

# THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S THOUGHT ON *KHABAR MUTAWATIR* AND *KHABAR ĀḤAD*

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**Abstract:** Some scholars regarded al-Ghazālī as not a well-known expert of the ḥadīth. They even stated that the weakness of al-Ghazālī lies in the science of ḥadīth. This article aims to refute those opinions by providing al-Ghazālī's thoughts on ḥadīth, mainly on *khavar mutawātir* and *khavar āḥād*, as well as the epistemic paradigm that construct his idea on ḥadīth. I argue that al-Ghazālī's thought on ḥadīth has a wide approach i.e. the use of logical and philosophical approach. This shows that al-Ghazālī tends to be more inclusive in understanding ḥadīth. Besides, I also argue that the use of logical and philosophical approach has to do with the political milieu where the Sunnite dynasty of Seljūq was in respond against the Shi'ite Fatimid power of Egypt. The very intellectual milieu of the Fatimid dynasty was flourished by logic and Greek philosophy. As a Sunni defender of the Seljūq, it is a must to fight the intellectual Shi'ite Ismā'īlite of the Fatimid by mastering logic and philosophy. Thus, al-Ghazālī's usage of both approaches in the science of ḥadīth was to justify and defend the authority of the Sunni Ash'arī of the Seljūq dynasty.

**Keywords:** *Khavar mutawātir*; *khavar āḥād*; epistemic paradigm; approach; truth regime.

**Abstrak:** Selama ini, Al-Ghazālī tidak dikenal sebagai ahli hadis. Beberapa ulama bahkan menyatakan bahwa kelemahan Al-Ghazālī ada di bidang ilmu hadis. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menyangkal pendapat-pendapat tersebut dengan memaparkan pemikiran al-Ghazālī tentang hadis, khususnya tentang hadis mutawatir dan hadis āḥād, serta paradigma epistemik yang membangun gagasannya tentang tentang hadis. Saya berpendapat bahwa pemikiran al-Ghazālī tentang hadis memiliki pendekatan yang lebih kaya yaitu penggunaan pendekatan logis dan filosofis. Ini menegaskan bahwa al-Ghazālī lebih inklusif dalam memahami hadis. Selain itu, saya juga berpendapat bahwa penggunaan pendekatan logis dan filosofis berkaitan dengan konteks politik ketika Dinasti Sunni Seljuq merespon kekuatan Syiah Fatimiyah di Mesir, di mana kondisi intelektual Dinasti Fatimiyah sangat berkembang dalam logika dan filsafat Yunani. Sebagai seorang pembela Sunni dari Seljūq, adalah suatu keharusan untuk menentang

intelektual Syiah Fatimiyah Isma'ili dengan menguasai logika dan filsafat. Dengan demikian, penggunaan kedua pendekatan al-Ghazālī dalam ilmu hadis adalah untuk membenarkan dan mempertahankan otoritas Sunni Asharī Dinasti Seljūq.

**Kata Kunci:** *Khabar mutawātir*; *khabar āḥād*; paradigma epistemik; pendekatan, rezim kebenaran.

## Introduction

Al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111)<sup>1</sup> was seen as an encyclopaedic Muslim scholar for mastering much knowledge on Islam and writing various books on multidiscipline works. In the fields of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), for example, there are some books written entitled *Al-Basīṭ*, *Al-Wasīṭ*, *al-Wajīz* and *al-Khulāṣah*.<sup>2</sup> In the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, he has devoted a book entitled *Al-Mankhūl*. He initially wrote the book as a summary of the lectures of his teacher, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. When he returned to Bagdād to teach in the Madrasa al-Nizāmīyā, al-Ghazālī has successfully completed his book entitled *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*. The last book seems to be the very pillar in the study of legal theory of Muslim jurisprudence. He stated that the book *Al-Mustasfā* is a summary of the book *Tabdhīb al-Uṣūl*.<sup>3</sup> However, we cannot reach the last book for it has not been found.<sup>4</sup>

Beside mastering on Islamic legal theory and jurisprudence, Al-Ghazālī was also popular with his inclination to logic, philosophy and theology, and he wrote some books on this field. These books were *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, *Fayṣal al-Tafrīqah*, *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*, *Al-Maqṣūd al-Asmā' fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, *Mi'yār al-'Ulūm*, *Mubikah al-Nazar*,

<sup>1</sup> His complete name is Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī al-Imām al-Jalīl Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. See Tāj al-Dīn Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Kāfi al-Subḥī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah al-Kubrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Jall dan Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī, vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' Kutub al-'Arabīyah, t.t.), 191.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Wasīṭ fī al-Madhbhab*, ed. Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, vol. 1 (Mesir: Dār al-Salām, 1997), 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, ed. Sulaymān al-Ashqar, vol. 1 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1997), 33.

<sup>4</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī bayn Mādhih wa Nāqidh* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1994), 14-15.

*Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm, Iljām al-‘Anwām fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām, Jawābir al-Qur’ān, Kīmīyā’ al-Sa‘ādah, Ma‘ārij al-Quds, and Mishkāt al-Anwār.*<sup>5</sup>

On the other side, al-Ghazālī also devoted some works on *taṣawwuf*, morality and education. Perhaps, one of his masterpieces is *Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*. The very popular work which deals with fundamental teaching of mysticism. Others, we can also find his works on the subjects like *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah, Miẓān al-‘Amal, Mi‘raj al-Sālikīn, Ayyubā al-Walad, and Minhāj al-‘Abidin*. Some of his polemic writing on theological school and religion could be found in his book like *Al-Qawl al-Jamīl fī al-Radd ‘alā Man Ghayyara al-Injīl, Faḍā’ih al-Bātinīyah, Hujjat al-Ḥaqq, Muḥaṣṣal al-Khilāf* and *al-Radd al-Jamīl li Ilāhiyyāt Tsā bi Ṣarīḥih al-Injīl*.<sup>6</sup>

From the various subject written by al-Ghazālī, none of them seem to address the science of ḥadīth. Many scholars have also devoted some works related to al-Ghazālī, but no one initiatively studies on his thought of ḥadīth. Therefore, the present work was aimed at elaborating al-Ghazālī’s thought on ḥadīth, with reference to *ḥabbar mutawātir* and *ḥabbar āḥād*, and how his epistemic paradigm forms the thought of his understanding on ḥadīth science.

### **Al-Ghazālī on *Khabar Mutawātir* and *Khabar Āḥād***

As like other scholars of ḥadīth, al-Ghazālī has also divided *ḥabbar* into two forms: *ḥabbar mutawātir* and *ḥabbar āḥād*.<sup>7</sup> According to al-him, *ḥabbar mutawātir* is a form of tradition that attains of knowledge on *ḍarūrī*.<sup>8</sup> However, this requirement provided by al-Ghazālī in assigning *mutawātir* tradition did not find any differences with other ḥadīth scholars such as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī.<sup>9</sup>

In any way, al-Ghazālī rejected those sects who opine that the science of *ḍarūrī* has only been sensory as like the Samānīyah sect, and he spurned al-Ka‘bī who argues that *ḥabbar mutawātir* is only a theory.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. See also, Mahbub Ghazali, “Hermeneutika Sufistik al-Ghazālī dalam Mishkāt al-Anwār,” dalam *Mutawātir Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadīth*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Thābit al-Ma‘rūf bi al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Kifāyah fī Ma‘rifat Uṣūl ‘Ilm al-Rimāyah*, ed. Abū Iṣḥāq Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafā ‘Alī b. Dimyāṭī (Mesir: Dār al-Hudā, 2003), 88; Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*, vol. 1, 250.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 251-252.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Al-Kifāyah*, 88.

Al-Ghazālī's denial on their opinion is directed by putting an example of Baghdad and Imām al-Shāfi'ī. He stated that even though someone has never visited Baghdad, someone could believe that the city was exist for there are many information told about it. This information is called as *khabar mutawātir*. Thus, if someone denied the existing of Baghdad, he/she would be considered insane. This example was similar to the popular figure of Imām al-Shāfi'ī. Although the generation after Imām al-Shāfi'ī had never met him, but people believed that Imām al-Shāfi'ī existed, for there are plenty of evidence, *khabar mutawātir*, telling on it. A child will not be able to know his biological mother if there is no *khabar mutawātir* that the woman is his mother.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Ghazālī emphasized that every science must be examined in the form of premises. Although these premises do not appear in a clear statement, the knowledge produced is still considered as *darūrī*, because sometimes the premise only appears in mind but it has not been realized and expressed yet. This is what we called as *anwālī* knowledge (axiomatic). The statement of 'two is half of four' shows this example. Basically, the statement arises because of the premises that are not realized in the mind, namely two multiplied by two is four. Therefore, number two is half of four. Because it is very clear, the emergence of such a premise is not realized.<sup>11</sup>

The use of syllogism by al-Ghazālī appears in his rejection on the idea that *khabar mutawātir* is only *naẓari* (theory), not *darūrī* (convincing and sure). According to al-Ghazālī, this assumption could be wrong, because there should be two premises in the mind of listeners:

*The first premise:* a large number of people with different conditions and characteristics is impossible to agree on lying about something.

*Second premise:* they have agreed to narrate an incident.

