

229097 - Biography of Imam adh-Dhahabi

the question

I would like a brief biography of Imam adh-Dhahabi. What is your view of his book Kitaab al-Kabaa'ir?

Detailed answer

Imam adh-Dhahabi is the leading scholar and historian Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Uthmaan ibn Qaymaaz adh-Dhahabi. He (may Allah have mercy on him) was born in 673 AH.

Tabaqaat ash-Shaafi'iyyah
(9/101); ar-Radd al-Waafir (p. 31)

His father, Shihaab ad-Deen Ahmad ibn 'Uthmaan, was a goldsmith, and he excelled in his craft, so he was known as adh-Dhahabi (dhahab = gold).

As-Safadi said in his biography of his father:

He excelled in working gold, which in his hands was like a flame.

End quote from A'yaan al-'Asr wa A'waan an-Nasr
(1/283)

Adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) possessed a vast amount of knowledge, and was extremely well-versed in the Islamic sciences such as 'aqeedah (beliefs), fiqh (jurisprudence), hadith, Qur'an recitations, usool al-fiqh (sources of jurisprudence) and so on, which he understood according to the methodology of the righteous early generations.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) was a leading figure in knowledge of halaal and haraam, and in hadith and its sciences, an insightful critic, a leading scholar in biography and history, strongly committed to the Sunnah, and strict in speaking out against followers of innovation; he stood up for the truth and never feared the reproach of any reproacher when acting in Allah's cause.

His shaykhs:

At-Taaj as-Subki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

He was granted ijaazah (licence to teach) by Abu Zakariyya ibn as-Sayrafi, Ibn Abi'l-Khayr, al-Qutb ibn Abi 'Asroon, and al-Qaasim ibn al-Irbilli.

He studied hadith when he was eighteen years old. In Damascus he learned hadith from 'Umar ibn al-Qawwaas, Ahmad ibn Hibatullah ibn 'Asaakir, Yoosuf ibn Ahmad al-Ghasooli, and others.

In Baalbek he learned hadith from 'Abd al-Khaaliq ibn 'Alwaan, Zaynab bint 'Umar ibn Kindi, and others.

In Egypt he learned hadith from al-Abraqoohi, 'Eesa ibn 'Abd al-Mun'im ibn Shihaab, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Daqeeq al-'Eid, al-Haafiz Abu Muhammad ad-Dimyaati, al-Haafiz Abu'l-'Abbaas ibn az-Zaahiri, and others.

In Alexandria he learned hadith from Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Ghuraafi, Abu'l-Hasan Yahya ibn Ahmad ibn as-Sawwaaf, and others.

In Makkah he learned hadith from at-Tawzari and others.

In Aleppo he learned hadith from Sanqar az-Zayni and others.

In Nablus he learned hadith from al-'Imaad ibn Badraan

His shaykhs were many; we will not list them all at length.

End quote from Tabaqaat ash-Shaafi'iyyah (/101).

One of the most famous of his shaykhs from whom he learned and by whom he was influenced was Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him).

His students:

As-Subki said:

Many scholars learned from him.

End quote from Tabaqaat ash-Shaafi'iyyah (9/103)

Among the most prominent of his students were the following:

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Al-Haafiz 'Imaad ad-Deen Ismaa'eel ibn 'Umar ibn Katheer, author of the Tafseer

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Al-Haafiz Zayn ad-Deen 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn al-Hasan ibn Muhammad as-Salaami

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Salaah ad-Deen Khaleel ibn Abeek as-Safadi

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Shams ad-Deen Abu'l-Mahaasin, Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Husayni ad-Dimashqi

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Taj ad-Deen Abu Nasr, 'Abd al-Wahhaab ibn 'Ali as-Subki

Scholars' praise for him:

The scholars praised him and his knowledge and religious commitment:

Ibn Naasir ad-Deen ad-Dimashqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his biography:

The shaykh, imam, prominent hafiz scholar of hadith, the star of Syria, the historian of Islam, the great critic of hadith and leading scholar in the assessment of hadith narrators, Shams ad-Deen Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Uthmaan at-Turkmaani, ad-Dimashqi, ibn adh-Dhahabi, ash-Shaafa'i. His shaykhs from whom he learned hadith and obtained ijaazah numbered more than one thousand three hundred. He excelled in the criticism and evaluation of hadith narrators, and was a scholar of usool al-fiqh, a leader in Qur'anic recitation, had deep knowledge of fiqh and of the four madhhabs; he promoted the Sunnah and the way of the salaf (early generations).

End quote from ar-Radd al-Waafir (p. 31)

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The shaykh and great scholar, the historian of Islam, the shaykh of the muhadditheen, Shams ad-Deen Abu 'Abdullah adh-Dhahabi, the last great scholar of hadith, may Allah have mercy on him.

