

[Home](#) > [The Prohibition of Recording the Hadith, Causes and Effects](#) > [Third Part](#) > [The Four Hundred Principles \(Al-Usul Al-Arba`Mi'ah\)](#) > Biography Of The Compilers Of The Al-Kutub Al-Arba`ah

The Four Hundred Principles (Al-Usul Al-Arba`Mi'ah)

The adherents of the Ahl al-Bayt School used to write down the sayings of the Holy Imams in books; they therefore have been considered the foremost writers in the field of the Muslim jurisprudence. In this regard, Mr. Mustafa `Abd al-Razzaq, referring to the recordation of the Muslim jurisprudence says,

“In any event, this fact indicates that the recordation of the Muslim jurisprudence was first carried by the Shi`ite Muslims. Since they believed in the inerrancy (*`ismah*), or a similar thing, of their Imams, this belief made or encouraged them to record the judgments and verdicts of their Imams.”^{[1](#)}

This is true, especially when applied to the ages of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq or, in other words, after the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty and the initiation of the `Abbasid dynasty when the `Abbasid rulers, in the early period of their reign, claimed following the policy of openness.

Thus, the two Imams seized this opportunity especially when the tribes of Banu-Asad, Mukhariq, Tayy, Sulaym, Ghatafan, Ghifar, al-Azd, Khuza`ah, Khath`am, Makhzum, Banu-Dubbah, Banu'l-Harith, and Banu-`Abd al-Muttalib began to urge their sons to attend the lectures of the Imams.^{[2](#)}

Referring to the biography of Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, al-Muzziy, in *Tahdhib al-Kamal*, has mentioned that Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah, Malik ibn Anas, Sufyan al-Thawriy, al-Nu`man ibn Thabit (i.e. Abu-Hanifah), Sulayman ibn Bilal, Shu`bah ibn al-Hajjaj, `Abdullah ibn Maymun, and `Abd al-Malik ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Jurayh as well as many other master scholars studied under Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq.^{[3](#)}

It has been narrated on the authority of Abu'l-`Abbas ibn `Uqdah on the authority of al-Hasan ibn Ziyad that Abu-Hanifah, having been asked to name the most knowledgeable in the field of the Muslim jurisprudence that he had ever seen, answered,

“I have never seen anyone more knowledgeable (in the Muslim jurisprudence) than Ja`far ibn Muhammad (i.e. Imam al-Sadiq). When al-Mansur, the `Abbasid ruler, ordered him to be brought to al-

Hirah, he summoned me and asked, ‘O Abu–Hanifah! The people have been charmed by Ja`far; therefore, you must prepare questions that you will put before him.’

I then visited him on another occasion while Ja`far was sitting to his right. When I saw the two, I felt reverence to Ja`far rather than al–Mansur. I thus greeted them and he permitted me... etc.”[4](#)

In the introduction of his book entitled *al–Imam al–Sadiq* that he wrote after seven books had been written about seven of the Muslim master scholars—namely Abu–Hanifah, Malik ibn Anas, Muhammad ibn Idris al–Shafi`iy, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Hazm, and Zayd ibn `Ali—Shaykh Muhammad Abu–Zuhrah writes down the following:

“Seeking Almighty Allah’s help and guidance, I have decided to write down a book about Imam al–Sadiq after I have written about seven of the noble Muslim master scholars. I have postponed writing about Imam al–Sadiq not because he is less than anyone of these seven personalities; rather because he has the merit of preference over the majority of them and has a particular preference over the major scholars among these seven ones. Abu–Hanifah used to report from Imam al–Sadiq declaring his having been the most knowledgeable of the people’s doctrinal differences[5](#) and the most experienced among all the jurists.

As for Malik ibn Anas, he learnt from Imam al–Sadiq the religious studies and also reported from him. It is indeed a sufficient virtue to be the mentor of Abu–Hanifah and Malik ibn Anas. It is unfeasible to ascribe any imperfection to him or to prefer any other person to him in fields of virtue and merit. Besides, he is the grandson of Zayn al–`abidin (Imam `Ali ibn al–Husayn) who was the master of the holy city of al–Madinah in his age in fields of merit, honor, religiousness, and knowledge.

Ibn Shihab al–Zuhriy as well as many other Tabi`un studied under him. He is also the son of Muhammad al–Baqir who split the knowledge and got to its core. Correspondingly, Imam Ja`far al–Sadiq is one of those for whom Almighty Allah has joined self–honor and additional honor due to the high lineage, the Hashimite kinship, and the Muhammadan dignity... etc.”[6](#)

The following is quoted from the book of *Hilyat al–Awliya`*:

“From the knowledge of al–Sadiq, a group of the Tabi`un received their knowledge. Among them were Yahya ibn Sa`id al–Ansariy, Ayyub al–Sakhtiyaniy, Abu–`Amr ibn al–`Ala, Yazid ibn `Abdullah al–Ma`adiy, Shu`bah ibn al–Qasim, Malik ibn Anas, Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah, and many others.”

As a matter of fact, the Hadiths that the Sahabah received from the Holy Imams of the Ahl al–Bayt were written down on papers. The shares of Imam Muhammad al–Baqir and Ja`far al–Sadiq were the largest in this field. These compilations have been entitled *Nuskhah* (Copy) or *Kitab* (book) or *Asl* (Principle), or *Risalah* (Epistle)... etc.

