

# The Development of the Science of Hadith in Nasaf

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## Abstract

This article provides an in-depth exploration of the historical development of hadith studies in the city of Nasaf and highlights the contributions of prominent scholars who shaped its intellectual tradition between the 8th and 13th centuries. The study focuses especially on the scholarly activities and legacy of Abu Hafs Umar ibn Muhammad an-Nasafi, one of the most influential hadith experts of the region. By examining biographical information preserved in classical sources such as Kitab al-Qand, the article demonstrates how early Nasaf scholars—including Abu Salih Khalaf ibn Tufail, Abu Hamid Zayd ibn Tufail, and Abu Ya‘la Abd al-Mu‘min al-Nasafi—established a firm foundation for hadith transmission and teaching. The study further explains how Nasaf emerged as a major center of Islamic learning, attracting students from numerous surrounding regions.

Special emphasis is given to the scholarly relationships between Nasaf and Samarkand, which played a crucial role in shaping Abu Hafs Nasafi’s education. Through his studies in Nasaf, Samarkand, Bukhara, and during his travels to Baghdad and Sarakhs, Abu Hafs developed a comprehensive methodological approach to hadith, influenced by Hanafi jurisprudence, Maturidi theology, exegesis, literature, and poetry. The article documents the breadth of his intellectual output—over one hundred works—and highlights the significance of his major contributions, including Kitab al-Qand, al-Manzuma an-Nasafiya, and his theological text ‘Aqeedat an-Nasafi, which became a cornerstone in the spread of Maturidi doctrine.

The study concludes that Abu Hafs Nasafi must be regarded as an encyclopedic scholar whose multifaceted expertise deeply enriched Islamic scholarship in Central Asia. His legacy illustrates the intellectual vibrancy of Nasaf as a center for hadith studies and its enduring influence on Islamic civilization.

**Keywords: Hadith Studies in Nasaf, Abu Hafs an-Nasafi, Islamic Scholarship in Central Asia, Hanafi Jurisprudence and Maturidi Theology, Kitab al-Qand, Historical Development of Hadith Transmission.**

## Introduction

The two sons of Abu Zayd, who continued the traditions of Abu Salih Khalaf ibn Tufail al-Nasafi (d. 908) and Abu Hamid Zayd ibn Tufail al-Nasafi (d. 957), and his grandson and disciple, the famous Abu Ya'la Abd al-Mu'min ibn Khalaf al-Nasafi (d. 957), who was the son of his son Abu Salih, also made a great contribution to the development of the science of hadith in Nasaf and continued the work of their ancestors <sup>1</sup>.

Nasaf remained one of the centers of hadith science in Transoxiana during the 8th-13th centuries. The city of Nasaf served as a central school for students of science throughout the region. Scholars from towns and villages such as Pazda, Kasbi, Kosan, Warsin, Yagna, Navkat-Quraysh, Ofuron, Zadak, Qalosi, Muda, Sanjan, Fijkat, and Maymarg came here to study. Two special works were written about the hadith scholars who worked in this city. The first of them is "Mufaharat ahl Kiss wa Nasaf" ("Disputes of the People of Kiss and Nasaf") by Abul Harith Asad ibn Hamduyya al-Warsini (d. 927). Unfortunately, only the title of this work is known to us. The second work about the hadith scholars of Nasaf is the two-volume "History of Nasaf". It was published by Abul Abbas Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Mustagfiri al-Nasafi (d. 1041)<sup>2</sup>. Although this work has not reached us, it served as one of the main sources for Abu Hafs Nasafi's Kitab al-Qand. The information in these two works has been completely preserved in "Kitab al-qand".

Abu Hafs Nasafi received his early education in his native Nasaf. The scholar cites as his first teacher in hadith the hafiz Abu Raja Qutayba ibn Muhammad al-Uthmani an-Nasafi (d. 1081), grandson of Abu al-Abbas al-Mustaqfiri. When Abu Raja dictated hadith in the Friday Mosque at the place called "Bab al-Maqsurah" in Nasaf, the young scholar Abu Hafs Umar ibn Muhammad Nasafi began to write down hadiths for the first time in his life<sup>3</sup>.

