Construction and Criticism of Hadith among Sufis:
An Analytical Study of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*

Zainal Muttaqin; Ach. Shodiqil Hafil
State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kediri, Indonesia
zainal.mtq@iainkediri.ac.id; as.hafil@iainkediri.ac.id

Abstract

Discussing a hadith that is not as important as the Quran, requires strict rules regarding the validity of its matan and sanad. These rules and criteria became a problematic dynamic among Sufis and hadith experts. There are even negative accusations against the book of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din as the primary book for sufis which contains many hadiths dha'if and even maudhu'. Therefore, this research is considered important to find the construction of hadith and the problematic point that occurs between hadith experts and Sufis in interpreting hadith, especially those contained in the book of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din. With the type of qualitative research of literature and analytical descriptive approach, the conclusion was produced that the weakness that hadith experts criticized the book of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din did not reduce the degree of quality and credibility of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din as a general book in studying Islam. The reason is that some of the dho'if or maudhu' hadiths contained in them are not used as postulates in terms of shari'a law, but only explain fadhail al-a'mal which is agreed to be legality by hadith experts as long as it does not penetrate into the realm of ilahiyat. The problem of interpretation rivalry among hadith experts and Sufis is caused by differences in the angles of the hadith in the recitation of the hadith. The difference comes from the two epistemologies that underlie the thinking of the two groups of scholars. Sufis, are more concerned with irfani epistemology, prioritizing matan over sanad, whereas hadith scholars who use bayani epistemology, have strict rules in passage. However, there are some hadith experts, such as al-Iraqi and al-Zabidi, who seek to find common ground for sanad's validity in the hadiths in the book of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din. Until finally the negative accusations against the book which were originally considered to use many maudhu' hadiths were finally refuted. This has led to the book of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din remaining relevant and significant for study today.

Keywords: *Hadith of Sufi; Hadith Expert; Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din.*

Abstrak

Membincang hadis yang tidak semutawatir al-Quran, mengharuskan adanya aturan yang ketat terkait validitas *matan* dan *sanad*-nya. Aturan dan kriteria ini menjadi dinamika problematis di kalangan kaum sufi dan ahli hadis. Bahkan terdapat tudingan negatif terhadap kitab *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* sebagai kitab primer bagi kaum sufi yang banyak memuat hadis-hadis *dha'if* bahkan *maudhu'*. Karenanya penelitian ini dirasa penting untuk menemukan konstruksi hadis dan titik problematika yang terjadi antara ahli hadis dan kaum sufi dalam menginterpretasikan hadis, khususnya yang terdapat dalam kitab *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din.* Dengan jenis penelitian kualitatif kepustakaan dan pendekatan deskriptif analitis, dihasilkan kesimpulan bahwa kelemahan yang menjadi kritik ahli hadis terhadap kitab *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* tersebut tidak mengurangi derajat kualitas dan kredibilitas *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* sebagai buku besar dalam mengkaji keislaman. Pasalnya, beberapa hadis *dho'if* ataupun *maudhu'* yang terdapat dalam tersebut tidak dijadikan dalil dalam hal hukum syar'i, melainkan hanya menjelaskan *fadhail al-a'mal* yang disepakati legalitasnya oleh para ahli hadis selama tidak merambah ke ranah *ilahiyat*. Adapun problematika rivalitas interpretasi di kalangan ahli hadis dan kaum sufi diakibatkan oleh perbedaan sudut padang dalam pembacaan hadis. Perbedaan tersebut berasal dari dua epistemologi yang mendasari pemikiran kedua kelompok ulama tersebut. Kalangan sufi lebih dengan epistemologi *irfani* lebih memprioritaskan *matan* daripada sanad, sedangkan ahli hadis yang menggunakan epistemologi *bayani*, memiliki aturan yang ketat dalam periwayatan. Namun demikian ada beberapa ahli hadis, seperti

al-Iraqi dan al-Zabidi, yang berupaya mencari titik temu kesahihan sanad pada hadis-hadis dalam kitab *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. Hingga akhirnya tuduhan negatif terhadap kitab tersebut yang mulanya dianggap banyak menggunakan hadis-hadis *maudhu'* akhirnya terbantahkan. Hal ini menyebabkan kitab *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* tetap relevan dan signifikan untuk dikaji hingga saat ini.

Kata Kunci: Hadis Sufi, Ahli Hadis, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*

Introduction

The Hadith is the second source of law in Islam after the Quran. Therefore, understanding the hadith is a necessity that must be explored by every Muslim and practiced in the practice of life (*living hadith*). For this reason, the study of hadith is urgent in order to maintain the authenticity and authority of religious texts as the main doctrine in Islam. Moreover, the prophet has long been a motivation and inspiration for behavior. Friends as an early generation who are directly related to the hadith have tried hard to prove the truth of this. One of them is by the method of *al-tatsabbut fi al-riwāyah* (confirmation of passage). It was like what Abu Bakr and Umar had done when on several occasions they received *news* from other friends to him.

