How is Shaikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi Understanding Prophetic Tradition? A Legal Hermeneutics Perspective

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Abstract

Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi was a renowned scholar in the 19th century. His name is well known in the world of Islamic studies in the fields of the Qur'an, Hadith, Ushul Fiqh, and others. One of his works is entitled *al-Khil ah al-Fikriyah*, which contains a commentary on the hadith from his other book, *al-Minḥah al-Khairiyyah*. This article aims to reveal Sheikh Mahfudz's theoretical approach from the perspective of Legal Hermeneutics, particularly in the selection of meanings in Islamic legal texts as proposed by Robert Gleave. To answer this question, this article employs a literature review using content analysis and descriptive approaches. The results of this study indicate that Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi's hermeneutics of hadith include effective history, linguistic analysis, and openness of interpretation. Based on Robert Gleave's theory, Sheikh Mahfudz uses three options for interpreting Islamic legal texts, namely populist, linguistic, and prophetic meanings.

Keywords

Hermeneutics of Hadith, Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi, Legal Hadith, Robert Gleave

Introduction

Studies on the hijab continue to spark interesting discussions among Islamic scholars. With various perspectives, the hijab worn by Muslim women has been interpreted in various ways. The Qur'an and Hadith, as primary sources, are



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All publications by IJOLANGID are licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License © Attribution to Author and IJOLANGID interpreted using hermeneutics, particularly in relation to Muslim women's clothing, including the hijab. Although this discipline is relatively new, hermeneutics occupies a strategic position in discussions on Islamic studies.

Hermeneutics of hadith was later introduced by modern Muslim scholars after studying in the West. Hermeneutics requires interpretation in order to trace how hadith emerged from the Prophet and what is contained in the text of hadith. Additionally, hermeneutics seeks to revive the meaning so that it can be understood by readers in their own time. However, contextualizing hadith through hermeneutics also presents challenges due to the significant time gap between when the hadith originated from the Prophet and when it reached modern humanity, especially given the differences in patterns and specific 'school' (Hauqola 2013). Therefore, many Orientalists question the authenticity of hadith. Some of them even reject outright the hadith collected by *muḥaddith*. Not to mention the shift of hadith from a living tradition to a literal (written) tradition (Susanto 2019). These two issues are also of interest to Muslim scholars working on Islamic sources, especially hadith.

Muslim figures such as Muhammad Iqbal, Fazlur Rahman, Syahrur, Nasr Hamd Abu Zayd, and others have been studied in relation to their hermeneutical concepts. As for this article, according to researchers, what has not been studied much from a hermeneutic perspective is Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi. Furthermore, this research will explore whether Sheikh Mahfudz also operates hermeneutical works as a way to understand a hadith. The focus of this article is on the theme of headscarf which is sourced from the text of the Prophet's hadith contained in the hadith master book.

Muhammad Makmun has conducted research on the hadith hermeneutics of Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi. Makmun took Sheikh Mahfudz's book entitled al-Khil'ah al- Fikriyyah bi Syarhi al-Minhah al-Khoiriyyah fi Arba'in Hadith min Ahadisi Khairi al-Bariyyah as the subject of his research. According to him, what Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi has done has made a great contribution, even though there are still those who have not reached the manhaj of Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi. On the sanad aspect, al-Tarmasi explains the tradition's *sanad*, *tarīkh rijāl* and its *jarḥ-taʿdīl*. While on the *matn* aspect, al-Tarmasi predominantly uses the linguistic and fiqhbased method of hadith analysis. This method is pursued by looking at the linguistics of the redaction aided from the sources of the Qur'an, other traditions, and the opinions of other scholars. However, Mahfudz al-Tarmasi has been noted to be inconsistent in his approach, the hadith assessment applied has not been successful, and has not paid much attention to the historical aspects of the hadith (*asbāb wurūd*) (Ghozali 2018). Unlike Makmun, this article will analyse from the theory offered by Robert Gleave, which is related to the selection of the meaning of lafaz in Islamic legal texts. In this case, it is the Prophet's hadith.

