



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

International Journal of Current Research

Vol. 10, Issue, 12, pp.76170-76173, December, 2018

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.33442.12.2018>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOME RESEARCHES ON ABU ISA TIRMIDHI IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

*Nodir Karimov Rakhmonkulovich

PhD student, Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 05th September, 2018
Received in revised form
24th October, 2018
Accepted 29th November, 2018
Published online 29th December, 2018

Key Words:

Al-Jami` As-Sahih, Hadith,
Shama'il Muhammadiyah,
Tafsir, Matan, Isnad, *sunnah*, ilal.

ABSTRACT

In Islamic world, there are six most reliable hadith collections. In particular, they are *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* and *Sunan ibn Maja*. Other than *Sahih al-Bukhari* very little has been written about the other five collections. The reason of that only just recently that a full translation of the Sunan al-Tirmidhi has become available in English [1]. However, Isa Tirmidhi's ideas were famous for its reliability in European scholars until its publication. About Hadith and its importance, there are also different thoughts among researchers. Some says they are main sources after Qur'an and others say they are fabricated stories. When the talk goes on about Hadith and its importance, most scholars prefer to clarify their ideas with Sunan al-Tirmidhi. When and how was Abu Isa Tirmidhi known in Europe? And what kind of reasons persuaded to study Sunan al-Tirmidhi? This research intends to analyze works about Abu Isa Tirmidhi that published in European countries. It will be an attempt to analyze and compare scientific works how they explained Abu Isa Tirmidhi and his Hadiths. More than ten works of European scholars that discussed to show the research levels of Abu Isa Tirmidhi. The qualitative study used the literature review framework and obtained research data through document analysis. In general, Abu Isa Tirmidhi's scientific legacy can be proven as the most vital sources to learn and explain Hadith in Europe.

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Citation: Nodir Karimov Rakhmonkulovich. 2018. "Some researches on abu isa tirmidhi in european countries", *International Journal of Current Research*, 10, (12), 76170-76173.

INTRODUCTION

Asian scholar Abu Isa Tirmidhi played an important role in the development of Hadith and religious sciences in the medieval world. Abu Isa Muhammad as-Sulami ad-Darir al-Bughi at-Tirmidhi often referred to as Imam al-Termezi/Tirmidhi was one of great Islamic scholar. He lived in 824–892 years and collected hadith. He wrote al-Jami` as-Sahih (known as *Jami` at-Tirmidhi*), one of the six canonical hadith compilations in Sunni Islam. He also wrote Shama'il Muhammadiyah (popularly known as *Shama'il at-Tirmidhi*), a compilation of hadiths concerning the person and character of the Islamic prophet, Muhammad. At-Tirmidhi was also well versed in Arabic grammar, favoring the school of Kufaover Basra due to the former's preservation of Arabic poetry as a primary source [8]. The importance of *Hadith* for a believing Muslim cannot be overestimated, for it is in the *Hadith* that a Muslim finds the fine and intricate details of his religion. The Qur'an is a spiritual book primarily and only at a secondary level does it discuss some points of law which do not go beyond 70 issues and 600 legal verses. For example, there are over 80 verses in the Qur'an commanding the Muslims to pray, but no detailed guidelines are to be found in it as to how and when one must pray, how to rectify mistakes during prayer, how long

should one pray for and how many times a day. To get details of these one has to resort to the *Hadith* to see how the Prophet taught prayers and how he prayed himself [2]. Abu Isa Tirmidhi was the first scholar who explained the Hadith very clearly and divided into some sorts. As above mentioned facts, his scientific works have been studying in all over the world as reliable sources. In this article, it will be an attempt to analyze the works about Abu Isa Tirmidhi have been published in Europe. According to our information, more than ten theses and hundreds of other works can be found about Abu Isa Tirmidhi in European countries.

Literature Review

In this research, "Al-Tirmidhi, The Translation of the Meaning of Jami Tirmidhi with Explanatory Notes and Brief Biographical Sketches of Major narrators" (2 vols.) Trans. into Urdu by Fazal Ahmad, trans. into English from Urdu by Rafique Abdur Rehman, "Al-Tirmidhi and the role of the isnad in his sunan" by Muhammad Mansur Ali, "Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums" by Sezgin F., "Imam Tirmidhi's contribution towards Hadith" by Hoosen A.K., "al-Tirmidhi". *Encyclopedia of Islam by Wensinck A.J.*, "Wali al-Din al-Khatib al-Tabrizi. Mishkat al-Masabih", English translation and explanatory notes by James Robson and other works are used as main sources.

