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# Analysis of The Commentaries on Sunan At-Tirmidhi

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**Abstract:** In this article, various commentaries written in different periods on the work *Sunan at-Tirmidhi* by the eminent hadith scholar Abu Isa Muhammad ibn Isa at-Tirmidhi are analyzed. Moreover, the study examines, on a scholarly basis, the earliest commentaries as well as later annotations and glosses authored by scholars belonging to the Hanafi school and other legal traditions. The research focuses on the distinctive features of these commentaries, their methodological aspects, and their contribution to the development of hadith studies. This work suffices to as an important source of gaining a deeper understanding of the scholarly heritage related to *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, and exploring the interaction among various schools and approaches within the science of hadith.

**Keywords:** Sunan at-Tirmidhi, hadith, as-Sihah as-Sitta, muhaddith, al-Jami, al-Ilal as-Saghir, Hanafi, Sharh Sunan at-Tirmidhi

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## Introduction

The work Sunan at-Tirmidhi was authored by the renowned muhaddith Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi and is counted among the as-Sihah as-Sitta (*the six most authentic hadith compilations*). In addition to this, the scholar produced more than ten other works during his scholarly career, including ash-Shamail an-Nabaviyya, Kitab at-Tarikh, Kitab al-Ilal as-Saghir and al-Ilal al-Kabir, Kitab az-Zuhd, Kitab al-Asma va al-Kuna, al-Ilal fi-l-Hadith, Risala fi-l-Khilaf va-l-Jadal, and Asma as-Sahaba.

Among these, Sunan at-Tirmidhi stands out as a source of great significance in the field of hadith studies. The scholar's work contains nearly 4,000 hadiths narrated from Muhammad (*peace be upon him*). The work is also known under several alternative titles, including al-Jami as-Sahih, al-Jami al-Kabir, Sahih at-Tirmidhi, and simply al-Jami. At-Tirmidhi compiled this collection during twenty years, travelling to various regions in search of hadiths. In this endeavor, he frequently consulted his teacher, the eminent muhaddith Imam al-Bukhari, following his advice so as to arrange the gathered narrations into a single volume.

As for the number of commentaries written on Sunan at-Tirmidhi, it is difficult to specify a precise figure, since scholars continue to produce commentaries on the work to this day. The methodologies and criteria employed by commentators differ, which plays an important role in the reception, influence, and recognition of their works. Notably, Sunan

at-Tirmidhi has been commented upon not only by scholars of Ahl as-Sunna wa al-Jamaa but also by scholars outside this tradition. However, the majority of the commentaries have been authored by scholars of the Hanafi school.

## Methodology

'Sharh Jami at-Tirmidhi'. Its author is Abu Ahmad Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Naysaburi al-Karabisi (285–378 AH / 898–988 CE), who was known by the title al-Hakim al-Kabir. This commentary is considered among the earliest expositions written on Jami at-Tirmidhi, although it has not survived to our time. It is also noteworthy that al-Hakim al-Kabir an-Naysaburi once served as Qadi al-qudat (*chief judge*) for a period in the ancient city of Shash (*modern-day Tashkent*).

'Aridat al-Ahwadhi bi-sharh Sahih at-Tirmidhi'. This commentary was authored by the distinguished Maliki jurist and hadith scholar Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abullah ibn Ahmad ibn al-Arabi al-Maafiri al-Ishbili (468–546 AH / 1076–1151 CE), widely known as Ibn al-Arabi al-Maliki. The work is extensive and focuses primarily on clarifying and supplementing Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi's legal opinions. In his exposition, Ibn al-Arabi examines each hadith from four key perspectives:

- Isnad analysis – a critical study of the chain of transmission.
- Linguistic examination – analysis of the hadith text in terms of Arabic grammar and syntax.
- Legal derivations – extraction and authentication of jurisprudential rulings.
- Theological considerations – attention to doctrinal and creedal implications.

Due to its methodological rigor, later generations of hadith commentators frequently referred to Aridat al-Ahwadhi. In addition, this work also includes a commentary on al-Tirmidhi's al-Ilal as-Saghir.