Hadith occupies an important position because Islamic teachings both related to *muamalah* and worship cannot be carried out properly without the instructions of the Prophet's hadiths. However, there are also many criticisms from hadith reviewers in the West such as Margoliouth who state that the position of hadith in Islam is not significant because there is already a Quran that is considered the most authoritative. But moslem scholar Fazlur Rahman refutes this with the argument that in the Quran itself there is a verse that does allow even require Muslims to follow the prophet's orders and prohibitions as explained in sura *al-Hasyr* verse 7.[1]

Thus, the assumption that the Quran is the only authoritative source of Islamic law so that there is no need for hadith has been refuted by the Quran itself. Therefore, to maintain the significance of the hadith, it is considered necessary to have the conservation of the hadith as in the Quran so that authenticity is always maintained. One of the groups of scholars who are concerned in the preservation of the hadith is the Sufis, because for them the Prophet and his hadiths, not only as a source of law, but also a source of norms and morals that must be practiced in everyday life.[2]

However, in its development, efforts to *ihya' al-sunnah* or the preservation of the *sunnah* of the prophet by Sufis have been met with opposition from hadith experts. This happens because Sufis are indifferent to the issue of narrating a hadith. In this case, for Sufis, the transmission of hadith is possible even though the prophet has died. The transmission can be through dreams or inspirations that in the study of hadith experts cannot be accounted for their existence and truth.

The controversy over hadith passages between hadith experts and Sufism continued to grow until it dragged the name al-Ghazali (d. 505 H.) as the author of the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, one of the primary books in the study of Sufism. In general, there is no problem with the book, but when reviewing the hadiths in it, there are many hadiths that hadith experts think are not worthy because they fall into the weak category (*dho'if*). Herein lies the problem between hadith experts and Sufism experts. They have a divergent *worldview* of the hadith.

From the background of the above problems, this research aims to examine more deeply the construction of the hadith concept among Sufis. In this case, the focus of his analysis is the monumental book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din'* by a famous Muslim scientist,

---

[1] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam: Sejarah Pemikiran dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Mizan Pustaka, 2016).
[2] Anas Ahmadi, *Orang Kiri dalam Buku Tempo* (Gresik: Graniti, 2017).

Imam al-Ghazali. The study of hadith among Sufis has become very urgent and significant to discuss, because even today there is still a deconstructive rivalry between Sufism and hadith experts.

Literature Review

This conflict between hadith experts and Sufism experts has encouraged many researchers to study problems related to hadith and its significance to the world of Sufism. Among these is Arafat who wrote an article entitled "The Interaction of Sufis with Hadith Experts: Tracing the Intersection of Sufism and Hadith".[3] The article, published in the Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities, uses a historical approach in order to examine the roots of the intersection between Sufism and hadith science through the interaction patterns of Sufis and hadith experts. From this research, it was found that the interaction of Sufis and hadith experts, which historically occurred in the second century hijra, was a dialogical and dynamic interaction between the two.

In addition, Ahmadi's research was also found entitled *"Prophetic Sufi: Study of Living Hadith Jamaah Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah in Trenggalek Regency"*.[4] This research departs from the negative views of Sufis who are considered not to pay much attention to the validity of a prophet's sunnah. As the title implies, this research methodology uses a qualitative field approach that focuses more on the pilgrims of the *Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah* Order in Trenggalek Regency as the subject of research. From the results of this study, it is known that in the discourse of living hadith there are many rites of Muslims inspired by the hadith of the prophet. Especially for those who consider the prophet as the main *public figure* who must be exemplary.

Then there is another research by In'amul Hasan and Ahmad Ahnaf Rafif.[5] This research using a historical approach examines the ins and outs and causes of the persistence of the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by al-Ghazali is a favorite book in the archipelago. In fact, of course, there are many points against the book, among which are the many weak hadiths (*dho'if*) in it. However, it was answered in the results of research that Sufism has become a typical pattern from the beginning of the spread of Islam in the archipelago. So, the flaws in the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* do not matter because of its focus on the substance of the *matan*, and not solely on the validity of the *sanad*. However, in the process of its development, Sufi scholars who spread Islam in the archipelago also clung to Shari'a, so the stereotype that appears to be neo-sufism.

From some of the literature above, it can be mapped and seen that gaps related to the relationship between hadith and Sufism are visible. So far not much has focused on studying al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din'* from the worldview of his hadith construction. Where it is very significant to find the common thread and common ground of the problem between hadith and sufis.

