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REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HANAFI DOCTRINE MENTIONED IN “TABSIRAT AL-ADILLA”

Abstract. *This article examines the history of the formation of the Hanafi-Maturidi theological school and the issues related to its roots. It also provides a scholarly refutation of the views that this doctrine emerged at a later period. The research is based on classical sources such as “Tabsirat al-Adilla” and is structured around the analysis of the academic lineage of several generations of scholars from Transoxiana and Khurasan. The article demonstrates through chronological evidence that the chain of teachers of Imam al-Maturidi and his followers dates back to periods much earlier than that of Imam al-Ash’ari. In the course of the analysis, the legacy of mutakallimun and Sufi scholars such as Imam al-Tahawi, the Iyadi dynasty, and al-Kalabadhi is referenced, revealing the comprehensive nature of the doctrine. In conclusion, it is scientifically substantiated that Maturidism is an authentic theological school with a historically established and unbroken tradition.*

Keywords: *Maturidism, aqidah, kalam, Transoxiana, “Tabsirat al-Adilla,” Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, Hanafi school, al-Kalabadhi, Mu’tazilites, refutation.*

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Islamic thought, the kalam school of Transoxiana – in particular, the Hanafi-Maturidi teaching – occupies a distinctive place. Its influence on the scholarly and spiritual environment of the region has been incomparable across the centuries. Nevertheless, one sometimes encounters one-sided views directed at diminishing the significance of this teaching with regard to its historical roots and the period of its formation. As a scholarly response to such approaches, this article aims to prove that this teaching goes back to the earliest periods of the Islamic world. To this end, it analyzes the chain of scholars belonging to several generations who emerged from the lands of Transoxiana and Khurasan, together with their scholarly heritage, and reveals how firm a foundation and how deep a historical basis the Maturidi creed possesses.

MAIN PART

The claim of some – that “these words about the attributes of Allah are a newly arisen innovation (bid‘a), that no such debate existed among the pious predecessors (salaf al-salih), and that no imam ever spoke of this matter” – is incorrect. On the contrary, such a view arises from a lack of deep knowledge of the school of the pious predecessors. The clearest proof of this is Imam Abu Ja‘far al-Tahawi (d. 321/933). It is well known to the people of learning that he had a profound knowledge of the doctrinal views of the predecessors of the community, in particular of Imam al-A‘zam Abu Hanifa and his disciples. In the introduction to his famous work “al-Aqida,” explaining to whom this creed belongs, Imam al-Tahawi says: “This is the school of the jurists of the community: Abu Hanifa al-Nu‘man ibn Thabit al-Kufi, Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub ibn Ibrahim al-Ansari, and Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani (may Allah be pleased with them all).”

After this, expounding their doctrinal views, Imam al-Tahawi writes, among other things: “(Allah) is eternally and always with His attributes, before creation; with the coming into being of the creatures, no increase accrued to His pre-eternal attributes... He possessed the description of ‘Nurturer’ even when there was as yet no nurtured being (creature), and the description of ‘Creator’ even when there was as yet no created thing.”

Imam al-Tahawi’s statement that “with the coming into being of the creatures there was no increase in any attribute of Allah Most High” is a clear indication that Allah Most High does not acquire His attributes of praise from the creatures. This being so, to say that the creed of the predecessor scholars – such as Imam al-A‘zam and his great disciples – “arose later,” almost four hundred years after them, is baseless. Whoever ascribes such a thing to them, this indicates his own ignorance of the matter.

Abu al-Mu‘in al-Nasafi employed a method of historical-chronological analysis grounded in strong evidence to prove the historicity of the Hanafi-Maturidi creed. Linking his claim to the work of a hadith scholar and jurist of high authority such as Imam al-Tahawi, the author shows that the root of these views reaches directly back to Imam al-A‘zam and his disciples, that is, to the era of the pious predecessors. By this he proves that the principle “the attributes of Allah are pre-eternal” is not a “bid‘a” invented by later theologians, but rather was the very core of the belief of the first representatives of the Hanafi school.

