

Epistemological Deconstruction Of Syarafuddin Al-Musawi On The Authority Of Abu Hurairah's Hadith In Contemporary Hadith Studies

Irfan Harmoko¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri

Correspondence: irfanharmoko@uinkediri.ac.id

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Abstract: This article analyzes Syarafuddin al-Musawi's criticism of the authority of the hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah by focusing on the problem of the epistemological validity of hadith criticism in contemporary hadith studies. This research departs from the lack of systematic mapping of the basis of al-Musawi's argumentation and from the limitations of previous studies, which tend to situate his criticism solely within the framework of Sunni-Shia polemics without critically examining its methodological construction. The research aims to identify al-Musawi's argumentation patterns, evaluate its evidence base, and assess its contribution to the development of modern hadith studies. This research uses a qualitative method based on literature studies with a historical-critical approach and critical hermeneutics. The primary source of research is al-Musawi's works on Abu Hurairah, while secondary sources include classical hadith literature, rijal books, and contemporary academic studies. The data was analyzed through three stages: classification of the theme of criticism, comparison with classical hadith sources, and historical evaluation of the socio-political context of the hadith narration. The results of the study show that al-Musawi's criticism is divided into three main aspects, namely biographical criticism of Abu Hurairah's credibility, quantitative criticism of the number of hadiths narrated, and socio-historical criticism of the relationship between hadith authority and political patronage in the early days of Islam. This study also found that al-Musawi's argument makes an important contribution to opening up a space for critical reading of the construction of hadith-narration authority, especially through the use of historical and socio-political approaches. However, some of his arguments remain indicative, as they are not fully supported by comprehensive sanad verification and adequate historical evidence of the direct relationship between political power and the production of hadith history. This article concludes that al-Musawi's criticism does not represent a total rejection of Abu Hurairah, but rather an attempt to reconstruct the study of hadith to be more open to multidisciplinary approaches and historical-critical evaluation.

Keywords: al-Musawi, Abu Hurairah, epistemology of hadith

Introduction

The study of contemporary hadith has undergone significant methodological developments. However, this is inseparable from the arguments that support or critique the dialectic of hadith studies. In the previous period, hadith criticism tended to focus on the textual study of sanad and matan; now, various disciplines such as hermeneutics, social history, discourse criticism, and epistemology have also helped expand the paradigm of hadith research. This shift is driven by academic awareness that hadith functions not only as a normative text but also as a social construct arising from the complex interactions among narrators, political authorities, the

development of scientific institutions, and the dynamics of the ummah's acceptance. In this context, the figure of the companions as narrators—especially those with numerous histories, such as Abu Hurairah—is often the focus of discussion because of their far-reaching influence on the development of Islamic law, theology, and ethics.¹

Abu Hurairah is the companion who narrates the most hadith among the companions. His central position in the transmission of hadith gave his narrations significant influence on the development of Islamic law, theology, and ethics. However, this quantity of history is one of the factors that has led to criticism from within Muslims, such as debates between Sunnis and Shiites as well as between modernist and traditionalist groups. Criticism also emerged from external circles, especially orientalist who questioned the validity and authority of his narration. Historically, criticism of Abu Hurairah has existed since classical times, though in different forms and intensities. In the modern era, the criticism gained new momentum through the work of Mahmud Abu Rayyah (d. 1970), which questioned the credibility, motivation, and historical conditions behind Abu Hurairah's narration. This criticism was met with various academic responses from modern Sunni scholars and contemporary academic studies.² Nonetheless, a sharper discussion emerged in the context of the Sunni–Shia debate, where several Shia scholars presented in-depth criticism of Abu Hurairah's position on the authority of the hadith.³

One of the important figures in this discourse is Syarafuddin al-Musawi, a Shia intellectual widely known for his works discussing the authority of the Companions and the narration of hadith. Al-Musawi not only conveyed a substantive critique of Abu Hurairah's narrations but also proposed a certain epistemological device that formed the way of assessing the authority of narration.⁴ This aspect has been rarely studied in several previous studies. Most studies focus only on the content of Al-Musawi's criticism without elaborating on the epistemic basis on which his criticism is based.⁵ In fact, to understand the structure of the argumentation and its methodological position, epistemological and hermeneutical-critical readings are very important.

Methodological developments in contemporary hadith studies have opened up space for a hermeneutical-critical approach that positions hadith not only as a normative text but also as a historical product born within a specific social, political, and power-relations context. In this article, epistemological deconstruction is understood as an analytical attempt to examine the knowledge bases, legitimacy mechanisms, and authority structures that underpin the claims to truth in a hadith history. This understanding rests on Jacques Derrida's idea of deconstructing the structures of meaning and authority in texts, as well as on Michel Foucault's critical approach to the discourse of knowledge, examining the relationship between power and the production of

¹ Mohammad Muslih, Fachri Khoerudin, and Amir Reza Kusuma, "A Study of the Problem of Hadith from a Secular Perspective: An Introduction," *Al-Afkar* 5, no. 1 (2022): 281–97, https://www.al-afkar.com/index.php/Afkar_Journal/article/view/245.

² Ruston Nawawi, "Companion Problematics: Abu Rayyah's Critical Study Of Abu Hurairah And His Role In Hadith Understanding," *IJOESCO* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.30762/ijoresco.v2i1.3423>.

³ Mahasin Haikal Amanullah and Muhammad Adip Fanani, "The Sunni-Shia View of the Status of 'Friends,' *LECTURES: Journal of Islamic and Education Studies* 3, no. 2 (2024): 83–101, <https://lectures.pdfaii.org/index.php/i/article/view/86/34>.

