The Methodology of Imām al-Tirmidhī

in his Book "Al-Jāmi'" (or "Al-Sunan")

A translation from "Al-Ta'rīf Al-Wajīz bi Manāhij Ashar al-Muṣannifīn fī al-Ḥadīth" by Sayyid 'Abd al-Mājid

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Glossary of Common Words

Ḥadīth (pl. Aḥādīth) - A narration from the Prophet consisting of a chain of narration (isnād) and text (matn).

Isnād / Sanad (pl. Asānīd) - Chain of narration.

Types of Aḥādīth Collections:

Jāmiʿ - A ḥadīth collection that includes all of the major topics of subjects addressed in the ḥadīth corpus. These primarily include the following eight:

1. ʿAqāʾid (Creed)

2. Aḥkām (Legal Rulings)

3. Siyar (Biography of the Prophet)

4. Ādāb (Etiquette)

5. Tafsīr (Quranic Exegesis)

6. Ashrāṭ (Signs of the Day of Judgement)

7. Fitan (Trials)

8. Manāqib (Virtues of Companions)

Sunan - A ḥadīth collection organized according to the well-known ordering of the chapters of Islamic Jurisprudential Understanding (fiqh). These include ṭahārah (purification), ṣalāh (prayer), zakāh (alms-tax), etc.

Ḥadīth Gradings:

Ṣaḥīḥ - This refers to the highest level a ḥadīth can be graded as. To reach this elusive rank, the ḥadīth must at least meet the following criteria:

- Continuity of the Chain of Narrators (اتصال السند) - It must be narrated from one person to another until it reaches the Prophet.

- Uprightness of the Narrators (العدالة) - The narrators must all be of good character.

- Accuracy of Narrators (الضبط) - The narrators must have good memory and/or good notes.

- No Anomalies (عدم الشذوذ) - The general definition is that the ḥadīth cannot contradict a ḥadīth at the similar level of authenticity narrated by a larger number of narrators or by a more accurate/reliable narrator.

- No Subtle Defects (عدم العلة) - There cannot be any subtle defects in the ḥadīth such as a skipped narrator. These are usually more recognizable to specialists but obscured from the layperson.

Ḥasan - Similar criteria as above, but a relaxed restriction on the accuracy of the narrators where they must still be trustworthy but not necessarily at the highest levels of accuracy.

Ḍa'if - A ḥadīth where one or more of the conditions for Ṣaḥīḥ have not been fulfilled. If it is related to an issue with the narrator, it could be that scholars of ḥadīth (*muḥadīthūn*) classified them as a weak narrator.

Types of Narrations:

Marfū' - A narration that is attributed to the Prophet ﷺ.

Munqaṭi' - Referring to a ḥadīth where this is break in the chain of narrators.

Mursal - Though this generally came to refer to a narration where the companion narrator was dropped, when used in the context of the Jāmi' this means Munqaṭi'.

Mawqūf - A narration that stops at the Companion narrator and doesn't go back to the Prophet ﷺ.

Translation Methodology & Style Guide

This is a translation of the section on Imām al-Tirmidhī's "al-Jāmī" or "al-Sunan" from the book "Al-Ta'rif Al-Wajīz bi Manāhij Ashar al-Muṣannifīn fī al-Ḥadīth" (The Short Introduction to the Methodologies of the Most Famous of the Authors of Ḥadīth Works) by Sayyid 'Abd al-Mājid Al-Ghawrī. We preferred to stick with literal translation whenever possible, but when this would result in needlessly verbose or unclear English, we went with translations that would flow better when rendered into it whilst preserving what was seen to be the author's intent. Any additions on the part of the translator, whether to enhance translation or include a relevant detail, will be enclosed in square brackets. And further clarifications will be relegated to the footnotes.

The following transliteration system will be employed:

أ	a	ش	sh	ه	h
ب	b	ص	ṣ	و	w
ت	t	ض	ḍ	ي	y
ث	th	ط	ṭ	ء	'
ج	j	ظ	ẓ	ة	h[1]
ح	ḥ	ع	'	اَ	ā
خ	kh	غ	gh	وُ	ū
د	d	ف	f	يِ	ī
ذ	dh	ق	q	´	a
ر	r	ك	k	´	u
ز	z	ل	l	ِ	i
س	s	م	m		

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[1] Though the transliteration key here is common between the ه and the ة, the tā' marbūṭah (ة) is present only at the end of a word and since the chosen convention assigns a sukūn at the end, the two effectively have the same sound.

For consistency's sake, the following conventions will also be adhered to:

- The first time oft-used technical jargon comes, it will be succinctly defined in a footnote. For more detail, the reader is advised to consult the glossary. For more obscure or uncommon terms, they will instead be thematically translated.

- An attempt will be made to preserve some Arabic grammatical qualities such as taʿrīf, iḍāfah, and ṣifah-mawṣūl in the translation itself as well as through capitalization. Any maʿrifah word will be identified as such through capitalization.

- Often, sentence-initial 'و' (wows) and other Arabic-specific language conventions will be omitted in the translation.

- All figures mentioned will have their death dates included as is tradition.

- All dates will be according to both the Hijrī as well as the Gregorian (Mīlādī) calendar.

