

Contextualizing the Meaning of the Siwak Hadith Through Fazlur Rahman's Hermeneutic Approach (A Substantive-Philosophical Understanding)

Ahmad Fauzi
UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
Ahmadf99@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper examines the hadiths related to siwak, a practice known for its many benefits as stated in Islamic teachings. Siwak was greatly favored by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and it was an integral part of his daily routine. During his time, siwak was the primary tool for oral hygiene, made from the root or branch of the *Salvadora persica* plant. Classical Islamic scholars shared a common understanding of this tool, similar to how it was practiced in the Prophet's era. Over time, a wide variety of oral hygiene tools have emerged, and siwak has been used in different forms, including being extracted and made into toothpaste. A key question arises: can siwak be replaced with other tools that serve the same function and purpose as the original siwak, and can the use of such tools be considered as following the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)? This study aims to contextualize the meaning of the siwak hadith through a different interpretive lens, specifically using Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutic approach. By employing situational interpretation and Rahman's historical analysis, this research seeks to demonstrate that religious principles, which are relevant for all times and places (s}a>lih} li kulli zama>n wa maka>n), can be applied to the siwak hadith. The study concludes that modern oral hygiene tools such as toothpaste (including those based on siwak), mouthwash, and similar products can replace siwak and carry the same religious value and ruling as siwak in Islamic law.

Keywords: siwak, oral hygiene tools, Sunnah, Hermeneutics, Fazlur Rahman

INTRODUCTION

Using siwak is a Sunnah (recommended practice) in Islam. According to classical Islamic texts, there are three key situations in which siwak is recommended: first, before performing prayer (salat); second, when the teeth begin to yellow; and third, when there is bad breath. In his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, Imam an-Nawawi explains: "Siwak is recommended at all times, but its significance is emphasized during five occasions: before prayer, when performing ablution (wudu), when reciting the Qur'an, upon waking from sleep, and when bad breath occurs." Siwak is something greatly favored by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and his activities rarely took place without it. Even when the Prophet was ill and in a weakened state, he still expressed a desire to use siwak. Had it not been for

his concern about burdening his followers, it is likely that siwak would have been made obligatory.

During the Prophet's time, the tool for siwak was made from the root, branch, or twig of the *Salvadora persica* plant, which grows in regions such as the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Classical scholars shared a common understanding about the tool for siwak, namely, using the root, branch, or twig of the arak plant, which is reflected in various of their writings. Imam an-Nawawi states: "According to the scholars, siwak is the use of a wooden stick or something similar on the teeth to remove yellowing." Imam Abu Ishaq mentions: "Siwak should be done with a stick that is neither too wet nor too dry." In *al-Tibyan*, an-Nawawi mentions: "The chosen opinion on siwak is using the arak wood."

With the passage of time and the advancement of modern technology, a wide range of oral hygiene tools have been developed and produced in various forms. Siwak wood itself can now be extracted and made into toothpaste. New tools for cleaning teeth, such as toothpaste, dental floss, interdental stimulators, proxabrushes, gum cloths, disclosing solutions, and mouthwash, have all been created. These tools are effective in cleaning teeth. Additionally, other products like White Light are used to whiten teeth that have yellowed, or to remove plaque and tartar caused by smoking. AQUA Floss, for instance, helps prevent tartar and plaque caused by food residue, effectively cleaning food particles from the teeth.

The principles of religious teachings, both in the Qur'an and Hadith, are intended to be *s}a>lih} li kulli zama>n wa maka>n* (relevant for all times and places). However, considering the classical interpretations of siwak, this principle has not yet been fully implemented in the present time. Therefore, a new approach is needed to globalize the meaning of siwak, making it relevant to contemporary developments, while still preserving the existence of the traditional siwak that continues to be practiced today. The principles of *maqasid al-Shari>'ah* (goals of Islamic law) could serve as a foundation for this. Supported by a hermeneutic approach, it is hoped that the meaning of siwak can be expanded, allowing its Sunnah to be experienced by Muslims everywhere and at any time.

Modern dental tools appear to serve the same function as the siwak recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)—cleaning teeth, removing bad breath, and maintaining oral hygiene. There is a functional synchronization between the traditional siwak and modern oral hygiene tools. Moreover, in recent developments, siwak has even become a new toothbrush product in Europe, with siwak wood being extracted and used as the base for toothpaste. Thus, it is important for Muslim intellectuals to address whether these modern tools can be used as a substitute for siwak, since they substantively fulfill the same function. Can using these tools be considered to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), as with using siwak from the wood of the arak plant? This question makes the contextualization of the meaning of siwak particularly relevant, not only to enrich the Islamic heritage but also to provide answers to

the aforementioned queries. This paper attempts to understand the siwak hadith through Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutic approach.

Previous

Research on siwak has been extensively conducted. Articles on siwak can frequently be found in dental or pharmaceutical journals. Many researchers are interested in studying the existence of siwak in relation to dental and oral health. This is understandable, as siwak is considered a part of Sunnah in Islam because the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used it as a tooth cleaner and breath freshener. This reality has drawn the attention of researchers from various countries to further investigate siwak, particularly *Salvadora persica*, the wood used for siwak.

