

## Awza'i School Of Thought And Its Followers In The Medieval Islamic World: A Historical And Demographic Study

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### Abstract:

*This paper presents a historical and analytical investigation of the Awza'i school of jurisprudence, a prominent Muslim legal tradition. Founded by Imam al-Awza'i, a contemporary of esteemed jurists Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Abu Jafar Sadiq, this school of thought emerged in Syria, where it was the dominant religious tradition. The Awza'i school later spread to the Iberian Peninsula, specifically Andalusia (present-day Spain, Portugal, and parts of France), where it persisted for approximately seventy years. However, its influence waned with the adoption of the Maliki School of thought by the ruling elite, leading to its eventual decline and replacement by the Shafi'i school of thought in Syria after 300 years. Despite its diminished presence, remnants of the Awza'i school's teachings can be found in the works of various jurists, often cited in support or refutation. This study aims to reconstruct the history of the Awza'i school and identify its followers through a thorough examination of historical records.*

**Keywords:** *Imam Awzā'ī, Awzā'ī's school of Thought, Islamic Jurisprudence, Demography, Iberian Peninsula.*

### Introduction:

The Awza'i school of thought, a significant Muslim legal tradition, has been a subject of fascination among scholars of Islamic history and jurisprudence. Founded by Imam al-Awza'i, a prominent contemporary of Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Abu Jafar Sadiq, this school of thought emerged in 8th-century Syria, where it became the prevailing religious tradition. Its influence later extended to the Iberian Peninsula, specifically Andalusia, where it persisted for approximately seventy years. However, the adoption of the Maliki School by the ruling elite led to its decline and eventual replacement by the Shafi'i school in Syria. Despite its diminished presence, the Awza'i school's teachings continue to be cited in the works of various jurists, underscoring its enduring legacy. This historical and demographic study seeks to reconstruct the trajectory of the Awza'i school and identify its adherents, providing a comprehensive understanding of its development, diffusion, and impact on the Islamic legal tradition.

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### **Imam Awzai:**

Imam Awzā'ī's real name is Abu amr Abd al-Rahman bin Amr bin Yehamd, who belongs to the awza tribe, which is a branch of the Dhul-Kala' tribe of Yemen. It was said that he was a sub-tribe of Hamdan, and his real name was Marsad bin Zaid. It was also said that Al-Awza was a village in Damascus on the way to Bab Al-Faradis, and awzaai was not one of them. Rather, he settled among them and was attributed to them, and he was one of the captives of Yemen.<sup>1</sup> He was an Islamic Scholar, jurist the chief representative and founder of the 'Awzā'ī school of Islamic jurisprudence.

He was born in Baalbek city (a city of Lebanon in modern day) in 88H/707AD. He experienced a tumultuous upbringing, having been born without parental care, and subsequently faced numerous challenges and adversities, particularly during his formative years."<sup>2</sup>

He exemplified a paradigm of piety, devotion, and temperance, characterized by patience, calmness, and a reserved demeanor. His virtues encompassed chastity, generosity, unwavering commitment to truth, and unrelenting courage in its defense. Notably, he was esteemed for his trustworthiness and reliability as a speaker. His exceptional moral character and erudition garnered universal acclaim. Among the scions of royalty and nobility, none surpassed him in intellect, piety, knowledge, eloquence, dignity, patience, or taciturnity. His discourse was so sagacious that his interlocutors felt compelled to record his every utterance. Moreover, his industry in authoring written works was remarkable, reflecting his profound dedication to scholarship"<sup>3</sup>.

His itinerant pursuits of knowledge led him to traverse various intellectual hubs, including Basra, Kufa, Mecca, Medina, Damascus, and ultimately Beirut, which he designated as his permanent residence and spiritual retreat (ribat) until his demise.

