

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION  
(ISTAC)

03<sup>rd</sup> October 2002

We certify that this dissertation entitled "Al-Ghazzali's Usage of the Weak Hādīth in His Writings with Special Reference to His Attempt to Revive Islamic Sciences" submitted by Ismael Hussein Sengendo satisfies the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Prof. Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas  
Chairman of Examining Committee  
and Founder-Director  
Supervisor



Prof. Dr. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud  
Member of Examining Committee  
and Deputy Director



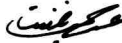
Prof. Dr. Omar Jah  
Second Reader



Prof. Dr. Karim Douglas Crow  
Third Reader



Prof. Dr. Muddathir Abdel Rahim  
Member of Examining Committee



Prof. Dr. Ala'Eddin Kharofa  
Member of Examining Committee



Dr. Ugi Suharto  
Member of Examining Committee



**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC  
THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)**

**AL-GHAZZĀLĪ'S USAGE OF WEAK ḤADĪTH IN HIS WRITINGS,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS ATTEMPT TO REVIVE  
ISLAMIC SCIENCES**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE INTERNATIONAL  
INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**BY**

**ISMAEL HUSSEIN SENGENDO**

**KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

**OCTOBER 2002**

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my beloved mother Hajarrah. It is also dedicated to Haji Hussein Sengendo and Shaykhat Noor Najjuuko, both of whom first taught me the rudiments of Islam and paved my way along the path of Islamic scholarship. It is also dedicated to the first *mufti* of Uganda and spiritual leader of the *ṭarīqat al-Shādhiliyyah*, the late Shaykh Swaib Semakura, known as Shaykh Mukulu (the Great Shaykh), who prayed a special *du'ā'* for me and wished that I would become one of the great and good scholars of Islam.

## TENTATIVE OUTLINE

Dedication	ii
Tentative Outline	iii
Abstract	viii
Acknowledgements	xi

### Chapter One

Introduction	1
The Problem of Weak ( <i>Da'if</i> ) Ḥadīth in Islamic Thought	1
Statement of the Problem	9
Objectives of the Study	16
Review of Related Literature	17
Significance of the Study	20
Sources of the Study	21
Methodology	24

### Chapter Two

The Position of Weak Ḥadīth and its Validity in Ḥadīth Criticism	25
A. Explanation of Technical Terms and Divisions of <i>Aḥādīth</i>	25
I. The Meaning of Sunnah, Ḥadīth, <i>Khabar</i> , <i>Athar</i> and the Difference Between Sunnah and Ḥadīth	25
II. Classification of Ḥadīth	33
1) Ḥadīth <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i> (Sound) and its Grades	33
2) Ḥadīth <i>Ḥasan</i> (Fair) and its Grades	34

3) Ḥadīth <i>Ḍa'īf</i> (Weak)	36
(i) Definition of Ḥadīth <i>Ḍa'īf</i>	36
(ii) Divisions of Ḥadīth <i>Ḍa'īf</i>	40
(1) Weak <i>Aḥādīth</i> with Weakness due to Discontinuity in the <i>Isnād</i> (chain of transmission)	41
(2) Weak <i>Aḥādīth</i> with Weakness due to Defect in the Narrators, and other Reasons	45
B. The Validity of Weak Ḥadīth	53
I. Major Views of Scholars on the validity of Weak Ḥadīth	53
II. The Employment of Weak Ḥadīth Concerning Encouragement of Virtuous Deeds and Discouragement of Evil Deeds ( <i>al-Targhīb wa'l-Tarhīb</i> )	58
C. Principles for Judging the Authenticity of Ḥadīth	62
I. Principles Relating to <i>Isnād</i>	63
1) The Beginning of <i>Isnād</i>	65
2) <i>Rijāl</i> /Criticism	67
3) Grades of Transmitters ( <i>ruwāt</i> )	72
(i) Grades of Reliable Transmitters	72
(ii) Grades of Weak Transmitters	73
(iii) Pious Transmitters	74
4) The Weak Transmitters	76
5) <i>Isnād</i> Terminology	84
II. Principles Relating to the Criticism of <i>Matn</i> (text; content)	89
1) Modernists Critique	91
2) The Response of Ḥadīth Supporters	93

3) Methods for Examining the Texts	94
(i) Textual Comparison ( <i>muqāranat al-matn</i> )	94
(ii) Rational Criticism ( <i>naqd al-'aqlī</i> )	95
(iii) Inspiration ( <i>ilhām</i> )	101

### Chapter Three

<b>Ḥadīth Criticism in Al-Ghazzālī's Juristic Methodology</b>	<b>106</b>
A . Al-Ghazzālī's Position on the Science of Ḥadīth	106
I. The Science of Ḥadīth in Al-Ghazzālī's Works	108
II. Legal and Ethical status of science of Ḥadīth and its Position in al-Ghazzālī's Classification of Religious Sciences	110
III. Al-Ghazzālī's Critique of the <i>Muḥaddithūn</i>	120
IV. Assessment of al-Ghazzālī's Criticism	125
B. Epistemological Perspective of Ḥadīth in al-Ghazzālī's Juristic Methodology	129
I. Al-Ghazzālī's Definition of <i>Khabar</i> (Report)	129
II. Modes of Transmission of Prophetic Reports as Employed by the Companions	133
III. Classification of <i>Khabar</i> into <i>Mutawātir</i> and <i>Āḥād</i>	137
1) <i>Mutawātir</i> Reports	137
2) <i>Āḥād</i> Reports	149
C. Criticism of the Narrator	160
I. Conditions of the Reliability of the Narrator	160
II. Principles of Invalidating and Declaring the Trustworthy of the Narrator ( <i>al-Jarḥ wa'l-Ta'dīl</i> )	163
III. Trustworthiness of the Companions	167

