

## CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE INTERPRETATION OF HADITH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SYUHUDI ISMAIL, IBN TAYMIYYAH, AND MUHAMMAD IBN 'ABD AL-WAHHAB

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### Abstract

The Prophetic hadith is one of the main sources of Islamic teachings after the Qur'an. However, the understanding and application of hadith is not always uniform in different places and times. One of the factors that influence the interpretation of hadith is the cultural background of the scholars who study them. This study discusses how the cultural background influenced the thinking of Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab so that they rejected culture as part of Islamic teachings, as well as how Syuhudi Ismail's cultural background shaped his views which are more flexible in accepting culture as part of the practice of the Prophet's hadith. Using historical and comparative analysis methods, this study found that Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab were born in a social context that tended to be puritanical and tried to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings from external influences, so they were stricter in understanding hadith within the limits of the original text and context. In contrast, Syuhudi Ismail, who lives in a plural and culturally inclusive society, tends to interpret hadith with an interdisciplinary approach that considers cultural relevance. Thus, this study confirms that culture has a significant role in shaping the understanding of hadith and its application in the lives of Muslims.

Keywords: Hadith; Culture; Ibn Taimiyah; Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab; Syuhdi Ismail.

### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary hadith studies, the interpretation of hadith should not be confined merely to the textual dimension. It also requires attention to contextual and extra-textual elements that contribute to a more accurate understanding of the meanings intended in the Prophet's sayings (Yahya, 2024). Culture represents a significant extra-textual factor that should not be neglected in examining how hadith is interpreted, understood, and applied within social contexts (Yaqub, 2021). The use of a cultural approach in understanding hadith has generated scholarly debate, eliciting both acceptance and criticism among certain Muslim scholars (Wasman dkk., 2023). Ibn Taymiyyah, whose thought exerted considerable influence on Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, is often understood as firmly rejecting cultural approaches to the interpretation of hadith (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). Unlike Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, Syuhudi Ismail demonstrated a more receptive stance toward the cultural approach in the interpretation of hadith (Miftah dkk., 2026).

Both Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab developed their religious thought within socio-cultural contexts that strongly emphasized the purification of Islamic teachings, particularly through the rejection of religious innovations and practices considered to have no explicit foundation in the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Tujang, 2016). Their socio-cultural backgrounds, influenced by social conditions that encouraged a return to what was perceived as the purity of Islam, shaped their strict attitude toward the incorporation of cultural practices into

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Islamic teachings. Consequently, they rejected practices such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, grave visitation aimed at seeking blessings (*tabarruk*), and other traditions deemed to constitute *bid'ah* (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, 1996).

In contrast, Syuhudi Ismail, who lived in a more inclusive socio-cultural environment characterized by rich local traditions, approached hadith from a more contextual perspective. In his view, Islam is a flexible religion capable of engaging with and adapting to culture, provided that such cultural expressions do not contradict the fundamental principles of *tawhīd* and the Shari'ah (Anggoro, 2019). Accordingly, Syuhudi Ismail acknowledged various local traditions as legitimate expressions of Islamic practice, as long as they did not conflict with the core values of Islamic teachings. His interdisciplinary approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of hadith, extending beyond a merely literal reading of the text by considering the broader social and cultural contexts in which hadith is understood and applied.

In light of these fundamental differences, this study seeks to answer the central question of the extent to which cultural background influences the interpretation and practical application of the Prophet's hadith. Through a comparative analysis of the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, and Syuhudi Ismail, this research argues that hadith, as a primary source of Islamic teachings, cannot be entirely detached from the cultural contexts within which it is interpreted, understood, and practiced.

Scholarly studies on the influence of culture on the understanding of hadith have been extensively conducted by previous researchers. Relevant works include studies on the methodological orientations of Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in critically addressing cultural practices perceived as religious innovations, as well as studies on Syuhudi Ismail's more contextual approach to the interpretation of hadith. Among the previous studies is the work conducted by Abidin, entitled "*The Pattern of Thought and Method of Ijtihād of Ibn Taymiyyah*" (Abidin, 2010a). This article discusses the characteristics of Ibn Taymiyyah's thought and his methodology of *ijtihād*, particularly his position on cultural practices that he regarded as lacking a clear foundation in the Shari'ah (Abidin, 2010b). Another relevant study is an article entitled "M. Syuhudi Ismail's Contribution to the Contextualization of Hadith Understanding." This article examines Syuhudi Ismail's contribution to developing the conceptual and practical foundations of contextual hadith interpretation in Indonesia, with particular emphasis on his hermeneutical approach, which considers social and cultural contexts in the process of understanding hadith (fzakka,+7.+Amrulloh, t.t.). Another study examines Syuhudi Ismail's approach to hadith interpretation by emphasizing the significance of both textual and contextual analysis, as well as the influence of earlier scholarly traditions on the development of his methodology (Fithoroini, 2021).

