualitative research method that seeks to describe and interpret shared patterns of values, beliefs, behaviors, and language within a cultural group.[74]

The ultimate goal of ethnography is to produce a comprehensive and in-depth description of a cultural group through prolonged engagement and extensive observation. A key feature of ethnographic research is participant observation, in which researchers immerse themselves directly in the field to observe, interact with, and interview members of the

[70] Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research.*

[71] Suryadilaga, *Metodologi Penelitian Living Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis.*

[72] Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research.*

[73] C. K Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (SAGE Publications, 2008).

[74] Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research.*

community being studied. Through this approach, researchers are able to understand social practices and meanings from the perspective of the participants themselves.[75]

When the concept of social construction, as proposed by Berger and Luckmann, is compared with the concepts of living Hadith and living Qur'an, these latter concepts can be understood as systems through which the Hadith and the Qur'an are manifested in real social life, either consciously or unconsciously. In this sense, living Hadith and living Qur'an represent the ways in which sacred texts are continuously objectified, internalized, and externalized within everyday social practices.

According to Berger and Luckmann, social reality is formed through a dialectical process between individuals and society, consisting of externalization, objectivation, and internalization.[76] This framework provides an analytical guideline for observing how individuals shape religious practices based on the Qur'an and Hadith, and at the same time are shaped by these practices in their daily lives. Thus, religious texts do not merely function as normative doctrines but become lived realities embodied in rituals, traditions, and social attitudes.

The study of living Hadith therefore emerges as a relevant and effective approach in the contemporary era, as it encompasses various forms of religious practices, traditions, and behavioral patterns that exist within Muslim communities and are inspired by the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW . In methodological terms, the study of living Hadith is closely related to disciplines such as anthropology of religion and sociology of religion, both of which emphasize empirical observation of religious life. Consequently, approaches such as phenomenology are particularly suitable for examining rituals and traditions as they are practiced and experienced within society.[77]

Living hadith in the study of hadith

Saifuddin Zuhri notes that the use of the terms Living Qur'an and Living Hadith was popularized in Indonesia by lecturers of Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith studies at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, particularly through the book *Living Al-Qur'an and Hadith Research Methodology* published in 2007.[78] This work played a significant role in institutionalizing the living Qur'an and living Hadith approaches within Indonesian Islamic scholarship.

However, long before this development, the term—especially Living Hadith—had already been introduced in international academic discourse. As early as 1993, Barbara D. Metcalf popularized the concept through her influential article entitled *"Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jamaat"*, in which she examined how Hadith function as lived religious practices within the Tablighi Jamaat movement rather than merely as textual authorities.[79]

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[75] P Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (Routledge, 2007).

[76] T Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Anchor Books, 1966).

[77] Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*;Suryadilaga, *Metodologi Penelitian Living Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis*.

[78] Zuhri, *Guruku Orang-Orang Dari Pesantren*.

[79] Metcalf, P., & Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*.

This historical trajectory demonstrates that the concept of living Hadith did not emerge abruptly, but rather evolved gradually from broader socio-religious studies that emphasize the dynamic interaction between sacred texts and lived religious experiences across different Muslim societies.

The study of Living Hadith differs fundamentally from conventional Hadith textual studies because its primary object is not the Hadith text itself, but the religious community that lives and practices the Hadith in everyday life. In this approach, Hadith is examined not through textual analysis alone, but through the study of socio-cultural realities, using phenomenological and social-scientific perspectives. Phenomenological inquiry, in this context, seeks to examine observable social phenomena in the form of behavioral patterns that originate from, or emerge as responses to, interpretations of the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.

For example, in the issue of women's leadership, the focus of living Hadith studies is not on determining the legal ruling regarding whether women are permitted to lead based on textual Hadith analysis. Nor does it aim to resolve classical juridical debates concerning whether a Hadith is general or specific, universal or contextual, or whether legal principles such as *al-'ibrah bi 'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab* or *al-'ibrah bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab lā bi 'umūm al-lafẓ* should be applied. Instead, the concern of living Hadith lies in examining how a particular Hadith is received, interpreted, and practiced within a specific social context, bounded by locus and tempus (*bi taghayyur al-azminah wa al-amkinah*).

Living Hadith research seeks to observe social phenomena in the form of religious behavior patterns that emerge from people's understanding of, and response to, the Prophet's Hadith—such as the tendency within certain communities to avoid appointing women as leaders due to their interpretation of Hadith texts that are perceived as prohibiting female leadership. The emphasis is not on validating or invalidating the interpretation normatively, but on understanding how such interpretations function within social life.

According to Muhammad Alfatih Suryadilaga, the study of living Hadith no longer relies solely on *'ilm muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, but integrates insights from the social sciences in order to observe and explain how religious traditions emerge, develop, and are sustained within Muslim societies.[80] Consequently, living Hadith studies do not stop at normative–doctrinal conclusions; rather, they seek to explain the historical and social processes through which religious phenomena are formed and institutionalized.

Thus, the scope of Hadith studies has expanded from purely textual analysis to socio-cultural investigation, positioning religious communities as the main object of inquiry. In this sense, living Hadith represents a reading of the dialectic between text and context, where Hadith functions not merely as a scriptural source but as a lived practice shaped by historical, social, and cultural realities

This kind of phenomenological approach is used to look for or observe the phenomenon of the *living* Hadith as it appears. In this case, there are three principles involved in it; *first*, something is tangible; *second,* something is visible; *third*, because it

[80] Suryadilaga, *Metodologi Penelitian Living Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis.*

appears exactly it is a phenomenon. The appearance shows the similarity between what is seen and what is received by the observer, without making any modifications.

