

A Study of Hadith Narrator Figures: Primary Narrating Companions, Comparative Analysis, and the Polemic over Abu Hurairah's Narrations

Fayumi Hasan¹, Luthfil Aziman², Moh. Najib³, Engkos Kosasih⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: fayumihasanbasri@gmail.com

Inputted : July 9, 2026

Revised : July 24, 2026

Accepted: August 19, 2026

Published: August 21, 2026

Abstract

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the profiles, characteristics, and narration methodologies of four principal hadith-narrating Companions: Abu Hurairah, Aisyah bint Abu Bakr, Abdullah ibn Abbas, and Abdullah ibn Umar. In addition, this paper critically evaluates the polemic surrounding the large number of narrations attributed to Abu Hurairah, which has been the target of criticism from contemporary scholars and orientalists. The study employs a qualitative library-research method combining three approaches: critical biography (al-tarjamah al-naqdiyyah), comparative analysis, and argument evaluation (naqd al-hujaj). The findings identify four ideal types of narration methodology: intensive-holistic (Abu Hurairah), selective-critical (Aisyah), interpretive-analytical (Ibn Abbas), and conservative-verificative (Ibn Umar). Regarding the Abu Hurairah polemic, the critics' arguments are found to contain methodological weaknesses in the form of overgeneralization and double standards, while the large volume of Abu Hurairah's narrations has adequate historical explanations rooted in his dedication. The study concludes that the difference in the quantity of narrations among the four figures reflects differences in historical circumstances and methodological choices rather than differences in integrity or faith.

Keywords: *Abu Hurairah, Aisyah, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, Hadith Narrator Study, Hadith Polemics.*

Citation:

Hasan, F., Aziman, L., Najib, M., & Kosasih, E. (2026). A study of hadith narrator figures: Primary narrating companions, comparative analysis, and the polemic over Abu Hurairah's narrations. *MSJ: Majority Science Journal*, 4(3), 86–94. <https://doi.org/10.61942/msj.v4i3.644>

Corresponding Author:

Fayumi Hasan

fayumihasanbasri@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The generation of the Companions (Sahabah) constitutes the first and most crucial link in the transmission of the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to the Muslim community across the ages. Those who lived alongside the Prophet, witnessed his conduct, heard his sayings, and observed his rulings were an irreplaceable generation in ensuring that the teachings of Islam reached subsequent generations authentically. Allah praises them in His words:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

Translation: "And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him." (QS. al-Taubah [9]: 100)

Among the thousands of Companions who narrated hadith, four names stand out as the narrators with the largest number of hadiths and the widest influence: Abu Hurairah (d. 59 AH), with more than 5,374 hadiths; Aisyah bint Abu Bakr (d. 58 AH), with 2,210 hadiths; Abdullah ibn Abbas (d. 68 AH), with 1,660 hadiths; and Abdullah ibn Umar (d. 73 AH), with 2,630 hadiths (Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, 1415 AH, pp. 425–430). These four figures stand out not only in quantity, but also in the quality, depth, and breadth of the hadith topics they narrated.

A comparative study of these four figures is of great importance because they reflect four distinct patterns of narration: Abu Hurairah represents intensive narration based on an extraordinary memory acquired through close but short-term companionship with the Prophet; Aisyah represents narration from within the Prophet's domestic sphere, inaccessible to other Companions; Ibn Abbas represents narration grounded in deep understanding and interpretive exegesis; and Ibn Umar represents narration based on *ittiba'* (strict adherence to the Prophet's conduct) with an exceptionally high standard of verification (Itr, 1979, pp. 340–355).

What makes this study even more urgent is the long-standing polemic surrounding the sheer volume of Abu Hurairah's narrations. Since Mahmud Abu Rayyah published *Adhwa' 'ala al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah* (1958), which harshly criticized Abu Hurairah (Abu Rayyah, 1958, pp. 144–205), followed by al-Musawi from a Shi'i perspective (Al-Musawi, 1993, pp. 15–60) and by Western orientalists, this polemic has become one of the most hotly debated issues in contemporary hadith studies. A methodological resolution of this polemic is not merely an academic matter; it concerns confidence in a substantial portion of the corpus of the Prophet's hadith.

