

# Mistaken Identity: An Investigation into Abū Ḥanīfa's *al-Fiqh al-akbar*

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Since the writings of Shiblī Nu‘mānī and A. J. Wensinck in the early twentieth century, scholarship has often questioned the ascription of the creed *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* to the well-known theologian and jurist Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767). But there has hitherto been little attempt to determine how and when this text entered the Hanafī theological tradition and who its true author was. In this article I show that until the early eighth/fourteenth century, theological and biographical works referring to *al-Fiqh al-akbar* consistently mean the text written by Abū Muṭī‘ al-Balkhī (d. 199/814), which was later renamed *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*. I then trace the entry of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* into the mainstream tradition, showing that the key figure in its popularization was the legal theorist ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī (d. 730/1329), who extensively quotes from the creed and attributes it to Abū Ḥanīfa. Finally, I propose that clues in the reception history and content of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* corroborate the claim recorded in some texts that it was instead likely written by an obscure late fourth/tenth-century Hanafī scholar named Abū Ḥanīfa Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Bukhārī.

## INTRODUCTION

The jurist and theologian Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān b. Thābit (d. 150/767), from Kufa in Iraq, is one of the most influential scholars in the history of Islam. Though he is most famous as the eponym of one of the four canonical Sunni schools of Islamic law, he also has a theological legacy, which was principally expressed through written records of his teachings that were passed on to his successors. There is a good chance that a Muslim studying today in a Hanafī madrasa will be taught the creed ascribed to him titled *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, often accompanied by the commentary by Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1606). This text, like other such primers, covers the core of Islamic belief with a prominent focus on the divine attributes.

Nevertheless, since the 1932 publication of A. J. Wensinck's *The Muslim Creed*, it is commonly asserted in Western academia that Abū Ḥanīfa did not write this creed. Wensinck argued that the content of the text, which he termed *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, does not reflect the prevailing terminology and polemical debates of the mid-second/eighth century, but rather the milieu of al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935f.) in the first part of the fourth/tenth.<sup>1</sup> In fact, this conclusion was anticipated by the early twentieth-century Indian reformer Shiblī Nu‘mānī, who

*Author's note:* Thanks to Harīth Bin Ramli and Salman Younas for their comments on an early draft of this article, the two anonymous reviewers for their useful critical feedback, and Peri Bearman for her exemplary editing.

1. A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), 245–46. Wensinck appended “II” to the name based on his speculative reconstruction of a short decalogue that he called *al-Fiqh al-akbar I*. Ulrich Rudolph and Josef van Ess have shown that his arguments to establish the existence of *al-Fiqh al-akbar I* as a separate treatise are fallacious. See U. Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunni Theology in Samarqand*, tr. R. Adem (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 56–58; J. van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, vol. 1, tr. J. O’Kane (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 237–41. I will retain the name *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* for concision and clarity.

also examined the book's transmission; he remarked both on its apparently anachronistic language and on the light impression that it had made in history, noting that it was only first commented upon in the eighth/fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Wensinck's assessment of the dating of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* was not challenged by either Josef van Ess or Ulrich Rudolph in their studies of the early development of the Hanafi tradition, although William Montgomery Watt cautiously suggested a late fourth/tenth-century dating.<sup>3</sup> Some contemporary researchers working from within the Islamic theological tradition, such as 'Ināyatullāh Iblāgh, Wahbī Ghawjī, Abdur-Rahman (Ibn Yusuf) Mangera, and Rustam Mahdī, have responded to doubts about the text's authorship and upheld its authenticity—though only Mangera, writing in English, mentions Wensinck. They cite early scholars who refer to an *al-Fiqh al-akbar* by Abū Ḥanīfa as well as the existence of a reliable chain of narrators (*isnād*) for the text, which is claimed to have been transmitted by his son Ḥammād (d. 176/792).<sup>4</sup> They do not take up the charge of anachronism between the creed's content and the second/eighth-century milieu of Abū Ḥanīfa (see §6 below).

In this article I will seek to resolve the provenance and reception of Abū Ḥanīfa's *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* within Islamic intellectual history. I will start by discussing the pair of theological texts ascribed by early Muslim authors to Abū Ḥanīfa, viz., *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim* and *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, which are central to the reception arguments that follow, and by analyzing the main chains of transmission for all three sources. I will then argue that the historical record undermines the ascription to him of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, as the Hanafi theologians who are said to have transmitted it do not cite it in their works. Moreover, for many centuries references to *al-Fiqh al-akbar* actually concern the so-called *al-Fiqh al-absaʿ*, a text that records Abū Ḥanīfa's teachings on the authority of his student Abū Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī (d. 199/814).<sup>5</sup> This latter creed was the text cited exclusively under the name *al-Fiqh al-akbar* into the seventh/thirteenth century, when there was a resurgence of interest among Hanafis in revisiting Abū Ḥanīfa's theological legacy. I will show that *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* likely first entered the mainstream Hanafi tradition only in the eighth/fourteenth century, through its extensive quotation in the commentary on legal theory *Kashf al-asrār* by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī (d. 730/1329), and I will detail the stages of reception that allowed it to replace its namesake, which eventually was retitled *al-Fiqh al-absaʿ*. Finally, I will make a case for identifying the author of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* based on debates on specific theological questions, including the possibility of saintly marvels (*karāmāt*), the fate of the Prophet Muḥammad's parents, and the divine attributes. I shall argue that these pieces of evidence together support the claim appearing in classical-era sources that the creed owes its genesis to an obscure scholar of fourth/tenth-century Transoxiana named Abū Ḥanīfa Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Bukhārī.

2. S. Nuʿmānī, *Imam Abu Hanifah: Life and Works*, tr. M. Hadi Hussain (repr. Karachi: Darul Ishaat, 2000 [orig. publ. *Sirat al-Nuʿmān*, 1891]), 83.

3. Van Ess, *Theology and Society*, 1: 238 n. 7; Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī*, 59 n. 128; W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (London: Oneworld, 2008), 133.

4. Abū al-Muntahā al-Maghniṣāwī, *Imām Abū Ḥanīfa's al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, trans. A.-R. ibn Yusuf (London: White Thread Press, 2007), 24–31; 'I. A. Iblāgh, *al-Imām al-aʿẓam Abū Ḥanīfa al-mutakallim* ([Cairo]: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-l-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1971), 100–101; Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī, *Minaḥ al-rawḍ al-azhar fī sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar*, ed. W. S. Ghawjī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʿir al-Islāmiyya, 1998), 12–14; R. Mahdī, *Dahḍ al-shubuhāt al-muthāra ḥawl al-Fiqh al-akbar riwāya Ḥammād b. Abī Ḥanīfa wa-l-Fiqh al-akbar riwāya Abī Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī raḍīya Allāh ʿanhum* (Sumqayit, Azerbaijan: n.p., 2018), 35–36.

5. I will henceforth usually refer to this text as al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* due to the much later emergence of the name *al-Fiqh al-absaʿ* (see below).

## 1. TEXTS

Abū Ḥanīfa's focus in his Kufan circle was jurisprudential teaching (*fiqh*). His most important students in this field were Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) and the younger Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805), to whom are attributed the first legal texts of the school. But there was another side to his pedagogic activities, one in which he taught what he called *al-fiqh al-akbar* (the greatest understanding), that is, theological principles for the resolution of disputed questions within the community.<sup>6</sup> Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī (or: al-Pazdawī) (d. 493/1099) preserves the memory of Abū Ḥanīfa:

Abū Ḥanīfa, God have mercy on him, learned this discipline [viz., *ʿilm al-kalām*] and used to debate it with the Muʿtazila and all of the people of deviance, and initially he used to teach it to his companions. He wrote books about it, some of which have come down to us, yet most of them have been effaced and purged (*maḥāhā wa-ghasalahā*)<sup>7</sup> by the people of deviance and misguidance. What has come down to us are *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim* and *Kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*. He stipulated in *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim* that there is no harm in learning this discipline [*ʿilm al-kalām*]. . . . We follow Abū Ḥanīfa. He is our leader and exemplar in principles and practical applications, and he used to permit teaching, learning, and writing it [*kalām*]. But at the end of his life he refrained from debating in it, forbade his companions from doing so, and did not teach it publicly to them as he did jurisprudence, which comprises the questions of practical application.<sup>8</sup>

Al-Bazdawī here mentions the names of two texts that are central to the present study, though crucially neither of them should be identified with *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>9</sup> Both are frequently attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa, but were actually composed by his students from Transoxiana who transmitted his theological views on their return from studying with him in Kufa.<sup>10</sup> *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim* was written by Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī (d. 208/823) in the form of a dialogue with his teacher, Abū Ḥanīfa; it became part of the theological canon of Hanafism in Samarqand.<sup>11</sup> In similar fashion, *al-Fiqh al-akbar* (the text later known as *al-Fiqh al-absaʿ*) was written by Abū Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī to disseminate Abū Ḥanīfa's theology; it was probably composed in Balkh, where it first gained prominence.<sup>12</sup> Al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* is a detailed creedal exposition.<sup>13</sup> It is longer than *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* and emphasizes questions of belief and fate.<sup>14</sup> Although there is a possibility that elements have undergone

6. See Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān b. Thābit, *al-ʿilm wa-l-mutaʿallim riwāyat Abī Muqātil ʿan Abī Ḥanīfa* [ . . . ], ed. M. Z. al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Anwār, 1949), 40. Use of the phrase *al-fiqh al-akbar* for theology plays both on the actual meaning of *fiqh* as understanding (Lane, s.v.) and the contrast with jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as the secondary activity of practical jurisprudence.

7. Parchment texts would be erased, especially by the application of water to them, and reused. For a discussion of various methods, see A. Hilālī, *The Sanaa Palimpsest: The Transmission of the Qurʾan in the First Centuries AH* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, in association with the Institute of Ismailī Studies, London, 2017), 8.

8. Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. H. P. Linss (repr. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2003), 15–16.

9. A third text with an obviously early provenance is *Risālatihī ilā al-Battī*, an open letter written by Abū Ḥanīfa to a jurist named ʿUthmān al-Battī in Basra, which appears to be the only surviving example of his own literary composition. See Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿilm wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 33–38. A second unpublished letter is discussed by van Ess, but its authenticity is doubtful as later sources speak of a single letter; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, 1: 221–29, 234–37; Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī*, 28–42. These texts do not play a part in the present study.

10. Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī*, 43–44, 53.

11. The structure of the text is summarized in *ibid.*, 48–53.

12. *Ibid.*, 64 n. 40.

