

THE CONCEPT OF *MUḤADDATHŪN* IN THE SHĪ'Ī AND SUNNĪ
TRADITIONS: A Preliminary Comparative Study

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ملخص

تحاول هذه المقالة تطوير مفهوم المحدثين حيث لا ينفصل عند الشيعيين والسنين عن مفهوم النبوة والرسالة. هناك مصدران أساسيان لهذه المقالة هما: كتاب الأصول من الكافي لمفكر شيعي معروف محمد بن يعقوب بن اسحاق الكليني وكتاب سيرة الأولياء لمحمد بن علي بن الحسن الترمذي من الصوفيين السنين الأوائل. أكد هذان المصدران بأن مصطلح المحدثين يدل على الأولياء والأقوام الذين اختارهم الله لتلقي الكلام والإلهام منه تعالى بدون واسطة الملك. لقد زود الله المحدثين بالكرامة والمعارف الإلهية حتى تمكنوا من أداء وظيفتهم وهي الحفاظ على شريعة الله وسنة نبيه.

وفيما يخص مصطلح المحدثين فهناك اختلاف بين الشيعيين والسنين، كما ذكر في الكتابين المذكورين. إنهم - كما قال الشيعيون - أئمة الشيعة، بدليل الأحاديث النبوية. بينما قال أهل السنة أنه لا يلزم أن يدل هذا المصطلح على أئمة الشيعة وإنما يدل على الأولياء بصفة عامة.

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini mencoba mengelaborasi *muhaddathūn* yang dipahami dalam lingkungan Shī'ī dan Sunnī. *Muhaddathūn* sesungguhnya merupakan konsep yang tidak dapat dipisahkan dari konsep tentang *nubuwwah* (kenabian, *prophethood*) dan *risālah* (kerasulan, *messengership*).

Dua karya, yaitu *Kitāb al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfi* oleh pemikir Shī'ī terkenal Muhammad bin Ya'qūb bin Ishāq al-Kulaynī dan *Kitāb Ṣirāt al-Awliyā'* oleh Muhammad bin Ali bin al-Ḥasan al-Tirmidhī yang merupakan seorang teosof Sunnī awal, menjadi sumber utama dalam makalah ini. Kedua karya tersebut menyepakati bahwa *muhaddathūn* menunjuk kepada *awliyā'* (*saints, friends of God*), yang mendengar ucapan ilahiah dan mendapat inspirasi dari-Nya walaupun tanpa melihat malaikat. *Muhaddathūn* diberkati dengan kualitas dan kemampuan khusus (*karāmāt*) serta pengetahuan ilahiah (*divine knowledge, ma'rifah*) sehingga mereka dapat melaksanakan tugas mereka untuk menjaga hukum Tuhan dan Sunnah Nabi.

Namun demikian, Shī'ī dan Sunnī, sebagaimana disebutkan dalam dua buku di atas, berbeda pendapat mengenai "siapa" sebenarnya yang disebut *muhaddathūn* tersebut. Kaum Shī'ī berpendapat bahwa istilah *muhaddathūn* itu secara jelas merujuk kepada para Imam berdasarkan atas sejumlah hadis. Sebaliknya, kaum Sunnī berpendapat bahwa *muhaddathūn* tidak harus selalu merujuk kepada Imam kaum Shī'ī, tetapi mereka adalah para *awliyā'* (*walāya holders*).

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I. Introduction

Walāya, friendship with God or sainthood, has been one of the most interesting themes of discussion amongst ṣūfis of different orders throughout the history of Islamic mysticism. In *walāya*, notions of privilege authority, divine knowledge and faithful love all meet. Hence, *walāya* is a topic of critical debate in religious discourse as well. In this respect, both Islamic sects, the Shī'ī and the Sunnī, have their own traditions and notions of *walāya*.

The Shī'īs consider *walāya* to be an important theological matter upon which the entire doctrine of imamate is based. One of the basic principles of *walāya* emphasized by the Shī'īs is that the Imāms possessed all knowledge which stems from four main sources: oral transmission; transmission by heredity; transmission by inspiration; and sacred books.¹ As *muhaddathūn*

(which may be translated as those to whom an angel speaks) the Imāms constitute an important element in Shī'ī discourse on *walāya*. In Sunnī sufism, the notion of *walāya* generates as much discussion. A Sunnī theologian, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, forwards a theory of *walāya*, which is complex and lengthy in his important book, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*. Al-Tirmidhī points out that *muḥaddathūn* receive a covenant of God as pertains to *walāya*.²

The present study will discuss the concept of *muḥaddathūn* as understood by both Shī'īs and Sunnīs. The analysis will be focused on the notion of *muḥaddathūn* and their standing in relation to *walāya* and divine knowledge. In order to identify the nature of *muḥaddathūn* in both traditions as well as the differences and similarities inherent in each, two early documents from the Shī'ī and Sunnī traditions have been chosen as the primary sources for the discussion: al-Kulaynī's *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfi* represents the Shī'ī tradition while Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'* is the representative of the Sunnī sphere. After devoting a section to a general introduction, the paper will present the life sketches and backgrounds of the afore-cited authors. A descriptive comparison of the concept of *muḥaddathūn* as presented in the two main books will follow. As stated the discussion will focus on *muḥaddathūn* and the notion of *walāya* and divine knowledge. The paper assumes that although the Shī'īs and Sunnīs share several concepts regarding *walāya* and *muḥaddathūn*, the interpretations they hold seem to be different. It aims to identify the similarities as well as the differences of both traditions.

