Orientalist Studies on the Authenticity of Prophetic Hadiths: 
A Phase Analysis of Western Scepticism

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.32505/al-bukhari.v6i2.6856
Submitted: 2023-08-03 | Revised: 2023-10-31 | Accepted: 2023-12-09

Abstract
This article focuses on analyzing Orientalist arguments against hadith in the phase of Western skepticism. In this study, hadith is the subject and the main basis of discussion. The progress of Islamic civilization in the past has been an attraction for orientalists in studying Islam to subjugate Islamic civilization. This made hadith one of the targets of the orientalists' studies since it is one of the sources of Islamic epistemology. The skepticism of the early generation of orientalists claimed that hadith is a collection of anecdotes. This description will be explained using the library research method, focusing on the argumentation of orientalists in the phase of Western skepticism. The author analyses the data using content analysis. The author finds that there is a misunderstanding in the argumentation of the early generation of orientalists, and the argumentation is weak in terms of methodological and historical truth.

Keywords Hadith, Orientalis, Autentisitas Hadis, Skeptisme
Abstrak

Kata kunci Hadis, Orientalis, Autentitisas Hadis, Skeptisisme

Introduction
The progress of Islamic civilization in the past has always been an interesting discussion. This progress is based on scientific conception and Islamic epistemology. Islamic civilization was able to produce various scientific advances and was able to create a virtuous society. This attracted the attention of orientalists to study Islamic epistemology for the benefit of the West to subjugate Islamic civilization. In line with this effort, hadith became one of the targets of orientalists to find out more about the progress of Islamic civilization and the conceptions that shaped it.

Muslims, particularly scholars, hold an unequivocal position in advocating for the authenticity of Hadith. This is extensively supported by academic literature and research that has discredited the criticisms of orientalists. Noteworthy authorities such as Mustafa A’zami, Mustafa al-


Siba'i, and al-Idlibi have responded to and addressed the orientalists' critical arguments with great care and attention.³

It is widely recognized that the hadith represents a key source of epistemology in Islam. Specifically, hadith refers to anything attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in words, deeds, taqrir, and characteristics.⁴ In the Quran, this is reinforced by the explanation that what the prophet Muhammad Saw conveyed is a divine revelation bestowed upon him by God.⁵ The position of hadith as one of the epistemological sources cannot be challenged in Islam because it functions as an explanation, confirmation, and reinforcement of the Quran, which explains the problems in the Quran in the form of things that are muqayyad with muthlaq, explaining the specific from the general.⁶ Therefore, the urgency of hadith as an Islamic epistemology explains that it is always associated with its authenticity which then has authority in its application.

The concept of authenticity of hadith deals with the authenticity of a hadith. Of course, this is related to the transmission of hadith from generation to generation with the prescribed rules.⁷ In line with this concept, for orientalists, this became an object of criticism and a means of subjugating Islamic civilisation by weakening the epistemological side of Islam. Alois Sprenger⁸ and his partner William Muir⁹, Both early orientalists, claimed that the hadith is a collection of anecdotes (false but exciting stories).¹⁰

This argument then spread over a short period, with Ignaz Goldziher, Joseph Schacht, and Gautier H.A. Juynboll arguing for Western skepticism towards Islam, especially the Prophet's hadith,

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³ Ibid., 69.
⁵ Al Qur’an, Surah Al Kahfi, Ayat 110
⁶ Abdul Ghani Abdul Khaliq, Ad-difau Annis Sunnah, (Al-Qahirah: Maktabah As-Sunnah 1989), 11
⁷ Ibid., 69
⁸ Misionaris Asal Jerman Yang Tinggal Lama Di India, Menulis Buku Das Leben Und Die Lehre Des Mohammed
⁹ Misionaris Asal Inggris, Menulis Buku The Life Of Mahomet And The History Of Islam To The Era Of Hegira
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which is not much different from the arguments of Alois and Muir.

