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The Sources of Abu Mikhnaf (isnad)

Introduction

Man learnt the art of writing, thus he recorded his actions and those of others. Accordingly, history took shape.

At the rise of Islam, history was limited among the Arabs to those who knew the Arab lineage and the events of the days of ignorance (*jahiliyyah*) by heart. These people were known as the 'most learned' ones. [1](#)

Al-Nadhr bin al-Harith bin Kaldah was among those considered as the learned ones. He used to travel to cities in Persia where he would purchase books on Persian tales such as those of Rustam and others. He would then use these tales to distract people from listening to the Holy Qur'an. The following verse was revealed about him:

"Among the people is he who buys diversionary talk that he may lead [people] astray from Allah's way, without any knowledge, and he takes it in derision. For such there is a humiliating punishment. And when Our signs are recited to him he turns away disdainfully as if he had not heard them [at all], as if there were a deafness in his hears. So inform him of a painful punishment." [2](#)

Another one among those considered as learned was a man from Madinah called Suwaid bin al-Samit who used to take stories of the past prophets from the Jews. After the advent of the Holy Prophet (S) he had gone to Makkah either for *haji* or *'umrah*. There he heard of the Prophet's mission and went to see him. The Holy Prophet (S) invited him to Allah upon which Suwaid said: "I have with me the code of Luqman." The Prophet (S) asked him to show it to him and he did that. The Prophet (S) then said: "Indeed this is a fine speech, but that which I have is better than this; the Qur'an revealed onto me by Allah; a guidance and a light." [3](#)

Among such narrations are the pre-Islamic reports about the prophets and the past nations related by *al-Tabari* and Muhammad bin Ishaq, whose chains of transmission end up with the phrase: 'some of the learned among the Jews'.

Islam rose and brought with it the Qur'an; a book and a reading recited during hours of the night and parts of the day. So the need arose for people to record it and for others to memorize it. Thus the Holy Qur'an was put on paper during the time of the Holy Prophet (S) as others committed it to memory.

After the demise of the Prophet (S) a group of those who had submitted to him during his lifetime turned back from Islam. This prompted his companions to fight the apostates. As a result, more than three hundred companions⁴ were killed in the battle of Yamamah alone. Following this, they felt the need for recording the traditions (*hadith*).

However, there was a difference of opinion in this regard. Some of the companions held that it was allowed to record the hadith, while others advocated its prohibition. The idea of prohibition gained more ground because of the ban on the recording of the hadith by the first⁵, the second⁶ and the third⁷ caliphs. The effect of such a prohibition and dislike continued up until the second century H when the Muslims unanimously agreed on the legitimacy of recording the hadith.

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali bin Abi Talib (as), always considered the recording of hadith as legal. The first thing he recorded was the Book of Allah, the Almighty. Immediately after the Prophet's burial, he had vowed not to put on his cloak, except for prayers, until after he has collected the Holy Qur'an. He consequently collected it according to its chronological order, also pointing out the general (*'amm*) and the restricted (*khass*) verses of it; the absolute (*mutlaq*) and the qualified (*muqayyad*); the clear (*mubayyan*) and the unclear (*mujmal*); the concrete (*muhkam*) and the ambiguous (*mutashabih*); and the abrogating (*nasikh*) and the abrogated (*mansukh*).

He also made distinct the verses after whose recital prostration becomes obligatory from those which are otherwise. There was also a mention of the manners and norms that have appeared in it, together with the cases of revelation (*sha'n al-nuzul*). He had also clarified in this collection all that which might have seemed difficult in some respect.

He also composed a work on blood money after the collection of the Holy Qur'an which was then known as 'Sahifah'. Ibn Sa'd has brought this work at the end of his book famously known as *al-Jami'*. Al-Bukhari also narrates from this particular work in a number of places in his *Sahih*, for instance in the beginning of the first volume of *Kitab al-'Ilm* (Book of Knowledge).

A group of his adherents at that time followed him in collecting the hadith. Among them was Abu Rafi' Ibrahim al-Qibtī and his two sons: 'Ali and 'Ubaidullah. 'Ubaidullah has a book in which he lists those who participated in the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan.⁸ Hence, this is the first book in history to be written by a follower of Imam 'Ali (as).

Similarly, the Shi'ah have preceded the rest of the Muslims in historiography. The works of Muhammad bin al-Saib al-Kalbi (d. 146 H), Abu Mikhnaf Lut (d. 158 H), Hisham al-Kalbi (d. 206 H) and others are all among the sources of Islamic history.⁹

Karbala'

It was in Karbala' that the event made perpetual by history took place; the event which terminated the life of the great Imam, the grandson of the Holy Prophet (S) and the lord of the martyrs, Abu 'Abdillah al-Husayn (as).

This tragic event that took place in 61 H, similar to the narrations of the battles in the early period of Islam, was passed from mouth to mouth from those who had either witnessed the battle itself, or the events before or after it. It was not until the second century H when Abu Mikhnaf Lut bin Yahya bin Sa'id bin Mikhnaf bin Salim al-Azdi al-Ghamidi al-Kufi¹⁰ undertook the collection of these oral accounts in a book which he named Kitab Maqtal al-Husayn (as) as it has appeared in the list of his works. This is the first book ever to be written on the history of this great event.

Hisham bin Muhammad bin al-Saib al-Kalbi al-Kufi al-Nassabah¹¹ was another personality from Kufah who studied the reports on Islamic history under the tutelage of Abu Mikhnaf. Hisham used to read the books of Abu Mikhnaf to him and then make a copy from them. He would then relate the content of his writings on the authority of his master saying: 'Abu Mikhnaf Lut bin Yahya al-Azdi narrated to me from...'

Among the works that Hisham reproduced from his master, read onto him and related from him was a book on the Maqtal (martyrdom) of al-Husayn (as) as has been recorded in the list of his works. However, Hisham did not limit himself in his book on the Maqtal of al-Husayn (as) only to the narrations of his master Abu Mikhnaf, but he also included in it narrations from his other master in history named 'Awanah bin al-Hakam (d. 158 H).

It is, however, evident for anyone who refers to the historical works of the early period of Islam that all other historians have entirely depended on their reports on these two earlier outstanding scholars, especially on Abu Mikhnaf as he was nearer in time to the events and so used to relate them in a detailed and precise manner.

Many historians have incorporated in their historical writings an abridged version of his works. This shows that his works were existent during their times. Some of these historians are: Muhammad bin 'Umar al-Waqidi (d.207 H); al-Tabari (d.310 H); Ibn Qutaibah (d.322 H) in his book al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andulusi (d.328 H) in al-'Aqd al-Farid when he discusses the thaqifah; 'Ali bin al-Husayn al-Mas'udi (d.345 H) when he mentions 'Urwah bin al-Zubair's apology on behalf of his brother, 'Abd al-Allah, for threatening the Banu Hashim with fire as they refused to pay allegiance to the latter; Shaikh al-Mufid (d.413 H) in al-Irshad when discussing the martyrdom of al-Husayn (as), and in al-Nusrah fi Harb al-Basrah; al-Shahristani (d.548 H) in al-Milal wa al-Nihal when mentioning the sect of NaZZamiyyah; Khatib al-Khwarazmi (d.568 H) in his work on the martyrdom of al-Husayn (as); Ibn al-Athir al-Jazri (d.630 H) in al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh; and Sibt al-Jawzi (d.654 H) in Tadhkirah al-Khawass.