⁴ Sharafudden Al-Musawi, *Suing Abu Hurairah : Tracing His Steps and Hadiths (Terj.)* (Jakarta: Pustaka Zahra, 2002).

⁵ Teguh Abdu Rohman, "Criticism of the Thought of Abdu Al Husain Syarafuddin Al Mūsawwī in the Book of Abū Hurairah" (2025), <https://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/122510/>.

truth in the scientific tradition.⁶ With this framework, Al-Musawi's criticism of Abu Hurairah is not understood simply as a theological polemic or an apologetic attack, but rather as a systematic attempt to test the epistemic foundations underpinning Abu Hurairah's narrational authority in the Sunni tradition. Therefore, this analysis is directed at the way in which the authority of hadith is constructed, maintained, and at the same time challenged through historical argumentation, narration criticism, and reading of power relations in the transmission of hadith.

Previous studies on criticism of Abu Hurairah can be grouped into four main tendencies. First, a study that focuses on Mahmud Abu Rayyah's criticism of Abu Hurairah. This group generally highlights Abu Rayyah's arguments regarding Abu Hurairah's historical background, economic motives, and the quantity of history which is considered disproportionate to the duration of his time with the Prophet.⁷ The main focus of the study is a critical reading of the authority of Abu Hurairah's narration and its implications for the validity of the hadiths he narrates. Second, the study positions itself as a Sunni defense of such criticism. The research in this group reaffirms the credibility of Abu Hurairah through the classical *jarh wa ta'dil* approach, emphasizing the legitimacy of the companions as a just narrator (*'udul al-sahabah*) and the consistency of the sanad in Sunni hadith literature.⁸ Both the first and second groups tend to move in an apologetic-descriptive dialectical pattern, so the debate revolves more around the true and false figures than around the epistemological framework underlying the method of criticism used. Third, some studies discuss Sunni-Shia relations in the controversy over hadith narration, particularly regarding criticism of certain companions, including Abu Hurairah. These studies have largely reviewed the views of Shia figures such as Sharafuddin al-Musawi, focusing on efforts to deconstruct the credibility of narrators through historical and polemical approaches.⁹ However, the research still stops at mapping differences between schools and has not thoroughly unraveled the argumentative structure underlying the criticism. Fourth, studies of hadith epistemology began to focus on the authority of knowledge, the validity of transmission, and the mechanisms of legitimacy in the hadith tradition.¹⁰ However, epistemological studies that specifically examine the methodology underlying Al-Musawi's criticism of Abu Hurairah remain relatively limited. In fact, an epistemological approach is important for understanding the basic assumptions, the logic of argumentation, and the methodological implications of Al-Musawi's criticism of the construction of Sunni hadith authority as a whole. Thus, this study occupies a space that has not been explored much: analyzing Al-Musawi's criticism of Abu Hurairah not only as a polemic within the school but also as a matter of hadith epistemology.

Identifiable research gaps include: (1) there are still limited studies that critically and systematically examine the epistemological tools used by Al-Musawi in constructing criticism of

⁶ Abdullah Afandi, "Michel Foucault's Concept of Power," *Theosophy: Journal of Sufism and Islamic Thought* 2 (October 16, 2015): 131, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2012.2.1.131-149>.

⁷ Zainuddin, "Examining the Development of Hadith Interpretation Insights from Abu Rayyah, Juynboll, & Zakaria Ouzon," *ESSENCE: Journal of Ushuluddin Sciences* 24, no. 2 (2023): 112–123, <https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v24i2.5349>.

⁸ Ali Mohtarom Mohtarom, "Critical Analysis: Criticism and Praise of Abu Hurairah," *Mu'allim Journal* 5, no. 1 (2023): 194–209, <https://doi.org/10.35891/muallim.v5i1.3536>.

⁹ Rahmat Miskaya, Noor Said Ahmad, and Umi Sumbulah, "HADITH STUDY FROM A SUNNI AND SHIA PERSPECTIVE: Historicity, Hadith Arguments, Parameters of Hadith Validity and Justice," *Journal of Nusantara Hadith Studies*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.24235/jshn.v3i1.9010>.

¹⁰ M Rohman, "Historicity of Hadith Studies: Paradigm of Understanding, Transmission, and Contemporary Hadith Studies," *Al-Mujtama: Journal of Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.30829/al-mujtama.v1i2.24373>.

the authority of Abu Hurairah; and (2) there is still a lack of research that examines the theoretical implications of Al-Musawi's criticism of contemporary hadith study paradigms, especially in the aspects of narration authority, validity of transmission, and the epistemological construction of hadith.

This research offers novelty at the epistemological and theoretical levels. First, this study maps the epistemic architecture Al-Musawi employs in compiling a critique of Abu Hurairah. The mapping includes the identification of historical assumptions, evaluation of the authority of the narration, and the pattern of argumentation used by Al-Musawi in constructing his criticism. Second, this study uses a hermeneutical-critical approach to examine how Al-Musawi repositioned the relationship between hadith texts, narrations, and scholarly authority. This approach allows the disclosure of the power dynamics and social constructs behind the criticism. This research offers an evaluative reading of the concept of the legitimacy of hadith narration by emphasizing its multidimensional nature, including historical, epistemological, hermeneutical, and socio-political aspects. Thus, this research contributes to expanding the discourse on the theory of authority in contemporary hadith studies, especially in the context of cross-sectarian hadith criticism.

