

The Prominence of Ahmad Shakir as a Contemporary Hadith Scholar: A Review of Selected Studies

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Abstract:

Ahmad Shakir has made a distinguished name of himself as an icon in the Islamic intellectual world, specifically in the field of hadith. And this is by means of his renowned works which contribute immensely in the contemporary field of hadith sciences. Yet he was not immune from criticism, as claims have been put forward by other hadith scholars regarding his background and methodology in rating the class of hadith. Although such criticisms do not in any form degrade his credibility as a figure who has contributed in the knowledge of hadith. As such, this article aims to study the background of Ahmad Shakir and the process of his knowledge development which paved the way for him to be regarded as an authority on hadith. In addition, the study will objectively scrutinize and examine some selected publications on Ahmad Shakir, in an attempt to affirm the exact right view. *Thus, to achieve this purpose, qualitative research is conducted by way of library research, in addition to the content analysis method in examining textual contents. And the data is analyzed based on inductive and deductive methods. In summary, the findings of the analysis illustrate that Ahmad Shakir was indeed an icon and renowned intellectual whose expertise in the field of hadith is so pronounced. His scholarly achievements proved that he was able to produce works that will continue to be basic hadith references of this contemporary.*

Keywords: Prominence; Ahmad Shakir; Hadith Scholar; Review

Introduction

The nation of Muhammad –peace be upon him- is a nation of text and followership. Thus, these two are the nation's only gateway to knowledge. Whoever seeks beneficial knowledge in this immediate world and salvation in the Hereafter has to take the path of Revelation, in its two forms; the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The former is the well protected speech of Allah the

Exalted which can never accommodate any form of addition or subtraction.¹⁴⁰¹ Allah says in the Qur'ān:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

*It is We who sent down the Qur'ān and indeed We will be its guardian.*¹⁴⁰²

*Ibn Kathīr affirmed the meaning of this verse that Allah has guarded the glorious Qur'ān from any form of alteration and distortion.*¹⁴⁰³

While the Sunnah is the second source of Islamic legislation. Sunnah on the other hand refers to the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, actions, consents, physique and character.¹⁴⁰⁴ The Sunnah is the second condition that qualifies every good deed in Islam, it is second to *Ikhlas*, as every action must go in line with the teachings of the Prophet of Islam –peace be upon him.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ قَالَتْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- (مَنْ أَحَدَّثَ فِي أَمْرِنَا هَذَا مَا لَيْسَ مِنْهُ فَهُوَ رَدٌّ) رواه البخاري.

*'Aisha –may Allah be pleased with her- said: the Prophet –peace be upon him- said: Whoever does any form of worship without our teaching is rejected.*¹⁴⁰⁵

Since this is the case, then much attention must be given to the Sunnah, most especially the authentic Sunnah. And what is the authentic Sunnah? The answer to this question and its like paved way to the 'Sciences of Hadith' (*Ulūm al-Hadīth*). With the motive to know specifications of hadith to be accepted or rejected¹⁴⁰⁶.

Ulūm al-Hadīth is basically the principles and methods followed by scholars to ascertain the two main perspectives of hadith; its transmission (*Riwāyah*), and the meaning of its text (*Dirāyah*)¹⁴⁰⁷.

The first set of people to learn the Sunnah from the Prophet –peace be upon him- were his Companions –the *Sahābah*-. They lived with him, thus, heard from him directly, they observed and memorized from his actions, they obeyed his instructions and practiced their knowledge

¹⁴⁰¹ Fahad b. Nāsir b. Ibrāhīm al-Sulaiman, *Tahqīq Sharh al-Manzūmah al-Baiqūniyya*, Dār al-Tharya li al-Nashr, 2003, p.12.

