

Living Ḥadīth in the Tradition of Santri Veneration toward the Kiai: A Study of Mushāfahah, Taqbīl al-Yad, and Inhinā' at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng

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ABSTRACT

Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, possesses various distinctive veneration traditions, among them *mushāfahah* (handshaking), *taqbīl al-yad* (hand-kissing), and *inhinā'* (bowing the head) toward the *kiai*. These traditions have frequently been the subject of scholarly debate regarding their *sharī'ah* foundations, necessitating examination through the *living ḥadīth* approach. This study aims to describe the practices of *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, and *inhinā'* at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng, to analyze the meanings and motivations underlying them, and to examine their correlation with the Prophetic traditions of Muhammad SAW. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques comprising semi-structured interviews with seven informants selected through purposive sampling, field observation, documentation, and a questionnaire administered to 50 *santri* as supplementary data. The findings indicate that all three practices have become institutionalized as a robust collective culture within the *pesantren* environment. The motivations of the *santri* in performing these practices encompass moral character development, veneration of knowledge, cultivation of *tawāḍu'* (humility), as well as the influence of the social environment and family education. Normatively, *mushāfahah* possesses a strong foundation in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*; *taqbīl al-yad* is permissible insofar as it is intended as *ta'ẓīm dīnī* (religious veneration) based on the position of the majority of scholars; whereas *inhinā'* in the form of a slight inclination of the head does not fall within the prohibited category, taking into account the physical degree of the movement and the intention of the practitioner. From the perspective of *living ḥadīth*, these traditions are more predominant in their praxis-conformative dimension than in their cognitive-textual dimension, reflecting that the transmission of values within the *pesantren* takes place through exemplification, habituation, and the internalization of *adab*. The novelty of this research lies in its locus at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng, which integrates science and religion, as well as its simultaneous analysis of three veneration practices within an explicit *living ḥadīth* framework.

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Introduction

Indonesia, as a country with a Muslim majority population, possesses a rich diversity of Islamic traditions, one of which is manifested in the institution of *pesantren*. As the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, the *pesantren* not only functions as a place for the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as a space for character formation and the internalization of Islamic values through traditions and customs upheld by the *santri* and *kiai* communities (Azra, 1998; Van Bruinessen, 2001). Among the distinctive traditions that remain preserved to this day are the practices of handshaking accompanied by hand-kissing toward the *kiai*, and bowing the head (*inhinā'*) when passing by teachers. These practices are not merely social habits, but are laden with deep moral, ethical, and religious values (Baroroh & Amin, 2023).

Nevertheless, such traditions of reverence are not free from debate within Islamic discourse. On one hand, there are those who question the *sharī'ah* basis of the practices of hand-kissing and bowing, referring to the *ḥadīth* narrated by Anas bin Malik which states that the Prophet Muhammad SAW prohibited his companions from bowing when meeting one another, and replaced it with handshaking (Ibn Mājah, 2011; Al-Tirmidhī, 2009; Āl Nu'mān, 2015). On the other hand, a number of scholars such as Shaykh Izzuddin bin Abdus Salam permitted these forms of reverence (Al-Anṣārī, n.d.), and some *fiqh* scholars even affirm that hand-kissing is encouraged when performed as a form of respect for the virtue of knowledge and religion, not for worldly reasons (Al-Nawawī, 1994; Al-Mubārakfūrī, 1990). Scholars who firmly prohibit certain forms of such reverence base their opinions on the principle of *sadd al-ẓarā'ī'* as cited in various *ḥadīth* commentaries (Āl Nu'mān, 2015; Al-Junaydī, n.d.).

This tension between the preservation of tradition and normative critique underscores the importance of examining this phenomenon through the *living ḥadīth* approach. Etymologically, *living ḥadīth* carries two interrelated meanings: first, "the living *ḥadīth*," meaning *ḥadīth* that is present and visible in the practices of community life; and second, "reviving the *ḥadīth*," meaning the effort to bring and practice *ḥadīth* teachings in daily life. Terminologically, *living ḥadīth* is a branch of *ḥadīth* studies that examines social symptoms, practices, and phenomena inspired by the Prophet's *ḥadīth*, where its focus lies not on the *ḥadīth* text alone, but on how *ḥadīth* is understood, received, and practiced in real life (Hasbillah, 2021). Its objects of study may include behavior, traditions, culture, values, rituals, and various other forms of social expression that live within communities, so that the direction of *living ḥadīth* studies moves from practice toward text, not the other way around (Qudsy, 2016).