*Conclusion:* they do not lie about an incident.<sup>12</sup>

At this case, then how is the knowledge produced without going through the intermediary of premises? as like the phrase on God's substance of the *Qadīm* (the Previous Substance), not *Muḥdath* (something new is created). According to al-Ghazālī, this kind of

<sup>10</sup> Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mankhūl min Ta'liqāt al-Uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Haytū (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, t.t), 235-236.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*, vol. 1, 253.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 253.

knowledge cannot be attained as *ḍarūrī*, as the knowledge of *ḍarūrī* requires premises. Therefore, al-Ghazālī mentions it as *anwālī* knowledge (axiomatic or definite truth without requiring proof).<sup>13</sup>

Among those discussed by al-Ghazālī are the conditions of a *ḵabar* (tradition) that is considered as *mutawātir*. According to al-Ghazālī, there are four conditions of a *ḵabar* to be sufficiently regarded as *mutawātir*:

First, it is delivered on the basis of knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-yaqīn* or strong belief), not *ẓann* (built on assumptions). The uncertain news can be categorized into this kind of knowledge, for instance: the residents of Baghdad tell us about a bird which they thought it was a dove, or someone they thought he was Zayd. As long as the news does not provide any convincing information on the truth, it could never be considered as *al-ʿilm al-yaqīn*.<sup>14</sup>

Second, the *ḵabar* should attain certainty based on the empirical senses. For example, the residents of Baghdad tell that the world is created (*ḥadīth*), thus the *ḵabar* does not produce any confidence of empirical evidence. This is common, although God might make the news a cause that makes us confident about its truth.<sup>15</sup>

Third, the fulfillment of all sides (*ṭarf*), including the perfect number of narrators. If the later scholar narrated *ḵabar* from the earlier scholar, and one generation afterwards did it so, and these conditions were not fulfilled in each generation, then the truth of the news could not be a sound. It possibly happens that the news carried out by one generation is different from the one reported by another generation because of unfulfilled condition. The fulfilled condition has thus become a standar to examine parallel information provided by each of generation.

According to al-Ghazālī, the *ḵabar* from Jews from Moses and the Shiʿites is unacceptable, even though there are many narrators fulfilled the condition. The tradition on the *imāmah*, for instance, was not considered as a firm information, though it reached a large number of narrators in the last generation. Therefore, since the *ḵabar* has only reached the large number of narrators which is only on one generation, it could not be seen as *mutawātir* as they could not reach

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

the conditions of fulfilment in each of generation (*tabaqāt*). Therefore, the truth cannot be relied upon it.<sup>16</sup>

Fourth: the standard number of narrators. Al-Ghazālī did not determine the standard number of narrators who can produce a tradition. When the science of *ḍarūrī* (certain) has been produced, then it can be understood how many number of the narrators are. Al-Ghazālī criticized al-Qāḍī's opinion who opines the minimum standar of the narrators for at least four people. However, al-Qāḍī himself, according to Al-Ghazālī, has only used something that is *ẓann* (alleged) and does not provide any convincing idea, for how many *ḵhabar* narrated by five or six people, but as long as it does not generate any confidence, thus it should not be considered as *mutawātir*.<sup>17</sup> There are also those who opines that the minimum must be 40 people as like a minimum number of people to conduct Friday prayer. There also some opinions argue that it must be at least 70 people as the word of God in the QS. al-A'raf [7]: 155.

According to al-Ghazālī, the slightest amount narrated should not only one person but has many *qarīnah* (indications) in its vicinity. If so, then it can be a convincing *ḵhabar*. In addition, he also argues that the exact mention of the number of various propositions shows their lack of understanding. Therefore, it is not important to take the minimum amount, but most *ḵhabar* was not narrated by one person but to the convinced and the assured one (the situation which can replace the position of the number of the standard narrators).<sup>18</sup>

An example of this explanation is a person's feelings of love and hatred, fear, anger, and shame. All these feelings are invisible, not empirical nor superficial. However, with the existence of situational aspects, we can find out its existence. If there is only one situational aspect, it is merely an assumption. However, if these aspects are supported by many other situations, which were initially only *ẓann* (predictions), thus it will turn into a doubtless tradition. As like *ḵhabar mutawātir*, the statement of each person cannot transform the tradition into confidence, but if put together some situational aspects of their words it will be considered as convincing *ḵhabar*.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 254-255.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mankhūl*, 240-242.; Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasjā*, vol. 1, 259-250.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasjā*, vol. 1, 255-256.

Related to the status of hadis *āḥād*, al-Ghazālī raised to problematize four problems thereof: First, *ḵabār āḥād* is *ḵabār* which the narrator does not reach the degree of *mutawātir*, but at any rate the *ḵabār* reaches a convincing degree (*al-‘ilm al-ḍarūrī*) and can be made as a theorem.<sup>20</sup>

*Ḵabār āḥād* is divided into three: first, which can be known to be true; second, the lies cannot be known; and third is doubtful. As for what is known to be truth is divided into two: first, it can be known with certainty by reason, as *ḵabār* proclaimed by reporters about cases that are impossible to be contradictory. Second, the truth which can be known with the common sense, such as the news proclaimed by a person who is *‘ālim* (the expert). The *ḵabār* is then considered as true although it cannot be attained by any senses of human being, for example the *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, heaven and hell. In this, al-Ghazālī argues that “if someone wants to use the *ḵabār āḥād*, he/she have to go through *ijmā‘*.” As for the *ḵabār*, which can be determined clearly as a lie, it cannot be used as a foundation. This can also be categorized as only for information.<sup>21</sup>

