

## DID ABU HANIFA (RAHIMAHULLAH) ENGAGE IN THE SCIENCE OF HADITH?!

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the scholarly legacy of Imam Abu Hanifa (r.h.) in the field of Hadith studies based on classical sources. It highlights the position of hadiths narrated from Abu Hanifa (r.h.) within hadith collections and examines the significance of the works Musnad and Athar in the development of Hadith studies. The findings of the study demonstrate that Imam Abu Hanifa was not only a great jurist but also a recognized scholar in the science of Hadith.

**Keywords:** Abu Hanifa (r.h.), Musnad, Athar, Sahih, hadith, Hadith studies, fiqh, narration, qiyas, hadith collections.

### Introduction

In recent years, special attention has been paid in the Republic of Uzbekistan to the development of the religious and educational sphere, the in-depth study of Islamic scholarly heritage, and the scientific research of the intellectual activities of great scholars. In particular, in the decrees and resolutions adopted by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the study of the legacy of thinkers who made an unparalleled contribution to the development of Islamic civilization, the introduction of their works into academic circulation, and their proper transmission to the younger generation have been defined as priority tasks.

In this regard, alongside Imam Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Imam al-Maturidi, and Imam al-Marghinani, the study of the scholarly legacy of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) is also of great importance.

This article, in line with the spirit of these state policies and academic reforms, examines the scholarly legacy of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in the field of hadith studies based on primary sources.

### Main Part

The position of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in the science of hadith is distinguished by his scholarly competence and juristic approach. He was not only highly skilled in understanding and analyzing hadiths, but also demonstrated great expertise in applying them to derive legal rulings. Therefore, studying his intellectual legacy and evaluating his methodology through his narrations and works is of utmost importance.

Researching the scholarly personality of Imam Abu Hanifa requires a high level of precision and deep reflection. This is because his virtues are so vast and profound that he is recognized for



possessing strong scholarly ability in understanding hadith, performing its takhrij (verification and extraction), and deriving rulings from it. For this reason, it is necessary to avoid both exaggeration and underestimation when assessing his personality and describing his views.

Indeed, the views of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) spread to other regions as well. People discussed his opinions, which led to their wide circulation across many parts of the Islamic world and gave rise to debates between supporters and opponents.

It is narrated that Al-Awza'i (a jurist of Sham and a contemporary of Abu Hanifa) asked Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak (may Allah have mercy on him): "Who is this man from Kufa whose kunyah is Abu Hanifa?" Instead of directly answering, Ibn al-Mubarak began explaining complex issues, their methods of understanding, and the legal verdicts related to them. Al-Awza'i then asked: "Who is the author of these fatwas?" Ibn al-Mubarak replied: "The jurist of Iraq". Al-Awza'i asked again: "Who is he?" Ibn al-Mubarak said: "Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him)".

At this, Al-Awza'i said:

"This man is indeed one of the most distinguished among the scholars. I would like to meet him".

Later, Al-Awza'i met Abu Hanifa. Abu Hanifa explained the issues mentioned by Ibn al-Mubarak to him in even greater detail. After parting from him, Al-Awza'i said to Ibn al-Mubarak:

"O Ibn al-Mubarak! How vast is this man's knowledge, and how profound is his intellect! I seek Allah's forgiveness – I had been completely mistaken about him. He is entirely different from what I had heard" [8:9].

Some people who did not fully appreciate his knowledge spoke about Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him), claiming that he did not give due importance to hadith and that he preferred analogical reasoning (qiyas) over hadith. Such accusations have increased even more in modern times, often stemming from blind fanaticism and a lack of proper understanding of the truth.

The hadith scholar and jurist Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Salihi states: "Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) was among the great hadith scholars. Although he did not narrate a large number of hadiths, he paid deep attention to them and was exceptionally skilled in deriving juristic rulings from them" [9:174].