Within the context of *living ḥadīth* studies, it is important to clearly distinguish between

two dimensions of how *ḥadīth* is received and practiced by society, namely the cognitive-textual dimension and the praxis-conformative dimension. The cognitive-textual dimension refers to the conscious understanding of individuals or communities regarding the *ḥadīth* text as a normative source. This dimension emphasizes the mastery of *ḥadīth* literature, knowledge of the *sanad* and *matn*, and the ability to articulate the textual foundation behind a particular religious practice (Qudsy & Dewi, 2018). In other words, this is the aspect of "knowing that" a certain teaching exists. Conversely, the praxis-conformative dimension points more to how the values of the *ḥadīth* are internalized and manifested in everyday social practices, regardless of whether the practitioner consciously understands the *ḥadīth* text that serves as its basis. This dimension is the realm of "knowing how," acquired through processes of habituation, exemplary conduct, and collective cultural transmission (Rismah et al., 2025). In this dimension, *ḥadīth* "lives" as a social reality practiced intergenerationally, even when its textual connection is no longer explicitly associated in the practitioner's consciousness (Rizkiy, n.d.).

Pesantren Sains Tebuireng in Jombang, East Java, was selected as the locus of this study due to its distinctive characteristics. As a branch of Pesantren Tebuireng founded by Hadratussyekh KH. Hasyim Asy'arī—a central figure of Nahdlatul Ulama and a prominent *ḥadīth* authority (Putra, 2016)—this *pesantren* implements the concept of Trensains, namely the integration of Islamic sciences with natural sciences based on approximately 800 *āyāt kawniyyah* (cosmic verses) in the Qur'an (Baroroh & Amin, 2023). In addition to being known for this integrative approach, Tebuireng also possesses a strong and sustainable tradition of *ḥadīth* studies, as reflected in the attention of its scholars and teachers toward the transmission of *riwāyah* and *dirāyah ḥadīth* within the *pesantren* environment (Nursyahbani, 2022). The scientific and rational character of Pesantren Sains Tebuireng makes it a representative setting for examining how traditions of reverence toward the *kiai* are understood and practiced within a more contextual and critical framework of thought.

Previous research on related themes has been conducted from various perspectives. Ahmad Qurtubi (Qurtubi, 2011) examined reverence in Islam through the perspective of *ḥadīth* in general. Tammulis, Galib, and Abubakar (Tammulis & Abubakar, 2021) discussed the tradition of hand-kissing toward the *kiai* through the analysis of Qur'anic verses. Radhie Munadi (Munadi, 2021) examined the practice of handshaking through the *ma'ānī al-ḥadīth* approach. Meanwhile, Lukman Hajibaraheng (2024) compared forms of *santri* reverence toward the *kiai* in two different *pesantren*. From the perspective of cultural and communication studies, Mowoka (Mowoka, 2020) viewed the tradition of hand-kissing as a religious-cultural etiquette resulting from the acculturation of Islam and local culture, while

Dasrial (Ade, 2019) and Munir (MUNIR, 2020) specifically explored the symbolic construction of meaning behind the practices of handshaking and hand-kissing by *santri* toward their teachers. As for the *living ḥadīth* approach, Rahman (Rahman, 2021) analyzed the practice of hand-kissing teachers using the *maʿānī al-ḥadīth* approach, and Syahid (Syahid, 2020) examined the negotiation of the bowing tradition with *ḥadīth* texts at Pesantren Raudhatut Thalibin Rembang. Basuni et al. (Basuni dkk., 2025) also employed an ethnographic approach to examine the meaning behind hand-kissing and walking with a bowed head from the perspective of the *santri*'s body.

Thus, this research offers novelty in two aspects. First, the research locus at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng, which has the characteristic of integrating science and religion, has never been made an object of *living ḥadīth* study for the topic of *santri* reverence toward the *kiai*. Second, the *living ḥadīth* approach employed simultaneously analyzes three practices at once (*mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, and *inhināʾ*) and explicitly operationalizes the cognitive-textual and praxis-conformative dimensions, something rarely done in previous studies. Therefore, no study has specifically used the *living ḥadīth* approach to examine the tradition of *mushāfahah* accompanied by *taqbīl al-yad* and *inhināʾ* at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng while taking into account the scientific and contextual dimensions that characterize this institution.

This research aims to: first, describe the practices of handshaking, hand-kissing, and bowing the head performed by *santri* of Pesantren Sains Tebuireng toward the *kiai*; second, analyze the meanings and motivations behind these practices; and third, examine the relationship between *ḥadīth* concerning *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, and *inhināʾ* and the traditions that live within the *pesantren* environment (Moleong, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019). Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of *living ḥadīth* studies, particularly in the context of *pesantren* education (Khosyiah, 2018; Ihsan & Ashshiddieqi, 2024), while also offering a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the transformation of *ḥadīth* texts into living and evolving socio-religious practices within society.

Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the practices of reverence in the form of handshaking (*mushāfahah*), hand-kissing (*taqbīl al-yad*), and bowing the head (*inhināʾ*) at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng, Jombang (Moleong, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019). Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with seven informants selected using purposive sampling. The selection of informants was not based on rigid criteria, but rather on the researcher's assessment that they possessed adequate direct knowledge and experience of the traditions under study, comprising junior *santri*, senior *santri*, alumni,

teachers, and the *pesantren* leader (Sugiyono, 2019). Secondary data were sourced from *ḥadīth* books, general books, and scientific articles discussing *pesantren* traditions and the values of reverence in Islam. In addition to interviews, data collection was conducted through field observation and documentation (Moleong, 2021). To strengthen the findings, the study also employed a simple questionnaire distributed to 50 *santri* as supporting data. The questionnaire consisted of twelve questions covering: frequency of *mushāfahah* and *inhinā'* practices, contexts of hand-kissing (e.g., after prayers, when meeting on the road, after learning activities), motivations behind the practices (personal awareness, formality, or *pesantren* rules), and the subjective feelings of *santri* when performing them. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively using simple tabulation to identify general tendencies, without being intended as the primary quantitative analysis. In order to analyze the manifestation of the two dimensions of *living ḥadīth*, this research adapted the framework of Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy (Qudsy, 2016), which encompasses the analysis of practice, reception, text, transmission, and transformation. Its operationalization includes: (1) identification of the praxis-conformative dimension through a focus on behavior (*behavior stream*) from observation and questionnaires (Hasbillah, 2021), tracing cultural transmission through patterns of practice inheritance (e.g., direct instruction from the *pesantren* leader, role modeling, daily habituation), and exploring motivation from an *emic* perspective (subjective meanings of the *santri*); (2) identification of the cognitive-textual dimension through tracing textual foundations from an *etic* perspective in interviews, tracking textual reception regarding the *santri*'s understanding of the *ḥadīth* prohibition against bowing, and conducting textual validation by the researcher through tracing and verifying reference *ḥadīth* books (such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Sunan Abī Dāwud*) mentioned by informants or relevant to the research object (Hasbillah, 2021). All collected data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Moleong, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019). Theming was carried out based on the main research topics: the practices of *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, *inhinā'*, the meaning of reverence, and their relationship to relevant *ḥadīth* within the framework of *living ḥadīth* (Qudsy, 2016; Hasbillah, 2021). By integrating data from observation, interviews (reception and motivation), and literature study (texts), this research is able to comprehensively map the balance and interplay between the praxis-conformative and cognitive-textual dimensions in the practices of reverence at the focus of the research.

Results and Discussion

Practices of Mushafahah, Taqbil Al-Yad, and Inhinā' at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng

The practices of *santri*'s reverence toward the *kiai* at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng are manifested in three main interrelated forms, namely *mushāfahah* (handshaking), *taqbīl al-yad* (hand-kissing), and *inhinā'* (bowing the head). These three practices are not understood as *mahḍah* worship with fixed procedures, but rather as socio-religious *adab* that lives within the *pesantren* tradition (Hasbillah, 2021; Qudsy, 2016). Based on interviews, field observations, and questionnaire data from 50 *santri*, a comprehensive picture was obtained regarding the implementation, meaning, and *ḥadīth* basis of these practices (Moleong, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019).

a. Forms and Implementation of Reverence Practices

The practice of hand-kissing is performed when *santri* shake hands with the *kiai* or *ustādh*, by kissing the back of the hand and sometimes touching it to the forehead as a symbol of humility (Basuni et al., 2025; Duta & Mujiono, 2025). Archie Javas Nararya, a senior *santri*, explained that this practice takes place in various daily situations. He conveyed that hand-kissing is performed as is customary toward the *ustādh*, while bowing is done when the *kiai* passes in front of the *santri* by slightly bowing the head, or when the *santri* passes by the *ustādh* or *kiai*. He also explained that if the *kiai* passes by, the *santri* will stop and bow, such as when Gus Kikin as the caretaker of Pesantren Tebuireng walks past. When passing by other *ustādh*, the *santri* continues walking while bowing the head. He added that bowing is performed when both the *kiai* and the *santri* are standing, but if the *kiai* or *ustādh* is sitting and the *santri* wishes to pass by, the *santri* walks in a kneeling position while bowing the head without needing to crawl or drag the body (Archie Javas, personal communication, February 14, 2026).

