

## Was Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626-7) a Mujtahid?

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### Abstract

The prevalent view that Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626-7) studied with a prominent *uṣūlī* (rationalist) jurist, namely, Shaykh Ḥasan Ṣāhib al-Ma‘ālim (d. 1011/1602), the son of al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 965/1558), and that he was a *mujtahid* for most of his life before he converted to *akhbārism* (traditionism) in Mecca, is largely unfounded. This view surfaced during the late nineteenth century, through Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī's *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, and was uncritically integrated into the major bio-bibliographical accounts on al-Astarabādī's life and scholarship afterwards. Many modern scholars in turn adopted this view, producing inadequate conclusions about the nature of his *akhbārī* movement. Based on a close assessment of al-Astarabādī's extant works and his references to his teachers and places where he studied, Shiraz rather than Mecca was decisive in shaping his early traditionist stance in Shī'a *kalām* (rational theology), which resonated with his traditionist positions in jurisprudence and *ḥadīth*. As far as one can tell through his *ijāzās* (scholarly licenses), he sought to transmit *ḥadīth* from one *mujtahid*, namely, Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāhib al-Madārik (d. 1009/1600), but did not receive training in *ijtihād* (rational legal inference) with him. He appears to have been well-versed in the methods used by *uṣūlī* jurists to evaluate *ḥadīth* and derive the law, prior to that time, through his studies in Shiraz. All these findings, lead us to question the background and nature of his *akhbārī* thought as they were presented in much of the secondary literature, and to bring attention to a distinct set of intellectual and sociopolitical forces that shaped it.

### Keywords

Safavid intellectual history – Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī – *akhbārīyya* – *ijtihād* – *kalām* scholarship in Shiraz – Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī

Since the turn of the twentieth century, the main biographical sources and studies dealing with the life and thought of Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626-7) have upheld the view that he underwent some form of “conversion” from a *mujtahid* to an *akhbārī* (“traditionist”) after moving to Mecca, being commanded by Mīrzā Muḥammad al-Astarabādī (d. 1028/1619), known as *ṣāhib al-rijāl*, to revive “*al-ṭarīqa al-akhbārīyya*” (“the traditionist way or method”).<sup>1</sup> This account forms a critical part of the accepted narrative about his intellectual transformation and the production of his traditionist work against the *mujtahids*, titled *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*.<sup>2</sup> This view, however, surfaced only in the late nineteenth century, for there is no prior hint or mention of this “conversion” in al-Astarabādī’s own writings or in any of the main sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth century or to that matter in the comments made by any of his students.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we do not know precisely, what the “traditionist method”<sup>4</sup> actually meant for Mīrzā Muḥammad because none of the sources report that his writings or interests resonate with al-Astarabādī’s project in *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya*.<sup>5</sup> As I will show in this article, al-Astarabādī’s full-fledged advocacy of *akhbārism* in Mecca was preceded by skepticism and resistance to the *mujtahids* while he was in Iran, and more specifically Shiraz. As such, he appears to have stayed in Shiraz for more than four years, before going to Najaf and after. His knowledge of jurisprudence also seemed to have been developed at the hands of al-Nassāba (on him, see below) in Shiraz prior to arriving in Najaf. Contrary to the prevalent biographical narratives dealing with him, al-Astarabādī was not a *mujtahid* who ‘converted’ to a

1 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 59f.; idem, “Dānishnāmah-yi Shāhī,” fol. 5a.

2 The “conversion” account is prevalent in the biographical sources written after the late nineteenth century or more specifically after the appearance of al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī’s *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* (vol. 1, pp. 120-139). See also Āghā Buzurg, *Ṭabaqāt a'lām al-shī'a: al-qarn al-ḥādī 'ashar*, p. 56. A number of modern scholars built their conclusions about *akhbārism* on the basis of this narrative. Among them are Iḥsān Qaysarī, “Akhhārīyān,” *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif-i buzurg-i islāmī*, vol. 7, no. 2991; Kohlberg, “Aspects,” p. 133; idem, “Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 2, pp. 845f.; Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, pp. 34, 35f.

3 See Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī (d. 1070/1659-60), *Lawāmi'-i Ṣāhibqirānī*, vol. 1, pp. 30-32, 38, 79-87; al-Karakī, *Hidāyat al-abrār*, pp. 221f.; al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Amal al-Āmil*, vol. 2, p. 246; Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan b. Yūnus b. Yūsuf b. Ṣāhib al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī b. al-Ḥusām al-Ṣāhib al-Āmilī al-'Aynāthī, “al-Masā'il al-Ṣāhibīyya,” in *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 547-567.

4 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 59f.; idem, “Dānishnāmah-yi Shāhī,” fol. 5a.

5 On Mīrzā Muḥammad al-Astarabādī, “Ṣāhib al-Rijāl,” see al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 2, pp. 81, 281; al-Tafriṣhī, *Naqd al-rijāl*, vol. 4, p. 279; Ibn Ma'sūm, *Sulāfat al-'aṣr*, p. 499; al-Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*, vol. 5, pp. 115f.

traditionist (*akhbārī*). While in Najaf, he seems to have refrained from studying with the son of the eminent jurist, al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 965/1558), namely, Shaykh Ḥasan Ṣāhib al-Ma‘ālim (d. 1011/1602), a *mujtahid* and an authority on the categorization of *ḥadīth*. He studied with one *mujtahid*, namely, Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-‘Āmilī al-Jubā‘ī, known as Ṣāhib al-Madārik (d. 1009/1600), but expressed his wish “to become part of the chain of transmitters of the pure *aḥādīth*.”<sup>6</sup> These factors may very well show that his aversion to the categorization and scrutiny of *ḥadīth* was already developed, and that caution and *taqīyya* (dissimulation), prevented him from expressing his views openly when he was in Iran.

A careful reading of the biographical sources, al-Astarabādī’s *ijāzas*, and the statements he made in his own works, lead us to conclude that al-Astarabādī was never a *mujtahid*, and that many of the ideas expressed in *al-Fawā’id al-madaniyya* were developed in Iran, and more specifically Shiraz, prior to his arrival in Mecca. He did not seem to have implemented *ijtihādī* rationalism, that is, *uṣūlī* methods in legal inference or *dirāya* (scrutiny and stratification of *ḥadīth* reports) in any of his extant works, especially his commentaries and glosses on *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh*, *al-Kāfī*, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, and *al-Istibṣār*.<sup>7</sup> He was, however, well-versed in logic and jurisprudence, which some scholars have confused with his practice of *ijtihād*. His expertise in these areas gave him the necessary foundation to scrutinize and later attack the methods of al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), al-Shahīd al-Thānī and his son Shaykh Ḥasan, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī (d. 940/1534), and Bahā‘ī (d. 1030/1621). The only *mujtahid* he studied with was Ṣāhib al-Madārik, author of *Madārik al-aḥkām fī sharḥ Sharā‘i’ al-Islām*. Ṣāhib al-Madārik directed a few criticisms against al-Shahīd al-Thānī’s assessment of *ḥadīth*.<sup>8</sup> As I will show, Shaykh Ḥasan did not give him an *ijāza*, as *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* and later sources have otherwise stated. It is doubtful that he was even one of his teachers. Finally, the views about al-Astarabādī’s sudden “conversion” to *akhbārism* can be traced first, to a misreading of al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī’s attack on al-Astarabādī in *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*,<sup>9</sup> and second, to a neglect of al-Astarabādī’s introduction in *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya* describing his motives for writing his work and how he went about it. Most scholars accepted instead his embellished account that Mīrzā Muḥammad

6 Fāḍilī (ed.), “Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī,” pp. 520-22.

7 Fāḍilī (ed.), “al-Ḥāshiyā ‘alā Uṣūl al-kāfī”; Fāḍilī (ed.), “Ḥāshiyat man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh”; Fāḍilī (ed.), “Ḥāshiyat al-Istibṣār”; Fāḍilī (ed.), “Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām”.

8 For more on this question, see Abisaab, “Shi‘i Jurisprudence”. See also Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, p. 59.

9 Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 1, pp. 120-139.

commanded him to revive the “traditionist method” and that he pondered this command in his heart for some time in Medina before fulfilling it.

### Astarabādī’s Association with Mirza Jān Shīrāzī (d. 995 /1586-7)

Al-Astarabādī tells us very little about his studies and whereabouts prior to earning an *ijāza* from Ṣāhib al-Madārik in Najaf in Jumādā 1 1007/December 1598. He merely notes that he was in Najaf during the prime of his youth (*‘unfuwān-i shabābī*)<sup>10</sup> or when he was a young man (*fi ḥadāthati sinnī*), as he noted in another place.<sup>11</sup> Hassan Ansari had suggested that al-Astarabādī may have studied in Shiraz before going to Najaf and went back to it afterwards. He based his observation on al-Astarabādī’s statement in *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya* that he studied an important work of jurisprudence with Shāh Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Nassāba al-Shīrāzī (d. 1019/1610-11) in Shiraz during “the earliest phase of his youth” (*fi awā’il sinnī*), most probably before turning twenty.<sup>12</sup> This work was the *sharḥ* (commentary) of ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1356) on *al-Mukhtaṣar*<sup>13</sup> of Abū ‘Amr b. ‘Umar b. Abī Bakr (d. 646/1248), known as Ibn al-Ḥājjib. Al-Astarabādī completed his studies with al-Nassāba in four years but this may very well have occurred prior to his departure to Najaf or unfolded before and after his trip to Najaf. To be sure, al-Astarabādī did not count him among the *shuyūkh* (teachers) who granted him an *ijāza* and therefore, the first shaykh of his *ijāza* remains Ṣāhib al-Madārik. There is also a reference in *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya* to a knotty *kalām* (rational theology) issue, which al-Astarabādī said he had speculated about during this early age, “*awā’il sinnī*”. It dealt with the innermost assertions (*taṣdīqāt qalbiyya*) humans experience in connection to revelation and points of faith, and whether such assertions are created by God or whether humans have a choice in acquiring them.<sup>14</sup> This statement shows that al-Astarabādī’s training in *kalām* and logic marks the earliest phase of his education. But it is al-Astarabādī’s own statements in his treatise “*Risāla dar mabāḥith-i thalātha*”,<sup>15</sup> which confirms beyond doubt that

10 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 58f.

11 Fāḍilī (ed.), “Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī,” p. 520.

12 Hassan Ansari, “Zindigīnāma va āthār-i ‘Allāma Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī,” *Dā’irat al-ma’ārif buzurg islāmī*, vol. 10, no. 4002 (Tehran: Markaz-i Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif Buzurg Islāmī, n.d.), 1-2. See Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, p. 265.

13 It is titled *Mukhtaṣar Muntahā al-su’l wa-l-‘amal fi ‘ilmay al-uṣūl wa-l-jadal*.

14 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 446f.

15 Astarabādī, “*Risāla dar mabāḥith*,” fols 6b-7a, 18b-21a, 23a-24a.

he studied for a while in Shiraz before his departure to Najaf and that he went back to it afterwards, having completed his “*Risāla dar mabāḥith-i thalātha*” there during the early month of Jumādā 1 1014/September 1605.<sup>16</sup> Al-Astarabādī makes a reference to what he heard (*al-masmū‘ min*) from “*al-ustādh, madda zillahu al-‘ālī*” (the teacher, may God lengthen his shadow)<sup>17</sup> and mentions “*ustādhunā al-Muḥaqqiq M.N.*” (our teacher, the Muḥaqqiq M.N.), and refers to him again as “*ustādhunā al-Muḥaqqiq M.N. fi Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd*”<sup>18</sup> (our teacher, the Muḥaqqiq M.N., in the gloss on *Tajrīd*).<sup>19</sup> I should add that there is no other scholar, past or contemporary who is addressed as “*ustādhunā*” in this treatise. Some of the same *kalām* questions and arguments found in the “*Risāla dar mabāḥith-i thalātha*” are reproduced in *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*. There, al-Astarabādī attacks Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 907/1501) openly, and replaces “M.N.” with “Mīrzā Jān” Shīrāzī. Yet, the term “*ustādhunā*” is eliminated. Al-Astarabādī refers to Mīrzā Jān instead as “Mawlānā” or “Mawlā” the same way he does with ‘Abd Allāh al-Yazdī (d. 981/1573).<sup>20</sup> In other words, he removed any hint to an earlier association with Mīrzā Jān in Shiraz.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in addition to studying with al-Nassāba, he appears to have studied with Mullā Ḥabīb Allāh Bāghnawī (Bāghnavī) known as Mīrzā Jān Shīrāzī, a prominent Shāfi‘ī Sunni scholar known for his expertise in *kalām*, logic, and jurisprudence.<sup>22</sup> Mīrzā Jān was born in Bāgh-i Naw and resided in Shiraz between 971/1563-4

16 Astarabādī, “*Risāla dar Mabāḥith*,” fol. 30b.

17 Astarabādī, “*Risāla dar Mabāḥith*,” fol. 3b. With respect to the first *mabḥath* on *‘ilm al-wājib* (knowledge of the Necessary Being), “the Almighty”, al-Astarabādī notes that his account of the various approaches toward *‘ilm* (“knowledge”) and *ma‘lūm* (“that which is known”) in this treatise, derives from two sources. The first source constitutes widely-expressed views of a group of *mutakallimūn* who draw upon the commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 907/1501) on *Aqā'id al-‘Aḥudī*. The second constitutes what he heard orally from his teacher “*al-masmū‘ min al-ustādh*”.

18 Astarabādī, “*Risāla dar Mabāḥith*,” fol. 26a.

19 Ibid. Mīrzā Jān Shīrāzī’s commentary on the gloss of *al-Mukhtaṣar* is also mentioned in folio 30b. His “*Ḥāshiya alā l-Tajrīd*” is a gloss on the old gloss of Dawānī on the commentary of ‘Alī Qushchī on *Tajrīd al-Itiqād* of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

20 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 511. Al-Astarabādī moves away from his early opinion on how to link the created to the eternal and adopts yet a new position. On al-Dawānī see Muḥammad Taqī Mīr, *Buzurgān-i Nāmi-yi Pārs*, vol. 2, pp. 560-67.

21 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 507, 510, 511.

22 On Mīrzā Jān Shīrāzī, see Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i naẓm*, vol. 1, p. 389; Ḥasan b. Ḥasan Fasā'ī, *Fārsnāma-yi Nāshirī*, vol. 2, p. 960; Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 808; Munshī, *Ālam-ārā-yi Abbāsī*, vol. 1, pp. 245f. See also Reza Pourjavady, “Bāghnawī, Ḥabībullah,” *EF*<sup>3</sup> [[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_24272](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_24272)].

and 988/1580 and taught the rational sciences.<sup>23</sup> In “*Risāla dar mabāḥiṭh-i thalātha*”, al-Astarabādī notes that during one of his travels, a person, whose name he does not mention, encouraged him to devote a special work for three *kalām* questions.<sup>24</sup> The first one dealt with the nature of God’s knowledge of possible existents (*mumkināt*). The second addressed the manner in which what is created in time is linked to the eternal (*rabṭ al-ḥadīth bi-l-qadīm*). The third one dealt with the basis for assigning reward (*thawāb*) and retribution (*‘iqāb*) for the believer’s actions after it is proven that if a thing is not necessary it does not exist.<sup>25</sup> Al-Astarabādī elucidated the various positions taken by Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 907/1501) on *‘ilm al-wājib*, the proof of the existence of the Necessary Existent, opposing Dawānī and revalidating some of the definitions and arguments of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274).<sup>26</sup> He defended al-Ṭūsī’s views again with respect to the third

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- 23 Abū l-Qāsim Kāzīrūnī’s account of his teacher Mīrzā Jān shows that he did not leave Iran after the death of Shāh Ismā‘īl II as Iskandar Beg Munshī noted in *‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, vol. 1, p. 246. See Kāzīrūnī, *Sullam al-samāwāt*, vol. 1, p. 226. Apparently, Mīrzā Jān’s older “*Hāshiya bar Ithbāt-i Wājib*,” a gloss on al-Dawānī’s treatise on the proof of the existence of the Necessary Existent, was completed in Dhū l-Ḥijja 983/March 1576 in Shiraz as Abū l-Qāsim Kāzīrūnī noted. Qāḍī Aḥmad Qummī notes in *Khulāṣat al-Tawārīkh* (p. 808) that Mīrzā Jān passed away in Bukhara sometime around Rajab 996/May 1588 and that he was over 60 years old. Ḥājjī Khalifa (*Kashf al-zunūn*, vol. 1, p. 137) lists the date of death of Mīrzā Jān as 994/1585-6. Nafīsī (*Tārīkh-i nazm*, vol. 1, p. 389) gives 994/1585-6 as a date for his death, whereas Muḥammad Taqī Mīr (*Buzurgān-i Nāmī-yi Pārs*, vol. 2, pp. 697-702) and Kāzīrūnī (*Sullam al-Samāwāt*, vol. 1, p. 226) give 995/1586-7 instead.
- 24 Al-Astarabādī offers his “*Risāla dar Mabāḥiṭh*” as a gift to an influential person, a potential patron, and possibly a governor, who is described in general terms as wise, powerful, and a supporter of knowledge. See fols 1b-2a.
- 25 “*Risāla dar mabāḥiṭh*,” fols 2a, 3b. From this early treatise, al-Astarabādī’s tendency to defend earlier Imami theological positions is evident. Despite advancing his own distinct position on several *kalām* questions, he presents them as a mere elucidation and assertion of ‘core’ Imami positions, and sets them apart from Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite ones, and sets his own ‘genre’ of writing apart from that of philosophy and *kalām*. In the introduction to the treatise he declares that his opinions rest on what was transmitted from the Imam, “Abī ‘Abd Allāh, Peace be upon Him”, namely, Imām Ja‘far al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), who “utters truths”. He also defends al-Ṭūsī’s views on these questions as conveyed in his renowned work *Tajrīd al-I‘tiqād*, and in his *sharḥ* (commentary) on Ibn Sīnā’s *al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt*. For an overview of the trends in *kalām* and philosophy in Shiraz, see Ansari, “‘Ilm-i kalām”.
- 26 “*Risāla dar mabāḥiṭh*,” fols 25b-26a, 44a. Al-Astarabādī addresses al-Dawānī’s position on these three questions as reflected in *Ummūdhaj al-‘ulūm* and in the *ḥāshiya* (gloss) on al-Ṭūsī’s *Tajrīd al-I‘tiqād* as well as his commentary on *‘Aqā’id al-‘Aqūḍī*.

question.<sup>27</sup> Al-Astarabādī argued that al-Dawānī differed from al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1414) in his treatment of the nature of the relationship between what is created in time and what is eternal. Al-Astarabādī found al-Jurjānī and Mīrzā Jān’s agreement with al-Ṭūsī on some questions favorable. He seemed also pleased with Mīrzā Jān’s refutation of the positions argued by al-Dawānī in his gloss on the *Tajrīd*.<sup>28</sup> Briefly, their discussion circled around God’s knowledge, which is unchangeable and eternal, and the manner in which it causes originated knowledge (in humans). Al-Dawānī considered our knowledge, which is originated (*ḥādīth*), to be tied to the eternal (*qadīm*) as an effect (*ma’lūl*) that follows its full cause (*‘illa*) in time. But al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī and Mīrzā Jān argued that what is originated is brought into existence from the eternal consecutively with no lapse in time.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Astarabādī appears to have studied with Mīrzā Jān Shīrāzī before the latter’s departure from Shiraz in 988/1580, that is, at least around forty-five years before writing *al-Fawā’id*. As such, al-Astarabādī would be in his late 60s or early 70s at the time of his death, and not 50 years old as Gleave concluded.<sup>30</sup> Mīrzā Jān was a student of Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī (d. 962/1554-55) who was in turn a student of Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī al-Shīrāzī (d. 948/1542).<sup>31</sup> During the reign of Shah Ismā’īl II (r. 984-85/1576-77), Mīrzā Jān Shīrāzī joined his court in Qazvin. This was a time when the Shah was perceived as discreetly harboring and encouraging Sunnism and surrounding himself with Sunni scholars.<sup>32</sup> The negative light cast on Mīrzā Jān after the death of Shah Ismā’īl II may explain why Munshī assumed that he could no longer stay in Iran and had to flee it right after. This in turn may have pushed al-Astarabādī to downplay his association with him, and to refer to him indirectly as “M.N.” while listing the names of all the other scholars in the treatise fully. There may be also another reason. At the time of writing *al-Fawā’id*, al-Astarabādī was accusing the *mujtahids* of veering away from the pure ‘orthodox’ origins of the faith due to the extent of their association with Sunni scholars. He may have

27 Risāla dar mabāḥith,” fols 43a-44b.

28 Risāla dar mabāḥith,” fol. 26a.

29 Risāla dar mabāḥith,” fols 23b-24a. Al-Astarabādī states that God’s knowledge of possibilities (*mumkināt*) is included within His knowledge of Himself (*‘ilmih bi-dhātih*). There is a debate, however, as to the nature of this inclusion (*intīwā’*).

30 Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, p. 35.

31 Munshī, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, vol. 1, p. 246. On Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī, see Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, p. 51 n.33.

32 Munshī, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, vol. 1, p. 246.

removed any reference to Mīrzā Jān as one of his early teachers, thus detaching himself from him completely.

### Astarabādī's Association with Ṣāḥib al-Madārik

Al-Astarabādī noted in *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya* as well as in “*Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*” that his first *shaykh* (teacher) was Ṣāḥib al-Madārik and that he gave him an *ijāza* in Najaf in Jumādā I 1007/December 1598, that is, two years before passing away.<sup>33</sup> Al-Astarabādī stated that he studied with him *ḥadīth* and *rijāl*.<sup>34</sup> The *ijāza* shows also that he had the permission to narrate all what Ṣāḥib al-Madārik narrated, read or heard in the area of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (jurisprudence).<sup>35</sup>

It is unclear how long al-Astarabādī stayed in Najaf or how long he studied with Ṣāḥib al-Madārik. There is a prevalent view in the biographical sources that Ṣāḥib al-Madārik stayed in Najaf around two years, and as such al-Astarabādī's association with him would have to be limited to this period.<sup>36</sup> This, however, proves to be an error. Ṣāḥib al-Madārik spent a good part of his life in Najaf. He had accompanied his uncle Shaykh Ḥasan from Jabal 'Āmil to Najaf sometime after the death of their Shaykh, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣā'igh al-'Āmilī al-Jizzīnī in 980/1572-3 in Ṣiddīq.<sup>37</sup> Ṣāḥib al-Madārik and Shaykh Ḥasan were usually mentioned together as having attended the same study circles in Jabal 'Āmil and Iraq.<sup>38</sup> Ḥasan al-Ṣadr noted in *Takmilat Amal al-Āmil* that he saw the handwriting of Shaykh Ḥasan on *al-Jamhara*, and that it showed that he was in Najaf shortly before Ramadan 983/December 1575.<sup>39</sup> If this is accurate then Shaykh Ḥasan would have obtained his short *ijāza* in 984/1576-7

33 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 59, 379; Astarabādī, “*Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*,” folio 41a.

34 Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Munyat al-murīd*, pp. 20-2; al-Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*, vol. 2, pp. 44, 399; vol. 5, pp. 35-7. Devin Stewart wrote that al-Astarabādī studied with Ṣāḥib al-Madārik in Karbala but this appears to be an error. See Stewart, “Genesis,” pp. 170f.

35 Fāḍilī (ed.), “Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī,” p. 521.

36 The most important and comprehensive of these sources is al-Amīn's *A'yān al-shī'a*, vol. 10, pp. 6f. It draws upon the biographical literature provided by Māmaqānī, *Tanqīḥ al-maqāl*, and al-Tafrishī's *Naqd al-rijāl*, and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kh<sup>w</sup>ātūnābādī, *Ḥadā'iq al-muqarrabīn*. These sources are drawn upon by J. al-Shahrastānī in the introduction to al-Mūsawī al-'Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, vol. 1, pp. 30f.

37 Al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Amal al-Āmil*, vol. 1, p. 119. Shaykh Ḥasan appears to have elegized him in a poem. See editor's introduction to al-Mūsawī al-'Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, vol. 1, p. 30.

38 See al-Mūsawī al-'Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, vol. 1, pp. 26f.

39 Al-Ṣadr, *Takmilat Amal al-Āmil*, vol. 1, pp. 96f.



from 'Alī b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Mūsawī al-ʿĀmilī, the father of Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik in Najaf. The latter was one of the students of al-Shahīd al-Thānī and may have left Jabal ʿĀmil earlier.<sup>40</sup>

Shaykh Ḥasan and Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik arrived together in Najaf for the purpose of studying with al-Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī (d. 993/1585-6) at the time when the latter was editing his *sharḥ* (commentary) on *Irshād al-adhhān* of the 'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), titled *Majma' al-fā'ida wa-l-burhān*.<sup>41</sup> Al-Muqaddas completed the *Majma'* in 985/1577-8.<sup>42</sup> Numerous biographical sources state that Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik and Shaykh Ḥasan told al-Muqaddas that they cannot stay long in Najaf and had to return to Jabal ʿĀmil.<sup>43</sup> To expedite the process of studying they suggested to al-Muqaddas, that they would simply read the assigned texts without interpretation and raise questions on the sentences or sections, which they do not understand. Al-Ardabīlī agreed.<sup>44</sup> They studied with him works of jurisprudence, logic, and *kalām* among others. The *ijāza*, which al-Muqaddas gave to Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik specifies that he wanted to develop his expertise in fields pertaining to *ijtihādī* rationalism (*dākhil fī l-ijtihād*).<sup>45</sup>

There is ample evidence that the two ʿĀmilī scholars did not go home afterwards but rather to Karbalā' and were back in Najaf again. Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik seemed to have spent the last two years of his life in Juba'.<sup>46</sup> If he arrived around 983/1575 in Iraq he would have lived in it for no less than twenty-four years.<sup>47</sup> He and Shaykh Ḥasan promoted distinct streams of scholarship,

40 Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-Āmil*, vol. 1, pp. 58f., 117.

41 In his introduction to *Muntaqā al-jumān*, 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī's draws upon the biographical data provided by Māmaqānī's *Tanqīḥ al-maqāl*, al-Tafrishī's *Naqd al-Rijāl*, and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kh<sup>w</sup>ātūnābādī's *Ḥadā'iq al-muqarrabīn*. See al-Shahīd al-Thānī, *Muntaqā al-jumān*, vol. 1, p. 7.

42 He started writing the *Majma'* in Karbala in Ramadan 985/November-December 1577. See al-Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī, *Majma'*, p. 38; al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a*, vol. 9, pp. 195f.

43 See al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a*, vol. 10, pp. 6f.; Ṣadr, *Takmilat Amal al-āmil*, vol. 1, pp. 93f.; al-Mūsawī al-ʿĀmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, vol. 1, pp. 30f.; al-Shahīd al-Thānī, *Muntaqā al-jumān f.* p. 13. Ghaffārī restated the view that the stay of Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik and Shaykh Ḥasan in Iraq was short then added that, "some have said" that the two came to Najaf shortly after the martyrdom of al-Shahīd al-Thānī. This is, however, improbable because Shaykh Ḥasan was around seven years old when his father died, and because we know he studied with Shaykh 'Alī al-Jizzīnī in Jabal ʿĀmil before leaving to Iraq, as I noted earlier.

44 Ṣadr, *Takmilat Amal al-āmil*, vol. 1, p. 97.

45 Ṣadr, *Takmilat Amal al-āmil*, vol. 1, pp. 93f.

46 Al-Mūsawī al-ʿĀmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, vol. 1, p. 32.

47 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī al-Mashgharī, the grandfather of al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, Ṣāḥīb *al-Wasā'il*, appears to have studied with both of them in Najaf. See al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī,

drawing upon and reformulating the methods of both Ardabilī and al-Shahīd al-Thānī in legal inference and treatment of *ḥadīth*. To be sure, al-Astarabādī had ample time to study with either one of them, if he so wished.

Ṣāḥib al-Madārik's *ijāza* to al-Astarabādī sheds light on what the latter wanted to study with him as well as the main subjects and texts, which he appears to have covered. Al-Astarabādī hoped "to become part of the chain of transmitters of the pure *aḥādīth* originating from the home of prophethood and the niche of revelation."<sup>48</sup> He wanted to pursue this study out of piety and devotion to the Imams. He also asked for permission to transmit all the works of his shaykh, Ṣāḥib al-Madārik, which he has not read or studied with him, that is, his *marwiyyāt*, and all what he read with his teachers (*maqrūāt*), and also what he heard from them (*masmūāt*).

In response to al-Astarabādī's request, Ṣāḥib al-Madārik sought God's guidance and gave him the permission he asked for, namely, to transmit from him all that which he himself is permitted to transmit from his teachers. This includes his knowledge of the *ma'qūl* (rational sciences), the *manqūl* (transmitted sciences), and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (jurisprudence) through several lines of transmission, which feature the *ijāza*, which al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī gave to the Āl Zuhra scholars, as well as the *ijāzas* of al-Shahīd al-Awwal. Ṣāḥib al-Madārik mentions one line of transmission, which can be traced back to the four canonical *ḥadīth* works, namely, *al-Kāfī*, *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruḥu al-Faqīh*, *al-Tahdhīb*, and *al-Istibṣār*.<sup>49</sup> He adds to these books, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's works, *Ṭal al-sharā'i*, *Ma'ānī al-akhbār*, *Thawāb al-a'māl*, and *Kamāl al-dīn*.<sup>50</sup> Evidently, al-Astarabādī was keen on securing authoritative lines of transmission reaching to the earliest compilations of *ḥadīth*, *uṣūl al-dīn* (foundations of the faith), and *fiqh* (law). Ṣāḥib al-Madārik lists the chain of scholars from whom he transmits all these works.<sup>51</sup> In the last part, Ṣāḥib al-Madārik repeats that he has given al-Astarabādī permission to transmit also the glosses and compilations he had written, "taking precautions for me and for him" through piety and devotion to God.<sup>52</sup>

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*Amal al-āmil*, vol. 1, p. 129. We also know that Ṣāḥib al-Madārik completed his work "Ḥāshiya 'alā Alfīyat al-Shahīd" on 24 Ṣafar 997/11 January 1589) in Karbalā', that is, around four years after the death of his teacher al-Muqaddas. See al-Mūsawī al-'Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, vol. 1, p. 32.

48 Fāḍilī (ed.), "Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī," pp. 520-22.

49 Fāḍilī (ed.), "Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī," p. 521.

50 Fāḍilī (ed.), "Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī," p. 522.

51 Fāḍilī (ed.), "Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī," pp. 521f.

52 Fāḍilī (ed.), "Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī," pp. 521f.

This type of *ijāza*, which allows him to transmit the knowledge of his shaykh in the manner described above does not entail a long or thorough study program.<sup>53</sup> This *ijāza* does not state that he spent time reading particular texts through “*baḥṭh wa-taḥqīq wa-naẓar wa-tadqīq*” (thorough study, verification, critical examination, and editing); terms, which he used in connection to the mode of study he pursued with al-Nassāba in Shiraz.<sup>54</sup> We do not find in the *ijāza* that he read to his teacher any of these texts. It is therefore unlikely that al-Astarabādī spent a long time studying with Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik.

The *ijāza* also makes no mention of an interest, on the part of al-Astarabādī, in fields tied to *ijtihād* usually denoted by “*dākhil fī l-ijtihād*”, that is, expertise in fields such as logic, *kalām* jurisprudence, and exegesis, among others, which Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik and Shaykh Ḥasan specifically requested from al-Muqaddas. In other words, the *ijāza* in itself does not show that al-Astarabādī aimed to be trained as a *mujtahid* or that he became one. It shows only that he was qualified to transmit his shaykh’s knowledge in *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence, and that he became acquainted with the debates that took place among *uṣūlī* jurists themselves. Al-Astarabādī appears to have written a gloss on the chapter of *ṭahāra* (ritual purity) in *Madārik al-aḥkām*, a work, which focused on acts of worship (*‘ibādāt*).<sup>55</sup>

### Delinking Astarabādī from Shaykh Ḥasan

Shaykh Ḥasan was known for carefully editing and verifying his legal and *ḥadīth* works, as well as developing new features in the categorization of *ḥadīth* reflected in his important work *Muntaqā al-jumān fī l-aḥādīth al-ṣiḥāḥ wa-l-ḥisān*. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī (d. 1313/1895) stated that al-Astarabādī studied and earned an *ijāza* from him.<sup>56</sup> He added that he saw two *ijāzas* written to al-Astarabādī, one by Shaykh Ḥasan, and one by Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik.<sup>57</sup> I have myself relied on this information earlier but have now arrived at a different conclusion. Al-Astarabādī’s association with Shaykh Ḥasan is uncertain,

53 I am grateful to Dr. Hassan Ansari for bringing this feature to my attention.

54 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 265.

55 Bahrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn*, p. 114.

56 See Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 1, p. 120; Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 13f.

57 Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 1, p. 120; Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya*, pp. 13f. Unlike al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī, al-Afandī and Yūsuf al-Bahrānī mention only Ṣāḥīb al-Madārik as the shaykh of his *ijāza*. See Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*, vol. 5, pp. 35f.; Bahrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn*, pp. 113f.

and the view that he received an *ijāza* from him is largely unfounded. In *al-Fawā'id*, al-Astarabādī acknowledges only three teachers, namely, al-Nassāba,<sup>58</sup> Ṣāhib al-Madārik, and Mīrẓā Muḥammad.<sup>59</sup> He specifies also that he earned *ijāzas* from the last two.<sup>60</sup> In "*Hāshiyat al-Istibṣār*", we find the *ijāza*, which al-Astarabādī gave to his student, Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Salām b. Nāṣir b. Ḥasan al-Baḥrānī in 1021 Dhū l-Ḥijja/January or February 1613. In it, al-Astarabādī identifies again the two *ijāzas* for transmission, which he obtained from Mīrẓā Muḥammad and Ṣāhib al-Madārik.<sup>61</sup>

Al-Astarabādī refers to Ṣāhib al-Madārik as his "shaykh" and "sayyid" in *al-Fawā'id* but when mentioning Shaykh Ḥasan, he does not note his tutelage under him, referring to him as "al-Shaykh al-Fāḍil" or "Shaykh Ḥasan" and "Ṣāhib al-Muntaqā".<sup>62</sup> In "*Hāshiyat man lā Yaḥḍuruḥu al-Faqīh*" he refers to Shaykh Ḥasan again as "Ṣāhib al-Muntaqā" or "Shaykh Ḥasan".<sup>63</sup> In "*Hāshiyat al-Istibṣār*" he refers to him also as "*min jumlat muta'akhhirī aṣḥābinā*" (one of our late Shī'a 'ulamā').<sup>64</sup>

'Alī Fāḍilī understood from reading a section in *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya* that al-Astarabādī referred to Shaykh Ḥasan as his teacher or "shaykhunā".<sup>65</sup> But this is inaccurate. It is rather Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan b. Yūnus al-Zahīrī al-Āmilī al-'Aynāthī,<sup>66</sup> the author of *al-Masā'il al-Zahīriyya* who makes such references in his list of questions (*masā'il*), addressed to al-Astarabādī, which were published together with *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*. Ḥusayn al-Zahīrī<sup>67</sup> mentions Shaykh Ḥasan two times depicting him as "...shaykhanā mawlānā al-shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Maṣṣūr b. al-Shahīd al-Thānī" and in another place as "...mawlānā wa-shaykhanā".<sup>68</sup> Yet, Fāḍilī notes again in connection to al-Astarabādī's *Sharḥ al-Tahdhīb*, that he refers to Shaykh Ḥasan as "*shaykhunā al-Fāḍil*", which proves, in his view, that he studied with him.<sup>69</sup> But this is an error too because this particular copy reflects the collector's 'intervention' in the text as he relates on behalf of al-Astarabādī. I saw similar interventions

58 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 265f.

59 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 58-60.

60 See also Fāḍilī (ed.), "Ijāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī," pp. 519-525.

61 Fāḍilī (ed.), "*Hāshiyat al-Istibṣār*," p. 38.

62 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 117, 127, 132, 134.

63 Fāḍilī (ed.), "*Hāshiyat man lā Yaḥḍuruḥu al-Faqīh*," 469, 472, 495, 508.

64 Fāḍilī (ed.), "*Hāshiyat al-Istibṣār*," p. 48.

65 This is in reference to Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 564.

66 Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 1, p. 70.

67 On Ḥusayn al-Zahīrī, see al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 1, pp. 141f.

68 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 564.

69 Fāḍilī (ed.), "al-Ḥāshiya 'alā Uṣūl al-kāfi," pp. 229f.

in a manuscript that brings together “*fawā'id manqūla*” (transmitted comments of benefit) found in the marginalia of a copy of *Tahdhīb al-ḥadīth* owned by al-Astarabādī.<sup>70</sup> There is a reference, for instance, to “*shaykhunā al-Bahā'ī*” even though we know that al-Bahā'ī was not the teacher of al-Astarabādī, and that the latter referred to him numerous times in other works as “*al-mu'āṣir*” (the contemporary).<sup>71</sup> More importantly, in the same work there are numerous other references to Shaykh Ḥasan simply as “*shaykh Ḥasan*”, thus exposing the discrepancy between what al-Astarabādī wrote and what the collector related in his own words.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, I consulted a full and accurate copy of al-Astarabādī's *sharḥ* on *Tahdhīb*, which was in an excellent condition. I found no references whatsoever to Shaykh Ḥasan as “*shaykhunā*”. In fact, al-Astarabādī mentions him numerous times as “*al-fāḍil al-muḥaqqiq*” or as the author of *al-Muntaqā* and *al-Ma'ālim*.<sup>73</sup> There are at least two places where he states explicitly that Ṣāḥib al-Madārik and Mirzā Muḥammad al-Astarabādī were his teachers but does not do so with Shaykh Ḥasan even though he mentions him just a few lines after. In another place, he refers to Ṣāḥib al-Madārik, as “my first teacher in the field of *ḥadīth* and *rijāl*”.<sup>74</sup> A few lines after he adds, “*shaykhunā*.... my last teacher in the fields of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and *rijāl*, namely, Mirzā Muḥammad al-Astarabādī”. Again, in the same section, he refers to Ḥasan as “Ṣāḥib al-Muntaqā” and makes no mention that he was his teacher. Probably the most decisive evidence that Ḥasan was not his teacher is a statement referring to “the words of the pious scholar Shaykh Ḥasan and *al-Muntaqā*, and the words of my teacher (*shaykhī*), Ṣāḥib al-Madārik, a prominent *sayyid* with unique authoritative knowledge.”<sup>75</sup> Clearly, if they were both his teachers he would not have distinguished between them as he did in the same sentence.

In brief, we have no evidence that Shaykh Ḥasan taught him or gave him an *ijāza*. This is noteworthy given the critical role, which Shaykh Ḥasan played in developing the categorization of *ḥadīth*, and whose works are studied by *uṣūlīs* until our times. Al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī may have confused Shaykh Ḥasan with

70 Astarabādī, “Hāshiya ‘alā Tahdhīb al-aḥkām”. I want to thank Dr. Muhammad Kazem Rahmati for providing me with a copy of this manuscript.

71 Ibid., 112. There are also indirect quotes by certain ‘*ulamā*’ referring to their teachers, such as Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa (d. 460/1067-8) referring to his teacher, al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022).

72 Ibid., pp. 118, 119, 120, 125, 129, 132-133, 136, 137, 139.

73 “Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām,” fols 10b, 21a, 28b, 49b, 67a, 77b, 94b.

74 “Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām,” fol. 41a.

75 Ibid., fol. 89b.

his son Fakhr al-Dīn Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 1030/ 1620-1) known as Abū l-Faqīhayn and al-Zayn.<sup>76</sup> Muḥammad was al-Astarabādī's classmate in the study circle of Mīrzā Muḥammad and presumably gave him an *ijāza* to transmit all what he himself was permitted to transmit from his father.<sup>77</sup> Zayn al-Dīn (d. 1064/1654) son of Muḥammad, on the other hand, appears to have received an *ijāza* from al-Astarabādī.<sup>78</sup>

The perception held by Kohlberg and Gleave among others that al-Astarabādī underwent a “conversion” from a *mujtahid* to a traditionalist appears to be tied solely to the biographical account provided by al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī in *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*.<sup>79</sup> Al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī pushed against the constraints of the *ṭabaqāt* genre in unusual ways. He utilized the space of a biographical entry to flaunt his knowledge of jurisprudence, listing and attacking a group of *akhbārī* views. We know that al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī studied jurisprudence and produced a work titled, “Aḥsan al-ʿAtīyya fī sharḥ Risālat al-Alfiyya”, which included “a substantial section on jurisprudence”.<sup>80</sup> In *al-Fawā'id al-Raḍawīyya*, ʿAbbās Qummī criticizes al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī for deviating from the path of exemplary biographers like al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī “who did not discriminate between *akhbārīs* and *mujtahids*” in his treatment of their works and lives.<sup>81</sup> Aside from his confrontational tone, al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī succumbed to hyperbole when he insisted that

76 Muḥammad studied lexicography, Qurʾānic exegesis, and jurisprudence with a number of Sunni scholars in Damascus and maintained amiable relations with them. He travelled to Mecca and stayed there around five years, developing a close relationship with Mīrzā Muḥammad. He seemed to have helped him edit his work “*al-Rijāl al-kabīr*” and organize its chapters and entries. On this, see al-Jubāʾī al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 2, pp. 209-211; al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 7, p. 38.

77 Fāḍilī (ed.), “al-Ḥāshiyā ʿalā Uṣūl al-kāfi,” pp. 231f.; al-Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-ʿulamāʾ*, vol. 2, p. 193; vol. 3, pp. 70, 416. In his own work, *Istiṣṣāʾ al-iʿtibār fī sharḥ al-Istibṣār*, Muḥammad son of Shaykh Ḥasan collected and reproduced several glosses written by Mīrzā Muḥammad al-Astarabādī. See “Ḥāshiyat al-Istibṣār,” *Mirāth-i Ḥadīth-i Shīʿa*, pp. 35f.

78 Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-āmīl*, vol. 1, p. 93; al-Tunkābunī, *Qaṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, p. 344; Fāḍilī (ed.), “al-Ḥāshiyā ʿalā Uṣūl al-kāfi,” pp. 231-3.

79 Newman, “Anti-Akhhārī Sentiments,” p. 168.

80 Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī, *Rawḍāt*, vol.1, wāw, zāy, hāʾ; Āghā Buzurg, *Dhariʿa*, vol. 1, p. 287; vol. 9, p. 575. I would like to thank Sajjād Nikfahm Khubaravān for noting this work as well as Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī's poem, “Qurrat al-ʿAyn fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh”. According to Andrew J. Newman a number of entries in *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* reflect anti-*akhhārī* sentiments but seem to be indicative of the views of the ʿulamāʾ during the Qajar period. On this, see Newman, “Anti-Akhhārī Sentiments,” pp. 162f.

81 Qummī, *al-Fawā'id al-raḍawīyya*, pp. 648-50. Tunkābunī and Muḥsin al-Amīn both mentioned al-Astarabādī briefly, noting his attack on the *uṣūlīs*. See al-Tunkābunī, *Qaṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, p. 344; al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, vol. 9, p. 137.

al-Astarabādī was indebted to two mujtahids, namely, Ṣāhib al-Madārik and Shaykh Ḥasan, and that he followed in the “path of” these two “great teachers”.<sup>82</sup> Only Ṣāhib al-Madārik was his teacher. Still, al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī’s statement that al-Astarabādī was “early on part of the circle of the people of *ijtihād*” cannot be understood to mean that he was a mujtahid, as Kohlberg and later Gleave assumed. Studying with *mujtahids* or studying subjects relating to *ijtihād* does not make one a *mujtahid*, for this would have to be demonstrated through the ability to derive the law on its basis, and beyond textual proofs established directly through *ḥadīth* and Qur’ān.

There is no evidence that al-Astarabādī produced any works on *dirāya* or *ijtihādī* legal inference.<sup>83</sup> His non-extant works include one dealing with Arabic grammar titled, “*Fawā’id daqā’iq al-’ulūm wa-ḥaqā’iqihā*”, as well as a treatise refuting the views of al-Dawānī and al-Ḍashtakī. His gloss on al-Shahīd al-Thānī’s *Tamhīd al-Qawā’id* is also non-extant but Mīrzā Afandī stated that such a gloss was part of an early copy of *al-Fawā’id*.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, a discussion of *Tamhīd al-Qawā’id* falls in the tenth chapter of the final version of *al-Fawā’id*.<sup>85</sup> There remains a non-extant gloss on *Madārik al-aḥkām* dealing with the chapter on *ṭahāra* (ablution). It is highly unlikely that this gloss alone carries *uṣūlī* positions especially since the *akhbārī* scholar, Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, who saw it, and was acutely aware of the *uṣūlī-akhbārī* struggles, did not refer to any *uṣūlī* elements in it. Rather, he commented favorably on the gloss, stating that it reflected al-Astarabādī’s “virtue, precision, and good clarifications”.<sup>86</sup>

Al-Astarabādī seemed to have refrained from studying with Shaykh Ḥasan, the author of a foundational work on *ḥadīth* categorization, which was a landmark in *uṣūlī* scholarship. This is all the more noteworthy since Shaykh Ḥasan lived for more than two decades in Iraq and was inseparable from Ṣāhib al-Madārik. Al-Astarabādī did not pursue the study of *ijtihād* or *dirāya* with Ṣāhib al-Madārik either. Rather, he was interested in Ṣāhib al-Madārik’s authoritative chains of transmission and hoped to obtain permission to narrate all what he knew in the areas of *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence. All this, as well as a statement al-Astarabādī made to Ḥusayn al-Ẓahīrī, which I will discuss in the following

82 Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 1, p. 120.

83 Al-Astarabādī did not compose a work in *fiqh* and this was reflected in his answer to the question posed to him by Ḥusayn al-Ẓahīrī. See Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-madaniyya*, p. 568.

84 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 13-20, 36. Afandī, *Riyād al-’Ulamā’*, vol. 5, p. 246.

85 See Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 395-404.

86 Baḥrānī, *Lu’lu’at al-Baḥrayn*, p. 114.

section, lead us to believe that he expressed a clear resistance to the *mujtahids* and *uṣūlism* while he was still in Iran, but that he tried to hide it.

