

Criticism of Orientalist Critical Views Toward Hadith Studies

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Abstract:

This article examines Orientalist perspectives on the hadith of Prophet Muhammad. It explores the differences in hadith studies between the West and the East, with a particular focus on the sanad (chain of transmission) and matn (content) of hadiths. Additionally, the article critiques Orientalist theories and presents responses to these views. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach within the framework of library research, the study finds that Orientalists generally criticize the authenticity of hadiths, particularly in terms of the sanad, matn, and rawi (narrators). The article argues that Orientalist critiques are often shaped by underlying biases, driven by a broader agenda to undermine Islam, viewing it through a colonial lens. This neo-colonial approach, which seeks to discredit Islamic scholarship, is countered by scholars like Azami, who provide in-depth rebuttals based on rigorous research and scientific validation.

Keywords: Orientalist, Hadith, Sanad, Matn

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 19th century, specifically in 1890, Muslims were shocked by the Orientalist research of Ignaz Goldziher. Imagine, the science of hadith, which had been accepted by Muslim scholars for centuries, was suddenly called into question by the findings of Orientalist scholars. Ignaz Goldziher was born into a Hungarian Jewish family. He became a student of several al-Azhar scholars, including Shaykh al-Asmawi, Shaykh Mahfudz al-Maghribi, Shaykh Sakka, and other prominent scholars of al-Azhar. In 1873, Goldziher went to Syria and studied under Sheikh Tahrir al-Jazairi. He then moved to Palestine and later to Egypt, where he studied with a number of al-Azhar scholars. After returning from al-Azhar, he was appointed as a professor at the University of Budapest (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 2008, p. 14).

Joseph Schacht, another prominent Orientalist, was crowned professor at the University of London at the age of 27. His academic achievements serve as a testament to the distinction of this Orientalist figure. Born in Ratibor (now in Poland) on March 15, 1902, Schacht's academic journey began as a student of classical philology, theology, and Eastern languages at the University of Breslau and Leipzig University. In 1923, at the age of 21, he obtained his doctorate from the University of Breslau (Ucin Muksin, 2008).

Goldziher published his research in *Mohammadanische Studien*, in which he cast doubt on the authenticity of the Prophet's traditions. Meanwhile, Josep Schacht released the book *The Origin of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*. Both of these Orientalists critiqued the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad in general through their works, particularly the two books mentioned. These critiques were then met with detailed responses by Muhammad Musthafa Azami in his book *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (1967). Prior to Azami, two other scholars had also responded to Orientalist critiques: Musthafa al-Siba'i in his book *al-Sunnah wa Makanatuha fi Tasyri' al-Islami* (1949) and Muhammad 'Ajjaj al-Khathib in his *al-Sunnah Qabla al-Tadwin* (1964) (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 1996, pp. 8–9).

Goldziher's *Mohammadanische Studien* went beyond simply raising doubts; it concluded that many traditions, especially those related to Islamic law, were not authentic. He argued that these hadiths were the work of 2nd-century scholars, including those found in the collection of Imam Bukhari.

The critical studies conducted by Orientalists such as Goldziher and Schacht on the traditions of the Prophet challenged hadith scholars to also engage in research or critique of what had previously been considered unquestionable. One of the scholars who took on this challenge was Muhammad Musthafa Azami. (His full name is Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mustafa al-Azami; in some literature, he is referred to simply as Azami.) Born in the city of Mano, North India, in 1932, Azami graduated from the largest Islamic studies institution in India, the Dar al-Ulum Deoband, in 1952. He then pursued further studies in Arabic and Education at al-Azhar University in Cairo, obtaining his *al-'Alimiyah* diploma in 1955. In that same year, he returned to India before continuing his studies at the University of Cambridge, England, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1966 with a dissertation titled *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*. Afterward, he taught at the postgraduate and Shariah departments at King Abdulaziz University (now Umm al-Qura University) (Sulidar, 2017).

The results of his research, published in 1967, were compiled under the title *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (1968). One of Azami's key findings was that the Prophet's hadiths were recorded during his lifetime, refuting the accusations made by Goldziher and Schacht as baseless (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 1996, pp. 8–9). In other words, the claims of these two prominent Orientalists were not substantiated by Azami's research.