Altamis Tajusa Faidh, a junior *santri*, added that the practices of hand-kissing and bowing the head are performed in daily life when meeting, after lessons, and when beginning them, including before and after prayers (Altamis Tajusa Faidh, personal communication, March 9, 2026). This indicates that the values of *adab* are instilled continuously through repetition and direct practice from the moment a *santri* first enters the *pesantren* (Wardi, Mansur, & Kusuma, 2023).

Regarding the origins of the development of the *inhinā'* tradition at Tebuireng, *Ustādh* Arif Khuzaini as the *pesantren* leader conveyed that in the past there was no custom of bowing at Tebuireng; what existed was only handshaking. After

handshaking, the *santri* would step back three paces while slightly bowing the body, then were permitted to turn away. The custom of bowing only emerged at Tebuireng around 2010 and above, and he himself is said to be the one who introduced it. This is because after completing his education at Tebuireng, he continued to Pondok Ploso, where he witnessed the practice of *inhinā'* as a form of respect toward teachers, something he had not encountered during his time at Tebuireng. He then concluded that it is not appropriate for anyone to condemn those who bow or those who do not, because every place has its own traditions. As he stated, "wherever the sky is upheld, there the ground is trodden; as long as none of it violates the *sharī'ah*, it is permissible" (Arif Khuzaini, personal communication, March 10, 2026; Syahid, 2020).

To strengthen the results of observation and interviews, the researcher administered a questionnaire to 50 *santri* of Pesantren Sains Tebuireng (Sugiyono, 2019). The results of the questionnaire are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Practice of Mushāfahah Accompanied by Taqbīl al-Yad

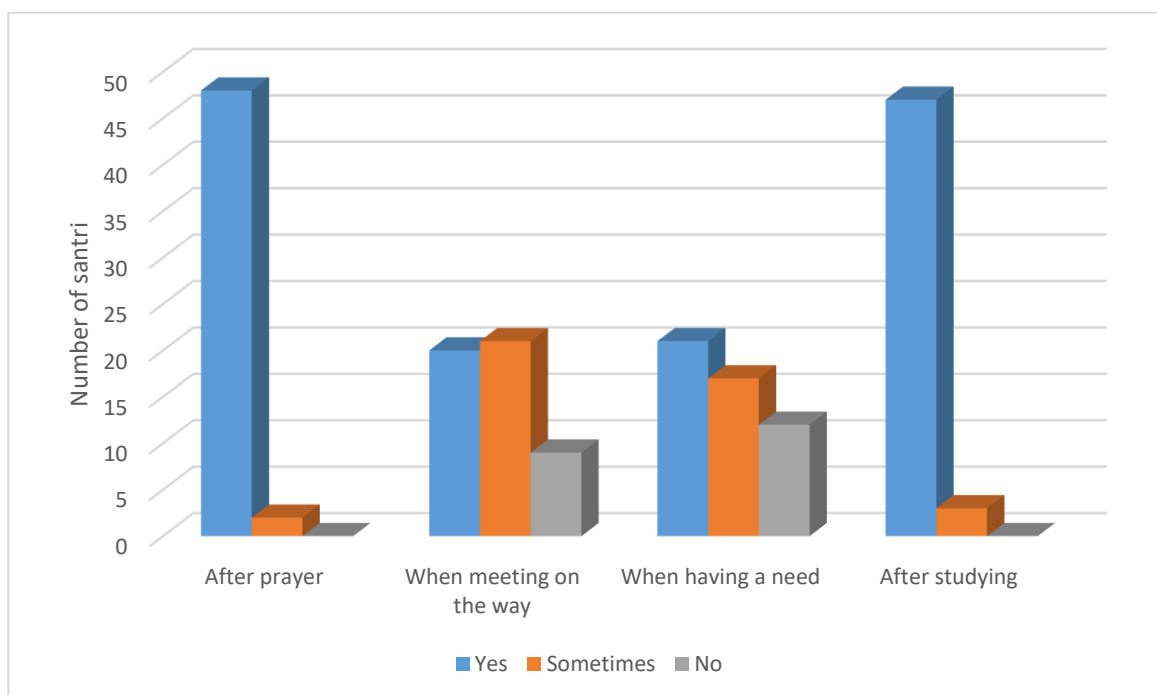
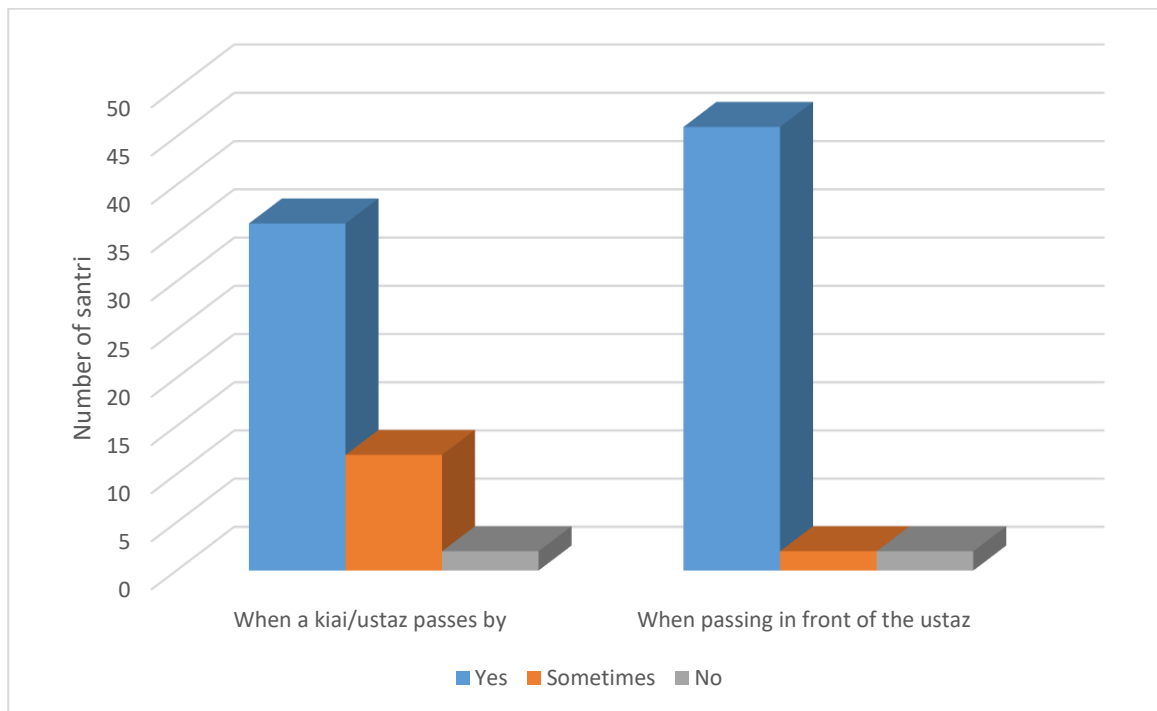


