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Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī

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Introduction

Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914-1999) was one of the most influential Salafi of ḥadīth in the 20th century. He sought to reform Islam by requiring Muslims to return a puritanical and literalist approach toward scripture. Albānī moved from Albania to Damascus with his family as a child, and his father became a leading Ḥanafī scholar in the Albanian Muslim community in Syria. From a young age, al-Albānī disagreed with his father and the Albanian Ḥanafī community. He rejected their allegiance to the Ḥanafī school of law and instead advocated a strict adherence to the Qurʾān and Sunna. His scholarly career was full of tug-of-war battles with traditional jurists over the validity of following a *madhhab* and particular principles of Islamic legal theory. His legal scholarship contains many unconventional opinions and he was therefore taken most seriously in the field of ḥadīth, not *fiqh*. A distinctive aspect of Albānī's legacy is his constant effort to reevaluate the authenticity of ḥadīth. He sifted through thousands of ḥadīth and reevaluated them using traditional ḥadīth methodology.

General Overviews

Most works on the topics of Salafism and ḥadīth make some mention of Albānī. However, despite his importance in Islamic studies, there are relatively few academic works in English that focus primarily on Albānī's life and methodology. A general overview of his life and impact is found in Hamdeh 2016 and Lacroix 2009. Hamdeh 2017 provides, Brown 2014, and Haykel 2009 provide a detailed analysis of his stance toward Islamic legal tradition. A presentation of Albānī's ḥadīth methodology is given in Amin 2004 and Brown 2009. Shaybānī 1986 and ʿAwda 2001 contain detailed biographies of Albānī and a list of his many works.

Amin, Kamaruddin, "Nāṣiruddīn al-Albānī on Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ: A Critical Study of his Method." *Islamic Law and Society*, 11, (2004): 149–76.

An examination of Albānī's methodology in determining the authenticity of ḥadīths. It also
analyzes the ḥadīths declared weak by Albānī from the perspective of traditional ḥadīth
scholarship as well as non-Muslim methods of dating ḥadīths.

ʿAwda, ʿAtiyya. *Safaḥāt baydāʾ min hayāt al-imām Muhammad Nāsir al-Dīn al-Albānī.* Al-
Sanaʿa: Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 2001.

　　　　A detailed biography of Albānī. It provides an excellent contextualization of the books he
wrote. It also contains a list of unpublished books.

Brown, Jonathan. *Hadith Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World.* England: Oneworld
Publications, 2009.
An excellent introduction to the science of ḥadīth. This provides a good overview of Albānī's
ḥadīth methodology.

Brown, Jonathan. "Even If It's Not True It's True: Using Unreliable Ḥadīths in Sunni Islam." *Islamic Law and
Society* 18, (2011): 1-52.
This article broadly covers the stance of Sunni scholars toward weak ḥadīth. It highlights Albānī's
role as one of the strongest opponents to the use of weak ḥadīth.

Brown, Jonathan. "Is Islam Easy to Understand or Not?: Salafis, the Democratization of Interpretation and
the Need for the Ulema," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, (2014).
Explores the role of the ʿulamāʾ in Salafi circles. It also contains an excellent discussion on the
Salafi rhetoric against traditional institutions. Albānī is mentioned among the other anti-tradition
scholars.

Brown, Jonathan. *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.* Leiden: Brill, 2007.
The status of Bukhārī and Muslim has been a contentious issue in modern Islam. This excellent
work contains a detailed discussion of Albānī's views on the authenticity and status of these two
canonical works.

Hamdeh, Emad. "The Role of the ʿUlamāʾ in the Thoughts of ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda," *The Muslim
World* 107, no. 3, (2017): 359-374.
ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda was one of Albānī's main critics. This article is a comparative study of
the two Muslim reformers and their approach toward Islamic scholarship. Their positions are
examined in light of the different status they both give to the Muslim scholarly tradition.

Hamdeh, Emad. "Qurʾān and Sunna or the Madhhabs?: A Salafi Polemic Against Islamic Legal Tradition,"
Islamic Law and Society 24:3 (June 2017): 1-43.

