

Hadith of the Prophet in the Eyes of Sunni and Shia: An Analytical Study of Hadith and Tafsir Sciences

Muhamad Ridwan Nurrohman
STAI Persatuan Islam, Garut, Indonesia
E-mail: rnurrohman@gmail.com

Abstract

This article aims to reexamine the foundational perspectives of Sunni and Shia views on Hadith. The main focus is on the Shia doctrine, which includes the infallible sayings (qaul ma'shum) of the Imams as part of the 'Prophetic' Hadith, which can be considered truthful. The occurrence of these sayings in key Shia Hadith texts is also notably problematic in number. In contrast to the sayings directly attributed to the Prophet or Ali, these collections are predominantly filled with the sayings of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq. Hence, the article discusses how robust this concept is when compared with the more widely accepted stance of the majority (jumhur).

Keywords: Hadith Concept, Sunni, Shia.

INTRODUCTION

Hadith, as one of the most important sources of Islamic law, has historically been a subject of extensive and sensitive debate. The emergence of discourse in this study is inseparable from the interests of certain groups regarding it. One of the issues that continues to resonate within society is the debate on inkar as-sunnah — the rejection of the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Although the term may be easily misunderstood, it is important to clarify from the outset that inkar as-sunnah refers to the phenomenon of rejecting the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in their apparent form, while simultaneously rejecting Islam as a way of life (Sunnah of the Prophet) in its essence.

The basic concept of inkar as-sunnah seems simple at first glance, but its details cannot be explained so simplistically. One of the intriguing cases to explore further is the differing perspectives on Hadith between Sunni and Shia Muslims. From a relativistic point of view, both groups might accuse each other of being munkir as-sunnah (deniers of the Sunnah). The Shia argue that the Sunnis reject the narrations from their community, particularly the sayings of their Imams. On the other hand, Sunnis claim that it is the Shia who have deviated from the consensus (ijma') of the Muslim ummah and are unwilling to accept the narrations of the majority of the Companions of the Prophet, and even the Ahl al-Bayt (family of the Prophet) themselves.

These two perspectives are naturally to be expected. The claims of truth, recognized by each group, are not unusual from their respective ideological viewpoints. However, what makes this situation problematic is that one group

legitimizes its foundational concepts by using sources from the opposing side. This group seeks acknowledgment of its truth from the other side. This dynamic creates a clash between these two concepts, which ultimately needs to be reassessed and tested more thoroughly.

This debate becomes particularly important when considering how deeply it influences Islamic jurisprudence and the broader religious discourse. The foundational texts of both Sunni and Shia Islam have shaped their respective communities' understanding of the Prophet's sayings and actions. As a result, the rejection or acceptance of certain Hadiths often defines key theological, legal, and ethical differences. Therefore, it is essential to critically examine the roots of these differences and understand the underlying reasons that shape the Sunni and Shia approaches to Hadith.

Furthermore, the role of Hadith in shaping the law and theology of Islam cannot be underestimated. While both Sunni and Shia agree on the importance of the Hadith, their interpretations and the sources they rely on can diverge significantly. This divergence calls for a deeper exploration of the historical development of Hadith collections, the authority of different narrators, and the ways in which both Sunni and Shia communities validate their sources.

At the same time, this issue raises questions about the nature of authority in Islam. Who determines what constitutes authentic Hadith, and how are disagreements between scholars reconciled? Such questions touch on the very essence of Islamic scholarship and the dynamics of religious authority within the Muslim world. The different methodologies used by Sunni and Shia scholars in collecting, evaluating, and interpreting Hadith are key to understanding these divergent views. In particular, it is essential to understand the role of the Imams in Shia Islam and how their teachings are incorporated into the Hadith tradition.

Additionally, the political context in which these theological differences arose plays a significant role in shaping the way each group approaches Hadith. The split between Sunni and Shia Islam has its roots in early Islamic history, and the legacy of this division continues to influence how Hadith is understood and utilized in both sects. By revisiting these historical contexts, we can gain a clearer picture of how the Hadith corpus developed and how it became a source of contention.