The issues raised in this debate are intriguing because, to this day, the majority of Muslims do not consider there to be any problem with the traditions of the Prophet. The Muslim response to Orientalism has varied, with some viewing it as a scourge that must be eradicated, while others take a more nuanced view. For academics, however, this is not necessarily a problem, as long as the ideas put forward by Orientalists are supported by credible and verifiable data.

Here is the corrected and improved version of the text in English, with a focus on clarity, academic tone, and grammatical accuracy:

METHOD

This research is a type of library research that examines and analyzes various literatures related to the issue of Orientalism in the study of hadith. It is a library-based cultural research model that focuses on ideas and concepts as products of human thought. Anton Bakker categorizes this as historical-factual philosophical research on figures (Anton Bakker, 1999, pp. 61–66), with Western scholarly thought serving as the material object, and the concept of hadith thought forming part of the broader framework of thought as its formal object. The description is both descriptive and analytical; therefore, in addition to describing the constructs of Western thought, this study also engages in an in-depth analytical approach, as referred to by Jujun S. Suriasumantri as "critical analysis" (Jujun S. Suriasumantri, 1998, pp. 44–50).

The data for this research consist of two types: primary and secondary sources. The primary data include works or writings by Western scholars relevant to this study, while the secondary data consist of books and other written materials related to the study of hadith, aligned with the topics discussed in this research.

This study applies the historical method, as it seeks to examine the thoughts of a figure within the context of the development of their ideas over time. As noted earlier, this research also employs a critical analytical method. The study was conducted following these operational steps: First, identifying the Orientalist perspectives on hadith as the object of study; second, formulating the research questions; third, verifying these perspectives by conducting descriptive-analytical studies of the literature on Western scholars' views on hadith, and comparing these with the views of other scholars, such as Azami.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Discussion of Orientalism

The term "Orientalism" is closely tied to discussions about the East and the West. The word "East" is often used to refer to all things related to the East, encompassing not only its geographical location but also its moral and cultural dimensions. The West, on the other hand, refers to the European world, which is often associated with modernity, materialism, and individualism.

The term "Orientalism" itself derives from the Latin word *Oriri*, meaning "to rise," which evolved into the French and English word *orient*, referring to the direction of the rising sun (i.e., the Eastern hemisphere) (Wahyudin Darmalaksana, 2001, p. 70). Geographically, it denotes the East, while ethnologically it refers to the peoples of the East. The opposite of *Orient* in French is *Occident*, which means "West" and geographically refers to the Western Hemisphere, while ethnologically, it refers to the nations of the West. The term *Occidental* relates to matters concerning the Western world, its nations, and their environment (Yoesouf Sou'yb, 1985, p. 1).

The word *orient* has entered various European languages, including English. In English, "orient" denotes the East, while "oriental" refers to the people or cultures of the East.

Edward Said, in his seminal book *Orientalism*, redefined the term, arguing that Orientalism is the Western style of dominating, restructuring, and ruling the Eastern world. He suggests that the use of the term Orientalism presupposes a power dynamic that warrants further exploration. Said uses this power-based understanding to frame his discussion of Orientalism (Edward W. Said, 2016, pp. 3–4).

Meanwhile, some scholars define Orientalism as a school of thought or movement that investigates matters related to the Eastern nations and their environments (Hassan Hanafi, 2000, p. 26). The "Eastern World" in this context refers to regions spanning from the Near East (such as Persia, Egypt, and Arabia) to the Far East (such as Japan, China, and India), as well as countries in North Africa (Badri Yatim (ed.), 1996, p. 56). Maryam Jamilah defines Orientalism as a movement or intellectual tradition through which Western scholars study the East, particularly its religion and civilization (Marwa, 2015). Western writers, in turn, have broadened the concept of Orientalism to encompass all things related to the East, not limited to the Arab and Islamic worlds. These scholars also trace the historical development of Western efforts to understand Islam, from the Middle Ages to later intellectual advancements (Mahmud, n.d., p. 37).

From these definitions, it can be concluded that Orientalism refers to the understanding of the East by Western scholars who systematically study various aspects of the East, including religion and literature, in order to achieve specific objectives. The purpose of Orientalist studies on hadith will be discussed in the following sections.

