159828 - Are there any mawdoo‘ (fabricated) hadiths in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad?

the question

With regard to the Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abu’l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi says that some of the hadiths narrated in this Musnad are mawdoo‘ (fabricated). How correct is this view?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The scholars sometimes differ in their verdict on some hadiths, as to whether they are mawdoo‘ (fabricated) or not. Their difference of opinion may be for many reasons, including the following:

1.

Their differences of opinion concerning the narrators of a specific hadith. A narrator may be regarded as a liar by some of them, and according to others he may be accused of lying, or be da‘eef jiddan (very weak), so they differed in their verdict on the hadith accordingly.

2.

The scholars may also differ concerning the verdict on the text of the hadith. Some muhadditheen (hadith scholars) may think that this text is munkar jiddan (very odd), and that it is contrary to the basic principles of sharee‘ah, and that its content is weird and strange, which confirms that it is fabricated, whereas other scholars may think that the text does not reach that degree of oddness.

Al-‘Allaamah al-Mu‘allimi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

These are some principles which it is very useful to discuss:

1.

If the critic of a hadith found evidence on the basis of which it becomes most likely that the report is false and cannot be attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), he may say, describing it, that it is baatil (false) or mawdoo‘ (fabricated). Both words imply that the report was falsely attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), either deliberately or by mistake. But what may be understood from the second word (mawdoo‘ or fabricated) is that it was falsely attributed to him deliberately. This subtle difference (between describing it as fabricated or false) was not taken into account by those who compiled the books of fabricated reports; rather they may mention in the compiled books some reports for which there is evidence to suggest that they are false, even though it may appear that they were not deliberately attributed falsely to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

2.

There may be evidence that a particular report is false, even though the narrator because of whom the critic thinks that the report is flawed was not accused of deliberately attributing false reports to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). In fact the narrator may be honest (sadooq)and a virtuous man, but the critic thinks that he made a mistake or that this hadith somehow became part of his narrations.

3.

Ibn al-Jawzi often quotes the report and criticises one of the narrators in its isnaad (chain of narration), then other critics come after him and comment on his criticism, saying that this narrator was never accused of deliberately attributing false reports to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). We may understand the comments of later scholars on the basis of the two principles mentioned above.

Indeed, there may not be sufficient conclusive evidence to rule that the report is false, unless there is added to it the presence of a narrator in the isnaad who is known for deliberately lying. In that case the hadith may be deemed false.

End quote from Muqaddimat at-Ta‘leeq ‘ala al-Fawaa’id al-Majmoo‘ah by ash-Shawkaani (p. 7), Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.

Shaykh Taahir al-Jazaa’iri (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The reports that are attributed falsely to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are to be regarded as a lie against him, whether that attribution was done deliberately or by mistake.

End quote from Tawjeeh an-Nazr (2/574)

Shaykh Taariq ‘Awadullah said:

It is well-known that the critics of hadith often deem some hadiths in which the narrator made a mistake to be da‘eef jiddan (very weak), baatil (false), munkar (odd), laa asl lahu (has no basis) or mawdoo‘ (fabricated), even though the narrators who made mistakes are not so weak that all their hadiths should be rejected; rather sometimes the critics issue these strict verdicts on hadiths in which trustworthy narrators made a mistake, regardless of the status of the narrator who made that mistake. Rather they base their ruling on examination of the isnaad (chain of narrators) and matn (text), and the type of mistake that occurs in both or one of them.

End quote from al-Irshaadaat (p. 82)

Secondly:

Once what we have mentioned above is established, we will realise the reason why differences of opinion occurred among the scholars as to whether the Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal contains fabricated hadiths. Some scholars affirmed that and others denied it, but in reality the reason for the difference between the two views has to do with the definition of what a mawdoo‘ or fabricated hadith is.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Those narrators who may make mistakes in narration but do not deliberately tell lies about the

Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are the ones from whom you will find reports narrated in the Sunans, the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, and similar works.

This is in contrast to those who deliberately tell lies. Ahmad did not narrate from any of them in his Musnad.

Hence al-Haafiz Abu'l-'Alaa' al-Humadhaani and Shaykh Abu'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi disputed as to whether there are any mawdoo' hadiths in the Musnad.

Al-Haafiz Abu'l-'Alaa' denied that there could be any mawdoo' hadith in the Musnad, whereas Abu'l-Faraj affirmed that and stated that it contained hadiths that were known to be false.

There is no contradiction between the two views, because the report that is mawdoo' according to the terminology of Abu'l-Faraj is that for which there is proof that it is false, even if the one who narrated it never deliberately told lies about the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and, rather, made a mistake. Therefore he narrated in his book al-Mawdoo'aat many hadiths of that nature.

Many scholars disputed with him concerning many of the hadiths that he listed in his book (as being fabricated), and said: There is no sound evidence there (about some particular hadith) to prove that it is false; rather they explained that some of these hadiths had been proven to be sound.

However most of what he mentioned in al-Mawdoo'aat were false reports according to scholarly consensus.

With regard to al-Haafiz Abu'l-'Alaa' and others like him, what they meant by mawdoo' is that which was fabricated and made up, which the narrator deliberately and falsely attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

End quote from Majmoo' al-Fataawa (1/248)

This is how we may reconcile between these two views.

Whoever examines the hadiths of the Musnad, or some of them, and checks the views of the scholars on these hadiths, will realise that this book contains some hadiths that are very weak, and that their texts cannot be soundly attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and that they may be described as mawdoo‘ (fabricated) even if the narrator did not deliberately tell a lie against the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

In fact there is a hadith that was narrated by Imam Ahmad in the Musnad, and narrated from him by Ibn al-Jawzi, who stated that it is a lie. This is the hadith of ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I saw ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn ‘Awf enter Paradise crawling.” Al-Musnad (41/337)

Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: This hadith is a lie and is odd. He said: ‘Amaarah [one of the narrators] narrates munkar (odd) hadiths. An-Nasaa’i said: This is a mawdoo‘ (fabricated) hadith.