In this study, the goal is not merely to highlight differences but to understand how these differences emerged and why they continue to be a source of tension. This requires a careful examination of both the intellectual and political factors that have shaped the Hadith traditions in Sunni and Shia Islam. By doing so, we can gain insights into the broader questions of religious authority, historical development, and the role of Hadith in shaping the lives of Muslims.

METHOD

Methodologically, this paper will examine the "roots" of the Shia perspective on the Prophetic Hadith tradition by focusing on one of the most recent and comprehensive sources in Shia scholarship, *Tarikh-e Umumi-ye Hadits* by Majid Ma'arif, which has been translated into Indonesian as *Sejarah Hadis*. This work provides a thorough historical account of Hadith studies in Shia Islam and serves as a valuable reference for understanding the Shia approach to Hadith.

The first step in the methodology will be to analyze the content of Ma'arif's work, particularly how it addresses the development of Hadith in Shia Islam and the inclusion of the sayings of the Imams as part of the Hadith corpus. This text is important because it offers a modern and authoritative account of the historical and theological underpinnings of Shia Hadith studies.

Next, a source criticism approach will be applied to assess the validity and reliability of the various Hadith collections cited in Ma'arif's work. This will involve a detailed analysis of the chain of transmission (isnad), the content (matn), and the context in which these narrations were recorded. By doing so, the paper will investigate how Shia scholars assess the authenticity of Hadith and the criteria they use to include or exclude specific narrations.

Additionally, the paper will compare the Shia approach to Hadith with the more widely accepted Sunni methodology. This comparative approach will help identify key differences in the way Hadith is approached by the two sects and shed light on the reasons behind these differences. By examining both Sunni and Shia perspectives, the study aims to uncover the theological, doctrinal, and historical factors that contribute to the divergent views on Hadith.

The study will use critical analysis to engage with the scholarly literature on Hadith in both Sunni and Shia traditions. This includes reviewing classical and contemporary works of Hadith criticism and interpretation from both sects. The goal is to present an accurate and well-rounded view of the issues surrounding Hadith studies in both Sunni and Shia Islam, with an emphasis on understanding the broader implications of these differences for Islamic thought and practice.

By employing these methods, the paper aims to present a balanced and nuanced examination of the Sunni and Shia perspectives on Hadith, exploring both the historical development of these views and their contemporary relevance. Through this analysis, the paper will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of Hadith in shaping Islamic theology and jurisprudence in both Sunni and Shia traditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Hadith in Sunni and Shia Traditions

In Sunni tradition, scholars define hadith or sunnah as something attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which includes his words, actions, tacit approvals,

and physical attributes. Even his silence and movements, whether awake or asleep, are considered part of the sunnah (Sakhawi, 2003). However, what differentiates the meaning of "hadith" and "sunnah" in this tradition is that the concept of sunnah is often emphasized in relation to legal matters. Therefore, issues related to the Prophet's physical "attributes" are generally not included within the definition of sunnah (Syaukani, 1999), a perspective commonly presented by scholars of Usul (theology) (Itr, 1997).

In contrast, in Shia tradition, hadith refers to specific sayings or actions of a ma'shum (infallible) figure (Majid, 2012). Sheikh Baha'i further includes the taqrir (tacit approval) of the ma'shum in the definition of hadith (Amili, 2007). At a glance, both definitions seem quite similar. However, when examined more closely, there are significant conceptual differences, particularly when it comes to the transmission of hadith.

In Sunni tradition, the focus of hadith is primarily on the person of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). However, in Shia tradition, the Imams, who are viewed as ma'shum, are also regarded as authorities in hadith. These Imams are considered the legitimate successors of the Prophet, and their narrations are considered equivalent to the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Moreover, the Shia believe that these Imams could directly hear the voice of angels and receive "revelations" from them (Majid, 2012).

In practice, the four major and authoritative Shia hadith collections—al-Kafi by al-Kulaini (d. 328 AH), Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih by Ibn Babawaih (d. 381 AH), Tahdzib al-Ahkam and al-Istibshar by at-Tusi (d. 460 AH)—show the following percentages of narrations: 11.30% (4,956 hadiths) are attributed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), 6.05% (2,655 hadiths) are attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib, 10.23% (4,490 hadiths) are attributed to Muhammad al-Baqir, and 25% (10,967 hadiths) are attributed to Ja'far as-Sadiq (Muchtar, 2015).