Sayyid Radiy al–Din `Ali ibn Tawus, in his book of *Muhaj al–Da`awat*, has mentioned on the authority of

Abu'l-Waddah Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Zayd al-Nahshaliy on the authority of his father that a group of his disciples and adherents used to attend the sessions of Imam Musa al-Kadhim and used to carry with them ebony boards and pencils so that they would write down any word and any verdict about any situation said by the Imam as soon as they would hear.^{[7](#)}

Likewise, Shaykh al-Baha'iyy, in his book of *Mashriq al-Shamsayn*, has said the following:

“We have been informed by our master scholars—may Allah sanctify them—that whenever they heard anybody reporting a Hadith from the Holy Imams, the writers of the Principles (*Ashab al-Usul*) would hurriedly write it down in their books of *Usul* so that they would not forget a part of it or that it would be totally forgotten by passage of days.”^{[8](#)}

Al-Muhaqqiq al-Damad, in the twenty-ninth chapter of his famous book of *al-Rawashih al-Samawiyyah*, says the following:

“It has been said that the Writers of the Principles used to write down, without delay, in their books any Hadith that they heard from a reporter.”^{[9](#)}

Furthermore, Mr. `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi has written down the following:

“The first of those who benefited by the early recordation of the religious knowledge was those who took shelter with the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt so as to learn from them orally and in written form. The Hadith that has been reported by the Shi`ite Muslims and written down in their books is the Prophetic heritage in its very point. From this heritage, the Shi`ite Muslims have thus learnt prosperity.

On the other hand, the Sunnite Muslims began to compile the Prophetic heritage only one century and a half after the Shi`ite scholars had applied themselves eagerly to it and written it down in their foremost books. For other centuries, the Sunnite Muslims wandered about deserts and plains looking for that heritage.

To take into consideration the fact that some of the narrators reported ten thousand Hadiths from the Imam clearly manifests that the authenticated heritage that is kept by the Shi`ite Muslims is adequately sufficient for the Muslim community.

Again, by taking into consideration the fact that al-Shafi`iy, Malik, Abu-Hanifah, Yahya ibn Mu`in, Abu-Hatam, and al-Dhahbiy—these master scholars who founded the conditions of the narrators of Hadith and the rules of the admission of a narration and the authenticity of the series of narrators, these master scholars accepted and authenticated the narrations of Imam al-Sadiq, it becomes sufficient for us to dedicate our efforts to searching for the reporters of the Holy Sunnah from Imam al-Sadiq.

As for the Shi`ite Muslims, it is sufficient that a Hadith is related to the Imam. They therefore do not demand with a series of narrators before Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq. Moreover, they even do not demand with a series of narrators before any of the Imams in general.

This is because the Imam either reported the Hadith from the Imam who preceded him or had already read that Hadith in the books of his forefathers. As a result, the saying of the Imam is decided as Sunnah for the Shi'ite Muslims.

In other words, a Hadith that is reported by the Imam must be absolutely purified from any doubt or spurion. Thus, not only is the Imam's reporting of a Hadith considered testimony for that Hadith but also it is a declaration of its authenticity.

So long as the report of al-Sadiq was received from al-Baqir; and the report of al-Baqir was received from al-Sajjad; and the report of al-Sajjad was received from al-Husayn or al-Hasan whose report was received from `Ali or from the Holy Prophet, this series decides the authenticity of a Hadith at all levels.

The last three ones were unquestionably among the foremost Sahabah who reported from the Holy Messenger, since al-Hasan and al-Husayn reported from `Ali who reported from the Holy Prophet.

Undoubtedly, the method of recordation of the religious knowledge adopted by `Ali and his adherents achieved a great benefit for the Muslims. This method intercepted the disadvantages that are ascribed to some narrations, and locked the door in the face of the forgeries of the miscreants as well as those who forged fabrications against the Holy Prophet in the form of Hadith.

As a consequence, the precedence in the recordation of the religious knowledge is considered virtue for the Shi'ite Muslims. As well, when the scholars, after long ages, agreed to resort to the recordation of the religious knowledge, they had unanimously confessed of this virtue for `Ali and his descendants.

Since the Holy Sunnah is the interpreter of the Holy Qur'an, which was written by the dictations of the Holy Messenger, it thus, just like the Holy Qur'an, should be fact as long as it is written down.

The Sunnite Hadithists, in the early ages of Islam, had to listen to the words of the Hadith from the master scholars or show such Hadiths before them, because the Prophetic traditions (i.e. the Holy Sunnah) was not yet kept in written form. For that reason, the most confirmatory means to attain the authentic form of a Hadith was to journey to the remote parts of the earth in order to listen to such Hadiths from the scholars.”[10](#)

In *Kitab al-Irshad*, Shaykh al-Mufid says,

“The knowledges that people received from Imam al-Sadiq have extended to the remotest regions and spread in all countries. None of the scholars of the Ahl al-Bayt has ever revealed as much knowledge as that revealed by Imam al-Sadiq.

