



Contributions of Muhammad Mahfuz Al-Tarmasiy in The Field of Islamic Studies

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Abstract

The present study, in principle, aims to introduce an archipelago figure who was once the focus of knowledge seekers in the Holy City of Makkah, Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz Al-Tarmasiy. This scholar had also *left behind significant contributions in his birthplace in the Island of Java. To identify his stature in the field of Islamic studies, scholarly works that bring to light the aesthetics of his writings will be briefly highlighted, fitting with the requirements of research papers. The methodology used in the present study is inclined towards qualitative research that encompasses the various sources of information in the form of his writings, be it from published books, untouched original manuscripts, theses and dissertation that look into his manuscripts and books, and the official website of the institution that was established by his successors. Interviews with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren living across the country will also be utilized as one of the methods used in identifying this figure, his background and the general view about his stature. The results of the study found that, al-Tarmasiy's stature in the area of Islamic studies is indeed superior based on two factors: First: The establishment of traditional and modern educational institutions in Java that were inspired by his enthusiasm and struggles for the sake of knowledge. Second: The impact of his meticulous works that span over twenty books on the academic world and on the traditional talaqqi education system.*

Keywords: Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy; Islamic Studies; Manuscripts; Archipelago Scholars

1. Introduction

Al-Tarmasiy's name is spoken highly of, such as that of other leading scholarly figures in the Book of al-A'lam and other biographical books, however it appeared that his name is not known to most academicians in this region, despite it being mentioned favourably in the Middle East. His works, especially in the field of *Hadith, Fiqh, Usul al-Fiqh, Sanad* (chain of narration) and *Qiraat* continue to be read, discussed and even relied on as footnotes there. But only few have heard about him in Malaysia. As a matter of fact, his knowledge can be considered as an encyclopedia that covers various Islamic sciences, with the science of *Fiqh* and *Qiraat* remaining as the field he stressed the most due to its direct relationship with the religion and al-Quran, the main source of reference in Islam.

The stature of Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy who was an archipelago scholar deserves to be highlighted in line with other scholars who are being recognized internationally for their knowledge. His prowess in the field of Islamic Sharia cannot be disputed. This was evident when he produced a variety of works in all fields of knowledge that were later made as references. The total count of al-

Tarmasiy's work is 20; with the medium of instruction being Arabic.

This study will analyze his writings by classifying the specific disciplines of sciences by setting the percentage based on the ratio of the titles compared to the total number. However, the distribution of percentage according to the ratio of book pages and chapters are not stated as it requires further research which is more specific and in-depth.

2. Research Methodology

The present study is inclined towards qualitative research. Data collection of this study relies on two main methods, the method of data collection and data analysis method.

Data collection is one of the most widely used methods for searching for information and facts related to the topic of the study. The data collection of this study will involve library research and field study.

Through the library research method, the researchers collected data through documentation and historiography of the materials available in the library, as well as from the manuscripts to be received from the heirs of al-Tarmasiy in Demak, Central Java and

those that are already in the researchers' own collection. Via this method, all information and materials collected have reviewed and studied in detail, with the emphasis on al-Tarmasiy's works in the field of Islamic Studies. Thus, this study relies on several university libraries for their research such as UKM's Library, KUIS, IIUM, UM, USIM and others.

Several pesantren pondok schools (Islamic boarding schools) on Pulau Jawa, Indonesia, such as in Demak and Tremas, are a great resource in the implementation of this study. Libraries belonging to these institutions also help supplement the necessary data.

Meanwhile, the field studies meant here is the interview, which conducted with al-Tarmasiy's grandchildren and heirs in Pondok Pesantren Bustan 'Ushshaq al-Quran, Demak, Central Java. The reason interview is needed in this study is because the information found in the works of this figure is not sufficient to complete some important information related to his background.

Additionally, this study will also obtain information related to al-Tarmasiy by conducting interviews with people who knew him in Demak, Central Java. Apart from that, interviews also carried out with several people who knew him in Mecca. This is due to the fact that he lived very long there and used to occupy the pillars of al-Masjid al-Haram, particularly the pillar facing the Bab al-Safa, with his teaching sessions.