The Purpose of Orientalism in Studying Islam

According to Edward Said, all knowledge is a product of its time and must be understood in that context. Therefore, no knowledge can be entirely separated from the influences, motivations, and support that shape it. If this argument holds true, then there is no such thing as truly objective knowledge. Consequently, Orientalism cannot claim to be entirely objective. As a form of discourse, Orientalism is intrinsically entangled with imperialism, and the knowledge it produces is therefore likely to be distorted and possibly even racist (John L. Esposito, 1995, p. 268).

Edward Said succinctly defined the aim of Orientalist studies on the East—specifically Islam—as a Western effort to dominate, reorganize, and assert power over the Eastern world (Edward W. Said, 2016, p. 4). Regarding the motivations behind Orientalist studies, Mustafa al-Siba'i outlined several factors, including imperialistic, commercial, and scientific motivations. Muhammad al-Bahiy identified two key motivations: first, to strengthen Western imperialism in Muslim

countries, ensuring that Muslims would accept Western power; and second, to revitalize the spirit of the Crusades under the guise of scientific and humanitarian study. In line with these views, Tibawi argued that the motivations driving Orientalism included missionary interests, commercial ambitions, and political considerations (Mahmud, n.d., pp. 5–6). Ali Akbar Velayati mentioned three primary motivations for Orientalist studies of the Eastern world: first, to curb the influence of Islam in the Western world and promote Christianity among Muslims; second, to facilitate and smooth the path for Western colonization of Eastern countries; and third, to recognize the markets and economic needs of Eastern countries for exploitation by Western industrialists (Aan Supian, 2016, p. 29).

In his analysis, Muhammad Benaboud, in *The Ideology of Orientalism* by Asaf Hussain, contends that Orientalist scholars, particularly missionaries studying Islam, sought to deny the prophethood of Muhammad and dismiss the Qur'an as divine revelation. In other words, their aim was not to understand Islam but to discredit it. Muin Umar outlined four primary objectives for the Orientalists' study of Islam: (A. Muin Umar, 1978, p. 9) First, for the sake of colonialism, as demonstrated by Snouck Hurgronje's research in the Dutch East Indies. Generally, the Orientalists pursuing this goal were from France, England, and the Netherlands, which held vast colonies in the 19th and 20th centuries. Second, for religious purposes, as seen with scholars like D.B. Macdonald and H. Kraemer. Third, for diplomacy and trade, as practiced by Eastern institutions in the U.S. and Europe, who studied Islam to train officials destined for service in oil companies in the Middle East. Fourth, for the advancement of science, as Orientalists viewed Islam as an essential reality in history and thus conducted research across various aspects of Islamic civilization, publishing their findings. Muin Umar's objectives represent a more objective assessment of the general motivations of Orientalist scholars.

From these various perspectives, the author categorizes the purposes of Orientalism into several key areas. First is the scientific objective, which involves the study of Eastern culture, religion, civilization, and language with an emphasis on the truth of the scientific method. Second is the trade objective, as the West was keen to expand trade and secure raw materials for industry. To achieve this, understanding the geography, natural resources, and agricultural systems of the East was deemed necessary to foster good relations between the East and the West. Third, the political and religious objectives, which stemmed from the historical clash between Islam and Christianity, especially during the Crusades. The political goals underlying Orientalism are particularly evident in the expansion of Western colonial powers in the 19th and 20th centuries. These Western powers then directed their efforts toward an ideological war, effectively replacing the Crusades with a "war on Islam" through Orientalist institutions and Western criticism.

Literature of Hadith in Orientalist Views

The differences in how Orientalists view Islam, including hadith, are inseparable from their underlying motivations and attitudes toward the study of Islam. These attitudes are closely linked to their perception and representation of the Prophet Muhammad. After all, any discussion of hadith will inevitably relate to the Prophet Muhammad, whose words, actions, and approvals are the foundation of the hadith literature. In this context, the representation of the Prophet Muhammad in the eyes of Orientalists can be examined from two main perspectives.

