

PRAYERS ATTRIBUTED TO THE PROPHET? A *TAKHRĪJ*-BASED READING OF SAYYID ‘UTHMĀN AL- BATĀWĪ’S *MASLAK AL-AKHYĀR* AND THE PROBLEM OF DEVOTIONAL ATTRIBUTION IN NUSANTARA ISLAM

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Abstract

Prayer collections (*kutub al-ad‘iya wa-al-adhkār*) occupy an ambiguous space between devotional literature and the formal discipline of hadith: they circulate as books of remembrance, yet their authority rests on the implicit claim that the formulae they transmit descend from the Prophet. This article tests that claim against a single historically significant case, *Maslak al-Akhyār fī al-Ad‘iya wa-al-Adhkār* by the Hadrami-Batavian mufti Sayyid ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yahyā (1822–1914). Using a complete takhrij of the book's forty-six prayers, which resolve into sixty-two distinct reports, and applying the method of al-‘Irāqī in *al-Mughnī* and Ibn Hajar in *al-Dirāya*, the study finds that roughly seventy per cent are sound (*sahīh*), eighteen per cent weak (*da‘īf*), one report fabricated (*mawdū‘*), and a further nine per cent without identifiable basis in the corpus. Rather than reading this distribution as a verdict on the author's competence, the article argues that the gap between the book's title and its contents exposes a genuine epistemological fault line in vernacular Islam: the difference between what is ma‘thūr (transmitted) and what is merely *manshūr* (in circulation). Situating the compilation within the economy of *fadā’il al-a‘māl* and the field of living hadith, it concludes that devotional attribution is best understood not as a binary of true and false ascription but as a graded claim whose evidentiary standards are negotiated by the community that prays.

Keyword: devotional attribution; *fadā’il al-a‘māl*; living hadith; Nusantara Islam; *takhrīj*.

Abstrak

Kitab-kitab doa dan zikir (*kutub al-ad‘iya wa-al-adhkār*) menempati ruang yang ambigu antara sastra devosional dan disiplin hadis formal: ia beredar sebagai kitab amalan, namun otoritasnya bertumpu pada klaim implisit bahwa redaksi yang ditransmisikannya berasal dari Nabi. Artikel ini menguji klaim tersebut melalui satu kasus yang signifikan secara historis, yaitu *Maslak al-Akhyār fī al-Ad‘iya wa-al-Adhkār* karya mufti Betawi keturunan Hadrami, Sayyid ‘Uthmān bin ‘Abd Allāh bin Yahyā (1822–1914). Dengan melakukan takhrij lengkap atas empat puluh enam doa dalam kitab tersebut—yang terurai

menjadi enam puluh dua riwayat—dan menerapkan metode al-‘Irāqī dalam *al-Mughnī* serta Ibn Hajar dalam *al-Dirāyah*, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa sekitar tujuh puluh persen berstatus sahih, delapan belas persen daif, satu riwayat maudu‘, dan sembilan persen lainnya tidak ditemukan asalnya dalam korpus hadis. Alih-alih membaca distribusi ini sebagai vonis atas kompetensi penulis, artikel ini berargumen bahwa kesenjangan antara judul kitab dan isinya justru menyingkap garis patahan epistemologis dalam Islam vernakular: perbedaan antara yang *ma’sūr* (tertransmisikan) dan yang sekadar *manshūr* (beredar luas). Dengan menempatkan kompilasi ini dalam kerangka *fadā’il al-a‘māl* dan kajian living hadis, artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa penisbatan devosional lebih tepat dipahami bukan sebagai dikotomi benar-salah, melainkan sebagai klaim berjenjang yang standar pembuktiannya dinegosiasikan oleh komunitas yang mengamalkannya.

Kata kunci: *fadā’il al-a‘māl*; Islam Nusantara; living hadis; penisbatan devosional; takhrij.

Introduction

Every prayer book makes a promise in its title, and the promise is almost always larger than the book can keep. When a nineteenth-century mufti of Batavia gathered the daily supplications of his community into a slim Malay volume and called it *Maslak al-Akhyār fī al-Ad‘iyya wa-al-Adhkār al-Wārida ‘an al-Nabī al-Mukhtār*—‘The Path of the Virtuous, on the Prayers and Remembrances transmitted from the Chosen Prophet’—he placed the entire weight of the book on a single Arabic participle: *al-wārida*, ‘that which has come down from.’ The word is a claim of provenance. It tells the reader that the formulae printed on these pages are not the compiler’s inventions, nor the accumulated habits of pious ancestors, but words that travelled an unbroken road from the mouth of the Prophet to the lips of the worshipper in Pekojan. Whether the book keeps that promise is a question that belongs squarely to the science of *takhrīj al-hadīth*: the disciplined tracing of a report back to its documentary sources and the judgement of its standing.

This article takes that question seriously, and it takes it literally. It asks, prayer by prayer, whether the supplications in *Maslak al-Akhyār* can in fact be traced to the Prophet through the recognised channels of hadith transmission, and what the answer reveals about the place such books occupy in the religious life of the Malay-Indonesian world. The academic disquiet motivating the study is this: the genre of devotional manuals has been enormously consequential for how ordinary Muslims in the archipelago encounter the Sunna, yet it has rarely been subjected to the rigorous evidentiary scrutiny that the

hadith sciences reserve for the canonical collections. We treat the *Sahīhayn* with exacting care and leave the prayer book on the bedside table unexamined—even though it is the prayer book, not the *Sahīh*, that shapes the daily piety of the household.

The purpose statement of this research is therefore twofold. First, descriptively, it seeks to establish the complete evidentiary profile of *Maslak al-Akhyār*—how many of its supplications are sound, how many weak, how many baseless—so that a much-used book is finally read with the instruments of the discipline whose authority its title invokes. Second, and more ambitiously, it seeks to interpret that profile: to argue that the gap between the book's title and its contents is not a scandal of negligence but a window onto a genuine epistemological structure in vernacular Islam, namely the difference between what is *ma'thūr* (formally transmitted) and what is merely *manshūr* (widely circulating among the pious).