From of old, such lands of Transoxiana and Khurasan as Marw and Balkh were centers of the Hanafi school. The scholars of this region followed the path of Imam al-A‘zam Abu Hanifa in both the principles (usul) and the branches (furu‘) and kept themselves away from currents such as Mu‘tazilism. Especially because of the depth of the learning of the imams of Samarkand, their firmness in kalam and creed, and their resolute position toward the people of innovation, Allah Most High kept this land pure of various deviations. This firm creed of the people of Samarkand developed still further from the time of Shaykh Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ishaq al-Juzjani. He was a pupil of Abu Sulayman al-Juzjani, the disciple of Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, and this scholarly chain attests to the purity of his views.

How high the place and worth of Abu Bakr al-Juzjani in learning were is clearly shown by his works such as “al-Farq wa-l-tamyiz” and “al-Tawba.” The doctrinal views of a scholar with such deep roots served as a criterion for later periods as well.

The pupil of Abu Bakr al-Juzjani, Shaykh Abu Nasr Ahmad ibn al-Abbas ibn Husayn... al-Ansari – a chief of the Khazraj – also held the same creed as his teacher. He was martyred in the land of Turkistan in one of the campaigns waged against the unbelievers during the rule of Nasr ibn Ahmad al-Kabir. He was one of the courageous, zealous, and bold leaders of his time, and in learning an ocean whose depths could not be reached; in the principles and the branches he was considered the unrivaled imam of his age. This is confirmed by the scholar’s work “al-Musannaf,” devoted to the question of the attributes, in which the author proved the views of the “people of truth” with evidence and exposed as false the opinions of such groups as the Mu‘tazila and the Najjariyya.

In his work “Tabsirat al-adilla,” the scholar uses the method of historical-biographical demonstration to prove the historical foundations and continuity of the kalam school of Transoxiana, in particular of Samarkand. Here the main emphasis is placed on the principle of the “scholarly chain” (isnad). It is emphasized that, through the connection of Abu Bakr al-Juzjani to Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan by way of pupils, the roots of the school reach back to the earliest period of Hanafism. He also manifested the purity of the teaching by clearly delimiting it in relation to its geographical center, Samarkand, and its ideological opponents, the Mu‘tazila and the Najjariyya. In this, the scholars’ activity of writing refutations occupies an important place. The mention of historical figures such as Nasr ibn Ahmad al-Kabir, in turn, links this intellectual history with

the real political environment. In this way, the scholar reliably substantiates that the sound doctrinal heritage in Transoxiana was a living tradition passed from generation to generation.

As Shaykh Abu al-Qasim al-Hakim al-Samarqandi (Abdurahmonov, 2021:5) relates, Abu Nasr al-Iyadi was so skilled in debate that whenever anyone from the people of innovation cited a verse as evidence against his belief, he would, without any preparation, immediately respond with strong arguments and defeat his opponent. At the age of twenty he attained the rank of “ri’asat al-‘ulama wa-l-dars” (“the headship of the scholars and of teaching”). When he was martyred, he left behind nearly forty accomplished disciples, such as Shaykh Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and Shaykh Hakim Abu al-Qasim al-Samarqandi.

His two sons, Abu Ahmad and Abu Bakr, were also among the accomplished scholars of their time. Here it is fitting to cite the following words about Abu Ahmad al-Iyadi spoken by Shaykh Abu Hafs al-Ajali al-Bukhari, the grandson of Shaykh Abu Hafs al-Kabir, the chief of the jurists of Transoxiana and Khurasan: “Abu Ahmad al-Iyadi himself is a proof of the truth of the school of Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him), for he was never a man who would believe in a false and baseless school.”

The following account about Abu Ahmad al-Iyadi is related from Shaykh Abu al-Qasim al-Hakim al-Samarqandi: “In the last hundred years, Khurasan and Transoxiana have not produced a scholar like the jurist Abu Ahmad al-Iyadi in learning, jurisprudence, language, strength, eloquence, virtue, chastity, and piety.” When he was asked, “Who among those before this hundred years could equal him?” he enumerated one by one the scholars, jurists, and masters of eloquence of all the past ages and could not find a single person among them who could be compared with Abu Ahmad al-Iyadi. Abu Ahmad’s younger brother, Abu Bakr al-Iyadi, was also not inferior to his elder brother in many fields of learning and in virtue and honor. Before his death, Abu Bakr al-Iyadi enjoined the people of Samarkand to hold fast to the creed of “Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jama‘a” and to keep away from the people of innovation, in particular the Mu‘tazila. He also wrote a work devoted to the ten principal contested questions between Ahl al-Sunna and the Mu‘tazila, entitled “al-Masa’il al-‘ashr al-Iyadiyya” (“The ten questions of al-Iyadi”) (Hosiriy, n.d., MS Inv. 402:251a-251b).