- Transliterated noun's case endings (fatḥah, ḍammah, kasrah) will always be left unspecified (with a sukūn), but not necessarily so with particles or verbs.

- All letters, both sun (ḥurūf shamsiyyah) and moon (ḥurūf qamariyyah), will be left unassimilated/undoubled when transliterating Arabic.

- Nouns that change form due to grammatical state will be kept in the default (marfūʿ) state when transliterating Arabic (ex. Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfah → Abū Bakr b. Abū Quḥāfah).

- Any mentions of ibn / bin (son of) or bint (daughter of) after the given name will be shortened to "b" and "bt", respectively, except when it is part of the name by which the person is known.

A Glimpse from the Biography of the Author

He is Abū ‘Īsā, Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā b. Sawrah Al-Tirmidhī Al-Sulamī, the Reliable Imām, One of the Prominent Ḥadīth Scholars and One of the Well-Versed Ones in the Recognizing the Hidden Defects in Ḥadīth.

He was born in "Tirmidh" in the year 200 AH (815 CE) and he passed away in the city of "Būgh"[2] in the year 279 AH (892 CE). He heard aḥādīth from an uncountable number of teachers in Khurāsān and ‘Irāq and al-Ḥijāz. And he was of the most distinguished students of Imām al-Bukhārī.

The scholars of ḥadīth and its experts praised him. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Sa'd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Al-Idrīsī (504 AH / 1109 CE) said: "[He was] one of the imāms who should be followed in the science of ḥadīth. He authored Al-Jāmi‘, Al-Tawārīkh, and Al-'Ilal with the expertise of a learned, precise academic. And he would be given as an example of memorization."

And his authored works in the field of ḥadīth include:

- Al-Sunan
- Al-'Ilal Al-Kabīr
- Al-'Ilal Al-Saghīr
- Al-Shamāil Al-Nabawiyyah

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[2] Both of these cities are now in modern-day Uzbekistān.

Characterization of the Book

Its Title

The author, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī, named this book "Al-Jāmiʿ Al-Mukhtaṣar min al-Sunan ʿan Rasūl Allāh Ṣallā Allāh ʿAlayh wa Sallam wa Maʾrifah al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Maʿlūl wa mā ʿalayh al-ʿAmal" (The Comprehensive Abridgement on Narrations from the Messenger of Allah, may Allāh confer blessings and peace upon him, and Knowing what is Authentic, what is Subtly Defective, and what is Acted Upon) but it is known by, and commonly referred to, as "Sunan al-Tirmidhī" (The Legal Collection of al-Tirmidhī) or "Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī" (The Comprehensive Collection of al-Tirmidhī), as a means of ascription to its author.

Its Status Amongst [Other] Books of Ḥadīth

It is the fourth of the major six books of ḥadīth[3], and it ranks [right] after "The Sunan of Abī Dawūd," and it includes narrations that are sound (ṣaḥīḥ), good (ḥasan), and weak (ḍaʾīf).

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī did not record a narration that was not acted upon by the scholars of legal understanding (fiqh). What drove him to compile this book was that he wanted to gather the aḥādīth and reports that were used as evidence by scholars of legal understanding, so he would comment on them, unveil their subtle defects, and clarify their status (in terms of soundness or weakness).

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[3] These would be, in order, the collections of Al-Bukharī, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, Al-Tirmidhī, Al-Nasāʾī, and Ibn Mājah.

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī added an appendix to this book entitled "Kitāb al-'Ilal" (The Book of Subtle Defects). Al-Ḥafiẓ b. Rajab Al-Ḥanbalī (795 AH / 1393 CE) commented on it and did it justice. The original book and the commentary contain invaluable benefits that no person studying the Prophetic narrations and its sciences can go without.

Scholars' Praise for it

Al-Imām Ibn al-Athīr Al-Jazarī (606 AH / 1209 CE - 1210 CE) said: "And this book of his (Al-Ṣaḥīḥ[4]) is the most excellent of books, the most abundant of them in benefit, the most excellent of them in organization, and the least of them in terms of repetition. And it has what other books do not have, such as mentioning the position of different legal traditions (madhāhib), the methods of deriving evidence, and the explanation of the categorization of a ḥadīth into sound, good, or weak. It also has criticism (Jarḥ[5]) and praise (Ta'dīl[6]) [of narrators]."

The Number of its Narrations, Sections, and Chapters

A) The Number of its Narrations

It has approximately 3956 narrations, but it could differ, because precisely ascertaining it is difficult due to discrepancies between the manuscripts.

B) The Number of its Sections

It has 51 sections, the first of them is "The Chapter of Purification" and the last of them is "The Chapter of the Virtues of the Companions from the Messenger of God ﷺ[7]".

C) The Number of its Chapters

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[4] Generally used to refer to a collection of aḥādīth with predominantly sound narrations, but here it is used loosely to refer to the Jāmiʿ of Imām al-Tirmidhī.

[5] Literally meaning to injure but technically referring to impugning a narrator.

[6] Technical term meaning "to declare a narrator's uprightness or good character".

[7] Honorific meaning "May God confer His blessings and peace upon him".

It has 2231 chapters.