The variable that determines something like a living Hadith is that the phenomenon originates from the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the living Hadith method employs an inductive approach, namely a mode of reasoning that begins with specific and particular empirical values and then derives broader generalizations. In this sense, Hadith-related phenomena observed in society are first analyzed in their concrete forms and subsequently synthesized into more general conceptual formulations. This inductive orientation distinguishes living Hadith studies from purely deductive and text-centered approaches commonly found in classical Hadith scholarship.

The term phenomenology itself does not originate from the tradition of Hadith scholars (*muḥaddithūn*). Rather, it emerged within Western philosophy. The initial foundations of phenomenological thought can be traced to Immanuel Kant, who sought to distinguish between elements derived from human experience and those originating from pure reason. This line of thought was later developed by G. W. F. Hegel, particularly in his dialectical framework of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

Phenomenology as a philosophical school and method of inquiry was systematically formulated by Edmund Husserl, who emphasized returning "to the things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*), that is, to phenomena as they appear. According to Husserl, phenomena are not mere appearances detached from reality; rather, they reflect a reality imbued with transcendental meaning. What appears to human consciousness is therefore always meaningful and intentional.

In relation to religious studies, Annemarie Schimmel argues that a phenomenological approach is particularly suitable for gaining a deeper understanding of Islam. This approach seeks to enter the religious path itself by first observing religious phenomena as they are lived and experienced, and then penetrating the deeper layers of human responses to the Divine.[81] Through such an approach, it becomes possible to approach the deepest sacred core of Islamic religious life.

Methodologically, phenomenology differs from other approaches in religious studies. Historical–philological methods, through textual analysis, aim to uncover the authorial intent or the original meaning of religious texts. Structuralism, on the other hand, focuses on explaining texts or rituals primarily in their holistic and synchronic dimensions rather than their historical and diachronic development. In contrast, phenomenology emphasizes the religious process itself, particularly the dynamic relationship between stimulus and response—such as between the sacred (noumenal) realm and human thought, religious action, and lived experience. Consequently, phenomenology treats religious experience and response as a legitimate and central field of scholarly investigation. Within this framework, the study of living Hadith becomes an exploration of how Hadith operates as a lived and experienced reality, shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts, rather than merely as a fixed textual authority.

[81] A Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

The use of phenomenology as a method of thinking is intended to passages of the Koran and Hadith from the 'historical stagnation' of the past by presenting it in the experience of its adherents. It must be taken away from historical time and then transplanted into an existential time where it 'lives' and always develops with those who believe in its truth.

The meaning of the Qur'an and Hadith is fundamentally open, as it depends on the decisions and interpretive choices made by individuals in engaging with these texts. Wilfred Cantwell Smith argues that the true meaning of the Qur'an and Hadith does not reside solely in the textual form itself, nor can it be fully located in the divine intention alone. Rather, their meaning is realized in the understanding, consciousness, and lived experience of Muslims. In this sense, the meaning of the Qur'an and Hadith constitutes a history of meanings—dynamic, creative, complex, and continuously intersecting with the lives of believers across different times and places.

At the same time, the Qur'an and Hadith are divine revelations from Allah, not ordinary human discourse. Consequently, not all interpretive rules applicable to human-to-human communication can be directly applied to divine revelation addressed to an extraordinary human being, namely the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This theological dimension underscores the uniqueness of revelation while also highlighting the need for methodological sensitivity in its interpretation.

On the other hand, religious practice as the implementation of faith is no less important than textual or contextual understanding of Hadith. From this perspective, proponents of living Hadith studies argue that this approach makes a significant contribution to contemporary Hadith scholarship by disseminating and grounding the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW within concrete social realities. Living Hadith thus bridges the gap between scriptural meaning and lived religious experience.

The study of living Hadith as a methodological model has been particularly developed by students of the Postgraduate Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. This development is closely linked to the concept of integrative–interconnective scholarship introduced by Amin Abdullah, which seeks to foster dialogue between Islamic studies—especially Hadith studies—and the social sciences, including anthropology, sociology, ethnography, and phenomenology. Through this interdisciplinary engagement, the academic field of living Hadith was institutionalized as a formal course of study.

The emergence of living Hadith as an academic subject was accompanied by the introduction of other interdisciplinary courses, such as philology, sociology of religion, and Qur'anic and Hadith hermeneutics. Together, these developments marked a new academic era characterized by intellectual openness (*Zeitgeist*), moving beyond the long-standing dichotomy between religious and secular sciences. In this context, living Hadith represents not merely a new term, but a paradigm shift in the study of Hadith—one that acknowledges the dynamic interaction between revelation, interpretation, and lived social reality.

D. Conclusion

Study of text and living Hadith is a model that can be used to understand the Hadith of the Prophet. Judging from the aspects of the method and object being studied, the text

study examines Hadith by relying on the meaning of the Hadith text based on certain principles, while the study of living Hadith examines visible phenomena and makes the religious community its object. This study model emerged in the last decade. The study of text and living Hadith aims to understand the Prophet's Hadith which is relatively more precise, appreciative, and accommodating to social change which is an implication of the development and advancement of technological science. Of course, this constitutes an *"ijtihad"* with the character of "*human construction*" (a human-made which can be true and could be wrong however). Even if it is true, the truth is still relative and debatable, but if we are wrong, we will still get one reward. Therefore, the study of texts and the study of living Hadiths contribute to the study of Hadith to further disseminate and ground the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

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