



## **FROM HISTORICAL TO NORMATIVE-THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES: Hadith Studies and Prophetic Tradition According to Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino**

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### **Abstract**

The present article is a descriptive-analytical examination of the hadith studies trend in Germany. Represented by Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino, Professor of Hadith Studies and Prophetic Tradition at Zentrum für Islamische Theologie at the University of Tübingen Germany, it explores his methodological and didactical contribution to the hadith studies traced through his publications. This study shows that Ruggero focuses on the theological dimension of hadith, as opposed to the historical study of hadith. Ruggero investigates one of the pioneers of referential text on the science of hadith, *al-Ilma'* by The Moroccan Maliki scholar al-Qadi 'Iyad. Besides studying *'Ulum al-Hadits* literature, he also expands his research on a reference text of Sunni prophetology, *al-Shifa' bi-ta'rif Huquq al-Muṣṭafa* by the same author. In line with the previous topic, he tries to answer the question of how the Prophet Muhammad should be perceived by doing a critical study of prophetology according to 'Abd al-Ḥalim Maḥmud. Ruggero also offers a comprehensive thematic approach concerning prophetological themes to counter fundamentalism and solve the conflict in some Muslim communities. The theological approach to

hadith offered by Ruggero defines hadith as transmitted testimony. While classical hadith studies which places hadith as a source for prophetic tradition focusing on transmission and Orientalism/Islamic Studies put hadith as history and document which portrayed social and culture of past Muslim societies, Ruggero wants to integrate both approaches and brings them into dialogue.

**Keywords:** hadith studies, prophetic tradition, Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino

### Abstrak

Artikel ini adalah analisis deskriptif-analitik dari tren studi hadits di Jerman. Diwakili oleh Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino, Profesor Studi Hadits dan Tradisi Nabi di Zentrum für Islamische Theologie di Universitas Tübingen Jerman, tulisan ini mengeksplorasi kontribusi metodologis dan didaktis pada studi hadis yang ditelusuri melalui publikasinya. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa Ruggero berfokus pada dimensi teologis hadis, berlawanan dengan kajian sejarah hadis. Ruggero menyelidiki salah satu perintis kitab referensi pada ilmu hadits, al-Ilma, oleh ulama Maliki Maroko al-Qadi, Iyad. Selain mempelajari literatur Ulum al-Hadits, ia juga memperluas penelitiannya pada teks referensi kenabian Sunni, al-Shifa' bi-ta'rif Huquq al-Muṣṭafa oleh penulis yang sama. Sejalan dengan topik sebelumnya, ia mencoba menjawab pertanyaan bagaimana seharusnya Nabi Muhammad dipandang dengan melakukan kajian kritis terhadap profetologi menurut 'Abd al-Ḥalim Maḥmud. Ruggero juga menawarkan pendekatan tematik yang komprehensif tentang tema-tema kenabian untuk melawan fundamentalisme dan menyelesaikan konflik di beberapa komunitas Muslim. Pendekatan teologis dalam hadis yang ditawarkan oleh Ruggero mendefinisikan hadis sebagai *transmitted testimony*. Sementara kajian hadits klasik yang menempatkan hadits sebagai sumber hadis kenabian yang berfokus pada transmisi dan Orientalisme/Studi Islam menempatkan hadits sebagai sejarah dan dokumen yang menggambarkan sosial dan budaya masyarakat Muslim masa lalu, Ruggero ingin mengintegrasikan kedua pendekatan tersebut dan membawanya ke dalam dialog.

**Kata kunci:** studi hadis, tradisi kenabian, RUGgero Vimercati Sanseverino

## Introduction

In contrast with the study of the Qur'an, the study of hadith in the West is difficult to discover separately but may be tracked through related publications. Although scientific study on hadith can only be dated back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD (Amiruddin, 2021; Budiman, Safri, & Wendry, 2020; Mukholik, 2017), Western interest in the transmission of hadith and hadith literature began in the 17th century, even if it was not a priority. The cause may be linked to two broad facts: first, the prevalent skeptical perception of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad at the moment. Second, the Prophet's traditions are seen as having less historical significance than the Qur'an. Both of these circumstances may have led to Western intellectuals' lack of intellectual interest for hadith studies.

