
Sunni Historiographical Orientation in the *Sīrah Nabawiyah* Curriculum at Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta

Muhamad Abror¹ and Imam Subchi^{2*}

¹ Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta, Indonesia

²Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received: December 25, 2025

Revised: January 25, 2026

Accepted: March 26, 2026

Published: June 30, 2026

Keywords:

sīrah historiography, Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah, Sunni, Islamic history

ABSTRACT

This article examines how Sunni historiography is taught through the *sīrah nabawiyah* curriculum at Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta, a pesantren-based higher education institution specializing in Prophetic biography. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's concept of historiography as a "textual operation," the study analyzes syllabi and seven prescribed textbooks (2023–2027) as institutional instruments that transmit and filter Sunni collective memory. Data were collected through textual analysis, short semi-structured interviews with curriculum implementers, thematic coding, and focused *takhrīj* of selected reports. The findings show that 62 of 160 credits ($\approx 39\%$) are devoted to *sīrah* studies, indicating the centrality of Prophetic history in shaping Sunni identity. The curriculum favors a linear historical narrative, a moral-theological framework, and reverence for authoritative Sunni scholars and transmitters. A notable example is the treatment of *Razīyyat Yawm al-Khamīs*, a significant historical report that appears in only one of the seven prescribed textbooks despite its prominence in classical sources. This suggests institutional selectivity regarding reports sensitive to Sunni–Shi'i historiographical debates. The study argues that contemporary pesantren higher education sustains Sunni historical narratives primarily through curricular control over what is taught and reproduced as orthodox knowledge. It concludes by advocating greater curricular diversity through new theoretical frameworks and critical methodologies.

© Abror & Subchi (2026)



This is an open-access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license

Correspondence Address:

Imam.subchi@uinjkt.ac.id

Please cite this article in APA Style as:

Abror, M., & Subchi, I. (2026). Sunni Historiographical Orientation in the *Sīrah Nabawiyah* Curriculum at Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta. *Mimbar Agama dan Budaya*, 43(1), (131-143). <https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i1.49963>

1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, Islamic scholarship is influenced by Sunni legal frameworks and by Asatidz in teaching and history. Azra describes the 17th to 19th-century Ḥaramayn–Nusantara network of scholars and their relationships with pesantren in an integrated model of Sunni scholarship, strengthened by the authority of sanad, the teaching of Islamic jurisprudence, and connections to Madrasah in Makkah and Madinah (Azra 2019). This model, with the support of local Islamic courts, created a Sunni scholarship model, patronage networks for local and regional Islamic jurisdictions, and local Sunni courts that remain to this day. In these frameworks, Sunni historiography is more than a school of thought, but an epistemic structure that determines modality in selecting which sources to accept as veracious, how and from where to draw the Prophetic tradition, and place the narrations within a normative and theological framework. In Sunni historiography, there is a focus on political and social stability, as well as consistency in the isnād and continuity in the Prophetic tradition. Sunni historiography also values the cleansing of history from the influence of the Shī'ī school by portraying the Ottomans as accommodating Sunni schools of law and the Safavids as coercively imposing Shī'ī orthodoxy (Manan and Taran 2020).

Bruinessen's studies on pesantren and kitab kuning show that Indonesia's traditional education system is based on an exclusive Sunni framework and incorporates Ash'arī theology, Shāfi'ī jurisprudence, and Ghazālian ethics and mysticism. The kitab kuning used for education is practically all classical Sunni and orthodox, and is indirectly designed to support orthodoxy via the sanad and the ijāzah systems (van Bruinessen 1994). Even contemporary Nusantara authors write in Arabic and utilize the Arabic script, indicating the ongoing connection with the Sunni tradition. Thus, kitab kuning plays the role of an education system and a social, political, and symbolic means of supporting and maintaining hegemony for Sunni Islam in Indonesia. The Sunni historiographical tradition sustained in the pesantren is in consonance with this tradition: history is seen as a discipline that needs to conform to the discipline of sanad, rather than an exercise in reconstructing empirical facts (Rohman et al. 2024).

This hegemony has an impact on the frameworks of education, which encompass the analysis of Islamic history. The Sunni tradition uses primary texts for the sīrah nabawiyah. These include Ibn Hishām's Sīrah, Ibn Kathīr's al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Ibn al-Athīr's al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, al-Mubārakfūrī's al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm, and Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī's Fiqh al-Sīrah. These texts write more than just a biography of the Prophet. They offer a procedure to the Sunni tradition, for instance, in choosing and organizing historical events and interpreting the motives behind them. However, although sīrah literature plays a major role in the development of the historical imagination of many Muslims, the studies that attempt to show how the Sunni historiographical tradition is reproduced in secondary school textbooks as opposed to classical texts are almost nonexistent.