A brief review of the existing literature situates the contribution. The figure of Sayyid 'Uthmān has attracted serious historical scholarship: Nico Kaptein's biography is the definitive treatment of his life and his entanglement with the colonial state,¹ while Azyumardi Azra's earlier study placed him within the intellectual networks of the Hadrami diaspora,² and Muhammad Noupal has examined his contested role as adviser to Snouck Hurgronje.³ These works, however, approach him as a historical and political actor, not as a transmitter of hadith; none subjects his devotional corpus to *takhrīj*. On the other side, a growing body of Indonesian scholarship has performed *takhrīj* on individual Nusantara works—al-Banjārī's *al-Durr al-Nafīs*, Kiai Saleh Darat's *Fayd al-Rahmān*, al-Fadānī's *al-Arba'ūn*—establishing a genre of 'archipelago hadith' studies.⁴ What the present study adds is the conjunction the literature has left empty: a complete *takhrīj* of a

¹ Nico J. G. Kaptein, *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age in the Netherlands East Indies: A Biography of Sayyid 'Uthman (1822–1914)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1. Indonesian edition: *Islam, Kolonialisme, dan Zaman Modern di Hindia Belanda: Biografi Sayyid Usman* (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2017)..

² Azyumardi Azra, "Hadhrami Scholars in the Malay-Indonesian Diaspora: A Preliminary Study of Sayyid 'Uthmān," *Studia Islamika* 2, no. 2 (1995): 1–33.

³ Muhammad Noupal, *Pemikiran Keagamaan Sayyid Usman bin Yahya (1822–1914)* (PhD diss., Graduate School, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, 2008), 7; see also Muhammad Noupal, "Kontroversi tentang Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya (1822–1914) sebagai Penasehat Snouck Hurgronje," in *Proceedings of the Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies (AICIS XII)*, Surabaya, 2012, 1376.

⁴ Ahmad Baihaqi, "Takhrij al-Hadīts Kitab al-Durr al-Nafīs Karya Syekh Muhammad Nafīs al-Banjari" (undergraduate thesis, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, 2019); Ilyas Daud, "Kitab Hadis Nusantara: Studi atas Kitab al-Arba'ūn Hadīthan Karya Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani Padang," *Jurnal al-Ulum* 16, no. 1 (2016).

prayer manual by a major colonial-era figure, read not merely to grade its reports but to theorise what devotional attribution means.

The method is *takhrīj* of the concise, source-and-verdict type, modelled deliberately on two classical exemplars: Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī’s *al-Mughnī ‘an Haml al-Asfār*, his tracing of the hadiths embedded in al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, and Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī’s *al-Dirāya fī Takhrīj Ahādīth al-Hidāya*.⁵ The choice is principled. These works ‘serve’ a non-hadith book by locating each report in the primary collections and pronouncing on it succinctly—precisely the operation a devotional manual requires, and precisely the genealogy within which a study of an Indonesian prayer book ought to place itself. The approach is consciously multidisciplinary: it joins the technical apparatus of the hadith sciences to the interpretive frame of ‘living hadith’ (*living hadis*) that has emerged in Indonesian scholarship to study how traditions are practised, received, and transformed within actual communities,⁶ and to the social history of the Hadrami diaspora that produced both the author and his litanies.

The central thesis can be stated plainly. The interesting thing about *Maslak al-Akhyār* is not that some thirty per cent of its material falls below the threshold of soundness. The interesting thing is that the book’s title and the book’s contents operate by two different and historically legitimate logics. The title speaks the language of the *muhaddith*, for whom a report is either established or it is not. The contents speak the language of the devotional compiler, for whom a formula’s worth is measured by its spiritual fruit and its long use among the pious, and for whom the line between ‘transmitted from the Prophet’ and ‘said in the manner the Prophet taught’ is porous by design. To read the book only with the first logic is to misread it; to excuse it with only the second is to surrender the very standards that *takhrīj* exists to protect. The honest reading holds both in tension—which is exactly what the science of hadith, at its best, has always done.

⁵ Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī, *al-Mughnī ‘an Haml al-Asfār fī al-Asfār*, printed in the margins of al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*; Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Dirāya fī Takhrīj Ahādīth al-Hidāya*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Hāshim al-Yamānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifā, n.d.).

⁶ Sahiron Syamsuddin, ed., *Living Hadis: Paradigma Baru Kajian Hadis di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2017), 5–12.

Sayyid ‘Uthmān of Batavia: Mufti, Network, and Press

Sayyid ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Aqīl ibn Yahyā al-‘Alawī was born in Pekojan, the Arab quarter of Batavia, in 1822, into a family of the Hadrami *sāda*—the sharifian lineage whose claim of descent from the Prophet through Husayn underwrote both their religious prestige and the principle of *kafā’a* they so fiercely defended.⁷ His earliest teacher was his maternal grandfather, the Egyptian-born Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Misrī, under whom he read Qur’ān, *tawhīd*, *fiqh*, grammar, *tafsīr*, hadith, and the science of the stars (*‘ilm al-falak*). The breadth matters: Sayyid ‘Uthmān was never a specialist of a single discipline, and this generalism bears directly on how he handled hadith.