Another of Abu Hafs's early teachers was the writer and jurist Abul Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Nasafi al-Kasbawi (d. 1092). He taught Abu Hafs Nasafi the sciences of literature in Nasaf<sup>4</sup>. The extant part of the work "Kitab al-Qand" and its abbreviated form "Muntahab" contains biographies of 26 Nasaf teachers of Abu Hafs Nasafi. However, 18 of them either visited Samarkand or narrated hadith to Abu Hafs in this city<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the connections of Abu Hafs Nasafi and his teachers with the Samarkand environment were closely connected. The scholar received his primary education in Nasaf and continued his education in Samarkand. Among his teachers, the following famous hadith scholars should be mentioned separately: Abu Ali al-Hasan ibn Abdulmalik an-Nasafi, al-Imam al-Fadil Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Maymarghi an-Nasafi (11th century)<sup>6</sup>, al-

<sup>1</sup> Kitab al-qand. 1991. – P. 304–306.

<sup>2</sup> Ansob. – V: V. – P. 588.

<sup>3</sup> Kitab al-qand. 1991. – P. 537.

<sup>4</sup> The same work. – P. 432.

<sup>5</sup> Muntahab. – V. 62b, 20b, 21a, 70b; Qand. 1991. – P. 33-34, 145, 166, 217, 218, 222, 255-56, 274, 277, 288, 289, 307-08, 364-65, 415, 432, 433, 436, 437, 442-43.

<sup>6</sup> Ansob. – V: V. – P. 185.

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Qadi al-Imam al-Khatib Abu Muhammad Ismail ibn Muhammad an-Nuhi an-Nasafi<sup>7</sup> (d. 1089), who heard hadith from al-Mustaghfiri.

Among them, the representatives of the an-Nuhi dynasty make up the majority.

Abu Hafs Nasafi spent his youth in Nasaf, and at the beginning of the 12th century he went to Samarkand, and spent the main, creative part of his life in Samarkand. Only once, in 1113-14, he traveled to Mecca via Baghdad in order to perform the hajj. However, his trip did not last long, and he returned to his homeland the following year<sup>8</sup>.

In the work "Kitab al-Qand", the author reports that during his travels he heard hadith from scholars such as Abul Abbas Muhammad ibn Yunus al-Kudaimi<sup>9</sup> in Baghdad and Abul Fadl Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Sa'ighi<sup>10</sup> in Sarakhs.

Abu Hafs Nasafi continued his education in Samarkand. The scientific institution called "Darul Juzjaniya" in this city played a great role in the scholar's rise to the top in the fields of science. In addition to Samarkand, the Bukhara school also had a strong influence on Abu Hafs Nasafi. The author went to Bukhara and studied jurisprudence with such eminent sheikhs as al-Shaykh al-Imam al-Rais Sa'id ibn Muhammad al-Khwarizmi<sup>11</sup>. Having gained experience in various fields of science, Abu Hafs Nasafi taught students of science in mosques and madrasas of Samarkand.

Abu Hafs Nasafi left behind a rich scientific legacy. Sources indicate that the total number of his works exceeds one hundred<sup>12</sup>. The scholar was prolific in the field of Hanafi jurisprudence. The sources mention the names of eight of his works in this field<sup>13</sup>. Of these, only the names "Kitab ad-da'ir fi-l-fiqh", "Mashari' ash-shari'", "al-Has'a'il fi-l-furu'" or "al-Has'a'il fi-l-mas'a'il" are known to us. The works that have survived to us are "al-Manzuma an-nasafiya fi-l-khilafiyat", "Tilbat at-talaba", "Sharh al-usul li-l-Karhiy", "Fatawa shaykh al-islam as-Sughi"<sup>14</sup>.

Abu Hafs Nasafi continued the tradition of Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (870-944) in theology. For example, scholars such as Abu Ali al-Hasan ibn Abdulmalik al-Maturidi<sup>15</sup> and Abul Hasan Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Maturidi, a descendant of the companion Abu Ayyub Khalid al-Ansari, were Abu Hafs Nasafi's teachers<sup>16</sup>.

