

The Meaning and Implications of the Use of Chickens in the Aqiqah Tradition: A Living Hadith Study in Torosiaje Jaya Village

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ABSTRACT

The Islamic tradition of aqiqah is normatively prescribed by the slaughter of a goat as a form of gratitude for the birth of a child. However, the people of Torosiaje Jaya Village practice the qukkor tradition by slaughtering a chicken as an alternative form that has developed through generations. This study aims to uncover the meaning and implications of using chickens in the aqiqah tradition and examine the implementation of living hadith in this local cultural practice. Using qualitative methods with an anthropological and historical approach, as well as thematic hadith analysis (maudhu'i), this study found that the qukkor tradition reflects the adaptation of hadith values in the socio-economic context of the community. In addition to preserving local culture, this practice strengthens social solidarity and the community's religious identity. Differences in community understanding between the slaughter of chickens and goats reflect the dynamics of the meaning of hadith in everyday life, making this tradition a concrete representation of living hadith that develops in the local cultural realm.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is endowed with a rich diversity of traditions, cultures, civilizations, and religions that extend from Sabang to Merauke. This plurality simultaneously generates both similarities and differences, yet remains unified under the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). Tradition, as an intergenerational legacy, is closely connected to human ideas and knowledge, which are manifested in daily practices.

Islam, as a religion of mercy, regulates all dimensions of life through two primary sources, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. In this regard, hadith functions as the second source of law, addressing not only legal and ritual matters but also traditions and other aspects of human life.

The interrelation between Islam and Indonesia's indigenous culture represents a compelling area of study. As a universal religion, Islam is present as a mercy for all creation, and its existence on earth is closely intertwined with local cultures. Therefore, religion and community culture cannot be separated, as both are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. This dynamic is also evident in Gorontalo society, which is well known for its rich local traditions. Most Islamic religious practices in Gorontalo are performed within a cultural framework that has been inherited across generations.

Aqiqah is one form of worship recommended in Islam as an expression of gratitude for the birth of a child. In a hadith narrated by Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated: *“Every child is held in pledge for his aqiqah; a sacrifice is made for him on the seventh day, his hair is shaved, and he is given a name.”* Generally, in performing aqiqah, two goats are sacrificed for a male child and one goat for a female child. This practice is categorized as a strongly recommended Sunnah (*sunnah mu’akkadah*) and carries profound social and spiritual significance, such as symbolizing sacrifice, expressing gratitude, and strengthening social solidarity within the community.

In the context of government initiatives promoting digital transformation in the economic, geographical, and cultural sectors, its implementation is also directly influenced by these factors. In Torosiaje Jaya Village, a coastal community in Gorontalo with strong maritime traditions and local customs, there has emerged a local practice known as *qukkor*. This tradition represents a localized form of *aqiqah*, in which chickens are used as sacrificial animals to replace goats, which are either difficult to obtain or considered too expensive by some members of the community. This phenomenon is particularly noteworthy to examine through the lens of *Living Hadith*, namely the study of how hadith is applied and given meaning within the cultural practices of society.

In general, *aqiqah* constitutes one of the Islamic rites classified as a Sunnah practice, and more specifically as *sunnah mu’akkadah* (a highly recommended Sunnah). Nevertheless, the practice of *aqiqah* within society is often carried out without sufficient understanding of its legal provisions in Islam. Etymologically, the term *aqiqah* is derived from the Arabic root word “عَقَّ” (*aqqa*), which means “to cut,” referring either to the hair of a newborn child or to the sacrificial goat slaughtered for the *aqiqah*. In essence, *aqiqah* refers to the slaughtering of an animal as an expression of gratitude for the birth of a child, which is ideally performed on the seventh day after birth in conjunction with shaving the infant’s hair.

Debates concerning *aqiqah* frequently arise among scholars as well as within the wider community. Differences of opinion generally revolve around the legal status of its performance, the required number of sacrificial animals, and the appropriate time for its implementation. The central issue often concerns whether *aqiqah* must be performed precisely on the seventh day after birth or whether it can be postponed to a later time. In addition, the family’s economic condition constitutes a significant factor, leading to cases where the *aqiqah* is postponed or even omitted altogether. This phenomenon is observable in society, where some individuals reach adulthood or even pass away without ever having an *aqiqah* performed on their behalf.

