

FATIMA MERNISSI'S HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHODOLOGY TOWARD MISOGYNISTIC HADITHS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY HADITH STUDIES

Umi Sumbulah¹

¹Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang, Indonesia, (umisumbulah@uin-malang.ac.id)

Siti Fatimatuz Zahroh²

²Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang, Indonesia, (250104310001@student.uin-malang.ac.id)



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Abstract

Contemporary hadith studies face persistent challenges related to the use of certain hadiths that are frequently interpreted and mobilized in gender-biased ways within Islamic discourse. Such interpretations not only shape gender relations in Muslim societies but also reinforce social inequality through the normative and ahistorical legitimation of religious texts. This article critically examines Fatima Mernissi's historical-critical methodology toward so-called misogynistic hadiths and analyzes its implications for contemporary hadith studies. Employing qualitative library research, this study draws primarily on Mernissi's *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry*, supported by classical hadith literature and recent scholarship on hadith methodology and Islamic gender studies. The article argues that Mernissi should not be understood as a rejecter of hadith, but rather as a critical examiner of their historical authority, transmission contexts, and socio-political functions. By integrating isnād criticism, socio-historical analysis, and an examination of power relations in the construction of hadith authority, Mernissi's approach contributes to a more contextual and gender-sensitive reading of hadith. At the same time, this article demonstrates that her methodology remains in tension with classical hadith epistemology, particularly regarding the limits of historical contextualization. The study concludes that engaging critically with Mernissi's approach offers an important methodological dialogue that enriches contemporary hadith studies without undermining the normative authority of the Sunnah.

Keywords: Fatima Mernissi; historical criticism; misogynistic hadiths; contemporary hadith studies; Islamic gender studies; gender Islam.

Background

Contemporary hadith studies face increasingly complex epistemological challenges alongside growing critical awareness of the relationship between religious texts and practices of social inequality, particularly regarding gender.¹

Some hadiths are frequently interpreted and deployed in misogynistic ways within religious discourse, shaping social constructions that position women in subordinate roles in both

¹ Nikmatullah Nikmatullah, "Male Ulama Reinterpretation of the Gender Hadith in Indonesian Socio

Cultural Contexts.," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105, no. 2 (2024): 1–13.

public and domestic spheres.² In this context, hadith functions not only as a normative source of religious authority but also as an instrument through which patriarchal power relations may be legitimized.³

Among the hadiths most frequently debated in Islamic gender studies are the report on female leadership (lan yuflīḥa qawmun wallaw amrahum imra'ah) and the hadith stating that prayer may be interrupted when a woman passes in front of a person performing ṣalāh.⁴ These traditions are often interpreted literally and ahistorically, producing theological justifications for restricting women's participation in leadership and religious spaces.⁵ The issue becomes more significant when such interpretations are institutionalized within education, family law, and Islamic political discourse.⁶ Recent scholarship increasingly argues that the central problem lies not in the hadith texts themselves but in their production, transmission, and interpretation, with insufficient attention to historical context and power relations.⁷ Consequently, contemporary hadith studies require approaches that are both historically grounded and contextually informed.

Existing scholarship on hadith and gender generally follows two major trajectories. The first focuses on gender-sensitive reinterpretation of hadith. Sugiara et al. (2025) reinterpret misogynistic hadith through Fazlur Rahman's

double movement approach.⁸ Farid Fauzi et al. (2024) examine Mernissi's criticism of the hadith on female leadership.⁹ Fauziah Syafitri (2024) discusses Mernissi in the context of Islamic feminism.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Nur Hidayah (2024) analyzes gender-biased hadith through critical discourse analysis.¹¹

The second trajectory concerns methodological developments in contemporary hadith studies. Harald Motzki (2016)¹² and Jonathan A. C. Brown (2017),¹³ emphasize historical isnād criticism and contextual analysis in evaluating hadith authenticity and authority. Although these approaches significantly strengthen hadith methodology, they do not explicitly integrate gender as an analytical category, leaving patriarchal bias within transmission and interpretation relatively unexplored.¹⁴

Fatima Mernissi occupies a distinctive position in contemporary hadith studies because she approaches misogynistic hadiths through historical criticism rather than merely normative or ideological critique. In *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry*, she reexamines the authority of hadith by analyzing the isnād, the credibility of transmitters, and the socio-political contexts surrounding their transmission.¹⁵ A prominent example is her critique of Abu Bakrah's narration of the hadith on female leadership, which she situates within the political conflicts of

² Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 4 (2006): 629–45.

³ Zumrotus Sholikhah, "Rekonstruksi Gender Dalam Islam: Studi Kritis Atas Tafsir Tradisional Perspektif Feminisme," *IJUGS: Indonesian Journal Of Gender Studies* 6, no. 1 (2025).

⁴ Lisa Mawarda and Masruhan Masruhan, "Reinterpretasi Hadis Larangan Kepemimpinan Perempuan: Telaah Hermeneutika Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 14, no. 2 (2025): 297–314.

⁵ Marhumah Marhumah, "The Roots of Gender Bias: Misogynist Hadiths in Pesantrens," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 5, no. 2 (2015): 283–304.

⁶ Zunly Nadia and Niswatin Faoziah, "Gender Equality within Family in Islamic Perspective: Insights from The Hadiths of Ummul Mukminin," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 1 (2024): 161–86.

⁷ Yulmitra Handayani and Mukhammad Nur Hadi, "Interpretasi Progresif Hadis-Hadis Tema Perempuan: Studi Aplikasi Teori Qira'ah Mubadalah," *HUMANISMA: Journal of Gender Studies* 4, no. 2 (2020): 157–76.

⁸ Lalu Rahmat Sugiara, Salsabila Arju, and Yogi Sopian Haris, "Understanding Misogynistic Hadiths from

The Perspective of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement Hermeneutics: Memahami Hadis Misoginis Dalam Perspektif Hermeneutika Gerakan Ganda Fazlur Rahman," *Jurnal Living Hadis* 10, no. 1 (2025): 101–21.

