

Use of Transmission Patterns in Contemporary Shi'i *Isnād* Analysis

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines how contemporary Shi'i scholars of *rijāl* deal with problematic *isnāds* through engaging in a thorough examination of the *isnād* patterns. It focuses on a sample model that has been undertaken to identify an informant of the renowned Shi'i hadith collector Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī (329/941), recorded in his *magnum opus*, *al-Kāfi fī 'Ilm al-Dīn*. Upon identifying the problem through examining the variants of the tradition, the paper then tries to ascertain the identity of the problematic reporter in the *sanad* by first looking into classical *rijāl* works such as those written by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Asadī al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (385/996-460/1067). After exhausting these classical sources, it examines how the more recent prominent Shi'i scholars of *rijāl*, such as Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī Nurī al-Ṭabarsī (d. 1902), Sayyid Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i Borūjerdī (d. 1961), Ayatollah al-Sayyid Mūsā al-Shubayrī al-Zanjānī, and Ayatollah Muḥammad Āshif al-Muḥsinī deal with the issue. Finally, the paper undertakes an additional study of the *isnād* patterns mentioned in *al-Kāfi* in order to assess the findings of Shi'i scholars of *rijāl*.

KEYWORDS: Shi'ism; *isnād* analysis; hadith; al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb; al-Ṣaffār, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan

In the traditional Muslim hadith (tradition) assessment method,¹ one of the most difficult aspects of the examination is to identify obscure informants mentioned in a *sanad* (chain of narration). Muslim hadith

analysis is primarily based on a strict scrutiny of the identities of the informants and establishing the merits of the transmitters mentioned in the *sanad*. Therefore, a hint of irregularity in the identity of a transmitter might lead a particular tradition to be considered *majhūl*² (unknown) and thus unreliable. However, such an ostensible irregularity might not always be a sign of a problem in a *sanad*; instead it may be the result of a typographical error that took place during the copying of a manuscript. Being aware of the possibility of typographical errors, contemporary Shi'i scholars of *'ilm al-rijāl* (the science of biographical evaluation) have pursued a different path to identify dubious transmitters in order to vindicate such traditions. This method is primarily based on the cross examination of the transmission patterns mentioned in the Shi'i hadith collections, to remedy a suspected irregularity in the *sanad* part of a tradition. As this paper will demonstrate, in some cases a rigorous cross examination of transmission patterns could indeed remedy an ostensible irregularity by uncovering the true identity of the transmitter in question.

In this regard, the aim of this paper is to examine how contemporary Shi'i scholars of *rijāl* try to overcome such difficulties through engaging in a thorough examination of the *isnād* patterns in which the person in question appears. In a brief study, I will focus on a sample model that has been undertaken to identify an informant of the renowned Shi'i hadith collector Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī (329/941), recorded in his *magnum opus*, *al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn*. Upon identifying the problem through examining the variants of the tradition, I will then try to ascertain the identity of the problematic reporter in the *sanad*. This will be achieved by first looking into classical *rijāl* works such as those written by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Asadī al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (385/996-460/1067). After exhausting these classical sources, I then will examine how the more recent prominent Shi'i scholars of *rijāl*, such as Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī Nurī al-Ṭabarsī (d. 1902), Sayyid Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i Borūjerdī (d. 1961), Ayatollah al-Sayyid Mūsā al-Shubayirī al-Zanjānī, and Ayatollah Muḥammad Āṣif al-Muḥsinī deal with the issue. Finally, I will propose an additional study of the *isnād* patterns mentioned in *al-Kāfī* in order to strengthen the findings of Shi'i scholars of *rijāl*.

Before beginning the study, it is useful to review the current state of hadith studies in Europe and North America to see how the contemporary approach of Shi'i scholarship differs from it.

A brief review of European and North American scholars' approach to the science of hadith

The field of hadith studies underwent significant developments towards the end of the nineteenth century. This period saw a strong criticism of Islamic sources that put the reliability of the entire Muslim hadith corpus into question. In his iconic work *Muhammedanische Studien*, published in 1890, Ignác Goldziher (d.1921) introduced his famous hypothesis that Muslim hadith literature was created as a result of political disputes among the different political factions after the demise of the Prophet.³ In his work, Goldziher further argued that during the Umayyad and 'Abbasid periods, the political struggles between the rival factions gave rise to the fabrication of hadith literature, which was heavily used as means of legitimising the authority of the respective faction.⁴ He presented two pieces of evidence for the fabrication of the hadith literature. The first is related to the oral nature of the preservation of traditions; hadiths were thought to be committed to the memories of individuals and passed on to the next generation orally. For Goldziher this is strong evidence of unreliability of the traditions as they were not written down in the early stages and thus could easily be manipulated. Second, younger Companions narrated considerably more hadith than older Companions, which goes against the expectation that since the older Companions had spent more time with the Prophet, they should have reported more traditions.⁵

Joseph Schacht (d.1969), who was deeply influenced by the findings of Goldziher, further developed Goldziher's method for the assessment of the authenticity of the Muslim traditions. According to Schacht, traditional Muslim methods are not reliable, thus the traditions do not bear any value for historical assessment. In his work entitled *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, published in 1950, he provides a meticulous examination of the Muslim traditions. Instead of focusing on the political struggles like Goldziher, Schacht argues that fabrication of traditions was the result of the development of legal schools and their struggles with each other. He consequently concludes that most of the Muslim hadith corpus was fabricated by the adherents to the Muslim legal schools.⁶

Schacht introduced his theory of 'projecting back', which later dominated the field and became the frame of reference for hadith studies.

