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Sufistic Approach in Understanding Hadith: Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's Viewpoint

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Abstract: This article studies al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's viewpoints toward understanding hadith on his work "Nawādir al-Uṣūl fī Ma'rifat Aḥādīth al-Rasūl." Using the content analysis approach, this study reveals that the primary purpose of transmitting hadith is that the hadith's message is supposed to be practiced so that happiness in the hereafter can be achieved, not just transmitting hadith from one person to another without any practical implication. So, it not only orients on the chain of transmission but also profoundly understands the *matan* or its contents. He quotes some hadith in his works to expose the meaning and the essence contained in every hadith and hopes that it can be a guideline of *sulūk* for those who intend to get closer (*taqarrub*) to God. Hence, the Sufism viewpoint becomes his basic epistemology in understanding the hadith.

Contribution: This article provides a new perspective of the hadith transmitter requirement according to al-Tirmidhī, namely, having a critical view towards everything that is heard and accepted. It also shows that understanding hadith is not just to reveal its meaning but a *sulūk* for those who want to get closer to Allah.

Keywords: al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī; commentaries; Sufi hadith transmitter

Introduction

The esoteric dimension of Islam has been characterized by Sufism. Sufism, a word equivalent to the Arabic term *al-taṣawwuf*, is the teachings and practices related to the path leading directly to God (*al-ṭarīqa ila Allāh*). According to Hussein Nasr, Sufism is like the heart of the body of Islam, invisible from the outside but providing nourishment for the whole organism. The inner spirit breathes in the outward forms of religion.¹ Later, Sufism developed from individual mystical experience into an organized community as a Sufi order, which served the types of *dhikr* (remembering the God), spiritual exercises, and *irshād* (guidance).

Initially, Sufism tried to imitate the Prophet's personality and deeds, such as modesty and ascetic attitude. It is well known that the character of Muhammad is in line with the lights of the Qur'an.² Hussein Nasr said that the prototype of Sufi life is the life of the Prophet, and no group throughout Islamic history has loved him as intensely and sought to emulate his wants and deeds as highly as Sufis.³ On the other hand, Sufis tried to reach the highest *akhlāq* (Islamic morality) as the manifestation of God's attributes, *al-takhalluq bi akhlāqillāh* (practicing God's character)

According to Annemarie Schimmel, Muhammad is the first link in the spiritual chain of Sufism. His ascension through the heavens into the divine presence became the prototype of the mystic's spiritual ascension into the intimate presence of God. Hadith served the Sufis when they elaborated their definitions of the various stages and states. Every tendency within Islam and Sufism found material to support its claim from Prophetic traditions. Later, the Sufis used a considerable number of hadith not found in the official collections as they were compiled in the second half of the 9th A.D. century.⁴ For them, Muhammad was the ideal leader, and the duty of every Muslim was to imitate him. His veneration soon reached mythical heights until the medieval mystics conceived him as the Perfect Man par excellence (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*).⁵

¹ Seyyed Hussein Nasr, *Islam; Religion, History, and Civilization* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher Inc., 2007), 80–81. 1

² This word is in line with a Hadith narrated by A'isyah, who said: that Rasulullah's character is the Qur'an itself.

³ Nasr, *Islam; Religion, History, and Civilization*, 82.

⁴ This is what al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī did in their writings which concerned with stages and states of Sufism, such as in his *al-Nawādir*.

⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension in Islam* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 27.

Furthermore, Muhammad has explained a fundamental concept in Islam adopted by the Sufīs, that is, the three-fold attitude of *Islām*, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*. *Islām* is the complete and exclusive surrender of the faithful to God's will and his perfect acceptance of the injunctions preached in the Qur'an. In contrast, *īmān* (faith) constitutes the interior aspect of Islam. Meanwhile, *iḥsān* was added -according to most traditions by the Prophet itself- with the meaning "that you worship God as if you see Him," for even though man does not see God, God always sees a man. With these three elements, the believer has to feel that he stands every moment in the presence of God, that he has to behave with awe and respect, and must never fall back in the "sleep of heedlessness" and never forget the all-embracing divine presence.⁶

Thus, in general views, Sufism, from the earliest time to the 3rd A.H. century, was a natural mystical expression pursued from individual religious exercises. Those exercises were formulated from tenets of al-Qur'ān and the Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*). Sufīs had interpreted both al-Qur'ān and Hadith by his epistemological frame (*ishārī*) to gain specific religious exercises, even mystical experiments.

Based on those arguments, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, as a Sufī in 3rd A.H., wrote a work related to *sulūk* on Sufism tradition based on Hadith interpretation. He named his work "*Nawādir al-Uṣūl fī Ma'rifat Aḥādīth al-Rasūl*". In this work, he asserted that Muhammad is the ideal figure for those who want to dive into a limitless spiritual ocean toward the Holy Lights, Allāh Almighty. In addition, this work also confirmed that Sufīs at the time had significant roles in Hadith's transmission and interpretation. This study aims to highlight al-Tirmidhī's thoughts on Prophetic tradition and his role in hadīth transmission in the 3rd A.H.

