

The Post-Seven-Day Tahlilan Tradition: Living Hadith as a “Reminder of Death” in Tegal Sari Village, Serang, Banten

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of Living Hadith in the tradition of religious gatherings (tahlilan) held on Thursday nights seven days after a death in Tegal Sari Village, Walantaka District, Serang City, Banten. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with the Living Hadith approach developed by Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, data were collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with religious leaders and community members. The findings reveal that the tradition of Thursday night religious gatherings seven days after a death represents a concrete manifestation of Living Hadith in the socio-religious practices of the community, even though hadith values are not always referenced textually. The primary values actualized include silaturahmi (social bonds with kin, as in Sahih Bukhari no. 1925), remembrance of death (as in Sahih Tirmidzi no. 2307), social empathy, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), charity (sedekah), and da'wah through religious exhortations (tausiyah). This tradition deserves preservation as it aligns with hadith exhortations to strengthen silaturahmi, foster empathy and mutual assistance among fellow Muslims, and refresh awareness of human mortality. These findings affirm that Living Hadith in the seven-day post-death tahlilan tradition serves as an effective medium for da'wah actualization, simultaneously reinforcing social solidarity and faith within the Muslim community.

Keywords: *Living Hadith; Tahlilan Tradition; Remembrance of Death; Social Empathy*

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Introduction

Death is a universal event that not only leaves grief for the bereaved family but also serves as a moment of spiritual and social reflection in various cultures, including Muslim communities in Indonesia (Sheikh, 1998). In the Archipelago, particularly among Javanese and Bantenese Muslim communities, post-death rituals are often coloured by local traditions that integrate Islamic teachings, such as tahlilan performed on specific days after burial, including seven days after death. This tradition is typically held on Thursday nights, where the bereaved family prepares a venue at home or in a prayer hall with simple mats, lighting, and light refreshments such as boxed rice or traditional cakes for guests (Idris, 2020).

The concept of Living Hadith, developed by Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, refers to the phenomenon in which the values of the Prophet Muhammad's hadiths are brought to life in community religious practices in a contextual and functional manner, even if not always literally referencing the hadith text (Qudsy et al., 2023). This phenomenon is clearly evident in the seven-day post-death tahlilan tradition, where the event begins with the recitation of Surah Yasin led by a local religious figure or modin, followed by repeated communal tahlil recitations, tasbih and tahmid dhikr, and concluding with special prayers for the deceased (Ramadan, 2023). Values such as prayers for the deceased, silaturahmi, and remembrance of the hereafter derived from authentic hadiths are actualized through local cultural rituals, ensuring that the tradition not only preserves Islamic heritage but also reflects the acculturation of Islam with local culture, remaining relevant in modern society.

Several previous studies have discussed death rituals in Indonesian Islam from the perspectives of Living Hadith or cultural acculturation (Jannah, 2014). For instance, Sholikhin's (2010) research in **Ritual Kematian Islam Jawa** analyses the influence of local traditions on Islamic practices

in death ceremonies, including tahlilan and selamatan as forms of integration between religious and customary values. Another study on post-death practices in the Banjar community (2016) shows how similar rituals serve as a medium for Living Hadith in communal dhikr and prayer. In other regions, research on tahlilan in West Sulawesi from a maqashid syariah perspective also reveals patterns of acculturation aligned with hadith values, while studies in Banten on local religious rituals highlight similar socio-spiritual functions.

Although these studies provide a strong foundation, there remains a gap in the specific exploration of the seven-day post-death tahlilan tradition in the Banten region, particularly regarding how the community interprets and brings hadith values to life within it, including aspects of silaturahmi and emotional support for the bereaved family. This research aims to fill that gap by focusing on the Living Hadith phenomenon in this practice, through direct observation of its implementation in the local community.

The objective of this research is to uncover the Living Hadith phenomenon in the seven-day post-death tahlilan tradition, including analysing the actualized hadith values—such as silaturahmi, communal prayer, and remembrance of death—as well as intergenerational transmission processes and their socio-spiritual functions for the community. Through this approach, the study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of religious life in Indonesian Islam, which harmoniously balances sacred texts with cultural contexts, while enriching contemporary Living Hadith discourse.

Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method to provide an in-depth description of the Living Hadith phenomenon in the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death in Tegal Sari Village, Walantaka District, Serang City, Banten. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for capturing meaning, values, and living religious practices in the community through direct experience, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument interacting naturally in the field. Primary data sources were obtained from participatory observation of the gatherings and in-depth interviews with key informants (religious leaders, bereaved families, and regular attendees) using semi-structured guidelines, while secondary data came from hadith literature and related Living Hadith studies.

The theoretical approach refers to Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy's Living Hadith framework, which focuses on the contextual and functional actualization of hadith values in community practices. Data analysis was conducted iteratively through stages of data reduction (identifying main patterns such as silaturahmi and empathy), descriptive narrative presentation, and conclusion drawing with source triangulation for validity. This approach yielded authentic findings on how the tradition brings hadith values to life without explicit textual references, thereby

enriching understanding of the dynamics of religious life in Indonesian Islam.

Results and Discussion

The Tahlilan Phenomenon in Tegal Sari Village

Tegal Sari Village is one of the villages in the administrative area of Walantaka District, Serang City, Banten Province. The village is known for its strong socio-religious character, maintaining local culture and Islamic traditions passed down through generations. Geographically, Tegal Sari Village lies in a relatively flat area with adequate transportation access, supporting community mobility in various activities, including religious ones that form an important part of their social life. Most residents of Tegal Sari Village work as farmers, daily labourers, small traders, and informal sector workers, giving village social activities a strong sense of familial bonds and interdependence.

Demographically, Tegal Sari Village is dominated by Muslim residents with high levels of religiosity. This is marked by regular religious activities such as routine gatherings, tahlilan, celebrations of Islamic holy days, and other religious traditions that constitute part of the local community's religious identity. Religious life in the village is still heavily influenced by traditional Islamic values inherited through family, religious leaders, and early religious education institutions present in the village. Religious figures such as ustaz, village kyai, and elders play a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of norms and religious traditions long practised in community life.

One of the religious traditions still preserved by the Tegal Sari Village community is the Thursday night religious gathering seven days after death. This tradition is not merely a religious ritual but also a means to strengthen social ties among villagers. In practice, the community gathers at the home of the bereaved family to recite prayers, tahlil, Yasin, and dhikr together. This tradition has been practised for a long time and is regarded as a form of respect for the deceased as well as an expression of social solidarity among residents. The village's communal social structure, with close inter-resident relationships, keeps such traditions alive and consistently performed across generations.

Tegal Sari Village has a social environment conducive to the development of Living Hadith, namely community religious practices rooted in hadith teachings even if not always expressed textually. The village community practises religion based on experience, guidance from religious leaders, and inherited traditions they believe align with Islamic values. Thus, this area provides a highly relevant context for researching how hadith manifests in community daily life, particularly in the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death. The stable social environment, strong togetherness, and continuity of tradition make Tegal Sari Village an ideal research location for understanding the living implementation of hadith teachings in local society.

The characteristics of Tegal Sari Village, in terms of social, religious, and cultural aspects, demonstrate that the area has rich and authentic religious dynamics. The persistence of ritual traditions, including Thursday night gatherings seven days after death, reflects the community's strong religious orientation towards togetherness, respect for ancestors, and practice of Islamic values. Therefore, this description of the area serves as an important foundation for understanding the social context underlying the researched phenomenon and provides a comprehensive picture of the environment in which hadith manifestations live and develop in community religious practices.

Community Social System

The social system of Tegal Sari Village society is a collective life order formed from interactions between individuals and groups in a stable, orderly social space grounded in religious and local cultural values. The village community has a communal social structure, where inter-resident relationships are built on emotional closeness, kinship ties, and mutual need. Intense daily interaction patterns create high social solidarity. Attitudes of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and collaboration form the basic values regulating how residents conduct various activities, including religious ones such as gatherings and tahlilan.

