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REVISITING THE FINALITY OF HADITH SCIENCE: FORMALIZATION, REFORMULATION, AND WESTERN SCHOLARS' FALSIFICATION

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Abstract

Classical hadith science has undergone relatively little development among Muslim Scholars, having come to be regarded as fully established and final (naḍīja wa iḥtaraqa). This stagnation was presented by Ibn Najīm and exists in the hadith science literature of the period. By contrast, Western scholarship has advanced considerably in methodology, theory, application, and historical analysis. This study addresses two questions. First, it maps classical and medieval hadith science through its phases of formalization and reformulation, before the emergence of Orientalism. Second, it examines how Western scholars' falsification of hadith studies – both revisionist and traditionalist – might revive the field, including through critical engagement with formalization and continued reformulation via re-examination of existing theories. Using a historiographical approach to hadith literature from the 4th/10th to 14th/mid-20th–15th/21st centuries, and drawing on al-Jābirī's theory of waṣl (continuity) and faṣl (rupture) alongside Popper's falsification, findings show that hadith science is ijtihādī, developing, stagnating, and developing again. Formalization around al-Bukhārī's standard led to misjudgments of traditions predating him or originating outside the Mashriq; Reformulations offered a little clear line of demarcation between multiple standards that are not standardized; and Western falsificationist critique has made hadith science more open, accommodating, and rigorous than formalized standards alone.

Keywords: *Hadith Science; Hadith Literature; Formalization; Reformulation; Falsification*

Abstrak

Ilmu hadis klasik mengalami perkembangan yang relatif minim di kalangan sarjana Muslim karena dianggap sudah mapan dan final (naḍīja wa iḥtaraqa). Stagnasi ini dikemukakan oleh Ibn Najīm dan hadir dalam literatur ilmu hadis pada masa tersebut. Sebaliknya, kajian akademis Barat telah mengalami kemajuan pesat dalam hal metodologi, teori, penerapan, dan analisis historis. Studi ini menjawab dua pertanyaan. Pertama, studi ini memetakan ilmu hadis klasik dan abad pertengahan melalui fase formalisasi dan reformulasinya, sebelum munculnya Orientalisme. Kedua, studi ini mengkaji bagaimana pendekatan falsifikasi dalam kajian hadis oleh sarjana Barat – baik dari kubu revisionis maupun tradisionalis – dapat menghidupkan kembali bidang ini, termasuk melalui pelibatan kritis terhadap formalisasi serta reformulasi berkelanjutan lewat peninjauan ulang teori-teori yang ada. Melalui pendekatan historiografis terhadap literatur hadis dari abad ke-4/10 hingga abad ke-14/pertengahan abad ke-20 atau ke-15/21, serta memanfaatkan teori waṣl (kontinuitas) dan faṣl (diskontinuitas) dari al-Jābirī yang dipadukan dengan konsep falsifikasi Popper, temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ilmu hadis bersifat ijtihādī, berkembang, stagnan, dan kembali berkembang. Formalisasi yang berpatokan pada standar al-Bukhārī menyebabkan penilaian yang keliru terhadap tradisi-tradisi yang ada sebelum masanya atau yang berasal dari luar wilayah Masyriq; Reformulasi memberikan sedikit garis demarkasi yang jelas antara beberapa standar yang tidak terstandarisasi; sementara kritik falsifikasionis Barat telah menjadikan ilmu hadis lebih terbuka, akomodatif, dan memiliki ketajaman metodologis dibandingkan sekadar mengandalkan standar-standar yang telah diformalisasi.

Kata Kunci: *Ilmu Hadis; Formalisasi; Reformulasi; Falsifikasi*

A. Introduction

Early hadith scholarship experienced significant development from the first half of the 1st/7th century to the 2nd/8th century, particularly in Baṣrah. This is evidenced by the rise of hadith studies there, rivaling those in Kūfah. This growth was driven by the emergence of prominent companions in Baṣrah, such as Anas bin Mālik (d. 93/712), and junior successors such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/729) and Qatādah bin Di'āmah (d. 117/735). (Snober, 2021b, pp. 144–155) This progress led to the point where hadith studies were no longer dynamic but were formalized and standardized by hadith scholars. For example, there are hadith books that follow the standards of Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) to assess the authenticity of a hadith and the pattern of a hadith. The Bukhārism school, which uses *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* as a reference in compiling hadith books and extracting them into hadith science, became the mainstream school after the 3rd/9th century, especially in Masyriq.[1]

This influence of Bukhārism makes the study of hadith rigid, standardized, and its validity is measured by *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.[2] This is evident in the tendency of works written three centuries later to treat *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* as an authoritative reference. Muḥammad bin Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113), who wrote *Syurūṭ al-A'immah al-Khamsah* and al-Mayyānisyī (d. 583/1187) in his work, *Mā lā yasa'u al-Muḥaddiṡ Jahluhū* made *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj al-Nīsābūrī (d. 261/875) to measure the quality and group the canonical hadith books (*kutub al-khamsah* or *kutab al-sittah*). (Abdul-Jabbar, 2020) This, in turn, led to the standardization and restriction of hadith scholarship to certain canonical books, which also shaped the literature of hadith science, particularly the work of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) in his *Ma'rifat Anwā' 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīṡ*. (al-Syahrazūrī, 2002)

Eerik Dickinson, based on his study of the development of hadith studies, argued that the study of isnād began to be somewhat neglected following the emergence of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. Although Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ re-emphasized the study of *isnād*, particularly *isnād 'ālī*, which is considered purer and closer to the Prophet, in practice he continued to adhere to Bukhārist principles. (Dickinson, 2002) Harald Motzki (d. 2019) further demonstrated that the hadith standards used by al-Bukhārī regarding *ṣīghat al-taḥammul wa al-adā'*

[1] See explanation of Bukhārisme in Muwaṭṭa'isme in (Akmaluddin, 2021a, pp. 140–141)

[2] In this regard, Jonathan AC Brown argues that canonization was not al-Bukhārī's intention. This means that *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* was not intended to be the standard of authenticity. Furthermore, canonization was the public's reception, in this case al-Bukhārī's, of the text circulating at that time. See (J. A. C. Brown, 2007, p. 36). However, the opposite occurred with books on hadith science. Hadith science was compiled with the author's interests in mind, resulting in a kind of subjectification of the standard of authenticity, primarily based on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

were apparently not applicable to assess books written before al-Bukhārī's time. The use of *'an* which was automatically considered *tadlīs* (forgery) was actually used as a *samā'* by 'Abd al-Razzāq. (Motzki, 1991) For Kamaruddin Amin, assessment using al-Bukhārī's methods and standards was not followed by all scholars at that time. Therefore, the application of al-Bukhārī's methods and standards to the authenticity of hadith followed by al-Albānī needs to be reviewed because it weakens many authentic hadith. (Amin, 2004)

This unclear standardization of hadith science then prompted hadith scholars in Syām to conduct further research into early hadith studies, both before and during the time of al-Bukhārī. This would lead to a more comprehensive standard for hadith science, as Ahmad Snober argues. (Snober, 2020) On the other hand, Ḥamzah al-Mallībarī argues that the simplification of the definition of hadith science, particularly that of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, is the cause of the emergence of overlapping hadith sciences. (al-Mallībārī, 2001, 2003) Despite their criticism of the simplifications in Ibn al-Salāḥ's standards, Snober and al-Mallībarī have not yet classified the formalization and reformulation of hadith science and have not yet linked it to the falsification of hadith science as done by Western scholars. The falsification carried out by Western scholars on hadith science is very important for revitalizing hadith science which is already considered final and established and does not need further development.

The glorification of hadith knowledge in the Masyriq region negates the study of hadith in several peripheral areas such as the Maghrib and al-Andalus as carried out by Muhammad Akmaluddin. (Akmaluddin, 2017) Apart from that, the theoretical and rationalist standards of hadith science were challenged by John Wansbrough. He requested that authentic hadiths be proven with empirical evidence and not just oral history that cannot be verified. (Akmaluddin, 2021b; Wansbrough, 2003a)

Several existing studies such as mentioned before by Abdul-Jabbar, Dickinson, Motzki, Amin, Snober, al-Mallībārī and Akmaluddin demonstrate that hadith studies require reexamination and its development. Several recent studies on hadith show that falsification of Western scholars on hadith science need to be reexamined and reevaluated. (Anwari, Trenggono, & Asyahudi, 2023; Berg, 2003a; Firdausy, 2018; Hera, 2020; Motzki, 2004; Suwarno, 2018) Therefore, this research focuses on two issues: *first*, how the classical and medieval hadith sciences are mapped, characterized by the formalization and reformulation of hadith. *Second*, how the falsification of hadith science by Western scholars, both revisionist and

traditionalist,[3] can revitalize hadith studies, including by critiquing the formalization and reformulation of hadith science by reexamining pre-existing theories and studies.

