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Representing Hadith as Material Culture in Islamic Architecture

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Abstract

Living hadith studies have largely focused on social practices, religious traditions, and the reception of hadith within Muslim communities, while the representation of hadith in physical spaces and material culture has received relatively limited attention in contemporary hadith studies. This study examines how hadith is represented in Islamic architecture, the functions served by these representations, and the ways in which hadith is transformed from a normative text into a form of material culture. Employing a qualitative library-based research approach, this study uses content analysis to examine scholarly works on hadith in Islamic architecture, living hadith, and material culture. The findings reveal that hadith is represented in Islamic architecture through calligraphy, inscriptions, ornaments, and various other visual elements. These representations serve educational, symbolic, aesthetic, and legitimizing functions within religious spaces. This study argues that the representation of hadith in Islamic architecture reflects its transformation from a normative text into material culture, enabling hadith to live not only through recitation and teaching but also through physical spaces and visual symbols that shape the religious experiences of Muslim communities. By connecting living hadith studies with material religion studies, this research expands the scope of contemporary hadith scholarship and offers a new perspective on the role of hadith in shaping religious spaces and Islamic religious identity.

Kajian *living hadith* selama ini cenderung berfokus pada praktik sosial, tradisi keagamaan, dan resepsi masyarakat terhadap hadis, sementara representasi hadis dalam ruang dan budaya material masih relatif jarang mendapat perhatian dalam studi hadis kontemporer. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjawab pertanyaan mengenai bagaimana bentuk representasi hadis dalam arsitektur Islam, apa fungsi representasi tersebut, dan bagaimana proses transformasi hadis dari teks normatif menuju budaya material. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kepustakaan (*library research*) dengan pendekatan kualitatif melalui analisis isi (*content analysis*) terhadap berbagai literatur yang membahas hadis dalam arsitektur Islam, *living hadith*, dan budaya material. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hadis direpresentasikan dalam arsitektur Islam melalui kaligrafi, inskripsi, ornamen, dan berbagai elemen visual yang memiliki fungsi edukatif, simbolik, estetis, dan legitimatif dalam ruang keagamaan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa representasi hadis dalam arsitektur Islam merupakan bentuk transformasi hadis dari teks normatif menjadi budaya material yang memungkinkan hadis hidup tidak hanya melalui pembacaan dan pengajaran, tetapi juga melalui ruang dan simbol visual yang membentuk pengalaman keberagamaan masyarakat Muslim. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperluas cakupan studi *living hadith* dengan menghubungkannya pada kajian budaya material (*material religion*) serta menawarkan perspektif baru mengenai peran hadis dalam pembentukan ruang dan identitas keagamaan dalam masyarakat Islam.

Keywords: Living hadith, Material culture, Islamic architecture, Hadith representation, Religious space.

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INTRODUCTION

Hadith has traditionally been positioned as a normative text studied through the examination of its chain of transmission (sanad), textual content (matn), authenticity, and legal derivation (istinbāṭ). However, the development of contemporary hadith studies demonstrates that hadith does not exist solely in books, scholarly gatherings, or religious ritual practices; rather, it is also present in various social and cultural spaces within Muslim communities. Hadith can be found in healing traditions, education, da'wah movements, visual culture, and even Islamic architecture. Its presence on the walls of mosques, domes, mihrabs, tombs, and various religious buildings indicates that hadith functions not only as a source of religious teachings but also as a visual symbol that shapes people's religious experiences. This phenomenon reveals a significant transformation of hadith from a normative text into a material representation embedded in the social spaces of Muslim communities. In this context, hadith is no longer merely read and taught; it is also seen, experienced, and embodied through physical spaces that shape Muslim religious memory and identity (Pramono 2010, 21).