D. Methods of Transmission of Reports of Individuals	168
E. Factors that May Invalidate the Reports	173

### Chapter Four

Exposition of Al-Ghazzālī's Theory of Allegorical Interpretation ( <i>ta'wīl</i> ) of the Ambiguous ( <i>mutashābihāt</i> ) Texts of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth	182
--	-----

A. Existence of <i>Muḥkamāt</i> (apparent) and <i>Mutashābihāt</i> (ambiguous) in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth	182
---	-----

I. Meaning and Major Components of <i>Muḥkamāt</i> and <i>Mutashābihāt</i>	184
--	-----

II. Methods of <i>Tafsīr</i> and <i>Ta'wīl</i> with Reference to Interpretation of <i>Muḥkamāt</i> and <i>Mutashābihāt</i>	188
--	-----

III. The Nature of <i>Mutashābihāt</i> in the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the Approaches of Muslim Theologians to their Interpretations	190
---	-----

B. Exposition of Al-Ghazzālī's Theory of <i>Ta'wīl</i>	195
--	-----

I. Al-Ghazzālī's Exposition of the Salafis' Approach to <i>Ta'wīl</i>	196
---	-----

II. Degrees of Existence and Human Spirits or Faculties with Reference to <i>Ta'wīl</i>	200
---	-----

III. Al-Ghazzālī's Rules of <i>Ta'wīl</i>	211
---	-----

IV. Levels of People and their Capacity to Understand <i>Ta'wīl</i>	219
---	-----

V. Interpretation of the Metaphysical and Spiritual Aspects of Sunnah	227
---	-----

### Chapter Five

The Critics of Al-Ghazzālī's Employment of Weak <i>Aḥādīth</i>	241
--	-----

A. Al-Ghazzālī's Critics	241
--------------------------	-----

I. Ibn al-Jawzī's Criticism	241
-----------------------------	-----

II. Ibn Taymiyyah's Criticism	250
-------------------------------	-----

1) Ibn Taymiyyah's Rejection of <i>Ta'wīl</i> and Existence of <i>Mutashabihāt</i> in the Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth Texts	264
2) Ibn Taymiyya's Rejection of the Principle of <i>Tafwīd</i>	270
3) Ibn Taymiyyah's Rejection of <i>Majāz</i>	272
B. Verification of Selected <i>Aḥādīth</i>	276
I. Ḥadīth No. 1	277
II. Ḥadīth No. 2	302
C. Evaluation	311
Conclusion and Summary	327
Glossary of Arabic Technical Terms with Reference to the Science of Ḥadīth	361
Bibliography	380



## Abstract

The present study aims at presenting an analysis of al-Ghazzālī's employment of *aḥādīth* in general and then to understand why he employs weak *aḥādīth* in his writings. It is mainly done to evaluate the criticisms which can be traced back to many scholars. Of particular importance is the influence of two Ḥanbalī scholars, namely, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d.728/1327), both of whom not only attacked al-Ghazzālī but also a number of the Ṣūfis from whose teachings al-Ghazzālī derived many of his own ideas.

Basically the objection of these two critics was to al-Ghazzālī's employment of weak *aḥādīth* in his writings, especially the *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which they claimed al-Ghazzālī filled with weak or spurious *aḥādīth* that he quoted without examining their authenticity. In other words these critics claimed that al-Ghazzālī employed *aḥādīth* which have no valid source or which are not found in the authentic books of ḥadīth.

It has been clarified that al-Ghazzālī did not confine himself to only *aḥādīth* that are found in the authentic books. He also used others that were used by the Ṣūfis, and that were not accepted by the *Muḥaddithūn* because of their misunderstanding of the salient features of the theology and metaphysics of the Ṣūfis. Therefore, this study also attempts to examine the reliability of the methods that were applied by the *Muḥaddithūn* with reference to their judging the authenticity of ḥadīth.

It has been found that due to the difficulties that were closely connected with differing views of the *Muḥaddithūn* in determining what might be deemed as defects in ḥadīth, they did not agree among themselves in their interpretation of weak

*aḥādīth*. Rather, they did not clearly define the weak ḥadīth, although they agreed that they have various types, not having the same degree of weakness. In other words, the fewer the number and importance of defects, the less severe the weakness.