Method

This research used a library *research-based* qualitative method. As philosophical research, this research uses a descriptive-analytical approach to find the construction of *sunni* hadith among *sufis*. Meanwhile, the primary source as the main source of analysis in this study is the monumental book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by the famous Muslim scientist al-Ghazali. This book is a medium of analysis because so far it is still widely studied and recognized for its very interesting quality of discussion. In its discussion, this

---

[3] Ahmad Tajuddin Arafat, "Interaksi Kaum Sufi dengan Ahli Hadis: Melacak Akar Persinggungan Tasawuf Dan Hadis," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2017): 129–55, doi:10.21580/jish.22.2520.
[4] Ahmadi, *Orang Kiri dalam Buku Tempo*.
[5] In'amul Hasan, "Popularisasi Ihyâ 'Ulûm al-Dîn di Nusantara: Melacak Akar Historis Melalui Sudut Pandang Sufistik dan Hadis," *Muàṣarah: Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer* 3, no. 1 (July 30, 2021): 28–35, doi:10.18592/msr.v3i1.4955.

research also uses a historical approach used to find out the early history of the interrelationship of rivalry between Sufis and hadith experts. Or also use an interpretive or normative approach,

Concept of Hadith literally and Term

Every term always has a definition, and in defining a term we are often faced with various meanings and differences contained in various reference books or those submitted by experts. The existence of differences in definitions is more influenced by the discipline and concentration of the interpreters of these terms. In the context of the word hadith, there are several terms that are widely known to have meanings that are not much different from hadith. Hadith linguistically according to al-Sabbagh and al-Tirmasi, can mean "new" (al-jadid), the opposite of "lama" (*al-qadim*). Hadith is also often equated with "news" (*akhbar*) delivered by word of mouth.[6]

According to al-Qatthan, the term hadith also varies according to each discipline.[7] It can also mean speech used in a conversation or that comes through revelation. For example, it is found in the verse:

وإذ أسر النبي إلى بعض أزواجه حديثا (QS. Al-Tahrim: 3)

فليأتوا بحديث مثله إن كانوا صادقين (QS. Al-Thur: 34)

الله لا إله إلا هو ليجمعنكم إلى يوم القيامة لا ريب فيه ومن أصدق من الله حديثا (QS. Al-Nisa: 87)

In the first verse above, حديث means speech, while the following verses contain the meaning of God's kalam or revelation. In the above verses Allah says that His word is a "hadith", and this meaning can be understood as the meaning of *lughawi*. The general understanding of the word hadith then experienced a shift in meaning under the strong influence of Islamic teachings. When it became a technical term, hadith was then variously defined by many scholars from various scientific backgrounds and schools. Some *muhaddisin* scholars define hadith as:

ما أضيف إلا النبي من قول أو فعل أو تقرير أو صفة خلقية أو خلقية

"Something that is leaned on to the Prophet saw., both in the form of words, deeds, approval (confirmation), physical appearance and ethics" (Smeer, 2008).

In addition, there is also an equivalent of the word hadith, namely *sunnah* which literally means the way of life (*sirah*) or the path (*thariqah*) of good and bad. Ibn Taimiyah revealed that sunnah is a custom (*al-'adah*) or path (*thariqah*) that is constantly repeated by various human beings, whether it is considered worship or not worship.[8]

Hadith scholars generally assume that *sunnah* is a synonym of the word's *hadith*, *khabar* and *atsar*. They define sunnah as something narrated from the Prophet, whether in the form of words, deeds, approval, physical appearance, and ethics, either before prophethood or after. Whereas according to ulama fiqh, *sunnah* is an act that when done gets rewarded and if left behind does not get torture sanctions. In contrast to T.M. Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy in Sulaiman, sunnah is something carried out by the Prophet that is constantly inscribed upon us from age to age by way of *mutawatir*.[9] The Prophet and the

---

[6] Muhammad Al-Sabbagh, *Al-Hadits al-Nabawi* (Riyad: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1972); Muhammad Mahfuz Al-Tirmasi, *Manhaj Zawi Al-Nazar* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1974).

[7] Manna Al-Qaththan, *Pengantar Studi Ilmu Hadits*, trans. Mifdhol Abdurrahman (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2005).

[8] M. Agus Shalahudin, *Ulumul Hadits* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2009).

[9] M. Noor Sulaiman, *Antologi Ilmu Hadits* (Jakarta: Gaung Persada Press, 2008).

companions carried it out, then the execution was continued by the companions and *tabi'in* and so on from generation to generation to our present day.

In addition to hadith and sunnah, there is also the term *khabar* or *akhbar* which literally means "news" (*an-naba'*) or talk that still contains the possibility of truth and lies. Meanwhile, in terms of terminology, there are two opinions regarding the meaning of this *akhbar*. The first opinion, some scholars argue that *akhbar* is synonymous with hadith. They therefore hold that *akhbar* is what comes from the Prophet, both the marfu' (which is leaned directly to the Prophet), the *mawquf* (which is leaned to the companions), and the *maqthu'* (which is leaned on the *tabi'in*). The scholars argue that way on the grounds that apart from language also because the so-called scholars are not limited to people who narrate news from the Prophet alone, but also narrate from companions and *tabi'in*. Therefore, there is no objection to equating hadith with *akhbar.* Secondly, some scholars state that *akhbar* is different from hadith. Hadith is what comes from the Prophet, while *akhbar* is what comes from other than the Prophet. Therefore, people who persevere (busy themselves) on the hadith are called "*muhaddis*", while people who persevere with history or something are called "*akhbari*".[10]