Over the past decade, hadith studies have demonstrated a strong tendency toward socio-cultural approaches through the study of living hadith. This approach seeks to expand the focus of hadith studies beyond textual analysis to examine how hadith is received, practiced, and brought to life within Muslim communities. Qudsy et al. explain that living hadith has emerged as a new direction in Indonesian hadith studies, positioning hadith as a social phenomenon that exists and evolves within the cultural spaces of Muslim communities (Qudsy et al. 2024, 17). Meanwhile, Salleh et al. demonstrate that research on living hadith in Indonesia has predominantly focused on religious rituals, local traditions, and social practices grounded in hadith. These studies position hadith as a source of cultural inspiration that shapes the social behavior and religious identities of Muslims (Salleh et al. 2020, 1133). Furthermore, Junianto et al. show that contemporary living hadith research is increasingly supported by interdisciplinary approaches, including phenomenology, ethnography, and the sociology of knowledge, which are employed to examine the relationship between hadith and social realities (Viki Junianto & Mo'afi 2023, 152).

Beyond its development as a social practice, several studies have also demonstrated that hadith functions as a medium of cultural transmission, a source of authority and legitimacy, and a means of constructing religious traditions. Metcalf illustrates how hadith serves as the foundation for the formation of a religious habitus within the Tablighi Jamaat (Metcalf 1993, 584), while Dutton examines the relationship between hadith and the practices of the people of Medina in the formation of Islamic legal authority (Dutton 1996, 15). Jonathan Brown further demonstrates that hadith reports considered weak in terms of their chains of transmission can nevertheless persist and function within Sunni Muslim life because they acquire social and cultural legitimacy (Jonathan A. C. Brown 2011, 6–7). More recent developments in the study of hadith transmission and

transformation also indicate that hadith does not live solely through formal instruction but also through collective recitation, social rituals, and the cultural practices of Muslim communities. Abdul Qadri demonstrates that the recitation of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī across various Muslim traditions has developed into a social practice involving dimensions of blessing, protection, and religious identity (Qadri 2023, 155–156). This trend indicates that contemporary hadith studies are increasingly concerned with how hadith operates within the social lives of Muslim communities.

Although most studies on hadith and socio-cultural dynamics have focused on social practices, religious rituals, the transmission of traditions, and community reception of hadith, relatively little attention has been paid to hadith as a form of material culture within the framework of material religion. One important study was conducted by Abou Khatwa, who emphasizes that hadith is present in Islamic architecture through various forms of inscriptions and visual representations on religious buildings. However, the study primarily highlights the presence of hadith in architectural elements and does not examine in sufficient depth how hadith transforms from a normative text into a material symbol that shapes space, identity, collective memory, and the religious experiences of Muslim communities (Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 358). Pinem's research demonstrates that inscriptions on tombstones contain not only the identities of the individuals buried there but also Qur'anic verses, hadith, prayers, and religious expressions that represent Islamic values in physical spaces. These findings reveal that religious texts have long undergone processes of materialization through architectural and artefactual media, thereby becoming part of the social memory and Islamic identity of communities (Pinem 2018, 119). Meanwhile, recent developments in living hadith studies have also begun to highlight the need for more interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the relationship between text, culture, and social space (Syaifudin & Sholihah 2025, 16). Consequently, the relationship between hadith, material culture, and Islamic architecture remains a relatively underexplored area in contemporary hadith studies.

Against this background, this article aims to examine the representation of hadith in Islamic architecture as a form of material culture from the perspective of living hadith. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) analyze how hadith is represented in Islamic architecture and identify the various forms of its manifestation in architectural spaces and elements that have developed within Muslim traditions; (2) explain the functions and meanings of hadith representations in Islamic architecture by examining their connections with religious life, social practices, and the construction of religious identity within Muslim communities; and (3) investigate the transformation of hadith from a religious text into material culture by tracing how hadith is embodied, produced, and interpreted through architectural media as part of Muslim religious experience.

This article argues that the representation of hadith in Islamic architecture does not merely serve an aesthetic or decorative function but constitutes a form of materialization of hadith authority within Muslim public space. Through inscriptions, calligraphy, and visual representations on religious buildings, hadith

undergoes a transformation from a normative text into a cultural symbol that shapes religious identity, collective memory, and the religious experiences of Muslim communities. Therefore, the presence of hadith in Islamic architecture can be understood as a form of living hadith, demonstrating that hadith lives not only through social practices and oral traditions but also within material spaces that form part of the everyday lives of Muslims.