Second, people who insists not to use the *ḵabār āḥād* as the proposition of the obligation of worship. This problem mainly appears because of the way to make certainty in hearing and seeing. If it is believed that there is truth in the narrators, witnesses and people, then the *ḵabār* will be judged as the truth. This infers that it is not considered as worship if only knowing the truth, otherwise it will be measured worship when it is practiced. The rejection came from people who did not believe the Sharia. People who believe in the Sharia are unlikely to reject the *ḵabār āḥād*, because the acceptance of *ḵabār āḥād* has been exemplified by the Prophet himself in receiving the only testimony from Khuzaymah b. Thābit. Therefore, in the case of Sharia, all things that are alleged (*ẓann*) and ascertained (*ma‘lūm*) should be aligned to carry out.<sup>22</sup>

Third, a group of people who argue that reason can show charitable obligations (no need for theorem *qaṭ‘ī* and arguments for *sam‘ī*). They rely on two arguments which are at the extreme left and extreme right:

<sup>20</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mankhūl*, 243; Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*, 272.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mankhūl*, 246-250.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*, vol. 1, 275.

- a) That a *muftī* (giver of *fatwā*), if he does not find a clear argument (*qat'i*) from the Qur'an or *ijmā'* (consensus) or *sunnah mutawātirah*, and does not find the *khabar āḥād*, he still must decide. Because if he does not decide, it is worried that he will damage the law. He thought that even though the Prophet had been sent at a particular time, the Prophet would not have been able to deal directly with everyone, and they could not have spread the Prophet's words to many people (*mutawātir*).

According to Al-Ghazālī, this idea is unsound (*ḍa'if*). For him, someone who gives a *fatwā* will not give a resolution if he does not find any argument of the *shara'* (holy text), nor the *khabar āḥād*, then he should return everything to its original jurisprudence. At this level, he made a comparison to the Prophet that the Prophet did not oblige someone to do something when he had not received yet any of the Islamic teachings. Thus, in the Arabian Peninsula, there were some people who had not yet reached the Islamic missionary of the Prophet, and they had no obligations (*taklīf*), because not all *taklīf* required by Allah are known to everyone.

- b) Practicing the *khabar āḥād* is an obligation (right extreme point), because if we leave *khabar āḥād*, it means that we have abandoned religion, then we must be careful and always practice it.

According to Al-Ghazālī, their arguments are not true in terms of three things: 1) There is a possibility of a lie in the *khabar āḥād*. If we force to practice it, then it could be a contrary to *shara'*. 2) The idea was much of generalizing. It is possible that the arguments demanded to practice are something that is reported by unbelievers and wicked people. 3) It contains an apathy (do not want to know) and an attitude of neglecting without investigation. Indeed, honesty must be practiced if possible.<sup>23</sup>

Fourth, the true goes to the generally orthodox scholars (*jumbūr 'ulamā' al-salaf*) the prophet's companions and *tabi'in*, *fuqahā'* and theologians who assert that it is not impossible to practice the *khabar āḥād* in matters of worship. However, *khabar āḥād* is used as the foundation in the worship must be in accordance with the criteria and

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 275-276.



conditions of the true *khabar*, for example, it is obtained directly by hearing (*simā'*) from the Prophet. The Qadārīya followed by the Zāhirīya sect like al-Qāssānī forbid *khabar āḥād* in the form of hearing (*simā'*).

According to al-Ghazālī, the idea of Qadārīya and Zāhirīya is misleading based on two arguments: a) According to *ijmā'* (consensus) of the Prophet's companions, that the *khabar āḥād* is acceptable. b) *Khabar āḥād* is considered as *mutawātir*, as it happened when the Prophet sent his companions to an area to proselytize. The companion who grasped the Prophet's words certainly received a *khabar āḥād* and then they preached it.<sup>24</sup>

According to Al-Ghazālī, we can accept the above two things according to several ways: *First*, some companions practice *khabar āḥād* in many ways, even though the *khabar* does not reach the degree of *mutawātir*, but the *khabar āḥād* can be used as *ḥujjah* (evidence), as narrated by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb in many opportunities. One example: There is a person who says: "I remember Allah about someone who has heard from the Messenger of Allah concerning something called a fetus, then stands Ḥamul b. Mālīk b. al-Nābighah, and said:

كُنْتُ بَيْنَ جَارَتَيْنِ يَعْني صَرَّتَيْنِ فَضَرَبَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى بِمِسْطَحٍ فَأَلْقَتْ جَنِينًا مَيِّتًا فَقَضَى فِيهِ  
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَعمُ بَعْرَةَ عَبْدٍ أَوْ وَلِيدَةٍ. فَقَالَ عُمَرُ: لَوْ لَمْ نَسْمَعْ هَذَا لَقَضَيْنَا فِيهِ بَعْرَ هَذَا

"I was between two slaves, then the two slaves were hurt, one of them struck with a *misṭah* (leveling device). Because of the blow, the fetus that was conceived by one of the *jariya* died, the Messenger of Allah stipulated for him a *ghurrah* (fine of loss) for the bat against a slave or girl. Then Umar said: "If we did not hear the Prophet's fatwa, surely we would decide differently from him, or we would not replace the fine (*ghurrah*) at all when the fetus conceived had died instead of his life."<sup>25</sup>

*Second*, the existence of *mutawātir* tradition from the Prophet in delegating representatives, judges and emissaries to various parts of the region, even though they were alone (*āḥād*). The companions are delegated partly to manage almsgiving, fulfill the agreement and the laws of the sharia.