13. For an outline of the structure, see *ibid.*, 65–71.

14. *Ibid.*, 63.

interpolation,<sup>15</sup> it is a document that can credibly be associated with the era in which it is claimed to have emerged. Moreover, as pointed out by Rudolph, it represents an important development in the Hanafī theological tradition: “Its thematization is much more expansive, and the premises that it offered for later theological explication were certainly more numerous than any text that preceded it.”<sup>16</sup>

Several chains of transmission are associated with each of the three theological texts discussed so far, either charted by scribes in the colophon of manuscript copies or as transmitted by prominent later scholars (see Fig. 1).<sup>17</sup> As the main focus of this article is on the historical reception of these texts, I do not propose to analyze them in detail. But a brief examination is useful for two reasons. First, their chains of transmission mainly consist of well-known Transoxianan Hanafī scholars, including some of the most important theologians and jurists of the classical period.<sup>18</sup> This tells us that they were transmitted as part of the pedagogical and literary activities of these figures and, if the chains are reliable, knowledge of them should be reflected within their own works. Second, the chains are similar for all three texts, and in the case of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* and al-Balkhī’s *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, nearly identical. In fact, the eleven transmitters between Nuṣayr b. Yaḥyā and Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī are exactly the same.<sup>19</sup> In §4, I will argue that the first verified historical reference to *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* is by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī, which occurs after this sequence in the chain. This finding leads to the suspicion that the majority of the chain for *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* has merely been reproduced from the one generated by the genuine transmission of al-Balkhī’s *al-Fiqh al-akbar* within Transoxianan Hanafī scholarship. The following two sections will test this hypothesis by showing that there is no evidence that *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* was known to the scholars mentioned in the chains or to other authors before this period.

## 2. RECEPTION

In this section I will discuss the earliest reception of *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, in books written in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries (see Fig. 2). This period marks the continuation of the formative period of Hanafī theology, and features representatives of both rationalism and traditionalism, prior to the full emergence of classical Maturidism at the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century. The analysis of primary texts from mainly Hanafī and Ash‘ari scholars builds a cumulative case that the title *al-Fiqh al-akbar* refers exclusively to the creed written by al-Balkhī during this span.

The earliest reference to *al-Fiqh al-akbar* is in *al-Fihrist* of the Imami Shi‘i bibliophile Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990) from Baghdad. He lists *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*, *Kitāb Risālatihī ilā al-Battī* and *Kitāb al-Radd ‘alā al-qadariyya* as additional works by Abū

15. Ibid., 57–62.

16. Ibid., 63.

17. Figure 1 is drawn from information recorded by al-Kawtharī with some additions by Iblāgh; Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-‘lim wa-l-muta‘allim*, 4–7, 59; Iblāgh, *al-Imām al-a‘zam*, 101–2. It is not intended as an exhaustive treatment of the chains associated with the three texts. In compiling the material, I have standardized the format of the names between the different sources and corrected obvious errors.

18. The extremely influential Hanafī-Maturidī theologian Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) is the earliest figure to appear in the chains for all three texts.

19. The *isnād* supplied by al-Kawtharī for *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* for both the Maktabat Shaykh al-Islām ‘Arif Hikmat and Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā ‘Āshir transmissions (Fig. 1, col. 1), omits the links between Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī and ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Fārisī, who transmits it from Nuṣayr b. Yaḥyā. The full *isnād* that al-Kawtharī gives for *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ* (Fig. 1, col. 4) also stems from Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, implying the same sequence of eleven names (shared with the versions mentioned by Iblāgh).



Author	Text	Main Location	Theological Affiliation	Reference to <i>al-Fiqh al-akbar II</i> ?
Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990)	<i>Kitāb al-Fihrist</i>	Baghdad	Imami Shi‘i-Mu‘tazili	N
‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1038)	<i>Uṣūl al-dīn</i>	Nishapur	Ash‘ari	N
Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ustawā’ī (d. 432/1040f.)	<i>Kitāb al-I‘tiqād</i>	Nishapur	Hanafi	N
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nāṭifi (d. 446/1054)	<i>Al-Ajnās fī furū‘ al-fiqh al-Ḥanafī</i>	Rayy	Hanafi	N
Abū Muẓaffar al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 471/1078)	<i>al-Tabṣīr fī al-dīn</i>	Khurasan	Ash‘ari	N
‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d. 482/1089)	<i>Kanz al-wuṣūl ilā ma‘rifat al-uṣūl</i>	Samarqand	Hanafi	N
Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1099)	<i>Uṣūl al-dīn</i>	Samarqand	Hanafi	N

Fig. 2. Citations of and quotations from *al-Fiqh al-akbar* in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries

Ḥanīfa,<sup>20</sup> whereas information recorded by others indicates that *al-Fiqh al-akbar* and *al-Radd ‘alā al-qadariyya* are different titles for al-Balkhī’s text.<sup>21</sup>

The Hanafi author Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ustawā’ī (d. 432/1040f.) from Nishapur cites material by al-Balkhī by name in *Kitāb al-I‘tiqād*, quoting verbatim from his *al-Fiqh al-akbar*. Al-Balkhī remarks, for instance, that God is never to be described by the attributes of his creation, but only as he describes himself.<sup>22</sup> Al-Ustawā’ī also records a number of reports against the claim made in some sources that Abū Ḥanīfa believed the Quran to be created, which doctrine, along with the question of divine speech, is not touched on in al-Balkhī’s text.<sup>23</sup> Yet al-Ustawā’ī does not comment on the treatment of divine speech in *al-Fiqh al-*

20. Muḥammad Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist li-l-Nadīm*, ed. Reżā Tajaddod (Tehran: n.p., 1971), 256.

21. See the testimony of ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī below. There is a remote possibility that Ibn al-Nadīm used the name *al-Radd ‘alā al-qadariyya* for al-Balkhī’s creed and lived just long enough to encounter a late fourth/tenth-century *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* before it disappeared into obscurity for more than three centuries. A similar explanation of the titles in Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* is offered by Mahdī, though he thinks *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* was written by the second/eighth-century Abū Ḥanīfa; Mahdī, *Daḥd al-shubuhāt*, 35–36.

22. Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ustawā’ī, *Kitāb al-I‘tiqād*, ed. S. Bāghjawān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005), 125; Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-‘lim wa-l-muta‘allim*, 56.

23. Al-Ustawā’ī, *Kitāb al-I‘tiqād*, 166–75.

*akbar II*. Instead, he reports the following conversation involving Ḥammād, the putative transmitter of that creed, whose traditionalist refusal to enter into theological speculation about the Quran is at odds with the theological formulation presented in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* (see §6 below):

It is narrated from al-Ḥasan b. Ziyād,<sup>24</sup> may God have mercy on him, that he said: Ḥammād b. Abī Ḥanīfa and I went to Dāwūd al-Ṭāʿī<sup>25</sup> and something was mentioned, such that Dāwūd said to Ḥammād, “O Abū Ismāʿīl, whenever a theologian (*mutakallim*) speaks about something, he hopes that he will be safe from it. Be warned against speaking about the Quran, except that which God, Most High, has said [in it]. I heard your father—that is, Abū Ḥanīfa—say, ‘God has let us know that it is his speech, so whoever takes from what God has informed him has grasped the firmest hand-hold (*fa-qad istamsaka bi-l-ʿurwa al-wuthqā*).<sup>26</sup> Is there, after grasping the firmest hand-hold, anything but falling into perdition?’” Ḥammād then said, “May God reward you friend, how well you speak!”<sup>27</sup>

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nāṭifī (d. 446/1054), a prominent fifth/eleventh-century Hanafi jurist based in Rayy, cites short quotations from al-Balkhī’s *al-Fiqh al-akbar* on the topic of the divine attributes in his *al-Ajnās fī furūʿ al-fiqh al-Ḥanafī*.<sup>28</sup> Usually when al-Nāṭifī is aware of multiple narrations (*riwāyāt*) from the leading Hanafi figures whom he cites, he will add the narrator within the title of the book. If he knew of another text titled *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, he would mention al-Balkhī’s text as *al-Fiqh al-akbar riwāyat Abī Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī*—which he does not do. This customary literary practice means that his quoting al-Balkhī’s creed could be taken as circumstantial evidence that he has no knowledge of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* allegedly by Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>29</sup>

Major figures connected to the rival theological Ashʿari school in Khurasan testify to an awareness of al-Balkhī’s *al-Fiqh al-akbar*. ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1038) mentions in his *Uṣūl al-dīn* that Abū Ḥanīfa supported the position that capacity (*istiṭāʿa*) is given by God at the same time as the action and can be used in that moment for either of two opposite actions,<sup>30</sup> and he paraphrases the following extract from al-Balkhī’s text:

Abū Ḥanīfa, may God have mercy on him, said: The capacity (*istiṭāʿa*) that a person uses for disobedience (*maʿṣiya*) is suitable in its essence for obedience (*ṭāʿa*). [The person] alternates in using the capacity that God, Most High, has created in him, which he has commanded him to employ in obedience rather than disobedience.<sup>31</sup>

24. Al-Ḥasan b. Ziyād al-Luʿluʿī (d. 204/819) was the fourth most prominent of Abū Ḥanīfa’s students, after Zufar b. al-Hudhayl (d. 158/774f.). See ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn Abī al-Wafāʿ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya fī ṭabaqāt al-ḥanafīyya*, ed. ʿA. M. al-Ḥulw, 5 vols. (repr. Giza: Hajr, 1993), 2: 56–57.

25. Dāwūd al-Ṭāʿī (d. ca 165/781f.) was an ascetic from Kufa connected to the circle of Abū Ḥanīfa. See *EI3*, s.v. (L. Berger), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_25947](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25947), accessed September 30, 2020.

26. This is a reference to Q 2:256: “There is no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error, so whoever rejects false gods and believes in God has grasped the firmest hand-hold, one that will never break” (trans. Abdel Haleem).

27. Al-Ustawāʿī, *Kitāb al-Fīqāh*, 167.

28. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nāṭifī, *al-Ajnās fī furūʿ al-fiqh al-Ḥanafī*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿthūr, 2016), 1: 445, 447. In the first of these two citations, he mentions al-Balkhī by name. See Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 56, 42.

29. I am indebted to Salman Younas for the references from al-Nāṭifī and the explanation of his usual writing habits.

30. ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn* (Istanbul: Madrasat al-Ilāhiyyāt bi-Dār al-Funūn al-Türkiyya, 1928), 308.

31. Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 43.

