

Sources for this Work

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Biharul Anwar is a collection of ahadith in 'Arabic compiled by Mawla Muhammad Baqir ibn Muhmmad Taqi, known as Majlisi the Second, or simply 'Allamah Majlisi (d. 1110 A.H./1689 C.E.). He is one of the most prolific Shi'i writers, and was Shaykh al-Islam during the Safavid period. He authored thirteen books in 'Arabic and fifty-three in Farsi. His largest and most important work is Biharul Anwar, al-Jami'ah li-Durar Akhbar al-A'immah al-Athar. This is the most comprehensive of all collections of Shi'i ahadith, and it includes almost all ahadith attributed to the Prophet through Shi'i chains of transmission, almost all of the ahadith Qudsi (narrations of the words of God revealed to the Prophet not included in the Qur'an), and other narrations attributed to the Imams (peace be upon all of them).

One of the features of this work is that 'Allamah Majlisi went to great pains to separate his own views from the transmission of the ahadith. It took him thirty-six years to compile the work, from 1070 A.H. to 1106 A.H. (1649 C.E. to 1685 C.E.), with the cooperation of other scholars of the day and students.

In the first volume, he identifies his sources, and later in the same volume he evaluates their reliability. His sources include close to four hundred titles, among which are sixteen works of Shaykh Saduq, sixteen works of Shaykh Tusi, eighteen works of Shaykh Mufid, twelve works of Sayyid Murtadha, twelve works of Shahid Awwal, twenty-one works of Sayyid ibn Tawus, twenty-three works of 'Allamah Hilli and twelve works of Shahid Thani. He also made use of ninety works by Sunni authors for correcting the words of the narrations or determining their meanings, and he mentions each of these sources by name in his introduction.

There are three extant editions that have been published of Biharul Anwar. One is a lithograph print in twenty-five volumes, known as the old edition. The second is that of Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, Tehran, Bazar Sulaimani, in one hundred ten volumes (no date), known as the new edition. In the Tehran edition, volumes 54, 55 and 56 contain a table of contents. The third edition is really just a reprint of the Tehran edition published by Mu'assasah al-Wafa' of Beirut. In the Beirut edition, the contents have been moved to volumes 108, 109 and 110, and a volume 0 was added in which there is an introduction to the author and the authors of his sources.² We have used the new edition published in

Tehran.

Tuhaf al-'Uqul fi Ma Ja'a min al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'idh 'an Al-Rasul by Abi Muhammad Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Shu'bah Harrani Halabi is one of the most well known collections of Shi'i narrations. The author was a contemporary of Shaykh Saduq and died in 381 A.H. (960 C.E.). Shaykh Mufid reports narrations from him, and he, in turn, reports traditions from Shaykh Abu 'Ali Muhammad ibn Hammam, who died in 336 A.H. (1005 C.E.). The book contains narrations from the Prophet followed by narrations of the first eleven Imams (peace be upon all of them). After this, there are four more parts to the book:

- (1) the whispered counsel (munajat) of God to Moses (peace be upon him);
- (2) the whispered counsel of God to Jesus (peace be upon him);
- (3) the advice of the Messiah (peace be upon him) in the gospel and other places; and
- (4) advice of Mufadhdhal ibn 'Umar, one of the companions of Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him), to the Shi'a.

In the introduction to this work, Ibn Shu'bah writes:

"I did not mention the chains of transmission in order to reduce the volume of the book and keep it short. Most of the narrations in this book are ones I have heard. Most of them pertain to manners and wisdom which testify to their own validity and the correctness of their attribution."

Scholars in this field consider the work to be reliable and refer to it in support of their opinions about ahadith and fiqh. The book was first published in 1303 A.H. (1883 C.E.) in Iran, and later in Iraq, Lebanon and Iran.³ The edition we have used is that of Qom, Mu'assasah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1416 A.H. (1996 C.E.).

The narrations we have translated from Tuhaf al-'Uqul are given without mention of a chain of transmission, although there is an indication in this work that they are reported by Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim (peace be upon him).⁴ Part of the narration may also be found in al-Kafi, Volume 2, Page 319, attributed to Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him).

Al-Kafi is one of the four most authoritative sources of Shi'i narrations. It was written by Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kulayni al-Razi (d. 328 A.H.) and contains six thousand narrations divided into thirty-four sections. It took twenty years to write during the minor occultation of the twelfth Imam (peace be upon him). It has been published in eight volumes in Tehran by Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah. We have used the 1362 A.H. /1983 C.E. edition. The whispered counsel of God to Jesus (peace be upon him), taken from al-Kafi, Volume 8, Pages 131–141, may also be found in Tuhaf al-'Uqul, Page 496, without mention of the name of the Imam from whom it was narrated, and in Al-Amali of Shaykh Saduq it is narrated from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him).

Another of the “four books” of Shi’i narrations containing reports about Jesus (peace be upon him) is Tahdhib al-Ahkam by Shaykh al-Ta’ifah Abi Ja’far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali al-Tusi (d. 460 A.H./1039 C.E.). There are said to have been four hundred small books of Shi’i narrations extant during the author’s lifetime, known as Usul al-Arba’A.H. Mi’A.H., and the author claims to have compiled this collection from these. This book is a commentary on Al-Muqni’A.H. of Shaykh Mufid, a work of jurisprudence containing references to ahadith. The edition of the Tahdhib al-Ahkam we have used is that of Tehran Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah (no date).

Mustadrak al-Wasa’il wa Mustanbat al-Masa’il by Hajj Mirza Husayn Nuri al-Tabarsi ibn Muhammad Taqi (d. 1320 A.H./1899 C.E.) contains more than twenty-three thousand narrations and has been published in Qom by Mu’assasah Al al-Bayt (peace be upon all of them) li Ihya’ al-Turath, first edition published in 1408 A.H. (1988 C.E.). This is considered one of the four most important collections of Shi’i hadith of the modern period, that is, after the eleventh/seventeenth century. The others being Al-Wafi by Faidh Kashani, Biharul Anwar by ‘Allamah Majlisi and Wasa’il al-Shi’A.H. by Shaykh Hurr al-’Amili. It was written in order to complete the narrations not included in the Wasa’il al-Shi’A.H..

¹. This detailed look at the sources of this work has been taken from the original publication, “Jesus Through Shi’ite Narrations” by Muhammad Legenhausen.

². This information is given in the article “Biharul Anwar” by Baha’ al-Din Khoramshahi in Dayirah al-Ma’arif Tashshayyu’, Volume 3, (Tehran: Mu’assasah Dayirah al-Ma’arif Tashshayyu’, 1371 A.H. /1992 C.E.), Page 91-98.

³. See the article “Tuhaf al-’Uqul” by Sayyid Mahdi Ha’iri in Dayirah al-Ma’arif Tashshayyu’, Volume 4, (Tehran: Mu’assasah Dayirah al-Ma’arif Tashshayyu’, 1373 A.H. /1994 C.E.), Page 169.

⁴. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, Page 392