According to his hypothesis, *asānīd* (chains of transmission) were later forged by Muslim scholars and attributed to the Prophet and/or early Muslims. In other words, the chains of transmission that supposedly come from the Prophet himself go backwards, from later transmitters to earlier ones, in order to demonstrate the apparent authenticity of certain narrations and thus strengthen the view of a particular legal school.⁷

Of course, due to its very nature, the hadith transmission process was open to manipulation and it is fairly certain that some portion the Muslim hadith corpus was fabricated. These fabrications took place for not merely political or legal reasons, but also religious, social, economic, and personal motives.⁸ However, it is highly problematic to conclude that there was large-scale and organised hadith forgery carried out by early Muslim scholars. In this regard, Harald Motzki, one of the leading contemporary scholars of hadith, questions this possibility:

Was the whole system of Muslim *Ḥadīth* criticism only a manoeuvre of deception? Who had to be deceived? Other Muslim scholars? They must have been aware of the pointlessness and vanity of all the efforts to maintain high standards of transmission, if forgery of *isnāds* was part and parcel of the daily scholarly practice.⁹

Nevertheless, Schacht's hypothesis became dominant in academia for a few decades and Muslim traditions were not considered reliable historical material. Because of the devastating effect of Schacht's theory, there have been attempts to improve hadith criticism methods to utilise them for understanding the early history of Islam. In this regard, Gautier H. A. Juynboll reasserted the importance of the assessment of the *sanad* of hadith. His method of studying of the historicity of hadith analysis is primarily based on Schacht's theory on Muslim traditions, and he implemented a strict scrutiny of the *sanad* parts of hadiths. His work entitled 'Some *Isnād*-Analytical Methods Illustrated on the Basis of Several Woman-Demeaning Sayings from *Ḥadīth* Literature' sets out the basic rule of his method: 'The more transmission lines there are, coming together in a certain transmitter, either reaching him or branching out from him, the more that moment of transmission, represented in what may be described as a "knot", has a claim to historicity.'¹⁰

Furthermore, according to Juynboll, if the tradition has a single

strand, which means if a hadith claimed to be transmitted from the Prophet by an individual (a Companion) and then to another person (a Successor) and then to another person (another Successor) then finally reaches a common link¹¹ and after that fans out, 'the historicity of that strand of transmission can be considered hardly tenable.'¹² Juynboll believes that these traditions are mostly fabricated and can lead to wrong conclusions regarding the dating and transmitters of hadith. Juynboll's attempt to improve Schacht's method to analyse Muslim traditions is certainly noteworthy but it suffers from serious shortcomings. The method only focuses on the *sanad* part of a tradition and disregards single strand traditions as fabrications.

Harald Motzki best summarises Juynboll's reasons for rejecting single strands. He believes that Juynboll, similar to Schacht, was under the impression that there were irregularities in the structures of the Muslim hadith corpus. If there was an uninterrupted process of traditions being passed from one generation to the next, the chains of transmission should have split into several branches right after the Prophet. Most of the time this is not the case; rather they divide from a common link after the formation of a single strand that consists of three to four transmitters. Juynboll explains this 'abnormality' by suggesting that in such a scenario, the common link is the forger of the tradition. He tries to justify his theory by naming the informants through whom the information about the Prophet and his Companions was acquired during the third quarter of the first Islamic century (61-73/681-692). In other words, these traditions were projected back around this time due to the emerging requirements of the time, and this was the work of the common links. This premise led to Juynboll's overall conclusion that single strands that include early transmitters, from the third quarter of the first Islamic century, are not reliable.¹³

An alternative method, that relied on both the *sanad* and *matn* part of traditions, was designed by Harald Motzki and Gregor Schoeler. The investigation of both *isnad* and *matn* of traditions was first emphasised in Jan Hendrik Kramers's 'Une tradition a tendance manicheenne (La "mangeuse de verdure")',¹⁴ published in 1953, and Joseph van Ess' work *Zwischen Hadith und Theologie*,¹⁵ published in 1975. However, it only emerged as a structured method in 1996 owing to the works of Harald Motzki¹⁶ and Gregor Schoeler,¹⁷ who independently from each other demonstrated that the examination of both parts of traditions could

provide more reliable results.¹⁸ This method came to be known as *isnād-cum-matn*.

In short, the method is based on a comparative study of variant *isnād* and *matn* clusters with the aim of establishing a correlation between them. The correlation between *matn* and *isnād* is crucial in the method as the existence of such a correlation can then confirm the reliability or source value of a tradition. However, it should be noted that the method's main aim is not to authenticate the traditions, but to trace the traditions to a certain point in time. This is based on the understanding that whether authentic or not, traditions 'have a history'.¹⁹ Further, during the process of dating it might be possible, 'in very rare cases', to authenticate the traditions.²⁰ Overall, as opposed to the Schachtian school, the approach of the method to the science of hadith is that unless otherwise proven, hadiths should be considered genuine historical evidence and the burden of proof must be on the scholars to establish them as inauthentic.²¹

Since then the *isnād-cum-matn* method has proved to be an efficient tool in investigating early Muslim sources and has endured as a reliable method despite criticisms from within Western academia. Consequently, it is likely to become the dominant method in dating and assessing the historical value of Muslim traditions.

While these debates have been taking place among the western academia, there has been little change in Shi'i scholars' approaches to the science of hadith. They have indeed carried out robust criticism of the *isnād* of traditions but by and large, similar to their Sunni colleagues, their attitude towards the classical methods of assessing traditions has remained constant. The debate within Shi'i scholarship, in relation to the science of hadith, has rather focused on the use of *khabar al wāḥid*²² (an isolated tradition) for deducing religious rulings.²³ There has been no noteworthy attempt to improve the way by which the authenticity of traditions is certified or to question the reliability of the existing method.