Previous studies suggest that Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb tended to approach hadith interpretation within relatively strict textual parameters. Both figures were critical of traditions that they regarded as lacking a direct foundation in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For example, in *Iqtidhā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, Ibn Taymiyyah strongly criticized religious innovations (*bid'ah*) that he considered contrary to the normative teachings of Islam. Similarly, in *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb emphasized the need to preserve the purity of monotheism by rejecting religious practices perceived as being mixed with cultural elements that could lead to deviation.

In contrast, studies on Syuhudi Ismail's thought show that he gave greater emphasis to a contextual approach in the interpretation of hadith. In his work *Metodologi Ilmu Hadis*, Syuhudi Ismail elaborates on the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, whereby hadith is examined not only through the analysis of its chain of transmission (*sanad*) and textual content (*matn*), but also in relation to the socio-cultural context in which it is understood.

This study seeks to extend previous scholarship by placing the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, and Syuhudi Ismail within a single, in-depth comparative

framework. Methodologically, this research adopts a qualitative design, employing historical, comparative, and textual analytical approaches.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach by employing historical-comparative and textual analytical methods. These methods are used to examine how social and cultural backgrounds shape the understanding of hadith among three figures: Ibn Taymiyyah, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, and Syuhudi Ismail (Lexy J. Moloeng, 2013). The historical method is employed to investigate the biographical contexts, social conditions, and religious dynamics that informed the development of each figure’s thought. Meanwhile, the comparative method is used to identify the similarities and differences among the three figures’ perspectives in interpreting and applying hadith in relation to culture and tradition (Sumanto, 2014).

Textual analysis is applied to the principal works of the selected figures, particularly those dealing with hadith interpretation, tradition, bid‘ah, and culture. The primary sources of this research consist of Ibn Taymiyyah’s works, including *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā and Iqtidā’ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*; Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s works, including *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd and Kashf al-Shubuhāt*; and Syuhudi Ismail’s works on hadith methodology and contextual understanding. The secondary sources comprise books, journal articles, and previous studies relevant to the subject of this research. This study focuses on analyzing the extent to which socio-cultural backgrounds shape the construction of hadith understanding, as well as the differing positions of the selected figures in accepting or rejecting cultural elements within religious practice.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Ibn Taymiyyah

Ibn Taymiyyah’s full name was Taqī al-Dīn Abu al-‘Abbas Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī al-Ḥanbalī. He was born on 10 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 661 AH / 22 January 1263 CE in Harran, a city located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which at that time formed part of the Abbasid Caliphate. Ibn Taymiyyah came from a prominent scholarly family. His father, ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, was a leading scholar of hadith in Damascus, while his grandfather, ‘Abd al-Salām, was also a renowned scholar in Baghdad. In 1268 CE, his family migrated to Damascus after the city of Harran was devastated by the Mongol invasion (Khoir & Haryati, 2024).

He received his education in a strong scholarly environment in Damascus and mastered various fields of Islamic knowledge, including theology, jurisprudence, Qur’anic exegesis, and hadith. At the age of twenty-one, he succeeded his father as a teacher at the madrasa and began to play an active role in intellectual and religious circles. Ibn Taymiyyah was widely known as a scholar who strongly opposed bid‘ah, superstition, and religious practices that he regarded as deviating from the purity of Islamic teachings. His thought often generated controversy, and he was imprisoned several times due to his legal opinions, which challenged the religious and political authorities of his time. Ibn Taymiyyah emerged as a scholar during a period in which the Muslim world was experiencing political, social, and religious crises. The Mongol invasions, political fragmentation, and the spread of doctrines and practices that he considered inconsistent with Islam shaped his firm, conservative, and purification-oriented thought. He called for a return to the Qur’an and the Sunnah, rejected foreign intellectual influences that he deemed incompatible with Islam, and sought to reform the political and social conditions of the Muslim community in his time. His thought continues to exert influence today, particularly in Islamic reform movements and Salafism (Muhibudin, 2022).