A complete ancient manuscript is preserved in the library of al-Madinah al-Munavvarah. Another manuscript is found in the library of Shaykh Rafi ad-Din al-Bukhari. The work was published several times: in 1299 AH / 1882 CE and again in 1350–1352 AH / 1931–1933 CE in the cities of Kanpur and Cairo across thirteen volumes, and later in Beirut in 1997 by the well-known publishing house Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah in fourteen volumes. However, researchers have pointed out that the Cairo editions contain numerous textual errors.

'An-Nafhu ash-Shadhi fi Sharh Jami at-Tirmidhi'. The author of this commentary is Hafiz Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Yaamuri (671–734/1273–1334), widely known as Ibn Sayyid an-Nas al-Andalusi. Although this commentary attained wide circulation, the author was unable to complete it. In fact, Ibn Sayyid an-Nas managed to provide commentary on 316 traditions from the beginning of Jami at-Tirmidhi. Scholars have remarked that this commentary had been brought to completion, it would have stood as one of the most comprehensive and detailed expositions of Jami at-Tirmidhi.

The reason for its extensive length lies in the author's approach: he did not confine his work solely to issues directly related to the science of hadith, but also incorporated discussions from other branches of knowledge. Although he produced ten volumes, he did

not find the opportunity to complete the entire project. Al-Allamah al-Chalabi observed: 'Had the author limited his commentary strictly to the science of hadith, he would certainly have completed it. Nevertheless, we praise God, for he undertook a task of great ambition'. Subsequently, the portion left unfinished was continued by the eminent scholar al-Hafiz Zayniddin Abdurahim ibn Husayn al-Iraqi (d. 806/1403), the celebrated author of al-Alfiyah. A complete manuscript of this work is preserved in the library of al-Madinah al-Munavvarah.

'Takmilat an-Nafh ash-Shadhi'. This commentary serves as a supplement to the aforementioned an-Nafh ash-Shadhi of Ibn Sayyid an-Nas. It was authored by Zayniddin Abdurrahman ibn Husayn al-Iraqi al-Kurdi (725–806/1325–1404). In this work, al-Iraqi sought to continue the commentary in the true style of a muhaddith, aiming to complete it. However, he was unable to finish the task, as his death intervened before its completion.

'Sharh Zawaid at-Tirmidhi ala as-Sahihayn'. The author of this commentary is Sirajiddin Abu Hafs Umar ibn Ali ibn Ahmad al-Ansari (723–804/1323–1402), better known by his honorific Ibn al-Mulaqqin. In this work, he comments on the traditions found in Jami at-Tirmidhi which are not included in the two canonical collections of Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari and Muslim ibn Hajjaj. Special attention is also devoted to those reports not found in Sunan Abi Davud. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, likewise, composed a supplementary work to the four canonical collections, entitled Zawaid al-Kutub al-Arba'ah mimma huva Sahih.

'Sharh al-Hakim Ibn Hajar'. This commentary is attributed to the renowned traditionist Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, famous for his comprehensive and detailed commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari entitled Fath al-Bari. He himself mentioned this commentary in Fath al-Bari. However, to date, the manuscript of this commentary has not been discovered or published. It is possible that it corresponds to his other work al-Lubab fi Sharh Qawl at-Tirmidhi va fil-Bab. It is well known that Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi, in each chapter, would indicate which scholars transmitted the hadith under discussion. Al-Lubab is devoted to the analysis and explanation of these transmissions.

'Sharh al-Bulqini'. Abu Hafs Sirajiddin Umar ibn Ruslan ibn Nasir al-Misri al-Kinani al-Asqalani al-Bulqini (724–805/1324–1403) was among the leading scholars of the Shafii school, and a teacher of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. He served as judge and mufti in Egypt. His commentary, entitled al-Arf ash-Shadhi ala Jami at-Tirmidhi, was unfortunately left incomplete.

'Sharh Ibn Rajab'. This commentary was authored by the Hanbali scholar Zayniddin Abdurrahman ibn Ahmad ibn Rajab al-Hanbali (736–795/1336–1393), renowned also for his works Tabaqat al-Hanabilah and al-Qawaid al-Fiqhiyyah. According to Kashf az-Zunun, the commentary originally comprised twenty volumes, but it was destroyed in the time of civil strife. However, a portion of the commentary and his exposition of al-Ilal as-Saghir – an appendix to Jami at-Tirmidhi – have survived.

