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Not peer-reviewed version

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Posted Date: 17 September 2024

doi: 10.20944/preprints202409.1196.v1

Keywords: Distorsification; Islamic studies; Modern; Study



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Article

Distorsification of Hadith and Its Influence on the Study of Modern Hadith

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the phenomenon of hadith distortion in hadith literature and analyze its impact on contemporary hadith studies. The intended hadith distortion here refers to the alteration or falsification of hadith narratives that can threaten the integrity and authenticity of sacred texts as sources of Islamic teaching. This article identifies the factors contributing to hadith distortion and its serious consequences in contemporary hadith studies.

Keywords: distorsification; Islamic studies; modern; study

1. Introduction

The study of hadith plays a central role in the Islamic religion. Hadith, as a representation of the behavior and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, is an important source for Muslims. The study of hadith is an intellectual activity of Muslims aimed at discovering key aspects in the understanding and practice of Islam. Therefore, Muslims strive to ensure that all their activities are relevant to the activities of the Prophet and his companions. However, throughout history, some groups have attempted to distort hadith. As a result, scholars have had difficulty identifying hadith that are truly authentic and originate from the Prophet.

Hadith is faced with a very serious problem. The presence of hadith *mawdū'* (fake) in the midst of the people is a very effective propaganda. The main source of *al-hadith al-mawdū'* refers to narratives that are presented as sayings or actions of the Prophet, but in essence do not come from the Prophet. Based on Abū Rayyah's observations, hadith *mawdū'* has existed since the time of the Prophet. However, its presence at the end of the reign of 'Uthmān bin 'Affān was the most brutal attack on Islam. This phase was marked by the most terrible events (internal conflict) that led to the death of 'Uthmān, then the death of 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib (Haykal, 2008:66; Rayyah, 2006:91) Al-Sibā'i, (2003:92) said that the first forty years were the time limit between the period of originality and authenticity with the period of intrinsic and forgery of hadith.

In contrast to the scholars of hadith above, critics of hadith -orientalists- such as Weil (1862), Sprenger, (1851), Goldziher et al., (1967), Schacht (1967) explicitly doubt the existence of authentic hadith. They consider the hadith of the Prophet is just a fictional story. Ignaz Goldziher said, there is no truly authentic hadith that comes from the Prophet. According to Goldziher, the evolution of Islamic dogma and theology has brought Muslims to a new understanding. The political situation was really chaotic, making it very difficult to find authentic hadith. In addition, hadith was transmitted from one generation to the next through oral tradition. This mechanism certainly requires a long hierarchy, so it will be very difficult to classify which hadith is authentic and which is not, especially since most Muslims are still illiterate. As a result, a number of hadiths are doubtful about their authenticity in terms of *sanad* and *matn*. Therefore, the study of hadith, as long as it is related to the hunt for *sahīh* hadith, always leaves a fierce debate.

From Exploitation to Diversification of False Hadith

Forgery of hadith (*al-wad'u*) has existed since the time of the prophethood is a historical fact. Critics of hadith believe that the existence of authentic hadith is limited to only the first thirty to forty

years after the prophethood period. Before the companions recognized the fictitious stories of the Jews and hypocrites (*Ahl al-Kitāb*), forgery of hadith had really occurred. In fact, fake news and propaganda by distorting the Prophet's statements were what made the companions aware of the importance of the *isnād mechanism* (chain of narration) (Al-Banna, 1997:161). The Prophet realized that someone could do anything to humiliate himself or to create an uncontrolled atmosphere. The incident of a hypocrite who provoked the situation by using the Prophet as his shield is very strong evidence. The story about the Prophet's instructions to a hypocrite to raid the homes of Muslims is only a provocation for Muslims, not really from the Prophet (al-Sabā'ī, 2000:267-269; Al-Shāfi'ī, 1994:75; Al-Ṭabrānī, 1994:318; Hamādah, 1997:324-326). Another story, this time about the claim of someone who had been appointed by the Prophet as Governor in an area. This story eventually turns out that there was never any evidence of the rapture (Al-Dhahabī, 1964:293).

