

RESEARCH ON THE LIFE AND WORKS OF IMAM ABU ISA MUHAMMAD AL-TIRMIDHI**Umarali Gafforov**Lecturer, Department of Arabic Language Translation Theory and Practice
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gafforov96u@gmail.com**Abstract**

The article provides valuable information about the life, lineage, scholarly activities, teachers, and educational journeys of Imam Abu Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi, one of the greatest scholars of Hadith and the author of the renowned work Sunan al-Tirmidhi. It is well known that the land of Mawarannahr has been the cradle of outstanding scholars and thinkers since ancient times. Imam Abu Isa al-Tirmidhi is regarded as one of the distinguished scholars who emerged from this blessed region. Furthermore, he is the compiler of one of the six authentic collections of Hadith known in the Islamic world as Al-Sihah al-Sittah (The Six Authentic Collections).

Keywords: Termez, Hadith, Sahih, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Abu Isa, Al-Bukhari, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Al-Sihah al-Sittah, Marv.

Annotatsiya

Maqolada hadis ilmi bo'yicha ulug' olimlardan, "Sunani Termiziy" asari sohibi Imom Abu Iso Muhammad Termiziyning hayoti, nasabi, ilmiy ishlari, ustozlari, ilmiy safarlari haqida qimmatli ma'lumotlar o'rin olgan. Ma'lumki, Movarounnahr diyori qadim zamonlardan beri ulug' olimlar, mutafakkirlar beshigi bo'lib kelgan. Imom Abu Iso Termiziy ham ana shu tabarruk zamindan yetishib chiqqan olimlardan sanaladilar. Shuningdek, olim Islom olamida "Sihohi sitta" deb yuritiladigan oltita ishonchli hadis to'plamlaridan birining sohibi hamdir.

Kalit so'zlar: Termiz, hadis, sahih, Imom Termiziy, Abu Iso, Al-Buxoriy, "Sunani Termiziy", "Sihohi sitta", Marv.

Аннотация

В статье содержится ценная информация о жизни, родословной, научных трудах, учителях и научных путешествиях имама Абу Исы Мухаммада Термизи, одного из великих ученых в области хадисоведения, автора труда «Сунани Термизи». Известно, что земля Маверауннахра с древних времен была колыбелью великих ученых и мыслителей. Имам Абу Иса Термизи также считается одним из ученых, выросших на этой благословенной земле. Этот ученый также является автором одного из шести надежных сборников хадисов в исламском мире, которые называются «Сихахи Ситта».

Ключевые слова: Термизи, хадис, сахих, имам Термизи, Абу Иса, Аль-Бухари, «Сунани Термизи», «Сихахи Ситта», Марв.

Introduction

Imam al-Tirmidhi's full name and lineage were Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Sawrah ibn Musa ibn al-Dahhak al-Sulami al-Bughi al-Tirmidhi. His kunyah (honorific title) was Abu Isa ("Father of Isa"). His lineage is mentioned in this form in numerous historical sources.

Al-Tirmidhi was born in 209 AH (824 CE). The renowned Hadith scholar and historian al-Dhahabi, in his work Mizan al-I'tidal, records that al-Tirmidhi passed away in 279 AH and states: "He was seventy years old when he died."

The eminent scholar Mulla Ali al-Qari also confirms this information in his commentary on *Al-Shama'il*. Imam al-Tirmidhi was born into a middle-class family in the village of Bugh, located near Termez (in present-day Sherabad District of Surkhandarya Region, Uzbekistan). The famous Central Asian historian Abu Sa'd Abd al-Karim al-Sam'ani (1113–1167) notes that al-Tirmidhi was also known by the epithet al-Bughi because he died in the village of Bugh. He further reports that due to excessive weeping, the scholar lost his eyesight in the final years of his life and consequently became known by the epithet al-Darir ("the blind").

However, the reason he became widely known as al-Tirmidhi is that his entire life and scholarly activity, beginning from his youth, were closely connected with the city of Termez. Moreover, the village of Bugh, where he was born, was located near Termez and was administratively affiliated with the city.

From an early age, al-Tirmidhi was exceptionally diligent, perceptive, and intelligent, qualities that clearly distinguished him from his peers. His profound interest in and enthusiasm for knowledge became evident during his youth, enabling him to master many branches of learning of his time, particularly the science of Hadith. According to the historian Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi, al-Tirmidhi never personally visited Egypt or Syria (al-Sham); therefore, he transmitted Hadiths from the scholars of these regions indirectly. During his long scholarly journeys, al-Tirmidhi expanded his knowledge not only in Hadith studies but also in Qur'anic recitation (*Ilm al-Qira'at*), rhetoric (al-Bayan), Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), history, and various other fields of learning under the guidance of numerous teachers. These educational experiences laid a solid foundation for his emergence as one of the leading scholars of his era.