This study aims to identify and describe the steps Syarafuddin Al-Musawi used to dismantle the relationship of authority in hadith narration, and to formulate the theoretical implications of this deconstruction for the concept of authority in contemporary hadith studies. This research uses a qualitative approach with a critical *library research* design, focusing on textual analysis of Al-Musawi's main work, Abu Hurairah, as the primary data. The secondary data were obtained from relevant supporting literature, including indexed journal articles discussing the authority of narration, sanad-matan criticism, and hadith hermeneutics. The selection of literature was carried out *purposively*, considering four main criteria: substantive relevance to the theme of hadith criticism and narration authority, academic credibility of the source, representation of Sunni and Shia perspectives, and novelty of studies in contemporary hadith discourse.

Data analysis is carried out through *a critical hermeneutical approach that integrates contextual-historical reading, argumentative deconstruction, and evaluation of epistemological tools that support claims to narrative authority*. The analysis process takes place through three systematic stages: first, the identification of the concepts, propositions, and argumentative patterns of al-Musawi; second, a critical examination of its epistemic framework by referring to the theory of sanad criticism, matan criticism, and the construction of authority in the study of modern hadith; and third, evaluative synthesis to assess the coherence of arguments, epistemological validity, and the theoretical implications of the deconstruction he builds. To maintain the validity of the interpretation, this study employs a source-triangulation technique through comparative reading of the literature and argumentative cross-checks between al-Musawi's text and studies of relevant contemporary hadiths. The limitation of this study lies in its focus, which examines only the construction of al-Musawi's criticism of the hadiths of Abu Hurairah in the epistemological-hermeneutic realm, and thus does not include historical verification of all hadith sanads or philological studies as a whole.

Discussion

Syarafuddin al-Musawi (1872–1957) was a modern Shia intellectual known for his works oriented towards inter-sectarian dialogue, such as *Al-Murāja'āt*, *Al-Fushūl al-Mubimmah fī Ta'līf al-Ummah*, and *Al-Nash wa al-Itihād*. Among the most relevant works on the epistemological problem of hadith is *Abu Hurayrah*, a work that examines the authority of Abu Hurayrah's narration through a historical-critical approach, an evaluation of the sanad, and an analysis of the relationship between political authority, hadith narration, and the construction of religious legitimacy. Through this work, al-Musawi not only criticizes the figure of the narrator but also questions the epistemic mechanism in the acceptance of hadith among Sunnis and Shia.¹¹

The epistemological construction of Al-Musawi's argument is carried out by synthesizing biographical reconstruction, narrative analysis, examination of matan and isnad, and contextual-political analysis to formulate doubts and explain the dominance of Abu Hurairah's narration in hadith literature. However, his approach cannot be understood solely as a theological polemic. In his work titled *Abu Hurairah*, Al-Musawi not only criticizes the authority of Abu Hurairah's narration but also includes reflective and argumentative passages. For example, he presents an analysis of the socio-political factors he believes influenced Abu Hurairah's position in the transmission of hadith, as well as an explanation of how power relations during the Umayyad Dynasty contributed to the popularization of certain narrations. In addition, al-Musawi offers a defense of the tradition of hadith criticism as an effort to maintain the authenticity of the narrations, rather than merely attacking Abu Hurairah as a person.¹² Thus, the arguments he presents show an analytical-critical pattern built through a combination of historical analysis, narrative evaluation, and contextual reading of the political dynamics of early Islam.

Konstruksi biographer (Tārīkh al-Rāwī) Abu Hurairah

Al-Musawi analyzed the name, origin, and socio-economic conditions of Abu Hurairah before and after the migration to Medina. According to Al-Musawi, Abu Hurairah is better known by his title (*chev*) than by his nasab name. Al-Musawi added that the true identity of the narrator — both in terms of nasab and original social status — is vague, so the claim of massive narration needs to be re-examined in light of the possible scarcity of genealogical documentation. Furthermore, Al-Musawi explained that Abu Hurairah originally lived among the Ahl as-Suffah, a group of poor people who lived in the foyer of the Prophet's Mosque because they lacked permanent housing. Abu Hurairah lived among people experiencing poverty and earned his living through alms or gifts, not as a respected person or of superior social status.¹³

From this, al-Musawi proposes a methodological hypothesis that Abu Hurairah's relatively weak socio-economic background and the disputed identity of his nasab can influence the assessment of his narrational authority. However, this condition does not automatically show that Abu Hurairah's chances of hearing hadith from the Prophet are smaller than those of other companions, because his closeness to the Ahl al-Suffah community can be understood as a factor

¹¹ Syarafuddin al-Musawi, *Suing Abu Hurairah: Tracing the Footprints and His Hadiths* (Jakarta: Pustaka Zahra, 2002).

¹² al-Musawi.

¹³ al-Musawi.

that allows for a high intensity of interaction with the Prophet due to their presence around the mosque. Thus, the large number of Abu Hurairah's narrations is better understood as a historical-critical issue that requires an in-depth biographical and contextual reconstruction, rather than as a basis for drawing definitive conclusions about their credibility.¹⁴

In this context, al-Musawi also highlights the change in the socio-political status of Abu Hurairah in the early days of the Umayyad rule, especially after the consolidation of Muawiyah's power, which, according to him, indicates a transformation from a marginal social position to a more respectable position through the awarding of political and material rewards, including gifts, titles, and a palace in al-'Aqiq. According to Al-Musawi, this phenomenon is hypothesized to have occurred because Abu Hurairah's hadith narration during this period did not arise solely from memory and closeness to the Prophet, but was also influenced by *political* patronage.¹⁵ The need for the legitimacy of Umayyad power and material incentives. Thus, some of Abu Hurairah's narrations — especially those that appeared during the Umayyad period — need to be re-examined in the context of their history and socio-political motives.