The initial modern studies of hadith were inspired by Western scholars' increasing fascination in Muhammad's life as recorded in his traditions, which awakened their awareness to the value of prophetic traditions other than the Qur'an. According to Daniel W. Brown in his book *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, the first Western academics to examine hadith were Aloys Sprenger with the *Life of Mohammad, From Original Sources* (1851 AD) and William Muir with his work *Life of Mahomet* (1858 AD) (Brown, 1996). The study was successful in attracting the attention of a broader variety of Western readers to the topic of hadith and is regarded as a springboard for more structured effectively scholarly publications. Ignaz Goldziher, on the other hand, was the orientalist who drew the most attention. Ignaz was the first orientalist who investigated hadith, according to 'Azami ('Azami, 1978), with his work *Mohammedan Studien* (1889-1891 AD) (Permana,

2019). Joseph Schacht's project *The Origins of Muhammad Jurisprudence* (1950 M) maintained the golden period of orientalist research in the subject of hadith. Juynboll, like his predecessors, became alarmed by the presence of hadith and frequently queried the origin, legitimacy, and reliability of previously thought-to-be-established sources (Ahsan, 2021; Juynboll, 1983, 2007)

In Indonesia, research on the growth of hadith studies in the West are quite appealing (Ahsan, 2021). This is partly due to a fundamental paradigm change in Western hadith studies. Western and Islamic interactions are about more than only colonization; they are also about the exchange of ideas. Sukron (Sukron, 2019) initially categorizes Western aims in learning Islam before delving into hadith research. Initially, the West's objective in studying Islam was to identify Islam's flaws. Following the Crusades, the West began to seek to Islam for enlightenment. When colonialism began, Islamic studies in the West were the most effective instrument for understanding the social life of Islamic society, and they subsequently became a reference for policy making by colonialists. Another step is a scientific and objective examination of Islam. It is impossible to deny that some Western monumental works have added to the repertoire of Islamic studies.

The Western paradigm of hadith studies first questioned the Prophet Muhammad's existence, and the consequence was to deny everything that came from him. Then, from the 1970s, colleges in the West began to bring in Muslim experts because they saw Islamic studies, including hadith, as incomplete without learning from them. As a result, Western academics such as Harald Motzki, a professor at Nijmegen University in the Netherlands, began to examine hadith critically and even criticized their predecessors (Budiman, Mu'in, & A'yun, 2022; Wazna, 2018).

Nabia Abbott (d.1981) and Jonathan Brown (Budiman & Handayana, 2022) are two names of hadith study researchers who arose in the United States. Brown divides Western hadith scholars into three categories: *orientalists*, who are suspicious of hadith's existence, *revisionists*, who aim at expanding on earlier thinking, and *reevaluation scholars*, who try to counter orientalist and revisionist ideas. Herbert Berg, a Brazilian-born orientalist, is another who categorizes hadith thought in the West. He classified them as follows: *Early Western Scepticism*, *Reaction Against Scepticism*, *Middle Ground*, and *Renewed Scepticism* (Amiruddin, 2021).

Hadith studies in America are fairly established and acquire attention, particularly in the study of authenticity (Altıntaş, 2015), and are steadily shifting to other concerns such as hadith transmission. *Carrying on the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission Across a Thousand Years* (Davidson, 2020) is a recent publication on this subject. This work makes a significant improvement to the Western study of hadith. Davidson emphasized the existence of post-canonical hadith narrations (particularly *ijāzah*), which differs greatly from the first three centuries of Islam. His writings laid the groundwork for subsequent inquiry into the history of hadith and its transmission, particularly in the post-canonical period, when oral transmission of hadith was diminished but compensated for by the availability of an extensive number of manuscripts.

The purpose of the article is to provide an innovative perspective of hadith studies in the West, notably Germany. According to Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino, the study of hadith adopting a theological normative approach is still relatively new in Germany. As a result, certain of Ruggero's writings require examination in order to learn about his perspectives on hadith and the approach he offers for analyzing the prophet's hadiths and traditions. This research is provided in an

analytical descriptive method applying Ruggero's works as main data, which illustrate his thoughts concerning hadith, through a qualitative investigation. The character study (individual life history) approach was used with the purpose of obtaining an overview of Ruggero's perceptions, motivations, and methodology in achieving hadith, especially when it comes to the transmission of hadith and the existence of prophetic traditions in contemporary Islamic life (Mustaqim, 2014, p. 201-218)

## **Profile of Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino**

Prof. Dr. Phil. Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino is a *Hadith-Studien und Prophetische Tradition* Professor at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen's *Zentrum für Islamische Theologie* (ZITh/Center for Islamic Theology). Ruggero was born in 1979 in Velletri, Italy, and is of Italian descent, hence he speaks Italian fluently. He is also proficient in German and French, having studied in both. Throughout his career, he has also demonstrated proficiency in English and Arabic. (<https://Uni-Tuebingen.de/En/Faculties/Center-for-Islamic-Theology/Staff/Scientific-Personnel/Prof-Dr-Ruggero-Vimercati-Sanseverino/#c756519>," n.d.)

Regarding education, he earned his bachelor's degree at Turin, Italy and at the University of Tübingen (2002-2005). He completed his master's degree in 2007 at the Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman (IREMAM/CNRS), Aix-en-Provence, France. In 2008, he was awarded a research grant from the Institute for Research and Studies of the Arab World and Muslims (IREMAM/CNRS), and from 2009 to 2010, he researched at the Center Jacques Berque/CNRS pour les sciences humaines et sociales au Maroc in Rabat, Morocco.