According to narrated accounts, during a chance encounter with a black woman in a Beirut cemetery, he inquired about the location of architectural marvels. Her enigmatic response, "If you seek architecture, it lies herein" (pointing to the graves), and "If you seek ruin, it lies before you" (gesturing towards the city), resonated with him. This ephemeral exchange precipitated his decision to establish himself in Beirut, drawn by the city's paradoxical juxtaposition of mortality and transience."<sup>4</sup>

His involvement in a mission to Yamamah facilitated an encounter with Yahya ibn Abi Katheer, from whom he received hadith transmissions and developed a profound devotion. Yahya ibn Abi Katheer subsequently recommended that he proceed to Basra to receive hadith transmissions from Al-Hasan and Ibn Sirin. However, upon arrival, he discovered that Al-Hasan had deceased two months prior, and found Ibn Sirin in a state of terminal illness. Despite this, he persisted in visiting Ibn Sirin, who ultimately succumbed to his illness without transmitting hadiths to Al-Awza'i.

Following this, Al-Awza'i relocated to Damascus, establishing residence in the Al-Awza'i district outside Bab Al-Faradis, where he emerged as a paramount authority, providing juridical and hadith-based guidance to the local populace and beyond. His expertise encompassed jurisprudence, hadith, hadiths of battles, and Islamic sciences. Throughout his lifetime, he interacted with numerous Tabien and other scholars, and his hadith transmissions were narrated by esteemed scholars such as Malik bin Anas, Al-Thawri, and Al-Zuhri, who also served as one of his instructors"<sup>5</sup>.

The Muslim historians exhibit a discrepancy regarding the year of his demise. Ahmad posits that he passed away in the year 150 AH, whereas Al-Walid bin Muslim suggests the year 156 AH. Conversely, Al-Abbas bin Al-Walid Al-Bayrouti reports that his father informed him of

the exact date of death: Sunday, at the beginning of the day, two nights prior to the end of Safar, in the year 157 AH. This latter account garners the majority consensus and is deemed the most accurate.

Notably, this opinion is shared by prominent scholars such as Abu Mushir, Hisham ibn Ammar, Al-Walid ibn Muslim (based on the most reliable narrations), Yahya ibn Ma'in, Duhaim, Khalifa ibn Khayyat, Abu Ubayd, and Saeed ibn Abd Al-Aziz, among others. Al-Abbas ibn Al-Walid remarks that he did not attain the age of seventy, whereas an alternative account suggests that he surpassed seventy. However, the accurate age at the time of death is sixty-nine, calculated based on his birth year of 88 AH, which is widely accepted. Conversely, a weaker account suggests a birth year of 93 A<sup>6</sup>H".

#### **His teachers:**

He narrated from: Ata bin Abi Rabah, Abu Jaafar Al-Baqir, Amr bin Shuaib, Makhul, Qatadah, Al-Qasim bin Mukhaymara, Rabi'ah bin Yazid Al-Qasir, Bilal bin Saad, Al-Zuhri, Abdah bin Abi Lubabah, Yahya bin Abi Katheer, Abi Katheer Al-Suhaimi Al-Yamami, Hassan bin Atiyah, Ismail bin Ubaid Allah bin Abi Al-Muhajir, Mut'am bin Al-Muqaddam, Umair bin Hani Al-Ansi, Yunus bin Maysarah, Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Taymi, Abdullah bin Aamer Al-Yahsabi, Ishaq bin Abdullah bin Abi Talha, and Al-Harith bin Yazid Al-Hadrami.

And Hafs bin Annan, and Salem bin Abdullah Al-Maharbi, and Sulayman bin Habib Al-Maharbi, and Shaddad Abu Ammar, and Abdullah bin Ubaid bin Umair, and Abd Al-Rahman bin Al-Qasim, and Abd Al-Wahid bin Qais, and Abu Al-Najashi Ata bin Suhaib, and Ata Al-Khurasani, and Ikrimah bin Khalid, and Alqamah bin Marthad, and Muhammad bin Sirin, and Ibn Al-Munkadir, and Maymun bin Mihran, and Nafi' the client of Ibn Umar, and Al-Walid bin Hisham, and many of the followers, and others<sup>7</sup>.

His earls:

Those he contacted and interacted with, including: Malik bin Anas, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Abdullah bin al-Mubarak.

