

A Critical Assessment of Taysir Mustalah al-Hadith: Insights from Tariq 'Iwadullah's Islah al-Istilah

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Abstract

The science of Mustalah al-Hadith is a fundamental branch in the study of hadith, playing a crucial role in shaping a comprehensive understanding among students. Therefore, selecting a high-quality curriculum is essential. In Malaysian higher education institutions, the primary syllabus for this subject is the book Taysir Mustalah al-Hadith by Mahmud al-Thahan. However, Tariq 'Iwadullah has authored a critical work that challenges the content of Taysir Mustalah al-Hadith, particularly focusing on the definitions of key terms, which raises questions regarding the book's suitability as the main curriculum. This study aims to critically analyze Islah al-Istilah by Tariq 'Iwadullah to assess the relevance of Taysir Mustalah al-Hadith as the core syllabus in Malaysian higher education. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study utilizes documentation as the primary data collection method and content analysis for data interpretation. The findings reveal that Tariq 'Iwadullah raises two key issues: firstly, al-Thahan's tendency to provide a singular definition without addressing divergent scholarly opinions, and secondly, the precision of certain definitions that appear inconsistent with classical scholarly views. Despite these criticisms, the study acknowledges that al-thahan deliberately adopted a simplified methodology to enhance comprehension for beginner students. The study recommends conducting similar critical evaluations on other Mustalah al-Hadith texts to ensure the continuous and dynamic development of discourse within the field of hadith sciences.

Keywords: Mustalah al-Hadith, Taysir Mustalah al-Hadith, Mahmud al-Thahan, Tariq 'Iwadullah, Islah al-Istilah.

Introduction

Background of Study

The precise definition of terms is a fundamental aspect of scholarly work across various academic fields (Halimah Ahmad, 2015). This focus arises because teaching, learning, and the exchange of ideas depend heavily on the use of clear and accurate language. Ensuring that each term has a distinct and well-understood meaning helps prevent ambiguity and confusion (Al-Jawharī, 2012).

In the context of hadith studies, defining terms with clarity is equally crucial. The study of terminology within *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* forms a key component of hadith education (Dzulfaidhi, 2024). As a significant sub-discipline of hadith sciences, *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* is also known as *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth* or *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (Mohd Sobali et al., 2011). Mastery of these terms is essential for understanding the methodologies applied by muhaddithīn when evaluating the authenticity of hadith (Dzulfaidhi Hakimie Dzulraidi, 2024). Due to its importance, Islamic scholars have long been at the forefront of developing the study of *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*, from the early Islamic era to the height of Islamic scholarship between the 3rd and 7th centuries Hijrah (Abdul Halim et al., 2019).

One of the widely recognized works in *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* is the book *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* by Mahmud al-Ṭaḥḥān. This book has been well received among Islamic studies students, particularly as a fundamental reference in various higher education institutions in Malaysia. For instance, both the Islamic University College of Perlis (KUIPs) and the Islamic College of International Technology Pulau Pinang (KITAB) utilize it as the core textbook for hadith-related courses (Khalilullah Amin Ahmad et al., 2023).

Despite its popularity, the book has faced criticism, particularly from Tāriq ʿIwadullah, who wrote *Islāh al-Istilāh* specifically to address perceived issues within *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*. His critique primarily focuses on the definitions of hadith terms as presented by Mahmud al-Ṭaḥḥān. In light of this, the present study aims to critically examine the critiques made by Tāriq ʿIwadullah regarding the terminology in *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* and to evaluate their implications for modern hadith studies.

The study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze the definitions and terminological explanations presented in *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* by Mahmud al-Ṭaḥḥān.
2. To identify and discuss the criticisms raised by Tāriq ʿIwadullah in *Islāh al-Istilāh* regarding these definitions.
3. To assess the validity and relevance of the critiques presented by Tāriq ʿIwadullah within the context of contemporary hadith scholarship.

By fulfilling these objectives, the study aims to enhance the discourse on hadith terminology and contribute to a deeper understanding of how foundational texts like *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* are evaluated in modern academic settings.

