



The Evidentiary Status of the Maqlub Hadith in Hadith Scholarship: A Critical Analysis of Authenticity and Reconstruction Methodology

Umami Mardliyyah

Department of Hadith Studies, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ushuluddin (STIU)

Darul Hikmah, Indonesia

Email: umardliyyah6@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the *maqlub* hadith a narration characterized by inversions or exchanges within its chain of transmission (*sanad*), text (*matan*), or both and addresses whether such reports are automatically rejected as evidence (*hujjah*). The scope of this research is specifically limited to epistemological analysis of classical hadith criticism, the application of Isnad-cum-Matn Analysis (ICMA) on inversion phenomena, and the contextualization of textual alterations in modern digital media. Employing a qualitative, library-based approach, the research critically analyzes classical works of hadith sciences, commentaries, and contemporary literature to evaluate the concept, causes, detection methods, and evidentiary status of *maqlub* narrations. The findings demonstrate that the *maqlub* designation does not inherently invalidate a hadith's underlying substance. While a *maqlub* report in its inverted, erroneous form cannot serve as valid legal evidence, it is not irrevocably discarded. If scholars identify the inversion and reconstruct the original report using stronger chains of transmission, the corrected narration may attain *sahih* (sound) or *hasan* (good) status upon comprehensive evaluation of its *sanad* and *matan*. Consequently, a hadith's evidentiary value is not dictated solely by the *maqlub* label, but by the efficacy of hadith criticism in uncovering its authentic form. This study recommends that fatwa authorities implement multi-source verification frameworks before issuing legal rulings, religious digital platform developers integrate automated Isnad-cum-Matn anomaly detection tools to curb digital hadith distortion, and educational ministries establish digital hadith literacy standards across religious institutions.

Keywords: Hadith Criticism, Evidentiary Value, Maqlub Hadith

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji hadis *maqlub* yakni hadis yang mengalami pembalikan atau pertukaran pada *sanad*, *matan*, atau keduanya serta menganalisis apakah hadis tersebut secara otomatis tertolak sebagai *hujjah* (dalil). Cakup masalah penelitian ini secara spesifik dibatasi pada analisis epistemologi kritik hadis klasik, penerapan Isnad-cum-Matn Analysis (ICMA) pada fenomena pembalikan, serta kontekstualisasi distorsi teks di media digital modern. Menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini menganalisis secara deskriptif-analitis, komparatif, dan kritis terhadap literatur umum hadis klasik, syarah hadis, maupun penelitian kontemporer untuk mengevaluasi konsep, bentuk, faktor penyebab, metode deteksi, dan status kehujahannya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa label *maqlub* tidak serta-merta menandakan ketidakabsahan substansi hadis. Riwayat *maqlub* dalam bentuknya yang keliru memang tidak dapat dijadikan *hujjah*. Namun, jika pembalikan tersebut berhasil diidentifikasi dan bentuk aslinya dapat direkonstruksi melalui jalur periwayatan yang lebih kuat, riwayat yang telah dikoreksi dapat meraih status *sahih* atau *hasan* berdasarkan penilaian menyeluruh terhadap *sanad* dan *matan*. Dengan demikian, nilai kehujahan suatu hadis tidak semata-mata ditentukan oleh label *maqlub*, melainkan oleh kemampuan kritik hadis dalam menemukan bentuk riwayat yang valid. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar lembaga fatwa menerapkan kerangka verifikasi lintas riwayat sebelum menetapkan hukum, pengembang platform digital keagamaan



mengintegrasikan alat deteksi anomali Isnad-cum-Matn untuk mencegah distorsi hadis digital, serta kementerian pendidikan menetapkan standar literasi hadis digital di lembaga pendidikan keagamaan.

Kata Kunci: Kritik Hadis, Kehujjahan, Hadis Maqlub

INTRODUCTION

The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) occupies a foundational position in the epistemological structure of Islam after the Qur'an. Hadith not only functions to explain the verses of the Qur'an but also serves as a source of information regarding the Prophet's sayings, actions, tacit approvals, and character, which serve as guidance for Muslims (Siba'i, 2000). Because of this position, hadith scholars, from the early period of Islam, developed a set of methods to distinguish acceptable reports from those that must be rejected. This process gave rise to the discipline of hadith sciences, which pays close attention to the chain of transmission (*sanad*), the text (*matan*), the credibility of narrators, the continuity of transmission, and various forms of hidden defects that may affect the quality of a report (Al-Khathib, 2025). Within this framework, the term *maqlub* becomes an important category because it indicates a change or inversion of certain elements within the *sanad* or *matan* of a hadith (Al-Baiquny, 1999). Terminologically, *maqlub* relates to a change in position, the substitution of a narrator's name, the exchange of one chain for another, or a change in wording that causes a report to no longer appear in its proper form (Syuhbah, 2006).

The problem of the *maqlub* hadith is important because a small error in the structure of transmission can produce major epistemological consequences. The inversion of a narrator's name with that of his father, for example, can alter the narrator's identity and affect the assessment of *jarh wa ta'dil* (criticism and validation of narrators). Likewise, the exchange of the chain of one hadith with the text of another can create the impression that a particular text has a chain that never actually accompanied it. Under certain conditions, inversion can also transform a hadith that was originally *marfu'* (attributed to the Prophet) so that it appears to have a different chain structure, or vice versa. For this reason, hadith scholars classify *maqlub* within the discussion of hadiths that suffer from defects or forms of deviation in transmission. However, Ibn al-Shalah explained that the weakness of a chain does not always mean that the text of the hadith is absolutely weak, since a text may have another, sound (*sahih*) chain (Shalah, 1986). This principle is crucial to understanding the question of the evidentiary value of the *maqlub* hadith.

