

# Alphabetical Compilation and Reformist Thought: A Socio-Historical Study of Abdul Latif Syakur's *Lathaif al-Ahadith al-Nabawiyah* in Early Twentieth-Century Minangkabau

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DOI: 10.29240/alquds.v10i1.13625

**Abstract.** This study critically analyzes *Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah* (1926), a unique hadith compilation authored by Abdul Latif Syakur, a reformist scholar from early 20th-century Minangkabau. The research problem focuses on how this work reflects local Islamic intellectualism and reformist thought through its unconventional structure and socio-religious content. Using a qualitative socio-historical approach that combines textual criticism and interpretive analysis, the study draws on two extant volumes of the book and relevant secondary literature. The findings reveal that Syakur employed an innovative alphabetical arrangement of hadiths based on the Arabic verb prefix in the matn, and incorporated Malay-Jawi commentary to make the text accessible to the local Muslim audience. Thematically, the book addresses issues of ritual, ethics, gender, and social reform, reflecting the author's moderate stance in navigating the tensions between traditionalism and modernism. The study concludes that *Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah* represents an important contribution to localized Islamic knowledge production in Southeast Asia and exemplifies how vernacular scholarship engaged with both classical traditions and modern social contexts.

**Keywords:** Hadith Compilation, Minangkabau Islam, Abdul Latif Syakur, Socio-Historical Approach, Jawi Script

## Introduction

In the early twentieth century, Minangkabau emerged as a vibrant hub of Islamic intellectual activity in the Indonesian archipelago. This region, known for its deep-rooted religious tradition and educational networks, produced numerous influential scholars who contributed significantly to the interpretation and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Among these figures was Abdul Latif Syakur (1882–1963),<sup>1</sup> a reformist Muslim scholar whose legacy includes a wide range of religious works, including *Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah*, a two-volume compilation of hadiths.

This study focuses on *Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah*, which stands out due to its unconventional approach to hadith arrangement—alphabetically by the initial verb (fi'īl) in the Arabic matn—and its use of Malay commentary written in Jawi script.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the thematic or isnād-based structures common in canonical collections such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*<sup>3</sup> or *Musnad*

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<sup>1</sup>Sonia Ayudia Fitri and Suriani Suriani, “Peranan Syekh Abdul Latif Syakur Dalam Membangun Kesadaran Pendidikan Di Balai Gurah, 1902-1963,” *Warisan: Journal of History and Cultural Heritage* 3, no. 3 (2023): 93–99, <https://doi.org/10.34007/warisan.v3i3.1654>.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Latif Syakur, *Lathaif Al-Hadits an-Nabawiya* (Bukittinggi: Tsamaratoel Ikhwan, 1926).

<sup>3</sup>Doni Saputra et al., “Historical Background Dan Manhaj Kepenulisan Kitab Al Jami’ Al Bukhari,” *Ushuly: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 3, no. 1 (2024): 37–54, <https://doi.org/10.52431/ushuly.v3i1.2321>.

*Ahmad ibn Hanbal*,<sup>4</sup> Syakur's method reveals an attempt to make hadiths more accessible to lay audiences while retaining scholarly depth.

The problem addressed in this article is twofold. First, it seeks to uncover how Abdul Latif Syakur's method of compilation reflects both a pedagogical intent and a response to socio-religious conditions in early 20th-century Minangkabau. Second, it explores how the themes found in the book—such as gender, ritual practice, and moral instruction—demonstrate a reformist engagement with traditional Islamic teachings.

While prior studies have examined various hadith scholars from West Sumatra, Syakur's work remains underexplored, particularly in terms of methodology and local context. Jannatul Husna Bin Ali Nuar, for instance, categorized hadith-related works from West Sumatra into six types: biography, thematic hadith, *muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth*, compilations, commentaries, and translations.<sup>5</sup> Febriyeni analyzed the thematic understanding of hadith by Shaykh Yunus Tuanku Sasak through his *Kitab Himpoenan Hadits*,<sup>6</sup> while Muhammad Alan Juhri focused on Buya Mawardi Muhammad's *Jawābir al-Aḥādīṣ*.<sup>7</sup> And Ummu Kalsum Hasibuan discussed Mahmud Yunus's contribution to hadith scholarship.<sup>8</sup> By situating this hadith compilation within its historical, intellectual, and cultural setting, the study contributes to a growing discourse on the vernacularization of Islamic scholarship in Southeast Asia.