Biography of Mahmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān

Mahmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān, whose full name is Abū Ḥafṣ Maḥmūd bin Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥḥān al-Ḥalabī al-Nuʿaymī, was born in Halab (Aleppo) in 1935. He was raised in a devout family that highly

valued religious education. His early education included memorizing the Quran, which he accomplished within two years while attending secondary school in Halab.

In 1956, al-Ṭaḥḥān pursued his undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Sharia, University of Damascus, and graduated with distinction in 1960. He then continued his education at the Islamic University of Madinah, earning a master's degree in 1969. Later, he pursued a doctoral degree in hadith studies at Al-Azhar University, successfully completing his Ph.D. in 1971. His thesis, supervised by Dr. Abd al-Wahhāb Abd al-Laṭīf, was titled "Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī Wa Atharuh Fī Ulūm al-Ḥadīth", and he graduated with high honors.

Throughout his academic journey, al-Ṭaḥḥān learned from prominent scholars. In Syria, he studied under the former Mufti of Manbij, Jumuah Abu Zalām, along with 'Abd al-Wahhāb Sakr, Muḥammad Abū al-Khayr Zayn al-Ābidīn, Muḥammad al-Mallāḥ, the renowned Quran reciter of Halab Muḥammad Najīb al-Khiyāṭah, among others. In Egypt, while at Al-Azhar, he was mentored by scholars like Muḥammad Muḥammad Abū Zahū and Muḥammad al-Sammāḥī.

Professionally, al-Ṭaḥḥān initially served as an imam and preacher in various mosques around Halab. Later, he became an Islamic Education teacher in several schools, a position he held until 1965. After completing his doctoral studies, he served as a lecturer at the Faculty of Sharia, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, for seven years. Subsequently, he moved to Kuwait, where he became a professor of hadith at the Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies, Kuwait University. He remained in Kuwait until the age of 70 before returning to Halab in 2005, where he resided until his passing on 24 November 2022 at the age of 87 (Midād, n.d.; Tajammu Duāt al-Syām, 2022).

Introduction to the Book Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth

Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth, authored by Mahmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān, is considered one of the most significant contemporary works in the field of hadith sciences. The book was written during his tenure as a lecturer at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, Riyadh (al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2011). It has gained substantial recognition, particularly among students and scholars, and has become a core textbook in various higher education institutions. In Malaysia, for instance, institutions such as the Islamic University College of Perlis (KUIPs) and the Islamic College of International Technology Pulau Pinang (KITAB) have adopted it as the main reference for hadith studies (Khalilullah Amin Ahmad et al., 2023).

The primary objective of Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth was to simplify the complex terminologies and methodologies associated with hadith studies. In the book's introduction, al-Ṭaḥḥān explains that while teaching at the Islamic University of Madinah, he observed that students faced difficulties in understanding the existing syllabus, which included books like Ulūm al-Ḥadīth by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Taqrīb by al-Nawawī. According to al-Ṭaḥḥān, these classical texts were challenging due to their advanced language, lengthy discussions, and their lack of practical examples from popular books on each topic.

To address this issue, al-Ṭaḥḥān aimed to develop a resource that would make hadith terminology more accessible. His approach in Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth was to present essential concepts in a straightforward language, avoiding lengthy debates over scholarly

differences. This practical and pedagogical approach made the book highly suitable for students specializing in Sharia and hadith sciences, significantly facilitating their understanding (al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2011).

By prioritizing clarity and accessibility, Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth successfully bridged the gap between classical hadith scholarship and modern educational needs. As a result, it continues to be an essential text for students and educators alike.

Biography of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah

Ṭāriq bin 'Iwadhullah Muḥammad was born in Egypt on May 1, 1963. He pursued his undergraduate studies in Arabic language and Islamic studies at the Faculty of Dār al-'Ulūm, Cairo University. Throughout his academic journey, he studied under several renowned scholars, including Muḥammad Jamīl Ghāzī, Muḥammad Balṭājī, Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, Abū Ishāq al-Ḥuwaynī, and Muḥammad 'Amrū 'Abd al-Laṭīf.

For more than two decades, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah has actively disseminated knowledge through lectures held in various mosques across Cairo. His expertise in hadith has earned him recognition from contemporary hadith scholars such as Abū Ishāq al-Ḥuwaynī, Muḥammad 'Amrū 'Abd al-Laṭīf, and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khuḍayr (Islamic University of Minnesota, n.d.).