In our observation, the last among the historians to have cited Abu Mikhnaf, without any reference to

other book or narrator, which apparently indicates that he must have been quoting directly from his work, is Abu al-Fida' (d.732 H) in his Tarikh.

Presently, we do not know of any of the existing works of Abu Mikhnaf in general, nor of his work on Maqatal in particular. Apparently all these works are lost and only some scattered reports from them have remained in the works of historians previously cited.

The oldest text known to us [today] from among those who have been quoting in their works the narrations of Hisham al-Kalbi from Abu Mikhnaf, is the Tarikh of Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari (d.310 H). He did not, however, compose an independent work on these narrations, rather he just mentions the event of Karbala' beside the events of the year 60 and 61 H. [12](#)

Moreover, he does not narrate them directly from Hisham, instead he relates them from his works and in order to strengthen his case he would say 'I narrate this from Hisham bin Muhammad', but he does not specify who related to him from Hisham. What leads us to believe that Tabari was not a contemporary of Hisham and therefore could not have heard him personally, is the comparison between the year Tabari was born (b.224 H) and the year in which al-Kalbi passed away (d.206 H). Besides that, Tabari has clearly asserted to have been narrating from the works of Hisham when mentioning the event of Harrah where he says: "This is how I have found it in my book..." [13](#)

Another earliest text, after al-Tabari, which directly draws reports from Hisham al-Kalbi's work, is Kitab al-Irshad of Shaikh al-Mufid (d.413 H). He says before relating the reports of Karbala' that: "[This is] a selection of the reports...which al-Kalbi has narrated..." [14](#)

After that comes Tadhkirat al-Ummah bi Khasa'is al-A'immah of Sibt ibn al-Jawzi (d.654 H). He clearly states to have narrated many of his reports about Imam al-Husayn (as) from Hisham al-Kalbi.

Comparing the reports of al-Tabari with those of al-Mufid and Ibn al-Jawzi, we find many similarities between these reports except in case of some letters or words (such as waw in the place of fa' or vice versa), as the reader shall see in the course of this work.

Abu Mikhnaf

The books of history do not mention his birthdate. But Shaikh al-Tusi (r), quoting from al-Kashhi (r), places [Abu Mikhnaf] in his *Rijal* in the category of those who have narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali (as). Al-Tusi then says: "In my opinion, this is not correct; for Lut bin Yahya did not meet Amir al-Mu'minin (as), rather his father, Yahya, was among his companions." [15](#) However, al-Tusi has not mentioned his father, Yahya, among the companions of 'Ali (as) either, instead he considers his grandfather, Mikhnaf bin Salim al-Azdi, to be among his companions and says: "[He was the son of 'Aishah's aunt. He was an Arab, from Kufah." [16](#)

It should be noted, however, that al-Tusi quoted the above piece of information from al-Kashhi's work,

and not directly from him; as al-Kashhi lived in the 3rd century H, while al-Tusi was born in 385 H. This work of al-Kashhi was titled *Ma'rifat al-Naqilin 'an al-A'immah al-Sadiqin*, as reported by Ibn Shahrashub in *Ma'alim al-'Ulama'*.¹⁷ This book is now lost, and, based on what Sayyid bin Tawus has stated in *Faraj al-Mahmum*, only that part of it has remained which was selected by Shaikh al-Tusi in the year 456 H.¹⁸ [But] what al-Tusi has quoted from al-Kashhi that Abu Mikhnaf was among the companions of 'Ali (as), is not found in this selection of al-Tusi.

In his *Rijal*, al-Tusi has mentioned Abu Mikhnaf to be one of the companions of Imam al-Hasan (as)¹⁹, and then among the companions of Imam al-Husayn (as)²⁰ and thereafter he mentions him in the circle of the companions of Imam al-Sadiq (as).²¹ [However,] he has neither mentioned him to be among the companions of Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn (as), nor among those of Imam al-Baqir (as).

Al-Tusi has quoted al-Kashhi's assertion in his [another] work called *al-Fihrist* also. There he says: "The correct view is that his father, [Yahya], was among the companions of 'Ali (as), though the former did not meet him."²² He then goes on to mention his chain of narration from Abu Mikhnaf through Hisham bin Muhammad bin al-Sa'ib al-Kalbi and Nasr bin Muzahim al-Minqari.

Al-Najjashi mentions Abu Mikhnaf in his *Rijal* and says: "Lut bin Yahya bin Sa'id bin Mikhnaf bin Sulaim²³ al-Azdi al-Ghamidi, [known as] Abu Mikhnaf, the master of the narrators in Kufah and the most prominent of them. He was reliable in his narrations. He has narrated [reports] from Ja'far bin Muhammad (as). It is said that he has narrated from Abu Ja'far [al-Baqir (as)] also, which is not correct."²⁴ Al-Najjashi then lists his works, among them being the book on the *maqatal* of al-Husayn (as). He then mentions his [own] chain of narration from Abu Mikhnaf through Hisham bin Muhammad bin al-Sa'ib al-Kalbi.

With the [above] citations, we have so far presented the opinion of three out of four of our primary works in *Rijal* regarding Abu Mikhnaf, without there being any mention of the dates of his birth and death.

The Family of Abu Mikhnaf as Reported by Tabari

Regarding the companions (*sahabah*) who passed away in the year 80 H, Tabari writes in his book *Dhayl al-Mudhayyal*: "[Among them was] Mikhnaf bin Sulaim bin al-Harith... Ibn Ghamid bin al-Azd... Mikhnaf professed Islam and accompanied the Prophet (S). He was the chief of the house of Azd in Kufah and he had three brothers: 'Abd Shams -who was killed in the battle of Al-Nukhailah, Saq'ab and 'Abdullah -both of whom were killed in the battle of Jamal. Lut bin Yahya bin Sa'id bin Mikhnaf bin Sulaim was among the descendents of Mikhnaf bin Sulaim, from whom people used to narrate historical events."²⁵

Tabari mentions [Mikhnaf bin Sulaim] in the reports of the battle of Basrah [i.e. Jamal], but not through Abu Mikhnaf. He says: "Mikhnaf bin Sulaim al-Azdi was in command of [the tribes of] Bajilah, Anmar, Khath'am and Azd."²⁶

There is no indication in the [above] two citations that Mikhnaf bin Sulaim was killed in the battle of Jamal. However, Tabari has related another report about the battle of Jamal from Abu Mikhnaf, who related from his uncle, Muhammad bin Mikhnaf, saying: “A number of elders of the tribe, all of whom were present in the battle of Jamal, have related to me that: the standard of the Azd from Kufah was with Mikhnaf bin Sulaim. He was killed on that day, so the standard was held by two of his family members, Saq’ab and his brother ‘Abdullah bin Sulaim, who were also killed by the people.”[27](#)

This report is in agreement with what Tabari has mentioned in *Dhayl al-Mudhayyal* regarding the death of the two brothers of Mikhnaf, Saq’ab and ‘Abdullah. Perhaps he narrated it from his *Tarikh*. However, it differs from what has appeared in *Dhayl al-Mudhayyal* on the death of Mikhnaf bin Sulaim; for according to the [above] report, he was killed in Jamal, and this contradicts what Tabari has related [in *al-Dhayl*] – in the reports of [the battle of] Siffin– on the authority of al-Kalbi from Abu Mikhnaf himself. Abu Mikhnaf says: “My father, Yahya bin Sa’id, related to me from his uncle, Muhammad bin Mikhnaf who said: ‘I was with my father, Mikhnaf bin Sulaim, on that day [i.e. in Siffin] and I was only seventeen years old...”[28](#)