To clarify the methodological foundations of hadith studies in the Shia tradition, two key concepts in Majid Ma'arif's argument need to be confirmed: the understanding of the hadith of Tsaqalain, and the interpretation of QS. Al-Ahzab: 33, which also includes a study of the Ahl al-Bayt (Majid, 2012).

Reinterpreting the Hadith of Tsaqalain

To fully understand the hadith of Tsaqalain, it is necessary to group similar narrations and arrange them chronologically, if possible (Nurrohman, 2017). In this regard, there are at least four versions of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) final advice: first, the Khutbah al-Wada' (Farewell Sermon); second, the hadith of Tsaqalain; third, the hadith of Kitab Allah wa Sunnat Nabiyyihi (The Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet); and fourth, the hadith of Irbad bin Sariyah, which mentions the Sunnah of the Prophet and the rightly-guided Caliphs.

As narrated by Jabir bin Abdullah (RA), the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) delivered an important message in the Khutbah al-Wada' (Farewell Sermon), in which he said:

"I have left with you something that, if you hold on to it, you will never go astray after me: the Book of Allah. And you will be asked about me. What will you say?" The companions responded, "We bear witness that you have conveyed the message, delivered it, and advised us." The Prophet then raised his finger towards the sky and said, 'O Allah, bear witness!' three times." (Ibn Humaid, 2002; Muslim, 1991).

The only message the Prophet conveyed in this farewell sermon was the Book of Allah. Later, after completing his pilgrimage, when the Prophet reached a valley that would come to be known as Ghadir Khum, he delivered another sermon, still using the term "wasiat" (advice). At that moment, the Prophet (SAW) said very quietly:

"I am only a human being like you, soon the messenger of my Lord will come to me and I will respond to Him. I will leave among you two heavy things: the first is the Book of Allah, in which there is guidance and light. Hold fast to the Book of Allah and act upon it. Then he said: 'And my family, I remind you about the family of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt). I remind you about the family of the Prophet.'" (Muslim, 1991).

What did the Prophet (SAW) mean by this? Imam Nawawi explains that the meaning of his statement was to preserve the rights of the Prophet's family, honor them, and place them in their rightful position (Nawawi, 1392 AH). Anyone who claims to love the Prophet must love his family and maintain ties with them. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, upon hearing this, said, "By Him in Whose hand is my soul, I love the family of the Prophet more than my own family" (Salus, 2003).

The meaning of the Prophet's words is not far from the meaning of the hadith of Irbadh bin Sariyah, which states, "Follow my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided caliphs." (Ahmad, 2001; Hakim, 1990), meaning as long as they align with the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (Mubarakafury, n.d.; Shan'ani, 1421 AH; Albani, 1995).

In other versions, this hadith is even stated more briefly and authoritatively, such as:

"I have left with you two heavy things, one of which is greater than the other: the Book of Allah, a rope extending from the heavens to the earth, and my family. Know that these two will never separate until they meet me at the pond." (Ahmad, 2001)

"I have left among you two complete successors: the Book of Allah, and my family. Know that these two will never separate until they meet me at the pond (of paradise)." (Ibn Abi Shaybah, 1997)

Unfortunately, the narrations of Tsaqalain with this succinct wording (except the Ghadir Khum narration in Sahih Muslim) are considered problematic. Essentially, these narrations can only be elevated to a reliable status through the narration in Sahih Muslim, with this particular wording. For a comprehensive explanation of this issue, see al-Arna'uth's notes in the verification of Musnad Ahmad, XVII: 170-175. From the data available, it can be concluded that the essence of these varying narrations is a riwayah bil ma'na (narrations by meaning), which, unfortunately, distorts the original essence of the foundational hadith (Nurrohman, 2017).