His students:

Narrated from him: Ibn Shihab Al-Zuhri, Yahya bin Abi Katheer - and they are two of his teachers - and Shu'bah, and Al-Thawri, and Yunus bin Yazid, and Abdullah bin Al-Ala bin Zabar, and Malik, and Saeed bin Abdul Aziz, and Ibn Al-Mubarak, and Abu Ishaq Al-Fazari, and Ismail bin Ayyash, and Yahya bin Hamza Al-Qadi, and Baqiyah bin Al-Waleed, and Al-Waleed bin Muslim, and Al-Ma'afi bin Imran, and Muhammad bin Shu'ayb, and Shu'ayb bin Ishaq, and Yahya Al-Qattan, and Isa bin Yunus, and Al-Haqi bin Ziyad, and Muhammad bin Yusuf Al-Faryabi, and Abu Al-Mughirah Al-Himsi, and Abu Asim Al-Nabil, and Muhammad bin Kathir Al-Masisi, and Amr bin Abdul Wahid, and Yahya Al-Babalti, and Al-Waleed bin Muzayd Al-Azri, and many other<sup>8</sup>s.

#### **Scholars' opinions about Al-Awza'i:**

Malik ibn Anas regarded Al-Awza'i as an exemplary imam worthy of emulation. Sufyan ibn Uyaynah and others concurred, characterizing him as the preeminent imam of his era. Yahya Al-Qattan, citing Malik, recounted a meeting with Al-Awza'i, Al-Thawri, and Abu Hanifa, during which Malik identified Al-Awza'i as the most authoritative figure.

Muhammad ibn Ajlan attested to Al-Awza'i's unwavering commitment to offering sincere counsel to the Muslim community. Another scholar noted Al-Awza'i's reserved demeanor, observing that he rarely exhibited unbridled laughter. Instead, his sermons often moved his audience to tears, both visibly and inwardly. Yahya ibn Ma'in posited that the scholarly community comprised four luminaries: Al-Thawri, Abu Hanifa, Malik, and Al-Awza'i.<sup>9</sup>

Al-Walid bin Mazid reported that Al-Awza'i's theological discourse possessed a timeless quality, becoming increasingly profound with repeated engagement. Abd Al-Rahman bin

Mahdi characterized Al-Awza'i as an imam in the Sunnah tradition. Sufyan bin Uyaynah echoed this sentiment, with Abu Muhammad clarifying that Al-Awza'i was regarded as the imam of his time.<sup>10</sup>

Abd Al-Rahman bin Mahdi further identified Al-Awza'i as one of four paramount imams in hadith scholarship, alongside Malik, Sufyan, and Hammad bin Zaid. Ahmad bin Hanbal recounted an encounter between Malik, Sufyan, and Al-Awza'i, during which Malik intimated that Al-Awza'i possessed superior knowledge, albeit with limitations regarding his suitability for imamate.

Abu Ishaq Al-Fazari reported Al-Awza'i's statement that, following the passing of Sufyan and Ibn Awn, the scholarly community would be bereft of equals. Abu Muhammad interpreted this remark as Al-Awza'i's acknowledgment of his own peerage with Al-Thawri and Ibn Awn<sup>11</sup>.

### **Awzai School of Thoughts**

The Awza'i School of thoughts is academically recognized as the third principal Sunni theological school, following the venerable schools of thoughts established by Imam Hasan al-Basri and Imam Abu Hanifah. This categorization positions the Awza'i school within the historical trajectory of Sunni thought, specifically among the written sects that developed after the period of the Sahabah, thereby underscoring its significance within the Islamic theological law.<sup>12</sup>

### **His Jurisprudential Contributions:**

Al-Awza'i's independent school of thought, which flourished in Syria for over two centuries and in Andalusia (Iberian Peninsula) for approximately half a century before its eventual decline, can be situated within the broader tradition of the People of Hadith (Ahl al-Hadith). This school of thought garnered a following among scholars, notably including Abd al-Rahman ibn Ibrahim (Duhaim), Abdullah ibn Ismail, Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Abd al-Salam al-Bayrouti, and Sa'sa`ah ibn Salam ibn Abdullah al-Dimashqi.