¹⁴⁰² Hijr, 15:9

¹⁴⁰³ Abū al-Fudā Isma'īl b. Kathīr al-Qurashy, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, Dār al-Tayyibah li al-Nashr wa al-Tauzi', 1999, vol.4, p.528

¹⁴⁰⁴ Fālih b. Muhammad al-Sagīr, *Al-Istishrāq wa Mauqifuh Min al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyy*, Majma' Mālik Fahad li tiba'ah al-Mushaf al-Sharif, Madīnah, p. 18

¹⁴⁰⁵ Muhammad Nāsir al-Albānī, *Mukhtasar Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, Maktabah al-Ma'ārif li al-Nashr wa al-Tauzi', Riyādh, 2002, vol. 2 p. 220.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Fahad b. Nāsir b. Ibrāhīm al-Sulaiman, *Tahqīq Sharh al-Manzūmah al-Baiqūniyya*, Dār al-Tharya li al-Nashr, 2003, p.13.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Kamāl, Mohammed Hāshim, *A textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of Hadith*, Kube Publishing Ltd, p.4.

in his presence, so he corrected their mistakes and affirmed their right acts and perceptions. And in the long run, they taught and conveyed his teachings to their predecessors –the *Tābi'ūn*. The *Tābi'ūn* in return learned and memorized from the Companions of the Prophet –peace be upon him, and as well passed it to those who came after them –the *Atbā' al-Tābi'īn*– and the chain goes on. The Companion will say I heard the Prophet –peace be upon him– said so and so, while the *Tābi'ī* will say I heard a Companion said that the Prophet –peace be upon him– said so and so, and the *Tābi' al-Tābi'ī* will say I heard a *Tābi'ī* said a Companion said that the Prophet –peace be upon him said so and so.¹⁴⁰⁸

This first generation of Muslims –the Companions– had completely answered the call of their Lord, when He said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

*Indeed, you have in the Prophet of Allah the best of qualities to emulate for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often*¹⁴⁰⁹

*Ibn Kathīr said: This verse is really a basis for emulating the Prophet –peace be upon him– in his words, actions and in his patience.*¹⁴¹⁰

So they hastened in total obedience and submission to the guidance of their leader, Allah's Apostle Muhammad –peace be upon him.¹⁴¹¹

Regarding reporting Prophetic narrations, the whole generation of the Companion is uniquely considered as trustworthy, however as the chain of narrators flows down, reporters are of classes. Prophetic narrations have been reported by the trustworthy, the less worthy and the non worthy, hence giving rise to the immense need of knowing the status of narrators –*ahwāl al-rijāl*. Indeed the glorious Qur'an has classified personalities in both positive and negative ways, then the Sunnah and as well the Companions. Numerous verses of the Qur'an have described generally and specifically the special qualities of the Companions. Same is the case regarding the general and specific negative qualities of the hypocrites. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

*O you who believe, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become regretful over what you have done.*¹⁴¹²

¹⁴⁰⁸ Abd al-Rahmān b. Yahyā al-Mu'alim, *Ilm al-Rijāl Wa Ahammiyatuh Li al-Mu'alim*, Maktabat Nūr, 2019, p. 1-3.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Al-Ahzāb 33:21

¹⁴¹⁰ Abū al-Fudā Ismā'īl b. Kathīr al-Qurashī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol.6, p.391

¹⁴¹¹ Muhammad 'Ajjāj al-Khātīb, *Al-Sunnah Qabl al-Tadwin*, Dar al-Fikr li al-Tibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tauzi', Beirut, 1980, p.10.

¹⁴¹² Al-Hujurāt, 49:6

*Almighty Allah enjoins the believers to confirm news before acting upon it, less it emerges as an intended or mistaken lie.*¹⁴¹³

Likewise, the Prophet -peace be upon him- in numerous traditions has generally and specifically graded his companions. In addition to the Hypocrites he -peace be upon him- discredited *Zū al-Khuwaisirah al-Tamīmī* in particular, and the Qadarites as a sect. Moreover, the Companions among themselves had few cases in which they discredited part of them. But the opposite is the case regarding their predecessors, the Companions indeed discredited many, as well the *Tābi'ūn* did the same to themselves. The era of the *Atbā' al-Tābi'īn* was completely different, because it was full of weak, faulty and false narrations, and that is as a result of large number of narrators with strange attitudes and manners. In addition to other relating factors like politics and inclinations. Thus, the need to author special books on the conditions and ranking of narrators of hadith arose.¹⁴¹⁴