On one hand, the Prophet Muhammad was seen as the Prophet and Apostle who freed mankind from tyranny. This view was expressed, among others, by De Boulavilliers and Savary. On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad was seen as a pagan, apostate Christian and Jew who would destroy Christianity and Judaism, a clever intellectual with a strong imagination and a wild nature, and a sorcerer who suffered from epilepsy. This view was expressed by, among others, D'Herbelot, Dante Alighieri, Washington Irving, Hamilton Gibb, Goldziher, and Joseph Schacht (Edward W. Said, 2016, p. 102).

The ambivalence above has created a similar image of the hadith. In the sense that those who hold a negative view of the Prophet Muhammad also tend to have a negative view of the hadith, and vice versa. However, this does not indicate a necessary correlation. If classified as a whole, it turns out that more Orientalist groups denounce the hadith than those who recognize its existence. This fact shows that the majority of Orientalists view the hadith negatively, which results in a lack of trust in the authenticity and truth of the hadith in their eyes. They do not recognize the traditions as originating from the Prophet, nor as a reliable source and foundation (hujjah) for Islamic teachings.

According to Sa'd al Marsafi, some Orientalists are skeptical about the existence and authenticity of the Prophet's traditions (Idri, 2011, p. 205), because, in their view, during the early growth of Islam, the traditions were not recorded like the Qur'an. The traditions that developed at that time, particularly during the time of the Prophet and the Companions, were oral traditions, not written ones. Moreover, there was a general prohibition against writing anything from the Prophet other than the Qur'an, though there are also traditions that state the opposite. As a result, many traditions are questioned for their authenticity or even doubted in their existence. Some argue that all traditions, especially those related to law, are the work of the Companions, the Tabi'un, or scholars and fuqaha of the first and early second centuries of the Hijra, which became a mature system with the compilation of hadith in the third century Hijra. The aim was to make Islam a multi-dimensional, comprehensive religion that covers all aspects of life.

Orientalists assume that the hadith is not a legal explanation or clarification of the laws contained in the Qur'an, but rather an amplifier of the fiqh laws created by the fiqh scholars. Thus, they argue that the existence of hadith was preceded by fiqh law, which the scholars then used the hadith to reinforce.

Josef Schacht, a German Orientalist, expressed his view of the traditions, stating that they were merely rules created to enforce the schools of fiqh. In fact, the books of hadith were only compiled after the time of the fiqh scholars. When the Shafi'i Imam considered the hadith to be one of the main points of religion, forgers scrambled to create false traditions to strengthen their respective schools and to undermine those schools that opposed their own (Ahmad Muhammad Jamal, 1991, p. 103).

In the view of most Orientalists, the hadith is only the work of scholars and fiqh experts who sought to make Islam a multi-dimensional religion. They consider the hadiths to be nothing more than human expressions or references to Jewish and Christian teachings. Hamilton Gibb states that the hadith is merely an imitation of Jewish and Christian teachings by Muhammad and his followers. Meanwhile, Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht, two leading Orientalists, argued that the hadith did not originate from the Prophet Muhammad, but rather emerged in the first and second centuries of the Hijra as a result of the development of Islam (Idri, 2011).

The Orientalists who denounced the Prophet's hadith were numerous, including Spranger, Well, Hamilton Gibb, Daury, Meyer, Goldziher, and Schacht. Schacht, in his ignorance, claimed that hadith scholars only focused on external matters, such as examining the raw isnads (chains of transmission) and the process of criticism (jarh and ta'dil). They did not engage in research on the internal aspects, namely the death of the traditions themselves (Ahmad Muhammad Jamal, 1991, p. 10). As such, almost all of the Orientalist views above indicate distrust of the Prophet's hadith. They are skeptical of the traditions codified by the scholars.

Differences in the Study of Hadith in the West and the Muslim World

There is a difference between the study of hadith conducted by Orientalist (Western) scholars and that conducted by Middle Eastern scholars. Middle Eastern scholars, including those in Indonesia, place more emphasis on verifying the authenticity of hadith traditions, while the hadith study conducted by Western scholars emphasizes dating (dating the hadith) to assess its historicity and reconstructing the historical events allegedly occurring at the beginning of Islam (Imam Musbikhin, 2015, p. 516).