Even in pesantren, there is not enough sīrah instruction. Bruinessen found that, among the 46 pesantren surveyed, only 10 (roughly 22%) taught 'Umar 'Abd al-Jabbār's Khulāṣah Nūr al-Yaqīn, a short foundational sīrah text (van Bruinessen 2012). By contrast, jurisprudence (fiqh) titles appeared in those pesantren more than twenty-eight times across the survey, ranging from elementary primers to advanced texts. There are few opportunities in the pesantren for systematic sīrah studies, despite sīrah studies being crucial to the turāth-based scholarship. Presently, sīrah

narratives are being utilized in the legitimation of morality, politics, and the social order in a wide range of Islamic discourses, particularly after the reawakening of the Sunni identity and the reaffirmation of religious authority (Sertkaya 2023).

Against this background, we have the Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta. As the only pesantren-based institute in Indonesia offering degree-level studies on *sīrah nabawiyah*, it employs, curates, and integrates many significant Sunni *sīrah* texts, both classical and modern. It is therefore necessary to analyze how it employs different kinds of teaching and learning styles to organize the texts and teaching resources it has chosen to use within the Sunni tradition of teaching history. It would also be important to analyze how it arranges and organizes courses to facilitate teaching the resources. As of March 2025, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has granted 91 operational permits (SK izin operasional) for Ma'had Aly institutions across the country (Kementerian Agama RI). Within this population, Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta is the only institution offering a degree-level focus on *sīrah nabawiyah*. The establishment of a Ma'had Aly is expected to serve as a representative center for Sunni *turāth*. For this reason, focusing on how this institution reproduces studies of the *Sīrah* and the historiography of Sunni Islam is also important for understanding the orthodoxies and innovations incorporated into modern methods of teaching.

The *sīrah* textbooks at Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah express how the Sunni tradition rewrites its story based on the higher-education contexts of the pesantren. Conserving and negotiating the adaptation of the Sunni tradition of the Prophet's story to contemporary frameworks of formal education is important for understanding the constraints of modern curriculum design in structuring, conceptual framing, and methodological selection. The curriculum and design structures employed by this institution preserve, teach, and extend the Sunni historiography tradition. Therefore, the institution's significance goes beyond the authorship of *sīrah* texts. The modernization of pesantren and its relation to the national education curriculum, the changing authority of the *kiai*, and the politics of education have been the focus of some recent studies (Abdul Malik 2024; Hanif et al. 2024; Musaddad 2023; Yani et al. 2022). Research on *sīrah* literature in Indonesia focuses on the analysis of individual texts and comparative studies of different texts (Abror and Rahma 2024). To our knowledge, the literature has not yet addressed *sīrah* textbooks within pesantren higher education and their role in restating Sunni historiography. This research addresses this gap and provides new ways to analyze the curriculum using pedagogical authority to highlight the ways that religious and historical narratives are integrated.

The focus of this research is new and exciting. Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah gives an opportunity to explore the connection between modern-day academic practices and Sunni historiographical *turāth*. The *sīrah* textbooks from this institution display more than just traditional information. They show a combination of select institutional narratives and various methods of information organization. This research makes a contribution to understanding how formal higher education in Indonesia conveys Sunni orthodoxy. It also illustrates the importance and the integration of the Sunni historiographical tradition in the modern academic structure of pesantren.

2. METHODS

This study takes a descriptive-analytical method to focus on historiography in text form. As per Paul Ricoeur, historiography is a “textual operation”, and this is the form of historiography that this method follows. Ricoeur states that to gain historical form, something from the past has to be written about, reconstructed from some archival documents, and packaged in a narrative (Ricoeur 2004). In this context, *sīrah nabawīyah* textbooks are seen as more than information booklets. They are forms of representation (*la représentation*) by which collective memories are mediated, organized, and structured in a pedagogical format. This study looks at how Sunni historiography is formed by the Ma’had Aly Sa’iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta curriculum by describing the layout and design of the curriculum and the teaching materials in the official educational law textbooks.

The researchers spoke only with members of the curriculum development team and course instructors to confirm the use and placement of textbooks and the teaching methods applied. The syllabi and textual materials were analyzed without disturbing the teaching process. The study focuses on the *sīrah nabawīyah* textbooks prescribed in the Ma'had Aly curriculum cycle of 2023–2027, drawing on both classical and contemporary works recognized within Sunni education. These texts are as follows: *Ar-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm* (*al-Mubārakfūrī*), *Sīrah Nabawīyah* (*Ibn Hishām*), *Tahdhīb al-Sīrah li-Ibn Hishām* (ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn), *Fiqh al-Sīrah* (*Sa’īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī*), *Tārīkh Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn* (*al-Suyūṭī*), *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (‘Abd al-Ṣabūr Marzūq), *Al-Shamā’ il al-Muḥammadiyah* (*al-Tirmidhī*). The study aims to restrict the references in the book lists to the approved book lists in

This research will analyze academic tradition, selective teaching methods, and biases toward history. It will help in preventing the classification of selective teaching methods as a type of bias, as it will focus more on established Sunni classical texts and ways of interpretation. It can be seen as use of intellectual teaching methods as educational restrictions and teaching aids (for example, time limits or age-appropriate teaching) can result in a variety of teaching aids that can be, and often are, pedagogical selective teaching methods. However, a historiographical bias will only be recognized if there is a repetitive tendency within a course that limits differing historical accounts, imposes a certain interpretative framework to limit students' conception of history to a single normative outcome regardless of the books used and the syllabus. Therefore, this research does not classify a certain Sunni book as biased, but analyzes the ways bias is manifested in the course in terms of focus, course structure, teaching aids, and course selection.