Table 2. Practice of *Inhinā'*

The questionnaire data indicate that the practices of hand-kissing and bowing the head are not only performed by a small number of *santri*, but have become a strong collective culture within the *pesantren* environment (Basuni et al., 2025). This finding is consistent with the interview results showing that both practices have been institutionalized in the daily lives of *santri*. This is also consistent with Hajibaraheng's (2024) finding that in *pesantren* with more ritualistic and structured traditions, the practices of hand-kissing and bowing are performed consistently as a sign of respect.

Meanings and Motivations Behind the Practices of Reverence

Based on interviews with seven informants, the practices of hand-kissing and *inhinā'* are not understood merely as physical habits, but contain deep dimensions of value and motivation (Moleong, 2021). In general, the meanings and motivations of the *santri* in carrying out these practices can be grouped into several main aspects:

a. Moral Cultivation and Glorification of Knowledge

The informants consistently mentioned that these practices are a means of moral cultivation as well as an expression of respect toward knowledge and its possessors (Wardi, Mansur, & Kusuma, 2023). Ustadz La Amin, a teacher and junior guidance *ustādh* at the *pesantren*, conveyed that the purpose of these practices is to cultivate the *santri*'s moral character to better respect knowledge, because the teacher is an intermediary in obtaining knowledge. Just as we respect the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and the

books of scholars, so too do we respect and honor the teacher. He also emphasized that hand-kissing and bowing the head are part of the identity of the *pesantren* as an institution of Islamic moral education that must be continuously instilled in every generation of *santri*, in order to form a generation that excels both in knowledge and in moral character and *adab* (La Amin, personal communication, March 5, 2026). This view is consistent with Qurtubi's (2011) finding that respect toward teachers in the Islamic tradition has a strong normative basis in the Prophet's *ḥadīth*.