So, what is the true position of the narration "wa ithratî" (my family) compared to "wa sunnatî" (my Sunnah)? Among Shia scholars, there is a tendency to view the narration "wa sunnatî" as unreliable, both among Sunnis and Shia. In contrast, the narration "wa ithratî" is classified as valid, not only among Shia but even among Sunnis (Habsyi, 1991). The narration using the phrase Kitabullah wa Sunnat Nabiyyi first appeared in Imam Malik's Al-Muwatta' in a rhetorical context, specifically addressing the prohibition of speaking presumptuously about divine decree (Malik bin Anas, 2004, V: 1323). In other narrations, a marfu' hadith from Ibn Abbas, classified as hasan (good), is found (Baihaqi, 2003). Furthermore, considering the narration of Irbadh bin Sariyah mentioned above, this hadith could be elevated to sahih li ghairihi (authentic by virtue of other supporting narrations).

Thus, the correct understanding is that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) indeed left behind these key elements in his messages: (1) The Book of Allah, specifically conveyed during Khutbah al-Wada', (2) the Qur'an and his Sunnah, also mentioned in Khutbah al-Wada' (Ibn Hisham, 1955), (3) the importance of his family (Ahl al-Bayt) during Ghadir Khum, and (4) the Sunnah of the Khulafa al-Rashidin al-Mahdiyyin (the rightly-guided Caliphs), in one of the Prophet's sermons after the Fajr prayer.

Reexamining the Term “Ahlul-Bait”

After the previous discussion established that the bequest concerning 'ithratî ahli-baitî (the family of the Prophet) is valid, the next focus of study is the meaning of Ahlul-Bait itself. Why is this important? Because, in recent times, the term Ahlul-Bait has become laden with political connotations and interpretations. It is therefore not surprising that when interpreting QS. Al-Ahzab: 33, Muhammad Husein Thabathaba'i, the author of the Tafsir al-Mizan, extensively elaborates on the final portion of the verse:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهَبَ عَنْكُمُ الْجُنُونُ وَيُطَهِّرُكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

He explains the function of *إِنَّمَا* as a hasr (restriction or limitation). His discussion centers on the syntactical construction of *إِنَّمَا* in relation to the phrase *أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ*. According to Thabathaba'i, the *إِنَّمَا* here cannot be interpreted as referring exclusively to the wives of the Prophet because the phrasing of the verse uses the masculine form *لِيُذْهَبَ عَنْكُمْ* rather than the feminine form. Thabathaba'i attempts to interpret Ahlul-Bait in this verse as encompassing all those who believed in the prophethood of Muhammad (SAW) from the families of Abbas, Uqail, Ja'far, Ali,

and Muhammad (SAW). He even goes as far as interpreting Ahlul-Bait as "all Muslims who had reached the age of responsibility at the time this verse was revealed" (Thabathaba'i, 1997). However, this interpretation clearly strays far from the context of the verse.

Not stopping there, Thabathaba'i attempts to strengthen his argument by citing narrations from Ummu Salamah, Aisyah, Abu Sa'id al-Khudry, and others from the Sunni tradition, as well as from Ali, Hasan bin Ali, and others from Shia sources, totaling 40 chains of narration. Among the hadiths used as evidence is the following:

Narrated by Ummu Salamah: The Prophet (SAW) covered Hasan, Husain, Ali, and Fatimah with a cloak and said, "O Allah, these are my Ahlul-Bait and my closest ones. Remove impurity from them and purify them thoroughly." Ummu Salamah then asked, "Am I with them, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "You are to the good." This narration is graded as hasan sahih by Abu Isa, and it is considered the most authentic narration on this topic (Tirmidhi, 1975).

In Thabathaba'i's view, the rejection of Ummu Salamah from the Prophet's Kisā' (cloak) proves that she, along with the other wives of the Prophet, is not part of the Prophet's Ahlul-Bait. Only the four individuals under the cloak—apart from the Prophet—are considered part of his Ahlul-Bait (Thabathaba'i, 1997). However, Zaid bin Arqam explains that the Ahlul-Bait includes the wives of the Prophet (SAW) as well (Muslim, 1991), not just Ali, Hasan, and Husayn, who would later be designated as "Imams" by the Shia. As understood by the majority of interpreters, even the Mu'tazilites agree that the wives of the Prophet (SAW) are part of his Ahlul-Bait (Zamakhshari, 1998).