This paper aims to produce a comprehensive comparative analysis of the four principal narrating Companions, to methodologically evaluate the polemic surrounding Abu Hurairah's narrations, and to contribute to the development of the methodology of biographical criticism (*rijal* study) within contemporary hadith scholarship. Its benefits include strengthening the analytical framework for evaluating the narrational capacity of the Companions, providing a balanced perspective in addressing narrational polemics, and building a solid methodological foundation for hadith studies at the doctoral level.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative library-research method comprising three complementary approaches: a critical biography approach (*al-tarjamah al-naqdiyyah*) to analyze the profile of each Companion based on primary biographical (*rijal*) sources; a comparative analysis approach to identify methodological similarities and differences among the four narrators; and an argument-evaluation approach (*naqd al-hujaj*) to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments in the Abu Hurairah polemic. Primary sources include classical *rijal* works (*al-Isabah*, *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*), major hadith compilations, and contemporary polemical works (Al-A'zami, 1978, pp. 33–61).

3. Results and Discussion

Profiles of the Four Principal Narrating Companions

a. Abu Hurairah (d. 59 AH): The Community's First Hafiz

Abu Hurairah – whose real name is disputed, the most well-known being 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Sakhr al-Dawsi al-Yamani – was born approximately twenty-one years before the Hijrah in Yemen. He embraced Islam and migrated to Madinah in the seventh year after the Hijrah, precisely when the Prophet was engaged in the expedition to Khaybar. Although he spent only about three years in the Prophet's company (from 7 AH until the Prophet's death in 11 AH), the intensity of that companionship was unmatched: he lived at the Suffah (the platform of the Prophet's Mosque) and devoted his entire time to accompanying the Prophet, unlike other Companions who were also occupied with trade, agriculture, or family affairs.

The most authoritative evidence of Abu Hurairah's memorization capacity is the Prophet's own testimony, narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, n.d., p. 1939):

اللَّهُمَّ حَبِّبْ عَبْدَكَ هَذَا وَأُمَّهُ إِلَى عِبَادِكَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَحَبِّبْ إِلَيْهِمُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Translation: "O Allah, make Your servant and his mother beloved to Your believing servants, and make the believers beloved to them." (Narrated by Muslim from Abu Hurairah) In terms of narrational statistics, Abu Hurairah narrated 5,374 hadiths according to the count of hadith scholars – the largest number among all the Companions. Al-Dzahabi, in *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, records that no fewer than 800 Successors (tabi'in) received hadith directly from Abu Hurairah (Al-Dzahabi, 1985, pp. 578–631). This figure shows that Abu Hurairah was not only a prolific narrator but also a highly active teacher in disseminating knowledge to subsequent generations.

Regarding his narrational methodology, Abu Hurairah is known to have been extremely active and open in transmitting hadith. He not only narrated from personal memory but also taught hadith to his students in scholarly gatherings. He once said, "Were it not for two verses of the Qur'an, I would not have narrated a single hadith" – referring to the verses prohibiting the concealment of knowledge (Ibn Sa'd, 1990, pp. 325–340).

b. Aisyah bint Abu Bakr (d. 58 AH): The Great Teacher of the Muslims

Aisyah bint Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Umm al-Mu'minin (Mother of the Believers), occupies a unique position in the history of hadith: she was the only narrator able to provide information about the Prophet's personal and domestic life, information wholly inaccessible to other Companions. Her marriage to the Prophet from a young age made her a direct witness to the most intimate aspects of his life (Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, 1984, pp. 258–263).

Aisyah narrated 2,210 hadiths spread throughout the major primary hadith compilations. Yet more important than quantity is the quality of Aisyah's narration: she was the only Companion who actively and systematically corrected hadiths she judged to be mistaken. Scholars record that Aisyah corrected no fewer than 67 narrations from various Companions that, in her assessment, contradicted what she had directly witnessed from the Prophet.