After obtaining all the essential information and raw data available, this study has examined the information and data so that they can all had analyzed and compiled in a scholarly manner. In addition to reviewing al-Tarmasiy's manuscripts and studying the methodology used by him as the subject matter of a thesis, the researchers managed to take advantage of doing research on his works in general with the aim of contributing to existing research in the field of Islamic studies.

Numerous resources and references that relate with the contributions of al-Tarmasiy or the historiography of the science of Islamic knowledge during the era of this great man's lifetime will be utilized. All information gathered have analyzed and properly compiled and then translated in the form of scientific research required. The style of writing is based on the book Introduction to Research Methodology in Islamic Studies (1), while the translation of the Quranic verses are based on *al-Quran dan Terjemahannya*, printed by *Mujamma' al-Malik Fahd li Tiba'at al-Mushaf al-Sharif*, in al-Madinah al-Munawwarah.

3. Discussions and Results

3.1. Biodata of al-Tarmasiy

His name is Muhammad Mahfuz bin 'Abdillah bin 'Abd al-Mannan al-Tarmasiy. He was born in Tremas, Pacitan, Central Java, on the 12th of Jamadil Awal 1285H/31st August 1868 (Al-Zirikliyy, 1984). However, there are some discrepancies about the date of his birth. In regard to this, his grandson Kiai Harir, when introducing the biodata of his grandfather in the prologue of the book *al-Khal'ah Fikriyyah al-Sharh al-Minhah fi al-Khayriyyah* said: "The year of his birth differs among people. Some say that the year is 1285H. This was the opinion of Shaykh Yasin Padang at the end of the book *Kifayat al-Mustafid*, page 44. Some also say that his birthdate is on Monday, 6 Safar 1280H. This was the view of his biological brother, Shaykh Dahlan al-Tarmasiy 'Abdullah "If considered, the 1280H is more accurate as usually familial relationships ensure accuracy in this case" (Muhammad Mahfuz, Review by Shaykh Muhammad Harir, 2007).

His grandfather's father was Demeng Dipomenggolo I, the descendant of a Keraton Surakarta Punggawa (tribe leader) named Ketok Jenggot. Ketok Jenggot was the first to clear the Pacitan forest which eventually was named Tremas. It must be kept in mind that Pacitan is a city located uppermost south from the Kabupaten city in Pulau Jawa (2).

Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy died in Mecca on the 1st of Rajab 1338H/20th March 1920. This date is agreed upon by all biography authors. Al-Tarmasiy passed away before the maghr

call to prayer on a Sunday evening. He was buried in the Bani Taslim Cemetery (Muhammad Mahfuz, Review by Shaykh Muhammad Harir, 2007).

3.2. Education of Al-Tarmasiy

Early Education in the Archipelago

Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz authored a very detailed book related to his studies in the book *Kifayat al-Mustafid li ma 'Ala min al-Asanid*. He had recorded in full the sanad or chains of narration of the sciences and subjects that he had learnt. Muhammad Mahfuz initially learned from his own father, Shaykh 'Abdullah bin 'Abd al-Mannan al-Tarmasiy. Among the books that he learned from his father were *Sharh al-Ghayah li Ibnay Qasim al-Ghuzza*, *al-Minhaj al-Qawim*, *Fath al-Mu'in*, *Fath al-Wahhab*, *Sharh Sharqawiy 'ala al-Hikam* and parts from Tafsir al-Jalalain until Surah Yunus. He then furthered his studies to Semarang and learnt from Muhammad Saleh bin Umar, better known as Kiai Muhammad Saleh Darat al-Samarani, a prominent scholar in Central Java during the 19th century. Among the books that he learnt from this Kiai were *Sharh al-Hikam* (finish learning it twice), *Tafsir al-Jalalain* (finish learning it twice), *Sharh al-Mardiniy*, and *Wasilah al-Tullab*, a book on astronomy. Upon completion of his education in Semarang, he then traveled to Mecca to seek knowledge. This phenomenon was considered a tradition for religious studies students in the archipelago who would lastly travel to Mecca to conclude their education (Muhammad Mahfuz, Review by Shaykh Muhammad Harir, 2007).

3.3. Education in Mecca

The Teachers of al-Tarmasiy

Among his teachers in Mecca were (3).