⁹ Farid Fauzi et al., "Criticism of Fatima Mernissi's Understanding of Misogynistic Hadith on Women's Leadership," *Ri'ayatu Al-Qur'an* 6, no. 1 (2024): 9–16.

¹⁰ Fauziah Syafitri, "Fatima Mernissi's Criticism of Misogynistic Hadiths Related to Gender Equality in The Modern Era," *IJUGS: Indonesian Journal of Gender Studies* 5, no. 1 (2024): 25–36.

¹¹ Nur Hidayah, "Kritik Terhadap Hadis-Hadis Misoginis Dalam Pendekatan Trans Queer," *El Nubunwah Jurnal Studi Hadis* 2, no. 1 (2024): 108–28.

¹² Harald Motzki, *Hadith: Origins and Developments* (Routledge, 2016).

¹³ Jonathan A C Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Simon and Schuster, 2017).

¹⁴ Khaled Abou El Fadl, "Tensions in Tradition: Hadith, Gender, and Reasonable Interpretation," *UCLA J. Islamic & Near EL* 19 (2021): 1.

¹⁵ Fatima Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry" (Balckwell, 1991).

the early Islamic period rather than treating it as a universally applicable norm.¹⁶

Existing scholarship, however, has largely positioned Mernissi as a Muslim feminist concerned with gender equality rather than as a methodological contributor to contemporary hadith studies.¹⁷ Consequently, her critique is often interpreted simply as a rejection of hadith, while its historical-critical methodology and epistemological significance remain insufficiently explored.¹⁸ This study addresses that gap by reconstructing Mernissi's historical-critical methodology and demonstrating how its integration of isnād criticism, socio-political contextualization, and the analysis of power relations offers a legitimate methodological contribution to contemporary hadith studies without presupposing the rejection of hadith authority.

The novelty of this study lies in rereading Fatima Mernissi not merely as a Muslim feminist but as a contributor to contemporary hadith methodology. Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss her feminist thought or critique particular hadiths, this article reconstructs her historical-critical methodology and demonstrates its implications for expanding contemporary hadith studies by integrating historical criticism and gender-sensitive analysis.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative library research approach to examine Fatima Mernissi's historical-critical methodology in interpreting hadiths commonly perceived as misogynistic. The primary source of data is Mernissi's *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry*, while secondary data consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and scholarly works on hadith studies, gender, Islamic feminism, and contemporary hadith methodology.¹⁹

Data were collected through systematic document analysis by identifying passages in Mernissi's work that discuss the historical criticism

of hadith, particularly her evaluation of isnād, transmitters, and the socio-political contexts of transmission. Relevant secondary literature was subsequently reviewed to contextualize and critically compare Mernissi's methodological framework within contemporary hadith scholarship.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and interpretive analysis.²⁰ Content analysis was employed to identify the main methodological components underlying Mernissi's critique, including isnād criticism, historical contextualization, and the analysis of power relations in hadith transmission. Interpretive analysis was then used to examine the epistemological significance of these components and to assess their contribution to the development of contemporary hadith studies, particularly in addressing issues of gender justice. Through these analytical procedures, this study seeks to demonstrate that Mernissi's historical-critical approach constitutes a methodological contribution that bridges classical hadith scholarship with contemporary historical and gender-sensitive perspectives.

Misogynistic Hadiths and Their Conceptualization in Contemporary Islamic Discourse

The term misogynistic hadiths in contemporary Islamic discourse is used to refer to hadiths that, in their interpretation and application, are perceived as denigrating, restrictive, or positioning women in subordinate roles within social and religious structures.²¹ However, contemporary scholars of Islamic studies emphasize that the label "misogynistic" cannot be directly or inherently ascribed to the hadith texts themselves; rather, it must be analyzed through the relationship between the text,

¹⁶ Mernissi, paras. 60–65.

¹⁷ Aysha A Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁸ Margot Badran, "Islamic Feminism Revisited," *Islamic Feminism*, 2006, 1.

¹⁹ John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

²⁰ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (California: Sage Publications, 2018).

²¹ Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2016), 3–6.

interpretive processes, and the social practices that emerge from those interpretations.²²

Methodologically, the distinction between the hadith text and its interpretation is crucial. Hadith texts are historical products that emerged within specific social contexts and were recorded through human processes of transmission. In contrast, the interpretation and *sharḥ* of hadith constitute epistemological constructions shaped by the social, ideological, and gendered backgrounds of their interpreters.²³ In many cases, hadiths that are later regarded as misogynistic do not explicitly express hostility toward women; rather, they undergo a narrowing of meaning as a result of the dominance of literalist readings that disregard the historical and situational contexts of transmission.²⁴

An analytical distinction between normative hadith, social reception, and religious practice helps to explain how misogynistic bias becomes attached to hadith. Normative hadith refers to the position of hadith as an authoritative source of Islamic teachings; however, this authority is always mediated through processes of social reception. Social reception encompasses how scholars, religious institutions, and Muslim communities understand and engage with hadith, while religious practice constitutes the concrete manifestation of that reception through legal rulings, traditions, and social regulations.²⁵ Within this framework, gender inequality is often more strongly produced at the level of reception and practice than at the level of the hadith text itself.²⁶

The dominant tendency within religious traditions to read hadith in a literal and ahistorical manner further reinforces the legitimization of misogyny. Literalist approaches treat hadith as transhistorical texts with universal applicability, without adequate consideration of the socio-political contexts in which they emerged. However, contemporary hadith scholarship demonstrates that many hadiths are closely tied to political conflicts, power relations, and specific social needs in the early Islamic period.²⁷ When this historical dimension is ignored, hadiths risk functioning as instruments for legitimizing patriarchal structures that are, in fact, contingent and historically constructed.²⁸

Fatima Mernissi explicitly challenges this ahistorical perspective by emphasizing that hadiths cannot be detached from the historical contexts of their transmission. In *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry*, Mernissi demonstrates that several hadiths with significant implications for the status of women emerged in contexts of political conflict and struggles over authority in the early Islamic period.²⁹ Reading hadith without historical critique therefore entails overlooking the fact that hadith authority is constructed through social processes deeply embedded in competing interests.³⁰

Within this framework, misogyny is understood not as an inherent substance of Islamic teachings, but as a product of interpretation legitimated by patriarchal social structures. Certain hadiths acquire misogynistic meanings because they are mobilized to sustain established power

²² Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 1–4.