Imām Muslim said¹⁴¹⁵:

“Islamic scholars have made it mandatory upon themselves and upon others as well, to unveil and expose the faults of hadith narrators because of the great risk involved therein, as these narrations imply religious injunctions of making lawful or unlawful. Hence, whichever narrator happens to relate a tradition from a weak or faulty narrator should expose his status to the public in order to checkmate others from reporting his traditions out of ignorance, thereby feeding the Muslim nation with wrong traditions related to the Prophet -peace be upon him-. Whereas Islam and Muslims are sufficed by the voluminous authentic Prophetic traditions.”¹⁴¹⁶

The methodology used by the previous hadith scholars as compared to the contemporary hadith scholars in determining the status of sanad differ to an extent. This difference create polemic in the classification of hadith and its usage. The principles laid down by the previous hadith scholars is generally regarded as more standard and complex. And that is for a number of factors, among which are; deeper scrutiny on the grading of narrators and the hadith context, practical approach to hadith gathering, lesser dependence on books, sharper memory, etc. While on other hand the contemporary hadith scholars rely fully on written books of the previous scholars, basing their judgement of a particular hadith on single chain of narrators, laxity in grading of narrators, etc. Nonetheless, from both categories of scholars, individuals could rightly fall between another form of classification of hadith scholars, which is *Mutashaddidūn* (Stricts) and *Mutasāhilūn* (Lenients).

Biography of Ahmad Shākir

Born in Cairo on 29th January 1892, Ahmad Muhammad Shākir Ahmad Abdul-Qadir was from the clan of Abu al-Ulya¹⁴¹⁷. His father named him Ahmad Shams al-A'imma Abū al-

¹⁴¹³ Abu al-Fudā Ismā'īl b. Kathir al-Qurashy, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, vol 7, p.370.

¹⁴¹⁴ AbdulRahmān bn Yahya Al-Mu'alim, *Ilm al-Rijāl wa Ahammiyyatuh Li al-Mu'alim*, Maktabah Nūr, 2019, p.4.

¹⁴¹⁵ Muslim bn Hajjāj al-Qushairī, *Sahih Muslim*, Dār Ihya Al-Turāth al-Arabī, Beirut, vol. 1, p. 1-2.

¹⁴¹⁶ Aliy bn Nāfi al-Shahūd, *Al-Khulāsah fī Ilm al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dīl*, Maktabah al-Manārah, Gaza, 2008, p. 1-2.

¹⁴¹⁷ Sabri b. Salamah Shahin, *Min A'alām al-Fikr al-Islāmī: Al-Allāmah al-Muhaddith al-Sheikh Ahmad Muhammad*, Fikr al-Thaqāfiyyah journal, Riyādh, 2016

Ashbāl¹⁴¹⁸. His father Muhammad Shakir who was by then among the prominent Azhar scholars was his first teacher.¹⁴¹⁹ On the heels of the Maḥdī revolution in Egypt, Muhammad Shākir migrated to Sudan with his family. Hence, Ahmad was enrolled into the Gaurdun Institute in the Sudan from 1900 to 1904¹⁴²⁰. In 1909 Ahmad was introduced to the study of hadith –a profession he lived and cherished to his death. And his creed was that of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah.¹⁴²¹ Among his scholars also was Sheikh Mahmud Abū Daqīqah. He was his first teacher in the Alexandria College, and he made a great impact in his literary carrier. Sheikh AbdulLah bn Idrīs al-Sanūsī was a celebrated Moroccan hadith scholar who lived for a while in Cairo, thus, Ahmad and his brothers got the opportunity to learn hadith sciences from him. And that was after their return to Cairo. Sheikh Muhammad Jamal al-Dīn al-Qāsīmī al-Damashqī has also imparted vast knowledge of hadith to Ahmad Muhammad Shākir in his youthful age. Sheikh Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqītī certified him after teaching him *Kutub al-Sittah* and *Bulug al-Maram*.¹⁴²² Subsequently, Ahmad got admitted into the famous Azhar University, where he was awarded with an International Award in 1917 for his outstanding performance. On completion in 1919, he thought for four years before he got employed as a judge, a profession he practiced till retirement in 1951.¹⁴²³ He had intellectual trips to different cities around the Arab world before his death in June 1958.¹⁴²⁴

His Interlectual Legacy

Ahmad Shākir was encyclopedic.¹⁴²⁵ Although most of his publications are in form of *tahqīq*, thus, he only has a few authored books to his credit. Yet all forms of his intellectual works have been identified with high precision and veracity.¹⁴²⁶

His published books include: *Abḥāth fī Ahkām Fiqh Wa Qadā Wa Qānūn, Al-Sharī’ah Wa al-Lughah, Al-Shuhur al-Arabiyyah, Nizām al-Talāq fī al-Islām, Kalimah al-Fasl fī Qatl Mudminī al-Khamr, Kalimah al-Haq, Muhammad Shākir Alam Min A’alām al-Asr*.¹⁴²⁷

¹⁴¹⁸ Athif al-Tahamy Fu’ad, *Asheikh Ahmad Shākir Wa Manhajuh fī Musnad Ahmad bn Hanbal*. Journal of Shariah and Islamic Studies, University of Kuwait, vol.48, 2002, p.119.

¹⁴¹⁹ Abid, p.120.

¹⁴²⁰ Ahmad bn Abdullah b. Ahmad, *Ahmad Shākir Wa Juhūduh fī al-Hadith Wa al-Difā’ ‘Anh. Al-Hikmah Journal*, Saudi Arabia, volume 13A, 1997, p. 100.

¹⁴²¹ Mutawallī al-Barājilī, *Ma’ālim Manhaj al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākir fī Naqd al-Hadith*, Maktabah al-Sunnah, al-Qāhirah, 2013, p.36.

¹⁴²² Ahmad bn Abdullah b. Ahmad, *Ahmad Shākir Wa Juhūduh fī al-Hadith Wa al-Difā’ ‘Anh. Al-Hikmah Journal*, Saudi Arabia, volume 13A, 1997, p. 102.

¹⁴²³ Sabri b. Salamah Shahin, *Min A’alām al-Fikr al-Islāmī: Al-Allāmah al-Muhaddith al-Sheikh Ahmad Muhammad*. Riyādh: Fikr al-Thaqāfiyyah Journal, 2016.

¹⁴²⁴ Athif al-Tahamy Fu’ad, *Asheikh Ahmad Shākir Wa Manhajuh fī Musnad Ahmad bn Hanbal*, journal of Shariah and Islamic Studies, University of Kuwait, volume 48, 2002.

¹⁴²⁵ Mutawallī al-Barājilī, *Ma’ālim Manhaj al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākir fī Naqd al-Hadith*, Maktabah al-Sunnah, al-Qāhirah, 2013, p.37.

¹⁴²⁶ Ahmad bn Abdullah b. Ahmad, *Ahmad Shākir Wa Juhūduh fī al-Hadith Wa al-Difā’ ‘Anh. Al-Hikmah Journal*, Saudi Arabia, volume 13A, 1997, p. 114.

¹⁴²⁷ Abid p. 114-118

Tahqīq, Takhrīj and Sharh works of Ahmad Shākir: Books under this category include: *Musnad Ahmad*¹⁴²⁸, *Sunan al-Tirmizī*, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī*, *Al-Muhallā li-bn-Hazm*, *Al-Risālah li al-Shāfi'ī*, *Sahīh Ibn Hibbān*, *al-Bāhith al-Hathīth li-bn-Kathīr*, *Umdah al-Tafsīr li-bn-Kathīr*, *Alfiyah al-Hadīth li al-Suyūṭī*, *Alfiyah al-Hadīth li al-Irāqī*, *Kitāb al-Tauhīd li-bn-Abd al-Wahāb*, *Tahzhīb Sunan Abī Daud*, *Al-Risālah al-Tadamuriyyah li-bn-Taymiyah*, *Khasā'is Musnad Imām Ahmad li Abī Yusuf al-Madīnī*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*, *Nukhbah al-Fikr li-bn-Hajar*, *Jami' al-Ilm li al-Shāfi'ī*, *Al-Ihkām fī Usul al-Ahkām li-bn-Hazm*,¹⁴²⁹