His Methodology Behind Writing This Book

His Conditions for the Book

In this book, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī relied on quoting narrations that were acted upon by scholars and jurists. He expressed this by saying: "The entirety of the narrations in this book are acted upon and [there are at least] some scholars [who] have accepted them, apart from two narrations[8]."

However, he did not commit to mentioning *all* of the narrations that have been acted upon because he founded this book on brevity, as he mentioned in its conclusion: "We have founded this book upon brevity due to the benefit we hoped for in it" (i.e. a shorter book is easier to read and digest).

He also records in this book some defective narrations in order to clarify their deficiencies and uncover the reasons for their rejection. He also included some very weak narrations, as it may complete the understanding of authentic narrations or be supported by them.

The narrations of very weak narrators are not present in this book [in general], but if he cited a narration from one, then he explained it according to his own scholarly scrutiny (ijtihād).

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[8] They are both marfūʿ narrations, the first from ʿAbd Allāḥ b. ʿAbbās speaks about the Prophet ﷺ combining between the two day prayers and the two nights prayers whilst he was in Madīnah without any apparent reason for doing so, and the second from Muʿāwiyah speaks about the ḥadd punishment for the drunkard, and that the one who commits this four times is to be put to death.

His Methodology Regarding the Ordering of the Chapters

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī ordered the aḥādīth in this book based on the [well-known ordering of] judicial works[9] and the scholarly designations. And the majority of aḥādīth in this book pertain to law. For that reason, it is called "Al-Sunan" (The Sunan[10]), even though he included aḥādīth about the description of the Day of Judgment, exegesis, and virtues of the companions to its end (in the way of Jāmiʿ[11] works).

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī began this book with the chapters on purification, and he ended it with the chapters of the virtues of companions of the Prophet ﷺ. With few exceptions, he mentioned the grading after every ḥadīth. He indicated supporting narrations by his statement: "Wa fī al-bab ʿan fulān wa fulān" (And on this topic narrated on the authority of so-and-so[12]).

The methodology of the author in sectioning the book into chapters is that he combines many [sub-]chapters into one [chapter]. And for that chapter, he titles it with the phrase "Abwāb" (Chapters on...), such as the "Chapters on Purity" and the "Chapters on Prayer."

As for the order of the aḥādīth within a chapter of this book, the author placed aḥādīth with subtle defects towards the front. Wherever he started with weak aḥādīth that had subtle defects, he then mentioned sound aḥādīth [that didn't]. And his purpose in doing so was to make clear what subtle defects were present in the aḥādīth and to make clear the ṣaḥīḥ version of the isnād.

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[9] Typically, books of Islamic Legal Understanding (fiqh) are more-or-less organized in a certain well-known manner. Thus, to facilitate the process of deriving rulings, Imām al-Tirmidhī organizes his chapters in a similar manner.

[10] Sunan refers to work wherein aḥādīth are organized according to the chapters of fiqh. Consult the Glossary for more.

[11] Jāmiʿ refers to works wherein aḥādīth are divided into eight sections which broadly encompass the ḥadīth corpus. Consult the Glossary for more.

[12] Essentially saying there are similar narrations on this topic from narrators other than the one mentioned.

And that is the general case. But sometimes he starts with a sound narration then follows it with a ḥadīth similar to it in authenticity or below it.

His Methodology Regarding the Titling of the Chapters

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī mostly titles the chapters of this book using clear[13] chapter titles. However, he did title some chapters using more hidden (i.e. obscure) titles, albeit infrequently. He also left some of the chapters without a title [at all], and they are ones that he sufficed with simply calling them: "Bāb" (Chapter) or "Bāb minhu" (Chapter on it[14]) without mentioning anything that would indicate the content within. And these are also infrequent.

His Methodology Regarding the Ruling/Grading of Narrations

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī mentions his ruling on every ḥadīth after the end of the wording of the ḥadīth, and in that he has his own unique nomenclature. A brief explanation of these will soon follow[15].

In this book, he also places specific emphasis on subtle imperfections that diminish the soundness of a ḥadīth, so much so that he designated a complete chapter at the end of the book to expound on the different categories of subtle imperfections in ḥadīth. And in aḥādīth that have a difference of opinion over them ([such as] whether the chain goes back to the Prophet ﷺ (marfū') or it stops (mawqūf), or whether the companion narrator is skipped (mursal) or not (mawṣūl)), he indicated his preference with specific terminology [whose explanation will soon follow].

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[13] Meaning that one can usually see the connection between the chapter title and its contents. This is in opposition to other books of ḥadīth (e.g. Al-Bukharī) where chapter titles can at times be more obscure.

[14] From a larger section; i.e. a subchapter.

[15] See the section entitled "Specific Terminology" for a breakdown on these.

His Methodology Regarding Designating Narrations as Mursal[16] or Munqaṭiʿ[17]

In this book, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī laid out numerous Mursal and Munqaṭiʿ aḥādīth. And when designating aḥādīth as Munqaṭiʿ, he mentions considerations that substantiate the disconnection. Oftentimes, he says: "isnāduh laysa bi-mutaṣṣil" (It's chain is not connected), or he says: "[It is] Mursal". And sometimes he says: "[It is] Munqaṭiʿ".