Al-Awza'i's religio-legal paradigm emphasized the importance of:

1. Group adherence (jam'ah)
2. Adherence to the Sunnah
3. Frequentation of mosques for prayer
4. Recitation of the Qur'an
5. Jihad in the path of Allah

He was known to articulate the aphorism: "The believer speaks sparingly and acts abundantly, whereas the hypocrite speaks profusely and acts scantily." This statement encapsulates his emphasis on the importance of tangible actions over mere rhetoric in demonstrating one's commitment to the faith.<sup>13</sup>

According to the testimony of imam abu Hanifah, Al-Awza'i pursued the study of jurisprudence (fiqh) under the guidance of esteemed scholar Makhul al-Shami<sup>14</sup>.

Malik and Al-Awza'i engaged in extensive discussions pertaining to Islamic jurisprudence and rulings in Madinah, commencing from noon until the afternoon (Asar) prayer, and resuming from the afternoon prayer until the sunset prayer. During these exchanges, Al-Awza'i immersed Malik in the intricacies of Islamic battles, while Malik reciprocally enlightened Al-Awza'i on jurisprudential matters.

On one occasion, Al-Awza'i and Al-Thawri engaged in a heated debate within the mosque of Al-Khaif regarding the contentious issue of raising one's hands during bowing and rising from it. Al-Awza'i substantiated his argument by citing a narration from Al-Zuhri, via Salim, and ultimately tracing it back to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who reportedly

raised his hands during these actions. Conversely, Al-Thawri countered with the hadith of Yazid ibn Abi Ziyad, prompting Al-Awza'i to express indignation at the apparent contradiction.

Al-Awza'i remarked, "Do you dare to contradict the hadith of Al-Zuhri with that of Yazid ibn Abi Ziyad, a notoriously weak narrator?" This retort visibly agitated Al-Thawri, whose countenance turned red. Al-Awza'i subsequently inquired, "Did my words displease you?" Upon Al-Thawri's affirmative response, Al-Awza'i suggested, "Let us proceed to the corner, where we may mutually invoke curses, thereby determining which of us occupies the truth." Al-Thawri, however, opted to remain silent, thus concluding the debate.<sup>15</sup>

Haql ibn Ziyad reported that Al-Awza'i rendered fatwas on approximately seventy thousand Islamic issues, demonstrating his prolific contributions to Islamic jurisprudence. Abu Zur'ah corroborated this assertion, stating that Al-Awza'i's opinions on sixty thousand Islamic rulings were documented.

Additional sources indicate that Al-Awza'i commenced issuing fatwas in the year 113 AH, at the age of twenty-five, and continued to do so until his demise.<sup>16</sup> Al-Awza'i's epistemological stance was unequivocal, as he posited: "Knowledge is exclusively that which emanates from the Companions of Muhammad; anything devoid of their authority is not considered knowledge." This statement underscores Al-Awza'i's commitment to the primacy of prophetic tradition and the importance of authoritative sources in Islamic scholarship."<sup>17</sup>

An examination of the hadith tradition reveals that both Al-Awza'i and Malik ibn Anas transmitted hadiths from the esteemed Imam Zuhri. Moreover, they also engaged in mutual transmission, wherein Malik occasionally reported hadiths from Al-Awza'i, who had himself received them from Imam Zuhri. Conversely, Al-Awza'i also transmitted hadiths from Malik, thus establishing a reciprocal relationship in their hadith transmission. A similar dynamic is observed in Al-Awza'i's relationship with Yahya ibn Kathir, where they also engaged in mutual hadith transmission. This phenomenon highlights the complex network of hadith transmission and the interconnectedness of early Islamic scholars.<sup>18</sup>

"Al-Awza'i demonstrated exceptional precocity in jurisprudence, as evidenced by his ability to address questions on the subject at the tender age of thirteen. Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi attested to Al-Awza'i's unparalleled expertise in the Sunnah within the Levant region.

Haql ibn Ziyad reported that Al-Awza'i responded to an astonishing seventy thousand inquiries, a testament to his vast knowledge and authority. Upon learning of Al-Awza'i's arrival, Sufyan al-Thawri sought him out and demonstrated profound respect by untying his camel's lead and placing it around his neck. As they traversed the terrain, Sufyan would gesture to Al-Awza'i, declaring, "The path leads to the Sheikh."