*Corresponding author: Nodir Karimov Rakhmonkulovich
PhD student, Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research using the content analysis approach. About more ten scientific works are used to explain how Abu Isa Tirmidhi's books are being studied in European countries. Besides that, the researcher had used journals and articles to collect data related to the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Hadith texts are prefixed with a chain of names going back from the author of a collection to the highest authority, mainly the Prophet. This chain is known as the *isnad*. *Isnād*, (from Arabic *sanad*, "support"), in Islam, a list of authorities who have transmitted a report (*ḥadīth*) of a statement, action, or approbation of Muhammad, one of his Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*), or of a later authority (*tabī'*); its reliability determines the validity of a *ḥadīth*. The *isnād* precedes the actual text (*matn*) and takes the form, "It has been related to me by A on the authority of B on the authority of C on the authority of D (usually a Companion of the Prophet) that Muhammad said...."

During Muhammad's lifetime and after his death, *ḥadīths* were usually quoted by his Companions and contemporaries and were not prefaced by *isnāds*; only after a generation or two (c. AD 700) did the *isnād* appear to enhance the weight of its text. In the 2nd century AH (after AD 720), when the example of the Prophet as embodied in *ḥadīth*—rather than local custom as developed in Muslim communities—was established as the norm (*sunnah*) for an Islamic way of life, a wholesale creation of *ḥadīths*, all "substantiated" by elaborate *isnāds*, resulted. Since *ḥadīths* were the basis of virtually all Islamic scholarship, especially Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and legal theory (*fiqh*), Muslim scholars had to determine scientifically which of them were authentic. This was done by a careful scrutiny of the *isnāds*, rating each *ḥadīth* according to the completeness of its chain of transmitters and the reliability and orthodoxy of its authorities [13]. At the same time, some modern Muslim Hadith scholars, such as al-Albani believe that the only scientific method for accepting Hadith is through *isnad* analysis [2].

In 1843, Paris Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary titled "Vefayat al-a'yan and anba anba az-zaman" (The Death of the Priest and the history of Children) was published by Viliam de Slane [6]. The volume of this work is 2700 pages, and it contains information about many well-known scientists until 1274. The page 679 is devoted to Abu Isa Tirmidhi and is called At-Tirmidhi the Traditionist. In this section the full name of Tirmidhi, "Jome" and "Ilal", his teachers, his death and other information about him are recorded. Though the ideas of Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary were incomplete, it was the earliest work in Europe, written briefly about Abu Isa Tirmidhi. In 1890, more details about Abu Isa Tirmidhi in the West appeared in Ignaz Goldziher's book, *Muhammedanische Studien* [3]. This book gave information about Sunan at-Tirmidhi which is one of the six collections of hadith science, and this is one of the most important sources of the comparative study of the differences in the academic schools adopted at that time. However, "In the works of Tirmidhi, Abu Hanifa and his views are not fully understood. Nevertheless, Tirmidhi was an educator who understood the science of hadith and meaning perfectly well, "wrote Ignaz

Goldziher. This research is one of the earliest detailed scientific studies of Europe about Abu Isa Tirmidhi. In addition, the author has a book called "Muslim Studies", which provides information on the six collections of hadith collections known in the world of Islam (*al-kutub as-sitta*) [4]. In 1954, James Robson published an important research on Imam Tirmidhi, entitled "The Transmission of Tirmidhi's *Jāmi'*", in his introduction to various narrations about Tirmidhi, James Robson, for the first time in the history of the 20th century, revealed the role of Abu Isa Tirmidhi's scientific heritage and his role in studying Tirmidhi's heritage by systematizing the scientists who studied the *Al-jome' as-sahih*. However, there are some disruptions in the work of Sunan at-Tirmidhi.