This study uses a historiographic approach to the works of hadith science from the 4th/10th century to the second half of the 20th century – the 15th/21st century. Data collection was carried out by tracing the history of early hadith science, especially after the emergence of al-Bukhārī's work and dividing it into three periods with their respective characteristics and traits. This step is very important to know the demarcation of dynamic studies before al-Bukhārī and rigid and static studies after al-Bukhārī. Then continued with the pre-orientalism and post-colonialism periods to find out how hadith studies were then revived and questioned again.

The theory that will be used is the theory of *waṣl* and *faṣl* by Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī (d. 2010). The first step is *waṣl* namely relying on the development of studies with tradition (*turāṡ*) first so as not to be separated from the initial scientific foundations and its epistemological basis. Then after that is *faṣl* namely including the development of current studies with existing turāṡ so that there are novelty and innovation. (al-Jābirī, 1990, pp. 35–36) In addition, this research will use Karl Popper's falsification theory, (Popper, 2002, pp. 17–19) namely by denying and doubting the standards of hadith studies to see how consistent the data and studies of hadith are with the development of contemporary hadith discourse.

Therefore, the overarching aim of this research is twofold: *first*, to systematically map the development of classical and medieval hadith sciences, with particular emphasis on their historical processes of formalization and reformulation; and *second*, to critically investigate how the revisionist and traditionalist Western scholarly falsifications of these sciences can productively revitalize contemporary hadith studies. This dual objective will be pursued by re-examining long-held pre-existing theories and analytical models, thereby enabling a nuanced critique of established formalizations while simultaneously synthesizing these external critical perspectives to forge new methodological pathways for engaging with hadith epistemology and historiography.

B. Formalization of Hadith Science (4th/10th Century to 10th/16th Century)

The formalization of hadith science began in the 4th/10th century to the 10th/16th century. This phase was marked by the book of hadith science starting from Aḥmad bin 'Alī al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915) in his *Rasā'il fī 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīṡ*, which

[3] The division between revisionists and traditionalists refers to Gregor Schoeler's categorization, which is considered more appropriate than Herbert Berg's. See (Motzki, 2003; Schoeler, 2011, pp. 8–13)

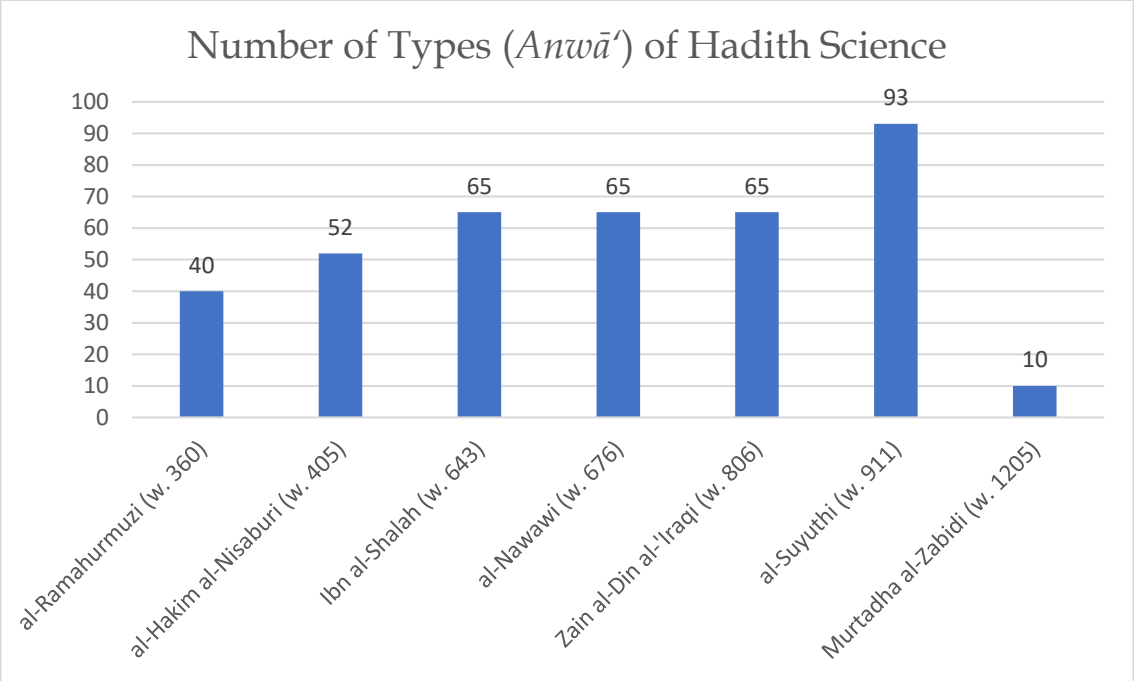
classified the most authentic sanad to the position of hadith experts against *sīrah* experts such as al-Wāqidī and exegetes such as Muqātil bin Sulaimān who were considered to have lied a lot, (al-Nasā'ī, 1985, p. 76) hadith science continued to develop: al-Ḥasan bin 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. circa 360/970) with his *al-Muḥaddiṡ al-Fāṣil baina al-Rāwī wa al-Wā'ī* with the totaling 40 hadith science and developed into 52 during the time of Muḥammad bin 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014) with his *Ma'rifah 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīṡ wa Kamiyyah Ajsānih*. (al-Rāmahurmuzī, 1404; al-Naisabūrī, 2003)

Subsequently, 'Uṡmān bin 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Syahrazūrī (d. 643/1245) in his *Ma'rifah Anwā' 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīṡ*, Yaḥyā bin Syaraf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) in his *al-Taqrīb wa al-Taisīr li Ma'rifah al-Sunan al-Basyīr wa al-Nażīr*, and 'Abd al-Raḥīm bin al-Ḥusain al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1404) in his *al-Taqyīd wa al-Īḍāḥ Syarḥ Muqaddimah Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* agreed to mention 65 types of hadith sciences. (al-Syahrazūrī, 2002; al-Nawawī, 1985; al-'Irāqī, 1969) Then, a significant increase occurred in 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), in his *Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Syarḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī*, in which the science of hadith became 93 types. (al-Suyūṭī, 1996) The increase in the science of hadith by al-Suyūṭī in the early 10th/16th century and the statement of Ibn Najīm in the late 10th/16th century prove that the science of hadith at that time reached its peak.[4] Therefore, the development of the science of hadith is an inevitability, while the changes and dynamics within it are another inevitability.

The science of hadith did not experience significant development by Muslim scholars after the 10th/16th century CE. This is evident in the decline in the quantity of hadith studies since al-Suyūṭī. During his time, the science of hadith reached its peak with 93 disciplines. After that, the number of hadith disciplines began to decline over time. This is supported by the thought of Zain al-Dīn bin Ibrāhīm Ibn Najīm al-Miṣrī (d. 970/1563) who quoted several scholars of that time, who stated that the science of hadith and fiqh were established and final (*naḍīja wa iḥtaraqa*). Furthermore, both disciplines already explained everything contained in the Shari'a. Studies related to *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* had already been fully discussed in these two disciplines, so they no longer needed further development. (al-Miṣrī, 1999, vol. VI: 130)

[4] This contrasts with the development of hadith scholarship in al-Andalus from the 6th/12th century to the 9th/15th century, which experienced a significant decline in both quality and quantity. Furthermore, the fall of Granada marked the end of Islamic civilization on the Iberian Peninsula. See (Akmaluddin, 2015, 2021a)

Diagram 1. Development of the Number of Types (*Anwā'*) of Hadith Science from the 4th/10th Century to the 13th/19th Century