METHOD

This study employs library research using a qualitative approach. The selection of this topic is based on the relatively limited number of studies examining hadith as material culture in Islamic architecture, compared with living hadith studies, which generally focus on social practices and religious rituals. The primary data consist of works that directly address the representation of hadith in spatial and material culture, particularly Abou Khatwa's study of hadith in Islamic architecture, as well as several studies concerning hadith transmission in social spaces, including those by Davidson, Lucas, Pinem, and Swantje. Secondary data are drawn from journal articles, books, and other scholarly research addressing living hadith, material religion, Islamic visual culture, and Islamic architecture.

Data were collected through documentation by identifying, reading, and classifying relevant literature. The collected data were subsequently organized into thematic tables covering the forms of representation, functions, and transformations of hadith in Islamic architecture. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis to identify patterns, categories, and relationships among the data. To strengthen the interpretation, this study draws on the perspectives of living hadith and material religion theory to explain how hadith undergoes a transformation from a normative text into a visual symbol that shapes the spaces and religious experiences of Muslim communities.

RESULT

1. Forms of Hadith Representation in Islamic Architecture

No.	Forms of Representation	Description	Sources
1	Hadith Calligraphy	Hadith is displayed in calligraphic writing on the walls, domes, mihrabs, tombstones, and gates of Islamic buildings.	(Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 370–372) & (Pinem 2018, 119)
2	Architectural Inscriptions	Hadith is carved or engraved onto building elements as an integral part of the architectural structure.	(Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 380)
3	Decoration of Worship Spaces	Hadith is used as a visual ornament to embellish religious spaces.	(Pramono 2010, 25)

4	Religious Educational Media	Hadith is displayed in religious public spaces to convey moral and religious messages.	(Ulya Fikriyati 2023, 278) & (Nuralia 2017, 91)

Based on Table 1, the representation of hadith in Islamic architecture does not appear in a single form but rather through various visual and material media. The most dominant form is hadith calligraphy, which is placed in prominent parts of buildings, such as mihrabs, domes, main walls, and mosque gates. In addition, hadith is also represented through inscriptions carved or engraved onto specific architectural elements, thereby becoming a permanent part of the building. In certain cases, hadith functions not merely as religious writing but also as a decorative element that reinforces the visual character of worship spaces. The presence of hadith in architectural spaces demonstrates that hadith texts undergo a process of visualization, enabling communities to interact with hadith through spatial and visual experiences (Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 370–372). The religious messages embedded in calligraphic inscriptions make them readily accessible to the public. Consequently, calligraphy plays an important role as a means of Islamization, conveying Islamic teachings and symbols through visual media (Fabrori 2023, 154).

These findings reveal three main patterns of hadith representation in Islamic architecture. First, hadith is represented as an aesthetic element through calligraphy and visual ornaments that enhance the beauty of religious buildings. Second, hadith functions as an educational medium that communicates Islamic values to the public through religious public spaces. Third, hadith serves as a symbol of religious identity that affirms the Islamic character of a building and the community that uses it (Nuralia 2017, 91). The representation of hadith in Islamic architecture demonstrates that hadith is no longer present merely as a text to be read and taught; rather, it has been transformed into part of a material culture that shapes the spaces, meanings, and religious experiences of Muslim communities. This study reinforces the view that the presence of hadith in architectural spaces can be understood as a form of living hadith, in which hadith lives on through religious visual and material symbols (Qudsy et al. 2024, 9).

Figure 1. Hadith Calligraphy on the Upper Wall of the Mihrab in the Men's Prayer Hall of Cikoneng Mosque, Banten



Source: Nuralia 2017, 92.

Figure 1 illustrates the representation of hadith in the form of calligraphy placed on the upper wall of the mihrab in the men's prayer hall. The placement of hadith in the mihrab area indicates that hadith texts are understood not merely as sources of religious teachings read in books but are also presented as visual elements integrated into the architectural structure of the mosque (Nuralia 2017, 92). In this context, hadith undergoes a transformation from a textual form into a material form that can be directly seen by worshippers while they are inside the prayer space. In addition to serving as a medium for conveying religious messages, the use of hadith calligraphy in the mihrab also indicates a process of aestheticization of hadith texts within the tradition of Islamic architecture. Hadith is not displayed as ordinary writing but through calligraphic compositions that accommodate the spatial characteristics and decorative elements of the building. Thus, the representation of hadith through calligraphy demonstrates that hadith texts can function simultaneously as sources of religious teachings and visual elements that reinforce the religious identity of a sacred space.