He received his PhD in 2012 by the Université d'Aix-Marseille (Aix-Marseille University) in France. His thesis (*Fès et sainteté, de la fondation à l'avènement du Protectorat (808-1912): Hagiographie,*

*tradition spirituelle, et héritage prophétique dans la ville de Mawlāy Idrīs* (French Edition)) was published in 2014 (Rabat: Center Jacques Berque/ CNRS, The Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie).

His academic career set up in 2014 as a scientific coordinator at the University of Tübingen's *Zentrum für Islamische Theologie* (ZITh/ Center for Islamic Theology). From 2013 to 2014, he served as a research associate at IREMAM/CNRS. Ruggero did postdoctoral fellowships at ZITh at the same time period. He has been a junior professor and chair of the Study of Prophetic Hadith and Traditions at ZITh since October 2016. Ruggero is the first hadith professor in Germany, and most likely in Europe, who applies a normative-theological method to research hadith and prophetic traditions, as well as hadith teaching. Starting in January 2021, he becomes a full professor (full professorship).

Ruggero's writings were written in a variety of languages, most notably German and French. In a monthly colloquium conducted on the last Friday of each month, he explained that ZITh has recently begun translating academic works into English in an effort to promote the hadith study methodology in Tübingen.

He has been collaborating on the book *Handbook of Oriental Studies: The Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam Volume 1 The Prophet Between Doctrine, Literature, and Arts: Historical Legacies and Their Unfolding*, Denis Gril, Stefan Reichmuth, and Dilek Sarmis (Editors) (Studies, 2021). This three-volume collection is an effort to investigate the dynamics of portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad throughout Muslim history. This first volume portrays Muhammad as a model character who molded Islam from the beginning to its current state. A number of essays in the handbook examine the figure of Muhammad from many distinct views among Sunnis and Shiites, as well as how Muslims continue to convey Muhammad in their life through prophetic traditions or culture.

Ruggero submitted his study *Theology of Prophet Muhammad Veneration (Knowledge and Love in the Shifā of al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149) between Hadīth, Philosophy and Spirituality)*. He analyzed hadith literature and prophetic traditions in respect to the connection between prophecy and hadith transmission according to well-known 12th century theological treatises *al-Shifā bi-Ta‘rīf Uqūq al-Muṣṭafā* by al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ.

His supplementary works on Islamic spirituality include *Interpreting the Meaning of Islamic Ritual (The Spiritual Significance of Ritual Prayer According to al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892) and Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajība (d. 1224/1809))* 2010 (<https://www.themathesontrust.org/library/vimercati-interpreting>,” n.d.). Other ongoing projects include entries *Topics and Themes Within the Corpora of Hadith* in the soon-to-be-published Oxford Handbook of Hadith Studies. Whereas Ruggero’s article in the field of *‘Ulūm al-Hadīth is Transmission, Ethos and Authority in Hadith Scholarship (A Reading of al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s (476–544/1083–1149) Handbook of Hadith Science “The Elucidation of the Principles of Transmission and of the Transcription of Audition”)* (Sanseverino, 2019b).

## **Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino Hadith Thoughts**

### *Methodological Conception*

“*Combat Prophetology, Sīra and Ḥadīth: Considerations about Some Approaches in Academic Islamic Theology in View of the Jihadist Reference to the Prophet Muḥammad*” published in the book *Modernization, Protestantization and Salafization. modern Islam the Instrumentalization of Nass in His Thought* (Istanbul: ISAR Yayinlari, 2019), is one of Ruggero’s writings on the existence of prophetic traditions and contemporary Muslim life. (Istanbul: ISAR Yayinlari, 2019). Another article is entitled “*Secularization and Conflicting Images of Muhammad in Contemporary*



*Islam: The Critical Meaning of Prophetology According to ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (1910-1978)’ in Transfer and Religion. Interactions between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam between the Middle Ages and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (2020).*

According to Ruggero, the study of hadith from a normative-theological perspective is a relatively new field in Germany. He did not, however, argue that he proposed the method and his focus of study on hadith studies at the University of Tübingen. Furthermore, the quantity of writings in an English version is still restricted in comparison to the use of German and French. As a result, discussion of Ruggero’s hadith views is restricted to publications in English version. Some of these texts are believed to be appropriate to demonstrate Ruggero’s approach to the study of hadith and prophetic traditions.

First, the essay *Combat Prophetology, Sīra and Ḥadīth: Considerations about Some Approaches in Academic Islamic Theology in View of the Jihadist Reference to the Prophet*(Sanseverino, 2019a) demonstrates the importance of a theological viewpoint in analyzing hadith literature. Ruggero examined the phenomenon of *jihad* in this piece. His research centered on the figure of Muhammad, particularly the interaction between the Muslim community and the source of his prophecy via diverse modalities such as interpretative tradition, canonical community, and personal experience.