Method

This research article uses a qualitative method with the type of literature study. The approaches used include historical approach, analytical-descriptive approach and content analysis. In addition, a little bit of interdisciplinary is used, because between the hadith filtering method and hadith hermeneutics, they are still in the same scientific family (Komariah 2019), i.e. hadith studies. Starting the data collection, researchers recorded various data sources from hadith books, books by Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi, and other data sources relevant to the research topic. After that, categorizing and selecting the data for further analysis using a legal hermeneutics perspective.

Results and Discussion

Hermeneutics of Legal Hadith

In principle, hermeneutics is the science of interpretation (theory of interpretation) and means interpreting and understanding in understanding a text (Raharjo 2008). Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation to explain texts and their characteristics, both objectively (the grammatical meaning of words and their historical variations) and subjectively (authorial intent). The study materials in hermeneutics include authoritative writings and sacred scripture. As a terminology, hermeneutics is not only a theory of interpretation or an analytical tool to study a text, but also the worldview of its initiators (Palmer 2005). Historically, hermeneutics has been used in the study of ancient texts such as scripture, then applied in the field of theology and reflected philosophically, until it eventually became a method in the social sciences. It is also used in various other fields, such as literature, history, law, and contemporary Islamic studies. Hermeneutics seeks to bridge the gap between the past and the present, meaning that texts can be openly understood today (Faiz and Usman 2019).

Meanwhile, hadith among the Sunnis is a normative reference source that clarifies the Qur'an and they agree on the significance of hadith as a source of *tashrī*^{\cdot}. In the circle of *uṣūl fiqh*, understanding and mastering hadith is a fundamental qualification for *ijtihād*. Moreover, legal traditions should be given more attention

both from the *sanad* aspect and the content of the *matn* in the form of *shara*, (Wasman 2014).

Hadith hermeneutics means reflection on the hadith texts that record the past as possible to be understood and existentially meaningful in the present situation. Hadith texts as old products dialogue with their new readers. Hadith hermeneutics is not about arbitrarily transferring texts into their new contexts. If this is the case, then the text is assumed to have been revealed in a static society that is void of change. Hadith hermeneutics is also not drowning the texts in their contemporary contexts carelessly, because ignoring the texts would abort hermeneutics itself (Wasman 2014).

Robert Glave sees textualism in the Islamic interpretive tradition as a natural, dominant and long-standing phenomenon. Robert Gleave observes its use in the traditions of Sunni legal theory, Shi'i, linguists, traditionalists, modernists, salafists and followers of the Ayatollahs (Gleave 2012). Philosophers of linguistics usually distinguish the 'literal meaning' of a text from two other types of meaning: the meaning intended by the author, and the meaning understood by the reader. So, we have three entities, which I will refer to as the literal meaning; the author's intended meaning; and the reader's understood meaning, all of which could be identical in content, or could be different from each other. Effective communication occurs when intended meaning and understood meaning meet. The involvement of literal meaning (apparently) is not a requirement for effective communication (Gleave 2012).

According to Robert Gleave (Gleave 2012), There are at least three trends in the choice of meaning in Islamic law, namely: (1) populist, as offered by al-Jaṣṣāṣ who emphasizes the criterion that the meaning taken in *istinbāṭ* is the popular meaning, not the technical terms usually used by conventional scholars. (2) the meaning introduced by linguists. That is, the meaning introduced by linguists, not the language circulating in society-etymological and technical, as was done by al-Baqillānī (d.950), and (3) Arabic, that is, the meaning derived from the language of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to the Companions in communication-legal. This third system of meaning is held by some Mālikīs through the teaching of Ibn al-Qaṣṣār (d. 937).

Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi: His Live and Education

His full name is Muhammad Mahfudz bin 'Abdillah bin 'Abdul Manan bin Dipomenggolo al-Tarmasi al-Jāwī. He was born in Tremas, Pacitan, East Java, on 12 Jumadil Awal 1285 AH, which coincides with 31 August 1842 AD.14 He died in Mecca at the beginning of Rajab on Monday night 1338 AH at the age of 53, and was buried in al-Ma[°]la cemetery. At the time of his birth, his father was in Mecca performing the hajj pilgrimage and studying religion there, as were most of the ulema of Nusantara at that time. *Nisbat* al-Tarmasi in his name is an allusion to the place of his birth, namely the village of Tremas, Arjosari, Pacitan, East Java (Fauzan 2018).

Al-Tarmasi is the eldest son of Kyai Abdullah, while his siblings are Kyai Dahlan, Nyai Tirib, Kyai Dimyati who also studied in Mecca and is an expert in inheritance science, Kyai Muhammad Bakri who is an expert in Qur'anic recitation science (*qira ah*), Sulaiman Kamal, Muhammad Ibrahim, and Kyai Abdurrazaq who is a *tariqah* expert and a *Mursyid* of *tariqah* who has followers throughout Java. The al-Tarmasi family is descended from a *pesantren* family, namely the Pondok Tremas Pacitan pesantren founded by his grandfather, Kyai Abdul Manan. He enjoyed his childhood in the Tremas Pesantren environment which at that time (al-Tarmasi's childhood) it was fostered by his father. Living in such environment, al-Tarmasi was introduced to religious values and practices by his mother and uncle Athaillah (Fauzan 2018).

The nuances of the *pesantren*, which present scientific nuances every day, certainly greatly influenced al-Tarmasi's personality for his love of knowledge, especially religious knowledge and led him to become a student and educator. It is even explained that al-Tarmasi had memorized the Holy Qur'an before adulthood, namely at the age of six years under the guidance and care of his mother and uncle. On the one hand, at the age of six, he was taken by his father to Mecca in 1291 H/1874 AD, his father introduced several important books to him. Then, at the age of twelve years he returned to *Nusantara* with his father precisely in 1878 AD. It was due to his father's upbringing that al-Tarmasi considered his father more than just a father and teacher. About his father, Sheikh Mahfudz called him *murabbī wa ruhī* (my educator and my soul) (Fauzan 2019).

From an early age, he studied various fields of knowledge with his own father, including Ibn Qasim al-Ghuzza's *Sharh al-Ghayah*, *al-Manhāj al-Qawīm*, *Fatḥ al-Muʿīn*, *Fatḥ al-Wahhāb*, *Sharh Sharqawi 'ala al-Hikam*, and parts of *Tafsir al-Jalalain* up to Yunus verse (Q:10). Feeling thirsty for knowledge and gaining knowledge from his own parents, in 1878 AD after returning from Makkah with his father, al-Tarmasi moved to Semarang and studied with Kyai Muhammad Shaleh Darat. Among the books he learnt from Kyai Shaleh Darat were *Sharh al- Hikam* (twice completed), Tafsir al-Jalalain (twice completed), *Sharh al-Mardini and Wasilah al-Tullab* (a book on astrology) (Fiddaroini 2023).

In 1308 AH, al-Tarmasi began his second scientific journey to Haramain. He studied with a famous scholar of the time, namely Muhammad Shata al-Makki. Al-Tarmasi received special attention from Muhammad Shata, he was treated like his own family. Thanks to al-Tarmasi's persistence and perseverance in studying, he was recognized by many scholars of Mecca, and was even given the opportunity to teach at the al-Haram Mosque. This position is a prestigious position, because not everyone can do or get a diploma to teach at the al-Haram. Al-Tarmasi taught there since 1890 AD (Fauzan 2019).