b. Cultivation of *Tawāḍuʿ* and Self-Awareness

These practices are also understood as a mechanism for cultivating the attitude of *tawāḍuʿ* (humility) within the *santri* (Duta & Mujiono, 2025). Altamis Tajusa Faidh, a junior *santri*, conveyed that the impact of these practices is the growth of higher self-awareness, deeper respect, and acknowledgment of one's limitations as a seeker of knowledge. He added that if this is continuously practiced, good moral character will continue to develop (Altamis Tajusa Faidh, personal communication, March 9, 2026). Ustadz Faiqur Rahman, a *pesantren* alumnus, also affirmed that this habit has shaped him to be humble before his teachers and has made him realize that he is nothing, and he continues to maintain this habit after graduating by continuing to respect others according to time and place (Faiqurrohman, personal communication, March 10, 2026). This dimension places the practice of reverence not merely as a social symbol, but as an instrument of character education with long-term impact (Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2024).

c. Influence of Social, Cultural, and Family Environments

The *santri*'s motivations are also shaped by the social environment of the *pesantren* and the background of family education (Basuni et al., 2025). Priya Sabda Alam, a senior *santri*, revealed that his parents always emphasized to him to kiss the hand, even in uncomfortable situations, so that now if he does not bow, he feels as if something is missing within himself (Priya Sabda, personal communication, February 14, 2026). Nur Muhammad Ismail Kayis, another senior *santri*, conveyed his motivation simply yet profoundly, namely out of love, humility, and respect (Nur Mhd Ismail Kayis, personal communication, February 14, 2026). Within the *pesantren* environment, these practices are reinforced through exemplary behavior and collective habituation (Wardi, Mansur, & Kusuma, 2023). Ustadz Arif Khuzaini, the *pesantren* leader, affirmed that the core value of these practices is *adab*, which in the *pesantren* tradition occupies a position higher than knowledge itself, while also teaching the importance of being *tawāḍuʿ* (Arif Khuzaini, personal communication, March 10, 2026).

Relationship Between the Practices and the Prophet's Hadith in the Living Hadith Perspective

From the perspective of *living ḥadīth*, the practices of *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, and *inhinā'* at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng represent a form of actualization of the values of the Prophet's *ḥadīth* in social life (Qudsy, 2016; Hasbillah, 2021). Before discussing the *ḥadīth* foundations of each practice, it is important to note that the spirit of respect toward teachers and things related to them has long been rooted in Islamic history. Ustadz Arif Khuzaini shared a story about Imam Malik who suddenly stood up, and when asked the reason, he answered that he stood up because he saw his teacher's child playing nearby. This story, as conveyed by him, reflects that respect toward teachers in the Islamic tradition is not limited to direct interaction, but also encompasses respect toward everything related to the teacher (Arif Khuzaini, personal communication, March 10, 2026). It is with this spirit that the practices of *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, and *inhinā'* in the *pesantren* need to be understood.

a. Hadith Foundation for *Mushāfahah* and *Taqbīl al-Yad*

The practice of handshaking performed consistently by the *santri* has clear legitimacy in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Anas bin Malik recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Al-Bukhārī, 2002):

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ عَاصِمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا هَمَّامٌ، عَنْ قَتَادَةَ، قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَنَسٍ: أَكَانَتْ الْمُصَافَحَةُ فِي أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ.

This *ḥadīth* demonstrates that *mushāfahah* was an established practice among the Companions and was acknowledged by the Prophet SAW. Al-Qaṣṭalānī explains that the Companions performed handshaking without any disapproval from the Prophet SAW (Al-Qaṣṭalānī, 1305H), while al-Suyūṭī affirms that this *sunnah* has been known and practiced since the early period of Islam (Al-Suyūṭī, 1998). Al-Saffārīnī also narrates a *ḥadīth* indicating that *mushāfahah* can eliminate feelings of envy among fellow Muslims (Al-Saffārīnī, n.d.). Furthermore, in *Al-Mashyakhah al-Baghdādiyyah* it is stated that when two believers meet, and one of them offers greetings and shakes the other's hand, their sins will fall away just as leaves fall from a tree (Al-Salfī, 2011). Thus, the habituation of *mushāfahah* in *pesantren* not only carries social value, but also holds religious merit, as it is rooted in a *sunnah* containing great virtues (Munadi, 2016; Wardi, Mansur, & Kusuma, 2023).