Similarly, none of them has ever attained the degree that Imam al-Sadiq attained regarding the amount of the traditions that have been reported from him. As Hadithists listed the names of the trustworthy narrators who reported from Imam al-Sadiq in various fields of knowledge, they were four thousand individuals of different sects and opinions.”[11](#)

Shaykh al-Tabrisiy says,

“The amount of knowledge, on various fields, that has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq has never been reported from any other person. As Hadithists listed the names of the trustworthy narrators who reported from him, they were four thousand men.” [12](#)

He further says in Part III of his book,

“Four hundred men reported various fields of knowledge from Imam al-Sadiq, and from his replies to the questions that were addressed to him, four hundred books, lately called *al-Usul*, were written by his companions in addition to the companions of his son, Imam Musa al-Kadhim.” [13](#)

Shaykh Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Fattal says,

“As Hadithists listed the names of the trustworthy narrators who reported from Imam al-Sadiq in various fields of knowledge, they were four thousand individuals of different sects and opinions.” [14](#)

In *Manaqib `Ali ibn Abi-Talib*, Ibn Shahrashub records the following:

“Narrators have never reported knowledges as many as those which were reported from Imam al-Sadiq. As Hadithists listed the names of the trustworthy narrators who reported from Imam al-Sadiq in various fields of knowledge, they were four thousand individuals of different sects and opinions.” [15](#)

Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilliy, in his book of ‘*al-Mu`tabar*’, says,

“Imam al-Sadiq is reported to have dealt with such innumerable fields of knowledge that perplexed the intellects. The material of four hundred books, lately called the *Usul*, was taken from Imam al-Sadiq’s replies on the questions that were addressed to him.” [16](#)

Muhammad ibn Makkiy (*al-Shahid al-Awwal*; the First Martyr) says,

“As for Abu-`Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, four hundred authors have compiled four hundred books all comprising his answers on the questions that were addressed to him. Among the famous disciples of him, the names of four thousand men from Iraq, Syria, Hijaz, and Khurasan were listed.” [17](#)

Shaykh Husayn, the father of Shaykh al-Baha’iy, says,

“Four thousand names of Imam al-Sadiq’s disciples whose knowledgeability was distinctively well-known were listed by Sunnite and Shi`ite scholars.”

He is also reported to have said,

“Four hundred books written by four hundred authors have totally comprised the answers of Imam al-

Sadiq on the questions which were addressed to him. These books are called *Usul* (The Principles) on various fields of knowledge.”[18](#)

Al-Muhaqqiq al-Damad, in the twenty-ninth chapter of his famous book of *al-Rawashih al-Samawiyyah*, says,

“It is well-known that the *al-Usul al-Arba`mi`ah* is four hundred books written by four hundred authors among the disciples of Imam al-Sadiq. Moreover, these books might have comprised materials that were heard or reported from him.

In fact, the disciples of Imam al-Sadiq were four thousand. Although their books and compilations are innumerable, it has been unanimously agreed that only these four hundred ones would be considered, depended on, and called *al-Usul al-Arba`mi`ah* (The Four Hundred Principles).[19](#)

Zayn al-Din al-Jub`iy al-`Imiliy (*al-Shahid al-Thani*; the Second Martyr), in his commentary on *al-Dirayah* says,

“The past scholars decided to choose four hundred books written by four hundred authors that they have called *al-Usul al-Arba`mi`ah*. They therefore depended upon these books. After that, most of these fundamental books vanished, due to vicissitudes of time, or they were added to private books. The best compilations in this connection are *al-Kafi*, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, *al-Istibsar*, and *Man-la-Yahduruhu`l-Faqih*.”[20](#)

The names of some of the writers of these four hundred *Usul* have been mentioned in *Kitab al-Rijal* (Book of Biography) by `Abdullah ibn Jibillah al-Kinaniy (died in AH 219), *al-Mashyakhah* by al-Hasan ibn Mahbub (died in AH 224), *al-Rijal* by al-Hasan ibn Faddal (died in AH 224), *al-Rijal* by `Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Mahbub, *al-Rijal* by Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqiy, *al-Rijal* by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqiy (died in AH 274), *al-Rijal* by Ahmad al-`Aqiqiy (died in AH 280), and many other books of biography.

In the introduction of his book of *al-Fihrist*, Shaykh al-Tusi writes down,

“I cannot tell that I have mentioned the names of all of these people; the books and *Usul* of our scholars were too many to be counted because they lived in various countries.”[21](#)

Sayyid al-Amin has recorded that Ahmad ibn `Uqdah al-Zaydiy al-Kufiy compiled a book in which he listed the names of those from whom he had reported the Hadith. In this book, he listed the names of four thousand men and mentioned all their books. Nevertheless, he could not mention all the narrators from whom he had reported.[22](#)

These characteristics urged the Shi`ite Muslims to take a great interest in their fundamental reference books which they have read, reported, retained, and corrected. The entire jurisprudential and traditional knowledge of Shi`ism has been derived from these fundamental reference books.

The Shi`ah Derive From The Usul

In the introduction of his book of *Man-lā-Yahduruḥu'l-Faqih*, Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Babawayh says,

“...Unlike the other compilers who adduce in their books all that which they have reported, I only would like to mention in this book verdicts that I issue and subjects in whose authenticity I believe being a pretext between my Lord—the Great and Almighty—and me.

All the contents of this book are deduced from noteworthy, dependable, and referential books, such as the book of Hurayz ibn `Abdullah al-Sajistaniy, the book of `Ubaydullah ibn `Ali al-Halabiy, the books of `Ali ibn Mahziyar al-Ahwaziyy, the books of al-Husayn ibn Sa`id, the anecdotes of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Isa, the book of *al-Rahmah* written by Sa`d ibn `Abdullah, the comprehensive (*Jami`*) book of our master scholar Ahmad ibn Abu-`Abdullah al-Barqiy, the epistle of my father to me, and many other fundamental and reference books.