Furthermore, the presence of hadith in the mihrab area indicates a relationship between religious texts and ritual space. The mihrab serves as the primary focal point for congregational prayer; therefore, placing hadith in this area carries strong symbolic significance. The representation of hadith in Islamic architecture is not merely intended to beautify buildings but also to bring Prophetic values into spaces used for everyday acts of worship.

2. Functions of Hadith Representation in Islamic Architectural Spaces

Table 2. Functions of Hadith Representation in Islamic Architecture

No.	Function	Description	Sources
1	Educational Function	Hadith is used to communicate Islamic values to worshippers and visitors to the building.	(Ulya Fikriyati 2023, 258) & (Pinem 2018, 120)
2	Legitimizing Function	Hadith is used to reinforce the religious authority and Islamic character of a building.	(Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 369)
3	Aesthetic Function	Hadith becomes part of the decorative elements and visual beauty of Islamic architecture.	(Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 367)
4	Collective Memory Function	Religion (Hadith) helps construct the religious memory of communities through material spaces.	(Knott et al. 2016, 124)

Based on Table 2, the representation of hadith in Islamic architecture serves various functions and is not limited to decorative purposes alone. Hadith displayed on the walls of mosques, mihrabs, domes, and gates of Islamic buildings functions as a medium for communicating religious messages to the public. In this context,

architectural space is not merely a place for religious activities but also serves as a medium of religious education that visually presents the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Furthermore, the presence of hadith in religious buildings also functions to reinforce the Islamic identity of a particular space, so that the building is recognized not only through its architectural form but also through the textual symbols embedded within it. Hadith in architecture thus serves both educational and symbolic functions, which are closely interconnected (Ulya Fikriyati 2023, 258; Pinem 2018, 120).

In addition to functioning as a medium of education and a symbol of identity, the representation of hadith in architecture also serves as a means of religious legitimation for constructed spaces. The use of hadith in various Islamic buildings, particularly mosques and religious complexes, reinforces their sacred character while connecting them to the religious authority of Islam. In many cases, the selection of hadith displayed is not neutral but is associated with particular religious messages intended to be conveyed to the public. Therefore, hadith in architecture functions not merely as a visual ornament but also as a symbolic instrument that constructs the meaning and authority of religious spaces. At the same time, the calligraphic forms and inscriptions of hadith also demonstrate an aesthetic function, as they become part of the visual composition that enhances the beauty of Islamic buildings (Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 369). Over time, the art of calligraphy has undergone a transformation that involves not only its spiritual function but also its artistic and aesthetic qualities (Anisa et al. 2023, 26).

The functions of hadith in Islamic architecture extend from normative functions toward broader socio-cultural functions. Hadith serves not only as a source of religious teachings to be read and understood but also as a visual symbol that shapes people's religious experiences as they interact with religious spaces. From the perspective of material culture (*material religion*), the presence of hadith in Islamic buildings can be understood as a form of materialization of collective memory, enabling religious values to remain present in the everyday lives of Muslims. Through religious architectural spaces, hadith acquires a new dimension as a visual object that shapes religious consciousness, communal identity, and the religious experiences of Muslim communities. Thus, the function of religion (hadith) in Islamic architecture demonstrates that hadith lives not only through oral and written traditions but also through material spaces that form part of the social lives of Muslims (Knott et al. 2016, 125).

Figure 2. Calligraphic Inscription of a Hadith on Intercession Located Along the Path Leading to the Prophet's Tomb at Al-Masjid al-Nabawi.



Source: Visual documentation of Al-Masjid al-Nabawi (Accessed on June 1, 2026).