There are ample of examples in this case, for instance, the delegation of the Prophet to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb in matters of

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

almsgiving, delegating Mu'āz b. Jabal to Yemen, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān to Mecca, giving trust to Qays b. 'Aṣim, Mālīk b. Nuwayrah, Zibraqān b. Badr, Zayd b. Ḥārithah, 'Amrū b. 'Āṣ, 'Amrū b. Ḥazm, Usāmah b. Zayd, 'Abd al-Raḥmān B. 'Awf, Abū 'Ubaydah b. Jarrāḥ and many other companions to deal with the matter of alms and its collection.

In this case, the historians (*mu'arrikh*) agreed that the Prophet had obliged all residents to believe in the envoy as well as the law he had set. If there is a requirement of the number of narrators for so called as *mutawātir*, surely not all companions could take part in it. Thus, it may possibly imply on the empty of the place of hijra (*dār al-hijrah*) which eventually could be controlled by the Jews. In this case their *hujjah* (evidence) might be incorrect (*da'if*).<sup>26</sup>

The scholars of ḥadīth in discussing the *khabar āḥād* had divided it based on the number of narrators into three types: *mashbūr* (narrated by three or more people in each level of sanad as long as it does not arrive at *mutawātir* numbers); *'aẓīẓ* (the ḥadīth which narrates no less than two people in each generation (*ṭabaqāt al-sanad*) and *gharīb* (the ḥadīth which the narrator is only one in each generation).<sup>27</sup> However, al-Ghazālī has also divided the *khabar āḥād* into three kinds, but not based on the number of narrators, indeed his consideration was based more on the *khabar āḥād* which comes to the level of *ḍarūrī* (convincing). He then divided: First, the truth that can be known; second, the lies which cannot be known; and third, doubtful. This division of al-Ghazālī on *khabar āḥād* is a further argument from the explanation of *khabar mutawātir* which no longer based on the number of narrators, but based on the level of *ḍarūrī* (convincing and certainty). In this, he argues that *khabar āḥād* that reaches the level of *ḍarūrī* degree is considered similar as like the *khabar mutawātir*. Based on this explanation, al-Ghazālī built more philosophical, logical and historical arguments why the *khabar* is acceptable, not based on the number of narrators.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 282

<sup>27</sup> Maḥmūd Ṭaḥḥān, *Taysīr Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadīth* (Mesir: Markaz al-Hudā al-Dirāsāt, 1415 H.), 23-27.

<sup>28</sup> This is different from the opinion of al-Shāfi'ī who asserted that *khabar āḥād* basically does not have *hujjah* (not authoritative) unless it meets the specific criteria: reported by people who are *thiqqah* (reliable) in matters of religion, are known as honest people about what is conveyed, understand what he conveyed, understood that if there was a change from the *khabar* he conveyed, conveyed the ḥadīth

## The Epistemology of al-Ghazālī's Thought on the Ḥadīth

It is important to question why did al-Ghazālī use logical and philosophical approach in addressing the discourse of the ḥadīth?<sup>29</sup>

The fierce of theological contestation which took place along the period of the Abbasid Dynasty has not only experienced by the Sunnite against the Mu'tazilites which later won by the Sunnis, but also between the Sunnites against the Shi'ites which happened long before al-Ghazālī's historical age. The Shi'ite dynasty that continued to spread their beliefs in the Abbāsīd Dynasty was the Buwayhīd (334-447 / 945-1055).

The Buwayhīd believed that if they can control the Abbāsīd dynasty, then the Sunnites were unable to fight against them. They behave an adaptive strategy in spreading Shi'ite theology into the public community. In this case, they were seeking help from the Shi'ite preachers like Mūsa b. Dāwūd al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), famous by (surname) al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn (a Qarmatian Shi'ite). He wrote many books related to the creed of the Isma'ili Shi'ites like *Al-Majālīs al-Mu'ayyadīyah* and *Al-Iḍāḥ wa al-Tabṣīr fī Faḍl Yawm al-Ghaḍīr*.<sup>30</sup>

