BOOK REVIEWS


A notable feature of the second volume is that it reproduces a summary of the criticism and objections levelled by their contemporaries or others against the traditionists treated herein and then the author, Ḍiyā‘ al-Dīn al-Iṣlāḥī, goes on to answer them from equally reliable and trustworthy sources. He has thus tried to present a very balanced account of the person treated and has admirably succeeded in his efforts.

For instance the very first traditionist treated is ʿAbd al-Bāqi ibn Qānī al-Baghdādī. One of his disciples Abūl Ḥasan al-Dāraquṭnī says that his teacher suffered from a weak memory and unfortunately he occasionally insisted on his wrong and inaccurate statements. It is why al-Barqūṭī (d. 425/1034) calls him as “da‘if” i.e., of weak and feeble memory, a great defect in a traditionist which renders his entire work unreliable and of doubtful value. Ibn Ḥāzm al-Andalūsī dubs him as munkar al-hadīth i.e., one who has been rejected as a truthful or reliable narrator of hadīths and consequently the generality of mukāddithīn has shown great hesitation in accepting his riwāya. The author, however, on the authority of eminent scholars like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (Taʿrikh Baghdādī, XI: 89), al-Dhahabī (Tadhhirat al-Ḥuffāẓ, III: 99), Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (Lisān al-Mīzān, III: 383-4) and Ibn al-Jawzī (al-Muntaqām fi Akhābār al-Mulūk waʿl-Umam, VII: 14) has refuted the allegations made against him and said that in effect Ibn Qānī, otherwise reliable and thiqa, suffered from a weak and feeble memory only towards the end of his life—it may be remembered that he was 86 lunar years of age at the time of his death.

Sibt ibn al-Jawzī says: وإن كان من أهل العلم والفهم والثقة غير أن تغير في آخر عهده... (ر-ك- المنظوم- ج-س- 17)

(Although he was endowed with knowledge, sagacity and veracity yet in the end of his life he suffered from an impairment of memory).

Practically every traditionist included in this volume has been treated in the same way and the author seems to have made it a point to especially mention such objections and then meet them seriatim from equally authentic sources. A telling case is that of Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ḥākīm al-Nishāpūrī, the celebrated author of, among others, al-Mustadrik alaʾ-ʾṢaḥīḥayn. This collection of traditions has been discussed in detail (pp. 141-58), which is highly informative both for a non-specialist and the lay-man. It is generally believed that the Mustadrik has been written with a view to collecting and compiling in
one place those traditions of Jami' al-Šahih of al-Bukhāri and the Saḫih of Muslim which have been left out by the Shaykhayn but which in the opinion of Ḥākim fulfill all those conditions laid down by both al-Bukhāri and Muslim for determining whether a particular hadith was saḥih or not, i.e., a tradition whose narrators follow one another without a break, are known to be truthful and just and are reputed to be of good, strong memory, and which in itself is neither rare (i.e., whose narrators contradict one another) nor ghayr-mu'allal, i.e., having a latent cause considered unfavourable.

The most serious charge against Ḥākim is that of tasrihul, i.e., he has wrongfully counted traditions among saḥih hadith which other eminent traditionists do not regard as such. Chief among them is the celebrated al-Dhahabi who says that “approximately one half of al-Mustadrīk is composed of hadiths which conform with the conditions imposed by al-Bukhāri and Muslim both or one of them. Nevertheless one fourth of the book records hadiths whose isnād are apparently in order but they do not come upto the standard of accuracy and veracity prescribed by the Shaykhayn. The remaining 1/4 th contains hadiths which are ḍa'i'if, munkar and even fabricated (al-mawḍū'). I have indicated and pointed them out in my Talkhis of al-Mustadrīk”. (p. 159 apud Bustān al-Muḥaddithin by Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dihlawi).

This statement by a prominent scholar supports the view, according to the author, that the claim of al-Ḥākim in respect of certain hadiths that they are as good as saḥih (sound) is not true and is untenable.

