



Research Article

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP IN MAVAROUNNAHR

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ABSTRACT

This article gives an overview of religious scholarship in Mavarounnahr during the 9th to 12th centuries. Starting from the 8th century, various theological factions such as Qadariyya, Jabriya, Jahmiya, Mutaziliyya, and Rafidiyyah emerged within Islam, proliferating notably in Central Asia during the late 9th and early 10th centuries. Extensive scholarly studies by figures like Wilfred Madelung, Melchert Christopher, Ahmet Karamustafa, Shirin Akiner, Muhammad Mansur Ali, and Aiyub Palmer have elucidated the origins, significance, and societal impacts of these theological sects. A prevailing consensus among these scholars highlights Mavarounnahr, or contemporary Central Asia, as a region where hadith scholars (Ahl al-hadith), adherents of Hanafi jurisprudence, and followers of Moturidism thrived. Notably, these scholars underscored the symbiotic relationship between certain Sufi practices (such as malamatiya and karramiya) and Islamic sects. It is documented that proponents of hadith, Hanafi jurisprudence, and Moturidism vehemently opposed groups espousing distorted interpretations of religious doctrines. Additionally, numerous studies have explored the doctrinal disparities between the Ahl al-Hadith and the Hanafi school, sometimes associating Abu Hanifa with the Ahl al-Ray. According to scholars like Khalid Blankinship and Ira Lapidus, the 10th-century scholar al-Moturidi of Samarkand formulated the Moturidi

doctrine, synthesizing positive elements from divergent theological streams. Essentially, Imam al-Moturidi expanded upon the foundational principles laid down by Abu Hanifa, anchoring his doctrines in the Quran and hadith while refuting the ideologies of groups like Jahmiyyah, Qaramit, Rafidiyyah, Murjiyyah, and Karramiyyah, which he perceived as distorting the essence of Islam and misinterpreting religious tenets. The objective of the analysis presented in this article is to explore the scholarly discourse surrounding Hanafi jurisprudence, Ahl al-Hadith, and other theological factions prevalent in Central Asia, with a focus on delineating their principal doctrines and trajectories.

KEYWORDS

Hanafi, Ahl al-Hadith, Central Asia, Qur'an, Islam, Sects.

INTRODUCTION

The book, *Life and Work of Imam Abu Hanifa*, states that he was born in Kufa, Iraq. It is narrated that 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (d. 653), one of the Companions of the Prophet, was sent to Kufa during the time of 'Ali 'Umar, where he taught many disciples and also taught Abu Hanifa's teacher Hammad ibn Abu Sulayman (d. 738) [28]. According to researchers, Hanafi views entered the land of Mavarounnahr during the lifetime of Abu Hanifa. Much of the work on this subject has been published by Wilfred Mandelang. In particular, in a 1982 study entitled "The early Murji'a in Khurasan and Transoxania and the spread of Hanafism", the scholar commented on the emergence of the Hanafi sect in Central Asia, its major scholars, and its central cities [22].

According to him, Balkh was one of the first centers of the Hanafi school in the East. Although there is evidence of early Hanafis in other cities of Mavarounnahr as well, there is insufficient information that they were directly related to Abu Hanifa. The scholar only mentions that Abu Isma Nuh ibn Abu Maryam (d. 173 / 789-90), a disciple of Abu Hanifa, served as a judge in Marw, and Abu al-Aziz ibn Khalid al-Termizi as a judge in Termez. Wilfred Mandelang commented that Samarkand later became the center of Hanafiism, which al-Moturidi further developed [22]. The researcher connects the spread of Hanafiism to the regions of Mavarounnahr and Khorasan with the Samanids. In other words, during the reign of Amir Ismail ibn Ahmad (982-907), Hanafi scholars gathered

in Samarkand, Bukhara and other cities of Mavarounnahr and they were questioned on various issues. Hanafi scholars held important positions in the Samanid state[22]. Hanafi scholars were the mainstay of the rulers not only during the Samanids, but also during the Karakhanids, Gaznavids, Seljuks [4]. In other words, Hanafi scholars served as chairman, judge, and imam in the Khurasan and Mavarounnahr regions, further strengthening Sunnism, restraining Shiites, and weakening the enemies of the ruler [4].

