

Idris Al-Marbawī's Influence on Ḥadīth Pedagogy in the Malay Archipelago: A Textual and Contextual Analysis of *Baḥr Al-Mādhī*

Muhamad Syarif Hidayatulloḥ | Universitas Islam Indonesia |

ORCID: 0009-0005-5787-1610 | m.syarif@uii.ac.id

Mohd Nor Adli Osman | Universiti Sains Malaysia |

ORCID: 0009-0009-5473-5719 | adliosman@usm.my

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Abstract

This study examines the pedagogical influence of Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī through his seminal work *Baḥr al-Mādhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*, with particular attention to its role in shaping the teaching and transmission of *ḥadīth* in the Malay Archipelago. Employing a qualitative library-based approach, the study analyses selected sections of the text through close textual reading, focusing on its structure, translation strategies, and modes of commentary. The findings show that al-Marbawī developed a pedagogically oriented framework characterized by bilingual Arabic–Malay presentation, thematic organization, and simplified explanatory commentary. These features enabled the work to function not only as a reference text but also as a structured instructional medium in traditional learning environments such as *pondok*, *surau*, and *pesantren*. In addition, the study highlights how this approach facilitated greater accessibility for non-Arabic-speaking audiences and supported the integration of hadith learning with practical religious instruction. The

study argues that *Baḥr al-Mādhī* contributed to a shift towards more accessible and contextually grounded forms of ḥadīth pedagogy in the region.

Keywords: *Baḥr al-Mādhī*; ḥadīth pedagogy; al-Marbawī; Malay Archipelago; Islamic education

Introduction

The study of *ḥadīth* in the contemporary Islamic world faces a dual challenge: preserving classical scholarship while ensuring its relevance across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. In Southeast Asia, particularly in the Malay Archipelago, this challenge has been addressed through processes of localisation in which scholars adapted Islamic knowledge to specific pedagogical settings. Among these figures, Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī emerges as a significant contributor to the contextualisation of *ḥadīth* education for Malay-speaking Muslim communities.¹ In this study, *ḥadīth* pedagogy is understood not merely as the transmission of textual knowledge, but as a dynamic educational process shaped by linguistic mediation and socio-cultural context.

Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī was a prominent twentieth-century scholar whose influence on *ḥadīth* studies and intellectual discourse continues to be recognised across Malaysia and Indonesia. His major work, *Baḥr al-Mādhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*, constitutes a substantial commentary on *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*,

¹ Latifah Abdul Majid, and Nurullah Kurt. “Baḥr al-Mādhī: Significant Hadith Text Sciences for Malay Muslims as a Tool for Political Teaching during the Twentieth Century.” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 1 (2014): 423-432.

written in both Arabic and classical Malay.² In addition to *Baḥr al-Mādhī*, al-Marbawī contributed to *ḥadīth* scholarship through his translation and annotation of *Bulūgh al-Marām* by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. His method—characterised by explanatory notes and linguistic clarification—reflects a broader pedagogical orientation aimed at widening access to *ḥadīth* knowledge among Malay-speaking audiences. Beyond authorship, he was also actively engaged in teaching and *daʿwah* activities, which further facilitated the transmission of *ḥadīth* within local educational contexts.³

Existing scholarship has extensively documented the historical development of hadith studies in the Malay-Indonesian world, including the intellectual networks of Nusantara scholars and their contributions to the production of hadith literature. However, specific studies examining Baḥr al-Mādhī as a pedagogical model for the transmission and contextualization of hadith knowledge remain relatively limited.⁴ This observation, however, should be qualified. Important contributions to the study of al-Marbawī's thought have already appeared, including discussions of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* within broader intellectual and hermeneutical frameworks, such as those

² Latifah Abdul Majid, "The Baḥr al-Mādhī of Shaykh Idris al-Marbawī and the Jawahir al-Bukhari of Tuan Haji Husayn: Significance of Hadith Texts for Malay Muslims as Tools for Religious, Political and Social Teaching during the Twentieth Century." (PhD diss., University of Wales, 2008).

³ Najahudin, L. "Metodologi Syaikh Idris al-Marbawī dalam Terjemah *Bulūgh al-Marām*." In *Proceedings of the Seminar Kebangsaan Tamadun Islam (NaSIC)*, 8-9 December 2009.

⁴ Ahmad Levi Fachrul Avivy, "Jaringan Keilmuan Hadis dan Karya-Karya Hadis di Nusantara," *Journal Hadis* 8, no. 16 (2018): 63–82

presented in *Negotiating Meanings*.⁵ These studies offer valuable insights into al-Marbawī's interpretive strategies and his engagement with Malay-Muslim intellectual traditions. Nevertheless, the present article differs in both focus and analytical orientation. Rather than examining *Baḥr al-Mādhī* primarily as a site of thematic interpretation or intellectual negotiation, this study foregrounds its function as a pedagogical model, with specific attention to how its structure, language strategy, and modes of commentary shaped the teaching and transmission of *ḥadīth* in educational contexts across the Malay Archipelago.

While some studies have examined its role in shaping religious discourse in the Malay world, systematic analysis of its function as an instructional text remains limited. This gap is particularly notable given that the structure and method of the work suggest a clear pedagogical orientation. Accordingly, this study seeks to analyse *Baḥr al-Mādhī* as a model of localised *ḥadīth* pedagogy, with particular attention to how it mediates between classical sources and the socio-religious realities of Malay Muslim communities.