This study aims to reveal how the tradition of *qukkor* is practiced, how the hadith on *aqiqah* is socially and culturally implemented within the Torosiaje Jaya community, and how this practice is interpreted within their religious context. The research employs a qualitative approach through anthropological and historical perspectives, combined with a thematic analysis (*mawdu’i*) of *aqiqah*-related hadiths found in classical Islamic literature. Through this inquiry, the study seeks to demonstrate how hadith texts “live” and undergo transformation within a local context, while simultaneously highlighting the dynamic interaction between normative Islamic teachings and the socio-cultural realities faced by Muslim communities in remote areas.

General Overview of the Research Site

Torosiaje Jaya Village was officially established in 2003 through the initiative and efforts of community leaders and youth who succeeded in separating from its

parent village, Torosiaje Laut. Prior to its establishment, the area served as a settlement project initiated by the Social Affairs Department of North Sulawesi Province under the program known as PKSMT (*Proyek Kesejahteraan Sosial Masyarakat Terasing* or the Social Welfare Project for Isolated Communities), which began in the 1984–1985 fiscal year. The program was implemented in five stages, accommodating a total of 359 households: 125 households in 1984–1985, 50 households in 1987–1988, 50 households in 1993–1994, 50 households in 1996–1997, and 84 households in 1999–2000.

The livelihoods of most residents of Torosiaje Jaya Village are sustained by the fisheries sector and small-scale farming, with maize serving as the primary agricultural commodity. Currently, approximately 30 hectares of maize fields are cultivated and managed by four farmer groups. Meanwhile, fishing activities are supported by six fisher groups. Beyond these two main sectors, the community is also engaged in various economic enterprises, such as small shops, furniture production, mechanical workshops, carpentry services, and the trade of marine products, including both dried and fresh fish. This occupational diversity does not diminish social harmony among the villagers, while the village administrative system continues to operate effectively.

Type, Method, and Research Approach

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research, which aims to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, as well as the understanding and thoughts of individuals or groups. Qualitative research does not solely rely on interview techniques but also employs the library research method, as the data and materials required are obtained from literature such as books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, journals, documents, magazines, and other written sources.

This research method emphasizes presenting ḥadīth according to its practice and implementation within the community. Its purpose is to describe and analyze social phenomena, religious practices, cultural traditions, and the community's understanding of ḥadīth in depth, allowing the researcher to capture the dynamics of real-life situations without being restricted to quantitative data alone. Data collection is conducted through a combination of interviews, participatory observation, and literature review.

The data collection in this study was conducted through:

- a. In-depth interviews with local leaders, religious figures, and community members who practice qukkor.
- b. Participatory observation of the qukkor procession.
- c. Library research to review literature on ḥadīth, fiqh books, and previous studies on living ḥadīth and the 'aqīqah tradition.

The research employs the living ḥadīth approach, which has developed rapidly in Islamic studies and has become a recognized discipline within ḥadīth scholarship. The concept of living ḥadīth is interpreted differently by various scholars. According to Saifuddin Zuhry Qudsy, living ḥadīth can be understood as a form of study or practice manifested in traditions, rituals, and behaviors based on ḥadīth that evolve within society. Meanwhile, Sahiron Syamsudin emphasizes that living ḥadīth refers to ḥadīth interpreted freely by scholars, rulers, or judges according to the social and contextual circumstances at the time.

In Indonesia, the term living ḥadīth was first popularized by ḥadīth interpretation lecturers at UIN Sunan Kalijaga through the book *Metodologi Penelitian Living al-Qur'an dan Hadis* in 2007. This development emerged because ḥadīth studies

in the early 2000s were considered stagnant, with many focusing solely on the sanad (chain of narration) without examining its social practices.

Practices included in living ḥadīth are widely carried out by Muslims, as they are based on the example of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in conveying Islamic teachings. One example that is the focus of this study is the practice of 'aqīqah for infants, particularly the slaughtering of animals as part of the religious tradition carried out by the community.

The Implementation of the *Qukkor* Tradition in Torosiaje Jaya Village

In the *aqiqah* tradition of the Torosiaje Jaya community, the primary preparation involves selecting a goat. The goat used is typically male, with horns large enough to be grasped in one hand. In addition, it must be in good health and free from defects. The *aqiqah* tradition in Torosiaje Jaya is not limited to the act of slaughtering a goat but is also enriched with symbolic items such as a young coconut, turmeric rice, scissors, an umbrella, and coconut blossoms. Collectively, these elements embody prayers for safety, expressions of gratitude, and the community's attachment to ancestral customs handed down across generations.