In line with the interest of orientalists in studying Islam, the development of orientalist studies on hadith in the West has grown and can be classified into four stages. The first is the phase of Western scepticism, later known as Western revisionism. The second is the stage of reaction to scepticism. The third is the stage of reconciliation, an attempt to find a middle ground. The fourth is the phase of neo-scepticism.  

This article aims to explain the arguments of orientalists in the phase of Western skepticism towards hadith, later known as Western revisionists, especially the opinions of Ignaz Gholziher, Joseph Schacht, and Gautier H.A. Juynboll, and then the critical responses of Islamic scholars to them, by using library research method and content analysis approach. The researcher found many previous studies criticizing the views of orientalists, but not collectively. It is more about personally criticizing an orientalist's argument. The researcher also found research that agreed with the Orientalist project. The researcher also found research that focuses on the arguments of Islamic figures that contradict the arguments of Orientalists.

Meanwhile, this study focuses on the orientalist argumentation of the Western scepticism or revisionist phase. This

12 Imam Supriyogo and Tobroni, Metodologi Penelitian Sosial Agama (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2003), 71.
is a school of criticism that will continue to exist until the end of time because the West, with its civilization, will continue to try to undermine Islam with a sceptical mindset towards the teachings and sources of Islamic teachings.

Western revisionists such as Ignaz Gholziher, Joseph Schacht, and Gautier H.A. Juynboll. These were western agents who changed the Muslim view of hadith. Their main agenda was to doubt, deny, and be skeptical about the source of Islamic teachings. At the same time, Western skepticism towards hadith will continue to grow along with the Westernization of civilization.

The Authenticity of Prophetic Hadith

The discussion related to the authenticity of the Prophetic hadiths is an essential study to maintain the truth and authenticity of the Prophetic hadiths as a revelation from God. This has started since the early days of the companions and the tabiin, as well as scholars from time to time who continued to strive to maintain the authenticity of the traditions, which can be evidenced by the persistence of the muhaddis in confirming and validating a tradition from another muhaddis and perhaps the distance between the two, is very far.

This process is clearly illustrated in the tradition of transmission of the Prophet's hadith, and it is in this way that the traditions have been preserved up to the present time. This process of preserving the authenticity of the hadith is a scientific tradition carried out since the early prophetic period. This is illustrated in the hadith about 'Umar ibn Khattab, who checked and confirmed the truth of the statement of one of the companions regarding the prophet's household.

Once Umar confirmed the words of one of the companions regarding the prophet's household. Then Umar went to the prophet and said, "Did you divorce your wives?" The prophet replied, "No".\textsuperscript{20} This tradition of criticism in hadith science is referred to as naqd and it becomes a matter of course in the process of hadith validation. This process of naqd plays an important role in separating and then describing the good hadith, the less good hadith and the bad hadith.\textsuperscript{21}

In line with the efforts of the scholars in maintaining the authenticity of the hadith. It should be understood that these efforts are based on the awareness of the hadith which is the second Islamic epistemology after the Qur'an. Hadith is the foundation of Muslims in practicing their religious teachings, so it is impossible for a Muslim to be able to carry out their religious teachings perfectly without involving the hadith in the process of worship.\textsuperscript{22} Therefore, understanding hadith and its function as a source of Islamic epistemology has great urgency in building Islamic civilisation.

Hadith or sunnah is also referred to as bayan at-taqrîr, bayan al-ta'kid or bayan al-isbat. The aim of the sunnah is to confirm or reinforce what has been mentioned in the Qur'an.\textsuperscript{23} Hadith also functions as bayan al-tafsir in the form of Hadith explanations of verses that require further details or explanations, such as on mujmal, mutlaq and ‘amm verses. Furthermore, the hadith as bayan at-tasyri' is an explanation of tasyri' in the form of establishing, realising, or determining a law or shara' rules that are not found in the Qur'an.