Ibn Najīm's statement does seem rational and more appropriate to the time and place at that time. The study of hadith and fiqh progressed rapidly and reached its peak. However, this only occurred within the Hanafī school of thought that he followed. At that time, this school already had various types of books such as *matn, syarḥ, ḥāsyiyah* and *takmilah* such as *Takmilah al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq* by Muḥammad bin Ḥusain bin 'Alī al-Ṭūrī al-Qādirī al-Ḥanafī (d. 1138/1726). (al-Ṭūrī, n.d.) The emergence of this *takmilah* was a sign that the work of the book had passed its peak.[5] Apart from that, al-Ṭūrī also has a collection of fatwas from Qāḍī al-Quḍāh Sirāj al-Dīn 'Umar bin Isḥāq al-Ghaznawī al-Hindī (d. 773/1372), which he systematized and annotated. (al-Ziriklī, 2002, vol. VI: 103)

Ibn Najīm's statement is indeed not problematic when considering the circumstances of the time and place at that time, especially in the Ḥanafī school. However, his statement was considered to legitimize and justify the establishment and final stage of the science of hadith and fiqh. The generalization of the statement of some scholars quoted by Ibn Najīm also extended to various other sciences that *lā naḍija wa lā iḥtaraqa.* With this statement, the science of hadith and fiqh seemed as if they could no longer be developed because they had reached

[5] *Takmilah* is a type of book writing that perfects the previous book. Perfected books are usually books that are popular in a particular field. This type of *takmilah* book first appeared in the book *Kitāb al-'Ain* by al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad (d. 173/789), written by Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Khārazanjī (d. 348/959). See (Khalīfah, 1941, p. II: 1443)

their peak. On the other hand, in the science of hadith itself, the development of hadith studies is a necessity, as expressed Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (al-Syahrazūrī, 1986, p. 11):

> "الخامس والستون: معرفة أوطان الرواة وبلدانهم. وذلك آخرها، وليس بآخر الممكن في ذلك، فإنه قابل للتنويع إلى ما لا يحصى، إذ لا تحصى أحوال رواة الحديث وصفاتهم، ولا أحوال متون الحديث وصفاتها، وما من حالة منها ولا صفة إلا وهي بصدد أن تفرد بالذكر وأهلها..."
>
> *"The sixty-fifth (type of hadith science) is knowing the residences of the narrators and their countries. This (sixty-fifth) type is not the end of hadith knowledge, and it cannot be the last. Indeed, (hadith knowledge) accepts infinite variations, because the conditions and characteristics of the narrators are infinite. Likewise, the conditions and characteristics of the narrators are infinite. There is no condition or characteristic except that its name and its people are specifically mentioned…"*

In this statement, the study of hadith will always develop from time to time to infinity (*qābil li al-tanwī' ilā mā lā yuḥṣā*), as with the development of other sciences. The study of *riwāyah* and *dirāyah* develops from time to time, and may influence or be influenced by hadith discourse. For example, the development of the science of narrator criticism is evidenced by the increasing number of narrators' names collected in hadith biographical books. Books such as *Tahżīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl* by Yūsuf bin 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341) for example contains 8,045 male and female narrators, each of whom has a *kunyah.* (al-Mizzī, 1980)

The large number of *rāwī* names along with their *kunyah*, not to mention the years of birth and death, similarities in names, areas and places of residence of *rāwī* and so on require new scientific disciplines such as the history of *rāwī* (*ma'rifah al-maulid wa al-wafāh, al-sābiq wa al-lāḥiq, riwāyah al-akābir 'an al-aṣāghir, riwāyah al-ābā' 'an al-abnā', riwāyah al-aqrān*), the identification of *rāwī* (*al-mu'talif wa al-mukhtalif, al-muttafiq wa al-muftariq, al-ikhwah wa al-akhwāt*), the narrator's title (*al-asmā' wa al-kunā, al-alqāb*) and the place of the narrator (*auṭān al-ruwāh wa buldānihim*). Thus, as the number of narrators and their distribution increased over time, more and more scientific instruments were needed in the study of hadith. Even Aḥmad bin 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) in his *al-Nukat 'alā Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* provided additional and more detailed explanations regarding the development of the 22 types of knowledge described by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. (al-'Asqalānī, 1984)

Ibn al-Salaḥ's thesis was indeed proven until the time of al-Suyūṭī, when the study of hadith flourished and increased in quantity. However, after al-Suyūṭī, the science of hadith declined quantitatively. This decline may be because the science of hadith, while already *naḍīja wa iḥtaraqa* (indefinitely limited in

quantity), continued to develop qualitatively. The stagnation in the development of hadith science, particularly in terms of quantity, did not prevent hadith scholars from developing its quality. This is what occurred during the reformulation phase of hadith science.

C. Reformulation of Hadith Science (11th /17th Century – First Half of the 14th /First Half of the 20th Century)

After al-Suyūṭī, hadith science decreased in quantity. For example, there are 10 chapters in the work of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq bin Saif al-Dīn al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642), *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Ḥadīṡ*. Meanwhile, in the work of Muḥammad bin Muḥammad Murtaẓā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790), *Bulghah al-Arīb fī Muṣṭalaḥ Āṡār al-Ḥabīb,* there are alsp only 10 types of hadith science. (al-Zabīdī, 1987). This numerical contraction was as a deliberate pedagogical and epistemological shift. The post-classical scholarly milieu, particularly in South Asia, Yemen, and the central Arab lands, increasingly prioritized concise, accessible curricula that could be transmitted efficiently within the confines of established madrasa systems. (Zaman, 1999) The reduction to ten core chapters in both al-Dihlawī and al-Zabīdī shows a strategic distillation of the sprawling classical corpus into foundational essentials, driven by a pragmatic rationale to consolidate authority, facilitate rapid memorization, and ensure that students could grasp the absolute prerequisites of *muṣṭalaḥ* without being overwhelmed by the encyclopedic comprehensiveness of earlier works like *Muqaddimah Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*.

The quantitative decrease, therefore, signals a shift in scholarly purpose, from exhaustive compilation to targeted instruction, and reveals an underlying assumption that the substantive boundaries of hadith science had already been securely fixed. In this reformulation phase, hadith studies were systematically mapped, sorted, and perhaps separated based on certain themes. A decrease in the quantity of hadith science did not necessarily indicate a decrease in its quality. Systematic mapping of hadith, for example, was carried out by Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 1182/1768) in his *Isbāl al-Maṭār 'alā Qaṣab al-Sakkar Naẓm Nukhbah al-Fikr fī Muṣṭalaḥ Ahl al-Aṡar*. In his book, al-Ṣan'ānī composed poetry and organized and systematized the studies contained in Ibn Ḥajar's *Nukhbah al-Fikr.* (al-Ṣan'ānī, 2006)

The motivation behind this systematic mapping lies in the reformulators' commitment to internal coherence and mnemonic preservation. By recasting Ibn Ḥajar's prose into versified poetry (*manẓūmah*), al-Ṣan'ānī was was actively reifying the classical framework as a closed, self-sufficient canon that demanded linguistic refinement and structural clarity. The purpose was twofold: *first*, to provide an enduring didactic tool that leveraged rhythmic memorization for long-term transmission; and *second*, to assert that the intellectual heritage of the

formative and formalization periods required no foundational revision, only elegant re-arrangement. This systematization was also a defensive consideration, at a time when rationalist (*kalām*) and Ṣūfī mystical epistemologies posed alternative modes of knowing, al-Ṣanʼānīʼs rigorous ordering served to reinforce the primacy of technical, text-critical methodology as the undisputed backbone of Sunnī orthodoxy. (Farrell, 2020; Melchert, 2002, 2020) The foundational argument here is that quality, for the reformulators, was measured by fidelity to inherited prototypes and pedagogical efficacy, not by novel discoveries or critical ruptures.

Separation based on certain themes, for example the theme of types of hadith, was carried out by ʻUmar bin Muḥammad al-Baiqūnī (d. circa 1080/1669) in his *al-Manẓūmah al-Baiqūniyyah.* (al-Baiqūnī, 1999) The theme of *jarḥ wa taʼdīl,* which al-Suyūṭī only discusses in the 23rd type in his book, (al-Suyūṭī, 1996, vol. I: 351) becomes a book in *al-Rafʼu wa al-Takmīl fī al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʼdīl* by Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Ḥayy bin Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Laknawī (d. 1304/1887), (al-Laknawī, 1987) and *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʼdīl* by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914). (al-Qāsimī, 1979) This thematic separation was driven by a profound disciplinary specialization that responded to the increasing complexity and casuistry of biographical evaluation across centuries of transmission. As the temporal distance from the Prophet grew, the sheer volume of narrators and conflicting assessments demanded independent, exhaustive treatment that could no longer be subsumed within a single generic chapter.