In this socio-religious context, Ibn Taymiyyah encountered the widespread development of various Sufi-oriented practices, including grave visitation rituals, the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (*Mawlid*), and the collective recitation of *tahlīl* for the deceased. He viewed such practices as religious deviations that could compromise the purity of Islamic teachings and therefore sought to restore the Muslim community to a stricter conception of tawḥīd. In particular, he expressed concern that excessive forms of grave visitation might lead to shirk, as he believed had occurred

among earlier religious communities. These historical and socio-religious circumstances shaped Ibn Taymiyyah's critical stance toward the use of tradition and culture as interpretive frameworks for understanding and contextualizing hadith.

### **Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab**

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb was born in 1703 in al-'Uyaynah, Najd, a central region of the Arabian Peninsula. He came from a family of Ḥanbalī scholars and displayed a strong aptitude for religious knowledge from an early age. Having pursued his studies in various centers of Islamic learning, including Mecca, Medina, and Basra, he later returned to Najd with a reformist commitment to purifying Islamic teachings (Al-Qaḥṭānī, 1999). From Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's perspective, eighteenth-century central Arabian society was characterized by the prevalence of various practices that he regarded as deviations from the purity of Islamic teachings. These included the veneration of graves, the use of amulets, and ritual practices that, in his view, lacked a clear foundation in Islamic law. Such conditions prompted him to call for a return to pure *tawḥīd* and to reject all forms of *bid'ah* and superstition (Farah, 2017). Fundamentally, his thought was also influenced by the ideas and teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah. Based on his understanding of the socio-religious conditions surrounding him at the time, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab sought to respond to practices that he regarded as contrary to Islamic teachings through several measures:

1. Through preaching and education, he actively taught and disseminated writings that emphasized the importance of *tawḥīd* and the dangers of *shirk*. Through his sermons and written works, he sought to educate society about what he regarded as correct Islamic teachings.
2. Through an alliance with local rulers, he established cooperation with Muḥammad ibn Sa'ud, the ruler of Diriyah, in order to gain political and military support for the dissemination of his teachings. This alliance became the foundation for the establishment of the First Saudi State and facilitated the spread of the Islamic purification movement that he initiated.
3. Through the enforcement of Islamic law, and with the support of political authority, he sought to implement Islamic law strictly, including efforts to eliminate practices considered to be *bid'ah* and *shirk*. These efforts were undertaken with the aim of returning society to what he understood as the purity of Islamic teachings (Mangasing, 2008).

His intellectual affinity with Ibn Taymiyyah, combined with his perception of the surrounding socio-religious environment as being contrary to the purity of Islamic teachings, encouraged Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab to interpret hadith through a predominantly textual approach and to resist the incorporation of cultural influences into the domain of religious doctrine.

### **Syuhudi Ismail**

Muḥammad Syuhudi Ismail was born on 23 April 1943 in Rowo Kangkung, Lumajang, East Java, and died on 19 November 1995 in Jakarta. He was known as a Muslim scholar, academic, and hadith expert who made significant contributions to the development of hadith studies in Indonesia. He was the first scholar to obtain a doctorate in hadith studies from IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and was appointed Professor of Hadith on 26 March 1994. His works comprise more than 164 publications, including *Pengantar Ilmu Hadis* (1987) and *Ulumul Hadis* (1992), both of which became important references in hadith studies in Indonesia. Muḥammad Syuhudi Ismail was raised in a family environment shaped by Madurese and Javanese cultural backgrounds, known for its religiosity and strong intellectual tradition (Ilyas & Suliaman, 2017). The convergence of these cultural backgrounds contributed to the formation of his moderate and systematic approach to understanding Islam.

Throughout his intellectual development, he was also influenced by Harun Nasution and Quraish Shihab, who introduced modern and rational approaches to Islamic studies. This influence encouraged him to employ an interdisciplinary approach in hadith studies, particularly through a cultural approach. One of the key approaches developed by Syuhudi Ismail is the contextual approach to hadith understanding. He maintained that the matn of hadith may contain universal, temporal, or local dimensions; therefore, its interpretation must take into account the cultural and social contexts of the community in which the hadith is understood and applied (Dadah., 2022.).

This long intellectual process enabled Syuhudi Ismail to develop a broad and profound understanding of the social and cultural conditions surrounding him. It also shaped his open perspective and way of thinking, allowing him to accept and distinguish cultural practices and traditions that he regarded as representations of Islamic teachings. Ultimately, he accepted culture as an important element in understanding and interpreting religious texts, including the Qur'an and hadith (Jamil & Arifin, 2025).