Ruggero assessed that contemporary Islamic thought and research, particularly on prophetic themes, are generally based on the assumption that critical engagement with contemporary Islamic developments must result in the humanization, de-mystification, and secularization of the figure of Muhammad. According to this perspective, the notion of humanizing Muhammad’s figure proves helpful in combating different actions that lead to fundamentalism and in resolving problems

between some segments of the Muslim community and modernity.

He also believed that perceiving Muhammad from a theological standpoint was equally crucial. He analyzed the theological relevance of Muhammad's figure and the meaning it bears for Muslims' religious and spiritual experiences (Sanseverino, 2019a). Other studies show that the lack of modernization results in the creation of doctrinal jihadism (extremism) and communication connected to the rise of prophetic secularization in modern Islamic thought. Other studies show that the failure of modernization results in the creation of doctrinal jihadism (extremism) and communication connected to the rise of prophetic secularization in modern Islamic philosophy. Furthermore, the figurative significance of Muhammad's dominant figure and his close connection with the Muslim community helps to justify jihad. Instead of attempting to demolish it, academic theology selects intellectual and methodological tools to provide ways for Muslims to apply it as a resource for effectively coping with current difficulties.

Ruggero did not always agree that a theological approach to prophetic studies is the most effective method to address modern issues. A proper understanding is of critical importance since it is also necessary to integrate theological study and critique of the Prophet's dehumanization and secularization in education, religious practice, and public discourse. Further investigation is also required to strengthen the theoretical and methodological framework, as well as outline the appropriate concepts for integrating the challenges of jihadism into current Islamic thinking and discourse. Ruggero stressed the significance of critical thought on the use of hadith by jihadists, particularly demonstrating its discordance with hadith science and the theological consequences that result. The crucial problem is, of course, how digitalization of communication impacts Muslim faith. They may acquire knowledge on jihad through many media outlets. Other theological traditions' experiences with the

functionalization of religious characters, narratives, and symbols are being investigated further. A multidisciplinary approach is also required to establish a meaningful dialogue among academic theology and the social sciences, so that jihad no longer appears as a waste of failing modernity and globalization. This is the responsibility of modern society as an entire community, not only Muslims.

Second, Sanseverino's paper *Secularization and Conflicting Images of the Prophet in Contemporary Islam (The Critical Meaning of Prophetology According to 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd) (1910-78)* (Sanseverino, 2020). Ruggero also stressed the significance of representing Muhammad in this work. Muslims' perceptions of their Prophet have impacts for religious knowledge and behavior. Allah's Messenger is God's assigned who conveyed Islamic teachings that are contained in the Qur'an. For Muslims, the Prophet's behavior, teachings, and life serve as normative and exemplary ideals, and they serve as significant sources and references for the articulation of the Islamic faith. According to Ruggero (quoted Constance Padwick's statement), the relation between Muslims and their Prophet is an emotional and spiritual relationship in their religious life. The type of love for the Prophet Muhammad is particularly dominant and demonstrates a strong religious commitment. The picture of Muhammad established by his belief (faith in the Prophet) creates a Muslim's identity.

As stated by Ruggero, the study of how the Prophet is portrayed has been extensively examined via numerous texts, dialogues, and religious rituals. This is a continuing endeavor to trace the representation of the Prophet Muhammad. In reality, the attempt to depict the figure of the Prophet Muhammad in the manner of "vivifying" the character of Muhammad initiatives to meet the changing historical necessities of Muslim culture. As a result, theological dispute about Muhammad's figure continues throughout Islamic history while also being an object of

scholarly research that is never out of date. The importance of this issue is due not solely to its historical and cultural importance, but also to the ongoing alteration of Western perceptions of Muhammad.

Modernization in the twentieth century additionally influenced the direction of Muhammad research. Ruggero examines the al-Azhar scholar Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (d. 1398/1978) in this work. Modernization, as manifested by the secularization of political, social, and cultural processes, provides a fresh perspective on the issues surrounding Islamic conceptions of the Prophet Muhammad. Secular study adapted from the West attempts a different view of the figure of Muhammad than the sources relied on by the Ummah. Academic study on Muhammad's image in the political, social, and economic realms is usually centered on his emergence and historical evolution. Meanwhile, the deconstruction and reinterpretation of Muhammad's figure, mediated by a secular perspective that triggered a dynamic combination of Muslim perception and research conducted by orientalists, continue to be favorites among academics.

Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd is regarded as an outstanding scholar in current Islamic study in addressing modernity's challenges to the secularization of the image of Muhammad. An examination of Muhammad's thought revealed that, rather than viewing the prophetic figure as a legacy from the past that must be preserved or rejected (since it is obsolete), parts of Muhammad as a Muslim identity and prophetic tradition may serve theologically as an objective examination of the evolution and trends of contemporary thought (Sanseverino, 2020). In addition, Maḥmūd's proposition was welcomed as a beginning point for a constructive conversation between Islamic tradition and modernity. Mamd emphasized that a rigorous investigation of numerous sources is required to obtain the correct Islamic vision of Muhammad, especially in a scenario where Muslims are confronted with intellectual secularization

and religious culture. He additionally asserted that for a 'clear image' (*ṣūra wāḍiḥa*) of the Prophet Muhammad, he must be positioned as both a human being and a prophet, although orientalists are frequently and almost exclusively focused on the individual figure. The bond between Muslims and the Prophet became the essential term for Maḥmūd's contribution. The representations of prophets as purely historical individuals or ethical role models can damage, if not completely destroy, Muslims' emotional and spiritual attachments to their Prophet.

Third, the research conducted by Ruggero in the article entitled *Transmission, Ethos and Authority in Hadith Scholarship (A Reading of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's (476–544/1083–1149) Handbook of Hadith Science "The Elucidation of the Principles of Transmission and of the Transcription of Audition")* (Sanseverino, 2019b). Ruggero did book research (content analysis) *al-Ilmā' Ilā Ma'rifat Uṣūl al-Riwāyah wa-Taqyīd al-Samā'* (Explanation of Transmission Principles and Audition Transcription), one of the pioneer books of Hadith Science written by Moroccan scholar al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ al-Yaḥṣubī (476-544 H/1083-1149 AD). Ruggero believes that, although being the first work in discussing the topic of hadith science in Morocco, scholars in Europe have yet to examine it. Ruggero traced al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ thoughts on the authority of hadith and its transmission. Following the structure of the book *al-Ilma'*, the discussion is divided into five topics: the epistemological basis of hadith transmission and theological authority/authority, the functions and objectives of hadith transmission, the technicalities and requirements of authority, and the significance of the ethos of hadith transmission. An additional objective of this research is to offer scientific parts of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ that have not been addressed by hadith studies enthusiasts in Europe.

In the view of Ruggero, the *al-Ilma'* gives excellent insight into the fundamental topics being disputed in contemporary Islamic philosophy and present theology: the authority of hadith as a source of

Islamic doctrines and its historical growth throughout Islam's formative period. When it came to hadith authority, he attempted a different approach, particularly in the methodology and history of pre-modern hadith studies. Instead of focusing on these two issues, he was more interested in studying al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ work in order to do an interpretative reading. The purpose was to learn about al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ view of hadith authority and how he expressed and interpreted it. Hadith quoted at the beginning of the book *al-Ilma'* more or less reflected the view of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ that the theological aspect (religious authority) cannot be separated from the issue of hadith authority as well as the nature and nature of hadith transmission (Sanseverino, 2019b). In this respect, identifying the nature of hadith authority only from a methodological standpoint seemed insufficient for comprehending hadith narration and classical Sunni scholarship. Because the primary premise was that prophethood is defined by divine revelation, the Prophet's position as God's representative is critical in comprehending the core of hadith transmission from theological viewpoint.

Ruggero maintained that *al-Ilma'* provided an opportunity for Muslims to reconnect with their Prophet and resolve divides. The transmission of hadith is a method of returning the Prophet's persona and preserving sunnah, which is steadily fading among Muslims in the West. Understanding the authority of a particular action (transmission), the integrity of the narrator, and the quality of his performance in hadith transmission are all part of studying the authority of hadith. The narrator has a vital role in deciding the substance of the sunnah and the aim of his transmission, which is to give Muslims with guidance. If the narrators can internalize and enhance the sunnah, they are considered to have good authority and ethos.

Fourth, the article entitled *Theology of Veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad: Knowledge and love in the Shifā of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149)*

*Between ḥadīth, Philosophy and Spirituality* (Sanseverino, 2022). Fourth, the article entitled *Theology of Veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad: Knowledge and love in the Shifā of al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149) Between ḥadīth, Philosophy and Spirituality* (Sanseverino, 2022). Rogero considered *al-Shifā* as the main reference about prophethood among Sunnis. He also stated explicitly that the analysis of *al-Shifā* can increase the love of the Prophet. In addition, this work also provided motivation to study topics that have not received attention from academics in the West.

Ruggero argued that *al-Shifā* showed that respect (veneration) and *mahabbah* (love) to the Prophet Muhammad occupies an important position in Sunni theological and scientific discourse. al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ used hadith, philosophy and Sufism approaches to review various prophetic literature (Sanseverino, 2022). This thorough investigation used a variety of ways to demonstrate Muhammad’s presence as a savior for Muslims’ religious lives. Furthermore, the examination of diverse literatures through various techniques provides the possibility of describing Muhammad’s prophetic figure in a systematic, logical, and complete manner. Ruggero pretended that al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ composed *al-Shifā* in order to build a new method of analyzing prophecy. As a result, in addition to combining the work of his predecessors, he also proposed a new paradigm of prophetic research. Previous prophetic studies focused on prophetic teaching and mission, but *al-Shifā* examines the Prophet Muhammad’s personality and position in religious life.