The word *istiṭāʿa* does not appear in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, which shows that al-Baghdādī must be referring to al-Balkhī's creed. Al-Baghdādī also states that Abū Ḥanīfa's *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-qadariyya* is another name for his *Kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*.<sup>32</sup> Thus, shortly after Ibn al-Nadīm listed this fourth title, the prominent theologian al-Baghdādī was aware of the alternative name, but not of any distinct theological content attached to it. This suggests that *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* was not being circulated as a part of Abū Ḥanīfa's theological legacy.

A second Ashʿari of note is Abū Muẓaffar al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 471/1078), who states in his book *al-Tabṣīr fī al-dīn* that he received *Kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, one of Abū Ḥanīfa's writings, from a strong and reliable chain of transmission via al-Nuṣayr b. Yaḥyā (d. 268/881f.).<sup>33</sup> This statement finds support in one *isnād* provided by al-Kawtharī for al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, in which there is only al-Balkhī between al-Nuṣayr and Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>34</sup>

The Transoxianan Hanafi tradition is represented by Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī, quoted above, and his older brother ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d. 482/1089), who are chiefly associated with the scholarship of Samarqand. By their generation, the theology of Samarqandi Hanafism had also encompassed Bukhara and the wider Transoxianan region.<sup>35</sup> In his text of *uṣūl al-fiqh* titled *Kanz al-wuṣūl ilā maʿrifat al-uṣūl*, ʿAlī al-Bazdawī references the three texts now familiar to us: *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, *Kitāb al-Risāla* [that is, *Kitāb Risālatihi ilā al-Battī*], and *Kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*. Like al-Baghdādī, he expressly identifies the term *istiṭāʿa* in connection with *al-Fiqh al-akbar*.<sup>36</sup> He also mentions that Abū Ḥanīfa rejected the *aṣḥāḥ* doctrine, the idea held by some of the Muʿtazila that God must do what is best for humankind.<sup>37</sup> This term is not found in either *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* or al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, but the account of divine action in the latter text amounts to a rebuttal of the position. A god who creates disbelief, as stated in al-Balkhī's creed, cannot fulfil the Muʿtazili condition for divine beneficence (*aṣḥāḥ*).<sup>38</sup> These two points suggest that al-Bazdawī is referring to the text of al-Balkhī rather than to that ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>39</sup> In §4 we will see that a commentary on al-Bazdawī's *Kanz al-wuṣūl* by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī several centuries later first introduces *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* to the main Hanafi theological tradition.

The preceding historical tour has shown that up to the beginning of classical Hanafi Maturidism, at the turn of the sixth/twelfth century, there is no reliable attestation of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* allegedly by Abū Ḥanīfa. Instead, there is reference to al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, including in some cases paraphrases and verbatim quotations. Furthermore, after Ibn al-Nadīm, the scholars writing about this title, though not exclusively Hanafi, were all

32. Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 308. Cf. Iblāgh, *al-Imām al-aʿẓam*, 104.

33. Abū Muẓaffar al-Isfarāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr fī al-dīn*, ed. K. Y. al-Ḥūt (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1983), 184. He uses the phrase *akhbarnā bihi al-thiqā*. This edition then has the name Abū Muṭīʿ (i.e., al-Balkhī) in brackets, which is presumably the editor's addition.

34. Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 6. See Fig. 1.

35. P. Bruckmayr, "The Spread and Persistence of Māturīdī Kalām and Underlying Dynamics," *Iran and the Caucasus* 13 (2009): 59–92, at 63; W. Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks," *Actas, IV Congresso de estudos árabes e islâmicos: Coimbra-Lisboa, 1 a 8 de setembro 1968* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 109–68, at 117.

36. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-Bazdawī*, ed. S. Bakdāsh (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʿir al-Islāmiyya, 2014), 89–90.

37. *EI2*, art. al-Aṣḥāḥ (W. M. Watt).

38. Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 43.

39. Fuat Sezgin claims that ʿAlī al-Bazdawī wrote a commentary on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*; *GAS*, 1: 412 (I, no. 1). This is seemingly due to the title *Sharḥ al-fiqh al-akbar li-ʿAlī al-Pazdawī* mistakenly given to the 1862 publication of al-Maghnisāwī's commentary (ed. H. E. J. Lord Stanley of Alderley [London: n.p., 1862]), which mentions al-Bazdawī in the introduction [p. 2].



active in the eastern lands, especially Khurasan and Transoxiana. This geographical location is consistent with the title having an origin in Balkh rather than Iraq, and thus having been written by Abū Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī rather than Abū Ḥanīfa.

### 3. CLASSICAL CONTINUITY

The span between the sixth/twelfth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries was pivotal for the consolidation of the distinctive tradition of Hanafi theology in Transoxiana that was later known as the Maturidi school.<sup>40</sup> In this section I argue that though Abū Ḥanīfa is acknowledged as a key figure in the genealogy of the school and his written theological legacy is cited to varying degrees by its major proponents, the creed *al-Fiḥ al-akbar II* does not make an appearance until it is quoted by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī (§4), as part of an emerging genre of Hanafi *uṣūl al-fiḥ* commentaries (see Fig. 3).

The scholarly tone for the entire period was set by the theologian often considered second only to Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) in importance, Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), whose works, especially the voluminous *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, became the standard sources for those succeeding him. Al-Nasafī honors Abū Ḥanīfa as the theological founder of the school,<sup>41</sup> and occasionally cites *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim* and al-Balkhī's *al-Fiḥ al-akbar*, texts that he is said to have personally transmitted.<sup>42</sup> But his main focus is to elaborate the systematic *kalām* of al-Māturīdī and other Samarqandī Hanafi theologians and to engage in dialectical debate with representatives of the rival Muʿtazili and Ashʿari traditions.<sup>43</sup> The same can be said of the many significant theological figures of his era. These include his student Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), author of *al-Aqīda al-nasafīyya*; Abū Ishāq al-Ṣaffār (d. 534/1140), who cites al-Balkhī's creed in one place;<sup>44</sup> and, a generation or two later, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī (d. 580/1184), author of *al-Bidāya fī uṣūl al-dīn*.

It is likely during this period that al-Balkhī's *al-Fiḥ al-akbar* attracted its first and apparently only commentary. *Sharḥ al-Fiḥ al-akbar* was ascribed to al-Māturīdī, but as the text explicitly critiques positions held by the Ashʿaris, this is obviously incorrect.<sup>45</sup> Contemporary scholars have differed as to the author's correct identity: Hans Daiber attributes it to Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. ca 373/983);<sup>46</sup> Rudolph leaves it anonymous but suggests a late fifth/eleventh-century dating due to internal evidence of doctrines similar to those of al-Bazdawī;<sup>47</sup> and Fuat Sezgin adduces manuscript evidence that names the author as Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl b. Ishāq al-Khaṭīrī, who lived in the fifth/eleventh century.<sup>48</sup> Sezgin treats the

40. Ayedh Aldosari argues that Mankūbars al-Nāṣirī's *al-Nūr al-lāmiʿ* is the earliest extant text to use the term "Maturidi," though like many such monikers, it apparently started as the label used by opponents, in this case the Muʿtazila; A. S. Aldosari, *Ḥanafī Māturīdism: Trajectories of a Theological Legacy, with a Study and Critical Edition of al-Khabbāzī's Kitāb al-Hādī* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2020), 193.

41. See, for example, Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. M. A. H. ʿĪsā, 2 vols. (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2011), 1: 307.

42. Ibid., 1: 154–55; Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 4, 6. See the chains of transmission in Fig. 1.

43. Aldosari, *Ḥanafī Māturīdism*, 182–84.

44. Abū Ishāq al-Ṣaffār, *Talkhīṣ al-adilla li-qawāʿid al-tawḥīd*, ed. A. Brodersen, 2 vols (Beirut: Orient-Institut der DMG, 2011), 2: 575–76; Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 57.

45. H. Daiber, *The Islamic Concept of Belief in the 4th/10th Century: Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī's Commentary on Abū Ḥanīfa (died 150/767)* al-Fiḥ al-absaṭ (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1995), 5–7, for the critique, 140–41.

46. Ibid., 7–10.

47. Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī*, 325–28.

48. GAS, 1: 414 (II, no. 1). And see A. R. Karabulut, *Muʿjam al-makhtūʿāt al-majāda fī maktabāt Iṣṭānbūl wa-nāṭūlī*, 3 vols. (Kayseri: Akebe Kitabevi, 2005), 1: 307.

Author	Text	Main Location	Theological Affiliation	Reference to <i>al-Fiqh al-akbar II</i> ?
Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114)	<i>Tabṣirat al-adilla</i>	Nasaf	Hanafi	N
Abū Ishāq al-Ṣaffār (d. 534/1140)	<i>Talkhīṣ al-adilla li-qawāʿid al-tawhīd</i>	Bukhara	Hanafi	N
ʿAṭāʾ b. ʿAlī al-Jūzjānī (lived before 565/1170)	<i>Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar</i>	Transoxiana	Hanafi	N
Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223)	<i>Kitāb Ithbāt ṣifat al-ʿuluww</i>	Damascus	Hanbali	N
Mankūbars al-Nāṣirī (d. 652/1254)	<i>al-Nūr al-lāmiʿ wa-l-burhān al-sāṭiʿ</i>	Baghdad	Hanafi	N
Abū Muḥammad al-Mundhirī (d. 656/1258)	<i>Al-Targhīb wa-l-tarhīb</i>	Cairo	Ashʿari	N
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Rāmushī (d. 667/1268)	<i>Kitāb Fawāʿid al-Bazdawī</i>	Bukhara	Hanafi	N
Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310)	<i>Kashf al-asrār</i>	Nasaf	Hanafi	N
Ḥuṣām al-Dīn al-Sighnāqī (d. 710/1310)	<i>Al-Kāfi sharḥ al-Bazdawī</i>	Bukhara	Hanafi	N
Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328)	<i>Darʾ taʿārud al-ʿaql wa-l-naql; Majmūʿ fatāwā</i>	Damascus	Hanbali	N

Fig. 3. Citations of and quotations from *al-Fiqh al-akbar* between the sixth/twelfth and eighth/fourteenth centuries, before reference to *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī

manuscripts that name the little-known figure ‘Aṭā’ b. ‘Alī al-Jūzjānī as a separate commentary, but Züleyha Birinci has shown that (like the manuscripts that mention al-Samarqandī) they are all copies of a single text and the earliest ones point to al-Jūzjānī, who lived before 565/1170, as the likely author.<sup>49</sup>