As for *taqbīl al-yad*, it is grounded in the narration of Ibn 'Umar recorded in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Abū Dāwūd, n.d.), which states that the Companions drew near to the Prophet SAW and kissed his hand. Imam al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* states that there is no

objection to kissing the hand of one who is revered in religion as a form of *tabarruk* (seeking blessing) and respect (Al-Ghazālī, n.d.). Ibn Taymiyyah also notes that some Companions kissed the hand of 'Umar *raḍiyallāhu 'anhu*, and the majority of *fuqahā'* (jurists) permit this when performed as a form of religious veneration (*ta'ẓīm dīnī*) rather than worldly glorification (Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.). In *Sharḥ Ibn Baṭṭāl* it is also mentioned that Zayd bin Thābit kissed the hand of Ibn 'Abbās, whereupon Ibn 'Abbās said: "This is how we were commanded to treat our scholars." The practice of *taqbil al-yad* in *pesantren* thus represents a reflection of the value of *ta'ẓīm al-'ilm* (glorification of knowledge) that has deep roots in the Islamic tradition (Al-Ghazālī, n.d.; Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.; Tammulis, Galib, & Abubakar, 2021; Duta & Mujiono, 2025).

b. Hadith Foundation for *Inhinā'* and Its Boundaries

The practice of *inhinā'* normatively needs to be situated within the framework of the Prophet's *ḥadīth* SAW that prohibits bowing when meeting someone, as narrated from Anas bin Malik in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* and *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* (Ibn Mājah, 2011; Al-Tirmidhī, 2009). Scholars explain that this prohibition has two *'illah* (legal causes): first, because of the element of *tashabbuh* (resemblance) to *rukū'* (bowing) which is part of the ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*); and second, as a form of *sadd al-dharī'ah* (blocking the means) toward glorification that could potentially lead to polytheism (*shirk*) (Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.; Al-Nawawī, 1347H; Al-Junaydī, n.d.).

However, as explained in *Al-Jāmi' fī Aḥkām al-Ṣalāh*, the threshold of *rukū'* is when a person bows until the hands can reach both knees (Al-Dabīyan, 1441H). Based on the results of observation and interviews, the form of *inhinā'* practiced by *santri* generally does not reach that degree, but consists only of a slight bowing of the head or a minor lowering of the body. From a *fiqh* perspective, scholars specify that merely bowing the head falls within the category of *makrūh tanzīhī* (mildly disliked) or even constitutes part of *adab*, and is not a prohibited act (Al-Nawawī, 1994; Syahid, 2020).

This view is reinforced by Ustadz Arif Khuzaini, the *pesantren* leader, who stated that the reason for prohibiting *inhinā'* solely on the grounds that its movement resembles *rukū'* in prayer is, in his view, insufficiently compelling. He argues that if every movement resembling a movement of worship were prohibited simply on account of that resemblance, then activities such as gymnastics or physical exercise that can physically resemble *rukū'* should likewise be prohibited. Therefore, according to him, what determines the legal ruling of an act is the intention (*niyyah*) behind it. If a person performs *inhinā'* with the intention of worshipping the teacher, that is clearly wrong. However, if it is performed solely with the intention of showing respect, then it is

permissible (Arif Khuzaini, personal communication, March 10, 2026).

By combining the view of Ustadz Arif with the explanations of scholars in *ḥadīth* commentaries, it can be concluded that the ruling on *inhinā'* is contextual and depends on two main factors: first, the physical degree of the movement, namely whether it reaches the threshold of *rukū'* or not; and second, the intention of the practitioner, namely whether it is intended as a form of respect or as glorification resembling worship (Al-Dahlawī, n.d.; Al-Junaydī, n.d.). As long as *inhinā'* does not physically reach the threshold of *rukū'* and is not intended as a form of worship, it remains within the domain of acceptable *adab*. Ibn Taymiyyah's legal maxim also reinforces this: if a form of respect has become a customary practice (*ʿurf*) within society and abandoning it causes greater harm, then it is permissible to choose the lesser harm (Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.). In the context of *pesantren*, *inhinā'* is not merely a physical gesture, but has become a symbol of courtesy, cultural identity, and a mechanism of character education (Basuni et al., 2025; Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2024).

c. The Living Hadith Dimension: Between Praxis and Textuality

Based on the recapitulation of interviews with seven informants, a varied picture was obtained regarding their level of knowledge of the *ḥadīth* foundations of the practices they carry out (Moleong, 2021). Two informants (28.6%) were specifically familiar with the *ḥadīth* that form the focus of this research. Three informants (42.9%) were able to cite general evidence concerning *adab* and respect toward teachers, but were not specifically familiar with the particular evidence regarding *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, or *inhinā'*. One informant (14.3%) was not aware of specific evidence regarding these practices, but was familiar with general evidence on *adab* as found in works on Islamic ethics, although without citing the explicit wording of such evidence, unlike the previous three informants who cited it directly. The final informant (14.3%) was not familiar with either specific or general evidence in textual terms, but believed that there must be prophetic teachings underlying these practices.