In 2016, he completed his Ph.D. in Hadith and 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth from the Islamic University of Minnesota, USA. After earning his doctorate, he was appointed as a lecturer at the same university, where he continues to teach hadith studies. Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's dedication to hadith scholarship, combined with his practical teaching experience, has solidified his reputation as a significant contributor to contemporary hadith studies.

Introduction to the Work Islāh al-Istilāh

The full title of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's work is "Islāh al-Istilāh: A Critique of Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth by Dr. Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān". According to Ṭāriq, his decision to write this book emerged from over a decade of teaching Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth in various mosques around Cairo. As a scholar frequently invited by mosque administrators to deliver lessons on foundational hadith studies, he selected Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth as a primary text due to its simplicity and suitability for beginners.

However, during his teaching sessions, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah noticed several areas within the book that required further elaboration or critique. As he examined the content more deeply, he identified points that merited clarification or correction. This prompted him to compose Islāh al-Istilāh, not solely as a critical response but also as an extension of Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth, providing explanations and expansions on the brief points made by al-Ṭaḥḥān.

In the preface, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah emphasizes that Islāh al-Istilāh is not purely a critique. Instead, it aims to complement the original text by addressing points that he believes are either inadequately explained or could benefit from alternative perspectives. Despite his critical approach, Ṭāriq acknowledges the value of Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth, recognizing it as a beneficial resource for students at the beginner level, as it simplifies complex hadith terminologies effectively (Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, 2009).

Through *Islāh al-Istilāh*, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah seeks to enrich the academic discussion around *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*, reinforcing its educational purpose while also offering scholarly critique where necessary. This balanced approach reflects his commitment to both preserving the utility of the original work and encouraging a more nuanced understanding of hadith terminology.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, as it is deemed the most suitable method for gaining an in-depth understanding of complex issues (Ahmad Sunawari Long, 2015; Idris, 2018; Jamil, 2019). In particular, it allows for a comprehensive exploration of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's critique of the definitions presented in *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*. The qualitative approach is essential in examining the nuances and intricacies involved in critiquing hadith terminology, where textual and interpretative analysis is required.

To gather data, this study utilizes the documentation method, which involves collecting both primary and secondary sources. These sources are meticulously selected to identify precise definitions as proposed by classical and contemporary hadith scholars. The study also systematically compiles Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's critiques as presented in his work, *Islāh al-Istilāh: Naqd Kitāb Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth li al-Duktūr Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān*.

Sources used in this research include library collections, academic journal articles, theses and dissertations, personal collections, PDF books, and digital libraries such as the *al-Maktabah al-Shāmilah* application. By leveraging these diverse sources, the study ensures a comprehensive understanding of the debated terminology within *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*.

The study employs content analysis as its primary data analysis technique. This method is utilized to examine the definitions of key hadith terminology as discussed by both classical and contemporary scholars. Through content analysis, the study systematically identifies accurate definitions and assesses their relevance within the framework of *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*. Additionally, the analysis addresses the concepts and methodologies of hadith evaluation, focusing on opinions expressed by reputable scholars. A critical aspect of the analysis involves evaluating the suitability of *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* as a learning module in contemporary educational settings.

By incorporating these methodological steps, the study aims to present a nuanced and evidence-based critique of *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*, while also highlighting the scholarly perspectives on hadith terminology that are most relevant to modern hadith studies.

Findings and Discussions

Concept of Work Analysis

According to Alex Zvargulis R. (2021), analyzing a scholarly work involves critically examining its sources, methodology, and evaluating its overall contributions. In line with this approach, the present study will systematically categorize the criticisms raised by Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah. These critiques will be organized according to themes, chapters, and page numbers to facilitate easy reference. The analysis will then proceed to assess the content of *Islāh al-Istilāh*, ultimately drawing conclusions regarding the relevance of *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* as a primary reference and syllabus in academic institutions.

It is essential to note that, as Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah himself acknowledges, not all the points discussed in his work are criticisms. Some passages consist of explanations, affirmations, or even agreements on certain aspects. Therefore, the selection of critiques in this study focuses on identifying errors, inaccuracies, or instances where the chosen views appear unsuitable. To present a clear and structured overview, the distribution of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's critiques is presented in Table 1. This table not only outlines the criticisms but also categorizes them based on the nature of the critique, the context in which they are raised, and the specific sections of the original text they pertain to.