Tabari also reports from al-Kalbi who said: “Harith bin Hasirah al-Azdi related to me from some elders of [the tribe of] Namir and Azd that Mikhnaf [disliked] the invitation from the [fellow tribe of] Azd in Sham...”[29](#)

He also related from al-Madaini (d. 225) and ‘Awanah bin al-Hakam (d. 158) –who was narrating through his chain of narration from an elder of the Banu Fazarah: “Mu’awiyah dispatched Nu’mān bin Bashir [al-Ansari] with two thousand men. They raided ‘Ain al-Tamr while the governor of ‘Ali, [Malik bin Ka’b] al-Arhabi, was in the city with three hundred soldiers. So he wrote to ‘Ali (as) asking him for help.” [Malik] also wrote to Mikhnaf bin Sulaim who was nearer, requesting him for assistance. So Mikhnaf sent to him his son, ‘Abd al-Rahman, with fifty other men and they joined Malik and his followers... When the Syrians saw them, they thought that Malik has a [good] support, so they felt defeated and fled.”[30](#)

All these narrations clearly attest to the fact that Abu Mikhnaf’s [great] grandfather, Mikhnaf bin Sulaim, was alive after the battle of Jamal, rather even after the battle of Siffin; as the raids of Mu’awiyah took place in the year 39 H, that is after the battle of Siffin (38 H). In contrary, the narration [that states that he was killed in Jamal] is a lone report. However, [it seems that] Tabari did not realize this fact and therefore did not comment on this, though he has clearly stated in *Dhayl al-Mudhayyal* that Mikhnaf lived till the year 80 H.[31](#)

The Family of Abu Mikhnaf as Reported by Nasr bin Muzahim al-Minqari

Apart from *al-Tabari*, there are other sources as well in which we find [evidences] that show that Mikhnaf bin Sulaim was alive [even] after the battles of Jamal and Siffin. Nasr bin Muzahim al-Minqari (d.212 H) relates in his book *Waq’at Siffin* on the authority of Yahya bin Sa’id from Muhammad bin

Mikhnaf who said: “Ali (as) looked at my father –after his return from Basrah– and said: ‘...but Mikhnaf bin Sulaim and his people did not lag behind...”^{[32](#)}

[Nasr] also says: “Our companions have said: “[Ali (as)] appointed Mikhnaf bin Sulaim as the governor of Isfahan and Hamadan and dismissed from them Jarir bin ‘Abdullah al-Bajali...”^{[33](#)}

He also reports: “When [‘Ali (as)] wanted to advance towards Sham, he wrote [a letter] to [all] his governors. The letter that he sent to Mikhnaf was written by ‘Ubaidullah bin Abi Rafi’ [in the year 37 H]. Mikhnaf put in his position two men from his kinsmen and set out for Siffin, where he fought alongside ‘Ali (as).”^{[34](#)}

[In another report] he says: “Mikhnaf bin Sulaim was in charge of the Azd, Bajilah, the Ansar and Khuza’ah”;^{[35](#)} and also that: “[Mikhnaf] was accompanying ‘Ali (as) in Babylon.”^{[36](#)}

He narrates from the elders of Azd that: “When the men of Azd in Iraq were invited by the members of Azd in Sham, Mikhnaf disliked the [invitation] and it was unbearable for him. So he addressed [his people], expressing to them his aversion and dislike.”^{[37](#)}

We have much to derive from the narration of Abu Mikhnaf from his father’s uncle, Muhammad bin Mikhnaf, in which he says: “I was with my father, Mikhnaf bin Sulaim, on the day [of Siffin] while I was seventeen years old.”^{[38](#)}

It is evident from this report that Sa’id was younger than his brother, Muhammad, and for this [very] reason he could not participate in [the battle of] Siffin. Therefore, he was relating the news about Siffin from his brother, Muhammad. The [above] report also implies that Muhammad bin Mikhnaf was born in the year 20 H. Based on this, his brother Sa’id –the grandfather of Lut– must have been born around this [time]. Accordingly, [it is] Sa’id, the grandfather of Lut, [who] should be among the companions of ‘Ali (as) and not even his father, Yahya.

Thus, we can assume, at the least, that Sa’id married and fathered a child, Yahya, when he was twenty years of age, that is in the year 40 H.^{[39](#)} In this case, there is, definitely, no question of the existence of Lut yet, nor of considering Yahya to be among the companions of ‘Ali (as).

Let us take it for granted [again] that Yahya also married and fathered a child, Lut at the age of twenty, that is in the year 60 H. This is the least we can assume. [Now] let us presume also that [Lut] began to listen to the reports [from his masters] when he was twenty, i.e. in the year 80 H, and he managed to compile his work within a period of twenty years or so, meaning that he must have finished compiling the book toward the end of the first century H.

However, it is very improbable that he could have compiled this book and read it to others during this period after taking into consideration that the recording of hadith, let alone history, was still disagreeable, but rather prohibited; and that the power was still in the hands of the Banu Marwan, the Umayyads; and

that the atmosphere was that of fear and dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) for the Shi'ah and [those narrating] reports about them.

[Instead] there is an indication that Abu Mikhnaf compiled this work of his around the year 130 H. For in his report about the arrival of Muslim bin 'Aqil in Kufah, [he says that Muslim] was residing in the house of Mukhtar bin Abi 'Ubaid al-Thaqafi. He then says: "...This is the house which is known today as the house of Muslim bin Musayyab." Since Ibn Musayyab was, in the year 129 H, the governor of Ibn 'Umar in Shiraz, as reported in *al-Tabari* (7:372), [we conclude that the above book must have been compiled around this time]. [In fact,] this was the time when the power of the Umayyads had become weak and the Banu 'Abbas were inviting people towards Imam al-Ridha (as), asking [them] to rise and revenge for the blood of al-Husayn (as) and his household.

And who knows, may be the adherents of the Banu 'Abbas had asked Abu Mikhnaf to compile the reports on the martyrdom of al-Husayn (as) in order to back their call. But after they had achieved their motives, they deserted him and his work as they deserted the Ahl al-Bait (as) after that and even fought against them.

The Works of Abu Mikhnaf

Shaikh al-Najjashi has mentioned the following books as belonging to Abu Mikhnaf:

Kitab al-Maghazi, Kitab al-Riddah, Kitab Futuh al-Islam, Kitab Futuh al-'Iraq, Kitab Futuh Khurasan, Kitab al-Shura, Kitab Qatl 'Uthman, Kitab al-Jamal, Kitab Siffin, Kitab al-Hakamain, Kitab al-Nahrawan, Kitab al-Gharat, Kitab Akhbar Muhammad bin Abi Bakr, Kitab Maqtal Muhammad bin Abi Bakr, Kitab Maqtal Amir al-Mu'minin (as), Kitab Akhbar Ziyad, Kitab Maqtal Hujr bin 'Adiyy, Kitab Maqtal al-Hasan (as), Kitab Maqtal al-Husayn (as), Kitab Akhbar al-Mukhtar, Kitab Akhbar Ibn al-Hanafiyyah, Kitab Akhbar al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi, Kitab Akhbar Yusuf bin 'Umair, Kitab Akhbar Shabib al-Kharijiyy, Kitab Akhbar Mutarrif bin Mughirah bin Shu'bah, Kitab Akhbar al-Huraith bin al-Asadi al-Naji and Kitab Akhbar Al Mikhnaf bin Sulaim.