False hadiths are the result of the political and social situation of Muslims after the prophethood. The political need for prophetic legacies is very important to gain public control. Likewise, the society in which Islam developed needed new "hadiths" that were relevant to their conditions. The presence of texts was the answer to new problems that arose in the midst of the social situation. Muhammad Arkūn said that the Sunnah was written long after the death of the Prophet. Since the political dispute (Sunnī, Shi'ah and Khawārij), each faction claimed to have exclusive rights to the hadith and its control. For example, the Sunni claim that the hadith collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are the most authoritative and most *sahīh* (Arkūn, 1996:101). Furthermore, Arkūn described that the development of Muslim society gave birth to diversity and new conditions that had never happened before, let alone told in the Qur'an or hadith. The integration of new life must be done, one of which is through the hadith of the Prophet. The mechanism, uses proper reasoning and analogy. Arkūn (1996:104) said, the compilation of hadith was done under a closed text structure, subject to a selective process, often based on the interests of the ruler. Moreover, during the two Umayyad and early 'Abbāsiyyah periods, hadith was transmitted through oral methods (Al-Masry, 2010).

Forgery of hadith is not limited to the production of *matn* (sayings of the Prophet) or linking something to the Prophet, in fact forgery of *isnād* may be more common and often done. For example, connecting a certain hadith with someone else's *isnād* or even creating a completely new sanad (transmission chain). This term is known among hadith scholars as *sāriq al-hadīth* (thief of hadith) or *tarkib al-asānīd* (assembled chain). In the early period to the third century of Hijriyyah, all matters related to the development of Islamic jurisprudence presented a socio-religious phenomenon that was different from what we witness today. *Isnād* is the most important thing to identify the accuracy of the source as well as measure the level of mastery of a scholar of the evidence they put forward.

The scholars of *ahl al-hadīth* never quoted a hadith without including their own *isnād* or the sanad to which the hadith belonged. They also would not give someone the opportunity to present his ideas or simply engage in any discussion, if he did not have a strong and reliable *isnād* and had received *ta'dil* (legasi) from credible critics of *ahl al-hadīth*. If these requirements were not met, the forgers of hadith would usually create a new *isnād*. For example, 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd (d. 144/761), a Mu'tazilite scholar, was criticized for lying about having created an *isnād* from his teacher. He had hijacked a hadith that was very popular among scholars of hadith and was recognized as an authentic hadith from the Prophet (al-Yahṣabī, 1998:375). In fact, al-Ḥasan never transmitted this hadith from the Prophet, but heard it from another source. The only reason he forged was to support the position of the school of thought he believed in, namely the Mu'tazilah. However, because he did not have his own *isnād*, he tried to deceive his debate opponent by putting together the *isnād* of his teacher.

In addition to political, social, economic and religious maneuvers, there are also those who take advantage of the Prophet's accessibility in predicting future events (vision of knowledge). For the forgers of hadith, this accessibility is very effective as a medium and opportunity. For example, the conversation that took place between the Prophet and 'Abbās. When the Prophet said to 'Abbās, about his predictions about some of his descendants ('Abbās) will become leaders of the Muslim community (Al-Mulaqqin, 2002)

After the Prophet died, the forgery of hadith became increasingly rampant. Along with the increasingly heated political situation, the development of fake hadith was like mushrooms in the

rainy season, popping up every day. The demand for responsibility for the death of 'Uthmān bin 'Affān made the fake hadith grow even more fertile. The demand for justice brought Muslims into a situation of open civil war between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya bin Abī Sufyān (Rāyyah, 1994:91). Not only physical war, but also propaganda war. Both groups used the Prophet's hadith as their intermediary. This phase shows how political and sectarian conflicts have contributed significantly to the context of forgery of hadith. Muṣṭafā al-Sibā'ī argued that the 40th year of Hijri was *the fāṣil* (borderline year) between authentic hadith and *mawdū' hadith*. These intrinsic hadiths were distorted through various political maneuvers resulting from internal divisions in the Muslim community (al-Sabā'ī, 2000:92).

Husayn Haykal said that political conflicts in classical Islam always gave birth to false hadiths. These hadiths were deliberately made for political purposes (Haykal, 2014:66). When the Umayyads were in power, the makers of false hadiths deliberately created hadiths *mawdū'* in order to achieve personal goals or secure the interests of the Umayyad rulers. They would make up fictional stories to bring down the opposing party, 'Alī bin Abī Tālib and vice versa. 'Alī's supporters published hadiths that showed his superior side. On the other hand, there were many hadiths that came from outside the conflicting groups, which were ignored. Haykal described that in general, the atmosphere was not at all conducive (Haykal, 2014:67-68).