Table 1

Distribution of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's Critiques

Nu.	Chapter	Issue	Page
1.	Ta'rīfāt Awwaliyah	1. Confusion in defining the science of Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth 13 - 37 2. Inaccurate placement of the topic of Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth 3. Incorrect placement of methods for studying Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth 4. Lack of alternative definitions for Ḥadīth 5. Mistake in differentiating the terms al-Sanad and al-Isnād 6. Mistake in specifying al-Musnad as a type of hadith book 7. Uncommon definition of al-Musnid 8. Uncommon definition of al-Muhaddith 9. Uncommon definition of al-Ḥāfiz 10. Error in defining al-Ḥākim	13 - 37
2.	Khabar Mutawātir	1. Unsuitable view regarding the number of narrators in Mutawātir hadith 2. Mistake in presenting examples of Mutawātir hadith	38 - 60
3.	Khabar Ahād	1. Suggestion to elaborate on the ruling of Khabar Ahād	60 - 63
4.	Al-Masyhūr	1. Mistake in presenting examples of al-Masyhūr hadith	64 - 74
5.	Al-Sahīh	1. Inappropriate definition of dhabṭ. 2. Inaccurate reasoning for the authenticity of ṣaḥīḥ hadith 3. Misinterpretation of al-Bukhārī's statement about the number of memorized hadith 4. Unsuitable view on the number of hadith in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim 5. Misunderstanding al-Ḥākim's criteria in al-Mustadrak 6. Omission of issues concerning unauthenticated hadith in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim	79 - 127
6.	Al-Hasan	1. Misinterpretation of the definition of al-Hasan 2. Error in labeling scholars who equate al-Hasan and al-Sahīh as lenient 3. Mistake in presenting examples of al-Hasan hadith 4. Misunderstanding scholars' use of the phrase ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ al-Isnād 5. Misinterpretation of al-Tirmizī's statement ḥadīth hasan ṣaḥīḥ	128 - 181

		6. Criticism of al-Baghawī's categorization of ṣaḥīḥ and hasan 7. Misinterpretation of Abū Dāwud's methodology concerning hadith he remained silent on	
7.	Al-Sahīḥ li Ghairihi	1. Mistake in classifying al-Sahīḥ li Ghairihi hadith	182 - 184
8.	Al-Nāsikh fī al-Hadīth wa Mansūkhuhu	1. Error in presenting examples of abrogated hadith	185 - 189
9.	Al-Dha'if	1. Misunderstanding Ibn Hajar's concept of ḍa'if hadith	190 - 194
10.	Al-Mursal	1. Inaccurate example of al-Mursal hadith 2. Incorrect definition of al-Mursal according to jurists	209 - 215
11.	Al-Mu'dhal	1. Inaccurate definition of al-Mu'dhal	216 - 218
12.	Al-Munqati'	1. Inappropriate example of al-Munqati' hadith	222 - 223
13.	Al-Mudallas	1. Incorrect definition of tadrīs al-Isnād	224 - 232
14.	Al-Mursal al-Khafī	1. Inaccurate definition of al-Mursal al-Khafī 2. Incorrect example of al-Mursal al-Khafī hadith	239 - 242
15.	Al-Mu'an'an wa al-Muannan	1. Unclear ruling on al-Mu'an'an hadith	243 - 248
16.	Al-Maudhū'	1. Unclear reasoning for al-Maudhū' hadith	249 - 252
17.	Al-Matrūk	1. Inaccurate definition of al-Matrūk 2. Unsuitable examples presented	262 - 267
18.	Al-Munkar	1. Inaccurate definition of al-Munkar 2. Confusion between al-Syādh and al-Munkar 3. Mistake in citing examples without verifying original sources	268 - 295
19.	Al-Ma'rūf	1. Mistake in defining al-Ma'rūf	296 - 297
20.	Al-Mudtarib	1. Inaccurate definition of al-Mudtarib 2. Incorrect example of al-Mudtarib sanad 3. Incorrect example of al-Mudtarib matn	298 - 321
21.	Al-Syādh wa al-Mahfūz	1. Inaccurate definition of al-Syādh 2. Inaccurate definition of al-Mahfūz	322 - 323
22.	Al-Bid'ah	1. Misunderstanding regarding narrators from ahl al-bid'ah	324 - 335
23.	Sū'u al-Hifz	1. Incomplete explanation of Sū'u al-Hifz	336 - 338
24.	Al-Muttasil	1. Inaccurate definition of al-Muttasil	347 - 348
25.	Ziyādah al-Tsiqah	1. Inappropriate example of scholars capable of evaluating Ziyādah al-Tsiqah	349 - 350
26.	Al-l'tibār wa al-Mutābi' wa al-Syāhid	1. Inaccurate definition of al-l'tibār	351 - 352
27.	Kitābah al-Hadīth wa Dhabtuhu wa al-Tasnīf fihi	1. Mistake in explaining the methodology of al-Mu'jam al-Tabarāni	353 - 354
28.	Gharīb al-Hadīth	1. Inaccurate example of Gharīb al-Hadīth	355 - 356
29.	Ma'rifah al-Alqāb	1. Inaccurate categorization of al-Alqāb	357 - 359