Despite this growing body of scholarship, Abdul Latif Syakur's *Lathaif al-Ahadith al-Nabawiyah* has not received sufficient attention. In particular, its alphabetical method of compilation has rarely been analyzed as a pedagogical strategy, nor has its reformist significance been examined within its socio-historical context. This study addresses these gaps by offering a socio-historical analysis of its structure and intellectual orientation.

Methodologically, this article employs a qualitative socio-historical approach that integrates textual criticism with contextual interpretation. Primary data are drawn from the two surviving volumes of *Lathaif al-Ahadith al-Nabawiyah*, while secondary sources include biographical materials and scholarly works on Islamic reform in Minangkabau. This combined method allows for a comprehensive analysis of both the textual structure and the socio-religious meanings embedded in the work.

This article thus aims to analyze *Lathaif al-Ahadith al-Nabawiyah* using this socio-historical lens, highlighting both the intellectual biography of Abdul Latif Syakur and the structural and thematic dimensions of his hadith compilation. Through this lens, the work is assessed not merely as

<sup>4</sup> Abdul Karim, "Manhaj Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal Dalam Kitab Musnadnya," *Rivayah* 1, no. 2 (2015): 351–70.

<sup>5</sup> Jannatul Husna Bin Ali Nuar, "Minangkabau Clergies and the Writing of Hadith," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 24, no. 1 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v24i1.1357>.

<sup>6</sup> Febriyeni, "Thematics Hadith Understanding In West Sumatra: Kitab Himpoenan Hadis By Syekh Yunus Tuanku Sasak (1879-1975)," *Fuaduna* 5, no. 1 (2021): 45–56, <https://ejournal.iainbukittinggi.ac.id/index.php/fuaduna/article/view/4260/pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Alan Juhri, "Studi Kitab Hadis Nusantara: Kitab Jawahir Al-Ahadis Karya Buya Mawardi Muhammad," *Jurnal Living Hadis* 4, no. 2 (2019): 253, <https://doi.org/10.14421/livinghadis.2019.1636>.

<sup>8</sup> Umayyah Syarifah, "Kontribusi Muhammad Musthafa Azami Dalam Pemikiran Hadis (Counter Atas Kritik Orientalis)," *Ulul Albab Jurnal Studi Islam* 15, no. 2 (2015): 222, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v15i2.2728>.

a textual artifact, but as a reflection of Islamic reformism, educational innovation, and cultural identity in colonial Indonesia.

### Biography of Abdul Latif Syakur

Abdul Latif Syakur (1882–1963) was one of the most prolific and influential reformist scholars in early 20th-century Minangkabau. Born on August 15, 1882 (27 Ramadan 1277 H) in Air Mancur, a small village in the highlands of West Sumatra, Syakur came from a modest family background.<sup>9</sup> His father, Muhammad Amin, also known by the title *Panduko Intan*, hailed from the Balai Gurah region and belonged to the Pili clan (*suku Pili*), a matrilineal social group within Minangkabau society. His mother, Fatimah, shared the same local heritage. At the time of his birth, the family had relocated to Padang Panjang, where his father worked on the Dutch colonial railway project and earned additional income through menial labor, such as cutting and selling grass for horse-drawn carriages.<sup>10</sup>

Despite economic hardship, his parents prioritized religious education. At the age of seven or eight, Abdul Latif was taken to Mecca by his father to pursue Islamic studies—an ambition cherished by many Minangkabau families as part of the *rantau* tradition of seeking knowledge abroad. His father, however, passed away not long after they arrived in Mecca. Left under his mother's care and subsequently entrusted to Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi—one of the most prominent Southeast Asian scholars in the Haramayn—Abdul Latif received intensive and sustained training in the Islamic sciences. Oral and local narratives indicate that he became one of Shaykh Ahmad Khatib's longest-standing Minangkabau students, which profoundly shaped his scholarly orientation and reformist tendencies.<sup>11</sup>

During his twelve-year stay in Mecca (ca. 1890–1901), Abdul Latif Syakur immersed himself in traditional disciplines such as tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), hadith, fiqh (jurisprudence), kalām (theology), and tasawwuf (Sufism). His curriculum integrated both textual memorization and rational inquiry, following the classical methodology of *tahqīq* and *ijtihad*. Upon returning to Minangkabau, he settled in his ancestral village of Balai Gurah in the IV Angkek district, Agam Regency. He began a decades-long project of Islamic renewal through teaching, writing, and institution-building.