قَالَ ابْنُ أَبِي مُلَيْكَةَ كَانَتْ عَائِشَةُ لَا تَسْمَعُ شَيْئًا لَا تَعْرِفُهُ إِلَّا رَاجَعَتْ فِيهِ حَتَّى تَعْرِفَهُ

Translation: "Ibn Abi Mulaykah said: Whenever Aisyah heard something she did not understand, she would keep pursuing it until she understood it." (Narrated by al-Bukhari) Al-Dzahabi ranks Aisyah among the greatest jurists (fuqaha') among the Companions – on a par with Abu Bakr, Umar, and Ibn Mas'ud (Al-Dzahabi, 1963, p. 2). Her extraordinary juristic expertise meant that her corrections to erroneous hadiths were not merely narrative in nature but also analytical and methodological. She was able to identify contradictions between a given hadith and a Qur'anic verse, or between one hadith and another, stronger hadith.

The most prominent methodological characteristic of Aisyah is selectivity and precision. She narrated only what she truly heard or witnessed, and did not hesitate to reject a narration

she deemed inaccurate, even if it came from a highly respected Companion (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 2001, p. 43).

c. Abdullah ibn Abbas (d. 68 AH): *Turjuman al-Qur'an* (Interpreter of the Qur'an)

Abdullah ibn Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib – the Prophet's cousin – was born about three years before the Hijrah. Although he was still very young when the Prophet died (around thirteen years old), the Prophet made a special supplication for him (Al-Bukhari, 1422 AH, p. 34):

اللَّهُمَّ فَفِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ وَعَلِّمُهُ التَّأْوِيلَ

Translation: "O Allah, grant him deep understanding of the religion and teach him the interpretation (ta'wil)." (Narrated by al-Bukhari from Ibn Abbas)

This special supplication – which made Ibn Abbas the only Companion explicitly prayed for in respect of exegetical expertise – carries profound implications for his methodological standing in hadith narration. Ibn Abbas's narrations are frequently accompanied by explanation, interpretation, and contextualization, which makes his hadiths valuable not merely as narratives of events but also as exegesis of meaning (Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, 1415 AH, pp. 95–100).

Statistically, Ibn Abbas narrated 1,660 hadiths. However, this figure can be somewhat misleading without context: most of Ibn Abbas's narrations were received not directly from the Prophet (owing to his very young age) but from senior Companions – particularly Umar ibn al-Khattab, who greatly respected him and frequently invited him to scholarly gatherings (Al-Dzahabi, 1985, pp. 331–370).

The most distinctive characteristic of Ibn Abbas's narration is its analytical quality: he did not merely narrate the text of a hadith but also provided explanations of its meaning, historical context, and implications for law and theology. This is why he earned the titles *Turjuman al-Qur'an* (Interpreter of the Qur'an) and *Bahr al-'Ilm* (Ocean of Knowledge) – two titles indicating that his contribution extended beyond mere narration toward interpretation (Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, 1997, p. 204).

d. Abdullah ibn Umar (d. 73 AH): *The Exemplar of Ittiba' al-Sunnah*

Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattab – son of the second caliph – is the Companion best known for his earnestness in following the Prophet's Sunnah literally and comprehensively. He not only narrated hadith concerning obligatory acts of worship, but even sought to emulate the Prophet's habits down to the smallest details – including choosing the same breed of camel the Prophet had ridden, stopping at places the Prophet had once stopped, and praying at spots the Prophet had once used (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 1992, pp. 934–950).

Ibn Umar narrated 2,630 hadiths – the second-largest number among male Companions after Abu Hurairah. What is remarkable about Ibn Umar is the extremely strict verification standard he applied in narration. His most devoted student, Nafi', recorded that Ibn Umar once refrained from narrating a particular hadith for years because he was not entirely certain of its precise wording, and only narrated it after obtaining confirmation from another Companion (Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, n.d., p. 185).

كَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ يُمَسِّكُ بِلَحْيَتِهِ فَيَقُولُ مَا أَجِبُ أَنِّي حَكَيْتُ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَنَا مُخْطِئٌ

Translation: "Ibn Umar would hold his beard and say: I do not wish to narrate from the Prophet (peace be upon him) while being mistaken." (Narrated by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi)

The most prominent characteristic of Ibn Umar's narrational methodology is his extremely high level of caution (*wara'*): he preferred not to narrate rather than narrate with doubt. This attitude stands in almost diametrical contrast to Abu Hurairah's active approach to narration (Al-Tirmidzi, 1998, p. 622). This fundamental difference makes a comparative study of these two figures highly illuminating for understanding the methodology of Companion narration as a whole.