²³ Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2017), 9–12.

²⁴ Harald Motzki, “The Question of the Authenticity of Muslim Traditions,” *Arabica* 47, no. 2 (2000): 211–214.

²⁵ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, “Muslim Legal Tradition and the Challenge of Gender Equality,” *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 4, no. 1 (2007): 2–5.

²⁶ Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 85–87.

²⁷ Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad* (London: Oneworld, 2014), 112–115.

²⁸ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27–30.

²⁹ Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 49–52.

³⁰ Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, 53–56.

relations, rather than because the normative message of Islam itself promotes gender discrimination.³¹ This perspective aligns with the epistemological critiques advanced by Islamic feminism, which highlight the absence of women's experiences in the processes of codifying and interpreting classical religious sources.³²

The dominance of masculine perspectives within the tradition of hadith scholarship has also shaped the interpretive trajectories of hadiths concerning women. The majority of hadith transmitters and commentators came from male social backgrounds, resulting in prevailing interpretations that often reflect patriarchal interests and assumptions that remain largely unexamined.³³ This condition has led to the selective reading of certain hadiths in ways that reinforce social norms positioning women in subordinate roles.³⁴

Accordingly, the conceptualization of misogynistic hadiths requires a critical approach capable of distinguishing between revelation, the history of transmission, and the social construction of meaning. Reading hadiths in a gender-just manner does not entail rejecting their authority; rather, it involves reexamining how that authority has been formed, deployed, and legitimized throughout Islamic history.³⁵ Historical critique within hadith studies thus becomes an essential instrument for uncovering patriarchal biases concealed behind claims of textual normativity.³⁶

Such an approach opens up space for the development of contemporary hadith studies that are more reflective and contextually grounded. Hadith are no longer treated as static texts immune

to scholarly critique, but rather as a living tradition that continuously interacts with social realities and demands for justice.³⁷ Within this framework, hadith can be understood as a source of Islamic ethics that supports gender equality and justice, rather than as a means of legitimizing social inequality.³⁸

The Epistemological Position of Fatima Mernissi in Contemporary Hadith Studies

Fatima Mernissi (1940–2015) was a prominent contemporary Muslim thinker whose work occupies an intersection between classical Islamic scholarship, modern social sciences, and Islamic feminism. Her strong intellectual background in sociology, shaped by her education at Université Mohammed V in Rabat, the Sorbonne, and Brandeis University, provided her with a distinctive analytical framework for engaging Islamic religious texts, including hadith.³⁹ This interdisciplinary approach distinguishes Mernissi from many classical hadith scholars as well as other Muslim feminists, as her work is grounded not only in normative concerns for gender equality but also in historical analysis, social structures, and power relations involved in the production of religious knowledge.⁴⁰

Within the landscape of Islamic feminism, Mernissi is often associated with figures such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas. However, unlike Wadud, who focuses primarily on Qur'anic hermeneutics, or Barlas, who emphasizes the deconstruction of patriarchal interpretations, Mernissi identifies hadith as her principal site of

³¹ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 41–44.

³² Asma Barlas, *Believing Women*, 13–16.

³³ Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam*, 27–29.

³⁴ Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam*, 27–29.

³⁵ Brown, *Hadith*, 247–250.

³⁶ Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 7–10.

³⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 6–9.

³⁸ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Justice, Equality and Muslim Family Laws," *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 3 (2005): 348–351.

³⁹ Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil, Revised Edition: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, vol. 423 (Indiana University Press, 1987).

⁴⁰ Sherine Hafez, "Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences Margot Badran" (JSTOR, 2011).

critique.⁴¹ This choice is significant because hadith play a central role in shaping social norms, Islamic law, and the legitimation of religious authority. Consequently, Mernissi's critique of hadith is not merely a textual critique but an interrogation of the epistemological foundations that sustain patriarchal structures within Islam.⁴²

Mernissi's relationship with Islamic feminism cannot be separated from the socio-political context of the postcolonial Muslim world. She observes that the subordination of women in modern Muslim societies is often justified through selective references to particular hadiths that are interpreted in literal and ahistorical ways.⁴³ Within this context, Mernissi positions herself as a Muslim intellectual committed to dismantling religious claims treated as final or unquestionable by demonstrating that such claims are in fact products of historical construction that can and should be subjected to critical examination.⁴⁴

Mernissi's epistemological position is distinctive in that she neither stands outside the Islamic tradition nor accepts it uncritically. She engages seriously with classical hadith literature, *rijāl* works, and early Islamic historical sources, while simultaneously applying modern tools of historical and sociological critique.⁴⁵ This approach situates Mernissi between two poles: on the one hand, the classical tradition of hadith scholarship with its emphasis on *isnād* and the authority of transmitters; on the other, modern

critical approaches that interrogate the relationship between texts, power, and political interests.⁴⁶

Within this framework, Mernissi argues that hadith authority is shaped through historical processes that may involve political and social interests, particularly during periods of early Islamic conflict.⁴⁷ From this perspective, subjecting hadith to historical examination constitutes an effort to safeguard the integrity of Islamic teachings from ideological manipulation.⁴⁸

Mernissi's epistemological approach converges in certain respects with contemporary hadith studies developed by Western scholars such as Jonathan A. C. Brown and Harald Motzki, both of whom emphasize the importance of historical *isnād* criticism and contextual analysis of transmission.⁴⁹ However, Mernissi advances beyond these approaches by incorporating gender analysis and power relations as crucial variables in assessing hadith authority. It is precisely here that Mernissi's distinctive contribution to contemporary hadith studies lies: in expanding the methodological horizon of hadith scholarship to become more responsive to issues of social justice.⁵⁰

Criticism of Mernissi has often come from conservative religious scholars who accuse her of casting doubt on hadith or of being influenced by Orientalism. Such accusations, however, tend to overlook the fact that historical critique of hadith is not foreign to the Islamic scholarly tradition. From its earliest period, hadith scholars developed

⁴¹ Haifaa Jawad, "Muslim Feminism: A Case Study of Amina Wadud's 'Qur'an and Woman'," *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 1 (2003): 107–25.