*Al-Shifā* consisted of four sections covering doctrinal and practical aspects in the study of prophecy. The first part discussed the position of the prophet Muhammad along with the arguments from the Qur’an, his miracles and figures in the holy books of earlier religions. This section was rich in analysis of various works on prophecy from various genres specifically for interpretation. However, al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ did not forget to

insert elements of ethical philosophy and prophetic analysis inspired by *Kalam*, *Fiqh* and Sufism (Sanseverino, 2022). The second part contained the rights of the Prophet and attitudes towards the Prophet. Respect for the Prophet is an implication of the priority of the Prophet. According to Ruggero, this second discussion was the uniqueness of *Al-Shifa* because it was viewed from various scientific genres. The third part dealt with the reality of Muhammad's prophethood and its theological articulation, the character that must exist, which is impossible and possible in the figure of a prophet. The classical *Kalam* approach was very strong in this section, especially when describing the relationship between the human side of Muhammad and his prophetic authority. If part three was dominated by the approach of *Kalam*, then the fourth part focused on the study of pure *Fiqh*, especially the implementation of the Prophet's rights from social and political aspects, particularly Islamic government. Therefore, *Al-Shifā* was also known as a reference cope with blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad, mainly in this socio-political aspect.

### *Didactic Notion: Hadithwissenschaften und prophetische Tradition*

Hadith studies are regarded as a key subject in Islamic theology within the context of education and learning. Ruggero defines hadith as textually recorded testimony of the Prophet Muhammad's remarks, acts, qualities, and so forth. Hadith, together with the Qur'an (Islam's most extensive holy book and most essential source), constitute the foundation of recorded information concerning prophetic traditions (Sunnah), which play a vital part in religion and the Islamic way of life. Despite the immense theological, historical, and social significance of the hadith tradition, as well as the complex challenges arising from the contemporary Islamic crisis regarding religion transmission and the issue of prophecy, Ruggero admits that the study of hadith with a normative-



theological approach is still in its early phases in German and European Islamic theology. This early stage of development includes exploration of the theoretical methodological foundations of hadith and tradition, hadith literature content related to theological approaches, ranking of institutions (the institutional visibility) in this context namely ZITH of University of Tübingen, including didactic (hadith studies), publicity of hadith literature and research of hadith. This allows Ruggero as head of hadith studies to act as a bridge for cross-regional hadith research (Western and Arabic or Turkish). The ultimate goal is to develop a center for the study of hadith in Europe.

In addition to the methodological efforts and studies conducted by Ruggero, also through hadith didactic and learning conducted through institutions. First, preparing teaching materials in German. Ruggero in one of the correspondences with the author said that ZITH is currently in the process of translating works in the field of hadith from German and Arabic to English and/or vice versa and also provides a list of the latest publications in field of Hadith and '*Ulūm al-Hadith* in German. Among them, Mohammad Gharaibeh, *Einführung in die Wissenschaften des Hadith, seine Überlieferungsgeschichte und Literatur* (Introduction to the Science of Hadith, History of Transmission and Literature), Freiburg i. Br: Kalam Verlag KG, 2016), Şuayip Seven, *Traditionelle Hadith-Hermeneutik im Zusammenhang mit modernen Ansätzen der Ankaraner Schule* (Traditional Hadith Hermeneutics in the Context of the Modern Approach of the Ankara School) (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2017), Yasar Sarikaya, *Hadith und Hadithdidaktik: Eine Einführung* (Hadith and Didactic Hadith: An Introduction), (Stuttgart: Schöningh UTB, 2021) and Ulvi Karagedik, *Hadith Hermeneutik: Methoden, Grundlagen und Praxis* (Hermeneutics of Hadith: Methods, Principles and Practice), (UTB 5763. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022).

Second, writing and editing publications in German and

English on topics, approaches and various issues of theological hadith studies. Ruggero seems to have a great interest in traditions, hadiths and various literature about the Prophet Muhammad which includes: the transmission of hadiths, the veneration (worship/respect) of the prophet among Sunnis, the example of the prophet (the emulation of the prophet) and *taqwa* (Islamic piety), the dynamics of transmission, tradition and renewal in Islam, classical and modern Islamic prophecy and the history of Islamic spirituality. This aspect of spirituality, according to the writer, is the specialty of Ruggero's hadith thinking, in which hadith is seen as an instrument for personal experience of engaging with the Prophet Muhammad. This concept is desperately required by the Muslim community in Europe and the world at large, given the assault of globalization, modernization, and secularization in many areas of life. Religious practices and the basis of prophetic hermeneutics are undeniably linked.