1. Shaykh Ahmad al-Minshawi, also known as Muqri. He learnt a wealth of knowledge from leading Shaykhs and scholars of al-Azhar University such as al-'Alamah al-Bajuriy and al-'Alamah al-Saqa. He went to Mecca in 1260 H. He had learnt from al-'Alamah 'Uthman al-Dimyatiy. After the demise of al-Dimyatiy, he continued his studies by learning from the Mufti of Mecca at that time; Shaykh Ahmad al-Dimyatiy until he received permission to teach in the al-Haram Mosque. He taught various sciences in al-Haram. Al-Tarmasiy learnt Qiraat 'Ashim and tajwid from him, as well as parts from *Sharh Ibnay al-Qashih 'ala al-Shatibiyyah* (although he did not finish the book).

2. Shaykh 'Umar bin Barakat al-Shamiy al-Biqa'iy al-Azhariy al-Makkiy al-Shafi'iy. He was born in al-Biqa'iy in the village of Ba'lul in 1245H. He grew up in his hometown and later moved to Damascus and sought a variety of knowledge there. He then went to Egypt and studied from the scholars of al-Azhar, among them al-'Alamah al-Bajuriy and al-'Alamah al-Saqa. He stayed in Egypt for fifteen years. He next went to Mecca in 1276H and learnt a wealth of knowledge there before becoming a teacher himself. He died in Mecca in 1313H. The book learnt by al-Tarmasiy was *Sharh Shuzur al-Zahab li Ibnay Hisham*, which was authored by his teacher.

3. Shaykh Mustafa al-'Afifiy. The books that he studied were: *Sharh Jam'il Jawami' li Mahalliy* and *Mughniy al-Labib al-Shafi'iy*. He was born in the state of 'Afif, one of the villages in Egypt. He had memorized the Quran as well as the matans and had even recited them in front of the scholars of al-Azhar. He also learned a lot from them such as Shaykh Mustafa al-Buqalaniy, before going to Mecca and settling down there. He also learnt from Shaykh Jamal al-Hanafiy. He also received permission to teach in al-Haram Mosque.

4. Al-Habib Husayn bin Muhammad bin Husayn al-Habshiy al-Shaficiy. He was born Seiyun, Hadramaut, Yemen. Al-Tarmasiy said: "I hear (by talaqqi) from the beginning of Sahih al-Bukhariy until it ends".

5. Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Babashail al-Hadramiy al-Shafi'iy al-Makkiy. He was a Shafi'iy mufti and a scholar of Mecca. He was born in 1245H. He had learnt from al-Sayyid Ahmad Dahlan.

He also taught in the al-Haram Mosque. Al-Tarmasiy studied the books *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Sunan Tirmidhi* and *Sunan Nasaiy* from him.

6. Sayyid Ahmad al-Zawawiy, he learnt the book *Sharh 'Uqud al-Juman*, written by his teacher, as well as parts from *al-Shifa' li al-Qadi al-'Iyadh* by Shaykh Muhammad al-Sharbayniy al-Dimyati. Meanwhile the books learnt by al-Tarmasiy were *Sharh Ibnuy al-Qashih*, *Sharh al-Durrah al-Mudhi'ah*, *Sharh Taibah al-Nashr fi al-Qiraat al-'Ashar*, *al-Raudh al-Nadhir li Mutawalli*, *Sharh al-Ra'iyah*, *Ithaf al-Bashar fi al-Qiraat al-Arba'ah al-'Ashar*, and *Tafsir al-Baidawiy bi Hashiyatih*.

7. Sayyid Muhammad Amin bin Ahmad Ridhwan al-Madaniy. He was born in Medina in 1252H. He narrated the history of Shaykh cAbd al-Ghaniy, al-Dahlawiy and Shaykh cAbd al-Hamid al-Sharwaniy and Shaykh cUthman al-Kharbutiy and others. He had written proofs regarding his narrated and it printed. Al-Tarmasiy said: "I learned from him Dalail, al-Ahzab, al-Burdah, al-Awwaliyat al-cAjluniy and Muwatac Imam Malik".