In 1840, at eighteen, he left for the Hijaz, beginning a *rihla* that would carry him across the central Islamic lands—Mecca, Medina, Hadramawt, then Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Istanbul, Syria, and Palestine—before his return to Batavia around 1862. In Mecca his decisive teacher was the Shāfi‘ī mufti Ahmad ibn Zaynī Dahlān (d. 1886), a major node in the *isnād* networks of the late nineteenth-century Haramayn.⁸ That Sayyid ‘Uthmān studied with Dahlān is significant, because it means he stood within reach of a living tradition of *riwāya*—the formal, certificated transmission of hadith with connected chains. The biographical record is explicit: the same Dahlān appears as a transmitter in the *thabat* of his Javanese contemporary Mahfūz al-Tirmisī, who reports having heard the *Sahīh* of al-Bukhārī 'by audition, several times, some four complete readings,' through a chain passing to Dahlān.⁹ Sayyid ‘Uthmān, in other words, had access—at least in principle—to precisely the institutional machinery that authenticates a prophetic report. This makes the looser provenance of his prayer book all the more revealing: it is not the product of a man cut off from the science, but of a man who chose, in this genre, to operate by other conventions.

Dahlān was not the only authority Sayyid ‘Uthmān acquired in these years, and the others matter more for *Maslak al-Akhyār* than the Meccan connection does. Continuing

⁷ On the Hadrami diaspora in general, see Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith, eds., *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1–18.

⁸ On Dahlān's centrality to the transmission networks of the Haramayn, see the chains of transmission preserved in Muhammad Mahfūz ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Tirmisī, *Kifāyat al-Mustafid limā ‘Alā min al-Asānīd*, ed. Muhammad Yāsīn al-Fadānī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1987), 12; and Abdurrahman Mas‘ūd, *From Pesantren to Cosmopolitan Sufis: A History of Islamic Scholarship in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 55.

⁹ Al-Tirmisī, *Kifāyat al-Mustafid*, 12.

his *rihla* to Hadramawt in 1848, he studied with a cluster of Bā ‘Alawī scholars distinct from the Meccan hadith network: Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh ibn Husayn ibn Tāhīr—reckoned among the celebrated 'seven ‘Abd Allāhs' (*al-‘Abādila al-Sab‘a*) of nineteenth-century Hadramawt—together with Habib ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Yahyā, Habib ‘Alawī ibn Saqqāf al-Jufrī, and Habib Hasan ibn Sālih al-Bahr.¹⁰ This second network is the more consequential one for the prayer book: it is the channel through which a sayyid of Sayyid ‘Uthmān's generation would have received not certificated *riwāya* but the ‘Alawī *tarīqa*'s own devotional inheritance—the *ratīb* and *hizb* material transmitted through *khirqa*, communally recognised *ijāza*, and the standing authority of the *sāda* themselves, registers of authorisation the tradition has long treated as legitimate in their own right without claiming the *muhaddith*'s chain.¹¹ It is this Hadrami network, more plausibly than the Meccan one, that supplied the raw material behind the nine per cent of the book a hadith-corpus search cannot place.

Back in Batavia his reputation rose quickly, and with it came the entanglement that has defined his image ever since. When the colonial administration recognised his juristic authority it appointed him *Adviseur honorair voor Arabische zaken*—honorary adviser for Arab affairs—and from 1889 he worked alongside the orientalist C. Snouck Hurgronje. To some contemporaries this made him a collaborator; to others, a scholar who used proximity to power to advance his own vision of a sober, anti-*tarekat* Islam.¹² Kaptein's careful verdict—that the relationship was one of mutual instrumentality rather than simple subservience—need not detain us, except to note one fact with a direct

¹⁰ On Sayyid ‘Uthmān's 1848 sojourn in Hadramawt and his teachers there, see Nico J. G. Kaptein, *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age in the Netherlands East Indies: A Biography of Sayyid ‘Uthman (1822–1914)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 20–24; cf. Muhammad Noupal, *Pemikiran Keagamaan Sayyid Usman bin Yahya (1822–1914)* (PhD diss., Graduate School, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, 2008), 8–10. Page references for this episode should be verified against the editions held by the author.

¹¹ On *khirqa*, *ijāza*, and the standing authority of the Hadrami *sāda* as registers of religious authorisation operating alongside formal *riwāya*, see Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 116–149; and Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), chap. 2.

¹² Murni Dandi, "Sayyid Usman dan Pandangan Kontroversialnya tentang Pemerintah Kolonial Belanda," *Tamaddun: Jurnal Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam* 5, no. 2 (2017): 5. On the prayer he composed for Queen Wilhelmina's coronation in 1898, see Nico Kaptein, "The Sayyid and the Queen: Sayyid ‘Uthmān on Queen Wilhelmina's Inauguration on the Throne of the Netherlands in 1898," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (1998): 158–177.

bearing on the prayer book: Sayyid ‘Uthmān owned and ran his own lithographic press.¹³ He could compose, print, and distribute a devotional work himself, in Malay, for an audience of ordinary worshippers in and around Batavia. This is the technological condition of *Maslak al-Akhyār*: a book made not for the seminary but for the household, by a scholar who controlled the means of its reproduction and aimed it at the widest possible public.

Sayyid ‘Uthmān was prolific—roughly sixty titles, some still in manuscript—spanning *fiqh*, creed, astronomy, lexicography, and polemic.¹⁴ Hadith runs through this corpus, but rarely as an object of the formal critical sciences. He cites reports to settle juristic questions in *al-Qawānīn al-Shar‘iyya*, to refute innovations in *Salāmat al-Muslimīn*, to defend the prerogatives of the Prophet's descendants in *Mir’āt al-Haqq*, and to gather family traditions in *Hadīth al-Usra*. What is striking, and what the present study confirms, is that in all this citing he typically reports the *matn* without isnād and without grading—marshalling hadith in support of his views regardless of the degree of the reports he transmits. This is the habit of a jurist and preacher, not of a *hāfīz*; and it is the habit that *Maslak al-Akhyār* inherits.