In 2002, Mandelang Wilfred's book "The Westward Migration of Hanafi Scholars from Central Asia in the 11th to 12th Centuries" was published in Turkey [41]. The introductory part of the study states that Hanafiism entered Central Asia as early as the life of Abu Hanifa. The cities of Bukhara and Samarkand are said to have been recognized as centers of the Eastern Hanafi school during the Samanid period. Later, the city of Gurganj in Khorezm also became a place of study of Hanafi, each school in Mavarounnahr has its own uniqueness, different from Iraq, Iran and other regions. The author writes that Hanafiyya, which developed in Central Asia, did not gain much popularity during the Abbasid period, and

Moturidism, one of the two major branches of Sunni theology, was also unknown for a century in Iraq and western Iran [40]. By the 11th century, with the death of great Hanafi scholars in Baghdad, Central Asia began to attract all scholars. Mandelang Wilfred linked the widespread spread of Hanafiism to the Seljuks. That is, the researcher noted that the Seljuks respected the Hanafi school of Mavarounnahr, that they appointed Hanafi scholars as judges, imams, and teachers wherever they went, and that only the Hanafis of Mavarounnahr served as ministers and ambassadors. The author also reveals the disputes between the Hanafis and Shafi'is of Mavarounnahr, the madrasas run or founded by Mavarounnahr scholars, the place of Khorezm, Bukhara, Samarkand, Shash, Nasaf, and Termez scholars in the Islamic world.

Christopher Melchert's book [25], "The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E", says that by the tenth century, Hanafi, Shafi'i, and other schools of thought had emerged in Muslim jurisprudence. Prior to that, there were two main directions, "Ash'ab al-Hadith" and "Ash'ab ar-Ray". It is noted that during the end of the VIII century and during the IX century there were various disagreements

between the two directions, the positive aspects of these conflicting groups were absorbed into the Islamic sects in the X century, and thus were reconciled [26]. The author also notes that the Hanafi school of Khorasan and Mavarounnahr has yet to be studied, that most Hanafi scholars in the region have not given information about their teachers, and that they usually refer to the Hanafi sheikhs of the time as rais, ahl ar-ray sheikh, Abu Hanifa ashabi, but not as teachers [26]. Christopher Melchert noted that similar cases should be investigated separately.

Ahmet Karamustafa's book, "Sufism: The Formative Period", states that the Sufis of Isfahan and Shiraz had close relations with the Shafi'is, Hanbalis, and Zahiris, and that they fought [19] together against the Mu'tazilites who denied Sufism and Muhaddithin. Sufism was not popular in Mavarounnahr until the 11th century because of the Hanafi school [19]. The scholar says that Sufism of Mavarounnahr developed as an integral part of Hanafiism and that Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Kalabadi (d. 380/990), the author of "At-Taarruf li-mazhab ahl at-Tasawwuf", also represented the Hanafi school. He also noted the lack of accurate information about Sufis in Bukhara, Samarkand, Termez and Nasaf [19].

However, in the northeastern regions of the Muslim world, especially in Khorasan and Mavarounnahr, there is a certain category called "hakim" (sage) whose scientific worldview covers many fields. That is, they differed from the mysticism of other regions in that they mastered the sciences of Hanafi jurisprudence, kalam, tafsir, hadith, and the study of the psyche [19].

In Akiner Shirin's study, "Islam, the State and Ethnicity in Central Asia in Historical Perspective" is studied in three stages. That is, the period from the advent of Islam to the nineteenth century is the first stage, followed by religious life in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and the third stage in the mid-1980s to the 2000s [2]. The study said that the people of Mavarounnahr first followed the Hanafi sect of Sunni Islam, madrassas and mosques served as centers for the study of religious sciences, and Central Asian scholars expanded their knowledge in Mecca, Baghdad, Damascus, Nishapur, Basra, Kufa and other cities [2]. The author notes that some aspects of mysticism entered the cities of Balkh and Nishapur in the VIII-IX centuries, and later developed in Merv, Bukhara and Khorezm. He writes that the person who played an important role in Central Asian Sufism was Yusuf Hamadoni

(d. 1148-1141) and his teachings later developed in the sects of Yassavi and Naqshbandi [2].