⁴² Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (University of Texas Press, 2019), paras. 6–9.

⁴³ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 1–4.

⁴⁴ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran," 2021.

⁴⁵ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 45–48.

⁴⁶ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Jhu Press, 1993), paras. 27–29.

⁴⁷ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 49–52.

⁴⁸ Jonathan AC Brown, "Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy by Jonathan AC Brown," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2015): 245–49.

⁴⁹ Harald Motzki, "The Question of the Authenticity of Muslim Traditions Reconsidered: A Review Article," *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, 2003, 211–57.

⁵⁰ Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (Simon and Schuster, 2016), paras. 15–18.

the science of *jarḥ wa ta'dīl* to assess the credibility of transmitters and the validity of reports.⁵¹

Accordingly, Fatima Mernissi's epistemological position in hadith studies can be understood as an effort to bridge the classical Islamic scholarly tradition with the demands of modern critique. She does not propose a radical deconstruction of hadith; rather, she offers a reconstruction of how hadith should be read one that is more historically grounded, critically engaged, and attentive to gender justice.⁵² This approach renders Mernissi relevant not only as a Muslim feminist but also as an important methodological contributor to the development of contemporary hadith studies.⁵³

The Historical-Critical Methodology of Fatima Mernissi

Mernissi's historical-critical methodology builds upon classical hadith scholarship by combining isnād analysis with socio-historical and power analysis. Her approach treats hadith authority as a historical construction that remains open to scholarly examination.⁵⁴

Contrary to accusations frequently directed at her, Mernissi does not reject isnād methodology; rather, she reactivates its critical dimension, which in many religious practices has been reduced to canonical acceptance. By rereading hadith through isnād criticism, socio-historical contextual analysis, and an examination of power relations, Mernissi operates in the same spirit as the early *muḥaddithūn*: safeguarding the integrity of Islamic teachings from historical distortion and the manipulation of vested interests.⁵⁵

First, Isnād Criticism and the Authority of Transmitters

In the classical hadith tradition, the isnād constitutes the primary foundation of hadith authority. Scholars have long emphasized the maxim *al-isnād min al-dīn* ("the chain of transmission is part of religion"), underscoring that the credibility of a report can only be verified through its chain of transmission. Mernissi adopts this foundational principle by paying close attention to the figures of transmitters, not merely as technical links in a chain, but as historical subjects situated within specific social and political contexts. This approach is consistent with the discipline of *rijāl al-ḥadīth*, which from its earliest development assessed transmitters based on moral integrity (*'adālah*), intellectual reliability (*dabt*), and social reputation.⁵⁶

However, Mernissi extends the reading of transmitter authority by incorporating a political dimension that has often been underexplored in traditional practice. She argues that a transmitter's credibility cannot be separated from his political position and social interests, particularly in contexts of conflict. This critique does not contradict the hadith tradition, as classical scholars themselves rejected transmissions from narrators involved in public dishonesty or whose political engagements compromised their integrity.⁵⁷

The most prominent example of this approach is Mernissi's analysis of Abū Bakrah as the transmitter of the hadith concerning female leadership. Drawing on classical historical sources, Mernissi recalls that Abū Bakrah was subjected to corporal punishment for false testimony during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.⁵⁸ Within

⁵¹ Ibn Al-Salah, *Muqaddimah Fi Ulum Al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1986), paras. 84–86.

⁵² Mir-Hosseini, "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism," paras. 6–8.

⁵³ Badran, "Islamic Feminism Revisited," paras. 249–251.

⁵⁴ Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, paras. 6–7.

⁵⁵ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 7–10.

⁵⁶ Al-Salah, *Muqaddimah Fi Ulum Al-Hadith*, paras. 84–90.

⁵⁷ Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Kifayah Fi Ilm Al-Riwayah* (Beirut: Dar al Kutub al 'Ilmiyah, 1988), paras. 121–122.

⁵⁸ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 49–52.

the framework of classical hadith scholarship, such a record is highly relevant for assessing a transmitter's moral integrity (*'adālah*). Mernissi's critique therefore does not depart from the manhaj of the muḥaddithūn; rather, it revitalizes attention to the moral and historical biography of transmitters, which is often neglected in purely normative readings.

Second, Socio-Historical Analysis of the Context of Transmission

Beyond isnād analysis, classical hadith scholars also paid close attention to the circumstances surrounding the emergence of hadith, a concern reflected in the concept of asbāb al-wurūd. Hadith were not understood as abstract statements detached from lived reality, but rather as responses to specific and concrete situations.⁵⁹ Mernissi elevates this principle to a central pillar of her historical critique by situating hadith within the socio-political conflicts of the early Islamic period.

According to Mernissi, many hadiths with profound implications for women's status emerged during periods of political fitnah, particularly in the aftermath of the Prophet Muḥammad's death. In such contexts, hadith functioned not only as sources of religious teaching but also as instruments of political legitimization.⁶⁰ This perspective resonates with early Islamic historical studies demonstrating that the production and circulation of hadith were often closely linked to the ideological needs of particular groups.⁶¹

In the context of gender, Mernissi highlights how patriarchal power relations have shaped the selection and transmission of hadith. She argues that women's experiences were largely absent from

the processes of hadith codification, resulting in preserved social contexts that predominantly reflect male perspectives.⁶² This critique does not conflict with classical methodology; rather, it broadens contextual analysis to include social dimensions that previously received insufficient systematic attention.