The General Methodology of Ahmad Shākir

As it is the attitude of Ahmad Shākir to explain his methodology, scope and limitation in the forward of almost all his hadith bound works, it makes it easier to ascertain his methodology. Hence, the following could be deduced as his general methodology:

1. To mention the grade of hadith. If it is sound hadith he affirms, and if it is weak he explains why, but if there is a sort of debate on the *sanad*, he discusses and then affirm his position.¹⁴³⁰

2. Regarding *āthār (mauqūfāt/maqtū'āt)*, he has limited his *takhrīj* to mentioning few words. And there are many instances where he keeps mute, without grading it. Such is numerous in *Tafsīr al-Tabarī* and the book of *al-Kharrāj* of Yahya bn Adam.¹⁴³¹

3. Explaining strange words and statements found in contents of hadith.

4. Full explanation of repeated hadiths and the forms in which the author has repeated them; same *matan* but with another *sanad*, same *sanad* with a slight difference in the *matan*, etc.

5. Cataloging: He has been commended for his detailed and explicit cataloging, most especially in *Musnad*.¹⁴³² Where he explains that himself in the preface that he has categorizes the catalogs into that of the Companions, based on *jarh wa ta'dīl*, important personalities, places and words mentioned in hadiths, and that of chapters.¹⁴³³

The Methodology of Ahmad Shākir in Evaluating the Status of *Sanad*

Hadith scholars have generally commended Ahmad Shākir's tremendous efforts on *sanad*, and have identified his evaluating methodology as follows:

¹⁴²⁸ Mutawallī al-Barājīlī, *Ma'ālim Manhaj al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākir fī Naqd al-Hadith*, Maktabah al-Sunnah, al-Qāhirah, 2013, p.38.

¹⁴²⁹ Ahmad bn Abdullah b. Ahmad, *Ahmad Shākir Wa Juhūduh fī al-Hadith Wa al-Difā' 'Anh. Al-Hikmah Journal*, Saudi Arabia, vol. 13A, 1997, p. 120.

¹⁴³⁰ Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, *Tahqīq al-Musnad li al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*. al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Hadith, 1995, p. ---.

¹⁴³¹ Ahmad bn Abdullah b. Ahmad, *Ahmad Shākir Wa Juhūduh Fī al-Hadith Wa al-Difā' 'Anh. Al-Hikmah Journal*, Saudi Arabia, vol. 13A, 1997, p. 141.

¹⁴³² Mutawallī al-Barājīlī, *Ma'ālim Manhaj al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākir fī Naqd al-Hadith*, Maktabah al-Sunnah, al-Qāhirah, 2013, p.36.

¹⁴³³ Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, *Tahqīq al-Musnad Li al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*. al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Hadith, 1995, vol.1, p.8-10.

1. He fully elaborates on the identities of personalities in *sanad* through various ways which include;

(a) giving detail names of narrators whose only first names or only *kunā* appear in the *sanad*. An example from *Musnad Ahmad*: hadith number (01) Qais, he said: *Qais huwa-bn-Abī Hāzim*.¹⁴³⁴

(b) giving the orthoepy of difficult names in the *sanad* for easier identification. An example from *Musnad Ahmad*: hadith number (03), he said regarding the narrator Amr bn Muhammad Abu Sa'id al-'Anqazī: *al-'Anqazī; bi fath al-'ain wa sukun al-nun wa fath al-qaf thumma al-zayy*.¹⁴³⁵