Al-Najjashi then mentions his link to these works and says: "...from his student Hisham al-Kalbi.^{[40](#)}

Shaikh al-Tusi ascribes to him some of the books mentioned above in his *al-Fihrist* and adds: "He has [also] a book called *Kitab Khutbah al-Zahra' (as)*." He then states his link to these works.^{[41](#)}

Ibn al-Nadim has listed to his credit some of these works in *al-Fihrist*, including [his work on] the *maqtal* of al-Husayn (as).

It is noticeable from the list of his works that Abu Mikhnaf directed much of his efforts in compiling the reports about the Shi'ah in general, and those about Kufah in particular. There does not appear, in the above list, any book on reports about the Banu Umayyah or the Banu Marwan. Nor is there any book on the revolt of Abu Muslim al-Khurasani or the Abbasid rule. This is taking into consideration that he

passed away twenty five years after all these events, in the year 158 H. Not only this, but his last book, according to the list of his works, was the one on Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi whose reports ended by his death in 95 H.

However, in his *Tarikh* Tabari relates reports from [Abu Mikhnaf] up until the end of the rule of the Umayyads, and to be specific, till the events of the year 132 H.[42](#)

It is evident from his reports which are scattered in several of his books, especially in *al-Tabari*, that [Abu Mikhnaf] often narrates [reports] either from his father, or uncle, or one of his cousins, or from his elders within the tribe of Azd in Kufah. This leads us to the fact that it was the abundance of reports within his tribe that prompted him to gather and compile books from them. This is why we find him limiting himself to the reports of the people of Kufah, to the extent that he was considered the most learned of them in this regard.

His Faith (madhhab) and Reliability (withaqah)

It is [quite] obvious from his reports generally that he has not directly narrated, even a single report, from Imam Zain al-‘Abidin (as) (d.95 H) nor from Imam al-Baqir (as) (d.115 H). Rather, he has narrated from Imam al-Baqir (as) through one person[43](#) and from Imam ‘Ali bin al-Husayn (as) through two links.[44](#) He has a few direct reports from Imam al-Sadiq (as) (d.148 H).[45](#)

The above facts prove what al-Najjashi said: “It is said that he related [reports] from Abu Ja’far (as), but it is not correct.”[46](#) [Abu Mikhnaf] has not narrated from Imam Musa bin Ja’far al-KaZim (as), though he lived after Imam al-Sadiq (as) and was a contemporary of al-KaZim (as) for ten years. For this very reason no one has counted him to be among the companions of al-KaZim (as).

All this may lead us to the fact that [Abu Mikhnaf] was not a Shi’ah in the technical sense of the word and whom the Ahl al-Sunnah term as the *rafidhi*, nor was he among the companions of the Aimmah (as) as such. Rather, he was a Shi’ah in the sense that he had personal inclinations [towards them] like most of the other people in Kufah, without having rejected the faith of the majority of the Muslims at that time.

What may back the above fact is that none among the Ahl al-Sunnah has accused him of being a *rafidhi* in their sense of the word; for according to them one who is simply inclined towards the Ahl al-Bait (as) [without having even professed their school of thought], is considered a Shi’ah. But a person who is known [to them] to have been following the Ahl al-Bait (as) in his beliefs, then they not only consider him to be a Shi’ah, but they also accuse him of *rafidh*. This is the difference between the two terms according to their terminology.

[Regarding the reliability of Abu Mikhnaf,] al-Dhahabi says: “A corrupt and unreliable narrator. Abu Hatim and others have rejected him. According to Ibn Ma’in, he is not reliable. He has also said elsewhere that he is of no importance. According to Ibn ‘Adiyy, he is a fanatic Shi’ah and the narrator of

their reports.”[47](#)

[Notice that] none of the [above Sunni] authorities have accused Abu Mikhnaf of *rafdh*. This is at a time when they used to charge with *rafdh* anyone who was proven to be a follower of the Ahl al-Bait (as) school of thought.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid states this clearly when he says: “Abu Mikhnaf is among the narrators (*muhaddithin*) and among those who hold that the legitimacy of [the divine] leadership (*imamah*) is realized [only] through [the divine] designation. He is not a Shi‘ah, nor is he counted to be among their outstanding figures.”[48](#)

The above passage has been quoted by Sayyid al-Sadr in his *Ta’sis al-Shi‘ah li ‘Ulum al-Islam*. He then comments on it saying: “I would say: they do not accuse him of something other than *tashayyu’*, which does not, according to their [own] scholars, contradict [his] being reliable. The great Sunni scholars, such as Abu Jarir al-Tabari and Ibn al-Athir, have relied on him. Especially Abu Jarir who has filled his *Tarikh al-Kabir* with the narrations of Abu Mikhnaf.”[49](#)

Imam Sharafuddin (r) has devoted one whole chapter in *al-Muraja’at* in which he enumerates one hundred Shiite personalities found in the Sunni chains of narration (*isnad*), but also in their *Sihah*, specifying the places [where these names have appeared].[50](#)

In brief, there is no room for any doubt about his not being a Shi‘ah and the follower of the Imamiyyah school of thought as it has been rightly asserted by Ibn Abi al-Hadid. Yes, some of the Sunni scholars consider him to be a Shi‘ah, [but] based on what they are accustomed to [in calling] one who expresses love and sympathy for the Ahl al-Bait (as) [as a Shi‘ah].

None of the past Shiite scholars have declared him to be a Shi‘ah. Al-Najjashi (may Allah have mercy on him), who is an expert in this discipline [i.e. in *rija’*], describes Abu Mikhnaf only by saying: “He was the master (*shaikh*) of the narrators in Kufah”, not ‘the master of our scholars’, and not even ‘the master of the narrators of our reports’.

There is nothing surprising about the fact that [on the one hand] Ibn Abi al-Hadid clearly states this fact, and [on the other hand] he narrates from him poems (*arjaz*) which he recited in the battle of Jamal on the succession of ‘Ali (as) to the Prophet (S); for narrating these verses implies only that he was a Shi‘ah, [in the sense that he was] sympathetic [towards the Ahl al-Bait (as)], not that he was an adherent of the Imamiyyah sect. Many Sunni scholars have been [normally] relating the like of these verses too.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that Abu Mikhnaf was a Shi‘ah, but there is no evidence that he was, beside this, a follower of the Ahl al-Bait school of thought (*imami*).

The best of what our scholars have said regarding him are the words of praise from al-Najjashi. He

says: “He was the master of the narrators in Kufah and outstanding amongst them. One could rely on what he narrated.” These words are noteworthy as they establish his probity. This is why his reports have been considered as agreeable (*hasan*) in [the texts of Rijal such as] *al-Wajizah*, *al-Bulghah*, *al-Hawi* and other works.

Hisham al-Kalbi

Shaikh al-Najjashi has mentioned him [in his book] together with his lineage. He then says: “He was well versed with the [historical] events, well-known for his righteousness and knowledge. He entirely belonged to our faith (*madhhab*). He has related the famous narration that says: “I was afflicted with a serious illness as a result of which I forgot all I knew. So I went to Ja’far bin Muhammad (as) and he made me drink knowledge in a cup and I thus regained my knowledge.’ Abu ‘Abdillah [al-Sadiq (as)] used to bring him closer to himself and encourage him. [Hisham] has many books.”⁵¹

Al-Najjashi then lists his works and mentions his sources for obtaining them. Among the books he lists is *Maqatal al-Husayn*. This is, perhaps, [the collection of] either all the reports or most of them which he narrated from his master Abu Mikhnaf.

