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**SECTION 17. World history. History of science
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AN OVERVIEW OF OPINIONS OF THE SCHOLARS IN RELATION TO HANAFI SCHOOL

Abstract: In this article the evidential proofs which are given as a denial to the critical opinions against the founder of the Hanafi School Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit are reported. In this article except the opinions of Hanafi Scholars the opinions of the representatives of other Madhhabs and his opponents are presented too.

Key words: Abu Hanifa, opponent, hadith, ra'y, faqih.

Language: English

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If we have a look at the history of famous people in Islam, we will find that a certain scholar was not only complimented, but also criticized by his contemporaries and scholars who lived after him. Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit (dated 699-767) lived in Kufa, where at the time, was the greatest center of many controversies and the different groups. Therefore, Abu Hanifa in the beginning of his scientific activity was rather interested in Kalam (seeking theological knowledge through debate and reason) than Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and took part in the discussions on this science. Afterwards he abandoned Kalam and emphasized on Fiqh and Sunnah. Qubaisa ibn Uqba (died 830) reported: "In the beginning of his scientific life Abu Hanifa used to discuss with people who usually says unnecessary words. Then he returned to Fiqh and Sunnah giving up any discussions and as a result became a great Imam". [19, p.163; 14, p.58-59]

Abu Hanifa's high rank in the sphere of the Islamic sciences caused him to have some critics and opinions about his personality. Even some scholars regarded Abu Hanifa as a firm supporter of the superstitions and stated that Abu Hanifa and his Madhhab was out of the Sunni branch "Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamaah" ("People of the Sunnah and the Community"). One who had that opinion mentioned the quotes from the previous scholars and Imams as an argument for submitting own opinion that Abu Hanifa was Murji and weak in the science of Hadith.

We need to analyze these accusations and to study the following points in order to make sure that

Abu Hanifa and his adherents belonged to the branch "Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamaah". The first of those points is that Abu Hanifa was weak in the science of Hadith and the second is that Abu Hanifa preferred his own ra'y (opinion) to Sahih Hadiths and all opinions in the historical books expressed by others.

The opponents of Abu Hanifa said that Bukhaari, Muslim and other authors of Sunan books did not narrate any Hadith from him (only at-Tirmidhi narrated one Hadith from him in "al-Ilal" and Nasaa'i narrated one Hadith from him) when they emphasized Abu Hanifa's position in the science of Hadith. That is why the opponents of Abu Hanifa considered this point as an argument for Abu Hanifa's unreliability in the science of Hadith saying that Abu Hanifa was not Muhaddith. But Muhammad Zahid Kawthaari (1878-1952) protected Abu Hanifa on this point and reported in his commentary to "Shurut al-a'imma al-khamsa" ("The conditions of five Imams") whose author was Khafiz Muhammad ibn Musa Khazimi (died 1198): "If we notice we will find that two Sheikhs did not narrate any Hadith from Abu Hanifa though they met his youngest students and narrated from them. But two Sheikhs did not narrate from Shafi'i though they met some of his students. Bukhaari narrated only two Hadiths from Imam Ahmad. But Bukhaari narrated from him the first Hadith directly and the second Hadith indirectly notwithstanding he met Imam Ahmad. Muslim kept Bukhaari's way in his own "Sahih" and followed him but did not narrate anything from him. Muslim narrated three Hadiths from Imam Ahmad. Therefore



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Imam Ahmad had some narrations through Shafi'i from Maalik in his own "Musnad". Notwithstanding this is the rightest way only four Hadiths were narrated through it. Imam Ahmad reported that the number of Hadiths narrated through this way is not even 20 although he met Shafi'i and studied Maalik's "Muvattaa" from him. [6, p.63]

Some scholars argued that famous Imams and Muhaddiths had affirmed Abu Hanifa's weakness in the science of Hadith. Furthermore their arguments are that Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855) said that Abu Hanifa's Hadith was weak [8, v.4, p.1412], Bukhaari (810-870) said that about his opinion and Hadiths was told nothing [12, v.4, l.2, p.81], Muslim ibn Hajjaj (821-875) said that his Hadiths were imperfect and number of his Sahih Hadiths was not lot [17, v.1, p.276], Shuayb Nasaa'i (died 915) said that Nu'man ibn Thabit was not authentic in Hadith [2, p.233], Doruqtni (918-995) said that it was narrated only from Abu Hanifa and Hasan ibn Ammaara. But both were weak [13, p.170].