Reference: Analysis by the Researcher from Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah (2009).

The distribution shows that out of the 30 chapters in Islāh al-Istilāh, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah has presented critiques in 29 chapters. However, it is important to note that not every discussion within these chapters is critical. In some instances, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah simply agrees with or elaborates on the author's views to prevent misunderstandings.

For example, in the discussion on the ruling of Mutawātir hadith, Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān states that Mutawātir hadith provides al-Darūrī knowledge and does not require further

examination of narrators. Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah concurs with this view and even offers a more detailed explanation to ensure that readers do not misconstrue al-Ṭaḥḥān's intent.

A comparative analysis between the sub-topics and the number of critiques indicates that Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah has raised 67 critiques out of 146 issues outlined. This shows that the proportion of critiques is relatively smaller compared to his agreements or explanatory comments regarding Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān's perspectives.

The study then focuses on the distribution of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's critiques related to terminology definitions. This is because definitions form the foundation of understanding in Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth. Therefore, this study limits its analysis specifically to the critiques concerning terminology definitions presented by Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah. The distribution of these critiques is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's Critiques Related to Terminology Definitions

Nu.	Chapter	Issue	Page
1.	Ta'rīfāt Awwaliyah	Confusion in defining the science of Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth Lack of mention of alternative definitions for Ḥadīth Usage of a less common definition for al-Musnid Usage of a less common definition for al-Muhaddith Usage of a less common definition for al-Ḥāfiz Mistake in defining al-Ḥākīm	13 - 37
2.	Al-Saḥīḥ	Inappropriate definition of dhabt	79 - 127
3.	Al-Hasan	Misinterpretation of the definition of al-Hasan	128 - 181
4.	Al-Mursal	Incorrect definition of al-Mursal according to jurists	209 - 215
5.	Al-Mu'dhal	Inaccurate definition of al-Mu'dhal	216 - 218
6.	Al-Mudallas	Unsuitable definition of tadrīs al-isnād	224 - 232
7.	Al-Mursal al-Khaḥī	Inaccurate definition of al-Mursal al-Khaḥī	239 - 242
8.	Al-Matrūk	Inaccurate definition of al-Matrūk	262 - 267
9.	Al-Munkar	Inaccurate definition of al-Munkar	268 - 295
10.	Al-Ma'rūf	Mistake in defining al-Ma'rūf	296 - 297
11.	Al-Mudtarib	Inaccurate definition of al-Mudtarib Inaccurate definition of al-Mudtarib matan	298 - 321
12.	Al-Syādh wa al-Mahfūz	Inaccurate definition of al-Syādh Inaccurate definition of al-Mahfūz	322 – 323
13.	Al-Muttasil	Inaccurate definition of al-Muttasil	347 - 348
15.	Al-l'tibār wa al-Mutābī' wa al-Syāhid	Inaccurate definition of al-l'tibār	351 – 352

Reference: Analysis by the Researcher from Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah (2009)

The analysis reveals that out of the 67 instances where Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah raised critiques in his work, only 21 instances specifically focus on the definition of terms.