My ways to these books are well-known in the index of the books, which I reported from my master scholars and forefathers. In this respect, I have exerted all possible efforts, seeking the help of and relying upon Almighty Allah and asking Him to forgive my shortcomings.”[23](#)

Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilliyy, in his book of *al-Mu`tabar*, says,

“About four thousand narrators reported from Imam al-Sadiq. In virtue of his teaching, a big number of righteous jurisprudents became well-known, such as Zurarah ibn A`yun and his brothers Bukayr and Hamran, Jamil ibn Salih, Jamil ibn Darraj, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Burayd ibn Mu`awiyah, Husham ibn al-Hakam, Husham ibn Salim, Abu-Basir, `Abdullah, Muhammad al-Halabiy, `Imran al-Halabiy, `Abdullah ibn Sinan, Abu'l-Sabah al-Kinaniy, and many other virtuous scholars. Imam al-Sadiq's answers for religious questions have filled the papers of four hundred books written by four hundred writers, which were subsequently called *al-Usul al-Arba`mi'ah*.

Within the disciples of Imam al-Muhammad Jawad, there were virtuous names, such as al-Husayn ibn Sa`id and his brother, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abu-Nasr al-Bizantiy, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqiy, Shadhan Abu'l-Fadl al-Qummiy, Ayyub ibn Nuh ibn Darraj, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Isa, and many others the mention of whose names requires a long list and whose books that indicate their vast knowledgeability are now transferred among the disciples.

I have satisfied myself with mentioning only the words of the scholars whose knowledgeability and virtue are well-known as well as those who are famous of their precedence in criticism of narrations, accuracy in investigation, and authenticity in consideration. I have further confined myself to referring to the books of the scholars whom are famous of diligence, carefulness, and reliability among those virtuous scholars.

I have thus chosen to report from al-Hasan ibn Mahbub, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abu-Nasr, al-Husayn ibn Sa`id, al-Fadl ibn Shadhan, Yunus ibn `Abd al-Rahman and, among the late scholars, Abu-

Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh and Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayniy...etc.”[24](#)

Ibn Idris al-Hilli, in his book of *Mustatrafat al-Sara'ir* Section: *al-Ziyadat* (Attachments), lists the materials that he has excerpted and culled from the books of the master authors and skilled narrations, saying,

“...Among these are as follows:

(1) The materials that I have culled from the book of *al-Nawadir* (The Anecdotes) written by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abu-Nasr al-Bizantiy, the disciple of Imam al-Rida;

(2) The materials that I have culled from the reports of Aban ibn Taghlib, the disciple of Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq, that he has recorded in his book;

(3) The materials that I have culled from the book of Jamil ibn Darraj; the materials that I have culled from the book of al-Sayyariy whose name is 'Abdullah, the disciple of Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida;

(4) The materials that I have culled from the books comprising the questions put before and messages sent to our Master Imam 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi, and his answers for these questions and messages;

(5) The materials that I have culled from the book of *al-Mashyakhah* written by al-Hasan ibn Mahbub al-Sarrad (the relater), the disciples of Imam al-Rida. In the view of our master scholars, this man has been trustworthy, lofty, reporter of numerous narrations, and one of the four pillars in his age. The book of *al-Mashyakhah* is reliably trustworthy;

(6) The materials that I have culled from the book of *Nawadir al-Musannif* written by Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Mahbub. This book has been written with the handwriting of our master scholar, Shaykh Abu-Ja'far al-Tusi. I have therefore quoted these Hadiths from his own handwriting;

(7) The materials that I have culled from the book of *Man-la-Yahduruhu'l-Faqih* by Ibn Babawayh (Shaykh al-Saduq);

(8) The materials that I have culled from the book of *Qurb al-Isnad* by Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far al-Himyariy;

(9) The materials that I have culled from the book of Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Sinan al-Dahqan;

(10) The materials that I have culled from the book of *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*;

(11) The materials that I have culled from the book of 'Abdullah ibn Bukayr ibn A'yun;

(12) The materials that I have culled from the book of Abu'l-Qasim ibn Qawlawayh;

(13) The materials that I have culled from the book of '*Uns al-`ilm*' by al-Safwaniy;

(14) The materials that I have culled from the book of *al-Mahasin* by Ahmad ibn Abu-`Abdullah al-Barqiy;

(15) The materials that I have culled from the book of *al-`Uyun wa'l-Mahasin* by (Shaykh) al-Mufid." [25](#)

Shaykh al-Baha'iy, in his book of *al-Wajizah*, says,

"All of the Hadiths, except a rare number, that are mentioned in this book have been reported from our Twelve Imams who, in turn, have reported from the Holy Prophet. Indeed, the knowledge of these Imams are excerpted from the heart of the Niche.

An investigative look into the books of Hadith of both the Sunnah and the Shi`ah proves that the Hadiths that are comprised in the books written by Shi`ite authors, as they have reported them from their Imams, are very much larger in number than these mentioned in the famous *al-Sihah al-Sittah* (the six most reliable Sunni reference books of Hadith).

In this respect, one reporter only (namely, Aban ibn Taghlib) has reported from one Imam only (namely, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq) about thirty thousand Hadiths.

Our former master scholars compiled the words of our Imams in four hundred books, which were lately called *al-Usul* (The Principles).

A group of the recent scholars—may Allah reward them for their efforts—have arranged and ordered these books in order to save them from loss and to make it easier for the seekers of these narrations to get them.

They have thus compiled verified and accurate books comprising the series of narrators connected to the Immaculate Imams. Examples on these books are *al-Kafi*, *Man-la-Yahduruhu'l-Faqih*, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, *al-Istibsar*, *Madinat al-`Ilm*, *al-Khisal*, *al-Amaliy*, *`Uyun al-Akhbar*, and many others." [26](#)

Shaykh Hasan, in his books entitled *Muntaqa al-Juman* and *al-Ma`alim*, has stated that the Hadiths mentioned in the four most reliable Shi`ite reference books of Hadith (*al-Kutub al-Arba`ah*) and their likes are substantiated by proofs as they were, without any distortion, quoted from the *al-Usul* as well as the fundamental books the authenticity of which have been unanimously confirmed by the scholars. [27](#)

Al-Kaf`amiy, in *al-Jannah al-Waqiyah* says,

"This book contains amulets, supplications, statements of glorification to Almighty Allah, and Ziyarahs (prayers said at the pilgrimage to the tombs of the Holy Infallibles). The material of this book has been quoted from books whose authenticity is reliably undoubted. To adhere to these books is safe." [28](#)

`Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummiy, the compiler of the famous book of *Tafsir* that carries his name, has

confirmed the authenticity of the Hadiths that he recorded in his book by bearing out that these Hadiths have been reported by trustworthy narrators from the Holy Imams.[29](#)

The books of Sayyid Radiy al-Din Ibn Tawus have comprised proofs on the fact that the majority of the *al-Usul* books that had been written by the disciples of the Holy Imams were kept by him and thus the majority of the materials of his books were reported from these fundamental books.[30](#)

Likewise, al-Shahid al-Awwal, in his book of *al-Dhikra*, and al-Kaf`amiy, in his book of *al-Misbah*, have stated that many of the fundamental books of the past scholars were kept by them.[31](#)

Moreover, Shaykh al-Hurr al-`Iraqiliy, in the four section of the epilogue of his famous book of *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, listing the bibliography, says, "... and many others. As regards the books from which the authors have reported without referring to their titles, they are very numerous. The titles of these books can be found in the books of biography. According to my personal inspection, these books are more than six thousand and six hundred."[32](#)

At any rate, a group of the disciples of the Holy Imams distinguished themselves in the various fields of knowledge, especially during the ages of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq. These scholars wrote down the items of knowledge that they had received from the Imams in books to which the master scholars of biography, such as Ibn al-Nadim, al-Kishiy, al-Najashiy, have referred.

In this connection, Husham ibn al-Hakam wrote books on the terms of the religious laws (*al-Alfadh*); on the refutation of the beliefs of the miscreants; on Monotheism (*al-Tawhid*; the belief in the existence of One and Only God—namely, Almighty Allah); on Imamate (*al-Imamah*; the loyalty to the twelve Imams whom have been divinely commissioned by Almighty Allah as the leaders of the Muslim community), Determinism (*al-Jabr*; the doctrine that human action is necessarily determined by motives regarded as external forces acting on the will), and Fatalism (*al-Qadariyyah*: the doctrine that all events are predetermined by fate); on the refutation of the beliefs of the Dualists (*al-Thanawiyyah*; those who believe in the existence of two gods—light and darkness); and on the refutation of the concepts of Aristotle—the famous Greek philosopher and scientist—as well as other Greek philosophers. He also wrote various epistles on Muslim jurisprudence and *Usul al-Fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence).

Zurarah ibn A`yun wrote books on Capability (*al-Istita`ah*), Determinism, and other topics.

Muhammad ibn `Umar wrote books on Monotheism, Imamate, Muslim jurisprudence, and other topics.

Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Sikkit wrote books on Reformation of Logic (*Islah al-Mantiq*), Terms and Opposites (*al-Alfadh wa'l-Addad*), and Common Words.

Muhammad ibn Nu`man al-Bujaliy (well-known as Mu`min al-Taq) wrote books on Imamate, Knowledge (*Ma`rifah*), Substantiation of the (the Holy Prophet's) Will (*Ithbat al-Wasiyyah*), Dos and Don'ts (*al-Awamir wa'l-Nawahi*), Debates (*al-Munadharat*), and other topics.

Hundreds, if not thousands, are the compilations of the Holy Imam's disciples. The Three Muhammads (i.e. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Shaykh al-Saduq, and Shaykh al-Tusi) have depended upon these books in the compilation of their famous books (*al-Kutub al-Arba`ah*; the four most reliable Shi`ite reference books of Hadith). It is worth mentioning that Shaykh al-Saduq and Shaykh al-Tusi wrote other books on *Tafsir*, history, Hadith... etc.

The majority of the reporters from the Holy Imams were at the utmost degree of decency and trustworthiness. They were also objects of admiration and respect for Muslims of various sects and groups. The compilers of the *al-Sihah al-Sittah* (the six most reliable Sunnite reference books of Hadith) wrote down Hadiths narrated from these reporters in their books.

Biographers, or the majority of them, decided them as trustworthy and occupying significant scientific statuses although they added statements like, "He terribly supported Shi`ism," "Trustworthy though belongs to Shi`ism," "His sect is Shi`ism" and the like, after the biography of these reporters.<sup>[33](#)</sup> Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ya`qub al-Kulayni, the author of *al-Kafi*, has referred to most of those biographers.

The compilers and writers of these narrations were also greatly respectable scholars; such as Ibn Makula,^{[34](#)} Ibn al-Athir,^{[35](#)} al-Safadiy,^{[36](#)} Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalaniy,^{[37](#)} and many other Hadithists and linguists, such as al-Fayruz'abadiy,^{[38](#)} al-Zubaydiy^{[39](#)}... etc.

Biography Of The Compilers Of The Al-Kutub Al-Arba`ah

Mr. Thamir al-`Amidiy has attested that none of the master biographers has ever criticized Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ya`qub al-Kulayni. He says,

"I have never noticed any Sunnite biographer addressing any word of criticism—be it clear or suggestive—at al-Kulayni although, unfortunately, these Sunnite biographers have been well-known of their malignity against the Shi`ite scholars for nothing more than their being Shi`ites. No researcher can ever deny this fact. However, this indicates the scholars' unanimous agreement on the fact that Shaykh al-Kulayni enjoyed an exalted status among the Muslim scholars; and anyone who mistreats this status will be considered as liar and exposed among the scholars."^{[40](#)}

Moreover, Ibn al-Athir believes Shaykh al-Kulayni as one of the Imamiyyah reformers in the third century.^{[41](#)}

Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Musa ibn Babawayh al-Qummiy, the author of *Man-lā-Yahduruhu'l-Faqih*, has written numerous books. He was exemplary in retention.^{[42](#)} He belonged to a dignified family that was deep-rooted in virtue and knowledgeability. Ibn Abi-Tayy has described Shaykh al-Saduq's family as the household of knowledge and dignity.^{[43](#)}

His father was one of the grand Shi`ite scholars and writers.^{[44](#)} He was highly dignified, distinguished in retention of Hadiths, well-versed in biographies of men, and expert in criticism of narrations. Among the

people of Qumm, he was the most excellent in retention and abundance of knowledge. He wrote about three hundred books.[45](#)

It was he who extinguished the sedition of al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj in Qumm.[46](#) In his early youth, master scholars attended his lectures.[47](#) Including Shaykh al-Mufid, a good group of master scholars reported from Shaykh al-Saduq.[48](#)

As regards Shaykh al-Mufid, he was the student of Shaykh al-Saduq and the master of Shaykh al-Tusiy. "He was nicknamed *Ibn al-Mu'allim* (Son of the Mentor). He compiled brilliant books, which counted two hundred."[49](#) "He was the chief of the Shi'ite master scholars and theologians. He also was the master debater in the field of the schools of the Sahabah. He was also skillfully perspicacious and mindfully intelligent."[50](#)

"In his house in *Darb-Rabah*, Ibn al-Mu'allim had a session attended by all the scholars."[51](#) "Despite the grandeur and greatness of the Buyid State, Shaykh al-Mufid used to debate the masters of all the other doctrines."[52](#) "He was skillful in arts, scientific investigation, and theology. He was also well-known of seclusion and politeness.

As he referred to Shaykh al-Mufid in his book of *Tarikh al-Imamiyyah*, Ibn Abi-Tayy mentioned him very lengthily and elaborately. He said that the Shaykh was unique in all of the fields of knowledge—knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, jurisprudence, narration, biography, exegesis (of the Holy Qur'an), grammar, and poetry.

Besides, he was strong-hearted, quite self-righteous, and greatly pious. He used to offer prayers and observe fasting characteristically. He also used to wear tough clothes... etc."[53](#)

As regards Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusiy, he was the chief of Shi'ism in his age. He wrote many noticeable books. Two of the *al-Kutub al-Arba'ah* are his. They are *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* and *Al-Istibsar fima'khtulifa min'al-Akhbar*. "He learnt theology and the principles of the Sunnite jurisprudence from Shaykh al-Mufid to whom he adhered and thus attained skillfulness in religious knowledge.

He also compiled a book of *Tafsir* and dictated many Hadiths and anecdotes that filled two volumes. The majority of these Hadiths and anecdotes were reported from Shaykh al-Mufid, his mentor."[54](#)

Al-Sabkiy,[55](#) al-Suyutiy,[56](#) and al-Katib al-Chalabiy[57](#) have listed Shaykh al-Tusiy with the Shafi'iyyah scholars. It is probable that the reason behind such confusion was that Shaykh al-Tusiy, in his books of Muslim jurisprudence and *Tafsir*, used to refer to the opinions of the Sunnite scholars.

Mentioning Shaykh al-Tusiy, Muhammad Abu-Zuhrah, in his book of *al-Imam al-Sadiq* says that he was competently knowledgeable in both the Sunnite and Imamiyyah schools.

Similarly, Mr. `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi says that Shaykh al-Tusiy was competent in the Imamiyyah as well as the Sunnite Schools.[58](#)

Previously, a brief presentation of the biographies of the compilers of the *al-Kutub al-Arba`ah* has been demonstrated. Those authors depended upon the Four Hundred Principles (*al-Usul al-Arba`mi`ah*) in the compilation of their books and these four hundred fundamental books comprised the words of the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt who had reported from the Book of `Ali that comprised the direct dictations of the Holy Prophet written with the calligraphy of Imam `Ali ibn Abi-Talib.