By reading hadith as historical products, Mernissi does not negate their normative value; rather, she rejects the universalization of particular historical contexts into binding legal norms. This approach is, in fact, consistent with the classical scholars' principle of caution in applying hadith in accordance with their contexts and underlying *maqāṣid*.⁶³

Third, Power Relations in the Production of Hadith Authority

The most distinctive dimension of Mernissi's methodology is her analysis of power relations in the construction of hadith authority. In her view, hadiths are not merely religious texts but also elements of power-laden discourse that help shape social order.⁶⁴ Certain hadiths attain authoritative status because they align with dominant patriarchal structures, thereby becoming continuously reproduced and legitimized within religious discourse.

Mernissi asserts that the legitimization of patriarchy through hadith does not occur naturally, but rather through social processes involving scholars, political authorities, and religious institutions.⁶⁵ This reading can be understood as an extension of internal critiques within the Islamic tradition, in which classical scholars themselves were wary of the potential misuse of hadith for political and ideological purposes.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti, *Al-Luma Fi Asbab Al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar al Kutub al 'Ilmiyah, 1988), paras. 6–7.

⁶⁰ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 53–56.

⁶¹ Motzki, "The Question of the Authenticity of Muslim Traditions Reconsidered: A Review Article," paras. 211–214.

⁶² Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1999), paras. 85–87.

⁶³ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 15 (University of Chicago Press, 2024), paras. 7–8.

⁶⁴ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, paras. 27–29.

⁶⁵ Mir-Hosseini, "Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran," paras. 41–44.

⁶⁶ Al-Dhahabi, *Siyar Alam Al-Nubala'*, Juz 5 (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 1988), paras. 11–12.

Within this framework, scholarly authority is understood as a social construction that can be critically examined without undermining the foundations of religion. Mernissi does not reject religious scholars or the hadith tradition; rather, she cautions that scholarly authority always operates within specific historical contexts. Consequently, interrogating power relations in the production of hadith constitutes an essential scholarly responsibility aimed at safeguarding Islamic teachings from structural bias.⁶⁷

Accordingly, Mernissi's historical-critical methodology may be understood as a critical dialogue with classical hadith scholarship. It retains the classical concern for isnād, transmitters, and context while extending the analysis to social and gender dimensions that are relevant to contemporary Muslim societies.⁶⁸ This approach does not undermine the authority of hadith; rather, it reinforces it through readings that are more intellectually honest, historically grounded, and attentive to justice.⁶⁹

Applying Mernissi's Historical Criticism to Misogynistic Hadiths

The application of Fatima Mernissi's historical-critical methodology to hadiths commonly perceived as misogynistic demonstrates how isnād analysis, socio-political contextualization, and the examination of power relations operate concretely within hadith studies. This section analyzes two hadiths that are most frequently cited in Islamic gender discourse as canonical examples: the hadith concerning female leadership and the hadith that portrays women as

disrupting prayer. Both hadiths have exerted wide-ranging influence on the formation of social norms and religious practices, making them significant test cases for Mernissi's historical critique.⁷⁰

First, the Hadith on Female Leadership: The Transmission of Abū Bakrah and the Context of the Battle of the Camel

The hadith most frequently cited to prohibit female leadership is the report transmitted by Abū Bakrah, which states as follows:

لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ

"A community will not attain success when it places its affairs under the authority of a woman."⁷¹

This hadith is recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and is normatively interpreted as a universal prohibition against female leadership. However, Mernissi argues that such an interpretation overlooks two fundamental aspects of hadith scholarship: the authority of the transmitter and the historical context in which the narration emerged.⁷²

From the perspective of isnād criticism, Mernissi pays particular attention to Abu Bakrah as the sole transmitter of this hadith. She examines his biographical profile in classical historical sources. She notes that he was once subjected to corporal punishment by Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb for giving false testimony in the case of al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah.⁷³ Within the framework of *jarḥ wa ta'dīl*, such historical records are relevant for assessing a transmitter's 'adālah, since moral integrity constitutes a primary criterion for the acceptance of a hadith report. Nevertheless, it

⁶⁷ Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*, paras. 15–18.

⁶⁸ Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, paras. 241–244.

⁶⁹ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 58–60.

⁷⁰ Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, paras. 233–236.

⁷¹ HR al-Bukhari No 4098

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ، عَنْ الْحَسَنِ، عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ، قَالَ: لَقَدْ نَفَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيَّامَ الْجَمَلِ بَعْدَ مَا كِدْتُ أَنْ أَلْحُقَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْجَمَلِ فَأَقَاتِلَ مَعَهُمْ، قَالَ: لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارسٍ قَدْ مَلَكَوا عَلَيْهِمْ بَنَاتٍ كَثَرَى، قَالَ: "لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ"

⁷² Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 49–52.

⁷³ Mernissi, para. 50.

should be emphasized that the majority of classical hadith scholars did not regard Abu Bakrah's *qadhf* case as grounds for nullifying his 'adālah, since he had undergone the prescribed punishment and was known for his honesty in transmitting hadith. Therefore, Mernissi's critique of Abu Bakrah is better understood as a sociological-historical analysis rather than a *jarh wa ta'dil* judgment in the classical sense.⁷⁴

Mernissi does not stop at a personal critique of the transmitter; rather, she advances her analysis by situating this hadith within the political context of the Battle of Jamal. She demonstrates that Abu Bakrah narrated the hadith after the armed conflict between 'Ā'ishah and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, a conflict that prominently involved female leadership in the public sphere.⁷⁵ In this context, the hadith served as a post hoc theological justification for evaluating a politically contentious event.⁷⁶

The epistemological implications of this analysis are highly significant. The hadith is not understood as a universal normative prohibition, but rather as a historical response to a specific political situation. Thus, Mernissi's critique does not categorically invalidate the hadith; instead, it rejects an ahistorical generalization that transforms a contextual report into a transhistorical legal ruling.⁷⁷ This approach aligns with the classical hadith scholars' principle of caution in distinguishing between historical reports (khabar) and legal norms that carry general binding authority.⁷⁸

Second, the Hadith on Women and the Disruption of Prayer: The Symbolization of the Female Body and the Bias of Social Reception

The second case analyzed by Mernissi concerns the hadith regarding women who are considered to disrupt or invalidate prayer. One of the commonly cited versions of this hadith reads:

يَقْطَعُ الصَّلَاةَ الْمَرْءُ وَالْحِمَارُ وَالْكَلْبُ

"Prayer is interrupted by a woman, a donkey, and a dog."⁷⁹

This hadith is transmitted in several hadith compilations with varying wordings, and it is often interpreted literally as an affirmation of female inferiority. Mernissi rejects such a reading by emphasizing the importance of analyzing the social context and the symbolic construction of the female body in early Arab culture.⁸⁰

In Mernissi's view, the association of women with animals in the wording of this hadith cannot be separated from the symbolic structure of a patriarchal society that regarded the female body as a source of fitnah and ritual disruption.⁸¹ However, this symbolism does not necessarily reflect the normative teachings of Islam; rather, it represents cultural constructs that entered the process of hadith transmission.⁸²

Moreover, Mernissi highlights significant variations in the transmission of this hadith. The report of 'Ā'ishah, for instance, explicitly refutes the notion that a woman invalidates prayer by stating that she once lay in front of the Prophet while he was praying, without his prayer being

⁷⁴ Al-Salah, *Muqaddimah Fi Ulum Al-Hadith*, paras. 84–86.

⁷⁵ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 53–56.

⁷⁶ Mir-Hosseini, "Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran," paras. 41–43.

⁷⁷ Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 15, paras. 6–8.

⁷⁸ Junaid bin Junaid, "Historitas Perkembangan Hadis (Dari Periode Klasik Hingga Kontemporer)," *CARITA*, 2024, 146–58.

⁷⁹ HR Muslim No 795

وَحَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِدْرِاهِيمَ، أَخْبَرَنَا الْمَخْزُومِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَاحِدِ وَهُوَ ابْنُ زَيْنَادٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْأَصَمِّ، حَدَّثَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ الْأَصَمِّ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: " يَقْطَعُ الصَّلَاةَ، الْمَرْءُ، وَالْحِمَارُ، وَالْكَلْبُ، وَيَبْقَى ذَلِكَ مِثْلُ مُخْرَجَةِ الرَّحْلِ "

⁸⁰ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 67–70.

⁸¹ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, paras. 27–29.

⁸² Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*, paras. 31–33.

invalidated.⁸³ These divergent reports indicate that disagreement (ikhtilāf) among the Companions and early hadith scholars existed from the outset. Therefore, using this hadith as a definitive theological basis for asserting the inherent inferiority of women contradicts the principle of caution in *istinbāt*. This fact demonstrates the plurality of transmissions which, in the classical hadith tradition, should prompt a careful and restrained approach in deriving legal rulings.⁸⁴

Mernissi argues that the dominance of certain transmissions over others cannot be separated from the social-receptive biases that developed within patriarchal societies. Reports that reinforced the subordination of women were more readily accepted and reproduced, whereas more egalitarian accounts were often marginalized.⁸⁵ This analysis does not conflict with hadith scholarship, as classical scholars themselves acknowledged that the acceptance of a hadith is significantly influenced by social context and the perceived authority of its transmitters.⁸⁶

Thus, the hadith concerning women and the disruption of prayer cannot be understood as a theological statement on female inferiority; rather, it must be viewed as a historical product that requires critical examination. Mernissi's historical critique opens the space to distinguish between Islam's normative message and the cultural biases embedded in the transmission of hadith.⁸⁷

Taken together, these two cases reveal a consistent pattern in Mernissi's historical-critical methodology. In the hadith on female leadership, she begins by reassessing the authority of the transmitter (Abū Bakrah) and situating the report within the political context of the Battle of the Camel, thereby calling into question its universal

applicability. In contrast, her analysis of the hadith on women interrupting prayer emphasizes the plurality of narrations, the symbolic construction of the female body, and the socio-cultural factors that shaped the reception of particular reports. Although the objects of analysis differ, both cases apply the same methodological sequence: critical examination of transmission, historical contextualization, and analysis of power relations before drawing normative conclusions. This comparative pattern demonstrates that Mernissi does not reject hadith authority; rather, she re-evaluates claims of universality through historically grounded and gender-sensitive analysis that remains compatible with the critical ethos of classical hadith scholarship.

Methodological Implications for Contemporary Hadith Studies

Fatima Mernissi's historical-critical approach to hadiths perceived as misogynistic carries three major methodological implications for the development of contemporary hadith studies. These implications are: 1) strengthening historical awareness in hadith interpretation, 2) integrating gender-sensitive analysis into hadith criticism, and 3) reconstructing the concept of hadith authority in contemporary scholarship.

The first methodological implication concerns strengthening historical awareness in the interpretation of hadith. Mernissi's historical criticism encourages contemporary scholars to understand the hadith as a textual tradition that possesses both historical and normative dimensions. Within the Islamic scholarly tradition, hadith has been understood from the outset as both a historical report (*akhbār*) and a normative

⁸³ HR al-Bukhari No 374

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ يَزِيدَ، عَنْ عِرَاكِ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ، " أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يُصَلِّي وَعَائِشَةُ مُعْتَزَّةٌ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْقَبِيلَةِ عَلَى الْفَرَّاشِ الَّذِي يَنَامَانِ عَلَيْهِ "

⁸⁴ Brown, "Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy by Jonathan AC Brown," paras. 120–123.

⁸⁵ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Muslim Legal Tradition and the Challenge of Gender Equality," *Men in Charge*, 2015, 13–43.

⁸⁶ Al-Dhahabi, *Siyar Alam Al-Nubala'*, Juz 5, paras. 11–12.

⁸⁷ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 71–73.

source of religious guidance.⁸⁸ Consequently, its authority is inseparable from both the authenticity of its transmission and its function as a source of Islamic teachings. At the same time, its validity depends on the verification of its *isnād*, the credibility of its transmitters, and the context of its narration.⁸⁹ Mernissi's historical critique does not negate this normative dimension; rather, it underscores that the normativity of hadith is always mediated by the history of its transmission and its social reception.