More broadly, contemporary Islamic education continues to grapple with the challenge of balancing fidelity to classical sources with the need for contextual relevance.⁶ In Southeast Asia, this involves not only linguistic translation but also the integration of local cultural frameworks into pedagogical practice.⁷ Al-Marbawī's work offers a

⁵ Khairil Husaini bin Jamil, ed., *Negotiating Meanings: Studies on Islamic Thought and Textual Interpretation in the Malay World* (Islamic Book Trust, 2023).

⁶ Yahia Baiza. "Are Contemporary Islamic Education and Their Pedagogical Approaches Fit for Purpose? A Critique and Way Forward." In *Supporting Modern Teaching in Islamic Schools*, (Routledge, 2022), 17-30.

⁷ Essam Ayyad. "Re-Evaluating Early Memorization of the Qur'ān in

compelling example of such integration; however, its broader pedagogical implications have yet to be fully theorised within current academic discourse.

Recent scholarship has explored the role of localised Islamic texts in shaping religious identity and intellectual traditions. For instance, Gallop and Fathurahman examine Acehnese manuscripts as part of regional Islamic scholarly heritage,⁸ while Iswanto et al. analyse the transmission of Islamic knowledge in Bali through Malay and Javanese textual networks.⁹ Although these studies underscore the importance of textual localisation, they primarily emphasise manuscript preservation and transmission rather than pedagogical function. Building on this body of work, the present study positions *Baḥr al-Mādhī* not only as a repository of classical *ḥadīth* knowledge but as an active pedagogical instrument that contributes to the formation of instructional models in the Malay Archipelago.

The intellectual and pedagogical relevance of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* becomes even more apparent in light of ongoing efforts to reform Islamic education in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ Contemporary scholarship

Medieval Muslim Cultures.” *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022): 179.

⁸ Annabel The Gallop, and Oman Fathurahman. “Islamic Manuscripts from Aceh in the British Library.” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 13, no. 2 (2022): 151–224.

⁹ Agus Iswanto, Moch Lukluil Maknun, Umi Masfiah, and Firdaus Wajdi. “The Linkage of Islamic Intellectual Traditions in Bali with Malay World: Kampung Saren Jawa Manuscripts.” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 14, no. 2 (2025): 203-229.

¹⁰ Mesbahul Hoque, Muneer Abdul Rab, Mualimin Mochammad Sahid, and Yuslina Mohamed. “Phases in the Life of the Malaysian Scholar Shaykh Muhammad Idris al-Marbawi and His Contribution of Knowledge.” *Journal*

highlights a growing emphasis on integrating traditional Islamic sciences with modern educational approaches.¹¹ In this regard, al-Marbawī's methodology—characterised by thematic organisation, accessible language, and practical orientation—aligns closely with such reformist trajectories. His work demonstrates how fidelity to classical sources can be maintained while simultaneously enhancing accessibility for students across *pesantren*, *madrasah*, and higher education institutions.

Despite its continued circulation in educational settings, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* has not received sustained analytical attention commensurate with its influence. Much of the existing literature remains confined to descriptive accounts of its linguistic features or its role in religious instruction, without fully engaging with its methodological innovations or broader intellectual significance. More recently, scholarship has begun to recognise *Baḥr al-Mādhī* as an important manifestation of the vernacularization of hadith scholarship in Southeast Asia, demonstrating how Islamic knowledge was articulated through Malay linguistic expressions and local intellectual sensibilities. This work illustrates the active role of scholars such as al-Marbawī in contextualizing prophetic traditions within the socio-cultural landscape of the Malay-Indonesian world.¹²

of *Hadith Studies* (2018).

¹¹ Lukman Afandi and Monika @Munirah Abd Razzak. "The Progress of the Quranic Scientific Exegesis in South-East Asia." *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 19, no. 2 (2021): 228-256.

¹² Muhammad Asif, *Vernakularitas Tekstual dalam Penjelasan Hadis di Nusantara Abad 20: Studi atas Kitab Baḥr al-Mādhī* (Tesis Magister, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2020), 8–9

This study responds to that need by offering a focused analysis of *Baḥr al-Mādhī*, examining its structure, methodology, and pedagogical implications. It advances the argument that the work should not be understood merely as a commentary, but as a formative model of contextualised *ḥadīth* pedagogy. By situating *Baḥr al-Mādhī* within both its historical context and contemporary educational frameworks, this article highlights its continuing relevance for the development of localised Islamic scholarship.

While grounded in the established tradition of hadith commentary, al-Marbawī's *Baḥr al-Mādhī* reflects a pedagogically oriented approach that prioritised clarity, accessibility, and the effective transmission of prophetic teachings to Malay-speaking audiences. Through translation, explanation, and contextual elaboration, the work served not only as a scholarly commentary but also as a vehicle for religious education and intellectual formation within the Malay-Muslim community.¹³

A defining feature of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* is its bilingual format, which presents the original Arabic text alongside a classical Malay translation. This arrangement functions as a pedagogical tool rather than a mere linguistic aid. Al-Marbawī supplements the translation with concise Malay commentaries that clarify vocabulary, provide contextual background, and connect the narrations to jurisprudential discussions across the four Sunni legal schools. In doing so, the text facilitates engagement with *ḥadīth* as both a source of knowledge and a guide to ethical and legal practice.

