

THE PRINCIPLES OF TOLERANCE IN THE SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE OF IMAM MATURIDI

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Abstract

This article examines the life and scholarly-spiritual legacy of our compatriot, Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, one of the most prominent representatives of the science of Kalam. The article highlights pedagogically the tolerance-based ideas of Maturidi's teachings, which were founded by the scholar himself. Furthermore, the significance of Imam Maturidi's works in countering various heterodox ideas is analyzed.

Keywords: Imam Maturidi, Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunna, Maturidi school of Kalam, tolerance, refutations.

Introduction

Maturid, to whom he is attributed, is today a suburb of Samarkand, located within the borders of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In 1920, Barthold, who visited Samarkand, noted that Maturid was a village in the northwest of the city. Very little is known about Maturidi's life from historical sources. He lived during a period when the central authority of the Abbasids was considerably weakened, and the Samanids, semi-independent principalities loyal to the Caliphate, ruled Transoxiana. Although his exact date of birth is unknown, based on the information that his teacher, the Qadi of Ray, Muhammad b. Muqatil al-Razi, died in 248 AH (862 CE), it is estimated that he was born around the middle of the first half of the 3rd/9th century and lived nearly a century. Indeed, Abu'l-Yusr al-Pazdawi records that Maturidi appeared before al-Ash'ari (d. 260/874) (Uṣul al-Din, p. 70). It should be noted cautiously that Qureshi mentioned him as a contemporary of the Qadi of Samarkand, Muhammad b. Aslam al-Azdi, who died in 268 AH (881) (al-Jawahir al-Mudiyya, III, 92; cf. Nesefi, Tabsirat al-Adilla, I, 358).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

Later scholars, such as Beyazizade Ahmed Efendi and Zabidi, referred to Maturidi with the nisba “Ansari,” and some modern works, citing a marginal note in the only surviving manuscript of *Kitab al-Tawhid* (vr. 1b) by an unknown person, claim that his lineage traces back to Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. This claim does not seem accurate, as there is no solid basis for it. Zabidi notes that even if the nisba were authentic, it would likely have been given to honor his role in supporting religion, not to indicate actual descent (*Ithaf al-Sade*, II, 5). Furthermore, according to Najm al-Din al-Nasafi, the grandmother of Qadi Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Hasan al-Maturidi (d. 511/1117), who was known to descend from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, was the daughter of Maturidi’s daughter (al-Qand, p. 420), while Sem‘ani claims she was Maturidi’s daughter. Considering the nearly two-century gap and al-Nasafi’s close relationship with this family through his student Abu'l-Hasan, the first account seems more accurate. Therefore, the direct attribution of Qadi Abu'l-Hasan as Maturidi’s descendant likely resulted from confusion between maternal and paternal lineage [1].

Contemporary Arab authors, such as Ayyub Ali and Ali Abdulfattah al-Maghribi, suggested that Maturidi was Arab, based on the idea that a descendant married into the family of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and the Arab elite’s concern with compatibility in marriage. This claim is also incorrect, since from a jurisprudential perspective, compatibility (*kafa'a*) is only relevant in case of dispute and poses no problem if both parties consent. Moreover, marrying someone from the family of such a prominent scholar should be considered an honor. Arabs generally record lineages tracing back to the Companions, adding an expression indicating attribution at the end. Indeed, Abu'l-Mu'in al-Nasafi, while describing the Sunni Kalam school in Samarkand, provided lineages for Abu Nasr al-Iyazi and Qadi Muhammad b. Aslam al-Azdi tracing back to the Companions, but could only mention Maturidi’s grandfather [2].

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The language and style of Maturidi’s works also indicate that he was not a native Arabic speaker. His compositions contain complex and difficult language, as noted in early sources (Abu'l-Yusr al-Pazdawi, p. 3; Ala al-Din al-Samarkandi, *Mizan al-Usul*, p. 3; *Sharh al-Ta'wilat*, vr. 1b), and this is evident in the extant manuscripts.

Moreover, examining sentence structures, especially the conjunctions of certain verbs, shows grammatical forms consistent with Turkish rather than Arabic. Considering both the linguistic style and the fact that he lived in Samarkand, a region predominantly inhabited by Turks, it is reasonable to assert that Maturidi was of Turkic origin. His use of some Persian-derived words, such as “hastiyya” (Kitab al-Tawhid, p. 7; Nesafi, I, 162), and some reports noting his use of Persian in daily life, reflect the linguistic environment of Transoxiana, where Turkish was common in villages and towns, while Persian prevailed in cities and scholarly circles [3].

Little is known about Maturidi’s family apart from his father and grandfather, Muhammad b. Mahmud. Zabidi notes that some sources mention another individual named Muhammad after his grandfather (Ithaf al-Sade, II, 5). From his kunya Abu Mansur, it is speculated that he may have had a son named Mansur, although in his Quranic exegesis, Maturidi explains that such a kunya could be given as a wish for a child to a childless man (Ta’wilat al-Qur’ān, vr. 905a). If he had descendants through a son, some of their names would have appeared in historical records.