The only notable exception I have come across is the prominent contemporary hadith scholar Ayatollah Muḥammad Āṣif al-Muḥsinī. In his *Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Rijāl*, al-Muḥsinī notes his dissatisfaction with the traditional Muslim hadith assessment method. Al-Muḥsinī states that like other Shi'i biographers, neither al-Najāshī nor al-Ṭūsī, authors of the most important Shi'i *rijāl* works, was present at the time of the Companions of the Prophet or disciples of the Imams. They both lived

at a much later period than the transmitters whom they judge in their works. Thus they were not in the position to grade the narrators based on direct observations. Consequently, the judgements of later biographers on the early narrators were based on either their assumptions, or traditions about the informants. The biographers must have used one or both of these methods to grade individual narrators. Al-Muḥsinī maintains that it is impossible to achieve certainty regarding the merit of the narrators by relying on these two methods. The first lacks certainty as it is based on speculation about the reliability of narrators who lived a long time ago. One can only accept the reliability (or unreliability) of a person providing he has direct access to the individual; otherwise passing judgement on a person's merit becomes mere conjecture, which is clearly unacceptable. The second method involves declarations of trustworthiness through the assessment of *asānīd*. However, usually the process of establishing trustworthiness relies on *mursal*²⁴ (hurried) traditions and al-Muḥsinī asserts that *mursal* traditions are not regarded as reliable, as a result of which the second method is also not reliable. Al-Muḥsinī further states that when he was a student, he raised this problem with some of the most prominent Shi'i scholars of the time such as al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū'i (d.1992), al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm (d.1970), al-Sayyid al-Milānī (d.1975), Sayyid Ruḥ Allāh Khomeini (d.1989), and others, but none of them provided a satisfying solution for the problem.²⁵

Tracing the variants of the tradition

In a tradition that is recorded in two major Shi'i works, *al-Kāfi fī 'Ilm al-Dīn* and *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt fī Faḍā'il Āl Muḥammad*, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad al-Bāqir (57/676-114/733), the fifth Shi'i Imam, reportedly informs his audience that only the Imams can have true and definite understanding of the Qur'an. The implications of such a statement carry great significance in terms of Shi'i hagiography and the understanding of the attitude of the Imams towards the interpretation of the Qur'an in the first and second Islamic centuries.

I have discussed the possible interpretations and implications of the tradition elsewhere;²⁶ however the more pressing issue in our quest is related to the *sanad* of the tradition. Despite similarities in the *sanads*, in the version that is reported in *al-Kāfi* the *sanad* goes through two

Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn (al-Kulaynī ← Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ← Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn) whose identities are not mentioned, thus giving the impression that there is an abnormality in the *sanad*:

Al-Kāfi.²⁷

*Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ‘an Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn
‘an Muḥammad ibn Sinān ‘an ‘Ammār ibn Marwān ‘an
al-Munakkbhal ‘an Jābir ‘an Abī Ja’far, ‘alayhī al-salām,
annahu qāla: Mā yastaṭī‘u aḥadun an yadda’i anna ‘indahu
jami’ al-Qur’ān kullihī ḡābirihī wa bāṭinihī ghayr al-aḥṣiyā.*²⁸

Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt.²⁹

*Ḥaddathanā Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ‘an Muḥammad ibn
Sinān ‘an ‘Ammār ibn Marwān ‘an al-Munakkbhal ‘an Jābir
‘an Abī Ja’far: Mā yastaṭī‘u aḥadun an yadda’i annahu jama’a
al-Qur’ān kullahu ḡābirahu wa bāṭinahu ghayr al-aḥṣiyā.*³⁰

The same tradition is also quoted in the influential *tafsīr* work of an Akhbārī scholar, Ḥāshim al-Baḥrānī’s (d. 1695) *al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’an*.³¹ Al-Baḥrānī mentions it as the first tradition in the work. The *matn* of the narration is identical to the tradition in *Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt* but the chain of narration is skipped and only the name of the narrator, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, is given. However, on page 33 of the same book, the tradition is mentioned again with full *isnād* that also includes the name Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār (d. 290/903), the author of *Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt*.³²

The most prominent Shi‘i scholar of the seventeenth century, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (d. 1698), also includes the tradition in his monumental work *Biḥār al-Anwār*.³³ The tradition was clearly quoted from *Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt*. In another work, entitled *Mir’āt al-Uqūl fī Sharḥ Akhbār Āl al-Rasūl*, Majlisī again mentions the same narration; however, this time there are slight differences in the *isnād* and *matn* of the tradition:

*Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ‘an Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan
‘an Muḥammad ibn Sinān ‘an ‘Ammār ibn Marwān ‘an
al-Munakkbhal ‘an Jābir ‘an Abū Ja’far, annahu qāla: Mā
yastaṭī‘u aḥadun an yadda’i anna ‘indahu jami’ al-Qur’ān kullihī
ḡābirihī wa bāṭinihī ghayr al-aḥṣiyā.*³⁴

This work is a commentary on al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfi fī 'Ilm al-Dīn*, in which Majlisī grades the traditions reported by al-Kulaynī. Therefore, we can infer that Majlisī took this version from al-Kulaynī. In a short comment, Majlisī considers the tradition *ḍa'īf* (weak) and explains that the word *ẓāhir* (outward) refers to the wording of the Qur'an and *bāṭin* (inward) to the meaning of the Qur'an.³⁵

According to Wilferd Madelung, al-Kulaynī's chief transmitters were Imāmī scholars based in Qum. Therefore, Madelung postulates that he spent most of his time studying in Qum, 'most likely during the last decade of the 3rd century AH (903-13).³⁶ He also transmitted traditions from scholars of Ray who lived in his time. In the first decade of the fourth century AH, he moved to Baghdad where he lived and taught until the end of his life. He compiled his book *al-Kāfi fī 'Ilm al-Dīn*³⁷ during this period.