The study of hadith by Eastern scholars places greater emphasis on the *takhrij* (source analysis) of the hadith. According to Zain el Mubarak, research on the authenticity and validity of traditions is quite important because the traditions have passed through a long period of time to reach us. Events in this process have certain political dimensions experienced by Muslims. This research is more grounded in reality and has been developed by scholars throughout history (Zain el-Mubarak, 1999, pp. 45–46). The proof of this effort is found in the existence of fairly complex requirements for filtering out authentic traditions. The work of these scholars is better known as the methodology of hadith criticism.

In the 19th century, various questions regarding the authenticity and legality of hadith began to emerge, including among the Orientalists. This became a central focus in Islamic studies, especially concerning Islamic law. Many questioned the status of the hadith because, as is well known, the process of compiling the hadith took a long time, as did its transmission. This led to skepticism about the existence of the hadith. For this reason, they employed various methods to examine the development of hadith literature as a means of understanding the process of transmitting hadith in writing since the time of the Prophet.

On an objective level, when reviewing the writings of the Orientalists, it becomes clear that their works cannot be dismissed in the development of Islamic studies and culture. With the scientific methods applied in the preparation of dictionaries and encyclopedias, they have made significant contributions to enriching Islamic literature across various disciplines, including the study of the Prophet's hadith (Musbikhin, 2015, p. 517).

Sanad and Matn in Orientalist Views

In conducting the study of *sanad*, the Orientalists tend to focus on when *sanad* first appeared in the narration of the hadith. According to Caetani, 'Urwah was the first person to collect hadiths, but he did not use *sanad*. He further stated that, at the time of 'Abd al-Malik, the use of *sanad* in the narration of traditions was also unknown. Caetani argued that the use of *sanad* began in the period between 'Urwah and Ibn Ishaq. Based on his view, he concluded that most of the *sanads* found in the hadith books were fabricated by scholars in the second century, even into the third century of the Hijrah. This opinion is supported by Alois Sprenger, a German Orientalist who famously stated that the hadith is nothing more than "interesting anecdotes based on Muhammad." This view was also shared by other Orientalists, such as William Muir, who argued that the name of Muhammad was invoked to justify and conceal lies and anomalies. According to Muir, half of the hadiths collected by Imam Bukhari should be rejected (Syamsuddin Arif, 2008, p. 29).

A softer opinion was expressed by Horowitz, who suggested that the use of *sanad* began in the last third of the first century of the Hijrah (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 2000, p. 99). R. Jobson stated that in the middle of the first century Hijri, there may have been a method similar to *sanad*. This is because, at that time, a number of the Prophet's Companions had died, and those who had not met the Prophet began narrating traditions. Naturally, those who heard these narrations would ask from whom they had received them. The *sanad* method, however, would have developed in detail gradually after this (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 2000, pp. 99–100).

Henry Lammens, a Belgian missionary, and Leone Caetani, an Italian missionary, stated that *isnad* (the chain of transmission) emerged long after the existence of the hadith and was an internal phenomenon in the development of Islam (Syamsuddin Arif, 2008, p. 30). Joseph Horowitz speculated that the *chain of tradition transmission* system (*isnad*) was introduced only at the end of the first

century of the Hijrah. Furthermore, the German-Jewish Orientalist claimed that the practice of Islam likely originated from and was influenced by oral traditions, as is well known in Jewish literature (Idri, 2011, p. 209).

Joseph Schacht, in *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, argued that the majority of the *sanad* of hadiths was false. According to him, everyone knows that *sanad* initially appeared in a very simple form and later reached its full development in the second half of the third century Hijri. He claimed that *sanad* was a product of the efforts of scholars in the second century Hijri, who sought to link hadiths to earlier figures, ultimately connecting them to the Prophet to lend the hadiths strong legitimacy (Idri, 2011, p. 209).

According to Ignaz Goldziher, for example, the conclusion about the Sunnah is nothing but the result of the historical religious development of the Islamic community many years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The hadith, according to him, is a tendentious reflection that arose among the Muslim community during its developmental period. The hadiths were created by people after the Prophet, namely the Companions and later Muslims. These words were then attributed to the Prophet, as if they had genuinely come from him, by saying "Muhammad said" (Ahmad Isaeni, 2013, p. 2).