End quote from al-Mawdoo‘aat (2/13).

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, concerning the hadith quoted above:

It is sufficient for us that Ahmad testified that it is a lie, as he highlighted why it is flawed. So there is nothing wrong with narrating it and confirming that it is flawed. Perhaps this is one of the hadiths that he instructed should be crossed out, because that was his usual habit with regard to those hadiths that were very odd: he would give instructions that they be crossed out from the Musnad and other books. Or it may be one of the hadiths that he forgot about, because man is forgetful and perfection is only for Allah, may He be exalted.

End quote from an-Nukat (1/472- 473)

Therefore the scholars reached a conclusion concerning the Musnad of Imam Ahmad that it may contain a few hadiths that could be described as mawdoo‘ or at least as possibly mawdoo‘.

Al-Haafiz al-‘Iraqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the presence of da‘eef (weak) hadiths in it, that is certain; in fact it even contains some mawdoo‘ (fabricated) hadiths.

End quote from at-Taqyeed wa’l-Eedaah (p. 57)

Imam adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It contains a few hadiths that may be fabricated, but they are like a drop in the ocean.

End quote from Siyar A ‘laam an-Nubala’ (11/329)

The commentators on the Mu’sasat ar-Risaalah edition of Musnad al-Imam Ahmad said:

The least that can be said by one who is well versed in knowledge of hadith, after examining these hadiths and what the scholars said concerning them, is that they are extremely weak, and the text of many of them is known to be flawed on the basis of common sense, so it is not possible for them to be strengthened by corroborating reports.

End quote from al-Musnad (1/77, Mu’sasat ar-Risaalah edn).

The hadiths that are deemed in this edition as likely to be fabricated are eight hadiths.

The commentators clearly stated that only one hadith is definitely fabricated. This is the hadith of Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “ ‘Asqalaan is one of the two brides; from it will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection seventy thousand who will not be brought to account; fifty thousand will be resurrected as martyrs and will be brought in delegations to Allah. In it are ranks of martyrs who will carry their severed heads in their hands, and their veins will be flowing with blood, and they will say: ‘Our Lord, grant us what You promised us through Your Messengers, for verily You do not break Your promise.’ And He will say: ‘My slaves have spoken the truth; wash them in the white river. And they will emerge pure and white, and they will go anywhere they want in Paradise.”

Al-Musnad, 21/66

The commentators said: It is mawdoo‘ (fabricated). With regard to Abu ‘Iqaal – whose name was Hilaal ibn Zayd ibn Yasaar al-Basri, who was a resident of ‘Asqallaan – there was unanimous agreement that his hadith is to be rejected. Ibn Hibbaan said: Fabricated things were narrated from Anas that Anas never said; it is not permissible to quote them as evidence under any circumstances…. ad-Doolaabi said: This is a very odd hadith; it is like the hadith of the liars. This hadith was deemed to be fabricated by Ibn al-Jawzi and al-‘Iraqi, and it is as they said. The attempt of al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar – in al-Qawl al-Musaddad (p. 32-33) – to counter the accusation that it was fabricated is not appropriate.

End quote.

Another hadith in the Musnad that is fabricated is the marfoo‘ hadith of ‘Imraan ibn Husayn, which says: “Verily ‘Ali is of me and I am of him, and he is the waliy of every believer after me.”

Al-Musnad (33/154)

Ibn Taymiyah said in Minhaaj as-Sunnah (7/391-392): This is a lie against the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). End quote.

The number of hadiths in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad that Ibn al-Jawzi deemed to be fabricated was thirty-eight. Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqallaani tried to respond to them one by one, but many of his responses are not to be accepted from him. However he (may Allah have mercy on him) also admitted that there are some hadiths in the Musnad that are fabricated, as was affirmed previously by both adh-Dhahabi and al-‘Iraqi.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There are no hadiths in the Musnad for which there is no basis except for three or four hadiths, which include the hadith of ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn ‘Awf, according to which he will enter Paradise crawling. The only way to defend Ahmad concerning it is to note that it was one of the things that he instructed was to be crossed out, but it was left by mistake, or it was crossed out and then rewritten after having been crossed out.

End quote from Tadreeb ar-Raawi (1/173)

He also said:

First of all, we may defend Imam Ahmad (for narrating this hadith) in general terms, by noting that what he quoted does not include any hadith that speaks of rulings on what is halaal and haraam, and being lenient in narrating hadiths without highlighting the problem with them was something that was commonly done. It is proven that Imam Ahmad and other imams said: If we narrate hadiths concerning halaal and haraam, then we are strict concerning them, but if we narrate hadiths concerning virtuous deeds and the like, then we are lenient.

End quote from al-Qawl al-Musaddad (p. 11)

He also said:

In fact, most of his hadiths are good and the weak hadiths are mentioned by way of corroborating evidence. It contains a few weak and odd hadiths without any corroborating evidence; he narrated them, then he started to cross them out one by one, but a few of them remained after he died. Some people claim that it contains fabricated hadiths, but we cannot say definitively that any of them are fabricated; rather we cannot rule that any of them are fabricated except in extremely rare cases, in which it is possible to find an argument to prove otherwise.

End quote from Ta'jeel al-Manfa'ah (p. 6)

To conclude: the Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal contains some hadiths that are very weak, and may be described as fabricated, if that is based on a very broad definition of the fabricated hadiths. This is what was stated by many contemporary specialists in hadith, such as Dr. Ibraaheem al-Laahim and Dr Sa'd Aal Humayyid.

And Allah knows best.