According to Faldi Pakaya, the village head, the *aqiqah* process begins with the slaughtering of the goat. This is followed by prayers of gratitude and the hair-cutting ritual, accompanied by the recitation of *al-Barzanji* as an integral part of the *qukkor* tradition.¹

A similar perspective was expressed by Umar Pasandre, a traditional leader of Torosiaje Jaya Village. According to him, the series of *aqiqah* rituals begins with the preparation of the sacrificial animal, followed by its slaughter, the thanksgiving prayer (*syukuran*), and the hair-cutting ceremony accompanied by the recitation of *al-Barzanji* and supplications for the child. Before the hair-cutting ritual, the infant first undergoes the *kurungtigi* ritual, which involves applying a mixture of finely ground rice and turmeric to specific parts of the body, such as the head, chest, elbows, palms, navel, and the tops of the feet. The *kurungtigi* rite is believed to symbolize protection, ensuring that the child is safeguarded from evil spirits, protected from illness, and granted divine security. Afterward, the baby's hair is cut by an imam, and the child is then carried around three times before the guests while prayers and blessings (*salawāt*) upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are recited as a form of invoking blessings.²

As explained by Umar Pasandre, the recitation of *al-Barzanji* constitutes an essential element accompanying the *aqiqah* ritual in Torosiaje Jaya. When the recitation reaches the *maḥall al-qiyām* section, all attendees rise to their feet as a gesture of respect, while the infant whose hair is to be cut is brought before the imam for the initial hair-cutting. Following this, the child is carried around the guests three times, accompanied by the chanting of blessings (*salawāt*) upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), one of which is:

The *salawāt* recited is as follows:

"Yā Nabi, salām 'alaika. Yā Rasūl, salām 'alaika. Yā Ḥabīb, salām 'alaika. Ṣalawātullāh 'alaika. Asyraqa al-badru 'alainā, fakhtafat minhul budūr. Miṣla ḥusnika mā ra'ainā, qatṭu yā wajhas-surūr. Anta syamsun anta badrun, anta nūrun fawqa nūr."³

The meaning of this *salawāt* is:

"O Prophet, peace be upon you. O Messenger, peace be upon you. O Beloved of Allah, peace be upon you. May Allah's blessings be upon you. The full moon has risen upon us, causing the light of all other moons to fade. Never have we seen a beauty like

yours, O radiant face of joy. You are the sun, you are the full moon, you are light upon light."

From the perspective of Living Hadith, this tradition is regarded as a form of implementing the hadith on *aqiqah* in accordance with local social and cultural conditions. The community interprets the hadith on *aqiqah* in a contextual and flexible manner, where the essence of the practice lies in expressing gratitude and offering prayers for the child's well-being, rather than merely in its outward form, such as the sacrifice of a particular animal. This indicates that the understanding of hadith may be reshaped and adapted to the actual circumstances faced by society.

Amidst the government's efforts to promote digital transformation across various sectors, one local expression of adaptation is the use of chickens in the *qukkor* tradition—one for a boy and one for a girl. Nevertheless, this practice continues to be respected as part of the local culture, typically carried out by neighbors or close relatives. Moreover, the tradition plays a significant role in strengthening social solidarity, reinforcing kinship ties, and preserving the continuity of Islamic practices rooted in local values. Thus, the use of chickens in the *qukkor* tradition is not solely based on economic considerations but has become embedded within the community's religious culture. This reflects the dynamic interplay between *text* (hadith) and *context* (local culture), thereby affirming Living Hadith as an important approach for understanding Muslim religiosity in regions with distinctive characteristics, such as Torosiaje Jaya Village.

The Implementation of Living Hadith in the *Qukkor* Tradition of Torosiaje Jaya Village

Living Hadith is understood not merely as a normative text, but as hadith that is enlivened through social practices within Muslim life. Conceptually, Living Hadith illustrates the interaction between the *text* (hadith) and the *context* of local culture. Thus, Living Hadith functions as an approach within hadith studies that examines how prophetic traditions are practiced in real life whether through rituals, traditions, cultural expressions, or social behaviors. This is evident in the practices of the Torosiaje Jaya community, Popayato District, Pohuwato Regency, who interpret Living Hadith through the *qukkor* tradition.

For the people of Torosiaje Jaya, the *qukkor* tradition is understood as an expression of gratitude to Allah Almighty for the birth of a child. The ritual is performed with the intention of invoking blessings and protection for the infant, while also serving as a symbolic act of purification from elements considered impure. To this day, the *qukkor* tradition also known as *aqiqah* continues to be preserved and practiced by the Torosiaje Jaya community of Popayato District, Pohuwato Regency.