During the Buwayhīd dynasty, when the rulers intend to disseminate a discourse, they approached the Shi'ite scientists and encouraged them to write works in the fields of philosophy, logic, exact science, and astronomy to support the Shi'ite theology. At that time, the Shi'ite academies appeared to strengthen the forgery of the prophetic traditions in order to justify their faith. A counterfeiter of ḥadīths emerged from the Shi'ites, for example, Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Azḍī al-Mawṣalī (d. 367/977), who lived in Bagdād and was welcomed by Amīr Buwayhīd Dynasty. He falsely reproduced the ḥadīth of the

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according to his pronunciation (could not be *bil ma'nā* or meaning transmission), kept his memorization when delivering it with his book, his ḥadīth did not resolve other narrators who were *thiqah*, free from *mudallas* (defects deliberately hidden), and the ḥadīth continued to the Prophet. The criteria made by al-Shāfi'ī are more likely to be the truth of the text and safeguards against its editorial. See Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *Al-Risālah*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Kairo: Maktabah Dār al-Turāth, 1399/ 1979), 369-371.

<sup>29</sup> Also using *taṣawwuf* (mysticism), but only a little, and not much influence on the discourse of the ḥadīth science or not a significant differentiator with the scholars of ḥadīth, so what is revealed here is the use of logic and philosophy.

<sup>30</sup> Rashād 'Abbās Ma'tūq, *Al-Ḥayāh al-'Ilmīyah fī al-'Irāq Kbilāl al-'Asr al-Buwayhīd [334-447/945-1055]* (Makkah: Jāmi'ah Umm al-Qurā, 1410 H/1990 M), 63.

Prophet that Jibrīl descended on Prophet Muḥammad in its apparently original form. Then Amīr of the Buwayhīd dynasty gave a gift to Abū al-Faṭḥ for what he did. Besides Abū al-Faṭḥ, the counterfeit ḥadīth figure of the Shi'ites is a rāfiḍah Shi'ite named Abū al-Faḍl al-Shaybānī (d. 387/997) who narrated many of the ḥadīth and people have written from what he narrated.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the two of them, there were counterfeiters of other ḥadīths from the Shi'ites like Ibn al-Ja'ābī (d. 355/965), Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Dawrī (d. 359 / 969), al-Ma'badī (d. 361/971), Ibn al-Baqqāl (d. 363/973), al-Shawnīzī (d. 364/974), Ibn Buhtah (w. 374/984) al-Nawbakhtī (d. 402/1011), and al-Kalūzānī (w. 414/1023). Besides them, many people are working to perfect and falsify the traditions that are patterned in terms of the Mu'tazilite and the Shi'ite narrations. Their efforts are also supported by the Buwayhīd dynasty for it was needed to win the Sunnite.<sup>32</sup>

During the Buwayhīd dynasty, the Shi'ite discourse has been flourished by four main books on the Shi'ite teachings, namely 1) *al-Kāfi al-Kulaynī* written by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941). This book is a compilation of the ḥadīth from Shi'ite tradition and is equivalent to *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, in terms of the Sunnite. 2) *Man lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh* written by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Buwayhīd al-Qummī (d. 381/992). 3) *Tabṣīr al-Aḥkām* and 4) *Al-Istibṣār fī mā Ikhtalaf min al-Akbbār* written by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (w. 460/1067).<sup>33</sup>

The end of the Buwayhīd dynasty was caused by the resistance of the Sunnites in the hands of the Sultans Tughril Bayk from the Seljuk dynasty (w. 455/1063) by capturing their king al-Mālik al-Raḥīm Abū Naṣr Khasrū Fayrūz b. Abī Kālījār (441-447/1049-1055) in 447/1055, three years before Al-Ghazālī was born. Beside the resistance of the Sunnites, another reason of the destruction of the Buwayhīd dynasty was because of the internal divisions and conflicts between the descendants of the Buwayhīd dynasty. The sons of 'Aḍḍ al-Dawlah (367-373/978-983) competed for power which was then won by Bahā' al-Dawlah (380-404/990-1013). Another conflict of sons is

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 105.

between Sulṭān al-Dawlah (377-380/987-990), Sharaf al-Dawlah (404-416/1013-1025) and Jalāl al-Dawlah (416-436/1025-1044).<sup>34</sup>

After the end of the power of the Buwayhīd dynasty in Baghdād, the power of the Shi'ite school has not come to the end. Because the Shi'ite power was still existed in the Abbasid dynasty which spreaded its discourse on the Shi'ite theology. Besides, there still also existed another Shi'ite sect which centered Egypt namely the Fātimid Isma'ili dynasty (296-566/909-1171) that is used to be called as the *bāṭiniyya*.