In addition to *hadith*, *sunnah*, *akhbar*, there is also the term *atsar* which from a linguistic point of view means "the rest of something". But there are also those who equate *atsar* with *akhbar*. Etymologically *atsar* is considered synonymous with *hadith*, *khabar*, and *sunnah*. *Jumhur ulama* hadith interprets *atsar* as "something that is leaned on to the Prophet SAW., companions and *tabi'in*". Meanwhile, Imam Nawawi mentioned that *atsar* in the terminology of salaf scholars and the majority of *khalaf* scholars is something narrated from the Prophet (*marfu'*) as well as from companions (*mauquf*). However, among *the fuqaha'* there are also those who argue that *atsar* is the word of a friend, while *akhbar* is the hadith of the Prophet.[11]

Apart from some of the above differences of opinion, the hadith has a very urgent position because it is one of the second sources of law after the Quran. The Quran would be difficult to understand and recite without hadith intervention. Using the Quran without taking the hadith as a foundation and guide to life is impossible. This is because both are revelations, the only difference is that the Quran is the revelation of *matlu'* (which is read), while the hadith is the revelation of *ghayru mathlu'* (which is not recited).

Apart from being the main explanatory for the Qur'anic verses that are still global, the hadith is also an additional guideline when problems arise that are not specifically found in the Quran. Therefore, scholars make hadith a second reference to issue fatwas and other rules besides the Quran. The Hadith also keeps the Quran from being easily misinterpreted. Many *qath'i postulates* show that hadith is a source of law that can be used as a *hujjah* in religion. Thus, so that this hadith has a primary position in clarifying and conveying the teachings in Islam.

Hadith Problems among *Sufis* and *Muhaddisin*

Negative friction also occurs in the relationship between hadith experts and mysticism expert. This is because some Sufis narrate false hadiths about *al-targhib wa al-tarhib*, which means "invitation and warning". In fact, these hadiths are also used to support their teachings and beliefs. For example, Ibn Na'im, in the book of *Hilyat al-Awliya'*, mentions many hadith histories of sufis whose passages are *dha'if* (weak) or even *mawdhu'* (false).[12]

---

[10] Ibid.

[11] Zeid B Smeer, *Ulumul Hadits: Pengantar Studi Hadis Praktis* (Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2008).

[12] Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, *A Sufi Study of Hadith: Haqiqat at-Tariqa Min Al-Sunna Al-'Aniqa*, ed. Yusuf Talal Delorenzo (London: Turath Publishing, 2010).

In addition to the issue of falsification of hadith, *muhaddis* and *sufis* are at odds over *jarh wa ta'dil*. The *muhaddis* used *jarh wa ta'dil* to study the characteristics of each hadith scholar. They take this *jarh wa ta'dil* very seriously and very thoroughly. Therefore, the Sufis warned the *muhaddis* not to fall into *ghibah* by observing the personality of the seorang perawi. This is shown in a conversation Ibn al-Mubarak (d. 181 H) had with several Sufis, who asked, "Do you practice *ghibah*?" Then, Ibn al-Mubarak replied, "How can we determine which is right and which is wrong if we do not explain it?" Thus, there is backbiting that can be tolerated and permitted, according to al-Ghazali and al-Nawawi, among which is to judge the unkind behavior (*al-jarh*) of a devotee and witness to advise and warn Muslims about their ugliness.[13]

About *jarh wa ta'dil*, there are many criticisms thrown by hadith experts on sufis. Starting from casual criticism, to sharp criticism. Whereas the form of criticism of muhaddis that is often thrown at sufis usually related to the quality of his narration which seems to underestimate the method of *tahammul wa al-ada* in the hadith narration of Nabi or related to his sufistic attitude which is considered heresy. Among the sufis who bagged *jarh* were Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 H), Abu Yazid al-Bustami (d. 261 H), Zun Nun al-Misri (d. 245 H), and al-Hakim al-Tirmizi (d. 320 H). In addition, there are many more of the Sufi groups who have the capability in the passage of the Nabi hadith and are suspected to be quite strong by hadith experts.

Not to be outdone, Sufism experts also criticize hadith experts who are too rigid and rigid in discussing the process of transmitting *sanad* on a hadith. One of these criticisms was made by al-Muhasibi who stated that there was a group of scholars who were dissolved and proud of their many memorizations and mastery of the passage of hadiths, but they forgot the essence of life to always be servile to Allah and the importance of hope and fear (*al-raja' wa al-khawf*) towards Him. As found in a hadith of the Prophet from Ibn Mas'ud, "the alim man is not judged by how much history he has mastered, but rather by how much he fears and submits to Him".[14]

In addition, there is also another Sufism figure, Zun Nun al-Misri (d. 245 H.) who also criticized hadith experts who he considered to have deviated from the original spirit of *tadwin al-hadith*. The reason is, some of them instead of practicing the hadith with a sincere heart, instead make the hadith a commodity to obtain worldly benefits or self-pride. To the extent that Hammad ibn Salamah (d. 167 H.) mentions that anyone who seeks hadith is not because of Allah, it is certain that he is in a state of neglect and complacency. However, according to hadith experts, receiving wages (*ujrah*) in the passage of a hadith is not a disgrace, it is just as the teacher receives honor from his teaching services.[15]