In Tegal Sari Village's social system, religious leaders hold a very central position. Ustaz, village kyai, and elders serve not only as spiritual leaders but also as moral guides and references for resolving social and religious issues. They have significant influence in maintaining religious traditions inherited from previous generations. The social system grants high respect to religious leaders, making their advice an important basis for collective decision-making and religious ritual implementation.

The social structure is also informally hierarchical, meaning that while there is no rigid class division, roles are distributed based on age, experience, and religious knowledge capacity. Older individuals tend to be role models, while youth support social activities through youth organisations. Such role division runs naturally and is deeply rooted in local tradition. This social system creates harmonious and respectful interaction patterns across generations, allowing religious traditions to be sustained without conflict.

In the context of the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death, the community's social system is clearly visible through their unity and solidarity. Every family experiencing the misfortune of death receives moral and social support from surrounding residents. Community attendance at the gathering is not only a form of respect for the bereaved family but also a manifestation of shared social responsibility that has become a collective norm. This tradition is viewed as a socio-religious activity that strengthens inter-resident relationships and maintains social balance within the community (Nadina Nurhaliza et al., 2025).

Religion forms the primary foundation of Tegal Sari Village's social system. Many social norms originate from Islamic values, whether from

hadith understanding, Quranic teachings, or local ulama traditions. This makes religious activities not only considered worship but also part of social life. The religion-based social system shapes how the community interprets certain traditions, including tahlilan and Thursday night gatherings, as manifestations of living Islamic teachings (living tradition). Thus, this social system supports the creation of an environment conducive to various religious rituals connected to hadith and community practices passed down through generations.

Overall, Tegal Sari Village's social system shows a close relationship between religious values, local culture, community solidarity, and the role of religious leaders. This collective, communal, and religious social life makes the village a community rich in religious traditions and enables the institutionalisation of Living Hadith practices in daily life. The strong and orderly social system is a key factor in the continuity of the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death, as the tradition is not only viewed as worship but also as part of the community's social identity.

Living Hadith in the Thursday Night Religious Gathering Tradition Seven Days After Death

The Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death highlights a strong social dimension, where community gathering activities become a concrete form of *silaturahmi*. The gathering is attended by neighbours, relatives, religious leaders, and surrounding residents regardless of social status. Their presence reflects the practice of the Prophet Muhammad's hadith on the importance of maintaining bonds of brotherhood (*silaturahmi*), visiting one another, and strengthening Islamic fraternity (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*). This activity often reunites relationships that had grown distant due to daily busyness, thereby tightening the community's social network.

Reminder of Death

The Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death is not only a religious ritual but also an effective means of reminding people of death while fostering deep social empathy within the community. When congregants gather at the bereaved home or prayer hall, the lingering atmosphere of grief becomes a tangible reminder of life's transience. Attendees, consisting of neighbours, relatives, and local residents, do not merely follow the sequence of *tahlil* recitations and prayers but also spontaneously show sympathy and concern through mutual encouragement, embracing the bereaved family, and whispering words of comfort (Davoudi, 2022). This practice represents the manifestation of hadith exhortations to console those afflicted by calamity, help one another in righteousness and piety, and share burdens among fellow Muslims, making empathy not mere words but real actions that heal emotional wounds.

The reminder of death grows stronger when the exhortation touches upon an authentic hadith frequently recited at such events: *Sahih Tirmidzi* 2307, *Sunan Nasa'i* 1824, *Sunan Ibn Majah* 4258:*

Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures: death. (HR. al-Tirmidzi no. 2307, an-Nasa'i no. 1824, and Ibn Majah no. 4258; authenticated by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih al-Jami' no. 1222 and Sahih at-Tirmidzi).

This brief hadith, uttered softly amid the night's silence, causes congregants to pause momentarily in reflection. The recent death of the deceased serves as living proof that all worldly pleasures—wealth, position, health—can abruptly end. This reminder does not breed despair but rather awakens deeper empathy: congregants become more aware that the grief experienced by the bereaved family could befall anyone, including themselves. This awareness encourages sincere mutual support, where tears flow together and earnest prayers are offered not only for the deceased but also for collective well-being.