Ismail, in his study, basically mediated al-Musawi's position. He accepted that Abu Hurairah's asceticism and simple lifestyle were factors that strengthened memorization and heightened the intensity of narration. However, Ismail, at the same time, corrected al-Musawi's tendency toward generalization by emphasizing that the large number of hadith attributed to Abu Hurairah does not automatically guarantee that all the narrations are directly sourced from the Prophet, especially without cross-verification of the sanad, matan, and socio-historical configurations that shape the transmission process.¹⁶ Thus, this study shows that the authority of narration is not sufficiently accepted in a traditional-normative way, but rather requires analysis through contextual, biographical, and historiographical approaches to understand better the problem of the quantity of narration methodologically and critically.

Quantity of Narrative and Historical Plausibility Problems

Al-Musawi's argument regarding the quantity of hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah makes an important methodological contribution to the discourse of contemporary hadith criticism. He does not simply question numbers, but proposes an analytical framework through statistical comparison, distribution mapping, and *temporal plausibility testing*.¹⁷ that can be tested with data.

In his book, al-Musawi constructs his criticism by highlighting the disparity between Abu Hurairah's time with the Prophet—which was only about three years—and the number of hadiths he narrated in canonical sources, which exceeds 5,000.¹⁸ He poses this question as an epistemological problem: how can a companion who converted to Islam in the final phase of

¹⁴ al-Musawi.

¹⁵ Political patronage is a system of power relations in which powerful individuals (patrons) provide assistance, benefits, or support (such as work, money, or projects) to their supporters (clients) in exchange for political support, loyalty, and other assistance.

¹⁶ Abolaji Abdrahman Ismail, "Rethinking the Polemical Studies on Abu Hurayrah 's Transmitted Hadiths," *QUHAS: Journal Of Qur'An And Hadith Studies* 14, no. 2 (2025): 546–60, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v14i2.46589>.

¹⁷ Temporal *plausibility* is a concept used in data analysis, to verify whether the sequence or time of an event makes logical sense in a real-world context. The primary purpose of this test is to detect anomalies, errors, or inconsistencies in time-based data

¹⁸ Al-Musawi, *Suing Abu Hurairah : Tracing His Steps and Hadiths (Terj.)*.

prophethood be the greatest narrator, while senior figures who accompanied the Prophet for a longer period of time—such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Ali, Aisha—inheriting a much smaller corpus of history? This question is an entry point for al-Musawi to deconstruct the authority of narration that has been assumed to be well established in the Sunni tradition.¹⁹ According to Nurul Husna's research, Abu Hurairah was recorded to have narrated the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, with a total of around 5,374 hadiths, namely the number of narrations with repetition (*takrār al-rivāyah*), so that the number of unique hadiths narrated does not reach this number. This number far exceeds that of other companions, such as Ibn Umar (2,630 hadiths), Anas bin Malik (2,286 hadiths), Aisha (2,210 hadiths), and Ibn Abbas (1,660 hadiths).²⁰

Al-Musawi's argument is supported by a quantitative reading of the distribution of hadith in major works such as Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, and Sunan al-Tirmidhi, as well as comparative data on the duration of the Companions with the Prophet. Based on this reading, Al-Musawi questioned why the intensity of narration was not always proportional to the length of interaction and historical closeness of a companion to the Prophet. When the correlation does not seem consistent, according to him, a methodological evaluation of the transmission process and the authority of hadith narration is needed.

In this context, G. H. A. Juynboll highlights the phenomenon of common link, which is the centering of narration paths on certain figures in the sanad network. He argues that some names gained dominance in sanad because of their strategic position in the transmission and codification of hadith. Although departing from a different epistemological basis, Juynboll's criticism of the concentration of sanad intersects with the problem discussed by al-Musawi, especially regarding the possibility of constructing narrative authority in the history of hadith transmission.²¹

Methodologically, al-Musawi proposes three main analytical tools in evaluating the narration of hadith. First, he numerically inventoried history using matan and sanad units, along with historical statistics, as the basis for critical rhetoric. By pointing out that the number of narrations of Abu Hurairah far exceeds the narrations of other companions, such as Aisha, Umar ibn al-Khaththāb, 'Ibn 'Abbas, or 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib, al-Musawi concluded that there was an anomaly of historical transmission of the tradition of Abu Hurairah.²²

Second, he compares the duration of the Companions' interactions with the Prophet to emphasize the process of "learning-by-accompaniment".²³ Al-Musawi argued that the temporal proximity and intensity of a companion's interaction with the Prophet should be directly

¹⁹ Sayyid Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din Al-Musawi, *Abu Huraira* (Ansariyan Publications, 2002), <https://al-islam.org/id/abu-hurayra-abd-al-husayn-sharaf-al-din-al-musawi>.

²⁰ Nurul Husna, "The History of Hadith and the Problems of Friends," *Al-Bukhārī: Journal of Hadith Science* 1, no. 2 (2018).

²¹ Achmad Nasrulloh, "G.H.A Juynboll's Common Link Theory: Tracing the Historical Roots of the Prophet's Hadith," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith* 5, no. 2 (2022): 226–48, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35132/albayan.v5i2.214>.

²² In'amul Hasan, "The Methodology of Hadith Analysis Narrated by Abu Hurairah from a Sunni-Shia Perspective (Nūr Al - Dīn Abu Liḥ Yah and Nerve Al-Dīn Al-Mūsawī)" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2020), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/51323/>.