Data collection combined documentary compilation with short semi-structured interviews. The documentary corpus comprised the prescribed textbooks, syllabi, and reference lists related to *sīrah*. Six interviews (approximately 30–45 minutes each, conducted in Bahasa Indonesia between 15 and 25 December 2025) were carried out with curriculum developers and lecturers responsible for *sīrah nabawīyah* courses, with the number of interviewees determined by the instructional use of each resource. Participants gave informed consent prior to participation, and interviews were recorded and transcribed where permitted. The interviews aimed to confirm which books were taught, where they were placed in the curriculum, how the curriculum was designed, and how instructors understood the texts they delivered; they were not designed to assess classroom interaction or pedagogical practice. This procedure provided contextual confirmation while keeping the analytical focus textual.

Analyzing data means looking closely at details and making comparisons. In this case, everything is being read and assigned a code based on certain factors. The factors being used in this example are: (1) Having a linear narrative (2) how the isnād and variant reports are depicted (3) how history is portrayed versus how moral theological instruction is portrayed, (4) how disputed sections of history about leadership struggles after the Prophet's death are portrayed (5) and lastly, how alternative intra-Sunni or non-Sunni references are portrayed. When applied to the seven textbooks and their accompanying curricula, these factors reveal how the curricula may reflect standard teacher preferences or, more likely, a restrictive approach to historiography.

The case of Razīyyat Yawm al-Khamīs (the Thursday tragedy) takes special prominence for its critical role in the arguments regarding succession between Sunnis and Shī'ah and has been the focus of many scholars. This case is important not because of the value of a single report in discerning the framework of a whole curriculum, but because the report's presence, absence, or manner of reporting provides insight into the curriculum's treatment of a historically well-known yet sensitive report. To enhance the credibility of the sources, the study incorporates the specialized form of *takhrij al-hadith* in relation to the reports. The results are interpreted in a manner that makes evident how the Sunni tradition of history writing is evident in the choices of sources, the order of presentation, the emphasis, and the construction of the narratives in the context of higher learning institutions (*pesantrens*) in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Curriculum Profile and the Structure of Sīrah Instruction

The curriculum of Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta places significant emphasis on *sīrah nabawīyah*. Therefore, *sīrah nabawīyah* is not seen in the curriculum of Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta as a supplementary or peripheral subject, but as the central framework of the curriculum. Of 160 total credit units (SKS), 62 ($\approx 39\%$) are devoted to the study of *sīrah*. This shows that the Prophet's biography is either a prime or a major focus of the curriculum. The curriculum should not be solely interpreted as a system of instruction. It needs to be interpreted as a structure of knowledge and as a system of prioritization that focuses on which historical documents are to be emphasized, the sequence of the historical documents, and what kind of religious and historical literacy is to be provided to the students.

The core of the curriculum comprises Takhasus courses, concentration courses, and development courses. The concentration courses serve as an analytical framework, and the development courses adapt the content to other forms of media, including, but not limited to, historical films and novels. The way these courses are organized at the formal level suggests a wide range of options. The provided materials, when considered together, reveal a curriculum that, holistically, is dominated by a Sunni view of historiography. This focus does not mean that the curriculum is devoted to polemics, nor does the focus on Sunni sources mean that those sources are problematic. The cumulative impact of the selections and order of the sources is the real concern. Throughout the curriculum, students are given little to no exposure to various historiographical frameworks and writings. Thus, students are likely to encounter *Sīrah* primarily through sources that are dominated by interpretative, moral, and devotional frameworks of a consistent Sunni narrative.

The *Ar-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm* text is a key primary source in this program. For a total of 12 credits, it describes the life of the Prophet Muhammad at a beginner and then at an advanced level. For a teaching resource, it is the clearest, most digestible, and easiest to read. It is easy to simplify and, in most cases, the *isnāds* and less popular views are gone. This is a reasonable step for a teacher, as you must simplify the process when teaching, especially to novices. However, that said, it may be framing the study of *sīrah* too simplistically, especially given that linear narratives are popular in introductory history courses due to the overwhelming array of perspectives often encountered in academic history. The point here is less to do with the text, and more to do with the place this text is given in the curriculum, and the role it serves as an interpretatively rigid beginning, and as a foundational narrative, that justifies a number of historical certainties (Solikin 2025).

Including Ibn Hishām's *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah* in the program for two semesters (adding 12 credits) brings greater classical authority to the curriculum. Ibn Hishām is the most important survivor of Ibn Ishāq (whose original work is lost) and is thus of great importance to the Sunni *sīrah* tradition. His text, however, is an edited and permanent account. In the curriculum, Ibn Hishām appears more as a given (assumed) authority rather than a subject of historiographical problem. This strengthens the authority of the text, but does not allow students to question how the editing of the text affects the way history is told (Muhajid 2025; Solikin 2025). Therefore, classical authority is maintained but does not open the possibility of critical questioning about how *sīrah* is constructed.