It is well known that al-Kulaynī was a student of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār, and thus reported traditions from him. In this regard the tradition seems to be a copy of al-Ṣaffār's, save the extra name in the chain of transmission and slightly different spelling of the last reporter. Similar to al-Ṣaffār's version, al-Kulaynī reports the tradition from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn. However, in al-Ṣaffār's version, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn reports it from Muḥammad ibn Sinān (d. 219/834), while in al-Kulaynī's version, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn reports it from an additional person who is also called Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn.

Investigating the identity of the reporter

In the 2008 Qum edition of *al-Kāfi fī 'Ilm al-Dīn*, there is a long footnote in which Ayatollah al-Sayyid Mūsā al-Shubayirī al-Zanjānī,³⁸ who is the editor of the print, discusses this additional transmitter and the surrounding issues. Al-Zanjānī points out that there is a print among the copies of the text in which the name was given as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan instead of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn.³⁹ In fact, the 1968 Tehran edition of the book also mentions the name as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan instead of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, without providing any additional information.⁴⁰ Al-Zanjānī adds that since the tradition was also narrated in *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, it is possible that al-Kulaynī included his name in the chain of narration without mentioning al-Ṣaffār. In mentioning

this argument⁴¹ he alludes to the views of eminent Shi'i scholars such as Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū'i⁴² (d.1992).

This explanation seems plausible, as al-Ṣaffār was al-Kulaynī's *shaykh* (teacher) and it is highly probable that al-Kulaynī heard the tradition from his *shaykh* and included it in *al-Kāfī* by adding the name Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan (without al-Ṣaffār) in the chain of narration. However, the identity of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan has been disputed by the scholars of *'ilm al-rijāl* (biographical evaluation), and it is not certain whether Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan always refers to al-Ṣaffār in *al-Kāfī*.

At this juncture it may be useful to seek help from major classical Shi'i *rijāl* sources. In order to discover the identity of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, the first point of reference is perhaps the foremost authority in Shi'i biographical work: Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Asadī al-Najāshī's (d.450/1058) *Rijāl al-Najāshī*.⁴³ This book is considered one of the earliest and most reliable biographical works on the Shi'i narrators. In his book, al-Najāshī lists al-Ṣaffār as number 948 of 1240 biographies, and discusses his biography under the name Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Farrukh. From al-Najāshī's account we understand that al-Ṣaffār was classified as a trustworthy (*thiqah*) person, a resident of Qum, and was considered a prolific writer. Al-Najāshī lists the names of all of his books and points out that he rarely erred in his reports.⁴⁴ Al-Najāshī also mentions the usual informants through whom al-Ṣaffār narrates his traditions: Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Ash'ārī al-Qummī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Walīd, Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Shādhān, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā, and his father.

Another important reference for al-Ṣaffār is Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (385/996-460/1067). He was a contemporary of al-Najāshī, but was based first in Baghdad and then Najaf. He has two important *rijāl* works entitled *al-Fihrist*⁴⁵ and *al-Rijāl*. Al-Ṭūsī mentions al-Ṣaffār in his *al-Fihrist*,⁴⁶ as biography number 611 of 888 biographies.⁴⁷ Al-Ṭūsī also mentions al-Ṣaffār's usual informants, but there is no extra information in addition to what was given in *Rijāl al-Najāshī*.

Since there is not much information in the classical sources to aid our quest, we may turn to contemporary sources. Perhaps the best investigation on the identity of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan came from *rijāl* scholar Ayatollah Muḥammad Āṣif al-Muḥsinī.⁴⁸ In his discussion, al-Muḥsinī points out that al-Kulaynī, in his *al-Kāfī*, narrates a number of traditions from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan alone or with Muḥammad ibn

al-Ḥasan and 'Alī ibn Muḥammad together. These are usually narrated on the authority of Sahl ibn Ziyād (who died around 250/864) and sometimes 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Alawī or 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan. Furthermore, sometimes they are narrated on the authority of Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq, who is also mentioned in the chains of transmission by the names Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq al-Nahāwandī or Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq al-Aḥmar.

Upon providing this information, al-Muḥsinī states that the strongest evidence in support of those who maintain Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan was al-Ṣaffār comes from Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī's (d. 460/1067) *al-Fibrīst*. In the book, al-Ṭūsī states the path to Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq's works: 'Narrated to me Abū al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī Jayyid al-Qummī from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Walīd from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār from Ibrāhīm al-Aḥmarī in his book *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn* only.'⁴⁹

For al-Muḥsinī, this path is an indication that the Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan whom al-Kulaynī mentions in his *asānīd* is al-Ṣaffār. Similar to the above-mentioned path, al-Kulaynī has other *isnāds* in *al-Kāfī* in which he narrates from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan through Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq; therefore it is plausible to argue that al-Ṣaffār and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan are the same person. However, al-Muḥsinī rules out this possibility on the ground that there is a lack evidence concerning the reliability of Ibn Abī Jayyid and thus the reliability of this path cannot be proven.⁵⁰

Al-Muḥsinī also mentions the opinion of another well-known scholar of biography, Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī Nūrī al-Ṭabarsī, (d. 1902) on the subject. In his book *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbat al-Masā'il*,⁵¹ Nūrī states that the evidence mentioned above falls short of attesting that Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan is al-Ṣaffār as there were a few Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasans contemporary to al-Ṣaffār, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan may refer to any of them. These are Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Muḥārībī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Qummī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī Abū al-Muthannā, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Bunādir al-Qummī, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Barnanī.