The grandmother of Qadi Abu’l-Hasan Ali b. Hasan b. Ali al-Maturidi, who was said to descend from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, was the daughter of Maturidi’s daughter. The person who married Maturidi’s grandson was named Ali b. Muhammad. Qadi Abu’l-Hasan’s father, Qadi Hasan al-Maturidi, along with his contemporaries Abu Shuja’ Muhammad b. Ahmed b. Hamza al-Alewi and Abu’l-Hasan Ali b. Husayn al-Sugdi, jointly led the Hanafi scholars of Samarkand in their time. Their joint fatwas were considered authoritative, and those who opposed them were not respected. Their grandfather was buried near Maturidi’s grave [4].

Maturidi belonged to the fourth, and possibly the third, generation of Hanafi scholars. Although he studied under teachers such as Abu Bekr Ahmed b. Ishaq al-Juzjani, Nusayr b. Yahya al-Balhi, and the Qadi of Nishapur, Abu Bekr Muhammad b. Ahmed b. Raja al-Juzjani, he completed his education under Abu Nasr al-Iyazi, teaching at Dar al-Juzjaniyya and taking on leadership of the scholars while still in his twenties. Details about his travels, whether he performed Hajj, or held official positions are unknown. However, his criticism of tyrants while describing them as just in their rule (Burhan al-Din al-Bukhari, V, 577), and his disapproval of Abu’l-

Qasim al-Ka'bi's collaboration with unjust rulers (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation, p. 452), indicate that his relations with political authorities were careful [5].

It is known that scholars such as Abu Ahmed al-Iyazi, Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Said al-Rustufaghi, and Abu Muhammad Abd al-Karim b. Musa al-Pazzawi studied Fiqh and Kalam under him. Later sources suggesting that Hakim al-Samarkandi was Maturidi's student remain unconfirmed. Considering that both studied under Abu Nasr al-Iyazi, their frequent joint mention in sources, and some accounts presenting them as contemporaries, it seems more accurate to view them as peers with scholarly exchanges. Moreover, Hakim is said to have shown respect toward Maturidi (Ahmed b. Musa b. Isa al-Keshshi, vr. 39b). Arthur Stanley Tritton suggested that Hakim studied Fiqh and Kalam under Maturidi and possibly was his brother, but differing grandfather names make this unlikely. Contemporary research noting that Abu'l-Lays al-Samarkandi may have studied under Maturidi is not corroborated by classical sources. In his works, Abu'l-Lays refers to two Fiqh opinions of Maturidi without expressing any approval, often preferring the opposite view (Kitab al-Nawazil, vr. 7b, 16b).

Ebu'l-Mu'in al-Nasafi and Ibn Fazlullah al-'Umari, without specifying dates, report that Maturidi passed away shortly after Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 324 AH / 935–36 CE) (Tabsirat al-Adilla, I, 360; Masalik, VI, 46). Qureshi, relying on his teachers Abu'l-Hasan Ibn al-Sawwaf and Qutb al-Din al-Halabi, states that he died in 333 AH (944 CE), a date later adopted by scholars such as Firuzabadi, Ibn Kutlubuga, Kafavi, Zabidi, and Lakhnawi. Conversely, Kawsari reports 332 AH, citing Qutb al-Din al-Halabi (Beyazizade Ahmed Efendi, p. 7). Since Qureshi recorded the date from two different teachers, the identical date in both cases is likely a copying error. Temimi, largely based on Qureshi, notes both 333 and 332 AH. Some sources also mention 336 AH (947 CE). Another manuscript of Firuzabadi's work (al-Mirqat al-Wafiyya, nr. 671, vr. 74a) lists 323 AH, which appears to be a transcription mistake [6].

Maturidi was buried in the famous Chakardize Cemetery in Samarkand. His friend and student, Hakim al-Samarkandi, had an inscription placed on the tomb stating: "Here lies one who devoted his entire life to knowledge, expended his efforts for its propagation and teaching, whose works in the path of religion are praised, and who reaped the fruits of his life" [7]. Barthold, during his 1920 visit to Samarkand, noted seeing Maturidi's tomb in Chakardize Cemetery (see Turkistan Before the

Mongol Invasion, p. 95). However, during the Soviet period, the cemetery was repurposed for housing, and the tomb ended up in a private yard. In 1991, a group of Turkish scholars visiting Samarkand reported that the tomb was no longer present, the grave had been covered with concrete, and the site used as a courtyard. A new mausoleum was completed in 2000 at the site of Maturidi's grave, located in the Second Sharq neighborhood, Gucluvan Street, in the Siyob central district of Samarkand, along with a surrounding complex.

The oldest known source providing information on Maturidi's life, works, views, students, and contemporaries is Ebu'l-Mu'in al-Nasafi's *Tabsirat al-Adilla*. Later works briefly mention Maturidi without adding new information, and contemporary research largely repeats these accounts. Some anecdotes about his life and Kalam views are also found in a commentary on Abu Salama's *Jumalu Usul al-Din*, written by an unknown author, who mentions his father as Ibn (Abu?) Zakariyya Yahya b. Ishaq (Ibn Yahya, vr. 161b). This author was a student of Ebu'l-Hasan al-Rustufaghi, himself a student of Maturidi. Maturidi is described in the work as "the singular in knowledge, understanding, mastery of schools of thought, and piety in his time" [2].