Doubts about the exact authorship of this text aside, it can be recognized as a product of a broader trend of scholars in the classical Hanafī tradition seeking to reconnect their thought to the legacy of Abū Ḥanīfa through commentarial activities. They did not abandon their commitment to classical Māturīdī *kalām*, rather they sought to explain the teachings of Abū Ḥanīfa as entirely in line with their theology. The most popular way to achieve this goal was to comment on the creed (*‘Aqīda*) of Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī (d. 321/933), an Egyptian Hanafī contemporary of al-Māturīdī, who claimed to “explain the creed of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a* according to the school of the jurists of the religion,” namely, Abū Ḥanīfa and his two main students.<sup>50</sup> Whereas al-Ṭahāwī also treated Abū Ḥanīfa as a key authority figure, he framed his legacy in a mode of Hanafī traditionalism that had been popular also in Transoxiana but had lost out to the rationalistic approach championed by al-Māturīdī.<sup>51</sup> Commenting on *al-‘Aqīda al-ṭahāwīyya* allowed Maturidi practitioners of *kalām* to reconcile this canonical statement of Hanafī traditionalism with their own project of scholastic theology.<sup>52</sup>

The earliest figure to have written a commentary on *al-‘Aqīda al-ṭahāwīyya* is Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghaznavī (d. 593/1197), though his book is apparently not extant.<sup>53</sup> Next was Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm al-Shaybānī, better known as Ibn al-Mawṣilī (d. 629 or 630/1232f.).<sup>54</sup> In his commentary, he highlights al-Ṭahāwī’s reliability in narrating from Abū Ḥanīfa and his two prominent students.<sup>55</sup> A third was Mankūbars al-Nāṣirī (d. 652/1254)<sup>56</sup> who begins *al-Nūr al-lāmi‘ wa-l-burhān al-sāṭi‘* in similar fashion.<sup>57</sup> He quotes from *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, citing al-Balkhī as its transmitter.<sup>58</sup> A contemporary of his, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Sattār al-Kardārī (d. 642/1244), was deeply involved in the vindication of Abū Ḥanīfa from the criticisms that he received from other schools of thought. He wrote a book devoted to the

49. Z. Birinci, “Ebū Mutī‘ rivāyetli *el-Fikhū’l-ekber Şerhi*’nin muellifi meselesi,” *M.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 35.2 (2008): 57–72, at 71–72, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/162737>.

50. Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī, *Matn al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwīyya* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1995), 7. The phrase *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a* (lit. people of Precedent and the Community) refers to the broad group of Muslims rendered in English as Sunnis (rather than Shi‘is). This distinction was not made in the earliest period of Islam. Popularization of the term was first principally associated with traditionalist currents of thought, including some Hanafis.

51. Madelung, “Spread of Māturīdism,” 113, 117.

52. Aldosari, *Hanafi Maturidism*, 148–49. İhsan Timūr has argued that the emergence of commentarial literature on al-Ṭahāwī’s creed is due to Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī’s reference to it in *Tabṣirat al-adilla* while defending the divine attribute of *takwīn* (creative action); İ. Timūr, “El-Akīdetü’t-tahāviyye şerh literatürünün ortaya çıkışı,” *KTÜİFD* 3.2 (2016): 39–54, at 48–49. Whereas al-Nasafī’s citation was doubtless helpful in popularizing the text, it does not seem sufficient as a sole explanation of the phenomenon.

53. Timūr, “El-Akīdetü’t-tahāviyye,” 49. He should not be confused with Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ghaznavī al-Hindī (d. 773/1372), whose commentary is well known and has been published, though cf. n. 86 below. See Aldosari, *Hanafi Maturidism*, 190–91.

54. Aldosari, *Hanafi Maturidism*, 191–92.

55. Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm al-Shaybānī, *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-ṭahāwīyya*, ed. A. F. al-Mazīdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005), 7.

56. See Aldosari, *Hanafi Maturidism*, 192.

57. Mankūbars al-Nāṣirī, *al-Nūr al-lāmi‘ wa-l-burhān al-sāṭi‘*, Laleli Library, Istanbul, MS 2318, 0v. I am grateful to Ayedh Aldosari for sending me a copy of this manuscript.

58. Al-Nāṣirī, *al-Nūr al-lāmi‘*, 95r. He cites *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim* on 94v. Also see Aldosari, *Hanafi Maturidism*, 192.

question, *al-Durra al-munifa fi intiṣār al-imām al-aʿzam Abī Ḥanīfa*,<sup>59</sup> which was a rebuttal of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) critique of Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>60</sup> And, as will become apparent in the next section, he transmitted al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* and *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*.<sup>61</sup>

Transoxianan Hanafi commentary of *uṣūl al-fiqh* manuals would become the first scholarly discipline to witness a decisive shift with respect to *al-Fiqh al-akbar*.<sup>62</sup> By the end of the seventh/thirteenth century, ʿAlī al-Bazdawī's *Kanz al-wuṣūl* had become a dominant textbook in the field, attracting a number of commentaries by prominent jurists. As already mentioned, al-Bazdawī referred to *al-Fiqh al-akbar* explicitly at the beginning of his book, so his commentators could not refrain from discussing the title. Their interpretations of his base text make it possible to locate the exact point at which there was a shift from understanding the book to be al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* to reading it as *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*:

(1) ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Rāmushī (d. 667/1268) writes in his *Kitāb Fawāʿid al-Bazdawī* that Abū Ḥanīfa titled his book *akbar* (greatest), because “knowledge is honored by what is known by it” (*sharaf al-ʿilm bi-qadar al-maʿlūm*), that is, the greatness of his book is explained by its focus on God's essence and attributes when elaborating on the foundations of religion.<sup>63</sup> Nothing about al-Rāmushī's treatment suggests that he is commenting on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*. Similarly, in *Kashf al-asrār* by (2) Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310), a commentary on his own text *al-Manār*, he refers—doubtless influenced by al-Bazdawī—to *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, explains its name in the same way as al-Rāmushī, and mentions the question of God-given capacity (*istiṭāʿa*) with the act and the disavowal that God necessarily does his best (*aṣlah*) for his servants.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, (3) Ḥuṣām al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn al-Sighnāqī (d. 710/1310) notes the same as the previous two authors about the title of Abū Ḥanīfa's book in his *al-Kāfi sharḥ al-Bazdawī*.<sup>65</sup> We can conclude that before ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī,

59. ʿU. R. Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifin: Tarājim muṣannifī al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1993), 3: 410.

60. Found in al-Ghazālī's early *uṣūl al-fiqh* work *al-Manḥūl*; Madelung, “Spread of Māturīdism,” 126 n. 40.

61. Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Makkī, *Manāqib al-imām al-aʿzam Abī Ḥanīfa*, 2 vols. in 1 (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʿirat al-Maʿārif al-Nizāmiyya, 1903), 1: 107–8. See Fig. 1 above.

62. There are a number of citations of and references to *al-Fiqh al-akbar* in works by non-Hanafis in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries. The Damascene Hanbali jurist and theologian Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) mentions the book in his *Kitāb Ithbāt ṣifat al-ʿulū*, ed. A. b. ʿA. al-Ghāmīdī (Beirut: Muʿassasat ʿUlūm al-Qurʿān, 1988), 170. The Cairene Shafīʿī Abū Muḥammad al-Mundhirī (d. 656/1258) states in *al-Tarḥīb wa-l-tarḥīb* that Abū Ḥanīfa's writings were *Kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, and *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-qadariyya* (ed. M. M. ʿImāra, 4 vols. [Beirut: Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1968], 13). The Damascene Hanbali Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) writes in *Darʾ taʿārud al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* that al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* is known and widespread among Abū Ḥanīfa's followers and he cites the text (ed. M. R. Sālim, 11 vols. [Riyadh: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1991], 6: 263; and see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, ed. ʿA. b. M. b. Qāsim, 37 vols. [Medina: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharif, 2003], 5: 46). Finally, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) cites it, explicitly naming al-Balkhī as the author: *Kitāb al-ʿarsh*, ed. M. b. Kh. al-Tamīmī, 2 vols. (Medina: al-Jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya, 1999), 2: 178; *Tārīkh al-islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-aʿlām*, ed. ʿU. ʿA. Tadmurī, 53 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1990), 13: 158. As illustrated in Figs. 3 (above) and 4 (below), all of these authors refer to al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* rather than *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.

63. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Rāmushī, *Fawāʿid al-Bazdawī*, ed. ʿĀ. A. al-Nidāwī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2017), 1: 126.

64. Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī, *Kashf al-asrār sharḥ al-Muṣannif ʿalā al-manār maʿa sharḥ Nūr al-anwār ʿalā al-manār*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 7.

65. Ḥuṣām al-Dīn al-Sighnāqī, *al-Kāfi sharḥ al-Bazdawī*, ed. F. S. M. al-Qānīt, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2001), 1: 157.

authors writing *uṣūl al-fiqh* commentaries followed the received knowledge regarding al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar*.

The above survey has brought the apparent absence of a historical record for the shorter creed *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* up to the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century; moreover, as there was no alternative to al-Balkhī's text in circulation, no author yet calls it *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*. How this changed will be explored in the next section.

#### 4. TURNING POINT

The decisive turning point in the reception history of the two texts titled *al-Fiqh al-akbar* occurred at the hands of 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī in his commentary *Kashf al-asrār* on the *Kanz al-wuṣūl* of al-Bazdawī. In his introduction he discusses the name *al-Fiqh al-akbar* in similar terms to his predecessors. But he then quotes several lines from *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* on the eternity of the divine attributes, followed by the statement of faith that starts the creed, and another one on God's creation of human actions.<sup>66</sup> He attributes to Abū Ḥanīfa in *al-Fiqh al-akbar* the words, "We do not deem any Muslim a disbeliever on account of wrongdoing" (*lā nukaffiru musliman bi-dhanbin min al-dhunūb*).<sup>67</sup> Further instances follow in which al-Bukhārī cites from *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* the position on the beatific vision (*ruʿya*), the return of the soul to the body, and punishment in the grave.<sup>68</sup> Appended to the latter is a statement narrated by Abū Ḥanīfa's son Ḥammād that is not found in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*: "I asked my father whether the punishment of the grave is a reality. He said: 'It is a reality; the Sunna has conveyed it and so have the reports (*āthār*)'."<sup>69</sup> This is followed by a final quotation from *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* concerning the creation of paradise and hell, and other eschatological matters.<sup>70</sup>

*Al-Fiqh al-akbar II* provides al-Bukhārī with much useful theological material for his introduction. But it comes at a cost. Unlike those before him, he is forced to explain the incongruity of al-Bazdawī's apparent reference to doctrines that are not in the text:

As for the two questions of *istiṭāʿa* and *aṣlah*, I have not found them in the copies (*nusakh*) that I possess of *al-Fiqh al-akbar*. Also, nothing in the speech of the shaykh [al-Bazdawī] necessitates (*yūjibu*) that he has mentioned that they are in it. He did not associate (*yaʿtif*) it with what had preceded, as he did not say, "and the affirmation of *istiṭāʿa*" and also he did not say "and he [Abū Ḥanīfa] affirmed *istiṭāʿa* in it and he refuted it in the doctrine of *aṣlah*." Rather, he began a new sentence (*istaʿnafa al-kalām*), saying, "He affirmed *istiṭāʿa* and categorically (*muṭlaqan*) refuted the doctrine of *aṣlah*." So perhaps he affirmed them in another place, or in his investigations (*mabāḥithihi*) and suchlike.<sup>71</sup>

It is hard to trace the source of al-Bukhārī's quotations from *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* based on the content of his text, though he alludes to possessing more than one copy of it.<sup>72</sup> He also seems unaware that his contemporaries understood al-Bazdawī's words to refer to al-Balkhī's

66. 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār ʿan uṣūl fakhr al-islām al-Bazdawī*, ed. A. Khalūṣī and M. Darwīsh, 4 vols. in 2 ([Istanbul]: Dār Saʿāda, 1891), 1: 8. Cf. 'Alī al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā, 1909), 184.

67. Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1: 9. While the doctrine is also present in al-Balkhī's text, the wording used by al-Bukhārī is that found in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*; al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 186.

68. Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1: 11; al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 186, 187.

69. Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1: 11.

70. Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1: 11; al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 187.

71. Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1: 8.

72. The oldest copy of a manuscript of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* that I have examined is dated 826/1423; Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Bankipore, MS 485; and see Abdul Hamid, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian*

creed and did not require grammatical analysis to explain why *istiṭāʿa* and *aṣḫ* were treated in the work.

A few further observations are in order. First, the mention of Abū Ḥanīfa's son, Ḥammād, along with the earliest recorded quotations from *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* is intriguing given his alleged transmission of this text. It may be hypothesized that later authors, seeking to provide the creed with a credible lineage, took a cue from this reference. Second, al-Bukhārī is effusive in praising his uncle, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Māymarghī (d. 688/1289), as a major influence on his scholarship.<sup>73</sup> It is possible that he received material ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa from this family member.<sup>74</sup> But the chain of transmission in two manuscripts of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* states that 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī received the text from Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (d. 693/1294),<sup>75</sup> who is said to have received it, in turn, from Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Sattār al-Kardārī. This (as I show in §5 below) is likely a conflation with the latter's genuine transmission of al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar*. In other words, though it is reasonable to assume that 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī treated *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* as the text referred to by al-Bazdawī and other earlier Hanafis in good faith, it seems that it had been substituted for al-Balkhī's creed at least a previous generation earlier.

I have now established a plausible scenario for the earliest known entry of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* into the mainstream of Hanafī tradition. What remains is to explain how this creed became naturalized so that later authors argued that *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* was the text referred to all along, and to explore its likely true time and place of origin.

##### 5. LATE CLASSICAL ORTHODOXY

Following 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī's quotation of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* in his *Kashf al-asrār*, the historical record bears witness to a parallel reception. On the one hand, there is continuous reference to al-Balkhī's creed as *al-Fiqh al-akbar* (often alongside *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*) by numerous scholars;<sup>76</sup> while on the other hand, there is increased focus on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, including the rise of a subgenre of commentary on it. Before discussing the latter phenomenon, I will document an important challenge raised against the authenticity of the theological texts ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa. By analyzing the response given by Hanafī authors to such claims, we will see the emergence of conflation between the two texts titled *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, whereby some authors treat earlier historical citations of al-Balkhī's creed as referring to *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* (see Fig. 4). This is also an important preliminary discussion for §6, in which I will explore the provenance of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* in more detail.

As we have seen, *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* began to be quoted in a period that featured continued transmission and reference to al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar*. It is not surprising that the

*Manuscripts in the Oriental Public Library at Bankipore*, vol. 10, *Theology* (Patna: Government Printing, Bihar and Orissa, 1926), 4.

73. Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1: 3.

74. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Māymarghī was a student of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Sattār al-Kardārī and a teacher of Ḥusam al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn al-Sighnāqī; Ḥājji Khalīfa, *Sullam al-wuṣūl ilā tabaqāt al-fuḥūl*, ed. E. İhsanoğlu, M. 'A. al-Arnā'ūt, and Ş. S. Şālih, 6 vols. (Istanbul: Markaz al-Abḥāth, 2010), 3: 231. See Fig. 1.

75. See Fig. 1.

76. E.g., Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a (d. 733/1333), *Idāh al-dalīl fī qat' ḥujaj ahl al-ta'ṭīl*, ed. W. Ghawjī (Damascus: Dār Iqra', 2005), 38; Şalāh al-Dīn al-Şafadī (d. 764/1363), *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. A. al-Arnā'ūt and T. Muṣṭafā, 29 vols. (Beirut: Dār İhyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000), 13: 70–71; Ibn Abī al-Wafā' (d. 775/1374), *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, 2: 477, 4: 87; Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392), *Tashnīf al-masāmi' bi-Jam' al-jawāmi' li-Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī*, ed. S. 'Abd al-ʿAzīz and 'A. Rabī', 4 vols. (Mecca: Maktab Qurtūba, 1998), 4: 844; Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), *Umdat al-qārī sharḥ Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 25 vols. (Beirut: Idārat al-Ṭibā'iyya al-Muniriyya, n.d.), 1: 107; Ibn Quṭlūbughā (d. 879/1474), *Tāj al-tarājim*, 331.

tension generated by the circulation of two different texts with the same title attributed to the same author would be exploited for polemics. That this indeed happened at some point in the century following ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī’s intervention can be seen from *Manāqib al-imām al-a‘ẓam* of Muḥammad al-Kardārī al-Bazzāzī (d. 816/1413), who writes:

If you say, “Abū Ḥanīfa did not author any book,” I respond [that] this is what the Mu‘tazila say, claiming that he did not write anything in the discipline of theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*). Their objective is to deny that *al-Fiqh al-akbar* and *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim* are his [texts], because he clarified in them many of the principles of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*. They claim that he was a Mu‘tazili and [they claim] that book is by Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī. This is a clear error, because I have seen these two books in the handwriting of the very learned (*‘allāma*) Mawlānā Shams al-Milla wa-l-Dīn al-Kardārī al-Barātiqīnī al-‘Imādī<sup>77</sup> and he has written in them that they are by Abū Ḥanīfa. A large group of scholars has agreed on that.<sup>78</sup>

There is a lot to unpack in this short quotation. First, there is the underlying context of a Hanafi Mu‘tazilism that wished to lay claim to Abū Ḥanīfa’s legacy and to reject his association with the beliefs of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*. Hence, their strategy was to reject the books ascribed to him. Wilferd Madelung points out that just such a group persisted in Khwārazm until at least the latter part of the eighth/fourteenth century.<sup>79</sup> Second, al-Bazzāzī takes the Mu‘tazili attack to be directed against the traditional pairing of *al-Fiqh al-akbar* and *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*. To support the genuine ascription of these books, he both provides first-hand testimony transmitted and authenticated by the earlier Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Sattār al-Kardārī and claims that there is consensus on it. Given his invocation of Hanafi authorities and the way that he mentions both books, it is unlikely that he is referring to *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* at the expense of al-Balkhī’s text. Third, and crucial for the present investigation, is the incongruous statement “that book is by Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī.” Al-Bazzāzī is reporting a claim that he has heard, which explains why he shifts from writing about two books to one. What book would have caught the attention of Mu‘tazili critics? And why would they have singled out just one with the claim that it was written by a different person named Abū Ḥanīfa? It seems implausible that they would have suggested that either al-Balkhī’s *al-Fiqh al-akbar* or *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim* was written by Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī. Such a claim, which is what al-Bazzāzī seems to have understood, would have been very unconvincing. It seems reasonable to infer instead that the accusation is directed at a text that had newly appeared in Transoxianan Maturidi circles. *Al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, which began to circulate within the eighth/fourteenth century, recommends itself much better than the other texts. The identity of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī and whether he could possibly be the author of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* will be discussed in the next section. But for the reception history of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* within the classical Hanafi tradition, the important point is that whereas al-Bazzāzī is likely reporting a claim made against *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, he is defending the authenticity of al-Balkhī’s *al-Fiqh al-akbar* and *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*. Unlike later figures who use his words, he does not here actually support an ascription of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* to Abū Ḥanīfa.

One of the major Hanafi scholars in the late eighth/fourteenth century to quote *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* draws from ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bukhārī’s treatment. Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384) reproduces in his commentary on al-Bazdawī’s *Kanz al-wuṣūl*, titled *al-Taqrīr*, a summarized version of al-Bukhārī’s words, including an abridgment of his quotations from

77. This is the Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Sattār al-Kardārī mentioned above.

78. Al-Makkī, *Manāqib al-imām al-a‘ẓam*, 1: 107–8.

79. Madelung, “Spread of Maturidism,” 116.

Author	Text	Main Location	Theological Affiliation	Reference to <i>al-Fiqh al-akbar II</i> ?
ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī (d. 730/1329)	<i>Kashf al-asrār</i>	Bukhara	Hanafi	Y
Badr al-Dīn b. Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333)	<i>Kitāb Ḍdāh al-dalīl fī qaṭʿ ḥujaj ahl al-taʿṣīl</i>	Cairo	Ashʿari	N
Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348)	<i>Kitāb al-ʿArsh, Tārīkh al-islām</i>	Damascus	Hanbali	N
Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363)	<i>al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt</i>	Damascus	Ashʿari	N
Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ (d. 775/1374)	<i>Jawāhir al-muḍiyya</i>	Cairo	Hanafi	N
Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384)	<i>al-Taqrīr</i>	Cairo	Hanafi	Y
ʿAlī b. Abī al-ʿIzz (d. 792/1390)	<i>Sharḥ al-ʿaqīda al-ṭahāwiyya</i>	Damascus	Hanafi	Y
Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392)	<i>Tashnīf al-masāmiʿ</i>	Cairo	Ashʿari	N
Muḥammad al-Kardarī al-Bazzāzī (d. 816/1413)	<i>Manāqib al-imām al-aʿẓām</i>	Anatolia	Hanafi	N
Aḥmad b. Sayf al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 845/1441)	<i>Sharḥ al-fiqh al-akbar</i>	Samarqand	Hanafi	Y
Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451)	<i>ʿUmdat al-qārī</i>	Cairo	Hanafi	N
Aʿlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Qūshjī (d. 879/1474)	<i>Sharḥ al-fiqh al-akbar</i>	Samarqand	Hanafi	Y
Ibn Quṭlūbughā (d. 879/1474)	<i>Tāj al-tarājim</i>	Cairo	Hanafi	N



Author	Text	Main Location	Theological Affiliation	Reference to <i>al-Fiqh al-akbar II</i> ?
Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480)	<i>Masraʿ al-taṣawwuf</i>	Damascus	Ashʿari	Y
Ilyās b. Ibrāhīm al-Sinūbī (d. 891/1486)	<i>Sharḥ al-fiqh al-akbar</i>	Bursa	Hanafi	Y

Fig. 4. Textual citations of and quotations from *al-Fiqh al-akbar* between the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries after ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī’s *Kashf al-asrār*

the creed. He also presents a simpler version of the earlier scholar’s grammatical argument, adding: “But there is imprecision (*taʿqīd lafẓī*) in it [al-Bazdawī’s speech].”<sup>80</sup> This refers to the aforementioned problems that al-Bukhārī had with squaring al-Bazdawī’s mention of *istitāʿa* and *aṣlah* with the content of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.