It is, however, strange that in his selections from *Rijal al-Kashhi*, Shaikh al-Tusi quotes al-Kashhi as saying: “Al-Kalbi was a Sunni, though he had great affection and love [for the Ahl al-Bait (as)]. It has also been said that al-Kalbi was practicing dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) and he was not a Sunni.”⁵²

Shaikh al-Tusi does not mention [Hisham] in his *al-Rijal* nor in *al-Fihrist*, except as a link to Abu Mikhnaf’s works.⁵³ The reason behind this may be that [those of] his works which are related to the history of the Shi’ah are, [in fact], what he has narrated from his master Abu Mikhnaf [i.e. he just served as a link to what Abu Mikhnaf had said]. Otherwise, the rest of his books do not contain what is related to the history of the Shi’ah.

Many of the Sunni historians and experts in biographies have attested to his knowledge, [good] memory and to his being a Shi’ah. Ibn Khalakan says: “He has profusely narrated the historical events [related] to the people and their news. He was the most learned in genealogy. He was among the renowned custodians of the hadith (*huffaZ*). He died in the year 206 H.”⁵⁴

Abu Ahmad bin ‘Adiyy writes in *al-Kamil*: “Al-Kalbi has [narrated] sound traditions (*ahadith*). His commentary on them is acceptable and through which he is renowned. No one has a longer and more comprehensive exegesis [in this regard] than him. He is given precedence over Muqatil bin Sulaiman since the latter has got vile beliefs. Ibn Hibban has mentioned him in his *al-Thuqat*.”⁵⁵

The Maqatal Currently in Circulation

A book on the martyrdom of al-Husayn (as) which is ascribed to Abu Mikhnaf is commonly in circulation

nowadays among the people and [book] publishers. It is very obvious that this is not the work of Abu Mikhnaf, rather it has been compiled by someone other than Abu Mikhnaf. However, it is not known where and when exactly it was compiled, from whom did the compiler find this book and when was it first published?

Imam Sharafuddin says: "It is evident that the current book on the martyrdom of [al-Husayn (as)] which is attributed to Abu Mikhnaf contains many such narrations that were not known [even] to Abu Mikhnaf! Indeed, they have been forged in his name. The number of those who have ascribed [false reports] to him (*kaddhabah*) is large, and this [on its own] attests to his greatness."[56](#)

Muhaddith al-Qumi says: "Let it be known that Abu Mikhnaf has numerous works on [Islamic] history and on the lifestyle [of the Aimmah (as)]. Among them is *Maqatal al-Husayn (as)* from which [our] great scholars in the past have narrated and have relied on it... Unfortunately it is [now] lost and there does not remain even a single copy of it. With regard to the *Maqatal* which is in our hands and which is being ascribed to him, it is neither his nor of any [other] reliable historian. Whoever wants to get convinced about this, then let him compare what has appeared in this [present] *Maqatal* with what Tabari and others have related from him. I have explained this in [my book] *Nafas al-Mahmum* when talking about Tirimmah bin 'Adiyy. And Allah knows best."[57](#)

Since I wanted to edit [Abu Mikhnaf's] work, I had to go through this fabricated *Maqatal*. There is no doubt that this book was compiled by someone other than Abu Mikhnaf [himself]. [But] it is not known who compiled it and when. It appears to me that the compiler must have been an Arab of a later period (*muta'akhhirin*), who was neither acquainted with history and hadith, nor with the biographies [of the narrators], not even with the Arabic literature; for in this book he uses words which were used by the Arabs of the later period in their colloquial language.

This book consists of a hundred and fifty narrations, six of which have some missing links in their chains of transmission (*mursal*). The first one [no.49] from Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn (as), the second [no.94] from 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas, the third one [no.82] from 'Umarah bin Sulaiman who reported from Humaid bin Muslim, the fourth one [no.96] from a person known as 'Abdullah bin Qais, the fifth report [no.70] from a person called 'Ammar and [the sixth] one [no.70] which has been narrated from al-Kulaini (d.329 H) without its chain of narration (*marfu'ah*) and which is not found in *al-Kafi*.

After narration no.105[58](#), he starts relating many [reports] from a person known as Sahl al-Shahrazuri who he considers to have traveled with the Ahl al-Bait (as) from Kufah to Sham [and accompanied them] until their return to Madinah! He [also] relates from this person 31 *mursal* narrations, mentioning among them the report of Sahl bin Sa'd al-Sa'idi in the name of Sahl bin Sa'id al-Shahrazuri![59](#)

The remaining 138 reports in the book are ascribed to Abu Mikhnaf himself.

The Grave Errors of this Maqtal

This book [which is ascribed to Abu Mikhnaf] contains a number of serious mistakes. They are as follows:

1. In the first line of the first page of this *Maqtal*, a discerning reader is confronted with this grave mistake: “Abu Mikhnaf said: ‘Abu al-Mundhir Hisham has narrated to us from Muhammad bin Saib al-Kalbi’!” Here [we] find that Abu Mikhnaf, who was the teacher of Hisham, is relating from Hisham, his [own] student! Who, in turn, was reporting from his father, Muhammad bin al-Saib al-Kalbi!

Thus, we can obviously tell how ignorant the compiler of this work was about the biographies of the narrators that such an inconsistency remained hidden to him.[60](#)

2. After three pages we read: “Al-Kulaini relates in a tradition...”[61](#) Would that I knew who was this person relating from al-Kulaini who died in 329 H, while Abu Mikhnaf died in 158 H! This is at a time when this tradition is not even found in *al-Kafi*!

3. After a few more pages we find him saying: “He said: ‘[Yazid] sent the letter to Walid. It reached him ten days into the month of Sha’ban.”[62](#) While the historians, including Abu Mikhnaf according to the report of Tabari, unanimously agree that al-Husayn (as) entered Makkah three days after the beginning of Sha’ban! So how can we reconcile between [these two reports]?!

4. In the case of the martyrdom of Muslim bin ‘Aqil, he is the only writer who reports that a pit was dug into which [Muslim] fell and he was, thereafter, taken to Ibn Ziyad while his hands were tied up behind his back. He says about this: “The accursed one approached and said to them: ‘I will set them a trap! Let us dig a pit on his way and fill it with grass and earth. Then we attack him and retreat from in front of him! I hope that he will not escape the pit.”[63](#)

5. Also concerning the martyrdom of Muslim, he is the only one to report [saying]: “When Muslim and Hani were killed, their news ceased to reach al-Husayn (as). So he became seriously disturbed! He gathered his household... and instructed them to return back to Madinah! They set out moving before him until they entered the city! [Al-Husayn] went to the grave of the Messenger of Allah (S) and clung to it. [There] he bitterly wept and [then] he fell asleep!”[64](#)

This report has no source and no trace of it is found at all in any other book.