The understanding of hadith as both a historical and a normative text aligns with the approach developed by Jonathan A. C. Brown, who argues that hadith never appears as a "bare text," but is always interpreted through particular traditions of interpretation and scholarly authority.⁹⁰ Brown demonstrates that divergent evaluations of hadith throughout Islamic history are not anomalies, but rather constitute a legitimate part of the intellectual dynamism of the tradition. In this context, Mernissi's historical critique can be seen as an attempt to restore the historical awareness long inherent in hadith scholarship, yet often diminished in contemporary normative practice.

The second methodological implication concerns the importance of integrating a gender perspective into hadith criticism. Classical hadith studies have indeed developed sophisticated methodological tools for evaluating *isnād* and *matn*, yet the social dimensions, including gender relations, have often not been analyzed explicitly. Mernissi demonstrates that patriarchal bias does not always reside in the hadith text itself, but rather in the processes of selection, transmission, and

reception, which male experiences and perspectives have historically dominated.⁹¹ By incorporating gender analysis into hadith criticism, contemporary hadith studies are not importing an external ideological agenda; rather, they are complementing historical analysis with relevant social variables.

This approach converges with Harald Motzki's methodology, particularly in its emphasis on reconstructing the historical context of transmission. Through *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, Motzki demonstrates that the historical development of hadith can be traced with greater precision, thereby allowing its claims to normativity to be examined scientifically.⁹² Mernissi takes this a step further by asking how power relations, including gender relations, shape this process. Thus, the integration of a gender perspective does not negate Motzki's methodology; rather, it expands the range of questions that can be posed to hadith data.

The third methodological implication concerns the need to reorient the concept of hadith authority in contemporary scholarship. The question of hadith authority has never been monolithic within the Islamic intellectual tradition, as different schools of thought have developed distinct epistemological frameworks for evaluating its authority, transmission, and legal function.⁹³ Mernissi's historical critique demonstrates that hadith authority was shaped through a long social process and is inseparable from specific political and cultural contexts.⁹⁴ This awareness does not undermine the authority of hadith; rather, it situates that authority within a more honest and accountable epistemological framework.

⁸⁸ Al-Salah, *Muqaddimah Fi Ulum Al-Hadith*, paras. 3–6.

⁸⁹ Muhammad Arwani Rofi'i, "Aksiologi Hadis Dan Sunnah: Resultansi Antara Tradisi Dan Ajaran," *Al-I'jaz* 4, no. 1 (2022): 30, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53563/ai.v4i.73>.

⁹⁰ Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, paras. 12–15.

⁹¹ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 45–48.

⁹² Motzki, "The Question of the Authenticity of Muslim Traditions Reconsidered: A Review Article," paras. 211–214.

⁹³ Muhammad Arwani Rofi'i, "Pemikiran Syi'ah Tentang Hadith: Studi Analisis Pemikiran Imam Al-Syaukani Tentang Hadis Ahad," *Al-I'jaz: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an, Falsafah Dan Keislaman* 5, no. 1 (2023): 1–14.

⁹⁴ Mernissi, "Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry," paras. 53–56.

Jonathan A. C. Brown argues that hadith authority throughout Islamic history has always been a form of "negotiated authority," emerging through an ongoing process of negotiation among the text, religious scholars, and the Muslim community.⁹⁵ Within this framework, rereading hadith through historical criticism does not signify a rejection of tradition, but rather participation in a long-standing tradition of critique. Mernissi, by focusing on hadiths that affect women's social positioning, illustrates how such negotiations of authority have often produced structural biases that require scholarly correction.

Reorienting the concept of hadith authority also requires a clearer distinction between the descriptive and prescriptive functions of hadith. Some hadiths record particular social realities without intending to establish them as universal norms. Without historical criticism, this distinction is easily obscured, allowing contextual reports to become permanent legitimations for discriminatory practices.⁹⁶ In this regard, Mernissi's approach aligns with the caution exercised by classical scholars in deriving legal rulings, who consistently considered context, *maqāṣid*, and the possibility of other, more corrective hadiths.

Methodologically, the principal contribution of Mernissi's historical critique is that it opens a space for dialogue between the classical hadith tradition and contemporary demands for social justice without positioning them as mutually exclusive. Hadith studies are thus not forced to choose between fidelity to tradition and responsiveness to modern realities, for both can be reconciled through a historical-critical approach grounded in the foundational principles of Islamic scholarship.⁹⁷ Within this framework, hadith can continue to serve as a relevant source of ethics and

moral inspiration, rather than as a normative burden that immobilizes social dynamism.

Collectively, these three implications demonstrate that Mernissi's historical criticism is not intended to replace the classical tradition of hadith scholarship but to expand its methodological horizon. By strengthening historical awareness, incorporating gender-sensitive analysis, and reconstructing the concept of hadith authority, Mernissi provides a framework through which contemporary hadith studies can remain faithful to their scholarly tradition while responding to present-day questions of social justice.⁹⁸

Classical Hadith Scholars' Rebuttals to Fatima Mernissi's Historical-Critical Approach

Fatima Mernissi's historical-critical approach to hadiths perceived as misogynistic has elicited strong objections from classical hadith scholars, primarily because it is seen as contravening the foundational principles of hadith methodology (*'ulūm al-ḥadīth*). One of the most fundamental criticisms concerns Mernissi's tendency to shift the locus of hadith validity from the *isnād* system to the socio-political analysis of transmitters. In the classical hadith tradition, the authority of a hadith is not determined by conjectured political motives or power dynamics but by the fulfillment of objective transmission criteria: continuity of the *isnād* (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), the moral probity (*'adālah*) and accuracy (*ḍabt*) of the transmitters, and the absence of hidden defects (*'illah*) or irregularities (*shudhūdh*).⁹⁹

Hadith scholars maintain that the evaluation of transmitters was carried out systematically and rigorously long before the emergence of modern

⁹⁵ Brown, "Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy by Jonathan AC Brown," paras. 84–87.

⁹⁶ Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 15, paras. 6–9.