In addition, al-Tirmidhi devoted particular attention to collecting the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), an interest he had cultivated since his youth. In this pursuit, he endured every hardship. Whenever he read a Hadith or heard one from a narrator, he carefully recorded it on separate sheets. After thoroughly verifying its authenticity and chain of transmission (isnad), and repeatedly examining it until he was fully satisfied with its reliability, he documented it systematically on special records. Likewise, whenever doubts arose regarding the authenticity of narrations transmitted by various narrators, he kept them separately and recorded them in an organized manner.

As a result, Hadiths were classified according to their authenticity and reliability into different categories, such as Sahih (authentic), Hasan (good), Da'if (weak), and Gharib (unusual or rare). Al-Tirmidhi consistently indicated these classifications in his works when presenting Hadith narrations.

Travels and Scholarly Pursuits

When Imam al-Tirmidhi reached the age of twenty, he studied under the prominent scholars of Khurasan, including Ishaq ibn Rahawayh al-Marwazi and others. At the age of twenty-five or twenty-six, he traveled to Iraq, particularly Basra, where he continued his studies with the distinguished scholars of the region.

Afterward, he journeyed to the Hijaz. However, historical sources do not provide evidence that he visited Baghdad, Egypt, or Syria. Some scholars suggest that the political instability prevailing in those regions at the time may have prevented such travels. His pursuit of knowledge continued for many years. Imam al-Tirmidhi returned to Termez only in 250 AH (864 CE), indicating that he spent more than fifteen years traveling through various lands in search of Hadiths and scholarly knowledge.

Hafiz Abu al-Fadl Muhammad ibn Tahir al-Maqdisi, narrating through Hasan ibn Ahmad Abu Muhammad al-Samarqandi, Abu Bishr Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Amr, and Hafiz Abu Sa'id Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Idrisi, stated:

“Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Sawrah al-Tirmidhi, the Hafiz and the blind scholar, was one of the imams whose authority in the science of Hadith was followed by others. He authored Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Al-Tawarikh, and Al-'Ilal as a scholar distinguished by knowledge, wisdom, and sound judgment. His extraordinary memory was regarded as exemplary.”

Al-Sam'ani, in his work Al-Ansab, describes al-Tirmidhi as follows:

“Without dispute, he was the leading imam of his age and the author of numerous scholarly compilations.”

Likewise, Ibn Khallikan characterized him by stating:

“He was one of the imams whose authority in the science of Hadith was followed by others.”

Imam al-Tirmidhi passed away in 892 CE in the village of Bugh, near Termez, and was buried there.

Some of Imam al-Tirmidhi's Teachers

Among the prominent scholars from whom Imam al-Tirmidhi acquired knowledge were:

1. **Abdullah ibn Mu'awiyah al-Jumahi** – passed away in 243 AH at the age of one hundred.
2. **Ali ibn Hujr al-Marwazi** – died in 244 AH when he was nearly one hundred years old.
3. **Suwayd ibn Nasr ibn Suwayd al-Marwazi** – passed away in 241 AH at the age of ninety-one.
4. **Qutaybah ibn Sa'id al-Thaqafi Abu Raja'** – lived from 150 AH to 242 AH.
5. **Muhammad ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Abi al-Shawarib** – died in 244 AH.
6. **Ibrahim ibn Abdullah ibn Hatim al-Harawi** – lived from 178 AH to 244 AH.
7. **Isma'il ibn Musa al-Fazari al-Suddi** – passed away in 245 AH.

The Scholarly Legacy of Imam al-Tirmidhi

Most of al-Tirmidhi's scholarly compilations, including his famous work Al-Jami', were completed after his return to his homeland. Throughout his academic career, he authored more than ten works. Undoubtedly, Al-Jami' occupies a central place in his intellectual legacy. This work is also known by several other titles, including Al-Jami' al-Sahih (“The Authentic Collection”), Al-Jami' al-Kabir (“The Great Collection”), Sahih al-Tirmidhi, and Sunan al-Tirmidhi.

Another of his major works is Ash-Shama'il al-Nabawiyyah (“The Prophetic Characteristics”). This work is also referred to as Ash-Shama'il al-Muhammadiyyah and Ash-Shama'il fi Shama'il al-Nabi Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam. The book was translated into Uzbek by the late Said Mahmud Tarazi, a compatriot who lived in Saudi Arabia and passed away in 1992. The translation has been published several times in Tashkent in both Arabic and Cyrillic scripts.