II. The Shī'ī Tradition

A. The Position of Tradition in Shī'ism

According to the Shī'īs, legal and absolute authority in Islam derive from the Qur'ān and the true Traditions. What is meant by "true Tradition" for them is a *sunna*, *ḥadīth*, *khobar*, *riwāya* which may be traced to sayings (*aqwāl*), deeds (*aḥwāl*) and states (*aḥwāl*) of the Prophet, of his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve Imāms. Thus, the true, authoritative Traditions can only come from these "Fourteen Impeccable" sources.³

Since the verses of the Qur'ān are not all free of ambiguity, a true interpreter must first grasp and comprehend their intended meaning. The Prophet and the Imāms, who have been appointed by God, become the right guides in this matter. They are the only persons authorized to expound upon the verses in accordance to God's purpose.⁴ In this respect, the Traditions function as paradigms to the correct interpretation and explication of God's intent.

Second, the Shī'īs believe that the Qur'ān has both exoteric and esoteric dimensions. None can comprehend the esoteric meaning of the Qur'ān except those who are pure, free from corruption and immune from error (*ma'sūm*), "People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and to cleanse you" (33:31). Thus the Prophet and the Imāms from his household are, by virtue of their pure beings, the only ones authorized to elaborate on the esoteric depth of the Qur'ān.

Third, the Qur'ān, as the eternal and fundamental source of law for Muslims, needed, after the death of the Prophet, a sinless, enforcing guarantor who had the power to uphold it. The guardian of the Qur'ān, its commandments and laws, must possess the same qualities of the Prophet, i.e., free from sin and corruption, and grasp both the exoteric and esoteric layers of the verses. These qualities are found in the beings of the Imāms. Consequently, the Imāms themselves are proof of God's existence and the conduits through which His intentions are relayed. In Imām al-Bāqir's words:

The Messenger of Allāh was the Warner; and for every age there is a guide from amongst us to guide them towards what the Prophet of Allāh has brought and to what was left by the guides after him, 'Alī and then the successors (*awṣiyā'*), one after the other.⁵

Based on the above considerations one may conclude that for the Shī'īs, the Traditions of the Imāms are as reverent as the Traditions of the Prophet. As such, the Imāms are the foci of standardization, authorization and reliability of the Traditions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Shī'ī Traditions have certain basic formations of *asānīd*.⁶ a) the *asānīd* either go back to an Imām; or b) they refer to an Imām who transmitted from his forefathers; or c) they go back to an Imām who transmitted from the Prophet Muḥammad, either directly or via the Imām's forefathers.

Most of the reliable and authoritative *asānīd* of the Shī'ī Traditions are, however, unacceptable in Sunnī scholarship. The Sunnīs regard the Shī'ī Imāms' reliability as transmitters of the Traditions as subject to the same standardized set of measurements which are applied to all other transmitters of Tradition.⁷ For instance, an *isnād* in which an Imām transmitted a Tradition directly from the Prophet without having met him, would be dismissed as *mursal*; and a *mursal* Tradition is unacceptable.

The compilation of Traditions in the Shī'ī community is believed to have commenced in the lifetime of the Prophet. The first book of the Traditions was compiled by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. 'Alī wrote down on sheets of paper what were dictated by the Prophet concerning the teachings which

contain all details about what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and what is unlawful (*ḥarām*).⁸ It is also reported that the emancipated slave of the Prophet, Abū Rafi' Ibrahim al-Qibtī,⁹ also compiled another book of Traditions called *Kitāb al-Sunan wa al-Aḥkām wa al-Qaḍāyā*.¹⁰ Salmān al-Fārisī and Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī were also known as the first Shī'īs to collect traditions and classify them under different headings. The Compiler of Shī'ī Traditions, who were also the contemporaries of the Imāms (from the first Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to Imām Ḥasan al-'Askarī) had compiled more than 6600 books containing the Traditions of the Prophet. Four hundred out of these 6600 books are concerned with the *uṣūl*; and are known as *al-Uṣūl al-Arba'u mi'a*.¹¹

All authors of these *uṣūl* lived during the period of the Imāms. Most of them are said to have been disciples of Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. These *uṣūl* are highly regarded as special Traditions and respected as the basis of the principles of legal jurisprudence since they consist in the sayings and utterances of the Imāms. The compilers of these *uṣūl* reported the Traditions of the Imāms as they themselves received them from the Imāms, or relied on the authority of trustworthy scholars who transmitted the Traditions they had heard from the Imāms.¹² The *uṣūl* were not at first organized according to subject matter. The arrangement of these *uṣūl*, by subject matter or according to some other principle of organization, was done in the next decades either by rearranging the existing *uṣūl* texts, or by rendering several early works into a larger compilation.¹³ The need for such well-arranged Traditions, arose when large and comprehensive works became more frequent, and indeed necessary, after the occultation of the twelfth Imām. According to Dr. Ḥusayn 'Alī Maḥfūz the greatest collections of these *uṣūl*, the most important and reliable source are the books of:¹⁴

1) *al-Kāfī*, collected and compiled by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941); 2) *Man lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, compiled by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, known as al-Shaykh al-Sadūq (d. 381/991); 3) *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, by Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d.460/1076); and 4) *al-Istibṣār*, also by the same author.

B. Al-Kulaynī and his *al-Kāfī*

Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kulaynī hailed from a noble family whose members were among the most outstanding Shī'ī scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and Traditions (*ḥadīth*) of their time. Al-Kulaynī was born in the village of Kulayn, under the jurisdiction of Ray, Iran, but then moved to

Baghdād, Iraq, where he served as chief of the Shī'ī scholars and died in 329/941.¹⁵

Al-Kulaynī and his *al-Kāfī* enjoy a high esteem and unique position among all other Shī'ī compilers of Traditions, due to the fact that he alone was the contemporary of all the four successive ambassadors and representatives (*wukalā'*)¹⁶ of the hidden Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī. In this respect, he was afforded every opportunity of collecting Traditions from reliable sources. He compiled them in a vast, comprehensive compilation in deference to the wishes of prominent Shī'ī scholars of his time who desired an extensive book to which they could refer for all pertinent information on Islamic teachings.¹⁷

Al-Kulaynī was a great Shī'ī scholar and a trustworthy Traditionist. Al-Najāshī, writing on his standing, relates that al-Kulaynī was the chief, most prominent, reliable scholar of their time.¹⁸ In addition to his unrivaled expertise in Traditions, al-Kulaynī also mastered the science of scholastic theology and was an expert in scrutinizing the narrators of Traditions. He wrote several books dealing, not only with the science of Traditions, but also with other fields of study. The following are the works credited to al-Kulaynī by al-Najāshī.¹⁹ 1) *Kitāb Ta'bīr al-Ru'ya*; 2) *Kitāb al-Rijāl*; 3) *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā al-Qarāmīṭah*; 4) *Kitāb Rasā'il al-A'immaḥ*; 5) *Kitāb Mā Qīla fī al-A'immaḥ min al-Shī'ī*.

Al-Kulaynī spent twenty years compiling *al-Kāfī*, a work which on to become the most important reference guide book for the Shī'īs in matters of religious doctrine and the Traditions of the truthful Imāms. In content, *al-Kāfī* is divided into three sections, namely *al-Uṣūl*,²⁰ *al-Furū'*²¹ and *al-Rawḍah*.²²

III. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: His Life and Works

Information on the life of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī as gathered from biographical dictionaries and ṣufi treatises is very limited. Although al-Tirmidhī himself wrote a book,²³ in which he outlined his spiritual development, it provides little information of his private life and career.

Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Bishr b. Hārūn al-Tirmidhī, known as Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, was born in Tirmidh, a town on the northern bank of Amū Darya (Oxus River) in Transoxiana, the southern most part of present-day Uzbekistan. There is no source which specifies either the dates of his birth or death. Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane suggest that his most probable birth date is between 205/820 and 215/830.²⁴ Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, who belonged to a family of theologians died in about 298/910. His father, 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Tirmidhī, was a known scholar, and transmitter in the field of Tradition (*ḥadīth*).²⁵ Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was brought up in an environment conducive to advanced learning. He began to pursue the learning

of religious sciences under a shaykh when he was eight years old, and mastered the science of fiqh (*'Ilm al-ra'y*) when he was still relatively young.²⁶

In order to gain advanced training, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī traveled to the western provinces under the control of Islam just as his father before him had done. During these travels he collected Traditions. At the age of about twenty seven, he set out on the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the holy city of Mecca, breaking his journey to the sacred land with a brief stop in Iraq and Basra where he searched for Traditions. He arrived in Mecca at the end the month of *Sha'bān* approximately three months in advance of the pilgrimage. This hiatus afforded him the opportunity to perform prayers at *Multazam*, and to ask for true repentance (*tawba*) from God. It was also in Mecca that he experienced strong spiritual motivation to abandon his concerns with worldly affairs in favour of imbibing the holy Qur'ān by heart. Both of these things later contributed to the direction of his life as a *walī*.²⁷

Upon returning home, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī had perfected study and recitation of the Qur'ān by heart and inaugurated his commitment to an intensive ascetic life. It is reported that he would lie awake during the nights reciting the Qur'ān till dawn without exhibiting fatigue or boredom until finally he had tasted the sweetness (*ḥalāwat*) of Qur'ān learning. His search for a master to whom he could refer for spiritual guidance was, unfortunately, frustrated. In this period he fasted and prayed intensively. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī eventually connected with ṣufi masters (*ahl al-ma'rifa*) and came across a book of the mystic al-Anṭākī, which inspired him to conduct further spiritual exercises (*riyādat al-nafs*).²⁸

After acquiring through strict spiritual exercise, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was moved to reject the vagaries of his carnal soul till he attained a state of consciousness where everything was known to him in his heart.²⁹ Eventually, his devotional sessions attracted people to join him, and to engage in discussions and *dhikr* recitations with him.³⁰

After attracting a group of people around him, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was accused of heresy and of fostering sectarian tendencies by individuals who claimed to be possessed of religious learning. Brought before the governor of Balkh, he was charged with engaging in inappropriate discourse on love (*ḥubb*), corrupting people, initiating heretical innovation and claiming prophecy. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, however, denied the charges.³¹

All said, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was the most prolific author of classical Islamic mysticism and the first to elaborate upon the theory of friendship with God (*walāya*). His concept of *walāya* was influential on later Ṣūfis, who based their theories of friendship with God on his thought. In addition to *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*, which is the main reference in this paper for his elaboration on the concept of *muḥaddath* and, the *Bad' Sha'n Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-*

Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, his autobiography, he wrote many other works. The following books are attributed to him:³² 1) *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*; 2) *ʿIlal al-Sharīʿa*; 3) *Kitāb al-Manhiyyāt*; 4) *Kitāb al-Ṣalāt*; 5) *Kitāb al-Ḥuqūq*; 6) *Kitāb al-Amthāl*; 7) *Kitāb al-Furūq*; 8) *Kitāb al-Akyas wa al-Mughtarrīn*; 9) *Kitāb Riyādat al-Nafs*; 10) *Kitāb Adab al-Nafs*; 11) *Manāzil al-Qāṣidīn* 12) *ʿIlm al-Awliyāʾ*; 13) *al-Farq bayn al-Āyāt wa al-Karāmāt*.

IV. The Concept of *Muḥaddathūn* in the Works of al-Kulaynī and Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī

Neither al-Kulaynī nor Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī treat the concept of *muḥaddathūn* as a separate item from discussions on prophethood and *walāya*. Both authors classify a *muḥaddath* as one who possess the characteristic of befriending God. The following is an attempt to elaborate upon the concept of *muḥaddathūn* as conveyed in the works of al-Kulaynī and Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī with special emphasis on its relation to the concepts of *walāya* and divine knowledge.

A. *Muḥaddathūn* and the Notion of *Walāya*

Walāya is a verbal noun derived from the root of *wly*, denoting "friendship" or "authority".³³ In this paper, the discussion on *walāya* is limited to the Ṣufi perspective. The Ṣufis regard *walāya* as the charismatic quality by which a genuine ṣūfi becomes the object of *karāmāt*.³⁴ Endowed with *karāmāt* the *walī* (plural: *awliyāʾ*) actually acquire enhanced abilities, as confirmed by God's words: "I am his ear by which he hears, his eye by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks, his heart by which he understands."³⁵

On the subject of *walī*, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī distinguishes between *awliyāʾ ḥaqq Allāh* and *awliyāʾ Allāh*. The distinction denotes two kinds of Friends of God.³⁶ The Friend who gives what is due unto God (*walī ḥaqq Allāh*), says Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, is a man who has turned to God in repentance (*tawba*) and remained true to Him in his repentance. To maintain his faith, he restrains seven of his bodily parts: his tongue, hearing, sight, hand, foot, belly and genitals. He also adheres to religious prescriptions (*farāʾid*) and is heedful of the legal punishment (*ḥudūd*). As a result of these efforts, his carnal soul (*nafs*) attains calm and his bodily parts tranquillity.³⁷

This kind of *walī* is, however, still required to exercise self-restraint, over time and again until he arrives in the wastelands of bewilderment (*mafāwiz al-ḥayra*). He feels alone in the emptiness of these wastelands, having lost his intimacy (*'uns*) with the carnal soul but not yet achieved intimacy with God. At this moment, disoriented, not knowing whether to go forward or to

turn back, he cries out to God and begs for His help. At this juncture, divine mercy overtakes him, and is received by him. In this moment the man comes to stand in a position of closeness (*mahall al-qurba*), to the possessor of the Throne, where he experiences the refreshing breeze of divine proximity.³⁸

As distinct from the *walī ḥaqq Allāh*, who has to exert himself to attain a position of closeness to God, the *walī Allāh*, the Friend of God, is a man who stands firm in his rank. He adheres to his rank until he becomes upright, refined, educated, purified, cleansed, rendered, sweet-smelling, broadened, developed, nourished, promoted and accustomed. His friendship with God is perfected through refinement of these ten qualities. He is then assigned a place before God where he is able to converse (*najwā*) with God face to face. God takes him in His grasp and binds him through His intelligence and makes him one of His trusted agents.³⁹

The distinction between two types of *awliyā'* is also found in later sufi treatises from, for instance, the thirteenth century.⁴⁰ The author of one treatise states that the Friends of God are of two types: the restored and perfected Friends, who are sober; and the consumed and perfect friends, who are the intoxicated. The general idea is akin to that Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's. It holds, that, when the consumed Friends, after their exertions, are drowned in the ocean of *tawḥīd*, and obliterated in the vision of the majesty and beauty of the Eternal Refuge, they lose all awareness of the self.⁴¹

For the restored Friends, the darkness caused by the world and the obscurity of temporal existence is removed. They are lost to themselves and returned to themselves by God's grace. This station is called "affirmation after obliteration." Those who occupy this station are given the robe of deputyship and placed upon the Throne of vicegerency. This station is illustrated in the following poem:⁴²

We are the radiance of Glory's candle
 we are the shadow of God's compassion
 We are the tablet of Being's realities
 we are the mirror displaying God.

The Shī'ī Traditions, on the other hand, make no mention of two types of *walī*. The Shī'īs believe that *walāya* means devotion to 'Alī and the Imāms from the house of the Prophet.⁴³ In fact, the Shī'ī Traditions confirm the belief that the Imāms are the Friends, *awliyā' Allāh* to whom God's sacred law and knowledge have been entrusted; hence they are the Friends appointed through God's will. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said: "We are the custodians of Allāh's affairs, the treasurers of Allāh's knowledge and the containers of Allāh's revelation,"⁴⁴ while Imām Alī al-Riḍā said: "The Imāms

are the vicegerents of Allāh, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, on His earth."⁴⁵ Thus, in so far as the walī is regarded as the trustee of God, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's views coincide with those of the Shī'ī Traditions. Shared viewpoints are also found in discussions on the notion of *muḥaddathūn*.

When Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was asked to define the differences between friendship with God (*walāya*) and prophethood, and to identify whom among the Friends of God hears supernatural speech (*muḥaddath*), he replied: 1) Prophethood consists of speech (*kalām*) which detaches itself from God as revelation (*wahy*); 2) this revelation is accompanied by a spirit (*ruḥ*) from God; 3) this revelation comes to an end and God seals it with the spirit that causes a Prophet to accept it; 4) this revelation must be regarded as true; 5) anyone who rejects it is considered an infidel.⁴⁶

With respect to *muḥaddathūn*, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī identified the following signs: 1) God's control of the speech (*ḥadīth*) that the *muḥaddath* hears from the celestial chambers (*khazā'in*); 2) the detachment of this supernatural speech (*ḥadīth*) from God and its filtration to the Friend of God; 3) the speech is accompanied by divinely inspired peace of mind (*sakīna*) which accrues in the heart of the man drawn to God (*majdhūb*); 4) the *muḥaddath* accepts that supernatural speech (*ḥadīth*); 5) to reject the speech is not to become an infidel.⁴⁷ Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī supports this view by quoting Ibn 'Abbās,⁴⁸ who expounded that God makes messenger, Prophet and *muḥaddath* into envoys (*mursalīn*) so that they may bring welfare to the world.

Concerning their being envoys, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī concludes that God has made a special covenant (*mīthāq*) with them. The messenger brings news of God, and is sent to a particular people to inform them of God and to carry out his mission. The Prophet, however, is not sent to a particular people. He informs the people; and when he is questioned by the people on the ways of the holy law (*sharī'a*) brought by the messenger he explains. Similarly, the *muḥaddath* raises the call to God by means of a holy law brought by the messenger, and directs people to it. What reaches him from God consists of glad tidings (*bushrā*), confirmation (*ta'yīd*) and admonishment (*mau'iza*). It does not contain anything that abrogates any part of the holy law, but is rather in full agreement with the latter.⁴⁹

The *muḥaddathūn* share in all the unveilings of the Prophet except the prophecy of law-giving, of which they are not in possession.⁵⁰ A similar notion is also held by the Shī'īs who base it on the Tradition of Imām al-Ṣādiq which states, "Alī although he is the equal partner of the Prophet in knowledge, is not bestowed with prophethood."⁵¹ A Shī'ī sūfi, Sayyid Ḥaydar Amulī, distinguished the notions of messengership (*risāla*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and friendship with God (*walāya*) in yet another way. *Walāya*, he argued, is the inner dimension of prophethood, while prophethood is the inner dimension of

messengership. Messengers receive the revelation (*wahy*), while prophets are given divine inspiration (*ilhām*), and the Friends of God are bestowed with the unveiling (*kashf*). The Friends of God are thus the heirs of prophethood in terms of both outer and inner dimensions, and adherents to the prophet's divine law.⁵²

There are several Traditions of the Imāms which elaborate upon the notions of messenger, prophet and *muḥaddath* to be found in al-Kulaynī's compilation. For instance, Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir is believed to have said:

A Prophet is one who sees the angel while asleep, and hears him, but does not see the angel while awake. A messenger is one who hears the voice while awake and sees while asleep, and also sees the angel with his eyes; an Imām is one who hears the angel's voice (*muḥaddath*) but neither sees the angel while asleep nor sees him with his eyes.⁵³

In another tradition the Imām is reported to have made the distinctions as follows:

A messenger is one before whom Jibril comes; the messenger sees Jibril and Jibril speaks with him. A Prophet is one who sees in his dream, and the spirit (*rūḥ*) comes to him and speaks to him in his dream without his seeing it (*rūḥ*) when awake. A *muḥaddath* is one who is spoken to and who hears but does not see with the eyes or see in his dreams.⁵⁴

In the Shī'ī Tradition we find clear statements to the effect that the *muḥaddathūn* are the Imāms of the Shī'īs. In Imām al-Bāqir's words, "the successors (*awṣiyā*) to Muḥammad are *muḥaddathūn*,"⁵⁵ and by Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā's, "the Imāms are men of knowledge, veracious, who are caused to understand perfectly (*mufahhamūn*), and are spoken to (*muḥaddathūn*)."⁵⁶ On the other hand, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, does not point to any peculiar persons. For him being a *muḥaddath* was a special quality of certain *awliyā*'s. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī backs this view by quoting a Tradition reported by the mother of the believers 'Ā'isha that the Messenger of God said: "There are people in different religious communities who hear supernatural speech (*muḥaddathūn*), but if there was ever one of them within my community, it was 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb."⁵⁷ A *muḥaddath*, continues Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, possesses supernatural speech (*ḥadīth*), clairvoyance (*firāsa*), divine inspiration (*ilhām*)

and strict truthfulness (*ṣiddīqiyya*).⁵⁸ Furthermore the Messenger of God is also reported to have said: "Verily, God has placed the truth (*ḥaqq*) on the tongue of 'Umar and in his heart"; "Satan never encountered him without falling down before him." Such things can only occur through the power of that which is due (*ṣulṭān al-ḥaqq*). God will expunge Satan from the heart of one who possesses friendship with Him.⁵⁹ In this passage 'Umar is upheld as one of the Friends of God, possessing special qualities.

The Shī'ī Traditions also confirm the belief that God protects the *muḥaddath* from Satan's influence and that supernatural speech (*ḥadīth*) is accompanied by divinely inspired peace of mind (*sakīna*).

Muḥammad ibn Muslim said: "The term *muḥaddath* was mentioned before Abū 'Abdillāh Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, and he said: 'He hears the voice, but does not see the person.' Then I said to him: 'May I be made your ransom! How does he know that it is the speech of the angel?' He said: 'He will be given God-inspired peace of mind (*sakīna*) and tranquillity till he knows that it is the speech of the angel.'"⁶⁰

B. *Muḥaddathūn* and Divine Knowledge

The *muḥaddathūn*, in addition to their being the Friends of God, have other distinguishing charismata (*karāmāt*). One of the most respectable among them is the *karāmāt* of special knowledge, a feature which enhances their standings among ordinary people. Ṣūfis frequently distinguish between suprarational knowledge, which is bestowed through unveiling (*kashf*) as *ma'rifa* (gnosis), and rational knowledge, which is gained through learning as *'ilm* (knowledge or learning).⁶¹ Knowledge of unveiling, in whatever respect, is always superior to rational knowledge. Al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) in his *Risālat al-Qushayriya* declared that "the Gnostic (*al-'arif*) is above what he says, but the possessor of learning (*'alim*) is below what he says."⁶²

According to Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, the Friends of God possess special knowledge shared only with the Prophet, and not with ordinary people. This knowledge surrounds the divine order of the world (*'ilm al-tadbīr*), primal beginnings (*'ilm al-bad'*), and esoteric interpretations of "the mother of books" (*umm al-kitāb*). Once in possession of this knowledge, the Prophets and the Friends of God are able, in the first instance, to grasp God's ordering of the world; second, to interact with God; and third, to undertake their servitude to Him. This is so because the lifting of the veil of knowledge from someone

reveals the highest form of the unseen (*al-ghayb al-a'lā*) to him, allowing him to behold the realm of sovereignty. Thus he may participate in the highest assembly (*al-majlis al-a'lā*) and address God face to face.⁶³ When they return from this encounter with God they acquire the greatest riches (*al-ghina' al-akbar*) and able to perform their servitude to God on His earth.

Similar ideas can be found in al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā'* where he defines unveiling as "knowledge of the non-manifest domain (*al-bāṭin*) and the goal of all the sciences"; such knowledge can only be acquired by sincere devotees and those brought near to God. It consists of a light that becomes manifest within the heart when it is cleansed and purified of blameworthy attributes.⁶⁴

The Shī'īs believe that the Imāms also possess such peculiar knowledge. The Imāms are themselves the treasurers of God's knowledge, as stated by Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, "We are the custodians of Allāh's affairs, the treasurers of Allāh's knowledge and the containers of Allāh's revelation."⁶⁵ In other Traditions it is reported that the Imāms' knowledge spans the past, the present and the future.⁶⁶

"Verily, our knowledge has been left (*ghābir*), or written down (*mazbūr*), or is pricked in our hearts or spoken into our ears. As for the knowledge which is *ghābir*, it is that part of our knowledge which we have received before, and as for what has been written down it is what will happen in the future, and as for what has been pricked in our hearts it is inspiration (*ilhām*), and as for what is spoken into our ears it is the affairs of the angels."

Knowledge of both the exoteric and esoteric layers of the Qur'ān, are addressed in Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir's several of Traditions. The following are two of them.

"Not a single person claims that he has collected the whole of the Qur'ān as it was sent down except he be a liar; and no-one has collected it and memorized it as Allāh, the sublime, sent it down except 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (p.b.u.h.) and the Imāms (p.b.u.t.) after him."⁶⁷

"No one can claim that he has the whole knowledge of the Qur'ān, all of it, its exoteric and esoteric meanings except the successors (*awsijā'*)."⁶⁸

From the afore-cited Traditions it is apparent that a holistic understanding of both the exoteric and esoteric layers of the Qur'ān is reserved for the Imāms. As such, those who Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī identifies as the Friends of God other than the Shī'ī Imāms are, from the Shī'ī's perspective, liars, for none but the Imāms can claim and grasp the esoteric meaning of the Book.

The Shī'ī Traditions put more emphasis on ownership of knowledge than Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, who never mentions how the knowledge of the Friends of God increases. The Shī'īs, on the other hand, have very clear ideas on this notion; the knowledge of the Imāms increases on the eve of Friday.

Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said: "There is no night of Friday without there being joy for the Friends of Allāh in it. When the night of Friday comes the Messenger of Allāh (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) reaches to the Throne, and the Imāms (p.b.u.t.) reach it with him, and I do not return without gaining knowledge. If it were not like this, that which is with me would be exhausted."⁶⁹

Furthermore, the Imām stipulated that the knowledge of the Imāms increases at all times, as they wish. This is so as God will cause the Imām to know that which he wishes to know.⁷⁰ As a result, the Imāms become repositories of knowledge, to whom people can refer for true guidance.

Imām Abū 'Abdillāh al-Ṣādiq said: "We are the tree of the prophethood, the house of mercy, the keys of wisdom, the mine of knowledge, the people where the message has been deposited, the place frequented by the angels and the place where the secret of Allāh has been entrusted. We are the people who have been entrusted by Allāh to the custody of His creatures, we are Allāh's greatest sanctuary, we are Allāh's pledge and the promise taken by Allāh. Thus, whoever has fulfilled his promise to us has fulfilled his promise to Allāh, and whoever has broken it has broken the pledge with Allāh and his promise to Him."⁷¹

From the above, we may infer the high esteem in which of the Imāms are held as *muḥaddathūn*. In Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's work such detailed claims regarding the position of the Friends of God, the *muḥaddathūn*, in relation to God are absent. He does, nonetheless, make strong claim that *muḥaddathūn* participate

in the highest assembly, addressing God directly face to face, regardless of the 'howness' (*kayfiyya*).

V. Concluding Remarks

A comparative treatment of the notion of *muḥaddathūn* in the works of al-Kulaynī and that of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī allows us to draw some conclusions. It can be stated that both the Shī'īs and Sunnīs subscribe the notion of *walāya*. Beyond the general principles, however, the similarities end. In Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's conception, for instance, the *walī/awliyā'* are of two types (*walī haqq Allāh* and *walī Allāh*) whereas al-Kulaynī's compilation makes no reference to a single Tradition which espouses this typology of the Friends of God. The Shī'īs hold their Imāms among the most respected *awliyā'*, the Friends of God, among others. Also emphasized in the Shī'ī conception of *walāya* is the love and devotion due to Imām 'Alī and the Imāms from his descendants. In Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's work, stress is placed on the nature of the friendship (*walāya*) with God; one is achieved through certain efforts; the other is bestowed by God Himself. Al-Kulaynī and Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, however, are in agreement that the Friends of God are the trusted agents and custodians of God's divine law (*sharī'a*).

Customary to both traditions, the Shī'īs and Sunnīs, is the status of *muḥaddathūn*. Several tenets are found to be common to both sects. The following is a summary of these shared views:

1. *muḥaddathūn* are endowed with supernatural speech from God without mediation of an angel;
2. this divine speech is accompanied by God-inspired tranquillity of mind (*sakīna*);
3. they are protected from the influence of Satan;
4. they are the Friends of God chosen through God's will (*mashī'a*);
5. they are bestowed special qualities and capabilities, especially those related to divine knowledge;
6. they have a duty to continue in prophetic tradition and to give guidance to the people based on the divine law revealed to the Messenger.