We know that Bernd Radtke, Yves Marquet, Sarah Sviri, Geneva Gobillot, Abdullah Baraka, and other scholars recognized Hakim Termezi as a unique thinker of his time, a scientist whose theories were ahead of his time, and the founder of the school of hakimiya [53]. However, in the work of Aiyub Palmer, a study of the period in which Hakim Termezi lived shows that the Mavarounnahr Hanafi school not only influenced the scholarly legacy of the scholar, but also that Hakim Termezi made a worthy contribution to the development of the Hanafi school [31]. The researcher says that Hanafiism became the main sect in Central Asia by the ninth century, and that one of Abu Hanifa's disciples taught “ilm ar-ray and ilm al-osar” to Hakim Termezi. The scholar was critical of those who misinterpreted Hanafiism in his time, and called groups such as Mushabbah, Qadariyyah, Jabriya, Jahmiya, Mutaziliyyah, and Rafidiyya, which were rejected by the Hanafis, “Ahl al-Bid'ah” (bid'ah group) and “Ar-radd ala al-mu'attila”. Al-Moturidi, who further developed Hanafiism, tried to explain that he was influenced by the ideas of Hakim Termezi in writing his book, “Kitab at-Tawhid” [31].

According to Aiyub Palmer, before al-Moturidi, only Hakim Termizi gave “wisdom” and its interpretation, and in Moturidi the word was used in the form and context used by Termizi [51]. The researcher also noted that Hanafi scholars such as Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi and al-Lamishi referred to the works of Hakim Tirmidhi and recognized him as a teacher, noting that in the ninth century, Hanafiism and mysticism were closely related [31]. Thus, it is clear from the work of Aiyub Palmer that the scholars who worked in Mavarounnahr in the IX-X centuries can be divided into four major categories, such as hadith scholars (Ahl al-hadith), Islamic jurists (Ahl ar-ray), Mutazilites and Moturidis. Hakim Termizi's work is closely connected with the Hanafi school of Mavarounnahr and the teachings of al-Moturidi.

The formation and meaning of the direction known as the group of hadith scholars or “ahl al-hadith”, “as'hob al-hadith” was analyzed by Joseph Schacht [36], Hallaq Weil [13], Hodgson Marshall [24], Jonathan Berkey [5], Khalid Blankinship [6], Jonathan Brown [9], Jeffrey Halverson [14], Ira Lapidus [20], Schmidtke S. [37], Limen Oliver [21] and in the works of other scientists [44]. The movement of hadith scholars

appeared in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. In some sources, the Ahl al-Hadith group is also referred to as the Hijaz School of Islamic Law, with Malik ibn Anas (d. 179/795) as the founder of the movement [17]. The Oxford Dictionary of Islam defines the Ahl al-Hadith as a movement of hadith scholars [45] who value the Qur'an and authentic hadiths as the most important sources in matters of jurisprudence and belief. According to Ira Lapidus, the Ahl al-Hadith differed from the Ahl al-Ray in terms of jurisprudence, but opposed the Mu'tazilites in matters of faith [20]. Muhammad Mansur Ali also explained the emergence of famous hadith scholars from Khorasan and Mavarounnahr by the movement of the Mu'tazilites [27]. According to the scholar, the translation of the works of Greek scholars Aristotle, Plato, and Ptolemy into Arabic in the House of Wisdom began to influence the science of the Qur'an and hadith. That is, the Mu'tazilites, inspired by Greek philosophy, denied the sciences of hadith, tafsir, and mysticism [46].