8. Shaykh Muhammad al-Sharbiniy al-Dimyatiy. He was born Dimyat. He died in 1321H.

All of his teachers mentioned above were linked to other scholars and this is known as sanad (chain) or salasilah (lineage). Regarding this, Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy had noted it down in full in his work *Kifayatul Mustafid*. Based on the writings of Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy where he mentioned that, most of his knowledge was obtained and learnt from Sayid Abu Bakr ash-Shata.

4. Al-Tarmasiy Companions in Mecca

At the time he was in Mecca, it can be concluded that among his peers who shared the same teachers with him was Shaykh Wan Daud bin Mustafa al-Fathani (1283H/1866 - 1355/1936). This Patani scholar was about two years older than Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy (1285H/1868 - 1338H/1920), while Penang's Mufti at that time, Haji Abdullah Fahim, was a year younger (born in 1286H/1869), and Tok Kenali, two years younger (born in 1287H / 1871) (3).

During his journey in seeking knowledge, Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy used to keep a special manuscript where he recorded all the sanad or chains of narration for every field of knowledge that he learnt. He then compiled them in his work entitled *Kifayat al-Mustafid li ma 'ala min al-Asanid*. Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy did not return to the archipelago, and instead chose to live and work in Mecca.

4.1. Teaching in Al-Haram Mosque

After residing in Mecca, Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy diligently studied under the tutelage of his teachers until he rose to be a great scholar and later became one of the teachers in al-Haram Mosque. When he was teaching at Bab al-Safa in the Holy Mosque (Al-Mu'allimiy, 2000), most of his pupils were the Javanese people, among them his own relatives such as K. Dimyati, K. Dahlan, K. Abdul Rozaq. There were among his pupils who later after returning to Java, became prominent Kyais in their respective areas, such as K. Hashim Ash'ari from Tebuireng Jombang, KH. Dahlan from Watucongol Muntilan, Raden Mas Kumambang from Surabaya and others (Muhammad Mahfuz, Review by Shaykh Muhammad Harir, 2007).

5. His Writing Contributions

As already mentioned, besides being a scholar who mastered a lot of literature, Shaykh Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy also authored tens of books, and unfortunately up till now, many have not been printed or published. There are also several pages from his writing that ended up lost or missing which thus suspend it from being printed. Additionally, a great flood took place in 1930 in Demak that resulted in some copies of his works being washed away. It is to the

researcher's knowledge that a number of Shaykh Mahfuz's books are used by almost all of the Pesantren pondok schools in Indonesia, and in fact according to some statements, many of his books are also used as compulsory literature at several institutions in the Arab countries, such as the institutions of higher education in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and so on, and in fact a number of his books are still being used for lessons in the Holy Mosque. Among the books are: (Muhammad Mahfuz, Review by 'Abdullah Zaini bin 'Uzayr al-Jatawiy, 1994).

5.1. In the field of Fiqh and Usul Fiqh

1. *Al-Siqayah al-Mardiyyah fi Asami al-Kutub al-Fiqhiyyah li Ashabina al-Shafi'iyah*. He finished writing this book on Friday, Sha'ban 1313H. Printed by *Matba'at at-Taraqqi al-Majidiyah al-'Uthmaniyyah*, Mecca (No date). It is compiled in 3 kurras (volumes). Kurras is an old printing term. Each book consists of clusters of several pages which are then combined together. Each cluster usually consists of 8 to 16 pages. It called *Kurras* or *Kurrasah*. The plural form is *Kararis*.

2. *Nayl al-Ma'mul Sharh Lubb al-Usul 'ala Ghayat al-Wusul*. 3 volumes.

3. *Is'af al-Mutali' Sharh Jam' al-Jawami'*. 2 volumes.

4. *Hashiyat Takmilat al-Manhaj al-Qawim ila al-Farai'd*. Single volume.

5.2. In the field of Tafsir

5. *Fath al-Khabir bi Sharh Miftah al-Tafsir*. 15 volumes.

5.3. In the field of Hadith and 'Ulum Hadith

6. *Mawhibat Dhi al-Fadl Hashiyat Sharh Mukhtasar Bafadal*, this book consists of four volumes. The first volume was completed on the 25th of Safar 1315H, the second volume completed on Friday, 27th Rabiul Akhir 1316H, the third volume on Sunday night, 7th Rajab 1317H and lastly, the fourth volume was completed on Wednesday night, 19th Muharram 1319H. The book was printed in 3 volumes by *Matba'ah al-Amirah al-Sharfiyyah*, Egypt, in 1326H.