The belief that *muḥaddathūn* are in possession of divine knowledge, shared only by the Prophet, is common to both Shī'ī and Sunnī traditions. This knowledge is revealed to them through unveiling (*kashf*, *mukāshafah*) and not by means of reasoning or learning. Additionally, they are also regarded as genuine intuitive interpreters of the esoteric layers of Qur'ānic meaning. On this point, the Shī'īs differ, arguing that only the Imāms themselves, and not all the Friends of God, have the whole knowledge of the Qur'ān's exoteric and esoteric depths.

Moreover, the Sunnīs and Shī'īs further disagree on the question of "who" is actually a *muḥaddath*. For their parts, the Shī'īs, based on the Traditions of the Imāms themselves strongly believe that the *muḥaddathūn* are synonymous with the Imāms. The Sunnīs, as represented by Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, give no clear indication of who the *muḥaddathūn* might have been, providing only an example of a person (i.e. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb) who is qualified to be regarded as a *muḥaddath*.

ENDNOTES

¹Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. al-Shaykh Muḥammad Akhundī (Tehran: Mu'assasat Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1374 H), 223-226.

²Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*, ed. Bernd Radtke (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Kāthūlikiya, 1992), 51-52, no. 74.

³Muhammad Ali Amir-Moezzi. *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism, The Source of Esotericism in Islam*. Translated by David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 22.

⁴Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 168-174, no. 1-5.

⁵*Ibid.*, 191, no.2.

⁶Etan Kohlberg. "An Unusual Shī'ī Isnād" in *Belief and Law in Imāmi Shi'ism* (Hampshire: Variorum Gower House, 1991), 142.

⁷*Ibid.*, 143.

⁸Muḥsin b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ḥusaynī, *A'yān al-Shī'a*, vol. I (Beirut: al-Insāf, 1960), 169-170.

⁹Al-Najāshī reported that Abū Rafī' resided in Mecca and then immigrated to Medina where he remained attached to the Prophet and witnessed what the latter did and saw. He then became a companion of 'Alī after the Prophet died. He was among the best Shī'ites, participated in all battles on the side of 'Alī and was in charge of the treasury during his caliphate in Kufa. This explanation is given by Ḥasan al-Amīn, *Shorter Islamic Shi'ite Encyclopedia* (Beirut: 1969), 159.

¹⁰Hasan al-Amīn, *Shorter Islamic Shi'ite Encyclopedia*, 147-148.

¹¹Ibid., 88; See also Etan Kohlberg, *Belief and Law in Imāmi Shi'ism*, 129-130.

¹²Etan Kohlberg, "Al-Uṣūl al-Arba'u mi'a", 129.

¹³Ibid., 132.

¹⁴Ibid., 141.

¹⁵Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. 'Abbās al-Najāshī, *Kitāb al-Rijāl* (Qum: Mu'assasat Nashr al-Islāmī, 1307), 377.

¹⁶The four Praiseworthy agents are 1) Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-'Amrī, whose date of birth and death are unknown; 2) Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān al-'Amrī (d. 305/916); 3) Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Rawh al-Nawbakhtī (d. 326/937); 4) Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samarri (d. 329/940). For more information concerning the biographies of these four representatives of the twelfth Imāms see *al-Rijāl* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (Qum: Muassasat al-Bayt, 1404 H).

¹⁷al-Kulaynī, "Khuṭbat al-Kitāb" in *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 8.

¹⁸al-Najāshī, *Kitāb al-Rijāl*, 377.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰al-Uṣūl consists of the Traditions on the basic principles of faith and the explanation of the beliefs referring to the Imāms. The subject matter is arranged under these headings:

1) *Kitāb al-'Aql wa al-Jahl* (The Book of Reason and Ignorance); 2) *Kitāb Fadl al-'Ilm* (The Book of Excellence of Knowledge); 3) *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* (The Book of Divine Unity); 4) *Kitāb al-Ḥujjah* (The Book of Divine Proof); 5) *Kitāb al-Īmān wa al-Kufr* (The Book of Belief and Unbelief); 6) *Kitāb al-Du'a'* (The book of Invocation); 7) *Kitāb Fadl al-Qur'an* (The Book of Excellence of the Qur'an); 8) *Kitāb al-'Ishrah* (The Book of Social Relations).

²¹al-Furū' contains the Traditions dealing with matters of Islamic jurisprudence, the order and commandments about the proper conducts of 'ibādāt (worship), mu'āmalāt (transactions) and qaḍā' (judgements). This part is known as *Furū' al-Kāfī* and consists of the following. 1) *Kitāb Ṭahārah* (cleanliness); 2) *Kitāb al-Ḥayḍ* (menstruation); 3) *Kitāb Janā'iz* (death ceremonies); 4) *Kitāb al-Ṣalāt* (prayer); 5) *Kitāb al-Zakāt* (alms tax); 6) *Kitāb al-Siyām* (fasting); 7) *Kitāb al-Ḥajj* (pilgrimage); 8) *Kitāb al-Jihād* (holywar); 9) *Kitāb al-Ma'ishah* (livelihood); 10) *Kitāb al-Nikāh* (Marriage); 11) *Kitāb*

'*Aqīqah* (acts of children); 12) *Kitāb al-Ṭalāq* (divorce); 13) *Kitāb al-'Itq wa al-Tadbīr wa al-Mukātabah* (regulations on the emancipation of slaves); 14) *Kitāb al-Ṣayd* (hunting); *Kitāb al-Dhabā'ih* (animal slaughtering); 16) *Kitāb al-Aṭ'imah* (foods); 17) *Kitāb al-'Ashribah* (beverages); 18) *Kitāb al-Zayn wa al-Tajammul wa al-Murū'ah* (dresses, beautifying and the ideal of manhood); 19) *Kitāb al-Dawājin* (tame animals); 20) *Kitāb Waṣāyā* (wills); 21) *Kitāb Mawāriṭh* (inheritances); 22) *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd* (punishment); 23) *Kitāb al-Diyāt* (idemnity for bodily injuries); 24) *Kitāb al-Shahādāt* (evidences); 25) *Kitāb al-Qaḍā' wa al-Aḥkām* (judgements and decisions); 26) *Kitāb al-Aymān wa al-Nudhur wa al-Kaffārāt* (oathes, vows and expiations).