The origin of the Ismā'ili was rooted from the eldest son of Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. Initially, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq determined the successor of the imamate was Ismā'il. However, Ismā'il was passed away before his father. Then the majority of the Shia switched their allegiance to Ismā'il younger brother, from different mother, Mūsā al-Kāẓim as his successor. However, there are some minor Shi'ite groups who claim that the position of the imamate comes to Ismā'il's son, Muḥammad b. Ismā'il. This person was then believed by the Isma'ilite as the seventh imam and the savior (*mahdī*), for he was hidden at his age and delegating his deputies to represent his appearance in the real community. Through this lineage, the Isma'ili later established a Fatimid kingdom which centered in Egypt after the migration of al-Mu'izz, the forth Fatimid imam.<sup>35</sup>

Ismā'ili system of belief lies much on the philosophy of Pythagoras (d. 495 BC). The number seven is believed to have a sacred meaning. The seventh group divides all events of the universe and history in seven periods. In their gnostic beliefs, which are based on the view of neoplatonism, the emanation stages go through seven stages: God, universal reason, universal soul, main matter, space, time and the human world. The world was blessed with the descent of seven Prophets who spoke namely Adam, Nūh, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, 'Īsā, Muḥammad and Muḥammad b. Ismā'il. Between the seven periods of the Prophet (*naṭīq*), there were also seven silent imams (*sāmī*), including Ismā'il, Hārūn and 'Alī.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Sumayrah Ḥasan al-Jābūrī, *Dawlah al-Saljuqiyah mundh Qiyāmihā Sanah 455 H* (Baghdad: Dār al-Farāhidī, 2010), 39.

<sup>35</sup> Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: from Earliest Times to the Present* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 442.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 442-443.

The distribution of their discourse in the Abbāsid dynasty was very successful because it used smooth and effective political and religious propaganda. From the place of exile, they sent preachers to various Muslim regions by preaching their teachings called *bāṭiniyya* (esoteric). The teaching is that the Qur'an must be interpreted allegorically by looking for the meaning behind the words written in the text.<sup>37</sup>

Their power has reach a peak development in Syria, Persia and Irāq.<sup>38</sup> This Isma'ili Shia was still developing rapidly when the Seljuq dynasty appeared on the historical stage which began in 447/1055. The Isma'ili Shia was supported by philosophers who relied much upon their mind. Some of the thoughts and beliefs of the Shi'ite school are similar to that of the paganists and philosophers.<sup>39</sup> The faith of the Isma'ili Shia is considered as deviation from the Sharia of the Prophets and the Apostle and then replaced by the imams whom they consider to be the leader who are *ma'sūm* (far from sins).<sup>40</sup> They claimed that the words of the imams were the same as ḥadīth for their imamate were considered as prophecy.

The intellectuals background of al-Ghazālī were formed in this kind of discourse between the Sunnite and the Shi'ite during the reign of the Seljuq and the Fatimid. This was compounded by the existence of al-Ghazālī as a student in the Niẓāmīya with al-Juwaynī, who has to fight the Shi'ite theology, and the immanent relationship between al-Ghazālī the Seljūq when Al-Ghazālī was appointed by Niẓām al-Mulk as a professor at Niẓāmīya. This made the Sunnī Ash'arī intellectuals imbedded in the mind of al-Ghazālī. Then al-Ghazālī was obliged to spread the societal discourses on the true teaching of Islam which belongs to the Sunnite Seljuq dynasty, and at the same time to fight against the Islamic discourse of the *bāṭiniyya* which partly campaigned by the Fatimid dynasty.

Fighting the Isma'ili theology should have an adequate intellectuals, mainly on the scientific logic and philosophy. This was

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>38</sup> 'Alī Muḥammad al-Ṣallābī, *Dawlah al-Salājiqah wa Barūḡ Masbrū' al-Islāmī li Muqāwamat al-Taghalbul al-Bāṭinī wa al-Ghaḡw al-Ṣalībī* (Mesir: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1427), 265.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 352.

<sup>40</sup> 'Alī Muḥammad al-Ṣallābī, *Dawlah al-Fāṭimīyah* (Mesir: Mu'assasat Iqrā', 1427/2006), 41.

because the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt was fully supported by the philosophical ideas who have mastered logic and philosophy. Anyone will not be able to fight Shi'ite theologically if they are nor well-versed in the matter of logic and philosophy.

Al-Ghazālī as an intellectual representative of the Sunnite has seemingly fulfilled the requirements as a person who is able to fight the intellectual power of the Shi'ite. In giving explanations about the discourses that were disseminated, including an explanation of the discourse of ḥadīth science, al-Ghazālī always used logic and philosophy because his intellectual opponents were people who were very masters of logic and philosophy. The choice of logic and philosophy as well as its methods (not science and other methods) in explaining statements and discourses, including the science of ḥadīth, has become the most featured in the epistemic paradigm of al-Ghazālī. Here lies the basic difference between the discourse of the ḥadīth of Al-Ghazālī with the scholars of ḥadīth in general.

Further, al-Ghazālī is a very unique figure compared to his predecessor clerics in defending religion. The previous scholars have only weaponized their ideas with the "pseudo" science of theology, which is considered as the most solid fortress in defending Islam. It then turns out that this fortress with the science of theology can only survive in the normal situation, and it cannot be an attack weapon.

