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Living Hadith at the Boundary of Canon: The Panjang Mulud Tradition in Cilegon, Indonesia

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Abstract

Existing studies of living hadith in Indonesia have largely examined how canonically attested hadith are reinterpreted and embodied in social practice. Less understood is how communities receive and enact prophetic sayings that fall outside the canonical hadith corpus. This study addresses that gap through an ethnographic study of the Panjang Mulud tradition in Pangabuan Village, Cilegon, Banten. Using Husserlian phenomenology, data were gathered through observation and semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, community leaders, government officials, a santri, and younger participants, then analyzed thematically across these groups. The findings show that while practices of shalawat, charity, and love for the Prophet draw on hadith recorded in al-Tirmidhī, al-Bukhārī, and Muslim, the community's motivation for spending wealth during the celebration is instead traced to a saying attributed to the Prophet and reportedly sourced by informants to Madārij al-Su'ūd, transmitted orally and without a canonical isnad. This study argues that in such cases, living hadith operates at the boundary between canonical and non-canonical prophetic tradition, where communal conviction and practiced meaning outweigh textual authentication, independently of this study's own verification of the saying's status. The study contributes to living hadith scholarship by showing that a community's practical treatment of a saying as hadith, and that saying's canonical status, can operate as two independent variables rather than two descriptions of the same fact, and by documenting, through the figure of a santri who examined and then set aside the saying's textual uncertainty, that this independence can itself be reached through deliberate, informed judgement rather than only through unexamined conviction.

Keywords: Cilegon, Living Hadith, Non-canonical Hadith, Panjang Mulud, Phenomenology.

Abstrak

Kajian living hadis di Indonesia selama ini sebagian besar meneliti bagaimana hadis yang telah teruji kesahihannya secara kanonik diinterpretasikan ulang dan dihayati dalam praktik sosial. Yang masih kurang dipahami adalah bagaimana masyarakat menerima dan mengamalkan ucapan yang dinisbatkan kepada Nabi namun berada di luar korpus hadis kanonik. Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan tersebut melalui studi etnografis atas tradisi Panjang Mulud di Kelurahan Pangabuan, Kota Cilegon, Banten. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi Husserl, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan tokoh agama, tokoh masyarakat, aparat pemerintah, seorang santri, dan generasi muda, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik lintas kelompok tersebut. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun praktik bershalawat, bersedekah, dan mencintai Nabi bersandar pada hadis yang tercatat dalam riwayat al-Tirmidzi, al-Bukhari, dan Muslim, motivasi masyarakat untuk berinfak pada saat perayaan justru ditelusuri pada sebuah ucapan yang dinisbatkan kepada Nabi dan menurut keterangan informan bersumber dari kitab Madarij al-Su'ud, diwariskan secara lisan tanpa sanad kanonik. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa dalam kasus semacam ini, living hadis beroperasi pada batas antara tradisi kenabian yang kanonik dan non-kanonik, di mana keyakinan komunal dan makna

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yang dihayati lebih diutamakan daripada otentikasi tekstual, terlepas dari ada atau tidaknya verifikasi independen atas status ucapan tersebut dalam penelitian ini. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi bagi kajian living hadis dengan menunjukkan bahwa perlakuan praktis suatu komunitas terhadap sebuah ucapan sebagai hadis, dan status kanonik ucapan tersebut, dapat beroperasi sebagai dua variabel yang independen, bukan dua deskripsi dari fakta yang sama, serta dengan mendokumentasikan, melalui sosok seorang santri yang memeriksa lalu secara sadar mengesampingkan ketidakpastian tekstual ucapan tersebut, bahwa independensi ini dapat dicapai melalui penilaian yang disengaja dan terinformasi, bukan hanya melalui keyakinan yang tidak diperiksa.

Kata Kunci: *Cilegon, Fenomenologi, Living Hadis, Hadis Non-Kanonik, Panjang Mulud.*

A. Introduction

Religious traditions transmitted across generations are rarely static repositories of the past; they are continually reactivated, reinterpreted, and invested with meaning by the communities that sustain them.[1] Among Muslim communities in Indonesia, the celebration of the Prophet's birth, or Mawlid, exemplifies this dynamic, having evolved into a rich array of localized practices that vary considerably from one region to another.[2] In the coastal city of Cilegon, Banten, this celebration takes the distinctive form of the Panjang Mulud tradition, in which community members expend considerable resources to mark the occasion through processions, communal recitation, and the public display of decorated offerings.[3] Scholars working within the framework of living hadith have argued that such practices function as embodied vehicles through which prophetic teachings continue to shape everyday religious life, extending beyond the normative reading of hadith texts into lived social experience.[4] Understood in this light, local expressions of devotion to the Prophet are not merely cultural performances layered onto religious obligation, but sites in which communities actively negotiate what it means to inherit and enact prophetic example.[5] It is within this broader phenomenon that the present study locates its inquiry into the Panjang Mulud tradition as practiced in Pangabuan Village, Cilegon.

Cilegon is a coastal city in the province of Banten, situated along the Sunda Strait on the western edge of Java, and is home to a range of local traditions that reflect the region's long history of Islamic practice.[6] Among these, the Panjang Mulud tradition remains one of the most vibrant, observed annually during the month of Rabi' al-Awwal to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.[7] The tradition has been linked in academic scholarship to the broader religious and cultural life of the former Banten Sultanate, where celebrations of the Prophet's birth were historically woven into the social fabric of the court and its

[1] Zainuddin, *Studi Hadis Dan Tradisi Keagamaan* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2015).

[2] Ulin Niam Masruri, 'Perayaan Maulid Nabi Dalam Pandangan KH. Hasyim Asy'ari', *Riwayah : Jurnal Studi Hadis*, 4.2 (2018), p. 281, doi:10.21043/riwayah.v4i2.3596; Bahruddin Umar Yakub and others, 'Living Qur'an, Gender, and Sibaliparriq, in Mandar, Indonesia: Cultural Construction in the Perspective of Islamic Law', *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam*, 7.2 (2023), p. 1219, doi:10.22373/sjhk.v7i2.17892.

[3] Siti Marfua'ah and M Inu Fauzan, 'Panjang Mulud Dalam Tradisi Masyarakat Banten (Studi Kasus Perayaan Maulid Nabi Dalam Perspektif Islam)', *Jurnal Cahaya Mandalika*, 3.931–942 (2024).

[4] Zainuddin.

[5] Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, 'Living Hadis: Genealogi, Teori, Dan Aplikasi', *Jurnal Living Hadis*, 1.1 (2016), pp. 177–96, doi:10.14421/livinghadis.2016.1073; Idris Siregar, 'Studi Living Hadis: Dilihat Dari Perkembangan Dan Metodologi', *SHAHIH (Jurnal Kewahyuan Islam)*, 5.1 (2022), pp. 159–72, doi:10.51900/shh.v5i1.15154.