Literature Review

There have been some studies on Sufī commentaries and al-Tirmidhī. First, *Sufī Commentaries on the Qur'an in classical Islam* was written by Kristin Zahra Sands.⁷ In her book, Sands collect the Sufī's points of view on the Qur'an. They are Al-Ghazali, Abu Nasr al-Sarraj, Ibnu 'Arabi, Al-Nisaburi, Al-Kashani and al-Simnani. It discusses their commentaries on the ontology of the

⁶ Schimmel, 29.

⁷ Kristin Zahra Sands, *Sufī Commentaries on the Qur'an in Classical Islam*, Routledge (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Qur'an and its exegesis. According to Sufi interpretation, the Qur'an contains many layers of meaning. They can be understood as the outer sense (*dhahīr*), which is the fundamental principle (*ḥukm*) in the Qur'an, and the inner sense (*bāṭin*), which is an allusion (*ishāri*). It also discusses the controversy of Sufi's *ishāri* method. One of the scholars who criticized the *ishāri* approach was Ibn Jauzi, who said that this method of interpretation was only the result of contemplation that was very easily perverted by demons.

Secondly, the article entitled *A study on the Sufi interpretation of Qur'an and the theory of Hermeneutics* was written by Maryam Musharraf.⁸ This article discusses that Sufis have their methods of understanding the Qur'an and their similarities with hermeneutics. Sufis were not convinced by the literal meaning of the Qur'an. But they attempt to discover the hidden meanings of the Qur'an's phrases. Musharraf concluded that there are two different thinking: the inner method and the outer method of interpretation and explanation of religion. Exoteric clerics argued that interpretation is not a personal matter. The mindset of interpreters should not interfere with what Al-Qur'an explained. The exoteric clerics claimed that their approach toward the meaning of a verse was purely objective. Meanwhile, Gnostic had a personal approach to the Qur'an and added an esoteric dimension from individual and inward experiences. Their approach has a liberating and flexible characteristic. According to them, interpretation is a struggle for freedom and a battle against alienation. Those characteristics lead them to a hermeneutic cycle that changes univocal to polyphony interpretation. Then Musharraf called it mystical hermeneutics.

Thirdly, *Epistemologi Sufi Perspektif Al-Tirmidhī* by M. Ainul Abied Shah.⁹ This article discussed the epistemology of Sufism and the postulate of al-Tirmidhī and described Sufi's *sulūk* journey to Absolute Reality. According to this article, the scopes of al-Tirmidhī's epistemology are between *walāya* (Sufi guardianship) and *ma'rifa* (Sufi knowledge). As a theoretician of Sufistic philosophy based on ethics and *mujāhada*, al-Tirmidhī argued that spiritual intuition or Sufistic intuition was born directly from a burdensome spiritual practice, not just theoretical learning. *Ma'rifa* is obtained directly by a Sufi

⁸ Musharraf Maryam, "A Study on the Sufi Interpretation of Qur'an and The Theory of Hermeneutic," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 11, no. 1 (2013): 33–47, <https://doi.org/10.11136/jqh.1311.01.03>.

⁹ M. Ainul Abied Shah, "Epistemologi Sufi: Perspektif Al-Hakim Al-Tirmidzi," *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism* 2, no. 1 (June 23, 2012): 153–82, <https://doi.org/10.20871/kpjipm.v2i1.28>.

without any mediation of rational premises, both reflective and contemplative. Supra-rational knowledge was acquired through inspiration in its various forms. In addition, this article also describes the three principles of *Sulūk* according to al-Tirmidhī: *al-Haqq* (true), *al-‘adl* (justice), and *al-ṣidq* (rightness).

This article will take a different angle by discussing al-Tirmidhī's thoughts and commentaries on the Hadith in his book *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*. He was a scholar of Hadith and a Sufi. He argues that Sufi has a different and unique way of understanding the quality of the Hadith and determining the quality of the transmitter (*rāwī*) or the person who narrates the Hadith.

Method

This article is qualitative-based research. The primary data were collected from al-Tirmidhī's book *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*. In contrast, the secondary data were taken from the books or articles that support this article. This study uses a critical and descriptive analysis approach to analyse the data.

Results and Discussion

General Pictures of the Second Half of 3rd A.H. Century

It is recorded in Islamic history that the 3rd A.H. is the golden age of Islamic intellectual tradition, especially in the process of official Hadith codification. It began officially in the time of Umar b. Abd al-Aziz until the end of the 3rd A.H. This golden age produced some phenomenal works, such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim b. al-Hajjāj*, *Musnad Aḥmad*, *Muwaṭṭa' Mālik*, and the *Sunans*. Afterward, it may be said that the codification process was running just for completing, interpreting, selecting, and criticizing the previous works. This era was the formative of the annotation of Hadith (*‘aṣr sharh al-Hadith*).¹⁰

On the other side, Sufism in this age gained momentum. According to some sources, Sufism already had been growing from individual ascetic exercise to semi-theoretical thoughts of Sufism. Sufis made some new concepts of stages and states of Sufism, such as *fanā'* (annihilation), *maḥabba* (love of God), *mushāhada* (witnessing), *ittihād* (unification), etc.¹¹

¹⁰ M. Syuhudi Ismail, *Kaedah Keshahiran Sanad Hadis; Telaah Kritis Dan Tinjauan Dengan Pendekatan Ilmu Sejarah* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1995), 116–17. 7

¹¹ M. Amin Syukur, *Menggugat Tasawuf; Sufisme Dan Tanggung Jawab Sosial Abad 21* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1999), 32–33.

Furthermore, there were so many Sufi figures that lived in this age. They became outstanding and influential figures for the next generation. Their thoughts, ideas, and works consist of Sufism tenets. Those are al-Hārīts al-Muhāsibi (w. 243 H), Junaid al-Baghdadi (w. 297 H), Dzun Nun al-Mishri (w. 245 H), Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (w. 200 H), Abu Sulaiman al-Darani (w. 254 H), Abu Yazid al-Busthami (w. 261 H), al-Hallaj (w. 309 H), and others.

Thus, from the 3rd A.H. to the 4th A.H., the discourse of *zuhd* (ascetic attitudes) was replaced by Sufism terminology. Concepts of Sufism no longer talked about mystical practices ('*amālī*'), but it already sifted to theoretical views (*nadhari*). The theoretical views were new in the Sufism world. We can see how the Sufi started talking about *maqām* (station), *hāl* (condition), *ma'rifat* (knowledge of God), *tauhīd* (oneness), *sulūk* (mystical journey), *fanā* (annihilation), *hulūl* (incarnation), and many more. Responding to this phenomenon, Abū al-A'lā al-'Afīfī stated that since the sifting paradigm, Sufism entered a new period, namely the intuition and *kashf* (unveiling) period. This period is assumed to be Sufism's golden age, the most significant phase".¹²

Finally, in those circumstances, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī had been growing up and constructing his ideas, thoughts, and Islamic knowledge, especially in the field of Sufism, particularly in his Sainthood concept and Prophetic tradition with his unique epistemology.

The Life of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī

His full name is Abū Abd Allāh Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Bisyr ibn Harun al-Tirmidhī, or known as al-Ḥakīm (the Wise).¹³ He is one of the Sufis who lives in the 3rd A.H. The relevant sources do not specify al-Tirmidhī's date of birth or when he died. Some historians said that he was born in the early 3rd A.H., 205-220 A.H., and he died probably between 295 and 300 A.H/ 905 and 910 A.D.¹⁴

Talking about al-Tirmidhī's biography, he already wrote down the little treatise about his autobiography, "*Buduww Sy'ani Abu Abdillah*." The treatise

¹² Abu al-Ala Al-Afifi, *Al-Tashawwuf: Al-Tsaurah Al-Ruhyah Fi Al-Islam* (Kairo, 1962), 92.

¹³ He was called by al-Ḥakīm (*the Philosopher*) because he was a Sufi who transformed the ideas of Hellenistic philosophy into Sufism. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension in Islam*, 56.

¹⁴ According to Abdul Fatah Barakat, he was born in 205 A.H. and died in 320 A.H. at the age of 115. Abdul Fatah Abdul Barakat, *Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidzi Wa Nadzariyatuhu Fi Al-Wilayah* (Mathbu'at Majma' al-Buhus al-Ilmiyah, n.d.), 35.

informed that al-Tirmidhī's formal education began when he was eight years old, he studied Hadith and fiqh from his father, and it is most likely that his father was his first teacher. He was born into a "theological" family. His father, Ali Ibn al-Hasan al-Tirmidhī, was a scholar of Hadith. He had travelled in the western Islamic countries and heard Hadith in *Baghdad*, amongst other places. Al-Tirmidhī names his father more frequently than anyone else as his source of transmission for the Hadith he cites.

At twenty-eight, al-Tirmidhī set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca. As was common practice among men of his religious culture, he collected Hadith while traveling. He mentions explicitly breaking his journey in Basra. While in Mecca, al-Tirmidhī underwent a spiritual experience that he describes as the starting point of his mystic career. The immediate effect was a strong desire on his part to turn away from the world. He also began at this time to learn the Qur'an by heart.

When he returned home, he devoted himself to a life of intensive ascetic practices. He sought like-minded companions and some form of practical spiritual guidance without success. However, he came across a book about the mystic, al-Antāki.¹⁵ This book proved to help him in his spiritual struggle.

After some time, a group formed around al-Tirmidhī. But it seems that his views brought him into ill repute. Indeed, he was eventually denounced before the government authorities. He was then obliged to go to Balkh to defend himself against charges of heresy. He was successful.¹⁶ The relatively late accounts about his exile from Tirmidh may have their origin in this event. Somewhat later, al-Tirmidhī accepted an invitation to enter into disputation with his former theological colleagues who had slandered him, and in the end, he was able to emerge triumphant. From then on, he tells us, he was established as a figure of religious authority.

This is all that we learn about al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's public career from his autobiography and some authoritative sources.

¹⁵ This was probably one of al-Muhāsibi's works; perhaps even his famous *Ri'āya*, al-Antāki was in fact, al-Muhāsibi's rawi.

¹⁶ According to a relatively late source, he was supposedly exiled from his native city and settled in Naysābūr. However, this is highly improbable because his grave was located in Tirmiz. The town stands on the right bank of the Oxus in the southernmost corner of present-day Uzbekistan.

Al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī's Sheikhs and Pupils¹⁷

In his autobiography, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī did not give clear information about his teachers, which he learned, except his father, Ali b. al-Ḥasan al-Tirmidhī. Meanwhile, al-Tirmidhī's stated that when he set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca, he stayed temporally in Baṣra and Kūfa to hear Hadith from the scholars there. But unfortunately, he did not mention with whom he learned Hadith studies there. Historians say al-Tirmidhī ever met and heard Hadith from about seventeen gurus in Khurāsān and Iraq. Al-Jayūsyī already observed the teachers of al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī from any sources and references. In the last, he concluded that they are around 168 people. The following names should be mentioned as compromising al-Tirmidhī's most important teachers, especially in Hadith and Sufism: Ali b. al-Hasan al-Tirmidhī, his father; Quthaybat b. Sa'īd al-Tsaqafī; Ṣāliḥ b. Abd Allah al-Tirmidhī; Ṣāliḥ b. Muhammad al-Tirmidhī; Al-Hasan b. Umar b. Syaḳīq; Sufyān b. Wakī'; Abū Turāb al-Nukhsyabi; Ahmad b. Khadhrawayh al-Balkhī; Yahya b. Mu'āz al-Rāzī; and Ya'qūb b. Syaibah b. al-Shalt.

Contrary to the list of his teachers above, there is a poor of information relating to the names of his pupils. It mentioned that there are only six men who met and learned with al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī; there is Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Isa; Abu Muhammad Yahya b. Mansur al-Qadhi; Abu Ali Mansur b. Abd Allah b. Khalid al-Harawi; Abu Ali al-Hasan b. Ali al-Jurjani; Muhammad b. Ja'far b. Al-Haitsam; Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Umar al-Hakīm al-Waraq.

Al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī's Works

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was the most prolific author during the whole period of classical Islamic mysticism. The latest effort to compile a list of his known writings enumerates no less than eighty titles. The following are works that should be mentioned as compromising al-Tirmidhī's most important writings:

- a. *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*, discussed in this article, is al-Tirmidhī's most voluminous work. He cites many Hadith and interprets that Hadith with *ilm bathin*'s interpretation.

¹⁷ See detailed about his sheikhs and his pupils in al-Zahabī, *Tazkirat al-Huffādz* and *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*; Ibn Hajar al-Asqalanī, *Lisān al-Mizān*; al-Sulamī, *Thabāqat al-Sufiyyah*; Abd al-Fatāh Abd Allah Barakat, *al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī wa Nazariyatuhu fi al-Wilayah*; and al-Jayūsyī, *al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: Dirāsāt li Atsārihi wa Afkārihi*

- b. *al-Akyas wa al-Mughtarrin*, has been recently published in Cairo (1989) with the incorrect title *Thaba'i al-Nufūs*. al-Ghazālī quotes from this work in his *Ihyā* and also Ibn al-'Arābī in his *al-Futūḥāt*
- c. *'Ilal al-Syari'a* has not yet been published in a critical edition. Al-Tirmidhī was supposedly driven out of his native city because of the "unorthodox" ideas presented in this work and the *Sīrat al-Awliyā*.
- d. *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā*, the most significant work of al-Tirmidhī. This work tells us about the concept of Sainthood in Islamic mysticism.
- e. *Kitāb al-Manhiyyāt*, was published in Beirut (1986). This work belongs to the same category as the *Nawādir* and the *'Ilal* mentioned above.
- f. *Kitāb Al-Amtsāl*, was published in Cairo (1975)
- g. *Kitāb Riyādat al-Nafs*, has been edited twice, most recently by A.J. Arberry and Abd al-Qadir (Cairo 1947). It is a brief compendium that deals with questions of anthropology and the mystic path.

The following are works that have been incorrectly attributed to al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī:

- a. *Kitāb al-Hajj wa Asrārihi*
- b. *Ghawr al-Umūr*
- c. *Al-Farq bayna l-shadr wa-l-qalb wa-l-fu'ād wa-l-lubb*
- d. *Ma'rifāt al-Asrār*.

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's Position in Islamic Intellectual History

It might well be a surprise that the Sufī handbooks of the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries pay little attention to al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī. He is not even mentioned at all by Abū Nasr al-Sarrāj and Abū Thālib al-Makkī in his *Qūt al-Qulūb*, whereas al-Kalābādhī and al-Qushayrī only refer to him in the most cursory manner. But al-Tirmidhī's popularity eventually received a significant boost when the prolific theosophist-mystic, Ibn al-'Arābī, wrote a commentary on his thought. And al-Tirmidhī was likewise known to Ibn al-'Arābī's great opponent, Ibn Taymiyya, particularly in the concept of Sainthood in Islamic mysticism.

Al-Tirmidhī's relative lack of recognition during the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries may be due to several different causes. His collected writings formed a kind of handbook in their own right, which other authors may have been reluctant to excerpt from or paraphrase in more general work. On the other hand, al-Tirmidhī stood somewhat apart from the contemporary development of

Sufism in that era. This is why Ja'far al-Khuldī, the famous Baghdād's Sufi writer, remarked that al-Tirmidhī did not belong to the *sūfiyya*.

Even though al-Tirmidhī may not be well known as a *ṣūfī* because he never explicitly uses this word in his writings; he was formally named by al-Ḥakīm (the Theosophist). It means he was a seeker of wisdom and higher mystical knowledge about a multi-faced worldview based on his own inner experience than through intellectual abstraction and syllogistic thinking of the philosophy of his age. Al-Tirmidhī's thoughts were gathered from whatever sources he found to hand. He was educated as a theologian and a *faqīr*; he had the Arabic Islamic tradition during his exile: theology, hadith studies, and *fiqh*.

Generally speaking, al-Tirmidhī's contribution to Islamic intellectual history was that he fused these various given elements with his personal mystical experiences to produce an integrated overview of his system. In this respect, he is an exceptional case for his age. Al-Tirmidhī's system of thought is originally representative of old Islamic theosophy that had not yet consciously assimilated elements from the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophic tradition.

Nawādir al-Uṣūl fi Ma'rifat Aḥādith al-Rasūl

As previously known, the *Nawādir* is al-Tirmidhī's most voluminous work. He cited many Hadith and *riwāyāt* from his teachers in this book. He wrote this work at the end of his life. This work reflects these thoughts' maturity and reveals his *bāthinī's* analytical approach toward understanding Hadith.¹⁸ Abd al-Fatah Barakat said at a glance; that this book is an ordinary canonical Hadith book. Still, if we look deeper into the book's contents, we will be aware that his interpretation's methodology is exclusively based on Sufi's sense (*al-dzauq al-sūfi*). So for *fororis* reason, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is *muhaddith*, but by this book, he was not meant to *taḥdīs* (transmit the Hadith merely).¹⁹

Why was al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī not merely transmit Hadith (*taḥdīs*)? And what is a reasonable reason from him? Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī wants to show people that what he performed in his mystical experiences is shadowed by *syara'* and the holy revelation from al-Qur'ān and Hadith. In addition, he also

¹⁸ From this information, we can conclude that the activity of Hadith commentary (*syarah al-Hadīth*) existed in al-Ḥakīm's time (3th A.H.) even though it was very uncommon.

¹⁹ Barakat, *Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidzi Wa Nadzariyatuhu Fi Al-Wilayah*, 78. 8

stated that Sufism emerged and was constructed from the inner of Islam; there are no infiltrations of strange traditions from other religions and beliefs.²⁰

Therefore, Abd al-Rahmān 'Umaira outlined some chapters of the book's contents into four sections to make a sound understanding of it. Section I contains the principles of the graduations that men should pass to be far away from Satan and anger. When the graduations are actualized in their behaviour, they will become a polite man (*muta'ddib*) in the light of Islam. Finally, he has already become a good person and pious. Section II emphasizes how men should fulfill their times and activities with kindness and goodness, addressed to God Almighty. One of those is finding a meaning of the Qur'an so that the Qur'an will enlighten their hearts. Section III elaborates the principles on how to reach the mystical object of Sainthood, and there are (1) spirits convergent in the world (*talāqī al-arwāh fi al-dunyā*); (2) knowledge of man states in front of God; (3) asking forgiveness of both of 'abd (servant) and *Rasūl* (prophet); (4) the characteristics of saints; (5) asking for assistance (*ma'unah*) and exposure the gifts. In comparison, section IV explains how to dive into the ocean of the Qur'an and interpret the Qur'an. There are some principles to which to be paid attention: (1) the virtue of *al-Fātiha* chapter; (2) the classifications of Qur'an; (3) the secret of *taqwa* words in al-Baqarah: 197.²¹

Mustafa Abd. al-Qādir said that the *Nawādir* was published firstly in Istanbul, Turkey (1293 A.H.) by merit of Mustafa b. Isma'il al-Dimisyqī who had written a *sharḥ* of the *Nawādir*, by the title "*mirqāt al-wuṣūl ḥawāshī nawādir al-uṣūl fi aḥādith al-Rasūl*".²² This book contains 291 Hadith named by him *al-aṣl* (the principle).²³ It was repeatedly cited in Islamic religious circles up through the 19th A.D. century and has been preserved in numerous manuscripts.

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: His Riwāya and the Commentaries of al-Nuqqād

When he was eight years old, he began his formal education. At that time, he learned two kinds of discipline: Hadith and *ra'y* in front of his father. In

²⁰ Abd. Rahman Umaira, *The Introduction of Nawādir Al-Uṣūl Fi Aḥādith Al-Rasūl* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992), 51.

²¹ Umaira, 51–54.

²² Mustafa Abd. al-Qādir Atha, *The Introduction of Nawādir Al-Ushul Fi Ma'rifat Ahadis Al-Rasūl* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutob al-'Ilmiyah, 1992), 21.

²³ Isma'il Ibrahim M.' Awadl analyzed the *sanad* of Hadith in the *Nawādir*, and he concluded that all of the Hadith which was cited by al-Ḥakīm was in the number of 1578 Hadith that classified into 293 *Uṣūl*.

addition, he also studied Hadith with his mother and his grandfather, who have authorization for the transmission of Hadith. So, fortunately, he lived in a family concerned with Hadith studies, either in the source of transmission (*riwāya*) or knowledge of Hadith (*dirāya*).

Later, when he was twenty-eight years old, he set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca, and he specifically mentioned breaking his journey in Basra. He collected Hadith while traveling. Al-Jayusyī analysed that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī have many teachers who related to the source of transmission for Hadith, and mostly their transmissions are acceptable by *Muḥaddithīn* (Hadith experts). That information, at least, showed us that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is a scholar who can pay attention enough to Hadith studies. It is also proved by when he wrote some of his works, he always cited Hadith in his writings, such as in *Kitāb al-Akyās wa al-Mughtarrīn*, *Kitāb al-Manhiyāt*, *Kitāb al-Amthāl*, and *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*.²⁴

According to *Muḥaddithīn*, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī already gets some titles and attributes in Hadith studies. Those titles are *al-Muḥaddith* and *al-Ḥafīz*.²⁵ In addition, Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, in his *Lisān al-Mizān*, also commends him as a Sheikh who expert in *Uṣūl al-Dīn* and *Ma‘āni al-Hadith* (Prophetic tradition exegesis).²⁶ Based on those reasons, it stated that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī have the capability and have a significant role in the source and the process of transmission of Hadith because those kinds of titles (*al-Muḥaddith* and *al-Ḥafīz*) are suitably attributed to whom experts in his field of knowledge, especially in Hadith.

Nevertheless, on the other side, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is also criticized acutely by other *Muḥaddithīn* in the transmission of Hadith. Some of *Muḥaddithīn* determine him as *Matrūk al-Hadith*; even he is also accused as a scholar who often uses *Hadith Mauḍū‘*. Further, Ibn al-‘Adim distinctly states, as Ibn Hajar quoted, that al-Tirmidhī is not an expert of Hadith who has credibility in the study of *riwāya* and *dirāya*; he is only a Sufi who talks about the hints and the signs of Sufism and argues with intuition (*kashf*) upon

²⁴ A. Ibrahim Al-Sāyih, *Al-Sūluk ‘ind Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī* (Kairo: Dar al-Salām, 1988), 42–43.

²⁵ See detailed in Taj al-Din Al-Subuki, *Thabaqat Al-Syafi‘iyah Al-Kubra* (Hajr li al-Thiba‘ah wa al-Tawzi’ wa al-Nasyr, 1992), 245; Abu Abd. Allah Syamsuddin Al-Zahabī, *Kitāb Tazkirat Al-Huffāz*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, n.d.), 645.

²⁶ Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān Al-Mizān*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutob al-Ilmiyah, 1996), 304.

everything. Hence, he is cross-examined by experts of *Fiqh* and Sufism. His works are full of *Hadith Maudhu'*, and his Hadith transmission has an unclear basis.

If the critique is detailed carefully, we will find that one of the reasons why scholars criticize al-Tirmidhī is because he has controversial concepts of *taṣawwuf* teaching in his era; one of them is about the idea of *khatm al-auliya*, which the majority of Muslims at that time considered that his concept is contradictory with Islamic teachings. It can be proved by looking at his life record. He was once driven out of Tirmiz because of this case. However, according to Tajuddin al-Subuki, the discretion above is apprehensively very subjective-discriminative judgment because the choice is only based on a specific sentiment ideology.²⁷ Tajuddin al-Subuki stated that the ideal theorem of *jarh wa ta'dīl* (the science of critics on Hadith transmitters) is when a transmitter (*rāwī*) is presumed trusted in his equitability and credibility. Some other scholars commend him but rarely criticize him. Thus, the transmitter is acceptable. Because if *jarh wa ta'dīl* only emphasized sentiment and fanatics on the school of thought (*madhhab*) concerning theology, Islamic law, or any other fanatics, every scholar will be criticized based on those fanatics.²⁸

So that is why it can be said that from the aspect of Hadith transmission, al-Tirmidhī is acceptable, although with some additional notes. Because, when it's seen from the standard of *Hadith Ṣaḥīḥ*, mainly from the chain of transmission side, the *riwāya* of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī at least have fulfilled the requirements, such as; the continuity of transmission chain, trustfulness (*thiqah*), equitable, *ḍābiṭ* and no *syadh* and *'illat* in his transmission. Nonetheless, all of it still needs more profound, more severe, and intensive study.

²⁷ This kind of case often happens in the tradition of Islamic sciences, moreover in Hadith studies. Many scholars of *Kalam*, *Fiqh*, or other fields are criticized because of the different ideology and *mazhab* fanaticism, such as Dawud b. Khalaf al-Zahiri. He is criticized because he criticizes the *qiyas* concept of Imam Syafi'i, whereas he is a credible and believable scholar. Ibn Hazm is criticized because he follows Zahiri's teaching and is entitled al-hafiz. And there are many other scholars.

²⁸ Taj al-Din Al-Subuki, *Qā'idat Fi Al-Jarḥ Wa Al-Ta'dīl* (Beirut: Dar al-Qur'an al-Karīm, 1980), 13. 3

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: His Viewpoints toward Transmitting and Understanding Hadith

According to Abd. al-Fath Barakat and Abd. Al-Rahim al-Sayih that there are two essential things from the viewpoints of al-Tirmidhī toward understanding Hadith, *riwāya* or *dirāya*. *First* is the process of transmission (*Siyāqat al-Isnād*). Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī in this study is not intended to criticize or defend whoever or whatever relates to Hadith. He has a viewpoint different from most *Muḥaddithin* in understanding the Hadith transmission. To him, the Hadith transmission is not only intended as a transmission process between one transmitter (*rāwi/Bukhārī*) to another, but also the transmission must be based on the deep and pure understanding of the material/content (*matan*) of Hadith. So that the transmitter doesn't only transmit the material of Hadith but also really cares and understands what he transmits. Finally, the transmission aims to benefit and become a model for the transmitter himself and others.

Al-Tirmidhī states that the ultimate purpose of *al-Istimā' wa al-Ḥaml* in the transmitting Hadith is to occupy the one with good deeds and look for the hereafter peace and welfare. Because whoever is not good at accepting Hadith will live in stupidity. And the one who lives in absurdity will never be able to repair their obedience and worship to Allah. So that's why, whoever wants the hereafter welfare, be good in worship and whoever wants his worship is always good, he should be good in accepting Hadith as well, namely not only orient on the chain of transmission, but also understand the *matan* or its contents deeply.²⁹

While the primary purpose of *al-Ada'*, *al-Naql*, and *al-Riwāyāt* in transmitting Hadith is no other but to keep *ummat* religiosity and to keep it, only knowing the quality of Hadith, *Ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan* or *ḍa'īf* is not enough. One more critical thing is selecting the transmitters (*rāwi*) who are well-known and capable of giving proper guidance (*a'immat al-hudā*), honesty, trustfulness, and good capacity in transmitting Hadith. In addition, a transmitter should be able to select and criticize what he hears and accepts that what he receives is good teaching which keeps and strengthens his religion.³⁰

Al-Tirmidhī classifies the types of transmitters into four kinds: (1) *al-Ru'āt*, those who seek and select their credible and trusted teacher/transmitter

²⁹ Barakat, *Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidzi Wa Nadzariyatuhu Fi Al-Wilayah*, 79.

³⁰ Barakat, 79.

who can understand well the secrets and meanings of what's quoted from him in the name of Allah and keeping the religion of *ummat* (*ḥifdh 'alā dīni ummatihim*); (2) *al-Mua'ddīn*, those who seek and choose the chosen teachers who are well-known for their honesty, credibility, and good in transmitting Hadith. They also understand Hadith and its explanation and can criticize *sanad* (chain of transmission) and *matan* (the content of Hadith); (3) *al-Naqqalīn*, those who prefer the chain of transmission memorize many kinds of transmission and don't give considerable attention to the content Hadith meaning so that if they are asked about the importance and the intention of Hadith, they can't answer; (4) *al-Ruwāt*, those who compete and vie in transmitting Hadith with worldly purposes and orientations, without any pure intention to obey God's order and enliven the religion for the sake of *ummah*.³¹

From the explanation above, al-Tirmidhī indirectly did his job as the expert of Hadith titled al-Ḥafīz, having the ability to criticize *sanad* and *matan* from the essence and purpose of transmitting Hadith, as value and guideline of human happiness, in this world and hereafter.³² Furthermore, al-Tirmidhī also gives his view about transmitting Hadith by *riwāya bi al-ma'nā* (transmitting the Hadith based on its meaning). He declares in *al-Nawādir* to support the method of transmitting Hadith by *riwāya bi al-ma'nā*. He said that scholars had determined the system of *al-Ada's* and the method of delivering knowledge. If they necessitate the delivering Hadith literally without any addition (*ziyāda*) or lessen (*nuqṣān*), placing last (*ta'khīr*) or placing front (*taqḍīm*), they will open the sheets of *muṣḥaf* as done by Prophet Muhammad toward al-Qur'ān which every verse that's sent down is directly written on papers and leathers to keep its authenticity. If the transmission of Hadith using that method, the companions must have written Hadith directly. Did the companions do it? Even one never did it. So, Hadith is transmitted by memorizing, so it is common when we find some differences, but it doesn't change the meaning of Hadith.³³

³¹ Barakat, 81.