This study relates to the second research question, namely the implementation of Living Hadith in the *qukkor* tradition among the people of Torosiaje Jaya Village. Based on an interview with Faldi Pakaya, the Head of Torosiaje Jaya Village, he explained:

"Concerning the tradition of qukkor or aqiqah as I understand it, we adhere to the motto of Sultan Amai: 'custom is founded upon the shari'ah, and the shari'ah is founded upon the Book of Allah.' In Torosiaje Jaya Village, the tradition of aqiqah, as well as other traditions, never departs from the Islamic shari'ah."

From this explanation, it can be understood that, according to Faldi Pakaya, the *qukkor* tradition in Torosiaje Jaya is inseparable from the values of Islamic law. He emphasized that tradition and shari'ah complement one another, ensuring that the cultural practices of the community remain within the framework of Islamic teachings.

Thus, this interview illustrates how local traditions can coexist harmoniously with Islamic law in the life of the community.

The *qukkor* (*aqiqah*) tradition in Torosiaje Jaya is regarded as an obligation that ought to be carried out. This was expressed by Umar Pasandre, a local customary leader:

"What I know, my child, is that qukkor/aqiqah is a practice recommended (sunnah) by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and it becomes an obligation for us as Muslims."

From this interview, it is evident that Umar Pasandre understands *qukkor* not merely as a customary practice but also as part of the Islamic *shari'ah* recommended by the Prophet. For him, the performance of this tradition constitutes both a moral and religious duty incumbent upon every Muslim. Hence, the *qukkor* tradition holds a dual value: as a cultural ritual and as an enactment of religious teaching. This perspective reflects the community's commitment to preserving the continuity of Islamic law through local traditions that remain alive in Torosiaje Jaya.

In line with this perspective, Hardi Hamzah, a resident of Torosiaje Jaya, explained that the *qukkor* or *aqiqah* tradition is commonly understood in simple terms as a hair-cutting ceremony performed when a child reaches a certain age in accordance with religious guidance. He further added that he had also practiced this tradition for his own child, considering it both an enactment of the *shari'ah* and a means of preserving cultural heritage.

Based on an interview with Marwan Sidu, another resident of Torosiaje Jaya, the *qukkor* tradition is understood as an act of animal sacrifice combined with the cutting of the newborn's hair.¹ Similarly, Silvana Monginsi emphasized that, for the general public, the *qukkor* or *aqiqah* tradition is more widely recognized as a hair-cutting ritual.²

Meanwhile, according to Salma Bitiya, the *qukkor* tradition involves both the cutting of hair and the slaughtering of a goat as a form of prayer for the newborn's well-being.³

From these three accounts, it becomes evident that there is a variation in the community's understanding of the *qukkor* tradition. For some, *qukkor* is primarily understood as a hair-cutting ritual, whereas for others it encompasses two practices: the cutting of hair and the slaughtering of a goat as an expression of gratitude for the child's birth. This indicates that the practice of *qukkor* in Torosiaje Jaya may be performed either in a simplified or more comprehensive manner, depending on each individual's knowledge and experience.

Based on an interview with Kisman, a religious leader in Torosiaje Jaya, the *qukkor* or *aqiqah* tradition is essentially in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as described in the hadith.¹ However, in practice, certain local customs have been incorporated by the community – one of which is the use of chicken as the sacrificial animal. Kisman explained that this practice is a hereditary tradition passed down from previous generations and continues to be preserved among the people of Torosiaje Jaya today.

This is consistent with the account of Marwan Sidu, who explained that in earlier times, when the community had not yet been familiar with livestock such as goats, *aqiqah* was performed using chickens.² Although, with the passage of time and greater awareness through sermons delivered by local *ustadhs* and religious leaders, many residents now perform *aqiqah* with goats, some members of the community still continue the tradition of using chickens.

From this interview, it is clear that the practice of *qukkor* in Torosiaje Jaya represents a combination of Islamic *shari'ah* and local custom. The community seeks to observe the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) while simultaneously preserving cultural elements handed down through generations, even as adaptations are made in light of new understandings regarding the sacrificial animal to be used.

Based on an interview with Silvana Monginsi, the practice of the *qukkor* tradition in Torosiaje Jaya continues to be influenced by customs inherited from previous generations.¹ She explained that some members of the community who are less familiar with the Prophet's guidance still carry out *aqiqah* using chickens. In earlier times, according to ancestral custom, the use of a goat for *aqiqah* was only recommended for those who were financially capable, while the use of a chicken—or even merely smearing the blood of a chicken—was also considered acceptable. In contemporary practice, Silvana emphasized that for girls, the sunnah of the Prophet is followed by sacrificing one goat. Nevertheless, for other children who are “included” in the ritual through such symbolic practices, the community continues to regard this as a legitimate form of *aqiqah*.