[6] 'Kota Cilegon', 2026.

[7] Marfua'ah and Fauzan; Aiyub Aiyub and Isna Mutia, 'Muhammad Quraish Shihab's Methodology in Interpretation of The Qur'an', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah*, 20.1 (2023), p. 1, doi:10.22373/jim.v20i1.16891.

surrounding communities.[8] In Pangabuan Village, one of the areas where this tradition continues to be practiced with particular intensity, community members mark the occasion through processions, the recitation of shalawat, communal religious gatherings, and the public display of decorated offerings funded through voluntary contributions.[9] According to local religious leaders, the tradition has been sustained across generations primarily through oral transmission rather than through written religious instruction, with successive generations inheriting both the practice and its associated meanings largely by participation rather than formal teaching.[10] It is this orally sustained, practice based transmission of prophetic memory that makes Pangabuan a particularly instructive site for examining how communities relate to hadith beyond the boundaries of formal textual authority.

A closer examination of the motivations invoked by the Pangabuan community reveals a more complex picture than the tradition's outward uniformity suggests. Several of the practices central to Panjang Mulud are explicitly linked by community members to hadith recorded within the canonical corpus: the recitation of shalawat is associated with hadith on the merit of invoking blessings upon the Prophet, the emphasis on love for the Prophet draws on a well attested tradition preserved by al-Bukhāri, and the practice of almsgiving is grounded in a hadith transmitted by Muslim on the non-diminishing nature of charity.[11] These attributions align closely with what earlier studies of Mawlid traditions elsewhere in Indonesia have already documented, in which canonical hadith serve as the textual anchor for locally embodied practice.[12] A different picture emerges, however, in relation to the community's stated motivation for spending money during the celebration itself. According to informants, this specific practice is justified not by reference to a hadith found in the standard collections, but by a saying attributed to the Prophet that circulates through Madāij al-Su'ūd, a text authored by Imam Nawawi al-Bantani and transmitted within the local religious milieu rather than through formal isnad.[13] This discrepancy between the canonical grounding of some practices and the non-canonical grounding of another, within a single tradition, raises a question that existing living hadith scholarship has not directly addressed: how should the reception of a prophetic saying be understood when its authority rests on communal conviction and local textual transmission rather than on isnad-based authentication?.

Scholarship on living hadith within the context of Mawlid celebrations across Indonesia has grown considerably over the past decade, examining a range of localized traditions in different regions of the archipelago. Muhammad Akrom Firdaus has studied the Bongkoan tradition in Sidoharjo, Kebumen, tracing its underlying values to teachings drawn

[8] Nofia Natasari, 'Tradisi Panjang Mulud Di Kesultanan Banten Lama Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes', *Jurnal Kajian Dakwah Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 25.1 (2021), pp. 93–101, doi:10.15408/dakwah.v25i1.23178.

[9] Field Observation, Pangabuan Village, Cilegon

[10] Interview With H. Masuhi, Religious Leader and Founder of Majlis Al-Kautsar, Pangabuan, January 30, 2025.

[11] Muhammad bin Isa al-Thirmidhi, *al-Jami' al-Shahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1996),p.355; Abū ʿAbdillah Muhammad ibn Ismaʿil Al-Bukhāri, *al-Jāmi' al-Musnad as-Ṣhahīh al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 2008); Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj Al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1998).

[12] Toha Andiko, Isna Mutia, and Nazaryani Nazaryani, 'THE RULING ON WISHING MERRY CHRISTMAS TO NON-MUSLIMS: AN ANALYSIS OF M. QURAISH SHIHAB'S INTERPRETATIONS', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah*, 21.1 (2024), p. 139, doi:10.22373/jim.v21i1.20040.

[13] Interview With H. Masuhi, Religious Leader and Founder of Majlis Al-Kautsar, Pangabuan, January 30, 2025.

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from the Qur'an and hadith.[14] Ahmad Muttaqin has examined Barzanji recitation among the Bugis community of Soppeng, showing how the text is read during Mawlid to convey both prophetic history and elements of hadith reception.[15] Muhammad Ridho Lubis has analysed the Mawlid commemoration in Mlangi, Sleman, identifying hadith on love for the Prophet, shalawat, almsgiving, and communal recitation as its normative basis.[16] Similar patterns have been documented by Nurul Khofifatul Molika in the Ancak Agung tradition of Situbondo, by Amin Thohari in the Kalipang tradition of Blitar, by Wasila in a pesantren based Mawlid practice in Kediri, and by Devita Innamasari in the Selabet Tradition of Bangkalan each tracing local customs to hadith concerning love for the Prophet, almsgiving, or communal gatherings of religious knowledge.[17] Accros these studies, differences in geographical setting notwithstanding, the hadith invoked to justify mawlid paractice are consistently drawn form the canonical corpus, leaving the researcher's task limited to tracing how such hadith are practised and given meaning.

A comparable reliance on canonical hadith is evident in studies of Indonesian practices unrelated to mawlid specifically. Nurjanah, Mubarak, and Amrulloh's analysis of the Manganan tradition to hadith on remembrance of the deceased and communal charity.[18] Saputra and colleagues have examined the Sadakah Basorakan tradition among the Minangkabau, and Erlina, Nasrullah the communal Bajamba dining tradition in the same region, both linking their respective practices to hadith on the merit of shared eating and almsgiving.[19] Musolin and Mukhtar have studied a forty-day congregational prayer tradition in Purworejo, and Aini and Al-Hanifah have examined mourning practices in Tamansari Wuluhan, in each case identifying canonical hadith as the textual anchor for the practice under study.[20] Further afield, Aripai and Amin have traced the Mattampung death ritual among the Bugis to hadith on remembering the deceased, Darin Rihhadatul Aisy has grounded the Grebeg Besar tradition in Demak in hadith on communal charity and gratitude, and Alwi Padli Harahap has linked the Martahi Martulpak tradition among the Mandailing

[14] Muhammad Akrom Firdaus, "Tradisi Bongkoan Dalam Perayaan Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW di Desa Sidoharjo, Kecamatan Puring, Kabupaten Kebumen (Studi Living Hadis)" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Walisongo Semarang, 2022).

[15] Ahmad Muttaqin, '"Barzanji Bugis" Dalam Peringatan Maulid: Studi Living Hadis Di Masyarakat Bugis, Soppeng, Sul-Sel', *Jurnal Living Hadis*, 1.1 (2016), pp. 129–50, doi:10.14421/livinghadis.2016.1071.

[16] Muhammad Ridho Lubis, "Peringatan Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW Dusun Mlangi, Desa Nogotirto, Gamping, Sleman, Yogyakarta" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2019).