According to Robson, the work was written in a sophisticated scientific sense and was not always popular with ordinary people. He mentioned Goldziher's phrase as "Tirmidhi, al-Bukhari, Abu Dawood and An-Nasa'i" in *Muslim Studies* to prove his opinions. Also, in 1964, James Robson translated the *Mishkat al-Masabih* by Al-Khatib al-Tabrizi [9] (v. 748.1348), translated into English, who used the hadiths as the main source of his books. This book gave the European people the opportunity to enjoy the true experiences of the Tirmidhi hadiths for the first time. In 1967, detailed information about the scientific heritage of Abu Isa Tirmidhi in Europe and his way of life is described in the book *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* ("Arabic Literature History") by Fuat Sezgin. Fuad Sezgin opposed the idea of Goldziher and accused him of irresponsible irony of the Islamic methodology, *Usul al-ahadis*. Because Fuat Sezgin Goldziher's many statements about the hadiths are not detailed and that their analysis of "isnad" is wrong. Orientalist Fuat Sezgin says that Isa Tirmidhi has had three types of hadiths. That is, grouping on the basis of attributes such as "sahih" (healthy, true), "hasan" (beautiful, right) and "strange" (unusual, wrong) was done by Tirmidhi as a new method in the hadiths. Also, in this work, briefly describes the short life, work and works of Abu Isa Tirmidhi [7].

In 1990, a book titled "Imam Tirmidhi's Contribution Towards Hadith" by Abdulqadir Husen in the University of New Castle in the UK was published [5]. In this book, detailed information about Abu Isa Tirmidhi's life, his creations and his place in the science of hadith has been given. Another interesting fact in the book, Imam Tirmidhi's Contribution Towards Hadith, is the most respected teacher of Tirmidhi was Imam Bukhari, who wrote 114 times in his book. Al-Bukhari also praised Tirmidhi and narrated two hadiths in his book *al-jome' as-sahih*. Also, according to Abd al-Qadir Hussen, Bukhari and Tirmidhi narrators are noteworthy that both authors do not use the name Abu Hanifa in their works. Instead, he used the word "some cowards." The book contains not only information about Abu Isa Tirmidhi, but also other important scholars. For example, in the book *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, there are several hadiths from Abu Dawud (may Allah be pleased with him). Muslim, on the other hand, is well aware that Tirmidhi has narrated a hadith. against the contrary, the researcher argued that A.J. Winsink [10] was opposed to the opinion that Ahmad ibn Hanbal was the mentor of Tirmidhi and that the scholar never went to Baghdad and did not attend Ahmed ibn Hanbal's lectures and that he was directly involved in the work of Sunan at-Tirmidhi. He did not narrate a hadith as evidence. In 1994, at King's College, London, "Hadith and Sufism in Damascus, 627 / 1230-728 / 1328: Ibn Arabi (d.638 / 1240), Al-Nawawi

(d.676 / 1277 and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). "(The case of Hadith and Sufism in Damascus, Ibn Arabi, Al-Nawawi, and Ibn Taymiya)" by Affaf Hogali Vakhsh was published. In his dissertation, it is emphasized that Abu Isa Tirmidhi is the most important figure in the formation of Ibn Arabi as a muhaddith. The scientific significance of Ibn Arabi's written heritage in the study was explained by the works of famous scholars. For example, many of the hadiths written by Arabi have been analyzed separately from their original roots. In most cases, Abu Isa Tirmidhi, Hakim Tirmidhi and Imam al-Bukhari. This indicates that the legacy of Abu Isa Tirmidhi's written heritage is scientifically recognized by the world, and many controversial matters are clarified through the hadiths of the scholars. Muhammad Mansur Ali put forward his PhD thesis called "Al-Tirmidhi and the role of the *isnad* in his *Sunan*" that in the case of classical *Hadith* scholar, al-Tirmidhi, the *isnad* was not the only criterion for accepting *Hadith*. The contention that for al-Tirmidhi the practice of the people of *Hadith* was the primary criterion for accepting *Hadith*. In other words, if a *Hadith* was practiced by the scholars of *Hadith*, al-Tirmidhi includes this in his collection, the *Sunan*, even though the *isnad* of the *Hadith* may be inauthentic. Muhammad Mansur Ali proves his thesis by analyzing three aspects of the *Sunan*: al-Tirmidhi's use of the term *Hasan* and its compounds, Tirmidhi's use of defective *Hadith* (*ilal*) and his method of extracting his legal opinions. In addition to proving Muhammad Mansur Ali's main thesis, he also carries out a biography of al-Tirmidhi in the West.