Classical literature shows that the discussion of *maqlub* did not stop at definition but developed into a specialized field concerned with detecting inversion and restoring reports to

their original form. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi composed the work *Rafi' al-Irtiyab fi al-Maqlub min al-Asma' wa al-Alqab*, which specifically discusses the inversion of names and identities within a chain of transmission. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani also composed a work related to *maqlub*, including *Nuzhat al-Qulub fi Ma'rifat al-Mubdal wa al-Maqlub*. The existence of these works shows that *maqlub* was understood not as a mere simple error but as a methodological problem requiring a deep capacity for chain and text criticism. The term *maqlub* encompasses both changes in a narrator's name or lineage within the isnad and changes in words or phrases within the *matan* (Al-Sakhawi, 2005).

To properly investigate this phenomenon, the scope of this research is explicitly delineated into three core domains: (1) evaluating the classical epistemological debates surrounding narrator error and intentional inversion testing (*imtihan*); (2) applying Isnad-cum-Matn Analysis (ICMA) as pioneered by Western and modern scholars like Harald Motzki to systematically reconstruct inverted transmission trees; and (3) contextualizing textual inversion within modern digital platforms, social media algorithms, and automated content copying.

In contemporary studies, this problem has become increasingly relevant because the transmission of hadith no longer occurs primarily through tightly controlled scholarly gatherings and books, but also through digital media. A hadith can be cut, copied, translated, reworded, and linked to different sources within seconds. A 2025 study on chain and text criticism on social media shows that the development of information technology has increased the challenges of hadith authentication, since people often accept hadiths without verifying their chain and text. That study emphasizes the need for digital hadith literacy that integrates chain and text criticism (Abdillah et al., 2025). This situation gives the concept of *maqlub* renewed relevance, since the mechanisms of textual alteration in digital spaces can produce forms of inversion or information exchange that are epistemologically similar to the transmission problems that hadith scholars have addressed since the classical period.

Recent research also shows that hadith studies are increasingly directing attention toward the integration of chain and text criticism. Research by Rahmiah Nur R., Mirna Yunita, and Muhammad Ali, published in 2025, affirms that chain criticism and text criticism are two fundamental elements in determining the validity of a hadith. Chain criticism serves to assess the continuity of the transmission line and the integrity and capacity of narrators, while text criticism examines the content of a hadith through various indicators such as conformity with Qur'anic principles, stronger hadiths, rationality, historical facts, and linguistic characteristics (Yunita & Ali, 2025). Furthermore, modern hadith scholarship has significantly expanded through the pioneering contributions of Harald Motzki in Isnad-cum-Matn Analysis (ICMA),

which provides a rigorous empirical framework to trace early transmission pathways, verify common links, and identify textual variants or inversions across regional hadith centers (Sumbulah et al., 2022).

Although the study of chain and text criticism has advanced, research specifically linking the concept of *maqlub* with the question of evidentiary value remains relatively limited. Much of the literature on hadith terminology (*mustalah al-hadith*) tends to describe *maqlub* merely as one type of *da'if* (weak) hadith without adequately elaborating the distinction between "a report currently assessed as *maqlub*" and "a hadith text that can be reconstructed once its inversion has been identified." This distinction is crucial. If a chain is judged *maqlub* because of a narrator's error, that report does not automatically eliminate the entire existence of the hadith. Conversely, if another chain proves the correct form, the object of assessment must shift from the defective report to the verified form of the report. Ibn al-Shalah even established the principle that a hadith with a weak chain must not be immediately declared weak in its text if there is a possibility that the hadith was transmitted through another, sound chain (Al-'Iraqi, 2020).

This issue is also related to the distinction between the status of a hadith as *maqbul* (accepted) or *mardud* (rejected) and the status of a particular line of transmission. A report may contain a defect in one line while the substance of the hadith has another, stronger line. Therefore, the assessment of a hadith cannot be adequately carried out through a single, isolated line of transmission. Researchers must conduct *i'tibar* (cross-examination of transmission lines), gather the *turuq al-hadith* (multiple chains of a hadith), perform *muqaranah al-riwayat* (comparison of reports), and determine the stronger line. Recent studies on the principle of *shadh* (anomaly) likewise affirm that the detection of deviation cannot be carried out on a single chain alone but requires the comparison of various transmission lines and the examination of both chain and text simultaneously. That research explicitly includes *maqlub*, *mudraj*, *ziyadah*, *mudhtarib*, *mushahhaf*, and *muharraf* as phenomena that must be examined in the process of hadith criticism (Arifin, 2024).

Based on this problem, this study poses a central question: can the *maqlub* hadith be used as *hujjah* (evidence)? This question is elaborated into further issues concerning the nature of *maqlub* according to hadith scholars, its forms and causal factors, methods for identifying *maqlub*, and the relationship between *maqlub* and hadith quality. This study proceeds from the hypothesis that the *maqlub* hadith cannot be judged in black-and-white terms as a hadith that is always substantially rejected. A report proven to be *maqlub* cannot be used as a basis of *hujjah* in the inverted form it takes, but the substance of the hadith may still serve as *hujjah* if

its original form can be successfully reconstructed through an accountable line of transmission. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to formulate the methodological position of the *maqlub* hadith within the system of hadith criticism and to explain, in a more proportionate manner, the limits of its evidentiary value.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. This method was chosen based on the nature of the problem under study namely, the concept and evidentiary status of the *maqlub* hadith which requires an examination of both primary and secondary literature in the science of hadith. The primary sources of this research include works by classical hadith scholars such as *Muqaddimah Ibn al-Shalah fi 'Ulum al-Hadith*, *al-Nukat 'ala Kitab Ibn al-Shalah* and *Nuzhat al-Nazar* by Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tadrib al-Rawi* by al-Suyuti, as well as books discussing chain and text criticism. Secondary sources include contemporary books on hadith sciences and recent scholarly articles addressing chain criticism, text criticism, hadith authentication, and developments in hadith research methodology.