[17] Nurul Khofifatul Molika, "Tradisi Ancak Agung Dalam Menyambut Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW (Studi Living Hadis di Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Situbondo Jawa Timur)" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2021); Amin Thohari, "Maulid dalam Balutan Budaya Lokal: Kajian Living Hadis terhadap Pelaksanaan Maulid di Desa Kalipang Kecamatan Sutojayan Kabupaten Blitar" (Undergraduate Thesis, IAIN Kediri, 2021); Wasila, "Tradisi Makan Memakai Nampan pada Peringatan Maulid Nabi di Pondok Pesantren Al-Haromain (Studi Living Hadis)" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2022); Devita Innamasari, "Selabet Dalam Tradisi Maulid Nabi: Studi Living Hadis di Desa Mrecah, Kecamatan Tanah Merah, Kabupaten Bangkalan" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2025).

[18] Zumrotus Sholikatun Nurjanah, Alfoun Fajar Mubarok, and Amrullah, 'Dari Keramat Ke Sedekah: Living Hadith Dan Perubahan Makna Tradisi Manganan', *Jurnal Riset Agama*, 5.1 (2025), pp. 100–110, doi:10.15575/jra.v5i1.43218.

[19] Edriagus Saputra and others, 'Living Hadith Studies: Acculturation of Religion and Minang Culture in the Sadakah Basorakan Tradition', *Majalah Ilmiah Tabuah: Ta`limat, Budaya, Agama Dan Humaniora*, 29.1 (2025), doi:10.37108/tabuah.v29i1.2349; Erlina and Nasrulloh, 'Tradisi Makan Bajamba Di Minangkabau: Studi Living Hadis', *PERADA: Jurnal Studi Islam Kawasan Melayu*, 6.2 (2024), pp. 177–87, doi:10.35961/perada.v6i2.1225.

[20] Muhlil Musolin and Naqiyah Mukhtar, 'Living Hadis Berjama'ah Shalat Empat Puluh Hari Pada Masyarakat Desa Salam Kecamatan Gebang Kabupaten Purworejo', *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadist*, 6.1 (2023), pp. 01–20, doi:10.35132/albayan.v6i1.230; Siti Qurrotul Aini and Hilyatul Azhar Al-Hanifah, 'Living Hadith: Companion for the Dead Traditions of the Tamansari Wuluhan Village Community', *Journal of Islamic History*, 3.2 (2023), pp. 119–36, doi:10.53088/jih.v3i2.1206.

community to hadith on maintaining kinship ties.[21] Taken together with the mawlid-focused scholarsip discussed above, these studies share a common analytical premise that the hadith animating local practice are already textually secured within the canonical corpus, leaving the researcher's task limited to tracing how such hadith are practised, transmitted, and given meaning. None of these studies, however, addresses a case in which a community's own point of reference for a central element of practice lies outside the canonical hadith literature altogether, a gap that the present study of Panjang Mulud in Pangabuan seeks to address.

This study takes the discrepancy identified above as its central problem, rather than treating it as an anomaly to be resolved by returning to canonical sources. Existing accounts of living hadith, including the five-fold framework distinguishing practice, reception, text, transmission, and transformation, have generally assumed that the "text" received and transmitted by a community is itself a hadith already secured by isnad, leaving the researcher's task confined to describing how that hadith is practised and given meaning.[22] What this framework cannot explain is a case in which the text functioning as hadith for a community is not, in fact, recoverable within the canonical corpus: existing categories offer no account of how reception, transmission, and internalisation proceed when the object being received is textually unsettled rather than textually secured. This gap matters theoretically because it bears on a foundational assumption of the field, namely that the hadith-ness of a text can be taken as given once a community is observed treating it as such; the Pangabuan case suggests that a community's practical treatment of a saying as hadith and that saying's canonical status are two independent variables, not two descriptions of the same fact. Building on this premise, this study extends living hadith theory to a case in which the object of reception is not a canonically authenticated hadith but a saying attributed to the Prophet through vernacular religious literature.

Specifically, this study asks how the Pangabuan community comes to regard, transmit, and enact a saying drawn from Madārij al-Su'ūd as though it carried the same normative weight as hadith recorded in al-Tirmidhi, al-Bukhari, and Muslim, despite the absence of a formal isnad connecting it to the Prophet. In addressing this question, the study draws on Husserlian phenomenology to examine how meaning is constituted in the consciousness of practitioners independently of the text's formal authentication, attending to how conviction, communal memory, and lived experience come to stand in for textual verification.[23] What changes, as a result, is the unit of analysis proper to living hadith research: rather than asking how an already-verified hadith is practised, this study indicates that living hadith scholarship must also be equipped to ask how a text comes to function as hadith for a community in the first place, independently of, and sometimes prior to, any scholarly verdict on its canonical status. This reframing does not dispense with the canonical/non-canonical distinction, but relocates it: from a precondition for living hadith research to one of its objects of enquiry.

Guided by the problem outlined above, this study pursues two interrelated aims. The first is to identify and describe the range of hadith, both canonical and non-canonical, invoked by the Pangabuan community to justify and animate the practices constituting Panjang Mulud. The second is to examine how these prophetic attributions, regardless of

[21] Andi Fatihul Faiz Aripai and Mukhlisah Amin, 'Interaksi Hadis Dan Budaya Lokal: Living Hadis Dalam Tradisi Mattampung Masyarakat Bugis', *Journal of Hadith Studies*, 7.1 (2025), pp. 44–62, doi:10.32506/johs.v7i1-03; Darin Rihhadatul 'Aisyi, Repa Hudan Lisalam, and Muhammad Alif, 'Living: Hadis Tradisi Grebeg Besar Demak, Jawa Tengah', *Jurnal Studi Islam Indonesia (JSII)*, 2.2 (2024), pp. 285–300, doi:doi.org/10.61930/jsii.v2i2.922; Alwi Padly Harahap and others, 'Martahi Martulpak Tradition: Living Hadith as a Means of Shaping Social and Cultural Norms of the Mandailing Community', *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)*, 11.1 (2025), pp. 15–27, doi:10.18784/smart.v11i1.2681.

[22] Qudsy.

[23] Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Sage Publications, 1994).

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their formal textual status, are received, transmitted, and internalised by different segments of the community, and how this process of reception confers upon them a normative force comparable to that of authenticated hadith. Pursuing these aims required attention not only to what informants say about the tradition's hadith basis, but to how that basis is treated differently depending on a given informant's religious authority, generational position, and proximity to the tradition's transmission, an internal variation addressed directly in the methodological approach set out below.