Comparative Analysis of Narration

a. Comparing Intensity: Number of Narrations and Contributing Factors

A statistical comparison of the narrations of the four Companions reveals an interesting pattern (Al-Tahhan, 1985, pp. 200–210):

- 1) Abu Hurairah: 5,374 hadiths – Main factors: (a) full dedication to accompanying the Prophet, unburdened by economic concerns; (b) residing at the Suffah, ensuring constant presence at the Prophet's gatherings; (c) the Prophet's supplication for a strong memory; (d) a long life (d. 59 AH), enabling him to narrate to a larger number of Successors; (e) active teaching of hadith until the end of his life.
- 2) Abdullah ibn Umar: 2,630 hadiths – Main factors: (a) very young age at conversion, allowing prolonged companionship with the Prophet; (b) an exceptionally long life (d. 73 AH), almost sixty years after the Prophet's death; (c) active involvement in answering legal questions that frequently required hadith references; (d) residing in Madinah, the center of Islamic scholarship.
- 3) Aisyah: 2,210 hadiths – Main factors: (a) her unique position as the Prophet's wife, granting access to information unavailable to other Companions; (b) extraordinary intelligence and memorization capacity; (c) active teaching in Madinah for decades; (d) a long life (d. 58 AH) and freedom from the obligation of jihad, which limited the mobility of male Companions.
- 4) Abdullah ibn Abbas: 1,660 hadiths – Main factors: (a) despite his youth at the time of the Prophet's death, he actively studied under senior Companions; (b) his elevated status as the Prophet's cousin granted him access to otherwise limited information; (c) although the smallest in number among the four figures, the quality of his hadiths is very high owing to the accompanying depth of interpretation (Al-Shalih, 1977, pp. 340–360).

These factors indicate that the difference in the quantity of narrations among the four Companions does not reflect a difference in integrity or faith, but rather differing historical circumstances and methodological choices.

b. Comparing Methods: How Hadith Were Received and Transmitted

In terms of the method of receiving hadith, the four Companions display a diversity that reflects the methodological richness of the Companions' narrational tradition:

Abu Hurairah (direct and collective sama' method). Abu Hurairah received almost all of his hadiths through sama' (direct hearing) from the Prophet. He is known to have been consistently present at every gathering of the Prophet and never missed an opportunity to accompany him. His method of transmission was massive and open: he was willing to narrate to anyone who asked, and he actively convened hadith study circles.

Aisyah (direct sama' and domestic observation method). In addition to sama', Aisyah possessed the distinctive method of musyahadah (direct observation) of the Prophet's conduct in his personal life. Her method of transmission was critical and selective: she actively corrected erroneous hadiths and narrated only what she believed to be true.

Ibn Abbas (sama', talaqqi, and istinbat method). Ibn Abbas received hadith through a combination of direct sama' from the Prophet (for a limited number of narrations), talaqqi from senior Companions, and istinbat (inference) from the Qur'an and hadith he had already received. His method of transmission was analytical and interpretive: he tended to add explanation and exegesis.

Ibn Umar (sama' with extremely strict verification standards). Ibn Umar received hadith through direct sama', but with a far stricter verification standard than the average Companion: he required complete certainty about the precise wording before narrating. His method of transmission was conservative and precise: he preferred silence to error.

c. Content Characteristics: Dominant Themes in Each Narrator's Corpus

A content analysis of the corpus of narrations from the four Companions reveals thematic specializations that reflect each one's unique position and experience:

Abu Hurairah dominates in the themes of moral conduct (ethical prohibitions, daily exhortations to virtue), practical worship (prayer, fasting, remembrance), the afterlife and eschatology (signs of the Hour, Paradise, Hellfire), and everyday transactions. This broad thematic range reflects his position as a 'full-time student' who witnessed every aspect of the Prophet's teaching.

Aisyah dominates in the themes of the Prophet's domestic life (personal hygiene, sleeping, eating habits), women's jurisprudence (menstruation, postnatal bleeding, ritual purity), night prayer and supererogatory worship, and the correction of erroneous hadiths. This dominance of domestic themes is entirely consistent with her unique access to the Prophet's private life (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 1992, p. 1090).