In accordance with qualitative research standards, the primary research instrument in this study is the human instrument (the researcher), who critically selects, analyzes, categorizes, and synthesizes textual data from classical manuscripts and modern databases. Data collection was systematically conducted through structured digital and manual documentation across primary hadith repositories (e.g., Maktabah Shamila, Al-Maktabah al-Waqfiyyah) and academic databases (ScienceDirect, Google Scholar).

The study employs documentation techniques to identify the concept of *maqlub* within hadith literature. The researcher traced the definitions, categorizations, examples, causes, and rulings concerning *maqlub* in classical sources and then compared them with the explanations of scholars and contemporary research. To investigate narrator memorization testing methods, classical historical records detailing oral examination protocols such as Baghdad's celebrated test of Imam al-Bukhari were cross-analyzed with biographical evaluation literature (*ilm al-rijal*). The focus of the study is directed not only at the definition of *maqlub* but also at the argumentative structures scholars use when determining that a report has undergone inversion. This approach is necessary because the term *maqlub* is often used to refer to several different situations, ranging from unintentional errors in transmission to deliberate inversion carried out to test memorization or to produce a distinctive chain.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method. The descriptive stage was used to map the concept and classification of the *maqlub* hadith based on the

literature of hadith sciences. The analytical stage was used to assess the relationship between the presence of *maqlub* elements and the overall status of a hadith. The study distinguishes between a defect in a particular line of transmission and a defect in the substance of the hadith. This distinction is important because the weakness of one chain does not always render the text absolutely weak if another, sound chain exists. This principle has been affirmed in the classical literature of Ibn al-Shalah and carried forward in the tradition of hadith-science commentary.

To ensure the relevance of this study to developments in contemporary hadith scholarship, this research incorporates scholarly articles published in 2025 as comparative material. This literature is used to observe recent trends in hadith criticism, particularly the strengthening integration of chain and text criticism, the development of text criticism, and the need for hadith literacy in digital spaces (Nur., 2025). Accordingly, this study does not merely reproduce the opinions of classical scholars but seeks to connect classical principles with the question of hadith authentication within a contemporary academic and social context.

To guarantee methodological validity and credibility, this qualitative study implemented rigorous credibility checks through theoretical and source triangulation. Data interpretation was systematically verified by cross-referencing findings across three distinct tiers of literature: (1) foundational classical *usul* and hadith terminology texts (Muqaddimah, Nuzhat al-Nazar); (2) classical *ilal* and *rijal* monographs (Rafi' al-Irtiyab); and (3) modern peer-reviewed empirical studies utilizing Isnad-cum-Matn Analysis (ICMA). Furthermore, auditability was established through clear analytical steps tracing data from raw textual extraction to final evidentiary synthesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Nature of the Maqlub Hadith in the Terminology of Hadith Sciences

Etymologically, *maqlub* is the passive participle (*ism maf'ul*) of the verb *qalaba*, meaning to invert, alter, or move something from its original position. In hadith terminology, *maqlub* refers to a report that has undergone an exchange or inversion in an element of its chain or text. This inversion may take the form of an exchange of narrators' names, the exchange of a narrator's name with that of his father, the substitution of one narrator for another, a change in the order of wording within the text, or even the exchange of the chain of one hadith with the chain of another. Definitions of this kind are found in the literature of hadith sciences and have been systematically formulated by scholars who address problematic hadiths (Al-Asqalani, 2000).

Al-Baiquni, in *Manzhumah al-Baiquniyyah*, describes *maqlub* as the phenomenon of exchanging one narrator for another or inverting the chain and text. This formulation shows that *maqlub* is not merely a matter of altered wording but can affect the very structure of hadith transmission. From the perspective of hadith sciences, a chain of transmission is not merely a list of names but an epistemological mechanism connecting a piece of information to its source. Therefore, a change in the chain can alter the level of credibility of a report (Al-Baiquny, 1999).

Ibn Hajar developed a classification of *maqlub* into forms related to the chain and the text. *Maqlub al-isnad* occurs when the inversion is located within the structure of the chain. Its forms may include the inversion of a narrator's name with that of his father, the substitution of one narrator for another occupying the same position or generational level, or the transfer of the chain of one hadith to the text of another. *Maqlub al-matn*, meanwhile, occurs when there is a change in the order or an exchange of wording within the text. In certain cases, inversion can occur simultaneously in both the chain and the text. The literature of hadith sciences also recognizes variations in classification based on the form and cause of the inversion. One of the simplest examples is the inversion of the name "*Ka'b ibn Murrah*" into "*Murrah ibn Ka'b*" (Al-Asqalani, 2000). At first glance, such a change might seem minor, since it concerns only the ordering of a name. However, in chain research, a narrator's identity is fundamental information. Such an error can make it difficult for researchers to determine whether a narrator truly existed, whether he lived contemporaneously with his teacher, whether he received the hadith directly from his teacher, and how the scholars of *jarh wa ta'dil* assessed his credibility. Thus, a small change in a name can produce major consequences in hadith research.