No less sharp criticism of hadith experts is also conveyed by Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597 H.) who said in his *Talbis al-Iblis*, that not a few hadith experts who are deceived by the devil because they have spent their age just listening, searching, and narrating the hadith that is *shahih* only. At first glance, it looks noble, but the devil with his cunning makes them negligent and only focuses on the redaction of a hadith. It makes them not care about the noble meaning contained in the hadith, not even practicing it.[16]

The interactions and intersections that have been presented can at least be data if the two scientific disciplines experience a fairly long intellectual dynamic. Even according to Azra (2005), until his time Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 853 H), Jalaluddin al-

---

[13] al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin* (Jakarta: Faizan, 1989); Yahya bin Syaraf Al-Nawawi, *Riyad Al-Salihin Min Kalam Sayyid al-Mursalin* (Amman: Dar Usamah li al-Nasyr wa al-Tawzi, 1999).

[14] Al-Haris Al-Muhasibi, *Ar-Ri'ayah Fi Huquq Allah*, IV (Beirut: Dar al-Maarif., 1996).

[15] Yusuf Muhammad Siddiq, *Al-Syarh Wa Al-Ta'lil Li Alfaz Al-Jarh Wa Al-Ta'dil* (Kuwait: Maktabah Ibnu Taimiyah, 1990).

[16] Rafid Abbas, "Kritik Ibn Jawzi Terhadap Ulama dalam Kitab Talbis Iblis," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 4, no. 1 (January 22, 2014): 165–76, doi:10.15642/islamica.2009.4.1.165-176.

Suyuti (d. 911 H/1505 AD), and Zakariya al-Ansari (d. 926 H), there was still an intersection between the two sciences. They are known to be important hadith experts from the 15th to the 16th centuries who in their network appear to be some prominent Sufismists, such as Abdul Wahhab al-Sha'rani (d. 973 H/1565 AD), Ahmad al-Qusyasi, Ibrahim al-Kurani, Ahmad an-Nakhli, and Abdullah al-Basri.

Nevertheless, still according to Azra, their relationship is different from that of hadith experts with early Sufis.[17] Their network of narrations no longer questions the transmission of hadith between scholars, but is in the form of a network of hadith teachers to mukharrijs only, such as *al-Kutub al-Sittah* and *Muwatta* Imam Malik. Even so, they strongly believe that studying and having a network of hadith can make them truly close to Prophet Muhamamd SAW. Al-Qusyasyi states that the Prophet is the most important figure for the people of the order, because he is the source of sharia after God.

The dynamics of the rivalry of interpretations of hadith between sufis and hadith experts will continue if each camp remains in principle. In the case of matan, sufis do not really care about whether the *sanad* is strong or not, if the *matan* does not contradict the Quran and the sunnah of the prophet, then it is legal to practice it. As for the hadith experts, if it is not strong or even unclear, the hadith still cannot be used as a foothold.

Biography of Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali's full name is Abu Hamid, Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Ghazzali al-Thusi al-Naysaburi, al-Faqih, al-Shufiy, al-Shafi'i, al-Asy'ari. Al-Ghazali lahir in Thus, a city in Khurasan, Iran, in 1058 AD./ 450 H. He became a Professor at Nizamiyah College, Baghdad. In 488 A.D., he went to Makkah, the Levant-Damascus, and began compiling the book of Ihya' Ulum al-Din at the al-Umawi Mosque. Then al-Ghazali returned to Baghdad, taught at the Nizamiyah College, then returned to Thus, teaching until the end of his life in 1111 AD.

Al-Ghazali and his brother Ahmad, were entrusted by their father to their best friend, Abdul Karim Usman, a Sufi, to be educated. Due to economic limitations, it was not long before Abdul Karim Usman finally took al-Ghazali to a madrasa that provided living expenses for his students. In this madrasa he then met Yusuf al-Nasaj, a well-known Sufi at the time. After the death of his teacher, al-Ghazali studied at Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Razakani al-Thusi, then studied with Nashar al-Islami in Jurjan, and finally entered the Nizamiyah College in Naisabur led by Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini, al-Shafi'i, al-Asy'ari, expert in Kalam Science.[18]

Al-Ghazali experiences doubt (which is essentially the turmoil of the struggle of his soul and mind) in the process of searching for the ultimate truth. He rose to study the nature of human nature in religion and to study philosophical and other schools with the aim of obtaining the "*'ilm al-yaqin*". Al-Ghazali initially studied Kalam Science: from his reading he concluded that kalam science was less beneficial. First, because the science intends to preserve the beliefs of the adherents for the benefit of each sect, to deceive the true beliefs. Secondly, because they use rational postulates that with their arguments have obscured the kalam of Allah which is already light by itself (Marhani, 2020).