An annotated translation of Albānī's lecture titled Misconceptions Surrounding Salafism (*Shubuh Ḥawl al-Salafiyya*). In this lecture Albānī attempted to defend Salafism against its anti-*madhhab* image. The introduction includes a detailed discussion on Albānī's polemics and rhetorical strategies Albānī uses to discredit Islamic legal tradition.

Hamdeh, Emad. "The Formative Years of an Iconoclastic Salafi Scholar," *The Muslim World* 106, no. 3, (2016): 411-432.

This article provides a translation of one of Albānī's autobiographical interviews. It sheds light on the biographical details of Albānī's formative years, namely his sour relationship with his father, quarrels with the Albanian community in Syria, and his controversial professorship at the University of Medina. This is the only academic article to date that provides a detailed analysis of Albānī's formative years.

Haykel, Bernard. "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

This ~~great~~ is an introductory chapter ~~for anyone looking to understand the~~that attempts to provide an overview of the nature of modern Salafi thought and action. Haykel works to provide a definition of Salafism in both the pre-modern and modern contexts. This chapter does not focus on Albānī, but he is mentioned several times.

Lacroix, Ste~~phh~~pane. "Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his Impact on the Shaping of Contemporary Salafism," in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Important work on the impact Albānī had on modern Salafism, especially in the Saudi Arabian context.

Shaybānī, Muḥammad. *Ḥayāt al-Albānī wa-āthāru-hu wa-thanā' al-ʿulamāʾ ʿalay-hi*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Sarrāwī, 1986.

A good biography of Albānī written in Arabic. This was written during Albānī's lifetime and therefore does not contain all of the information one might be looking. It is nevertheless one of the more comprehensive books on Albānī's life.

Wagemakers, Joas. *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietiest Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2016.

An important work on political Salafism. In particular, it provides detailed insight into politically quietiest Salafism that Albānī adhered to.

~~Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-~~Albānī's Legal Works

Albānī was a prolific author who wrote 217 books on various topics such as ḥadīth, fiqh, and creed. Although he was self-taught, many considered him to be a master of the science of ḥadīth. He was a reformer who sought to purify Islam of weak and fabricated ḥadīth, cultural interpretations of Islam, and the opinions of scholars that were not grounded in scripture. His works are primarily an effort to "clean up" a previous ḥadīth compilation or present a particular legal topic using only authentic texts.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn (d. 1999). *Ādāb al-Zafāf fī l-Sunna al-Muṭahhara*. Amman: Al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 1988.

> This is a book on the etiquette of marriage and weddings. It contains various rulings provided by Albānī on weddings and marriage. These include his opinions on the use of musical instruments, jewelry, sexuality, and marriage customs.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Taḥrīm ālāt al-ṭarb*. Serbia: Maktabat al-Dalīl 1997.

> A book on the prohibition of musical instruments.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Ṣifat ṣalāt al-nabī ṣalla Allāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam min al-takbīr ilā al-taslīm ka-anʿanaka tarā-hā*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2006.

> This is one of Albānī's most famous works. He attempts to provide the reader with a method of praying only based on authentic ḥadīth. He aims to bypass scholarly opinion and weak ḥadīth and bring the reader in direct contact with the prayer of the Prophet.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Al-Taṣfiya wa l-tarbiya wa ḥājat al-muslimīn ilay-hā*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2007.

> A short treatise on the need to purify Islam, especially Islamic law and ḥadīth, from foreign teachings.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Jilbāb al-marʾa al-muslima fī l-kitāb wa l-sunna*. Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2002.

> Albānī discusses dress of women according to Islamic scripture. He argues that the face veil is optional, but not mandatory. This book sparked controversy when he wrote it in Saudi Arabia where most women covered their faces.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*. Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1984.

Albānī comments on the famous *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*. He authenticates its ḥadīths and includes a rather long discussion in his introduction. This introduction often consisted of him attacking his critics.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Qiyām ramadān: fadluh wa-kayfiyyat adaʾih wa-mashruʿiyyat al-jamāʿa fīh wa-maʿahu bahūth qayyim ʿan al-iʾtikāf*. Amman: al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya, 1997.

