

The Life and Legacy of Hafiz ibn al-Salah ﷺ

By Muaz Billoo

Among the most significant and influential figures in the codification of the Hadith sciences was the Imam, the Hadith master, Shaikh al-Islam, Taqiuddin ibn al-Salah ﷺ. His most famous contribution, *'Ulum al-Hadith*, had such a profound impact on the study of the Hadith sciences, that all who embark in the study of the Hadith sciences today are indebted to him.

Full Name: Abu 'Amr Uthman ibn Salahuddin 'Abdur Rahman ibn 'Uthman ibn Musa al-Kurdi al-Shahrzuri al-Shafi.

Birth Year: 577 AH.

Passed Away: 643 AH.

Studied under: 'Ubaidullah ibn al-Samin, Nasrullah ibn Salamah, Mahmud ibn 'Ali al-Mawsili, Ahmad ibn Sukaynah, 'Umar ibn Tabar zad, Abu al-Fadl in al-Mu'azzam, Mansur, al-Mu'ayyad, Zainab, Abu al-Muzaffar al-Sam'ani, al-Qadi Jamaluddin 'Abdus Samad ibn al-Harastani, Shaykh Muwaffiq al-Din al-Maqdisi, Shaikh Fakhr al-Din ibn 'Asakir, 'Abdul Qadir al-Ruhawi and others.

Some of his students: Shamsuddin 'Abdur Rahman ibn Nuh, Kamaluddin Sallar, Kamaluddin Ishaq, Taqiuddin ibn Razin al-Qadi, Fakhruddin 'Umar al-Karaji, Majduddin al-Mihtar, Shaikh Tajuddin 'Abdur Rahman, Shaikh Zainuddin al-Fariqi, Qadi Shihabuddin al-Khuwayyi, Khatib Sharafuddin al-Fizari, Nasiruddin Muhammad ibn al-Mihtar, al-'Imad ibn al-Balisi, and others.

He taught in al-Madrasah al-Salahiyyah within *Bait al-Maqdis*. When the Sultan of Shaam, 'Isa ibn Muhamad tore down the walls of the city (out of fear of the Franks coming and conquering al-Quds), Hafiz ibn al-Salah moved to Damascus and taught in al-Madrasah al-Rawahiyah. Thereafter he was appointed as the first Shaikh at the esteemed Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyyah¹ in the year 630.

He wrote a number of works, including:

- *'Ulum al-Hadith*, famously known as *Muqaddimah ibn al-Salah*, which is his most celebrated work. This work serves as a foundation for all those who embark on the path of the Hadith scholars. In it he compiles, summarizes, and simplifies the various branches of the Hadith sciences, relying on and quoting from those who came before him, such as Imams al-Hakim, al-Baihaqi, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, and others. Allah ﷻ accepted this work of his to such a degree that all those who wrote treatises and books on the Hadith sciences after him utilized and relied on his work.

¹¹ For more details on the history of the esteemed Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyyah, see *al-Daris Fi Tarikh al-Madaris* 1/15-36 of Hafiz 'Abdul Qadir ibn Muhammad al-Na'imi al-Dimishqi (d. 978 AH). The Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyyah witnessed some of the most celebrated Imams and Hadith masters at its helm such as Hafiz ibn al-Salah, Hafiz Abu Shamah, Imam al-Nawawi, Hafiz al-Mizzi, Taqiuddin al-Subki, Hafiz ibn Kathir, Tajuddin al-Subki, and others.