Something similar happens with 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn's *Tahdhīb al-Sīrah li Ibn Hishām*. This course lasts for three semesters and grants students six credits. This book is an abridged version, so it is easier to structure a course around it than the original. This is especially true for students who would have trouble reading the original text. However, abridged versions also cut out a lot of extra details and reduce the amount of different texts students are exposed to. For the most part, this is a case of abridged texts focused on pedagogy rather than on bias in historiography. Although using these texts is pedagogically defensive, there is a severe focus on pedagogy when a lot of simplified texts are used throughout a course and across different courses. This is especially true when we think about the different aspects of historiography that students are exposed to (Anwar 2025; Solikin 2025).

Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī's *Fīqh al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*, taught over two semesters, is imperative in clarifying the normative dimension of the curriculum. This work is not a piece of critical history and does not reconstruct historical events. It, rather, identifies events of the *sīrah* and interprets them as instances of moral, theological, and legal instruction. Within the curriculum, this work is not peripheral. History is not merely the record of a succession of events. It serves as a vehicle for the instruction of values. It, thus, strengthens the program's formative dimension. However, it also indicates that the narration of history is generally conducted with regard to the significance that the events should have, rather than being focused on a thorough examination of the plurality of the text, or historiographical criticism (Masrur 2025; Solikin 2025).

There's a similar trend in al-Suyūṭī's *Tārīkh Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn*, which spans four semesters. The text does not represent the *sīrah* [biography] of the Prophet in the strict sense, but its placement describes the educational progression from the biography of the Prophet to the validation of the early caliphs. This is important as it relates the life of the Prophet to a

conventional [Sunni] account of political order after the Prophet's passing. Along those lines, the syllabus does not simply teach the life of the Prophet. It incorporates this teaching within a broader [Sunni] context of political order and cohesion of the community cohesion. Most important is the establishment of legitimacy and the perception of stability within the polity, while legitimately disputed alternatives are presented only briefly.

The concentration texts further support this. In his book, 'Abd al-Ṣabūr Marzūq, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, situates the *sīrah* in the context of the Qur'ān, thereby providing additional theological support for the historical account. This offers a more enriching perspective for devotional and exegetical purposes. However, it also tends to harmonize rather than problematize the relationship between scripture and history (Malik 2025). Al-Tirmidhī's *Al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyah* brings the curriculum to the realm of the prophetic virtues and personal attributes. His contribution to the curriculum is essential because it demonstrates that historical knowledge is not limited to past events. It also brings reverence, respect, and attachment to the Prophet. This focus in the curriculum is fully within the bounds of the Sunni tradition; however, in the context of the curriculum, it also shifts the curriculum away from the debate of history and toward devotional purposes (Masrur 2025).

Including historical books and movies in developmental courses seems to diversify the methods and mediums. Sadly, there's evidence that these types of media often reinforce established views and do not print representations that can be analyzed and compared critically. At the risk of being overly simplistic, we can say that these materials expand the mode of delivery, but they do not really change the historiographical scope of the curriculum (Solikin 2025). The same is true for the addition of modern fields such as historiography, philology, anthropology, and archaeology. Their inclusion represents an expansion in scholarship, but in actuality, they appear to be more peripheral than central. They may improve the presentation of *sīrah*, but only to a slight degree do they encourage reopening the established narrative to extended contestation (Solikin 2025; Syafii 2025).

Taken together, these features point to a coherent curricular pattern. The sequence facilitates cumulative engagement with Sunni texts, prioritizes works that integrate moral and theological reflection, and leaves only limited structural space for competing narratives or alternative historiographies. The result is not a defect of the Sunni tradition itself, but a curricular orientation in which the formal study of *sīrah* is channeled along a narrow range of interpretive pathways.

3.2. Representation of Sunni Historiographical Tradition in the Textbook Corpus

The seven textbooks used at Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah are not direct examples of anti-Shī'ī polemics. Their significance lies in a quieter but more decisive mechanism: the formation of a Sunni canon through curricular selection. Rather than confronting alternative historiographies openly, these texts normalize a particular way of remembering the Prophet's life. They present *sīrah* through the authority of the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, classical transmission, and moral-theological interpretation. In this framework, Sunni historiography is reproduced not by explicit sectarian attack, but by making one narrative appear stable, authoritative, and pedagogically sufficient.

This pattern becomes clearer when the authors are examined together. Ibn Hishām occupies a foundational position because his recension of Ibn Ishāq became the most widely transmitted

version of the Prophet's biography in Sunni tradition. His authority does not rest on historical criticism in the modern sense, but on textual stabilization, selective transmission, and *isnād*-based legitimacy (Ibn Hishām 2019). By placing Ibn Hishām at the center of instruction, the curriculum affirms a conservative Sunni model in which inherited textual reliability is prioritized over reconstructive skepticism. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn's *Tahdhīb al-Sīrah* extends this model by abridging and refining the classical narrative, making it easier for students to access while also reducing their exposure to variant reports and the complexity of early transmission (Qaṭṭān 2022).