2. Passing his own personal verdict on the narrators whose evaluation has been disputed upon by hadith scholars; it becomes apparent here after a study on his evaluation methodology that he is much independent and self-reliant in his judgement,¹⁴³⁶ instead of relying on the traditional references of *jarh wa ta'dīl* like that of Ibn Hajar – *Taqrīb al-Tahzhīb*. An example from *Musnad Ahmad*: hadith number (1374),¹⁴³⁷ where Ahmad Shākir evaluates Muhammad bn Ishaq as “*thiqah*” but Ibn Hajar ranks him under the fourth category of *mudallisūn* and evaluates him as “*sadūq who is popularly known with tadlīs of du'afā and majhūlīn*”.¹⁴³⁸

3. *Tābi'ūn*: Ahmad Shākir has taken the position to consider and evaluate as ‘*ādil*, any *Tābi'ī* who has neither been graded by hadith scholars as ‘*ādil* nor *majrūh*, even if some of them have pronounced him as *majhūl*. To him every *Tābi'ī* is considered ‘*ādil* except when proven otherwise. Thus, his hadith is considered sound.¹⁴³⁹ An example of such from *Musnad Ahmad* hadith (2308) is Maimūn al-Makkī; Ahmad Shākir grades him as ‘*ādil* despite Ibn Hajar's grading of him as *majhūl*,¹⁴⁴⁰ while al-Zhahabī mentioned his *tarjamah* but kept mute regarding his grading.¹⁴⁴¹

4. Ahmad Shākir's position on the grading of Ibn Hibbān in *al-Thiqāt*: It is also part of the general methodology of Ahmad Shākir in evaluating *sanad* to accept and consider the grading

¹⁴³⁴ Abid vol. 1, p. 165.

¹⁴³⁵ Abid vol. 1 p. 166.

¹⁴³⁶ Mutawallī al-Barājilī, *Ma'ālim Manhaj al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākir fī Naqd al-Hadīth*, al-Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Sunnah, 2013, p.130.

¹⁴³⁷ Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, *Tahqīq al-Musnad li al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*. al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Hadīth, 1995, vol. 2, p. 166.

¹⁴³⁸ Ahmad b. Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Ta'rīf Ahl al-Taqdīs bi Marātib al-Mausūfīn bi al-Tadlīs*, Oman: Maktabah al-Manār, 1982, vol. 5, p.51.

¹⁴³⁹ Nahad AbdulHalīm 'Ubaid, *Waqafāt Ma'a Ahammi al-Qawā'id al-Latī Sāra Alaihā al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākir Fī Tahqīqih Li Musnad al-Imam Ahmad bn Hanbal*. Journal of Shariah and Islamic Studies. University of Kuwait, vol. 23, 1994, p.95.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Ahmad b. Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Tab' Bakistan :Pakistan, 1393H, vol. 1, p. 354.

¹⁴⁴¹ Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, *Tahqīq al-Musnad li al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*. al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Hadīth, 1995, vol. 3, p. 55-56.

of narrators by Ibn Hibban in *al-Thiqāt*. Despite the well established controversy over the principle applied by Ibn Hibbān in such grading. Ibn Hajar said in *Lisān al-Mizān*:¹⁴⁴²

“The principle laid down by Ibn Hibbān in his book *al-Thiqāt* to consider every narrator whose only identity is confirmed, as ‘ādil until found otherwise is refuted and goes contrary to the position of majority of the scholars”.¹⁴⁴³

And al-Albanī said: *Indeed Ibn Hibban is mutasāhil in his tauthīq. He frequently grades majhūlīn as thiqāt*.¹⁴⁴⁴

An example of such from *Musnad Ahmad* hadith (754) is Abd Lah bn Yasār Abū Hammām al –Kūfi: Ahmad Shākīr evaluates him as *thiqah* for the simple fact that Ibn Hibbān has included him in *al-Thiqāt*, while other scholars like Ibn Hajar¹⁴⁴⁵ grades him as *majhūl*.¹⁴⁴⁶