The explanation for the authenticity of the traditions that were transmitted from the Prophet to the Companions and to the Tabiin up

\textsuperscript{21} Idrî, \textit{Epistemologi; Ilmu Pengetahuan, Ilmu Hadis Dan Ilmu Hukum Islam} (Jakarta: Kencana, 2015), 141.
\textsuperscript{22} Idrî, \textit{Hadis & Orientalis Perspektif Ulama Hadis dan Para Orientalis tentang Hadis Nabi}, 69.
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Orientalists' Views on Hadith Authenticity

1. Ignaz Gholziher

Ignaz Gholziher was an orientalist of Jewish descent from Hungary, he studied the orientalism in Damascus and Cairo, he also studied at Al-Azhar University Cairo for 1 year (1873-1874).\(^{24}\) His opinion on the hadith is recorded in his book Muslim Studies, where he comments:

"We are unlikely to have even as much confidence as Dozy regarding a large part of the hadith, but will probably consider by far the greater part of it as the result of the religious, historical and social development of Islam during the first two centuries."\(^{25}\)

According to him the hadith is nothing more than a product of the development of the religious, historical and social aspects of Islam that only emerged from the second century of Hijri, Gholziher also confirms his argument by stating that the Sunnah was the view and the only religious practice that developed in the early generations of Muslim society.\(^{26}\) He doubted the authenticity of the hadith because he believed that after the death of the prophet Muhammad, the narrators (rawi al-hadits) added many greetings that they considered to be in accordance with the sayings of the prophet. He also claimed that there was no authentic evidence that the hadith originated from the prophet.\(^{27}\)

Ignaz's sceptical assumptions consist of several arguments. Firstly, the Companions were the ones who forged the traditions. Secondly, there

\(^{24}\) Idri, Hadis dan Orientalis, 146
\(^{25}\) Ignaz Goldziher, Muslim Studies, terj. C.R. Barber dan S.M. Stern, Vol. 2
\(^{26}\) (since the sunna is the embodiment of the views and practices of the oldest Islamic community) Ignaz Goldziher, Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979 M), 38
\(^{27}\) Ignaz Goldziher, Muslim Studies, terj. C.R. Barber dan S.M. Stern, Vol. 2, 18
was coercion or intervention by the ruler on the scholars to fabricate the hadith. Thirdly, hadith forgery was part of the political machinations of the rulers of that era. These three arguments are the basis of Ignaz’s scepticism towards hadith. As evidence that the hadith is a political product of the second century of Islam, Ignaz cites a hadith narrated by al-Zuhri, 

Hadith narrated by Bukhari No. 1115 in the chapter on the virtue of praying in Makkah (Masjid al-Haram) and Madinah (Masjid Nabawi).
Goldziher has opened a new discourse in hadith research previously considered passive. His book became the primary reference in orientalist studies in several Western universities, which later gave birth to new orientalist figures such as Joseph Schacht, who adopted his skeptical view of hadith.

2. Joseph Schacht

Joseph Schacht is an orientalist of German Jewish descent. he studied Orientalism at the universities of Breslau and Leipzig in 1920, then in 1934 he taught at the University of Egypt (now the University of Cairo). He stated that “we shall not meet any legal tradition from the prophet which can not be considered authentic.” There are no valid traditions that are definitely from the Prophet Muhammad, so it is not appropriate to believe in their existence and even if they exist and can be proven, they are very few in number. then he criticised the sanad in the tradition of hadith transmission by assuming that:

“The isnad were often put together very carelessly, any typical representative, the group whose doctrine was to be projected back on to an ancient authority could be chosen at random and put into the island, where other consideration exclude the possibility of the transmission of a genuine old doctrine by several person.”

According to him, relying on a hadith narrator's narration is a random or haphazard reliance. What is meant is relying on hadiths from famous figures who lived previously to strengthen the legitimacy of hadith statements. From here, Schacht's criticism of the hadith only focuses on the isnad and its codification. This can be seen from the theory he put forward, namely the Projecting Back theory.