His Methodology Regarding Designating Narrations as Mawqūf[18]

In this book, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī presented a number of mawqūf narrations to clarify the legal opinions of the scholars (from among the companions (ṣaḥābah) and the successors (tābiʿīn)) and their statements he cites to explain why he brought the narrations of the [current] chapter. Or [he brought them to] so he could prop up weak narrations so that they [now] become hasan [by strengthening each other][19]. He mentions these narrations with clear expressions like: "[It is a] mawqūf ḥadīth" and "wa fulān lam yarfaʿhu" (So-and-so did not attribute it to the Prophet ﷺ).

His Methodology Regarding Repeating Narrations

In this book, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī did not repeat narrations except for a few of them in a handful of places. When repeating narrations, he sometimes takes into account the difference [between the versions] by bringing a new benefit [that can be gleaned], either in the text of the narration or in its chain of transmission.

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[16] Technical term in ḥadīth studies referring to a narration that skips the Companion narrator.
[17] Technical term in ḥadīth studies referring to a narration wherein a person in the chain is skipped.
[18] Technical term in ḥadīth studies referring to a narration that only reaches till a saḥābī (companion) narrator.
[19] In other ḥadīth works, the original narration would then be called "ḥasan li ghayrih" (ḥasan due to extrinsic evidence).

His Methodology in Combining Teachers with a Particle of Connection[20] and Combining Chains with Taḥwīl

His Methodology in Combining Teachers with a Particle of Connection

In this book, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī joined between his teachers by connecting them with the particle of connection, the letter "wāw" (و). And that was to keep it succinct and to avoid repetition of the shared portions of the full chains of narrations.

An example of that is his statement: "Qutaybah and Hannād and Maḥmūd b. Ghaylān[21] all said: 'Wakī'told us...'".

His Methodology in Combining Chains with Taḥwīl

In this book, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī combined chains by using the letter "ḥā'" (ح), indicating taḥwīl, referring to switching from one chain to another.

His purpose in that was to condense chains that converge at a specified narrator by not repeating the portion of repetition between the chains.[22] So he placed the "ḥā'" (ح) representing taḥwīl after the narrator that would connect with the other chains, and that narrator would be the pivot/convergence point (madār) of the ḥadīth. And sometimes he placed the ḥā' of taḥwīl after mentioning a portion of the text of the ḥadīth at the location where the two narrators begin to differ.

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[20] "wāw" (و).

[21] The wāw (و) would be represented by the "and"s between the names of the three individuals.

[22] Meaning since both chains would read the same after meeting at a certain narrator, repeating the common narrators after that one would be superfluous (as it would be the same for both), thus Imām al-Tirmidhī skips it and makes an indication when he does so.

And an example of that is the statement of Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī:

> Qutaybah b. Saʿīd narrated to us that Abū ʿAwānah narrated to us from Simāk b. Ḥarb. ح. And Hannād narrated to us that Wakīʿ narrated to us from Isrāīl from Simāk from Muṣʿab b. Saʾd from Ibn ʿUmar (May Allah be pleased with him and his father) that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Prayer is not accepted without purity, nor is charity from *ghulūl*.[23]" Hannād said in his narration: "Except without purity."

His Methodology Regarding Shortening Chains of a Narration

When there were a multitude of chains or texts for a narration, then Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī would mention some of them and refer to the rest of them without mentioning them in their entirety. For example, he would say "rawāh fulān ʿan fulān ayḍa" (so-and-so narrated from so-and-so as well), or "wa qad ruwiya min ghayr wajh ʿan fulān" (it has been narrated in another manner by so-and-so), or "mithluh" (like it), or "naḥwah" (similar to it), or "bi hādhā isnād" (with this chain), or "bi mithl ḥadīth fulān" (like the ḥadīth of so-and-so), or "wa zāda fī al-ḥadīth kadhā (and he added this-and-that to the ḥadīth)". Or he would say, "bi maʾnah" (with the meaning of it). Or he would say, "Qala fulān kadhā makan kadhā" (so-and-so said this in place of that). Or he would say, "tābaʿah fulān" (so-and-so followed it) or phrases other than those.

An example of that is the statement of Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī following the mention of a ḥadīth: "Wa qad ruwiya min ghayr wajh ʿan Abī Hurayrah ʿan al-Nabī hadha al-ḥadīth, wa ḥadīth Abī Hurayrah innamā ṣaḥḥ li annahu ruwiya min ghayr wajh" (This narration was narrated in another

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[23] Treachery. Referring to stealing from the war booty before it is divided.

way by Abu Hurayrah from the Prophet ﷺ, and only the narration of Abu Hurayrah is correct because it was narrated in another way).”

What Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī intends by "wajh" is another chain or path, the same usage as other scholars who compiled books of narrations.

He said in another narration:

Wa rawā hadhā al-ḥadīth ʿAlī b. Qādim ʿan Sufyān al-Thawrī wa zada fīh 'tawaḍḍa' marrah marrah'. Qāla: "Wa rawā Sufyān al-Thawrī hadhā al-ḥadīth ayḍa ʿan Muḥārib b. Dithār ʿan Sulaymān b. Buraydah anna 'Al-Nabī kāna yatawaḍḍa' li kulli ṣalāh'".