For al-Muḥsinī, the evidence that Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan is not al-Ṣaffār weighs stronger. Most of the traditions that al-Kulaynī reports from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan were reported on the authority of Sahl ibn Ziyād; yet al-Ṣaffār, in his *Baṣā'ir*, did not report a single tradition from Sahl ibn Ziyād. Al-Muḥsinī further points out that *Baṣā'ir* was written to revere the Shi'i Imams and in such a book al-Ṣaffār would

certainly have reported traditions from Sahl ibn Ziyād, who was thought to have extremist Shi'ī (*ghālī*) tendencies and was therefore a good source of traditions that highly revered the Imams. Furthermore, in another work entitled *al-Tabdhīb*, al-Ṣaffār recorded only one tradition from Sahl ibn Ziyād,⁵² which indicates that al-Ṣaffār's tradition from Sahl ibn Ziyād was an exception and that he did not prefer to report from him.

Al-Muḥsinī then refers to Sayyid Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī Borūjerdī⁵³ (d.1961) who also discussed the identity of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. Borūjerdī examines *asānīd* of al-Ṣaffār and *asānīd* of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, and concludes that the Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan from whom al-Kulaynī directly reports is not al-Ṣaffār. Borūjerdī infers that there is no similarity between the *isnāds* of the two reporters. He further elaborates that al-Ṣaffār had a good number of sources for his traditions; he reports from around 50 different individuals. These sources are from Kufa, Baghdad, Qum, and Rayy. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, from whom al-Kulaynī reports directly, had a very limited number of sources, all of whom are from Rayy. Further, he mostly reports from Sahl ibn Ziyād, and other than Sahl ibn Ziyād he has very few informants.⁵⁴

Borūjerdī further argues that it has not been proven that al-Ṣaffār reports from Sahl ibn Ziyād. In his works, he narrates from Sahl ibn Ziyād twice, once in his *al-Tabdhīb* and once in *al-Faqīh*. However, the traditions mentioned in *al-Tabdhīb* are known to be defective. In light of this information, Borūjerdī then puts forward his supposition that the reporter who was named Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan was al-Ṭā'ī al-Rāzī. Al-Ṭā'ī al-Rāzī was known to be a hadith scholar from the city of Rayy. Al-Najāshī, in his discussion on 'Alī ibn al-'Abbās al-Jaradhīnī al-Rāzī, whom he considered an extremist Shi'ī (*ghālī*) and weak narrator, mentions the *isnād* path through which all of his books were narrated. It consists of: al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Ubayd Allāh from Ibn Abī Rāfi' from Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭā'ī al-Rāzī.⁵⁵ According to Borūjerdī, this path provides information regarding the identity of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, who reports from sources based in the city of Rayy. The Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan mentioned in this *isnād* path is from the city of Rāz (Rayy) and therefore Borūjerdī maintains that Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan is al-Ṭā'ī al-Rāzī.

To strengthen his theory, Borūjerdī also locates the name Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭā'ī in *al-Kāfī*, in the book of *Jihād* (the chapter regarding the duty of jihad), which he believes is an indication

that al-Kulaynī reports other traditions from al-Ṭā'ī. However, while in three handwritten manuscripts of *al-Kāfi* the name is written as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭā'ī, in another handwritten manuscript and two other printed version of the book, the name al-Ṭā'ī is replaced by al-Ṭātārī and given as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭātārī. This might seem to make the issue more complicated, but Borūjerdī takes it as further validation of his argument: although al-Ṭātārī was known as a famous reporter, he lived one generation (*al-ṭabaqah al-sābi'ah*) earlier than al-Kulaynī and would have needed one more person in between to transmit from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭātārī.⁵⁶ Although this concurs with his earlier findings, al-Muḥsinī is dubious about the reliability of such a conclusion, as despite the evidence brought forward it still remains speculation that al-Kulaynī's informant Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan was al-Ṭā'ī. Al-Muḥsinī goes on to state that even if it was him, al-Ṭā'ī was an unknown person and, therefore, the *sanad* he is in has no value.⁵⁷

This elaborate investigation into the identity of the Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan mentioned in *al-Kāfi* rules out the possibility that al-Kulaynī's informant was al-Ṣaffār or any other Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. It was perhaps a typographic error, which is very possible as the names Ḥasan and Ḥusayn stem from the same Arabic root. Furthermore, Majlisī's quotation of the *isnād* in which he gives the name as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn also reinforces the possibility of a typographic error.

A brief investigation of the *isnād* reveals that the common link for the two variants of the tradition is Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn. In his book *Baṣā'ir*, al-Ṣaffār reports from 150 sources and there are only two Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayns among the *shaykhs* (teachers) of al-Ṣaffār. One of them is mentioned as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn and the other as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 262/875) who was a Kufan scholar and member of the al-Hamdānī tribe.⁵⁸ Having said that, there is no person in the biographical books named only Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn; therefore we can postulate that al-Ṣaffār used the shortened version of the name referring to one of the Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayns from whom al-Ṣaffār reported traditions.

In *Rijāl al-Najāshī* and al-Ṭūsī's *al-Fibrīst*, there are five informants with this name: Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Safarjal, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Sa'id, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣāyī' and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn

ibn Mūsā. Al-Şaffār only reports from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 262/875) among these, in his *Başāir*.

Isnād patterns further support this since Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb usually reports from Muḥammad ibn Sinān (d. 219/834) and al-Şaffār reports from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb. After Muḥammad ibn Sinān, through a single strand, the transmission line reaches Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir who apparently stated the tradition.

As for al-Kulaynī's *isnād*, an important question remains unanswered: why did al-Kulaynī not report the tradition from al-Şaffār but from someone else? Since the two scholars were contemporary and al-Şaffār was a *shaykh* of al-Kulaynī, it would have been very convenient for al-Kulaynī to copy it from al-Şaffār's book. Therefore, it seems strange that he narrates the tradition from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn. A possible explanation is that al-Kulaynī wanted to enhance the reliability of the tradition by skipping al-Şaffār who was thought to have some 'unconventional' traditions in his books. Thus, this piece of information demands further investigation.