This aligns with the account of Marwan Sidu, who stated that the practice of performing *aqiqah* with chickens was a custom of the older generations and continues to be preserved to this day.² However, along with the advancement of time, technological progress, and the dissemination of information through social media and religious sermons, some members of the community have begun to understand the Prophet's sunnah more accurately, namely by using goats for *aqiqah*. Thus, the practice of *qukkor* in Torosiaje Jaya reflects a synthesis between local tradition and the evolving understanding of Islamic *shari'ah*.

Based on an interview with Lukman Langke, the term *qukkor* originates from the Bajo language, meaning hair-cutting or *aqiqah*, and is regarded as a symbol of Islam for both boys and girls.¹ He emphasized that the performance of *qukkor* does not necessarily require the slaughtering of a goat; the sacrifice of an animal is carried out only by those who are financially capable as an expression of gratitude. In accordance with the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the *qukkor* tradition continues to be practiced, though its form of implementation may be adapted to the economic capacity of each family, for instance by sacrificing a goat or a cow according to their preference.

Scholarly Perspectives on the Hadith of Aqiqah

According to the explanation of al-Khattabi (may Allah have mercy on him), Imam Ahmad once stated that this matter is related to *shafā'ah* (intercession). The meaning, he explained, is that if a child is not given an *aqiqah* and then passes away at a young age, the child would not be able to intercede on behalf of his or her parents. Nevertheless, this statement does not appear to be the direct *ijtihād* of Imam Ahmad himself but rather a reference to the opinions of earlier scholars.

‘Atā’ al-Khurasānī, a prominent scholar among the Tabi’in, was once asked about the meaning of the phrase “tergadai dengan akikahnya” (“held in pledge by his *aqiqah*”). A narration reported by Imam al-Bayhaqī through Yahyā ibn Ḥamzah mentions that when he inquired of ‘Atā’ al-Khurasānī regarding the expression, the latter explained that it refers to the child's intercession for the parents being withheld. However, this interpretation was later criticized by Ibn al-Qayyim, who argued that such an understanding is not accurate.

He emphasized that the meaning of the term "withheld/held in pledge" (*murtahan*) in the hadith of *aqiqah* remains a matter of scholarly disagreement. Some scholars understood it to mean that the child is prevented from interceding on behalf of his or her parents, as explained by 'Atā' and later followed by Imam Ahmad. However, this interpretation is considered less accurate, since the intercession of a child for the parents is not deemed more significant than the intercession of parents for their child.

When the Prophet ﷺ prescribed the removal of outward impurities from the child through the shaving of the newborn's hair, along with the slaughtering of the *aqiqah* animal as a symbolic act of blood-shedding signifying inner purification, it becomes clear that the ultimate aim of *aqiqah* is to purify the child from both physical and spiritual impurities. Nevertheless, Allah Almighty alone knows best the true intent of His command and the purpose conveyed by His Messenger.

CONCLUSION

In the midst of the Indonesian government's efforts to promote digital transformation across various sectors, the substitution of chickens for goats in the *aqiqah* ritual reflects not only economic limitations but also a deeply rooted process of cultural adaptation. This practice continues to preserve the essence of the hadith, namely the expression of gratitude for the birth of a child and prayers for the infant's well-being.

Within the field of hadith studies, scholars such as al-Suyūṭī and al-Nawawī emphasize the importance of understanding hadith in light of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law), rather than focusing solely on its literal textual aspects. Al-Nawawī, in his *al-Majmū'*, explains that under certain circumstances, the community is permitted to adopt *rukhsah* (legal concessions) in accordance with its social conditions. This perspective aligns with the principle of living hadith, which underscores the continuity of hadith meaning within the lived experiences of Muslim communities. As Syuhudi Ismail highlights, hadith does not merely remain as static texts but continues to manifest dynamically within society.

The *qukkor* tradition demonstrates that the understanding of hadith within the community is plural. Most people choose to sacrifice a goat in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), while others opt to sacrifice a chicken as an expression of gratitude that is still considered valid in terms of its spiritual value. Thus, this tradition reflects the encounter between normative Islamic teachings and the social realities of the community.

This study affirms the importance of the *living hadith* approach in examining the religiosity of Indonesian Muslims. The *qukkor* tradition serves as evidence that the interpretation of hadith is dynamic, adaptive, and continues to evolve in line with the essential values of Islam, as emphasized by both classical and contemporary scholars.

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