- *Adab al-Mufti wa al-Mustafti*: a famous work wherein he lists and details the considerations and etiquettes of the sciences related to Ifta (passing fatwa).
- *Siyanah Sahih Muslim*, his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*. He went on into the mercy of Allah ﷻ prior to completing it. Shaikh Nur al-Din 'Itr states that he came across a portion of the work ranging from the beginning of *Sahih Muslim* and goes on until midway through the chapter of faith (*Kitab al-Iman*).
- *Sharh Mushkil al-Wasit*: his commentary on Imam al-Ghazali's work on Shafi' Fiqh.
- *Sharh Ma'rifah 'Ulum al-Hadith*: his commentary on Imam al-Hakim's early contribution to the principles of Hadith. Unfortunately, Hafiz ibn al-Salah passed away prior to completing his commentary.
- *Sharh al-Waraqat*: his commentary on Imam al-Haramain al-Juwayni's famous work on the principles of Shafi' Fiqh.
- *Wasl al-Ahadith al-Arba'ah al-Mu'allaqah Fi Kitab al-Muwatta Li Malik*: his completion of a work that was initiated by Hafiz ibn Abdul Barr. In short, one who studies the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik will notice that many of the narrations therein have missing links within the chains of narrations, which was generally a non-issue for the early generations of scholars. Nonetheless, attempts were made those who came after the early scholars to locate the fully connected versions of those chains of narrations in other books of Hadiths. The most famous of them to embark on this work was the Hadith master of the east, Hafiz ibn 'Abdul Barr al-Maliki in his encyclopedic commentary of the *Muwatta*, his magnum opus, *al-Tamhid*. However, he was unable to locate the fully connected chains of four narrations. In this work, Hafiz ibn al-Salah manages to locate and clarify the fully connected versions of these narrations.²
- *Tabaqat al-Fuqaha al-Shafi'iyyah*: his work on the biographies of a number of jurists within the Shafi' school. He was unable complete the work, and thereafter Imam al-Nawawi completed a large portion of it, and thereafter Hafiz al-Mizzi completed the work, thus the work was a result of three great Imams.
- *Fawaid al-Rihlah*: his work containing insights on a number of sciences, which he had written while on his journey to Khurasan.
- *Silah al-Nasik Fi Sifah al-Manasik*: his work on a number of legal issues regarding Hajj.
- *Al-Ahadith Fi Fadl al-Iskandriyah wa 'Asqalan*
- *Al-Ahadith al-Kulliyyah*
- *Al-Amali al-Hadithiyyah*
- *Hukm Salat al-Raghaib*
- *Hilyah Imam al-Shafi*
- *Al-Fatawa*: a collection of his fatawa which were gathered together by his students, which demonstrates his mastery of fiqh, tafsir, and hadith.

² This work has been published by Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah as the second treatise in his *Khamsu Rasail Fi 'Ulum al-Hadith*.

- *Al-Mu'talif wa al-Mukhtalif Fi Asma al-Rijal*³

His student, Ibn Khallikan رحمته الله says,

“He was one of the brilliant scholars of his time in Tafseer, Hadith, Fiqh. He had expertise in a number of fields. His fatawa were codified, and he was one my shuyukh from whom I benefitted tremendously. I stayed with him to benefit (from his knowledge) for one year in 632. He has objections against *al-Wasit*.”⁴

Abu al-Hafs Ibn al-Hajib رحمته الله says in his *al-Mu'jam*,

“A pious Imam with profuse intelligence, well-mannered, an ocean in sciences of principles and bylaws, he strove to seek knowledge to such an extent that he is often given as an example (as a role model for seeking knowledge). He also exerted himself in obedience (to Allah ﷻ and His messenger ﷺ) and worship.”⁵

Hafiz al-Sakhawi رحمته الله says in *Fath al-Mughith*,

“The scholar, the jurist, the Hadith master of the era, Shaikh al-Islam Taqi al-Din Abu ‘Amr ‘Uthman ibn al-Imam al-Bari’ Salah al-Din ... he was an expert Imam, a proof, an ocean of the Islamic sciences. He had great foresight into the (Shafi’) school and its angles, well informed of its principles, yet still well aware of the other schools, well-versed in the Arabic language, a master of the Hadith sciences, maintaining precision in it with excellent memory. He was of great stature ... there were none like him in his time, in addition to his practice of the religion, worship ... piety and consciousness (of Allah). The creation benefitted from him, and they turned their attention towards his works.”⁶

When reading about the lives of these illustrious Imams, one notices that they were not just pure academics. In addition to their academic prowess, they lived as true slaves of Allah ﷻ. Their ultimate goal in life was to please Allah ﷻ. They enjoyed worshipping Allah ﷻ. It is important that in whatever field of work we go into it, even if it be the service of Islam, we must never forget that the purpose of our lives is to please Allah ﷻ. The knowledge that these Imams acquired was evident in their practice and servitude.

³ The names of these works were extracted from Shaikh Nur al-Din ‘Itr’s preface to Hafiz ibn al-Salah’s *‘Ulum al-Hadith* pg. 16, as well as from Shaikh Hakim al-‘Awni’s *al-Takmil wa al-Idah Li Maqasid Kitab ibn al-Salah* pgs. 21-23.