('Ali b. Qādim narrated this narration from Sufyān al-Thawrī and he added onto it: "He ﷺ would make wuḍū' time and time again." He said: "Sufyān al-Thawrī narrated this narration as well from Muḥārib b. Dithār from Sulaymān b. Buraydah: "The Prophet ﷺ would make wuḍū' for every prayer.")

Wa rawāh Wakīʿ ʿan Sufyān ʿan Muḥārib ʿan Sulaymān b. Buraydah ʿan abīh qāla "Wa rawāh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī wa ghayruh ʿan Sufyān ʿan Muḥārib b. Dithār ʿan Sulaymān b. Buraydah ʿan al-Nabī mursala. Wa hādhā aṣaḥḥ min aḥādīth Wakīʿ.

(Wakī' narrated it from Sufyān from Muḥārib from Sulaymān b. Buraydah from his father, he said: "'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī and others narrated it from Sufyān from Muḥārib b. Dithār from Sulaymān b. Buraydah from the Prophet ﷺ directly" and this is more correct than the narration from Wakīʿ.)

Specific Terminology

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī used lots of domain-specific terminology in his book and the reader must be well-acquainted with them to understand its depths. They include:

1. "Fīh maqāl" (There is discussion on this)

   Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī uses this term to weaken a narration or a narrator. What he means by this is that ḥadīth critics have spoken regarding the ḥadīth or the narrator and criticized either of their soundness.

2. "Fī isnādih maqāl" (There is discussion on the chain of narrators)

   It has the same meaning as the previous one.

3. "Dhāhib al-Ḥadīth" (Someone who loses narrations)

   What Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī means by this is that the narrator is unreliable in his ability to preserve the ḥadīth.

4. "Muqārib/Muqārab al-Ḥadīth" (Someone who has similar narrations)

   What is meant by "al-Muqārib" with a kasrah on the "rā'" (ر) is that his ḥadīth is similar to that of others. And if it is with a fatḥah on the "rā'" (ر) it means someone else's ḥadīth is similar to his. Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī only applied this description to two narrators, and they are "Bakkār b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Bakrah" and "Ḥajjāj b. Dīnār."

5. "Shaykh laysa bidhāk" (He is an old man, not up to par)

   What Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī means by this is that the narrator is an old man who has become forgetful, so he is no longer of a level where he can be relied upon, meaning his narrations are not strong.

6. "Laysa isnāduh bidhāk" (Its chain of narrators is not strong)

   Meaning it's not strong.

7. "Ḥadīth Gharīb min hadhā al-Wajh" (At some point in chain there is a single transmitter, but others exist)

   Meaning from this isnād. Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī describes the isnād with "al-Wajh" (from this chain) meaning that it is "gharīb" from the isnād-perspective only and not from the text of the ḥadīth. A "gharīb" ḥadīth is one wherein some of the narrators are the sole transmitters on that level of the chain. Similar terminology is used for a ḥadīth wherein some narrators are unique in mentioning a portion that no one other than them does, either in the text of the ḥadīth or its chain of narrators.

8. "Ḥadīth Mursal" (Missing narrator in chain)

   In most places in his collection, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī used the phrase "Mursal" in the meaning of "Munqaṭi'.[24]" "Mursal", according to most ḥadīth scholars, is defined as what a tābī' (successor) narrates [directly] from the Messenger of Allāh [, skipping the companion (ṣaḥābī narrator)].

9. "Ḥadīth Jayyid" (Sound narration but not at the highest level of authenticity)

   Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī uses it in the meaning of "the ḥadīth is ṣaḥīḥ (sound) but not at the highest level [of authenticity]."

10. "Hadhā aṣaḥḥ min dhālik" (This is more authentic than that)

    Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī says this after mentioning two ḥadīths or statements. And its meaning is apparent, namely that both the ḥadīths or statements are sound, however this one is stronger or more established than that one.

11. "Hadhā al-Ḥadīth aṣaḥḥ shay' fī hadhā al-Bāb wa aḥsan" (This narration is the most sound of everything on this topic)

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[24] This word came to be used in the field of ḥadīth studies for a narration wherein a tābī' (successor) narrates directly from the Prophet ﷺ, thereby bypassing at least one companion narrator.

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī meant that this narration is the most probable of all the narrations recorded on this topic. [He uses this indiscriminately] regardless of whether everything recorded regarding [the chapter] was authentic or weak. If whatever that came in the chapter was authentic, then this ḥadīth is the most sound of them in its authenticity. And if everything in it is weak, then this ḥadīth is the most acceptable of them (i.e. [it is] the least weak from them).

12. "Hadhā ḥadīth fīhi iḍṭirāb" (This narration has discrepancies)

A "muḍṭarib" narration is what has been narrated in various ways with equivalent levels of strength. It is a ḥadīth that is narrated in various, differing ways, some of them contradicting others to the extent that the differences cannot possibly be reconciled nor can any narration be given preference over the rest. If it is possible to give preference to any one of the ways it has been narrated, then the preferred narration is [considered] sound and everything else is [considered] weak. Iḍṭirāb necessitates a narration being weak because it exposes a lack of accuracy on the part of its narrators. Iḍṭirāb sometimes occurs in the chain of narrations and other times in the text of the narration [itself]. It could occur due to a single narrator, or two narrators, or [even] a group of narrators.