This study employs a qualitative approach informed by Husserlian phenomenology as operationalised by Moustakas, conducted in Pangabuan Village, Cilegon, where the Panjang Mulud tradition continues to be practised with particular intensity.[24] Five informants were purposively selected to represent distinct positions in relation to the tradition's transmission: a religious leader (H. Masuhi), a community leader (H. Madsaid), a local government representative (Abdurohman), a youth participant active in mosque activities (Faizul Arrasid), and a santri engaged in independent religious study (Khoirul Alfiyani). This selection was intended to capture a range of relationships to religious authority and textual learning, from formal religious leadership to lay community and governmental perspectives, rather than to achieve statistical representativeness. Interviews were conducted primarily in Javanese Serang, the local dialect spoken in the Cilegon-Serang area, with Indonesian used interchangeably where appropriate, each lasting approximately forty-five minutes to one hour, between 30 and 31 January 2025, and were audio-recorded with informants consent before being transcribed in full for analysis; quotations appearing in this article are the authors' own English translation, rendered via an intermediate Indonesian transcript.[25]

Interview data were analysed following Moustakas's procedure of phenomenological reduction. The researcher's prior assumptions, including an initial expectation that all practices within Panjang Mulud would be traceable to canonical hadith, were made explicit and bracketed at the outset of analysis, a step revisited once the non-canonical attribution associated with almsgiving emerged from the data rather than being anticipated by the research design.[26] Each transcript was then read to identify significant statements, which were horizonalised, treated as carrying equal initial weight, before being clustered into thematic units of meaning through repeated comparison of statements across the five transcripts; this clustering yielded the four thematic units presented in the fifth subsection below. Differences between informant categories were analysed by comparing which thematic units were present or absent, and in what form, across each informant's transcript, a procedure that generated the comparison developed in the third subsection. Interview findings were triangulated against direct observation of the Panjang Mulud celebration and against written sources on the tradition's historical and religious context, so that claims resting on a single informant's account, such as the attribution to Madārij al-Su'ūd, are explicitly identified as such rather than presented as independently corroborated.[27]

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. The following section presents the study's findings, beginning with the canonical hadith underlying the more widely recognised elements of Panjang Mulud before turning to the non-canonical basis of the practice of almsgiving during the celebration, and proceeding to a thematic comparison across the five categories of informants consulted. This is followed by a phenomenological analysis of

[24] Moustakas.

[25] Jhon W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th edn (Sage Publications, 2018).

[26] Moustakas.

[27] Ramakrishnan Vivek, Yogarajah Nanthagopan, and Sarmatha Piriyatharshan, 'Beyond Methods: Theoretical Underpinnings of Triangulation in Qualitative and Multi-Method Studies"', *SEEU Review*, 18.2 (2023), pp. 105–22, doi:10.2478/seeur-2023-0088.

informants' experience of the tradition, and by a discussion of these findings in relation to existing living hadith scholarship, arguing that the case of Pangabuan extends current understanding of how prophetic authority is constituted beyond canonical text. The article concludes by reflecting on the broader implications of this case for the study of living hadith in vernacular religious contexts, and by identifying directions for further research on communities in which canonical and non-canonical prophetic attributions coexist within a single devotional practice.

B. Results and Discussion

Canonical Hadith and the Performance of Panjang Mulud

Consistent with practices documented in comparable studies of Mawlid traditions elsewhere in Indonesia, several core elements of Panjang Mulud in Pangabuan are explicitly grounded by informants in hadith drawn from the canonical corpus.[28] The recitation of shalawat throughout the celebration is justified by reference to a hadith recorded by al-Tirmidhi:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ بُنْدَارٌ حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ ابْنُ عَثْمَةَ حَدَّثَنِي مُوسَى بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ الزَّمْعِيُّ حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ كَيْسَانَ أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ شَدَّادٍ أَخْبَرَهُ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ عَلَيَّ صَلَاةً قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ غَرِيبٌ وَرُوِي عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ مَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيَّ صَلَاةً صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ بِهَا عَشْرًا وَكَتَبَ لَهُ بِهَا عَشْرَ حَسَنَاتٍ

Meaning: "Muhammad ibn Bashshar, known as Bundar, related to us, saying: Muhammad ibn Khālid ibn 'Atmah related to us, saying: Musa ibn Ya'qub al-Zam'i related to me, saying: 'Abdullah ibn Kaysan related to me, that 'Abd Allah ibn Shaddad informed him, on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "The person closest to me on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who sends the most blessings upon me. 'Abu 'Isa [al-Tirmidhi] said: "This is a hasan gharib hadith. It has also been narrated from the Prophet that he said: Whoever sends blessings upon me once, God will bless him tenfold and record ten good deeds for him."[29]

The pervasive emphasis on love for the Prophet, expressed by informants across all five categories, draws on the hadith preserved by al-Bukhāri:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْيَمَانِ قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا شُعَيْبٌ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الزِّنَادِ عَنْ الْأَعْرَجِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ وَالِدِهِ وَوَلَدِهِ

Meaning: Abu al-Yaman related to us, saying: Shu'ayb informed us, saying: Abu al-Zinad related to us, on the authority of al-A'raj, on the authority of Abū Hurairah, that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'By the One in whose hand my soul lies, none of you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than his father and his child'".[30]

The practice of distributing charitable offerings, meanwhile, is linked to a hadith transmitted by Muslim:

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[28] Lubis; Thohari.

[29] al-Thirmidhi, p.355, kitab witir bab Mā jā'a fī fadl al-Salāh 'lāā al- Nabi nomor 484 juz 2, graded hasan gharib by al-Tirmidhi.

[30] Al-Bukhāri, Kitab al-Īmān, Bab Hubb al-Rasūl min al-īmān, No. 13.

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حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ وَقُتَيْبَةُ وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَعِيلُ وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ عَنْ الْعَلَاءِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلَّا عِيًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ

Meaning: "Yahya ibn Ayyub, Qutaybah, and Ibn Hujr related to us, saying: Ismā'il ibn Ja'far related to us, on the authority of al-'Ala', on the authority of his father, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Charity does not diminish wealth. God does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour, and no one humbles himself for the sake of God except that God raises his rank".[31]

These three hadith meet the standard criteria of authenticity central to the science of hadith criticism, namely an unbroken chain of transmission and narrators possessing integrity and precision in the case of sanad, together with the absence of irregularity or hidden defect in the case of matn.[32] Their canonical status is neither contested by informants nor treated by them as a matter requiring further scrutiny, rather, it functions as an unquestioned textual foundation upon which the corresponding practices are performed and explained. It is against this backdrop of secure canonical grounding that the community's account of a fourth, more contested practice becomes analytically significant.

Beyond their textual grounding, these canonical hadith are consistently described by informants as lived commitments rather than doctrines recited in the abstract. H. Madsaid, a community leader, frames continued participation in the tradition explicitly in terms of love for the Prophet: "This tradition must be upheld and further developed because it is an expression of our love for the Prophet. This tradition is not only of religious value but is also part of our local identity. Preserving the tradition means preserving communal harmony and Islamic values."[33] As a finding, Madsaid anchors the three canonical hadith discussed above not in their individual textual provenance but in a single affective register, love translated into communal preservation. As interpretation, this register is what allows shalawat, love for the Prophet, and charity to function as one devotional complex rather than three separately verified propositions.