Another Orientalist who questioned the *sanad* of the hadith was Robson. Robson believed that, in the middle of the first century Hijri, it was possible for anyone to create a *sanad* or something similar. This was because, at that time, many of the Prophet's Companions had passed away, and those who had never met the Prophet, whenever they heard a narration, would be asked about its source. This is when the *sanad* system likely began. The peak of the Orientalist critique of the hadith was carried out by Joseph Schacht, who conducted an in-depth study of the hadith and concluded that *isnad* was part of an arbitrary construct in the hadith. Schacht argued that the Prophet's traditions were developed by different groups that linked their theories to earlier figures (Hasan Suadi, 2016).

This model of skepticism casts doubt on the origin of the hadith, the chain of narrations, the period of writing, and even its authority. Joseph Schacht doubted the *sanad* system, even claiming that the earlier part of the *sanad* was fictitious, while the latter part was genuine. Schacht's assumption was that the *sanad* system was created by people living after the Prophet but who sought to legitimize their fabrications by attributing them to the Prophet. Thus, the *sanad* chain was constructed to make the traditions appear more complete. Ali Masrur explained that Juynboll also doubted the *sanad* system, which was the route for transmitting traditions (Ali Masrur, 2004, p. 70).

In general, according to Azami, this theory can be refuted by noting that *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) had already been developing since the time of the Prophet. *Fiqh* is the product of *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) by the *mujtahids* (juridical scholars), and the Companions, even during the Prophet's time, had been engaged in this process. Therefore, it is difficult to accept Schacht's accusation that *fiqh* only developed during the appointment of judges (*qadi*) in the Umayyad period. To clarify his theory, Azami conducted a special study of the

Prophetic traditions found in classical texts. Among these were manuscripts by Suhayl ibn Abi Shalih. Abu Salih was a student of Abu Hurayrah, a Companion of the Prophet. Therefore, the hadith in the manuscript was shaped: The Prophet - Abu Hurayrah - Suhayl. This manuscript contained 49 traditions, and Azami studied the narrators up to Suhayl's generation (the third generation), including their numbers and genealogies (Idri, 2011, p. 210).

From this research, Azami found that in the third generation of narrators, there were about 20-30 people living in scattered locations such as India, Turkey, Morocco, and Yemen. The hadith texts they narrated were identical. According to Azami, it is highly improbable that, given the conditions of the time, these individuals would have gathered to fabricate a hadith that resulted in the same wording. It is also improbable that each of them created a hadith, which then became widely known to the next generation with the same editorial content. This conclusion contradicts Schacht's assertion both about the reconstruction of the *sanad* and the *matn* of the hadith.

The Orientalist accusation that the *sanad* and *matn* of hadiths were fabricated by Muslims in the first, second, and third centuries of the Hijrah is disputed by Azami in the following ways: First, historical facts prove that the use of *sanad* began in the time of the Prophet, as instructed to the Companions who attended the Prophet's gatherings to convey the hadith to those who were absent. Second, most hadith falsification occurred in the first forty years of the Hijrah, largely due to political issues, as many Muslims at the time had weak faith and fabricated hadiths for the benefit of political factions. Third, the Orientalists' research focus on *sanad* is problematic because they studied the books of *fiqh* and *sira*, not the actual hadith books. Fourth, the theory of Projecting Back (*al-qadhf al-khalf*), used as the basis for their argument, along with their examples of hadiths, is flawed, as these fall within the realm of fabricated narratives. Fifth, there has never been a development in the *sanad* system such as the creation of *mawquf* (suspended) or *marfu* (elevated) traditions or the creation of *muttasil* (connected) hadith. Similarly, the accusation that the *sanad* was only used to support a specific opinion or school of thought is baseless and contradicts historical facts. Sixth, the research and criticism of hadith scholars on the *sanad* and *matn* of hadiths, with all their scholarly expertise, were carried out with sincerity and without worldly interests (Idri, 2011, p. 290).

The Disputed Sanad

Joseph Schacht claims in his book *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* that his study begins by examining the emergence of Islamic law. He found that a new form of Islamic law emerged after the time of al-Sha'bi (d. 110 H), suggesting that the hadiths pertaining to Islamic law were fabricated by people who lived after al-Sha'bi. Schacht argues that the new Islamic law became known at the time of the appointment of the qadi (judge). His conclusion is that the decisions made by the qadi needed legitimacy from figures with higher authority, which is why they were connected to earlier figures in the generations of the Tabi'in (Successors), the

Sahabah (Companions), and ultimately to the Prophet Muhammad. This is Schacht's reconstruction of the sanad system (Ahmad Isnaeni, 2013, p. 99).