The generation of companions ended, the next was the generation of *tā'bi'īn*. This phase was colored by debates about theology. The collectors of hadith were forced to follow the beliefs of the caliphs, especially al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'tasim, they were the sons of Hārun al-Rashīd. The two 'Abbāsiyyah caliphs issued laws on the obligation to follow the official state beliefs, the rationalist Mu'tazilah school. Threats of death for those who do not obey state laws, one of which is about the creatureliness of the Qur'an (Al-Jābirī, 2000:102-105; Taymiyyah, 2020:63). The ambition of power to control the beliefs of the people and control science. In this phase, politics greatly dominates religious, social and political life. Ahmad bin Hanbal, a Sunni scholar was forced to surrender his beliefs to a ruler affiliated with the rationality of Mu'tazilah.

Interestingly, *al-Kutub al-Sittah* was born in a very complex political situation. This fact proves that the political tension between the loyalists of Banī 'Abbās and the loyalists of the family of 'Alī bin Abī Tālib did not dampen the spirit of hadith scholars to carry out their duties as the fortress of the sunnah. Hadith figures such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwud, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah worked hard to ensure that only hadiths that met the criteria of *ṣahīh* could be categorized into their collections. Therefore, it is not surprising that *al-Kutub al-Sittah* is considered the most *ṣahīh* hadith work.

However, the authenticity of the work does not automatically escape the attention of hadith critics. Hadith critics (rationalists) find it difficult to believe that these works are the most authentic works. This reluctance is more based on rationality which is considered beyond reason and intellect. For example, questioning al-Bukhārī who has a collection of hadith of 600,000 (six hundred thousand hadith), but only 4,000 hadith are considered *authentic*. This means that for every 150 hadiths, only one hadith is considered *authentic*. How did al-Bukhārī spend sixteen years just to filter his hadiths from six hundred thousand to only four thousand hadiths. Then, he said that he did all of this as a form of accountability to Allah (Badr al-Dīn, 1971:121). How al-Bukhārī categorized his hadiths, so that he would not include hadiths, except those that met his requirements (Al-'Asqalānī, 1991:10). The Prophet's hadiths are certainly not limited to al-Bukhārī's collection of four thousand. More than that, because hadith is not only *matn*, but also *tāriq* (path) and *sanad* (chain) of narration. Al-Bukhārī memorized one hundred thousand hadiths that were *ṣahīh* and two hundred thousand that were not *ṣahīh*, does not indicate that there are no hadiths that are *ṣahīh* (Badr al-Dīn, 1998:148).

mawdū' (fake) and *da'if* (weak) hadiths does not affect the collection of *ṣahīh hadiths* by hadith experts at all. Imam al-Dāruqutnī said that finding *ṣahīh hadiths* from a vast expanse of *mawdū'* (fake) hadiths is like looking for one white hair on a black bull's skin (Al-Jundī, 1996:148). This shows how difficult it is to select *ṣahīh hadiths* among the existing hadiths. Moreover, if we look at the data from the critics, there are many narrators in *al-Kutub al-Sittah* whose validity is questionable. This could be because the critics are not completely neutral, especially since the criteria used are also different.

Thus, it requires hard work, integration and collaboration between the authorities and hadith experts (Al-Rūmī, 1993:95).

The illustration above illustrates the origin of the hadith *mawdū'* which emerged, then developed and even filled the gaps between the holy texts, until it was difficult to distinguish. The *Ahl al-Hadīth* had to struggle hard to prove that the hadith was inherited directly from the Prophet and came from him. Moreover, the perspective on *al-wad'u* (forgery) of hadith has influenced the beliefs and religious practices of some Muslims. The recognition that the hadith came from the Prophet *sanadān wa matnān* (qualification of the chain of transmission and wording), must answer the fact that there has indeed been distortion in both of these important aspects.