His early efforts in da'wah took place through informal gatherings in *surau*—communal prayer and study halls central to Minangkabau religious life. He introduced the use of written materials, study tables, and systematic instruction, breaking from the oral, teacher-centered tradition that dominated the *surau* culture. In 1906, he established the *Surau Sicamin* in a rice field near Balai Gurah, which eventually evolved into a structured institution of Islamic education. Following the

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<sup>9</sup> Ridhoul Wahidi, Riki Rahman, and M Nurkholis, “The Characteristics of Nusantara Tafsir Manuscript: A Methodological Study of QS . Al-Baqarah by Abdul Latif Syakur Development and Education and Training Agency of the Ministry of Religion (Badan Litbang Dan Diklat Kementerian Agama ) through the Resea” 8, no. 1 (2024): 55–70.

<sup>10</sup> Zikra Fadilla, Latifah Kurnia Hapsari, and Priscila Fitriasih Limbong, “Tafsir Antikolonialisme Abdul Latif Syakur Pajak Pendapatan Dalam Naskah Peraturan Pajak Pendapatan Ternate,” *Jurnal Manassa* 11, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>11</sup> Yosi Nofa and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, “Between Traditionalist and Modernist: The Islamic Reformation of Haji Abdul Latif Syakur in Minangkabau in the 20Th Century,” *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 28, no. 1 (2023): 85, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v28i1.5777>.

destruction of this *surau* by lightning, Syakur founded *Attabiyatul Hasanah* in 1918, a school that combined traditional learning with a more formalized curriculum.<sup>12</sup>

Syakur's influence extended beyond pedagogy. He was a central figure in mediating the ideological divide between the *kaum muda* (young reformists) and *kaum tua* (traditionalist elders)—two camps engaged in heated debates over Islamic authority, ritual practice, and the role of *ijtihad* in modern life. While many reformists confronted traditional institutions directly, Syakur adopted a conciliatory approach. He emphasized the importance of *ukhūmah* (brotherhood) and discouraged sectarian conflict, arguing that most theological disagreements belonged to the realm of *khilafiyah*, where legitimate differences of opinion were tolerated in classical Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>13</sup>

This conciliatory stance is evident not only in his sermons and teaching style but also in his writings. Syakur authored over a dozen books and treatises, ranging from Qur'anic commentary to legal instruction and spiritual ethics. Among his most important works are *Lathaiif al-Abadits al-Nabawiyah* (a two-volume compilation of hadith with commentary in Jawi), *Al-Da'wah wa al-Irshād ilā Sabil al-Rashād* (1951), *Tafsir Yā Ayyuha al-Nās*, *Tafsir Yā Ayyuha al-Ladhīna Āmanū*, *Mabādi' al-Qāri'* (a textbook on *tajwīd*, 1917), *Akhlāqunā al-Adabiyah*, *Al-Tarbiyah wa al-Ta'lim* (1927), and *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*. etc<sup>14</sup>

One of the most remarkable dimensions of Syakur's legacy is his progressive view on gender. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he supported advancing Muslim women's education and public presence. This reflects the support for his founding of *Djanharah*, a magazine dedicated to women, through which he addressed issues of domestic life, education, and the spiritual dignity of women in Islam. His interpretations of hadith related to women, which appear throughout *Lathaiif al-Abadits al-Nabawiyah*, often emphasize compassion, context, and legal nuance—setting him apart from both conservative and polemical trends of his time.

Through his scholarship, teaching, and mediation efforts, Abdul Latif Syakur emerged as a reformist scholar who not only engaged with modernity but did so from a deeply rooted Islamic epistemology. His intellectual legacy continues to offer valuable insights into the vernacularization of Islamic knowledge, and how local scholars navigated colonial pressures, internal reform, and the enduring quest to make Islam relevant to their communities.