### Theory of Cultural or Environmental Influence

Based on several theories, culture or the surrounding environment can have an impact and influence on individuals, as stated by a number of scholars. Among these is behaviorism, associated with B. F. Skinner and John Watson. This theory argues that individual behavior is shaped by the environment through processes of habituation and conditioning (Isnaini dkk., t.t.). Behavior is regarded as a response to external stimuli, and learning occurs through interaction with the environment. In a cultural context, individuals adopt behaviors that correspond to the norms and values prevailing in their society. From this theoretical perspective, individual behavior is understood as being influenced by external factors, including culture, family members, close friends, and the surrounding environment (M. Ulum & Fauzi, 2023).

The next perspective is social constructivism. This theory emphasizes that knowledge and social reality are formed through social and cultural interactions. Individuals do not merely receive information passively; rather, they actively construct understanding through experience and interaction with others. Culture provides a framework through which individuals interpret the world around them (Fuadah dkk., 2026).

Structuralism argues that underlying structures within the human mind influence how individuals understand the world. Culture consists of systems of signs and symbols that shape individual patterns of thought and perception. Through these structures, individuals interpret their experiences and construct an understanding of reality (Ahmad, 2025).

Functionalist theory views society as a system consisting of interrelated parts that function to maintain social balance and order. In this regard, culture plays a role in providing guidelines for behavior and strengthening social solidarity (Abrori & Rofiq, t.t.). Cultural traditions and rituals contribute to individuals' sense of belonging within a community and help them understand their social roles within the broader structure of society..

Abū Ṭāhir ibn Bashīr, in his work *al-Tanbīh 'alā Mabādi' al-Tawjīh*, states that:

مما لا شك فيه أن للبيئة وللظروف المحيطة بالإنسان تأثيرًا على حياته وسلوكه وثقافته، حتى قيل: إن الإنسان ابن بيئته، وكلما ازداد اطلاع الإنسان واتسعت ثقافته ومعارفه، دل ذلك على اتساع الرقعة المؤثرة فيه، فالعالم لا يتأثر ببيئته الضيقة فحسب، بل يتأثر بالمحيط الواسع الذي يتصل به.

“There is no doubt that a person's environment and surrounding conditions exert an influence on his life, behavior, and culture. It is even said that human beings are products of their environment. The broader a person's perspective, and the more developed his culture and knowledge, the wider the range of influences he receives. A scholar, for instance, is not only influenced by his immediate environment, but also by the wider world with which he establishes connections.”

The environment and social conditions exert a significant influence on individual development, particularly in the aspects of thought, behavior, and culture. The notion that human beings are products of their environment indicates that one's understanding and patterns of thought are not formed independently, but are shaped by external factors such as culture,

education, and social interaction. Furthermore, the broader a person's intellectual horizon, the greater the range of influences he receives from various sources. This suggests that an individual exposed to diverse experiences and forms of knowledge is shaped not only by his immediate environment, but also by wider global dynamics (Ibn Bashīr, 2001). This is particularly relevant in the modern era, in which openness to culture and information from various parts of the world increasingly influences the way individuals think and act. The theories discussed above explain the various ways in which culture influences individuals, ranging from the formation of behavior through habituation to the construction of social reality through interaction and cultural symbols.

### Ibn Taymiyyah's and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's Views on Culture and Tradition

Both Ibn Taymiyyah (661–728 AH) and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1115–1206 AH) rejected various religious traditions that lacked a foundation in the Qur'an and authentic hadith. They argued that religion must return to the purity of *tawḥīd* and the Sunnah of the Prophet, without cultural additions or new religious innovations (*bid'ah*) (Tujang, 2016).

Ibn Taymiyyah authored several works, one of which is *Iqtidā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm li Mukhālafat Aṣḥāb al-Jahīm*. In this work, Ibn Taymiyyah rejects all forms of tashabbuh toward non-Muslims in matters of worship and religious celebrations (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2003). He emphasized that Muslims should avoid practices that have no basis in the Sunnah of the Prophet, including traditions such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*) and other religious festivals. Another important work is *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, a collection of Ibn Taymiyyah's legal opinions. In this work, he firmly criticizes practices such as *tahlīlan*, the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, and excessive grave visitation. He regarded these traditions as forms of *bid'ah* that could lead to shirk, particularly when they involved elements of veneration directed toward beings other than Allah (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995).