Al-Ghazali's intellectual odyssey ended in Sufism.[19] He believed *al-dzawq* (intuition) to be higher and more trusted than reason (ratio) to capture knowledge that could be believed to be true. This knowledge is gained through the light that God bestows into man's heart. However, al-Ghazali's morally nuanced views are also inseparable from

---

[17] Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2005).

[18] Abd. Rahman, *Tasawuf Akhlaki: Ilmu Tasawuf yang Berkonsentrasi dalam Perbaikan* (Pare-Pare: Kaaffah Learning Center, 2020).

[19] Al-Ghazali, *Al-Munqidh Min al-Ḍalal* (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1967).

philosophy. His view of morals is closely related to his view of man. According to al-Ghazali, the core of primacy is the balance (*al-'adl*) between the potentials that human beings have. The essence of happiness at the highest level of perfection is to know the essence of all things. Similar opinions have been found in the Muslim philosophers of his predecessors, namely: Ibn Sina, Ibn Maskawaih and al-Farabi.

Methods for improving morals include having the concept of *muhasabah al-nafs* which is also found in Pythagorism. The view of Sufism that places *al-dzawq* above reason is followed in his attitude to form self-perfection by using *al-faqr* (poverty), *al-ju'* (hunger), *al-khumil* (weak), *al-tawakkul* (surrender) as virtues and this level must be passed to achieve the highest perfection of man. From these things, al-Gazali's views and constructs of thought were formed. Al-Ghazali sought to position reason in its proportions. For him, a person cannot understand objects of an abstract-supra rational nature with his reason. In this area, a person needs the role of intuition (*zawq*) to understand and feel directly the object.

Al-Ghazali is considered the source of the decline of Islam, the source of the demise of rationality, the "killing" of philosophy. When in fact he is not anti-philosophy. In *al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*, al-Ghazali divides philosophy into 6 parts: the science of *riyadiyat*, *mantiqiyat*, *thobi'iyat*, *ilahiyat* (*bimaknal 'am*: ontology, *bimaknal khas*: theology), political ethics, ethics of morality. Well, al-Ghazali only objected to the divine part in the theological sense, even then only objected in some issues, where the opinions of philosophers were considered problematic. So, the accusation that al-Ghazali killed philosophy is not true. The truth is that he has his own conception of philosophy, which corresponds to the aqidah of *asy'ariyah.* Thus, it turns out that the problem lies only in the readership.

After reading some of al-Ghazali's scientific characteristics above, we can simplify it into a map of al-Ghazali's competence as can be seen in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: al-Ghazali Competency Map

Overview of the *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*

The Book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* was born at a time when the socio-political condition of the late Abbasid Dynasty had entered an era of disintegration. Al-Ghazali faced the complexities of his time, ranging from clashes of opinions among clerics, materialistic lifestyles, security disability, power struggles, assassinations of rulers and prominent figures became the trend of his time. It is further strengthened by the strangeness of the sciences of the affairs of the hereafter (which is the nature of

mu'amalah science, not the science of *mukasyafah*), and the science of wisdom. As a result, the condition of people's understanding of religion and the ultimate truth is deteriorating. Many only study *fiqh*, especially because it is an object of pride and a tool for pursuing self-fame. In that situation, the publication of a work that evokes transcendental spirituality such as the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* becomes very urgent, significant, and very relevant.

Furthermore, regarding the characteristics and advantages of the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, a l-Ghazali exposes itself to the *muqaddimah* in us: 1) Al-Ghazali seeks to uncover what has not been revealed, and is written in more detail than his earlier works. 2) Al-Ghazali systematically composes, and unites what was previously scattered. 3) Al-Ghazali shortened the discussion from the previous one too long. 4) Al-Ghazali removes what tends to be repeated in terms of delivery. 5) Al-Ghazali makes it easier to understand.

Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, is *al-Ghazali's* work in the category of Sufism. But it is encyclopedic and contains many explanations about various Islamic sciences. Ibn al-Subki in al-Shami (1993) commented, "If there is not a single book written by scholars for man other than Iḥyāʾ, then it would be enough."

In all, the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* consists of four *rubu'* (parts). On the first *rubu'*, al-Ghazali begins with a Science Chapter. How important is the science and knowledge of religion. For knowledge is the essential instrument and means of worshipping and serving God. In this *rubu'* also al-Ghazali elaborates in detail and in depth around the adab that surrounds worship. In addition, it also explains the wisdom (*asrar*) stored behind all the commandments of worship. So that it is no longer trapped in matters of fiqh that are too binding.