5. Unconditional *tauthīq* of Abd Lah bn Lahi’ah: The famous narrator Abdul Lah bn Lahi’ah bn ‘Uqbah bn Far’ān bn Rafī’ah bn Thaubān al-Misrī al-Hadramī, Egyptian jurist was born in 96H and died in 174H. However, his home containing his books (references of narration) burnt down in 170H. Thus, he automatically fell under *mukhtalitūn* narrators, though before this accident he was counted among the *thiqāt*. Hence scholars have differentiated between his narrations based on this time zone.¹⁴⁴⁷ Notwithstanding, Ahmad Shākīr has taken a different general opinion of grading Ibn Lahi’ah as *thiqah* unconditionally. He said in his comments in *Musnad Ahmad* under hadith (2308): *Our grading position on Ibn Lahi’ah is thiqah*.¹⁴⁴⁸

6. The silence of al-Bukhari and Ibn Abī Hātim on a narrator entails *tauthīq*: Al-Bukhari in his books of *jarh wa ta’dīl*, like *al-Tarīkh al-Kabīr* and Ibn Abi Hātim in his book *al-Jarh wa al-Ta’dīl* have included the names of some narrators but kept mute regarding their grading. Thus, some few scholars consider that as their *tauthīq* for such narrators, and Ahmad Shākīr got inclined to this scholarly view, despite its weak status. An example is regarding Azhar bn Rashīd al-Kahīlī; in *Musnad Ahmad* under hadith (649), in his comments Ahmad Shākīr grades him as *thiqah*, he says: *Azhar bn Rashīd al-Kahīlī, Ibn Ma’īn grades him as da’īf and Abu*

¹⁴⁴² Ahmad b. Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Mizān*, Beirut: Mu’assasah al-A’lamī, 1971, vol. 1, p. 14.

¹⁴⁴³ Nahad AbdulHalim ‘Ubaid, *Ma’a Ahammi al-Qawā’id al-Latī Sāra Alaihā al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākīr Fī Tahqīqih li Musnad al-Imam Ahmad bn Hanbal*. Journal of Shariah and Islamic Studies. University of Kuwait, vol. 23, 1994, p.109.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Muhammad Nāsir al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Ahādīth al-Da’īfah wa al-Maudū’ah wa Atharuhā al-Sayyi fi al-Ummah*, Riyadh: Dār al-Ma’ārif. 1992, vol. 1 p. 146.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Muhammad bn Hibbān bn Ahmad Abu Hātim al-Tamimi, *Kitab al-Thiqāt*, Dar Ma’rifah al-Uthmaniyyah, 1393H, vol.5, p.51.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Ahmad Muhammad Shākīr, *Tahqīq al-Musnad li al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*. al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Hadith, 1995, vol.1, p.493.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Nahad AbdulHalim ‘Ubaid, *Waqaḥāt Ma’a Ahammi al-Qawā’id al-Latī Sāra Alaihā al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākīr Fī Tahqīqih li Musnad al-Imam Ahmad bn Hanbal*. Journal of Shariah and Islamic Studies. University of Kuwait, vol. 23, 1994, p.126.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Ahmad Muhammad Shākīr, *Tahqīq al-Musnad li al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*, al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Hadith, 1995, vol.3, p. 56.

*Hātim says he is majhul, but al-Bukhari has included his tarjamah in al-Tarīkh al-Kabīr and did not mention any jarh on him.*¹⁴⁴⁹

And with regards to Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Albānī said: whenever Ibn Abī Hātim keeps mute on a narrator, it is because he does not know his exact status. Because this exactly what Ibn Abī Hātim himself said in the preface of his book (*al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dīl*).¹⁴⁵⁰

7. Ahmad Shākir did not permit the traditional transmission of hadith *da'if*: he said:

*My opinion concerning hadith da'if is that it is mandatory to tell its weakness at all circumstances when narrating it. And in this case there is no difference between al-ahkam and fada'il al-a'amāl. Moreover, no one is sufficed of authentic narrations of the Prophet –peace be upon him- in either classes of sahih or hassan.*¹⁴⁵¹