The narrative of Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of certain traditions can be seen in several practices, one of which is his rejection of the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*). In *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses and explains a question concerning religious practices performed on the night of the Prophet's birth. The wording is as follows:

وسئل: عن يعمل كل سنة ختمة في ليلة مولد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم هل ذلك مستحب؟ أم لا؟ فأجاب: الحمد لله، جمع الناس للطعام في العيدين وأيام التشريق سنة وهو من شعائر الإسلام التي سنّها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم للمسلمين وإعانة الفقراء بالإطعام في شهر رمضان هو من سنن الإسلام. فقد قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم " {من فطر صائماً فله مثل أجره} وإعطاء فقراء القراء ما يستعينون به على القرآن عمل صالح في كل وقت ومن أعانهم على ذلك كان شريكهم في الأجر. وأما اتخاذ موسم غير المواسم الشرعية كبعث ليالي شهر ربيع الأول التي يقال: إنها ليلة المولد أو بعض ليالي رجب أو ثامن عشر ذي الحجة أو أول جمعة من رجب أو ثامن شوال الذي يسميه الجهال عيد الأبرار فإنها من البدع التي لم يستحبها السلف ولم يفعلوها والله سبحانه وتعالى أعلم.

He was asked: Concerning a person who completes the recitation of the Qur'an every year on the night of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*), is such an act recommended or not? He replied: Praise be to Allah. Gathering people for meals on the two Eids and during the days of *Tashrīq* is part of the Sunnah and constitutes one of the Islamic symbols that the Messenger of Allah prescribed for Muslims. Assisting the poor by providing them with food during the month of Ramadan is also part of the Sunnah of Islam. The Prophet said: "Whoever provides food for a fasting person to break his fast will receive a reward similar to that of the fasting person." Providing assistance to poor Qur'an reciters so that they may continue reciting the Qur'an is a righteous deed at any time. Whoever assists them in this matter shares in their reward. However, designating a specific time as a religious celebration other than those that have been prescribed, such as certain nights in the month of *Rabī' al-Awwal* that are referred to as the night of *Mawlid*, certain nights in *Rajab*, the eighteenth of *Dhū al-Hijjah*, the first Friday of *Rajab*, or the eighth of *Shawwāl*, which some ignorant people call "Īd al-Abrār," all of these are innovations (*bid'ah*) that were neither recommended nor practiced by the early generations (*salaf*) And Allah knows best.

He explicitly stated that commemorating the Prophet's birth is not part of Islam as taught by the Messenger of Allah and his Companions. Rather, it is an innovation (*bid'ah*) introduced by later generations. Although some people may perform it with good intentions, this does not make

it an authentic Sunnah. The next issue concerns his rejection of the tradition of *tahlīlan* and death commemoration rituals. Still in the same work, Ibn Taymiyyah stated that reciting the Qur'an for the deceased and gathering to pray for the souls of the dead are not part of the Prophet's Sunnah. He argued that the Messenger of Allah and his Companions never gathered to recite the Qur'an and pray for the deceased; therefore, such a practice should not be established as a customary religious practice.

The next issue concerns his rejection of grave visitation accompanied by specific rituals. In *Iqtidā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, Ibn Taymiyyah rejected excessive forms of grave visitation, particularly when they involved elements of supplication to the dead. He stated that "turning graves into places of worship or seeking help from the deceased constitutes a deviation in creed." The background of Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of such traditions can be understood in relation to the socio-religious context in which he lived, where various Sufi-oriented practices had become widespread, including grave visitation rituals, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*), and the collective recitation of *tahlīl* for the deceased. He viewed these practices as deviations from the purity of Islamic teachings and sought to restore the Muslim community to a stricter understanding of *tawḥīd*. He was also concerned that excessive forms of grave visitation could lead to *shirk*, as he believed had occurred among earlier communities. His rejection of traditions and cultural practices that he considered outside the framework of Islam influenced his approach to hadiths related to certain religious practices within social life (Azkiyah & A, 2025).

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb also rejected certain traditions and cultural practices. He authored several works that contain discussions criticizing such traditions. Among his works is *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, which presents a strong critique of practices that he regarded as deviating from *tawḥīd*, such as *tawassul*, grave visitation, and the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*) (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, 1996). Another relevant work is *Kashf al-Shubuhāt*. In this book, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb explains that many people fall into error by considering practices such as praying at graves or seeking blessings from righteous persons to be part of Islam. Another work is *Mukhtaṣar Ṣirat Rasūl Allāh*, in which he discusses the biography of the Prophet and emphasizes the importance of following the Prophet's example without adding to or subtracting from his teachings (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, 1978).