The purpose of such extraction was to enable experts to devote focused, granular scrutiny to the nuances of narrator reliability, chain continuity, and historical criticism, without the distraction of other sub-disciplines. However, this separation carries a critical consideration: while it deepened technical proficiency, it simultaneously fragmented the holistic, integrative vision of hadith sciences that earlier scholars had cultivated, inadvertently insulating each sub-field from cross-methodological interrogation. For al-Laknawī and al-Qāsimī, writing in the Indian subcontinent and the Levant respectively, the independent monograph on *jarḥ wa taʼdīl* also served a contextual purpose, responding to sectarian polemics and the need to defend Sunnī credentials against Shiʼi or Western missionary critiques, yet it operated strictly within the inherited evaluative criteria, showing no inclination to challenge the foundational axioms of classical criticism. (Zaman, 1999)

The reformulation period saw a significant decrease in quantity compared to the formalization period, because the focus of the reformulation period was not on increasing the quantity of hadith knowledge, but rather on systematizing and deepening the existing types of hadith science rather than encompassing all types of hadith knowledge in a single book. The result was largely reaffirmation of earlier scholarship, with little critical or innovative research—a pattern that persisted until Western scholars introduced a revisionist approach to hadith

studies. Underlying this era was an epistemological reliance on taqlīd (adherence to precedent) and deference to classical authorities, which made methodological innovation both impermissible and undesirable. Reformulation thus prioritized preservation and refinement over discovery. While this approach sustained institutional continuity and pedagogical stability across the Islamic world, it gradually exhausted its creative potential, reaching a point of stagnation by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The foundational consideration here is that the reformulators' deep immersion in the received tradition, coupled with their unquestioning acceptance of its foundational premises, produced a scholarly culture that excelled in commentary, gloss, and arrangement but failed to generate new epistemological questions or empirical reassessments of the classical canon. Consequently, this intellectual inertia left the tradition structurally unprepared for, yet paradoxically ripe for, the external challenges posed by Western revisionist scholarship, which, by applying historical-critical methods, source-criticism, and skeptical historiography, forcibly reopened foundational issues that the reformulators had long considered settled. Thus, rather than viewing Western falsification merely as an adversarial attack, this study interprets it as an indispensable, albeit disruptive, catalyst that can revitalize hadith studies precisely by compelling contemporary scholars to re-engage the pre-existing theories and empirical data that the reformulation period had stabilized but failed to critically scrutinize.

D. Falsification of Hadith Science (Second Half of the 14th/Second Half of the 20th Century – 15th /21st Century)

The falsification of hadith science began with the emergence of responses to orientalists who questioned the standards and validity of hadith. This response, for example, was initiated by Musṭafā bin Ḥasanī al-Sibā'ī (d. 1384/1966) in his *al-Istisyrāq wa al-Mustasyriqūn Mā lahum wa Mā 'alaihim*. Al-Sibā'ī criticized several revisionist orientalist perspectives on various Islamic studies, especially with hadith (al-Sibā'ī, n.d., pp. 54–59). In other books, he also rejected those who doubted hadith, such as Abū Rayyah, who he considered to follow the pattern of revisionist orientalist thought.

Revisionist criticism of hadith includes later hadith, composed around the 2nd/8th century to the 3rd/9th century. They consider that hadith have no historical value. (Schoeler, 2011, pp. 8–9) Thus, hadith did not originate from the Prophet Muhammad himself, but were composed by people after the Prophet, and then attributed to the Prophet. This claim is primarily based on historical-critical methods (HCM), which then gave rise to various specific rules regarding the origins of Islamic law, such as those conducted by Joseph Schacht. (D. W. Brown, 2020; Schacht, 1950) In this case, Muḥammad Muṣtafā al-A'ẓamī (d.

1439/2017) responded to Schacht's various criticisms and methods, which primarily used legal texts to explore and test the science of hadith. For example, he responded to Schacht's isnād issue regarding the expiation of fasting by Ibn Abī Lailā from Abū Ḥanīfah, which had an incomplete sanad, which was allegedly completed during the time of Mālik ibn Anas in his Muwaṭṭa' Mālik. (Azami, 1996, pp. 133–134)

In addition, Azami also responded to several objections from John E. Wansbrough (d. 2002), who doubted and questioned the absence of contemporary evidence on the Prophet. (Wansbrough, 2003b) In his Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīṡ al-Nabawī, Azami cited the Prophet's scribes and correspondence as proof of early hadith, (Azami, 1980) though without surviving manuscripts, this falls short of answering Wansbrough. (Akmaluddin, 2021b, pp. 237–239) However, Schoeler says that some empirical evidence can at least explain Wansbrough's objections. (Schoeler, 2011, pp. 14–15) Meanwhile, GHA Juynboll (d. 2010) refined Schacht's common link (CL) theory, reinterpreting the CL as an originator rather than a fabricator. Harald Motzki, using isnād-cum-matn analysis (ICMA), argued the CL was a professional transmitter, pushing dating back to the CL's teacher. (Motzki, 2005a) J.J. Little's analysis of the Ā'isyah hadith corroborates ICMA, demonstrating the need to adapt any ICMA results to further geographical and critical analysis of the form. (Little, 2022)

The revisionist HCM was challenged by the traditionalist ICMA. Motzki himself stated that the revisionist analysis, regarding the three calendars, was biased and lacked triangulation and verification of both *isnād* and *matn* data.[6] Therefore, Motzki and Schoeler then proposed the ICMA, which accommodates various revisionist hadith analyses, which are considered more reliable and tested. Moreover, the ICMA analysis does not rely solely on one type of hadith study, such as law, as done by Schacht and Juynboll, but extends to various fields such as *tafsīr*, *sīrah*, *maghāzī* especially the hadith books before al-Bukhārī. (Motzki, 2000)

Among Muslim scholars, the *'ilal al-ḥadīṡ* or *qarā'in* movement emerged, seeking to restore the dynamic standards of hadith study that existed before the period of formalization. They believed that each hadith possessed its own evidence, the validity of which was not determined solely by the authenticity of its chain of transmission, as in the *ẓāhir al-isnād* school. Therefore, they questioned

[6] These are the dating based on the matan conducted by Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) and Joseph Schacht (d. 1969), the form analysis conducted by Marston Speight, the dating based on the collection in which the hadiths appear (*argumentum e silentio*), the dating based on the sanad conducted by Schacht with several provisions, and the dating of Michael Cook, Josef van Ess (d. 2021) and Juynboll who say that the common link is the initiator of the hadith. See (Motzki, 2005b, pp. 206–224)

the definitions of hadith from the period of formalization, such as those of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, which needed to be redefined. (al-Mallībārī, 2001, 2003; Snober, 2020, 2021a) The science of hadith itself, hadith scholars sometimes neglect the methodological consistency of hadith in their opinions. This is evident in the glorification of hadith codification by Muslim scholars, who apparently do not use the principle of *'ilal al-ḥadīṡ* in presenting narrations and evidence in their arguments. The concept of hadith is sometimes even neglected in selecting related narrations, such as the codification attributed to 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720). (Snobar, 2021)

'Ilal al-ḥadīṡ movement re-evaluated the standards of Bukhārism and *syurūṭ al-a'immah al-khamsah,* which had served as a single benchmark for the validity of hadith throughout time. This period of falsification of hadith science was a period of re-evaluation of concepts and definitions within hadith science, testing its validity, consistency, and also focusing on the strength and reliability of the methods used. Developments in other disciplines related to hadith, such as history and social sciences, as well as the increasing disclosure of various collections of hadith manuscripts, influenced hadith studies.[7]

Tabel 1. Periods of Hadith Science and Their Characteristics

No.	Period	Century	**Characteristics**
1.	Formalization	4th/10th century – 10th/16th century	a. Codification of hadith science b. Orientation of the number of hadith sciences c. All themes in one work d. Bukhārism
2.	Reformulation	11th/17th century – First Half of the 14th/First Half of the 20th century	a. Systematic mapping b. Orientation of the depth of hadith science c. Separated based on certain themes d. Strengthening Bukhārism
3.	Falsification	Second Half of the 14th/Second Half of the 20th century – 15th/21st century	a. Doubting the formalization of hadith science b. Reconstructing the standards of hadith science c. Questioning Bukhārism

[7] See, for example, Harald Motzki's study, which reveals that the method of narration using *'an* is considered *tadlīs*. However, ʿAbd Al-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī in his *Muṣannaf* uses various types of narration, even using *'an*, directly from his teacher. See (Motzki, 1991, pp. 8–9)

E. Stagnation and Repetition of Hadith Science

The formalization of hadith studies became one of the causes of the rigidity of hadith studies, despite having certain standards. Furthermore, this period caused the initially dynamic, diverse, and informal sciences to be marginalized. The dominant sciences were those that were made the primary standard, like the *ṣīghat taḥammul wa adā'* which remained dynamic and flexible, especially before the 5th/11th century, began to be standardized by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. As a result, the versions of *ṣīghat taḥammul wa adā'* existing in Medina and the Maghrib were ignored. Yet, the variations existing in these two regions were numerous and had diverse opinions.[8] With the only one recognized, other versions are marginalized and cannot be used as a standard for evaluating hadith. Consequently, hadith in Medina and Maghrib are not measured by the standards of those two regions, but rather by the Maghrib standard, which has a different set of standards. This is why many hadith from Medina and Maghrib are not considered authentic because they are measured by the Masyriq standard (Akmaluddin, 2017, pp. 240–241).