Based on his writings on *jihad* (read: extremist movements), it is obvious that Ruggero places considerable importance on Muslims' interaction with prophetic sources (hadith) and how Muslims position the Prophet Muhammad to play an essential part in minimizing the negative effects of changes in contemporary Muslim society's life. His examination of Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd's thought confirms his point of view. Understanding the figure of the Prophet Muhammad requires a theological perspective in addition to an interdisciplinary one. So, when studying al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ 's two works, Ruggero continually emphasizes on focusing on the transmission of hadith and the figure of Muhammad from a theological standpoint.

Third, developing international cooperation, especially with his previous university in France which studies Hadith and Prophetic as well as several research institutions in Arab (Egypt and Morocco) and Turkey. This can be seen when he received a research grant and continued his

dissertation which raised Islamic civilization in Morocco. Ruggero also presented his writings on al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s (1083-1149) ‘Elucidation Concerning the Knowledge of Hadith Transmission’ (book *al-Ilma*) at the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies, Cairo, 11-13 January 2018. Meanwhile, studies on the *al-Shifā* delivered at the World Congress of Middle East Studies, in Ankara, 18-22 August 2014.

Fourth, in study and teaching, creating interdisciplinary hadith studies with Jewish and Christian theology, particularly in the realm of hermeneutics of scriptures and traditions and interpretation of religious texts. When reacting to the phenomenon of jihad (extremist movements), a multidisciplinary method was proposed. This interdisciplinary research, he believes, is critical for developing modern theological hadith studies that are relevant to religious life in Germany and Europe in general.

As an indicator of dedication in expanding theological hadith study, the following are several on-going projects in hadith studies in Germany, Ruggero undertook book publication *Hadith – Themen, Ansätze und Fragestellungen* (Arabic and German with comments) and *Theologie der 40 Hadithe* (Arba’in Hadith)”. Besides, an annotated bibliography on the issue of hadith studies employing a theological perspective was also written. Moreover, Ruggero established the academic network “Spirituality of the Prophet,” which is committed to studies on prophecy and spirituality in the lives of Muslims. Another effort in research development is the preparation of an interdisciplinary study proposal entitled “Connecting with the Prophet Muhammad. Rethinking the Transmission of the Prophetic Tradition”. In the realm of understanding hadith, Ruggero developed a writing project *Theological-Scientific Hadith Commentary* (Understanding/Tafsir Hadith with a theological-scientific approach) (“<https://Uni-Tuebingen.de> n.d.)

## Discourse on the Theological Approach to Hadith Studies: A Methodological Proposal

Ruggero presents a theological perspective to the study of hadith through the views expressed in numerous of his publications. This approach model aims to objectively investigate hadith and its transmission as a source for contemporary Islamic theology, as though participating in a dialogue with the Prophet Muhammad. Recognizing hadith's ability to attract, organize, and challenge modern Muslims, Theological Hadith Studies hadith as a Muslim's live testimony to the Prophet Muhammad's encounter. His research and teaching are centered on prophecy as a medium between God and mankind, transmission as a medium between revelation and society, and tradition as a medium between guidance and the present (Budiman, 2022).

In classical hadith studies (*'Ulūm al-Hadīth*), as developed in the Islamic tradition, the hadith is primarily regarded as a tradition whose continuity and consistency with the prophetic word must be traced for its validity. Therefore, classical hadith scholarship is devoted to *riwāyah*, the actual collection and transmission of hadith, and *dirāyah*, examination of hadith material in relation to its belief as a testimony to prophetic words. Therefore, the main function of classical hadith scholarship is the transmission of the words of the prophet, including the *aqwāl*, *af'āl* and *aḥwāl* Nabi saw.

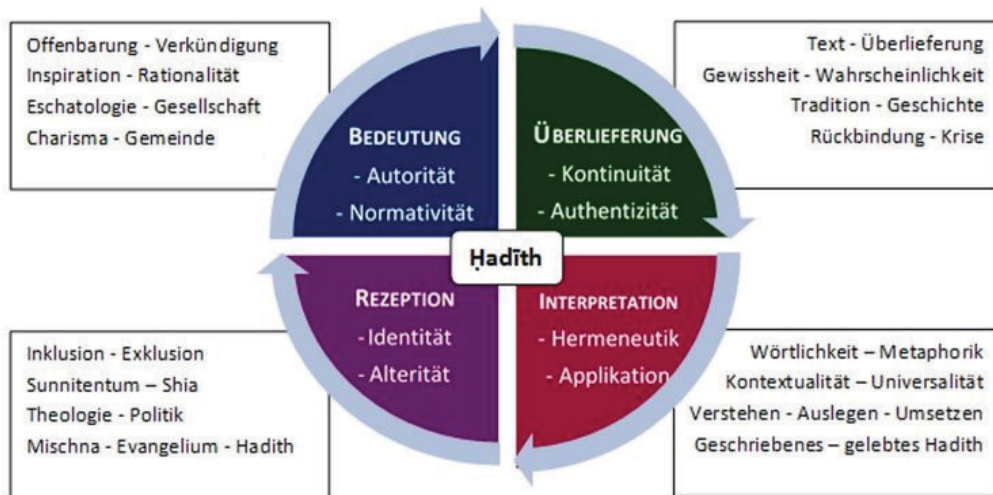
Hadith studies in the field of orientalism, on the other hand, reveal that hadiths are investigated as historical texts that give information about the context when Islam developed. The extent to which the hadith tradition historically represents the Prophet's acts is a point of debate in Islamic studies, with no clear viewpoint to decide on. Hadiths are increasingly being explored in current Islamic academic study on the basis of their historical acceptability as cultural legacy, which gives