In the second *rubu'*, al-Ghazali explains the wisdom and adab in associating with others, as well as how to preserve oneself from its excessive influence. Then there is the third *rubu'*, al-Ghazali explains how to distance and rid oneself of despicable morals for the soul to become holy and increasingly purposeful. While there is the last (fourth) *rubu'*, al-Ghazali explains the noble, gentle, and desired *akhlaq* by anyone to come to the degree of *shiddiqun*. Regarding the details of the components of the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* can be seen in figure 2 below.
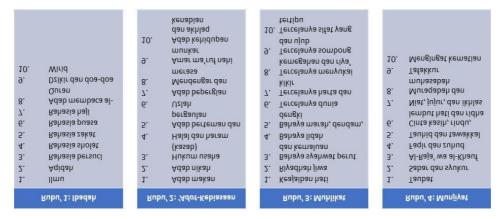
Rubu' 1: Ibadah	Rubu' 2: Adat-Kebiasaan	Rubu' 3: Muhlikat	Rubu' 4: Munjiyat
1. Ilmu	1. Adab makan	1. Keajaiban hati	1. Taubat
2. Aqidah	2. Adab nikah	2. Riyadhah jiwa	2. Sabar dan syukur
3. Rahasia bersuci	3. Hukum usaha	3. Bahaya syahwat perut	3. Al-Raja' wa al-Khauf
4. Rahasia sholat	4. Halal dan haram (kasab)	4. Bahaya lidah dan kemarahan	4. Faqir dan zuhud
5. Rahasia zakat	5. Adab persahabatan dan pergaulan	5. Bahaya marah, dendam, ...	5. Cinta kasih, rindu, ...
6. Rahasia puasa	6. Uzlah pergaulan	6. Tercela dunia dan ...	6. Niat, jujur, dan ikhlas
7. Rahasia haji	7. Adab bepergian	7. Tercela harta dan ...	7. Muhasabah dan ...
8. Adab membaca al-Qur'an	8. Mendengar dan ...	8. Tercela menumpuk ...	8. Muraqabah dan ...
9. Dzikir dan doa-doa	9. Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar	9. Tercela sombong	9. Tafakur
10. Wirid	10. Adab kehidupan dan akhlak kenabian	10. Tercela sifat yang ... dan riya'	10. Mengingat kematian

Figure 2: Division of the Contents of the *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*

Hadith in the *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*

In the midst of the high popularity of the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, it turns out that there are some accusations or even stigmas that the book is filled with weak (*dho'if*) and even false (*maudu'*) hadiths. These oblique accusations are most often filed by hadith experts who scientifically feel they have authority over the hadiths of the prophet. Although al-Ghazali himself has answered the accusation by saying that everything he

writes is always asked or conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW directly, either through a dream or in a conscious state (wakefulness). However, this is still considered by hadith experts as a boast because it does not match the facts and there is no strong enough evidence.

According to Hasan some hadiths are debated in the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* due to the difference in *worldview* between Sufism experts and hadith experts in understanding *ittishal al-sanad* (sanad continuity).[20] Nevertheless, some hadith scholars such as al-Iraqi (d. 806 H.) tends to defend al-Ghazali by *takhrij* the hadiths in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and then classifies them into sahih, *hasan*, and *dha'if* hadiths, without anyone *maudhu'* or false. Even if the lowest degree is called *dha'if*, in fact in the study of *mustalah hadith* it is allowed with a note that it is not too much of its *dha'if* and includes hadiths that are practiced such as primacy in worship (*fadhail al-a'mal*).

The presentation of the sufistic hadith in the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* can be seen from al-Ghazali's discussion of the hadith which reads: "*chastity is part of the faith*" (HR. Muslim). According to al-Ghazali, what is meant by holy is not merely holy in *zahir*, such as ablution and bathing, but the main thing is to be mentally holy, such as avoiding liver disease and bad behavior that can harm oneself or others. Therefore, Nasikun said that al-Ghazali in using hadith does not include its path of impression, because the main concern is that the hadith is sufistic, so it does not seem textual.

Al-Ghazali's expertise in the field of hadith can be seen from his work entitled *al-Mustasyfa*. In the book al-Ghazali discusses a lot of debate in the dynamics of hadith studies, especially in the process of taking or in deciding a law of *syar'i* (*istinbath al-ahkam*). Therefore, after al-Iraqi tended to defend al-Ghazali and the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, there was also a hadith expert who was commonly called Imam al-Zabidi because he was from Yemen's Zabid.

Al-Zabidi conducted an in-depth study of the hadiths in the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din.* He even wrote a separate book containing *sharah* from the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din.* Some hadiths that have still not been found the sanad by al-Iraqi in the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, continued their search by al-Zabidi, until finally all the sanad became clear and undoubtedly the value of the hadith.[21]

Regarding the method used by Sufis in understanding the authenticity of hadith according to Sha'roni can use *liqa' al-nabi* (meeting with the prophet) or *thariq al-kasyf* (the unveiling of the veil).[22] Both of these sufistic methods were recognized and lived by al-Ghazali in order to determine the authenticity of a hadith. He therefore argues that if one wishes to dream or meet the prophet, then one should remove the covering of the heart.[23] This shows that al-Ghazali used more of '*irfani*' reason in writing the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din.* This is what causes the difference in *mindset* between sufis who are '*irfani* and hadith experts who tend to use *bayani* epistemology.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that in the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by al-Ghazali, there are indeed many anomalies and controversies, especially regarding hadiths that are considered *dho'if* (weak) or even *maudhu'* (false). However, the weakness that hadith scholars criticize the book of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din' does not reduce the degree of quality and credibility of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* as a ledger in studying Islam. The reason is that some of the dho'if or *maudhu' hadiths* contained in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din are not used as postulates in terms of the law of syara', but only explain *fadhail al-a'mal* or the virtues of