This same affective register is echoed by Faizul Arrasid, representing the younger generation: "We, the younger generation, usually participate in preparing the event, reciting shalawat, and so on. This tradition is not only an occasion for celebration, but also a means of strengthening Islamic brotherhood and deepening love for the Prophet Muhammad."[34] As a finding, Faizul describes youth involvement in explicitly devotional rather than merely customary terms. As interpretation, his account indicates that the canonical hadith complex is transmitted generationally through participation in ritual labour, reciting shalawat, preparing the celebration, rather than through separate doctrinal instruction.

For H. Masuhi, the hadith on love for the Prophet is further elaborated as inseparable from love for God: "The essence of love for the Messenger of God is love for God. Loving the Messenger means making love for God the primary aim, realised through emulating, following, and obeying the teachings of Islam that God has prescribed."[35] As a finding, H. Masuhi collapses the distinction between love for the Prophet and love for God into a single theological chain. As interpretation, this collapse is significant for what follows: a saying's

[31] Al-Naysābūrī, No. 2588, Kitab al-Birr wa al-Sillah wa al-Adab, Bab Istihbab al-'afw wa al-tawadu'.
[32] Desi Asmarita, 'Questioning the Validity of Hadith in the Digital Era', *Jurnal Living Hadis*, 8.1 (2023), pp. 1–17, doi:10.14421/livinghadis.2023.4156.
[33] Interview with H. Madsaid (Community Leader), Pangabuan, January 31, 2025.
[34] Interview with Faizul Arrasid (Mosque Youth), Pangabuan, January 30, 2025.
[35] Interview with H. Masuhi (Religious Leader), Pangabuan, January 30, 2025

capacity to generate the same chain of devotional obligation, rather than its formal textual status, is what appears to determine whether it functions as authoritative for this informant, a pattern that becomes directly relevant to the non-canonical attribution examined in the next subsection.

Across these three accounts, the canonical hadith on shalawat, love, and charity are not treated as separate propositions to be individually verified, but as a single, mutually reinforcing complex of values that the celebration exists to enact. This pattern of internalisation, in which textual authority translates directly into affective commitment without apparent friction, provides a useful point of contrast for the practice examined in the following section, where the underlying attribution lacks the same textual security yet appears to generate an equally unquestioned sense of obligation.

Khoirul Alfiyani's position, discussed at length in the following subsections for its treatment of the non-canonical saying on almsgiving, is worth noting briefly here as well, for the contrast it offers. Although Khoirul subjected the saying associated with Madārij al-Su'ūd to independent textual scrutiny, he did not extend the same scrutiny to the hadith on shalawat, love for the Prophet, and charity discussed above, treating their canonical status as settled and unremarkable.[36] As a finding, Khoirul's critical engagement was therefore selective rather than general: it was triggered specifically by the almsgiving saying's textual uncertainty, not applied as a standing disposition toward every religious justification offered for the tradition. As interpretation, this selectivity suggests that even the informant most disposed to examine a saying's canonical status does not relate to the tradition's hadith basis as a whole through a single critical stance; rather, scrutiny is applied locally, to sayings whose status is already in some way unsettled, while hadith that circulate as settled canon are received without equivalent examination. This observation qualifies the picture offered in the preceding paragraphs: the internalisation of canonical hadith described there is not merely a feature of informants who engage the tradition uncritically, but persists even for an informant otherwise capable of, and willing to undertake, independent textual verification.

The Non-Canonical Basis of Almsgiving: Hadith Beyond the Isnad

A markedly different pattern emerges in relation to the community's stated motivation for spending money during the celebration itself, a practice that informants regard as one of the defining features of Panjang Mulud. According to H. Masuhi, the saying invoked to justify this expenditure is as follows:

مَنْ عَظَّمَ مَوْلِدِي كُنْتُ شَفِيعًا لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَمَنْ أَنْفَقَ دِرْهَمًا فِي مَوْلِدِي فَكَأَنَّمَا أَنْفَقَ جَبَلًا مِنْ ذَهَبٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Meaning: "Whoever honours my birth will have me as his intercessor on the Day of Judgement, and whoever spends a dirham in commemoration of my birth is as though he had spent a mountain of gold in the path of God".

H. Masuhi attributed this saying to Madārij al-Su'ūd, a text by the Bantenese scholar Imam Nawawi al-Bantani, though he did not specify the page or section in which it appears, and this study did not independently locate or verify the passage against the primary text.[37] Khoirul Alfiyani, a santri at Majlis al-Kautsar, separately reported having searched the major hadith compilations and found no corresponding report, but this search, too, was conducted by the informant rather than independently verified by this study.[38] Three distinct questions

[36] Interview with Khoirul Alfiyani.

[37] Interview With H. Masuhi (Religious Leader), Pangabuan, January 30, 2025. On imam Nawawi al-Bantani's corpus within the Bantenese religious tradition more broadly. See Nofia Natasari.

[38] Interview with Khoirul Alfiyani (Santri Majlis al-Kautsar), Pangabuan, January 30, 2025

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can be separated here, only one of which this study is positioned to answer. The first is philological: whether the saying is in fact present in Madārij al-Su'ūd, and in what precise wording. The second is a matter of hadith criticism: whether the saying has any earlier source, chain of transmission, or discussion among hadith scholars outside the canonical collections, bearing in mind that absence from the canonical corpus does not by itself establish that a report is fabricated. Resolving either question would require philological verification of the primary text and a systematic search beyond the canonical compilations, which lies outside the scope of this study. The third question, by contrast, is the proper object of a living hadith inquiry: irrespective of the saying's authenticity, how is it received, transmitted, and mobilised as a reason for almsgiving within the Panjang Mulud tradition? It is this third question, and not a verdict on the saying's textual status, that the remainder of this subsection addresses.

Accordingly, this study makes no claim regarding the saying's ultimate authenticity. What can be reported, on the basis of the interviews conducted, is narrower and more limited: H. Masuhi presented the saying without reference to a canonical isnad, attributing it instead to a locally circulated text, while Khoirul Alfiyani, after his own search, found no basis for it within the hadith compilations he consulted and continued to treat the tradition as warranted regardless. Rather than treating this absence of canonical grounding as a conclusion requiring further adjudication, Khoirul justified the tradition's continuation on two distinct bases: that the activities comprising it, shalawat, the recitation of barzanji, and almsgiving, are positive in themselves regardless of the saying's textual status, and that in the absence of an explicit prohibition, the tradition should be upheld as a cultural inheritance from local religious scholars.[39]

Khoirul's account is analytically significant for a further reason: it demonstrates that awareness of the saying's uncertain textual status and continued participation in the tradition are not mutually exclusive positions. Where H. Masuhi presented the saying without qualification, as functionally equivalent to the canonical hadith discussed in the previous section, Khoirul presented an explicitly bifurcated justification, acknowledging the absence of a confirmed textual basis while defending the practice on grounds of benefit and inherited custom. The practical consequences of this conviction, whether held without qualification or arrived at critically, are observable in the tradition itself, where contributions from community members fund the offerings displayed during the celebration.[40]