Through the example of the place occupied by the Iyadi family in the formation and consolidation of the kalam school of Transoxiana, the scholar shows the intellectual

and social foundation of the teaching. The placing at the center of the analysis not of isolated scholars but of a scholarly dynasty consisting of three persons – a father and his two sons – serves to emphasize that the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition is a heritage with deep roots transmitted across generations. From a comparative point of view, various facets of scholarly authority are manifested through each representative of this family: in the example of Abu Nasr al-Iyadi, institutional and pedagogical leadership is shown; in his son Abu Ahmad, high personal authority is emphasized; and the youngest son, Abu Bakr, appears as an exemplar of writing refutations against opponents. In sum, through the example of the Iyadi family, this text shows that the formation of the Samarkand doctrinal school was accomplished not only through theoretical debates but also through active defense in various forms – oral disputations, written heritage, and firm injunctions – which, in turn, attests that this teaching possessed firm social and scholarly foundations.

In the generation before these, the qadi Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Aslam... al-Azdi also held precisely this creed. He served in the office of qadi of Samarkand during the time of the amir Nasr ibn Ahmad ibn Asad ibn Saman (also famous in history under the name Nasr ibn Ahmad al-Kabir). The sources record that his death fell on Monday, the 18th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal, 268/881. Four days after his death, the amir Nasr ibn Ahmad appointed the deceased’s son Isma‘il qadi of Samarkand in his father’s place, in the hope that he would “eliminate injustice.”

Another distinguished representative of this generation in Samarkand is Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yaman al-Samarqandi. He is the author of works on the science of kalam such as “al-Ma‘alim al-din” (“The Marks of Religion”) and “al-I‘tism” (“Holding Fast”). He also has a book written as a refutation of the Karramiyya sect. These books show how deep a knowledge he possessed of the sciences of kalam and of the principles of religion. As the author (that is, the author of “Tafsirat al-adilla”) writes, this scholar was among the first to write a refutation of the Karramiyya, for that current arose precisely in his time.

Another representative of this generation is Abu Salama Muhammad ibn Muhammad (*Abu Salama al-Samarqandi*, 2001:3), the author of “Jumal usul al-din” (“A Summary of the Principles of Religion”). He studied the sciences of jurisprudence and kalam under Abu Ahmad al-Iyadi and also under Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Rustughfani. His teacher Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Rustughfani was also one of the accomplished scholars

of his time and wrote several works. Among others, there are ascribed to him “Irshad al-muhtadi” (“A Guide for the Seeker of Guidance”), “Kitab al-zawa’id wa-l-fawa’id” (“The Book of Additions and Benefits”) on various sciences, and other treatises on the science of kalam (*al-Nasafi, 1990:359*).

Abu al-Mu’in al-Nasafi adduces important evidence to take the historical roots of the Hanafi-Maturidi school still deeper – namely, to the 9th century – and to substantiate its antiquity. Facts such as the death of the qadi Abu Abdullah al-Azdi in 268/881 and his having held the office of qadi of Samarkand under the Samanid amir Nasr ibn Ahmad disclose two important aspects: first, that the foundations of this teaching existed long before the principal representatives of the kalam schools; and second, that it was not merely the view of a group of scholars but an official ideology supported by the state. That Abu Bakr ibn Yaman was among the first to write a refutation of the then-nascent Karramiyya current attests that the Samarkand school was not only formed but also intellectually mature enough to defend its doctrinal boundaries actively. That Abu Salama studied at one and the same time under teachers such as al-Iyadi and al-Rustughfani depicts the many-sided and interconnected scholarly environment of that era. In sum, it emphasizes that by the time of Imam al-Maturidi, the foundation for a sound creed had been firmly laid in Transoxiana over the course of generations.

Although the scholarly capacity of all the scholars mentioned above was high, the place of all of them could be filled by Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi alone. He plunged into the ocean of the sciences and gathered the most precious pearls from its depths. Adorning the proofs and arguments of religion with his incomparable fluency, eloquence, and talent, he defended the creed of “Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jama‘a.” His standing in learning was so high that his disciple Abu al-Qasim al-Hakim al-Samarqandi said at his teacher’s death: “This is the grave of a scholar who plunged into the ocean of learning and showed self-sacrifice in spreading and teaching it. His heritage is always praised in religion, for he gathered the fruits of his life while still alive.”