Among al-Tirmidhi's other works are:

- Kitab al-Tarikh ("The Book of History"),
- Kitab al-'Ilal al-Saghir and Al-'Ilal al-Kabir,
- Kitab al-Zuhd ("The Book of Asceticism and Piety"),
- Kitab al-Asma' wa al-Kuna ("The Book of Narrators' Names and Honorific Titles"),
- Al-'Ilal fi al-Hadith ("Defects and Irregularities in Hadith"),
- Risalah fi al-Khilaf wa al-Jadal ("A Treatise on Disagreements and Debates"),
- Asma' al-Sahabah ("The Names of the Prophet's Companions").

Another important work of Abu Isa al-Tirmidhi is Ash-Shama'il al-Nabawiyyah. In some sources, it is also cited as Ash-Shama'il fi Shama'il al-Nabi Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam and Ash-Shama'il al-Muhammadiyah. This valuable work contains 408 authentic Hadiths describing the personal life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), his physical appearance, noble character, virtues, and daily habits.

Al-Tirmidhi's Work "Al-'Ilal fi al-Hadith"

One of Imam al-Tirmidhi's most significant surviving works is Al-'Ilal fi al-Hadith ("Defects or Hidden Flaws in Hadith"). This important contribution consists of two independent sections. One of them, known as Al-'Ilal al-Kabir ("The Major Defects") or Al-'Ilal al-Mufrad, has long been presumed lost. Although most researchers have accepted this view, the scholar Nur al-Din 'Itr, who devoted a special monograph to the life and works of al-Tirmidhi, reported otherwise in the second edition of his study published in Beirut in 1988.

According to Nur al-Din 'Itr, he discovered the only known manuscript of Al-'Ilal al-Kabir in one of Turkey's manuscript-rich libraries. He obtained a photographic copy of the manuscript and utilized it in the revised edition of his research. He further notes that when al-Tirmidhi originally composed Al-'Ilal al-Kabir, the work was not divided into chapters. Later, however, the distinguished scholar Abu al-Walid al-Qadi organized the text into thematic chapters. In addition, an independent section was appended at the end of the book, containing discussions and evaluations concerning the narrators (rijal) of Hadith.

The second part of Al-'Ilal is known as Al-'Ilal al-Saghir ("The Minor Defects"). Since it is directly related to the author's principal work, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, it was included as a concluding section at the end of that collection. In general, the Arabic term 'ilal is the plural form of 'illah, which literally denotes illness, defect, weakness, imperfection, or deviation. In the science of Hadith, however, the concept of 'ilal occupies a highly significant position, as it concerns the investigation of hidden flaws, inaccuracies, mistakes, omissions, and other weaknesses that may occur in the transmission of Hadiths due to various factors affecting narrators.

The fact that numerous Hadith scholars devoted special attention to this subject and authored independent works on it demonstrates its great significance and practical value within Islamic scholarship. Among those who wrote on defective Hadiths were Ali ibn Abdullah al-Madini (the teacher of Imam al-Bukhari), Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Abu Hatim, and many other distinguished scholars. Even among these eminent muhaddithun, Imam al-Tirmidhi's works on 'ilal hold a particularly important place in assessing the authenticity and reliability of Hadith narrations.

Regarding the study of ‘ilal, Imam al-Tirmidhi himself stated:

“I reflected on this issue for a long time. The reason was that whenever we were asked about it, we initially refrained from expressing our views openly. This was because several scholars before us, when questioned about the subject of ‘ilal, had likewise remained silent. Moreover, some scholars believed that pointing out the errors, mistakes, and shortcomings of narrators who were otherwise considered trustworthy amounted to backbiting. However, after years of association with a number of renowned muhaddiths, especially my teacher Imam al-Bukhari, and after hearing narrations relevant to this matter, I became determined to discuss the issue of ‘ilal openly. I have not seen, either in Iraq or in Khurasan, a scholar more knowledgeable than Imam Muhammad ibn Isma‘il al-Bukhari in the fields of ‘ilal, history, and chains of transmission (isnad).”

Conclusion

In conclusion, Imam al-Tirmidhi was one of the greatest scholars in the science of Hadith and one of the most distinguished personalities who rendered invaluable service to the Muslim community. His scholarly works continue to occupy a prominent place in the Islamic intellectual tradition and remain among the most authoritative and widely consulted sources in the Muslim world. May Allah the Almighty reward him abundantly for his outstanding contributions to Islamic scholarship and preserve his legacy for future generations.

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