Figure 2 illustrates the representation of hadith in religious architectural spaces through the medium of calligraphy and inscriptions. The hadith bearing the statement *"My intercession is for those who commit major sins among my community"* is displayed along the pathway used by worshippers as they approach the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad. This placement indicates that hadith functions not merely as a text read in hadith collections but also as part of the spatial experience encountered by pilgrims. The presence of hadith in a location of profound spiritual significance reinforces its symbolic and religious functions, as pilgrims do not simply read the hadith as information but also interpret it within the context of their emotional and spiritual connection with the Prophet Muhammad.

This figure illustrates the process of materializing hadith in a visual form integrated into the architecture of Al-Masjid al-Nabawi. Hadith is no longer present merely as a textual narrative but becomes a material element that shapes the religious atmosphere of the space. From the perspective of *living hadith*, this phenomenon demonstrates how hadith lives through non-textual media, allowing the Prophet's teachings to remain present and interact with Muslim communities in their everyday lives. The presence of hadith inscriptions at Al-Masjid al-Nabawi can be understood as a form of transformation of hadith from a normative text into material culture that shapes collective religious experiences.

Figure 3. Hadith Inscription at the Amir Shaykhu al-Umari al-Nasiri Mosque-Madrasa, Cairo.



Source: Abou Khatwa 2023, 372, Figure 11.5.

Figure 3 illustrates the representation of hadith in the form of an architectural inscription carved into a wooden medium and placed above the mihrab of the Amir Shaykhu al-Umari al-Nasiri Mosque-Madrasa in Cairo. The inscription contains the following Prophetic hadith:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم خيركم من تعلم القران وعلمه

"The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it to others," preceded by the basmalah and followed by the building's foundation text. The presence of hadith in a foundation inscription indicates that hadith texts function not only as sources of religious teachings but also as part of the identity and legitimization of the construction of religious institutions.

Furthermore, the placement of hadith in a foundation inscription demonstrates how hadith is used to articulate the religious motivations behind the construction of mosques and madrasas. In this context, hadith functions as a symbolic foundation connecting educational and devotional activities with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. This form of representation demonstrates that hadith has undergone materialization into an architectural artefact capable of enduring beyond generations of readers. These findings indicate that one form of hadith representation in Islamic architecture is through permanent inscriptions integrated into building structures. Unlike hadith transmitted through books or oral traditions, hadith in the form of inscriptions possesses visual and spatial dimensions that enable religious messages to remain present in public spaces and become part of the collective memory of Muslim communities.

3. The Transformation of Hadith from Normative Text to Material Culture

Table 3. The Transformation of Hadith from Text to Material Culture in Islamic Architecture

No.	Form of Transformation	Description	Sources
1	From Text to Inscription	Hadith, originally transmitted through recitation and teaching, is presented in the form of permanent writing on buildings.	(Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 358) & (Pinem 2018, 119–120)
2	From Oral Tradition to Visual Representation	Hadith is not only heard and read but also presented through visual symbols in religious spaces.	(Konrad Hirschler 2023, 312)
3	From Scholarly Authority to Spatial Authority	Hadith becomes part of the religious legitimation of Islamic spaces and buildings.	(Garrett Davidson 2023, 341)

4	From Textual Collections to Material Objects	Hadith undergoes materialization through physical media such as calligraphy, ornaments, and architecture.	(Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 358)	

Based on Table 3, the transformation of hadith in Islamic architecture demonstrates a shift in how hadith is presented and received by Muslim communities. Whereas hadith was initially transmitted primarily through narration, learning, and the reading of books, it has subsequently also been presented through visual and material media. One manifestation of this transformation can be observed in the use of hadith inscriptions in Islamic buildings, which enables hadith to function not only as a text to be read but also as a permanent part of religious physical spaces. In this context, hadith shifts from a textual tradition to a visual representation that can be directly seen and experienced by the public. Hadith transmission does not always take place through formal scholarly channels but also occurs through material symbols embedded in the everyday lives of Muslims (Noha Abou Khatwa 2023, 358).