Another example of inversion in textual wording appears in the following hadith, whose correct wording is given beneath it:

وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَخْفَاهَا حَتَّى لَا تَعْلَمَ يَمِينُهُ مَا تُنْفِقُ شِمَالُهُ

This wording is in fact inverted; the correct text should read "*حتى لا تعلم شماله ما تنفق يمينه*" (Al-Asqalani, 2000). This hadith concerns the group of people who will receive shade on the Day of Judgment. It is known from another report that the text discussed above was inverted. The more correct text reads, in translation: "...so that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given in charity." Thus, there was an exchange in the textual wording, specifically, the position of the word *yamin* (right hand) with *shimal* (left hand). Many hadith reports also state that, in matters of goodness, the right side should be given precedence, as in the case of giving charity, which is recommended to be done with the right hand.

There is also a form of a single hadith that is understood in two inverted ways without any reduction in its essential meaning. The hadith in question reads:

عن البراء بن عازب قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: زينوا القرآن بأصواتكم. أخرجه أبو داود بإسناده

From al-Bara' ibn 'Azib, who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Beautify the Qur'an with your voices." Beyond being understood as a command to beautify the Qur'an through recitation, some hadith scholars understand this hadith as a *maqlub* hadith—that is, a hadith understood in inverted form. Imam al-Khattabi (d. 388 AH) understood the hadith in its inverted wording (*zayyinu aswatakum bil-Qur'an*), meaning "beautify your voices with the Qur'an." In his work *Ma'alim al-Sunan* (Al-Khattaby & Hamdun Bin, 1932), he argued that the Qur'an does not need a created being (a human voice) to beautify itself and make it lovely. Rather, it is the (human) voice that is deficient and in need of something majestic (the Qur'an) to adorn it so that it becomes noble and pleasant to hear. From a psychological perspective, on the spiritual and mental level, human beings need the Qur'an to attain beauty in the sense of holistic well-being. It cannot be denied that listening to Qur'anic recitation brings inner tranquility.

Other scholars, such as Imam al-Nawawi (Al-Nawawi, 1985) and al-Manawi (Al-Manawi, 1971), attempted to preserve the original text without classifying it as *maqlub*, offering an interpretation (*ta'wil*) that its meaning is "beautify your voices when reciting the Qur'an," because a beautiful voice will make the beauty of the Qur'an more apparent and allow it to penetrate more deeply into the hearts of listeners. Thus, "beautifying" here refers to the manner of delivery (*tabligh*) to the listener, not to altering the essence of the Qur'an itself. Beautifying the voice in this sense must not deviate from the rules of *tajwid* (Qur'anic recitation). The beauty of a voice is judged by its measured pace (*tartil*), correct articulation of letters, and natural intonation.

Although some scholars categorize this text as containing an element of *qalb* (inversion) in terms of theological coherence of meaning, in terms of its chain of transmission, the hadith *Zayyinu al-Qur'ana bi-Aswatikum* was recorded by Imam Abu Dawud, al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and Ahmad with a sahih/hasan chain from the Companion al-Bara' ibn 'Azib. Therefore, the inversion here does not undermine the authenticity of the hadith but instead becomes an object of in-depth discussion among scholars of hadith terminology regarding rhetorical style (*balaghah*) and theology. In other words, the evidentiary reliability (*hujjah*) of this hadith remains strong. Reciting the Qur'an with a beautiful voice, in accordance with the rules of *tajwid*, is one of the things commanded by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

***Maqlub* as a Defect in Transmission, Not an Absolute Determination of a Hadith's Substance**

The question "can the *maqlub* hadith be used as *hujjah*?" requires terminological caution. The main error to be avoided is assuming that the label *maqlub* always means that the entire substance of a hadith is necessarily false. In hadith science, *maqlub* fundamentally indicates a problem in the form of transmission. Therefore, an uncorrected *maqlub* hadith cannot be directly used as *hujjah*. However, this does not mean that the text contained within a *maqlub* report necessarily does not originate from the Prophet. This principle can be explained through the distinction between *riwayah* (the act or mode of transmission) and *dirayah* (critical, analytical understanding of a report). From the standpoint of *riwayah*, a chain proven to have undergone inversion cannot be used in its original form, since the relationship between the narrator and the hadith can no longer be trusted. From the standpoint of *dirayah*, however, a researcher can still trace other lines of transmission to determine whether the text has a sound chain elsewhere. If another line shows that the text was indeed transmitted through a correct chain, the *maqlub* problem in the first line does not automatically corrupt the second line (Al-Suyuti, 2020).

Ibn al-Shalah offers a highly important principle on this matter. According to him, if a researcher finds a hadith through a weak chain, he may state that the hadith is weak through that particular chain, but he may not automatically declare that its text is weak, because there is a possibility that another, sound chain exists. To declare that a text is weak in its entirety requires research demonstrating that the hadith indeed has no accountable line of transmission at all (Shalah, 1986). This principle has direct implications for the *maqlub* hadith. If a *maqlub* report has another line demonstrating the correct form of the chain or text, then what constitutes *hujjah* is not the *maqlub* form but the verified form of the report. In other words, "*maqlub*" is not a final status that always eliminates the evidentiary value of an entire hadith. Rather, it is an indicator of a transmission problem that must be resolved through hadith criticism.

Therefore, the statement "a *maqlub* hadith cannot be used as *hujjah*" is acceptable if what is meant is the *maqlub* report in the form that has been proven erroneous. However, this statement becomes inaccurate if understood to mean that any text ever transmitted through a *maqlub* line must automatically remain unusable, even after a sound line proving its original form has been found. This distinction is one of the important findings of this study.