This study is mainly designed to examine al-Ghazzālī's employment of the weak *aḥādīth* and clarifies that in his attempt to revive the religious sciences, he tried to introduce the principles and rules that can be used to preserve the harmonious relationship between apparent (*ẓāhir*) and hidden (*bāṭin*) meanings in the words of the Qur'ān and of ḥadīth. This approach was different from that of his critics who confined themselves to literal interpretation of the texts of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

Indeed, al-Ghazzālī's position on the science of ḥadīth is a unique approach which integrates various aspects of Islamic sciences, i.e., ḥadīth, *Uṣūl al-fiqh*, *Kalām*, *Tafsīr* and *Taṣawwuf*, forming an integrated system that discloses the ultimate reality in positive terms. Of course, the '*ulamā'*' or scholars specializing in these sciences were all concerned with the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet as sources of knowledge in their approaches to interpret the concept of Sunnah, the second source of Islamic law next to the Holy Qur'ān. However, al-Ghazzālī clarifies, their understanding depends upon the levels of experience and cognition to which the words [in the text of *aḥādīth*] refer, and upon the levels in their capacity to understand their meanings.

What is unique about al Ghazzālī, and perhaps the most valuable contribution made by him to ḥadīth criticism, is that within his writings he treated the science of ḥadīth by integrating the points of view of *Fuqahā'*, *Uṣūliyyūn*, *Muḥaddithūn*, *Mutakallimūn* and the higher Ṣūfis. Therefore, in order to properly judge the

authenticity of ḥadīth we should not depend solely on the *Muḥaddithūn*'s preoccupation with the *isnād* alone; but also we must examine the subject matter/text (*matn*) as well as the nature of the truth conveyed by ḥadīth.

## Acknowledgements

This work would not have been done without the assistance and co-operation of many persons to whom I wish to extend my profound thanks and gratitude for their generous contribution that have led me to its successful completion.

First and foremost, I wish to express my thanks to Prof. Dr. Syed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas, the Founder-Director of ISTAC, for establishing this Institute. I acknowledge that the inspiration for writing this dissertation draws greatly from his lucid exposition of the present Muslim dilemma which is caused, among other things, by corruption of knowledge and *loss of adab*, and the chief characteristic symptom of *loss of adab*, being the process of 'leveling' which is perpetrated by the extremist scholars who unjustly criticize the great learned, virtuous and true leaders among Muslims.

Al-Attas's exposition of these factors is manifest in his multifarious works, lectures on the course 'the Religion of Islam', as well as being a frequent topic of his Saturday Night Lectures. All of these have inspired my thought about the content of the present work in a most profound way.

More importantly, I owe a debt of gratitude to Prof. Al-Attas for having accepted to be my major supervisor. I am particularly grateful for the encouragement and friendly guidance he has given me throughout the long and difficult preparation of this work. He generously offered me much of his time and guided me to an understanding of the salient features of theology and metaphysics of the Sūfis, which led me to identify the background of the criticism addressed to al-Ghazzālī by Ḥanbalite and Mālikī scholars. His profound knowledge of al-Ghazzālī's ideas — to the degree that he was appointed as the first holder of The al-Ghazzālī Chair of

Islamic Thought — and his grasp of the metaphysics and worldview of Islam have made the preparation of this work a happy journey for my pursuit of knowledge.

Throughout the duration of my studies at ISTAC, I have greatly benefited from the Deputy Director of ISTAC, Prof. Dr. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, who showed interest in my academic career right from the beginning and advised me on the best combination of courses to take, and to take an intensive English course at the expenses of ISTAC. Not only this, but he was much concerned about my term papers as his guidance led me to improve my research skills. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that the inspiration for choosing the topic of this present work also draws from his suggestion that I would justify the common employment of certain *aḥādīth* by the Sūfis. A special contribution made by Prof. Wan is also noted upon his reminding me when admitting me to study at ISTAC, that he was rendering me a trust (*amānah*). Hence, my completion of this work has been achieved as a result of desiring to accomplish this *amānah*.

I am equally, indebted to Prof. Omar Jah and Prof. Karim Crow, my second and third readers respectively. They have read my work, inspired me to clarify my ideas, and gave me useful assistance, which has enabled me to reach my goal. Prof. Karim Crow did not only patiently read this work and guide me to some relevant sources, but more importantly, he generously gave me access to some of his unpublished materials in the field of ḥadīth criticism.

I would also like to express my thanks to Prof. Ala' Addin Kharofa, Prof. Muddathir Abdel-Rahim and Dr. Ugi Suharto, all of whom are examiners of this work, for having read this work and given me their useful comments which have led me to correct the mistakes that were not foreseen. My thanks are also due to Dr.

Ajmal M. Razaq who read some chapters of this work and helped me to express my ideas in a clearer fashion. Not to forget my colleagues namely, Dr. Siraje Sekamanya and Umar Ahmad Kasule, both of whom showed their interest in my work and helped me to translate some Arabic materials into English.

In the course of my studies at ISTAC, I received financial assistance without which my studies would have been impossible. In this respect I wish to express my thanks to Prof. Al-Attas and his Deputy Prof. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, the late Haji Mat Ali Mat Daud — whose sudden death was a shock to everybody — may God make his grave one of the pits of *jannah*, the acting registrar Wan Mohd. Nasruddin Abdullah, and the entire administrative staff of ISTAC.