8. Narration of *majhul al-'ain*: Ahmad Shākir said:

*And they (hadith scholars) have disputed over the narrations of Majhul al-'ain. Majhul al-'ain is that narrator whom only one person has narrated from him. The correct view is to reject his narrations, and that is the majority's view.*¹⁴⁵²

Criticisms Made on the Methodology of Ahmad Shākir

Despite his celebrated scholarly status, the methodology of Ahmad Shākir in determining the status of hadith has received much criticism by hadith scholars. They rate his methodology in general as merely that of the lenient scholars (*Mutasāhilūn*), as the following areas are clearly visible in his diverse hadith works. These criticisms are basically on:

1. His excessive soft consideration of weak narrators in the *sanad*, thus, his final ruling on the hadith in general. There are many proven instances where Ahmad Shākir has considered the narrations of *mudallisūn* despite their *'an'ana*, as highlighted above.

2. In addition, he over regarded the *Tābi'ūn* in their narrations of hadith, by evaluating each and every one of them as *'ādil* until when proven otherwise. And this contrary to the set standard followed by the majority hadith scholars.

3. Also the cases where he solely relied on the judgment of Ibn Hibbān has been criticized, because the standard of Ibn Hibbān itself has been criticized and refuted.

4. He has been criticized as well for regarding Bukhārī's silence and that of Ibn Abī Hātim on some narrators as their endorsement for them. This is because both of them have clearly stated in the prefaces of their books that their silence on a narrator does not imply their *tauthīq* for him.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, vol.1 p.446.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Muhammad Nāsir al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Ahādīth al-Da'īfah wa al-Maudū'ah wa Atharuhā al-Sayyi fi al-Ummah*, Riyadh: Dār al-Ma'ārif. 1992, vol. 3, p. 39.

¹⁴⁵¹ Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, *Tahqīq al-Bā'ith al-Hathīth li Bn Kathīr*, Beirut: Dar Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2008, p.76.

¹⁴⁵² Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, *Tahqīq Alfīyah al-Suyūūt*, Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 2009, p.79.

5. Also, a thorough study on the general methodology of Ahmad Shākir in authenticating hadith reveals that in the case where a hadith only attains the grade of *sahih* or *hasan* due to its different chains of narration, Ahmad Shākir in his attitude only mentions the attained grade of hadith without mentioning that it is only due to its numerous chains that qualifies it to be attain such grading. Although he mentioned that in some instances as his methodology, like he did in his preface of *Musnad Ahmad*.¹⁴⁵³

Conclusion

Although Ahmad Shākir has received criticisms in terms of his background in determining the *sanad* of hadith, the legacy of his vast knowledge and scholarly works on hadith will continue to reign. As right from time, he was brought up by a noble scholarly family, which had great impact on his intellect. Apart from his deep knowledge of hadith, he was equally vast in Arabic language and other aspects of the Islamic law such as principles of tafsir, jurisprudence and its principles, history, etc. In addition, Ahmad Shākir got inclined to the specialization in hadith studies at a time when less attention was paid to it, hence he gave it all of his time and attention until he emerged an authority of hadith during his era.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the following facts should be taken into consideration regarding the *mutasāhilūn* hadith scholars, to whom Ahmad Shākir evidently belonged to:

- a. The side effects of authenticating weak hadith narrations in diverse aspects of Islam, including *aqīdah* is most critical.
- b. Authenticating weak hadith narrations results in distortion of the Islamic law and regulations through mere imaginations and perceptions.
- c. Authenticating such weak hadith narrations gives rise to conflicting opinions in implementing the *sunnah*.
- d. Such attitude also opens avenues for the orientalist, hypocrites, innovators and heretics to criticize and harm the beauty and perfection of Islam.

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¹⁴⁵³ Mutawallī al-Barājilī, *Ma'ālim Manhaj al-Sheikh Ahmad Shākir fī Naqd al-Hadith*, Maktabah al-Sunnah, al-Qāhirah, 2013, p. 243.

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