However, the previous scholars who lived in the era of Abu Hanifa praised him when they discussed the problem Jarh and Ta'dil of the narrators of Hadiths. For example Ibn Madini, Yahya ibn Qattaan, Yahya ibn Ma'iin and Shu'ba ibn Hajjaj affirmed Abu Hanifa's authenticity and truthfulness.

Yahya ibn Ma'iin (775-848) studied at Abu Hanifa's pupils and therefore he was familiar with them closely. [16, v.19, p.320] Yahya ibn Ma'iin being sheikh of Bukhaari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Abu Haatim was Imam in Jarh and Ta'dil. [21, v.11, p.280-281] He protected Abu Hanifa and confirmed his authenticity in the science of hadith emphasizing his good memory ability. Yahya ibn Ma'iin said: "Abu Hanifa reports only what he learned by heart and does not report what he did not learn by heart". [21, v.10, p.449-460] Furthermore he said: "There is no one who says that Abu Hanifa is a weak narrator". [9, p.197]

Another Muhaddith and scholar Shu'ba ibn Hajjaj (died 776) also protected Abu Hanifa. Ahmad ibn Hanbal stated about him: "Shu'ba is Ummat in this sphere (in the sphere of recognizing the narrators and appreciating Hadiths). [21, v.4, p.344] Shu'ba ibn Hajjaj wrote to Yahya ibn Ma'iin and asked him to tell Hadith: "Ya Abu Zakariya, was Abu Hanifa authentic in the science of Hadith"? He answered: "Yes, he was very authentic". [11, p.1083] Hasan ibn Ali al-Hilvanii said: "Shu'ba also respected him (Abu Hanifa)". [9, p.196; 11, p.1083]

For recognizing the rank of a certain scholar we may consider the opinions suggested about him by the scholars who do not follow him or his Madhhab as a strong argument. A modern scholar Muhammad Naasiriddin al-Albaani (1914-1999) gathered the opinions of Jarh and Ta'dil Imams about Abu Hanifa in his own "Irvaa' al-galil" and concluded: "Abu Hanifa's weakness in Hadith does not reduce his

high rank in Fiqh. He might not have a great memory for Hadith because he was very busy with Fiqh. There is no doubt that if anyone is always busy with a certain branch of the science it will decrease his memory ability in the other branches of the science". [20, v.2, p.279]

Another problem is that Abu Hanifa presented his own opinions against Sahih Hadiths. Ibn Abu Shayba (776-849) presented the sayings narrated by Abu Hanifa which were against the prophet's Hadiths in his own "Musnaf", in the chapter "The denial to Abu Hanifa". [3, v.12, p.351] Furthermore Ibn Abdulbarr (978-1071) stated in his own "At-Tamhid": "The supporters of Ahl al-Hadith supposed that Abu Hanifa's greatest fault and sin were his denial Hadiths. He used to deny Sahih Hadiths if they were not fit to his ra'y and this fault caused him to have the main critics expressed by the supporters of Ahl al-Hadith". [10, v.14, p.13-14] That is why number of Muhaddiths referred to them as "the supporters of their own ra'y" when they talked about the opinions of Hanafi School on the different problems of Fiqh.

All statements told above in which reported that Abu Hanifa preferred his own ra'y to Sahih Hadiths in the different problems of Fiqh are not worthy reasons to blame him for doing this intentionally, but it may have several reasons. Firstly Abu Hanifa might consider the narration delivered to him as a weak Hadith or not enough sahih. Secondly he might not have any Sahih Hadith when he judged on some problems. Because at the time of Abu Hanifa Hadiths still were not collected and a lot of Hadiths were saved only by Tabeins who lived in the different cities and regions.

The supporters of Hanafi School denied the opinions in which they were blamed for their preference ra'y to Sahih Hadiths and presented several proofs against these opinions. Especially Abdulvahhab ash-Shar'aani (1493-1566) said: "We and every author who wrote a book about Abu Hanifa are sure that if Abu Hanifa lived before the time when all sciences of Fiqh had already been collected and scholars had traveled around the world he would have accepted these proofs and abandoned his own comparative approaches. In the beginning of his Madhhab he used the method of qiyas ("comparison") less as it was in other Madhhabs. But at the time when he lived all legal proofs were spread among Tabeins and their followers who lived in the different regions. For this reason it was reported that Abu Hanifa needed to use the method of qiyas judging on a certain problem when he had no any Sahih Hadith on it. [1, v.1, p.227-228]

Furthermore Abu Bakr al-Bayhaaqi (994-1066) in his book "al-Madkhal" quoted from Abu Hanifa through Abdullah ibn Mubarak (726-797): "If I am given the prophet's Hadith I will accept it with pleasure! If I am given a Hadith of some Sahaba I