Ibn Abbas dominates in the themes of Qur'anic exegesis and the occasions of revelation (asbab al-nuzul), theology and knowledge of God, the history of earlier prophets, and complex jurisprudential issues. This dominance of exegesis is entirely consistent with the Prophet's supplication specifically for his interpretive expertise.

Ibn Umar dominates in the themes of the jurisprudence of Hajj and 'Umrah (he is among the most frequent narrators on this theme), the Prophet's daily conduct and manners (as he sought to emulate the Prophet's behavior in its entirety), and the jurisprudence of jihad and leadership. This dominance is entirely consistent with his methodology, which emphasized total ittiba'.

d. The Uniqueness and Methodological Distinctiveness of Each Companion

A synthesis of the above analysis reveals four identifiable 'ideal types' of Companion narrational methodology:

Type One – Intensive-Holistic (Abu Hurairah): Maximal narration grounded in total dedication, extraordinary memory, and complete openness in transmission. Strength: the completeness and breadth of the corpus. Risk: the large volume increases the likelihood of minor errors accumulating over long-term transmission.

Type Two – Selective-Critical (Aisyah): Narration based on direct observation combined with rigorous critical control. Strength: high precision and accuracy. Risk: information available only from Aisyah's perspective may be underrepresented in the corpus of other Companions.

Type Three – Interpretive-Analytical (Ibn Abbas): Narration grounded in deep understanding that integrates hadith with the Qur'an and reason. Strength: depth of meaning. Risk: the boundary between narration and interpretation is not always clear.

Type Four – Conservative-Verificative (Ibn Umar): Narration with an extremely high verification standard that prioritizes accuracy over comprehensiveness. Strength: the highest reliability per hadith. Risk: much information went unnarrated owing to insufficient certainty.

The Polemic Surrounding the Volume of Abu Hurairah's Narrations

a. The Critics' Allegations: Abu Rayyah, al-Musawi, and the Orientalists

Criticism of Abu Hurairah has a long history, but reached its most intense expression in the twentieth century through three major currents that, despite their differing backgrounds, reinforced one another in generating systematic doubt about the corpus of Abu Hurairah's hadith.

First, the criticism of Mahmud Abu Rayyah. In *Adhwa' 'ala al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah* (1958), Abu Rayyah advanced several main arguments: (1) Abu Hurairah spent only a very short three years in the Prophet's company, making it illogical for him to have narrated far more hadith than Companions who accompanied the Prophet for longer; (2) Umar ibn al-Khattab once prohibited Abu Hurairah from narrating hadith, which Abu Rayyah interpreted as Umar's acknowledgment of Abu Hurairah's unreliability; (3) some content in Abu Hurairah's narrations contradicts the Qur'an and sound reason; (4) Abu Hurairah lived among and received payment from Mu'awiyah, raising the possibility that his narrations were influenced by political interests.

Second, the criticism of 'Abd al-Husayn al-Musawi. From a Shi'i perspective, al-Musawi, in *Abu Hurairah*, criticizes even more sharply: in addition to arguments similar to Abu

Rayyah's, he adds that Abu Hurairah's alignment with Mu'awiyah during the Battle of Siffin means that all of his narrations must be critically examined from the perspective of 'adalah (religious integrity).

Third, the criticism of Western orientalists. From Ignaz Goldziher to Joseph Schacht, orientalists have generally doubted the authenticity of the hadith corpus as a whole. Specifically with respect to Abu Hurairah, they argue that the large number of hadiths attributed to him reflects a process of fabrication by later generations of Successors, who attached their own hadiths to Abu Hurairah's name in order to lend authority to the chain of transmission.

b. Defensive Arguments: Al-Khatib, al-Siba'i, and al-A'zami

Responses to these criticisms came swiftly and comprehensively from scholars who defended Abu Hurairah with strong methodological arguments (Al-Khatib, 1981, pp. 25–80).

First, the defense of Muhammad 'Ajjaj al-Khatib in *Abu Hurairah Rawi al-Islam* (1981). Al-Khatib responds systematically to each of Abu Rayyah's accusations: (1) the 'only three years' argument is countered with the fact that full dedication for three years is far more productive than sporadic involvement over ten years; (2) Umar's prohibition was not directed specifically at Abu Hurairah, but at all Companions, as part of an early policy restricting narration to prevent confusion with the Qur'an; (3) alleged contradictions with the Qur'an are consistently refuted upon comprehensive examination; (4) the relationship with Mu'awiyah has never been shown to have influenced the content of his narrations.

