



RECTIFYING THE UNDERSTANDING AGAINST THE CONCEPT OF 'ADALAH AL-SAHABAH

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Abstract

This research will attempt to rectify the concept of *'adalah al-sahabah*. There is some agreement among Islamic scholars, especially among the hadith reviewers, that all the Prophet's Companions were fair. An additional agreement arose from that agreement that it was not permissible to criticize the integrity and characters of the Prophet's Companions as hadith narrators. However, some Companions are presumed to have committed unsavory and inappropriate actions. So, defending this argument becomes problematic; even the Qur'an and Hadith describe some as hypocritical and wicked. This article aims to unravel this problem by rectifying the concept of *'adalah al-sahabah* and considering a historical approach in the 1st-9th H centuries related to the Companions' position as hadith transmission. Islamic scholars debate the concept of *'adalah al-sahabah*, and there are limitations to understanding a theoretical review of Companions. The study results revealed that not all people who lived during the time of the Prophet can be called the Prophet's Companions. If all of them were called companions and there was no strictness in categorizing the concept rigorously, it would cause polemics among Islamic scholars. The narrator in transmission hadith must be guaranteed fairness according to credibility and contradicting the essential concept of fairness (*'adalah*) or its companion (*al-sahabah*). Therefore, the notion of *'adalah al-sahabah* should not be seen in general but in a particular context of hadith transmission. However, constant discussion of historical facts is necessary. It opens up the possibility of new findings regarding the selection of authentic hadith narrators based on the concept of *'adalah al-sahabah*.

Keywords: : *'Adalah al-Sahabah, Fairness, Hadith Transmission, Hadith Narrators,*



Introduction

One of the essential aspects in the study of Hadith is the position of the Companions. The certainty of the role of the Companions is vital because they rank first in transmitting of the Prophet's Hadith (*sanad*). Some scholars say a rule of all companions was fair (*al-sahabah kulluhum 'udul*). It means that all hadiths narrated by Companions are authentic hadiths (*sahih*). Al-Ghazali noted that the rule that all Companions are fair is true and cannot be refuted. If information states that the Companions of the Prophet committed evil deeds (*fasiq*), then this information cannot be justified. Therefore, the Companion's fairness should not be doubted.¹ This view was also followed by most scholars who were classified as traditionalist scholars.²

This scholar's view is impressed with glorification because these tend to be ideological; however, when looking at the historical fact, some of the companions who lived during the time of the Prophet committed acts that did not follow Islamic ethics and morals. In other words, in the historical approach, the statement that every Companion of the Prophet never made a mistake cannot be justified based

¹ Al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustasfa fi al-'Ilmi al-Ushul* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993).

² Ibn Hajar al-Asqalany, *Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1978); Mahmud at-Thahhan, *Taisir Mustalah al-Hadis* (Beirut: Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, 1979); Abu 'Amar 'Utsman Ibn 'Abd Rahman ibn al-Salah, *Ulum al-Hadis* (Madinah: al-Maktabah al-Ilmiyah, 1972).

on historical evidence. According to Gottschalk,³ the historical method is considered scientific if it fulfills two conditions: the ability to determine facts that can be proven and the fact that it originates from an element obtained from the results of a critical examination of the historical document.

The companions' fairness is against the historical fact that some disobeyed the Prophet's teaching,⁴ such as some companions who tried to avoid and flee from the battlefield,⁵ be drunk,⁶ were more concerned with trading and games than worship or praying, were traitors to religion and even some of them declared or converted as Muslim for fear of swords.⁷ Some elite companions were also involved in the coup overthrow of Caliph Uthman⁸ or later Caliphs.

³ Louis Reichenthal Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).

⁴ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1983); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Madina* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

⁵ Ja'far Murtadha al-Amili, *Al-Sahih min Sirat al-Nabi al-A'zam* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islami li al-Dirasat, 1428 H).

⁶ Abu Bakar Ahmad al-Razi al-Jassas, *Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993); Fuad Jabali, *Sahabat Nabi: Siapa, Ke Mana, dan Bagaimana* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2010).

⁷ Mahmud Abu Rayyah, *Al-Adwa 'ala al-Sunnat al-Muhammadiyah III* (Makkah: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1994); al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1426).