Factors Behind the Occurrence of *Maqlub* and Their Implications for Evidentiary Value

Hadith scholars explain that inversion can occur due to several factors. The first factor is human error, such as forgetfulness, *wahm* (misapprehension), misreading, faulty memorization, or the mixing up of notes (Karina et al., 2025). The second factor relates to the condition of a narrator whose memorization ability has changed, including *ikhtilat* (cognitive decline in old age). The third factor is a deliberate act intended to test the ability of a hadith expert. The fourth factor is a deliberate act intended to make a report appear unique or unusual so as to attract public attention (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2019).

If the inversion occurs due to an unintentional error, the main problem lies in the narrator's *dhabt* (precision). If such an error occurs occasionally and can be identified through comparison with the reports of other narrators, scholars can correct the report. However, if the inversion occurs repeatedly and indicates a serious weakness in memorization, this can affect the overall assessment of the narrator's credibility. In this context, *maqlub* can serve as an indicator that a narrator lacks the level of precision required to meet the standard of a *sahih* hadith.

If the inversion is carried out deliberately to test memorization, the situation differs. Historically, scholars employed rigorous oral examination protocols to evaluate a scholar's retentive memory and analytical acuity. A well-known story in hadith literature concerns the testing of Imam al-Bukhari while he was in Baghdad. A number of hadith experts inverted the chains and texts of around one hundred hadiths and then presented them to al-Bukhari. He did not immediately declare the reports incorrect but listened to them until the end, then returned each chain to its proper text and each text to its proper chain. This story is used by scholars to illustrate the ability of hadith experts to detect *qalb* (inversion). In such a context, the inversion was carried out as a testing instrument, not as a form of report intended to be used as *hujjah* (Al-Baghdadi, 2015).

In contrast to testing, inversion carried out deliberately to create a distinctive chain or to alter perceptions of a hadith's quality carries more serious consequences. Hadith scholars regard such an act as a form of manipulation of transmission. If someone deliberately attributes a text to an improper chain in order to attract attention, such an act is not merely a technical error but a violation of scholarly integrity in transmission. Contemporary literature discussing *maqlub* also classifies inversion carried out for *irghab* (attracting interest) or seeking distinctiveness as a rejected form (Wasman et al., 2023).

From the perspective of evidentiary value, the factor behind the occurrence of *maqlub* must therefore be taken into account. A report that is mistaken due to forgetfulness can be corrected if strong evidence exists. A report deliberately inverted to test memorization was

never intended as an actual form of hadith transmission. Meanwhile, a report deliberately inverted to create distinctiveness or to enhance the image of a hadith must be rejected and can serve as a serious indicator regarding the integrity of the narrator. Accordingly, the assessment of *maqlub* requires an analysis of cause, not merely the identification of form.

Scholarly Methods for Identifying the *Maqlub* Hadith

Identifying a *maqlub* hadith requires mastery of the entire line of transmission. It is not sufficient for a researcher to read a single hadith compilation and then conclude that a chain is correct or incorrect. One must perform *jam' al-turuq*—that is, gathering all available lines of transmission. After all lines have been collected, the researcher compares the names of narrators, the order of the chain, the wording of the text, the opening and closing phrasing, and the context of transmission. This method enables the researcher to identify differing lines and determine which is stronger.

The next stage is to perform *muqaranah al-riwayat* (comparison of reports). Comparison is conducted at both the chain and text levels. If most trustworthy narrators report "A from B," while a single line states "B from A," this discrepancy becomes an indication requiring examination. The researcher then assesses whether the first form is supported by the teacher-student relationship, ages, places of residence, and other reports. If biographical data supports the first form and does not support the second, the second form is most likely an inversion.

Criticism of narrator identity is extremely important. In *maqlub al-isnad*, a change in the position of a name can produce a name that is actually unknown in the biographical literature (*rijal*) or that produces a different identity altogether. For this reason, researchers must consult the books of *rijal* (narrator biographies), *tabaqat* (generational classifications), *jarh wa ta'dil*, and *ansab* (genealogies). An error in a name must not immediately be regarded as an acceptable variation without further research.

Text criticism also plays an important role (Saputra et al., 2026). If a particular chain carries a text that is normally transmitted through a different chain, the researcher must compare the structure of the wording and the content of the hadith. The exchange of chain and text can be detected when a particular line deviates significantly from the established pattern of transmission (Supian, 2015). Contemporary studies on *shadh* (anomaly) show that inter-line comparison is one of the important instruments for detecting deviations in reports, including forms of *maqlub* (Munadi, 2026).

This method is consistent with developments in contemporary text criticism. A 2025 study on the principles of text criticism affirms that the hadith tradition possesses a number of

instruments for testing the content of a hadith, including comparison with the Qur'an, *mutawatir* (mass-transmitted) hadiths, stronger reports, scholarly consensus, rational considerations, and linguistic characteristics (Rahman, Imelda Putri Hsb, 2025). Another study, also from 2025, affirms that chain criticism and text criticism must be used in an integrated manner so that the authentication process does not stop merely at examining a chain that appears sound (Yunita & Ali, 2025).

In a modern context, the *isnad-cum-matn* method can offer an additional contribution. Pioneered by scholars such as Harald Motzki, ICMA integrates detailed *Isnād* analysis with rigorous *Matn* comparison, enabling researchers to construct dynamic transmission trees, identify common links (*ma'mar*), trace regional variations across Mecca, Medina, Kufa, and Basra, and empirically locate exact historical nodes where textual inversions occurred (Motzki, 2002; Sumbulah et al., 2022). This approach considers the development of the chain of transmission together with variations in the text, allowing researchers to map how a hadith evolved through the process of transmission. Studies on *isnad-cum-matn* show that this method can be used to test the methodology of hadith criticism and to produce a more comprehensive reading of hadith transmission (Nur., 2025). Thus, the concept of *maqlub* can be studied not only through classical terminology but also through more systematic mapping of transmission.