This work has been conducted in the library of ISTAC. I wish to thank the library staff for their co-operation. I am indebted to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zainy Uthman who availed me with necessary source materials for the completion of this study. I must also extend my gratitude to all the Professors of ISTAC, for opening my eyes in many ways to issues of great importance and for their generous assistance whenever I needed it. I must also thank all the research fellows for their concern in the progress of my work.

It is also important to make mention of my foster family in Tanzania, especially Mr. Nawab A. Mulla, Mr. Abdul Hakim A. Mulla, Mr. Haroon P. Mulla, Mr. Yusuf N. Mulla, and Mr. Shahdad N. Mulla. Without their assistance I would not have managed to study in Malaysia with my family.

I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Haji Elias Kisitu and his wife Joweria Kisitu (Mama Hasan), both of whom I stayed with

during my earlier studies at Kampala. Without their encouragement and love I would not have had a good preparation in my earlier studies.

In course of my writing this present work, God blessed me with a baby boy, who was born premature. My wife's health was not good, as she had to be admitted to the hospital for two months. Similarly, my baby was incubated for the same period. This was the most difficult moment that I have ever experienced. For I had to take care of the kids, go to the hospital everyday, and at the same time I had to work on my dissertation. All of these required a huge amount of money.

In this respect I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Al-Attas and his staff for assisting me to pay half of the hospital bills for my wife. I am also indebted to many individuals who generously contributed towards this matter. These include, the late Haji Mat Ali Mat Daud, Prof. Dr. Ala' Eddin Kharofa, Prof. Malik Badri, Prof. Omar Jah, Prof. Muddathir Abdel-Rahim, Prof. Karim Crow, Prof. Hasan al-Nagar, Prof. Amer al-Rubaic, Dr. Siraje Sekamanya, Mr Mustafa Abdul Rahman, Mr. Sulaiti Kabali, Mr. Umar Ahmad Kasule, and Mr. Murtada al-Merghani.

Outside ISTAC, we had a weekly gathering for Qur'ān recitation (*tilāwat al-Qur'ān*). My special thanks are due to my fellow members of this circle, for their assistance and the special *du'ā'*, which they have been praying for quick recovery of my wife and son.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Noor Nakasujja, my children Raihanah, Mariam, and Ja'far, for their continued moral and material support that have helped me to ease the burden of working on this dissertation. Their patience and kindly disposition in enduring my long hours of working on this dissertation have provided me with great encouragement.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### I. The Problem of Ḥadīth *Ḍa'īf* (weak) in Islamic Thought

The major task of this work is to analyze al-Ghazzālī's employment of ḥadīth (pl. *aḥādīth*, i.e., traditions, narratives, reports of the Prophet) in general (sound or weak) and then to understand why he employs some weak *aḥādīth* in his writings and his justification for it. His full name is Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazzālī.<sup>1</sup> He was a great *Faqīh* (jurist) and *Uṣūlī* (legal

<sup>1</sup> There is a long and intense dispute going back to some of the earliest traditional biographers concerning whether his name should be spelled with one or two Z's. I have adopted the spelling with two Z's following what is called the standard view (*al-mashhūr*)—that is *nisbah* from Ghazzāl—for his father was a spinner of wool, which he sold in his small shop. Other scholars hold that the correct spelling is Ghazālī (with single Z)—that is derived from Ghazāla, a village near Ṭūs—the birth place of the outstanding scholar under discussion. See Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah al-Kubrā*, 10 Vols, eds. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanaḥī, 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Huluw, and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanaḥī (Cairo: Dar Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah/Faisal 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d), 6: 203, hereinafter cited as *Ṭabaqāt*; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 14 Vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1989), 1:24-25, hereinafter cited as *Ithāf*; see also, W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1963), 181-83, hereinafter cited as *Muslim Intellectual*. The most important and authentic source for al-Ghazzālī's life, especially concerning the development of his intellectual and spiritual life, is his semi-autobiographical work *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*. And the principle traditional biographies of al-Ghazzālī in Arabic have been compiled by 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Uthmānī, under the title, namely, *Sīrat al-Ghazzālī wa Aqwāl al-Mutaqaddimīn fīhi*. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1961. Included in this collection of biographies are those of 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1129), Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimashqī (d.571/1175), Abū'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1200), Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d.681/1282), Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), al-Subkī (d.771/369) and al-Zabīdī (d.1205/1790). Of these biographies the most authentic appears to be that of al-Fārisī who was a contemporary and close friend of al-Ghazzālī. For an English translation of the major part of al-Fārisī's biography, see R. J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl and other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), xiv-xx, hereinafter cited as *Freedom and Fulfillment*. For modern accounts of his life, see in particular, D. B. Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī with Special Reference to his Religious Experience and Opinions", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 20 (1899): 71-132, hereinafter cited as "Life of al-Ghazzālī"; W. R. Gairdner, *An Account of al-Ghazālī's Life and Works*. Madras, 1919; S. M. Zwemer, *A Muslim Seeker After God*. New York, 1920; Margaret Smith, *al-Ghazālī the Mystic*. London: Luzac and Co., 1944; Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*; idem, "al-Ghazālī", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New edition (1983); 2: 1038-41; Gerhard Bowering, "Ghazālī: I. Biography", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 10, no 4 (1985): 358-63; M. Saeed Sheikh, "al-Ghazzālī", *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, 2 Vols. ed. M. M. Sharif (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1995), 1: 581-87.