Schacht concluded that both the classical schools of Islamic jurisprudence and the Hadith experts were responsible for fabricating hadith. As quoted by Ali Mustafa Yaqub, Schacht argued that none of the traditions of the Prophet relating to law can be considered authentic hadith (Imam Musbikhin, 2015, p. 530).

However, Schacht's conclusions have been strongly disputed by Muhammad Mustafa Azami, a scholar from India. Azami criticized the mistakes and carelessness of Schacht's methodology. He argued that Schacht's method, which involved researching the sanad of hadith from fiqh books, was flawed. According to Azami, Schacht should have relied on the primary sources—books of hadith traditions—which would not have led to such erroneous conclusions. Azami's own research demonstrates that the use of sanad (the chain of narrators) was already practiced long before the time of al-Sha'bi. In fact, the practice of narration with sanad was common among the Companions (Sahabah) (Syamsuddin Arif, 2019).

Azami further challenged Schacht's historical theory by studying the history of hadith, especially focusing on hadiths found in classical texts. One of the manuscripts Azami examined was the work of Suhayl ibn Abi Salih (d. 138 H). Suhayl's father, Abu Salih, was a student of Abu Hurayrah, a Companion of the Prophet. The manuscript contains 49 hadiths, and Azami studied the narrators of these traditions up to the third generation (al-thabaqah al-thalithah). He examined the number of narrators and their locations. Azami proved that between 20 to 30 people narrated the same texts, and these narrators were spread across various regions, including India, Morocco, Turkey, and Yemen. The texts they narrated were identical (Ahmad Isnaeni, 2013, pp. 147–148).

Azami concluded that it would be impossible for scholars in different regions to gather and fabricate the same hadith with identical wording. Furthermore, it is highly improbable that each of these narrators independently created similar hadiths that would be known to later generations as the same. This conclusion contradicts Schacht's theory about the reconstruction of the sanad and the matn (content) of hadiths.

For example, Azami pointed to a hadith reported by Abu Hurayrah: "If any one of you gets up from his sleep, then he should wash his hands because he does not know where his hands were last night." This hadith appears in the Suhayl ibn Abi Salih manuscript (at sequence number 7) and is narrated by five Companions—Abu Hurayrah, Ibn Umar, Jabir, Aisha, and Ali ibn Abi Talib. Abu Hurayrah himself later narrated this hadith to 13 Tabi'in (second-generation narrators). These 13 Tabi'in spread across different parts of the Islamic world: eight stayed in Medina, one in Kufa, two in Basra, one in Yemen, and one in the Levant (Sham). These 13 Tabi'in then passed the hadith to at least 16 people in the next generation (third generation/Tabi' Tabi'in), who lived in Medina, Basra, Kufa, Makkah, Yemen, Khorasan, and Sham. Azami argued that it is inconceivable for these 16 narrators, scattered across the Muslim world, to have fabricated the same hadith or text. This

argument strengthens Azami's refutation of Schacht's "projecting back" theory (Ahmad Isnaeni, 2013, p. 149).

Azami's research shows that the third-generation narrators numbered between 20 and 30 people, scattered across a wide geographical area. Despite the distance between them, the hadiths they narrated were identical in wording. Therefore, it was impossible for these narrators to have fabricated hadiths together or independently and created the same fabricated text. This contradicts Schacht's theory and refutes his reconstruction of the sanad and matn of hadith.

Dismissing the Orientalist Theory

For many years, Muslims felt weak and unsure of their ability to confront Orientalist critiques. This mindset was prevalent for much of the past. However, as the movement for freedom and liberation grew, Muslims began to develop a sense of dignity and intellectual independence. This movement inspired a renewed focus on Islamic heritage, including Aqeedah (creed) and Sharia (law), as well as a systematic effort to dismantle the Orientalist views that had long shaped academic and colonial discourse. Contemporary scholars of hadith have strongly countered the Orientalist critique.