A distinguished array of scholars sought knowledge from Al-Awza'i, including Abu Ishaq al-Fazari, Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, Haql ibn Ziyad, Abu al-Abbas al-Walid ibn Muslim, al-Walid ibn Muzayd, Umar ibn Abd al-Wahid, Amr ibn Abi Salamah, Uqbah ibn Alqamah, and Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Faryabi. Notably, Abu Muhammad was also among his students.<sup>19</sup>

During his visit to Yahya ibn Abi Katheer, Al-Awza'i undertook the compilation of his written works. Haql ibn Ziyad reiterated the remarkable fact that Al-Awza'i addressed seventy thousand questions, underscoring his extraordinary erudition and influence in the realm of Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>20</sup>

Within the hadith tradition, numerous instances of *sulasiat* (three-fold) and *rubaiat* (four-fold) narrations are attributed to Imam Al-Awza'i. The term *sulasiat* refers to hadiths characterized by a concise chain of transmission, comprising solely three narrators linking the report to the

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Conversely, rubaiat denotes hadiths with a slightly extended chain of transmission, featuring four narrators connecting the report to the Prophet.

It is noteworthy that the brevity of the chain of transmission is inversely correlated with the quality of the hadith. Specifically, the fewer the number of narrators involved in the transmission, the greater the reliability and authenticity of the hadith. This principle underscores the significance of sulasiat and rubaiat narrations, as they represent relatively direct and unadulterated channels of transmission from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)."

The following exemplify Al-Awza'i's sulasiat (three-fold) narrations:

1. Al-Awza'i ← Ishaq ← Anas
2. Al-Awza'i ← Qatada ← Anas
3. Al-Awza'i ← Atta ← Jabir
4. Al-Awza'i ← Ata' ← Ibn Abbas
5. Al-Awza'i ← Nafi' ← Ibn Umar
6. Al-Awza'i ← Ata' ← Abu Hurairah
7. ( Variant chain ) Muhammad bin Sirin ← Abu Hurairah

And the following represent Al-Awza'i's rubaiyat (four-fold) narrations:

1. Al-Awza'i ← Al-Zuhri ← Sulaim ← Ibn Umar
2. Al-Awza'i ← Amr bin Shaab ← his father ← his grandfather
3. Al-Awza'i ← Al-Zuhri ← Sa'id ← Abu Hurairah
4. al awzai ← Al-Zuhri ← Urwah ← Aisha.<sup>21</sup>

Note: The arrows (←) denote the direction of transmission, with the narrator on the left receiving the hadith from the authority on the right."

#### "Al-Awza'i's Literary Contributions:

Al-Awza'i is credited as the pioneering figure in compiling hadith in Syria,<sup>22</sup> although Abd al-Razzaq attributes the initial compilation to Ibn Jurayj, with Al-Awza'i also making significant contributions<sup>23</sup>. He wrote many books but the majority of Al-Awza'i's works have been lost. A sampling of his literary contributions includes the following works:"

1. Sear al-Awza'i':

"The biography of Al-Awza'i, titled 'Sear al-Awza'i', is incorporated within the 'Kitab al-Alam'. This text is accessible in the 'Kitab al-Umm', spanning from volume 1, page 352 to 390. .

2. Kitab al Sunan
3. Kitab al masayil

Unfortunately, the majority of Al-Awza'i's works have been lost, with the exception of his biographical compendium. There are indications that he may have authored additional works, including Kitab Us Sunan Sunan and a Kitab al Masayil.

4. Musnad Al-Awza'i:<sup>24</sup>

Al-Awza'i himself reported that he compiled fourteen books under the guidance of Yahya ibn Katheer, which were subsequently destroyed by fire. Hisham ibn Ammar corroborated this account, stating that Al-Awza'i's works were lost during an earthquake, with estimates suggesting that approximately 1.3 million copies were destroyed.