Maslak al-Akhyār as a Devotional Object

Maslak al-Akhyār is a small book—around eighty pages in the edition issued by the Shirkat Maktabat al-Madaniyya, undated in the imprint but assigned by Kaptein to 1892.¹⁵ Its design tells us what it is for. Sayyid ‘Uthmān wrote the framing and the rubrics in Malay—the language of his readers—while preserving the prayers themselves in Arabic, with a Malay rendering set beneath each Arabic line. It is, in form, a bilingual devotional handbook: Arabic for the sacred utterance, Malay for comprehension. The author opens not with chains of transmission but with the etiquette of remembrance—six conditions the reciter must observe, among them that one not neglect obligations such as seeking knowledge for the sake of optional litanies, that one not alter the wording of the *awrād*,

¹³ On lithography and the transformation of Islamic textual authority in the region, see Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orthodoxy and Identity in a Diasporic Public Sphere* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 177–180.

¹⁴ Kaptein, *Islam, Colonialism*, 76, 297–298, catalogues this corpus. See also Nico Kaptein, "Some Early Contributions to Arabic-Malay Lexicography: Sayyid ‘Uthmān of Batavia as a Lexicographer," in *Malay Images*, ed. Asmah Haji Omar (Tanjung Malim: UPSI, 2005), 120–142.

¹⁵ Kaptein, *Islam, Colonialism*, 298. The copy on which this study is based is the Maktabat al-Madaniyya (Indonesia) lithograph, n.d., 80.

that one understand their meaning, eat only what is lawful, face the qibla in purity, and supplicate in humble submission.¹⁶ One of those conditions—*do not alter the wording*—will return to haunt the analysis, for the book itself sometimes transmits formulae in expanded forms that the source hadiths do not contain.

The arrangement is liturgical-quotidian: prayers for waking and sleeping, for dressing, for leaving the house, for entering and leaving the mosque, the supplications interwoven with the limbs of *wudū'*, prayers on seeing the new moon, on hearing a cockerel or a dog, on entering the market, at the clap of thunder and the fall of rain, for the bridegroom and for the bereaved. It closes with two longer pieces: the 'comprehensive and perfecting' supplication (*du'ā' al-jawāmi' al-kawāmil*) associated with the Hadrami *ratīb* tradition of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alawī al-Haddād, and the *sayyid al-istighfār*, the 'chief of all asking-for-forgiveness.' The structure is itself an argument: this is a book organised by the rhythm of a Muslim life, not by the architecture of a *musnad* or a *sunan*. Its logic is occasion, not *isnād*.

That this Hadrami *ratīb* material sits beside supplications drawn from the canonical collections is the heart of the matter. *Maslak al-Akhyār* is a hybrid: part canonical *ma'thūr*, part Sufi litany of the 'Alawī *tarīqa* to which Sayyid 'Uthmān himself belonged. The title, however, advertises only the first ingredient. The reader is told the contents come 'from the Chosen Prophet'; the reader is not told that some come, more proximately, from the devotional inheritance of the Ba'Alawī sayyids. This is not deception. It is the ordinary grammar of the genre, in which a litany hallowed by generations of saintly use is felt to participate in prophetic authority even when no chain can be produced. But it is precisely this grammar that *takhrīj* is designed to interrogate.

Two readings of this borrowing are available, and the evidence gathered here favours one over the other. The first reading takes *al-wārida* as a calculated gesture: Sayyid 'Uthmān, on this view, knew the difference between what a chain could support and what communal use merely sanctioned, and chose the stronger word anyway, gambling that no reader would perform the *takhrīj* this article performs. The second reading is less dramatic and, on the evidence, more plausible: Sayyid 'Uthmān was operating within a semantic range of *ma'thūr* that was broader, and older, than the strict

¹⁶ Sayyid 'Uthmān, *Maslak al-Akhyār fī al-Ad'iya wa-al-Adhkār* (Indonesia: Shirkat Maktabat al-Madaniyya, n.d.), 2–3.

muhaddith's usage the title's modern critic brings to it. Classical usage of the root already accommodated this breadth—an *athar*, in the received definition, is 'a verbal report transmitted from (*ma'thūr 'an*) the Prophet or early generations of Muslims, typically not vetted through the mechanisms of formal *hadīth* criticism.¹⁷ Read in that register, 'transmitted from the Chosen Prophet' need not mean 'certified by an unbroken *isnād*'; it can mean, more loosely, 'descending from the Prophet through the accumulated practice of the righteous'—a claim the 'Alawī litany tradition makes for itself quite openly, without pretending to *isnād* at all.

The biographical record supports the second reading over the first. Sayyid 'Uthmān's habit of citing *hadīth* without *isnād* and without grading is not confined to *Maslak al-Akhyār*; it is, as noted above, the settled convention of his entire corpus, from legal tracts to polemics. A man deliberately blurring a line for this one book would be expected to observe it elsewhere; a man working inside an inherited and wider convention of *ma'thūr* would not. Ismail Fajrie Alatas's account of what he calls the 'Haddadian mode of articulatory labour' is useful here: in the Bā 'Alawī tradition that produced both Sayyid 'Uthmān and the *ratīb* material he transmits, religious authority is reproduced not solely through the *muhaddith's* certificated *riwāya* but through an ongoing, communally recognised labour of teaching, textual transmission, and saintly example—a mode of authorisation the tradition regards as no less legitimate, even though it leaves a different kind of evidentiary trace than an *isnād* does.¹⁸ None of this fully exonerates the title. Even a broader, historically legitimate *ma'thūr* is still a claim, and *al-wārīda* is still its most assertive form; a hedged title would have pre-empted this article's central finding entirely. But 'chose an assertive word within a permissive convention' is a materially different verdict from 'consciously misled the reader,' and it is the verdict the evidence supports.

Methodological Orientation

Methodologically, this study is not a *takhrīj* exercise alone. It combines two registers of analysis that are often kept apart in Indonesian *hadīth* scholarship: a

¹⁷ Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Dar' Ta'arūḍ al-'Aql wa-l-Naql* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), Glossary of Arabic Terms, s.v. "athar."