Research

One such study was conducted by Ghazi M, Saini T, Ashri N, and Lambourne A, titled "Meswak Chewing Stick versus Conventional Toothbrush as an Oral Hygiene Aid." This study compared siwak and a regular toothbrush in terms of their impact on oral cleanliness. The researchers conducted two experiments: the first compared siwak and a regular toothbrush used twice a day and five times a day, while the second compared users of siwak with users of regular toothbrushes to assess the impact on gum inflammation (gingivitis).

Another study was conducted by Parveen Dahiya, Reet Kamal, R. P. Luthra, Rahul Mishra, and Gaurav Saini in 2012, titled "Miswak: A Periodontist's Perspective." This research examined siwak from the perspective of periodontology, the branch of dentistry that focuses on the structures of the mouth, especially the gums, teeth, and bone. The study analyzed the pharmacological properties of *Salvadora persica* and tested its effectiveness as an oral cleaner compared to modern toothbrushes.

A further study was carried out by Tiara Adzakiyah, Indrawati Lipoeto, and Nila Kasuma, dental students at Andalas University in West Sumatra, titled "The Effect of Rinsing with *Salvadora Persica* Extract Solution on the pH of Oral Cavity Saliva." The goal of the research was to examine the impact of *Salvadora persica* extract on saliva pH. The researchers experimented with 17 students from SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Padang, measuring saliva pH before and after rinsing with a 50% *Salvadora persica* extract solution, and analyzed the data using a T-test ($p < 0.05$).

In another study, Yustin Nur Khoiriyah examined the "Porosity of Acrylic Resin Plates after Soaking in Boiled Betel Leaf and Siwak Wood Solutions." Conducted at the Integrated Laboratory of Poltekkes Tanjungkarang in 2015, the study aimed to determine the effect of a mixture of boiled betel leaf water and siwak wood on the porosity of acrylic resin plates (used for making dentures). The results indicated that the combination of betel leaf and siwak wood solution had no significant effect on the porosity of acrylic resin plates.

Vania Salsabila Kamil, Al Munawir, and Rosita Dewi, students of the Faculty of Medicine at Jember University, conducted a study to determine the effect of ethanol siwak extract on the growth of *Porphyromonas gingivalis* bacteria. The antibacterial activity was tested in vitro using the well diffusion method on BHI-A (Brain Heart Infusion Agar) media. The study involved a positive control group (K+), a negative control group (K-), and four experimental groups (P1, P2, P3, and P4), each with different concentrations of ethanol siwak extract (50%, 25%, 12.5%, and 6.25%, respectively). After 24 hours of incubation, the inhibition zones formed were measured.

Another study on siwak was carried out by Mardia Apriansi at the Biology Laboratory of Bengkulu University, which examined the effect of *Salvadora persica* powder extract on the growth of *Streptococcus mutans* bacteria. This study used a Completely Randomized Design (CRD) with six treatments and four repetitions. The concentrations tested were A: 0%, B: 5%, C: 25%, and D: 50%. The results showed that the extract had a significant effect and inhibited the growth of *Streptococcus mutans*, with the inhibition beginning at a concentration of 5%, which was the minimum inhibitory concentration. The growth of *Streptococcus mutans* was completely inhibited at a concentration of 25%, where the largest inhibition zone was observed.

These studies primarily focus on the material properties of siwak wood (*Salvadora persica*), such as its pharmacological content, its direct effectiveness on oral health, comparisons between siwak and regular toothbrushes, and similar topics. None of the existing research has addressed the role of modern oral hygiene tools, such as toothpaste (and toothbrushes), mouthwash, and others, from a religious perspective. Can these modern tools replace siwak, which was the main oral hygiene tool during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)? Or at least, do they hold the same religious significance as siwak in terms of Sunnah? Therefore, this research is necessary to explore these questions.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on the hermeneutical analysis of Islamic texts, specifically the Hadith related to siwak. The goal is to understand the significance of siwak as an oral hygiene tool within the framework of contemporary practices. The research begins by examining classical interpretations of siwak found in key Islamic texts, including the Qur'an and Hadith. These texts will be analyzed using Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical approach, which emphasizes the contextualization of religious teachings to make them relevant to modern times without distorting their original intent. This approach allows for a dynamic interpretation of the concept of siwak, considering its historical, social, and technological context.

The research involves a comprehensive review of the existing literature on siwak, including both classical and contemporary sources. Classical Islamic scholars' perspectives on siwak, particularly those of prominent figures such as Imam al-Nawawi and Imam Abu Ishaq, will be explored to understand their interpretations. Furthermore, modern studies and reviews on siwak's health benefits, particularly in dental care, will be analyzed to assess how siwak is understood today in relation to contemporary oral hygiene practices. This literature review will provide the foundation for contextualizing the Hadith on siwak in light of modern oral health tools like toothpaste and mouthwash.