6. Regarding the arrival of al-Husayn (as) in Karbala’, this writer is alone in reporting that the Imam was riding seven horses and that he dismounted them, and that they [all] stopped and none of them could move further.[65](#)

7. He, again, is the only person to have narrated what Imam ‘Ali bin al-Husayn said on the night of ‘Ashura’ and on the day of [al-Husayn’s] arrival in Karbala’.[66](#)

8. He alone has reported that the number of Ibn Sa'd's army in Karbala' was eighty thousand [men]![67](#)

9. He relates the speech of Zuhair bin al-Qain as having been delivered on the day the army [of Ibn Sa'd] arrived in Karbala'. He says in this regard: "He then advanced towards his followers and said: 'O Muhajirin and Ansar! The speech of this accursed dog and his likes should not deceive you!! Indeed, he is not going to attain the intercession (*shafa'ah*) of Muhammad (S). Verily, the people who kill his offspring and their helpers will be in hell fire forever.'"[68](#)

10. He is the only one to have narrated the report about the digging of the well by al-Husayn (as). He says: "...But he did not find water in it."[69](#)

11. Again he is the only one to have repeated three times the report of the night and the day of 'Ashura'. He mentions in the first the speech of al-Husayn (as) and the [martyrdom] of his brother, 'Abbas (as)! He is alone in saying that: "... ['Abbas] then held the sword with his mouth." He then says: "[Al-Husayn] came to him and carried him on the back of his horse and took him to the tents. He put [his body] there and bitterly wept over him such that everyone present with him began weeping."[70](#)

Then he comes back to the night of 'Ashura' and says: "[Al-Husayn] then turned to his companions and said to them: 'O my companions! These people are after me only. So when the night sets in, go away under the cover of its darkness.'" He then continues: "He spent that night and in the morning..."[71](#)

He then, once again, talks about the day of 'Ashura' by narrating another speech of the Imam (as). He is the only person to have mentioned here that al-Husayn (as) sent a messenger to Ibn Sa'd by the name of Anas bin Kahil, whereas, in fact, the [name of the] messenger was Anas bin al-Harth bin Kahil al-Asadi.

He reverts for a third time [and] talks about the night of 'Ashura' and here he relates the famous speech of the Imam (as) to his companions and his household [on that night]. Then he comes back, again, to mention the war preparations by al-Husayn (as) and Ibn Sa'd.[72](#)

12. He is the only one to mention Ibrahim bin al-Husayn as one of the companions of Imam al-Husayn.[73](#)

13. He mentions Tirimmah [bin al-'Adiyy] as one of those who were martyred along with al-Husayn (as), whereas Tabari relates on the authority of al-Kalbi from Abu Mikhnaf that [Tirimmah] was not present in Karbala' and was [thus] not killed with al-Husayn (as).[74](#) Muhaddith al-Qumi [also] has commented on this in his book *Nafas al-Mahmum* (pg. 195).

14. He mentions some verses in the story of Hurr al-Riyahi which are, in fact, of 'Ubaidullah bin al-Hurr al-Ju'fi, [whom Imam (as) met] at Qasr Banu Muqatil, not realizing that they were not in tune with the conditions Hurr [al-Riyahi] was in. The [writer] ascribes to al-Riyahi the following: "I stood by their bodies and their graves..."[75](#) How ignorant the compiler of this book was!

15. He ascribes some verses to al-Husayn (as) in lamentation of Hurr [al-Riyahi] which are not worthy of [the Imam (as)]. Some of it reads: “He is the best *hurr* (free man) as he supported Husayn, those who helped Husayn are indeed successful!”[76](#)

16. He ascribes to Imam al-Husayn (as) three verses in lamentation of his companions, whereas they are obviously known not to be of the Imam (as). Rather they belong to one of the poets of the later period. He says: “They helped Husayn, what young men were they.”[77](#)

17. He is alone in specifying the day on which Imam al-Husayn (as) arrived in Karbala’, saying that it was on Wednesday.[78](#) He [also] says that he was martyred on Tuesday.[79](#) According to this, Imam (as) must have arrived in Karbala’ on the 5th of Muharram! While the historians –including Abu Mikhnaf as reported in *al-Tabari*– unanimously agree that he reached Karbala’ on Thursday[80](#), the second of Muharram, and he was [martyred] on Friday.

18. After narration no. 105[81](#), he starts relating many [reports] from a person known as Sahl al-Shahrazuri, who is regarded to have journeyed with the Ahl al-Bait (as) from Kufah to Sham [and accompanied them] until their return to Madinah! He then puts in his mouth verses –while he was in Kufah– which were, in fact, said by Sulaiman bin Qattah al-Hashimi[82](#) by the grave of Imam al-Husayn (as): “I passed by the houses of the household of Muhammad...”[83](#) In Sham, he ascribes to him the report of Sahl bin Sa’d al-Sa’idi in the name of Sahl bin Sa’d al-Shahrazuri[84](#), as though he considers [Shahrazuri] to be [al-Sa’idi]!

19. He attributes a poem (*urjuzah*) of thirty odd verses[85](#) to Imam al-Husayn (as) on the day of ‘Ashura’. Similarly, he ascribes to ‘Abdullah bin ‘Afif al-Azdi a *qasidah* comprising about thirty verses before ‘Ubaidullah bin Ziyad.[86](#)

20. There appear words in different places of this book which are used in the colloquial language of the Arabs of the later period (*muta’akhhirin*) and which do not befit Abu Mikhnaf. For instance, in the story of digging a pit to trap Muslim, [we come across words as] “The accursed (*la’in*) one approached and said to them... and fill it with grass (*daghl*) and earth.... we should then retreat from in front of him.”[87](#). Or “His helpers went away (*rahat*)”[88](#), or “The one who was awake (*yaqZanahu*)...”[89](#) and “He was picking a quarrel (*yataharrashu*)...”[90](#)

After all this, none would consider it correct for this book to be ascribed to Abu Mikhnaf.

The Sources of Abu Mikhnaf (isnad)

Here, we will present a detailed list of the names of the intermediaries (*wasait*) between Abu Mikhnaf and the events [he related]. We shall [also] mention after the name of every narrator the reports he has narrated. Thus, the list itself would serve as an index for all the narrations that are going to appear in this book.

We have six different list of narrators based on the manner they narrated the reports, or the manner in which Abu Mikhnaf related from them. They are:

1. This list comprises the names of those who witnessed the battle and *directly* related [its events] to Abu Mikhnaf, without any intermediary. Thus, Abu Mikhnaf is reporting the [information about the] battle from them, i.e. through one link [only]. This list comprises three narrators.
2. This list also consists of the names of those who witnessed the battle, with the difference that Abu Mikhnaf relates from these [narrators] through a link or two. That is, he narrates the [events of the] battle through two or three people. There are fifteen people in this list. Accordingly, the total number of people who witnessed the battle and from whom Abu Mikhnaf related his reports is eighteen.
3. This list contains the names of those who were in direct contact with the events before and after Karbala'. They reported them to Abu Mikhnaf *directly*. Thus, he narrates the events from each of them through a single link. There are five people in this list.
4. It consists of those who witnessed the events before or after Karbala' and Abu Mikhnaf narrates from each of them through one or two links. There are twenty one people in this list.
5. It comprises people who neither witnessed the battle, nor were they in direct contact with the events. Rather, they served as links for the reports of Abu Mikhnaf from [the narrators in the past four lists]. Thus, Abu Mikhnaf narrates the battle or the events surrounding it through two links. There are a number of twenty nine people in this list.
6. It contains the names of the just narrators (*'udul*) from among the companions of the Aimmah (as) or the Aimmah themselves. They are not among those who witnessed the battle or were in direct contact with the events surrounding it. They are [all] considered as links, though they were not narrating through [any] intermediaries or [at least] did not mention them. There are fourteen people in this list.

Therefore, it becomes clear from the above list that the total number of those who narrated the events of Karbala' to Abu Mikhnaf, directly or indirectly, is thirty-nine people. They have related sixty-five narrations together with their complete chains of narration (*musnad*). And this is the total number of reports mentioned in this book.