The same thing also happened when the period of formalization of hadith, especially the science of hadith of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, was used to assess the terms and definitions that existed among the *mutaqaddimīn* scholars who lived in the 2nd/8th century to the 3rd/9th century. For example, al-Mallībārī said that the term *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* for al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmiżī was not problematic because both had the same meaning. The problem arose when the term *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* was measured and defined by two terms, namely *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* hadith. According to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* hadith have their own standards and provisions, they cannot be combined as stated by al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmiżī. According to al-Mallībārī, if Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ had judged the term *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* according to methods and rules owned and used by al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmiżī, then there would have been no problem (al-Mallībārī, 2003, p. 29).

Some of the hadith sciences during this formalization period seem to have been separated from earlier studies of *turāṡ*, or there was no *waṣl* process according to al-Jābirī. Thus, the hadith sciences that existed during this formalization period developed their own methods and rules. (al-Jābirī, 1990, pp. 35–36) The discontinuity of the study meant that the methods, rules, and definitions were no longer as well understood as they were initially. The development of the methods, rules, and definitions ultimately required further and more in-depth explanation, leading to the emergence of various opinions during the reformulation period of hadith science. Therefore, during the reformulation period of hadith science, numerous works were directed at re-explaining the concepts of hadith science that existed during the formalization period. This was because the formalization

[8] See the standard of *ṣīghat taḥammul wa adā'* versions of Medina and Maghrib in (al-Yaḥṣubī, 1970)

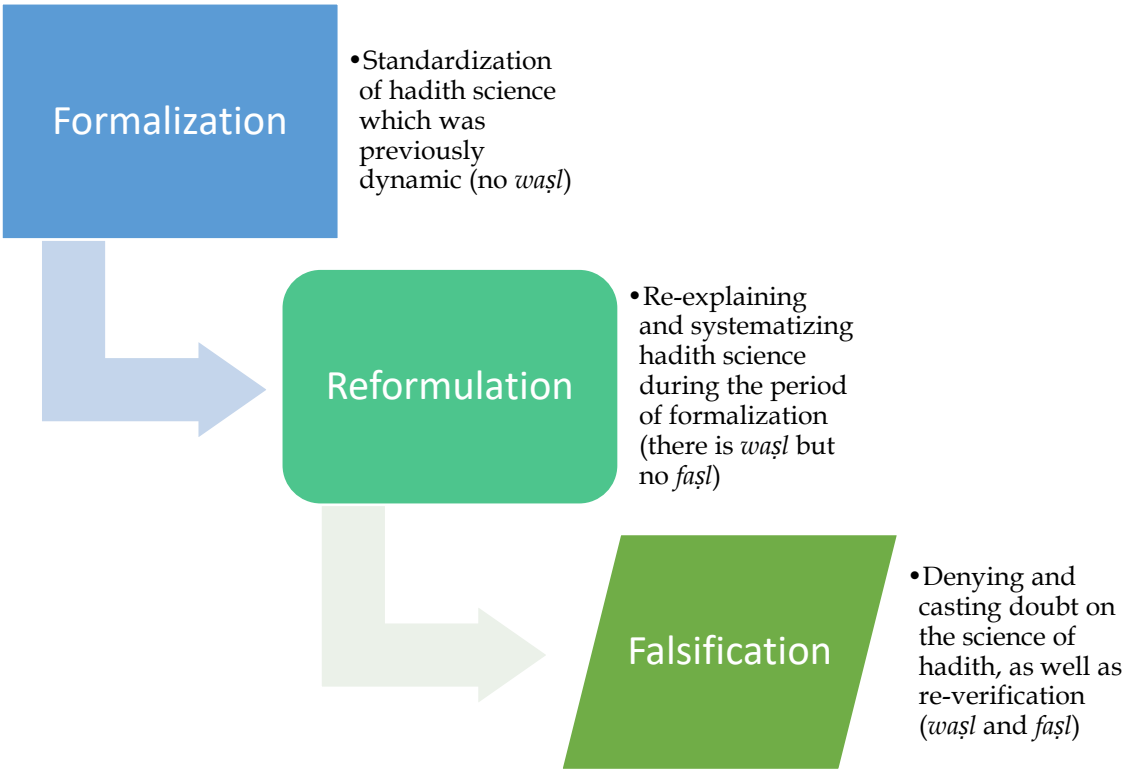
period was disconnected from the previous period, even though the material objects remained the same, thus giving rise to various confusions.

According to al-Mallībārī, hadith science during the *marḥalah al-riwāyah* period, which existed until the 5th/11th century, was the primary reference for hadith studies. The *marḥalah ma ba'da al-riwāyah* that emerged afterward should refer to the *marḥalah al-riwāyah*. (al-Mallībārī, 2003, p. 13) However, in its development, the *marḥalah ma ba'da al-riwāyah* did not refer to the *marḥalah al-riwāyah* as it appeared in the case Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. Although he succeeded in developing the quantity of hadith science, it turned out that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's methods, rules and definitions led to Bukhārism, which al-Bukhārī himself might not have approved. The absence of innovation, which stems from a disconnection from previous *turāṡ* studies. Because *waṣl* was not fulfilled, it was very difficult to direct to *faṣl* to find novelty and innovation in hadith science. (al-Jābirī, 1990, pp. 35–36) Ultimately, the reformulation period of hadith science was only a repetition, re-explanation, and systematization of hadith science.

Given the stagnation of hadith scholarship during the reformulation period, coupled with the geopolitical situation related to colonialism and the Enlightenment, orientalists seemed to find support in doubting and questioning the authenticity of hadith. Methods, rules, and definitions that may not have been developed within hadith scholarship were met with doubt by these orientalists. Hadith scholarship seemed unable to satisfy or answer their questions. Therefore, Muslim scholars were forced to rebuild the methods, rules, and definitions of hadith scholarship by studying related disciplines such as history, manuscripts, textual analysis, historical-critical methods, and other more advanced methods in the West.

Azami, for example, criticized Schacht and Goldziher through a search of hadith books. Fuat Sezgin addressed the absence of hadith writings in the first century of the Hijra by presenting hadith manuscripts. Motzki refuted doubts about the existence of back-projection and the arbitrariness of the *isnād* (chain of transmission) with *Muṣannaf ibn Abī Syaibah*. He also conducted a dating analysis based on existing methods and then created the *isnād-cum-matn analysis* (ICMA). Thus, the period of falsification of hadith science aims to refute and question the standards of hadith studies. This was done to assess how consistent the data and studies of hadith science are with the development of existing knowledge, as well as to re-verify hadith science.