As we have observed previously, there are five people in the biography books with names beginning with Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, but none named only Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn. At this stage two options remain to disclose the identity of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn: (a) relying on the biographical works, or (b) examining *al-Kāfī* to look for the *isnād* patterns to identify Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn. There is no information in the biographical works regarding the identity of the Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn mentioned in this particular *sanad*; therefore, we may rule out the first option. However, in the same footnote that we mentioned above,⁹⁹ al-Zanjānī gives information regarding the *sanad* of this tradition, which seems to provide a tangible solution to the problem. Troubled by the peculiarity of the *sanad*, al-Zanjānī first argues against the conclusion that we have covered above: Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn is in reality Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Şaffār. He notes that in *al-Kāfī* there is no other tradition in which Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn is located between Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad ibn al-Sinān. Further, in *al-Kāfī*, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan (whether he may be al-Şaffār or al-Ṭā'ī al-Rāzī) does not report from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, and consequently this argument is not substantiated.

Faced by the lack of concurrence between scholars on the issue,

al-Zanjānī proposes investigation of the *isnād* patterns in order to solve the riddle. He undertakes a cross-comparison of the *sanad* patterns of *al-Kāfī* and *Baṣā'ir* for the tradition that they both narrate. For example, in *Baṣā'ir*, al-Ṣaffār reports from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn from al-Naḍr ibn Shu'ayb. In *al-Kāfī* the same tradition is reported from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā,⁶⁰ a well-known *shaykh* of al-Kulaynī and Shaykh al-Sadūq⁶¹ (d. 380/991), who was a Qummī reporter from the Ash'arī tribe, from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, from al-Naḍr ibn Shu'ayb.⁶² Thus, al-Kulaynī does not narrate the tradition from al-Ṣaffār and instead prefers to narrate it from another informant, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā. The same pattern is apparent in another tradition. Al-Ṣaffār reports a tradition from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il, and the same tradition is reported in *al-Kāfī* through Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il. Again, al-Kulaynī prefers a different informant and instead of al-Ṣaffār he reports it from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā.⁶³

Al-Zanjānī provides various other *asānīd* in which a similar pattern recurs, and based on this pattern, he concludes that there must be a typographical error in the recording of the *sanad* and the name of al-Kulaynī's informant should have been the famous and 'reliable'⁶⁴ Qummī informant Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā, who appears in around 6,000 *asānīd* in *al-Kāfī*. He adds that this *sanad* pattern makes more sense as there are many transmissions in *al-Kāfī* in which Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā reports from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb, who reports from Muḥammad ibn Sinān.⁶⁵

This seems to be a very innovative and convincing solution for the problem at hand. It is not uncommon for scribal errors to occur during the copying of handwritten manuscripts; consequently, it is possible that a later copyist spelled Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā as Ḥusayn. One might still consider the lack of evidence regarding the identity of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn as indicative of the fabrication of the tradition; however such an assertion at this stage is not warranted since no fabricator would have crafted such a dubious *sanad* to promote a tradition. Had al-Kulaynī wanted to fabricate this tradition, he could have put together a much more sophisticated and solid *sanad* that would not have cast doubt on it even by Akhbārī scholars like Majlisī.

An analysis of al-Kāfī's isnād patterns

At this junction, we might look into the possibility of strengthening al-Zanjānī's finding. Trying to substantiate it by examining all the *sanads* of *al-Kāfī* in which the name Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn was mentioned might be one way to achieve this. An examination of the *sanads* would give us an opportunity to see the patterns by which al-Kulaynī reports his traditions from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, and also if, similar to this tradition, the name Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn appears in a *sanad* more than once.

In the *Dār al-Ḥadīth* edition of *al-Kāfī*, 15,413 traditions are listed and out of these, 473 include a Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn in their *sanads*. This amounts to around 3% of the total number of traditions. Among these *sanads* the name Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn is mentioned once as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Saghīr, once as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb, twice as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Kathīr al-Khazzāz, once as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn and once as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Yazīd. In the remaining 467 *asānīd* the name appears as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn. Considering their position in the *asānīd* we can safely assume that whenever al-Kulaynī mentions Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn he is referring to Ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb.

In addition, there is only one occasion on which Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn appears twice in a single *sanad* and this is the tradition currently being treated. There is no other example of such an appearance in the *aṣānīd*. This further strengthens al-Zanjānī's argument that there was a typographical error in the *sanad*. Among these *sanads*, around 412 times al-Kulaynī reports the tradition directly or indirectly through Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā (most of the time directly and only on a few occasions with Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad in the middle). Hence, we may consider this to give further credence to al-Zanjānī's argument that there is a typographical error in the place of Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā.

The only concern now is why al-Kulaynī did not report it from al-Ṣaffār himself. The answer can be found in Motzki's study of a similar – not identical – situation, where he enquires about Nafi' ibn 'Umar's hadith on *zakāt* to see if it exists in different versions of Mālik's *Muwatṭā'*. Motzki finds that the tradition does not appear in the oldest available recension of the *Muwatṭā'* by Muḥammad al-Shaybānī

(d.189/805). On the other hand, it does appear in the later recension of the *Muwatṭā'* by Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al-Laythī (d. 234/236 or 848/9-850).⁶⁶ In order to justify this, aside from other arguments, Motzki speculates that when al-Shaybānī, who was Mālik's student, studied with him, Mālik's lecture notes did not include the tradition or Mālik only used certain parts of his notes in the lectures from which al-Shaybānī could have received the tradition.⁶⁷ Similarly, it is possible that al-Ṣaffār had not finished his book when al-Kulaynī met him and also that he did not inform al-Kulaynī about this tradition. Al-Kulaynī might have seen (or might not have seen at all) the completed copy of al-Saffār's book and the tradition after compiling the relevant volume of his work, but then there was no need for him to include the same tradition in his book, as he had already received the same tradition from another informant and perhaps thought this was sufficient.