⁹⁷ Mir-Hosseini, "Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran," paras. 38–41.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, paras. 241–244.

⁹⁹ Al-Salah, *Muqaddimah Fi Ulum Al-Hadith*, paras. 17–21.

criticism. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ states that a transmitter's 'adālah is assessed based on moral consistency, religious integrity, and scholarly reputation, not on speculative political assumptions.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Mernissi's approach, which links hadith transmission to political conflict as in the case of Abu Bakrah, is viewed as problematic because it introduces external variables that are not considered criteria within the classical framework of *jarḥ wa ta'dil*.

In the case of the hadith on female leadership (*lan yuflīḥa qawmun wallaw amrahum imra'ah*), Mernissi questions Abu Bakrah's credibility by citing his involvement in the *qadḥ* incident and the political dynamics of the Battle of Jamal. However, hadith scholars firmly reject this line of argumentation. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī asserts that the implementation of a ḥadd punishment for certain offenses, including *qadḥ*, does not automatically nullify a transmitter's 'adālah if the individual has repented and is known to be honest and meticulous in narration.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Abu Bakrah is regarded as *thiqqah* by the majority of hadith scholars, and his narrations are accepted in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, the two collections universally acknowledged by Muslims as the most authoritative after the Qur'an.

Furthermore, hadith scholars reject any approach that evaluates a hadith solely based on its social implications. Al-Shāfi'ī had long cautioned that the truth of a hadith is not determined by its conformity to social preferences or particular cultural developments, but by the validity of its transmission and its consistency with the principles of the Shari'ah.¹⁰² From this perspective, Mernissi's critique is seen as risking

the subordination of hadith to modern, inherently relative and subject-to-change moral standards.

Another objection concerns what scholars perceive as Mernissi's tendency toward over-historicization. Classical hadith scholars indeed acknowledged the importance of context (*asbab al-wurūd*), but they never regarded historical circumstances as grounds for annulling a hadith's normativity. Al-Nawawī emphasizes that context serves to clarify the meaning of a hadith, not to negate its applicability unless there exists a stronger countervailing evidence.¹⁰³ Thus, treating political conflict or patriarchal structures as a basis for delegitimizing a hadith is viewed as exceeding the methodological function of context within the hadith tradition.

In addition, hadith scholars criticize Mernissi's approach for what they view as conflating academic analysis with the normative agenda of feminism. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A'zamī asserts that the science of hadith was developed precisely to safeguard the Sunnah from ideological interference, whether political or theological.¹⁰⁴ From this perspective, Mernissi's critique is seen as potentially replacing the authority of hadith methodology with particular ideological preferences, even when presented in academic language.

More fundamentally, Mernissi's approach is rejected because it implies a shift in the epistemology of hadith. Within the tradition of Ahl al-Ḥadīth, hadith is accepted as binding legal proof (*ḥujjah shar'iyah*) based on sound transmission, not on later sociological reconstruction. Ibn Taymiyyah affirms that the truth of the Prophet's reports does not depend on subsequent sociological analysis, but on the

¹⁰⁰ Al-Salah, paras. 93–95.

¹⁰¹ Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Tabdhib Al-Tabdhib*, Juz 12 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1984), paras. 87–89.

¹⁰² Muhammad Yahya et al., "Comparative Critical Analysis of Methodologies for Establishing the Validity of Hadith Among Sunni and Shia," *International Journal of Religion* 5 (n.d.): 777–92.

¹⁰³ Muhamad Rozaimi Ramle and Miftachul Huda, "Between Text and Context: Understanding Ḥadīth through Asbab Al Wurud," *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022): 92.

¹⁰⁴ Muhammad Mustafa Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (American Trust Publications, 1978), paras. 111–114.

authenticity of the isnād and the consensus of the Muslim community in accepting it.¹⁰⁵

Thus, from the perspective of classical hadith scholars, Fatima Mernissi's approach contains several fundamental methodological weaknesses: first, the use of political and gender variables as criteria in isnād criticism; second, an inclination toward over-historicization that undermines the normative force of hadith; and third, the risk of subordinating hadith methodology to contemporary ideological agendas. These rebuttals do not dismiss Mernissi's concern for gender justice; rather, they emphasize that social reform cannot be pursued at the expense of the epistemological foundations of the Prophet's Sunnah.¹⁰⁶

Within an objective academic framework, the critiques of hadith scholars toward Mernissi reveal that this debate is not merely a contest between "tradition" and "modernity," but rather a confrontation between two distinct epistemologies for understanding hadith authority. Therefore, any effort to renew hadith studies must begin with an honest dialogue with classical methodology rather than unilaterally replacing it.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that Fatima Mernissi's historical-critical methodology represents a methodological contribution to contemporary hadith studies rather than a normative rejection of hadith. By combining isnād analysis, socio-historical contextualization, and the examination of power relations, Mernissi offers a framework for reassessing misogynistic hadiths through historically grounded and gender-sensitive interpretation while remaining engaged with the broader tradition of hadith scholarship.

The study identifies three principal methodological contributions of Mernissi's approach: strengthening historical awareness in reading hadith, integrating gender as an analytical perspective within hadith criticism, and reconstructing the concept of hadith authority as a dynamic epistemological process shaped by historical transmission and social reception. These contributions expand the methodological horizon of contemporary hadith studies without abandoning the foundational principles of classical hadith criticism.

Accordingly, this article argues that Mernissi's historical criticism should be understood as a constructive methodological dialogue with the classical hadith tradition. By bridging historical criticism and gender-sensitive analysis, her approach provides a relevant framework for developing contemporary hadith studies that are both methodologically rigorous and responsive to questions of religious authority and social justice in modern Muslim societies.

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¹⁰⁵ Nuraini Nuraini, "Analyzing Hadith Sanad Validity: Steps to Assess Acceptance and Authenticity," *El-Sunan: Journal of Hadith and Religious Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 56–69.

¹⁰⁶ Nehru Millat Ahmad, Saichul Anam, and Hithna Rohadatul Aisyi, "KRITIK NARASI MISOGINIS: Analisis

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