¹⁸ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), chap. 2, on the "Haddadian mode of articulatory labour" and the transmission of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alawī al-Haddād's litanies through channels of authority distinct from certificated *riwāya*.

philological-critical method proper to the hadith sciences, and a socio-religious approach—attentive to textual discourse and social history—that reads the compilation as an artefact of Hadrami-Batavian print culture and Sufi transmission. The first register supplies the evidentiary spine: the grading of each report against the primary collections. The second supplies the interpretive frame within which that grading is made to speak—who compiled the book, for whom, drawing on which networks of authority, and within which discursive conventions of devotional Malay writing. Neither register is sufficient alone. A *takhrīj* without social-historical context would reduce *Maslak al-Akhyār* to a scoreboard; a social history without *takhrīj* would have nothing evidentiary to interpret. The two registers converge in the pages that follow.

The Method of Takhrīj Applied to a Prayer Manual

Takhrīj al-hadīth—literally 'bringing out' a report—is the procedure by which a tradition encountered in a secondary work is located in the primary collections that record it with their own chains, after which its standing is assessed.¹⁹ The procedure for each prayer was uniform. The Arabic *matn* as printed in *Maslak al-Akhyār* was isolated and searched across the primary corpus: the Nine Books (*al-kutub al-tis‘a*) and, beyond them, the major *mu‘jam* and *musnad* literature—the three *Mu‘jams* of al-Tabarānī, the *Mustadrak* of al-Hākim, the *‘Amal al-Yawm wa-al-Layla* of Ibn al-Sunnī, the *Da‘awāt al-Kabīr* of al-Bayhaqī, and others. Where a report appeared, its standing was determined from explicit gradings in the source and its commentaries, or from the assessments of recognised critics; where it could not be located, that too was recorded as a finding. One adjustment proved necessary: a single 'prayer' in the book frequently corresponds to more than one prophetic report—a composite supplication stitched from several traditions—so the forty-six prayers resolve into sixty-two distinct hadiths once disaggregated. All percentages below are computed over the sixty-two.

A word on the limits of the instrument is in order. *Takhrīj* establishes whether a wording is *documented* and how the tradition rates its chain; it cannot prove a negative about origins. To say that a formula 'has no basis' (*lā asla lahū*) in the corpus is a claim

¹⁹ For the classical conception, see Mahmūd al-Tahhān, *Usūl al-Takhrīj wa-Dirāsāt al-Asānīd* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1996), 11–14. In English, see Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 2nd ed. (London: Oneworld, 2018), 100–120.

about the searched sources, not a definitive claim about the absolute historical impossibility of prophetic utterance. Equally, a *sahīh* grading certifies a chain; it does not guarantee that the worshipper in Batavia received the wording through that chain rather than through the open circulation of pious speech. These limits are not weaknesses to apologise for; they are the very distinction the article wishes to draw out—between transmission as a documented historical fact and transmission as a devotional self-understanding.

The Evidentiary Profile of the Book

Disaggregated into sixty-two reports, the supplications of *Maslak al-Akhyār* yield the distribution in Table 1. The headline figures: forty-three reports (about 70%) are sound; twelve (about 18%) are weak; one is fabricated; six (about 9%) have no traceable basis; and two could not be assigned a provenance.

Table 1. Status of the sixty-two reports by soundness

Grade	Count (≈ %)	Devotional consequence
<i>Sahīh</i> (sound)	43 (70%)	Recitable without reservation; ascription to the Prophet secure.
<i>Daʿīf</i> (weak)	12 (18%)	Permissible in <i>fadāʿil al-aʿmāl</i> under stated conditions; ascription should be hedged.
<i>Mawdūʿ</i> (fabricated)	1 (1%)	Impermissible to ascribe to the Prophet save to expose it.
<i>Lā asla lahū</i> (no basis found)	6 (9%)	Not locatable in the searched corpus; likely devotional or <i>ratīb</i> material.
Untraced	2 (2%)	Provenance undetermined by the present search.

A second axis classifies the reports by attribution within the chain. Fifty (88%) are *marfūʿ* (raised to the Prophet), five (10%) are *mawqūf* (halting at a Companion), and one (2%) is *maqtūʿ* (stopping at a Successor). The preponderance of *marfūʿ* material is reassuring for the book's self-presentation: when a wording is documented at all, it is usually documented as prophetic. The complication lies elsewhere—in the nine per cent with no basis, in the expansions, and in the composites.

A third axis—the distribution of sources—quietly answers a biographical question. The reports are spread across at least twenty-nine distinct collections beyond the bare Nine Books. The *Musnad* of Ahmad supplies thirty-seven of the traced reports; al-Nasāʾī twenty-nine; Abū Dāwūd twenty-five; al-Tirmidhī twenty-three; Ibn Māja nineteen; al-

Bukhārī and Muslim thirteen each; Ibn Hibbān sixteen; al-Bukhārī's *al-Adab al-Mufrad* fifteen; al-Hākim's *Mustadrak* seventeen; and the remainder scattered across al-Tabarānī's *Mu'jams*, al-Dārimī, al-Bayhaqī, Ibn al-Sunnī, the *Muwatta'*, and single appearances in works as specialised as Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Mawdū'āt*. The breadth has a clear implication: a compiler does not personally extract from twenty-nine primary collections to assemble an eighty-page household manual. The spread is the fingerprint of *intermediary* sourcing—Sayyid 'Uthmān very likely drew these supplications from earlier devotional compendia that had already gathered them, rather than from the *usūl* themselves. The book is a compilation of compilations, which is exactly what a working mufti's prayer manual would be.