Projecting Back is the theory that the hadith are the sayings of people at the end of the first and

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32 Idri, Hadis dan Orientalis, 179
34 Joseph Schacht, The Origins Of Muhammadan Jurisprudence, 163
beginning of the second centuries of Hijri who then attributed their sayings to random authoritative people in the earlier period in order to legitimise them. In other words Schacht wants to claim that the hadith is the word of second century scholars who attributed it to the Companions and then to the Prophet.\(^{35}\)

Furthermore, Joseph Schacht stated that the primary books of hadith were not authentic, he explained:

“\textit{The classical corpus contains a large number of traditions that cannot be authentic. the practice of regular use of isnads dates back to the early second century}”\(^{36}\)

According to him, it is impossible to trust the authenticity of the hadith books (\textit{al-kutub al-sittah})\(^{37}\) of hadith. He also states that the sanad system was only perpetuated in the second century Hijri in accordance with the codification of hadith in the second century. Joseph Schacht’s study of hadith focused only on the study of the hadith's sanad and matan. He felt that they were not authentically from the prophet but were fabricated by second century scholars. Schacht’s argument persisted among orientalists and later inspired another orientalist, Gautier H.A. Juynboll.

3. Gautier H.A. Juynboll

Gautier H.A. Juynboll was an orientalist of noble Dutch descent born in Leiden, Netherlands. He studied orientalism at Leiden State University, where he conducted research on hadith studies in Egypt to complete his doctoral programme in 1969.\(^{38}\) His opinion on the hadith is not much different from Joseph Schacht's, who doubted the hadith by writing:

“I am skeptical as to whether we will ever be able to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that what we have in the way of sound prophetic traditions are indeed just what it purpose to be.”\(^{39}\)

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\(^{35}\) Idri, \textit{Hadis dan Orientalis}, p. 185

\(^{36}\) Joseph Schacht, \textit{The Origins Of Muhammadan Jurisprudence}, 37

\(^{37}\) The primary hadith books consist of Sahih Imam al-Bukhori, Sahih Imam Muslim, Sunan Abu Daud, Sunan at-Tirmizi, Sunan an-Nasa’I, Sunan Ibn Majah.

\(^{38}\) Idri, \textit{Hadis dan Orientalis}, 199

Juynboll also adopted Schact's argument that he did not believe that the existing hadiths were sourced from the Prophet, and he also accused the last transmitter, "Common link," of being the first to forge the hadiths.  

The common link as described by Juynboll is a hadith narrator who heard a hadith from an authoritative person and then transmitted it to some of his disciples and then his disciples transmitted it to other disciples. The common link is a narrator who is usually one person and then transmits the hadith to many people and this common link is usually found at the level of the tabiin and tabi’ at-tabiin. Then there is the term single strand, which refers to a hadith with a single transmitter from the beginning to the Prophet.

Juynboll stated that it is impossible to justify the authenticity of single-strand hadiths because according to him hadiths with multiple sanads are more reliable.

Islamic Scholars' Critique of Orientalist Arguments

1. The problem with Ignaz Goldziher's concept of Hadith

In summary, Ignaz Goldziher's statement presents three problems. First, the problem of understanding the concept of hadith by Ignaz Golziher as a construct of the development of spirituality, history and socio-politics of the Islamic society that only existed in the second century of Hijri. This opinion received a lot of criticism from Muslim scholars, including Musthafa as Siba'iy, 'Ajaj al Khatib, and M. Musthafa al Azhami. According to them, Golziher's opinion is weak in terms of methodology and historical truth.
In linguistic terms, sunnah and hadith have different meanings. Sunnah is a way and hadith is a narration.\(^\text{46}\) However, in terminology, sunnah and hadith have the same meaning, which is everything that is attributed to the prophet in the form of qaul, fi’il, and taqrir, it is also one part of the revelation of God revealed to the Prophet.\(^\text{47}\) This refutes Gholziher's interpretation of the hadith, as his error stems from his misunderstanding of the hadith narrated by al-Zuhri regarding the three mosques, which he considers to be the result of history and socio-political constructs in Islam.