theorist) who belonged to juridical school of al-Shāfi'ī<sup>2</sup>, to the extent that he has been described as the “consummate *imām* of the *fuqahā*”<sup>3</sup>, or the most influential jurist who shaped Shāfi'ite legal developments during fifth/eleventh century<sup>4</sup>, a *Mutakallim* (speculative theologian) whose thought was broadly in line with the Ash'arite school of theology<sup>5</sup>, and a higher Ṣūfi.<sup>6</sup> Al-Ghazzālī is considered to be the

<sup>2</sup> For detailed study of the juridical school of al-Shāfi'ī and the position of al-Ghazzālī therein, see George Makdisi, “The Juridical Theology of al-Shāfi'ī: Origins and Significance of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*”, *Studia Islamica*, 59 (1984), 5-47, reprint, in *Religion, Law and Learning in Classical Islam*, Variorum (1991); 21, part II, 5-47; Wael Hallaq, “Ghazzālī: As a Faqīh”, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 10, no. 4 (1985); 372-74. Al-Ghazzālī's works that he wrote in correspondence with the Shāfi'ite school of jurisprudence include, on *fiqh*: *al-Basīṭ*, *al-Wasīṭ*, *al-Wajīz*, and *Khulāṣat al-Mukhtaṣar*; on *Uṣūl al-fiqh*: *al-Mankhūl min Ta'liqāt al-Uṣūl*, *Shifā' al-Ghāfil* and *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*; and on *'ilm al-jadal* or *'ilm al-khilāf*— a science which is concerned with how to conduct rational discourses in *fiqh*, especially in areas where there are differences between the various schools of jurisprudence — al-Ghazzālī contributed four books, namely, *Ma'ākhiḍ al-Khilāf*, *Lubāb al-Nazar*, *Taḥṣīn al-Ma'ākhiḍ fī 'Ilm al-Khilāf*, and *al-Mabādī wa'l-Ghayat*. These works are mentioned by 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, *Mu'allafāt al-Ghazzālī*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kuwait: Wakālat al-Maṭbū'āt, 1977), 6-38; hereinafter cited as *Mu'allafāt*. For further sources where al-Ghazzālī's works on jurisprudence are mentioned see, Ahmad Zakī, *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī's Juristic Doctrine in al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl with a Translation of Volume One of a Translation of Volume One of 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, 3 Vols. (Ph.D.dissertation submitted to the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago, published by UMI, 1987), 158-178; *The Fatawā of Imām al-Ghazzālī*, edited with introduction and notes by Abu Sway (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), xxix-xxx; see also Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qarrah Dāghī's introduction, *al-Wasīṭ fī'l-Madhhab*, 2 Vols. by al-Ghazzālī (Cairo: Dār al-Naṣr, 1973), 1: 201-204.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 6: 216; see also as quoted by Ahmad Zakī, *Juristic Doctrine*, 2; Ahmad Zakī goes on to reveal that al-Ghazzālī's writings on the origins and the details of Islamic jurisprudence have been very significant as one finds hardly a book on this field written after al-Ghazzālī that does not rely on him, quote him extensively, or engage him in debate — especially with reference to his *al-Mustasfā*, see *Ibid*, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Wael B. Hallaq, “Ghazzālī: As a Faqīh”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 10, part 4 (1985); 372.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed studies of the Ash'arites and al-Ghazzālī's position in the Ash'arite school, see Makdisi, “Ash'arī and the Ash'arites in the Islamic Religious History” *Studia Islamica*, 17,18 (1962, 1963); 37-80, 19-39, reprint, in *Religion, Law and Learning*, Variorum (1991); 21, part I & II, 37-80, 19-39; *idem*, “The Sunni Revival” *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150: Papers on Islamic History III*, ed. D. H. Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1977), 155-168, reprint, in *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad*, Variorum (1990); 25, part VI, 155-168; Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Iḥjāt al-Siddiq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīri* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, 1986), 209-213; hereinafter cited as *Commentary*; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1985), 75-97; R. M. Frank, “Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ash'arī”, *Le Muséon*, 104 (1991); 141-190; *idem*, *al-Ghazzālī and the Ash'arite School*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994; Oliver Leaman, “Ghazzālī and the Ash'arites” *Asian Philosophy*, 6, no. 1 (1996); 17-29.