Moreover, in a subsequent narration in Sahih Muslim from Zaid bin Arqam, it is further emphasized that the Prophet's wives are not considered part of his Ahlul-Bait. Zaid says, "No, by Allah! The wives were like any other women, and if they were divorced, they would return to their families and tribes. The Ahlul-Bait refers to the Prophet's direct descendants, whose zakat is forbidden after his death" (Muslim, 1991). This narration is considered by researchers to be ma'ul (weak), intentionally shown by Imam Muslim to contradict other sahih narrations (Muhammadi, 2005). Nevertheless, both texts only address the prohibition of zakat for the Ahlul-Bait, and the Prophet's concern for them was because they could not accept zakat, given that he did not leave much wealth. Any wealth left by the Prophet (SAW) was considered sadaqah (charity), as confirmed by figures such as Ali, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman (Ibn al-'Arabi, 1412 H).

Had Thabathaba'i been honest in his interpretation of the Qur'anic verse QS. Al-Ahzab: 33, and the Hadith of the Cloak, it would be clear that the Prophet (SAW) affirmed Ummu Salamah's goodness. This is in line with the apparent meaning of QS. Al-Ahzab: 33. The arrangement of the verse, along with the linguistic meaning of Ahlul-Bait, clearly establishes the Prophet's wives as part of his Ahlul-Bait. They were the first group to be referred to by this verse. The Prophet (SAW)'s prayer for Hasan, Husayn, Ali, and Fatimah during the incident was to ensure they were

included among the Ahlul-Bait, as they did not reside in the Prophet's house (Syihab, 2005).

Rereading the Shia Hadith Conception

As Azami (1980) pointed out, there are fundamental differences in how Sunnis and Shias accept and interpret hadith. This becomes particularly evident when comparing the Shia conception, which emphasizes that hadith must come from the Imams and only from the Ahlul-Bait; and tragically, it is often understood in an exclusive sense. This becomes even more problematic when the basis for this conception is derived from interpretations that diverge from the meaning required by the text itself.

One notable issue is the Shia emphasis on limiting Ahlul-Bait to only the line of Fatimah and Ali, disregarding the Prophet's wives and even his other daughters, like Ruqayyah and Ummu Kultsum, who were married to Uthman Ibn Affan, earning Uthman the title Dhul-Nurayn (Possessor of Two Lights; for marrying two daughters of the Prophet). This exclusivity reveals significant flaws in the Shia conception of hadith. Many of these issues have been explored in detail by other researchers in various works.

Before concluding, it is worth quoting a statement by Ali bin Husayn, also known as Ali Zayn al-Abidin, from one of At-Thusi's monumental works, Rijal al-Kisi: "Indeed, the Jews loved 'Uzayr and said things about him that even 'Uzayr had no connection to. The Christians did the same for Isa ibn Maryam, and similarly, the Shia of our family say things about us, just as the Jews said about 'Uzayr and the Christians said about Isa. These words have nothing to do with us, and we have nothing to do with them" (Thusi, 1427 H).

CONCLUSION

Through the study of hadith and exegesis, a fundamental conceptual difference has emerged between Sunni and Shia views on hadith. The research above found a politically charged approach to the term Ahlul-Bait, which has led to a distortion of the intended meaning of the term in both the interpretation of QS. Al-Ahzab: 33 and the Hadith of the Cloak.

If the author were to decide which side, in practice, has denied as-Sunnah, it is likely that those who have "selected" a large number of informants from as-Sunnah, consciously or unconsciously, have removed many essential aspects of this religion's teachings. Thus, they have had to rely on many problematic "hadiths" from the sixth Imam's generation, which are difficult to verify historically.

The exclusivity in Shia hadith studies has made these studies more closed off and hard to confirm scientifically. Even the Shia jarh-ta'dil works have not been able

to present an objective and open study, complete with evaluations of narrators, though this is not the focus of this paper.

Through the exposure of these issues, the author hopes to foster a proper and truthful scientific tradition, particularly in the archipelago. The author aims to transform the current dogmatic Sunni-Shia debate into an open academic discussion. Those with data and ideas should be encouraged to write them in scholarly works, not just engage in casual and often irresponsible discourse. The goal is to revive the scientific tradition in the archipelago.

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