Khoirul's justification can be situated more precisely within the vocabulary of Islamic legal theory from which it is drawn. His reasoning combines two distinct usul al-fiqh principles: maslahah mursalah, the recognition of an unregulated benefit not explicitly endorsed or prohibited by a specific textual proof, and the foundational maxim *al-Aslu fi al-Ashya' al-Ibāhah*, that the default ruling for worldly matters is permissibility absent an explicit prohibition.[41] Both principles operate independently of a practice's grounding in a specific, verified hadith; what they require is only the absence of prohibition and the presence of discernible benefit, criteria Khoirul applied explicitly to shalawat, the recitation of barzanji, and almsgiving as constitutive elements of the tradition. This framing situates the Pangabuan case within a long-standing current of Islamic legal reasoning concerned with practices that benefit communities without direct textual mandate, and indicates that Khoirul's willingness to set aside the question of the saying's canonical status is not merely a

[39] Interview with Khoirul Alfiyani.
[40] Field observation, Pangabuan Village Cilegon.
[41] Abdul Wahhab Khallaf, *'Ilm Usul Al-Fiqh* (Maktabah al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah, 1990).

pragmatic accommodation but a position with recognised standing within Islamic jurisprudence.[42]

How such a saying comes to carry normative weight, independent of its unresolved textual status, can be understood through the framework of living hadith as it has developed in Indonesian scholarship, which distinguishes practice, reception, text, transmission, and transformation as areas of enquiry.[43] Within this framework, reception, the understanding held by practitioners themselves, is approached from an emic standpoint, which aligns with the phenomenological orientation of this study and with its deliberate bracketing of questions of textual authenticity.[44] A comparable dynamic appears in Qadri's study of the practice of reading Sahih al-Bukhari, which finds that hadith texts acquired protective and intercessory functions in social life even though no hadith or Qur'anic verse encourages that reading.[45] In both cases, religious value attaches to a practice through social transmission and communal use, a question that can be investigated independently of, and prior to, any resolution of the text's canonical status.

Taken together, these observations locate the analytical interest of the case not in a settled judgement on the saying's authenticity, which this study does not claim to provide, but in the range of ways its uncertain status is rendered immaterial to the practice's continuation, whether by informants for whom the question does not arise or by informants who raise and then set the question aside. This is what the concept of living hadith must account for if it is to describe how prophetic authority operates in vernacular settings, independently of the philological and hadith-critical work that would be required to settle the saying's textual status. The following subsection considers whether this range of positions maps onto the different categories of informants consulted.

Thematic Comparison Across Informant Categories

While all five informants converge in affirming the value and continuity of Panjang Mulud, they diverge markedly in how they account for that value, and this divergence maps onto a broader distinction between those who engage the tradition through a religious-textual frame and those who engage it through a social-cultural one. This divergence does not correspond neatly to age or formal office, but rather to each informant's proximity to religious learning and to the mosque or majlis as an institutional setting. What follows presents a representative statement from each category, together with the context in which it was given and the analysis it supports; comparisons to prior scholarship are flagged separately from the interpretation of the present data.

H. Masuhi, the religious leader whose account has structured the preceding subsections, grounds the tradition in both inherited authority and textual conviction. Asked about the tradition's history, he stated: "I do not know precisely how the Panjang Mulud tradition began in the Banten region. However, the figure who initiated this tradition was Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa... Every month of Mulud we continue to uphold this tradition, because it is an inheritance passed down from our forebears."[46] Elsewhere, he linked the practice directly to doctrinal conviction: "The essence of love for the Messenger of God is

[42] Nur Fadhillahtul Jam'iyyah and Bambang Iswanto, 'Maslahah Mursalah for Safeguarding Public Welfare in Islamic Economics: A Maqashid Al-Shari'ah Perspective', *Jurnal Hukum Ekonomi Syariah*, 10.1 (2026), pp. 120–39.

[43] M. Inul Rizkiy, 'Bridging the Methodological Gap: Emic and Etic Paradigms in Evolving the Living Hadith Studies', *Jurnal Living Hadis*, 10.2 (2025), pp. 139–60, doi:10.14421/livinghadis.2025.6578; Qudsy.

[44] Rizkiy.

[45] Abdul Qadri, 'Living Hadith: Study of Transmission and Transformation of the Practice of Reading the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad Saw', *Jurnal Living Hadis*, 8.2 (2024), pp. 155–69, doi:10.14421/livinghadis.2023.4611.

[46] Interview with H. Masuhi.

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love for God. Loving the Messenger means making love for God the primary aim, realised through emulating, following, and obeying the teachings of Islam that God has prescribed."[47] As a finding, this statement shows H. Masuhi anchoring the tradition's authority in two distinct registers at once, genealogical inheritance and theological necessity, without treating either as requiring the other's support. As interpretation, this dual anchoring is consistent with the religious-textual frame identified in the previous subsection, within which canonical and non-canonical hadith alike are absorbed into a single devotional register.

H. Madsaid, the community leader, by contrast, frames the tradition without reference to hadith at all: "This tradition must be upheld and further developed because it is an expression of our love for the Prophet. This tradition is not only of religious value but is also part of our local identity. Preserving the tradition means preserving communal harmony and Islamic values."[48] As a finding, Madsaid's justification operates entirely at the level of affect and identity, love, heritage, harmony, without invoking a textual source for that love. As interpretation, this supports the pattern noted above: for informants engaging the tradition through a social-cultural frame, the question of a practice's canonical or non-canonical grounding does not arise because the justification offered is not textual to begin with, a different configuration from, and not merely a weaker version of, H. Masuhi's hadith-based account.

Abdurohman, the local government representative, frames the tradition in terms of social function: "As government officials, we believe this tradition teaches togetherness, because residents work communally in preparing the event. The Panjang Mulud tradition is not only about ritual, but also about social interaction that strengthens communal harmony."[49] As a finding, Abdurohman's account, like Madsaid's, contains no hadith citation of any kind. As interpretation, this corroborates the social-cultural cluster identified above and, in comparison with existing scholarship on rural religious authority, is consistent with findings that religious textual competence in Indonesian villages tends to be concentrated in specifically religious roles rather than distributed evenly across community and government positions.[50]

Faizul Arrasid, representing the mosque's youth wing, occupies a position closer to H. Masuhi's than to Madsaid's or Abdurohman's: "We, the younger generation, usually participate in preparing the event, reciting shalawat, and so on. This tradition is not only an occasion for celebration, but also a means of strengthening Islamic brotherhood and deepening love for the Prophet Muhammad."[51] As a finding, Faizul's account combines practical participation with the same devotional vocabulary used by H. Masuhi, and, as established in the previous subsection, he is one of only two informants who independently cited the saying on almsgiving associated with Madārij al-Su'ūd. As interpretation, this suggests that proximity to the religious-textual frame is not confined to formally religious office, but extends to lay participants whose involvement is routed through the mosque's devotional activities.

