

Course Introduction, Note-Taking Tips, and Biographies of the Authors

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Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Organization	2
1.2	How to Take Notes While Studying Islamic Sciences	2
1.2.1	Preparation: Setting Up Your Notes	2
1.2.2	How to Structure Your Notes During Class	3
1.2.3	Minimal Color System	4
1.2.4	Evidence-Based Review Schedule	4
2	Biographies of the Authors	5
2.1	Biography of Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini (419–478 AH / 1028–1085 CE) . .	5
2.1.1	Birth and Background	5
2.1.2	His Teachers	5
2.1.3	His Students	6
2.1.4	His Works	6
2.1.5	His Death	7
2.2	Biography of Imam Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (791–864 AH / 1389–1459 CE) . .	7
2.2.1	Birth and Background	7
2.2.2	His Teachers	7
2.2.3	His Students	7
2.2.4	His Works	8
2.2.5	His Death	8

1 Introduction

The long-term goal of this project is to provide an accessible, organized study companion for English-speaking students of sacred law, based on **Sharh al-Waraqat** by **Imam Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli**, and taught according to reliable Shafi'i methodology and sources by **Sheikh Abdullahi Shire** of **Miraath Institute**.

This work was originally inspired by a fellow student (may Allah preserve him and protect him) who inquired about my note-taking approach a while back. In the spirit of classical tradition, I was reminded of **Ta'lim al-Muta'allim fi Tariq al-Ta'allum** (*Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning*), which outlines adab and practical methods for serious seekers of sacred knowledge.

Read the English translation of [*Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*](#)

1.1 Organization

The content follows the topical arrangement of *Sharh al-Waraqat* by Imam al-Mahalli, beginning with biographies of the author (Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni) and the commentator (Imam Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli), then progressing through the essential chapters of Usul al-Fiqh, including, but not limited to categories of speech, rulings, commands and prohibitions, general and specific texts, abrogation, consensus, analogy (qiyas), and independent legal reasoning (ijtihad).

1.2 How to Take Notes While Studying Islamic Sciences

Many students struggle to retain English explanations while following the Arabic text, especially when encountering unfamiliar words and concepts related to the subject matter at hand. Research from the [University of Pennsylvania](#) shows that students remember **up to 70% of material when they write concise notes and review them within 24 hours**, compared to less than 30% if no active note-taking or review is done.

1.2.1 Preparation: Setting Up Your Notes

i Before the Lesson

- Print or bring the Arabic text of *Sharh al-Waraqat*. Lightly number each line or key statement in the matn.
- Keep a separate notebook or tablet for your notes — leave space beside each line number to write explanations.
- Draw a narrow left column for keywords or questions and a larger right section for class explanations and commentary.
- Leave a bottom section or back of the page for summarizing what you learned after class.
- Before class, **recite Qur'an abundantly** and **send abundant salawat upon the Prophet** , intending that Allah opens understanding and blesses your

lesson.

💡 Reflections from the Scholars

Some people said to the scholar of Damascus **Shaykh Ali al-Daqqar**:

> “We deliver various lessons to the people but we do not see in them the same effect that we notice in your lessons.”

He replied:

> “My son — were it not for necessity I would not speak. This lesson you are hearing, my son, is supported by the recitation of ten ajza’ (parts) of the Qur'an before dawn with the intention that Allah benefits the Muslims through what I speak about.”

Al-Haafidh al-Diyaa' al-Maqdisi said:

> “Ibrahim ibn ‘Abdil-Wahid al-Maqdisi advised me at the time I traveled for seeking knowledge: ‘Increase in recitation of the Qur'an and do not leave it. For indeed whatever you seek will be facilitated for you proportionate to what you recite.’”

He added:

> “I saw that and experienced it many times. When I recited a great deal of Qur'an, listening to Hadith and writing much of it down became easy for me. But when I did not recite, it was not facilitated.”

1.2.2 How to Structure Your Notes During Class

Structure your **notebook page/notetaking device** like this:

Section	Purpose
Left Margin (small)	Write Arabic line number, key term, or question.
Main Notes Area (right side)	English explanation, teacher's commentary, definitions, examples.
Bottom of Page / Separate Box	Summary of lesson, unresolved questions, or reflections.

You may lightly underline important words in the Arabic text, but full explanations should remain in the notebook or be referenced from reliable translations. In addition, always, when referencing or quoting a hadith by the Prophet Muhammad, always write out Salawat in its full form) .(

1.2.3 Minimal Color System

Color	Use For
Blue	Key Arabic terms & definitions.
Green	Important commentary or explanations from Sheikh Abdullahi Shire.
Red	Questions, uncertainties, or topics to review or ask about.

1.2.4 Evidence-Based Review Schedule

Research shows that reviewing notes at spaced intervals drastically increases retention. A simple routine I've found to be helpful is:

Time	What to Do	Why?
Within 24-48 hours	Reread your notes and add missing details (this is especially important if you are re-watching the lectures and catch important missed information)	This prevents forgetting up to 50–80% of material.
After 3-6 days	Revisit and summarize the key ideas in your own words. If you're able to, explain to other students in the class.	This not only reinforces your own understanding, but helps other students benefit as well and helps build lasting relationships with students you may take subsequent classes with.

2 Biographies of the Authors

i Source

Imam al-Juwaini's biography was translated from from *Sharh al-Waraqat*, Dar al-Diyā Publishing, pages 13–15, and Imam Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli's from the same text, pages 16-18.