Among his teachers while studying, both in *nusantara* and in Haramain were Kyai Abdullah (his father), Kyai Shaleh Darat, Muhammad al-Syarbini al-Dimyati, Abu Bakr bin Muhammad Zayn al-Abidin Shata al-Makki, Muhammad al-Munshawi who was known as Qur'an reciter (*muqri*), Umr bin Barakat al-Shami al-Biga'ili al-Azhari al-Makki al-Shafi'i, Mustafa bin Muhammad bin Sulaiman al-'Afifi, al-Habib Husain bin Muhammad bin Husain al-Habshi al-Shafi'i, Muhammad Sa'id Babasil al-Hadrami al-Shafi'i al-Makki, Sayyid Ahmad Zawawi al-Makki, Muhammad al-Sharbini al-Dimyati, Muhammad Amin bin Ahmad Ridwan al-Madani, and others. Among his students who came from outside Nusantara, were Sa'ad Allah al-Maymani, a mufti from Bombay India, Umar bin Hamdan a hadith expert from Haramain, al-Shihab Ahmad bin Abd Allah, a reciter from Syria. Among his students from Nusantara were Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, Kyai Wahab Hasbullah from Jombang, Muhammad Bakir bin Nur from Yogyakarta, Kyai R. Asnawi from Kudus, Mu'ammar bin Kyai Baidawi from Lasem, Ali bin Mahmud bin Muhammad Arshad bin Abdullah al-Banjari, K. H Muhammad Dimyati al-Tarmasi who is his younger brother, Umar bin Abi Bakr bin Abdullah bin Umar bin Ali bin Muhammad al-Bajind al-Hadrami al-Maliki, Muhammad Habib bin Abdullah bin Ahmad al-Shangiti, and so on (Fauzan 2019).

Hadith Hermeneutics of Shaykh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi

In the field of hadith, Mahfuzh al-Tarmasi authored *Tsulātsiyyāt al-Bukhārī, Minhah al-Khayriyyah*, and *al-Kil'ah al-Fikriyyah bi Syarḥ al-Minhāh al-Khairiyah*. The most popular of his works in the field of Hadith is *al-Minḥah al-Khayriyyah*. This fiftyone-page book contains forty selected hadiths. The advantage of Sheikh Mahfuzh's collection of 40 hadiths is that it contains 22 hadiths sourced from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. As for Hadith knowledge, Mahfuzh al-Tarmasi wrote the books *Manhaj Dhawī al-Naẓar* and *Kifāyah al- Mustafīd li Ma 'alā Min al-Asānīd. Manhaj Dhawī al-Naẓar* is a commentary on the book *Manāhij 'Ilm al-Āthār* by al-Suyuṭi (d. 911 AH). Scholars and lecturers at al-Azhar University in Cairo regard it as one of the best commentaries on Naẓam al-Āthar (Masrur et al. 2019).

Mahfuzh al-Tarmasi points out that in fact, the purity of *isnād* science is very convincing for those who are masters of science. This supremacy has never been questioned by those with religious understanding, intellect, and common sense. In his important book, he writes: 'Indeed glorified by Allah are those who are experts in the sciences of this people (unlike those before Muhammad).' Quoting the Prophet's words, Mahfuzh considers that knowledge is a religion, and daily prayers are also a religion, so one should pay attention to where knowledge is obtained and how he keeps his prayers. Everyone will be held accountable in the hereafter. *Isnād* is part of religion. Due to shallowness in this substantial tool, a person will say whatever he wants (out of control without any religious basis) (Untung and Mas' ud 2006).

To convince his readers Mahfuzh al-Tarmasi quotes some convincing verses. Ash-Shafi'i considers the one who seeks traditions without *isnād* to be like a nocturnal seeker who carries a log and does not know that it contains a poisonous snake. Some of traditional clerics said that *isnād* is like a sword; if you cannot grasp it, how can you win the battle. Yahya ibn Muʿīn (d. 333 AH) asserted that a noble isnād will substantially bring one closer to Allah and His Messenger (Masrur et al. 2019). Al-Tarmasi also argues that the science of jurisprudence also requires hadith in performing *istinbat al-hukm*, even to understand the Qur'an requires guidance from hadith (Rakhman 2022). The importance of hadith as guidance, for al-Tarmasi, must be accompanied by knowledge of the quality of hadith. One of them is by knowing the science of *sanad* criticism. This science functions on the quality of the narrator of a hadith, whether each narrator can be trusted or not. Someone who does not have knowledge of this science will easily conclude that a hadith is sahih, hasan or da'if. If this happens, errors in determining arguments using traditions are prone to occur. Hadiths of *da*'if quality, for example, are used in matters of basic religious issues. At the extreme, there is an arbitrary attitude towards traditions that have been agreed upon as $da^{i}\bar{f}$ or even maud \bar{u}^{i} , as being valid (Masrur et al. 2019). As for the book *al-Khil* '*ah al-Fikriyah*, methodologically it can be seen what al-Tarmasi did in the *sanad* and *matan* as follows (Purwanto 2016):