²³ Literally, *companion* in Indonesian means friend, friend, or friend. This term refers to someone who accompanies or is with others in an activity or social relationship. The concept is more general and can be applied in a variety of contexts, both formal and informal. This is synonymous with the concept of *Mulazamah*.

proportional to the breadth of the narration he narrates. If there is an inequality — for example, a very long history of a person who, chronologically, has only a short period of interaction — then it requires an investigation of external factors, especially the socio-political aspects that allow one to gain narrative authority. He specifically attributes the surge in Abu Hurairah's historical prominence to his association with the political elite, including his connection to Marwan ibn al-Qamah.²⁴

Third, Al-Musawi emphasizes the importance of socio-historical reasoning in understanding the narration of hadith. In the context of Abu Hurairah, the number of narrations attributed to him is understood not solely as a measure of individual memorization capacity but also as a reflection of the process of establishing narrational authorities in the early days of Islam. Abu Hurairah's proximity to the post-Prophetic center of power, especially in the Umayyad era, also influenced the reception and dissemination of his narrations among Muslim societies. Thus, the authority of hadith, in al-Musawi's view, does not occupy a neutral space but rather engages with social and political dynamics that affect a narrator's legitimacy. This approach shows al-Musawi's distinctive contribution to the reading of hadith as part of the historical construction of authority in Islamic society.

Through the three approaches of historical statistics, interaction duration analysis, and socio-historical reasoning, al-Musawi concluded that large quantities of narration should be read with historical skepticism. That is, without contextual clarification, a large amount of history leads to the inflation of narration authority, that is, the legitimacy of a narrative that is built solely because of the volume of history, not the quality of sanad or matan. However, a large number of hadith narrations are not always interpreted as doubtful before verification.

Quality of Narration

In his book, Syarafuddin al-Musawi devotes a chapter to assessing the reliability of the hadiths attributed to Abu Hurairah. Al-Musawi examines two important points. First, in the content of the hadith text (*matan*), he sees whether there are peculiarities in the language and the pattern of *Isra'iliyyat*, or whether the content is contrary to other hadiths that are stronger. Second, he assesses the chain of narrators (*sanad*). Here, he distinguishes between a history whose sanad is complete (*musnad*) and a history whose sanad is interrupted (*mursal*). In addition, he noted that in the hadiths attributed to Abu Hurairah, there is *a considerable amount of mursal material*.²⁵

According to al-Musawi, when the content of the hadith shows irregularities and the sanad is unstable, the level of trust becomes low, even though many people previously accepted it without criticism. Therefore, he concluded that even though there is a narration of Abu Hurairah that appears to have a complete sanad, its quality is still not much better than that of the narration whose sanad is interrupted.²⁶ To support this opinion, he gives examples of hadiths whose content is contrary to established texts. He shows cases where the narrators directly rely on a saying attributed to the Prophet, even though, according to him, the reliance is not strong in terms of sanad.

²⁴ Hasan, "The Methodology of Ktitik Matan Hadith Narrated by Abu Hurairah from a Sunni-Shia Perspective (Nūr Al - Dīn Abū Liḥ Yah and Syaraf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī)."

²⁵ Al-Musawi, *Abu Huraira*.

²⁶ Al-Musawi.

In the study of Wahidul Anam and Ilaina, some of Abu Hurairah's narrations that are considered strange include the narration that tells the story of the Prophet Moses and the Angel of Death, the narration of the Prophet Moses and the stone, and the narration about the depiction of Allah and the creation of Adam, which is considered logically absurd. This strengthens the list of cases in question in the narration of Abu Hurairah's hadith.²⁷

The analysis conducted by Al-Musawi on matan hadith employs a systematic approach to matan criticism. Al-Musawi highlights the editorial difference in the hadith regarding the prohibition of fasting for people who are junub at dawn, which Abu Hurairah narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, but corrected by the narrations of 'Aisha and Umm Salamah, which state that the Prophet continued to fast even though he entered dawn in a state of junub. These differences show the inconsistency of matan between narrations, which are then resolved through the mechanism of tarjih by hadith scholars.²⁸

The development of the discipline of eye criticism in the study of modern hadith supports the legitimacy of such an approach. Contemporary scholars point out that verification of sanad alone is not enough; The content of the eyes also requires a strict evaluation of internal consistency, rationality, and conformity with other authoritative sources.²⁹ Methodological studies are now recording evidence that even among classical and *mutaqaddimin scholars*, criticism of the context and substance of matan has been carried out — though not always as systematically as in the modern era. Some contemporary research has also focused on ocular anomalies as a basis for critical reflection on the reliability of hadith texts.³⁰

In the realm of isnad, Al-Musawi distinguishes the pattern of musnad and mursal by showing that several hadiths that appear to have a complete sanad in canonical collections were initially circulated in the form of mursal. One example he highlights is a set of narrations attributed to Abu Hurairah, in which the initial version of the sanad ends with the tabi'in. In contrast, in the later period, a more complete sanad appears, with the addition of the names of certain narrators, so that they appear continuous. Al-Musawi demonstrates this tendency by comparing variants of the sanad in early sources. The classical version tends to be shorter and mursal, while the musnad version appears in later transmissions. Thus, according to him, a strong display of sanad does not necessarily indicate the original form of transmission, but can be the result of the regularization of the sanad to strengthen the authority of the hadith. Therefore, he concluded that the proliferation of mursal hadith attributed to Abu Hurairah should be studied critically through simultaneous analysis of isnad and matan. This is also emphasized in the study

²⁷ Wahidul Anam and Rudhad Ilaina, "The Problem of Authentication of Hadith in the Friend Period: Between Justice and Political Intrigue," *Empirism: Journal of Islamic Thought and Culture* 32, no. 1 (2023): 87–108, <https://doi.org/10.30762/empirisma.v32i1.836>.