Despite Western scholars' criticisms levied against traditional Muslim hadith analysis methods, hadith studies have been at the core of Muslim scholars' endeavours to understand Islamic teachings and principles and it is unlikely that they will change their general attitude towards the traditional assessment of traditions in the near future. Nevertheless, we may see the prominent Shi'i scholar al-Muḥsinī's criticism of the traditional Muslim hadith study method as a possible indication of future methodological developments in the field of hadith studies within traditional Muslim circles. Instead of dealing with the fundamental problems of the science of hadith by seeking alternative methods, Shi'i scholars have by and large opted to improve on the existing traditional hadith assessment method. This is perhaps due to the fact that for centuries Muslim scholars have been building their understanding of religion mostly on the knowledge that they have derived through analysing the traditions. Therefore, it must be excruciating for them to come to terms with the reality that their traditional method of verifying the veracity of the Muslim hadith corpus may not be accurate. However, this does not mean that the traditional Muslim hadith assessment method cannot be improved upon in order to get better results. In this regard, Shi'i scholars demonstrate an increasing amount of sophistication in overcoming the problems encountered while analysing *isnāds*, and our study above has demonstrated that identifying unknown persons in the chains of transmission via the use of transmission patterns is an effective way of doing this.

Notes

¹ Based on its assessment of reliability, Shi'i hadiths are classified into four fundamental categories: *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), *ḥasan* (good), *muwaththaq* (dependable) and *da'īf* (weak).

Ṣaḥīḥ: A tradition that is uninterruptedly linked to one of the infallibles (*ma'sūmīn*) through veracious (*ādil*) Twelver Shi'i transmitters. Each transmitter must be veracious and a Twelver Shi'i.

Ḥasan: A tradition that is uninterruptedly linked to one of the infallibles through Twelver Shi'i transmitters whose reliability has not been affirmed.

Muwaththaq: A tradition that is narrated by reliable transmitters but the transmitters are not Twelver Shi'is. These traditions are also considered to be strong (*qawī*).

Da'īf: If a tradition does not fulfil any of the above mentioned categories on the grounds that it consists of a 'reporter who has been defamed because of his immorality, etc. or because he is unknown or because he is a fabricator.' ('Abd al-Hādī al-Faḍlī, *Introduction to Ḥadīth: Including Dirāyat Al-Ḥadīth*, trans. Nazmina Virjee (London: ICAS Press 2002), 25-28).

² This is a classification of hadith that indicates that one or more reporter(s), mentioned in the chain of transmission, is not mentioned in the works of *rijāl* (biographical works). Consequently, a hadith that falls into this category is deemed unreliable.

³ Ignác Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, trans. S. M. Stern and C. R. Barber (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971).

⁴ Ibid., 92-97.

⁵ Ignác Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1981), 28.

⁶ Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 163.

⁷ Joseph Schacht, 'A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 81, no. 3-4 (1949), 146-48.

⁸ For a detailed discussion on the Shi'i view on the fabrication of Muslim traditions see 'Abd al-Hādī al-Faḍlī and Al-Shahīd al-Thānī, *Introduction to Ḥadīth: Including Dirāyat al-Ḥadīth*, 147-78.

⁹ Harald Motzki, 'Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey', in *Arabica* LII, no. 2 (2005), 235.

¹⁰ G. H. A. Juynboll, 'Some *Isnād*-Analytical Methods Illustrated on the Basis of Several Woman-Demeaning Sayings from *Ḥadīth* Literature', in *Ḥadīth: Origins and Developments*, ed. Harald Motzki (Great Britain, 2004), 352. Cf. G. H. A. Juynboll, 'Nāfi', the Mawlā of Ibn 'Umar, and His Position in Muslim *Ḥadīth* Literature', in *Der Islam* LXX (1993), 210-211.

¹¹ According to G. H. A. Juynboll, the common link 'is the oldest transmitter mentioned in a bundle who passes the hadith on to more than one pupil, or again in other terms: where an *isnād* bundle first starts fanning out.' G. H. A. Juynboll, 'Some *Isnād*-Analytical Methods Illustrated on the Basis of Several Woman-Demeaning Sayings from *Ḥadīth* Literature', 184.

¹² G. H. A. Juynboll, 'Some *Isnād*-Analytical Methods Illustrated on the Basis of Several Woman-Demeaning Sayings from *Ḥadīth* Literature', 184-85.

¹³ Harald Motzki, *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), 50. Cf. G. H. A. Juynboll, 'Nāfi', the Mawlā of Ibn 'Umar, and His Position in Muslim Ḥadīth Literature'.

¹⁴ An English translation of the article was published in *Ḥadīth: Origins and Developments*, ed. Harald Motzki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 245-57.

¹⁵ Joseph van Ess, *Zwischen Hadith und Theologie* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975).

¹⁶ Harald Motzki, 'Quo vadis, Ḥadīth-Forschung?', in *Der Islam* LXXIII (1996), 193-231 (An English translation was published in Harald Motzki with Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort and Sean W. Anthony, *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 47-124.

¹⁷ Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996). Published in English under the title *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity*, ed. James E. Montgomery, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl (New York: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁸ Harald Motzki, 'Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey', in *Arabica* LII, no. 2 (2005).

¹⁹ Harald Motzki, *Analysing Muslim Traditions*, 235.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 214.