Diversification of False Hadith

Another problem that is no less important in discussing hadith *mawdū'* is the problem of diversification. Jamāl al-Bannā -a rationalist academic from Egypt- describes the shift from weak hadith to false hadith. He explains how hadith *mawdū'* is a diversification of hadith *da'if* (weak) in one subtitle: *min al-da'if ila al-mawdū'* which is part of his work entitled: *Nahw Fiqh Jadīd*. Based on this principle, al-Bannā concluded that hadith *mawdū'* is no different from hadith *da'if*, even in very bad conditions (Al-Banna, 1997:109). Both can be used as a basis for the virtue (*fadā'il al-a'māl*) of religious practice. Al-Bannā deeply regretted the attitude of the scholars of hadith who were not firm against the forgers of hadith, but instead provided a way and space for the development of hadith *mawdū'*. He suspected that this neglect was caused because the scholars of hadith basically had the same motivation as the forgers of hadith.

Although most scholars of hadith criticize al-Bannā's assessment view which is considered wrong, ironically they also make mistakes that support the truth of al-Bannā. Nūr al-Dīn 'Itr categorizes the hadith *mawdū'* into part of the hadith *da'if*, even though it is considered the lowest and worst quality hadith in the level of hadith *da'if*. (Nur al-Din'Itr, 1981:301). Al-Zarkashī firmly rejects the diversification and categorization of the hadith *da'if*. According to him, the hadith *mawdū'* cannot be categorized into any hadith at all, and is not even worthy of being called a hadith, because it is not a hadith (Badr al-Din, 1998:395). The narration of the hadith *mawdū'* must be accompanied by testimony of its occurrence as a hadith *mawdū'*. This is different from the hadith *da'if* which can be used as a basis for religious practice (Al-Rahman, 2003:472).

Consequences

The soft attitude shown by some scholars of hadith towards the hadith *mawdū'* has implications for the narration of *isrā'īliyyāt* (*al-Isrā'īliyyāt* is a term that refers to stories related to Banī Isrā'īl. They are descendants of the Prophet Yā'qub who is also known as Isrā'īl. This term in Islam, refers to stories attributed to Banī Isrā'īl scholars, (Jews and Christians) including stories about pre-Islamic times regarding anything. For example, about the evolution of the universe) The illustration of the narration of *isrā'īliyyāt* is described by theologians as having mastered the entire narration of hadith, so that there is no gap for the companions of scholars to obtain truly authentic information sourced from the Prophet (Al-Hārith Fakhri Īsā Abdullah, 2013:171). In fact, the conditions are not as described. This is because the proportion of narrations and hadiths conveyed by *mua'llaf* (people who have recently converted to Islam from among the *Ahl al-Kitāb* is not significant. If you look at the hadith figures, from the companions to the main hadith figures, not many can be found in *isrā'īliyyāt* history. 'Abdullāh bin Salām (the *mua'llaf* who is known to be the most active in narrating hadiths), only narrated seventeen hadiths. Abū Hurayrah was only meri narrated only three hadiths from him. 'Abdullāh bin Amrū bin al-Āṣ did not even narrate any hadiths from Ka'ab al-Aḥbār. The main hadith figures (*al-Kutub al-Sittah*) only narrated seven hadiths from Ka'ab al-Aḥbār.

isrā'īliyyāt narrations, no matter how many, still has no effect. This is because the companions and *Ahl al-Hadīth* have their own methods to anticipate the possibilities that will occur to the hadith. Abū Hurayrah's attitude towards the narrations sourced from Ka'ab al-Aḥbār shows that even the companions did not simply accept them, so that their narrations had no effect at all on the Prophet's Sunnah. Abū Hurayrah distinguished between those sourced from the Prophet and those from other

than the Prophet (Khalid Aba al-Khayl, 1435:369-371). Understanding the substance of the narration is the most important thing, so that the companions could not possibly accept it, (even from Ka'ab al-Aḥbār) if it contradicted what was conveyed by the Prophet (Abu al-Hasan Muslim, 1990:175) The parent of Abū Hurayrah's narrations was the Prophet, so only narrations sourced from the Prophet are considered to have authority and authenticity. This can be traced to the evidence in the narrations related to the authenticity of Abū Hurayrah's sources (Al-Nawawī, 1391:124).