Furthermore, this tradition significantly contributes to building long-term community solidarity. Social relationships formed through attendance, comforting embraces, and joint prayers do not end when the gathering concludes. Instead, they become valuable capital for mutual presence in other important events—further condolences, regular gatherings, or joint religious activities. The empathy nurtured in moments of grief flows into daily life, making the community more sensitive to neighbours' difficulties, quicker to visit the sick, and more united in facing trials together. Thus, the Thursday night religious gathering seven days after death functions as a medium for maintaining social cohesion and stability in inter-resident relationships on an ongoing basis (Raduan et al., 2018).

Overall, the social activities in this tradition constitute a concrete manifestation of Living Hadith in community life. The reminder of death through the hadith “perbanyaklah mengingat pemutus kenikmatan dunia” not only leaves an impression on the heart but also nurtures living empathy, which in turn gives birth to silaturahmi, mutual cooperation, moral education, and sustained solidarity. This tradition strengthens the identity and harmony of the Indonesian Muslim community, demonstrating that Islamic teachings can beautifully adapt to local cultural contexts without losing their spiritual essence.

In the context of Tegal Sari Village society, the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death can be understood as a socio-religious process aligned with long-established religious practices passed down through generations. The community does not “read” Living Hadith studies in academic text form like scholars but rather through direct experience, collective practice, and interpretation of religious values felt in daily life. This type of reading is practical and contextual, based on living experience that keeps hadith relevant, dynamic, and continuously brought to life in community life (Mashhadi & Rassafi, 2025).

Charity (Sedekah)

Mutual cooperation is an inseparable integral part of the gathering's implementation, but the dimension of charity also emerges as a concrete expression of Islamic teaching practice in this tradition. The community voluntarily contributes various forms of assistance, from labour to clean

and arrange the venue to material contributions such as food, drinks, or funds for congregational refreshments. Light meals like boxed rice, traditional cakes, or porridge are often prepared and distributed to all attendees, including the poor in the vicinity. This charity not only serves to host guests but also as infak and sedekah on behalf of the deceased, with the hope that its reward flows to the departed while bringing blessings to the living (Rakhmi et al., 2025).

In practice, the Tegal Sari Village community interprets charity in the Thursday night gathering seven days after death as direct practice of Quranic and Prophetic hadith teachings. Although mutual cooperation remains the main characteristic, charity becomes a concrete expression of ta'āwun (cooperation) and infak fi sabilillah emphasised in Islam, while strengthening collective ownership and responsibility towards the community.

The hadith on silaturahmi narrated by Anas bin Malik RA in Sahih al-Bukhari no. 1925 serves as a normative foundation implicitly alive in community consciousness.

Sahih Bukhari 1925: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَبِي يَعْقُوبَ الْكِرْمَانِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا حَسَانُ حَدَّثَنَا يُونُسُ قَالَ قَالَ مُحَمَّدٌ هُوَ الزُّهْرِيُّ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يُبْسَطَ لَهُ فِي رِزْقِهِ أَوْ يُنْسَأَ لَهُ فِي أَثَرِهِ فَلْيَصِلْ رَجْمَهُ

“Whoever wishes his provision to be expanded or his lifespan prolonged (or good traces left after his death), let him maintain ties of kinship.” (HR. al-Bukhari no. 1925, from Anas bin Malik RA)

The value of silaturahmi in this hadith integrates into community social behaviour, particularly through habits of gathering, mutual prayer, and sharing charity after death. Although most community members do not reference the hadith textually or mention its number, its essence has been internalised: attendance at the gathering is understood as worship and an expression of silaturahmi that brings blessed provision and eternal goodness for the deceased and bereaved family.

The research findings show that this tradition is a manifestation of Living Hadith aligned with community understanding. They “read” hadith values through real actions—silaturahmi, empathy for the bereaved family, mutual cooperation in preparation, sharing charity, and togetherness in prayer and dhikr. Awareness that the practice has religious foundations encourages them to continue preserving the tradition as a means of maintaining social solidarity and instilling Islamic values in future generations.