¹³ Mohd Syukri Ab Razak and Roslan Shamsudin, "Pendekatan Penulisan Dakwah Al-Marbawi Berdasarkan Karya Syarah Hadith," *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development* 10, no. 71 (2025): 602–623, especially 613–614

The pedagogical value of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* is further reinforced by al-Marbawī's use of accessible Malay prose and a systematic explanatory method. Although deeply rooted in the classical hadith tradition, the work employs language that remains relatively easy to understand while presenting complex religious discussions in a structured and instructional manner. This combination of linguistic clarity and methodological organisation enabled *Baḥr al-Mādhī* to function not only as a reference work for scholars but also as an effective medium for the broader transmission of hadith knowledge among Malay-speaking Muslims.¹⁴

Al-Marbawī's treatment of hadith material reflects a pedagogically informed methodology that extends beyond literal translation. In rendering classical texts into Malay, he frequently supplemented the original wording with explanatory remarks, clarifications of technical terminology, and contextual notes designed to facilitate comprehension among local readers. This interpretive strategy enabled him to preserve the substance of the source text while simultaneously making its legal and ethical teachings more accessible to audiences with diverse levels of scholarly training.¹⁵

Beyond its pedagogical features, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* has also been examined for its broader intellectual and socio-political significance. Studies have shown that the work functioned as a medium for ethical

¹⁴ Hilmy Firdausy, Rifqi Muhammad Fatkhi, and Fuad Thohari, "Baḥr al-Madhī and the Establishment Momentum of Ḥadīth Studies in Nusantara in the 20th Century," *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 9, no. 1 (2022): 15–48

¹⁵ Najahudin Lateh, "Metodologi Syeikh Idris al-Marbawi dalam Karya Terjemah *Bulugh al-Maram*: Analisa Kitab al-Taharah," paper presented at *Seminar Kebangsaan Ketamadunan Islam*, Hotel Casuarina, Ipoh, Perak, 8–9 December 2009

and political reflection in twentieth-century Malay society. Similarly, analyses of its treatment of jihad indicate that al-Marbawī framed the concept in ethical rather than militant terms, thereby shaping local understandings of religious responsibility within specific historical contexts.

The significance of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* extends well beyond its initial publication context. Widely regarded as one of the major contributions to Malay hadith scholarship, the work played an important role in shaping religious understanding and intellectual discourse among Malay Muslims throughout the twentieth century. Its enduring relevance reflects not only the breadth of themes addressed within the commentary but also al-Marbawī's ability to present prophetic teachings in a manner that resonated with the linguistic and cultural realities of the Malay world. Furthermore, the work contributed to the consolidation of a distinctive Malay tradition of hadith writing that combined fidelity to classical sources with sensitivity to local contexts.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the work is not without limitations. Its reliance on classical Malay expressions and traditional modes of exposition may pose challenges for contemporary readers who are unfamiliar with the linguistic and cultural conventions of earlier Malay Islamic literature.¹⁷

¹⁶ Mohd Solleh Ab Razak, Mohd Nor Adzhar Ibrahim, and Khairrol Ikhwan @ Mohd Fithri Khoza, "Perkembangan Pengajian Ilmu Mukhtalif Al-Ḥadīth: Kajian Ketokohan Al-Marbawī (The Development of 'Ilm Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth: An Analytical Study of al-Marbawī's Scholarly Contributions)," *Journal of Hadith Studies* 10, no. 1 (2025): 42–60

¹⁷ Fairuz Sakinata dan Sri Mawaddah, "Peran Bahasa Arab Melayu dalam Melestarikan Warisan Budaya dan Identitas di Aceh Besar," *Bayt Al Hikmah: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam* 1, no. 1 (Juni 2025): 114–123

In addition, the increasing expectations of modern academic scholarship and contemporary learning environments highlight the need for updated interpretive tools, critical annotations, and pedagogical adaptations that can facilitate wider engagement with the text.¹⁸ These considerations underscore the importance of continued scholarly efforts to bridge the gap between the historical context of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* and the intellectual needs of present-day readers.

Existing studies on *Baḥr al-Mādhī* may be broadly grouped into three areas: linguistic analysis, jurisprudential methodology, and socio-political impact. While each of these approaches provides valuable insights, they often remain analytically separate. This study seeks to bridge these strands by offering an integrated analysis that foregrounds pedagogy as a unifying framework, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the work's significance within the tradition of Southeast Asian Islamic scholarship.

Methodological Framework

This study employs a qualitative library-based approach with content analysis as its primary analytical method, focusing on Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī's *Baḥr al-Mādhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* as the central object of analysis.¹⁹ Rather than treating the text as a purely descriptive source, this approach examines how its

¹⁸ Widya Pratiwi dan Tasmin Tanggareng, "Kritik Sanad Hadits terhadap Kajian Ilmu Hadits," *Global Research and Innovation Journal (GREAT)* 1, no. 2 (2025): 1969–1978.

¹⁹ Wardani. "The Intellectual Genealogy of Indonesian-Malay Qur'an Interpreters: A Historical Tracking." *Global Journal al-Thaqafah* 12, no. 1 (2022): 98-110.

internal structure, translation strategies, and modes of commentary function pedagogically within specific intellectual and social contexts.

The analysis is guided by a historical-conceptual perspective inspired by Fazlur Rahman, which emphasises the interaction between normative Islamic sources and the contextual needs of particular communities.²⁰ In this study, this perspective is operationalised by examining how al-Marbawī selectively engages with classical *ḥadīth* material and reformulates it in response to the linguistic, legal, and pedagogical realities of the Malay Archipelago in the early twentieth century. This includes identifying patterns of selection, adaptation, and emphasis within the text, rather than assuming a neutral process of transmission.

The analysis focuses on selected sections that represent key thematic areas, particularly legal (*aḥkām*) and ethical discussions, as these sections most clearly demonstrate the work's pedagogical orientation. The selection is based on three criteria: (1) the presence of extended commentary beyond literal translation, (2) the inclusion of jurisprudential discussion across madhhab perspectives, and (3) the use of explanatory strategies aimed at non-specialist readers. This selective approach allows for a more focused and analytically coherent examination of al-Marbawī's methodological choices.

