

Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Salāma ibn Salama ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Azdī al-Ḥajrī al-Miṣrī al-Ṭahāwī رحمه الله (229-321), the humble, self-effaced, scrupulous, peerless *Faqīh*, absolute *Mujtahid*, and unrivalled Imām and Master of the *Madhhab* in ḥadīth and its sciences, “matched by none of those who followed” (Ibn Yūnus, al-Safādī, al-Suyūṭī), “unanimously agreed upon in his trustworthiness” (al-‘Aynī, al-Sam‘ānī, al-Dhahabī, al-Suyūṭī), “the Master in all the Schools of *Fiqh*” (Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr), “one of the established trustworthy giants among the ḥadīth Masters” (Ibn Kathīr), who shared the same *Shuyūkh* in ḥadīth as Muslim, al-Nasā‘ī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah, and “whose *Sharḥ Ma‘ānī al-Āthār* definitely surpasses the *Sunan* in excellence” (al-Kawtharī)!²

A student of his maternal uncle al-Muzanī, Abū Ja‘far first followed the Shāfi‘ī School until al-Muzanī’s death in 264, after which he focused on three Cairene ḥadīth Masters of superlative Religion and *Fiqh*, all of them Ḥanafīs: the Qāḍī of Shām, Kūfa, and Karkh (Baghdād) Abū Khāzim ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Sakūnī al-Baṣrī (d. 292), the saintly Qāḍī of all Egypt Abū Bakrah Bakkār ibn Qutayba al-Baṣrī (d. 270), and his successor the Qāḍī of all Egypt Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad ibn Abī ‘Imrān Mūsā ibn ‘Īsā al-Baghdādī (d. 280) whom al-Ṭahāwī frequented for twenty years and who was probably the decisive reason behind his switching to the Ḥanafī School. After this, al-Ṭahāwī said, he dreamt of al-Muzanī complaining to him: “Abū Ja‘far robbed me of you, Abū Ja‘far!” However, the claim that the reason for his adoption of the Ḥanafī School was that “he had seen his uncle and teacher turning to the works of Ḥanafī Scholars to resolve many thorny issues of *fiqh* etc.” is most likely untrue since al-Muzanī’s *Mukhtaṣar* and his other works are replete with refutations of the Ḥanafī School.

Ibn Hajar discussed the categories of ḥadīth Mastership (*hifz*) in his biographical notice on Ibn Rāfi‘ al-Salāmī (d. 774) and said, “In truth, Ibn Rāfi‘ is closer to the definition of *hifz* by the standards of *Ahl al-ḥadīth* than Ibn Kathīr. Ibn Rāfi‘ focussed on short-chained narrations, short treatises, dates of death, and ḥadīth auditions more than Ibn Kathīr. The latter is closer to the definition of *hifz* by the standards of the *Fuqahā’*, due to his great familiarity with the juristic and Qur’anic commentary texts, than Ibn Rāfi‘. The two of them would make up an accomplished *Hāfiẓ* but few are those that attained such a level after the early period, such as Ibn Khuzayma, al-Ṭahāwī, Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Bayhaqī, and, in the latter period, our Shaykh, al-‘Irāqī.”³

Among the works of al-Ṭahāwī:

Aḥkām al-Qur’ān, his *Tafsīr*, partly extant and now published in Turkey.

Akhbār Abī Ḥanīfa, also known as his *Manāqib*.

Bayān I’tiqād Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a ‘alā Madhhab Fuqahā’ al-Milla Abī Ḥanīfa wa-Abī Yūsuf al-Anṣārī wa-Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan (“Exposition of the Creed of the People of the Sunna and the Congregation According to the Teachings of the Jurists of the Community, Abū Hanīfa and his Companions”), known as the *‘Aqīda Ṭahāwiyya*. This is one of the most reliable concise early texts of Sunni doctrine.⁴ Among its tenets is the creed that the Twelve Imāms, the *Itra*, and the Companions – Allāh be well-pleased with them all – put together are below the level of a single Prophet: §98. “We do not prefer any of the saintly men among the Community over any of the Prophets but rather we say that any one of the Prophets is better than all the *awliyā’* put together.”