> This book speaks of the virtues of Ramadan and the night prayers. It also contains some of Albānī's controversial opinions such as his prohibition of iʿtikāf in any mosque besides the three holy mosques. He also argues that the *tarāwīḥ* prayer must not exceed eleven cycles. This stands in contrast to the prayers of many Muslims who pray twenty cycles of *tarāwīḥ*.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Al-Tawassul anwāʿu-hu wa aḥkāmu-hu*, Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif 2001.

> Throughout Islamic history scholars have differed concerning the permissibility of seeking intercession with God through saints and the righteous (*tawassul*). This book consists of Albānī arguing against the permissibility of *tawassul*.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Taḥdhīr al-sājid min itikhādh al-qubūr masājid*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2001.

> This is one of Albānī's earliest works. He prohibits building mosques that contain graves in them or praying in a mosque that contains a grave out of fear that it will result in associating partners with God.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Difāʿ ʿan al-ḥadīth al-nabawī wa l-sīra fī l-radd ʿalā jahālāt al-Būṭī fī kitābi-hi fiqh al-sīra*. Damascus: Manshūrāt Muʾassasat wa Muhtabat al-Khāfiqīr, 1977.

> This book is a response to Muḥammad Ramaḍān al-Būṭī's (d. 2013) work *Fiqh al-Sīra*.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Kashf al-niqāb ʿammā fī kalimāt Abī Ghudda min al-abāṭīl wa l-iftirāāt*. Damascus: [n.p.], 1978.

> One of Albānī's strongest critics was ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (d.1997). The two disagreed on ḥadīth and Islamic law, but their differences were very personal. In this book, Albānī attempts to refute Abū Ghudda. The language is coarse, and the tone is very harsh.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Tamām al-minna fī taʿlīq ʿalā fiqh al-sunna*. Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya 1998.

A commentary on Sayyiyed Sabiq's famous book *Fiqh al-Sunna.*

Albānī's Ḥadīth Works

Most Sunni scholars were lenient the narrations of weak ḥadīth related to topics of virtues of deeds. However, Albānī rejected the use of weak ḥadīth in all areas. Many of Albānī's ḥadīth works are attempts to purge or "clean-up" the works of previous scholars. He often republishes them with only their authentic ḥadīth. This has sparked controversy because others have accused him of trying to do away with the works of great ḥadīth scholars and replacing them with his own judgements on ḥadīth.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Al-Ḥadīth Ḥujja binafsi-hi fī l-ʿAqāʾid wa l-Aḥkām.* Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2005.
> This book attempts to establish ḥadīth as one of the main sources of legislation and evidence in belief in law. It is an important work because it situates Albānī's stance on ḥadīth, the *madhhab*s, and *taqlid.*

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.* Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2002.
> As the title suggests, this work is a summary of Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. However, Albānī does not summarize it by removing its ḥadīths. Rather he removes the *isnād*'s leaving only the name of the narrator in most cases. Hence, he makes it easier for the layperson to read the book without the long chains of narrations.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr wa ziyādati-hi.* Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1988.
> Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī compiled a book titled *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr.* Albānī sifted through this book and republished it with only its authentic ḥadīths.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa l-tarhīb.* Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 2000.
> This is a republication of Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī's (d. 656/1259) collection of ḥadīths on the encouraging and discouraging certain actions. Albānī republished this work with only its authentic ḥadīth.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ḍaʿīfa wa l-mawḍūʿa wa atharu-hā al-sayyiʾ fi l-*
umma. Riyadh: Maktbat al-Maʿārif, 1992.

This book is a compilation of thousands of weak and fabricated ḥadīth. The introduction contains a discussion on the negative societal and spiritual impacts these ḥadīth have on the Muslim community.

Albānī (al-), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. *Silsilat al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1995. This book contains thousands of ḥadīths that are authentic. Albānī addresses the *isnāds* of each ḥadīth in a relatively concise manner. It also contains many of Albānī's legal rulings based on his understanding of these authentic ḥadīths.

Albānī's Critics

Albānī was perhaps the twentieth century's most controversial scholar. He remained uncompromising throughout his life and always presented his interpretation of scripture as being synonymous with scripture itself. His attempts to purge Islam was not viewed positively by many scholars. The large number of book-length responses to Albānī byTraditionalists throughout the Muslim world. These books are important because Albānī's works cannot be understood outside the many battles he was fighting.