At least three scholars have systematically opposed the theories of Goldziher and Schacht. They are Mustafa al-Siba'i in his book *Al-Sunnah wa Makanatuha fi al-Tashri' al-Islami* (1949), Ajjaj al-Khatib in *Al-Sunnah Qabla al-Tadwin* (1964), and Muhammad Mustafa Azami in his groundbreaking work *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (1967). These scholars comprehensively refute the Orientalist theories about the authenticity of hadith, especially those advanced by Goldziher and Schacht (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 2000, p. 16).

Both al-Siba'i and Ajjaj al-Khatib, through their separate works, successfully challenged Ignaz Goldziher's skepticism about the authenticity of hadith. Meanwhile, Azami went further by addressing all the arguments put forth by Orientalists regarding the authenticity of hadith. Azami's work, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, systematically dismantled the arguments of the Orientalists and exposed the flaws in their theories. His research was based on extensive study and scientific methodology, making his arguments both credible and grounded in solid evidence. For example, Goldziher's claim that the Hajj could have been performed in al-Quds (Jerusalem) instead of Makkah is refuted by Azami, who demonstrates that there is no textual evidence in Sahih al-Bukhari to support such a claim (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 2008, p. 17).

In their critique, the Orientalists often fail to understand the methodology required to properly interpret the matn (content) of hadith. Their approach typically lacks consideration of the historical context and the rich background that underpins the texts. This approach is called the "Method of Unity" (al-absurd), which oversimplifies the interpretation by reading the text without understanding its broader context (Tajul Arifin, 2009, p. 18).

To counter Schacht's "projecting back" theory, Azami conducted further research on hadith traditions, including a manuscript belonging to Suhayl ibn Abi Salih (d. 138 H), a student of Abu Hurayrah. Azami demonstrated that the sanad in this manuscript clearly shows the connection from the Prophet to Abu Hurayrah, Abu Salih, and Suhayl. The text of the hadith was narrated identically across many regions (Ali Musthafa Yaqub, 2008, p. 28).

Azami's meticulous research proved that it was impossible for scholars to have fabricated identical hadiths in different regions, especially considering the historical and logistical conditions at the time. This finding contradicts Schacht's theory of fabricated hadiths and provides strong evidence for the authenticity of the early hadith literature.

Due to his expertise and groundbreaking research, Azami earned widespread recognition in the Islamic world. In 1400 H / 1980 AD, he was awarded the King Faisal International Prize in Islamic Studies. Orientalists themselves were forced to acknowledge his work. Notably, A.J. Arberry, a leading Orientalist from the University of Cambridge, publicly praised Azami's scholarship and the high academic standards of his work (M. M. Azami, 1994, p. VII).

CONCLUSION

Based on the above explanation, the views of Orientalists regarding both the sanad (chain of narrators), matn (text), and the narrators themselves are essentially the same: they criticize and doubt the authenticity of the hadith. In the study of hadith, there is a clear distinction between the approaches of Western (Orientalist) scholars and those from the Middle East. Middle Eastern scholars focus on the process of *takhrij* (the method of verifying and authenticating traditions) to determine the authenticity of hadith, and they have developed a method known as the methodology of hadith criticism. In contrast, Western scholars focus on dating traditions to assess their historical context and the reconstruction of events that supposedly occurred at the beginning of Islam, which has led to skepticism regarding the authenticity of hadith.

The skepticism of Orientalist scholars about the authenticity of hadith has been vigorously refuted by contemporary scholars of hadith. For example, Mustafa al-Siba'i in his book *Al-Sunnah wa Makanatuha fi al-Tashri' al-Islami* (1949), Ajjaj al-Khatib in *Al-Sunnah Qabla al-Tadwin* (1964), and Muhammad Mustafa Azami in *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (1967) have all comprehensively disproven the theories of Orientalists, especially those of Goldziher and Schacht. The rebuttals by Islamic scholars have effectively dismantled these theories.

The subjectivity and paradoxes inherent in the Western scholarly approach, particularly among Orientalists, reveal that their critiques often serve missions that go beyond mere academic inquiry. These missions are rooted in a form of neo-colonialism, aiming to undermine Islam through a lens of Orientalism. Their limited capacity to develop proper methodologies and techniques for

understanding hadith often leads them to overlook critical factors beyond the literal meaning of the text, failing to account for the broader context and intent of the hadith.

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