However, a remarkable incident occurred where an individual presented Al-Awza'i with copies of his lost works, offering him the opportunity to review and correct them. Nevertheless, Al-

Awza'i chose not to disclose or utilize these copies until his passing, leaving the fate of his literary legacy uncertain.<sup>25</sup>"

Furthermore, Al-Awza'i's epistolary correspondence with various ministers and monarchs has been preserved in diverse texts, as recorded by Ibn Abi Hatim in 'Al-Jarh and Al-Muddham of Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Hatim Muhammad ibn Idris'."

Notably, Al-Awza'i does not have a dedicated, standalone book of his own; however, his jurisprudential pronouncements are extensively documented in 'Al-Awsat fi Sunan wa Ijma wal Ikhtilaf' by Ibn Mundhir Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim (d. 319 AH). Similarly, Imam Kusaj Abu Yaqub Ishaq bin Mansoor Marwazi (d. 251 AH) has compiled numerous sayings of Al-Awza'i in the work 'Masayil Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Ishaq Ibn Rahwayh'

### **Demographic Study of his followers:**

"The Iberian Peninsula, encompassing contemporary Spain, Portugal, and portions of southern France, constitutes the southwestern European region of Andalusia. During the tenure of Umayyad Caliph Walid bin Abd al-Malik bin Marwan, General Tariq Ibn Ziyad launched a military campaign in Morocco, capturing the territory with a force of approximately seven thousand soldiers. In 712 AD, Musa Ibn Nasir, the governor of Morocco, augmented their ranks with an additional five thousand troops.

The Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba:

Although the Umayyad Caliphate had been toppled in Syria in 750 AD, a scion of the dynasty, Abd al-Rahman I, managed to escape and flee to Andalusia in 755 AD. There, he proclaimed the re-establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba in 756 AD.<sup>26</sup>

Historical records indicate that adherents of the Uza'i school of thought persisted in Andalusia until 220 AH (835 CE) and continued to thrive in Sham<sup>7</sup> (Syria) until 340 AH (951 CE), as chronicled by historians."

"The Awza'i school of thought maintained a significant presence in Andalusia until 220 AH (835 CE), after which it experienced a decline in popularity. Concomitantly, the Maliki school of thought gained prominence under the auspices of Yahya bin Yahya Al-Laithi.

Similarly, the Awza'i school of thought remained influential in Damascus until 340 AH (951 CE), with Judge Abu Al-Hasan bin Hudlam convening a study circle in the Great Mosque of Damascus dedicated to the teachings of Al-Awza'i.

Notably, Al-Awza'i was revered as the principal authority by the people of Ash-Sham, who adhered to his doctrine until the fourth century AH. Moreover, the inhabitants of Morocco initially followed Al-Awza'i's teachings before the Maliki school of thought gained traction in the region."

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<sup>7</sup>. In the 9th century, Sham was one of the five main provinces (junds) of the Abbasid Caliphate in Syria, along with Urdunn (Jordan), Filastin (Palestine), al-Awasim (northern Syria), and Qinnasrin (central Syria). The province of Sham was further divided into smaller districts, including Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. The capital of Sham was Damascus, which served as a major center of governance, trade, and culture. During the 9th century, Sham was an important hub of Islamic learning, with prominent scholars like Al-Awza'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal contributing to the region's intellectual landscape. (Hinds, M. (1984). Early Islamic Administration and the Caliphate of al-Mu'min. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol: 116 Issue: 1, 1-17)

Shams Uddin Zahabi says:

"The Awza'i school of thought maintained a significant presence in Andalusia until 220 AH (835 CE), after which it experienced a decline in popularity. Concomitantly, the Maliki school of thought gained prominence under the auspices of Yahya bin Yahya Al-Laythi. Similarly, the Awza'i school of thought remained influential in Damascus until 340 AH (951 CE), with Judge Abu Al-Hasan bin Hudlam convening a study circle in the Great Mosque of Damascus dedicated to the teachings of Al-Awza'i."<sup>27</sup>

Imam Safdi writes:

"The Awza'i school of thought maintained a discernible presence in Andalusia until approximately 220 AH (835 CE), after which it experienced a decline in influence. Concomitantly, the Maliki school of thought gained ascendancy, particularly through the prominence of Yahya bin Yahya al-Laythi. Furthermore, the Awza'i school of thought retained its significance in Damascus until circa 340 AH (951 CE), indicating a prolonged period of intellectual vitality in the region."<sup>28</sup>