Imam al-Dhahabi mentioned Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in his work "*Tabaqat al-Huffaz*" and said:

"His narrations were relatively few, but this was not due to a lack of attention to hadith or insufficient knowledge of it. Rather, it was because he was occupied with juristic deduction (istinbat) – deriving rulings from hadith. For the same reason, narrations from Imam Malik and Imam al-Shafi'i are also fewer.

Moreover, among the Companions, figures such as Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), despite being among the greatest of the Companions, also narrated relatively few hadiths. This, however, does not diminish their rank in any way" [8:9].

Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) would derive general principles from the hadiths and Qur'anic verses that reached him, and then apply these principles to newly arising



issues. In matters where no explicit textual evidence was available, he would issue rulings based on analogical reasoning (qiyas). However, if a hadith reached him and was established through a sound and reliable chain, he would accept it – even if it appeared to contradict qiyas. In other words, if the narrators of a hadith were trustworthy and fulfilled the conditions of acceptance, Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) would take that hadith as a primary proof and abandon qiyas.

It is narrated from Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said regarding a person who forgetfully eats or drinks while fasting:

مَنْ أَكَلَ نَاسِيًا وَهُوَ صَائِمٌ فَلْيُتِمَّ صَوْمَهُ فَإِنَّمَا أَطَعَمَهُ اللَّهُ وَسَقَاهُ

“Whoever forgetfully eats while fasting should complete his fast, for it is Allah who has provided him with food” [6:245].

Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) took this hadith as evidence. By doing so, he set aside the general principle that “the invalidation of fasting occurs when something reaches the stomach or through sexual intercourse”. This serves as an example that when a reliable proof – namely a hadith – is present, Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) would give it precedence over analogical reasoning (qiyas).

The righteous predecessors (al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ) – including the Tabi‘un and those who came after them – as well as scholars who attained the rank of *Amir al-Mu‘minin fi al-ḥadith*, unanimously acknowledged and praised his virtues in jurisprudence, asceticism, truthfulness, memorization (ḥifz), and sincere counsel to the Muslim community. Among those who praised him were the teachers of Imam al-Bukhari and their teachers, such as Ali ibn al-Madini, Yahya ibn Ma‘in, Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Qattan, Makki ibn Ibrahim, Waki’ ibn al-Jarrah, Shu‘bah ibn al-Hajjaj, Sufyan al-Thawri, Imam Malik, Imam al-Shafi‘i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak.

As for the issue that Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on them) did not narrate hadiths from Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections, one of the reasons is that their aim in compiling these works was to preserve hadiths and chains of narrators that were at risk of being lost. Since the students of Abu Hanifa were numerous, they were confident that the hadiths known to him would not be lost or neglected.

Moreover, Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim did not narrate hadiths from Imam al-Shafi‘i in their *Ṣaḥīḥ* works either. Additionally, Imam al-Bukhari narrated only two hadiths from Ahmad ibn Hanbal, despite being his student. Likewise, Imam Muslim did not narrate any hadiths from his teacher Imam al-Bukhari in his own *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

From this, it becomes clear that the fact that Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on them) did not narrate from Abu Hanifa does not in any way diminish his recognized scholarly status and authority in the science of hadith.

Hadiths narrated from Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) are mentioned in numerous hadith collections. Among them are: in *Saḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaymah* – 1 hadith, in *Saḥīḥ Ibn Hibban* – 1 hadith, in Imam al-Nasa‘i’s *Sunan al-Kubra* – 1 hadith, in *Sunan al-Bayhaqi* – 30 hadiths, in *Sunan al-Daraqutni* – 29 hadiths, in Ahmad ibn Hanbal’s *Musnad* – 1 hadith, in *Musnad Abu Ya‘la al-Mawsili* – 4 hadiths, in Al-Hakim al-Nishapuri’s *al-Mustadrak* – 3 hadiths, in *Musannaf Abd al-Razzaq* – 76 hadiths, in *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah* – 46 hadiths, in Imam al-Tahawi’s *Sharh Ma‘ani al-Athar* – 16 hadiths, in *Sharh Mushkil al-Athar* – 42 hadiths, in Al-