Figure 1. The Process of Development of Hadith Science



When the science of hadith declined during the period of al-Baiqūnī to al-Zabīdī, Muslim scholars tended not to innovate (*ibdā'*) and make new discoveries (*iktisyāf*). The absence of innovation and new discoveries could be linked to the intellectual and socio-cultural relations of society at that time. (al-Jābirī, 1990, p. 53) In addition, the labeling of heresy, the labeling of heresy and the weakening of Islamic power may also be other factors that caused the segregation of thought and groups. However, these factors require further and in-depth research. This is also supported by the statement of some scholars like Ibn Najīm that the science of hadith and fiqh is established and final (*naḍīja wa iḥtaraqa*). (al-Miṣrī, 1999, p. 330)

F. Return to Tradition: Innovation in Hadith Science

During the formalization period of hadith science there were few discoveries or scientific developments, during the reformulation period there were none. Scholars during the reformulation period merely referred to, affirmed, explained, and repeated previous studies. This is evident in the works published during that period. This stark transition from "few" to "none" serves as a profound diagnostic marker of epistemic closure, wherein the very possibility of methodological novelty became conceptually unthinkable rather than merely difficult to achieve. The rationale for this total absence of discovery lies in the gradual sacralization of

the classical canon, particularly the works of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ibn Ḥajar, and al-Suyūṭī, which were elevated to quasi-scriptural status within the *muṣṭalaḥ* tradition. By the 11th/17th century, the foundational principles of hadith criticism were regarded not as historically contingent human constructs open to refinement, but as divinely guided, empirically verified templates that had reached their definitive perfection.

Consequently, the reformulators' primary purpose was not to advance knowledge but to ensure its faithful transmission across generations, a pedagogical imperative that prioritized uniformity, consensus, and doctrinal safety over intellectual risk-taking. This purpose operated under a fundamental consideration: that any deviation from established terminology, classification, or evaluative criteria would invite not only scholarly reproach but also charges of heresy (*ilḥād*) or heterodox innovation (*bid'ah*), given the perceived theological stakes attached to the prophetic corpus. Foundational to this argument is the recognition that the reformulators operated within an intellectual ecosystem governed by the principle of taqlīd (authoritative imitation), which systematically discouraged independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) in methodological matters, confining legitimate scholarly activity to the production of commentaries (*syurūḥ*), glosses (*ḥawāsyī*), abridgments (*mukhtaṣarāt*), and versifications (*manẓūmāt*), all of which were structurally designed to elucidate and reinforce, never to challenge or revise. (Davidson, 2014a, 2014b)

The evidentiary weight of the published works from this period corroborates this diagnosis: al-Ṣan'ānī's versification of Ibn Ḥajar, al-Baiqūnī's mnemonic poem, al-Laknawī's specialized extraction of *jarḥ wa ta'dīl*, and al-Qāsimī's independent monograph all exhibit a consistent textual strategy of elaboration upon received authorities, frequently citing earlier opinions verbatim while offering only marginal clarifications on ambiguities. Even when reformulators introduced subtle terminological refinements or resolved apparent contradictions between classical masters, these acts remained strictly derivative, operating entirely within the conceptual boundaries already demarcated centuries earlier.

This intellectual stagnation, however, was not perceived as a deficiency by its practitioners; rather, it was celebrated as fidelity, rigor, and humble deference to the scholarly giants of the past. Nevertheless, this prolonged absence of critical or innovative research carried profound consequences: unexamined historical assumptions, unresolved empirical inconsistencies, and untested methodological premises were entombed beneath layers of reverential commentary, rendering the tradition internally coherent yet externally fragile. The reformulation period thus sealed the classical framework into an airtight, self-referential system that could sustain its own institutional practice indefinitely, yet which possessed no internal mechanism for self-correction, historical reappraisal, or epistemological renewal.

It was precisely this rigid stability, this scholarly silence on foundational questions, that left the tradition acutely vulnerable to, and simultaneously in desperate need of, the external falsification that Western revisionist scholarship would subsequently unleash, for only an external shock could rupture the epistemic bubble that the reformulators had so meticulously constructed.

In addition, scholars during the reformulation period did not re-verify or question the statements of scholars during the formalization period. Therefore, according to al-Jābirī, there was no innovation in the science of hadith due to the absence of discovery (*iktisyāf*) and verification (*qābil li al-taḥaqquq*) of the science of the previous period. The relationship between stagnant reason and the culture of scholars at that time did not produce a culture and epistemology for the science of hadith. (al-Jābirī, 1990, pp. 53–56) Ibn Najīm's statement that the science of hadith and fiqh were established and final (*naḍīja wa iḥtaraqa*) demonstrated the absence of this relationship and justified the paradigm of predecessors who believed that hadith had reached its peak during the time of al-Suyūṭī. This led to the stagnation of hadith science, which was then considered established and in need of no further development.

Al-Jābirī proposes several paths toward renewing reason and knowledge: reconstructing intellectual heritage (turāṡ), gaining full command of the essential knowledge available in a foreign language, revisiting turāṡ through a critical, present-day lens, and consistently engaging with real-world issues by analyzing and openly addressing the problems they present. According to him, turāṡ is everything that is far or near, present in the present, along with oneself or others, and originating from the past. This turāṡ includes meaningful traditions (thought and culture), material traditions (monuments and artifacts), national cultural traditions, and universal humanitarian traditions. Tradition is something that is related to the past and remains alive in the present. (al-Jābirī, 1990, p. 61, 1991, p. 45, 1993, pp. 46–47; Baso & al-Jābirī, 2000) For this reason, achieving innovation and new discoveries in hadith science requires three key steps: reconstructing the discipline itself, critically re-examining it through a contemporary lens, and analyzing the reality and voicing the problems of the science of hadith.

1. **Rebuilding the Science of Hadith**

   The first is the rebuilding of the science of hadith. This rebuilding is done through falsification, testing the consistency of methodology, and conducting source criticism. Hadith studies, particularly those related to the assessment of the sanad and matn of hadith, are largely based on subjective and inconsistent studies and assessments, such as the argumentation that the most authentic book after the Qur'an is *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by al-Bukhārī and followed by *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by Muslim. (al-Bukhārī, 2001; al-Nīsābūrī, n.d.) Between the two, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ said that the most authentic is *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

(*ṡumma inna kitab al-Bukhārī aṣaḥḥ al-kitābain ṣaḥīḥan wa akṡarahumā fawā'id*), because al-Bukhārī is "*awwalu man ṣannafa al-ṣaḥīḥ*", "*innā Muslim akhaża 'an al-Bukhārī wa istafāda minhu*", and "*akṡaruhumā fā'idatan*". (al-Syahrazūrī, 1986, pp. 17–18)

This tripartite justification, articulated by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ during the apogee of the formalization period, functions as a deliberate canonical ranking that systematically constructs a hierarchy of textual authority, embedding within it a set of epistemological assumptions that would later be accepted as unquestionable dogma by reformulation-era scholars. The rationale underlying the first reason rests on a deeply entrenched historiographical premise (precedence equates to methodological purity and foundational authenticity). The second reason, that Muslim studied under al-Bukhārī, benefited from him, and shared the majority of his teachers, serves to construct a linear, genealogical chain of intellectual dependency that subordinates Muslim's work as a derivative, secondary endeavor rather than an independent scholarly parallel. The third reason is that al-Bukhārī's work contains more *fawā'id* (benefits, i.e., jurisprudential derivations, textual variants, narrative expansions, or practical legal implications, shifts the evaluative criterion from mere formal authenticity to substantive hermeneutic yield) than Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj's.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ himself rejected the claim of Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Syāfi'ī (d. 204/820) that *Muwaṭṭa'* by Mālik bin Anas al-Aṣbaḥī (d. 179/795) was the most authentic book, such as his saying that *mā a'lam fī al-arḍ kitāban fī al-'ilm akṡar ṣawāban min kitab Mālik* and similar narrations. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ argued that al-Syāfi'ī's and similar statements appeared before the presence of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (*fa innamā qāla żālik qabl wujūd kitābay al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*). (al-'Irāqī, 1969, p. 25; al-Syahrazūrī, 1986, p. 18) However, al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ bin Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī al-Sabtī (d. 544/1149) did not agree with Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. He said that many scholars, both those who support and those who disagree with Mālik, say that *Muwaṭṭa' Mālik* is the most authentic book and is a priority reference (*fa inna al-muwāfiq wa al-mukhālif ijtima'a 'alā taqdīrihī wa tafḍīlihī wa riwāyatihī wa taqdīm ḥadīṡihī wa taṣḥīḥihī*) as prooven that there are many books related to the *musnad* and *syawāhid* of *Muwaṭṭa' Mālik.* (al-Yaḥṣubī, 1965, vol. II: 80)

Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's opinion is indeed quite reasonable. While *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is considered the most authentic, it certainly contains many hadith with broken chains of transmission (*mu'allaq*), problematic narrators, discrepancies in the content and chapters of the hadith, and other issues. Therefore, the book does not live up to its name, which includes authentic hadith as al-Bukhārī claims, but it turns out that many hadith lack a chain of transmission. To answer this problem, Aḥmad bin 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī

(d. 852/1449) even compiled *Hady al-Sārī* as an introduction to *Fatḥ al-Bārī,*, a special book on problematic narrators *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* and a special book on *mu'allaq* in his *Taghlīq al-Ta'līq*. (al-'Asqalānī, 1405; Fadel, 1995a) Thus, the *mursal* and *balāghāt* (hadiths that begin with *balaghanī 'an Rasul Allāh* and the like) in *Muwaṭṭa' Mālik,* which are considered to have a broken *isnād*, should not be problematic as if another line were traced as was done by Yūsuf bin 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071) in his *al-Tamhīd,* (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 1387) al-Suyūṭī in his *Tanwīr al-Ḥawālik,* (al-Suyūṭī, 1969) and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ himself in his *Waṣl Balāghār Muwaṭṭa' Mālik*. (al-Syahrazūrī, n.d.)