Al-Suyūṭī and al-Tirmidhī strengthen this orientation from different directions. Al-Suyūṭī's *Tārīkh Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn* connects the Prophet's biography to the legitimacy of the early caliphal order, thereby extending *sīrah* instruction into a Sunni account of political continuity. Al-Tirmidhī's *Al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyah* moves the curriculum toward devotional memory by portraying the Prophet through his virtues, physical qualities, and exemplary character. Together, these works show that *sīrah* is not taught merely as past events. It becomes a medium for cultivating reverence, moral formation, and acceptance of a normative Sunni memory of early Islam (Dhanani 2007).

Al-Mubārakfūrī's *Ar-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm* adds a more complex layer. The author's intellectual genealogy within the North Indian Ahl al-Ḥadīth tradition, closely associated with Salafī manhaj, differs from the Ash'arī-Shāfi'ī-Ghazālīan synthesis dominant in Indonesian pesantren; its textualist anti-*taqlīd* tendency could therefore generate ideological tension. Yet the book is easily incorporated because its narrative is linear, restrained, and broadly acceptable within Sunni circles. Al-Mubārakfūrī avoids explicit Salafī polemics and rarely cites authorities such as Ibn Taymiyyah, allowing the text to function as a concise, non-disruptive account of the Prophet's life. Although his genealogy is Salafī-leaning, the work is sufficiently generic to be absorbed into traditional Sunni frameworks, revealing the curriculum's selective appropriation and epistemic caution ('Allāh 2017).

Al-Būṭī and Marzūq further confirm this mechanism. Al-Būṭī's *Fiqh al-Sīrah* fits pesantren culture because it combines Sunni law, Ash'arī theological sensibility, and ethical-spiritual reflection. It does not reopen the historical record as a contested field, but extracts moral, legal, and theological lessons from it (Ja'barī 2015). Marzūq's *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, shaped by modern Azharī learning, offers a literary and Qur'ānic mode of interpretation while remaining firmly within Sunni orthodoxy (Marzūq n.d.). In both works, the past is not treated as an unstable arena of competing memories, but as a source of normative instruction harmonized with scripture and doctrine.

The corpus is therefore not homogeneous in authorship, genre, or method. It includes classical *sīrah* transmission, ḥadīth scholarship, Azharī philology, Ahl al-Ḥadīth narration, Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī moral theology, and devotional ḥadīth literature. Yet the curriculum filters these differences into a coherent Sunni historiographical structure. Diversity exists at the level of background, but not at the level of interpretive horizon. The textbooks converge in privileging linear narration, reverence for transmitted authority, moral-theological framing, and the legitimacy of Sunni memory.

For this reason, the issue is not simply that the authors are Sunni. That would be too crude an argument. The more precise point is that the curriculum produces a Sunni historiographical orientation through the cumulative arrangement of texts. Each book may be legitimate when read individually, but together they create a narrow field of historical imagination. Alternative intra-

Sunni accounts, politically sensitive reports, and non-Sunni historiographical perspectives remain structurally marginal. Thus, the textbook corpus functions as an epistemic filter: it does not silence plurality directly, but limits its curricular presence and makes one narrative appear authoritative, natural, and sufficient academically.

3.3. The Focal Case of Razīyyat Yawm al-Khamīs

Examining Razīyyat Yawm al-Khamīs illustrates an example of the development of the Sunni curriculum in the historiography of the Seera. This narration is of particular importance due to its significance. It is found in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, one of the most authoritative ḥadīth collections in Sunni Islam. It is also one of the most controversial reports in the discussion between Sunni and Shīʿī scholars regarding leadership after the Prophet. Thus, this curriculum's inclusion, exclusion, and/or framing of this narration allows us to understand the division of the ordinary selection of the pedagogy, and historiographical bias.

The report speaks of an event happening on the Thursday before the Prophet died. From what we know, the Prophet asked to have writing materials to write something so the community wouldn't go astray. Some of the Companions supported that, while ʿUmar said the Prophet's sickness was worse and that the Qurʾān was enough. The argument grew, and the Prophet asked the people to leave. In the future of Islamic memory, Ibn ʿAbbās said it was a major disaster because the instruction was never written. That's why the event is called Razīyyat Yawm al-Khamīs, or "the Thursday tragedy" (al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-ʿIlm; see al-ʿAsqalānī 1986).