insight into past Islamic social behaviors, cultural networks, legitimacy discourses, and so forth.

Through the two segments of the hadith studies mentioned above, the theological hadith study presented by Ruggero, explores the hadith as a theological testimony, notably as a source of religious practice in Islam. Therefore, the hadiths must be examined in terms of their content which describes prophetic practices including the faith, words and deeds of the Prophet. As a theological testimony, hadith must also be studied for its history, namely its historical (aspects). In contrast to the perspective of Islamic studies, this history is always understood as the history of the word (*proclamation*) prophetic and its transmission. In other words, the theological approach tries to dialogue between approaches in classical hadith studies and hadith studies in orientalism. Theological hadith studies position the hadith as *transmitter testimony* whose object of research covers everything that has been inherited by and about the Prophet, as well as the history of reception and reflection from the narration.

The specific questions of theological hadith research are different from questions of other Islamic disciplines. Theological hadith research develops its questions based on a hermeneutic approach to prophetic hadith in order to build a dialogue between hadith and readers. Therefore, the concern of theological hadith research is not the transmission of hadith, as is done by classical hadith studies, nor research on the history of Islamic culture, as regulated by Islamic studies. In contrast, theological hadith research makes it its task to develop hadith as a source relevant to contemporary Islamic theology. Here, being relevant to the present means that the hadith is not only seen as a text derived from the past, whose origin and reception will be discussed, but also as a medium for presenting prophetic authority, charisma and prophetic proclamation in the life of Islamic society (Sanseverino, 2023).

The following is the breakdown of Ruggero’s paradigm of hadith studies:



<p><b>Meaning</b> (Authority and Normativity)</p> <p>Revelation - The Annunciation Inspiration - Rationality Eschatology – Society Charisma – Community</p>	<p><b>Knowledge</b> (Continuity and Authenticity)</p> <p>Text – Knowledge Certainty – Probability Traditions - History Reconnection - Crisis</p>
<p><b>Reception</b> (Identity and Alteration/Change)</p> <p>Inclusion – Exclusion Sunni - Shia Theology – Politics Mishnah/Torah - Bible – Hadith</p>	<p><b>Interpretation</b> (Hermeneutics and Applications)</p> <p>Literal – Metaphor Contextuality – Universality Understand - Design – Implement Written – Living Hadith</p>

## Conclusion

Classical *‘Ulūm al-Hadith* is considered a continuous tradition aimed at transmitting everything that originates from the Prophet (words, deeds, traits and others). Therefore, the study of classical hadith is focused on the *riwāyah* (collection of chain of hadith) and *dirāyah*

(examination of *sanad* and *matn* regarding their feasibility as a source of teachings). Hadith has been examined over the years as a historical source containing a description of Islam at its formative period. The hadith portrays the Prophet Muhammad's acts in multiple aspects. However, when faced with the topic of the extent to which hadiths are traditionally thought to reflect the Prophet Muhammad's authority, it becomes a point of assertion (mainly among orientalists). In the subsequent development of hadith studies, hadith is examined based on the history of its acceptance as cultural heritage which contains insights about socio-cultural activities and legitimacy discourse.

Ruggero is presently providing theologically based hadith studies. The fundamental notion is that hadith serves as a source of religious practice in Islam. As a result, the hadith must be analysed from both the material side of the Prophet (theological) and the historical aspect of its transmission. Theological study sources also contain all that comes from the Prophet, the history of the Prophet's portrayal, and thoughts on the prophetic heritage. Theological approaches to hadith studies attempt to provide explanations to issues concerning the normative or ethical implications of prophethood. Hadith is positioned as a medium for the development of conversation (experience) between hadith and readers. Hence, theological hadith studies differ from classical hadith studies and Islamic studies, which emphasize research on the history of Islamic culture, in that theological hadith studies view texts not only as a legacy from the past but also as a medium for depicting Muhammad's prophetic authority, charisma, and existence in the lives of contemporary Muslims.

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