**Second,** Ignaz Golziher's problem that the narrators tended to narrate only orally rather than in writing. This is in line with his failure to find earlier manuscripts that narrate hadith in writing.\(^\text{48}\) This statement has been criticised by many Muslim scholars such as Muhammad Hamidallah who discovered the Shahifah of Hammam Ibn Munabbih (40-131/132 AH) in the mid-20th century as evidence that hadith transmission was not only by memorising or oral methods but also by writing. The tradition of writing hadiths was used as a means of confirming the authenticity of hadiths.\(^\text{49}\) This is in line with Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's narration from Amr bin Umayyah where there was a discussion between Umayyah and Abu Hurayrah regarding the authenticity of the hadith he narrated.\(^\text{50}\)

**Third,** Golziher's problem is that the hadith is an interpretation of socio-political conditions in the first century. According to him, the hadith critic scholars are not fair in assessing hadith because they use the sanad criticism approach rather than the matn criticism. He accused al-Zuhri of being a cleric who falsified hadiths for the political interests of

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\(^{46}\) Subhi As-Shalih, *ulumul hadis wa mustahalhatuhu* (Lebanon, darul ilmi lil malayin, 2009), 3-6

\(^{47}\) Muhammad bin Mutir Azzahranri, *tadwinu as-sunnah an-nabawiyyah nasy’atu hu wa tathawwuruhu* (Riyad, Maktabah darul Minhaj, 1426 H), 19


\(^{49}\) Ugi Suharto, *peranan tulisan dalam periwayatan hadis* (Islamia, THN I NO 2/JUNI-AGUSTUS 2004)

\(^{50}\) Ibnu Abd al-Barr, *Jami’ Bayan al-ilm*, 1:74
the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik in order to maintain his credibility as a ruler.\(^{51}\)

This statement was criticised by Mustafa Al-siba'i, who then presented several arguments. Firstly, authoritative historical experts such as Ibn Asakir, al-Tabari agreed that the one who built \textit{Qubbah al-Sakhrah} was Al-Walid bin Abd al-Malik not Abd al-Malik. Secondly, it was not possible to build a mosque as a substitute for the \textit{Masjid al-Haram} in Makkah. Thirdly, in the history of Ibn Asakir said that al-Zuhri had not known Abd al-Malik at the time when Abdullah bin Zubair had electability in the area of Makkah and Madinah, the beginning of the meeting between al-Zuhri and Abd al-Malik in 80 AH long after the death of Abdullah bin Zubair.\(^{52}\)

Fourth, Golziher does not examine the sanad of the hadith that is the object of his study because the hadith narrated by al-Zuhri is narrated by many other narrators such as al-Bukhary narrates it from the line of Abu Sa'id al-Khudhry, Muslim narrates it from three lines one of which is from the line of al-Zuhry. Fifth, if the hadith is a political product of Abd al-Malik, why is there no description of the majesty of \textit{Qubbah al-Sakhrah}.\(^{53}\)

2. Problem Teori Projecting Back Joseph Schacht

The authenticity of the hadith in terms of its sanad and matan became the focus of Joseph Schacht's study. He claimed that hadith transmission as a random transmission route was constructed by the scholars of the second century Hijri, who only attributed their words to the scholars of the first century for legitimacy.\(^{54}\) This statement was Joseph Schacht's initial assumption in coming up with the theory of projecting back. This theory has several problems in the study of hadith transmission. First, the claim that \textit{isnad} in hadith only emerged in the second or late first century Hijri. This is a fallacy because the \textit{isnad}
method of conveying hadith had existed since the time of the Companions in order to be cautious in accepting hadith. Among the Companions who paid attention through in-depth research in this regard were al-Zubayr, Ibn Abbas and Abu Ubaidah.  