<sup>6</sup> See where Professor al-Attas distinguishes between two kinds of Ṣūfis in regard to the basis of their ideas: higher Ṣūfis and pseudo-Ṣūfis. Higher Ṣūfis are those who attained to the highest stage of spiritual experience, whose ideas and practices are firmly rooted in knowledge which is based on intuitive experience, and who received a good grounding in Islamic sciences prior to embarking upon the study and practice of Ṣūfism. On the other hand, pseudo-Ṣūfis—also known by other

reformer of the fifth century of Islam, and the special title that was given to him was *Hujjatu'l-Islām* (The Proof of Islam).<sup>7</sup> This is especially true when the problems inherent in the Muslim community of his time are closely examined. It was a period of weakness and decline of the Abbasid Caliphate. At the same time the Fatimid Ismā'īlī (the Bāṭinites) propaganda was threatening not only the Abbasid caliphate but the Sunnī *madhhab* and Islam as a whole. It was also the age of intellectual disputes and controversies among the different schools of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *kalām* (speculative theology) within the Muslim society.<sup>8</sup> In addition, cultural influences affected the thinking of Muslims; perhaps the most influential was that of Greek or Hellenic thought. During al-Ghazzālī's lifetime Muslims ignored the moral aspect of Islam. For the religion of Islam became merely a name for performing certain formal practices and rituals, their ethical significance being ignored. As a result, the Islamic Caliphate suffered from the invasions of the Crusaders.<sup>9</sup>

---

names, such as ignorant Sūfis and the extremist Sūfis—are those whose doctrines are grossly erroneous. They affirmed either a dualism, or a monism, or a pantheism in their various positions on the relationship between God and the world. They also emulated the method and way of thinking of the Sophists (*al-Sufisā'iyyah*) and the deviating Existentialists (*al-Wujūdiyyah al-Mulhidah*). See al-Attas, *Commentary*, 344; see also, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1998), 37-38, hereinafter cited as *Educational Philosophy*.

<sup>7</sup> According to a ḥadīth attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, at the beginning of every hundred years God sends someone to revive the faith of the Islamic community. Al-Zabīdī devotes an entire section to this fact, listing all those for whom the honor of being such a reformer had been claimed for the centuries before al-Ghazzālī. As for the fifth century of Islam al-Ghazzālī's position as its reformer seems undisputed. See *Ithāf*, 1:35-37. Al-Ghazzālī was himself of the opinion that he was favored by divine providence for this role. See *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Cairo and Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Masrī/Dār al-Kutub al-Lubnānī, 1990), 140 hereinafter cited as *Munqidh*.

<sup>8</sup> See a study made by Abū Sway regarding theological and juridical disturbances that took place during the time of al-Ghazzālī, Mustafa Abū Swayy, *A study in Islamic Epistemology* (Kuala Lumpur: Diwan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1988), 5-15, hereinafter cited as *Ghazzaliyy*.

<sup>9</sup> See M. 'Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of al-Ghazālī* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1977), 21.

Perhaps this can be reduced to a single evident crisis which is called— by one of the most prominent and creative Muslim thinkers in contemporary Muslim scholarship, one of the few scholars who has pointed out the major problems that beset Muslim society today, and the original conceptualizer of the notion of Islamization of present day knowledge and education, Professor Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas<sup>10</sup>—as *the loss of adab*. By *loss of adab*, al-Attas is referring to loss of discipline.

The discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual, and spiritual capacities and potentials; the recognition and acknowledgement of the fact that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> For biographical information on al-Attas, see *Who's Who in the World 1997*, 14<sup>th</sup> edn (New Providence: Marquis Who's Who, 1996), 25-26. The seeds for agenda of Islamization of contemporary knowledge and education were planted by al-Attas, particularly in his paper entitled: "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", presented at the First World Conference on Muslim Education held at Mecca from March 31 to April 8 in 1977, which was organized by King Abdul Aziz University. The paper was read in the Plenary Session II on April 3, 1977. (See the Conference Book, King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah & Mecca al-Mukarramah, 1397/1977, 35, 37). The above paper was published, together with seven selected papers as a book under the title: *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, ed. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, London/Jeddah, Hodder and Stoughton/ King Abdul Aziz, 1979. However, al-Attas made a commentary of the same paper in his book entitled: *The Concept of Education in Islām: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education*, Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization [ISTAC], 1991, hereinafter cited as *Concept of Education*. Apart from al-Attas's works which will be quoted in this work frequently because of their relevance to al-Ghazzālī's views, further references where his original concept of Islamization and his contribution pertaining to Muslim education are clearly expounded in many works of Professor Wan. See, Wan Mohd Nor, *The Beacon on the Crest of a Hill: A Brief History and Philosophy of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1991; idem, "Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge: A Brief Comparison between al-Attas and Fazlur Rahman", *Al-Shajarah*, 2, no. 1 (1997): 1-19; idem, *Educational Philosophy*. Finally, because of al-Attas's many contributions to contemporary Islamic thought and profound understanding of al-Ghazzālī's ideas, he was appointed as the first holder of the Abū Hamid al-Ghazzālī Chair of Islamic Thought. See *Commemorative Volume on the Conferment of the Al-Ghazzālī Chair of Islamic Thought on Prof. Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 1993/Rajab 1414), published by ISTAC, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: (1978), reprint, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993), 105

Under the above-mentioned circumstances, attention to Islamic sciences, which properly should portray the real aims of the Islamic worldview<sup>12</sup>, was diverted to hairsplitting debates leading to intellectual and moral decadence. A religious reformer who could fulfill the requirements involved in the revival of the sciences of religion was absolutely needed. No one had a higher reputation to take up that duty than al-Ghazzālī, who had achieved a reputation in various fields of Islamic scholarship. He truly revived the sciences and gave them impetus never provided by his predecessors.