One of the most well-known and frequently analyzed real-world cases in hadith criticism and the *Isnad-cum-Matn Analysis* (ICMA) method is the Hadith of the Seven Persons Sheltered by Allah (*Hadith of the Seven Sheltered Persons*), particularly the wording concerning secret charity. The conclusions drawn from the ICMA analysis indicate that the hadith can be classified into two versions (Sumbulah, Umi, Zarwaki, Zarwaki and Huda, 2022). Version A is classified as *Sahih Mahfuzh*, representing the original wording preserved through the primary transmission source. Version B, by contrast, is classified as a *Matn Maqlub* hadith, namely a defective textual variant resulting from the reversal of the words “right” and “left” by a particular transmitter. Imam Muslim included both transmission routes in his *Sahih*, not to authenticate or endorse Version B, but rather as a form of scholarly documentation intended to demonstrate to hadith critics that the error in this particular transmission had already been identified and recognized (Al-Bahlul, 2024).

The Position of the *Maqlub* Hadith in the Hierarchy of *Maqbul* and *Mardud* Hadiths

In the general classification of hadith sciences, *maqlub* belongs to the type of report that suffers from a defect, such that, in its uncorrected form, it does not meet the standard of a *sahih* hadith. Some literature classifies *maqlub* as part of the *da'if* (weak) hadith category because it involves a problem in *dhabt* or in the structure of transmission. However, the term

"*da'if*" in this context must be understood methodologically. A hadith may be called *da'if* based on a particular line without meaning that its entire substance necessarily lacks any basis. Ibn al-Shalah and al-Suyuti affirm that a researcher must distinguish between "weak through a particular chain" and "weak in its entirety" (Shalah, 1986; Al-Suyuti, 2020). This distinction is key to answering the research question.

If the *maqlub* form remains the only form available, that report cannot be used as a basis for establishing a legal ruling requiring a *maqbul* (accepted) hadith (Muzakki & Syarifuddin, 2021). A researcher must not attribute a saying to the Prophet based on a chain or text form proven to have undergone inversion. In such circumstances, evidentiary value is not fulfilled because doubt exists in the process of attribution to the Prophet. If another, sound line is found, the status changes. The *maqlub* report can then function as material for understanding the history of transmission or as evidence of an error in one of the lines, while *hujjah* is built upon the verified sound line. Thus, *maqlub* can become an object of study but not the basis of *hujjah* in its defective form (Muzakki & Syarifuddin, 2021)

Another condition arises when a *maqlub* line can be corrected with certainty through strong *qarinah* (contextual evidence). For example, all trustworthy lines indicate form A, while a single line states form B, and it is known that the narrator of that line has made errors regarding narrators' names. In such a case, a researcher can conclude that form B is *maqlub* and that form A represents the stronger form. Evidentiary value then depends on the quality of form A.

Can the *Maqlub* Hadith Serve as *Hujjah* in Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*)?

In principle, a hadith intended to serve as *hujjah* in a matter of law must meet the standards of acceptance established by the discipline of hadith. If a hadith is only available in *maqlub* form and its original form remains unknown, the researcher lacks an adequate basis to use it as *hujjah*. This applies particularly when the inversion affects the identity of the narrator, the continuity of the chain, or the normative content of the text. However, if *maqlub* occurs only in one line, while another line shows the same hadith with a sound chain, then a legal ruling can be built upon that sound line. In such a case, it is inaccurate to say that "the *maqlub* hadith serves as *hujjah*." The more accurate statement is that "the hadith found in the *maqlub* line has an original form proven through another line, so that original form can serve as *hujjah*."

This distinction in wording is important to avoid epistemological error. A researcher must not use an erroneous report and then justify it on the grounds that another, sound line exists. Rather, the researcher must use that sound line as the basis of the argument and explain that the *maqlub* report merely indicates the existence of a transmission error.

What about the use of the *maqlub* hadith in *fadha'il al-a'mal* (the merits of good deeds)? In general, scholars distinguish between the use of a *da'if* hadith in matters of law and creed and its use in the realm of motivation, the merits of deeds, stories, and exhortation, subject to certain conditions (Harahap et al., 2023). Ibn al-Shalah notes that there is a degree of tolerance in transmitting weak hadiths for matters other than creed and rulings on what is lawful and unlawful; however, this does not mean that every problematic hadith may be attributed to the Prophet with certainty. He also insists that a hadith not yet proven *sahih* should not be presented with a definitive formula such as "the Messenger of Allah said" if its status has not been established (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 2000).