Analysis of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's Critique

From the distribution presented, it can be concluded that Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's critique of Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān's terminology primarily revolves around two aspects: the absence of alternative definitions for specific terms and the inaccuracy of certain definitions.

Lack of Alternative Definitions

One of the critiques raised by Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah against Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān is that the latter fails to present alternative definitions for specific terms. However, this critique does not necessarily imply an error on al-Ṭaḥḥān's part. In the preface of *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth*, al-Ṭaḥḥān clearly states that his objective was not to delve into extensive scholarly debates or present various opinions due to the introductory nature of the book. His intention was to simplify the subject for beginners, allowing them to gradually progress to more comprehensive texts authored by classical hadith scholars. Therefore, omitting alternative definitions should not be considered a mistake.

For example, when defining the term *mu'dal* hadith, al-Ṭaḥḥān states that it is a hadith with two or more consecutive missing narrators in the sanad. Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah criticizes this definition, arguing that al-Ṭaḥḥān fails to include another type of *mu'dal* hadith, which consists of a *muttaṣil musnad* hadith transmitted by a *tābi'* al-*tābi'in* that ends with a *tābi'in* without mentioning the Sahabah and Prophet (SAW). In this form, the names of the Sahabah and Prophet (SAW) are omitted from the sanad, despite originally being part of the *muttaṣil musnad*. According to Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, this type of *mu'dal* has been recognized by scholars such as al-Ḥākim, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-'Irāqī, and Ibn Ḥajar (Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, 2009).

However, it is important to highlight that Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān merely presents the most common definition of *mu'dal*, which is consistent with the approach taken by earlier hadith scholars when introducing basic concepts. For instance, Ibn Ḥajar in *Nuzhat al-Nazar* also uses the same definition without mentioning the alternative interpretation (Al-'Asqalānī, 2011). Similarly, contemporary scholars like Abu al-Layth in *'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth Aṣīluhā Wa Mu'āṣiruhā* (2015) take a comparable approach. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that al-Ṭaḥḥān's decision to adopt the common definition is justified, considering the introductory nature of his work.

Inaccuracy of Definitions

Another significant critique by Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah is related to the inaccuracy of certain definitions proposed by Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān. He argues that these definitions do not align with the practical applications established by classical hadith scholars.

For instance, al-Ṭaḥḥān defines a *syādh* hadith as one narrated by an acceptable narrator that contradicts the narration of a more authoritative narrator. In contrast, a *munkar* hadith is described as one narrated by a weak narrator that contradicts the narration of a *thiqah* (trustworthy) narrator. However, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah contends that the first scholar to make this distinction between *syādh* and *munkar* was Ibn Ḥajar.

According to Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, this definition is flawed because, in practical hadith scholarship, *munkar* is generally understood as a narration made independently (*tafarrud*) by a narrator who lacks the qualifications for such singularity. For example, if a weak narrator presents a *tafarrud*, it is inherently considered *munkar*. Additionally, even a *thiqah* narrator who transmits a hadith singularly from a teacher, without being known for consistently attending that teacher's lessons, would also produce a *munkar* hadith. Therefore, the concept of *munkar* among hadith scholars is not solely linked to the narrator's reliability but also to the context of the transmission and the narrator's capacity for *tafarrud* (Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, 2009).

Furthermore, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah points out that hadith scholars traditionally do not differentiate between syādh and munkar. They often use both terms interchangeably to indicate a mistake in the narration, irrespective of the narrator's reliability or whether there is a contradiction (mukhālafah) (Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, 2009).

Analysis of the Terms Ma'rūf and Mahfūz

In his work, Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān follows the definition proposed by Ibn Ḥajar, where ma'rūf is considered the opposite of munkar, and mahfūz is viewed as the opposite of syādh. However, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah (2005) challenges this view, arguing that it is not necessary for a reliable (thiqah) narration to contradict a weak one to be classified as ma'rūf. Similarly, it is not a requirement for a thiqah narration to contradict a less reliable one to be considered mahfūz. Instead, according to Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, both ma'rūf and mahfūz should be understood as authentic and firmly established narrations, regardless of whether they conflict with syādh and munkar or not.