The *Ṭahāwiyya* received many commentaries. Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ya‘qūbī said the most reliable is Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī’s, a Māturīdī commentary. Among the reliable Ash‘arī commentaries: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Ghunaymī al-Maydānī’s and al-Bājūrī’s (Ash‘arī). Al-Kawtharī said:

The *‘Aqīda Ṭahāwiyya* received several commentaries, among them that of Najm al-Dīn Abū Shujā‘ Bakbars al-Nāsīrī al-Baghdādī – among Sharaf al-Dīn al-Dimyāfi’s Shaykhs – that of Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn Ishāq al-Ghaznawī al-Miṣrī, that of Mahmūd ibn Aḥmad ibn Mas‘ūd al-Qūnawī, that of Sharḥ al-Ṣadr ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Adhra‘ī and others. A commentary was published, authored by an unknown [Ibn

¹Main sources: al-Arna‘ūt, introduction to his edition of al-Ṭahāwī’s *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār*, and al-Kawtharī, *al-Ḥāwī fī Sirat al-Imām al-Ṭahāwī*.

²This claim, even if untrue, indicates the high rank of al-Ṭahāwī and his work.

³Ibn Hajar, *Inbā’ al-Ghumr* (1:62).

⁴Cf. therevival.co.uk/articles/aqeeda_tahawi.htm, sunnah.org/aqida/index.htm, etc.

Abī al-‘Izz] spuriously affiliated with the Ḥanafī school, but whose handiwork proclaims his ignorance of this discipline and the fact that he is an anthropomorphist who has lost his compass.⁵

Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā’, an unfinished masterpiece of *fiqh* erudition unfortunately lost, but its abridgment by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370) is preserved in full and was published recently in Damascus.

Mukhtaṣar al-Taḥāwī in Ḥanafī *Fiqh*, praised by the *Muḥaddith* ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī in *Bustān al-Muḥaddithīn* as a proof of al-Taḥāwī’s status of *Mujtahid muṭlaq* and his free range of positions, some conforming to the *Madhhab*, some given precedence over those of the *Madhhab*. This work received many commentaries, the most important one being Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ’s commentary.

Al-Nakhl, a book on datepalm-trees

Naqd Kitāb al-Mudallisīn, a critique and refutation of al-Karābīsī’s work in which the latter unwisely gave arguments to the enemies of ḥadīth. This work is lost.

Sharḥ Ma ‘ānī al-Āthār, his earliest work, in which he focussed to a large extent on the jurisprudence of the Ḥanafī Imāms in his discussion of all the issues he brought up. This work is a didactic manual of tremendous use for students of jurisprudence and differences. It served as the foundation for the *Mushkil* where he focussed on ḥadīth and gave greater leeway to his *Ijtihād*. Among the commentaries the *Ma ‘ānī* received: the *Hāfiz* ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Qurashī’s [Ibn al-Turkmānī’s student] *al-Ḥawī fī Takhrīj Ahādīth al-Taḥāwī* and al-Badr al-‘Aynī’s three commentaries: *Nakhb al-Afkār fī Sharḥ Ma ‘ānī al-Āthār*, *Mabānī al-Akhhār fī Sharḥ Ma ‘ānī al-Āthār*, and *Naghm al-Akhyār fī Rijāl Ma ‘ānī al-Āthār*.

Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār, a large, late work, his *magnum opus*, published in sixteen volumes by Shaykh Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt who describes the Imām’s method as gathering two authentic but apparently contradictory ḥadīths in each chapter – without specific topical order or organization – and discussing the various ways in which the purported contradiction is resolved according to the principles of lexical usage, *tafsīr*, jurisprudence and *qiyās*, with special consideration for the principles in use in the Ḥanafī *Madhhab*, and – almost overcoming all other aspects – ḥadīth science. If the two ḥadīths are not of comparable strength then the stronger one is put forward and the weaker one superseded. The full title of this work is *Bayān Mushkil Ahādīth Rasūlillāhi ﷺ wa-Istikhrāji mā fīhi min al-Ahkāmi wa-Naḥī al-Tadāddi ‘anhā* (“Exposition of the Problematic Ḥadīths of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, Extraction of the Rulings Contained Therein, and Refutation of the Notion that They Show Contradiction”). The original inspiration for this genre in Islām was pioneered by Imām al-Shāfi‘ī in his much smaller *Ikhtilāf al-Ḥadīth*, followed by others such as Ibn Qutayba’s masterful but concise *Ta’wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth* (“The Explanation of Conflicting Narrations”), Ibn Mahdī al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’wīl al-Aḥādīth al-Mushkalāt al-Warīdāt fīl-Ṣifāt*, and Ibn Fūrak’s *Mushkil al-Ḥadīth*. These should not be confused with the works dealing exclusively with lexical difficulties such as Ibn Sallām’s *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, Thābit ibn Qāsim al-Andalusī al-Saraqastī al-Sharīṭī’s (d. 314) *al-Dalā’il fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarībī’s *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, al-Khattābī’s *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, Ibn al-Athīr’s *al-Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wal-Athar*, Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, and al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Fa’iq*. Al-Taḥāwī narrates in the *Mushkil* the famous ḥadīth in which the Prophet ﷺ rested or received revelation with his head in ‘Alī’s lap until sunset, after which – since ‘Alī had not prayed *‘Asr* – the Prophet ﷺ raised his hand and supplicated until the sun moved back up from the West.⁶ Al-Taḥāwī mentioned that the ḥadīth Master Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ (d. 248) considered it a duty for every *‘Alīm* to memorize this ḥadīth as it provides one of the proofs of Prophethood. Yet Ibn Taymiyya summarily dismissed al-Taḥāwī’s expertise in ḥadīth because of this narration, which he declared forged in his *Minḥāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya* as did Ibn al-Jawzī before him. Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād considered it authentic and Ibn Ḥajar rejected the claim of forgery, authenticating a similar ḥadīth from Jābir: “The Prophet ﷺ commanded the sun which lagged back for an hour during

⁵ Al-Kawtharī, *al-Ḥawī fī Sīrat al-Imām al-Taḥāwī* (p. 38-39). Muhammad ibn ‘Ala’ al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī al-‘Izz, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Dimashqī al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 792) is unknown in the Ḥanafī biographical sources but is mentioned in other sources due to the affair that led to his eleven-month imprisonment from 784 to 785. Ibn ‘Imād al-Hanbalī (d. 1089) devoted 5 lines to him in his ten-volume *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* (6:326) in which he mentions that Ibn Abī al-‘Izz was the Ḥanafī judge for Damascus, then for Cairo for one month, after which he excused himself and came back to Damascus. There, he was imprisoned for a certain matter and remained incarcerated until a new governor came and gave him amnesty. The story is told by Ibn Ḥajar in the chapter for the year 784 in his *Inbā’ al-Ghumr* (1:258-260).

⁶ Narrated from Asmā’ bint ‘Umays by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (24:144-151 #382, 390-391 cf. Ibn Abī ‘Āsim, *al-Sunna* 2:598 #1323) and al-Taḥāwī in *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār* (3:92-95 #1067-1068) through two ‘Alawī chains cf. al-Haythamī (8:297), al-Husayn by al-Dūlābī in *al-Dhurriyyat al-Tāhira* (p. 91 #164), and ‘Alī; deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Suyūṭī after al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād in *al-Shifā’* (p. 347-348 #684) cf. *Fayd al-Qadīr* (#7889), Ibn al-Hadhdhā’ al-Haskānī (d. >470), Ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Halabī, and others while Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Taymiyya, al-Mizzī, al-Dhahabī in the *Mīzān* and *Tartīb al-Mawdū‘āt*, and al-Qārī in *al-Maṣnū‘* declared it forged cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya* (5:80-90), al-Nabhānī, *Hujjat Allāh* (p. 398).

the day.”⁷ In any case, the entirety of the Ulema concur that al-Taḥāwī was a major ḥadīth Master regardless of his ruling on this ḥadīth.