### Shiraz not Mecca: Astarabādī's Intellectual Formation

We do not know whether al-Astarabādī left Najaf to Shiraz right after his attainment of the *ijāza* from Ṣāhib al-Madārik. In his treatise "*Risāla dar mabāhith*," he mentions having travelled prior to writing it but he does not indicate where he was and when. We know that he studied for four years in Shiraz with al-Nassāba,<sup>87</sup> a student of Faṭḥ Allāh Shīrāzī (d. 998/1589), who was a native of Shiraz and an eminent scholar of philosophy and theosophy.<sup>88</sup> Faṭḥ Allāh left to India and ended up in 982/1574-5 at the court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Al-Nassāba offered him a thorough training, "*baḥth wa-taḥqīq wa-naẓar wa-tadqīq*", in jurisprudence, *kalām*, and logic.<sup>89</sup> Evidently, the expertise, which al-Astarabādī developed in these areas, even if he did not earn an *ijāza*, appears to have been significant. Any *ijāza* in and of itself is not an indication of the depth or significance of the study program and training a student receives from a *shaykh*. Al-Astarabādī's enthusiasm and fondness of al-Nassāba is reflected in *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya* and is only matched by his admiration for Mīrẓā Muḥammad. His depiction of Ṣāhib al-Madārik as "*al-sanad wa-l-'Allāma al-awḥad*" (a pillar and peerless scholar), carries only some of the praise he reserves for al-Nassāba, whom he depicts as, "*a'ẓam al-'ulamā' al-muḥaqqiqīn, waḥīd 'aṣriḥ wa-farīd dahriḥ, al-sayyid al-sanad wa-l-'allāma al-awḥad, sanad al-'ulamā' al-muḥaqqiqīn wa-quḍwat al-atqiyā' al-muqaddasīn*" (the greatest among proficient scholars, exceptional, peerless, a pillar of a sayyid, an exceptional scholar, a guide for the verifiers, and an exemplar among those who are pious and virtuous).<sup>90</sup> Aside from the importance of al-Nassāba for his training in jurisprudence and *kalām*, Shiraz's scholarly traditions and intellectual environment proved to be vital in shaping al-Astarabādī's thought. It should also be noted that prominent scholars like al-Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī and Mulla 'Abd Allah Yazdī who resided in Najaf were products of the intellectual environment of Shiraz. In my article, "Shi'ī Jurisprudence, Sunnism",

87 *Al-Fawā'id*, p. 265; Ibn Ma'sūm, *Sulāfat al-'aṣr*, p. 498; al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, pp. 309f.

88 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya*, pp. 265f.; Wāliḥ Iṣfahānī, *Khuld-i Barīn*, p. 412; Khātūnabādī, *Waqā'i'*, p. 489.

89 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 265.

90 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 59.



I highlighted the importance of Shiraz for new trends in *ḥadīth* scholarship, and discussed the opposition to the mujtahids, especially al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī, which a number of Shiraz's scholars and theologians expressed.<sup>91</sup>

It was in Shiraz and not Mecca that al-Astarabādī took a defensive revisionist approach toward central *kalām* questions as a way of carving out a canonical Twelver Shī'a position.<sup>92</sup> His skepticism about *ijtihādī* rationalism was growing at that time in Shiraz, for he tells his student, Ḥusayn al-Zahīrī, that a number of scholars in Iran were forced to hide their opinions in fear of the powerful jurists, that is, the *mujtahids*.<sup>93</sup> He added that the practice of "*taqīyya* (dissimulation) was necessary in the "land of the Persians (ʿAjām)".<sup>94</sup> What transpired in Mecca appears to have been a full expression of his disaffection with *ijtihādī* rationalism while in Shiraz, starting with a critique of al-Shahīd al-Thānī's methodology. Otherwise, his statement that he was practicing *taqīyya* in Iran with respect to the powerful mujtahids, would be meaningless.

Al-Astarabādī also points out that while he was still in Shiraz, twenty years before composing *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, he received "signs" about his envisaged role in Mecca to promote the authenticity of the Imami *aḥādīth* and to warn believers against following the corrupt path taken by the *mujtahids*. A righteous man in Shiraz came up to him and told him what he saw in a dream. Al-Astarabādī wrote,

91 Abisaab, "Shī'i Jurisprudence," 10-11; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Karaki," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 15, pp. 544-47.

92 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 48. It appears to run parallel to his views in the area of jurisprudence.

93 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, p. 573. Al-Zahīrī asks al-Astarabādī if the believer must migrate to a country where s/he can observe Friday prayer, given that it is obligatory during occultation (*ghayba*). He answered that the person should move to such a country if s/he is able to do so but such a country does not exist in the present time because the legal scholars in Persia (*bilād al-'ajam*) are fighting among themselves intensely over such questions [as Friday prayer] due to their precarious knowledge of *ḥadīth*. He adds that, "such a country does not exist at this time for even in Persia it is necessary to practice dissimulation due to the extent of the political power wielded by jurists who have no profound knowledge of *ḥadīth* (*bilād al-tamakkun mafqūd al-'ān, fa'inna fī bilād al-'ajam kadhalika yajib al-taqīyya li-shiddat shawkat al-fuqahā' al-ghayr [sic. ghayr] al-wāšilīn 'ilā 'umuq al-aḥādīth*)."

94 For more on this question see Abisaab, "Karaki," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 15, pp. 544-547; eadem, "Shī'i Jurisprudence," pp. 10-13.

The Eighth Imam, the protector and nurturer of the Persians—God’s Prayers and Peace be upon him and his pure forefathers and descendants—gave him [the pious man] a paper written with his noble handwriting and ordered him to deliver it to me [al-Astarabādī] and tell me: “You must keep it, for it will bring benefit to you.” He ordered him to tell me: “There remains another matter, which we will inform you about, if God wills, in Mecca, the Illustrious City—may God increase it in distinction and veneration—that is, after you take up residence there in the Honored City.<sup>95</sup>

Whether this account is anecdotal or factual does not change the implication of linking al-Astarabādī’s *akhbārī* leanings to Shiraz and not to the Ḥijāz. Al-Astarabādī’s departure to Mecca seems to have been motivated by his wish to study with Ṣāhib al-Rijāl. The latter’s reputation as a fine scholar of *rijāl*, *ḥadīth* and exegesis was well-known to al-Astarabādī prior to his move to Mecca, especially, since the third and last volume of Mīrzā Muḥammad’s work, *Manhaj al-maqāl fi taḥqīq al-rijāl* was completed in Ṣafar 986/April or May 1578 in Najaf.<sup>96</sup>

Mīrzā Afandī Iṣfahānī had noted that the first copy of *al-Fawā’id*, which he saw in Mazandaran consisted of commentaries on al-Shahīd al-Thānī’s *Tamhīd al-Qawā’id*.<sup>97</sup> In his detailed study, “Akhbāriyyān wa-Aṣḥāb-i Ḥadīth-i Imāmiyya,” Hassan Ansari sheds light on the additions and ameliorations, which *al-Fawā’id* underwent and their implications.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the existence of different versions of it over time further undermines the assumption that it was written in response to a command by Mīrzā Muḥammad in Mecca. Ansari emphasizes the depth of al-Astarabādī’s revisionist *ḥadīth* scholarship, which in my view led him to seek Mīrzā Muḥammad rather than being acquired after contacting him in Mecca.

95 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 535f. The Arabic text is too long to include here. Suffice to mention the last few lines: “*baqiya shay’un ākhar naqūluh lak fi Makka al-Mu’azzama.*”

96 Astarabādī, *Manhaj al-maqāl*, vol. 1, p. 19.

97 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 13-20, 36. al-Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-Ulamā’*, vol. 3, p. 246.