Table 3. Level of Informant Knowledge of Hadith Foundations

Category of Knowledge	Count	Percentage
Specifically familiar with the research-focus <i>ḥadīth</i>	2	28,6%
Able to cite general evidence of <i>adab</i> and veneration	3	42,9%
Limited knowledge of evidence but believes in a religious basis	1	14,3%
Unaware of the specific <i>ḥadīth</i>	1	14,3%

These findings indicate that *living ḥadīth* in the practices of *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-*

yad, and *inhinā'* at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng is stronger in the praxis-conformative dimension than in the cognitive-textual dimension (Qudsy, 2016; Khosyiah, 2018). This condition does not necessarily indicate a weakness of the tradition, but rather reflects that the process of value transmission within the *pesantren* environment largely takes place through exemplary conduct, habituation, and the internalization of *adab* (Rafiq, 2020; Huda & Anwar, 2022). *Ḥadīth* in this context lives primarily as an inherited social practice, even though it is not always accompanied by detailed textual mastery on the part of all practitioners. This finding is consistent with the concept of *living ḥadīth* as *al-sunnah al-ḥayyah*, namely the study of *ḥadīth* practices that have taken place within community life with an emphasis on phenomenological aspects (Hasbillah, 2021; Ihsan & Ashshiddieqi, 2024).

The *santri*'s motivations in carrying out these practices also derive from a functional interpretation of *ḥadīth*. Altamis Tajusa Faidh, a junior *santri*, cited the *ḥadīth al-‘ulamā’ waratsat al-anbiyā’* (scholars are the inheritors of the prophets) as a foundation for placing the *kiai* and teachers in a position deserving of honor and reverence, and stated that loving the Prophet means also loving the scholars (Altamis Tajusa Faidh, personal communication, March 9, 2026). This *ḥadīth* is narrated in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, and *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Abū Dāwūd, 1323H; Ibn Mājah, 1430H; Al-Tirmidhī, 1996). Although scholars such as al-Dāruquṭnī have assessed it as a weak *ḥadīth* in terms of its chain of transmission (*sanad*), its meaning continues to be widely recognized within the Islamic scholarly tradition (Al-Maghribī, 1414H). Meanwhile, the narration concerning the conduct of 'Amr bin al-ʿĀṣ, who stated that he was unable to look fully at the Prophet SAW due to his profound sense of reverence, was shared by Ustadz Arif Khuzaini, the *pesantren* leader, as a reinforcement of the value of *adab* in the practice of *inhinā'* (Arif Khuzaini, personal communication, March 10, 2026). This narration demonstrates that profound respect toward a revered figure can be manifested through bodily posture and expressions of *adab* without necessarily taking the form of worship, thereby constituting an ethical basis that strengthens the legitimacy of the practice of *inhinā'* within the *pesantren* environment (Al-Harrārī, 2009; Syahid, 2020).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the traditions of *mushāfahah*, *taqbīl al-yad*, and *inhinā'* at Pesantren Sains Tebuireng constitute a dynamic, adaptive form of *living ḥadīth* that remains consonant with the values of the *sharīʿah*. First, the veneration practices are manifested in two principal forms: hand-kissing performed during handshaking with the *kiai* or *ustādh*, and bowing of the head carried out separately when encountering or passing before a teacher. Both

practices have become institutionalized in the daily lives of *santri* and have become a robust collective culture, as confirmed by questionnaire data from 50 *santri*. Second, the meanings and motivations underlying these practices encompass moral character development, veneration of knowledge, cultivation of *tawāḍuʿ* (humility), and the influence of the *pesantren* social environment and family education. Within the *pesantren* tradition, *adab* occupies a central position—even surpassing knowledge itself—and these veneration practices are a concrete manifestation of that value. Third, from the perspective of *ḥadīth*, *mushāfahah* possesses a strong foundation in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*; *taqbīl al-yad* is permissible based on authentic narrations and the position of the majority of scholars, provided it is intended as *taʿzīm dīnī* (religious veneration); while *inhināʾ* in the form of a slight bowing of the head does not fall within the prohibited category, taking into account the physical degree of the movement and the intention of the practitioner. From the *living ḥadīth* perspective, this tradition is more strongly expressed in the praxis-conformative dimension than in the cognitive-textual dimension, indicating that the transmission of values within the *pesantren* takes place primarily through exemplification, habituation, and the internalization of *adab*—rather than solely through explicit mastery of *ḥadīth* texts.

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