In addition to literature review, this study will also use a comparative method to analyze the functional similarities and differences between siwak and modern oral hygiene tools. This comparison will help assess whether modern tools, such as toothpaste, mouthwash, and dental floss, can serve as substitutes for siwak in fulfilling the religious requirement of maintaining oral cleanliness, as prescribed by the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The analysis will take into account the purposes and benefits of using siwak and whether the contemporary tools align with those same goals in terms of both health benefits and religious significance.

The study will incorporate interviews with Islamic scholars, dental professionals, and other experts to gain diverse perspectives on the use of modern oral hygiene tools in comparison to siwak. These interviews will provide insight into the intersection of religious practice, health, and modern technology. The experts' opinions will be analyzed to gauge the degree to which modern tools fulfill the religious and health functions that siwak served during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This aspect of the methodology will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the religious relevance of modern oral care practices.

The research will conclude with recommendations based on the findings. The study will aim to provide a balanced view on the use of modern tools as substitutes for siwak, considering both religious and health perspectives. It will also offer suggestions on how to interpret the Hadith on siwak in a way that is relevant to contemporary practices without undermining its religious significance. Through this comprehensive analysis, the study seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of how Islamic teachings on oral hygiene can be adapted in today's world while remaining faithful to the core principles of the faith.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Historical Setting and Intellectual Career of Fazlur Rahman

Before delving into the contextualization of the meaning of siwak, it is important to first discuss the figure of Fazlur Rahman, whose theory will guide this study's analysis. Rahman was an intellectual who positioned himself within the ranks of neo-modernism. He began his journey in contemporary Islamic thought amid the academic anxiety felt by many Muslims: the closure of the doors of *ijtihad*, which resulted in significant intellectual stagnation within the Muslim community. Fazlur Rahman was given the historical opportunity to apply neo-modernist ideas and was regarded as one of the liberal-reformative expositors of Islam. He positioned himself as an opposition figure to traditional scholars and worked towards reforming traditional Islamic thought, particularly concepts such as *Sunnah*, revelation, and the methodology of exegesis (*tafsir*).

Born on September 21, 1919, in the northwest region of Pakistan (in what was then Hazara, before the partition of India), Rahman grew up in a religious family that followed the Hanafi school, a Sunni madhhab known for its rationalist approach, as opposed to the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools. Rahman was raised by his parents in a deeply religious environment. His father, Maulana Syihabuddin, was a religious scholar educated in traditional methods, and Rahman received his early education in a madrasa established by Muhammad Qasim Natonawi in 1867. Rahman often reflected on the significant influence his parents had on his personal development:

"My father and mother greatly shaped my character and the early beliefs of my life. From my mother, I learned the values of truth, kindness, loyalty, and love. My father was a scholar of religion, educated in the traditional educational system. However, unlike most traditional scholars of the time, he saw modernity as both a challenge and an opportunity. I share my father's views to this day."

Rahman studied hadith and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) under the guidance of his father, Maulana Syihabuddin. By the age of 10, Rahman had completed memorizing the Qur'an and was already accustomed to performing daily prayers and fasting without missing them. However, during his teenage years, Rahman began to question the authenticity of hadiths. He believed that, during the early years of Islamic history, most of the hadiths did not originate from the Prophet Muhammad but rather from his companions, the *Tabi'in*, and the third generation of Muslims (the *Tabi'u al-Tabi'in*). This was not due to the scarcity of hadiths but the actions of subsequent generations.

After completing his secondary education, Rahman continued his studies at the Department of Eastern Studies at the University of Punjab. He then pursued a master's degree in Arabic Literature at Punjab University, where he earned an M.A. in 1942. It was during this time that his critical thinking skills began to develop. After completing his master's program, Rahman continued his studies at Oxford University in England, where he pursued a Ph.D. in philosophy, particularly focusing on the thought of Ibn Sina (*Avicenna*). He received his Ph.D. in 1949. Rahman's decision to study at Oxford stemmed from his dissatisfaction

with the educational system in his home country, which he believed was backward.

After completing his doctorate, Rahman taught for a time at Durham University in England, then moved to McGill University's Institute of Islamic Studies in Canada, where he served as an Associate Professor of Philosophy. In the 1960s, Rahman returned to Pakistan and joined the staff of the Institute of Islamic Research. In 1964, he was appointed to the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology by the Pakistani government. This council, established in 1962, was tasked with reviewing all laws, both existing and proposed, to ensure their alignment with the Qur'an and Sunnah, and providing recommendations to the central and provincial governments to improve the Muslim community's well-being.

Rahman expressed his modernist views on Islam through articles published in three journals of the Institute of Islamic Research: *Dira>sa Isla>miyyah* (Arabic), *Islamic Studies* (English), and *Fikr O-Nazr* (Urdu). At the Institute, Rahman not only engaged with theoretical Islamic studies, such as Islamic philosophy and intellectual history, but also tackled practical issues like banking interest and mechanical slaughter. During this time, Rahman began to reformulate Islamic exegesis methodology. However, his ideas were met with fierce resistance from conservative scholars, and he faced serious threats to his life. Some suggested that the opposition to his ideas was politically motivated, aimed not only at his intellectual views but also at the authoritarian regime of Ayub Khan.