²²This *rawdah* (the Garden of al-Kāfi) is somewhat like an encyclopedia. It provides the Traditions on the principles of Islamic faith, the appropriate acts in social life as well as the information on the Islamic history, biographies of the Prophet and the truthful Imāms.

²³The tittle of the book is *Bad' sha'n Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī*. The book has been translated by Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane with the title *The Begining of the Affair of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī* and is published in a book entitled *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism, Two Works by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996).

²⁴See the "Introduction" given by Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane to their translation of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's works published under the title *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*, 1.

²⁵Bernd Radtke, "The Concept of Wilāya in Early Sufism" in *Classical Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn (London, New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications), 484.

²⁶Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Bad' Sha'n Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī*. Translated by Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, 15.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 16.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 16-17.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, "Introduction", 3-5.

³³For more information about the usage of the word in various meanings related to the function, position or domain of authority see Hermann Landolt, "Walāyah" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 15 (New York, London: McMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 316-323.

³⁴Hermann Landolt, "Walāyah", 321.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*, edited by Bernd Radtke (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Kāthūlikiya, 1412/1992), 2, no. 3.

³⁷Ibid., 2, no. 4.

³⁸Ibid. 14-15, no. 28-29.

³⁹Ibid., 33-34, no. 48.

⁴⁰William C. Chittick translated the book of "Clarification for Beginners and Reminder for the Advanced" that was apparently written by Naṣīr (or Nāṣir) al-Dīn al-Qūnawī. The book is published together with two other texts written in the same century under the title *Faith and Practice of Islam, Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), xi.

⁴¹William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 91.

⁴²Ibid., 92.

⁴³Hermann Landolt, "Walāyah", 319.

⁴⁴al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 196, no 1.

⁴⁵Ibid., 193, no.1.

⁴⁶Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*, 46, 48, no, 67, 71.

⁴⁷Ibid., 46, 48. no. 67-68, 71.

⁴⁸"Never have we sent a messenger (*rasūl*) or a prophet (*nabī*) or a person who hears supernatural speech (*muḥaddath*) before you...." QS. 22:52.

⁴⁹Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*, 50-51, no. 73.

⁵⁰William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 93.

⁵¹al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 263.

⁵²Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Kitāb Jāmi' al-Asrār wa Manba' al-Anwār*, ed. Henri Corbin and 'Uthmān Ismā'īl Yahyā (Tehran, 1969), 390.

⁵³al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 176, no 1.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 176, no. 2.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 270, no. 1.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 271, no. 3.

⁵⁷Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*, 54, no. 76.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 55, no. 77, 78.

⁶⁰al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 271, no. 4.

⁶¹William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 18.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*, 29, no. 41.

⁶⁴William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 19.

⁶⁵al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 192, no. 1.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 264, no. 3.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 228, no. 1.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 228, no. 2.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 254, no. 3.

⁷⁰Ibid., 258, no. 1,2,3.

⁷¹Ibid. 221, no. 3.

Personallanya, apakah larangan riba sebagaimana ditegaskan Al-Qur'an juga berlaku untuk semua transaksi pinjam-meminjam uang dimana peminjam harus membayar lebih dari yang dipinjamkan? Bagaimana dengan berbagai transaksi yang dipandang juga mengandung riba seperti bunga bank, jual beli mata uang atau barang-barang yang nilainya berubah-ubah?

Tulisan ini mencoba memaparkan pandangan Muhammad Rasyid Rifa'i mengenai riba dengan menggunakan argumennya, baik yang rasional maupun tekstual, dan bagaimana relevansinya dengan situasi kontemporer.

Secara mendasar makna riba dalam Al-Qur'an, Al-Hadis dan berbagai kitab-kitab klasik telah diteliti oleh para sarjana Islam yang terkemuka. Namun demikian, sebenarnya masalah riba ini masih merupakan masalah yang kontroversial. Riba dianggap sebagai salah satu dosa yang terberat dalam Islam. Riba juga dianggap sebagai salah satu dosa yang terberat dalam Islam.

أليس الله أعلم بما كنا نفعل؟

A. Introduction

قال الله عز وجل: أليس الله أعلم بما كنا نفعل؟
Allah obliges every Muslim to act with justice in all aspects of life.

Riba, which is regarded as an unjust manner of business transaction, is prohibited by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It was also prohibited by the ancient Egyptians and Greeks.¹ In jahiliyya times, this riba consisted in the debtor having to pay a certain amount to the creditor in addition to the principle, a practice called *riba al-nasi'a*. In the Qur'an, the term *riba* is used in a number of different senses, while in the hadith, we find other instances, the prophet permits the addition (*riba*) as a gift, while in another Abu Bakr prohibits it even as a gift.² The term *riba* is usually translated as "interest" or "unjust interest", when in fact it has much wider meaning.

This paper will look at the Qur'anic verses relating to *riba al-nasi'a* and show that they are intended to prohibit the riba known in jahiliyya times. Moreover, we shall also see how the contradictory hadiths concerning *riba al-nasi'a* are reconciled.