⁸ Ibn Abu al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*

These showed that some companions were disobedient to the Qur'an and Hadith and contrary to the principles of righteousness established by hadith experts. However, the mainstream scholar still adheres to this legacy doctrine. That also means a cognitive dissonance in reading the history of companions.

Jabali wrote that there is a distance between doctrine and historical fact.⁹ Since initially, some of the companions have been full of black stains of deviation and red blood of war. Innocent lives were sacrificed for some companions' political interests. However, unfortunately, in general, hadith experts avoided this contradiction.

According to Amin, the question of how to reconcile some companions' deviance with the doctrine of fairness for companions stimulated a debate among Islamic scholars.¹⁰ Indeed, slander was accused among companions, such as some companions were kept from saying which was correct. Still, all of them led to the same problematic consequences: hanging decisions avoiding the label of heresy,¹¹ accusations of Shi'a scorning

(Beirut: Dar al-Jayl, 1987); 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naisaburi, *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d); Munawir Sjadzali, *Islam and Governmental System* (Jakarta: INIS, 1991).

⁹ Jabali, *Sahabat Nabi*.

¹⁰ Kamaruddin Amin, *Menguji Kembali Keakuratan Metode Kritik Hadis* (Jakarta: Hikmah, 2009).

¹¹ Jabali, *Sahabat Nabi*.

companions, Islam's enemy that destroys Islam whose blood is lawful, and many other accusations aimed at those who differ from mainstream understanding.

Therefore, the study analyzes an objective understanding of the concept of '*adalah al-sahabah*' and attempts to deconstruct and redefine that concept regarding their position in Hadith transmission according to the historical evidence experienced by the Companions in the 1st-9th century H.

Rectifying the Understanding of the Concept of '*Adalah al-Sahabah*'

Hadith experts have widely discussed the concept of '*adalah al-sahabah*' (the fair Companion) from al-Bukhari to modern times. Of all these definitions, Jabali comprehensively collected the variant definitions of the concept.¹² He recorded and elaborated the definition from the time of 'Ali al-Madini (d. 234 H) to Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalany (d. 852 H), up to become a formal definition that was agreed upon, not only by Islamic scholars but also by Western scholars such as Etan Kohlberg and Miklos Muranyi.¹³

Jabali stated, "The Companion is anyone who has ever met the Prophet, was in a state of Islam, and died in a state of Islam, regardless of whether at the time

¹² Jabali.

¹³ Jabali.

of the meeting someone the person is of *baligh* age or has heard anything from him." Jabali admitted that this definition followed Ibn Hajar's view with a few modifications.¹⁴

Ibn Hajar defines a companion as "*man laqiya al-nabi mu'minan wa-mata' ala dhalik* (anyone who met the Prophet in a state of faith and died in that state)."¹⁵ Ibn Hajar emphasized the definition made by his predecessors, Ibn Hambal (d. 241 H) and al-Bukhari (d. 256 H), who defined a companion as "*man sahiba al-nabi aw ra'ahu* (anyone who accompanied the Prophet or saw him)"—this reported by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 463 H).¹⁶

Therefore, Ibn Hajar's definition includes anyone who was with the Prophet for a long time or not as a companion; anyone who narrated from him or not; anyone who participated in the war with him or not; anyone who has seen him even though he did not join his assembly, and anyone who cannot see him because he is blind.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Ibn Musayyab defined that a person who only briefly saw the Prophet was not considered a friend. Furthermore, his argument was

¹⁴ Jabali.

¹⁵ Al-Asqalany, *Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah*.

¹⁶ Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Tsabit al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Riwayah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1409 H).

¹⁷ Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, *Tadrib al-Rawi fi Sharh Taqrib al-Nawawi* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1427 H).

rejected by later generations because many Muslims only met the Prophet during the Pilgrimage, even though they were also classified as Companions who lived contemporaneously with the Prophet. Even Ibn Hajar also considered *jinns* to be the Prophet's Companions.

Al-Bukhari mentioned that a companion is a Muslim who is friendly with the Prophet or sees him (Muhammad). Thus, the definition does not represent a blind person such as Ibn Umm Maktum, but all Muslim scholars have agreed that he was a Prophet's friend. Ibn Musayyab had a slightly different opinion, noting that the Companion is a person who met and fought with the Prophet and lived contemporaneously with the Prophet for at least one year.

Meanwhile, al-Razi stated that the Companions are those who witness the revelation, know the interpretation and *ta'wil*, were chosen by Allah to be with the Prophet, help him uphold his religion, and reveal his truth. Allah accepts them as his companions and makes them role models and sources of knowledge. They memorize what the Prophet conveyed regarding what was sunnah, prescribed, applied as law, recommended, ordered, prohibited, warned, and taught by the Prophet. They guard it, believe in it, then understand it in religion and know Allah's commandments and prohibitions. They witnessed the interpretation of the Qur'an and its *ta'wil* from the

Prophet. They took from the Prophet and concluded him so that Allah also glorified them with His grace and exalted them in a noble position. Therefore, Allah removes from their doubts, lies, errors, mistakes, doubts, pride, and criticism. Allah refers to them as the most just people, guided priests to explain religious teaching, and role models in the practice of the Qur'an and al-Hadith.¹⁸

Al-Razi asserted that Companions played a more significant role after the Prophet died. They took over all functions of the Prophet except for receiving revelations. Companions must also be trusted if they are considered the only bridge to learn about Islam.¹⁹ Whatever can be proven from them must be regarded as truth. Al-Awzai even goes so far as to say that whatever comes from companions is knowledge, and whatever comes from other than them is not Islamic knowledge. Moreover, Said ibn Jubayr said that anything that the people who took part in the Badr war did not know was not religion.²⁰ Even al-Shafii emphasized that every *mujtahid* is prohibited from unthinkingly following other people's opinions (*taqlid*), but he is allowed to follow Companion's beliefs.²¹

¹⁸ Al-Razi, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil 1* (Hiderabad, Dekkan: Dairah al-Maarif al-Uthmaniyah, 1952).

¹⁹ Al-Razi.

²⁰ Ibn Abdul al-Barr, *Jami' Bayân al-'Ilm wa Fadlih II* (Riyadh: Dar ibn al-Jawzi, 1435 H).

²¹ Al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwâfaqât fî 'Usûl al-Sharî'ah II* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2004).

The Polemic of 'Adalah al-Sahabah

Islamic scholars carried out a stringent definition in the first century, such as Anas ibn Malik (d. 90 H), Sa'id ibn Musayyab (d. 100 H), Abu Thufail Amir ibn Wathilah (d. 100 H), and the *'ulama usul*, including the Mu'tazilites who are in line with the Shia. However, the loose definition was carried out in the 2nd-3rd to the 8th century H. Ali ibn al-Madiny (161-234 H), Ahmad ibn Hambal (164-264 H), Yahya ibn Uthman ibn Shaikh al-Mishri (d. 282 H), Ibn Hajar al-Asqalany (773-852 H), the generation after him paid less attention to that Companion definition.

Nevertheless, for the Mu'tazilites, not all Companions can be considered fair. At the same time, Sunnah or Hadith experts think all friends are fair (*sahābah kulluhum 'udul*). It means the Companion categorization is very loose. The contestation for the category continues and is still a polemic today, but it is not between Sunnah or Hadith experts and Mu'tazilites but between Shiites and Sunnis.

The principle of *sahābah kulluhum 'udul* was initiated by al-Khatib al-Bagh-dadi's *ijtihād* following the Qur'an and Hadith in the 4th century H. Then, Sunnah experts widely institutionalized the concept, so it seems to be a truth that could not be reclaimed. Since then, it has been used until the modern era. Consequently, the concept was imposed in assessing Companions as hadith narrators; the com-

panions were prioritized in hadith transmission among other narrators. Almost all scholars who study hadith, both Western and Islamic, have a stand on this crucial issue.²² They can be divided into two opposing main streams. *First* is the group of scholars who agree to accept the concept unanimously. Mainstream Islamic scholars such as Ajaj al-Khatib, Mustafa al-Siba'i, and Mustafa A'zami dominate this group. Most Indonesian Islamic scholars also include this mainstream. *Second*, the group disagrees with the concept. Goldziher, Schacht, and non-mainstream Islamic scholars Abu Rayyah, Ahmad Amin, and al-Mawdudi are in this group.²³

The different perspectives on the concept also lead to differences in each group's acceptance of the history transmitted by the Companion. The first group accepts without reserve everything that comes from a Companion. The doctrine built by this group is that Allah is true, the Prophet Muhammad is also true, and the Prophet's traditions have come through Companions whom Allah has chosen as the Prophet's mouthpieces for all humanity. It is a necessity that is certain to be embedded in this attribute, a tribute that God does

²² Abu Rayyah, *Al-Adwa 'ala al-Sunnat al-Muhammadiyah III*.

²³ Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought, Cambridge Middle East Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

not give to other creatures apart from the Prophets. Therefore, their integrity and character no longer need to be questioned.²⁴ Accordingly, in al-Suyuti's expression, without them, Islamic law stopped in the Prophet's time,²⁵ and without them, Muslims would never know anything about Islamic teachings.²⁶

To establish their principle, this group based on several of the Qur'an verses,²⁷ such as surah al-Taubah ([9]: 100), that (the Companions are) the former people who first converted to Islam from among the *Muhajirien* and Ansar and those who them well, Allah is pleased (*ridha*) with them, and they are pleased with Allah; surah Ali Imran ([3]: 110), that they are the best *ummah*; and surah al-Fath ([48]: 18 and 29), that they are believers who pledge allegiance to the prophet and are approved by Allah.

There are two hadiths based on this standpoint. First is the hadith *laa tasubbū ashshābī* (do not criticize my friends)—this mentioned by al-Bukhari, al-Muslim, Hambal, Tirmidzi, and Dawd.²⁸ Second, *khair al-naas qarnii tsumma ladziina yaluunahum* (al-Bukhari, al-Muslim, ibn Hambal, al-Tirmidzi, and

²⁴ Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Riwayah*.

²⁵ Al-Suyuti, *Tadrib al-Rawi*.

²⁶ Ali Mustafa Yaqub, *Kritik Hadis* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2008).

²⁷ Amin, *Menguji Kembali Keakuratan*.

²⁸ *Maktabah Syamilah Vol. I*, 91; al-Muslim, 1964; Ibn Hambal, 138; al-Tirmidzi, 695; Dawd, 214.

ibn Majah).²⁹

Based on these principles, Muslims believe that the companions of the Prophet are fair. Therefore, in the concept of "*jarh wa ta'dil*", when criticizing each hadith narrator, then at the level of friends, they are no longer charged because friends are considered entirely fair. This view differs from the Shia in that not all companions are fair. Like Abū Hurairah, Sumrah ibn Jundub, Marwan ibn Hakam, Amran ibn Hatthan, and Amr ibn Ash, their hadiths are rejected.³⁰

On the contrary, the study of Western scholars is academic and critical. This group has nothing taboo to be criticized, including Companions. Because of this, when some scholars emerge from Islamic circles who question companions, they will immediately be accused of being Orientalist stooges who want to destroy Islam.³¹

Re-Definition of 'Adalah-Sahabah

They state that '*adalah al-sahābah*' does not follow historical facts and companions have also been separated from the Prophet for a long time, which their spiritual qualities are different, so the

²⁹ *Maktabah Syamilah Vol. I*, 91; al-Muslim, 1963; Ibn Hambal, 199; al-Tirmidzi, 500; Ibn Majah, 189.

³⁰ Moh. Quraish Shihab, *Sunni-Syiah Bergandengan Tangan Mungkinkah? Kajian atas Konsep dan Pemikiran III* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2007).

³¹ Jabali, *Sahabat Nabi*.

reason that companions are not perfect humans who have any mistakes and limitations in religion. This perspective views the concept of *al-sahabah* loosely. Therefore, it stimulates polemic and circular debates among Islamic scholars.