Tabarani's *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir* – 21 hadiths, in *al-Mu'jam al-Saghir* – 2 hadiths, in *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat* – 16 hadiths, in Imam al-Tirmidhi's *Sunan* – 2 hadiths, in Al-Haythami's *Majma' al-Zawa'id* – 1 hadith, in Imam al-Shafi'i's *Kitab al-Umm* – 27 hadiths, in Al-Sarakhsi's *al-Mabsut* – 7 hadiths, in Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak's *Kitab al-Zuhd* – 1 hadith, and in Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's *Tarikh Baghdad* – 16 hadiths [8:61-207].

The abundance of hadiths narrated from Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in these sources confirms that he was not only a jurist, but also an important and recognized figure in the science of hadith. As an example, it is appropriate to cite some of his narrations found in Imam al-Tahawi's *Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar*:

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ قَالَ : ثنا عَمِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ وَهْبٍ قَالَ : أَخْبَرَنِي اللَّيْثُ ، عَنْ يَعْقُوبَ ، عَنْ الثُّعْمَانَ ، عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ أَبِي عَائِشَةَ ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ شَدَّادٍ ، عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ إِمَامٌ فَقِرَاءَةُ الْإِمَامِ لَهُ قِرَاءَةٌ.

It is narrated by Ahmad ibn Abd al-Rahman from Abdullah ibn Wahb, from Al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from Ya'qub ibn Ibrahim, from Imam Abu Hanifa (al-Nu'man ibn Thabit, may Allah have mercy on him), from Musa ibn Abi Aisha, from Abdullah ibn Shaddad, from Jabir ibn Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

“Whoever has an imam, the recitation of the imam is sufficient for him” [1:279].

It is appropriate to present, in the form of a table below, the students who narrated the most hadiths from Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in the aforementioned hadith collections, along with the number of hadiths they narrated:

The students who most frequently narrated hadiths from Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in hadith collections are: [4]

| No | The name of the narrator (transmitter)         | The kunya (teknonym) of the narrator | Year of death | Number of hadiths they narrated |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. | Ibrahim ibn Husayn ibn Ali ibn Mehran          | Abu Ishaq                            | 281/895       | 222 hadiths                     |
| 2. | Muhammad ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mughira | Abu Abdullah                         | 256/870       | 195 hadiths                     |
| 3. | Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Hammad                 | Abu al-Fadl                          | 280/894       | 87 hadiths                      |
| 4. | Abdurahman ibn Amr ibn Abdullah ibn Safwan     | Abu Zur'a                            | 281/895       | 36 hadiths                      |
| 5. | Hashim ibn Marthad                             | Abu Sa'id                            | 278/892       | 31 hadiths                      |

In addition, the hadith legacy of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) is especially evident through the works attributed to him, namely *Musnad* and *Athar*.

Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) was the first to arrange hadiths according to fiqh chapters and compile them in written form. This work is known as *al-Athar*, in which he selected and included more than forty thousand hadiths. The work has several manuscript versions. Among them, the narration transmitted by Muhammad al-Shaybani has been published. In addition, narrations transmitted by Abu Yusuf and Zufar ibn al-Hudhayl also exist [5:133].

The work consists of two volumes and includes 211 chapters and 913 hadiths. Imam Abu Hanifa began his work with the chapter on purification (taharah), in which the chapters are arranged in the following order:



**Volume I chapters:**

1. Chapters on purification (taharah) and related issues;
2. Chapters on ghusl (ritual bath) and related issues;
3. Chapters on prayer (ṣalah) and related issues;
4. Chapters on funeral rites (janazah) and related issues;
5. Chapter on visiting graves;
6. Chapters on Qur'an recitation and related issues;
7. Chapters on fasting and related issues;
8. Chapters on zakat and related issues;
9. Book of rituals (manasik) – includes 15 chapters;
10. Chapter on faith (iman) and related issues;
11. Chapters on marriage and related issues;
12. Chapters on divorce (ṭalaq) and related issues.