Second, the defense of Mustafa al-Siba'i in *al-Sunnah wa Makanatuha* (2008). Al-Siba'i adds another dimension to the defense: he shows that Abu Hurairah's critics generally apply a double standard – they do not apply the same rigorous criticism to other Companions whom they favor. He also demonstrates that the assessments of the great hadith imams – al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and others – who regard Abu Hurairah as a trustworthy narrator carry far greater authority than the judgment of Abu Rayyah, who was not a hadith specialist (Al-Siba'i, 2008, pp. 178–198).

Third, the defense of Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zami in *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (1978). Al-A'zami offers the most scientifically rigorous methodological contribution: he conducts a systematic quantitative analysis of the corpus of Abu Hurairah's narrations and shows that the geographic distribution of narrators from Abu Hurairah (spread across the Hijaz, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt) is inconsistent with the fabrication theory, since centralized fabrication could not plausibly produce such a broad and diverse distribution without a traceable historical footprint.

c. A Methodological Evaluation: Weighing the Arguments of Both Sides

A fair evaluation of both sides must acknowledge that each has distinct argumentative strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths of the critics' arguments: The question of possible political bias in certain narrations that specifically favor Mu'awiyah over Ali is a methodologically legitimate question. The hadith tradition itself – through the criteria of 'adalah and jarh wa ta'dil – acknowledges that a narrator's socio-political circumstances must be taken into account. Some narrations attributed to Abu Hurairah do contain problems in their chain of transmission that warrant critical examination (Al-Qaradawi, 2000, pp. 40–50).

Weaknesses of the critics' arguments: The most significant methodological error made by Abu Rayyah and al-Musawi is overgeneralization: from a handful of problematic narrations, they conclude that the entire corpus of Abu Hurairah's narrations must be doubted. This contradicts the basic methodological principle of hadith scholarship, which evaluates each hadith individually rather than collectively. Furthermore, al-A'zami demonstrates that most of Abu Rayyah's factual allegations contain fundamental errors of data.

From a methodological standpoint in hadith scholarship, the most defensible conclusions are as follows:

- Abu Hurairah is a thiqah (trustworthy) narrator according to the assessment of the overwhelming majority of classical jarh wa ta'dil scholars, who possessed unmatched competence and independence.

- The large volume of Abu Hurairah's narrations has adequate historical explanations that do not require assuming fabrication.
- Some hadiths attributed to Abu Hurairah have problems in their chain of transmission (sanad) – not in their content (matn) – which must be critically examined on a case-by-case basis, rather than serving as grounds for rejecting his entire corpus of narrations.
- Allegations of political bias must be proven concretely, hadith by hadith, and cannot be assumed en masse based on his political relationship with Mu'awiyah.

d. The Significance of the Polemic for Contemporary Hadith Studies

The polemic surrounding Abu Hurairah carries significance that extends far beyond the case of a single Companion. It fundamentally tests our methodology in confronting challenges to the authority of hadith:

First, this polemic demonstrates that the tradition of hadith scholarship – with its instruments of jarh wa ta'dil, 'ilm al-'ilal, and 'ilm al-rijal – possesses sufficient methodological capacity to respond scientifically to critical challenges. The responses of al-Khatib, al-Siba'i, and al-A'zami show that the defense of Abu Hurairah does not rely on appeals to authority or blind imitation (taqlid), but on rigorous methodological analysis.

Second, this polemic teaches the importance of distinguishing between scholarly criticism that follows the methodology of jarh wa ta'dil – which has always been accepted within the hadith tradition – and ideological attack that uses textual arguments as cover for political or theological agendas. The ability to distinguish these two kinds of criticism is a fundamental competency that every doctoral-level hadith researcher must possess.