The analytical procedure involves close textual reading of the bilingual Arabic–Malay format, with attention to four interrelated dimensions: (1) textual structure, including the organisation of chapters, subchapters, and *ḥadīth* numbering; (2) translation and commentary techniques, such as the use of *ḥāshiyah*, lexical clarification, and contextual explanation; (3) legal orientation,

²⁰ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

particularly the predominance of Shāfiʿī reasoning alongside references to other Sunni legal schools; and (4) pedagogical strategies, including the simplification of *isnād*, the use of analogies, and the adoption of a communicative explanatory style. These dimensions are derived inductively from the text and are consistent with recent studies that highlight the methodological and thematic features of *Baḥr al-Mādhī*.²¹

In contrast to classical ḥadīth studies, which prioritise isnād criticism and narrator evaluation, this study adopts a pedagogically oriented analytical lens. While the classical approach remains foundational, it offers limited insight into how ḥadīth knowledge is transmitted and internalised within non-Arabic-speaking educational contexts. Accordingly, this study situates *Baḥr al-Mādhī* within its instructional environment, examining how accessibility, language, and structure contribute to its function as a teaching text.²²

To complement this perspective, the study incorporates an ethical-contextual approach informed by Khaled Abou El Fadl, which emphasises the importance of interpretive responsibility and contextual awareness in engaging with Islamic texts.²³ In practical terms, this framework is applied by assessing how al-Marbawī balances

²¹ Azid, Muhammad Adam Abd., Ibrahim Adham Mohd Rokhibi, Mohd Farhan Md Ariffin, Muhammad Ikhlas Rosele, and Mohammad Fahmi Abdul Hamid. “The Trajectory of the Jihad Discourse in Malay World: An Analysis on the *Baḥr al-Mādhī* by Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī.” *Al-Jami‘ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 60, no. 1 (2022): 265-286.

²² Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 3–7.

²³ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Reasoning with God: Reclaiming Shari‘ah in the Modern Age* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

fidelity to classical sources with the need to address the moral, social, and educational concerns of his audience. This dual framework—historical-conceptual and ethical-contextual—allows for a more nuanced understanding of the text as both a scholarly and pedagogical project.

To ensure analytical validity, the findings are triangulated with existing scholarly literature on *Baḥr al-Mādih*, including studies that examine its methodological features, intellectual contributions, and reception within the Malay world. This includes engaging with both positive evaluations and critical observations, such as the limited presentation of complete *isnād* chains and the challenges posed by the use of classical Malay for contemporary readers. By incorporating these perspectives, the study presents a balanced assessment of al-Marbawī's work and situates it within broader discussions of *ḥadīth* pedagogy and Islamic intellectual history in Southeast Asia.²⁴

This study demonstrates that Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī occupies a transformative position in the development of *ḥadīth* studies in the Malay Archipelago. His contribution extends beyond textual transmission to a methodological reconstruction that repositions *ḥadīth* as a pedagogical instrument adapted to local linguistic and socio-cultural contexts. The findings are organized into four interrelated dimensions: (1) intellectual-historical role, (2) textual structure and methodology, (3) pedagogical orientation and

²⁴ Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir, Mohamad Zaid Mohd Zin, Ahamad Asmadi Sakat, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, Mohd Arip Kasmu, 1 Latifah Abdul Majid, Fadlan Mohd Othman, Jaffary Awang, Mazlan Ibrahim, "Methodology of Al-Marbawi in the Interpretation of Al Quran: A Study on *Tafsir Al-Marbawi Juzuk Alif Lam Mim*." *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences* 5, no. 5 (2011): 446-45.

socio-religious function, and (4) critique, limitations, and contemporary relevance.

Intellectual and Historical Role in the Malay Ḥadīth Tradition

Al-Marbawī's intellectual legacy represents a pivotal shift in the localisation of *ḥadīth* scholarship in the Malay world. While earlier traditions largely preserved *ḥadīth* within Arabic textual frameworks, *Baḥr al-Mādhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* enabled broader access by rendering *ḥadīth* into classical Malay, thereby functioning as an epistemological bridge between classical Islamic scholarship and the lived realities of Malay-speaking Muslims.²⁵ Empirically, its influence is evident in its sustained use within Islamic educational institutions. In Malaysia, the text is utilised in *pondok* systems in Kelantan and Terengganu, while in Indonesia it appears in *pesantren*-based *ḥadīth* instruction, particularly in Aceh and parts of Java. In these contexts, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* functions not merely as a reference work but as a structured teaching text that shapes instructional practices.

In comparative terms, al-Marbawī's approach differs significantly from figures such as Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani, whose scholarship emphasises *isnād* transmission within transnational scholarly networks,²⁶ 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili, whose works integrate *ḥadīth* within broader exegetical and Sufi frameworks, and Maḥfūz al-

²⁵ Hussin, Haziyah, Latifah Abdul Majid, Nor Syamimi Mohd, Wan Nasyrudin Wan Abdullah, and Sabri Mohamad. "Pemikiran Tafsir Shaykh Mohamed Idris al-Marbawī dalam Manuskrip Quran Bergantung Makna Melayu." *Jurnal al-Turath*, (2016).

²⁶ Saleh Adri, "Pemikiran Hadis Syekh Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani." *Al-Mu'tabar: Jurnal Ilmu Hadis* 1, no. 1 (2021): 86-101.