In this thesis it has been examined the role that the *isnad* played in acceptance of *Hadith* according to the early *Hadith* scholars. it has been made the case that although the *isnad* played a crucial role it was not the only criterion that the scholars used to accept *Hadith*. The excessive use of the *isnad* by early *Hadith* scholars has led some western scholars to believe that Muslim *Hadith* criticism is based on external criticisms only and therefore is unscientific. On the other hand, some modern Muslim *Hadith* scholars have advocated that a report can only be accepted as a *Hadith* of the Prophet if it passes the rigorous *isnad* analyses. One such scholar is the Albanian Nasir al-Din al-Albani. It was al-Albani's mission to scrutinize all *Hadith* in light of the *isnad* and reject any *Hadith* that does not fall in the category of *sahih* or *hasan*. On the basis of this, al-Albani split the *Sunan* into two monographs, *Sahih* and *Da'if*, giving the message that the *Da'if* portion must be discarded. In this study, it is attempted to show that at least in the case of one *Hadith* scholar, Abu Isa al-Tirmidhi, rigorous *isnad* analysis is not needed for accepting a *Hadith*. Al-Tirmidhi was too subtle a scholar to rely only on the *isnad* for accepting *Hadith*. For him, *amal* was the main criterion used to accept or discard *Hadith* and often when the apparent meaning of a *Hadith* was in contradiction to the prevailing practice al-Tirmidhi interpreted the *Hadith* away by saying 'this is what the *fuqaha* have said about this *Hadith*, and the *fuqaha* understand the meanings of *Hadith* best. Elsewhere, regarding another *Hadith*, he said, 'the *isnad* of this *Hadith* is not strong, [... however] practice is based on [this *Hadith*]. This being the case, it can be asked 'what role the *isnad* played in *Hadith* literature and what do we make of the overly excessive use of *isnad* that we see as soon as we open a *Hadith* book? The researcher answered these questions shortly in his PhD dissertation. In Chapters One to Four, Muhammad Mansur Ali provided background historical and biographical information on al-Tirmidhi, this helped us to put our analysis of al-Tirmidhi's *Sunan* into perspective. Then the author

reviewed the different works (or lack of any work) on al-Tirmidhi in the West in Chapter One. "This chapter served to identify gaps in western academia on studies on al-Tirmidhi. It was surprising to find out that although being a pivotal figure in *SunniHadith* scholarship, other than two articles, few passing comments and four lines in both editions of the Encyclopedia of Islam, no serious studies have been carried out on al-Tirmidhi or any of his works. This thesis tries to take the first step towards filling this gap" – Muhammad Mansur Ali says[2]. Chapter Two was dedicated to a biography of al-Tirmidhi, as well as a narrative of the political and intellectual milieu that he came from. In this part, it was traced the development of *Hadith* back to the *Sunna*, and showed that Muslim scholars were involved in preserving the *Sunna*. Side by side of the *Hadith* two other methods of preserving the *Sunna*, *amal* and legal rationale, were also vehicles of the *Sunna*. The author tried to demonstrate that due to the efforts of al-Shafi and other *Hadith* scholars, the *Hadith* remained the only repository of the *Sunna*. However, elements of the former two methods still remained amongst the scholarly circles. In fact, Muhammad Mansur Ali argues in this thesis, that for al-Tirmidhi, the *amal* played a greater role in preserving the *Sunna* than the *Hadith* i.e. *isnad*. In Chapter Three, the *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhi was studied from many different angles. The author discussed it from the point of it being a part of the canonical collections as well as its importance amongst the canonical collections. The study also looked at its form and content in details. The purpose of this chapter was to provide a general picture of the *Sunan* so that in carrying out a detailed study on specific aspects of the *Sunan* in the following three chapters will be easy to follow. Muhammad Mansur Ali has supplemented this chapter with appendix two and appendix three. A thorough study of al-Tirmidhi's works and in particular his *Sunan*, show that actual practice (*amal*) played a great role in accepting *Hadith*. Even a close analysis of al-Tirmidhi's use of the *isnad* shows that he does not make the *isnad* his priority. In this study it has been looked at three aspects of al-Tirmidhi's *Sunan* to prove this. Ironically, two of them are directly related to the *isnad* whilst the last one is related to *matan* criticism. Further on in this conclusion the researcher tried to take time to explain the purpose of the *isnad* and the function it plays. In chapter Four he discussed al-Tirmidhi's use of the term *hasan*.