Four Evidentiary Patterns: Secure, Weak, Expanded, and Untraced Reports

Aggregate percentages alone cannot fully capture the textual complexity of the book. To recover it, consider four representative cases— one securely transmitted, one weak, one textually expanded, and one untraced in the searched hadith corpus—each of which exemplifies a distinct relationship between the printed prayer and the documented tradition.

The Secure Case: Waking

The book's first prayer, recited on waking—*al-hamdu li-Allāh alladhī ahyānā ba'da mā amātanā wa-ilayhi al-nushūr*— represents the clearest case of secure prophetic attribution. It is recorded by al-Bukhārī, Ahmad, al-Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Māja and others, with sound chains, in the precise wording the book prints.²⁰ Here title and content coincide perfectly: the wording is *wārid* in the strict sense, ascription is secure, and no significant hadith-critical objection prevents its attribution to the Prophet. Approximately seventy per cent of the book falls within this secure category, and it is important to insist on that majority before examining the remaining reports that raise more complex evidentiary questions.

The Weak Case: The Supplications of Ablution

²⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Da'awāt; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Kitāb al-Adab; Ibn Māja, *Sunan Ibn Māja*, bāb mā yad'u bihi al-rajul idhā asbaha wa-idhā amsā. The wording is identical to that of al-Bukhārī.

The prayers Sayyid ‘Uthmān assigns to each limb of *wudū*—a distinct formula for rinsing the mouth, for the nostrils, for the right hand, for wiping the head, for each foot—constitute the longest single block in the book and represent its weakest evidentiary category. The author is explicit at this point: he tells the reader that this material is taken from al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā*, not from a *sunan*.²¹ This candour is itself evidence of method: This suggests that Sayyid ‘Uthmān did not present these supplications as established *ṣaḥīḥ* reports. That al-‘Irāqī, in his *takhrīj* of the very same *Ihyā* passages, had already flagged their weakness creates an important methodological connection: the model this study follows is also the model that had already identified the weakness of this material before its later circulation in Batavia. The per-limb prayers belong to the eighteen per cent—permissible to recite as devotional habit, on the licence discussed below, but not to ascribe firmly to the Prophet.

The Expanded Case: Accretion in the Wording

A more subtle issue than weakness is textual expansion. In several places the book prints a supplication in a fuller form than its documented source supports—additional clauses, lengthened invocations, a phrase appended to a hadith that the critical editions do not carry. The phenomenon is not unique to Sayyid ‘Uthmān; it is common in the litany tradition, where devotional additions gradually become attached to a prophetic core through generations of recitation until the boundary between the two is no longer clearly marked. The juristic literature anticipated exactly this. As Ibn Qudāma observes in *al-Mughnī*, to add to the Prophet’s *talbiya* is ‘neither recommended nor disliked’—citing the practice of Ibn ‘Umar, who kept the Prophet’s wording and then added his own.²² The precedent matters because it shows the tradition itself distinguishing between the prophetic core and the devout supplement while permitting their juxtaposition. The problem, therefore, does not lie in expansion itself, but in the absence of a clear marker distinguishing the documented report from the later devotional supplement. In *Maslak al-Akhyār*, this issue is better understood as a problem of textual presentation rather than a doctrinal fault.

²¹ Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-ʿArnaʿūt (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), 31, where al-Nawawī notes that no sound report establishes a specific supplication for each limb washed in ablution.

²² Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1968), 3:267, on additions to the *talbiya*, citing the reports of Ibn ‘Umar and ‘Umar, who appended their own wording to that of the Prophet.

The Untraced Case: The Nine Per Cent

Six reports could not be located in the hadith collections consulted in this study. These reports constitute the most analytically significant residual category. They are unlikely to be simple inventions of Sayyid ‘Uthmān; rather, they may reflect *ratīb* and *ḥizb* materials circulating within ‘Alawī and Qādirī devotional traditions. Such supplications may have been composed by saintly authorities, preserved through communal practice, and received as spiritually authoritative without necessarily claiming a formal prophetic chain. When such formulae are included in a book titled “prayers transmitted from the Prophet,” a shift of category occurs. The issue is better understood as a generic convention of devotional literature rather than a personal error of the compiler. From the standpoint of formal hadith criticism, the problem lies in the absence of a traceable documentary basis. From within a Sufi devotional logic, however, the formula may not have been understood as a documentary hadith claim, but as part of a broader spiritual lineage evaluated by different criteria.

A terminological clarification is necessary here. ‘*Lā asla lahū*’—‘without basis’—is, in the vocabulary of ‘*ulūm al-hadīth*, a verdict on the searched hadith corpus, not a verdict on the material’s history in any wider sense: it says a wording was not found within the primary hadith collections consulted, and it says nothing about whether the wording circulated, and was authorised, through some other channel entirely. Recent Indonesian scholarship on Sufi hadith transmission has traced exactly this second channel: alongside the *muhaddith*’s *riwāya*, a strand of the Sufi tradition has long recognised knowledge received through *kashf* (unveiling) or *ru’yā* (vision) as a legitimate, if contested, mode of connection to the Prophet, answerable to its own internal safeguards—conformity to established doctrine chief among them—rather than to *isnād* criticism.²³ A comparable dynamic can be observed in the reception of *al-Ghazālī*’s *Iḥyā’*, the very source Sayyid ‘Uthmān names for the ablution prayers discussed above, drew an almost identical charge from al-‘Irāqī’s own contemporaries: Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī judged some nine hundred of its reports *lā yu’rafu asluhā*, ‘of unknown origin’—the same verdict, in different words, that

²³ Ahmad Ubaidillah Ma'sum Al Anwari and Muhammad Akmaluddin, "Epistemological Transformation of Hadith Transmission in Post-3rd Century of Sufi Tradition," *Dialogia: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Sosial* 23, no. 2 (2025): 220–238, esp. 231–234.

this study's *takhrīj* reaches for six prayers in *Maslak al-Akhyār*.²⁴ The parallel is instructive: a *lā asla lahū* finding has attached itself to some of the most influential devotional literature in Islamic history without eliminating its devotional authority for the communities that use it. What it challenges is not the devotional value of the material, but its claim to a specific documentary pedigree, leaving untouched the separate—and, within the ‘Alawī and broader Sufi milieu, no less operative—claim of transmission through saintly example, communal *ijāza*, and, in some strands of the tradition, unveiling.