Second, Isnad is a random construct of second century scholars. This is a wrong statement, Mustafa Azami criticized this opinion, he explained that in a number of narrations many of the same sanad or matn are found but come from different sects, If they were written randomly, there would be no similarity between one sanad and another.  

Third, it is misunderstanding the difference between hadith writing and codification. In the history of Islam the writing of hadith has existed from the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the form of Sahifahs, some of which include the hadith records of Ali ibn Abi Talib, Samurah ibn Jundub, Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn As (as-Sahifah as-Sadiqah), Abd Allah ibn Abbas (alwah), Abd Allah al-Anshari (Sahifah Jabir).  

3. The Problem of Gautier's Common link Theory H. A. Juynboll  

In line with Golziher and Schacht, Juynboll also holds a sceptical view of the hadith, stating that the so-called common link narrators are the ones who fabricate and falsify the hadith, he assumes that if the hadith is authentic from the prophet then each level of scholars should have more than one narrator. There is a fundamental problem with the Common link theory developed by Juynboll, namely the Single strand problem. The problem of single strand or hadith is narrated by only one narrator. There are four criticisms from scholars of hadith and Muslims in general.  

First, the presence of the Prophet was only sometimes attended or witnessed by many people. Second, sometimes, the

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55 Muhammad Ajjaj al-Khatib, al-Sunnah qab\l\ al-Tadwin (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1971 M), 32  
56 Muhammad Mustafa A’zami, Naqd al-Hadis Ina\l\ al-Muhadditsin (Riyad: Maktabah Al-Imariyah, 1982), 237  
57 Idri, Hadis dan Orientalis, 194  
58 Juynboll, Muslim Tradition, 71
Prophet did an activity only found by a companion. Third, not infrequently, the Prophet sent a friend to the regions to convey the teachings of Islam. Fourth, sometimes, the envoys from the regional areas only numbered one person to learn Islam from the Prophet.  

At least five categories under which ahad traditions can be accepted directly. Firstly, the hadith narrator is fair. Secondly, intense memorization. Third, the sanad is unbroken. Fourth, there is no ‘illat (defect). Fifth, it is not awkward.  

Conclusion  
The early generation of Orientalist studies in the era of Western skepticism towards hadith had a skeptical ideological line in viewing hadith. This can be seen from the Orientalist study of hadith, which placed hadith only as a news narrative that developed in the second century of Hijri and was a socio-political formation of Islamic society.  

The incomprehension of the orientalists in understanding hadith brought this school of thought to the Islamic world, which began to question the authenticity of hadith, which became a significant problem in the Islamic world. The problem received a response from many Muslim scholars such as Musthofa as Siba’iyy, ’Ajaj al-Khatib, and M. Musthofa al Azhami, who criticized and refuted the orientalists' arguments.  

Goldziher's argument is weak in terms of methodological and historical veracity. Furthermore, in Islam's history hadith writing dates back to the time of the Prophet in the form of sahifah.  

Also, some Ahad Hadith can be accepted as a legal basis because they have authenticity in terms of sanad that are connected to the Prophet and matan that are not defective.  

Suggestions  
Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be made to continue to defend hadith
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from the criticism of Orientalists. Among them:

First, a proper understanding of the authenticity of the hadith. This is the first thing that must be done to position oneself as a defender of the hadith. This understanding is gained through the review of the Turats and the works of scholars.

Second, critical reading of the works of orientalists. Critical reading of books by orientalists in explaining hadith is essential because this is a step of academic rigor in accepting Western arguments.

Third, an understanding of the asbab al-wurud of the hadith. This relates to the history and context of the hadith, which cannot necessarily be politicized in an attempt to reduce their authenticity.

This research presents a novelty in orientalist studies. It focuses on the early generation of Orientalist criticism with the tendency of Western scepticism. This is a style of criticism that will continue to exist until the end of time because the West, with its civilization, will continue to try to destroy Islam with the sceptical mindset toward its beliefs. This study restates the authenticity of the Prophet's hadith as the second source of Islamic epistemology.

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