The author argued that *Hasan* is not a classification of *Hadith* which sits between *Sahih* and *da'if*, as has been understood from Ibn Salah's time onwards. By a close reading of al-Tirmidhi's *Sunan* and looking at the use of the term by other scholars who were contemporaries of al-Tirmidhi as well as those who preceded him it can be concluded that *Hasan* was an umbrella term which comprised both *sahih* and *da'if*. Looking at it from this perspective, *hasan* is synonymous to 'accepted' or 'practiced upon' (*maqbul*, *ma'mul bih*). This is a novel understanding of the term *hasan*, something which neither the medieval scholars nor modern scholars have put forward. However, like all other theories put forward by scholars this one also suffers from some shortcomings. First of all, the theory fails in those instances where al-Tirmidhi just used the term *hasan* on its own. However, by cross-referencing these *Hadith* with the very same ones found in al-Tirmidhi's *Kitab al-ilal al-Kabir* the author finds that Tirmidhi sometimes qualifies them as *hasan sahih* etc. Al-Tirmidhi's use of *ilal* was discussed in Chapter Five. The inclusion of defective *Hadith* in the *Sunan* shows that al-Tirmidhi was ready to compromise strict standards of *isnad* criticism for arbitrary

practice. One may say that it was al-Tirmidhi intention to collect alternative weak *isnads* for otherwise strong *Hadith* for academic purposes, i.e. for the sole purpose of collecting them, and he should not be blamed for including them because he points the defects out. This maybe the case, but the question still remains, 'why are there more legal issues discussed in the *Sunan* than the *Sahihayn*?' In our opinion the driving force for including defective *Hadith* was not to bring them to the public light in order to warn the people against them; on the contrary. The research has shown that by lowering his standards al-Tirmidhi was able to include all the *Hadith* that have been the basis of practice, mainly by the scholars of *Hadith* and most of those *Hadith* were defective. 'Amal dictated whether a *Hadith* should be accepted or not, and when the ama; went against a *Hadith*, even though it is sahih al-Tirmidhi uses different hermeneutical devices to make the otherwise ambiguous *Hadith* texts conform to the practice of the people of *Hadith*.

After analyzing different parts of al-Tirmidhi, the author comes to the conclusion that although the *isnad* played a major role in *Hadith* being accepted, it was not the only criterion that the scholars of *Hadith* used. This thesis can be extended to the works of most early *Hadith* scholars such as al-Bukhari and Abu Dawud with the exception of a few such as al-Daraqutni and Ibn Hanbal, Hence, it can safely concluded that al-Albani's dichotomy of the *Sunan* into Sahih al-Tirmidhi and *da'if* al-Tirmidhi on the basis of *isnad* analysis only distorts the perception of his follower's as well as the general public's understanding of the formative period of *Hadith*. In other words his followers think that since al-Albani was a staunch advocate of *Hadith* as opposed to the law schools, his work must enhance the works of his predecessors and therefore, by separating the *Sunan* into two monographs, al-Albani was only making conspicuous that which al-Tirmidhi already believed in and accepted [2].

Concluding Remarks

In general, the study of the history of hadith science in Europe appeared in the second half of the 19th century, though the name of Abu Isa Tirmidhi was known in the western world in the 1950s. Thus, Europeans have been enjoying their scientific heritage for almost two centuries by the well-known Central Asian educator Abu Isa Termidhi. D.G. Pfanmyuller, G.X.Junbol, N.Y.Kulson, I.Goldziher, A.J.Vensink, in the most scientific view of the original European evangelists, do not have a profound understanding of the science of hadith and do not have any idea about the written heritage of Tirmidhi and we can see cases of extreme unjustified conclusions. Particularly, such aspects of the authenticity of hadiths appear in the statements about the complexity of the reading of *Sunan* at-Tirmidhi. According to scholars, many scholars have been denied by scholars from countries that believe in Islam. In their works, Abu Isa used the term "Tirmidhi" to prove the scientific value of his scientific heritage and used it to confirm his hadiths. In many controversial issues, he has been referred to the works of a Central Asian scientist as a reliable source.

It has been proven through the books of the Tirmidhi that the authenticity of the hadiths that are deemed to be invented by statesmen or scholars for various purposes. In short, such works as "Sunan At-Tirmidhi" and "Ash-Shamil an-nabaviya" plays an important role in the formation of true perceptions in Europe about the hadiths. However, much remains to be done on the study of the life and scientific heritage of Abu Isa Tirmidhi. The ideas and thoughts of Western scholars on Abu Isa Tirmidhi are greatly varied. Particularly critical critique of the creativity of scholars such as Goldziher, J. Robertson, H.J.Junbott, studying the scientific heritage of scholars in the West. Because of their incomplete scientific conclusions, they are the basis for new Islamic studies in the West today. The critical point in today's science is to define the role of Abu Isa Tirmidhi in the world science through scientifically-based research, and to critically analyze their works.

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