A number of manuscripts claim to contain a commentary by al-Bābartī on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, which is sometimes known as *al-Irshād*.<sup>81</sup> But this assertion is open to doubt. Bajazid Nicević lists manuscripts that he has confirmed are actually copies of *Mukhtaṣar al-ḥikma al-nabawiyya*, a later commentary on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, and shows that the manuscripts ascribed to al-Bābartī are really by Ishāq al-Ḥakīm al-Rūmī (d. 950/1543).<sup>82</sup> Nicević states that he accessed the copy of *al-Irshād* in the library of al-Azhar and found it to be a short book on the fundamentals (*arkān*) of Islam.<sup>83</sup> An inspection of MS Hamidiye 769/1, one of the wrongly ascribed manuscripts of *Mukhtaṣar al-ḥikma al-nabawiyya*, shows that it is written before MS Hamidiye 769/2,<sup>84</sup> which contains al-Bābartī’s commentary on Abū Ḥanifa’s *al-Waṣīyya*.<sup>85</sup> It seems possible that al-Bābartī’s apparent authorship of a commentary on *al-Waṣīyya* may have played a role in the misattribution of *Mukhtaṣar al-ḥikma al-nabawiyya* to him. I therefore have not been able to confirm the claim that al-Bābartī wrote a commentary on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>86</sup>

80. Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī, *al-Taqrīr li-uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, ed. Kh. M. ʿAbd al-Qādir and ʿA. ʿA. Muḥammad, 2 vols. (Mecca: Jāmiʿat Umm al-Qurā, 1997–2000), 1: 28–29. Al-Bābartī is also mentioned in the chain of authorities for *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* in Azhar MS 34197; Iblāgh, *al-Imām al-aʿẓam*, 101. See Fig. 1.

81. GAS, 1: 412 (I, no. 2).

82. Al-Rūmī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar al-musammā Mukhtaṣar al-ḥikma al-nabawiyya*, ed. B. Nicević (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2015), 147–50. The same is true for Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī, *Mukhtaṣar al-ḥikma al-nabawiyya*, Vahid Paşa Library, Kütaḥya, MS Vahid Paşa 305, which is not on Nicević’s list.

83. Al-Rūmī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 149.

84. Al-Bābartī, *Mukhtaṣar al-ḥikma al-nabawiyya*, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, MS Hamidiye 769/1; al-Bābartī, *Sharḥ al-Waṣīyya*, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, MS Hamidiye 769/2.

85. This is another text that is ascribed to Abū Ḥanifa but is held by Wensinck and Watt to be a later composition; Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 187; W. M. Watt, tr., *Islamic Creeds: A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1994), 57. Iblāgh states (*al-Imām al-aʿẓam*, 124) that he has not found a chain of transmission for it. Though the focus of this article is on *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, not *al-Waṣīyya*, it is notable that this text has not come up in any of the prior citations to Abū Ḥanifa’s theological writings.

86. It is also not mentioned in prominent bibliographical and biographical texts. See Ḥājji Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1941), 2: 1287; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājīm*, ed. M. Kh. R. Yūsuf (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1992), 277. It is claimed that al-Bābartī wrote a com-

Another figure at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century who refers to *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* is the Damascene theologian ‘Alī b. Abī al-‘Izz (d. 792/1390) in his commentary on *al-‘Aqida al-ṭahāwiyya*. Despite his Hanafī affiliation, al-‘Izz was influenced by Ibn Taymiyya.<sup>87</sup> In his commentary he quotes the creed on both the subject of divine attributes and the Quran as God’s speech.<sup>88</sup>

Two scholars from Samarqand provide the earliest commentaries on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* that I have been able to confirm from secondary literature. The first is Aḥmad b. Sayf al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 845/1441), whose commentary (MS 481) is housed in the American University of Beirut Library. This is very likely a commentary on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* because the catalogue entry notes that it ends with a discussion of four prophets who remain alive: “al-Khaḍīr (or: al-Khiḍr) and Ilyās on the earth and ‘Isā and Idrīs in the heavens.”<sup>89</sup> The end of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* refers to the descent of ‘Isā from the heavens, whereas this topic does not appear in al-Balkhī’s creed.<sup>90</sup>

The second text is ascribed to ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Bukhārī (d. 841/1437) and its catalogue entry shows that the manuscript comments on the beginning of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>91</sup> But the manuscript is prefaced by the declaration that the commentary was written for Sultan Ulugh Beg (r. 850–853/1447–1450), who was the governor of Samarqand before he became the Timurid ruler.<sup>92</sup> The author’s use of the title *ṣulṭān* and the expression *mughith al-dawla wa-l-dīn* (supporter of the nation and religion) suggests that it was produced during the short period of Ulugh Beg’s reign. This means that ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qūshjī (d. 879/1474), the sultan’s favorite scholar, who looked after his falcons as a boy, is likely to have been its actual author. Al-Qūshjī dedicated other books to the ruler, as well as co-authored an astronomical treatise with him.<sup>93</sup>

The most important early commentary on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* for the present study is undoubtedly the one authored by Ilyās b. Ibrāhīm al-Sīnūbī (d. 891/1486), who was based in Bursa.<sup>94</sup> In his introduction he addresses the accusation made against *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*:

What is narrated from some of the riffraff of the Mu‘tazila and the ignorant of those with isolated opinions, that this book is by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Bukhārī, better known as Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī, is a clear error and an outrageous calumny.<sup>95</sup>

Unlike al-Bazzāzī, he does not restrict the claim to the Mu‘tazila alone but hints that it is shared by others. He also provides a fuller name for the alleged author. To defend Abū

mentary on *al-‘Aqida al-ṭahāwiyya*, which has been published under his name: *Sharḥ ‘Aqīdat ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*, ed. ‘Ā. Aytēkin (Kuwait City: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1989). This may actually belong to his contemporary, Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ghaznavī al-Hindī, as argued by the editor of an alternative edition; al-Hindī, *Sharḥ ‘aḳīdat al-imām al-Ṭahāwī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Naṣṣār, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Iḥsān, 2016), 13–14.

87. İ. Timür, “Tahāwī akīdesi’ne ehl-i hadis yorum: Sadruddin İbn Ebi’l-İz ve el-Akīdetü’t-tahāwiyye şerhi,” *KTÜİFD* 4.2 (2017): 53–72, at 66.

88. ‘Alī b. Abī al-‘Izz, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-ṭahāwiyya*, ed. ‘A. b. ‘A. al-Turkī and Sh. al-Arnā‘ūt, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1990), 1: 85, 186–87; al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 184.

89. Y. Q. Khūrī, *al-Makhṭūṭāt al-‘arabiyya al-mawjūda fī maktabat al-Jāmi‘a al-Amīrkiyya fī Bayrūt* (Beirut: al-Jāmi‘a al-Amīrkiyya fī Bayrūt, 1985), 184.

90. Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 187.

91. There are copies in libraries in Rampur and Bankipore. Hamid, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts*, 10: 5 (MS 486); *GAS*, 1: 413, no. 6.

92. Hamid, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts*, 10: 5.

93. Hamid, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts*, 10: 5, 99.

94. For the edition, F. K. Kazanç, “Fıkh-ı ekber şerhleri ve İlyās b. İbrāhīm es-Sīnobī’nin Fıkh-i ekber şerhi” (PhD diss., Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, 1991).

95. Al-Sīnūbī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar*, in *ibid.*, 8.

Ḥanīfa's authorship of the creed, he quotes al-Bazzāzī's reference to al-Kardārī. But he adjusts it to indicate the authenticity of only a single text with the expression "this book," which he takes to be *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>96</sup> He supports his position by mentioning that 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī transmits "close to half of his sweet flowing prose."<sup>97</sup>

By the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, mention of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* appeared in sources outside of the Hanafī school, for example, the Ashʿari and Shafīʿī Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480), who possibly came to know of the text from his time in Damascus. In his *Maṣraʿ al-taṣawwuf* he cites *al-Fiqh al-akbar* regarding a distinction between miracles and saintly marvels, and those [miracles] that support the miracle-worker (a prophet) as opposed to those that degrade him, such as the (deceptive) ones performed by al-Dajjāl, the Antichrist.<sup>98</sup> This point is made in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>99</sup>

In the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries the trickle of commentaries on *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* becomes a flood and they are too numerous for this article to adequately classify. Well-known texts include those by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb Zāda (d. 920/1514), Ishāq al-Ḥakīm al-Rūmī (d. 950/1543), and Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Bahāʾ al-Dīn (d. 956/1549), followed by the popular commentaries of Abū Muntahā al-Maghnisāwī (d. 1000/1592) and Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī. Also of note is Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bayāḍī (d. 1097/1687), who wrote a short book titled *al-Uṣūl al-munīfa li-l-imām Abī Ḥanīfa* that collected the theological principles found in five writings ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa: *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, *al-Risāla [ilā ʿUthmān al-Battī]*, *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*, *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim*, and *al-Waṣīyya*.<sup>100</sup> This is the earliest that I have found al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* referred to as *Al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*, though it is certainly possible that al-Bayāḍī was preceded in this by another author. Al-Bayāḍī does not provide an explanation for his use of the new title. He comments on his own book in another text, *Ishārāt al-marām*, and provides a list of many works in which reference to these five writings can be found, but he does not distinguish between early references to al-Balkhī's text and later references to *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>101</sup> Finally, he turns to the accusation of the Muʿtazila, which he takes as directed against all five of the books that he has mentioned and for which he also cites al-Bazzāzī as his source.<sup>102</sup> From al-Bayāḍī, then, *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* receives its definitive canonical position within the tradition as one of Abū Ḥanīfa's five theological works, sitting alongside the original *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, now renamed *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*.