Abū Ghudda, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ (d. 1997). *Kalimāt fī kashf abāṭīl wa iftirāʾāt*. Aleppo: Maktabat al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Islāmiyya, 1990.
A response to Albānī's accusations in his *Kashf al-niqāb ʿammā fī kalimāt Abī Ghudda min al-abāṭīl wa l-iftirāʾāt*.

Anṣārī, Ismāʿīl (d. 1997). *Ibāḥat al-taḥallī bi l-dhahab al-muḥallaq wa l-radd ʿalā al-Albānī fī taḥrīmi-hi*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Imam al-Shāfiʿī, 1988.
A refutation of Albānī's prohibition of circular gold for women.

Anṣārī, Ismāʿīl. *Taṣḥīḥ ṣalāt al-tarāwīḥ ʿishrīn rakʿa wa l-radd ʿalā al-Albānī fī taḍʿīfi-hi*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Imam al-Shāfiʿī, 1988.
A refutation of Albānī's prohibition of praying twenty cycles during the *tarāwīḥ* prayers.
ʿAwwāma, Muḥammad. *Adab al-ikhtilāf fī masāʾil al-ʿilm wa l-dīn*. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 1997.
This book is about scholarly etiquette but contains a refutation and discussion on Albānī and Salafis.

Aʿẓamī (al-), Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān (d. 1992). *Al-Albānī: shudhūdhu-hu wa akhṭāʾu-hu*. Kuwait: Maktabat Dār
al-ʿUrūbah, 1984.

Aʿzamī attempt to highlight Albānī's self-learning, mistakes, and contradictions. The work was originally published under the pseudonym Arshad Salafi.

Būṭī (al-), Ramadan Muḥammad (d. 2013). *Al-lā madhhabiyya akhṭar bidʿa tuhaddid al-sharīʿa al-islāmiyya*. Damascus: Dār al-Farābī, 2005.
    The most important critique of Albānī's stance toward the Muslim schools of law.

Būṭī (al-), Ramadan Muḥammad. *Al-Salafiyya marḥala zamaniyya mubāraka lā madhhab islāmī*. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1988.
    A critique of the concept of Salafism as a school or method of thinking.

Haddad, Gabriel. *Albani & His Friends: A Concise Guide to the Salafi Movement*. United   Kingdom: Aqsa Publications, 2004.
    A polemical work against Albānī and Salafis. The book critiques several leading Salafi scholars and is ordered alphabetically.

Mamḍūḥ, Maḥmūd. *Al-Taʿrīf bi-awhām man qassama al-sunan ilā ṣaḥīḥ waḍaʿīf*. 6 vols. Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth li al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 2000.
    The longest rebuttal against Albānī's dividing of the Sunan and his ḥadīth methodology.

Mamḍūḥ, Maḥmūd. *Tanbīh al-muslim ilā taʿaddī al-Albānī ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Mujallad al-ʿArabī, 2011.
    Criticism of Albānī's weakening some ḥadīths in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.

Mamḍūḥ, Maḥmūd. *Wuṣūl al-tahānī bi ithbāt sunniyyat al-subḥa wa l-radd ʿalā al-Albānī*. Cairo.: Dār al-Imām al-Tirmidhī, 1994.
    A response Albānī's prohibition of using prayer beads.

Saqqāf, Ḥasan. *Iḥtijaāj al-khaṭib bi-ʿibaārat man iddaʿá al-ijmaā fahuwa kaādhib*. Amman: Maktabat al-Imaām al-Nawawiī, 1990.
    Refutation against Albānī's critique of the practicality of consensus.

Saqqāf, Ḥasan. *Qāmūs shatāʾim al-Albānī*. Amman: Dār al-Imām al-Nawawī, 1993.
    Saqqāf tries to record and compile all the instances in which Albānī disrespected or spoke ill of other scholars.

Saqqāf, Ḥasan. *Tanāqaḍāt al-Albānī al-wāḍiḥāt*, N.p.: n.p. 2007.

Highlights Albānī's ~~"clear"~~ contradictions. He highlights instances in which Albānī would authenticate a ḥadīth and then later weaken it.