The fabricated report, however, must be treated separately. According to the standards of hadith criticism, it should not be attributed to the Prophet except for the purpose of clarification or warning. Its presence in the book therefore illustrates the corrective function of *takhrīj*: not to dismiss devotional literature as a whole, but to distinguish between secure prophetic reports, weak but usable material, untraced devotional formulae, and reports that cannot be transmitted as prophetic.

The Jurisprudence of Devotional Speech

The findings cannot be interpreted without the jurisprudence that governs the use of imperfect material in worship. Three doctrines are decisive: the licence to act on weak reports in *fadā’il al-a‘māl*; the permissibility of supplicating in words not transmitted from the Prophet; and the etiquette of attribution—how one should phrase the claim that a saying is prophetic. The discussion that follows reads the evidentiary profile through these three lenses, and then through the wider frame of living hadith.

The Licence of Fadā’il al-A‘māl

The majority position among hadith scholars permits acting upon a weak report in matters of moral exhortation and the merits of pious deeds (*fadā’il al-a‘māl*), as distinct from creed and law, subject to three conditions classically formulated by Ibn Hajar: that the weakness be not severe, that the report fall under a general principle already established, and that one not believe, in acting on it, that it is firmly established—acting rather out of caution and hope of reward.²⁵ Brown's study of this principle shows how it

²⁴ Al Anwari and Akmaluddin, "Epistemological Transformation," 229–230, citing Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (Cairo: Dār Ihyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1918); cf. al-‘Irāqī's own assessment of the *Ihyā*'s hadīths, discussed above.

²⁵ These three conditions are set out by al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī fī Sharh Taqrīb al-Nawāwī* (Cairo: Dār al-Hadīth, 2010), 258, transmitting them from Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī. On the contours of the debate and its

functioned for centuries as a deliberate epistemic policy, not a loophole: the community could derive benefit from a tradition's message while suspending judgement on its precise ascription. This is the doctrinal space within which *Maslak al-Akhyār* operates legitimately. Its weak supplications are precisely *fadā'il*—merits of remembrance, not rulings of *halāl* and *harām*—and Sayyid 'Uthmān's own prefatory etiquette, urging the reciter to understand and to act sincerely, maps onto Ibn Hajar's third condition almost exactly.

It is worth registering the dissent, lest the licence be made to bear more than it can. A minority of critics, ancient and modern, reject acting on weak reports altogether, holding that the sound corpus is abundant enough that the weak is never needed.²⁶ From this stricter vantage, the eighteen per cent should simply be replaced by sound equivalents where they exist. The strict view has the virtue of consistency and the cost of pastoral severity; applied literally, it would dismantle much of the devotional literature of every Muslim community, not only the Betawi one. The point here is not to adjudicate the dispute but to locate *Maslak al-Akhyār* within it: the book is defensible on the majority view and vulnerable on the minority view, and which view one holds determines what one sees when one reads it.

Supplicating in Non-Prophetic Words

The deeper licence concerns the baseless nine per cent. The jurists agree that supplication need not be confined to transmitted formulae at all. One may call upon God in one's own words, in any language, provided one asks for nothing sinful and seeks no severance of kinship, on the strength of the prophetic assurance that the servant's prayer is answered 'so long as he does not pray for sin or the cutting of kinship.'²⁷ If a Muslim may freely compose a supplication, then *a fortiori* the inherited litanies of the saints—composed in scrupulous imitation of prophetic diction—are permissible to recite. The category 'has no basis in hadith' therefore carries no prohibition. It carries only a

opponents, see Jonathan A. C. Brown, "Even If It's Not True It's True: Using Unreliable Hadīths in Sunni Islam," *Islamic Law and Society* 18, no. 1 (2011): 1–52.

²⁶ This stricter position is often associated with a number of hadith critics and has been revived by certain modern reformist movements; see the discussion in Brown, *Hadith*, 250–267, on the tension between traditional latitude and modernist critique.

²⁷ Muslim, *Sahīh Muslim*, Kitāb al-Dhikr wa-al-Du'ā' wa-al-Tawba wa-al-Istighfār; cf. al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 340, on the breadth of permissible supplication. The juristic consensus that supplication need not be *ma'thūr* is nearly universal across the schools of law.

descriptive correction: these formulae are devotionally licit but historically non-prophetic, and a book that gathers them under the banner *al-wārida* 'an *al-nabī* has, strictly, mislabelled them. The mislabelling is the whole problem of the genre in a single phrase.

The Etiquette of Attribution

The classical tradition supplies the remedy as well as the diagnosis. Where a report is weak, the etiquette of transmission requires the non-assertive formula—'it is related that the Messenger said...' (*ruwiya* 'an *rasūl Allāh*), or 'it has reached us that...'—rather than the assertive 'the Messenger said' (*qāla*), so that the listener is not led to attribute to the Prophet, with certainty, what is uncertain.²⁸ This is the precise point at which *Maslak al-Akhyār* can be faulted on its own tradition's terms—not for including weak or saintly material, which is licit, but for a title that asserts (*al-wārida*) where it should have hedged. Had the book been called 'prayers in the manner of the Prophet and the righteous,' no *takhrīj* could have laid a finger on it. The gap this article has measured is, in the end, the gap between an assertive participle and a hedged one.