7. *Manhaj Dhawi al-Nazar fi Sharh Manzumat 'Ilm al-Athar*, completed in 1329H/1911. The contents of this book discuss about the science of *Mustalah Hadith* and is an explanation of *Sharh Manzumat 'Ilm al-Athar*, a book authored by Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti. This book is proof that archipelago scholars were capable of writing on the field of science of *Hadith*, which is of high value. It was made a source of reference for scholars in parts of the world, including the scholars of *Hadith* themselves. It was printed by *Matba'at Mustafa al-Babiy al-Halabiy wa Auladuhu*, Egypt, in 1352H/1934. Its printing was funded by Shaykh Salim bin Sa'ad bin Nabhan and his brother Ahmad, owner of *al-Maktabah al-Nabhaniyyah al-Kubra*, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. Single volume.

8. *Al-Khal'ah al-Fikriyyah fi Sharh al-Manhaj al-Khayriyyah*. The exact date of its completion is not known. The contents of this book touch on the explanation of *hadith* in the book, *Sharh Hadith Arba'in*, based on the poem narrated by Shaykh al-Qastallaniy and written by al-Hafiz Abi Bakr al-Burqaniy in *Hadith Bukhariy*. The one in the researcher's collection is still in the form of manuscript, and is a copy of Haji Ahmad Dahlan bin Muhammad Minhaj, a scholar from Selangor. According to him, it was copied from the book printed by *Matba'at al-Miriyah al-Kainah*, Mecca, 1315H. According to some, the book consists of 13 kurras.

9. *Al-Minhah al-Khayriyyah*. 2 kurras.

10. *Thulathiyat al-Bukhariy*. Single kurras.

5.4. In the field of Sanad (Chain of narration)

11. *Kifayat al-Mustafid li Ma 'Ala min al-Asanid*, completed on Tuesday, 19th Safar 1320H. The contents of this book touch on

the various sanad or chains of narration of Muhammad Mahfuz bin 'Abdullah at-Tarmasiy. It was printed by *Matba'at al-Mashhad al-Husayniy*, No.18, Shari' al-Mashhad al-Husayniy, Egypt (No date). This book was reviewed and edited by Shaykh Muhammad Yasin bin 'Isa al-Fadaniy al-Makkiy, al-Mudarris Dar al-Ulum al-Mudarris Diniyah, Mecca. Single kurras.

All of his teachers mentioned in this book were all linked or connected to one another with the early scholars, and this is known as sanad (chain) or silsilah (lineage). Regarding this, Shaikh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy had noted it down in full in his work *Kifayat al-Mustafid*. In his writings, Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz al-Tarmasiy had mentioned that, most of his knowledge was obtained from Sayyid Abu Bakr al-Shata.

The book *Kifayat al-Mustafid li Ma 'ala Min al-Asanid* presents the various sanads or chains of knowledge of the sciences that he learned. Pages 10 to 19 of the book specially touch on the sanad's of Hadith, starting from him, then his teacher and then to the ones narrating before them. In regard to his studies that were conducted via talaqqi, he mentioned that he completed his studies of the *Sahih Jami' al-Bukhariy* four times (3).

5.5. In the field of Qira'at:

12. Al-Fawa'id al-Tarmasiyyah fi Asami al-Qira'at 'Ashariyah, Shaykh Yasin Padang mentioned that this book was published by Mathba'ah al-Majidiyah, Mecca, in 1330H. Single kurras.
13. Al-Badr al-Munir fi Qira'at Ibn Kathir. 6 kurras.
14. Tanwir al-Sadr fi Qira'at Ibn 'Amr. 8 kurras.
15. Inshirah al-Fawa'id fi Qira'at Hamzah. 13 kurras.
16. Ta'mim al-Manafi' fi Qira'at Nafi'. 16 kurras.
17. Ghunyat al-Talabah bi Sharh Nazm al-Tayyibah fi al-Qira'at al-Ashriyyah. 1 volume.