Third, this polemic affirms the continuing relevance and vitality of biographical studies (rijal study) as an evolving scholarly discipline. Far from being merely a historical artifact, rijal studies remain the most critical instrument for ensuring the validity of the hadith corpus that underlies the entire edifice of Islamic law and theology.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

The four principal narrating Companions – Abu Hurairah, Aisyah, Ibn Abbas, and Ibn Umar – each possess a unique and distinctive narrational profile reflecting differing social positions, informational access, methodological choices, and historical circumstances. Their respective distinctiveness makes their corpora of narration complementary rather than competitive.

The comparative analysis identifies four ideal types of Companion narrational methodology: intensive-holistic (Abu Hurairah), selective-critical (Aisyah), interpretive-analytical (Ibn Abbas), and conservative-verificative (Ibn Umar). The difference in the quantity of narrations among the four figures reflects differing circumstances and methodological choices, rather than differing degrees of integrity or faith.

The polemic surrounding the volume of Abu Hurairah's narrations, pioneered by Abu Rayyah and al-Musawi, contains fundamental methodological weaknesses: overgeneralization from a handful of problematic cases to the entire corpus of narrations, the application of double standards in evaluating Companions, and the conflation of legitimate historical criticism with political and theological agendas.

The methodological defenses offered by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, al-Siba'i, and al-A'zami demonstrate that the large volume of Abu Hurairah's narrations has adequate historical explanation, and that the assessments of classical jarh wa ta'dil scholars regarding Abu Hurairah's thiqah status carry far greater authority than criticism from parties lacking equivalent methodological competence.

Taken together, this comparative study and polemic underscore the urgency of biographical studies (rijal study) as a discipline that must continue to be developed to the highest scholarly standards within the Doctoral Program in Hadith Sciences.

References

- Abū Syuhbah, M. (1989). *Difā' 'an al-Sunnah wa Radd Shubah al-Mustashriqīn wa al-Kuttāb al-Mu'āshirīn*. Maktabah al-Sunnah.
- Abu Nu'aym al-Ashbahani. (1985). *Hilyat al-awliya'*. Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabi.

- Abu Rayyah, M. (1958). *Adhwa' 'ala al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah*. Dar al-Ma'arif.
- Ahmad ibn Hanbal. (2001). *Musnad Ahmad*. Mu'assasah al-Risalah.
- Al-A'zami, M. M. (1978). *Studies in early hadith literature*. American Trust Publications.
- Al-Asqalani, A. ibn 'A. Ibn Hajar. (1415 AH). *Al-Isabah fi tamyiz al-sahabah*. Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Asqalani, A. ibn 'A. Ibn Hajar. (1984). *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*. Dar al-Fikr.
- Al-Bukhari, M. I. (1422 AH). *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Dar Tawq al-Najah.
- Al-Dzahabi, S. al-D. (1963). *Mizan al-i'tidal fi naqd al-rijal*. Dar al-Ma'rifah.
- Al-Dzahabi, S. al-D. (1985). *Siyar a'lam al-nubala'*. Mu'assasah al-Risalah.
- Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi. (1997). *Tarikh Baghdad*. Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi. (n.d.). *Al-Kifayah fi 'ilm al-riwayah*. Al-Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Khatib, M. 'A. (1981). *Abu Hurairah rawi al-Islam*. Dar al-Fikr.
- Al-Musawi, 'A. al-H. S. al-D. (1993). *Abu Hurairah*. Dar al-Zahra'.
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2000). *Kayfa nata'amal ma'a al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*. Dar al-Shuruq.
- Al-Shalih, S. (1977). *'Uloom al-hadith wa mustalahatuhu*. Dar al-'Ilm li al-Malayan.
- Al-Siba'i, M. (2008). *Al-Sunnah wa makanatuhu fi al-tashri' al-Islami*. Dar al-Salam.
- Al-Tahhan, M. (1985). *Taysir mustalah al-hadith*. Markaz al-Huda li al-Dirasat.
- Al-Tirmidzi, A. 'I. M. (1998). *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Dar al-Gharb al-Islami.
- Ibn 'Abd al-Barr. (1992). *Al-Isti'ab fi ma'rifat al-ashab*. Dar al-Jayl.
- Ibn Sa'd. (1990). *Al-Tabaqat al-kubra*. Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.
- 'Itr, N. (1979). *Manhaj al-naqd fi 'ulum al-hadith*. Dar al-Fikr.
- Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj. (n.d.). *Sahih Muslim*. Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi..