



THE PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SUNAN AT-TIRMIDHI IN HADITH STUDIES

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This article examines prestige and significance of the renowned hadith collection Sunan at-Tirmidhi by the eminent muhaddith Abu Isa Muhammad ibn Isa at-Tirmidhi within the science of hadith. It explores the author's distinctive methodology in compiling and organizing hadiths, his application of the principles of aj-jarh va at-tadil, his approach to determining the level of authenticity of narrations as well as his treatment of jurisprudential issues. Furthermore, the article analyzes the position of Sunan at-Tirmidhi among other canonical hadith collections, scholarly evaluations of the work, and the outcomes of research conducted by scholars on this compilation. The study highlights the contribution of this source to the development of hadith scholarship and underscores its relevance for contemporary academic research.

HADISSHUNOSLIK FANIDA IMOM AT-TIRMIZIY "SUNAN" ASARINING O'RNI VA AHAMIYATI

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MAQOLA HAQIDA

Kalit so'zlar: Ulum al-Hadith, Kutub as-Sitta, Sunan at-Tirmiziy, sahih, hasan, hasan sahih, al-jarh va at-ta'dil, hadisshunoslik.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada buyuk muhaddis Abu Iso Muhammad ibn Iso at-Tirmiziyning mashhur hadis to'plami — "Sunan at-Tirmiziy" asarining hadisshunoslik fanidagi o'rni va ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi. Muallifning hadislarini jamlash va

tasniflashdagi o'ziga xos metodologiyasi, al-jarh va at-ta'dil (roviylarni baholash) qoidalaridan foydalanish uslubi, hadislarining ishonchlilik darajasini aniqlash mezonlari hamda fiqhiy masalalarni sharhlash yondashuvlari ilmiy asosda yoritiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada "Sunan at-Tirmiziy"ning boshqa kanonik hadis to'plamlari orasidagi o'rni, olimlarning bu asarga bergan ilmiy baholari hamda unga bag'ishlangan zamonaviy tadqiqotlarning natijalari tahlil etiladi. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, ushbu manba hadisshunoslik ilmining shakllanishi va rivojlanishida muhim o'rin tutgan bo'lib, bugungi akademik ilmiy izlanishlar uchun ham dolzarb ahamiyat kasb etadi.

МЕСТО И ЗНАЧЕНИЕ СУНАН АТ-ТИРМИЗИ В НАУКЕ О ХАДИСАХ

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: Улюм аль-хадис, Кутуб ас-Ситта, Сунан ат-Тирмизи, сахих, хасан, хасан сахих, аль-джарх ва ат-тадиль.

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются авторитет и значение знаменитого сборника хадисов «Сунан ат-Тирмизи», составленного выдающимся мухаддисом Абу Иса Мухаммадом ибн Иса ат-Тирмизи, в науке о хадисах. Анализируется методология автора при сборе и систематизации хадисов, применение им принципов аль-джарх ва ат-тадиль, его подход к определению степени достоверности преданий, а также рассмотрение им вопросов фикха. Кроме того, в статье исследуется место «Сунан ат-Тирмизи» среди других канонических сборников хадисов, оценки ученых относительно данного труда и результаты научных исследований, проведенных на его основе. Исследование подчеркивает вклад данного источника в развитие хадисоведения и его актуальность для современного академического изучения.

Introduction. The science of Hadith constitutes one of the most significant fields within Islamic studies. It holds a pivotal role not only in interpreting the verses of the Quran but also in formulating juridical rulings, strengthening theological principles, and promoting ethical and

moral values. For this reason, from the earliest centuries of Islam, Muslim scholars paid particular attention to the collection, classification, and scholarly commentary of Hadiths.

Among such valuable sources, the book is the work of the eminent traditionist Abu Isa Muhammad ibn Isa at-Tirmithi (209-279 AH / 824-892 CE), titled *Sunan at-Tirmithi*. This book is recognized as one of the *Kutub as-Sitta* – the six most authentic collections of Hadith – and occupies a highly esteemed place in the corpus of Islamic scholarly heritage. The work does not merely present the *isnad* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (text) of Hadiths, but also elaborates on their gradations, the authenticity of narrators, and their applications in juridical rulings. In this respect, *Sunan at-Tirmithi* is valued not only as a primary source in Hadith studies but also a significant reference in the fields of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalam*), Quranic exegesis (*tafsir*), and Sufism (*tasavvuf*).

Furthermore, at-Tirmithi made a profound contribution to the development of Hadith classification by clarifying the distinctions between *sahih*, *hasan*, and *zaif* narrations. He also organized the Hadiths according to jurisprudential chapters, which rendered his work a practical guide for scholars of the Hanafi, Shafii, Hanbali, and Maliki schools of law. Consequently, *Sunan at-Tirmithi* has been extensively studied throughout the Islamic world from its inception until the present day, inspiring numerous commentaries.

Main part. Among the most authentic collections of Hadith, the entire Muslim ummah has unanimously agreed that al-Bukhari's *Sahih al-Bukhari* and Muslim's *Sahih Muslim* are the two most reliable works. However, regarding the rank of the next three compilations – *Sunan Abi Davud*, *Sunan at-Tirmithi*, and *Sunan an-Nasai* – scholars have expressed different opinions.

For instance, al-Hazimi, in his work *Shurut al-Aimmah al-Khamsa*, places *Sunan at-Tirmithi* after the collections of *Abu Davud* and *an-Nasai*. His reasoning is that these two scholars predominantly narrated from the first three tiers of transmitters, whereas at-Tirmithi sometimes included reports from the fourth tier of narrators[1]. In addition, the renowned scholar al-Hafiz Sirajiddin as-Subki classified three Hadiths found in *Sunan at-Tirmithi* as fabricated (*mawdu*). Yet, other Hadith scholars, upon further examination, judged these narrations as weak (*zaif*) rather than fabricated. The majority of scholars (*jumhur al-ulama*) considered the conditions employed by *Abu Dawud* to be stronger than those of at-Tirmithi and, consequently, ranked *Sunan at-Tirmithi* as the fourth most authentic among the six canonical collections.

Muhammad Yusuf al-Bannuri also expressed his view on this matter: 'The books of *Abu Davud* and *at-Tirmithi* are very close in rank. Both of them narrated from fourth-tier transmitters. If a Hadith was authentic, at-Tirmithi would explicitly state so, while *Abu Davud* often remained silent, though he selectively narrated from the fourth tier. Perhaps this is the main difference between them. Each of the most authentic Hadith compilations possesses unique strengths and

features not found in others. Almost no single collection can be deemed absolutely superior in every aspect, for the compilers of the Sahih as-Sitta each sought to adopt their own methodology, and they executed it with excellence'[2].

Furthermore, Rashid Ahmad Ganguhi, in his work *Kavkab ad-Durri ala Jami at-Tirmithi*, elaborated in detail on the distinctive characteristics of Sunan at-Tirmithi. The distinctive features of Sunan at-Tirmithi may be summarized as follows:

It is, at the same time, both a Jami and a Sunan. At-Tirmithi's compilation, within the Sahih as-Sitta, encompasses a vast range of subject-related Hadiths. According to al-Bannuri, the Book of Asceticism (*Kitab az-Zuhd*) in Sunan at-Tirmithi is unparalleled and has no equivalent in the other Hadith collections.

In some chapters, at-Tirmithi's work even surpasses Sahih al-Bukhari in terms of comprehensiveness – for instance, in the *Kitab az-Zuhd* (Book of Asceticism), *Kitab al-Dawat* (Book of Supplications), and *Kitab at-Tafsir* (Book of Quranic Exegesis).

He classifies Hadiths as sahih, hasan, zaif, and gharib, which is of immense benefit to the reader. Regarding the transmitters, he also indicates issues of jarh va-tadil (criticism and validation), clarifying whether narrators were upright or if their reliability had been compromised. He records the names and kunyah of narrators, a distinct science related to the transmission chains.

He provides notes on the hidden defects (*ilal*) of Hadiths, and whenever his judgment differed from that of his teachers, he presented his own evidence. Discussions about narrators within the chains of transmission are also included.

Furthermore, at-Tirmithi reports the views of the Imams of the legal schools and clarifies which opinion was considered authoritative in practice. This is one of the most remarkable qualities of his work. He also records the opinions of the Companions and Successors, and provides information on the now-defunct legal schools of prominent jurists such as al-Avzai, as-Thawri, and Ishaq ibn Rahawayh[3].

One of the most prominent scholars of the last century, Allama Abulhasan Ali al-Hasani an-Nadavi, remarked: 'It was at-Tirmithi who first laid the foundations for what is today termed 'comparative fiqh,' and he was a scholar of great virtue. The Muslim ummah must duly recognize his role in preserving the jurisprudential legacy of his era. Without Imam at-Tirmithi, many sciences would have vanished over time. Indeed, his Jami stands out distinctly among the Hadith and Sunnah works as one of the most reliable references. Especially in learning about the nearly lost schools of al-Avzai, as-Thawri, and Ishaq ibn Rahawayh, his works hold a unique place. Another distinctive aspect of this collection is that it preserved al-Shafii's earlier (*qadim*) school for later generations of scholars'[4].

Shah Abdulaziz Dehlavi, in his work *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*, states:

‘At-Tirmithi authored many works in the field of hadith. The best of them is his book al-Jami, which in certain respects surpasses all other hadith collections. Firstly, its arrangement is elegant and contains little repetition. Secondly, the schools of law (madhahib) of the jurists are mentioned, and the evidences of each school are presented. Thirdly, the categories of hadith are clarified, such as sahih, hasan, zaif, gharib as well as their ilal (hidden defects). Fourthly, it includes the names, kunyas, and epithets of the transmitters, together with other principles related to the knowledge of narrators’[5].

Abu Isa at-Tirmithi organized his al-Jami as-Sahih into separate chapters, citing as far as possible the transmitters of each narration, and after each hadith he indicated its level of authenticity or weakness. One of the main reasons why the work is also called as-Sunan is that it contains a large number of hadiths relating to legal rulings (ahkam). Accompanying these, the work also contains a wide range of traditions on admonition (vaaz), ethics, Quranic exegesis, good character, and virtues – of which no other author’s compilation can be compared in this respect[6].

The eminent scholar Tashkubrizadah likewise comments on at-Tirmithi’s biography: ‘At-Tirmithi produced numerous works in the science of hadith. His al-Jami as-Sahih is the most beneficial among them, the most concise in arrangement, and the least repetitive. It also contains features not found in other hadith collections: the consideration of the madhahib and their arguments; the classification of traditions as sahih, hasan, and gharib; the inclusion of jarh va-tadil (critical evaluation of narrators, their qualities, defects, or virtues, and whether they are reliable or not); and, at the end of the book, a special chapter devoted to the ilal of ahadith. In short, this book comprises immense benefits, and those who study it readily acknowledge this fact’[7].

The beneficial aspects of Imam at-Tirmithi’s work have been explicitly emphasized by al-Hakim an-Naysaburi in his al-Madkhal ila marifat kitab al-iqlil and al-Muqaddasi in his Shurut al-Aimmah as-Sitta. Moreover, Imam at-Tirmithi’s contribution to the development of hadith terminology is considerable. Nearly all the terminologies later codified in the works of Ulum al-Hadith (‘The Sciences of Hadith’), which constitute the main sources for the study of hadith methodology, are already found comprehensively employed in his al-Jami[8].

Scholars who have critically examined the Sunan at-Tirmithi have classified its narrations as follows:

- Hadiths conforming to the criteria of Imam at-Tirmithi and the compilers of the Sahih al-Tisa: 143 hadiths.
- Hadiths conforming to the criteria of Imam at-Tirmithi and the compilers of the Sahih as-Sitta: 378 hadiths.
- Hadiths conforming to the criteria of Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, and Imam at-Tirmithi: 1,096 hadiths.

- Hadiths conforming to the criteria of Imam at-Tirmithi and Imam al-Bukhari: 237 hadiths.
- Hadiths conforming to the criteria of Imam at-Tirmithi and Imam Muslim: 522 hadiths.
- Hadiths conforming exclusively to the criteria of Imam at-Tirmithi: 577 hadiths.

Among the scholars who thoroughly studied Abu Isa at-Tirmithi's *Sunan* is Adab Mahmud ash-Shams, who examined the gradings of its narrations. He demonstrated that the highest category of narrations in at-Tirmithi's collection is those classified as *hasan sahih*, amounting to 1,641 narrations. Furthermore, the majority of these *hasan sahih* narrations correspond to the criteria of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim[9].

Regarding Imam at-Tirmithi's use of the expression *hasan sahih*, scholars have offered various explanations. The most compelling interpretation is that of Hafiz Ibn Hajar, with which Imam as-Suyuti concurred. In summary, Ibn Hajar explained that when at-Tirmithi said 'this hadith is *hasan* and *sahih*', he meant that the narration possessed more than one chain: one chain being *hasan* in reliability, while another was *sahih*.

If a hadith described as *hasan* has only a single chain of transmission, the meaning of Imam at-Tirmithi's expression is: 'This hadith is *hasan* according to some scholars of hadith, and *sahih* according to others'[10].

In *Sunan* at-Tirmithi, the second tier of authenticity is designated as *hasan sahih gharib*, and such hadiths number 321. The next level consists of narrations graded simply as *sahih*, numbering 90. Following these are hadiths graded as *sahih gharib*, amounting to 18. Imam at-Tirmithi applied the designation *hasan gharib* to 557 narrations. The number of hadiths in *Sunan* at-Tirmithi graded as *hasan* is 312. The term *aṣaḥḥu* was applied by at-Tirmithi to 31 narrations. At the subsequent level, he classified narrations as *gharib*, numbering 362 in his work. Furthermore, at-Tirmithi described 14 narrations as *gharib isnadahu bil-qavi* (rare, yet with a strong chain of transmission)[11].

The first scholar to compose a commentary on Imam at-Tirmithi's *al-Jami al-Kabir* was Ibn al-Arabi, who in the introduction to his *Aridat al-Ahavadhi* described at-Tirmithi's scholarship as follows: 'There is no book as delightful and captivating as Imam at-Tirmithi's compilation. Within his *al-Jami al-Kabir* are encompassed fourteen sciences: the classification of subjects; discussion of chains of transmission (*isnad*); grading of a hadith as *sahih*; indicating whether a hadith is widely transmitted (*mashhur*); enumerating variant chains of transmission; engaging in *jarh va-tadil* (criticism and accreditation of transmitters); identifying the names of narrators; identifying their *kunyas*; indicating whether a narration is continuous (*mawsul*); indicating whether it is broken (*maqtu*); clarifying the hadiths upon which practice has been established; clarifying those abandoned in practice; recording scholarly differences over acceptance or rejection of narrations; and presenting the diverse scholarly interpretations in the exegesis of hadiths'.

In his *Nafh ash-Shadhi*, Ibn Sayyid an-Nas cites the words of Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Umar ibn Rushd, who added to the sciences enumerated by Ibn al-Arabi. He stated that Ibn al-Arabi did not exhaustively list all the sciences contained in Imam at-Tirmithi's works. If one were to complete them, additional disciplines found in *al-Jami al-Kabir* would include: the classification of a hadith as *hasan*; the classification of a hadith as *gharib*; providing broader detail in the accreditation of transmitters (*thiqa*); clarifying *marfu* and *mavquf* reports; distinguishing *mavsul* and *mursal* narrations; clarifying transmissions among the *Tabiin* from one another; identifying hadiths with uninterrupted chains of transmission (*muttasil*); pointing out when a narration has also been transmitted by other Companions; clarifying whether a transmitter was a Companion or not; noting transmissions of the younger from the elder; and recording the historical context of narrations.

Each of the sciences mentioned above has been the subject of independent scholarly works[12].

Al-Dehlavi states: 'At-Tirmithi was the author of numerous books, yet the most beneficial among them is *al-Jami as-Sahih*. This work surpasses other hadith compilations in several respects. Firstly, in its arrangement of a hadith and the minimal repetition within. Secondly, in mentioning the schools of the jurists (*fuqaha*) along with their respective methodologies in adducing proofs. Thirdly, in clarifying whether a narration is *sahih*, *hasan*, *zaif*, or *gharib*, and in noting its hidden defects (*ilal*) where present. Fourthly, in presenting the names, *kunyas*, appellations, and other beneficial details related to transmitters, thereby providing invaluable sciences connected to the knowledge of narrators'[13].

The scholarly approaches found in the works of Imam at-Tirmidhi establish his status not only as a *muhaddith* but also as a *faqih*. For this reason, scholars have esteemed at-Tirmidhi's writings as unique sources that integrate both hadith and jurisprudence. Today, the significance of *Sunan at-Tirmidhi* lies not only in its role as one of the principal sources of hadith studies but also in its function as a work that has fostered scholarly dialogue among different Islamic legal schools. In particular, at-Tirmidhi's methodology in determining the degree of authenticity of hadith, analyzing juristic perspectives, and assessing the reliability of transmitters continues to serve as an important reference for contemporary academic research.

Conclusion. Imam Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi's *al-Jami* (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*) occupies a distinguished place as one of the most significant sources in the science of hadith. Prominent classical scholars such as al-hakim an-Naysaburi, al-Muqaddasi, Ibn al-Arabi, Ibn Sayyid an-Nas, and Tashkopruzada have underscored the scholarly value of this work, its systematic arrangement, methodological precision, and its unparalleled contribution to the development of hadith criticism.

The collection not only classifies traditions into categories such as sahih, hasan, zaif, and gharib, while examining their hidden defects (ilal), but also records the opinions of jurists from various schools of law and analyzes their legal arguments. In this regard, Sunan at-Tirmidhi stands out as a unique source that harmonizes the disciplines of hadith and fiqh.

Modern researchers have likewise examined at-Tirmidhi's application of hadith terminology, particularly expressions such as hasan sahih and hasan gharib, emphasizing that his methodology reflects an independent and original exercise of ijtihad in the evaluation of traditions.

In conclusion, Sunan at-Tirmidhi encompasses not only traditions related to legal rulings but also narrations concerning ethics, morals, exegesis, and virtues. For this reason, it continues to serve as an important scholarly reference in addressing contemporary socio-religious issues. The sustained study and commentary of this work by generations of muhaddithun and fuqahas testify to its pivotal role in the advancement of hadith scholarship and its enduring status as an invaluable component of the Islamic intellectual heritage.

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