Tarmasī, whose contributions are likewise rooted in traditional scholarly transmission.²⁷ In contrast, al-Marbawī foregrounds pedagogical accessibility through linguistic adaptation, thematic structuring, and selective presentation. His contribution thus marks a shift from the logic of preservation toward that of transmission-oriented pedagogy, reshaping the dissemination of *ḥadīth* knowledge in non-Arab contexts.²⁸ This orientation reflects a deliberate methodological adjustment that mediates between classical textual authority and the communicative horizon of a Malay-speaking readership.

Through a selective engagement often described as *takhyīr al-maḥnā*, al-Marbawī departs from exhaustive transmission and instead foregrounds narrations with direct instructional relevance in their socio-religious setting. Accordingly, textual organisation serves a dual function: preserving authoritative content while ensuring its pedagogical intelligibility.

This adaptive tendency corresponds to a wider intellectual pattern in the region, where Islamic knowledge has long been rearticulated through local linguistic and cultural frameworks. As Wardani notes, scholars such as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Singkili illustrate this mode of mediation by embedding Arabic scholarly traditions within indigenous interpretive contexts. Within this continuum, al-Marbawī represents a further refinement, whereby

²⁷ Ahmad Fauzan, “Syekh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi: Muhaddis Nusantara,” *Tahdis: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu al-Hadis* 9, no. 2 (2018): 119-145.

²⁸ Ramli Abdul Wahid and A. Irwan Santeri Doll Kawaid, “The Role of Malaysian and Indonesian Ulama in Hadith Studies: Muhammad Idris al-Marbawi and T.M. Hasbi Ash Shiddieqy,” *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 3, no. 1 (2019): 104-19.

inherited discourses are reorganised in accordance with Malay linguistic expression and normative sensibilities, while remaining firmly grounded in the Sunni scholarly tradition.

Textual Structure and Methodology: From *Riwayah* to Pedagogical *Dirayah*

From a bibliographical perspective, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* comprises 22 volumes, containing approximately 2,781 ḥadīths and 8,282 legal and ethical discussions. It was first published in Egypt in 1933 (1352 AH) and later reissued in 1960 (1379 AH). While structurally modelled on *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, the work is not a literal reproduction but a selective and pedagogically oriented reorganization. A further indication of al-Marbawī's scholarly depth lies in his extensive engagement with authoritative classical sources. He frequently cites major jurists and scholars such as al-Shāfi'ī, al-Nawawī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, and al-Ghazālī, thereby situating his commentary within a well-established Sunni intellectual tradition. In the domain of ḥadīth scholarship, he draws upon prominent commentaries including *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī*, *Fath al-Bārī*, and *Umdat al-Qārī*, while in exegetical discussions he refers to foundational works such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, and al-Qurṭubī's *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*. This intertextual engagement not only reinforces the intellectual credibility of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* but also demonstrates how al-Marbawī mediated classical scholarship for a Malay-speaking audience without severing its epistemological roots.

A key methodological innovation lies in the simplification of *isnād*. In *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, the ḥadīth on intention appears with a full chain of transmission:

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ،
عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنِ وَقَّاصٍ، عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ...

In *Baḥr al-Mādihī*, this is reduced to: From 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (raḍiyallāhu 'anhu). This reduction reflects a deliberate shift from *isnād* criticism (*riwāyah*) to meaning-oriented interpretation (*dirāyah*), while still retaining ḥadīth classification categories such as *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, and *gharīb*. The pedagogical orientation is further evident in the commentary.

For example, the well-known *ḥadīth*:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

is explained through practical illustrations, such as intentions in trade, education, and daily work, thereby transforming the text into an ethical guide for everyday life.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْمُطَّلَبِ يَقُولُ : سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
دَفَعَ عَمْرُ بْنُ الْمُطَّلَبِ بَرَكَةَ أَيُّهَا كُوْدُفَرُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

قَالَ : إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ
برسېداى اى هان سان سکل عمل ایت دغز نية

۱۰ - مسئله : فری کېکیان سیدنا عمر . استله برېکیان اى ددنیا دان آتوۛ ، کوان
إله سوړغ درفدا اورغ سفره بغد سکیکن اوله نې دغز شرکا . دان إله درفدا الخفاء الراشدین
دان إله سوړک سوړغ درفد مترو رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم دان سوړغ درفد سیرم . علمه
محابه نه موافقه تورن وحى سبا کیان نیلقن دان فیکرن . دان نه درلو یسکن حدیث با کین
درفد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم 539 حدیث . دان نه إجماع مریکت آتس باقی علومون
دان باقی مطلق دان ضمن دان زاهدن دان توانمن دان بس کسپن کفد مسلمین دان
پروری دانس حق ، دان مجسرن فیکتالان نې صلى الله عليه وسلم دان سنن دان میکتوت
با کین دان امیل فروداین دغز سکل کملیحاتن مسلمین ، دان بنیا اکندی اوله اهل الفضل
والعبر . دان کفو جین آتس باقی ، دان کلپهژن نیاد تر یلفسکن رضی الله عنه .

۱۱ - مسئله : حدیث عمل دغز نية ، کات امام محمد بن عبد الباقری دان مسل
دان ابو عیسی الترمذی دان لاین دالم کتاب ۳ همیچن [عن عمرو بن الخطاب یقول سمعت
رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال : إنما الأعمال بالنیات] دروا یسکن درفد عمرو بن الخطاب
رضی الله عنه برکت اى نه ا کو دغز کلام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم سیدان هان سان سکل عمل
ایت دغز نية . (کات إمام نووی) دالم شرح مسلم - برومول معنای بکینی : هواسن سکل
عمل ایت دکره دان دفا ک فنیل ادا اى دغز نية ، دان نیاد دکره اقبیل نیاد دغز نية . اه .