The discrepancy between the name of al-Bukhārī's work and its contents, which means it does not meet the definition of a valid hadith, is still defended and supported by Ibn Ḥajar, He said that al-Bukhārī presented a *mu'allaq* with a certain intention and purpose and it was considered valid by tracing the existing narration path. (see also in al-'Asqalānī, 1405; Fadel, 1995b) Meanwhile *Muwaṭṭa' Mālik,* which contains several hadiths that are considered to have a broken *isnād*, should have the same fate and be considered the same as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. With the same status as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* then *Muwaṭṭa' Mālik* should also be equally valid. However, the fate of *Muwaṭṭa' Mālik* was not as good as that of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* due to the double standards and inconsistency of some scholars such Ibnu Ḥajar.

The competition for the most authentic book has turned up numerous exceptions, demonstrating the inconsistent use of the method of *taṣḥīḥ al-ḥadīṡ*. This also applies to the permissibility of practicing weak hadith. Jonathan A. C. Brown, for example, shows that the permissibility of using weak hadith became a nearly unanimous opinion in the 3rd /9th century. After that, the use of weak hadith became a polemic, between those who supported and those who rejected it, until today. (Brown, 2011) Likewise, the assessment of the narrator in the *isnād* is not free from subjectivity and ideological and school bias. (al-Sakhāwī, 1990; al-Subkī, 1990; al-Żahabī, 1990) Even some authentic hadiths can be invalid due to the application of the rules of classical hadith science. (Amin, 2004, 2009, p. 92)

These persistent epistemological and hermeneutic dilemmas reveal a deep-seated methodological tension within the tradition: namely, whether the discipline demands a strictly codified, unified, and empirically testable standard (*jāmi' māni'*) or whether it must embrace its inherent fluidity, school-based plurality, and subjective interpretive frameworks. This study contends that framing the issue as a binary choice between a singular rigid standard and absolute methodological relativism is itself a product of the very uncritical formalization-reformulation trajectory that we have critiqued. The comprehensive solution proposed here, and the primary

scientific contribution of this work, lies in a tripartite critical-reconstructive framework that transcends this false dichotomy.

First, it argues for a transparent historicization of the classical evaluative criteria, systematically mapping where and why ideological, theological, and legal biases entered narrator criticism, thereby transforming subjectivity from an unacknowledged liability into an empirically documented variable. *Second*, it harnesses the external falsification methods of Western revisionist scholarship, not as a wholesale rejection of the classical system, but as a rigorous diagnostic tool to expose its internal inconsistencies, historical contingencies, and unexamined axioms, thus revitalizing the discipline through constructive critique rather than defensive apologetics. *Third*, it advocates for a differentiated, multi-layered methodological standard that distinguishes between core textual authenticity (where a consistent, verifiable, and empirically grounded set of criteria can be applied universally) and interpretive narrator evaluation (where contextualized, school-aware, and thoroughly documented subjective assessments are not eliminated but openly acknowledged, cross-referenced, and critically weighed against each other).

By operationalizing this framework, the study demonstrates that the science of hadith need not choose between ossified rigidity and chaotic relativism; rather, it can adopt a dynamic yet accountable epistemology, one that preserves the tradition's rich plurality of schools while subjecting their foundational premises to the very critical scrutiny that the reformulation period so conspicuously avoided. This resolution not only addresses the inherent subjectivity of *jarḥ wa ta'dīl* but also reclaims the discipline's capacity for methodological self-renewal, thereby offering a viable path forward for contemporary hadith studies that is at once historically honest, critically robust, and internally coherent.

2. Rereading the Science of Hadith in a Critical and Contemporary Method

The next step is to study hadith critically and contemporaryly. Scientific developments, particularly those related to the social and humanities, related to history and hadith, must be pursued. For example, this concerns source criticism. Source criticism is an attempt to reconstruct history. One form of source criticism in hadith is dating. Several Western scholars offer methods related to hadith dating. This dating method is considered more objective because it can reconstruct the history of hadith. According to Motzki, this is because Western scholars use hadith "*as sources for the reconstruction of Islamic history: the history of events, the history of jurisprudence, of religious ideas and institutions, and exegesis of the Qur'an, etc*"

(Motzki, 2005b). Therefore, some Western scholars offer five methods of dating hadith based on the matan of the hadith, based on the collection in which the hadiths appear, based on the sanad, based on both sanad and matan and based on other criteria (Motzki, 2005b, pp. 206–207).

Oral and written history are also important points for Western scholars. Schoeler, for example, argues that the revisionist view that hadith originated after the 2nd/8th century is incorrect. Long before they were written down in the 2nd/8th century, there was an oral tradition, which then became quasi-oral with notes serving as reminders (*written aides-mémoires*) and finally became a fully written tradition in the 2nd/8th century. This can be seen in the primary transmissions of early Medinan hadith by 'Urwah bin al-Zubair (d. 95/713) and his students. Therefore, the evolution of history and oral and written traditions needs special attention, especially if written evidence during the oral tradition period is lost on purpose (erased, burned) or accidentally (burned by the authorities), as in the *al-Ḥarrah* war in 63/683 and the end of the second fitna (*al-fitnah al-śāniyah*) in 72/692. (Görke, Motzki, & Schoeler, 2012; Schoeler, 2003, 2006, 2011, pp. 20–37)

Revisionist Western scholars view the hadith as nothing more than literary criticism in the form of interpretations and speculation about what happened during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. John Edward Wansbrough (d. 2002), for example, said that it is strange if the hadith are only records, without any empirical evidence that can be felt even today. For comparison, Ras Shamra-Ugarit (Syria) in the Bronze Age in the 14th century BC already had a multitude of artifacts, city plans, regional architecture, burials, and so on. (Prévalet, 2009; Wansbrough, 2003b) Meanwhile, in the Arabian Peninsula in the 1st/7th century, approximately 19 centuries or 1,900 years after the Silver Age, no empirical evidence was left behind. According to Wansbrough, the people of the Arabian Peninsula should have left behind something better than the previous century. Therefore, evidence through archaeological objects (artifacts, numismatics, buildings, manuscripts, and others) is considered more objective and empirical than speculative evidence through interpretation or speculation, as is common in studies of the Prophet Muhammad. (Wansbrough, 2003a)

Furthermore, verification through external sources is also crucial. This method is a form of data triangulation, where cross-referencing and matching sources strengthens and proves the data. Supporting evidence from sources such as other religious scriptures or historical sources can enhance the validity of hadith studies. (Cook, 2004; Rubin, 2003, p. 73) Therefore, mainly traditionalist schools compete to obtain empirical evidence and external sources such as inscriptions written around 634-644,

papyri in 22/643, mentions of Muhammad's name between 66-67 AH, and so on. (Schoeler, 2011, p. 14) Empirical proof and external sources will further strengthen the position of the hadith, which is not only ideally valid in its *isnād* and *matn*, but also empirically proven and validated by other sources.

This stark epistemological divergence between an internally transmitted textual tradition that privileges literary and oral continuity, and an externally anchored historical criticism that demands palpable, contemporaneous material proof produces several profound and far-reaching consequences for the field of hadith studies. *First*, at the most immediate level, it generates a deep-seated legitimacy crisis that traditionalist scholars, operating within the classical *muṣṭalaḥ* framework, find themselves increasingly unable to defend the historical reliability of the prophetic corpus against external academic scrutiny, as their internal criteria of *tawātur* and *'adālah* appear circular and self-referential when judged by the evidentiary standards of mainstream historiography. Conversely, revisionist scholars, while exposing genuine weaknesses in the classical defenses, risk committing the opposite methodological error, demanding archaeological or epigraphic corroboration for a textual community that, in its formative century, may simply have prioritized oral memorization over monumental inscription, thereby imposing an anachronistic evidentiary template that prematurely forecloses alternative historical pathways.