The narrative of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's rejection of tradition can be seen in several aspects. First is his rejection of grave visitation accompanied by mystical beliefs. In *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab states: Those who seek help from deceased saints have committed a form of *shirk* similar to that committed by the polytheists of Quraysh during the time of the Prophet (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, 1996). Second is his rejection of the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*). His rejection of *Mawlid* is indirectly reflected in his work *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, which emphasizes the purification of *tawḥīd*. From this perspective, he regarded the celebration of *Mawlid* as a religious innovation (*bid'ah*) because it resembled the practices of non-Muslims, a view that was widely affirmed by his followers. According to this view, celebrating the Prophet's birthday constitutes a form of worship, and worship must have a valid textual basis. The celebration of *Mawlid*, however, is not part of the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah and represents an addition to religion. Third is his rejection of *tawassul* and *tabarruk*, namely seeking blessings through righteous individuals. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab rejected both *tawassul* and *tabarruk*, stating that seeking blessings from the dead or from particular objects was a pre-Islamic practice (*jāhiliyyah*) that had been opposed by the Prophet Muḥammad (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, 1978).

The background of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's rejection of certain traditions can be traced to the fact that he lived in the Arabian Peninsula during the eighteenth century, a period in which various Sufi practices and mystical beliefs were developing, such as grave visitation, *tawassul* to saints, and rituals of *tabarruk*. He regarded these practices as deviations from *tawḥīd* because they were considered capable of leading to *shirk*. The movement he initiated, later known as Wahhabism, sought to restore Islam to its pure teachings based on the Qur'an and authentic hadith, free from cultural additions.

Comparative Table of the Similarities and Differences between Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb

Aspect	Ibn Taymiyyah	Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab
<b>Primary Focus</b>	Purification of Islam from Bid‘ah	Purification of Tawḥīd from Shirk
<b>Rejection of Mawlid</b>	Mawlid is a religious innovation ( <i>bid‘ah</i> ) that was not practiced by the Prophet	Mawlid is regarded as a form of <i>tashabbuh</i> with Christian practices
<b>Grave Visitation</b>	Permissible, provided that one does not supplicate to the deceased	Strongly rejected, as it may lead to shirk.
<b>Approach to Da‘wah</b>	Using scholarly arguments and textual evidence	More aggressive and more willing to challenge tradition

Several points can be drawn from the table above, including the following:

1. Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb both rejected traditions such as *Mawlid*, *tahlīlan*, and grave visitation accompanied by specific rituals.
2. Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb adopted a stricter position, as he regarded many traditions as forms of shirk.
3. Ibn Taymiyyah was more argumentative in his approach, although he still considered many traditions to be religious innovations (*bid‘ah*) that should be abandoned

### Syuhudi Ismail’s Openness to Culture and Tradition as Part of the Islamic Intellectual Heritage

Muḥammad Syuhudi Ismail is known as an Indonesian Muslim scholar who adopted an open approach to culture and tradition in understanding hadith. This approach is reflected in the methodology he developed, which involves three main steps. First, textual analysis: Syuhudi Ismail begins by examining the hadith text in depth in order to understand its literal meaning. Second, identification of the historical context: he then identifies the historical context in which the hadith emerged, including the social, cultural, and specific situational background surrounding it. Third, contextualization of hadith: the final step is to contextualize the hadith within contemporary circumstances by considering its relevance and application in modern life (Miftah dkk., 2026). Through this methodology, Syuhudi Ismail emphasized the importance of understanding hadith not only textually, but also within the social and cultural contexts that surround it (Nasrulloh & Witro, 2022). This approach allows for the integration of local traditions and culture into religious practice, provided that they do not contradict the fundamental principles of Islam.

The background factors that influenced Syuhudi Ismail’s openness to culture and tradition include the social environment and education he received. He was born in Rowo Kangkung, Lumajang, East Java, on 23 April 1943, to Ismail ibn Mistin ibn Soemohardjo and Sufiyatun bint M. Ja‘far. His father was of Madurese descent, while his mother was of Javanese descent, providing him with direct exposure to cultural diversity from an early age (Khotimah, 2023)

In addition, both the formal and non-formal education he received contributed to the formation of his inclusive perspective. Syuhudi Ismail studied at various Islamic educational institutions, which provided him with a deep understanding of Islamic teachings as well as an awareness of the importance of considering cultural contexts in the interpretation of religious texts. In his works, such as *Metodologi Ilmu Hadis*, Syuhudi Ismail emphasized that the understanding of hadith should take social and cultural contexts into account. He argued that Islam is a flexible religion capable of adapting to various cultures, as long as they do not deviate from the principles

of *tawhīd* and the *Sharī'ah*. This approach allows local traditions and cultural practices to be integrated into religious life, making them part of the intellectual heritage used to understand religious texts. Thus, Syuhudi Ismail's openness to culture and tradition was grounded in his belief that contextual and inclusive religious understanding can enrich religious practice and ensure its relevance across diverse social situations and conditions (Addzaky, 2024).