Ira Lapidus noted that the Ahl al-Hadith refused to make judgments in jurisprudential matters on the basis of "ray" (thought) and "qiyas" used by "ahl ar-ray" [48]. They went against the idea of

the Mu'tazilites that the Qur'an was created. [1]. Indeed, at that time, the Mu'tazilites created the Qur'an (creation) [1] was a group that completely denied [35] hadith, tafsir, and mysticism, claiming that if the Qur'an were the words of Allah, logically it should be in its own language [18]. While Ira Lapidus recognized [20] Ahmad ibn Hanbal as the most famous leader of the movement, Jonathan Brown noted [8] that in the tenth century the ideas of the Ahl al-Hadith and the Hanbali sect became commonplace. Scholars write that other schools of jurisprudence later accepted the Qur'an and the hadiths narrated by the Ahl al-Hadith as reliable sources [20].

The scholar says that in the ninth and tenth centuries, the Ahl al-Hadith group created hadith collections in the form of sahih and sunan, and in the books of Muhammad Ismail al-Bukhari and his student Muslim ibn Hajjaj, he compiled only sahih hadiths and abandoned the weak hadiths used by the Ahl al-Hadith. Their methods were advanced in the Sunan of Abu Dawud Sijistani, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah. Jonathan Brown also writes that members of the Ahl al-Hadith, such as Abu Zura al-Razi (d. 264/878), initially criticized Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim, who had authentic books, and

condemned the division of hadiths into authentic and non-authentic types. accused of giving precedence to ahl ar-ray [9]. That is, when Abu Zura used the hadiths when the Ahl al-Hadith were arguing with others, he was afraid that their opponents would claim that it was not authentic. However, Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim avoided such problems and noted that they did not compile all the authentic hadiths in their books. For example, while Imam Bukhari said that he used authentic hadiths that were based solely on his fiqh views, Imam Muslim admitted that he was limited to hadiths that were accepted by all scholars [9].

According to Khalid Blankinship and Tim Winter's book, *The First Belief*, the Al-Ash'arites defended the Ahl al-Hadith movement and, unlike the Mu'tazilites, recognized the essence of Allah and all His attributes, the revelation of the Qur'an [6]. Al-Ash'ari and Ahl al-Hadith have the same view that the faith of Muslims decreases and increases depending on the level of worship [15].

Ashirbek Muminov said that the views of the people of al-hadith have caused a lot of controversy in the province of Mavarounnahr [50]. For example, he said that during the escalation of the hadith dispute in Bukhara, the

chairman of the Bukhara scholars, Abu Hafs al-Saghir, summoned Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, a prominent representative of the Ahl al-Hadith, and the two scholars discussed certain issues and were expelled from Bukhara because of al-Bukhari's views [50]. Ashirbek Muminov also writes that all the issues of Ahl al-Hadith Shari'ah should be linked to verses and hadiths, and all the narrations narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) should be strictly checked (jarh and ta'dil). If they do not pass such an examination or are not in the collection of hadith scholars, they should be declared non-religious. He put forward the idea that those who do not act in this order should be considered as those who act according to their personal desires (people of the air) [50]. According to the book of the Turkish scholar Hasan Kurt, in the VIII-IX centuries in Bukhara lived Ahl al-Hadith representatives such as, Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Bukhari (d. 167/783), Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Bukhari (d. II / VIII century), Abu Muhammad Budayl al-Bukhari (d. .205/820), Abu Huzayfa Ishaq al-Bukhari (d. 206/821), Ishaq ibn Hamza al-Bukhari, Bayan ibn Amr al-Bukhari (d. 222/837), Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Masnadi (d. 229. / 844), Abdullah ibn Surayj al-Shaybani (d. III / IX century). Heinz

Halm and Wildfred Madelang have also reportedly commented on the issue. Heinz Halm puts forward the idea that the Ahl al-Hadith in the East meant the Shafi'is, while Wildfred Madelang argued that the Shafi'is were scarce in Mavarounnahr. Ashirbek Muminov found out that about 15 sources on various aspects of the Ahl al-Hadith direction were written in Mavarounnahr, and this direction also influenced the Hanafi school.