Under Imam al-Maturidi, many powerful scholars of their time, such as Abu Ahmad al-Iyadi and Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Rustughfani (Kashi, 2021:8), received instruction in various sciences. Many of his works from his rich scholarly heritage have reached us, some of which are the following:

Kitab al-Tawhid – “The Book of Monotheism”;

Kitab al-Maqalat – “The Book of Treatises”;

Kitab radd awa’il al-adilla li-l-Ka’bi – a refutation of al-Ka’bi’s “Primary Proofs”;

Kitab radd tahdhib al-jadal li-l-Ka’bi – a refutation of al-Ka’bi’s “Refinement of Dialectic”;

Bayan wahm al-mu‘tazila – “An Exposition of the Delusion of the Mu‘tazila”;

Radd kitab al-Ka’bi fi wa‘id al-fussaq – a refutation of al-Ka’bi’s book on the threat against transgressors;

Radd al-usul al-khamsa – a refutation of Abu Amr al-Bahili’s “The Five Principles”;

Radd kitab al-imama li-ba’d al-rawafid – a refutation of the book on the Imamate by certain Rafidites.

In addition, he has two works entitled “al-Radd ‘ala al-qaramita” (“A Refutation of the Qarmatians”), one devoted to their creed and the other to their jurisprudence. He also has two works on the principles of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh): one expounds the sources of the Sharia, and the other is entitled “al-Jadal” (scholarly disputation). Imam al-Maturidi’s scholarly method was distinguished by its extreme precision. He was able to bring hidden proofs to light and to derive (deduce) rulings from them. In debates he observed the conditions of ilzam (compelling the opponent to acknowledge) and iltizam (adhering to one’s own proof). In refuting the erring groups he always preserved the etiquette of disputation.

In his learning, the signs of divine guidance and inspiration are clearly perceptible. A clear proof of this may also be seen in the attitude of his teacher Shaykh Abu Nasr al-Iyadi toward him: the teacher would not begin the lesson until his pupil Abu Mansur al-Maturidi reached the circle of study. When he saw his pupil from afar, he would look at him with a gaze of wonder and recite the following verse:

“Your Lord creates what He wills and chooses” (Qur’an 28:68).

DISCUSSION

Abu al-Mu’in al-Nasafi employs a multi-layered method of demonstration in creating the intellectual portrait of Imam al-Maturidi. First, the imam’s personal mastery and capacity are raised to the highest level through rhetorical devices and historical appraisal. Second, his scholarly heritage is manifested in two directions. Third, al-Maturidi produced powerful disciples such as al-Iyadi and al-Rustughfani. The analysis

of the list of his works shows that Imam al-Maturidi's activity was built mainly on the "refutation" (radd) tradition, directed against the principal ideological currents of that era – such as al-Ka'bi, the Mu'tazila, and the Qarmatians – which presents him as the chief defender of the "Ahl al-Sunna" creed.

Imam al-Maturidi's work "Ta'wilat al-Qur'an" is unequalled in its field, and no exegesis written before it can equal it. The following appraisal of this work by contemporary scholars confirms our view: "al-Maturidi is among the great imams and the pillars of the community. His exegesis disclosed the difficult passages of the Qur'an and explained the ambiguous (mutashabih) verses. In it, too, the rulings of the Qur'an and the questions of the lawful and the forbidden are expounded with great mastery. May Allah Most High envelop him in His mercy and peace."

Another distinguished representative of the Hanafi-Maturidi school is Shaykh Abu al-Qasim al-Hakim al-Samarqandi. He was a great scholar recognized by the entire community, always worthy of praise and honor. He was considered an ocean of many sciences – kalam, jurisprudence, ta'wil, gnosis, and conduct. His fame spread to near and distant lands, and his services to Islam have always been acknowledged by the people of reason.

The author (that is, the author of "Tabsirat al-adilla"), bringing his work to a close, says: "If I wished to speak one by one about the imams of Bukhara, Transoxiana, the Turkish lands, Marw, and Balkh, and to set forth that each of them was an ocean in learning, the book would grow excessively long and I would stray from the main aim."