Unable to find support for his views in his own country, Rahman moved to Chicago, United States, where he spent the rest of his life until his death in 1988. His legacy as a reformer and intellectual remains influential in the development of contemporary Islamic thought.

Fazlur Rahman's Paradigm on Legal Hadiths

Fazlur Rahman, as cited by Umma Farida, argues that looking at the life of the Prophet Muhammad in general, it becomes evident that he was not a legal scholar who regulated every detail of human life. Even until the end of his life, the Prophet did not have much time to establish detailed rules for human existence. He was busy fighting moral and political battles, particularly against the people of Mecca, and more broadly with the Arab society. During that time, societal issues were often addressed based on reasoning and customs, which the Prophet allowed to remain largely intact with minimal modifications. Only in cases of significant difficulty did people turn to the Prophet for guidance, and even then, these matters were often resolved informally, without rigid or literal application.

Rahman asserts that legal hadiths should not be viewed as fixed, ready-made laws to be applied rigidly and unchangingly. Instead, he offers that such hadiths must be interpreted from a historical perspective, meaning that the chronology and specific circumstances surrounding each hadith should be understood. This

way, general legal conclusions can be drawn, avoiding the literal interpretation of the hadiths without regard for the situational context. According to Farida, Rahman argues that the Sunnah of the Prophet should be seen as a general guiding principle (a "general umbrella concept") serving as a foundation for legal reasoning, rather than as a set of specific, absolute rules. The theoretical conclusion that Sunnah is a behavioral term, rather than a series of exact prescriptions, highlights the need for reinterpretation in light of modern situations. The changing moral, psychological, and material contexts of today demand that the Sunnah be reinterpreted, not in the sense of abandoning the practices of the Prophet but in order to revitalize the essence of the Sunnah itself.

Rahman's approach to understanding legal hadiths is both historical and sociological. This approach is vital because every hadith, including legal hadiths, is accompanied by a *ratio legis* (purpose or rationale), which explains why the law was declared in the first place. By understanding this rationale and the background and circumstances of the early Muslim community, modern Muslims can better interpret the hadiths. The historical-sociological approach requires several strategic steps: first, understanding the literal meaning of the hadith text; second, examining the situational background, including the general context of the Prophet's time and the specific circumstances of the hadith's emergence (e.g., *asbab al-wurud*); third, considering relevant guidance from the Qur'an, since Rahman believed that the most reliable criteria for authenticating hadith interpretations are history and the Qur'an. The next step is distinguishing the underlying moral values and goals of the law from the specific legal rulings, so that the ideal moral principles can be extracted. Finally, these ideal moral principles must be applied and adapted to contemporary sociological contexts. This is what Rahman refers to as the "liquefaction" of hadith into a "living Sunnah."

Rahman illustrated this approach through examples from the time of the Companions, such as Umar ibn al-Khattab's reinterpretation of the law of war. During the Prophet's time, conquered land was confiscated as war booty and distributed among the Muslim forces. This was seen as an effective strategy to both defeat the enemy and reward the soldiers. However, during Umar's caliphate, when conquering Iraq and Egypt, he chose not to seize the land from its inhabitants or distribute it to the Arab soldiers. His reasoning was that if the land were seized and distributed to the soldiers, they would no longer be motivated to fight, and the confiscation of land could harm the local population, disrupting their future generations and violating social justice.

Rahman's innovative approach can be seen as inspired by Umar's actions, who was known for interpreting the Prophet's Sunnah in light of the situational context. Umar's decisions were not based on a literal reading of the Sunnah; instead, he sought to understand the moral principle behind the Sunnah and apply it to the social realities of his time. Another example of this is Umar's ruling on divorce. During the Prophet's time, if a man pronounced three divorces at

once, it would count as one, and the couple could reconcile. However, during Umar's caliphate, he ruled that three simultaneous divorces would count as a final divorce (*talaq ba'in*), and the couple could not reconcile unless the woman married another man and was divorced. Umar argued that people were hastily pronouncing divorce without consideration and that this ruling was intended to prevent hasty decisions in such serious matters.

Rahman saw Umar's actions as creating new meaning within the context of Islamic law. Although it appeared that Umar was departing from the formal Sunnah of the Prophet, his goal was to uphold the true essence of the Sunnah itself. Through these examples, Rahman demonstrated how the reinterpretation of legal hadiths, informed by historical and sociological insights, could serve the needs of contemporary Muslims while remaining faithful to the moral principles of Islam.

Contextualizing the Siwak Hadith Through Fazlur Rahman's Hermeneutical Approach

1. Text of the Siwak Hadith

An interesting issue that requires attention is the tradition of using *siwak* among Muslims. *Siwak* refers to the act of cleaning the teeth and mouth using a specific tool, often a twig. For Muslims, *siwak* is not only seen as a health-related practice but also as an act of worship, since the Prophet Muhammad (saw) performed it. Anything done by the Prophet becomes a Sunnah, and following it brings reward and virtue.