Al-Ghazālī was aware that philosophers were not a common opponent. Therefore, he used logic and philosophy to win the theological discourse. Both approaches are not well managed by their predecessor, and they were even prohibited to learn on it. When al-Ghazālī served as a professor at the Madrasa of Nizāmīya, it was at this time that al-Ghazālī wrote books on logic and philosophy so that the problems in philosophy which were considered complicated by society became easily understood and the truths of religion could be understood by sense. In this case, al-Ghazālī succeeded in deciphering spider threads that wrapped philosophy and tried to eliminate the monopoly of the scientific mastery by writing a book entitled *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah*.<sup>41</sup>

Al-Ghazālī was keen to eliminate large distances in the philosophy circle so that philosophy could be easily understood by

<sup>41</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ḥusnī al-Nadawī, *Rijāl al-Fikr wa al-Da'wah fī al-Islām*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1428/2007), 969.

society. Al-Ghazālī even mentions that the sharia will be weakened and even destroyed because it rests on fatal mistakes: the ignorance of those who defend Islam by rejecting philosophy totally so that religion becomes irrational (even contrary to the development of science) and people who rely on philosophy totally<sup>42</sup> which causes *naṣṣ* (revelation) will always be understood esoterically (inner meaning) like the Shi'ite Isma'īl which can also undermine the religion of Islam from within. This is what causes al-Ghazālī to determine the principles and rules that must be used as a basis for philosophy, that philosophy is not contradicted to the sharia (*naṣṣ*).<sup>43</sup>

Based on the explanation above, it can be emphasized that the explanation of al-Ghazālī about the discourse of ḥadīth science by using or incorporating the approaches and methods of logic and philosophy, which both approaches are not mastered by his previous scholars of ḥadīth, is an epistemic paradigm of al-Ghazālī in dealing with the philosophers. Although the mastery of the logic and philosophy of al-Ghazālī was considered to exceed the philosophers of the time, however, al-Ghazālī did not leave the text (*naṣṣ*). This fact significantly proves that al-Ghazālī is not a pure philosopher (who when he found *naṣṣ* is explained esoterically), but he was a philosopher who fight for the Sunnite theology and used logic and philosophy to explain the ḥadīth science. Thus, it make sense that his approach was different from other scholars mainly on the idea of ḥadīth discourse who put a parameter of reaching the level of *ḍarūrī* than only counting the number of narrators in determining the level of *mutawātir* of the ḥadīth. This approach was then obviously framed by the opponents milieu of the philosophers and the Isma'īli Shia.

The defense of al-Ghazālī to the *naṣṣ* (in this, prophetic ḥadīth) shows that al-Ghazālī was still confined to the old epistemological reason of *bayānī* (textual episteme). In facing other ideological communities, i.e. the Shi'ite Isma'īli at that time, al-Ghazālī relied upon a dogmatic attitude of the Sunnite theology, carrying out an apology and defensive with logic and philosophy, because his opponent have mastered these two sciences and made a dialectical-polemic defense in various debates. In other words, all the functions

<sup>42</sup> Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad Shāmī, *Al-Imām Al-Ghazālī Ḥujjat al-Islām wa Mujaddid al-Mi'ab al-Khāmisah* (Damaskus: Dār al-Qalam, 1434/1994), 81.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Ṣallābī, *Dawlah al-Salājīyah*, 354.



and roles of the real mind are to confirm and justify the *naṣṣ* (text). This is what was affirmed by ‘Abid al-Jābirī as *ta’sīs al-bayān ‘alā al-burhān* (affirming the text through a set of evidences) which has confined Muslims in the early 5<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

The discussion on *ḵabābar mutawātir* and *ḵabābar āḥād* in the perspective of al-Ghazālī has its uniqueness when compared to the scholars of ḥadīth. This uniqueness is because al-Ghazālī included logic and philosophical approach in addressing the science of ḥadīth. Both approaches of logic and philosophy was derived from the Greek tradition and was never used by the previous scholars of ḥadīth such as al-Ramāhurmuḥī (360/971), al-Bāqillānī (403/1012) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (463/1071), for they still regarded them as a tradition outside the boundary of Islamic thought.

The use of logic and philosophy in explaining *ḵabābar mutawātir* and *ḵabābar āḥād* by al-Ghazālī was because his position as representative of the Sunnite authority to fight against the Shi‘ite forces of the Fatimid dynasty. The Shi‘ites who opposed the Sunnite rule were master of logic and philosophy which then forced al-Ghazālī use this approach in order to balance the discourse of his opponents. However, this confrontative milieu between Sunni and Shi‘ite has formed the epistemic paradigm of al-Ghazālī, particularly on the thought of ḥadīth.

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<sup>44</sup> Muḥammad ‘Abid al-Jābirī, *Bunyat al-‘Aql al-‘Arabī: Dirāsah Taḥlīlīyah Naqdīyah li Naẓm al-Ma‘rifah fī al-Thaqāfah al-‘Arabīyah* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsah al-Wiḥdah al-‘Arabīyah, 2009), 588.

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