### Reflection on the Influence of Culture in Hadith Interpretation

The approach to hadith in accepting or rejecting culture within Islam is based on different frameworks of thought between these two groups. The following analysis explains how each group understands hadith and applies it in relation to culture. The group that rejects culture, represented by the Salafi/Wahhabi orientation, has a particular conceptual framework for interpreting and understanding religious texts. This framework is built upon several main principles. First, Islam is regarded as a perfected religion, as stated in Q.S. *al-Mā'idah*: 3. Second, all forms of worship must have a clear foundation in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. Third, culture should not be incorporated into Islam unless it has been established by the Prophet (R. Ulum, 2016). Consequently, in interpreting and applying hadith, this orientation tends to be restrictive and confined to textual considerations. Examples of the application of this method are as follows:

How do they understand the hadith concerning the ease of Islam, which serves as a universal concept and a basis for flexibility among those who are open to culture?

إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ

“Indeed, this religion is easy.”– HR. *al-Bukhari* no. 39 (Al-Bukhārī, 2002)

This hadith does not imply the acceptance of new cultural practices, but rather indicates that Islam does not impose hardship in acts of worship that have already been established by the Prophet. (Al-'Aynī, 2001) Ease in Islam means practicing the pure teachings of religion without the addition of *bid'ah*. If a practice was never performed by the Prophet, then it is not considered part of Islam, even if society regards it as easy or acceptable. In conclusion, they reject the interpretation that this hadith can be used to justify the acceptance of culture as part of Islamic teachings

How do they understand the hadith concerning the acceptance of culture, which serves as a concept of openness within Islamic teachings?

مَا رَأَى الْمُسْلِمُونَ حَسَنًا فَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ حَسَنٌ

What Muslims regard as good is also regarded as good in the sight of Allah (HR. Ahmad no. 3600) (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001)

This hadith applies only to matters that are supported by valid *Sharī'ah* evidence. The goodness referred to in the hadith is that which was taught by the Prophet and agreed upon by the Companions, not newly adopted cultural practices introduced by later communities. Therefore, they continue to reject new practices such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*) or *tahlīlan*, because these practices were not performed by the Prophet and his Companions. Culture cannot be regarded as part of Islam, since Islam is already complete without the addition of local traditions (Al-Futūḥī, 1997).

For the group that regards culture as a possible approach to understanding hadith, Islam is viewed as a flexible religion capable of adapting to local cultures. From this perspective, *bid'ah* is not always considered misguided, since there is also the concept of *bid'ah ḥasanah*, or commendable innovation.) (Asy'arī, 2021). Cultural practices may be accepted as long as they do not conflict with the principles of *tawhīd* and the *Sharī'ah* (Al-Sanūrī, 1997). Syuhudi Ismail developed a conceptual framework for the interpretation of hadith. He classified hadith understanding into several categories, namely textual, contextual, textual-contextual, universal, temporal, and local (Asriady, 2019).

Accordingly, through the conceptual framework developed by Syuhudi Ismail, hadith can be understood as having a broad range of interpretive and practical applications. The following hadiths illustrate how their meanings may be interpreted according to their respective textual,

contextual, universal, temporal, or local dimensions. Based on this framework, how do these groups interpret the hadith on *bid'ah*, which functions as a central concept for those who reject cultural openness in religious practice?

مَنْ أَحَدَثَ فِي أَمْرِنَا هَذَا مَا لَيْسَ مِنْهُ فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

"Whoever introduces into this matter of ours something that does not belong to it, it shall be rejected." – HR. al-Bukhari no. 2697) (Al-Bukhārī, 2002).

This hadith applies only to matters of *'ibādah maḥḍah*, namely acts of worship whose procedures have been prescribed in detail, such as prayer and fasting (al-'Asqalānī, 1997). However, in matters of social transactions (*mu'āmalah*) and culture, innovation is permissible as long as it does not contradict the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For example, the use of microphones for the call to prayer (*adhān*), the printing of the Qur'an, and the modern Islamic education system are not considered misguided innovations, even though they did not exist during the time of the Prophet. This group rejects the view of those who oppose culture by arguing that not all forms of *bid'ah* are misguided. Rather, *bid'ah* may be divided into two categories: misguided innovation, namely innovations that contradict Islam, such as rituals resembling shirk; and commendable innovation (*bid'ah ḥasanah*), such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*), insofar as it aims to honor the Messenger of Allah and strengthen love for Islam (Al-Sanūrī, 1997).