Abu Hafs Nasafi summarized the teachings of his great teacher, Imam al-Maturidi, in a concise form, and served to spread the teachings of the Maturidi school. His work "Aqeed al-Nasafi" was widely read in the Islamic world, and many commentaries and footnotes were written on it. Although the scholar wrote only this one work on theology, the reason why he became famous as a theologian is that this work provided the theoretical basis of the Islamic creed in a very concise manner<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Ansob. – V: V. – P. 531.

<sup>8</sup> Kitab al-qand. 1991. – P. 20.

<sup>9</sup> The same work. – P. 137.

<sup>10</sup> The same work. – P. 141.

<sup>11</sup> The same work. – P. 20, 344.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad ibn Ahmad az-Dhahabi. Siyar a'lam an-nubala'. – Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-risala, 1992. 8th edition. – T. XX. – P. 126.

<sup>13</sup> Kitab al-qand. 1991. – P. 22-24.

<sup>14</sup> The same place.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn an-Najjor. – T. XX. – P. 99.

<sup>16</sup> Ansob. – V: V. – P. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Wensinck A.J. al-Nasafi. III. Extract from the Encyclopaedia of Islam CD-ROM Edition v.1.0.

Abu Hafs was also an expert in the field of Nasafi tafsir. His work "at-Taysir fi ('ilm) at-tafsir" (a commentary on the Qur'an in 4 volumes) testifies to this<sup>18</sup>.

The numerous poems in his works indicate that the scholar also had high poetic abilities. The scholar also commented on many of the hadiths he cited in his work "Kitab al-Qand" in his own language and in a poetic style. According to sources, Abu Hafs Nasafi wrote about a hundred works in various fields of knowledge<sup>19</sup>. Some of his works have become so famous that many reviews have been written on them<sup>20</sup>. There are more than ten of them that have reached us<sup>21</sup>. These works can serve as a sufficient basis for a detailed study of the various directions of Abu Hafs's multifaceted creativity in the future. Abu Hafs Nasafi died in Samarkand on 12 or 13 Jumada al-Ula, 537 AH/3 or 4 October 1142 AD and was buried in the Chokardiza cemetery there, next to Imam Maturidi<sup>22</sup>.

Abu Hafs Nasafi left behind a son named Ahmad, known by the nickname "al-Majd", born in 1113-14. Abu Sa'd Sam'ani describes his son Abu al-Lays Ahmad ibn Umar as a handsome man, a jurist, a virtuous man, a preacher, and a perfect man. When Abu Sa'd Sam'ani went to Samarkand in 1154-55, he met Abu al-Lays and had a scientific conversation. According to him, they often visited each other, and Majd used to borrow some books from him. Majd Nasafi set out on the Hajj pilgrimage in 1156-57. When he was returning from Baghdad to his homeland in 1157-58, when he passed through the city of Bistam on the way, a group of Ahl al-Qila' (people of the forts), Ismailis, blocked the caravan route. They killed more than 70 people and many scholars who were in the caravan coming from the Hijaz. Among them was Majd Nasafi. He was buried in a village in the Bistam district<sup>23</sup>.

Abu Hafs Nasafi, who spent almost a quarter of a century of his life creating works in various fields of Islamic sciences, left a deep mark. In this research work, the scientist was approached primarily as a scholar of hadith in Samarkand. However, Abu Hafs was one of the encyclopedic scholars. In his interpretation of the science of hadith, of course, his positions in other fields of science (Hanafi jurisprudence, Maturidian theology, exegesis, literature and poetry) are of great importance.

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<sup>18</sup> Uvatov U. Samarkand scholars // Lessons from the wise. – T.: People's heritage publishing house named after Abdulla Qadiri, 1994. – P. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Kitab al-qand .1991. – P. 9; Sugar. 1999. – B. 21; Ibn al-Najjar. – V: XX. – P. 99.

<sup>20</sup> Kitab al-qand .1999. – P. 21-24.

<sup>21</sup> GAL. – V: II. - B. 427-428; GAL SB. – V: I. – P. 758-762.

<sup>22</sup> Kitab al-qand. 1991. – P. 10; Kitab al-qand. 1999. – B. 20-21; Ibn al-Najjar. – V: XX. – P. 99.

<sup>23</sup> Kitab al-qand. 1999. – P. 21.