²² Traditions are also divided into two categories based on the variety on each level of their chains of transmission: *mutawātir* (multiple successive) and *khabar al-wāḥid* (isolated tradition). *Mutawātir* denotes traditions that have multiple chains of narrations at every level. This type of tradition is considered more reliable as it is more difficult to fabricate traditions that are reported by many people. *Khabar al-wāḥid* denotes traditions that have not attained multiple successive transmissions. *Khabar al-wāḥid* are considered less reliable than *mutawātir* traditions.

²³ On this see 'Abd al-Hādī al-Faḍlī, *Introduction to Ḥadīth: Including Dirāyat al-Ḥadīth*, 93-118.

²⁴ A type of tradition in which some or all of the intermediary transmitters are incomplete.

²⁵ Muḥammad Ḍāḥir al-Muḥsinī, *Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Rijāl* (Qum: Markaz al-Muṣṭafā al-'Ālamiyyah, 1999), 51-52.

²⁶ Seyfeddin Kara, 'The Collection of the Qur'an in the Early Shī'ite Discourse', in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* XXVI, no. 3 (July 2016), 375-406 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1356186315000425>>. Accessed 12 July 2016.

²⁷ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn* I, (Qum: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2008), 566.

²⁸ 'No one can claim to possess the collection of the Qur'an in its entirety, with its inward and outward [meaning], except the trustees.'

²⁹ Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt fī Faḍā'il Āl Muḥammad*, 2nd ed. (Qum: Ayatollah Mar'ashī Najafī Library, 1983), 193.

³⁰ 'No one can claim to have collected the Qur'an – in its entirety – inwardly and outwardly, except the trustees.'

³¹ Sayyid Hashim ibn Sulaymān Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān* I, 8 vols. (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Bi'thah, 1992), 1.

³² Ibid. I, 33.

³³ Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār* LXXXIX (Beirut:

Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1982), 88.

³⁴ Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, *Mir'āt al-'Uqūl fī Sharḥ Akhbār Āl al-Rasūl* III (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1983), 32.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Wilferd Madelung, 'Al-Kulaynī (al-Kulīniā), Abū Ja'far Muḥammad', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2014). <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-kulayni-or-al-kulini-abu-djafar-muhammad-SIM_4495>.

³⁷ For a detailed study of *al-Kāfī* see Robert Gleave, 'Between Ḥadīth and Fiqh: The "Canonical" Imāmī Collections of Akhbār', in *Islamic Law and Society* VIII, no. 3 (2001), 350-82; Andrew J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shī'ism: Ḥadīth as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad* (Surrey: Curzon, 2000).

³⁸ A Grand Ayatollah (*marja'*) and one of the foremost Shī'i experts on '*ilm al-rijāl*'. For more information see his official website: <<http://zanjani.net/index.aspx?pid=1>>.

³⁹ al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn* I, 8 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1986), 566.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 228.

⁴¹ Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ardabili, *Jāmi' al-Ruwwāt* II (Qum: Maktab Ayatollah Mar'ashī Najafī, 1982), 465.

⁴² A Grand Ayatollah and one of the most influential Shī'i scholars who lived in the twentieth century. He was born in Iran but then moved to Najaf, Iraq for seminary studies and remained there until the end of his life. He published works in many fields of Islamic studies, and his 24-volume *Mu'jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth* was a major contribution to the field of '*ilm al-rijāl*'.

⁴³ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Asadī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī* (Beirut: Shirkat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbū'āt, 2010).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 338.

⁴⁵ This work is a catalogue of Shī'i authors and their books.

⁴⁶ Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fibrīst*, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Baḥr al-'Ulūm (Qum: al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, n.d.).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 143-44.

⁴⁸ Al-Muḥsinī is known as one of the most influential Shī'i scholars in Afghanistan. He completed his *ḥawzah* studies in Najaf, Iraq and studied under the most eminent scholars. He is currently one of the leading Shī'i experts in the field of hadith studies.

⁴⁹ Muḥammad Āṣif al-Muḥsinī, *Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Rijāl*, 275.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī Nurī al-Ṭabarsī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbat al-Masā'il* III, 28 vol. (Qum: Mu'assasat Taḥqīqāt wa Nashr Ma'ārif Ahl al-Bayt, 1987), 528-29.

⁵² Muḥammad Āṣif al-Muḥsinī, *Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Rijāl*, 275-76.

⁵³ An Iranian Grand Ayatollah and one of the most influential Shī'i scholars of the twentieth century. His 31-volume work *Jāmi' Aḥādīth al-Shī'i* is a major contribution to science of hadith.

⁵⁴ Sayyid Husayn Ṭabāṭabā'i Borūjerdī, *Rijāl Asānīd wa Ṭabaqāt Rijāl: Kitāb al-Kāfī* (Mashhad: Islamic Research Foundation, 1992), 315-17.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Muḥammad Ḍṣif al-Muḥsinī, *Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Rijāl*, 275-76.

⁵⁸ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Asadī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, 319.

⁵⁹ Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn* I, 566.

⁶⁰ No date of death. For more information on him see *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, 337.

⁶¹ One of the most important Shi'i hadith collectors, and author of the canonical work *Man Lā Yahḍuruhu al-Faqīh*.

⁶² There is no direct information about al-Naḍr ibn Shu'ayb in the early sources; however, elsewhere I have given his estimated date of death as around the year 210/825-826 (Seyfeddin Kara, 'The Collection of the Qur'ān in the Early Shi'ite Discourse', 13-16.)

⁶³ al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn* I, 566.

⁶⁴ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Asadī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, 337.

⁶⁵ al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn* I, 566.

⁶⁶ Harald Motzki, *Analysing Muslim Traditions*, 91-92.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 93.