²⁸ Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002).

²⁹ Ayub, "Matn Criticism And Its Role In The Evaluation Of Hadith Authenticity," *IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities)*, no. March (2018): 1–4.

³⁰ Wasman, Mesraini, and Suwendi, "A Critical Approach To Prophetic Traditions Contextual Criticism In Understanding Hadith," *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 1 (2023): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.611.1-17>.

by Yunita et al., which highlights the importance of integrating sanad and matan criticism in assessing the authenticity of hadith.³¹

Politics, patronage, and amplification of narrative

Al-Musawi argues that some of the narrations connected to Abu Hurairah cannot be fully understood without taking into account the political context and patronage mechanisms that developed after the prophetic period. He argues that some hadiths are strengthened or become widespread not only because of the quality of the narrator's memory, but also because of socio-political relations, such as awards, gifts, or protection by rulers, that incentivize the reproduction and dissemination of certain traditions. In al-Musawi's terminology, patronage can serve as an "amplification machine" that creates access, legitimacy, and transmission networks, facilitating the proliferation of a particular history.³²

To support this claim, al-Musawi highlighted various evidences, including; (1) a biographical narrative showing the improvement in the economic and social status of Abu Hurairah in the post-Prophetic period; (2) the pattern of distribution of history that is concentrated in the environment of power or certain sects; and (3) the temporal correlation between the phase of Umayyad political consolidation and the emergence of variants of hadith that favored the narrative of the regime's legitimacy. He combines textual evidence, such as chronology and hadith collections, with historical studies of patronage in early Islam that show the practices of awarding and client relationships that influenced individuals' social status. The findings of the early historiographic study of Islam and the study of patronage provide an empirical basis for this analysis.³³

Al-Musawi shows that patronage influences narration in four ways: granting access and networking with close groups of rulers; providing material and symbolic incentives; selecting narratives that support the regime's legitimacy; and spreading certain traditions until they have many narrative paths and appear more authentic. These findings are in line with studies in the sociology of religion and textual history showing that religious authority is often formed through power relations and political support. In the context of early Islam, this was evident in the use of pulpits and networks of court clerics by Umayyad rulers to reinforce certain political narratives. Therefore, the dominance of a history does not always reflect its historical strength alone, but can also be influenced by the socio-political structures that support its transmission.³⁴

Criticism of Syarafuddin al-Musawi's argument

The study of historical biography (*ilm rijal al-hadith*) in the classical tradition provides a wide range of information, though its quality is not always uniform. Rijal books, such as those of Ibn Sa'ad, al-Dhahabi, and Ibn Hajar, contain biographical accounts of historians with varying

³¹ Mirna Yunita, Rahmiah Nur R., and Muhammad Ali, "Methods of Criticism of Sanad and Matan Hadith," *Ma'bad Aly Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.63398/pj6gix91>.

³² Arif Jamaluddin, "Political Dynamics In The Hadith Transmission : Hadis Scholars And Orientalists ' Perspectives," *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies (IJPSAT)* 45, no. 1 (2024): 18–28.

³³ Ikhsan Darmawan and Siska Afriany, "The Early Umayyad Period: Formation, Political Development, Social Conditions, Religious Affairs, And Civilizational Progress," *Judikis (Journal of Islamic Education)* 1, no. 2 (2024): 53–64.

³⁴ Abdul Matin bin Salman, "The Hadith of the Prophet in the Politics of Power: A Study of the Meaning of the Hadith of the Prophet from the Perspective of Power," *AL QUDS : Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 6, no. 2 (2022): 471–94, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v6i2.4236>.

methods, depth, and focus. Some are very detailed, some are concise, depending on the author's purpose and the available sources.³⁵ The chronological reconstruction of al-Musawi rests on a polemical narrative that has not been adequately tested against the entire sanad data. Therefore, contemporary researchers emphasize the importance of applying philological methods—such as sanad comparison and *common-link* analysis—to verify the chronology of narration, rather than relying solely on narrative readings of biographical literature.³⁶

Criticism of al-Musawi asserts that he tends to adopt the “late development” thesis (the view that the authority or popularity of Abu Hurairah's narration emerged and strengthened in a later period, rather than in the early phase after the death of the Prophet). Thus, for many hadiths narrated by Abu Hurairah, a more systematic and quantitative analysis of sanad is needed to provide an adequate empirical basis for these claims.³⁷

The strength of al-Musawi's analysis lies in his ability to raise relevant issues in the study of hadith, especially related to quantitative anomalies of narration and the possibility of historiographical constructions in the formation of narrative authority. However, several of his chronological claims still rely on polemical sources and have not been supported by a systematic analysis of the sanad network. As a result, some chronological conclusions appear to be more inferential than quantitatively verified. That is, the proposed sequence of events or historical developments is primarily based on logical reasoning, assumptions, or interpretive readings of texts. In other words, the chronology is compiled through *rational conjectures* that have not been tested through adequate empirical data.

Some orientalists, such as Juynboll and several hadith historians, interpret the pattern of Abu Hurairah's narration as a product of the development of transmission to the next generation, as explained by *the common-link theory*.³⁸ al-Musawi's argument requires sanad mapping that shows *common-link frequencies*, the starting points of the spread, and the main transmission nodes. Without such analytical tools, his reasoning power becomes limited.