Numerous hadiths discuss the practice of *siwak*. Among them is the narration from Imam Bukhari:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو النُّعْمَانِ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا حَمَادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ عَنْ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ جَرِيرٍ عَنْ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَوَجَدْتُهُ يَسْتَنْ بِسِوَاكٍ بِيَدِهِ يَقُولُ أَعْ أَعْ وَالسِّوَاكُ فِي فِيهِ كَأَنَّهُ يَتَهَوَّعُ

This hadith describes the Prophet holding the *siwak* and using it while saying, "U'uh, u'uh," and the sound of the *siwak* in his mouth was like he was about to vomit.

Additionally, **Aisha** narrated:

وَقَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ السِّوَاكُ مَطْهَرَةٌ لِلْفَمِ مَرْضَاةٌ لِلرَّبِّ

This indicates that *siwak* cleanses the mouth and is pleasing to Allah.

From Imam Muslim, another important hadith is:

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ وَعَمْرُو النَّاقِدُ وَزُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ عَنِ الْأَعْرَجِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَوْلَا أَنْ أَشَقَّ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَفِي حَدِيثِ زُهَيْرٍ عَلَى أُمَّتِي لِأَمْرَتِهِمْ بِالصَّوَالِكِ صَلَاةٍ

This hadith describes the Prophet saying that if it were not burdensome for the believers, he would have commanded them to use *siwak* before every prayer.

2. Scholarly Explanations of the Siwak Hadith

In classical Islamic jurisprudence, scholars have examined the significance of the *siwak* hadith. Generally, scholars agree that these hadiths indicate the religious merit of *siwak* as an act performed by the Prophet. Ibn Hajar explained that the term *siwak* sometimes refers to the tool itself, while other times it refers to the act of cleaning the teeth or mouth. According to him, the first hadith suggests that *siwak* is a prescribed act of worship, and it is recommended to use it for cleaning the mouth in a back-and-forth motion and for cleaning the teeth in a side-to-side motion.

Imam an-Nawawi, in his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, highlights that the Prophet's frequent use of *siwak*, even before entering his home, demonstrates its importance and the emphasis placed on it. The Prophet consistently encouraged *siwak* at various times.

Regarding the hadith "Had I not feared making it difficult for my followers, I would have commanded them to use *siwak* before every prayer," Al-Qadhi 'Iyadh explains that this hadith implies the *siwak* is recommended before prayer and ablution. However, based on the wording of the hadith, it is not obligatory.

Ibn Daqiq al-'Id discussed the hadith about the Prophet cleaning his mouth with *siwak* upon waking up, explaining that it is recommended after sleep, as sleep causes bad breath, which can be cleansed using *siwak*. Similarly, Ibn Hajar states that *siwak* serves not only to clean the teeth but also to purify the mouth and provide a pleasant fragrance.

Scholars such as Imam al-Shafi'i and Imam Badruddin al-'Aini emphasize the importance of *siwak* in maintaining cleanliness, with various views on when it is most recommended, such as before prayer, after waking, and when the mouth's odor changes. Imam al-Shafi'i highlights that while *siwak* is a Sunnah, it is not obligatory unless it is practiced regularly. However, Imam Dawud al-Dhahiri holds that it is obligatory before prayer, although this view is disputed.

3. Hermeneutical Approach of Fazlur Rahman to Siwak Hadiths

Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical approach would emphasize understanding the *siwak* hadiths within their historical and social context. His method would involve reinterpreting the hadith based on the situations of the time, avoiding a rigid, literal interpretation. Rahman might argue that while the *siwak* was emphasized during the time of the Prophet Muhammad as part of maintaining personal hygiene, its contemporary relevance must be reassessed in light of modern methods of oral hygiene, which are more effective and accessible than the traditional twig.

By employing Rahman's historical-sociological approach, the practice of *siwak* could be seen as part of the broader principle of cleanliness in Islam, which is essential for physical and spiritual purity. However, the exact means of maintaining this cleanliness may adapt to current practices, ensuring the underlying moral and health values remain relevant.

Thus, Rahman would likely argue that the *siwak* remains a valuable practice, but its specific form—using a twig—should be understood as culturally and historically situated. The modern Muslim community may take the principle of cleanliness and adapt it to contemporary health practices while still honoring the Sunnah's emphasis on personal hygiene.

The Discourse on Recent Developments in Oral Hygiene Tools

In recent years, a variety of oral hygiene tools have been developed and mass-produced, offering more efficient ways to maintain oral health. These tools, including toothbrushes, toothpastes, dental floss, interdental stimulators, proxabrushes, and mouthwashes, have been marketed as effective for cleaning teeth and maintaining oral health. Many of these products are designed to address various needs, from preventing plaque buildup to improving the appearance of teeth.