Beyond the transformation of its medium, hadith also undergoes a change in its function within social spaces. Hirschler demonstrates that the development of post-canonical hadith traditions is concerned not only with intellectual transmission but also with the materiality surrounding hadith scholarly practices. In the context of Islamic architecture, hadith no longer functions merely as a source of knowledge but also becomes part of the symbolic structures that shape religious spaces (Konrad Hirschler 2023, 303). Throughout Islamic history, spaces dedicated to hadith recitation have been closely associated with the formation of a community's religious authority and identity. This indicates that the presence of hadith in physical spaces cannot be separated from the production of social and religious meaning. The transformation of hadith from text to space demonstrates that hadith authority is constructed not only through sanad and teaching but also through its presence in spaces used and respected by Muslim communities (Garrett Davidson 2023, 341; Pramono 2010, 21).

Hadith undergoes a process of materialization that enables religious texts to exist in forms extending beyond mere reading or memorization. Swantje demonstrates that concise hadith collections, such as the Arba'in, serve as a medium that facilitates the internalization of Prophetic values in people's lives. Meanwhile, Lucas illustrates that the teaching of hadith in various Muslim communities aims not only to transmit knowledge but also to construct collective religious identity. In the context of Islamic architecture, this process develops further through visual representations that make hadith part of Muslim communities' spatial experiences. Therefore, the transformation of hadith from normative text into material culture demonstrates its capacity to adapt to various social and cultural media without losing its religious function. Ultimately, the presence of hadith in Islamic architecture reveals that religious texts can remain alive through spaces, objects, and visual symbols that collectively shape people's religious experiences.

DISCUSSION

Materializing Hadith Authority: Architecture, Identity, and Collective Memory

The presence of hadith representations in Islamic architecture does not merely serve a decorative function but also operates as a medium for transmitting religious values, a symbol of religious identity, and a means of shaping the religious experiences of Muslim communities. The findings in Result 1 demonstrate that hadith is represented through various material forms, including calligraphy, inscriptions, ornaments, and visual elements in religious buildings. Meanwhile, Result 2 shows that these representations serve educational, symbolic, aesthetic, and legitimizing functions within religious spaces. Furthermore, Result 3 reveals the transformation of hadith from normative text into material culture, whereby hadith lives not only through reading and teaching but also through spaces, visual symbols, and material objects that constitute part of the social lives of Muslim communities. This study demonstrates that hadith has the capacity to adapt to various cultural media without losing its religious authority (Saputra et al. 2024, 160).

The transformation of hadith into material culture in Islamic architecture occurs because hadith functions not only as a source of law and normative teachings but also as a source of cultural legitimacy that is continuously reproduced in the lives of Muslim communities. From the perspective of living hadith, hadith acquires new meanings when it is received, practiced, and embodied in various social and cultural forms. Qudsy et al. explain that living hadith develops through processes of community reception of hadith, which generate various forms of religious cultural expression (Qudsy et al. 2024, 16). On the other hand, Rizkiy emphasizes that the development of contemporary living hadith studies demonstrates the need to approach hadith not merely as a text but also as a social phenomenon that lives through various cultural media. In the context of Islamic architecture, this process becomes evident when hadith is presented through inscriptions and visual symbols, transforming religious spaces into media for conveying Prophetic messages (Rizkiy 2025, 142). Thus, the presence of hadith in architecture is the outcome of social and cultural processes that enable hadith texts to remain alive beyond the traditions of formal reading and teaching.

The representation of hadith in Islamic architecture can be understood as a form of materialization of hadith authority within Muslim public spaces. Traditionally, hadith authority has been understood primarily through sanad, books, and scholarly institutions. However, the findings of this study demonstrate that such authority is also constructed through spaces and visual symbols that enable communities to interact with hadith in non-textual ways. From the perspective of material culture, objects, spaces, and visual symbols do not function merely as passive media; rather, they actively shape people's religious experiences and consciousness. Therefore, the presence of hadith on mosque walls, domes, mihrabs, and various other architectural elements demonstrates that hadith has become part of the collective memory and visual identity of Muslim communities. These findings expand the understanding of living hadith by demonstrating that

hadith lives not only through ritual practices and social traditions but also through material spaces that shape the everyday religious experiences of Muslim communities (Syaifudin & Sholihah 2025, 16).