Regarding the quality and quantity of Abu Hurairah's narration, al-Musawi highlights that attributing thousands of hadiths to Abu Hurairah raises epistemic problems. He questioned how a companion could narrate so many hadiths without consistent sanad support for the next generation. At the same time, some of the matan attributed to him showed indications of contradiction or possible interpolation.

Conclusions regarding the possibility of fabrication cannot be based solely on extensive historical evidence. Methodologically, al-Musawi's argument that “a large number gives rise to suspicion” requires adequate comparisons, including: (a) the quantitative distribution of the narrations of other companions in a large corpus such as Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim; (b) the level of convergence of the sanad derived from the independent line; and (c) the characteristics of the narration traditions in each region, such as Medina, Iraq, and Syria. Without systematic

³⁵ Anis Tilawati, "The Study of the Book of At-Thabaqat Al-Kubra by Ibn Sa'ad," *Syndicate* 2, no. 2 (2022): 148–60.

³⁶ Nur Mahmudah, "G. H. A. Juynboll's Thoughts on Hadith," *Mutawâtir* 3, no. 1 (2013): 106–22.

³⁷ Nasrulloh, "G.H.A Juynboll's Common Link Theory: Tracing the Historical Roots of the Prophet's Hadith."

³⁸ Ahmad Maghza Rizaka Idri, “The Concept and Implementation of Common Link Theory in Hadith Research,” *Technium* 59 (2024): 292–305.

comparative analysis, al-Musawi's statistical claims risk being seen as sheer quantitative rhetoric and inadequate as a basis for historical suspicion.

The study of sanad in modern research, including analytical models *such as the common-link developed in the Juynboll tradition, suggests that some of the narration appears to have centered on a specific intermediary narrator rather than on Abu Hurairah directly*. However, several criticisms of Juynboll's approach and its application to Abu Hurairah's case confirm that the identification of a *common link must be accompanied by verification of the narrator's integrity through a study of jarh wa ta'dil, as well as other historical support for comparison*. Findings from some studies suggest that only a small portion of Abu Hurairah's narrations is problematic, while the majority have a sanad that is highly regarded in classical literature. Thus, criticism of al-Musawi argues that he tends to generalize from partial cases, producing conclusions disproportionate to the entire corpus of Abu Hurairah's history.³⁹

Al-Musawi assessed the existence of an anomaly as an indication of the possibility of *interpolation*⁴⁰. However, textual scholars argue that differences in matan can often be understood through the context of narrative practices in different regions, the use of paraphrasing in the teaching process, or editorial adjustments by intermediary narrators. Therefore, the alleged interpolation needs to be proven through a more systematic pattern, such as the sudden appearance of variants and reliance on only one transmission line, rather than small differences between editors. Critics demand that al-Musawi present a representative selection of matan cases and present evidence of transmission networks that clearly indicate the entry point of interpolation.⁴¹

The strength of al-Musawi's analysis lies in its emphasis that the high number of Abu Hurairah's narrations demands adequate historical explanation. This question is methodologically valid because it concerns the consistency between the narration capacity, the socio-political context, and the dynamics of hadith transmission in the early days of Islam. However, this argument has weaknesses in the aspect of data verification. Al-Musawi has not made use of the large corpus-based sanad-mapping analysis, which would allow for measurable testing of his claims. Therefore, some critics consider the approach to be still *heuristic*.⁴² and requires quantitative data to be categorized as strong empirical findings.

Al-Musawi succeeded in showing the temporal and contextual proximity between the narrator of the hadith and the configuration of certain political powers. Still, he did not fully prove that the relationship was causal and determinative. In modern historiography, this kind of practice is considered problematic because structural proximity does not automatically indicate a

³⁹ Nasrulloh, "G.H.A Juynboll's Common Link Theory: Tracing the Historical Roots of the Prophet's Hadith."

⁴⁰ In the study of hadith and text criticism, interpolation refers to the insertion of new elements—whether in the form of words, phrases, sentences, or ideas—that were not present in the initial version of a text and added at a later stage of transmission. This term is often used when researchers suspect that a part of the eye appeared later, rather than from the first source or narrator.

⁴¹ Damanhuri, "Reconstruction Of Matan Hadith Understanding About Women Position In Household," *Scientific Journal of Peuradeun* 4, no. 2 (2016): 239–56, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v4i2.101>.

⁴² In the context of academic criticism, heuristics refer to approaches that use indicative reasoning, scientific intuition, or general patterns to build arguments, but without the support of systematic and quantitative data verification. In other words, heuristic arguments rely on logical and interpretive considerations that make sense, but have not been tested through scalable, computational, or large corpus-based methods.

cause-and-effect relationship.⁴³ Without an empirically verified causal mechanism, such as administrative records, evidence of patronage contracts, or contemporary testimony, the argument risks falling into the logical fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*⁴⁴ which is often criticized in the methodology of social history and religious politics. As a result, al-Musawi's thesis appears to be more of an interpretive construction than a historically grounded reconstruction with sufficient evidence.