⁴ *Wafayat al-A’yan* 3/243-244

⁵ More details on his biography can be found in *Mirah al-Zaman* 8/502, *Siyar A’lam al-Nubala* 23/140-144, *Tazkirah al-Huffaz* 4/1430-1433, *Tabaqat ‘Ulama al-Hadith* 4:214-217, *Tabaqat al-Shafi’iyyah* of al-Subki 8/326-336, *Shazarat al-Dhahab* 5/221-222,

⁶ *Fath al-Mughith Sharh Alifyyah al-Iraqi Fi al-Hadith* 1:38, under line 6 of Hafiz al-Iraqi’s *Alifyyah*.

The Impact of his ‘*Ulum al-Hadith*

As alluded earlier, his work, ‘*Ulum al-Hadith*, serves as a cornerstone in Islamic history. Hafiz ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani رحمته الله, at the start of his work, *Nuzhah al-Nazar Fi Tawdih Nukhbah al-Fikr Fi Mustalah Ahl al-Athar*, gives an overview of the history of the literary contributions to the science of Hadith terminology, wherein he discusses the works of al-Ramhurmuzi رحمته الله (d. 360), al-Hakim رحمته الله (d. 405), Abu Nu’aim al-Asbahani رحمته الله (d. 430), al-Khatib al-Baghdadi رحمته الله (d. 463), and al-Qadi ‘Iyad رحمته الله (d. 544). Thereafter he discusses the impact of Hafiz ibn al-Salah’s work,

“Until came the Hadith master, the jurist, Taqi al-Din Abu ‘Amr ‘Uthman ibn al-Salah ‘Abdur Rahman al-Shahrazuri, who settled in Damascus. Upon being granted the post of teaching Hadith at the Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyyah, he compiled his famous work. He organized its sciences, and dictated it piece-by-piece, due to which the book was not organized in the most ideal manner. He gave special attention to the various works of al-Khatib, thereby gathering the various objectives of his works. He also added various beneficial points from other works, thus, his book compiled what was scattered in other than it. This was why the people turned their attention towards it, treading the same path as it. The number of those who organized the book into prose, or summarized it, or critiqued it, or defended it cannot be enumerated.”⁷

To better gauge the value of the work, hereunder are some of the works that Hafiz ibn Hajar alludes to which build off of Hafiz ibn al-Salah’s work:⁸

Among those who have written commentaries on the work include:

- Imam ‘Izz al-Din ibn Jama’ah’s رحمته الله (d. 767) *al-Jawahir al-Sihah Fi Sharh ‘Ulum al-Hadith li ibn al-Salah*.
- Imam Abu Ishaq al-Abnasi’s رحمته الله (d. 802) *al-Shadh al-Fayyah min ‘Ulum ibn al-Salah*.
- Imam Siraj al-Din al-Bulqini’s رحمته الله (d. 805) *Mahasin al-Istilah wa Tadmin Kitab ibn al-Salah*.

Among those who have written abridgements of the work include:

- Imam al-Nawawi’s رحمته الله (d. 676) *Irshad Tullab al-Haqaiq Ila Ma’rifah Sunan Khair al-Khalaiq*. Subsequently, he would abridge this work and entitle it, *al-Taqrif wa al-Taysir fi Sunan al-Bashir al-Nazir*. It was upon this work that Imam al-Suyuti رحمته الله (d. 911) based his celebrated work, *Tadrib al-Rawi fi Sharh Taqrif al-Nawawi*.
- Imam Badr al-Din ibn Jama’ah’s رحمته الله (d. 733) *Mukhtasar Muqaddamah ibn al-Salah fi Sharh ‘Ulum al-Hadith*. He was the father of the aforementioned ‘Izz al-Din ibn Jama’ah.
- Imam Sharaf al-Din al-Tibi’s رحمته الله (d. 743) *al-Khulasah Fi Usul al-Hadith*.

⁷ Pg. 39-40.

⁸ See: Shaikh ‘Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah’s preface to *Qafwu al-Athar Fi Safw ‘Ulum al-Athar* pgs. 19-24.

- Imam ‘Ala al-Din ibn al-Turkmani al-Hanafi’s ﷺ (d. 750) *al-Muntakhab fi ‘Ulum al-Hadith*.
- Hafiz ibn Kathir’s ﷺ (d. 774) *Ikhtisar ‘Ulum al-Hadith*.
- Hafiz ibn al-Mulaqqin’s ﷺ (d. 804) *al-Muqni’ Fi ‘Ulum al-Hadith*.