- 1. *Sanad*, mentioning the chain of transmission of the hadith he has obtained in order to its *mukharrij*, e.g. Imam Bukhari. Then mention the *tarikh ruwat*, the science of *rijāl ḥadīth*, and *jarḥ taʿdīl*.
- 2. *Matn*; analysing the language in three ways (vocabulary interpretation, Arabic grammatical science, and *jahili* poetry), explaining with Qur'anic verses, with other traditions on the same theme, the opinions of scholars, explaining by explaining the spirit of the law and the sign of the content or wisdom of the hadith. This al-Tarmasi did by adding the rubrics of *tanbīh*, *fā`idah*, *muhimmah*.

Based on the above information, when viewed from a hermeneutical perspective, Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi has carried out hermeneutical theories, including: First, the authenticity of the hadith with a historical and subjective approach of *muhaddith* through historiography of narrators ($t\bar{a}r\bar{i}kh ruw\bar{a}t$), hadith *rijāl* science, and *jarh* $ta^{\circ}d\bar{i}l$ (where this affects the redaction of the hadith). In philosophical hermeneutics terms such as Heidegger and Gadamer it is called effective history. Second is the language analysis. The language (in this case Arabic) and the Prophet as a speaker, of course, are also influenced by the socio-cultural constructs of the Arabs, so a deeper exploration of language is a step that cannot be abandoned in hermeneutical work, especially objective hermeneutics. Third, through rubrics such as *tanbīh* or $f\bar{a}^{\circ}idah$ where this is an effort to open up the understanding of the meaning read at that time as the period read by the interpreter (Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi). As Farid Essack said, that hermeneutics is a bridge to understand the past for the present.

Al-Tarmasi' Hasith Understanding: A Review Through Legal Hermeneutics Perspective

The researcher took the hadīth of *hijāb* and the Prophet's marriage to Sayyidah Zainab quoted by Sheikh Mahfudz in his *al-Khil ah* because this theme is an important one to study in relation to law and human relations. The following is the wording of the 22nd Hadith from the *Thulāthiyāt al-Jāmi al-Ṣahīh* of Imam al-Bukhari (three chains between al-Bukhari and the Prophet).

وبه إليه قال :حَدَّثَنَا حَلَّادُ بْنُ يَحْيَى حَدَّثَنَاعِيسَى بْنُ طَهْمَانَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ يَقُولُ نَزَلَتْ آيَةُ الحِْجَابِ فِي زَيْنَبَ بِنْتِ جَحْشٍ وَأَطْعَمَ عَلَيْهَا يَوْمَئِذٍ خُبْزًا وَلَحْمًا وَكَانَتْ تَفْخَرُ عَلَى نِسَاءِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَكَانَتْ تَقُولُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْكَحَنِي فِي السَّمَاء

"Khallad ibn Yahya narrated to us, Isa ibn Thahman narrated to us, saying: I heard Anas ibn Malik r.a. say: the verse of hijab was revealed to Zainab bint Jaisy, at which time Rasullullah Saw. was feeding her bread and meat while Zainab belittled the other wives of the Prophet and said: "Indeed, Allah has married off me in the heavens"