This perspective aligns with the view of Ḥātim al-'Awnī (1996), who argues that the classification of ma'rūf as the opposite of munkar and mahfūz as the opposite of syādh was never explicitly stated by earlier scholars. In fact, the classical works on 'ilal are replete with the terms ma'rūf and mahfūz used in contexts that do not match the definition provided by Ibn Ḥajar. This indicates that the traditional understanding of these terms differs from the modern interpretation introduced by al-Ṭaḥḥān.

Critique on the Selection of Definitions (Tarjīḥ)

Another focal point of Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah's critique is the methodological error in choosing between definitions (tarjīḥ). One notable example is related to the definition of ḥasan hadith. In his work, Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān presents the definitions of ḥasan according to al-Khaṭṭābī, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Ḥajar, and subsequently selects Ibn Ḥajar's definition as the most accurate (Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, 2009).

Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah criticizes this approach, arguing that choosing one definition over the others is flawed since each definition must be understood according to the perspective of the scholar who coined it. When al-Tirmidhī uses the term ḥasan, it should be interpreted based on al-Tirmidhī's understanding, and similarly for al-Khaṭṭābī. The process of preferring one definition over the other is inappropriate because it fails to consider the contextual differences between the scholars' uses of the term.

Additionally, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah points out that al-Ṭaḥḥān's method of preference implies that Ibn Ḥajar disregarded the views of al-Khaṭṭābī and al-Tirmidhī, presenting Ibn Ḥajar's definition as inherently distinct from the other two. However, this impression is misleading, as Ibn Ḥajar (like Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ) actually categorizes al-Khaṭṭābī's definition as ḥasan li dhātih and al-Tirmidhī's definition as ḥasan li ghayrih (Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah, 2009).

This critique highlights the nuanced difference in how classical scholars approached the definition of ḥasan hadith. Rather than viewing one definition as superior, Ṭāriq 'Iwadullah emphasizes the need to contextualize each term according to the scholar's intention and the specific context in which it was used.

Conclusion

Taysir Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth by Mahmud al-Ṭaḥḥān is widely regarded as an excellent introductory book for students of hadith. One of its key strengths is the author's ability to present complex topics in a simplified manner, using accessible language without delving into overly detailed discussions. This approach makes it particularly suitable for beginners who are just starting their journey into hadith studies. However, despite its positive reception, the book has faced criticism from contemporary hadith scholar Ṭāriq 'Iwadhullah, who addressed these critiques in his work titled Islāh al-Istilāh: Naqd Kitāb Taysir Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth li al-Duktūr Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān. One of the major areas of critique concerns the terminological definitions provided by al-Ṭaḥḥān. According to Ṭāriq, at least 15 definitions presented in Taysir Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth are problematic. The critiques posed by Ṭāriq 'Iwadhullah highlight two significant issues: the lack of multiple perspectives on definitions and the accuracy of the chosen definitions in Taysir Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth. However, it is crucial to contextualize these critiques within the purpose of al-Ṭaḥḥān's work. As an introductory text, Taysir Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth aims to present fundamental concepts in a simplified and accessible manner, which may naturally limit the depth of discussion on varying scholarly opinions. While Ṭāriq's critiques invite a more nuanced understanding of hadith terminology, it is also essential to recognize that al-Ṭaḥḥān's approach, rooted in pedagogical simplicity, remains effective for beginners. Thus, the book continues to hold value as a foundational text despite the critical observations raised by modern scholars. Given the ongoing debate surrounding the accuracy and completeness of terminological definitions in Taysir Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth, future research could focus on conducting a comparative study of terminological consistency between classical and contemporary hadith works. This study could examine how key terms in hadith sciences have evolved or remained consistent over time and how scholars from different periods have approached the issue of definition accuracy.

Moreover, it would be beneficial to analyze how introductory texts like Taysir Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth balance the need for simplicity against the risk of oversimplification. By comparing similar introductory texts from other regions or time periods, researchers could develop a more comprehensive framework for creating balanced educational materials that maintain accuracy while catering to beginner audiences. Such studies would not only address the critiques raised by Ṭāriq 'Iwadhullah but also contribute to refining the pedagogical approaches in the teaching of Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth at higher educational institutions.

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