۱۲ - مسئله : لوس دان بجرا حدیث ابن سبا کى (کات نووی) هواسن نه إجماع
سکپن اورغ اسلام آتس سر دان لوس تحف بجرا حدیث ابن دان باقی قائده قدان . دان
کات امام شافى . دان اورغ لان إله ساتو فونیکا اسلام دان کات شافى لا کى ماسق اى

Figure 1: The layout of the book's content

In jurisprudential terms, al-Marbawī adopts a comparative madhhab approach. In discussing whether physical contact invalidates *wudu’*, he presents both the Shāfi’ī and Ḥanafī positions before favouring the Shāfi’ī view, reflecting regional practice.²⁹ However, in several instances, the rationale for such *tarjih* is not explicitly articulated, indicating a prioritization of pedagogical clarity over detailed legal argumentation.

Baḥr al-Mādhi has exerted a profound influence on Islamic education in the Malay world, particularly through its accessible

²⁹ Muhammad Mustaqim Mohd. Zarif, “The Bahr al-Madhi of Shaykh Muhammad Idris Al-Marbawi: A Preliminary Analysis,” *Ulum Islamiyyah: Malaysian Journal of Islamic Sciences* 2 (2003): 61–80.

pedagogical design.³⁰ Its use of Jawi script alongside classical Malay enabled broader engagement among non-Arabic-speaking audiences in the early twentieth century. Structurally, the work is organized into major thematic sections (*abwāb* or *kitāb*), each further subdivided into specific legal and ethical topics, thereby facilitating systematic learning and ease of navigation. In addition, the inclusion of a glossary of *ḥadīth* terminology assists readers in understanding technical expressions, while the consistent numbering of *ḥadīths* enhances memorization, cross-referencing, and instructional use in classroom and informal study settings. These features collectively demonstrate al-Marbawī's deliberate effort to transform a classical commentary into a functional pedagogical tool.

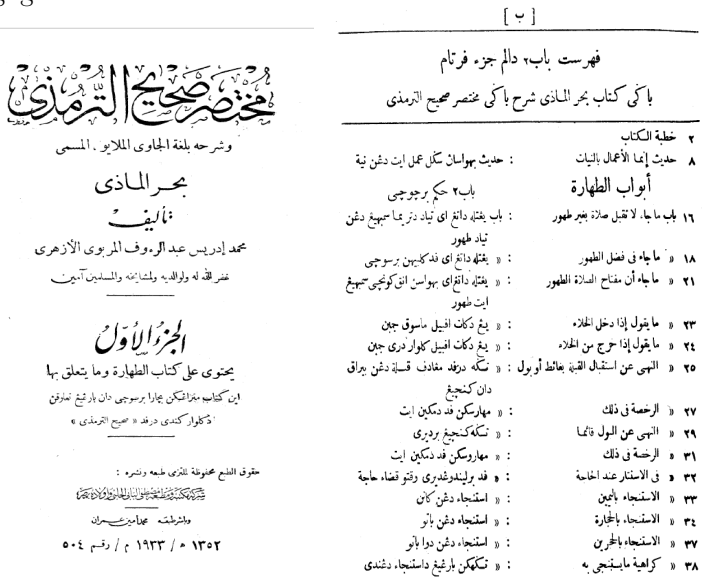


Figure 2: Cover and Table of Contents

30 Nur Syhadah Mohamed and Mohd Akil Muhamed Ali. “Tahap Pengetahuan dan Persepsi Pelajar Terhadap Pengajian Hadith di Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin.” *Islamiyyat* 38, no. 2 (2016): 155–163.

This pedagogical orientation is further reflected in al-Marbawī's effort to present ḥadīth teachings in a manner that is both intellectually grounded and socially relevant. Rather than limiting his commentary to textual exposition, he frequently connected prophetic traditions to practical religious concerns and everyday experiences within the Malay-Muslim community. Through explanatory discussion, contextual interpretation, and the clarification of legal and ethical implications, al-Marbawī transformed the study of ḥadīth from a purely scholarly exercise into an accessible medium of religious guidance. His methodology therefore demonstrates a conscious commitment to making classical Islamic knowledge meaningful and applicable to a broader audience while remaining firmly rooted in the authoritative tradition of ḥadīth scholarship.³¹

Pedagogical Orientation and Socio-Religious Function

The primary objective of *Baḥr al-Mādhī* is to disseminate Prophetic teachings to Malay-speaking audiences lacking proficiency in Arabic. As such, the work operates simultaneously as a scholarly contribution and a form of da'wah. This intention is reflected in its opening with the *ḥadīth*:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

which establishes an ethical foundation for all subsequent discussions. In this regard, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* may be understood as a transformative pedagogical instrument that extends beyond the transmission of

³¹ Faisal Ahmad Shah, "Syaiikh Mohamed Idris al-Marbawi: Kontribusinya dalam Fiqh al-Hadīs," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 34, no. 1 (2010): 17–37.

religious knowledge to encompass ethical formation and civic awareness. Its localized yet textually grounded approach demonstrates how *ḥadīth* commentary can respond to contemporary educational needs without compromising fidelity to classical sources. The *ḥadīths* are systematically organised according to *fiqh* themes, and when a single *ḥadīth* appears across multiple contexts, al-Marbawī provides distinct commentaries tailored to each context—reflecting an adaptive pedagogical approach.