According to the mainstream, taking issue with the authority of Companions is the same as rejecting the Qur'an and Sunnah or destroying Islam itself.³² This accusation was received by Abu Rayyah, Ahmad Amin, and al-Mawdudi, as well as other scholars.³³

Jabali's study shows that the '*adalah al-sahabah*' has become a hereditary doctrine that accompanies the long journey of Muslims for periods. In addition, Ibn Mubarak (d. 181 H) states that the five characteristics firmly are considered fair (*'adl*) to Companions: *la yashrab hadha al-sharab ay al-nabith* (does not drink wine), *yashhaduhu al-jama'ah* (witnessed many people confess to Islam), *la takunu fi di nihi kharbah* (no corruption in religion), *la yakdhib* (not lying), and *la yakunu fi 'aqlihi shay'un* (sound mind).³⁴

Wijaya quoted Darwazah's opinion, which classified Muslims into seven groups: 1) the early period of the *Muhajireen* and 2) the *Ansar* period. Both have pure and sincere faith in Allah and

³² Yaqub, *Kritik Hadis*.

³³ Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*.

³⁴ M. Musthafa A'zami, *Manhaj al-Naqd 'Inda al-Muhaddithin: Nashatuhu wa Tarikhu* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Kautsar, 1410 H).

His Messenger; they are called blessed people (*radhiya Allah anhum wa radhu anhu*). 3) The group who converted to Islam after the Prophet's migration, their Islam was quite sound like their predecessors, Ansar and emigrants. 4) Hypocrites and Bedouins. 5) Muslim groups who are sincere but mix up good and evil. 6) Unclear group. 7) A group that is hypocritical and has no fear of the Prophet.³⁵

Ali Umar al-Habsyi grouped companions into ten groups by referring to the Qur'an: 1) known hypocrites and 2) hidden hypocrites (Surah al-Taubah [9]: 101); 3) whose hearts are sick (Surah al-Ahzab [33]: 12); 4) the *samma'un* group whose hearts are like goose feathers blown by a strong wind (Surah al-Taubah [9]: 45-47); 5) which mixes the good and the bad (Surah al-Taubah [9]: 102); 6) almost apostate or hesitant (Surah Ali Imran [3]: 154); 7) the wicked (Surah al-Hujurat [49]: 6); 8) declaring oneself a Muslim, but not be considered a believer (Surah al-Hujurat [49]: 14); 9) the *mu'allaf*, their faith is still regarded as weak; 10) who fled from war (Surah al-Anfal [8]: 15-16).³⁶

³⁵ Aksin Wijaya, *Sejarah Kenabian dalam Perspektif Tafsir Nuzuli Muhammad Izzat Darwazah* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2016).

³⁶ Ali Umar al-Habsyi, *Dua Pusaka Nabi Saw: al-Qur'an dan Ahlulbait: Kajian Islam Otentik Pasca Kenabian* (Jakarta: Pustaka Zahra, 2002).

It is crucial to re-examine this conception at first, as in the opinion of Ibn Hambal, which defines a Companion very simply, namely every friend who is friendly with the Prophet, and the view of al-Bukhari in his *sahih* book, a Companion is anyone friendly with the Prophet Muhammad among Muslims at that time.³⁷ Regarding the problem, *fairness* (*'adalah*) is a character and trait that stays away from wrongdoing and directs people to do righteousness (the *muruhah*).

Conclusion

The disagreements Islamic scholars on the companions need to re-understand the character of *fairness* (trustworthy) in hadith transmission, according to his understanding that fairness is not one-sided or putting something in its place proportionally and by the historical facts that it can be said to be authentic (*sahih*). Moreover, the narrator must be guaranteed fairness according to credibility and capability in transmission hadith.

Not all people who lived during the time of the Prophet can be called the Prophet's Companions. If all of them were called companions, it would cause polemics among Islamic scholars because some are considered hypocritical, evil,

³⁷ Manna al-Qatthan, *Mahabith fi 'Ulum al-Hadith IV* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1425 H), 60. .

lazy to fight, converts to Islam, and other predicates, contradicting the basic concept of *fairness* ('*adalah*) or a *companion* itself. Furthermore, the polemics will only be circular unless there is strictness in categorizing the concept of '*adalah al-sahabah* rigorously so that the statement "all Companions are fair" can be implemented obviously.

However, constant discussion of historical facts is necessary. It opens up the possibility of new findings regarding the selection of authentic hadith narrators based on the concept of '*adalah al-sahabah*.

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