

Imam Abu Hanifah's Kitab al-Athar

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Imam Abu Hanifah رحمته الله (d. 150) was among the most significant and influential figures in Islamic history, and is thus not in need of an introduction. As far as his literary contributions are concerned, some have argued that none of his own works survived the test of time and others have suggested that he never engaged in writing any specific work, but that the majority of what has been attributed to him were works gathered and penned by his students.¹ Among these works is the *Kitab al-Athar*, which is often attributed as primarily being the work of Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani رحمته الله (d. 189). Hereunder, various proofs will be presented briefly in order to demonstrate that the *Kitab al-Athar* was a work gathered and penned by Imam Abu Hanifah رحمته الله himself, which was thereafter transmitted by his various students, such as Imams Abu Yusuf رحمته الله (d. 182), Muhammad ibn al-Hasan رحمته الله, Zufar ibn al-Huzail رحمته الله (d. 158), Hasan ibn Ziyad رحمته الله (d. 204), and others.

Historical Precedent with the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik رحمته الله (d. 179)

In order to follow the line of reasoning that will be presented in these few pages, we must first draw a line between the *Kitab al-Athar* and the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik, as both works were written in similar eras by similar figures. Additionally, the *Muwatta* has been transmitted by numerous figures (just like the *Kitab al-Athar*), and in spite of these various transmissions, the authorship of the *Muwatta* has historically been attributed to Imam Malik. Some of those who have transmitted the work include:

- Yahya ibn Yahya al-Laithi رحمته الله (d. 234)
- Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani رحمته الله (d. 189)
 - Imam Muhammad's transmission of the *Muwatta* is also known as *Muwatta Muhammad* because he adds a number of narrations from his own shuyukh (i.e. other than Imam Malik), yet the majority of his narrations are through Imam Malik. At its core, it is still the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik. Understanding this gives credence to the fact that the *Kitab al-Athar* attributed to him is ultimately his transmission of Imam Abu Hanifah's work.
- Abu Mus'ab al-Zuhri رحمته الله (d. 242)
- Yahya ibn Abdullah ibn Bukair رحمته الله (d. 232)
- Abdullah ibn Maslamah al-Qa'nabi رحمته الله (d. 221)
- Abdur Rahman ibn al-Qasim رحمته الله (d. 191)²

Despite the numerous transmissions of the *Muwatta*, it has always been known as the work of Imam Malik. This same standard can be maintained to show that the *Kitab al-Athar* is the work

¹ See for example: *al-Mazhab al-Hanafi* 1:69-70 by Ahmad ibn Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Naqib

² This is not meant to be an exhaustive list as it is not the objective of this article. For a more comprehensive list, see: *Awjaz al-Masalik Ila Muwatta Malik* 1:98-105 by Shaikh al-Hadith Zakariyya al-Kandelwi رحمته الله.

of Imam Abu Hanifah. Just as the *Muwatta* has numerous transmissions, the *Kitab al-Athar* has also been transmitted by a number of figures, such as:

1. Qadi Abu Yusuf رحمته الله (d. 182)

Imam Abu Yusuf's transmission of *Kitab al-Athar* can be traced through at least two of his own students: 1) His own son, Yusuf, and 2) 'Amr ibn Abu 'Amr

a. Transmission of Yusuf from Abu Yusuf

- i. This transmission of the *Kitab al-Athar* has been mentioned by the revered historian, Shaikh Abdul Qadir al-Qurashi (d. 775) رحمته الله, as he says, "He (Yusuf) has narrated *Kitab al-Athar* from his father."³ This work was published by 'Allamah Abul Wafa al-Afghani رحمته الله in the 20th century, and a more recent edition was published with the annotations of Shaikh Latifur Rahman al-Qasimi al-Bahraichi.

b. Transmission of 'Amr ibn Abu 'Amr

- i. This transmission is the eleventh of the fifteen Masanid mentioned by al-Khawarizmi (d. 655) رحمته الله in his preface to his *Jami' al-Masanid*. Our respected teacher, Mufti Ruhul Amin Qasimi, has chains of narration to this version via al-Khawarizmi.⁴

2. Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani رحمته الله (d. 189)

- a. This is the most famous version of *Kitab al-Athar* and is the most predominant in circulation. Our respected teacher's chain of narration for this transmission can be found in *al-Kalam al-Mufid fi Tahrir al-Asanid* pgs. 47 – 48 (2nd edition).