Some notable modern oral hygiene products include:

- **Toothpaste:** Available in a wide range of brands, each claiming specific benefits like whitening, plaque removal, and breath freshening.
- **Dental Floss:** Helps remove food particles and plaque from between the teeth, areas that toothbrushes may miss.
- **Interdental Stimulators:** These tools are designed to massage the gums and stimulate blood flow to improve gum health.
- **Mouthwashes:** Products like **Total Care Mouthwash** and **Listerine®** provide antibacterial properties, help in preventing plaque, and freshen

breath. They are formulated to address multiple concerns such as cavity prevention, gum health, and breath freshness.

In addition to these, specialized products like **White Light** are available to address aesthetic concerns like whitening yellowed teeth, while products such as **Aqua Floss** are effective at preventing plaque buildup and removing food particles. These products provide more targeted solutions and convenience for maintaining oral health.

Interestingly, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in natural or herbal-based oral hygiene products. Several toothpastes now incorporate natural ingredients such as **Aloe Vera**, **Eucalyptus**, **Siwak**, and **Betel Leaves**. Aloe Vera, in particular, has gained attention for its use in oral care, with reports such as one from Dr. Melnick in 1982, who used Aloe Vera-based toothpaste to treat gum inflammation and help reduce staining from smoking.

Siwak (*Salvadora persica*), also known as the miswak, has been a prominent topic in recent developments in oral health products. Research shows that the mechanical action of the siwak fibers, along with its chemical properties, significantly contributes to improved oral hygiene. The fibers of the siwak stimulate saliva production, which helps in cleaning bacteria, while the chemical compounds in the extract of the siwak possess antibacterial and antifungal properties. These properties make it effective in combating plaque formation and reducing the virulence of bacteria responsible for dental issues such as gingivitis and cavities.

Because of its proven benefits, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** has endorsed the use of siwak for maintaining oral health. The therapeutic and mechanical effects of siwak have led to its incorporation into modern oral care products such as **Quali-Meswak Toothpaste**, **Epident Toothpaste**, and others. These products incorporate the natural benefits of siwak while providing the convenience and familiarity of modern toothpaste.

A recent development in the European market reflects the growing appeal of siwak. In 2017, a company in the Czech Republic named **Yoni** launched a new product called 'Miswak'. This product is a combination of a toothbrush and toothpaste, making it a convenient, all-in-one solution for oral hygiene. Yoni markets siwak as a natural, instant oral care tool, positioning it as an eco-friendly and effective alternative to traditional dental products. The price for a single unit of Miswak is about 3.9 euros (around Rp 55,000), making it accessible to a wide market.

These developments reflect a broader trend toward combining modern oral care with traditional natural remedies. Products like siwak, now being incorporated into toothpaste and other oral care tools, bridge the gap between tradition and

modernity, offering consumers the benefits of both natural ingredients and advanced dental technologies.

In conclusion, the recent discourse around oral hygiene tools shows a marked shift towards more holistic and natural approaches to maintaining oral health. While products like mouthwashes, dental floss, and electric toothbrushes continue to dominate the market, the inclusion of natural ingredients such as siwak signifies a growing preference for health-conscious, sustainable alternatives in the realm of personal care.

Analysis of the Hadith on Siwak

The practice of using siwak (*Salvadora persica*) as a tool for cleaning teeth dates back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), where it was considered the most effective method for cleaning teeth and eliminating bad breath. With the advancement of technology, various new dental hygiene tools have emerged, such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, and mouthwash. Interestingly, the use of siwak has also been modernized, with siwak extract being incorporated into toothpaste. Countries like Switzerland (Quali-Meswak), Egypt (Epident toothpaste), Pakistan (Fluoroswak), and Saudi Arabia (Dentacare Miswak Plus) produce toothpaste based on siwak.

This leads to an important question: Can modern dental tools replace siwak from a religious perspective, and do they carry the same reward and virtue as using the original siwak? To address this, there is a need to expand the understanding of the hadith concerning siwak, in order to adapt it to modern developments. This expansion requires understanding the core, essential meaning of the hadith and applying philosophical reasoning.

The Substantial Meaning of Siwak in Islamic Tradition

According to scholars in various books of hadith and jurisprudence, the use of siwak was not merely a physical action of rubbing a stick on the mouth; it was a means of maintaining cleanliness and health, and an important tool for freshening breath. Siwak is recommended in certain conditions, such as when the teeth turn yellow, when bad breath arises, or when waking up from sleep. This highlights that the purpose of siwak is rooted in cleanliness and health, both of which are of significant importance in Islam.

For example, in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:222), Allah says, *"Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves."* This verse illustrates the importance of cleanliness and purity in Islam, showing that Islam places great value on both physical and spiritual cleanliness. Another example is found in the Quran regarding the people of Masjid Quba, who are praised for their habit of maintaining cleanliness. Before praying or reciting the Qur'an, Muslims

are encouraged to use siwak to ensure their mouth is clean and pure when they are about to communicate with Allah.

From this, we can conclude that the primary purpose of siwak in Islam is to maintain the cleanliness and health of the mouth.