Out of the seven textbooks we looked at, including Al-Mubarakfuri's Ar-Rahiq al-Maktoum, Ibn Hisham's Sira Nabawiyah, Abd al-Salam Harun's Tahdhib al-Sirah, Sa'id Ramadan al-Bouti's Fiqh al-Sirah, al-Suyuti's Tarikh Khulafa al-Rashidin, Abd al-Sabur Marzouq's Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah fi al-Qur'an al-Karim, and al-Tirmidhi's Al-Shamail al-Muhammadiyah, only Ar-Rahiq al-Maktoum includes this narration. In the examples given, the narration is presented in the form of content (matn) and does not provide the full chain of transmission (isnad). This is similar to modern synthetic sira writing, which tends to document the narration in a clear format. (Abror and Rahma 2024).

Having this report in at least one textbook is important for the reason that it's an example of some sensitive content being allowed into the curriculum. The other six of the seven provided textbooks do not discuss this material. Even though it's in a persistent standard Sunni source. Just because it's not in these other textbooks does not mean it was intentionally hidden. There are many reasons for excluding a report, such as genre, scope, and pedagogical focus. When a report is excluded from the curriculum as a whole, it reveals more than just one author's preference. It shows that students who go through the sira program will have little exposure to this report, which is important for understanding the last days of the Prophet and the issue of succession.

This pattern connects to something Abbas Barzegar said. In his view, choosing ḥadīths in Sunni history could mean two things: recording history and writing a new history that runs counter to existing ideas and teaching methods (Barzegar 2010). Barzegar points out that in the scholarly community, it's not enough to establish that a report is authentic. It's just as important to determine how the community handles narrations that will challenge the existing frameworks of legitimacy. Reports that might go against Sunni beliefs will be sidelined or (re)positioned, despite the fact that the reports are recognized in the Sunni canon.

Reading the sources alongside Shī'ī historiography shows that Shī'ī narrators pay greater attention to the Ahl al-Bayt, 'Alī, and post-Prophetic events such as Saqīfah and the Ridda wars in their narrative framing (Yaghoubzadeh and Ahmadvand 2022). Within Shī'ī narrations, Razīyyat Yawm al-Khamīs is read as the Prophet trying to appoint 'Alī as his successor, but Shī'ī narrations argue that, owing to the politics surrounding the Prophet's death and its aftermath, the Prophet's designation of 'Alī as his successor did not take effect (al-Anṣārī n.d.; al-Mufīd n.d.). By contrast, the Sunni view situates the events of Yawm al-Khamīs within the framework of the Qur'ān's sufficiency, the Ummah's deliberation and consensus, and the Ummah's subsequent agreement on Abū Bakr's leadership (al-'Asqalānī 1986).

A report doesn't have to be just one simple form. Miskinzoda says that stories can have multiple versions with different wording, participants, and Prophet's instructions and their possible meanings. For example, Ibn Sa'd has a few accounts in which some say the Prophet requested written assistance, while others record him requesting instructions on how to deal with polytheists in Arabia, how to receive delegations, how to pray, how to give alms, and how to deal with slaves. There are accounts that mention 'Umar's objection, while others have accounts with comments on 'Alī, the Prophet's wives, and the other people that were present (Miskinzoda 2014). These multiple accounts mean that this report has a lot of room for interpretation and is not just a neutral account of the event.

Because of this, the way schools handle Razīyyat Yawm al-Khamīs shows that schools are given leeway in how much they want to show. The reports are not completely gone or not talked about in some way. Instead, they remain on the side. This is how bias shows: not through using Sunni texts, but by arranging the curriculum in such a way that students don't have a lot of access to texts that can be disruptive to a narrative. As a result, the scholarly ways to study early Islamic leaders become more limited.

3.4. Toward a More Balanced Historiographical Pedagogy

The findings do not require Ma'had Aly Sa'iidusshiddiqiyah to abandon its Sunni identity. The real issue is whether a Sunni curriculum can remain doctrinally rooted while also training students to recognize how historical narratives are selected, authorized, contested, and transmitted. A stronger curriculum would therefore not replace Ibn Hishām, al-Mubārakfūrī, al-Būṭī, al-Suyūṭī, or al-Tirmidhī. These works remain indispensable for preserving the Sunni sīrah canon. What is needed is an additional comparative layer that allows students to see how Sunni historiography itself contains different degrees of openness toward politically sensitive reports.

In this respect, Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī's al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah and al-Jawharī's al-Saqīfah wa-Fadak should not be introduced merely as "contested" or marginal works. They are better understood as examples of Sunni historiographical courage: works associated with Sunni scholars who were willing to narrate difficult episodes in early Islamic history, including the Prophet's final illness, Saqīfah, Fadak, and succession, even when such reports risked provoking suspicion. Their inclusion of pro-'Alī perspectives or reports highlighting political tension does not automatically make them Shī'ī; rather, it shows a willingness to preserve narrative complexity within the broader Sunni historical tradition. The suspicion directed at these authors reflects intra-communal polemical sensitivity more than rigorous sectarian classification. In the case of al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah, the debate over attribution itself is pedagogically valuable, since students

can examine how Sunni scholarship negotiates authorship, source reliability, sectarian suspicion, and historical objectivity (Abū ‘Ubaydah Mashhūr, 1995; Erbil, 2020; Goeje, 1908; Varol, 2003).