Ibn taimiah writes:

"Al-Awza'i was revered as the principal authority by the people of Ash-Sham, who adhered to his doctrine until the fourth century AH. Moreover, the inhabitants of Morocco initially followed Al-Awza'i's teachings before the Maliki school of thought gained traction in the region."<sup>29</sup>

#### **Demographic Analysis of Followers:**

Based on the preceding historical examination, it can be inferred that the Awza'i School of thought enjoyed a significant following among the population of the Iberian Peninsula for a period of approximately 70 years, spanning from 150 to 220 AH (772-835 CE)

Conversely, in Syria, the Awza'i School of thought maintained a substantial adherent base for an extended duration of roughly 300 years, from 150 to 340 AH (772-951 CE).

Notably, by 340 AH (951 CE), the population of Syria had swelled to over 2 million individuals, while the city of Cordoba boasted a sizable demographic of approximately 100,000 Arabs and Berbers. Estimating the population of Andalusia (Islamic Iberia) in the beginning of the 9th century is challenging due to limited historical records. However, here are some approximate population figures:

The population of Andalusia in the early 9th century is estimated to be around 1 million to 1.5 million people or approximately 2 million to 3 million inhabitants. Although there were Christians and Jews in Islamic Iberia but most of the inhabitants were Muslims and followers of the Awza'i School of thoughts. This constitutes a considerable population size for that era".

Prominent Awza'i Scholars:

Historical records reveal a notable array of scholars affiliated with the Awza'i school of thought, including:

1. Ibn Hadlam (Ahmad ibn Sulayman ibn Ayoub ibn Dawud ibn Abdullah ibn Hadlam): A distinguished Imam, Mufti of Damascus, and esteemed jurist.
2. Al-Asadi al-Dimashqi al-Awza'i: A deputy in the Damascus judiciary under al-Husayn ibn Harwan and Abu al-Tahir al-Dhahali.<sup>30</sup>



3. Al-Abu al-Husayn al-Razi: A scholar who led a study circle in the Damascus Mosque, focusing on the teachings of al-Awza'i, until his demise in Shawwal 347 AH (958 CE) or Rabi' al-Awwal 7 AH (627 CE), at the age of eighty-nine.

4&5. Haql and Ibn Sama'a: Abu Zur'ah al-Dimashqi reports that Abu Mashair al-Dimashqi regarded Haql and Ibn Sama'a as the most noble companions of al-Awza'i, with Ibn Sama'a potentially having direct access to al-Awza'i's teachings.<sup>31</sup>

6&7.. Yazid bin Al-Samt and Salamah bin Al-Ayyar: Abu Mashair al-Dimashqi attests to their reliability and superior memory in transmitting al-Awza'i's teachings.

8. Abdul Hamid bin Habib bin Abi Al-Ashreen: Hisham bin Ammar identifies him as the most trustworthy companion of al-Awza'i.<sup>32</sup>

9. Abdullah bin Al-Mubarak: A reliable companion of al-Awza'i in Hadith transmission.

10. Al-Walid bin Muzid: Although not a direct companion, his transmissions from al-Awza'i are deemed highly reliable and free from errors or concealment.<sup>33</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the Awza'i school of thought was a pivotal and influential Islamic legal tradition in its time, playing a significant role in shaping the religious landscape of the early Muslim community. As one of the earliest schools of thought within Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah, it maintained a substantial following for three centuries, with a notable presence in Andalusia for approximately seventy years and in Syria for three hundred years. The school's scholars provided guidance to the community in religious matters, adhering to its principles. At its peak, the Awza'i school boasted an estimated one million followers in Córdoba and over two million in Syria. Although the Imam's written works were lost due to destruction, his teachings continue to be referenced in the works of other jurists, ensuring the preservation of his intellectual legacy. This study has demonstrated the significance of the Awza'i school of thought in the history of Islamic jurisprudence, highlighting its contributions and enduring impact on the Islamic legal tradition.

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