5.6. In the field of Tasawuf (Sufism):

18. 'Inayat al-Muftaqir fi ma Yata'allaq bi Sayyidina al-Khidr. 2 Kurras.
19. Bughyat al-Adhkiya' fi al-Baith 'an Karamat al-Awliya'. 3 kurras.
20. Tahyi'at al-Fikr bi Sharh Alfiyyat al-Sayr. 14 kurras.

Most of his books are still in the manuscript form and have yet to be published. However, there are several organizations that have worked on reviewing and editing several of his books and having them printed.

5.7. Among the books that have been reviewed and printed are:

1. Manhaj Dhawi al-Nazar fi Sharh Manzumat 'Ilm al-Athar.
2. Mawhibat Dhi al-Fadl Hashiyat Sharh Mukhtasar Bafadal.
3. Al-Minhah al-Khayriyyah.
4. Al-Khal'ah al-Fikriyyah fi Sharh al-Manhah al-Khayriyyah.
5. Al-Fawa'id al-Tarmasiyyah fi Asami al-Qira'at 'Ashariyah.
6. Al-Siqayah al-Mardiyyah fi Asami al-Kutub al-Fiqhiyyah li Ashabina al-Shafi'iyyah.
7. Kifayat al-Mustafid li Ma 'Ala min al-Asanid.
8. Bughyat al-Adhkiya' fi al-Baith 'an Karamat al-Awliya'.

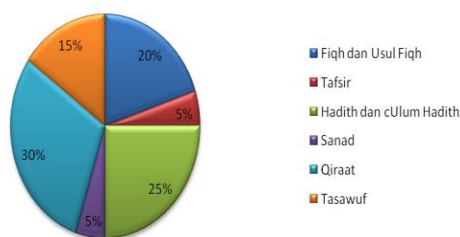


Fig. 1: Manuscripts written by al-Tarmasiy

6. Conclusion

Islamic Studies is a field that had produced numerous leading scholar throughout the ages. The scholars are from various disciplines of the Quran and al-Sunnah and the other disciplines related to understand the contents and requirements of these two main sources.

Generally, publication in Islamic studies were from Arab scholars and the rest of the people seem to just sit in the shade. But there are also some of the leading scholars were from Ajam tribes who appear to sow services. However, it seems that it is more from Indian subcontinent and the African continent.

Shaykh Muhammad Mahfuz Al-Tarmasiy had diligently made the effort to ensure the continuity of the link (*sanad*) of the sciences and knowledge that he had learned by recording it on the yellowish sheets of paper which many still contain his handwriting on them. It is feared that his old original manuscripts that are still kept in Mecca, Medina, Demak and Tremas will eventually become obscure and will disintegrate with time. Without serious attempts to review his manuscripts, most likely his struggles and painstaking efforts will be wasted and forgotten. If this indeed happens, al-Tarmasiy would have already been rewarded for his efforts, but it is us who will bear these unfortunate huge losses due to neglecting his efforts in the field of Islamic studies.

Therefore, this study can help form pioneer research with the aim of empowering Islamic Studies in Malaysia and Archipelago. It is also hoped that this study can create a clearer perspective on the works written on this field in our region. Efforts to publish all the works of al-Tarmasiy and the works of other archipelago scholar figures by those involved in this field will be much easier after this initial road has been paved.

After tracing the writing mistrust and the bitter taste of the journey of scholarly study by the scholars, the writer was grateful and very fortunate in the platform of Islamic studies for understanding the efforts and the hard-working thoughts of the Prophet's heirs for building Islamic civilization that will not collapse anytime. Therefore, this insignificant study will present the implications of this study:

Al-Tarmasiy and others Malay Scholars; which far from the center of Islamic world; Mecca and Medina, were proof that although distance a far away but it was not a reason to become a scholar, there was also some great-minded figures appearing to deny the great challenge to this era.

In recognition of al-Tarmasiy's mastering in qiraat knowledge and his comprehensive mastery of Islamic studies, the author did not hesitate to call him as al-Imam. In addition to appreciating his services in the field of multi-disciplinary in Islamic studies, this study become a continuation of the title given by a research institute in Taif University, Saudi Arabia. When the researcher was preparing for introduction for book al-Tarmasiy's fiqh book, he had embraced this great title to appreciate al-Tarmasiy's services to Muslims.

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