Another relevant criticism of al-Musawi's approach is his tendency towards *Over-Determined* politics in explaining the dynamics of the transmission of Abu Hurairah's hadith. By placing political patronage as the dominant variable, al-Musawi implicitly reduces the complexity of the hadith transmission ecosystem, which in fact is also shaped by non-political factors such as the structure of halaqah, the personal authority of the narrator, the intellectual network of early Islam, and the stability of the Arabic oral tradition⁴⁵. Several recent studies in Islamic historiography have confirmed that such reductions risk obscuring the plurality of historical determinants and constructing an oversimplifying narrative of the dynamics of classical Islamic scholarship.⁴⁶ In addition, the analysis of the sanad often finds that many of Abu Hurairah's narrative chains are scattered across various centers of tradition (Basrah, Kufa, Medina), rather than centered on a single circle of power. This does not support the single patronage narrative that explains the consolidation of the corpus.⁴⁷ Some of these criticisms do not rule out the possibility of political intervention in the transmission of hadith. Still, they do demand a more proportionate analytical framework, in which politics is treated as a contingent variable rather than a single determinant.

Theoretical and practical implications of Syarafuddin al-Musawi's deconstruction

Al-Musawi's argument cannot be reduced to a mere personal attack on Abu Hurairah, but rather operates in a discursive formation that structurally shifts the center of legitimacy of hadith authority from the tradition of normative transmission to the horizon of historical-modern criticism. The main problem lies not in personal criticism, but in methodological asymmetry. The Sunni hadith tradition is burdened with a heavy historiographical suspicion, while other transmissional traditions do not receive equal methodological treatment. On the other hand, not all pillars of al-Musawi's argument are at the same epistemic level; some of the criticisms are *heuristic* and open up legitimate question space, but some are still at the *plausible* level (lack of evidence) because they are not supported by robust data mapping (having strong data from various methods) and replicative validation mechanisms.

⁴³ James Mahoney, "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 4 (2000): 507–48, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007113830879>.

⁴⁴ It refers to a *logical fallacy* in which a person concludes that event A causes event B only because B occurs after A, even though the sequence of time alone is not enough to prove the cause-effect relationship. This is a common logic error that confuses correlation (sequence relations) with causality (cause-effect).

⁴⁵ Miski, "Ifṭirāq Hadith in Authoritative Literature: Portrait of Networks and Interests," *Mashdar: Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies*, 2022, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.15548/mashdar.v4i1.4370>.

⁴⁶ Hussein Raja Al-shuqairat, Abd-al Razzak Mahmoud Al-maani, and Mohanad Nayef Aldajah, "Islamic Historiography and Modernity: A Systematic Literature Review on the Evolution of Muslim Societies in the Postcolonial Era," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)* 15, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.151.14>.

⁴⁷ Amsori, "Abu Hurairah Ra in Hadith Studies (Contributions, Criticism and Defense)" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2023).

The most epistemically significant pillar of al-Musawi's argument is the problematization of the number of Abu Hurairah's narrations, as it opens space for empirical testing through analysis of the distribution of sanad and transmissional demography. However, at the implementation stage, this argument remains plausible but not yet robust due to the lack of a computational mapping of the hadith corpus. The weakest pillar lies in the Umayyad political patronage thesis, which operates more on a correlational narrative basis than on verified causal evidence. Meanwhile, the most crucial epistemic problem arises from methodological slippage, when the modern tool of criticism is applied to the classical tradition without the explicit articulation of the shifting standards of validity employed.

The epistemological implications of the critique of al-Musawi's argument suggest that the authority of hadith, especially the narration of Abu Hurairah, should be understood as the product of complex historical processes, not merely the result of a linear, independent transmission devoid of socio-political context. This demands a shift from an authoritative-traditional approach to a critical-reflective approach that simultaneously analyzes sanad, matan, and historical context. Methodologically, further research is suggested using a triangulation strategy among the study of classical rijal al-hadith, the analysis of the sanad network (isnad network analysis), and socio-historical readings of political dynamics and patronage, supported by simple quantitative data to avoid speculative generalizations. This integrative approach is expected to produce a more proportionate, transparent, and academically accountable assessment in contemporary hadith studies.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that Syarafuddin al-Musawi's epistemological criticism of the authority of Abu Hurairah's hadith cannot be understood solely as an attempt to delegitimize the narrator, but as an attempt to reconstruct the way hadith verification works through a historical reading of the relationship between the transmission of knowledge, political configuration, and the formation of religious authority. The main contribution of this research lies in the formulation of an integrative reading model that brings together classical sanad-matan criticism and modern historiographic approaches, particularly through analyses of the social context of narration, political patronage, and the dynamics of the hadith transmission network. Thus, this study not only examines the substance of al-Musawi's criticism but also offers a methodological framework for reading hadith as a scholarly tradition shaped by complex historical processes.

This study finds that some of al-Musawi's criticisms have methodological relevance because they show that the authority of narration does not rest entirely on normative assumptions about personal justice but is also shaped by processes of social and political legitimacy in the early days of Islam. However, this study also confirms that several of al-Musawi's arguments have not fully met the standards of contemporary historiographic verification because they still rely on polemical inference rather than comprehensive sanad mapping, measurable transmission analysis, and empirically testable historical correlations. Therefore, al-Musawi's criticism can be accepted as a reflective and corrective instrument in the study of hadith. Still, it is not strong enough to be used as a basis for the historical delegitimization of Abu Hurairah as a whole.

Based on these findings, this study positions the deconstruction of al-Musawi as a foothold for developing a more interdisciplinary methodology for hadith study. Strengthening the study of hadith in the future requires integrating classical hadith criticism with other approaches, such as data-driven sanad analysis, network analysis to map the relationships of narration transmission, and modern Islamic historiography to test the patterns of hadith spread and authority more systematically. With this methodological direction, contemporary hadith studies do not stop at apologetic and revisionist polarization, but move towards a more measurable, open, and academic model of historical verification.

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