Thus, charity and mutual cooperation in the Thursday night gathering seven days after death become a space where hadith is not only read and heard but also collectively brought to life. This tradition affirms that the Prophet's teachings remain dynamic and contextual in Indonesian Muslim life, binding ritual dimensions with profound social values (Andi Warisno, 2017).

Da'wah

Da'wah in the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death is a central element providing spiritual depth and educational function for the community. During the gathering, an ustaz or local religious leader delivers a brief exhortation amid congregants sitting reverently on mats in the bereaved home or village prayer hall. The sermon is not limited to prayers for the deceased but weaves profound advice on the wisdom of death as a reminder of worldly transience, the importance of patience in facing trials, the value of ongoing charity (*amal jariyah*) whose rewards continue after death, and the urgency of preparing provisions for the hereafter through daily good deeds. The atmosphere grows more solemn when the advice is interspersed with Quranic verses and hadith—one frequently quoted being the authentic hadith:

أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَ هَازِمِ اللَّذَاتِ: الْمَوْتِ

Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures: death.

(HR. al-Tirmidzi no. 2307, an-Nasa'i no. 1824, and Ibn Majah no. 4258; authenticated by Shaykh al-Albani).

This brief hadith is recited softly yet firmly, causing congregants to reflect on their own lives amid the scent of incense and the night's gentle breeze, as if the recent death of the deceased serves as a real mirror for the living.

This da'wah mechanism is collective and directly touches the heart, as the conveyed hadith values are immediately internalised through the shared experience. Congregants do not merely listen but respond with nods of agreement, simultaneous "amin" utterances, or tears flowing upon hearing explanations of the hereafter. When the ustaz discusses hadith on *silaturahmi*, prayers for the deceased, or patience in calamity—including the hadith "perbanyaklah mengingat kematian" as a reminder that all worldly pleasures will cease—the community spontaneously connects it to their presence: gathering to pray for the deceased and comfort the bereaved family. This process transforms the exhortation from mere information delivery into a living spiritual experience, where religious messages are directly applied in social practice.

Such da'wah strengthens awareness that the Thursday night religious gathering seven days after death is not merely inherited custom but has a solid religious foundation in Islamic teachings. The moral messages conveyed, including wisdom from the hadith on reminding of death, continue to echo in congregants' minds even after the event ends, influencing their daily behaviour—such as more frequently remembering death, increasing good deeds, or maintaining relationships with relatives. In this way, da'wah within the tradition becomes an effective means of refreshing community faith amid modern life's currents, while affirming that Islamic values remain relevant and continue to live in the local cultural context of the Archipelago (Librianti & Mukarom, 2019).

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death in Tegal Sari Village, Walantaka District, is a concrete form of Living Hadith practice in community life. This tradition is not merely interpreted as a religious ritual but also as a means of practising Islamic teachings derived from the Prophet's hadith, particularly the values of silaturahmi, prayer, dhikr, empathy, and social solidarity. Through the gathering activity, the community collectively brings the Prophet's teachings to life in a local social and cultural context rooted across generations.

The research findings show that community understanding of hadith does not stop at the textual level but manifests in real daily life practices. The hadith exhorting maintenance of kinship ties narrated by Anas bin Malik RA serves as a foundational value alive in the Thursday night gathering tradition seven days after death. Community presence at the gathering, moral support for the bereaved family, and built social cooperation reflect direct actualization of hadith teachings. This tradition also functions as a medium for education and da'wah that strengthens spiritual awareness and social cohesion in the community.

The implications of this research are expected to serve as a reference for the community and religious leaders to continue preserving the Thursday night religious gathering tradition seven days after death as a means of strengthening Islamic and social values. Religious leaders are expected to increasingly emphasise explanations of hadith meanings in every gathering so that the community not only performs the tradition by inheritance but also understands the underlying Islamic teachings. Furthermore, future researchers are recommended to expand Living Hadith studies by examining other developing religious traditions in society, whether through regional comparison or more diverse methodological approaches, to make understanding of hadith dynamics in Muslim social life more comprehensive.

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