'Qut al-Mughtazi'. This commentary, authored by Jalaliddin as-Suyuti, is considered among the concise commentaries on Sunan at-Tirmidhi. Several editions of it have been published in both India and Arab world. The Maghribi scholar Ali ibn Sulayman (1234–

1306/1819–1888) wrote a hashiyah on Qut al-Mughtazi, providing extensive explanatory notes. This is mentioned in Haji Khalifah's *Kashf az-Zunun*.

In this work, as-Suyuti held Sunan at-Tirmidhi in high regard, describing it as follows: 'The Sunan of Imam at-Tirmidhi is arranged into chapters, and this in itself is a branch of knowledge. The legal rulings contained there are another branch of knowledge. His discussion of the distinguishing authentic from weak reports constitutes yet another discipline. Likewise, his mention of the various categories of hadith is a distinct science. The names and appellations of transmitters form a separate branch of knowledge, as do *aj-jarh va-l-ta'dil* (evaluation and accreditation of narrators), and the distinction between those transmitters who met the Prophet and those who did not – that is, *isnad* analysis. All these are forms of summarized knowledge, but their detailed study encompasses a vast range. In short, the merits and scholarly benefits of this work are abundant and invaluable'.

'*Naf Qut al-Mughtazi*'. The author of this supplement was the erudite scholar as-Sayyid Ali ibn Sulayman al-Dumanti al-Bajmawi al-Maghribi al-Maliki ash-Shadhili (d. 1877). It was published as a marginal commentary on a manuscript of *Jami at-Tirmidhi*. The author abridged al-Suyuti's earlier commentary but, in doing so, diminished some of the useful aspects of the original, to the extent that the title '*Naf Qut al-Mughtazi*' ('The Benefit of Qut al-Mughtazi') lost its intended sense. This work was printed in Cairo and Delhi.

'*Sharh Jami at-Tirmidhi*'. The author of this commentary is Abu Muhammad al-Husayn ibn Masud al-Baghavi (436–510/1044–1117), known by the honorific titles *Muhyi as-Sunnah* and *al-Farra*. He gained fame through his work *Masabih as-Sunnah*, which later served as the foundation for '*Mishkat al-Masabih*'. He also authored the well-known Quranic commentary '*Maalim at-Tanzil*'. Although it has been reported that he wrote a commentary on *Jami at-Tirmidhi*, no manuscript has thus far been discovered, nor has it been published.

'*Sharh Muhammad ibn Tahir al-Fattani*'. This commentary was authored by Majduddin Muhammad ibn Tahir ibn Ali al-Hanafi al-Fattani al-Gujarati (913–986/1508–1579), one of the renowned Indian hadith scholars. He gained fame through his work *Tadhkirat al-Mawduat*, dedicated to fabricated traditions. In his book *Majma al-Bihar al-Anwar fi Ghariib at-Tanzil va-Lataif al-Akhbar*, a lexicon of rare and unusual words in the *Sihah as-Sittah*, he also recorded that he had composed a commentary on Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi's *Jami at-Tirmidhi*. However, this commentary has not yet been discovered.

'*Sharh Sunan at-Tirmidhi*'. Authored by Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Idris al-Qadiri al-Husayni, a Maghribi scholar who passed away in 1931. He also composed a separate treatise concerning the waters of Zamzam.

'*Sharh Sunan at-Tirmidhi*'. Among the scholars of the Maghrib, the distinguished historian and source-critic Abdulhay al-Kattani (1305–1382/1888–1962), founder of the manuscript collection in Rabat, also authored a commentary on *Jami at-Tirmidhi* under this title.

'*Maarif at-Tirmidhi*'. This commentary was composed by Mufti Muhammad Tariq, a teacher at the Faridiyya Madrasa in Islamabad. It is arranged in two volumes, structured in the form of text, translation, and lexical explanation.