## 6. THE AUTHOR OF *AL-FIQH AL-AKBAR II* AND ITS CONTENTS

If the narrative told so far is that *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* suddenly appeared with 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī, the question arises: whence did it come? The investigation has uncovered only one solid clue: a persistent claim that it was written by someone called Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Bukhārī, who shared the *kunya* Abū Ḥanīfa with the celebrated scholar. In this section I will explore the scant available information about the theological views of this figure, as well

96. Ibid., 8–9.

97. Ibid., 9.

98. Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī, *Maṣraʿ al-taṣawwuf aw tanbīh al-ghabī ilā takfīr Ibn ʿArabī wa-tahdīr al-ʿibād min ahl al-ʿinād*, ed. ʿA. al-Wakīl (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1953), 259.

99. Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 186.

100. Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bayāḍī, *al-Uṣūl al-manīfa li-l-imām Abī Ḥanīfa*, ed. M. ʿA. al-Shāghūl (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 2008), 7.

101. Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bayāḍī, *Ishārāt al-marām min ʿibārāt al-imām*, ed. Y. ʿAbd al-Razzāq (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1949), 21–23.

102. Ibid., 23.

as look at evidence from the contents of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* to argue that an ascription to him within fourth/tenth-century Bukhara is plausible.

Biographical information about Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī is hard to come by. But his existence is confirmed by Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, who states that Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Zaʿfarānī (d. 393 or 394/1003f.) narrated a fatwa from him: Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī declared a disbeliever a person who says that the celebrated ascetic Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 162/778) was in Basra and Mecca on the same day, as this is a kind of miracle (*muʿjiza*) and not a saintly marvel (*karāma*).<sup>103</sup>

Assuming this report is accurate, the following can be inferred: Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī was active in the late fourth/tenth century, probably in Bukhara or the surrounding region; and he maintained that there was a theological distinction between prophetic miracles and saintly marvels, but did not include travel between distant locations in the latter category (see below). They are mentioned as separate categories in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, but no further explanation is given about what they entail: “The signs (*āyāt*) of the prophets and marvels (*karāmāt*) of the saints are a reality.”<sup>104</sup>

Greater clarity of the kind of theological discussion that may underlie the position attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī can be found by looking at a text of responsa by the Samarqandī scholar Abū al-Ḥasan al-Rustughfanī (d. ca. 345/956), student of al-Māturīdī, set alongside that of other Transoxianan jurists by Aḥmad b. Mūsā b. ʿĪsā al-Kashshī (d. 550/1155). Here al-Rustughfanī presents an exchange with an unknown interlocutor, in which he deals with an objection to the saintly marvel of “folding the earth” (*taṭwī al-arḍ*). The opponent’s complaint is that this amounts to favoring (*tafḍīl*) the saint over the Prophet, as the former travels a great distance without a means (*sabab*) whereas the Prophet had to make use of the creature al-Burāq to travel from Mecca to Jerusalem. Al-Rustughfanī provides arguments for why this does not amount to greater favor for the saint.<sup>105</sup> It seems that this opponent is not from those Muʿtazilis he addresses in an earlier part of the same response—according to the text, they rejected the premise of saintly marvels as a violation of human capacity. The discussion is rather an argument internal to *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* on what kinds of miraculous actions are appropriate for saints as opposed to prophets.<sup>106</sup> It is plausible that al-Rustughfanī’s interlocutor holds the same position upheld by Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī.

A second theological question that is specifically tied to Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī in the sources concerns the fate of the parents of the Prophet Muḥammad. Commentaries, such as that of al-Sinūbī, show that *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* contains the statement, “The parents of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, died as infidels” (*mātā ʿalā al-kufr*).<sup>107</sup> In the introduction to his edition of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, al-Kawtharī—who rejects this reading—makes several arguments against its authenticity: (1) he claims that copies he has seen have *fiṭra* (natural disposition) instead of *kufr*; (2) he suggests that writing *kufr* instead of *fiṭra* is an easy scribal error to make in Kufan script; and (3) he argues that he has witnessed *mā mātā* (they did not die) in two old manuscripts and that the first *mā* could have

103. Ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, 3: 412.

104. Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 186.

105. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Rustughfanī, *Bāb al-mutafarriqāt min fawāʾid al-shaykh al-imām al-ajall Abī al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Saʿīd al-Rustughfanī raḥimahu Allāh*, in Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Kashshī, *Majmūʿ al-nawāzil wa-l-ḥawādīth wa-l-wāqīʿāt*, Beyazit Library, Istanbul, MS Veliyüddin Efendi 1545, 291r; *ibid.*, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, MS Yeni Cami 547, 297v. I am grateful to Mustafa Bilal Öztürk for sending me copies of these manuscripts.

106. See J. A. C. Brown, “Faithful Dissenters: Sunni Skepticism about the Miracles of Saints,” *Journal of Sufi Studies* 1 (2012): 123–68, at 133.

107. Al-Sinūbī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 141.

been accidentally removed as it looks like a common copying mistake.<sup>108</sup> But he acknowledges that the commentator al-Qārī confirmed the controversial reading.<sup>109</sup> Al-Kawtharī deletes this creedal point rather than substituting one of his alternatives, and the same is true for most modern editions of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>110</sup>

Centuries earlier, Muḥammad b. Rasūl al-Barzanjī (d. 1103/1691) dealt with the same question. He cites Ibn Ḥajar<sup>111</sup> who writes in his *Fatāwā* that the copies of *al-Fiqh al-akbar* that are relied upon do not have this doctrine; it is only found in those copies that are by Abū Ḥanīfa Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Bukhārī.<sup>112</sup> Al-Barzanjī relates the *isnād* of a copy of al-Balkhī's text written in 651/1253, which he has seen, and comments: "[The manuscript] is, as [Ibn Ḥajar] says, not this *al-Fiqh al-akbar [II]*, so it is verified that it [*al-Fiqh al-akbar II*] is not by Imām Abū Ḥanīfa." Furthermore, he points out that books sharing a name, or people sharing a *kunya*, can lead to incorrect ascriptions.<sup>113</sup>

Patrick Franke has shown that this position within *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* responds to a specific theological controversy. A Baghdad-based traditionist, Abū Ḥafṣ b. Shāhīn (d. 385/995), popularized a heavily criticized report that when the Prophet visited the tomb of his mother, she was brought back to life and believed in him.<sup>114</sup> Some Hanafis, including but not limited to Muṭazilis, rejected this report because it would amount to breaking the divine promise of punishment (*wa'īd*) for disbelief.<sup>115</sup> Al-Qārī noted in his commentary that the statement in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* was meant as a rejoinder to this belief about the Prophet's parents,<sup>116</sup> again dating *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* to the period in which Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī was active.

If this exhausts what can be ascertained about the specific theological doctrines of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī, what can be found by comparing *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* with his milieu in general? The early arguments of Shiblī Nu'mānī and Wensinck (described above) focused on the content of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*, arguing that technical terminology in the creed, such as

108. Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-ʿlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, 7. The manuscript copy of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* dated 826/1423 contains the reading *mātā ʿalā al-kufr*; MS 485, 3r.

109. Al-Qārī also mentions that he wrote a separate treatise defending this position; al-Qārī, *Minah al-rawḍ al-azhar* (n. 4 above), 310. This section of the creed and commentary are suppressed in the 1909 edition; al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 97–98, 187. Al-Qārī maintains his stance in his later commentary on Qāḍī Iyād's *al-Shifāʿ*?; al-Qārī, *Sharḥ al-shifāʿ*, Beyazit Library, Istanbul, MS Veliyüddin Efendi 684, 210r; *ibid.*, Beyazit Library, Istanbul, MS Veliyüddin Efendi 685, 449r; *ibid.*, *Sharḥ al-shifāʿ*?, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Durr Saʿadat, 1892), 1: 601. Some recent editions have substituted a retraction in its place. See, for instance, *ibid.*, ed. ʿA. M. al-Khalīlī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001), 1: 605. As argued by Gibril Haddad, the evidence points to al-Qārī retaining the same position in all his works throughout his life; G. F. Haddad, "Mullā ʿAlī b. Sulṭān al-Qārī and His Works: A Descriptive Bibliography," *The Islamic Quarterly* 58.2 (2014): 129–58, at 142. Compare with al-Maghnisāwī, *Imām Abū Ḥanīfa's al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, 209–10.

110. Al-Maghnisāwī, *Imām Abū Ḥanīfa's al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, 209.

111. Al-Barzanjī intends the Shafīʿi jurist Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī al-Makkī (d. 974/1566), as confirmed by reference to the same comment in M. b. A. al-Shurunbulālī, *Faṭḥ Allāh al-muʿīn ʿalā sharḥ al-Kanz li-Muḥammad Manlā Miskīn*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Jamʿiyyat al-Maʿārif, 1870), 2: 90.

112. Muḥammad b. Rasūl al-Barzanjī, *Sadād al-dīn wa-sidād al-dayn fī ithbāt al-najāt wa-l-darajāt li-l-wālidayn*, ed. ʿA. A. Ş. al-Ḥusaynī and Ḥ. M. ʿA. Shukrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006), 88. The same information is also relayed subsequently in Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Taḥṭāwī, *Hāshiyat al-Taḥṭāwī ʿalā al-Durr al-mukhtār sharḥ Tanwīr al-abṣār*, ed. A. F. al-Mazīdī, 12 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2017), 4: 278.

113. Al-Barzanjī, *Sadād al-dīn*, 88–89.

114. P. Franke, "Are the Parents of the Prophet in Hell? Tracing the History of a Debate in Sunnī Islam," in *Bamberger Orientstudien*, ed. L. Behzadi et al. (Bamberg: Univ. of Bamberg Press, 2014), 135–58, at 140–42.

115. *Ibid.*, 145. For example, the general principle is clear in the exegesis of al-Māturīdī; R. Harvey, "Al-Māturīdī on the Abrogation of the *Sharīʿa* in the Qurʾān and Previous Scriptures," in *Imām Māturīdī ve te'vilâtü'l-Kurʾân*, ed. H. K. Arpağuş, Ş. Ümit, and B. Kır (Istanbul: M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2019), 511–24, at 518.