The Historical Context of Siwak

The practice of using sticks or branches for cleaning teeth dates back thousands of years. The Babylonians in Iraq were among the first to use such tools, dating back over 7,000 years. This practice continued in ancient Greece, Rome, and among the Jews and Egyptians. Islam did not introduce the use of siwak but rather continued and spread the tradition, especially with the Prophet Muhammad's use of siwak. The Prophet's example turned the practice into a Sunnah, meaning it became an act rewarded by Allah.

The widespread use of siwak in the Muslim world is greatly influenced by the religious dimension, as the Prophet Muhammad's use of siwak made it an act of virtue. The spread of Islam globally also contributed to the spread of the practice of using siwak, influencing many regions and cultures.

The Effectiveness of Siwak

Scientific studies have confirmed the benefits of using siwak for dental health. Research has shown that siwak has antibacterial properties, especially against cariogenic and periodontal pathogens, and it helps prevent plaque formation. For example, studies in Zimbabwe and Sudan found that children who used siwak had fewer dental cavities compared to those who used conventional toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Siwak contains a variety of beneficial compounds, such as trimethylamine, salvadorin (an alkaloid), chlorides, fluoride, silica, and various vitamins, including vitamin C. These compounds contribute to its effectiveness as a natural antimicrobial agent and dental cleaner.

The Global Use of Siwak

Siwak has not been limited to the Middle East. Different cultures around the world have utilized various plants for similar purposes. For instance:

- In West Africa, people use lime tree (*Citrus aurantifolia*) and orange tree (*Citrus sinensis*) branches.
- In India and nearby regions, neem (*Azadirachta indica*) branches are used.
- In the U.S., African Americans have traditionally used the roots of the senna plant (*Cassia vinea*).
- The Japanese use a tool similar to siwak known as *koyoji*.

The Modern Context of Siwak

Given that in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), siwak was the most accessible and effective tool for oral hygiene, it is clear that the cultural and situational context of the time contributed to its widespread use. Today, however, the advent of modern dental tools such as toothbrushes and toothpaste raises the question of whether these tools can replace siwak in terms of religious merit.

From a substantive-philosophical perspective, the function of modern oral hygiene tools is essentially the same as siwak: they are tools for cleaning the mouth, maintaining dental health, and eliminating bad breath. Therefore, the usage of modern dental products—such as toothpaste, mouthwash, or electric toothbrushes—carries the same purpose as siwak: maintaining cleanliness and health. Consequently, these modern tools, in their intent and effect, can be considered to hold the same reward and virtue as siwak, as long as they serve the same fundamental purpose outlined in the hadith.

The use of siwak in Islamic tradition is primarily aimed at maintaining cleanliness and health. Modern oral hygiene tools, which serve the same purposes, can be understood as having the same religious value as siwak. By broadening the interpretation of the hadith on siwak, we can appreciate that any tool or product used to maintain oral cleanliness and health aligns with the same spiritual and health-conscious objectives as the use of siwak during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Thus, the religious merit of using siwak extends to modern tools that fulfill the same essential function.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the substantive-philosophical meaning of using siwak during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was to maintain the health of the teeth and gums, clean the teeth, and eliminate bad breath. Siwak was chosen as the primary tool for cleaning the teeth and mouth during the time of the Prophet because it was the most accessible and practical tool available at the time, and it had been proven effective based on the experiences of previous generations. The discovery of modern dental tools is part of Sunnatullah (the natural law established by Allah) and a result of the intellect that Allah has granted to humans, allowing them to find solutions for their well-being. Therefore, modern oral hygiene tools should not be rejected or seen as contradictory to the Sunnah. Instead, efforts should be made to align these tools with the teachings of the Prophet, in this case, siwak. Modern dental products, **such** as toothpaste and mouthwash, especially those made from siwak, serve the same purpose as siwak. Thus, based on the above conclusions, the use of modern

oral hygiene tools holds the same merit as using siwak, in terms of both its Sunnah and its value as an act of worship.

REFERENCES

Adzakiyah, T., Lipoeto, I., & Kasuma, N. (2015). Pengaruh berkumur dengan larutan ekstrak siwak (*Salvadora persica*) terhadap pH saliva rongga mulut. *Jurnal Sains Farmasi & Klinis*, 2(1), 74–77. <https://doi.org/10.29208/jsfk.2015.2.1.52>

An-Nawawi, I. (n.d.). *Syarah Sahih Muslim* (Vol. XIV). Maktabah al-Shamilah, al Maktab al-Ta'awuni Li al-Da'wah.

Asqallani, I. H. al-' (n.d.). *Fath Al Bari bi Syarh Sahih Al Bukhari* (Vol. I). Maktabah al-Syamilah al Maktab at-Ta'awuni Li ad-Dakwah.