Scholars such as George Zaydon, Rosskin Gibb, Vasily Barthold, E.V. Zeymal, Ibrahim Hassan, Rene Grosset, Denis Sinor, Edmund Bosworth, Swat Sochek, Ira Lapidus, Kennedy Huyun, and Friederick Star have extensively investigated the Arab conquest policy in Mavarounnahr. These researchers highlight that Central Asia came under the dominion of the Arab Caliphate between 650 and 751. Both the Umayyads and the Abbasids pursued agendas aimed at widespread dissemination of Arabic language and Islam throughout the conquered regions. As noted by Rene Grosset, while this process was gradual during the Umayyad era, the Abbasids' adoption of an equality policy resulted in a notable increase in the Central Asian population embracing Islam and adopting Arabic as a spoken language.

Subsequently, Mavarounnahr witnessed successive rulerships by the Tahirids, Saffarids, Samanids, Ghaznavids, Karakhanids, and Khorezmshahs.

In the realm of foreign literature, terms such as VIII-XIV, IX-XII, or sometimes IX-XI centuries serve as markers for significant epochs in Islamic civilization, often referred to as the "golden age," "Islamic renaissance," "Muslim renaissance," or "period of awakening." Scholarly examinations attribute the rise of this "golden age" to a multitude of factors, including a zealous pursuit of knowledge grounded in the Quran and hadiths, a culture of veneration for scholars and scientific inquiry within the caliphate, the translation of ancient texts from various languages into Arabic, and the establishment of a standardized language and alphabet across the caliphate.

During the IX-XII centuries, Mavarounnahr garnered renown as a hub where both religious and secular sciences flourished, with scholars from this region commanding significant respect in the broader Islamic world. Particularly esteemed were the works of hadith scholars such as Imam Darimi, Imam Bukhari, and Imam Tirmidhi, revered then and now as authoritative sources second only to the Quran. However,

scrutiny of foreign publications reveals a divergence of opinions regarding hadith literature.

Western scholars began delving into hadith studies in earnest during the 1990s. Throughout the twentieth century, figures like Joseph van Ess, J. Robson, N.D. Anderson, S.E. Bosworth, John Vansbro, Patricia Kron, Michael Cook, Mandelang, Donner, Motzki, and Scheler undertook extensive investigations into hadiths, often questioning their authenticity and alleging fabrication. Conversely, scholars such as N.Abbat, F.Sezgin, Abu Shuhba, Al-Marsafi, and Al-Azami sought to vindicate the historical significance of hadiths. The former group sought to contextualize hadiths solely based on textual analysis and the political motivations of the ruling dynasty at the time, contending that orally transmitted hadiths from the third century AH were tailored to suit contemporary interests and rulers. The latter category, affirming the sanctity of hadith as a sacred source, highlighted the existence of authentic hadiths dating back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), lamenting the Western scholars' neglect of these genuine sources. The discovery of numerous hadiths dating to the Prophet's era in

the 1990s led to a reassessment among global scholars, prompting even Western figures like Hebert Berg, Jonathan Brown, and Scheler to acknowledge hadiths as the most sacred source after the Quran.

Certainly, the essence of a scientist's works is intricately linked to the era in which they lived. To truly grasp the literary legacies of figures like Hakim Termezi and Abu Isa Termezi, one must immerse oneself in the religious milieu of the 9th to 10th centuries. Scholars such as Wilfred Mandelang, Christopher Melchert, Ahmet Karamustafa, Shirin Akiner, Muhammad Mansur Ali, Aiyub Palmer, and others have underscored the religious landscape of that time, highlighting the presence of theological sects such as Qadariyya, Jabriya, Jahmiya, Mutaziliyya, and Rafidiyya. Concurrently, they have noted the proliferation of hadith scholars (Ahl al-hadith), adherents of Hanafi jurisprudence, and followers of Moturidism. According to Muhammad Mansur Ali, Ira Lapidus, and Jonathan Brown, Abu Isa al-Tirmidhi earned profound respect among the hadith scholars of Mavarounnahr (Ahl al-Hadith) through his seminal work, *Sunani al-Tirmidhi*. Aiyub Palmer has demonstrated Hakim Termezi's significant contributions to the development of

the Hanafi school and the Moturidi doctrine by refuting the ideologies of Qadariyya, Jabriya, Jahmiya, Mutaziliyya, and Rafidiyya sects.

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