## Overview and Structure of the Book

*Lathaiif al-Abadits al-Nabawiyah* is a two-volume hadith compilation authored by Haji Abdul Latif Syakur and first printed in Bukittinggi by the Tsamaratoel Ikhwan press in 1926 (Volume I) and 1929 (Volume II). Both volumes survive only in their initial editions, with no known reprints, making them rare and valuable artifacts of early 20th-century Indonesian Islamic scholarship. The manuscript was discovered in the residence of the descendants of Shaykh Abdul Latif Syakur, located in Balai Gurah, IV Angkek District, Agam Regency, West Sumatra. It is part of the private

<sup>12</sup> Fitri and Suriani, "Peranan Syekh Abdul Latif Syakur Dalam Membangun Kesadaran Pendidikan Di Balai Gurah, 1902-1963."

<sup>13</sup> Nofa and Mohd Nor, "Between Traditionalist and Modernist: The Islamic Reformation of Haji Abdul Latif Syakur in Minangkabau in the 20Th Century."

<sup>14</sup> Ridhoul Wahidi, "Tafsir Yā Ayyuha Al-Ladhīna Āmanū Karya Syaikh Abdul Latief Syakur 1882-1963 : Suntingan Teks Dan Analisis Isi," *Disertasi* 1963 (2018): vi–323, <https://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/id/eprint/12102/>.

collection of Mrs. Khuzaimah, one of the author's granddaughters, who has preserved the text as part of the family's intellectual legacy.

The physical characteristics of the book reflect its time and pedagogical intent. The text is printed in black ink using a legible upright font, suitable for both private reading and group instruction. Volume I measures 14 × 20 cm, while Volume II is slightly larger at 15.5 × 23 cm. While the original of Volume I is no longer extant and is preserved only in photocopied form, four original copies of Volume II still exist. The survival of multiple original copies of the second volume suggests that the work was actively used in religious circles—most likely in *surau* (traditional learning centers) and early Islamic schools—as a reference and teaching text.

What distinguishes *Lathaiif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah* from classical and contemporary hadith compilations is its unique method of organization. Rather than arranging hadiths thematically or according to chains of transmission (*isnād*), Syakur organizes them alphabetically based on the initial word of the Arabic *matn*, which is predominantly a verb (*fi'il*). Specifically, the arrangement follows the sequence of the Arabic *hijā'ī* (alphabetical) order from alif (ا) to yā' (ي), as stated in the *muqaddimah* (introduction) of Volume I.

“This is a concise explanation containing several noble hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which I have compiled from various reputable books in my possession... I arranged these hadiths according to the sequence of the Arabic alphabet, from the letter alif to the letter ya...”<sup>15</sup>

In practice, entries such as *atā* (أتى) and *ākala* (أكل), which appear at the beginning of the compilation, are placed under the letter alif because their orthographic forms begin with alif or alif madd (آ). In the Arabic alphabetical system, both forms are classified under the alif category, which explains their placement at the beginning of the work. This system indicates that Syakur's method relies on the written form of the word as it appears in the text, including orthographic variations, rather than on root-based classification.

This alphabetical ordering reflects an effort to systematize religious knowledge in a way that is accessible to learners with limited exposure to classical Islamic sciences. By anchoring each entry to the initial word—most often a verb—Syakur provides a structured yet practical system that facilitates memorization and reference. However, the data also indicate that this method is not strictly grammatical. While most entries begin with verbs, certain entries, such as *ithnān* (اثنتان), are nominal forms, suggesting that the classification is based on the surface structure of the text rather than a rigid grammatical principle.

To clarify this method of organization, the table below presents selected examples of how hadiths are arranged alphabetically based on the initial word of the *matn*, following the sequence of Arabic letters.

Table 1 : Examples of Alphabetical Grouping

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<sup>15</sup> Abdul Latif Syakur, *Lathaiif Al-Hadits an-Nabawiya*.

No	Initial Word	Arabic Matn (Beginning)	Type	Placement
1	أتى ( <i>atā</i> )	أتى باب الجنة	Verb	ALIF-ALIF-TA
2	أكل ( <i>ākila</i> )	أكل الربا	Verb	ALIF-ALIF-KAF
3	بخل ( <i>bakhila</i> )	ابخل الناس	Verb	ALIF-BA
4	اتق ( <i>ittaqa</i> )	اتق الله	Verb	ALIF-TA
5	اثنان ( <i>itsnān</i> )	اثنان خير	Nominal	ALIF-TSA
6	اجتنب ( <i>ijtannaba</i> )	اجتنبوا الخمر	Verb	ALIF-JIM
7	أحب ( <i>aḥabba</i> )	احب الاعمال	Verb	ALIF-HA
8	أخذ ( <i>akbadha</i> )	اخذ الامير	Verb	ALIF-KHA
9	إذا ( <i>idhā</i> )	إذا أتيتم الغائط	Particle	ALIF-DZAL
10	إذا ( <i>idhā</i> )	إذا أحدث	Particle	ALIF-DZAL
11	إذا ( <i>idhā</i> )	إذا أراد	Particle	ALIF-DZAL
12	إذا ( <i>idhā</i> )	إذا أطل	Particle	ALIF-DZAL