**Volume II chapters:**

1. Continuation of chapters on divorce (ṭalaq) and related issues;
2. Chapters on blood money (diyāh), retaliation (qīṣāṣ), and related issues;
3. Chapters on legal punishments (ḥudud) and related issues;
4. Chapters on testimony (shahadah) and related issues;
5. Chapter on wills (waṣīyah);
6. Chapters on manumission of slaves;
7. Chapters on inheritance (mirath) and related issues;
8. Chapters on debts and expiations (kaffarah);
9. Chapters on trade (buyu') and related issues;
10. Chapters on sacrificial animals (udḥiyah) and related issues;
11. Chapters on hunting and related issues;
12. Chapters on prohibited matters;
13. Chapter on the virtues of the Companions;
14. Chapters on praiseworthy qualities;
15. Chapter on the use of medicine;
16. Chapter on writing down knowledge;
17. Chapter on responding to the greeting of a non-Muslim (dhimmi) and other subsidiary legal issues [6:43-784].

Scholars who came after him composed their books by following the arrangement he established and based their writings on that structure. The work includes not only marfu' hadiths but also narrations from the Companions and the Tabi'un [2:174].

The *Musnad* of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) is a collection of musnad hadiths narrated from him, compiled by later hadith scholars. Later, Imam al-Khwarizmi gathered all the musnad collections and compiled a large hadith work titled *Jami' Masanid Abi Hanifa* [5:133]. This work consists of 15 musnads and was published in 1326 AH, comprising around 800 pages. The work contains only marfu' hadiths narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) [3].

In the work *Jami' Masanid Imam al-A'zam*, which gathers the musnads containing hadiths attributed to Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) as presented in the compilation



of Al-Khwarizmi, the following authors of the musnad collections are included:

1. Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Harith (d. 340/951)
2. Talha ibn Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Shahidi al-Adl (d. 380/990)
3. Muhammad ibn Muzaffar al-Bazzaz (d. 379/989)
4. Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani (d. 430/1038)
5. Abdullah ibn Adi al-Jurjani (d. 365/989)
6. Hasan ibn Ziyad (d. 204/819)
7. Umar ibn Hasan al-Ishnani (d. 339/950)
8. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Kalabi (d. 432/1040)
9. Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Khusraw al-Balkhi (d. 522/1128)
10. Abu Yusuf (Ya'qub ibn Ibrahim, d. 182/798)
11. The *Musnad* of Muhammad al-Shaybani (d. 189/804)
12. Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman (d. 170/786)
13. The *Athar* of Muhammad al-Shaybani (d. 189/804)
14. Abdullah ibn Muhammad Sa'di ibn Abi Awwam (d. 335/946)
15. Hasan ibn Ziyad (repeat source tradition in the compilation) [7:4-5].

The scholarly activity and intellectual legacy of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in the science of hadith are distinguished not only by his juristic opinions, but also by his ability to systematically collect and analyze narrations. His works such as *Musnad* and *Kitab al-Athar* were not limited to preserving hadiths as mere reports; rather, they organized them according to legal (fiqh) themes and served as a source for later generations of scholars.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) is regarded as the founder of one of the schools of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah. Accordingly, this legal tradition cannot be separated from its primary sources – the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah. His scholarly activity clearly demonstrates the primacy of textual evidence (naṣṣ) in his methodology.

The science of hadith historically developed in close connection with the science of fiqh; therefore, all founding mujtahid imams were also highly competent scholars in hadith. Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) paid special attention to the authenticity of narrations, prioritizing sound evidence over juristic deduction and applying analogy (qiyas) in a balanced manner. As a result, his scholarly legacy occupies an important place in both hadith studies and Islamic legal thought. This study demonstrates the recognized scholarly status of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) in the science of hadith and emphasizes the need for further systematic and contemporary research into this intellectual heritage.

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