To come to the point, the recordation of the religious knowledge and the reporting of the Hadith are two trends of the same method that is tenaciously and incontrovertibly interconnected for the Shi`ah School; and this fact confirms the genuineness of this School.

It is noteworthy that the *al-Usul al-Arba`mi`ah* had not comprised all the words of the Holy Imams in the various fields of knowledge in general and Muslim jurisprudence in particular; rather a part of these words were kept in the hearts of the reports of Hadith.

Correspondingly, the *al-Kutub al-Arba`ah* have not comprised all the Hadiths reported by the disciples of the Holy Imams; rather their compilers have recorded only the Hadiths that were proven as authentic according to their criteria. Besides, there is no proof that these compilers could attain all the Four Hundred Principles.

In his book of *A`yan al-Shi`ah*, Sayyid al-Aminiy says,

“Some of the *al-Usul al-Arba`mi`ah* were kept in the book stores of the Shi`ite master scholars—such as al-Hurr al-`Iraqiliy, Shaykh al-Majlisiy, Mirza Husayn al-Nuriy, and many others—until recent ages. Although the majority of these fundamental books were damaged, their contents have been preserved in the collections of Hadith.

This is because our scholars, since the beginning of the fourth century up to the first half of the fifth, depended in their writings on these books as well as other books that comprised their contents.”

In the course of the recordation of the religious knowledge, Mr. `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi, in his book of *al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq*, says,

“... However, `Ali wrote down and left for his adherents (Shi`ah) his method of recordation. Most certainly, he had full trust in his method. About him, the Messenger of Allah has said, ‘`Ali is with the Qur`an and the Qur`an is with `Ali; and they shall not depart one another until they meet me on the Divine Pool (on the Resurrection Day).’ ...

By means of the jurisprudential recordation, the (Shi`ite) School found a spacious place in the hearts of the memorizers and reporters. It was then moved, by inheritance, to the sons and then to their sons, especially Zayn al-`Abidin, al-Baqir, and al-Sadiq. After that, the session of Imam al-Sadiq worked on spreading it in the same way as the recordation had worked on establishing it.

The master scholars who studied under him, as well as their disciples, realized that the sessions of

Imam al-Sadiq had enjoyed a number of matters that made these sessions surpass the others whether led by the Ahl al-Sunnah or the Ahl al-Bayt. They listed these distinguishable matters.”[59](#)

Preceding this statement, Mr. al-Jundiyy had said,

“Their studying under Imam al-Sadiq had dressed with glory the jurisprudential aspects of the Four (major) Schools of Sunnite jurisprudence. As for Imam al-Sadiq himself, his glory is not subjected to increase or decrease; he conveyed to all humanity the knowledge of his grandfather (i.e. the Holy Prophet)—peace and blessings be upon him.

Further, Imamate is a special rank; and the imams (i.e. founders) of the Four Schools of Sunnite jurisprudence learnt from him out of their eagerness to draw near to the owner of that rank.”[60](#)

On another page, Mr. al-Jundiyy says,

“Certainly, Malik ibn Anas was scenting the presence of the Messenger of Allah in the session of his daughter’s son (i.e. Imam al-Sadiq). He was also feeling or was on the verge of touching a material thing descending from the grandfather to the grandson, or touching non-material things grasping the heart and the mind. Vision is thus joy and hearing is grace.

Even neighborhood, mere neighborhood, was discipline and order. And in all of these, there are ways taking to Paradise. The master of the session was thoroughly pure. He speaks about his grandfather only when he is (ceremonially) pure... etc.”[61](#)

On another page, Mr. al-Jundiyy further says,

“In this very session, four thousand reporters studied and reported from Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, according to historians and biographers, and four hundred writers each of whom used to say, ‘Ja`far ibn Muhammad said...’ wrote books from him. What sort of session was that?

Things from the Messenger of Allah were seen in that session; some of these things were material flowing in the spines of men—one after another; and some were mental things the connotations of which, and the meaning of their essays, were seen by all these. The session was completely free from any dispute or aimless argument.

The head of the session used to say to the students, ‘Whoever has full acquaintance with a matter will speak very little about it. An actual eloquent is he who hits the target with the least effort.’”[62](#)

This is the end of our presentation of the statuses of and views about the Shi`ite comprehensive reference books of Hadith. As for the Shi`ite Muslims, they have never regarded the *al-Kutub al-Arba`ah* as revealed from Almighty Allah and have never considered those from who Shaykh al-Kulayniyy, al-Tusiyy, or al-Saduq having passed the divine exam.

Besides, they have never judged that all the contents of these Four Books are utterly authentic. As a matter of fact, like any other book, the narrations of the Four Books are subjected to the principles of criticism, assessment, and investigation. In brief, the Four Books, unlike *al-Sihah al-Sittah*, have not been encompassed by haloes of sanctity.