A mini-course on comparative historiography would therefore strengthen, not weaken, the Sunni curriculum. Its aim would not be to teach that all narratives are equally valid, but to train students to distinguish between authoritative transmission, selective omission, polemical accusation, and responsible historical narration. Reading the core *sīrah* textbooks alongside carefully chosen Sunni works that preserve more difficult materials would show that Sunni historiography is not monolithic. It contains both canon-preserving and critically expansive tendencies. Such an approach would help students understand not only how Sunni tradition protects communal memory, but also how some Sunni historians narrated the past with greater openness, even at the cost of being misunderstood.

CONCLUSION

This study shows how the *sīrah* nabawiyah curriculum at Ma’had Aly Sa’iidusshiddiqiyah Jakarta treats learning materials. The curriculum acts as a system that stabilizes and reproduces a Sunni historiographical orientation. The findings do not show that the curriculum relies only on the Sunni texts. The bias emerges at the curricular level when the patterns of selection, sequencing, and omission limit the historiographical possibilities available to the students.

The curriculum allocates a substantial share of credits to *sīrah*, relies on an editorially organized Sunni corpus, and consistently favors linear narration combined with moral-theological framing. It also exhibits selective treatment of reports that are canonically present but politically sensitive. This case is important, not because it shows how Sunni tradition can be discredited, but how curriculum can be used to demonstrate a technique of epistemic closure: it specifies not just the content of teaching, but what types of historical realities are coming into existence within the formal academic environment, and what are therefore discussable and legitimate in scholarly discourse.

The study contributes to both the methodology and the substance of this field. It shows that contemporary Sunni narratives within the pesantren are shaped not only by inherited authority but also by modern institutional organization. Through the methods and emphases that instructors adopt, textbook selection, course design, and pedagogical style together shape how the life of the Prophet is articulated. In this respect, contemporary pedagogy does not merely transmit older methods of historical instruction; it structures, stabilizes, and adapts them to present-day educational forms.

The article suggests not completely changing the Sunni system, but expanding it. Developing a better curriculum could keep the genealogy intact while including comparative intra-Sunni analysis and modules on historiographical methods. These changes would not erase the institution’s identity. On the contrary, it would allow students to better equip themselves to differentiate between distortions of scholarly tradition, censorship in teaching, and historiographical bias. This research may be further developed to look at the ways in which students incorporate *sīrah* narratives in their academic writing, in what ways instructors actually deal with sensitive issues in historiography, and the ways other Ma’had Aly institutions do put together different combinations of orthodoxy, curriculum and historical knowledge.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Malik. 2024. “New Variants of Ultra-Conservative Islamic Schools in Indonesia: A Study on Islamic School Endeavor with Islamic Group Movement.” *Power and Education* 16 (1): 14–28.
- Abror, Muhammad, and Awalia Rahma. 2024. “Sira Nabawiyya: Historiography of the Prophet Muhammad by Three Modern Writers.” *Buletin Al-Turas* 30 (1): 25–38.
- Abū ‘Ubaydah Mashhūr. 1995. *Kutub Ḥazzir Minhā Al-‘Ulamā’*. Vol. 2. Dār al-Shamī‘ī.
- Anṣārī, Muḥammad Bāqir al-. n.d. *Kitāb Sulaym Ibn Qays*. Vol. 1. <https://lib.eshia.ir/15224/1/324/%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%89#>.
- Anwar, Mohammad. 2025. *Personal Interview*. December 25.
- Azra, Azyumardi. 2019. *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. University of Hawai‘i Press.
- Barzegar, Abbas. 2010. *Remembering Community: Historical Narrative in the Formation of Sunni Islam*.
- Bruinessen, Martin van. 1994. “Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Maintenance and Continuation of a Tradition of Religious Learning.” In *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World*, edited by Wolfgang Marschall. University of Berne.
- Bruinessen, Martin van. 2012. *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, Dan Tarekat Islam Di Nusantara*. Gading Publishing.
- Būṭī, Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-. 1991. *Fiḥ Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*. Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir.
- Dhanani, Alnoor. 2007. “Suyūṭī: Abū al-Faḍl ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī.” In *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, edited by Thomas Hockey, Virginia Trimble, Thomas R. Williams, and Katherine Bracher. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-30400-7_1350.
- Donaldson, Dwight M. 1933. *The Shi‘ite [Shiite] Religion: A History of Islam in Persia and Irak [Iraq]*. Edited by 1st. Luzak & Company.
- Erbil, Kadir. 2020. “İbn Kuteybe ve El-İmāme ve’s-Siyāse.” *UMDE Dini Tetkikler Dergisi – UMDE Journal of Religious Inquiries* 3 (1): 141–58.
- Goeje, M. J. de. 1908. “Kitāb Al-Imāma Wa’s-Siyāsa.” *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 1 (3): 415–21.
- Yaghoubzadeh, Hadi, and Abbas Ahmadvand. 2022. “Imāmiyya and Sīra Writing in the Second and Fourth Centuries AH.” *Religious Inquiries* 11 (2): 123–40.
- Hanif, Muh., H. Suwito Mukroji, Afīq Chamim Mubaroq, and Abu Dharin. 2024. “Pesantren Resistance to Indonesia’s National Curriculum to Defend Its Curriculum Model.” *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental* 18 (7): 1–32.
- Hārūn, ‘Abd al-Salām. 1975. *Tahdhīb Al-Sīrah Li-Ibn Hishām*. Mu‘assasat al-Risālah.
- Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. 1986. *Fath Al-Bārī*. Vol. 10. Dār al-Rayyān li al-Turāth.
- Ibn Hishām, ‘Abd al-Malik. 2019. *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*. Dār Ibn Kathīr.
- Jawharī, Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-. 2011. *Al-Saqīfah Wa-Fadak*. Al-Amānah al-‘Āmmah al-Muqaddasah.
- Ja‘barī, Samīr Rubīn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm al-. 2015. “Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī Wa-Ārā’uhu al-I‘tiqādiyyah: ‘Arḍ Wa-Naqd Fī Ḍaw’ ‘Aqīdat al-Salaf.” Master’s thesis, Jāmi‘at al-Khalīl (Hebron University).
- Kementerian Agama RI. “Enam Ma’had Aly Terima IJOP, Total 91 Lembaga Sudah Kantongi Izin.” <https://kemenag.go.id/ar/nasional/enam-ma-had-aly-terima-ijop-total-91-lembaga-sudah-kantongi-izin-5G2YB>.
- Malik, Abdurrahman. 2025. *Personal Interview*. December 15.
- Manan, Abdul, and Jovial Pally Taran. 2020. “The Sunni-Shia Conflict in the History of Islam:

- An Analytical Descriptive Study.” *Palita: Journal of Social Religion Research* 5 (2). <https://doi.org/10.24256/pal.v5i2.1327>.
- Marzūq, ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr. 1981. *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah Fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*. [publisher not stated].
- Marzūq, ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr. n.d. “‘Abd Al-Ṣabūr Marzūq.” Ministry of Awqaf – Official Platform of the Egyptian Government. <https://awkafoonline.gov.eg/about/entities/249/-أد-عبد-الصبور-مرزوق>.
- Masrur, Labib Najih. 2025. *Personal Interview*. (Jakarta), December 15.
- Miskinzoda, Gurdofarid. 2014. “The Story of ‘Pen and Paper’ and Its Interpretation in Muslim Literary and Historical Tradition.” In *The Study of Shi‘i Islam: History, Theology and Law*, edited by Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- Mubārakfūrī, Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-. 2007. *Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm*. Wizārat al-Awqāf.
- Mufīd, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu‘mān al-. n.d. *Al-Amālī*. Vol. 1. <https://lib.eshia.ir/15035/1/36/حفض>.
- Muhajid, Taufan Azhari. 2025. *Personal Interview*. December 25.
- Musaddad, Ahmad. 2023. “Transformation of Islamic Boarding Schools as Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia.” *Journal of Islamic Education Research* 4 (1): 74–80.
- Qaṭṭān, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Badr al-. 2022. “Shaykh Al-Muḥaqqiqīn ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn Fī Riḥlat Ḥayāh (1–2).” *Majallat Al-Mujtama‘*, October 20. https://mugtama.com/articles/2_1_رحلة_حياة_في_رحلة_عبدالسلام_هارون_في_رحلة_حياة_2.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rohman, Abdul, Mulyani Mudis Taruna, Mustolehudin Wahab, and Mintarti. 2024. “Islamic Boarding School Policy in Response to the Transmission of Transnational Religious Ideologies in Klaten, Indonesia.” *Cogent Education* 12 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2436291>.
- Sertkaya, Suleyman. 2023. “Sīrah Philosophy: A Modern Trajectory for Sīrah Studies.” *Religions* 14 (11): 1440.
- Solikin, Nur. 2025. *Personal Interview*. December 25.
- Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-. 2013. *Tārīkh Khulafā’ Al-Rāshidīn*. Dār al-Minhāj.
- Syafii, Sufyan. 2025. *Personal Interview*. December 18.
- Tirmidhī, Abū ‘Īsā al-. 2001. *Al-Syamā’il al-Muḥammadiyah*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- Varol, M. Bahauddin. 2003. “‘El-Īmāme ve’s-Siyāse İsimli Eserin Müellifi İbn Kuteybe Midir?” *İslamî Araştırmalar Dergisi* 16 (2): 308–21.
- Yani, Muhammad Turhan, Choirul Mahfud, S.A.P. Rangga Sa’adillah, Mohammad Reevany Bustami, Maskurie, and Ahmad Taufiq. 2022. “Advancing the Discourse of Muslim Politics in Indonesia: A Study on Political Orientation of Kiai as Religious Elites in Nahdlatul Ulama.” *Heliyon* 8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e12218>.
- ‘Allāh, Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad. 2017. *Al-Ta’līq ‘alā al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm*. 1st ed. Dār al-Tadmurīyah. <https://shamela.ws/book/14572>.