Outside Hanafi sources, Maturidi is first mentioned in Shafi'i works by Abu Asim al-Abbadi, who completed *al-Fuqaha' al-Shafi'iyya* in 435 AH (1044 CE), listing him as "Abu Mansur al-Samarkandi" among prominent Hanafi jurists. Sem'ani also mentions Maturidi in the biography of his grandson, Qadi Abu'l-Hasan al-Maturidi (*al-Ansab*, VI, 155). Prominent commentators such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and al-Qurtubi reference Maturidi's views in their *Tafsir*, with al-Qurtubi calling him al-Shaykh al-Imam (*Mafatih al-Ghayb*, V, 163; VI, 200; XIV, 228; XXIV, 244; XXVII, 188; *al-Jami'*, VI, 38). Al-Zahabi mentions him in the biography of his student Abdulkarim al-Pazdawi, noting that this student studied Fiqh under him (*Tarikh al-Islam*, p. 200). Ibn Fazlullah al-'Umari briefly praises Maturidi among Hanafi scholars in his work *Masalik al-Absar*. Alongside Qureshi, Maturidi's biography was consistently included in Hanafi biographical compilations [4].

Despite Maturidi's importance in *Tafsir*, Kalam, Fiqh, Usul, and the history of schools of thought, modern studies note that he has often been neglected in historical and bibliographic sources. While Ash'ari works were widely disseminated, Maturidi's received relatively little attention. Reasons suggested include: his residence far from the Abbasid center in Baghdad; deliberate omission

by Arab historians; lack of state support compared to Ash‘aris; exclusion of Maturidi’s teachings from formal educational institutions; Maturidism’s restriction to the Hanafi school, whereas Ash‘arism spread among Shafi‘is and Malikis; emphasis on rationality making his works less accessible to conservative scholars and biographers; concern among Hanafi circles that he might overshadow Abu Hanifa; and linguistic and stylistic complexity of his works. Some researchers argue that biographers like al-Zahabi and al-Suyuti omitted him because he was Turkic, though closer inspection shows biographical works included scholars regardless of ethnicity or school. Al-Samarkandi notes that even in Maturidi’s homeland, he was largely neglected for nearly two centuries, with minimal details in Hanafi biographical works [5].

Maturidi’s ideas align with Ahl al-Sunnah. His adoption of a moderate Murji‘a position on the separation of faith and deed (kebira) does not place him outside Sunni orthodoxy, and his critique of Murji‘a, whom Qadariyya opposed, invalidates contrary claims. Whether the term Ahl al-Sunnah appears in his lost works is uncertain, but his intellectual descendants, such as Ibn Yahya, frequently used it. The term, popularized after Maturidi, signifies those who follow the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Companions, encompassing general Islamic practice, including prayer – a view held by the vast majority of Muslims (Topaloğlu, p. 109).

Maturidi’s neglect was partially due to linguistic and stylistic issues. Abu’l-Yusr al-Pazdawi, despite considering Kitab al-Tawhid sufficient, wrote his own book because of perceived stylistic difficulties (Usul al-Din, p. 3). Al-Samarkandi similarly lamented the neglect of Maturidi’s works, arguing it stemmed from obscure language or lack of effort. Scholars focusing exclusively on Fiqh, ignoring his Kalam discussions, led to the prevalence of Fiqh-only works. Bekir Topaloğlu emphasizes that invasions, destruction of religious works, and Transoxiana’s distance from major centers like Baghdad, Basra, and Kufa contributed to this neglect. Furthermore, some suggest that hadith scholars and jurists considered his views close to Mu‘tazilism. Madelung notes that in Iraq, the Hanafi scholarly center, prominent jurists’ adoption of Mu‘tazilite positions limited Maturidi’s influence west of Transoxiana. Nonetheless, Maturidi was not entirely ignored: his views appear in early works, particularly in Transoxiana Hanafi writings, and from the 7th/13th century, in other schools’ works, albeit sparingly [3].

CONCLUSION

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi was a central figure in Islamic theology (kalam) and a leading authority of the Hanafi school. Living in Transoxiana during the 9th–10th centuries, he combined deep rational inquiry with strong adherence to Sunni orthodoxy, emphasizing reason, moderation, and tolerance. Despite facing historical neglect due to geographic, political, and linguistic factors, his works influenced generations of scholars in fiqh, kalam, and tafsir, particularly in Central Asia.

Maturidi's legacy reflects a balance between intellectual rigor and spiritual devotion. Accounts of his piety, moral guidance, and adherence to knowledge illustrate a scholar who integrated scholarship with ethical and religious life. While not widely recognized outside Hanafi circles in his time, his teachings underpin much of Sunni thought today, affirming his role as a pivotal contributor to Islamic intellectual heritage.

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