---

20 Hasan, "Popularisasi Ihyâ 'Ulûm al-Dîn di Nusantara."
21 Ibid.
22 Usman Sya'roni, *Otentisitas Hadis Menurut Ahli Hadis dan Kaum Sufi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2008).
23 Hasan, "Popularisasi Ihyâ 'Ulûm al-Dîn di Nusantara."

practice agreed upon legality by hadith experts as long as they do not penetrate into the realm of *ilahiyat* (divinity).

The problem of the rivalry of interpretations among hadith experts and Sufis in implementing hadith is the intellectual dynamics caused by differences in the angles of the hadith reading. The difference comes from the two epistemologies that underlie the thinking of the two groups of scholars. Sufis prioritize *matan* over *sanad* because they use *irfani* reasoning, where the truth of the hadith is actually obtained from inner clearness, even the process of transmitting hadith may continue through dreams or inspiration. On the other hand, for hadith experts who use *bayani* epistemology, this cannot be justified. The transmission of hadith from the prophet to his people has been completed along with the death of the prophet. Even the hadiths that circulate must be set very strict criteria regarding the validity of *sanad* and *matan*. However, there are some hadith experts, such as al-Iraqi and al-Zabidi, who seek to find common ground for sanad's validity in the hadiths in the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. Until finally the negative accusations against the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* which is considered to use many *maudhu'* (false) hadiths became disputable. Therefore, the book of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* remains relevant and significant to study today.

Bibliography

Abbas, Rafid. "Kritik Ibn Jawzi Terhadap Ulama dalam Kitab Talbis Iblis." *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 4, no. 1 (2014): 165–76. doi:10.15642/islamica.2009.4.1.165-176.

Ahmadi, Anas. *Orang Kiri dalam Buku Tempo*. Gresik: Graniti, 2017.

Al-Ghazali. *Al-Munqidh Min al-Ḍalal*. Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1967.

al-Ghazali. *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. Jakarta: Faizan, 1989.

Al-Muhasibi, Al-Haris. *Ar-Ri'ayah Fi Huquq Allah*. IV. Beirut: Dar al-Maarif., 1996.

Al-Nawawi, Yahya bin Syaraf. *Riyad Al-Salihin Min Kalam Sayyid al-Mursalin*. Amman: Dar Usamah li al-Nasyr wa al-Tawzi, 1999.

Al-Qaththan, Manna. *Pengantar Studi Ilmu Hadits*. Translated by Mifdhol Abdurrahman. Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2005.

Al-Sabbagh, Muhammad. *Al-Hadits al-Nabawi*. Riyad: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1972.

Al-Tirmasi, Muhammad Mahfuz. *Manhaj Zawi Al-Nazar*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1974.

Arafat, Ahmad Tajuddin. "Interaksi Kaum Sufi dengan Ahli Hadis: Melacak Akar Persinggungan Tasawuf dan Hadis." *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2017): 129–55. doi:10.21580/jish.22.2520.

Azra, Azyumardi. *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII*. Jakarta: Kencana, 2005.

Hasan, In'amul. "Popularisasi Ihyâ 'Ulûm Al-Dîn di Nusantara: Melacak Akar Historis Melalui Sudut Pandang Sufistik dan Hadis." *Muàṣarah: Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer* 3, no. 1 (2021): 28–35. doi:10.18592/msr.v3i1.4955.

Rahman, Abd. *Tasawuf Akhlaki: Ilmu Tasawuf yang Berkonsentrasi dalam Perbaikan*. Pare-Pare: Kaaffah Learning Center, 2020.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam: Sejarah Pemikiran dan Peradaban*. Jakarta: Mizan Pustaka, 2016.

Shalahudin, M. Agus. *Ulumul Hadits*. Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2009.

Siddiq, Yusuf Muhammad. *Al-Syarh Wa Al-Ta'lil Li Alfaz Al-Jarh Wa Al-Ta'dil*. Kuwait: Maktabah Ibnu Taimiyah, 1990.

Smeer, Zeid B. *Ulumul Hadits: Pengantar Studi Hadis Praktis*. Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2008.

Sulaiman, M. Noor. *Antologi Ilmu Hadits*. Jakarta: Gaung Persada Press, 2008.

Sya'roni, Usman. *Otentisitas Hadis Menurut Ahli Hadis dan Kaum Sufi*. Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2008.

Thanawi, Mawlana Ashraf Ali. *A Sufi Study of Hadith: Haqiqat at-Tariqa Min Al-Sunna Al-'Aniqa*. Edited by Yusuf Talal Delorenzo. London: Turath Publishing, 2010.