‘Haqaiq as-Sunan’. Authored in Urdu by Abdulhaq al-Haqqani, one of the lecturers at the Dar al-Ulum Haqqaniyya in Pakistan. This commentary, extending across several volumes, consistently highlights the evidences of the Hanafi school.

‘Tashrihat al-Tirmidhi’. Composed by Kamaliddin al-Mustarshid, this commentary is structured in a question-and-answer format. It discusses, one by one, the hadiths that serve as proofs for the four schools of jurisprudence as well as the responses of the Hanafis to those proofs. In its composition, the author drew upon ten earlier commentaries on Jami at-Tirmidhi.

‘Sharh Siraj Ahmad’. This commentary, authored by Siraj Ahmad as-Sarhandi al-Hanafi (d. 1230/1815), was published in Kanpur in 1295/1878. It is a commentary written in Persian.

‘Al-Kawkab ad-Durri’. This commentary was composed under the dictation of Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1246–1322/1831–1905), one of the scholars of Dar al-Ulum Deoband. A number of his students also wrote glosses upon this work. The commentary provides essential information for understanding Jami at-Tirmidhi in accordance with the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.

‘Al-Ward ash-Shadhi’. The author of this concise commentary was Mavlana Mahmud al-Hasan (1852–1921), who earned the title Shaykh al-Hind. Like as-Suyuti’s work, this commentary is brief in nature.

‘Al-Arf ash-Shadhi taqrir Jami at-Tirmidhi’. This important Hanafi commentary was authored by Muhammad Anvar Shah ibn Muazzam Shah al-Hanafi al-Kashmiri (1292–1352/1875–1933). In his approach to commenting on Jami at-Tirmidhi, he adopted a distinctive method: he compared the proofs and arguments of both the Hanafi and Shafii schools on specific juristic issues, demonstrating the superiority of the Hanafi position. The commentator also briefly analyzed the chains of transmission (*isnad*), the lexical aspects of the text, and the legal rulings derived from it.

## Result and Discussion

At the end of Jami at-Tirmidhi, Anvar Shah al-Kashmiri also authored a commentary on al-Ilal as-Saghir entitled Sifa al-Ghilal fi Sharh Kitab al-Ilal.

This work was published in five volumes in India in 1244/1828 and later in Beirut in 2004 by Dar Ihya at-Turath al-Arabi. Today, it continues to be taught as a textbook in many religious institutions across the Muslim world.

‘Maarif as-Sunan’. The author of this commentary is Muhammad Yusuf ibn Muhammad Zakariyya al-Husayni al-Hanafi al-Bannuri (1326–1397 AH / 1907–1977 CE). He based his work on the explanations of his teacher Anvar Shah al-Kashmiri during his lectures. This book is regarded as one of the significant commentaries within the Hanafi school. The author, without delving into the *isnad* of the hadiths in Sunan at-Tirmidhi, focused on the grammatical (*nahwi*) analysis of the text and the jurisprudential rulings derived from it. In doing so, he carried out a comparative analysis of the views of the four leading juristic schools of Ahl as-Sunna va al-Jamaa. Furthermore, when a particular hadith was also transmitted in other canonical collections, those references were duly mentioned.

The author also explained the technical hadith terminology employed by Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi concerning certain narrations. However, the work only covers up to the Kitab al-Hajj, which itself was published in six volumes.

'Al-Misk az-Zaki and Taqrir at-Tirmidhi'. The author of these two works is Ashraf Ali at-Tahanavi (1280–1362 AH / 1863–1943 CE), one of the prominent Hanafi scholars of the Indian subcontinent. He was honored with the epithet Hakim al-Umma ('*The Sage of the Umma*'). He authored nearly 1,500 works.

'Dars-i Tirmidhi' and 'Taqrir-i Tirmidhi'. These commentaries were written in Urdu by Muhammad Taqi Uthmani, a leading jurist and muhaddith of contemporary times. In the introduction to the first volume, he presents crucial discussions on the science of hadith, its history, Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifa, and the hadith scholars. He also devotes special attention to the life and scholarly legacy of the commentator Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi. One of the salient features of this commentary is that it is analyzed within the framework of the Hanafi school. The evidences of the Hanafi madhhab are elaborated upon in detail, while objections and criticisms directed against the Hanafi tradition are answered comprehensively. The first three volumes of this work, titled Dars-i Tirmidhi, deal with the explanation of hadiths related to acts of worship. The subsequent two volumes, under the title Taqrir-i Tirmidhi, focus on hadiths (*ibadat*), addressing transactions (*muamalat*) and social issues.