Most hadith scholars classify *hadith maqlub* as a type of *da'if* (weak) hadith (Sholeh, 2022). However, scholars differ in their opinions regarding the permissibility of acting upon weak hadith. The first view holds that weak hadith may not be acted upon under any circumstances. According to the schools of Imam Malik and Imam al-Shafi'i, as well as Yahya ibn Ma'in, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi, al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Ibn Hazm, and other leading hadith scholars, acting upon weak hadith is not permissible under any circumstances, including in matters related to *fada'il al-a'mal* (virtues of righteous deeds). The second view, attributed to Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, permits acting upon weak hadith subject to several stringent conditions (Al-Qasimy, 1987):

- The hadith must be used exclusively in matters concerning *fada'il al-a'mal*, *targhib* (encouragement toward virtuous deeds), and *tarhib* (warning against sinful deeds). It may not be used as a basis for matters of Islamic creed (*'aqidah*), legal rulings (*ahkam*), or Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*).
- The hadith must not be extremely weak. In particular, fabricated (*mawdu'*) and *munkar* hadiths, as well as reports whose origins are unclear, may not be used.
- The hadith must not be believed to be definitively the statement of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), nor should it be widely circulated or presented as an established prophetic statement.
- The hadith must have a general basis or supporting principle derived from an authentic (*sahih*) hadith.
- When transmitting or citing the hadith, it is obligatory to clarify that the hadith is weak.
- When transmitting a weak hadith, expressions indicating certainty or definitive attribution (*lafaz al-jazm*) should not be used, such as, "The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said," "The Prophet did such and such," or "The Prophet commanded or

prohibited such and such,” because such expressions imply certainty that the Prophet actually made the statement or performed the action in question. Instead, expressions of qualification (*lafaz al-tamridh*) should be employed, namely expressions that do not indicate definitive attribution. For example, one may say, “It has been narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him),” or use other expressions with a similar meaning.

The third view maintains that weak hadith may be acted upon without restriction. Abu Dawud and Imam Ahmad reportedly held that acting upon a weak hadith is preferable to relying solely on rational opinion (*ra'y*) or analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) (Al-Khatib, 1979). Specifically with regard to the *maqlub* hadith, greater caution is required, since the primary issue is not merely a minor weakness but a possible error of attribution. If the inversion causes the chain and text to no longer correspond, then the use of such a hadith in a sermon or piece of writing must still be accompanied by an explanation of its status. Researchers should use formulations such as "it is reported" or "there is a report that..." when the status has not been established, rather than attributing it absolutely to the Prophet.

The Relevance of the *Maqlub* Hadith in the Digital Era

The phenomenon of *maqlub* has gained new relevance in the digital era (Khabiiir, & Ridlo, 2025). Whereas classical scholars faced the problem of inversion through memorization, manuscripts, and oral transmission, modern society faces inversion through processes such as copy-pasting, text truncation, misattribution, automatic translation, and social-media algorithms. Furthermore, maintaining methodological integrity and textual accuracy in the digital age requires robust verification frameworks to prevent systematic distortions or algorithmic alterations in religious texts (Mujiadi, 2026). A hadith can be copied from one website to another without any verification of its source (Rosyad & Alif, 2023). In this process, a narrator's name, hadith number, translation, and even part of the text can become mixed up (Brown, 2012).

This digital media contextualization introduces unique epistemological challenges. Unchecked algorithmic recommendation loops and viral copying mechanics frequently amplify inverted text variants (*maqlub al-matn*) or swap attribution tags (*maqlub al-isnad*). Consequently, modern digital platforms function as hyper-accelerated vectors for transmission errors, mirroring classical scribal inversions but operating at global scale and instantaneous speed. A 2025 study on hadith criticism on social media shows that digital communities often face a literacy gap in verifying the authenticity of hadiths. That study emphasizes the need to integrate the principles of chain and text criticism into digital religious literacy education

(Abdillah et al., 2025). This finding reinforces the relevance of classical scholarly methods within this new context. The principle of *jam' al-turuq* can be applied through cross-searching hadith databases, while *muqaranah al-riwayat* can be conducted by comparing variations in chain and text across various digital compilations.

Digital technology can even serve as a supporting instrument for detecting *maqlub* (Umanah, 2024). Hadith databases can be used to map the appearance of narrators' names, teacher-student relationships, chain variations, and patterns in textual wording. Through a text-mining approach, researchers can identify shifts in the position of recurring words or phrases across various manuscripts and editions. Such technology does not replace the authority of hadith criticism but can help researchers detect patterns that are difficult to discern through manual reading (Suryadilaga & Qudsy, 2021). At the same time, the use of technology must be accompanied by caution. Algorithms can only identify similarities or differences in data, while determining whether a particular change constitutes *maqlub* requires knowledge of transmission history, narrator biography, the context of transmission, and the principles of hadith criticism (Munir, 2025). Accordingly, the digitization of hadith should be positioned as a research tool, not as a substitute for the methodology of hadith sciences.

Reconstructing Evidentiary Value: A Proposed Methodological Model

Based on the overall analysis, this study proposes a model for reconstructing the evidentiary value of the *maqlub* hadith through four interrelated epistemological stages. The first stage is identification—ensuring that the change found genuinely falls within the category of *maqlub* and is not merely a tolerable variation in wording. The second stage is comparison gathering all lines of transmission and comparing both chain and text. The third stage is reconstruction determining the strongest form of the report based on narrator credibility, chain continuity, textual consistency, and support from other lines. The fourth stage is evidentiary assessment determining whether the reconstructed form attains the degree of *sahih*, *hasan*, or remains unacceptable.

This model shows that "*maqlub*" constitutes a starting point of criticism, not necessarily the final point of assessment. When a researcher encounters a *maqlub* report, it is not sufficient to stop at the conclusion "this hadith is *maqlub*." The researcher must continue the investigation by asking: "What is the original form of this hadith?" and "Does that original form have an accountable line of transmission?". This framework also reinforces the relationship between chain criticism and text criticism. If the inversion occurs in the chain, the researcher must examine the teacher-student relationship and the quality of the narrators. If the inversion occurs in the text, the researcher must compare the wording and meaning with other reports. If the

inversion occurs in both the chain and the text simultaneously, the research must be conducted more comprehensively, since the risk of misattribution is greater.