98 Ansari, “Akhbāriyyān,” p. 83.

### Astarabādī's Association with Mīrẓā Muḥammad

In 1014/1605 al-Astarabādī was still in Shiraz having completed his treatise “*Risāla dar mabāḥith*”. He moved to Mecca shortly after. From 1015/1606 until 1025/1616 another phase of his scholarly development in *ḥadīth*, law, and *rijāl* unfolded, partly through the guidance of Mīrẓā Muḥammad, the last of his teachers.<sup>99</sup> He gave al-Astarabādī an *ijāza* in Jumādā 1 1017/August or September 1608 in Mecca, that is, around two years or more after he moved to Mecca.<sup>100</sup> Al-Astarabādī was thus under his tutelage for all or part of this period. He added that he stayed in touch with Mīrẓā Muḥammad and continued to benefit (*istafadtū minhu*) from him until his death.<sup>101</sup>

Mīrẓā Muḥammad praised al-Astarabādī in the *ijāza* noting that he strove to memorize and investigate the *ḥadīth* of the four books and their chains of transmission.<sup>102</sup> Al-Astarabādī devoted himself to the examination of *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* having “probed its complicated matters and untied its knotty questions”. Al-Astarabādī also covered well-known *rijāl* sources including Mīrẓā Muḥammad’s own work and a section of *Mukhtalaf al-Shī’a*. Mīrẓā Muḥammad gave him permission to transmit all what he was permitted to transmit through a chain of scholars reaching back to Shaykh al-Ṭā’ifa, in connection to the latter’s works especially *al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*, which as he notes, were the focus of discussion.<sup>103</sup>

In the very first section of *al-Fawā’id*, al-Astarabādī presents his motives for writing his work, that is, “*al-bā’ith ‘alā ta’līf al-kitāb*”, which stresses the work’s gradual development from notes, comments and class lessons to a full critique of the foundations of *ijtihādī* rationalism. In this section, there is no mention of Mīrẓā Muḥammad. He wrote that when a group of,

virtuous men in the venerated city of Mecca wanted to read with me some works of jurisprudence (*al-kutub al-uṣūliyya*), I compiled useful lessons, that combine all what I have learnt from the words of the blessed

99 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-madaniyya*, pp. 59, 379. Al-Astarabādī read with Mīrẓā Muḥammad *Uṣūl al-kāfi* and the complete work of *Tahdhīb* by al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī alongside others. On Mīrẓā Muḥammad Ṣāḥib al-Rijāl, see al-Ḥurr al-‘Amilī, *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 2, p. 281. For Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Kayl al-Astarabādī, see al-Tafriṣhī, *Naqd al-rijāl*, vol. 4, p. 279.

100 Fāḍilī (ed.), “*Jāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī*,” p. 525.

101 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*, p. 59.

102 Fāḍilī (ed.), “*Jāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī*,” pp. 523f.

103 Fāḍilī (ed.), “*Jāzāt Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Astarabādī*,” p. 524.

descendants of the house of the Prophet (PBUT). [One section of these lessons] is tied to the art of jurisprudence and another to non-juristic questions. I called [this work], “*al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*” in refutation of those who upheld [the principle of] *ijtihād* (rational legal inference) and *taqlīd* (emulation), that is, those who relied on conjecture (*ẓann*)<sup>104</sup> in connection to deriving the divine legal rulings themselves. This work includes an introduction, twelve chapters, and a conclusion.”<sup>105</sup>

Given that the work is a group of *fawā'id* (benefits), which appeared piecemeal, al-Astarabādī considered some of them “lessons” to be taught and spread among students, and then added others with the aim of uprooting the study of *uṣūlī* works and replacing them with his traditionist approach toward the verification of *ḥadīth*. At this moment, it seemed that his adversarial writings on the mujtahids’ methods in legal inference, would have a direct audience. As he stated to his student al-Ḥusayn al-Ẓahīrī, the only form of jurisprudence he would pursue would be linguistic analysis by way of reconciling conflicting *aḥādīth*.<sup>106</sup> Al-Astarabādī’s “revival” of “*al-ṭarīqa al-akhbārīyya*” did not happen suddenly or as a response to his teacher’s command. Gleave’s conclusion that “only Ṣāhib al-Rijāl seems to have approved of (and indeed inspired) his development of an Akhbārī position”<sup>107</sup> runs in the face of much evidence for a longer historical process starting in Iran, which led to the birth of *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*.

Al-Astarabādī highlighted in “*Dānishnāmāh-yi Shāhī*,” the nature of his research before he embarked on writing *al-Fawā'id*.<sup>108</sup> He revisited the early Shī'ī *ḥadīth* collections and major Sunni and Shī'ī works of jurisprudence and *ḥadīth* analysis. Mīrzā Muḥammad approved and praised at least some of the sections of *al-Fawā'id*, which he saw.<sup>109</sup> He did not live to see the full and final

104 For the *mujtahids*, *ẓann* carries probative type of knowledge but for al-Astarabādī it is treated as conjecture.

105 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya*, p. 29. Al-Astarabādī writes: “*wa-lammā arāda jam'un min al-afāḍil fi Makkata al-mu'azzama qirā'at ba'd al-kutub al-uṣūliyya ladayya, jama'tu fawā'id mushtamila 'alā jull mā istafadtuhu min kalām al-itra al-tāhira (alayhim al-salām) mim mā yata'allaq bi-fann uṣūl al-fiqh wa-ṭaraf mim mā yata'allaqu bi-ghayrihi wasammaytuhā 'al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya' fi l-radd 'alā man qāla bi-l-ijtihād wa-l-taqlīd ay ittibā' al-ẓann fi nafs al-aḥkām al-ilāhiyya. Wa-hiya mushtamila 'alā muqaddima wa-ithnāy 'ashara faṣṣan wa-khātima.*”

106 Ḥusayn al-Ẓahīrī, “Al-Masā'il al-Ẓahīriyya,” in *Al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, pp. 547-567.

107 See Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, pp. 35f.

108 Astarabādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyya*, 59-60; Astarabādī, “*Dānishnāmāh-yi Shāhī*,” fol. 5a.

109 Astarabādī, “*Dānishnāmāh-yi Shāhī*,” fol. 5a.

version of the work, which al-Astarabādī completed in Rabīʿ 1 1031/January or February 1622, three years following his death. As such, we do not know what sections he actually approved of and praised.

None of the Safavid sources mentioned Mīrzā Muḥammad in connection to a critique of *uṣūlism*. This was uniquely al-Astarabādī's position. Mīrzā Muḥammad also appears to have described the 'Allāma al-Ḥillī, a major target of al-Astarabādī's attacks, by the words: "His praiseworthy attributes are too numerous to recount and too apparent to hide."<sup>110</sup> Therefore, al-Astarabādī's statement that Mīrzā Muḥammad envisaged a prophetic role for him in "reviving" *akhbārism*, which he himself had allegedly espoused, is an exaggeration and must be approached with caution.

In Mecca and Medina, al-Astarabādī completed the intellectual journey, which he started in Iran, that is, a movement from anti-*ijtihādī* skepticism to the reformulation of traditionism as the only truthful and salvific path for the Shīʿī jurist.

### Summary and Conclusions

The intellectual and political dominance of the *uṣūlīs*, shaped the way al-Astarabādī was represented in the biographical works of the nineteenth century, and explains the meager interest in collecting and studying his works. Given the dispersed and scanty references to al-Astarabādī earlier, al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī's entry, the longest account on him since the seventeenth century, acquired an authoritative quality. Al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ānsārī's emphasis on al-Astarabādī's indebtedness to the *mujtahids* is an exaggeration and his reference to al-Astarabādī as being part of "the circle" of *mujtahids*, does not entail that he was one. Al-Astarabādī appears to have refrained from contacting Shaykh Ḥasan but studied with Ṣāḥib al-Madārik. He did not ask the latter to train him in fields pertaining to *ijtihād*. Al-Astarabādī's knowledge of jurisprudence seemed to have been developed at the hands of al-Nassāba in Shiraz prior to arriving in Najaf.

Al-Astarabādī's full-fledged advocacy of *akhbārism* in Mecca was preceded by skepticism and resistance to *ijtihādī* rationalism while he was in Iran, and more specifically Shiraz. In a future study, I will discuss how the training, which al-Astarabādī received in jurisprudence and *kalām* in Shiraz, and the particular positions he chose to take on the major doctrinal and theological debates of the sixteenth century resonated with his *akhbārī* outlook in the fields of *ḥadīth* and law.

<sup>110</sup> Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-ʿāmil*, vol. 2, p. 81.

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