Among those who have written annotations of the work include:

- Hafiz Zain al-Din al-Iraqi ﷺ (d. 806)’s *al-Taqyid wa al-Idah*
- Hafiz ‘Ala al-Din al-Mughultai al-Hanafi’s ﷺ (d. 762) *Islah Kitab ibn al-Salah*.
- Hafiz ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani’s ﷺ (d. 852) *al-Nukat ‘ala Kitab ibn al-Salah*.
- Hafiz Badr al-Din al-Zarkashi’s ﷺ (d. 794) *al-Nukat ‘ala Kitab ibn al-Salah*.

Among those who have written the book into prose form include:

- Imam Shihab al-Din al-Khuwayyiy al-Azrabiiyani’s ﷺ (d. 693) *Aqsa al-Amal wa al-Sul fi ‘Ulum Ahadith al-Rusul*. It is famously known as *Manzumah ibn Khalil*.
- Hafiz Zain al-Din al-‘Iraqi’s ﷺ *al-Tabsirah wa al-Tazkirah* is perhaps the most famous prose-form of the book into a 1000+ lines, which is known as an *alifiyyah*.
- Hafiz al-‘Iraqi ﷺ then wrote a commentary on his *alifiyyah*, *Sharh al-Alfiyyah*.
- Imam Muhammad Amin ﷺ (d. 987), famously known as Amir Badshah al-Bukhari al-Hanafi summarized Hafiz al-Iraqi’s commentary.
- Hafiz Qasm ibn Qutlubughah al-Hanafi ﷺ (d. 879) wrote an annotation on Hafiz al-Iraqi’s commentary.
- Imam Shams al-Din al-Biqai’s ﷺ (d. 885) transcribed Hafiz ibn Hajar’s lectures notes on Hafiz ‘Iraqi’s commentary entitled, *al-Nukat al-Wafiyyah bi ma fi Sharh al-Alfiyyah*.
- Imam Muhammad ibn Qasim ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzi ﷺ (d. 918) wrote an annotation on Hafiz al-‘Iraqi’s commentary.
- Imam ‘Imad al-Din Isma’il ibn Ibrahim ibn Jama’ah al-Kinani ﷺ (d. 861) wrote a commentary on Hafiz ‘Iraqi’s *alifiyyah*.
- Imam Zain al-Din ‘Abdur Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-‘Ayni al-Hanafi ﷺ (d. 893) wrote a commentary on Hafiz ‘Iraqi’s *alifiyyah*.
- Imam Qutb al-Din al-Zubaidi ﷺ (d. 894) wrote a commentary on Hafiz ‘Iraqi’s *alifiyyah*.
- Perhaps the most famous commentary on Hafiz ‘Iraqi’s *alifiyyah* is that of Hafiz al-Sakhawi’s ﷺ (d. 902) *Fath al-Mughith bi Sharh Alfiyyah al-Hadith*.
- Hafiz al-Sakhawi’s commentary was abridged by Shaikh ‘Abdul Wahhab al-Sha’rani ﷺ (d. 973).
- Hafiz Zain al-Din Zakariyya ibn Muhammad al-Misri ﷺ (d. 926) wrote a commentary on Hafiz ‘Iraqi’s *alifiyyah* entitled, *Fath al-Baqi bi Sharh Alfiyyah al-‘Iraqi*.

- Imam Burhan al-Din Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Halabi al-Hanafi (d. 956) wrote a commentary on Hafiz ‘Iraqi’s *alfiyyah*.
- Hafiz al-Suyuti also wrote a 1000+ line poem on the Hadith sciences, following in the footsteps of Hafiz ‘Iraqi, entitled, *Alfiyyah Fi ‘Ilm al-Athar*.
- Hafiz al-Suyuti would then go on to write a commentary on his *alfiyyah* entitled, *al-Bahr aladhi Zakhar fi Sharh Alfiyyah al-Athar*.
- Shaikh Muhammad Mahfuz ibn ‘Abdullah al-Tirmisi (d. 1338) would go on to write a commentary on Hafiz al-Suyuti’s *alfiyyah*, entitled, *Manhaj Dhawi al-Nazar fi Sharh Manzumah ‘Ilm al-Athar*.

The attention that the scholars of Hadith have given to Hafiz ibn al-Salah’s work serves as a testament to its value. These scholars expanded upon his work, adding and critiquing, while still maintaining great respect for its author. Much more can be said about this illustrious Imam. May Allah have mercy on him and make his grave a garden from the gardens of Jannah.