Al-Shurūṭ al-Awsaṭ, al-Kabīr, and al-Ṣaghīr, in which al-Taḥāwī shows his unsurpassed mastery of the science of *shurūṭ* or Correct Transactions.

Sunan al-Shāfi‘ī, narrated from his uncle al-Muzanī from the Imām. This monograph of al-Shāfi‘ī’s narrations comes to us from al-Taḥāwī through three of his students: Abū al-Qāsim Maymūn ibn Ḥamza al-Mu‘addal; Muḥammad ibn al-Muzaffar ibn Mūsā al-Bazzār the ḥadīth Master; and Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Āṣim al-Muqri’. The work known as the *Musnad* of al-Shāfi‘ī is different and was compiled by the trustworthy ḥadīth Master Abū al-‘Abbās al-Aṣamm (247-346) from his hearing al-Rabī‘ ibn Sulaymān al-Murādī’s narrations from the Imām in *al-Umm*.⁸

Tafsīr Mutashābih al-Akhbār, mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya in *Minḥāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya*.

Al-Taswiya bayna Ḥaddathanā wa Akhbaranā, showing that the two terms are identical in ḥadīth terminology.

Al-Taḥāwī once said: “None imitates except a fanatic or a doer” (*lā yuqallidu illā ‘aṣabiyyun aw ghabī*). The meaning of this phrase is not absolute but applies only if three conditions are met: one is actually qualified and capable of discerning the stronger position without the shadow of a doubt and has reached certainty of its superiority yet follows the weaker position out of loyalty to his School.⁹

The author narrates by permission (*ijāza*) from Shaykh Muḥammad Muṭī‘ al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dimashqī with his chain through Shaykh Ismā‘īl al-‘Ajlūnī the compiler of *Kashf al-Khafā’*, through Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, through Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, from Ibn ‘Asākir with a strong chain through al-Taḥāwī, from Yūnus ibn ‘Abd al-‘Alā al-Ṣadafi, from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahb ibn Muslim, from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Hafṣ, from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim, from his father al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, from his grandmother ‘Ā’isha the Mother of the Believers who said: “I saw a man the Day of the Trench with the exact appearance of Dihyat ibn Khalīfa al-Kalbī, mounted, speaking with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ in private, wearing a turban with its extremity hanging in his back. I asked the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ about him and he said: ‘This is Gibrīl, he ordered me to go out to the Banū Qurayza.’”¹⁰

⁷Narrated from Jābir by al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* with a fair chain cf. *Fath* (6:221) and al-Haythamī (8:296). The editor of the *Mushkil* cites all the negative rulings but does not mention this. Further, his edition of the *Mushkil* is missing the words of al-Taḥāwī cited by ‘Iyād verbatim: “These two ḥadīths [from Asmā’ bint ‘Umays] are firmly established as authentic and their narrators are trustworthy (*fa-hādhāni al-ḥadīthāni thābitāni wa-ruwātuhumā thiqāt*)”!

⁸Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (10:397).

⁹This does *not* apply to every single imitator of a School. It would have been preferable that the editor of *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Athār* clarify this distinction, but he is satisfied with quoting al-Taḥāwī’s statement four times or more in his introduction without once clarifying it! Imām Zufar, for example, generally imitated Abū Hanīfa’s positions after his death because he declared his inability to reach absolute certainty of the superiority of his finding when it contradicted that of the Imām in view of his knowledge of the latter’s perspicuity.

¹⁰Narrated by Ibn ‘Asākir (5:367-368).