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī exposed this defect in a group of narrations by saying "hādhā ḥadīth fīh iḍṭirāb" (this narration has iḍṭirāb in it). Some of these types of narrations are due to conflicting versions between the narrations, either between whether the chain goes back to the Prophet ﷺ (marfū') or it stops (mawqūf), or whether the chain is connected (mawṣūl) or not (munqaṭi') [, etc]. [Issues in] the chains of narrations are the predominant cause of iḍṭirāb between narrations, but rarely it can be due to the text itself.

13. "Ḥadīth ghayr maḥfūẓ" (A narration that has not been preserved [properly])

"Al-Ḥadīth Al-Maḥfūẓ" (the preserved narration) is what a stronger narrator narrated that contradicts another strong narrator. It stands in contradistinction with a "shādh ḥadīth" (an anomalous narration), which is when a strong narrator narrates that which contradicts a narrator stronger than them, and more credible in preservation, precision, and frequency. And whenever Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī says: "hādhā al-Ḥadīth ghayr maḥfūẓ" (this narration is not preserved) the intention of his statement is that it is shādh (it contradicts the narration of someone who is more credible than them).

14. "Hadhā ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ" (This is a sound narration)

"Al-Ḥadīth Al-Ṣaḥīḥ" (the sound narration) is one wherein [(1)] its chain is connected through transmission from someone who is accurate and reliable to someone who is also accurate and reliable (till the end of the chain), [(2)] it is not anomalous, and [(3)] there are no subtle defects. So "al-ṣaḥīḥ" (sound) according to Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī is the same as the term "al-ṣaḥīḥ" as used by the [rest of the] ḥadīth experts, which can be substantiated through investigating his statements on narrations wherein he uses this terminology.

15. "Ḥadīth Ḥasan" (A Good Narration)

"Al-Ḥadīth Al-Ḥasan" (the good narration) is a narration wherein [(1)] its chain is connected through transmission from a reliable narrator whose accuracy is imperfect, [(2)] it is not shādh (anomalous), and [(3)] it does not have any subtle defects.

This is the standard, well-known definition according to the scholars of ḥadīth. It is [just] like the [definition for] ṣaḥīḥ except for one distinction, and that is that its narrators are lesser in accuracy (i.e. it fulfills the condition of accuracy, but at the lowest acceptable level).

As for "al-ḥasan" according to Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī, in his collection, it is a term unique to him. He defined it in the end of his book[25] saying:

> What I have mentioned in this book "ḥadīth ḥasan", I intended only that its chain of narrations is good according to me [by fulfilling the following conditions]: [(1)] for every ḥadīth that has been narrated, no narrator in the chain has been accused of lying, [(2)] the narration is not shādh (anomalous), and [(3)] it is narrated in a similar manner with another chain. [If it fulfills these conditions,] then, according to me, it is a ḥasan ḥadīth.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab Al-Ḥanbalī (795 AH / 1393 CE) explained Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī's purpose behind these words saying:

> Based on this [particular definition of Imām al-Tirmidhī], the narration that is narrated by reliable and upright narrators, and the one narrated by someone who often errs, and the one narrated by the one whose narrations are filled with nonsense are all at the level of ḥasan, so long as none of them have been accused of lying, the narration is not anomalous (such that it is contradicting sound narrations), and its meaning has been narrated through other chains.

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[25] This is in "Kitāb al-'Ilal".

16. "Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ" (Good, Sound)

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī often uses this terminology in his collection when giving rulings on narrations. The scholars have differed over its interpretation, because the word "ḥasan" means it falls short from the "ṣaḥīḥ" ranking, so how does the author combine between these two (i.e between ḥasan and ṣaḥīḥ) in a single narration's ruling?

They have some opinions regarding that: [(1)] that this ḥadīth is ḥasan according to some, and ṣaḥīḥ according to others, or that [(2)] it is ḥasan according to one chain of narration, and ṣaḥīḥ according to another chain of narration.

17. "Ḥadīth Gharīb" (Weak Narration)

The meaning of this term is that the narration is weak according to Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī, and that [comprises of] singularity [at some level of the chain] along with weakness of the chain of narration (due to a lack of a supporter to strengthen the narration[26]). If there was another chain that was appropriate to follow up the [original] narration, then it would have been raised to the rank of ḥasan.

18. "Ṣaḥīḥ Gharīb" (Sound but a single narrator at at least one level)

What Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī means by it is the combining of the criteria of ṣaḥīḥ (sound) along with the criteria of gharīb (weak)[27].

19. "Ḥasan Gharīb" (Good but a single narrator at at least one level)

Similar to the aforementioned definition of "al-ḥasan" (good), it is a ḥadīth wherein all of its narrators are well-known for honesty and trustworthiness, but they did not reach the level of narrators required for a ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth because of their lower accuracy. Despite

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[26] If this had been present, then the ḥadīth could have presumably been considered as ḥasan li ghayrih.
[27] i.e. at some level, the chain narrows to a single narrator, but the ḥadīth still fulfills all the criteria for a ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth.

that, they are of a higher rank than those whose ḥadīth when narrated solely by them is considered Munkar. In the context of soundness of the ḥadīth [itself], [then] it could be Munkar (when a weak narrator narrators that which contradicts a sound narration), Shādh (when a strong narrator narrates that which contradicts a narrator stronger than them), or Muʿallal (has some subtle defect).