We have extracted the biographies of these transmitters either from the works of *rijal*, or by tracing the places wherein their reports have appeared in *al-Tabari*. [Of course,] there are [also] those about whom we could not find any information.

¹. Al-Kulaini reports in al-Kafi (vol. 1, pg.32) through his chain of transmission from Imam Musa bin Ja'far (as) who said: "[one day] the Messenger of Allah (S) entered the mosque and saw a group of people gathered around someone, upon which he asked: 'Who is this?' 'A learned one' he was told. He further enquired: 'And who is a learned person?' They replied: 'The most knowledgeable of people about the Arab lineage and their affairs, the events of the pre-Islamic period and Arab poetry.' Imam Musa bin Ja'far (as) says that here the Prophet (S) remarked: 'This is a kind of knowledge which

neither harms one who is ignorant of it, nor does it benefit one who knows it.' The Prophet (S) then went on to say: 'True knowledge is of three kinds: a concrete verse (ayatun muhkamah), a righteous precept (faridhatun 'adilah) and an established tradition (sunnatun qaimah). All else is superfluous."

[2.](#) Qur'an, 31:6-7; Tafsir al-Qumi (2: 161; Najaf edition) and Tafsir Ibn 'Abbas (pg.344; Egypt edition).

[3.](#) Al-Tabari (2:353; Dar al-Ma'arif publications) and Tarikh al-Ya'qubi (2:30; Najaf edition).

[4.](#) Al-Tabari (3:269).

[5.](#) Tadhkirah al-Huffa" (1:3&5).

[6.](#) Tadhkirah al-Huffa" (1:3,4&7); al-Bukhari (vol.6, bab al-istidhan) and Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'd (2:206).

[7.](#) Musnad Ahmad (1:363). Regarding this see also al-Sunnah qabl al-Tadwin.

[8.](#) Rijal al-Najjashi (pg. 1-5; India edition) and al-Fihrist (pg. 122; Najaf edition).

[9.](#) See Mu'allifi al-Shi'ah fi al-Islam, al-Shi'ah wa Funun al-Islam, Ta'sis al-Shi'ah li 'Ulum al-Islam (pg.91-287), A'yan al-Shi'ah (1:8-148) and al-Ghadir (6:290-297).

[10.](#) Fawat al-Wafayat (2: 140) and al-A'lam of al-Zarqali (3:821)

[11.](#) Muruj al-Dhahab (4:24; Egypt edition).

[12.](#) Al-Tabari (5:338-467).

[13.](#) Al-Tabari (5:487): Among the other things that lead us to this is also the fact that Tabari names some of the personalities in a different way. This implies that he did not hear these names [directly] from their narrators. For instance, in the case of Muslim bin al-Musayyab, he mentions him by this name in two places [of his book], and in another two places he calls him as Silm bin al-Musayyab, whereas both refer to the same person as it appears in the report about Mukhtar.

[14.](#) Kitab al-Irshad (pg.200; Najaf edition).

[15.](#) Rijal al-Tusi (pg.57; Najaf edition).

[16.](#) Ibid, pg.58.

[17.](#) Ma'alim al-'Ulama' (pg. 152; Najaf edition).

[18.](#) Faraj al-Mahmum (pg. 130; Najaf edition).

[19.](#) Rijal al-Tusi (pg.70).

[20.](#) Ibid, pg.79.

[21.](#) Ibid, pg.279.

[22.](#) Al-Fihrist of Shaikh al-Tusi (pg. 155; Najaf edition).

[23.](#) It is strange that he names him as such and then attributes to him the book called Akhbar Al Mikhnaf bin Sulaim! This is likely to have been the error of the copyist.

[24.](#) Rijal a-Najjashi (pg.224; India lithographic edition).

[25.](#) Al-Matbu' ma'a al-Tarikh (13:36; Dar al-Qamus Publications and 11:547; Dar Suwaidan Publications).

[26.](#) Al-Tabari (4:500; Dar al-Ma'arif Publications).

[27.](#) Ibid, (4:500).

[28.](#) Ibid, (4:542).

[29.](#) Ibid, (5:26).

[30.](#) Ibid, (5: 133).

[31.](#) Dhayl al-Mudhayyal (11:547; Dar Suwaidan Publications), quoting from al-Tabari.

[32.](#) Waq'at Siffin (pg.8; al-Madani Publications).

[33.](#) Ibid, (pg. 11).

[34.](#) Ibid, (pg. 104).

[35.](#) Ibid, (pg. 117).

[36.](#) Ibid, (pg. 135).

[37.](#) Ibid, (pg.262). According to Taqrib al-Tahdhib: "He was martyred with the followers of Tawwab in at 'Ain al-Wardah in 64 H!" which is [absolutely] incorrect.

[38.](#) Al-Tabari (4:246).

[39.](#) In this case, how can Yahya, the father of Abu Mikhnaf, be among the companions of 'Ali (as) as claimed by Shaikh al-Tusi in two of his books?! Al-Fadhil al-Ha'iri pointed out to this fact before us in his book Muntaha al-Maqal. He proves [in

this book] that Abu Mikhnaf never met Amir al-Mu'minin (as). He [also] regards the opinion of al-Tusi that Yahya –the father of Lut– met 'Ali (as), as weak; for it was his father's grandfather, Mikhnaf bin Sulaim, who was among the companions of 'Ali (as), as it has been stated by al-Tusi himself and others.

Al-Hairi further says: "This [i.e. Mikhnaf bin Sulaim was among the companions of 'Ali (as)] should prove for al-Tusi that Lut did not see ['Ali (as)], as it also weakens the possibility of his father, Yahya, to have met ['Ali (as)]." That Abu Mikhnaf should be among the companions of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) –as mentioned by al-Kashhi– is, therefore, impossible. Likewise, there is no room for Shaikh al-Ghifari's argument, which he has put forward in the introduction of his Maqatal, for there being a possibility of Abu Mikhnaf to have met even his father's grandfather, i.e. Mikhnaf bin Sulaim.

This is by assuming that Lut was then fifteen years old, while his father, Yahya, was thirty-five and his grandfather Sa'id, fifty-five and his great grandfather, Mikhnaf bin Sulaim, seventy-five. But this [assumption] cannot be correct if we take into consideration the report of Abu Mikhnaf from his father's uncle, Muhammad bin Mikhnaf, that the latter was seventeen years old [during] the battle of Siffin, and that his brother, Sa'id, was younger than him. It was for this [very] reason that [Abu Mikhnaf] relates the report from [Sa'id's] brother, Muhammad, [and not from Sa'id himself]. Based on this, the age of Sa'id must have, then, been about fifteen years and not fifty-five [as it has appeared in al-Ghifari's argument].

[40.](#) Rijal al-Najjashi (pg.224; India lithographic edition).

[41.](#) Al-Fihrist of al-Tusi (pg. 155; Najaf edition).

[42.](#) Events about the revolt of Muhammad bin Khalid in Kufah in 132 H. See: al-Tabari (7:417).

[43.](#) See the report on the martyrdom of the infant of al-Husayn (as) (5:448).

[44.](#) See the narration about the night of 'Ashura' (5:488).

[45.](#) See the report on the martyrdom of al-Husayn (as) (5:453).

[46.](#) Rijal al-Najjashi (pg.224; India lithographic edition).

[47.](#) Mizan al-I'tidal (3:420; Aleppo edition).

[48.](#) Ta'sis al-Shi'ah (pg.235; Baghdad edition).