The two hadiths recorded by Ḥākim which have been widely criticized are those which extol 'Ali ibn Abī Tālib i.e., the hadith which begins with, ‘... from 187...’ and the one known as hadith 'Ṭayr'. The author in an extremely lengthy discussion (pp. 161-198) stoutly defends Ḥākim quoting from a number of authorities in his support that the two hadiths commonly criticized are neither mawḍū' nor munkar. He also absolves Ḥākim of the charge of Shi'ism levelled against him. It is interesting to note here that the famous hadith about re-emergence or re-appearance of the Mahdi has only been related by Ḥākim. Bukhāri and Muslim do not record it (vide Encyclopaedia of Islam, ist. ed., s.v. ‘Mahdi’). It is on this account also that Ḥākim has been accused of having Shi'ite tendencies. But this charge is also not true for no less an outstanding scholar, divine and champion of Sunnism than the great Sufi-saint Shaykh ᾿Abūd al-ṣafrūqi al-Sirhindī, popularly known as Mujaddid ʿAlī-ʾi Thānī, in his Maktābāt (Daftar II) has clearly referred to the appearance of the Mahdi at the end of the world and filling it with equity and justice displacing the rampant oppression, tyranny and injustice.

About the controversial hadith 'Ṭayr' the author quotes al-Dhahabi who says:-

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(In so far as hadith tayr is concerned it has been narrated in various ways. I have collected them together in a regular compilation or tract. Collectively speaking this hadith is not without foundation).

The author further comments that the above statements of al-Dhahabi prove that he was not sure about this hadith being ḍa'i'if or mawḍū'; and although al-Tirmidhi characterizes it as gharib yet he has taken care to mention that it has been narrated in more than
one way which means that even he does not regard it as mawdū' or qa'if, i.e., fabricated or weak.

Discussing the hadith which is frequently quoted by the Shi'ites to prove the spiritual and charismatic superiority of ‘Ali over Abū Bakr and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who preceded him as the Khalīfat al-Rasūl Allāh and Amīr al-Mu'minīn, the author remarks that this hadith has been narrated by Ḥākim in three recensions and he has supported and dittoed them all. Among the great traditionists who have included and incorporated this hadith in their collections are al-Tirmidhī, Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Māja, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Diyāʾ al-Maqdisī and al-Nāṣaʾī; the latter three in the chapter on Khaṣāʾīṣ ‘Ali (special qualities of ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib). According to the author the controversial clause in this hadith i.e., من كنت مولاه فعل مولاه is common to all the versions and it is why the majority of muhaddithūn have not characterized it as either qa'if or baseless.

As to the charge of raṣf (i.e., not acknowledging the caliphate of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar I as legitimate and legal) against Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ḥākim, the learned author quotes the reply of Shaykh al-Islam Abū Isma‘īl ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī to a question about Ḥākim that “he was reliable and truthful in hadith but he was an extremist raṣfī” (cf. Ṭadhkira al-Ḥusayn, III: 247). However, al-Dhahabī in his another work Mīzān al-Īdāl (III: 85) remarks that al-Anṣārī has been unjust to Ḥākim because he was, in effect, a Shi‘ī and not a raṣfī.

Nevertheless the most widely circulated report about Ḥākim is that recorded by al-Khaṭṭāb al-Baghdādi. It reads: Ḥākim was considered trustworthy but he was imbued with Shi‘ī leanings. I was told by Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Urmawi, who was a pious and educated man, that Ḥākim had collected such hadiths as he considered to be in accordance with the conditions laid down by the Shaykhayn with respect to their own Sahīhs. Accordingly among such hadith are those relating to a bird and the one which says: man kuntu mawlāhu fa-‘Allum mawlāhu, these both pertain to the virtues and excellences of ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib. It is because of this that the traditionists have upbraided and condemned Ḥākim. (cf. Ta'rīkh Baghdādi, V:474).

From the above excerpt it would be clear, says the author, that it is wrong to impute raṣf to Ḥākim. ‘Allāma Taqī al-Din al-Subkī has also rejected the charge of raṣf against Ḥākim (cf. Tabaqāt al-Shāfi‘ī al-Kubrā, III: 27-61). But the charge of having Shi‘īte leanings is not absolutely baseless although he did not ever prefer ‘Ali to his two predecessors to the Caliphate, i.e. Abū Bakr and ‘Umar I. (p. 180).