'Dars-i Tirmidhi'. This work is considered superior not only among Urdu commentaries but also compared to those written in Arabic, due to its comprehensiveness, its inclusion of the evidences of the Hanafi school, and its satisfactory refutations of the views and arguments of other schools of thought. It holds great importance in the study of the hadith-based evidences of the Hanafi madhhab. Muhammad Taqi al-Uthmani has authored more than fifty works, most of which focus on contemporary juridical issues, including banking and other economic matters. For this reason, he is recognized worldwide as one of the leading experts in Islamic economics.

'Durus-i Tirmidhi'. This commentary, consisting of four volumes, was compiled from lecture notes by Mawlana Raisuddin al-Mazahiri, one of the senior teachers of the famous madrasa Mazahir al-Ulum in Saharanpur, India. Each hadith is presented with its Urdu translation, followed by a detailed commentary, the views of those who used it as evidence, the counter-arguments of opponents, and finally the biographical notes on the transmitters mentioned in the chain of narration. A noteworthy feature of this commentary is its systematic refutation of contemporary groups such as Wahhabis and Salafis, presenting the responses of Hanafi scholars to their arguments.

'Tuhfat al-Almai'. This eight-volume commentary was authored by Muhammad Said Bolanpuri, one of the distinguished hadith scholars of India and a Shaykh al-Hadith at Dar al-Ulum Deoband. A unique aspect of this work is that it also provides commentaries on two additional works of Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi: ash-Shamail an-Nabaviyya and Kitab al-Ilal. Furthermore, his five-volume work Rahmatullah al-Wasia has also gained wide recognition.

'Sharh Ibn al-Naqib'. This commentary consisted of approximately ten volumes but was destroyed during a time of turmoil.

'Jaizat ash-Sha'wazi'. This Urdu commentary was authored by Shaykh Badi az-Zaman Laknavi (d. 1310 AH). It is essentially a detailed, explanatory Urdu translation of Jami at-Tirmidhi.

'Hadyat al-Lawzai bi-Nukat at-Tirmidhi'. Authored by Abu Tayyib Muhammad Shams al-Haqq Azimabadi (d. 1329 AH), this commentary remained incomplete due to the author's death. It contains refined research not only on the texts but also on isnad-related issues.

The aforementioned commentaries are presented on the basis of the information collected during the preparation of this article and do not encompass all the commentaries written on *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*. This is because, even today, scholarly research on this work continues to be conducted in various academic and research centers around the world.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Sunan al-Tirmidhi has remained one of the most extensively studied hadith collections from the time of its compilation until the present day. From the early centuries of Islamic history to the modern era, scholars have devoted considerable attention to this work, producing a wide range of commentaries, glosses, and supercommentaries. This fact clearly demonstrates that the collection holds not only academic significance but also an important place in the spiritual and intellectual life of the Muslim community.

The hadiths contained in Sunan al-Tirmidhi continue to serve as a vital source for addressing ethical, legal, and socio-religious challenges in today's age of globalization and rapid social transformation. This proves that the work has retained its relevance, functioning not only as a part of the Islamic intellectual heritage but also as a guide for resolving contemporary issues.

The commentaries on Sunan al-Tirmidhi may be classified according to several criteria: manuscript commentaries – many of which remain unpublished and preserved in libraries around the world; published commentaries; complete commentaries – covering all chapters and traditions of the collection; and incomplete commentaries – those of which only certain portions have survived.

One of the most notable aspects of this tradition is that a significant portion of the commentaries were produced by scholars of the Indian Subcontinent, particularly from India and Pakistan. Their works are of special importance because many of them were written in accordance with the methodological principles of the Hanafi school of law, thereby enriching both the legal and exegetical dimensions of the study of Sunan al-Tirmidhi.

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