During his life time al-Ghazzālī produced numerous writings, dealing with most of the Muslim problems of his time, including his masterpiece *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which is considered as one of the most visible fruits of his attempt to restore equilibrium and harmony between the inner and exterior dimensions of Islam.<sup>13</sup> Such prodigious intellectual productivity had a great impact on Muslim intellectual history.

Having followed the standard system of Islamic education in his academic career, al-Ghazzālī was introduced to the science of ḥadīth. He followed the legal method of the Shāfi'ī *Fuqahā'* (sing, *Faqīh*) and *Uṣūliyyūn* (sing, *Uṣūfī*), most of whom were also connected to the Ash'arite school in theology. Their approach to studying *aḥādīth* was epistemological, i.e., dealing with the *yaqīnī /ẓanni* (certain /conjectural) dichotomy. That is to say, their approach was primarily in terms of the

---

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed explanation of worldview of Islam see al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islām* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995), 1-39, hereinafter cited as *Prolegomena*.

<sup>13</sup> For a list of al-Ghazzālī's works see, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Mu'allafāt al-Ghazzālī*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Kuwait: Wakālat al-Matbū'āt, 1977.

nature of knowledge and, more precisely, the categories of knowledge of certainty as opposed to knowledge derived from a presumption of truth, or conjecture.

Based on the above-mentioned approach *aḥādīth* were classified into two divisions, namely, *mutawātir*—i.e., widely transmitted by so many individuals or various chains of transmitters, at the source that according to legal theory it is impossible to doubt the certain knowledge it conveys—and *āḥād*, i.e., that attested by a single chain of transmitters or which falls short of *mutawātir*. In line with this dual classification, however, nearly all the Shāfi'ī *Uṣūlis* and the Ash'arī *Mutakallimūn* agree that the knowledge conveyed by *mutawātir aḥādīth* is certain (*yaqīnī*), whereas that conveyed by *āḥād* is not certain, but conjectural (*ẓannī*).

Hence in *aḥkām* (i.e., sing. *ḥukm*; primarily the infinitive of *ḥakama*, which has various connotations, and in the context of juridical theory denotes a judgement, legal decision or status)<sup>14</sup>, al-Ghazzālī, as a Shāfi'ī *Faqīh* and *Uṣūlī*, employs *aḥādīth* whose reliability was judged not so much on the basis of considering their *asānīd* (chains of transmission), but on their character as *mutawātir*. In other words, what concerned al-Ghazzālī was the meaning and relevance of the truth conveyed by the *aḥādīth*.

In addition to this al-Ghazzālī followed the higher Ṣūfis' approach to ḥadīth. It should be noted that the higher Ṣūfis as well as the *Mutakallimūn* — especially the Ash'arites — consider that just as the Qur'ān has ambiguous verses, likewise the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet contain ambiguities whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal texts. Often they require allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) or demand absolute acceptance (*al-taslīm*).

Upholding this line of understanding, al-Ghazzālī develops certain rules of interpretation of such *aḥādīth*. He also employs *aḥādīth* that are deemed as weak by the *Muḥaddithūn* as one of the sources of religious knowledge, especially on matters pertaining to *faḍā'il* (sing, *faḍīlah*) namely, an excellence or meritorious quality, a high degree of merit. However, *faḍā'il* in the context of an innate character trait (*khuluq*) and one of the noble character traits (*makārim al-akhlāq*), embraces either the meaning of 'divine gift' or 'grace' in the sense of the human moral quality, or a 'surpassing virtue' by which a person excels over others.<sup>15</sup> *Faḍā'il* also involve the encouragement of virtues and discouragement of evil (*al-tarḥīb wa'l-tarḥīb*).

This is in line with al-Ghazzālī's firm conviction that the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (Ṣ.A.W)—the second main source of Islamic law, after the Holy Qur'ān—should be followed in detail, not to be restricted only to matters pertaining to *aḥkām*. Al-Ghazzālī believes that there are some metaphysical and spiritual secrets hidden beneath the actions and utterances of the Prophet in all matters, which have been handed down in the form of ḥadīth. Taking this into consideration, al-Ghazzālī uses some weak *aḥādīth* in his works, especially *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. Al-Ghazzālī holds that the underlying meaning that may be deduced from such *aḥādīth* has an important effect on the happiness of Muslims both in this world and in the hereafter. Al-Ghazzālī didn't confine himself to only *aḥādīth* found in the six canonical or authentic books (*kutub al-ṣiḥāḥ al-sittah*), for he found it necessary to

<sup>14</sup> For the above adopted meaning and various kinds of connotations that the term *ḥukm* denotes, see T. H. Weir, "Ḥukm" *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3: 332. See also the Qur'ānic verse (Remember Dāwūd and Sulaymān, when they give a judgement [*idh yahkumān*]) (*al-Anbiyā'*, 21:78).

<sup>15</sup> See R. Sellheim, "Faḍīla" *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edn, 2: 728. The above meaning of *faḍā'il* is also based on unpublished article provided to me by Professor Karim Douglas Crow, and a final draft with corrections he submitted to *Arabica*, entitled: "The *Kitāb al-'Aql* [On Innate 'Wisdom'] by Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbar (d.206/821) and its Rejection by Sunnī Tradents" December, (1998); 37-38, especially note 2.

include other *aḥādīth* which were excluded by the compilers of these books.<sup>16</sup> For this al-Ghazzālī had good reasons, and a proper understanding of their true significance and utility for spiritual life.