Second, this conflict produces an entrenched scholarly polarization that has paralysed meaningful dialogue for nearly half a century. Traditionalists increasingly retreat into a defensive, apologetic posture, dismissively categorizing Western revisionism as orientalist hostility or as a category error that misapplies physicalist criteria to a faith-based literary tradition; meanwhile, revisionists, emboldened by the patent lack of early material witnesses, push toward radical source-skepticism that often rejects the entire hadith corpus as a late 2nd/8th- or 3rd/9th-century fabrication, leaving no room for the nuanced historical kernels that even critical methods might confirm. This mutual incomprehension has fractured the academic landscape into two incommensurable camps, stifling collaborative research and condemning both sides to methodological isolation.

Third, and most critically for this study, the concrete outcome of these conflicting views is an epistemological impasse that directly necessitates a new methodological intervention. The revisionist challenge, while flawed in its radical empiricism, irreversibly shatters the reformulation-era assumption that classical hadith science is a closed, self-sufficient, and historically secure edifice; at the same time, traditionalist defenses, while

preserving the communal and devotional integrity of the tradition, can no longer simply reproduce classical verdicts without confronting external historical questions that the reformulators never deemed relevant. This impasse, however, is not a dead end but a generative crisis, one that forces contemporary scholarship to move beyond the binary of uncritical acceptance versus wholesale dismissal.

Consequently, this study treats the clash not as an intellectual catastrophe to be resolved by choosing one side over the other, but as a productive dialectical opportunity to develop a critical historical hermeneutics that acknowledges the subjective, school-based, and ideological biases inherent in narrator criticism (as demonstrated above) while simultaneously adapting the rigour of external source-criticism to reassess, rather than outright reject, the textual corpus. In doing so, the conflict ultimately yields a revitalized research agenda: one that systematically re-examines pre-existing classical theories through the lens of revisionist falsification, not to demolish the tradition, but to separate its historically defensible core from its later, often ideologically superimposed, formalized structures. Thus, the ultimate consequence of this confrontation is the forced but fruitful emergence of a third, integrative scholarly paradigm, precisely the contribution that this study endeavours to articulate and operationalize.

3. Analyzing Reality and Voicing the Problems of Hadith Science

The final step involves analyzing contemporary realities and addressing the challenges facing hadith scholarship. Among these realities is the growing engagement with hadith by scholars outside the traditional hadith disciplines, indicating that the field is no longer the exclusive domain of hadith specialists. Roberto Tottoli, for instance, observes that many citations of hadith deviate from established scholarly conventions: some transmitters cite only the *isnād* (chain of transmission) traced to the Companions, others reproduce only the textual content, others convey merely the essential meaning, while still others—following the practice common among Sufi scholars—simply indicate that a statement originates from hadith without further specification. (Tottoli, 2020) Moreover, the study of hadith need not be confined to canonical hadith compilations alone.

Rather than relying exclusively on mainstream collections such as the *kutub al-tis'ah*, scholarship should also draw on hadith preserved in non-hadith sources, since hadith are documented not only in dedicated hadith works but also embedded in *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, history, and so on. Confining hadith research to a single ideological or methodological framework, however, risks

producing deviations in both method and outcome. Therefore, studying hadith solely from hadith books, especially exclusively from *kutub al-tis'ah*, results in many hadith being overlooked. For instance, Herbert Berg conducted a methodological analysis of traditionalist and revisionist thought simultaneously. He used narrations in early tafsir books such as the works of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/933), Sufyān bin Sa'īd al-Ṡaurī (d. 161/778), Mujāhid bin Jabr al-Makhzūmī (d. 104/722), Muqātil bin Sulaimān al-Azdī (d. 150/767), Muḥammad bin Sa'īd al-'Ayyāsyī (d. 319/932), *sīrah* and *maghāzī* Muḥammad bin Isḥāq al-Madanī (d. 151/768) to test the validity of the history in the QS. al-Ḥijr: 89-91. (Berg, 2003b, p. 264)

According to Berg, both approaches offered by the optimistic/ traditionalist and revisionist/skeptical schools can be seen as supported by the evidence provided by the interpretation and history of hadith from QS. al-Ḥijr: 89-91. This suggests that one's assumptions about the nature of early Islamic texts in general or about the value of the sanad more specifically will determine the status of hadith. This may not be the most profound conclusion, but it does point to a larger dilemma: the results of each approach are mutually exclusive, and one, or perhaps both, must be wrong. (Berg, 2003b, p. 287) Andreas Görke, in his article "Eschatology, History, and the Common Link: A Study in Methodology", states that while some sanads are unreliable, this does not mean that all of them are. Some sanad findings on specific topics, such as legal hadith, may yield different results than those on non-legal hadith. (Görke, 2003) Therefore, if we look at Görke's writings, research on sanad and matan in various types of themes can produce diverse and varied findings.

Another issue is the need to rethink the study of early Islam. This is because, according to Herbert Berg in his other writing, "Failures (of Nerve?) in the Study of Islamic Origins," is a lack of interest among Islamic scholars, even Muslims themselves, in further researching early Islam, fearing accusations of reductionism and orientalism, particularly appropriating the voice of Muslims. (Berg, 2014) Berg's fears are not without reason, as many traditionalist Muslims, especially those in the early days, attacked the revisionists emotionally. Their attacks were off-target and sometimes irrelevant to what the revisionists were asking or proposing.

Furthermore, the majority of hadith studies are confined to Masyriq, the center of Islam, making them highly Arab-centric. Such studies only view the center as the source and focus of study, ignoring peripheral studies, which should have distinct traditions, systems, and cultures of thought. Studies in peripheral areas such as al-Andalus or Indonesia have unique characteristics, hadith principles, and understandings. The history, stages of

development, codification, dialectics of hadith scholarship, and discourse are highly dynamic. (Akmaluddin, 2017; Fierro, 2011) Even the study of hadith in Islamic centers such as the Middle East tends to be static and there is no new ijtihad for the development of hadith science.

Therefore, local hadith studies in peripheral areas provide a diverse and diverse discourse. Hadith studies are no longer monopolized by Islamic centers such as Baghdad, Damascus, the Hijaz, and other regions of the Arabian Peninsula. Studies in peripheral areas can shed light on the level of understanding and knowledge of the communities there. Furthermore, in narrating or receiving hadith, their perspectives on hadith and how they implement hadith studies will differ from those in the Islamic center. (Ávila, 2002; Fathurahman, 2012; Fierro, Maribel & Penelas, 2021) These differences reveal anomalies in hadith scholarship, as in the case of *Muṣannaf 'Abd al-Razzāq* and *al-Ilmā'* which offer different perspectives. (Akmaluddin, 2017; Motzki, 1991)

G. Conclusion

The history of hadith science has not progressed smoothly, filled with discourse and the hegemony of one group over another. Furthermore, this history shows that each phase has distinct characteristics and traits. The map of classical and medieval hadith science is marked by the formalization and reformulation phases of hadith. The formalization period, marked by Bukhārism and the reformulation that strengthened Bukhārism, has methodological gaps and problems, such as the neglect of pre-Bukhārī standards and the bias of hadith standards in the Masyriq. In the contemporary era, the falsification of hadith science by Western scholars, both revisionist and traditionalist, has revived hadith studies by conducting historical criticism and addressing the methodological gaps and problems of the formalization and reformulation periods. This includes criticizing the formalization and reformulation periods of hadith science by reexamining existing theories.

Continuity includes the remaining material objects of hadith, namely the sanad and matn of hadith, which also maintain the classical sources. Changes related to hadith science include methodological consistency, empirical evidence, external source verification, early manuscripts, source criticism, oral and written history, and early hadith studies. These changes are inevitable and gradually become continuity, requiring further changes. Of the three phases, a return to tradition is necessary to innovate in the science of hadith. This requires at least three steps: rebuilding the science of hadith, rereading it critically and contemporary, and analyzing reality and addressing its challenges. With these three steps, the science of hadith will no longer simply affirm existing concepts

but will also falsify, verify, and innovate in response to current developments. This, of course, must be based on tradition, not overstepping or abandoning it.

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