His writing style is equally distinctive, characterised by the use of direct address to the reader, such as “O my brother,” the incorporation of Malay numerals, and concluding expressions such as:

الحمد لله على التمام
الحمد لله أولاً وآخراً

These stylistic features foster a sense of emotional proximity between the text and its readers, a quality rarely found in classical *ḥadīth* commentaries.

From a hermeneutical perspective, al-Marbawī demonstrates notable sensitivity in dealing with anthropomorphic *ḥadīths*. For example, in addressing anthropomorphic expressions such as:

يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

In narrations referring to divine attributes—such as “the hand of God” or divine descent—he avoids literalism and instead employs *taʾwīl*, interpreting such expressions metaphorically in line with Sunni theological principles of *tanẓīh* (divine transcendence). This approach

reflects an effort to preserve textual fidelity while addressing theological concerns within a modern pedagogical framework.

In cases of *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* (apparently conflicting narrations), al-Marbawī employs classical reconciliation methods such as *al-jamʿ* (harmonisation) and *al-tarjīḥ* (preference). However, the analytical process is not always made explicit.³² For instance, in discussions on the practice of *qunūt* in the dawn prayer, he endorses the Shāfiʿī position without systematically presenting the competing evidence. This suggests that his primary aim is instructional clarity rather than exhaustive legal debate. His mode of legal reasoning reflects a comparative orientation that draws upon multiple Sunni *madhāhib*, though often with a discernible inclination toward Shāfiʿī positions.³³ Such an approach exemplifies a form of methodological pluralism that resonates with the intellectual landscape of Southeast Asian Islam, where legal diversity is accommodated within a broadly shared normative structure.

Extending beyond its pedagogical orientation, the work also operates within a broader socio-political register. Through selective references to exemplary figures such as ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, al-Marbawī foregrounds themes of justice, governance, and ethical leadership, thereby situating *ḥadīth* within the domain of collective moral responsibility. In this regard, the text functions not merely as an instrument of individual piety, but as a medium through which ethical

³² Mohd Solleh Ab Razak, *Manhaj Mukhtalif al-Hadīth oleh al-Marbawī dalam Bahr al-Mādhi li Sharh al-Mukhtasar Sahih al-Tirmidhi* (Master's thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2022).

³³ Fadhilah, Is, "Analisis Metode Muhammad Idris al-Marbawī dalam Kitab *Mukhtasar Shahih al-Tirmizi wa Syarhuhu bi Lughah al-Jawi al-Malayu al-Musamma Bahr al-Madzi*." *Shahih: Jurnal Ilmu Kewahyuan* 4, no. 2 (2021): 40–59

principles are translated into lived social practices. This orientation is evident in the way al-Marbawī consistently connects Prophetic teachings to issues of communal conduct and responsible leadership, extending the relevance of *ḥadīth* beyond strictly devotional concerns.

More fundamentally, this approach reflects a conscious effort to recontextualise classical *ḥadīth* discourse within the socio-historical realities of the Malay world. Rather than reproducing inherited interpretations verbatim, al-Marbawī reformulates them in response to evolving political structures and patterns of social organisation. As observed by Majid and Kurt, such an interpretive orientation played a significant role in shaping a more reflective moral and political consciousness among Malay Muslims, particularly during periods of colonial and post-colonial transformation.³⁴

Critique, Limitations, and Contemporary Relevance

Despite its significant contributions, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* is not without limitations. One major critique concerns its use of classical Malay, characterized by extended sentence structures and Arabic-Malay hybrid terminology, which may pose challenges for contemporary readers unfamiliar with older linguistic forms. As further noted by Zarif and Kosran, the linguistic style of early twentieth-century Malay scholarship may hinder accessibility, particularly for younger audiences.³⁵ This has led to increasing calls for retranslation and

³⁴ Abdul Majid, Latifah, and Nurullah Kurt. “Baḥr al-Mādhī,” 423–432.

³⁵ Siti Zahidah Kosran, and Latifah Abdul Majid, and Ahamad Asmadi Sakat. “Peranan Tulisan Jawi dalam Penulisan Hadith di Nusantara.” *Al-Turath* 2, no. 2 (2017): 49–53.

linguistic modernization to ensure the continued relevance of the text in contemporary educational contexts.³⁶

Additionally, the simplification of *isnād*—while pedagogically effective—limits the work’s utility for advanced *ḥadīth* scholarship. The absence of complete transmission chains constrains critical analysis of authenticity and historical context. Although al-Marbawī consistently identifies the primary narrators and classifies *ḥadīths* using standard categories such as *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, and *gharīb*, the lack of full *isnād* documentation restricts deeper scholarly engagement, particularly in evaluating the transmission history of individual narrations.

Another limitation relates to the handling of *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*. Although al-Marbawī employs recognized reconciliation methods such as *al-jam‘* (harmonisation), *al-tarjīḥ* (preference), and *al-naskh* (abrogation), he does not consistently elaborate on the reasoning behind his preferences. This has led some scholars to view the work as more didactic than analytically rigorous, with a tendency to prioritize instructional clarity over methodological transparency.

Nevertheless, these limitations must be understood within the pedagogical objectives of the work. Rather than functioning as a specialized treatise in *ḥadīth* criticism, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* succeeds as an educational tool that bridges classical scholarship and the needs of broader Muslim audiences. Its methodological features—such as thematic organization, bilingual presentation, and contextual interpretation—represent deliberate adaptations to enhance accessibility and instructional effectiveness. Beyond the limitations outlined above, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* continues to exert a sustained intellectual

³⁶ Abdul Mu ‘iz Ahmad, and Taj Rijal Muhamad Romli. “Metode Terjemahan Teks Bab Solat dalam Kitab *Baḥrul Mazi*.” *International Journal of Humanities, Philosophy and Language* (2020).

influence on contemporary *ḥadīth* studies in the Malay world. Its methodological orientation—particularly its emphasis on contextualization, accessibility, and ethical engagement—resonates with current scholarly concerns surrounding religious literacy and the social function of Islamic knowledge.