The author has also taken serious notice of the charge of Ḥākim’s being highly prejudiced against the Ahnāf i.e., Abū Ḥanīfa, his pupils al-Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, laid very vehemently against him by M. Abū al-Raṣīd al-Nu‘mānī (ex-collaborator, Nadwat al-Muṣannīfīn, Delhi and ex-Professor of Ḥadith Jami’a Islāmiyya, Bahāwalpur) in his Arabic work “Ma Tamassu ilayhi ‘l-Ḥājja liman yatlī’u Sunan ibn Māja”.

After closely examining this charge the author has strongly rebutted it. He further says that none of the biographers of Ḥākim has even obliquely referred to his being a biased Shāfi‘īte who wrote disparagingly of Abū Ḥanīfa and other prominent leaders of
his school. The author says that A. Rashid Nu'mâni should have cited proofs and arguments in his support from the writings and statements of other a'imma and authors especially the teachers, pupils and contemporaries of al-Ḥâkim failing which he should have given examples of Ḥâkim's extremism and bias in juristic decisions and pronouncements. Had he done so it might have been possible to convince the dilettanti and the superficial of Ḥâkim's prejudice against the founder of the Ḥanafî school of jurisprudence and his immediate successors. (p. 306). Even this charge against Ḥâkim, therefore, falls to the ground.

The author devotes considerable space to al-Bayhaqi (d. 458/1066) and his outstanding works: Shu'ab al-Imân and al-Sunan al-Kabîr or Ma'rifat al-ʿAthâr wa'l-Sunan (ed. Hyderabad, India 1335/1916). There is only one MS, which is unfortunately defective, of al-Madkhal extant, preserved in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society of Calcutta. Al-Sunan al-Kabîr (variant Kubrâ) has been discussed at length and its characteristics or prominent features have been fully described (pp. 353-58).

The author, while quoting eminent scholars in praise of al-Sunan al-Kubrâ, says that Qâdî al-Quḍât 'Alâ' al-Dîn 'Ali ibn 'Uthmân al-Turkamânî (d. 750/1349), a well-known scholar, jurist, traditionist and faqîh of his times wrote a gloss entitled "al-Jawâhir al-Naqî fi 'l-Radd 'alâ'l-Bayhaqî". As the title of the work suggests al-Turkamânî has subjected to carping criticism the methodology adopted by al-Bayhaqi in the selection of genuine traditions and the rijîl and particularly his tasâkül and his deductions. In spite of the wide knowledge and erudition of al-Bayhaqi he has been accused of showing undue preference for Shâfi‘ism. His works are replete with calculated praise for al-Bayhaqi almost bordering on blind faith in the great imâm. Consequently al-Bayhaqi, maintains the author, seems to have deviated from the path of truth, justice and fair-play. (p. 358).

Abû Bakr al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, well-known in Oriental circles for his monumental work, the Taṣâkh Baghdadî, also finds a place in this book. He is credited with having a number of works on hadîth to his credit but these are not rated very high. One of his pupils Ibn Makula, himself a high-ranking traditionist and deep scholar of 'ilm al-rijîl, says that after al-Dârâqûtî a greater traditionist than his teacher was not seen in Baghdad. (p. 287). Then follow the opinions and remarks of several other scholars of the discipline of hadîth about al-Khaṭîb and his place and station among the traditionists. His other works including his magnum opus, the Taṣâkh, have been fully described and discussed. (pp. 305-313). Various objections raised against al-Khaṭîb, according to the plan adopted by the learned author, have been recorded, examined and met one by one.

In short this is the first authentic and detailed notice of al-Khaṭîb in Urdu that has come to notice so far. ʻUdâ‘ al-Dîn al-ʻIṣlâḥî deserves our thanks for introducing this world-famous historian and biographer to Urdu-knowing readers.

Both the volumes are a gold mine of information about traditionists who flourished during the 4th-8th/10th-14th centuries. The last scholar of hadîth noticed is Jamâl al-Dîn al-Zayla‘î (d. 762/1361). He was born in Zayla‘, a small village on the coast of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), to which place also belonged Fakhr al-Dîn, the famous commentator of the Kanz al-ʻUmmâl of ‘Ali al-Muttaqi al-Hindi.