This structure made it easier for lay Minangkabau readers in the early twentieth century to locate, memorize, and understand hadith, particularly for those with limited familiarity with classical hadith organization.

Importantly, the second volume does not introduce a separate classificatory principle but continues the alphabetical sequence established in the first volume. While Volume I concludes with entries under *alif-khā'* (أخ), Volume II proceeds with entries beginning with *alif-dhāl* (أذ). Consequently, hadiths beginning with *idhā* (إذا) appear at the beginning of the second volume as part of this alphabetical continuation.

This method stands in contrast to more canonical arrangements seen in works like *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (which is categorized thematically)<sup>16</sup> or *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Hanbal* (which is arranged according to *ṣaḥābah* narrators)<sup>17</sup>. While Syakur does not adopt a *musnad* or *mandū'ī* (thematic) structure, his approach still preserves thematic diversity, as each verb inevitably introduce a range of hadith topics, from ritual practices to ethical behavior. This form of compilation highlights both the linguistic richness of the hadith corpus and the functional pragmatism of local scholars in organizing knowledge for instructional purposes.

<sup>16</sup> Saputra et al., "Historical Background Dan Manhaj Kepenulisan Kitab Al Jami' Al Bukhari."

<sup>17</sup> Abdul Karim, "Manhaj Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal Dalam Kitab Musnadnya."

Furthermore, his intention was to compile around 1,000 hadiths divided into ten parts. However, to date, only two volumes have been found—Volume I contains 49 hadiths, and Volume II contains 55 hadiths. No additional volumes are preserved in the private library maintained by his descendants, and there is no information from the family regarding whether he ever completed a third volume.<sup>18</sup>

### Language and Script

*Lathaiif al-Abadith al-Nabawiyah* is presented in a bilingual and biscriptual format: the hadith texts are written in Arabic, while the accompanying explanations are rendered in Malay using the Arabic script (Jawi). One particularly notable feature is that the Arabic hadiths are fully vocalized with diacritical marks (*ḥarakāt*), which is uncommon in most scholarly compilations. This typographical choice was not incidental but purposeful. In the introduction (*muqaddimah*) to the first volume, Abdul Latif Syakur explicitly states that the book was composed in response to the needs of his fellow citizens, many of whom lacked sufficient knowledge about the sayings and life of the Prophet Muhammad. The alphabetical arrangement was a pedagogical innovation aimed at systematic memorization and ease of reference for learners.

The inclusion of *ḥarakāt* in the Arabic text serves two important purposes. First, it ensures the correct pronunciation of the hadiths, which is vital in Islamic tradition as errors in recitation can alter their meaning. Second, it reflects the author's inclusive pedagogical intent—namely, to make the hadiths accessible not only to trained scholars but also to the general Muslim public who may not have mastered Arabic grammar. The vocalization is therefore a didactic strategy aligned with Syakur's broader reformist and educational goals.

The accompanying commentary, written in Malay using Jawi script, serves as a cultural and linguistic bridge between the Arabic text and its intended audience in West Sumatra. The choice of Jawi reflects continuity with long-standing Malay Islamic intellectual traditions, while also affirming a distinctly local Islamic identity in an era of colonial linguistic displacement.

Figure 1. Example of Arabic hadith text and Malay-Jawi commentary in *Lathaiif al-Abadith al-Nabawiyah*.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Khuzaimah, descendant of Abdul Latif Syakur, conducted in Balai Gurah, West Sumatra, June 3, 2024.

إِذَا آتَيْتُمُ الْغَائِطَ فَلَا تَسْتَقْبِلُوا الْقِبْلَةَ وَلَا تَسْتَدْبِرُوهَا

وَلَكِنْ شَرِّقُوا أَوْ غَرِّبُوا .