This phenomenon can also be examined through the perspective of material culture, which regards objects, spaces, and religious artefacts as active components in the construction of social and religious meanings. Within this approach, material objects are not understood merely as passive containers of religious teachings but rather as media that actively shape how people understand, remember, and experience religion. Daniel Miller explains that materiality has the capacity to shape social practices because human beings constantly interact with the world through the material objects that surround them (Daniel Miller 2005, 5–6). Morgan likewise emphasizes that religion is not manifested solely through doctrines and beliefs but also through objects, visual images, spaces, sounds, and various other material forms that make religious experiences tangible in everyday life (Morgan 2009, 16). In the context of this study, hadith inscriptions and calligraphy on Islamic buildings can be understood as forms of materialization of Prophetic teachings that enable hadith to become physically present in public spaces. Thus, architecture serves not only as a place for religious activities but also as a medium through which collective memories of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad are reproduced and sustained.

This study differs from several previous studies, which have predominantly focused on social practices and community reception of hadith. Salleh et al. examine living hadith as a socio-cultural phenomenon that develops within Indonesian community traditions, while Khasani investigates living hadith within the educational culture of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Other studies, such as those by Metcalf, Dutton, and Brown, also place greater emphasis on the practices, authority, and use of hadith in socio-religious life. Although Abou Khatwa has addressed the presence of hadith in Islamic architecture, the primary focus of that study remains on the inventory and examination of hadith inscriptions in Islamic buildings. In contrast to previous studies, this article positions the representation of hadith in architecture as a process through which hadith is transformed from normative text into material culture. The contribution of this study lies in its attempt to connect living hadith studies with material culture (material religion) research, thereby expanding the scope of hadith studies from social practices to religious spaces and materiality.

Based on these findings, future living hadith research needs to broaden its focus beyond rituals, community traditions, and socio-religious practices to include the material, visual, and spatial dimensions of hadith in Muslim life. To date, living hadith studies in Indonesia have predominantly focused on hadith recitation traditions, religious practices, and local cultures, while studies of spaces, architecture, visual media, artefacts, and material symbols of hadith remain relatively limited. Therefore, future research could develop interdisciplinary approaches that integrate hadith studies, anthropology, architecture, visual culture, and material religion studies to understand how hadith operates within contemporary public spaces. Furthermore, field research on hadith representations

in mosques, Islamic boarding schools, religious buildings, and digital spaces is also important for enriching new directions in contemporary hadith studies (Ihsan & Ashshiddieqi 2024, 83).

CONCLUSION

In Islamic architecture, hadith functions not only as a normative text that is read and taught but also exists as material culture that shapes the spaces, identities, and religious experiences of Muslim communities. The representation of hadith in architecture takes various forms, including calligraphy, inscriptions, ornaments, and visual elements integrated into religious buildings. The presence of hadith in architectural spaces serves educational, symbolic, aesthetic, and legitimizing functions, transforming Islamic buildings into media for transmitting Prophetic values. Furthermore, this study finds that these representations constitute a form of transformation of hadith from normative text into material culture, whereby hadith no longer lives solely through oral and written traditions but also through spaces and visual symbols that can be seen, experienced, and collectively interpreted. These findings expand the scope of living hadith studies by demonstrating that the life of hadith is reflected not only in social practices and religious rituals but also in the materiality and spaces that form part of Muslim life.

This study has certain limitations because it employs library research based on literature analysis without supporting field data concerning the practices of hadith representation in specific Islamic buildings. Consequently, the study focuses more on the conceptual and theoretical dimensions of the transformation of hadith into material culture than on the empirical experiences of communities interacting with hadith representations in architectural spaces. Furthermore, the data sources are still predominantly drawn from studies of Islamic architecture and living hadith in general, and therefore do not yet provide a comprehensive picture of the variations in hadith representation across different geographical regions and historical periods. Accordingly, future research could focus on field studies of hadith inscriptions in mosques, Islamic boarding schools, tombs, and other religious buildings, as well as examine how communities interpret and respond to the presence of hadith in material spaces. Such studies would enrich the development of living hadith research while opening up broader opportunities for dialogue among hadith studies, Islamic architecture, the anthropology of religion, and material culture studies.

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Not applicable. This study employed a library-based research approach by analyzing sources and content that are publicly available. The research did not involve human participants, the use of personal data, or any activities requiring informed consent. Accordingly, ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required.

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