2.1 Biography of Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini (419–478 AH / 1028–1085 CE)

2.1.1 Birth and Background

He is **Shaykh al-Islam**, the jurist, theologian, and master of usul, the Shaykh of the Shafi'is, the Imam of the Imams — **Imam al-Haramain Abu al-Ma‘ali Abd al-Malik ibn Abd Allah ibn Yusuf al-Juwaini al-Naysaburi**.

He was born into a well-known scholarly family among the people of knowledge, virtue, piety, and asceticism.

His father, **Abu Muhammad Abd Allah al-Juwaini**, was among the great imams of Islam. The son grew up under his care, acquiring knowledge from him, memorizing, studying, and refining his worship. He advanced in **fiqh**, **usul**, **tafsir**, and **adab**.

- **Grandfather:** Yusuf ibn Abd Allah, a distinguished literatus.
- **Paternal uncle:** Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Yusuf al-Juwaini, known as *the Shaykh of the Hijaz*.
- His era was among the most brilliant centuries; scholars flourished in every discipline and the intellectual climate refined his scholarship.

2.1.2 His Teachers

He sought knowledge tirelessly with many leading scholars:

- **His father**, Imam Abu Muhammad al-Juwaini.
- **Abu al-Qasim al-Iskafi al-Isfarayini**, learned jurist in usul.
- **Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Faddal al-Majjashi'i**, grammarian and literatus.
He also heard hadith from **Abu Hasan**, **Abu Sa‘id ibn ’Alayyak**, and **Abu Sa‘id al-Nasrawi**, among others.

2.1.3 His Students

He taught numerous eminent figures, including:

- **Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Hujjat al-Islam)**, author of *Ihya‘ ’Ulum al-Din*.
- **Imad al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Harrasi**, author of valuable works.
- The jurist **Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Khawwafi al-Naysaburi** (a contemporary).

💡 Praise for His Students

Imam al-Juwaini said:

> “Al-Ghazali is a deep ocean, al-Kiya is a blazing lion, and al-Khawwafi is a consuming fire.”

ℹ️ Praise from Scholars

- **Al-Dhahabi**: “The great Imam, Shaykh of the Shafi‘iyyah, Imam al-Haramain.”
- **Al-Subki**: “Imam, Shaykh of Islam, sea of knowledge, precise scholar, theologian and usuli, eloquent and unmatched — famed East and West.”
- **Abu Uthman al-Sabuni**: “He is the very eye of Islam today, defending it with eloquence.”

2.1.4 His Works

- *Nihayat al-Matlab fi Dirayat al-Madhab*
- *Al-Burhan fi Usul al-Fiqh*
- *Al-Irshad ila Qawati‘ al-Adillah fi Usul al-I‘tiqad*
- *Al-Waraqat fi Usul al-Fiqh*
- *Luma‘ al-Adillah*
- *Ghayat al-Umam fi Ithbat al-’Adl li al-Hakam*
...and others.

2.1.5 His Death

He passed away in **478 AH (1085 CE)**. May Allah envelop him in His mercy, Allahumma ameen.

2.2 Biography of Imam Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (791–864 AH / 1389–1459 CE)

2.2.1 Birth and Background

He is the learned, precise imam — hadith scholar, jurist, theologian, exegete, and grammarian —

Jalal al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Ansari al-Mahalli al-Qahiri al-Shafi'i.

Born in **Cairo** in **791 AH (1389 CE)**, he dedicated himself to both transmitted and rational sciences and excelled in most of what he studied.

2.2.2 His Teachers

He studied under many great imams:

- **Siraj al-Din Abu Hafs 'Umar ibn 'Ali (Ibn al-Mulqin)**
- **Shaykh al-Islam al-Bulqini** (Abu Hafs 'Umar ibn Raslan al-Qahiri al-Shafi'i)
- **Wali al-Din Abu Zur'ah Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Raheem al-'Iraqi**
- **Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Kinani (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani)** — Commander of the Faithful in Hadith

2.2.3 His Students

Students who graduated from his teaching include:

- **Abu al-Fida' Isma'il ibn Ibrahim (Ibn Jama'ah)**
- **Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Dimashqi (Ibn Qadi 'Ajlun)**
- **Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi**

- Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti
- Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah al-Sharif al-Samhudi — scholar of Madinah

i Praise from Scholars

- **Al-Sakhawi:** “*Precise, sharp-minded, careful with his time, ascetic in spirit, and the Sheikh of the Shafi‘is at the Mu‘ayyadiyya and Barquqiyya institutions; an imam, verifier, deeply insightful and intelligent.*”
- **Al-Suyuti:** “*A sign of intelligence and understanding.*”
- **Ibn al-Imad:** “*The Taftazani of the Arabs — the imam, the learned scholar.*”

2.2.4 His Works

- *Al-Badr al-Tali‘ fi Hall Jam‘ al-Jawami‘* (*Commentary on Subki’s Jam’ al-Jawami’ on Usul al-Fiqh*)
- *Sharh al-Waraqat* (this commentary)
- *Kanz al-Raghibin fi Sharh Minhaj al-Talibin* (*Commentary on Imam Nawawi’s Minhaj in Fiqh*)
...and others.

2.2.5 His Death

He passed away in **864 AH (1459 CE)**. May Allah have abundant mercy on him. Al-lahumma aameen.