End quote from al-Bidaayah wa'n-Nihaayah (18/500)

As-Safadi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

He was a scholar of hadith who was unequalled in his knowledge thereof. He was well versed in hadith and narrators, examination of hadith, biographies of narrators, and removing any ambiguity or confusion

about their chronology. He was very bright, and being named after gold (dhahab) was entirely appropriate in his case. He acquired a great deal of knowledge and benefitted many people; he wrote many books, and his books were concise and very useful.

End quote from al-Waafi bi'l-Wafiyyaat (2/114)

Taj ad-Deen as-Subki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to our teacher Abu 'Abdullah, he was prominent, with no equal. He was a treasure, the one to turn to when we were faced with a difficult issue. He was the leading scholar of hadith and the gold (dhahab) of the era, the leading scholar in evaluation of hadith narrators. He was the most prominent in every way. It is as if the entire ummah was gathered in one plain and he looked at it, then started to tell its history like one who was there and narrating its reports as if he had heard them directly.

He is the one who trained us in this field and enabled us to be counted among the scholars of hadith. May Allah reward him with the best of rewards and admit him to Paradise.

End quote from Tabaqaat ash-Shaafi'iyyah (9/101)

Al-Haafiz Jalaal ad-Deen as-Suyooti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

He studied hadith when he was eighteen years old, and he learned a great deal, travelled and put a great deal of effort into pursuing this knowledge and serving it, until he became well versed in it and people submitted to his leadership in that field.

It was narrated from Shaykh al-Islam Abu'l-Fadl Ibn Hajar that he said: I drank Zamzam water with the intention of reaching the level of adh-Dhahabi in memorising and understanding hadith.

End quote from Dhayl Tabaqaat al-Huffaaz (p. 231)

Ash-Shawkaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said concerning him:

The great scholar and historian... He was skilled in the art of hadith, and compiled many useful multi-volume books in that field.

Al-Badr an-Nabulsi said concerning his shaykhs: He was the great scholar of his time in the field of hadith narrators and their status; he possessed great understanding and a sharp mind. His fame means that there is no need to elaborate further.

End quote from al-Badr at-Taali' (2/110)

His books:

He wrote many books on various topics, including the following:

- Mizaan al-I'tidaal
- Siyar A'laam an-Nubala'
- Tareekh al-Islam
- Al-Kaashif
- Al-Mughni
- Mukhtasar Sunan al-Bayhaqi
- Tabaqaat al-Huffaaz
- Tabaqaat al-Qurra'
- At-Tajreed fi Asma' as-Sahaabah

- Talkhees al-Mustadrak

- Mukhtasar Tahdheeb al-Kamaal

- Mukhtasar Tareekh
Neesaboor li'l-Haakim

- Mukhtasar Dhayl Ibn
ad-Dubaythi

- Mukhtasar al-Muhalla li
Ibn Hazm

- Mukhtasar az-Zuhd
li'l-Bayhaqi

- Mukhtasar ad-Du'afa' li
Ibn al-Jawzi

- ... and other useful books.

See: Tabaqaat ash-Shaafi'iyyah (9/104-105); Dhayl
Tabaqaat al-Huffaaz (p. 231); al-Badr at-Taali' (2/110); al-A'laam
by az-Zarkali (5/326)

His 'aqeedah (belief):

He (may Allah have mercy on him) followed the 'aqeedah of Ahl
as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah; he adhered to it, defended it, promoted it,
defended its scholars, and wrote a number of books on 'aqeedah, including
the following:

- Kitaab al-'Uluw

- Kitaab al-'Arsh

·Kitaab al-Arba'een fi

Sifaat Rabb il-'Aalameen

·Risaalat at-Tamassuk

bi's-Sunan wa't-Tahdheer min al-Bida'

... and others

His death:

He died (may Allah have mercy on him) on the night of Monday

3 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 748 AH and was buried the following day in the graveyard of al-Baab as-Sagheer in Damascus.

Ar-Radd al-Waaqir

(p. 31)

With regard to the well-known book Kitaab al-Kabaa'ir

that is attributed to adh-Dhahabi, a number of contemporary scholars have rejected the attribution thereof to him, quoting as evidence for that the large number of fabricated and false hadith and strange stories and reports contained in this book, because that is not something that is usually found in the books of Imam adh-Dhahabi, the great scholar and critic, and leading scholar in the evaluation of hadith narrators.

Prof. Muhiy ad-Deen Masto came across another copy of the

manuscript of al-Kabaa'ir in the library of 'Aarif Hikmat in al-Madinah

al-Munawwarah, and he affirmed in the introduction to Kitaab al-Kabaa'ir

that he annotated and published that this version was the correct version of the book, because it was free of many of the fabricated hadiths that are mentioned in the famous version, and because the weak hadiths are quoted with comments to indicate that they are weak. In the correct version, the character of Imam adh-Dhahabi, the well-versed critic, may be clearly seen.

The version of Muhiy ad-Deen Masto is the reliable version of this book.

Similar to it is the version of Mashhoor Hasan Salmaan, which was based on the same abbreviated manuscript.

And Allah knows best.