The majority of the Hanafi-Maturidi scholars mentioned above died before 300/913, while the rest lived mainly between 330/942 and 340/952. Now let us compare this with Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari: he died in 324/936. Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi died a little after him, and Shaykh Abu al-Qasim al-Hakim al-Samarqandi died in 335/947. Thus they were of the same generation as Imam al-Ash'ari – that is, contemporaries. Yet the teachers of these figures and the representatives of the generation before them lived much earlier than Imam al-Ash'ari. This being so, how is it possible to deny the views of the Hanafi-Maturidi school, which have continued across the centuries, as "a recently arisen matter," while accepting the particular views (tafarrudat) of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, who was his contemporary? Such an approach is nothing other than obstinacy, not scholarly fairness!

Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi employed a sharp method of comparative-chronological analysis to prove the antiquity of the Hanafi-Maturidi school. He places the historical periods of the scholars of Transoxiana side by side with the lifetime of Imam al-Ash'ari. Using the concept of the "generation" (tabaqa), he emphasizes not only that Imam al-Maturidi was a contemporary of Imam al-Ash'ari but that his teachers belonged to an even earlier period, thereby pointing to the historical priority of the school. The principal argument is built through a rhetorical question that exposes the logical contradiction and double standard of the opponents – namely, that it is not possible to accept the views of one of two scholars who lived in the same period while denying as "newly arisen" the teaching of the other, which has even more ancient roots. The text's ending with the word "obstinacy" raises the debate to a level higher than the identification of a scholarly error – to the level of a moral-doctrinal appraisal. By this, the author presents the opponents' position not merely as a scholarly mistake but as a deliberate denial of clear evidence.

In addition, the majority of the Sufis who were acknowledged as oceans in learning and were known among the people as possessors of miraculous gifts (karamat) also belonged precisely to the Hanafi-Maturidi school. This view was specially emphasized by the famous scholar Shaykh Abu Bakr ibn Abu Ishaq al-Bukhari al-Kalabadhi in his work "al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf" ("An Exposition of the School of the People of Sufism"), where he set forth the doctrinal school of the Sufis. Shaykh al-Kalabadhi himself was known as a reliable and just hadith scholar. Those who knew his correct path, his pure creed, his distance from the people of innovation, his firmness in religion, and his trustworthiness were certain that he did not transmit weak narrations; for he had the habit of citing each narration only after carefully examining it and being fully assured of its soundness.

Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi advances the argument linking the Hanafi-Maturidi school with another important direction of Islamic thought – Sufism – with the aim of broadening the school's influence and scope. By emphasizing that the majority of the Sufis were Maturidi in creed, he shows the harmony between kalam and the spiritual-agnostic path and forms the conception that the teaching was comprehensive and worthy of general recognition. Taking into account that the strength of a proof depends on the reliability of the one who adduces it, the author chooses as his principal witness one of

the most esteemed representatives within Sufism – Shaykh al-Kalabadhi. Then, dwelling in detail on his justice as a hadith scholar, his personal qualities, and his scholarly methodology, he seeks to remove any possible doubt about his testimony. This is the classical method of “tazkiya” (declaring a transmitter reliable). In this way, the text shows that the connection between Maturidism and Sufism is not accidental but that this historical truth is confirmed by the most reliable sources within the Sufi tradition itself, further strengthening its claim that the Maturidi school is the central creed for the Ahl al-Sunna of the region.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research show that the Hanafi-Maturidi doctrinal school formed in Transoxiana is not, contrary to certain views, a product of a later period, but a continuous scholarly tradition whose roots reach back to the earliest centuries of Islam. The analysis based on the source “Tabsirat al-adilla” disclosed the organic scholarly succession and the consistency of thought among several generations of the scholars of Transoxiana and Khurasan. That Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and his associates were contemporaries of Imam al-Ash’ari, while their teachers lived much earlier, was manifested through precise chronological evidence. It was also established that this creed was the principal doctrinal orientation not only within the circle of the theologians but also of the Sufis of the region, as authors such as al-Kalabadhi testify. All of this proves that the claims that the Hanafi-Maturidi teaching “arose recently” have no historical basis. On the contrary, it confirms that this school is the natural and legitimate continuation, in Transoxiana, of the sound foundations of creed that began with Abu Hanifa and his disciples.

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