³² The same criticism is also stated by Dzun Nun al-Mishri. He says that the Hadith is one of the basic foundations of Islam. It is the light of Islam. But, in its development, many transmitters swerve their intention in quoting and transmitting Hadith. They make Hadith a tool for worldly things and something to be proud of. Kamil Muhammad 'Uwaidha, *Dzun Al-Nun Al-Mishri: Al-Hakīm Al-Zāhid* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1996), 30.

³³ Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahīm Al-Sāyih, *Al-Sulūk 'ind Al-Hakīm Al-Tirmidhī* (Kairo: Dar al-Salām, 1988), 51–52.

Secondly is understanding Hadith (*Fiqh al-Hadith*); Quoting from the statement of Ibn Hajar, al-Tirmidhī is a scholar who is an expert in understanding the meanings of Hadith (*Ma'ani al-Hadith*). In this case, the writer quotes from the statement of Barakat and al-Sayih that al-Tirmidhī stated that the purpose of quoting some Hadith in his works, moreover in *al-Nawādir*, is to expose the meaning and essence contained in every Hadith and hope that Hadith becomes the guideline of *sulūk* for those who intend to get close (*taqarrub*) to the God.³⁴

So that is why the point of view of Sufism (*al-ittijāh al-ṣūfī/al-dhauq al-Ṣūfī*) becomes his basic epistemology in understanding those Hadiths. While one of the applications of his *Sufism* teaching can be seen from his explanation of the reality of the heart in the main discussion 268, the (*al-aṣl al-thāmin wa al-tis'ūn wa al-mi'atān*), which was related to Hadith “*Inna Allah lā yandhuru ilā ṣuwārikum wa lā ilā amwālikum wa ahsābikum, wa lakin yandhuru ilā qulūbikum wa a'mālikum.*” He stated that the heart is the centre of every human activity. Because from the heart, everything in human actions can be seen clearly.³⁵

In the main discussion 187 (*al-aṣl al-sābi' wa al-thamānūn wa al-mi'āt*), he explained *al-ḥikmah* (the wisdom/the philosophy) based on Hadith “*lā ḥakīma illa dhū tajribāt* (there is no philosopher except having experience).” To him, the mind demonstrates reason, and wisdom is a light that reveals and shows hidden things. The wisdom will reveal its perfection through such exercises until the heart can see the aftereffects of things (‘*awāqib al-umūr*).³⁶

Al-Sayih has examined the Sufism mainstream of al-Tirmidhī in exploring the meaning contained in Hadith in his work “*al-Sulūk 'ind al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī.*” In this book, al-Sayih explains the concept of *suluk* in Sufism according to al-Tirmidhī, such as asceticism (*zuhud*), repentance (*al-tauba*), and love (*al-maḥabba*), etc., which all of them is based on the understanding of Hadith. Furthermore, the view of al-Tirmidhī in understanding Hadith indicates that at the beginning of the 3rd A.H. century, well-known as the golden age of Hadith codification, there has been a work about *sharḥ Hadith* with Sufism characteristics. This proves that the study of *sharḥ Hadith* arose before the 4th-6th A.H century, which is well-known as the *sharḥ Hadith* era.

³⁴ Al-Sāyih, 44; Barakat, *Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidzi Wa Nadzariyatuhu Fi Al-Wilayah*, 78.

³⁵ Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir Al-Uṣūl Fi Ma'rifat Ahadis Al-Rasūl* (Kairo: Maktabat al-Imām al-Bukhari, 2008), 1146.

³⁶ Al-Tirmidhī, 708–9.

Conclusion

The study of the contribution of Sufism in the course of Hadith studies is still rare. This study, at least, offers other views in Hadith studies. In the opinion of the Sufis, like al-Tirmidhī, Hadith is the ideal investment and role model for those who want to ascent and approach Allah because, according to Sufis, Muḥamad, the messenger of Allah, is the perfect model for every human to ascend (*mi'rāj*) in front of Allah.

Al-Tirmidhī has a unique and different view from the majority of *Muḥaddithīn* in transmitting and understanding Hadith. The difference is not on the application but on the more significant level that is the main essence of the transmitting Hadith process. For him, transmitting Hadith is not only oriented to continuity of the transmission chain but also a good understanding of the meaning of Hadith because the primary purpose of Hadith transmission is not the chain of transmission itself but to keep the values of religious teachings contained in Prophetic traditions. Besides, al-Tirmidhī had started the effort to interpret the meaning of Hadith from the Sufism perspective as this approach was never used before him. Thus, he has contributed significantly to building the fundamental methodology of understanding (*sharḥ*) Hadith.

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A.T.A. performed reviewing and analysis; M. conceptualised, wrote draft preparation, and writing; H. R. collected data and performed data curation; All authors agreed on the published article.

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