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will accept it with pleasure! If I am given a narration of Tabeins then we are human kind and they are human kind too". [4, p.111]

Muhammad ibn Ismail as-San'aani (1688-1768) in the chapter "How did Imams respect Hadith" of his book "Irshaad an-Nuqaad" reported Abu Hanifa's answers to some questions. According to this narration Abu Hanifa was asked: "What would you do if you judge something against Qur'an?". He answered: "Then give up my conclusion and follow Allah's Book". Afterwards he was asked: "What would you do if you judge against the prophet's Hadith?". He answered: "Then give up my conclusion and follow the prophet's Hadith". Then he was asked: "What would you do if you say something against Sahaba?". He answered: "Then give up my conclusion and follow the Sahaba's narration". [18, p.141]

A representative of Maaliki School Ibn Abdulbarr emphasized that Abu Hanifa had taught his students to accept Hadith as a main source and not to follow his conclusions and quoted from him: "It is forbidden to judge for those who was only based on my books and did not learn the proofs of my conclusions". [9, p.267]

An opponent of Abu Hanifa Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) concluded about Abu Hanifa's preference ra'y to Hadith absolutely: "One who says that Abu Hanifa and other Imams were intentionally against the meaning of Sahih Hadiths in order to use the method of qiyas or something like this he will make a mistake about them and his opinion will be doubtful or be based on himself". [15, v.20, p.304]

We notice some cases in which Abu Hanifa is blamed by the representatives of other Schools and quote from Khatib Bagdaadi (1002-1071) that he gave in his book "Tarikh Madina as-Salam" the opinions of those who criticized Imam with their Isnad (The chain of reporters).

Lots of previous scholars who wrote a historical book about sheikhs or famous people gave Hadith with Sahih and weak Isnad equally for the reason to disclaim responsibility. That is why we may notice even weak Hadiths in Ibn Jarir at-Tabari's (838-923) "Tafsir". So we may also notice doubtful Sahih Hadiths in his book "Tarikh". These scholars considered that it was necessary to narrate with Isnad for being sure on Hadith's authenticity. The scholars of "Ilm ar-Rijaal" know every man in the chain of reporters. But narrating with Isnad is also not a proof of Hadith's authenticity. Even fiction Hadiths may also have Isnad. The authentic reporters

in this Isnad may be collected as a result of fictionalizing.

Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Makki (died 1565) reported in the 36th chapter "The denial to Khatib Bagdaadi's opinions about Abu Hanifa" of his book "al-Khayraat al-hisan": "Know, Khatib Bagdaadi did not intend (to be against Imam). He only gave all opinions about a certain man as did it the historians in his time. While doing this he did not intend to degrade him or to decrease his rank. The proof of this is that Khatib Bagdaadi gave the opinions in which Abu Hanifa was praised more than the opinions in which he was blamed and gave only good qualities of Imam. Furthermore he criticized those who blamed him (Abu Hanifa)". [22, p.79]

Khatib Bagdaadi in his work said that when he had appreciated a certain scholar it was not impossible to be based on the opinions among people. According to him Abdullah ibn Mubarak said: "When I came to Shaam, to al-Avzai's place he said me: "Ya Khurasaani, who is that Abu Hanifa from Kufa, the supporters of the superstitions"? Then I came back home and spend three days to choose Abu Hanifa's writings on special problems. Afterwards I came with these papers to al-Avzai's place who worked as a muazzin and Imam in his own town. He asked me: "What are these papers"? I gave him the papers with an inscription "Nu'man ibn Thabit says..." and he started to read. Al-Avzai continued to read these papers after reciting Azan and finished the first paper of them and put it into his pocket and made salaah. Afterwards he took the papers and said: "Ya Khurasaani who is this Nu'man ibn Thabit"? I said: "He is Sheikh who I met in Iraq". He said to me: "He is a wonderful sheikh, go to him and require a science from him". Then I said: "It is this Abu Hanifa who you blamed". [5, v.15, p.463-464]

As a conclusion we may say that every student and scholar must analyze all available information before he concludes about famous scholars. If every person who is busy with the science follow the comprehended opinions of Hanafi scholar Abu Ja'far at-Tahaavi (853-933) in his book "al-aqida at-Tahaaviyya": "Previous salaf scholars and scholars after them - are good people and the people of Athar and the people of Fiqh and Nazar are remembered only with good words. Whoever remembers them with bad words then he is not in the right path" [7, p.30] it will be prevented the society from the spread of the different distempers and controversies.

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