116. Al-Qārī, *Minah al-rawḍ al-azhar*, 310. See Franke, "Are the Parents?," 145.

the words *aʿrād* (accidents), *jawhar* (substance), and *kasb* (acquisition), seem anachronistic for Abū Ḥanīfa’s second/eighth-century context.<sup>117</sup> But more recent research has suggested that some of these terms may have already been in use in the early Abbasid period. There are references from the time to metaphysical terminology drawn from the Hellenic tradition, such as *aʿrād*, while the first translations into Arabic of a clutch of foundational Aristotelian texts emerge alongside the founding of Baghdad in the reign of the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–775).<sup>118</sup> Moreover, a concept of *kasb* was already used by the Ibadī theologian ʿAbd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī (active in the mid- to late second/eighth century), as well as the long-lived ʿAmr (d. ca. 200/815).<sup>119</sup>

The writings of al-Fazārī, a contemporary of Abū Ḥanīfa in Kufa, show him drawing a distinction between God’s essential attributes (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) and active attributes (*ṣifāt al-fiʿl*), another theological feature of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.<sup>120</sup> Madelung infers from this that Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748), the early figure credited with the origins of the Muʿtazila, must already have been discussing this question.<sup>121</sup> Yet, as van Ess points out, this distinction was adopted only gradually by theologians.<sup>122</sup> Despite these possible responses to arguments that the contents of the creed are anachronistic to the second/eighth century, I will suggest that several characteristics concerning divine attributes in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* do fit the profile of a traditionalist Hanafī creed from late fourth/tenth-century Bukhara, or the surrounding region.

*Al-Fiqh al-akbar II* affirms the seven essential attributes held by Ashʿarism, along with the eternity of the active attributes, such as creating (*takhliq*), which are supported by Hanafīs and traditionalists.<sup>123</sup> This seems superficially similar to the classical Maturidī position, which affirms the seven essential attributes along with the attribute of creative activity (*takwīn*). But the succinct creedal statement of this position crystallized in Maturidism over several centuries of reconciliation with Ashʿarism. The earliest in the Maturidī tradition to produce the list of all seven followed by the eternal active attributes seems to have been ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Uṣmandī (d. 552/1157) in both his *Lubāb al-kalām* and his *al-Hidāya fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād* (as active participles), and al-Ṣābūnī in *al-Bidāya fī uṣūl al-dīn* (as verbal nouns).<sup>124</sup> Bukharan Hanafism had a greater proximity to Ashʿarism<sup>125</sup> and so it would not

117. See Nuʿmānī, *Imam Abu Hanifah*, 82–83; Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 245–46.

118. See C. D’Ancona, “Greek Sources in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (winter 2017 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/arabic-islamic-greek/>. A good example is the mention of *ʿarād* in the treatise on logic written by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, or his son, as an introduction to a translation of Aristotle’s *Organon*; J. van Ess, “60 Years After: Shlomo Pines’s *Beiträge* and Half a Century of Research on Atomism in Islamic Theology,” *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 8.2 (2002): 19–41, at 9.

119. A. al-Salimi and W. Madelung, eds., *Early Ibādī Theology: Six kalām Texts by ʿAbd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 28; Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-islāmīyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. M. M. Abd al-Ḥamid, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahda al-Miṣriyya, 1950), 1: 313.

120. Al-Salimi and Madelung, *Early Ibādī Theology*, 181. He also uses the technical term *maʿnā*; W. Madelung, “Early Ibādī Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. S. Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), 242–51, at 246.

121. Madelung, “Early Ibādī Theology,” 246.

122. J. van Ess, *Theology and Society*, vol. 4, tr. G. Goldbloom, 489.

123. Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 184. This was the basis for Watt’s late fourth/tenth-century dating for *Al-Fiqh al-akbar II*. See Watt, *Formative Period*, 133.

124. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Uṣmandī, *Lubāb al-kalām aw kitāb Taṣḥīḥ al-iʿtiqād fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. M. S. Özervarlı (Istanbul: İSAM, 2019), 82; ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Uṣmandī, *al-Hidāya fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*, ed. ʿA. M. Ismāʿīl (Cairo: Dār al-Imām al-Rāzī, 2022), 230, 263; Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī, *al-Bidāya fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. and tr. Bekir Topaloğlu, 18th ed. (Istanbul: M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2018), 26.

125. Madelung, “Spread of Maturidism,” 117–18.

be surprising for this development to have occurred there earlier. In terms of the specific impact of Ash‘ari scholars, it is possible to point to Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) teaching in Nishapur from around 370/980, who had an interest in engaging the Hanafi theological tradition, as shown by his authorship of a commentary on *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*.<sup>126</sup>

It is also instructive to compare *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* with *Kitāb al-Ta‘arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf* of the Hanafi Sufi Abū Bakr al-Kalabadhī (d. 385/995), who lived in Balkh. He starts his book with a detailed theological introduction, which Arthur Arberry thought was “quoting as it seems verbally from the ‘creed’ known as *al-Fiqh al-akbar* (II).”<sup>127</sup> Comparing the two texts, it appears that while al-Kalabadhī is writing within a similar milieu to the author of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* and in places draws on a common stock of theological phrases, he does not quote directly from it. A notable example of a difference is his addition of *ḥikma* (wisdom) into his list of essential attributes, which is closer to the fourth/tenth-century Samarqandi tradition—for example, the *Jumal uṣūl al-dīn* of Abū Salama al-Samarqandī.<sup>128</sup>

There is also a traditionalist element to the discussion of divine attributes in *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*. The creed mentions so-called *mutashābih* (ambiguous) attributes: God’s *yad* (lit. hand), *wajh* (lit. face), and *nafs* (lit. self), and says “they are his attributes, without [any question as to] how (*bi-lā kayf*).”<sup>129</sup> Later in the creed he states that it is permissible to use the Persian equivalents of God’s names and attributes, except in the case of *yad*.<sup>130</sup> Of the various Hanafi creeds that are extant, this is similar to the *Kitāb al-‘Itiqād* of the traditionalist Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Balkhī (d. 421/1030),<sup>131</sup> which again places *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* close to the late fourth/tenth-century Transoxianan environment that can be associated with Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī.

A final point concerns the oft-disputed attribute of God’s speech (*kalām*). *Al-Fiqh al-akbar II* has a sequence in which it sets out the different modalities by which the Quran is realized in the creation without itself being created: “The Quran is the speech of God written (*maktūb*) in the codices, memorized (*maḥfūz*) in the hearts, recited (*maqrū‘*) upon the tongues, and sent down (*munazzal* or *munzal*) to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace.”<sup>132</sup> This is strikingly similar to formulations used by al-Rustughfanī in his response and are broadly paralleled by expressions in the text of al-Kalabadhī.<sup>133</sup> But al-Rustughfanī adds “heard (*masmū‘*) by the ears” to the other four modalities, and he provides quranic evidence for each, which makes it seem likely that he is the earlier proponent of the formulation. A transference from Samarqand to Bukhara during the fourth/tenth century is not at all implausible. In sum, while the arguments that I have presented in this section are not individually decisive, I propose that together they support Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī as the most likely candidate for authorship of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II*.

126. Abū Bakr Ibn Fūrak, *Sharḥ kitāb al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*, ed. A. ‘A. al-Sāyih and T. ‘A. Wahba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Diniyya, 2008). For more on his intellectual activities in Transoxiana, see *EI2*, art. Ibn Fūrak (W. M. Watt).

127. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 69. See Abū Bakr al-Kalabadhī, *Kitāb al-Ta‘arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānī, 1994), 13–21.

128. See Abū Salama al-Samarqandī, “Jumal uṣūl al-dīn,” in A. S. Kılavuz, *Ebū Seleme es-Semerkindī ve akāid risālesi* (Istanbul: n.p., 1989), 15.

129. Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 185.

130. *Ibid.*, 187.

131. Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Balkhī, *Kitāb al-‘Itiqād fī i‘tiqād ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a al-ma‘rūf bi-Kitāb al-Khiṣāl fī ‘aqā‘id ahl al-sunna*, ed. A. S. Aldosari (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabiyya, 2020), 106–7.

132. Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Fiqh al-akbar*, 184.

133. Al-Rustughfanī, *Bāb al-mutafarriqāt min fawā‘id*, MS Veliyüddin Efendi 1545, 294r; *ibid.*, MS Yeni Cami 547, 300v. See al-Kalabadhī, *al-Ta‘arruf*, 18.

## CONCLUSION

Like a farce, this is the story of a mix-up—of two authors with the same name, one incredibly famous, the other almost unknown. The historical record provides consistent, strong attestation that Abū Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī studied with the celebrated scholar Abū Ḥanīfa and transmitted his theological views. Al-Balkhī's creed gained prominence among the developing Hanafi tradition, attracting citations and a notable commentary, as well as mention by non-Hanafis as one of the founding documents of the school. Despite the success of al-Balkhī's composition, its late second/eighth-century concerns did not fully meet the needs of classical Hanafism, which eventually turned to writing commentaries on the creed of al-Ṭahāwī.

Meanwhile, most likely in late fourth/tenth-century Bukhara, a minor figure named Abū Ḥanīfa Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Bukhārī wrote a semi-traditionalist Hanafi creed (*al-Fiqh al-akbar II*). This work did not gain any prominence until the eighth/fourteenth century when another Bukharan, the celebrated legal theorist ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bukhārī, came into possession of the text and, presumably not having read al-Balkhī's treatise, thought it was the famous *al-Fiqh al-akbar*. He quoted from it extensively, inserting a sizable portion of it into his *uṣūl al-fiqh* commentary, and thereby popularized it. Possibly due to his placing of a report from Ḥammād in the midst of his quotations, the text was taken to be transmitted on the authority of Abū Ḥanīfa's son. Nevertheless, some individuals, especially but not exclusively Muʿtazilis, were aware of its actual provenance and brought up the name Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī.

At this juncture the confusion multiplied. A key twist seems to be the defense mounted by al-Bazzāzī a century later. He was keen to rebut the accusation that Abū Ḥanīfa al-Bukhārī was the author of *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, which he took to be a Muʿtazili attack against al-Balkhī's *al-Fiqh al-akbar* and *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim*—texts that he knew had been transmitted reliably. Later figures, such as al-Sīnūbī, understood al-Bazzāzī as defending *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* and it reached a greater prominence in commentary than its forerunner ever had. The continuing existence of al-Balkhī's text also required a resolution and this was achieved with the new name *al-Fiqh al-absaʿ* by at least the eleventh/seventeenth century. The idea that *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* belonged to a different Abū Ḥanīfa remained in the margins of the tradition, especially to explain the author's position on the fate of the Prophet's parents. But this argument fell into disuse when the controversial doctrine, and its defence by al-Qārī, were removed from printed editions. The author of *al-Fiqh al-akbar II* was mostly forgotten.