حديث ثابت عن ابي ايوب الانصاري.

ارتبب: بيل كامو دانغ اكن بواغ اير مك جاغن كامو

معهدافي قبله دان جاغن مبلكاغي دي. دان تئافي كتيموركنلاه

اكن دي اتو كبارتكن.

كتراغن: رسول الله مناكه معهدافي قبله ( سبله كعبه )

اتو مبلكاغي دي دغن فرج كتيك بواغ اير اتو بئرق

دان دسورهكذب معهادف متهماري هيدف اتو متهماري ماتي.

This example clearly illustrates the text's structural layering: the hadith appears at the beginning in fully vocalized Arabic, followed by a brief Arabic attribution, and then by an extended explanation in Malay written in Jawi script. The use of ḥarakāt in the hadith section ensures correct pronunciation and textual precision. At the same time, the Jawi commentary serves as an interpretive medium enabling local readers to understand the meaning of the hadith within their linguistic and cultural context.

This dual presentation—Arabic source text with Malay-Jawi commentary—embodies a model of vernacular Islamic scholarship that is both rooted in the classical tradition and attuned to its socio-historical context. This dual-language format illustrates Syakur's effort to balance scholarly rigor with local accessibility.

### Pedagogical and Reformist Intentions

The structural presentation of *Lathaiif al-Abadits al-Nabawiyah* reflects Abdul Latif Syakur's careful planning and pedagogical vision. The first volume consists of 95 pages, each containing approximately 18 - 20 lines of text. The second volume spans 108 pages, and has a similar line density. This layout suggests that the book was designed for consistent pacing, likely to facilitate both individual reading and instructional use in religious gatherings or *surau* settings.

Each volume opens with an introductory section (*muqaddimah*) in which the author outlines the rationale, structure, and goals of the work. In the first volume, the introduction begins with traditional praise of Allah and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Abdul



Latif Syakur then presents the book as a concise guide to selected hadiths, sourced from reputable scholars who specialized in the prophetic tradition. He explains that the hadiths are arranged alphabetically according to the Arabic script (*hurūf hijā'iyah*), beginning with the letter *alif* and ending with *ya'*. The alphabetical arrangement was a pedagogical innovation aimed at systematic memorization and ease of reference for learners. His long-term plan was to compile a total of 1.000 hadiths, across volumes—a project that reflects both ambition and a deep commitment to religious education.

The author's motivation for writing is explicitly stated in the first *muqaddimah*, where he expresses humility before God and a sense of obligation to educate his fellow Muslims.

...many of whom still do not understand the sayings of the Prophet and his way of life...  
...This is what compels me to present this book... as a prelude for future scholars to continue this effort...

These statements reflect Syakur's awareness of the educational gap within his community and his effort to address it through a more accessible form of hadith instruction.

In the second volume's introduction, Syakur further elaborates on the structural design. He notes that the hadiths in Volume II begin with particles such as *izhā* and *izh*, while the planned third volume would proceed with entries beginning with *alif rā'* (*ar-*), continuing the alphabetical sequence. This systematic progression demonstrates an intentional effort to create an ordered and cumulative learning structure.

Between the *Muqaddimah* and the main text, Syakur includes a section titled “*Khutbah al-Kitāb*” (Book Sermon), which functions as a thematic preamble. In Volume I, he cites verses 28–29 of *Sūrat al-Faḥ*, while in Volume II he includes verses 7–10 of *Sūrat al-Ṣaff*, each accompanied by Malay translation and commentary. These selections connect the work to a broader Qur'anic framework and reinforce its theological grounding.

The concluding remarks in both volumes further highlight his pedagogical and spiritual orientation. At the end of the first volume, he simply notes the continuation of the work, while in the second volume he adds a prayerful message expressing humility and hope for the continuation of the project. This tone reflects not authority, but service and communal responsibility.

Overall, these structural and textual elements demonstrate that Syakur's work is not merely a compilation of hadiths, but a consciously designed educational tool aimed at guiding, instructing, and uplifting his community.

### **The Position of the Book in the Local Hadith Tradition**

*Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah* distinguishes itself not only through its methodological innovation but also through the breadth and relevance of its content. The first volume of the book contains 47 hadiths spread across 95 pages, each consisting of 18 to 20 lines. Each hadith is accompanied by a detailed Malay-language explanation in Jawi script, demonstrating Abdul Latif Syakur's concern for clarity, pedagogy, and contextualization.