More significantly, the work has contributed to the emergence of renewed scholarly interest in localized approaches to *ḥadīth* interpretation. As demonstrated in studies such as those by Azid, thematic discussions within *Baḥr al-Mādhi*—particularly on issues such as jihad—reflect a nuanced engagement with questions of identity formation and socio-political transformation in colonial contexts. This indicates that al-Marbawī's commentary is not merely exegetical, but also responsive to broader historical dynamics shaping Muslim societies. In addition, the methodological features introduced by al-Marbawī—including thematic structuring, bilingual exposition, and comparative legal reasoning—have informed subsequent developments in Malay *ḥadīth* literature. This influence is evident in later scholarly works, such as those of Mustafa Abdul Rahman and Abdul Hayei Abdul Sukor, who adopt similar strategies in presenting *ḥadīth* in accessible yet analytically grounded forms.³⁷

Its enduring relevance is evident in its continued use in *pesantren*, *surau*, and *madrasah* curricula across Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as its influence on subsequent Malay-language *ḥadīth* writings.³⁸

³⁷ Nor Mohd Syamimi, Haziyah Hussin, and Wan Nasyrudin Wan Abdullah. "Scientific Exegesis in Malay Qur'anic Commentary." *Asian Social Science* 10, no. 10 (2014): 236.

³⁸ Shumsudin Yabi, Mesbahul Hoque, A. Irwan Santeri Doll Kawaid, Fadlan bin Mohd Othman, Norhasnira Ibrahim, Amiruddin Mohd Sobali, Muhammad Suhail Tsaqif, "Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī wa

Furthermore, these pedagogical and methodological features remain highly relevant to contemporary discussions on Islamic education, particularly in relation to the localization and democratization of religious knowledge.

Looking forward, the need for a critical edition and digital preservation is increasingly urgent. Variations across printed editions, inconsistencies in formatting, and limited accessibility present ongoing challenges for researchers and educators.³⁹ Digitization initiatives—particularly through open-access platforms and mobile applications—have the potential to significantly expand the reach and impact of the work, ensuring its continued relevance in modern Islamic education.

Looking ahead, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* continues to offer significant opportunities for further scholarly exploration. Recent studies have demonstrated that the work contains rich discussions on a range of social, legal, and ethical issues that remain relevant to contemporary Muslim societies. Beyond its value as a hadith commentary, the text provides important insights into the intellectual outlook of Malay Muslim scholarship and its engagement with changing social realities. Continued research on its thematic, methodological, and pedagogical dimensions will therefore contribute to a deeper understanding of the development of hadith studies in the Malay world.⁴⁰

kitābuhu” [Syekh Muhammad Idris al-Marbawī dan Kitabnya (Bahr al-Māzi)]” In *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Nabawi Heritage*, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 2024.

³⁹ Syarif Hidayatulloh, Muhamad, and Muhammad Malik Nahar. “Digital Zakat as a Social Innovation: UTAUT and Maqasid Analysis for Strengthening the Islamic Financial System.” *El-Hekam: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 10, no. 2 (2025): 186–204.

⁴⁰ Nur Saadah Hamisan @ Khair and Nor Aniza Mad Azeri, “Analisis

Conclusion

This study concludes that *Baḥr al-Mādhī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* by Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Marbawī constitutes a significant milestone in the formation of localized *ḥadīth* pedagogy in the Malay Archipelago, as reflected in four interrelated key findings. First, al-Marbawī played a transformative intellectual-historical role by bridging the classical Arabic *ḥadīth* tradition with the socio-religious realities of Malay-speaking Muslim communities, thereby shifting the orientation of *ḥadīth* transmission from the mere preservation of *isnād* toward pedagogy centered on comprehension and religious practice. Second, in terms of textual structure and methodology, *Baḥr al-Mādhī* demonstrates a pedagogically driven reorganization through its bilingual Arabic–Malay presentation, thematic arrangement based on *fiqh* and ethics, simplification of *isnād*, and integration of cross-madhab references with a predominant Shāfiʿī inclination, marking a methodological transition from *riwāyah* to *dirāyah*. Third, the work exhibits a strong pedagogical orientation and socio-religious function, as evidenced by its communicative style, contextualization of *ḥadīths* through everyday examples, and emphasis on ethical values and social responsibility, enabling it to function not merely as a reference text but also as a means of moral formation and collective awareness within traditional institutions such as *pondok*, *surau*, and *pesantren*. Fourth, while *Baḥr al-Mādhī* has certain limitations—most notably its use of classical Malay and the absence of complete *isnād* presentation—these constraints are consistent with its pedagogical objectives and do not diminish its relevance within contemporary Islamic education, which

terhadap Hadis Berkaitan Wanita dalam Baḥr al-Mādhī: Meneliti Konsep Emansipasi Wanita,” *HADIS* 13, no. 25 (2023): 18–27.

increasingly emphasizes accessibility, contextualization, and ethical engagement.

Overall, this study affirms that *Baḥr al-Mādī* should be understood not simply as a traditional *ḥadīth* commentary, but as a coherent model of contextualized *ḥadīth* pedagogy that is both academically legitimate and highly significant for the development of *ḥadīth* studies and Islamic education in Southeast Asia, while also opening avenues for future research through critical editions, comparative regional studies, and digital integration within modern curricula.