Takhrīj Hadith: The Stakes for Nusantara Islam

Why should a single Betawi prayer book deserve sustained scholarly attention? Because it sits at the junction of two bodies of work that rarely meet: the formal critical sciences of *isnād* and *matn*, and the newer, largely Indonesian field of 'living hadith' (*living hadis*), which studies how prophetic traditions are practised, received, transmitted, and transformed within actual communities rather than how they are graded on the page.²⁹ The two fields have tended to talk past each other. *Takhrīj* asks whether a tradition is sound; living-hadith scholarship asks how a tradition lives. *Maslak al-Akhyār* forces the two questions into the same frame, because it is simultaneously a hadith artefact, gradable by *isnād*, and a living-hadith artefact, practised in households across Java for well over a century.

²⁸ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, 258; al-Tahhān, *Taysīr Mustalah al-Hadīth* (Surabaya: al-Hidāya, n.d.), 65–66, on the *sīghat al-tamrīd* and the rules for transmitting weak and fabricated reports.

²⁹ Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, "Living Hadis: Genealogi, Teori, dan Aplikasi," *Jurnal Living Hadis* 1, no. 1 (2016): 177–196; Syamsuddin, *Living Hadis*, 5–12, which identifies practice, reception, text, transmission, and transformation as the field's five areas of focus.

Seen through the living-hadith lens, the thirty per cent that fails the *takhrīj* test is not a defect to be corrected but a datum to be explained. It records the actual process by which prophetic devotion is transmitted in a vernacular Muslim society: not through certificated *riwāya* from teacher to student, but through the circulation of compilations, the accretion of saintly litanies, the bilingual mediation of Arabic prayer through Malay gloss, and the printing press that put all of it into the hands of ordinary believers. The Hadrami diaspora is central to this story. The *sāda* carried with them not only genealogies reaching the Prophet but devotional repertoires—*rawatib*, *ahzāb*, *mawlid* texts—whose authority flowed through that genealogy as much as through any documented chain.³⁰ For a sayyid who himself descended from the Prophet, the line between 'transmitted from the Prophet' and 'transmitted within the Prophet's family' was lived as a continuity, not a contradiction. The book's title encodes that lived continuity. *Takhrīj*, by design, cannot see it—which is exactly why *takhrīj* needs the living-hadith frame to interpret its own results, and why living-hadith scholarship needs *takhrīj* to keep it honest about what the sources do and do not say.

There is also a corrective to a certain reformist reflex. Since the early twentieth century—and Sayyid ‘Uthmān himself lived at the leading edge of this current, polemicising against the *tarekat* even as he transmitted ‘Alawī litanies—the discovery of weak or baseless material in popular devotion has often been wielded to discredit the devotion wholesale.³¹ The present study resists that move. The data do not support a verdict of corruption; they support a verdict of *hybridity*. A book that is seventy per cent sound prophetic supplication, eighteen per cent licit weak material, and nine per cent hallowed saintly litany is not a counterfeit of Islamic devotion. It is an accurate sample of how Islamic devotion has actually been assembled and lived in the Malay world, by one of its most learned figures, using the best means his age afforded.

Conclusion

³⁰ On the devotional and genealogical authority of the Hadrami *sāda* in Southeast Asia, see Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 116–149; and Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 1–27..

³¹ On Sayyid Utsman's critique of the reformist movement, see Muhammad Noupal, "Kritik Sayyid Utsman bin Yahya terhadap Gerakan Pembaharuan Islam di Indonesia," *Intizar* 22, no. 1 (2016): 81–100.

This article set out to test a promise made by a title. *Maslak al-Akhyār* promises prayers 'transmitted from the Chosen Prophet,' and a complete *takhrīj* finds that roughly seventy per cent of its sixty-two reports keep the promise strictly, eighteen per cent keep it loosely under the licence of *fadā'il al-a'māl*, one breaks it outright, and the remainder keep a different promise altogether—the promise of a saintly devotional inheritance that never claimed a documentary chain. In direct answer to the academic disquiet from which the study began: the prayer manual, the most consequential genre for everyday piety, can indeed be subjected to rigorous evidentiary scrutiny, and when it is, it turns out to be neither pure Sunna nor pious counterfeit but a measurable hybrid of the two.

The significance of this finding for the development of hadith studies lies in the reframing it compels. Devotional attribution is best understood not as a binary of true and false ascription but as a *graded* claim, whose evidentiary standard is set by the community that prays and the genre in which the claim is made. In a *sunan*, 'the Prophet said' is a documentary assertion answerable to *isnād*; in a household prayer manual the same words function more like a doxological frame—a way of orienting the supplication toward its prophetic source and exemplar, within a tradition that has always permitted the worshipper to pray in inherited and even original words. To read the manual as if it were a *sunan* is a category mistake; to exempt it entirely from the *sunan*'s standards is to abandon the very science that lets us tell the difference. The discipline of *takhrīj* earns its keep precisely by holding the two readings together, and the conjunction of *takhrīj* with the living-hadith paradigm offers Indonesian hadith scholarship a methodologically richer way to study its own devotional heritage—one that measures the gap and explains it in the same breath.

Several avenues remain open for further inquiry. A comparative *takhrīj* of the other prayer manuals circulating in the nineteenth-century archipelago—the *Khulāsat al-Madad al-Nabawī*, the *Kunūz al-Nūrāniyya*, the *Shawāriq al-Anwār*—would establish whether the seventy-thirty profile of *Maslak al-Akhyār* is typical of the genre or particular to Sayyid 'Uthmān. A codicological study of the Hadrami *ratīb* sources behind the baseless nine per cent might recover the proximate channels through which that material reached Batavia. And an ethnographic study of how these prayers are recited today—whether reciters distinguish the sound from the weak, and whether they care—would complete the passage from *takhrīj* to living hadith that this article has only begun. The

prayers of *Maslak al-Akhyār* still rise from Betawi households. The task of scholarship is not to silence them but to understand, with precision and sympathy in equal measure, the road by which they came to be prayed.

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