Khoirul Alfiyani, a santri at Majlis al-Kautsar, occupies a fifth and distinct position. Rather than grounding the tradition in an unexamined textual attribution, as H. Masuhi does, or omitting textual justification altogether, as Madsaid and Abdurohman do, Khoirul reported having examined the textual basis of the tradition directly, concluding that no explicit basis for the Mawlid celebration exists in the Qur'an or the authoritative hadith collections, while

[47] Interview with H. Masuhi.
[48] Interview with H. Madsaid (Community Leader), Pangabuan, January 31, 2025
[49] Interview with Abdurrohman (Local Government), Pangabuan, January 31, 2025
[50] Ahmad Faisal and others, 'Strengthening Religious Moderatism through the Traditional Authority of Kiai in Indonesia', *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8.1 (2022), pp. 1–15.
[51] Interview with Faizul Arrasid.

maintaining that the celebration should nonetheless be upheld because of the beneficial religious activities it comprises, including shalawat, the recitation of barzanji, and almsgiving.[52] As a finding, this is the only account among the five informants in which textual scrutiny and continued justification are both explicit and held together deliberately, rather than one being absent or the other unexamined. As interpretation, Khoirul's position indicates that the religious-textual frame identified above is not internally uniform: within it, a saying's textual status can function as an unexamined given, as it does for H. Masuhi, or as an examined and consciously set-aside consideration, as it does for Khoirul.

Taken together, this comparison suggests that the absence of an epistemic boundary between canonical and non-canonical hadith, identified in the previous subsection, is not a property of the community as an undifferentiated whole, nor is it uniform even among informants who share a religious-textual frame. For Madsaid and Abdurohman, the question of canonicity does not arise because their justification for the tradition is not textual in the first place. For H. Masuhi and Faizul Arrasid, canonical and non-canonical sayings are treated within the same textual register without differentiation. For Khoirul, the distinction is drawn explicitly and then set aside in favour of a separate justification grounded in benefit and inherited legitimacy. The following subsection considers what this configuration implies for the concept of living hadith more broadly.

Phenomenological Analysis of Informant Experience

Following Moustakas's procedure, the first step in analysing the interview data was horizonalization: identifying statements across all five transcripts that carry equal initial weight as units of experience, prior to any interpretive clustering.[53] Among the statements that recurred, informants described the tradition as productive of inner calm, a quieted soul following the exertion of preparation, and a felt release of something burdensome once the rituals were complete.[54] Khoirul Alfiyani's account echoed this register closely, describing the effects of participation as an inner calm, strengthened ties with neighbours, and a deepened love for the Prophet.[55] Other statements centred on relational effects, strengthened ties with neighbours and reduced potential for communal conflict, while still others centred on textual and doctrinal justification, the citing of hadith on intercession, charity, and love for the Prophet discussed in the preceding subsections.[56] No single informant reduced their account to one of these registers alone; each wove affective, relational, and textual language together within the same description of the tradition.

Clustering these statements into thematic units of meaning yields four interrelated clusters: an affective cluster, centred on the language of calm, happiness, and relief from exhaustion; a relational cluster, centred on silaturahmi, communal harmony, and the avoidance of social conflict; a devotional cluster, centred on love for and emulation of the Prophet; and a textual cluster, centred on the specific hadith, canonical and non-canonical alike, invoked to justify practice. Notably, the textual cluster does not stand apart from the other three as a separate, more rigorously examined category. Rather, informants moved between textual citation and affective or relational description within single utterances, as when H. Masuhi linked love for the Prophet directly to love for God and to the lived imperative of emulating prophetic conduct, and as when Khoirul paired his own critical

[52] Interview with Khoirul Alfiyani,
[53] Moustakas.
[54] Interview with H. Masuhi, H. Madsaid, Abdurrohman, and Faizul Arrasid.
[55] Interview with Khoirul Alfiyani
[56] Interview with H. Masuhi and Faizul Arrasid

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examination of the saying's textual status with an unqualified affirmation of the calm and closeness to the Prophet that participation produced in him.[57]

A textural description of this experience, attending to what is given to consciousness rather than to its underlying structure, would emphasise the sensory and emotional immediacy with which informants recalled the tradition: the labour of preparation, the gathering at the mosque, the recitation of barzanji and marhabanan, and the settling of fatigue into a felt contentment once the offerings had been distributed.[58] The structural description, attending to the conditions that make this experience possible, points to something more analytically significant. The sense of religious fulfilment that informants describe does not appear to be contingent on the prior verification of a textual source; it is constituted, instead, through participation itself, through the communal labour of preparation and the shared enactment of the ritual sequence. Khoirul's case sharpens this point rather than complicating it: even where the textual status of a saying had been consciously examined and found wanting, the affective and relational fruits of participation remained undiminished, suggesting that these two dimensions of experience, textual conviction and felt fulfilment, operate along largely independent tracks. It is this structure, in which religious certainty is generated by collective practice rather than confirmed by isnad, that accounts for why the distinction between canonical and non-canonical attribution, so salient to the hadith scholar, does not register as a determining question for the informants who inhabit the tradition from within, Khoirul included.

This phenomenological reading reinforces, from a different analytical angle, the argument advanced in the preceding subsections. The absence of an epistemic boundary between canonical and non-canonical hadith observed among religiously engaged informants is not best explained as a lapse in textual rigour, but as a feature of how religious meaning is constituted for them in the first place: through embodied, communal participation rather than through the isolated verification of a cited source. Living hadith, understood phenomenologically, operates less as a body of texts awaiting correct application than as a horizon of meaning realised in practice, within which a saying's canonical status is one consideration among several rather than the condition of its authority.

Theoritical Implications

The findings presented above suggest that the concept of living hadith, as it has developed within Indonesian scholarship, requires refinement to account for cases in which a community's textual point of reference is not confined to the canonical corpus. The five-fold framework distinguishing practice, reception, text, transmission, and transformation, as proposed by Qudsy, has generally assumed that the "text" in question is itself a hadith secured by isnad, with the analytical task confined to how that hadith is practised and received.[59] The case of Pangabuan indicates that the category of text within this framework must be widened to include locally authoritative religious literature that functions as a hadith in the eyes of practitioners without meeting the formal criteria of one. Treating such sayings as outside the proper scope of living hadith research would exclude precisely the material through which communities themselves experience continuity with prophetic teaching.

Khoirul's reasoning, grounded in maslahah mursalah and the maxim *al-Aslu fi al-Ashyā' al-Ibāhah*, introduces a further complication to the framework under discussion.[60] Where H. Masuhi's account suggests that living hadith can operate through an unexamined collapse of canonical and non-canonical attribution into a single devotional register,

[57] Interview with H. Masuhi; Interview with Khoirul Alfiyani.
[58] Field Observation.
[59] Qudsy.
[60] Khallaf; Jam'iyyah and Iswanto.