[49.](#) Ibid, (pg.235). He says: "I have counted the number of instances where Tabari has narrated [reports] from Abu Mikhnaf. I found them to be around 400 instances, as it appears in the index of names in al-Tabari (Dar al-Ma'arif Publications). The last of these narrations is in (7:417) which is pertaining to the revolt of Muhammad bin Khalid in Kufah in 132 H."

[50.](#) Al-Muraja'at (ch. 16–17, pg.52–118, Dar al-Sadiq publications).

[51.](#) Rijal al-Najjashi (pg.305; India lithographic edition).

[52.](#) Rijal al-Tusi (pg.390, hadith no.733; Mashad edition). It is evident that, in case of difference of opinion [between scholars of rijal about a personality], our scholars of rijal would prefer the view of al-Najjashi [over the others]. Shahid al-Thani [Zain al-Din al-'Amili] writes in al-Masalik: "What is apparent about al-Najjashi is that he is the most precise (adhabat) of the people [i.e. the experts in rijal] and the most acquainted of them about the status of the narrators." His grandson says in Sharh al-Istibsar: "Al-Najjashi has precedence over Shaikh [al-Tusi] in such cases as it is known through experience."

His master, Muhaqqiq al-Astarabadi says in Al-Rijal Al-Kabir when mentioning the biography of Sulaiman bin Salih: "The difference in style between Shaikh [al-Tusi] and al-Najjashi is clear, and perhaps the latter is more accurate." Sayyid Bahr al-'Ulum says in al-Fawa'id al-Rijaliyyah: "Ahmad bin 'Ali al-Najjashi was among the reliable masters and the just among the trustworthy. He is one of the main personalities [referred to in matters] of defamation (jurm) and authentication (ta'dil). He is the most learned in this discipline. Our 'Ulama' have unanimously relied on him and referred to him for information about [the narrators]. A group of scholars have explicitly stated his precedence [over the others] by virtue of his unique book in this field, and this view seems to be correct."

Writing on the life of Shaikh al-Kashhi, al-Najjashi says in his book (pg.363): "He was an outstanding and reliable personality... and has a book in rijal. Although he was knowledgeable, his book has many mistakes... He was an associate of al-'Ayyashi and has studied under him. He has narrated [information] from weak [sources as well]." Regarding al-'Ayyashi, he says on pg.247: "He is reliable and trustworthy. He was among the eminent personalities of the [Shi'ah] sect.

He was a Sunni in the beginning, who was then guided [to the Ahl al-Bait school of thought]. He frequently used to narrate from weak [narrators].”

It is, therefore, probable that al-Kashhi took this opinion [that al-Kalbi was a Sunni in the beginning] from al-‘Ayyashi, for he said with regard [to Hisham] that ‘he is a Sunni’ since he himself [i.e. al-‘Ayyashi] was a Sunni in the beginning. Likewise, he may have [also] taken from him the view that al-Kalbi was hiding his [actual faith] and was practicing taqiyyah.”

[53.](#) Rijal al-Tusi (pg. 155; Najaf edition).

[54.](#) Tabari narrates from al-Kalbi in [some] three hundred and thirty places of his Tarikh. But [still] he did not mention his biography in Dhayl al-Mudhayyal. Instead he mentions his father on pg. 101 and says: “His grandfather Bishr bin ‘Amru al-Kalbi and his sons: al-Saib, ‘Ubaid and ‘Abd al-Rahman had participated in the battles of Jamal and Siffin along side ‘Ali (as).

[55.](#) Lisan al-Mizan (2:359).

[56.](#) Mu‘allifu al-Shi‘ah fi Sadr al-Islam (pg.42; al-Najah Publications).

[57.](#) Al-Kuna wa al-Alqab (1:148) and Nafas al-Mahmum (pg. 195) and its Introduction (pg.8; Basirah publications).

[58.](#) Maqtal (pg. 102; Najaf edition).

[59.](#) Ibid, (pg. 123).

[60.](#) Sayyid al-Murtadha (r) has related a similar narration in Tanzih al-Anbiya’ (pg. 171; Qum edition) from someone whom he calls Ibn ‘Abbas bin Hisham, who related from his father, and who in turn was narrating from Abu Mikhnaf, who was reporting from Abu al-Kanud ‘Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Ubaid. It is probable that the compiler of the above Maqtal narrated this from this work of al-Murtadha or from someone else, but with additions and distortions!

[61.](#) Maqtal (pg.7).

[62.](#) Ibid, (pg. 11).

[63.](#) Ibid, (pg.35).

[64.](#) Ibid, (pg.39).

[65.](#) Ibid, (pg.48).

[66.](#) Ibid, (pg.49).

[67.](#) Ibid, (pg.52).

[68.](#) Ibid, (pg.56).

[69.](#) Ibid, (pg.57).

[70.](#) Ibid, (pg.59).

[71.](#) Ibid, (pg.59–60).

[72.](#) Ibid, (pg.61–62).

[73.](#) Ibid, (pg.70).

[74.](#) Ibid, (pg.72).

[75.](#) Ibid, (pg.77). Tabari cites these verse in (5:470; Dar al-Ma‘arif Publications) on the authority of Abu Mikhnaf from ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Jundab who said: “‘Ubaidullah bin al-Hurr had recited these verse in Madain: ‘A treacherous governor, son of a traitor says: why did not you fight the martyr, son of Fatimah?’” Notice that this disloyal compiler has changed some words [in the verses] so that they might fit Hurr al-Riyahi, yet they did not!

[76.](#) Ibid, (pg.79).

[77.](#) Ibid, (pg.85).

[78.](#) Ibid, (pg.48).

[79.](#) Ibid, (pg.93).

[80.](#) Al-Tabari (5:409). The account of al-Tabari is backed by what al-Arbali has related in Kashf al-Ghummah (2:252) through his chain of narration from Imam al-Sadiq (as): “He was martyred on the day of ‘Ashura, [which fell] on Friday.”

[81.](#) Maqtal, (pg. 102)

[82.](#) Shaikh Muhammad al-Samawi comments on this saying: “He was a Hashimite by clientage (wala’). His mother was Umm Qattah and his father Habib. He died in Damascus in 126 H. Al-Mas’udi (4:74) mentions him as Ibn Qattah, quoting

that from the book Ansab Quraish of Zubair bin Bakar.”

[83.](#) Maqtal (pg. 102–103).

[84.](#) Ibid, (pg. 123).

[85.](#) Ibid, (pg.76–77). Seventeen of these verses have been related by ‘Ali bin ‘Isa al-Arbali (d.693 H) in his book Kashf al-Ghummah (2:238; Tabriz edition). He related them from the book al-Futuh of Ahmad bin A’tam al-Kufi (d.314 H), saying that he recited them when [al-Husayn’s] infant was martyred and he dug a grave and buried him. While according to this Maqtal, the Imam (as) recited them when he made a violent attack on the [enemy], scattering them and killing one thousand five hundred of their horsemen! He returned to the tents saying...”

Al-Arbali (pg.250) clearly states that: “The nuniyyah verses that begin with: ‘The people committed treachery...’ have not been mentioned by Abu Mikhnaf though they are famous, and Allah knows best.” Al-Khwarazmi (d.568 H) has mentioned in his Maqtal three of the [above] verses (2:33) from Ibn A’tam.

[86.](#) Maqtal (pg. 108–109).

[87.](#) Ibid, (pg.35).

[88.](#) Ibid, (pg. 135).

[89.](#) Ibid, (pg. 129).

[90.](#) Ibid, (pg. 132).

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