As for the "gharīb ḥadīth", it is the narration where some of the narrators were alone in narrating it. This is also the case for the narration where some of them are alone when they mention a snippet no one else mentioned, either in its text or its chain of narrators[28].

So when a ḥadīth is described as "Ḥasan [and] Gharīb" simultaneously, this means that it comprises the conditions of a ḥasan ḥadīth, but some narrators may be alone in narrating it, or a portion of its text or its chain.

20. "Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ Gharīb min hādhā al-Wajh" (Particular narration goes through a single narrator, but the narration is sound and has other chains where it does not go through a single narrator)

It means that Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī is describing the narration as ḥasan (good) because of the multiplicity of its chains of transmission, as ṣaḥīḥ (sound) because of its rank, and as gharīb (one narrator at at least one level) to explain the single narrator from this chain, as opposed to other chains. So the following are combined in this narration: multiple chains of narration, soundness, and an attribution to a single narrator at at least one level (and this is present in [only] one chain as opposed to the rest).

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[28] i.e. The way a certain narrator narrated it had discrepancies (in either the text or chain) with everyone else who narrated the same ḥadīth.

21. "Ḥasan Gharīb min hādhā al-Wajh" (Particular chain is weak, but others exist)

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī means by this that the ḥadīth is ḥasan since it has multiple chains

strengthening each other, but the particular one cited is weak.

22. "Qāla Aṣḥābunā" (Our companions said)

Through this, Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī intended the mujtahid[29] jurists of the people of ḥadīth

like Mālik b. Anas (179 AH / 795 CE), Muḥammad b. Idrīs Al-Shāfiʿī (204 AH / 820

CE), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (241 AH / 855 CE), Isḥāq b. Rāhūyah[30] (238 AH / 852-853 AD),

etc.

23. "Qāla Ahl al-Kūfah" (The people of Kūfah said)

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī often uses this terminology in his collection when explaining

[differing] legal opinions[31]. And he often mentions it in contrast to the three imāms:

Mālik, Al-Shāfiʿī, and Aḥmad. For example, he says "Ahl al-Kufāh", "Some of the

people of Kūfah said", or some phrase like that.

Some people [falsely] assume that by "Ahl al-Kūfah" Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī intends

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nuʾmān and that he [intentionally] omitted his mention due to

partisan issues[32].

And this assumption is by no means correct. That is because a through investigation of

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī's usages of this phrase leads to [the fact] that he did not single out

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[29] One who engages in and is capable of what is known as ijtihād, the ability to weigh different evidences using the legal sources of Islām and come to a conclusion.
[30] Also pronounced Rāhwayh.
[31] Referring to the nascent schools of Sunnī legal understanding in his day, namely the eponymously-named Ḥanbalī, Shafiʾī, Mālikī, Ḥanafī, and Ẓahirī schools, among others which have now largely fizzled out.
[32] Due to coming from differing legal heritages resulting in differences in juristic understanding (fiqh) or base legal maxims (uṣūl).

Imām Abū Ḥanifah. Rather, he intended from Kūfah who was a jurist, such as Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ (197 AH / 812 CE), Sufyān Al-Thawrī (161 AH / 778 CE), and Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah (198 AH / 814 CE). A demonstration of that is his statement in "The chapter of what has come regarding that he begins with the back of the head": "And some of the people of Kūfah opined using this ḥadīth, among them Wakī' b. Jarraḥ"[33].

24. "Ahl al-Ra'y" (The people of opinion)

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī used this wording in a few places in his collection. He intended by "Ahl al-Ra'y" whomsoever had rational evidences and theoretical musings be predominant in their juristic studies, regardless of whether they were Ḥanafī scholars or others who fall under that definition from the generality of the legal schools.

25. "Wa fī bāb 'an fulān wa fulān" ([We have narrations] from so-and-so regarding this topic)

Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī often put this statement at the end of narrations. And its meaning is that the mentioned companion narrated this ḥadīth with the same wording that was in the chapter, or by its meaning, or by an alternate meaning.

Most Prominent Features of the Methodology of the Author in Writing this Book

The most prominent features of this book include that the author:

1. Limited it to only the narrations that were acted upon by the jurists of the major cities.

2. Mentioned in it, most of the time, the differences of opinion between the jurists and their statements regarding the matters of jurisprudence. And due to that, this book is considered to be one of the most important sources of studying jurisprudential differences between the legal schools of thought or studying comparative jurisprudence.

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[33] Another reason given for the omission of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah is that Imām al-Tirmidhī did not have any chains going through him, so he did not mention him.

3. Was the first of the authors of the six books to popularize the term "ḥasan"; often his usage of it in this book was during his comments on the narrations.

4. Discusses in it, for most narrations, what makes them ṣaḥīḥ (sound) or ḍaʿīf (weak).

5. Mentions shawāhid (alternate attestations) of a narration on the topic through his statement: "wa fī al-Bāb ʿan fulān wa fulān" (and on this topic on the authority of so-and-so). Through this statement he is not referring [only] to those companions who narrated the specific narration by its exact wording, he only intends to show the existence of other narrations on the [same] topic that could have been brought.