Khoirul's account suggests a second, distinct mechanism: a saying can continue to function authoritatively for a practice even after its canonical status has been examined and found absent, provided an independent legal warrant, here, the recognised Islamic legal principles of unregulated benefit and presumed permissibility, is available to sustain the practice in the saying's place. This matters theoretically because it indicates that the absence of an epistemic boundary observed in this study is not a single phenomenon requiring a single explanation, but admits of at least two distinct pathways: one in which the boundary is never drawn, and another in which it is drawn and then rendered practically inconsequential by a separate normative resource.

This second pathway also points to a disciplinary boundary that the concept of living hadith, as currently formulated, does not clearly address. Khoirul's justification does not rely on hadith scholarship at all once the saying's absence from the canonical corpus is established; it shifts instead to the register of usul al-fiqh, legal theory, to supply the warrant that hadith criticism can no longer provide. Living hadith research, insofar as it remains disciplinarily anchored in hadith studies, may therefore need to engage usul al-fiqh as a neighbouring field whose categories become operative precisely at the point where a hadith-based justification is found wanting, rather than treating the absence of canonical grounding as simply external to its object of study.

A comparable dynamic, in which religious value is transmitted through practice rather than secured by explicit textual mandate, appears in Mahmudah, Satibi, Zaini, and Holilulloh's study of the Jum'at Berkah tradition at the Jogokariyan Mosque, where a weekly almsgiving practice draws its religious force from communal habituation and pesantren-style pedagogy as much as from any single cited hadith.[61] What distinguishes the Pangabuan case is that the saying invoked is presented as a hadith, complete with a specific wording and a claimed prophetic attribution, rather than as a general value inferred from Islamic teaching. This distinction matters analytically: the Pangabuan community is not merely acting in a manner consistent with prophetic example, but is citing what it takes to be the Prophet's own words, drawn from a source outside the canonical corpus.

This configuration also stands in an instructive contrast to contexts in which the hadith basis of Mawlid practice is explicitly contested. Rohmah's analysis of anti-Mawlid discourse among Salafi commentators on social media shows religious actors actively invoking hadith criticism to delegitimise Mawlid celebrations as an unwarranted innovation, treating the question of textual authenticity as central and adversarial.[62] No such contestation is evident among the informants of the present study. The community in Pangabuan does not defend the authenticity of its practices against an external critique; rather, canonical and non-canonical attributions coexist within the same devotional register, unexamined by either informants or, evidently, by the broader community context in which they operate. This suggests that the boundary between canonical and non-canonical hadith carries analytical weight for scholars and religious critics, but is not necessarily salient to communities for whom the practice's meaning is constituted through participation rather than argument.

The contrast with Rohmah's findings can be drawn more precisely. The Salafi commentators she examines and Khoirul share a common starting point: both subject the textual basis of Mawlid-related practice to critical scrutiny, and both find that scrutiny

[61] Mahmudah and others, 'Jum'at Berkah and The Tradition of Islamic Philanthropy: Anthropolinguistic Study Of Sego Jum'at at The Jogokariyan Mosque, Yogyakarta', *IBDA`: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya*, 22.2 (2024), pp. 257–74, doi:10.24090/ibda.v22i2.12220.

[62] Nur Maulidya Wardatur Rohmah et al., "The Legitimizing Power Of Hadith in Anti-Maulid Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis Of Salafi Ideology On Social Media," *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies*, 6.2 (2025), 347–77 <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v6i2.234>.; Interview with Khoirul Alfiyani.

DOI: 10.22373/jim.v23i2.34718

wanting in some respect.[63] What distinguishes them is the conclusion drawn from that shared finding. For the commentators Rohmah examines, textual uncertainty or absence functions as sufficient grounds for rejecting the practice as an unwarranted innovation, bid'ah, to be abandoned. For Khoirul, the same textual uncertainty functions instead as an occasion to invoke a different normative register, maslahah mursalah and the presumption of permissibility, capable of sustaining the practice independently of its hadith basis. The two cases thus demonstrate that critical textual scrutiny does not determine, by itself, whether a practice is retained or rejected; what determines the outcome is which further normative framework, rejection on grounds of unwarranted innovation, or continuation on grounds of benefit and presumed permissibility, is brought to bear once that scrutiny has been undertaken. This suggests that debates over the legitimacy of Mawlid-related practices in Indonesia are better understood as disagreements conducted downstream of a shared textual judgement, rather than as disagreements over the judgement itself.

Taken together, these comparisons suggest a conceptual proposition arising specifically from the Pangabuan case, rather than a claim about living hadith communities in general: that the distinction between canonical and non-canonical prophetic attribution, indispensable to the hadith scholar's analytical vocabulary, need not be operative within the practitioner's own frame of reference, and that living hadith as a lived phenomenon can therefore be constituted independently of a hadith's recoverability within the canonical corpus. Whether this proposition holds beyond Pangabuan, in communities where religious authority or textual literacy is differently distributed, is a question this single-site study cannot answer; what it offers is the case itself, as a demonstrated instance in which such independence occurs, together with a vocabulary, drawn from the distinction between unexamined and consciously bracketed canonicity observed among the five informants, for describing it.

C. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Panjang Mulud tradition in Pangabuan Village, Cilegon, represents a form of living hadith operating at the boundary between canonical and non-canonical prophetic attribution. While the practices of *shalawat*, almsgiving, and expressing love for the Prophet are supported by canonical hadith, the community's specific motivation for spending wealth during the celebration is associated with a saying attributed to the Prophet and reportedly derived from *Madārij al-Su'ūd*. The findings reveal three patterns of reception: acceptance of canonical and non-canonical sayings within a shared devotional framework, emphasis on sociocultural meanings without concern for textual authentication, and recognition of textual uncertainty alongside continued commitment to the tradition. These differences suggest that communal participation, emotional attachment, and inherited religious authority play significant roles in sustaining devotional practices independently of formal hadith authentication.

The study contributes to living hadith scholarship by demonstrating that the distinction between canonical and non-canonical prophetic attribution, although central to hadith criticism, does not necessarily determine how religious communities understand and sustain their practices. Rather, religious meaning emerges through the interaction of textual authority, collective memory, and lived experience. Nevertheless, the findings are limited to a single community and five informants, while the attribution to *Madārij al-Su'ūd* remains philologically unverified. The translation of interviews from Javanese Serang through Indonesian into English may also have affected interpretive nuances. Future research should verify the textual attribution and examine comparable Mawlid traditions across different

[63] Rohmah and others.

communities to assess the broader applicability of these findings. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of distinguishing textual authenticity from lived religious meaning without treating them as mutually exclusive dimensions of hadith reception.

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