From an epistemological standpoint, this study shows that the evidentiary value of a hadith does not depend solely on the label attached to a report but on the quality of the verification process applied to that report. A hadith that has undergone inversion in one line may still possess correct substance if another line proves it. Conversely, a hadith that appears to have a sound chain remains unacceptable if comparative research reveals an inversion that undermines its attribution or the relationships within its chain. Accordingly, the *maqlub* hadith must be situated within a dynamic framework of *naqd al-hadith* (hadith criticism). The label *maqlub* signals the existence of a transmission problem, but the final decision regarding evidentiary value must follow the results of thorough research. This principle simultaneously guards against two extremes: first, accepting a *maqlub* hadith outright simply because its text seems sound; and second, absolutely rejecting the substance of a hadith merely because one of its lines has been proven to have undergone inversion.

Critical Synthesis: The Limits of the Evidentiary Value of the *Maqlub* Hadith

The findings of this study show that at least three conditions must be distinguished. First, a *maqlub* report that cannot yet be reconstructed. Reports in this category cannot be used as *hujjah* because the form of transmission cannot be established with certainty. Second, a *maqlub* report that can be corrected through another, sound line. In this category, *hujjah* lies in the *sahih* form of the hadith after correction, not in the *maqlub* form. Third, a report that underwent inversion in the context of scholarly testing and was immediately corrected by the transmitter or hadith expert. Reports of this kind should not be understood as a *maqlub* hadith deliberately transmitted to be used as *hujjah*, but rather as part of a method for testing memorization and precision.

These findings show that the question "can the *maqlub* hadith be used as *hujjah*?" must, methodologically, be answered as follows: "not in its *maqlub* form, but possibly in its original form, if that original form can be proven through hadith research." This answer is more consistent with the principles of classical hadith criticism while also being more relevant to contemporary research. These findings also correct an overly simplistic understanding of the *da'if* hadith. The weakness of one chain does not automatically eliminate the possibility that the same hadith exists through another chain. Hadith research must therefore distinguish between *hukm al-riwayah* (the ruling on a particular report or line) and *hukm al-hadith* (the ruling on a hadith based on the totality of its lines and available evidence). This distinction

aligns with Ibn al-Shalah's explanation of the need to distinguish the weakness of a chain from the weakness of the text as a whole (Al-Zarkasyi, 2024).

In an academic context, this approach also encourages researchers not to use the term "*maqlub hadith*" without specifying its precise object. A researcher must state whether what is *maqlub* is the narrator's name, the order of the chain, a chain attached to a different text, or the wording of the text itself. Such specification will improve terminological precision and prevent readers from drawing overly general conclusions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the *maqlub* hadith is fundamentally a report that has undergone an inversion or exchange in the elements of its chain, its text, or both, such that its form of transmission deviates from what it should properly be. From the perspective of hadith sciences, a *maqlub* report proven to have undergone inversion cannot be used as *hujjah* in that defective form. The problem of *maqlub* relates directly to the validity of attribution and the accuracy of transmission, such that using it as a basis for legal rulings without a process of reconstruction runs contrary to the principle of caution in hadith criticism. Nevertheless, this study finds that the presence of *maqlub* in one line does not automatically render the substance of a hadith absolutely rejected. Hadith scholars distinguish the weakness of a chain from the weakness of a hadith as a whole. A text found within a *maqlub* line can still have its validity established if another, sound or stronger line is found that demonstrates the correct form of the report. Accordingly, evidentiary value must be granted to the form of the hadith that has been verified, not to the *maqlub* form proven to have undergone inversion.

This study also shows that identifying *maqlub* requires an integrative critical method. Researchers must gather all lines of transmission, compare chain and text, examine the biographies and teacher-student relationships of narrators, test variations in wording, and apply the principles of *i'tibar*, *muqaranah*, and *'ilal* criticism. In argumentative terms, the answer to the research question "can the *maqlub* hadith be used as *hujjah*?" is as follows: a *maqlub* report cannot be used as *hujjah* as long as its inversion remains uncorrected and its form of transmission cannot be established with certainty; but a hadith found within a *maqlub* report can still serve as *hujjah* if its original form can be successfully reconstructed and meets the criteria of a *maqbul* hadith through another, accountable line of transmission. Therefore, the term *maqlub* is more accurately understood as an indicator of a transmission problem requiring further research, rather than as an absolute verdict that the substance of a hadith is necessarily false.

The findings of this study carry important implications for hadith studies in the digital era. The changes, exchanges, and misattributions of hadith occurring through social media possess characteristics that can be epistemologically likened to the transmission problems that have long been addressed through chain and text criticism. Therefore, the methodology of hadith sciences must continue to be developed so that it remains capable of responding to new forms of transmission alteration without abandoning the fundamental principles of classical hadith criticism.

Future research could further develop the study of *maqlub* through empirical research on specific hadiths within the *Kutub al-Sittah* (the Six Canonical Collections) and other hadith compilations, using the *isnad-cum-matn* approach. Subsequent research could also make use of digital technology to build chain-network maps, identify variations in wording, and detect possible inversions of narrators' names or texts in a more systematic manner. The development of digital hadith criticism of this kind must continue to involve philological verification, the science of *rijal*, chain criticism, text criticism, and the study of 'ilal, so that technology does not replace scholarly methodology but instead expands researchers' capacity to conduct *jam' al-turuq* and *muqaranah al-riwayat*. Future research should also specifically examine the relationships among *maqlub*, *shadh*, *mudhtarib*, *mushahhaf*, *muharraf*, and *mu'allal*, so that the conceptual boundaries of each category become increasingly clear within contemporary hadith studies.

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