3. Imam Zufar ibn al-Huzail رحمته الله (d. 158)

- a. Imams ibn Makula (d. 457) رحمته الله and Abu Sa'd al-Sam'ani (d. 562) رحمته الله write, "Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Bakr ibn Saif al-Jassini...he narrates from Abu Wahb who narrates from Zufar ibn al-Huzail who narrates *Kitab al-Athar* from Abu Hanifah."⁵
- b. This narration of Abu Wahb from Imam Zufar has been mentioned by Imam Hakim in his *Marifah 'Ulum al-Hadith*, but instead refers to it as *Nuskhah* (manuscript of) Zufar. Interestingly, he mentions another *nuskhah* of Imam Zufar transmitted by Shaddad ibn Hakim al-Balkhi, which may suggest multiple versions of Imam Zufar's recension of *Kitab al-Athar*.⁶

³ *Al-Jawahir al-Mudiyah Fi Tabaqat al-Hanafiyyah* 3:645

⁴ See: *al-Kalam al-Mufid fi Tahrir al-Asanid* pgs. 657 – 658 (2nd edition) for his chain of narration to *Jami' al-Masanid* and then see *Jami' al-Masanid* 1:173 – 174 for al-Khawarizmi's chain of narration to 'Amr ibn Abu 'Amr.

⁵ *Al-Ikmal* 3:39, *al-Ansab* 3:284; this shows that the work has been historically attributed to Imam Abu Hanifah.

⁶ See: *Ma'rifah 'Ulum al-Hadith* pg. 164

4. Imam Hasan ibn Ziyad ؓ (d. 204)

- a. Hafiz al-Daraqutni ؓ (d. 385) writes, “Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Hubaish al-Baghawi narrates from Muhammad ibn Shuja’ al-Thalji **from Hasan ibn Ziyad who narrates *Kitab al-Athar* from Abu Hanifah.**”⁷
- b. This is further supported by comparing al-Daraqutni’s chain of narration to that of Imam Abu al-Muayyad al-Khawarizmi’s chain. While introducing what he refers to as the “Musnad” of Abu Hanifah narrated by Hasan ibn Ziyad, he says, “...Abul Hasan Abdur Rahman ibn ‘Umar ibn Ahmad informed us that Abul Hasan **Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Hubaish al-Baghawi informed us that Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad ibn Shuja’ al-Thalji narrated to us that Hasan ibn Ziyad, the student of Abu Hanifah, narrated to us from Abu Hanifah, may Allah be pleased with him.**”⁸
 - i. It’s worth noting that although Imam al-Khawarizmi (d. 655) ؓ refers to the work as a “Musnad” gathered by Imam Hasan ibn Ziyad, Hafiz al-Daraqutni (d. 385) ؓ refers to it as *Kitab al-Athar*. It is for this reason that ‘Allamah Abdur Rashid al-Nu’mani (d. 1420) ؓ argues that some of the “Masanid” mentioned by al-Khawarizmi are in fact transmissions of *Kitab al-Athar*.⁹
 - ii. From this it is clear that there exists a scribal or editing error in the current prints of *Lisan al-Mizan* 6:487, wherein it is written under Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Hubaish al-Baghawi’s (second) entry #6344, “Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Hubaish al-Baghawi: narrated *Kitab al-Athar* from Muhammad ibn Shuja’ al-Balkhi from **Hasan ibn Ziyad al-Lu’lu’i from Muhammad ibn al-Hasan from Abu Hanifah.**” Hafiz al-Daraqutni’s *al-Mu’talif wa al-Mukhtalif* is thereafter referenced, but upon checking al-Daraqutni’s work directly (as quoted above), neither Hafiz al-Daraqutni nor al-Khawarizmi mention Imam Muhammad in the chain of narration. Thus, ‘Allamah Abdur Rashid al-Nu’mani asserts that this is an error from the scribes or editors (*musihihin*).¹⁰

Due to the constraints of this article, we conclude here. The work can be safely attributed to Imam Abu Hanifah, just as we safely attribute the various transmissions of the *Muwatta* to Imam Malik. May Allah ﷻ allow us to follow in the footsteps of those whom He has guided onto the straight path.

⁷ *Al-Mu’talif wa al-Mukhtalif* pg. 689; here we see the early Muhaddithin attributing the work to Imam Abu Hanifah.

⁸ *Jami’ al-Masanid* 1:172

⁹ See: *Nazarat ‘ala al-Kutub al-Thalathah fi al-Hadith li al-Aimmah al-Hanafiyah* pgs. 28-29 & 50; this work a compilation of three short treatises written by ‘Allamah Abdur Rashid al-Nu’mani in Urdu which were then translated into ‘Arabic by Bilal ‘Abdul Hai al-Hasani al-Nadwi. See also: ‘Allamah Abdur Rashid al-Nu’mani’s introduction to *Kitab al-Athar* (in Urdu).

¹⁰ See: *al-Imam ibn Majah wa Kitabuhus Sunan* pg. 53 and *Imam ibn Majah Aur ‘Ilm Hadith* (Urdu) pg. 282