Bramanti, I., Sutardjo, I. R., Ula, N., & Isa, M. (2014). Efektifitas siwak (*Salvadora persica*) dan pasta gigi siwak terhadap akumulasi plak gigi pada anak-anak. *Dental Journal (Majalah Kedokteran Gigi)*, 47(3), 153–157. <https://doi.org/10.20473/j.djmk.v47.i3.p153-157>

Bukhari, I. (n.d.). *Sahih Al Bukhari* (Vol. I). Maktabah as-Shamilah, al Maktab al-Ta'awuni Li al-Da'wah.

Dahiya, P., Kamal, R., Luthra, R. P., Mishra, R., & Saini, G. (2012). Miswak: A periodontist's perspective. *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine*, 3(4), 184–187. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0975-9476.104431>

Eva A. Sijabat, Posangi, J., & Juliatri. (2015). Perbandingan efektivitas pasta gigi yang mengandung siwak dengan pasta gigi tanpa siwak pada pasien pasca skelling. *Jurnal e-GiGi (eG)*, 3(2), 72–77.

Farida, U. (2018). Studi pemikiran Fazlur Rahman tentang sunnah dan hadis. *Addin*, 10(1), 1–30.

Hanafi, B. A. al. (n.d.). *Umdat al-Qari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Vol. V). Maktabah as-Shamilah, al Maktab al-Ta'awuni Li al-Da'wah.

Hanbal, A. b. (n.d.). *Musnad Ahmad* (Vol. IV). Maktabah as-Shamilah, al Maktab al-Ta'awuni Li al-Da'wah.

Khoiriyah, Y. N. (2018). Porositas lempeng resin akrilik pasca perendaman rebusan daun sirih dan kayu siwak. *Jurnal Vokasi Kesehatan*, 4(1), 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.30602/jvk.v4i1.122>

KumparanNews. (2018). Siwak jadi produk baru sikat gigi di Eropa. *Kumparan*. Retrieved from <https://www.kumparan.com>

KumparanStyle. (2018). Mengenal siwak dan manfaatnya untuk gigi. *Kumparan*. Retrieved from <https://www.kumparan.com>

Kurdi, dkk. (2010). *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an dan Hadis*. eLSAQ Press.

Mardia Apriansi. (n.d.). Pengaruh ekstrak serbuk kayu siwak (*Salvadora persica*) terhadap pertumbuhan bakteri *Streptococcus mutans*. *JURNAL AGROQUA*, 2(15), 1–10.

Meswak Chewing Stick versus conventional toothbrush as an oral hygiene aid. (n.d.). *Europe PMC*. Retrieved May 9, 2018, from <http://europepmc.org/abstract/med/2088630>

Mitra Kesehatan. (n.d.). Alat pembersih gigi. Retrieved from <https://www.mitrakesehatan.com>

Munawwir, A. W. (2002). *Kamus Al Munawwir*. Pustaka Progressif.

Musawi, S. A. H. al. (1989). *Isu-isu penting ikhtilaf sunnah-Syi'ah*. Mizan.

Muslim, I. (n.d.). *Sahih Muslim* (Vol. 2). Maktabah as-Shamilah, al Maktab al-Ta'awuni Li al-Da'wah.

Mustaqim, A. (2010). *Epistemologi tafsir kontemporer*. LkiS.

Muttaqin, L. (2013). Aplikasi teori double movement Fazlur Rahman terhadap doktrin kewarisan Islam klasik. *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam*, 7(2), 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v7i2.564>

Nawawi, I. (n.d.). *Al Majmu' Sharh Al Muhadzdzab* (Vol. I). Maktabah as-Shamilah, al Maktab al-Ta'awuni Li al-Da'wah.

Nawawi, I. (1984). *Al-Tibyan fi Adab Hamalah Al-Qur'an*. Dar an-Nafais.

Pratiwi, R. (2005). Perbedaan daya hambat terhadap *Streptococcus mutans* dari beberapa pasta gigi yang mengandung herbal. *Dental Journal (Majalah Kedokteran Gigi)*, 38(2), 64–67. <https://doi.org/10.20473/j.djmk.v38.i2.p64-67>

Santoso, O., Wardani, A. P., & Kusumasari, N. (2012). Pengaruh larutan ekstrak siwak (*Salvadora persica*) terhadap *Streptococcus mutans*: Studi in vitro dan in vivo. *Media Medika Indonesiana*, 46(3), 163–167.

Shirazi, A. I. as-. (1994). *Al-Muhadhdhab* (Vol. I). Dar El-Fikr.

Yahsabi, A. F. I. al. (n.d.). *Ikmal Al Mu'allim Sharah Sahih Muslim* (Vol. II). Maktabah as-Shamilah, al Maktab al-Ta'awuni Li al-Da'wah.

Yudi Dharmawan. (2018). 8 alat bantu untuk membersihkan gigi. Retrieved from <https://ilmukukesehatan.blogspot.co.id>

Vania Salsabila, dkk. (2013). Efek antibakterial ekstrak etanol siwak (*Salvadora persica*) terhadap pertumbuhan bakteri *Porphyromonas gingivalis*. *Jurnal Pustaka Kesehatan*, 1(1), 15–20.