A survey of the first volume reveals a wide thematic range. The hadiths cover eschatology (e.g., who enters Paradise first), ethical teachings (e.g., the condemnation of arrogance and hypocrisy), legal-social matters (e.g., zakat, marriage consent, divorce), devotional practices (e.g., ṣalāh in extreme heat, ṣadaqah), and moral warnings (e.g., against riba, slander, and oppression). Notably, several hadiths focus on gender justice, family law, social cohesion, and economic ethics—topics especially relevant in the reformist discourses of early 20th-century Minangkabau.

One unique feature of the work is the author’s frequent elaboration on jurisprudential details, such as the classification of *riba* (usury), the gradation of charity obligations, and the proper prioritization of spending in familial contexts. His discussions reflect both a grounding in classical fiqh (particularly of the Shāfi‘ī school) and an openness to reformist reasoning when addressing local concerns. For instance, his interpretation of hadiths on divorce demonstrates a sensitive legal-ethical balance between permissibility and moral discouragement.

The inclusion of hadiths related to public conduct—such as safeguarding orphans’ wealth, maintaining communal prayer, showing honesty toward authority, and avoiding religious hypocrisy—aligns with a broader reformist aim to shape a morally conscious and socially engaged Muslim community. Through this selection, Syakur emphasizes that hadiths are not merely abstract doctrines, but practical ethical guidance for everyday life.

What further distinguishes *Lathaiif al-Abadits al-Nabawiyah* is its structure as a developing corpus. In the introductions to Volumes I and II, Syakur states his intention to compile approximately 1.000 hadiths across 10 volumes. He organizes them alphabetically based on the initial word (fi‘il) of the Arabic matn, with Volume II specifically focusing on hadiths beginning with particles such as idhā and idh. In contrast, the planned third volume was intended to continue with entries beginning with alif rā’ (ar-). This systematic sequencing reflects an ambition not merely to compile hadiths, but to construct an organized, pedagogically oriented reference work for local readers.

To better situate Syakur’s work within the broader landscape of local hadith scholarship, a comparison with other Minangkabau scholars highlights key differences in method and orientation:

Table 2. Comparative Position of *Lathaiif al-Abadits al-Nabawiyah* within Local Hadith Tradition

Scholar	Work	Method	Language & Script	Primary Aim
Abdul Latif Syakur	<i>Lathaiif al-Abadits al-Nabawiyah</i>	Alphabetical (based on initial word of matn)	Arabic + Malay (Jawi)	Pedagogical accessibility and systematic learning
Sjech Yunus Tuanku Sasak	<i>Himpoenan Hadis</i>	Thematic (mawḍū‘ī), including sanad–matan analysis and tarjīḥ	Arabic-Malay (Jawi)	Resolving legal-religious debates (e.g., qunut)

Mawardi Muhammad	<i>Jawābir al- Aḥādīṣ al- Nabawīyyah</i>	Thematic compilation of selected hadith	Arabic	Emphasis on moral, social, and mu‘āmalah teachings
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As shown in previous studies, Yunus Tuanku Sasak employed a thematic method by collecting hadiths related to specific issues such as qunut, followed by sanad and matn criticism as well as the use of tarjīḥ to reconcile differences.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Mawardi Muhammad’s work is characterized by a thematic arrangement focusing on selected ṣaḥīḥ and ḥasan hadiths, with particular emphasis on ethical and social teachings in everyday life<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, Syakur’s unique contribution lies in his development of an alphabetical system of hadith arrangement combined with bilingual presentation, transforming hadith literature into a structured pedagogical tool that is both accessible and systematically organized for local learners.

### Intellectual and Social Context

The creation of this work must also be situated within the broader socio-political and intellectual landscape of early 20th-century Minangkabau. During this period, the Muslim community was under dual pressures Dutch colonial rule—especially in the political and economic domains—and the emergence of Islamic reformist ideas. The intellectual landscape was shaped by debates between the so-called *kaum tua* (traditionalists) and *kaum muda* (modernists).