6. Narrates in it multiple types of ḥadīth, including ṣaḥīḥ (sound), ḥasan (good), and ḍaʿīf (weak) narrations. There are very few munkar narrations, and when he narrated them, he gave them a grading.

7. Does not include in it anything from a narrator unanimously accused of lying.

8. Abridges the various chains of narrations in it, mentioning one of them and indicating to the rest.

9. Is unique in his use of specific terminology.

It's Most Important Paths of Narration, Explanations, and Abridgements

It's Most Important Paths of Narration

This book has two famous paths of narrations and they are:

1) The path of Al-Shāshī, Abū Saʿīd Al-Haytham b. Kulayb (335 AH / 946 CE). This path is distinguished due to containing narrations that are not found in others.

2) The path of Al-Maḥbūbī, Abū al-ʿAbbās Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Al-Marwazī (346 AH / 957 CE). This path is the most well-known, the most circulated, and it is the one used for

publishing today. Many have narrated from him, among them Imām Abū al-Fatḥ ʿAbd al-Malik b. Abū al-Qasim al-Karūkhī (548 AH / 1153 CE), the one who hand wrote an excellent manuscript of the collection. He narrated using it more than once, and it was checked multiple times, and through his path the book was promulgated.

It's Important Commentaries and Supercommentaries

1. "ʿĀridah al-Aḥwadhī fī Sharḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī" by Al-Imām b. Al-ʿArabi, the judge Abū Bakr, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh Al-Ishbīlī (543 AH / 1148 CE). It is the first commentary on this book. In it, the author focused on the explanation of everything that related to the text of the narration and its chain and he enriched it with many grammatical discussions. He did the same with discussions on creed, judicial rulings, and etiquettes.

2. "Tuḥfah al-Aḥwadhi Sharḥ Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī" by Al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Mubārakpūrī (1353 AH / 1935 CE). It is one of the best and most exhaustive commentaries on the collection. In it, the author focused on discussing the narrators within the chains of transmission and thoroughly explaining the texts of the narrations. From them, he extracted beneficial points of knowledge and jurisprudential rulings in light of the narrations, statements, and opinions of the scholars of the *salaf* [34], not sticking solely to the opinions of a single school of thought.

3. "Maʿārif al-Sunan Sharḥ Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī" by Shaykh Muḥammad Yūsuf Al-Banūrī (1397 AH / 1977 CE). It is an explanation of all the benefits and reflections he noted down from his teacher, Shaykh Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī. It is considered to be one of the most reliable sources of the evidences of Al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah regarding the issues of dispute between the scholars. And it is one of the best commentaries in

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[34] Referring to the first three generations of Islām.

resolving problematic issues and clarifying ambiguous matters. However, he was unable to complete it, reaching only until the Chapters of Ḥajj (mandatory ritual pilgrimage).

4. "Itḥāf al-Ṭālib al-Aḥwadī bi Sharḥ Jāmiʿ Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī" by Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ādam Al-Athyūbī Al-Wallawī (1442 AH / 2020 CE). It is a solid and beneficial commentary on the collection. The author composed it in the style of the scholars of ḥadīth. He focused extensively on explaining odd narrations, clarifying their meanings, elucidating jurisprudential issues that derive from them, mentioning wordplay and any relevant benefits, and expounding on the statement[s] of Al-Imām Al-Tirmidhī "wa fī al-Bāb ʿan fulān" (there are other narrations on this topic by so-and-so).

Some other beneficial commentaries and supercommentaries [include]:

1. "Al-Nafḥ Al-Shadhī fī Sharḥ Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī" by Al-Imām b. Sayyid al-Nās Abū al-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Yaʿmurī (734 AH / 1334 CE). It is a fantastic, beneficial commentary claimed by the ḥadīth field, except, it was not completed. Al-Ḥafiẓ Al-ʿIrāqī and others attempted to finish it but they did not complete it [either].

2. "Qūt al-Mughtadhī ʿalā Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī" by Imām al-Suyūṭī Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abū Bakr (911 AH / 1505 CE).
   It is an abridged (yet beneficial) supercommentary of the Jāmiʿ.

3. "Ḥāshiyah al-Sindī ʿalā Sunan al-Tirmidhī" by Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan Al-Sindī Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Hādī Al-Tatawī (1138 AH / 1725-1726 CE).
   It is an abridged commentary using narrations. He sufficed in it with the explanation and clarification of words of the Jāmiʿ.

4. "Al-'Arf Al-Shadhī 'alā Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī" by Shaykh Muḥammad Anwar Shāh Al-Kashmīrī (1342 AH / 1933 CE).

   It is an explanation of his hopes for the Jāmi'.

5. "Al-Ṭayyib Al-Shadhī fī Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī" by Shaykh Ishfāq al-Raḥmān Al-Ṣiddīqī Al-Kāndahlawī (1377 CE / 1957-1958 CE).

   It is a very short commentary of the Jāmi'.

It's Most Important Abridgements

"Mukhtaṣar Sunan al-Tirmidhī" by Dr. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Bughā. It is in print.