Thus, the allegation that there has been infiltration of *isrā'īliyyāt* narrations into the hadiths of the Prophet is a claim without evidence. The results of an analysis based on a way of thinking or logic towards a hadith cannot be considered as evidence at all. Moreover, if it is only based on the similarity of the story sourced from the Prophet with that in the Ahl al-Kitāb, then the hadith is claimed as *isrā'īliyyāt*. For example, the hadith of three babies who can talk, 'Īsā bin Maryam, the baby (Jurayj's savior) and the baby who is being breastfed by his mother (in the story of Banī Isrā'īl) (Badr al-Dīn, 2001:410). This hadith is categorized as *isrā'īliyyāt* because it is considered to be contrary to Islamic law and sunnatullah (natural law). Logically, babies will not talk until they reach a certain age. This rational criticism is in fact refuted by the Qur'an itself. For example, 'Īsā bin Maryam, the Qur'an describes people who question how a baby can speak (Surat Maryam: 29). Then, Allah confirms that He has given 'Īsā the gift of speaking while he was still a baby in the cradle (Al-Qur'an: Surah al-Mā'idah: 110). Likewise, a Prophet and Messenger, miracles can also happen to pious people (Wali) as karomah. Thus, the categorization of the hadith as *isrā'īliyyāt* is only based on personal disbelief that views the story as irrational, without being supported by strong arguments is an irrational claim.

In general, the views of modern thinkers in studying holy texts (the Qur'an and hadith) are based on their framework of thought and historical context. Modern thought prioritizes rationality (even becoming the basis) for the thought of interpretation and hadith, so that many traditional aspects of religion, including the interpretation of holy texts, become a source of debate and criticism. Consequently, the validity of many holy texts is doubted, because it is considered irrational. The use of traditional methods and rules that are no longer relevant is assumed to be the main cause. A reformative methodology and approach are needed in interpretation to gain a new understanding of concepts such as *sanad* and *matn* (text content). This methodology and approach will significantly change the way modern Muslims think that is relevant and acceptable to reason.

Implications

Hasan Hanafī, Arkūn, 'Ābid al-Jābirī and Shahrūr proposed a revision project on the parent sciences that have been used to understand the sacred texts. The reform of the science of hadith aims to present a sharp and contextual critical view of the hadiths, so that the intellectual and social challenges faced by Muslim society in this era can be answered easily. Through this project, they believe that Islam will be able to interact with various world civilizations (Arkūn, 1996:75). According to the modernist-rationalists, there are four reasons that can be used as the basis for revision: first, there is no *naqli argument* (sacred text) that is truly authentic and valid. Second, the *sahīh requirement* of a hadith is based on the criteria of its compiler, so its objectivity cannot be measured. Third, the claim of the scholars of hadith, that isnad is unable to distinguish *sahīh hadith* from others. Fourth, the codification of hadith is a political product, so that hadith is a legacy of thought that must be subject to textual criticism. (Arkūn, 1996:102). Based on the four frameworks of thought, the hadith is a religious text that is the same as other texts. Therefore, it is important for Muslims to revise and reform the texts that have been believed to be holy texts.

Hasan Hanafī highly values the role of reason in his thinking. For him, reason is more authoritative than sacred texts. Texts cannot establish something, but rather need something to establish it. Texts need evidence to establish something, while reason is able to judge everything without having to rely on external (additional) evidence. For him, texts are just a general (empty) framework that must be filled with substance to fill it. Hasan Hanafī's view produces three basic pillars of thought. First, all hadith of the Prophet are relative. Second, reason is the most important basis for understanding religion. Third, reality is the basis for all things that exist. This idea is very interesting and seems reformative, but many doubt it, especially when viewed from the perspective

of hadith studies, because it ignores the importance of hadith science and scientific methods in testing religious texts (Hanafi, 2020:374-376)