How do they interpret the hadith concerning *tashabbuh*, namely imitation of non-Muslims, which serves as one of the bases for certain groups' rejection of culture?

مَنْ تَشَبَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ فَهُوَ مِنْهُمْ

"Whoever imitates a people is considered one of them." – HR. Abu Dawud no. 4031 (Abū Dāwud, 2000).

This hadith applies when there is an intention to imitate another religion or to adopt practices that contradict Islam. However, if a cultural practice does not contain elements of non-Muslim creed, it is not included in the prohibited form of *tashabbuh* (Faqīh Maskumambang, 2023). For example, wearing batik or traditional clothing in an Islamic context does not necessarily constitute imitation of non-Muslims. Likewise, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*) is not equivalent to Christmas, as it does not contain elements of Christian creed. They reject the interpretation advanced by groups that oppose cultural accommodation, namely the view that all forms of *tashabbuh* are categorically forbidden. From this perspective, cultural practices may be accepted as long as they do not contain elements of creed or belief that deviate from Islamic principles (Al-Suyūṭī, 2007).

The following table provides a comparative overview of the two groups: those who reject cultural accommodation and those who accept culture as part of religious understanding.

Aspect	Group Rejecting Culture (Salafi/Wahhabi)	Group Accepting Culture (Syuhudi Ismail, etc.)
Concept of Islam	Islam is already perfect and does not require cultural additions.	Islam is flexible and capable of adapting to culture.
Understanding of <i>Bid'ah</i>	All forms of <i>bid'ah</i> are considered misguidance, except those related to worldly matters.	<i>Bid'ah</i> is divided into two categories: blameworthy innovation and commendable innovation.
Understanding of the Hadith on the Ease of Islam	Ease means adhering to the purity of the Sharī'ah without cultural additions.	Ease means that Islam can adapt to local cultural contexts.

Aspect	Group Rejecting Culture (Salafi/Wahhabi)	Group Accepting Culture (Syuhudi Ismail, etc.)
Understanding of the Hadith on <i>Tashabbuh</i>	All forms of resembling non-Muslims are prohibited.	Only practices involving elements of creed are prohibited, while neutral cultural practices are acceptable.
Attitude toward Culture	Local culture is rejected in matters of worship because it is regarded as deviating from the Sunnah.	Local culture is accepted as long as it does not contradict Islamic principles

The group that rejects culture and the group that accepts culture demonstrate different understandings and applications of the Prophet's hadith. Those who reject culture interpret hadith within the framework of preserving the purity of Islam without the addition of local cultural elements. In contrast, those who accept culture understand and apply the Prophet's hadith by interpreting it within the framework of Islamic flexibility and cultural adaptation, provided that such adaptation does not contradict the Shari'ah. These differences arise because each group adopts a different approach to the concepts of Islam, *bid'ah*, and culture.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the extent to which cultural background influences the interpretation and application of the Prophet's hadith through a comparative analysis of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, and Syuhudi Ismail. Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab tended to reject the incorporation of culture into Islamic religious practice. They emphasized the purity of the Qur'an and hadith and criticized practices such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*), grave visitation for the purpose of seeking blessings (*tabarruk*), and *tahlilan*, which they regarded as forms of religious innovation (*bid'ah*) with the potential to lead to *shirk*. In contrast, Syuhudi Ismail adopted a contextual approach to hadith interpretation, allowing cultural practices to be accepted as long as they do not contradict the principles of *tawḥīd* and the Shari'ah. These differences were shaped by the distinct socio-cultural backgrounds of each figure: Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab developed their thought within more puritan-oriented contexts, whereas Syuhudi Ismail grew within a more plural and culturally diverse environment. This study therefore concludes that the interpretation of hadith cannot be separated from the socio-cultural contexts in which it is understood and applied. However, this study has not sufficiently discussed other contemporary scholars, the specific hadith methodologies of each figure, or the impact of their thought in the modern era. Therefore, future research is recommended to include other figures, such as Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī or Nasr Ḥamid Abu Zayd, to examine the application of hadith understanding in contemporary fatwas, and to explore its influence in responding to the challenges of globalization and religious pluralism.

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