Furthermore it should be noted that in al-Ghazzālī's time there was no general agreement on the matter of authentic books. The first man to give Ibn Mājah a place along with the other five was probably Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d.507/1113)<sup>17</sup>, who died two years after al-Ghazzālī's death; but many others did not accept him for centuries after this. We find both, Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ḥāzimī (d.584/1118)<sup>18</sup> and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d.643/1245), still spoke of the five books omitting Ibn Mājah.<sup>19</sup> In al-Ghazzālī's time al-Tirmidhī had also failed to gain general acceptance among the most authoritative books.<sup>20</sup>

That being so, it is only natural that al-Ghazzālī did not confine himself to use only the *aḥādīth* found in the authentic books. He also used those which were found in others, especially those which were used by the *Zuhhād* (ascetics) and the Ṣūfis, and which were discarded by the *Muḥaddithūn*. And more importantly, it seems to me, that he used some *aḥādīth* which had been orally transmitted from one generation to another, especially in Ṣufi tradition. That is why there are so many *aḥādīth* which many scholars have been unable to discover their sources. It should be mentioned that although such *aḥādīth* are not found in the books of ḥadīth that are considered authentic, it doesn't mean that they were not linked to the Prophet, and that al-Ghazzālī was not aware of their source or their spiritual significance.

---

<sup>16</sup> Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim admitted that they didn't include all the authentic *aḥādīth* in their works.

<sup>17</sup> His work is entitled, *Shurūṭ al-A'immat al-Sittah*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1984.

<sup>18</sup> His work is entitled, *Shurūṭ al-A'immat al-Khamsah*, published along with the above.

<sup>19</sup> See Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ulum al-Ḥadīth*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn 'Atr (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), 37-38.

<sup>20</sup> See James Robson, "Al-Ghazzālī and the Sunna" *Muslim World*, 44 (1955), 326.

## II. Statement of the Problem

The common employment of the weak *aḥādīth* in the works of the Ṣūfis has been a subject of criticism by certain scholars, especially the Hanbalites, who were influenced by the early *Muḥaddithūn* — i.e., professional body of ḥadīth experts; those who transmitted, criticized, compiled and classified *aḥādīth*, sometimes referred to as *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* or *ahl al-ḥadīth*, and for English alternatives, as Traditionists or Traditionalists<sup>21</sup>—who totally rejected the usage of such *aḥādīth*, whether as a basis for *aḥkāṁ*, or for *faḍā'il*. Among those Ṣūfis who employed weak *aḥādīth*, it is probable that no one in the history of Islamic thought was confronted with such rigorous criticism as was al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111).

The rise of this form of criticism can be traced back to many jurists amongst the Mālikīs, the Ḥanbalīs, and — interestingly — the Shāfi'īs (al-Ghazzālī's own juridical school). To mention the most prominent of these critics, bibliographical works list the two leading jurists among the Mālikīs namely, Muḥammad b. al-Wafīd al-Ṭurṭūsh (d. 520/1126) and Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141).<sup>22</sup> Among the Ḥanbalī jurists Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1200) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1327) are the two leading vocal critics of al-Ghazzālī.

---

<sup>21</sup> There is distinction between the two English terms namely, 'Traditionists' and 'Traditionalists' which are used by scholars to mean the ḥadīth-experts. In most cases, we have used the Arabic term *Muḥaddithūn*, and for the same purpose the English terms, traditionists, ḥadīth critics or experts, have been maintained throughout our study. For the references where the distinction between the two terms namely, 'Traditionalists' and 'Traditionists' is mentioned, see Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites", part I, 48-49; Christopher Melchert, "Adversaries of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal", *Arabica*, 44 (1997): 235, note 4; Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), iv.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3-4: 122-23; al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, I: 38; Ibn Taymiyyah; see also Ibn Taymiyyah, *Bughyat al-Murtād fi'l-Radd 'alā'l-Mutafalsifah wa'l-Qaramīyah wa'l-Bāṭiniyyah Ahl al-Ilhād min al-Qa'īlīn bi'l-Ḥulūl wa'l-Ittihād*, ed. Mūsā b. Sulaymān al-Dawaysh, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (al-Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-'Ulūm wa'l-Ḥikam, 1995), 280, hereinafter cited as *Bughyah*; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 25 Vols. eds. Shu'ayb al-Arnu'ūt, Ḥusayn al-Asad (Beirut: Mu'assat al-Risālah, 1998), 19: 330, 334, hereinafter cited as *Siyar*. For more details on Mālikī jurists' criticism of al-Ghazzālī's *Ihyā'*, see Ahmad b. Yahyā al-Wānsharīsī (d. 914), *al-Mi'yār al-Mu'rab wa'l-Jāmi' al-Mughrab 'an Fatawā 'Ulamā' Iḥrīqiyyah wa'l-Andalus wa'l-Maghrib*, 13 Vols, ed,