In the context of rationalist thought, Ibn Sīrīn (Al-Jurjānī, 1997:254) and Ibn al-Mubārak's (al-Rāzī, 1953:16; Naisābūrī, 2006:15-16) view that *isnād* is part of religion, becomes completely meaningless. Hasan Hanafi explains that the existence of *isnād* in a hadith does not prove any truth at all, if it ignores logical and rational considerations. Therefore, a hadith does not necessarily become the basis for an authentic argument before its truth is tested by logic and reason (Hanafi, 2020:355). This project is not just a criticism aimed at hadith scholars, but also a reform proposal containing revision proposals in all fields of hadith science, such as *isnād* science, *jarh* (criticism), *ta'dil* (legacy), and *'ilal* (cause of defects in a hadith). According to Hasan Hanafi and Arkūn, traditional sciences such as the science of *al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* (criticism and justification of the narrators of hadith), the science of *Tārikh al-Ruwāt* (history of narrators), the science of *Ta'wil* (meaning in hadith), and the science of *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh* (regarding changes in law in Islam) and all other sciences of hadith are sciences that are not productive in preserving hadith ('Ubaydāt, 2010:203).

When the sacred text (hadith) does not have sacredness, then the value of the hadith is the same as human conversation in general. Its nature is profane (non-sacred). The hadith of the Prophet is the same as ordinary human texts, such as history books, literature or scientific works, do not have sacred or divine properties. These texts were written by humans without claims of divine revelation or authority. This text is considered the work of ordinary humans that reflects the knowledge, experience, thoughts, or expressions of humans in general according to their conditions, situations and psychology. Muhammad al-Jāberī explained how the criteria for a *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith are determined based on the conditions of its compiler, not based on absolute religious authorization ("https://hekmah.org/ 2020/", قضائي-الفكر- الدين-محمد-عبد-الجابر). This means that a *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith is determined based on the criteria of its compiler. The sacrality of a *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith is the result of the sacralization of its compiler. Likewise, al-Bukhārī's work is considered *ṣaḥīḥ*, because it is based on criteria made by al-Bukhārī himself. The profane nature of the Prophet's hadith in this context implies that the hadith does not have a special status in religion, because it does not contain sacredness. Therefore, it is very possible to be explored, debated or criticized without religious guidelines or rules.

Pros and cons color the opinions of these rationalist modernists. However, the majority of Muslims still respect the works of hadith, especially *al-Kutub al-Sittah* as the most authentic and *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith work. Hadith scholars provide clarification on the project of reforming and revising Islamic sciences. Hadith scholars emphasize that these hadiths have gone through a very strict process of research and authentic criticism. There are a number of methodological selections and mechanisms that are in accordance with existing hadith science standards. Efforts to revise or criticize hadith through the tradition of hadith science can threaten the integrity and sustainability of the hadith science heritage. Meanwhile, modernist thinking about the reform of hadith science may not have a strong enough methodology or foundation to assess the validity of the hadiths.

Isnad sciences identify *ṣaḥīḥ* hadiths from weak ones. The approach of reforming the science of hadith as an important effort to renovate the understanding of Islam according to the context of the current era does not have to destroy the foundation of authentic and authoritative thought. Moreover, it is based on the historical imagination of hadith *mawdū'*. It cannot be denied that the fact is that hadith has experienced a phase of distortion (forgery) which then produced several hadith *mawdū'*. However, this fact cannot be used to generalize, all hadith are *mawdū'*. In fact, modernist-rationalists greatly worship reason and logic. They should understand that doubting the authenticity of all hadith is a generalization of thought that is contrary to logic itself.

5. Conclusions

This article presents the phenomenon of hadith distortion and its impact on modern hadith studies. Distortion of hadith, through its two main doors, namely the forgery of *matn* (Prophet's words) and *isnād* (chain of transmission), is a very serious problem throughout Islamic history, especially hadith studies. This article notes that forgery of hadith has occurred since the time of the

prophet hood until it mushroomed during the political and sectarian contestation after the deaths of the caliphs 'Uthmān and 'Ālī. Critics of hadith have put forward proposals containing different criteria for the authenticity of hadith, some of whom even doubt the existence of authentic hadith.

The implication is that the critics of hadith propose a revision of the criteria and methods in order to anticipate the fatal mistakes made by the scholars of hadith, namely the diversification of false hadith from weak hadith and criticizing the soft attitude of some scholars of hadith towards false hadith. The firm attitude of the scholars is needed in viewing the hadith *mawḍū'*, because it is impossible for this hadith to be combined with the hadith *da'if* in the same category. Therefore, debates and conflicts arise between groups as a result of sharp differences regarding the understanding of the holy text and the beliefs of Muslims.

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