Abdul Latif Syakur distinguished himself by adopting a moderate and conciliatory stance. He avoided sectarian disputes and emphasized the legitimacy of differing opinions within the bounds of recognized Islamic scholarship. According to articles published in *Djauharah* magazine, Syakur believed that any opinion grounded in the classical jurisprudential traditions and supported by the Qur’an and Sunnah deserved consideration. His conciliatory disposition allowed him to bridge divides and promote a unified Islamic discourse amid growing fragmentation.

The structure and commentary of *Lathāif al-Aḥādīṣ al-Nabawīyyah* can thus be understood as a response to these dual pressures. The alphabetical arrangement provides a neutral and non-polemical framework that avoids privileging particular legal or theological positions. At the same time, the use of Malay-Jawi commentary ensures accessibility to a broader audience beyond scholarly elites. In this sense, Syakur’s work reflects a strategic balance: it preserves the authority of classical Islamic scholarship while simultaneously adapting to the demands of a changing socio-intellectual environment shaped by colonial intervention and reformist critique.

<sup>19</sup> Febriyeni, “Thematics Hadith Understanding In West Sumatra: Kitab Himpoenan Hadis By Syekh Yunus Tuanku Sasak (1879-1975).”

<sup>20</sup> Juhri, “Studi Kitab Hadis Nusantara: Kitab Jawahir Al-Aḥādīs Karya Buya Mawardi Muhammad.”

## Understanding Hadith through a Socio-Historical Lens: Abdul Latif Syakur's Interpretive Method

The historical context of *Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah* can be understood through an analysis of the socio-religious, intellectual, and political conditions that shaped its creation. Published on September 19, 1926, the first volume includes a preface (*muqaddimah*) in which Abdul Latif Syakur outlines his primary motivations for compiling the work. These motivations can be categorized into three core themes:

### 1. Bridging the Public's Knowledge Gap of Hadith

Abdul Latif Syakur was deeply concerned about the general public's limited understanding of the sayings and life of the Prophet Muhammad. He noted that many in his community lacked basic religious literacy, stating: "*Many of my compatriots, who are of the same standing as myself, do not yet understand the words and journey of the Prophet.*" At the time, the surrounding socio-religious environment was plagued by widespread moral decline, including gambling, alcohol consumption, cockfighting, and drug abuse. In response, Syakur dedicated himself to reviving Islamic consciousness through a broad spectrum of religious writings, including works on hadith, Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, and spirituality.

### 2. Islam as a Compassionate and Contextual Religion

A second key motivation was Syakur's effort to present Islam as a religion grounded in mercy, rationality, and contextual understanding. His interpretive method emphasizes flexibility within the framework of Islamic law. For instance, in discussing the prohibition of tattooing (*wasym*), he outlines specific conditions under which it becomes impermissible, while allowing exceptions in cases of necessity. Similarly, in interpreting the hadith on delaying the noon prayer during extreme heat, he supports flexibility by citing classical scholars such as al-Shāfi'ī and Mālik, and frame the ruling within Islam's principle of ease (*taysīr*).

His treatment of divorce further illustrates this approach. While acknowledging its permissibility, he emphasizes that it should only be pursued as a last resort under conditions such as unresolved conflict or hardship. Across these examples, Syakur consistently foregrounds ethical balance, demonstrating that Islamic teachings are not rigid prescriptions but responsive guidelines rooted in compassion and justice.

### 3. Addressing the Lack of Local Hadith Commentary

Finally, Syakur was motivated by the limited availability of locally accessible hadith commentaries. He observed a gap in religious literature within the Indonesian context. He sought to provide a work that could function both as an instructional resource and as a foundation for future scholarship. As he notes, there had not yet been a dedicated work in the region focusing specifically on the explanation of hadith.

Through *Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah*, Syakur not only addressed this intellectual gap but also established a model of vernacular Islamic scholarship—one that remains grounded in classical sources while being responsive to local linguistic, cultural, and educational realities.

## Conclusion

*Lathaif al-Ahadits al-Nabawiyah* is not merely a collection of hadith interpretations; it is a reflection of Abdul Latif Syakur's reformist vision, intellectual humility, and deep concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of his society. His work exemplifies a contextual and compassionate approach to Islamic scholarship—one that seeks to reconcile traditional sources with contemporary realities. As such, the book represents a significant milestone in the development of Indonesian Islamic thought in the early 20th century and remains a valuable resource for understanding the dynamics of religious reform, moderation, and local intellectual traditions in Southeast Asia.

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