Sheikh Mahfudz first explains the isnād aspect, stating that the hadith he writes about is *muttasil* (continuous) up to Imam al-Bukhari. He then describes each narrator from the aspect of the rijal of the hadith, including the names of the narrators, their kunyah and lagab. However, he does not mention the birth and death of the narrators. Next, come to the content of the hadith. Al-Tarmasi begins by explaining some of the *mufradats* that he thinks need to be explained. Such as word *lahm* (meat), which is in the context of this *walimah* eats what meat. Al-Tarmasi then refers to another narration that the Prophet held a walimah by eating syāt (mutton). Then the language analysis in other words, such as the tafkharu (wa kānat tafkharu "alā nisā" al-nabī) which al-Tarmasi quoted the opinion of Ahmad al-Fayumi in the book al-Misbah al-Munir which means al-mubāhah bi al-kalām (boasting with words) and telling his grace and family. In addition, al-Tarmasi also explains the meaning of al-samā' (inna Allāh ankahnī fī al-samā'). Here, al-Tarmasi follows the opinion of the Sunni Ash'ariyah, where the meaning of 'Allah married off me in the heavens' does not mean that Allah occupies the heavens but a sign of the nobleness and greatness of Allah's substance and attributes (Purwanto 2016).

According to al-Tarmasi, there are two different understandings of this hadīth. The first is that the revelation of the verse of hijab coincided with the Prophet's marriage to Sayyidah Zainab and other things such as wedding parties and *walimahs* by serving a lot of food such as bread and meat. The second opinion is that the verse of hijab was revealed after the Prophet's marriage to Zainab, which was after the insistence of Sayyidina Umar. Al-Tarmasi quoted another narration from Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, al- Tabrani, and Ibn Mardawaih.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو النُّعْمَانِ حَدَّثَنَا مُعْتَمِرٌ قَالَ أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مِحْلَزٍ عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ لَمَّا تَزَوَّجَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ زَيْنَبَ دَحَلَ الْقَوْمُ فَطَعِمُوا ثُمَّ جَلَسُوا يَتَحَدَّثُونَ فَأَحَذَ كَأَنَّهُ يَتَهَيَّأُ لِلْقِيَامِ فَلَمْ يَقُومُوا فَلَمَّا رَأَى ذَلِكَ قَامَ فَلَمًا قَامَ قَامَ مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ الْقَوْمِ وَقَعَدَ بَقِيَّةُ الْقَوْمِ وَإِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم

"When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) married Zainab bint Jahsh, he invited the people, so he served them, they enjoyed the meal, then they sat down and talked." Then he changed his position as if he wanted to stand up, but the people did not stand up, so when he stood up, the people stood up too." After that three people sat down again. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came and was about to enter Zainab's room, but the people were still sitting, so they stood up and left. Anas said: 'Then I told the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that they had left.' Then he entered and I followed him in, and he lowered the curtain between me and him." Then Allah Almighty revealed: 'O you who believe, do not enter the Prophet's house' (Q. 33:53).

This difference of opinion made by al-Tarmasi by following what Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani did, namely by means of al-Jam'u. When this *sharaḥ* (explanation) from Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi is analysed using Robert Gleave's legal hermeneutics related to the selection of meaning, there are several steps taken by Sheikh Mahfudz, including; first, when explaining the meaning of *"laḥm"*, al-Tarmasi uses the third option, namely Arabic which comes from the Prophet Muhammad. Although in the form of tradition or culture, namely eating mutton. Secondly, in *lafaz tafkharu*, Sheikh al-Tarmasi chooses the second, which is the meaning introduced by linguists. Thirdly, on *al-samā*' (sky), he interpreted it but referred to the popular meaning in his school of thought, namely Sunni Ash'ariyyah.

Conclusion

Tarmasi has been recognized for his scientific capacity both from the branches of the Qur'an, hadith, ushul fiqh and others. Sheikh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi, when reviewed with the theory of hadith hermeneutics, actually also did these works. Such as awareness of the history that can influence each narrator (effective history), language analysis, and openness (inclusiveness) of interpretation. Then, when analyzed using Robert Gleave's theory of selection of meaning in Islamic legal texts, the three selections mentioned by Gleave were made by Sheikh Mahfudz in explaining the meaning of hadith passages.

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