Unless it meets all the considered qualifications of authenticity, a Hadith is worthless even if it has been mentioned by master Hadithists, such as Shaykh al-Kulayniy and Shaykh al-Tusiy. Moreover, it is binding that a Hadith cannot be decided as authentic unless it has present or written obligatorily reliable evidences that act as presumptions confirming that the Holy Imam has actually said that Hadith, such as:

- 1) The existence of it in the majority of the Four Hundred Principles or, at least, in one or two of them with various considerable series of narrators,
- 2) The existence of it in one of the books that were presented before the Holy Imams, for authentication, such as the book of `Ubaydullah al-Halabiy that he had shown to Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq about which he is reported to have said, "These do not have the like of this book," or the books of Yunus ibn `Abd al-Rahman and al-Fadl ibn Shadhan, which were presented before Imam al-Hasan al-`Askariy.
- 3) The existence of it in the fundamental reference books of Hadith that were trusted by the master scholars who lived in the ages of the Holy Imams; such as the book of *Kitab al-Salat* by Hurayz ibn `Abdullah and the books of Ibn Sa`id, `Ali ibn Mahziyar, and the like, even if these books were compiled by authors other than the Imamiyyah Shi`ites, such as the book of Ja`far ibn Ghiyath al-Qadi, the books of al-Husayn ibn `Abdullah al-Sa`diy, and the book of *Kitab al-Qiblah* by `Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Tatiry.[63](#)

[1.](#) Asad Haydar: *al-Imam al-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba`ah* 3:497, as quoted from Mustafa `Abd al-Razzaq: *Tamhid li-Tarikh al-Falsafah al-Islamiyyah* (Prelude to the History of the Islamic Philosophy) 252.

[2.](#) Ja`far ibn Muhammad Sayyid al-Ahl.

[3.](#) Al-Muzziy: *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 5:75-76.

[4.](#) Al-Muzziy: *Tahdhib al-Kamal* 5:79. For the details of this narration, refer to `Ali al-Shahristaniy: *Wudu' al-Nabiy* 349-352.

[5.](#) In his book of *Tarikh al-Madhahib al-Islamiyyah* (History of the Muslim Jurisprudential Schools' pp. 693, Shaykh Muhammad Abu-Zuhrah has written down a commentary on the arguments between Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq and Abu-Hanifah.

[6.](#) Shaykh Muhammad Abu-Zuhrah: *al-Imam al-Sadiq* 2-3.

[7.](#) Sayyid Radiy al-Din `Ali ibn Tawus: *Muhaj al-Da`awat* 219-220.

[8.](#) Shaykh al-Baha'iyy al-`imiliy: *al-Habl al-Matin* 274.

[9.](#) Al-Muhaqqiq al-Damad: *al-Rawashih al-Samawiyyah* 98.

[10.](#) `Abd al-Halim al-Jundiy: *al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq* 203-204.

[11.](#) Shaykh al-Mufid: *Kitab al-Irshad* 288.

[12.](#) Shaykh al-Tabrisiy: *I`lam al-Wara bi-A`lam al-Huda* 284.

[13.](#) Shaykh al-Tabrisiy: *I`lam al-Wara bi-A`lam al-Huda* 166.

[14.](#) Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Fattal: *Rawdat al-Wa`idhin* 177.

[15.](#) Ibn Shahrashub: *Manaqib `Ali ibn Abi-Talib* 4:247.

[16.](#) Najm al-Din al-Hilli: *al-Mu`tabar* 1:26.

[17.](#) Al-Shahid al-Awwal: *al-Dhikra* 6.

- [18.](#) Sharif al-Murtada: al-Dhari`ah 2: 129.
- [19.](#) Al-Muhaqqiq al-Damad: al-Rawashih al-Samawiyyah 98.
- [20.](#) Al-Shahid al-Thani: al-Dirayah 17.
- [21.](#) Shaykh al-Tusiy: al-Fihrist 3.
- [22.](#) Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin: A`yan al-Shi`ah 1: 100. See also `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi: al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq 217.
- [23.](#) Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Babawayh (Shaykh al-Saduq): Man-lā-Yahduruhul-Faqih 1:2-5.
- [24.](#) Najm al-Din al-Hilliy: al-Mu`tabar 1:7.
- [25.](#) Ibn Idris al-Hilliy: al-Sara`ir 471-493. This book has been published under the title of 'Mustatrafat al-Sara`ir'.
- [26.](#) Shaykh al-Baha'iyy: al-Wajizah 6-7; Shaykh al-Hurr al-`ilmiliy, in Wasa'il al-Shi`ah (the epilogue) 30:200, quotes the same wording. Similar statement has been mentioned in Shaykh al-Baha'iyy's Mashriq al-Shamsayn 269-270.
- [27.](#) Shaykh al-Hasan: Muntaqa al-Juman 1:27.
- [28.](#) Al-Kaf`amiy: al-Jannah al-Waqiyah 3-4.
- [29.](#) `Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummiy: Tafsir 1:4 as is recorded in Shaykh al-Hurr al-`ilmiliy: Wasa'il al-Shi`ah (the epilogue) 30:202.
- [30.](#) Shaykh al-Hurr al-`ilmiliy: Wasa'il al-Shi`ah (the epilogue) 30:213.
- [31.](#) Shaykh al-Hurr al-`ilmiliy: Wasa'il al-Shi`ah (the epilogue) 30:213.
- [32.](#) Shaykh al-Hurr al-`ilmiliy: Wasa'il al-Shi`ah (the epilogue) 30:165.
- [33.](#) In his famous book of 'al-Muraja`at', Sayyid `Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din lists the names of more than one hundred individuals of these trustworthy reporters.
- [34.](#) Ibn Makula: al-Ikmal 4:575.
- [35.](#) Ibn al-Athir: al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 8:364.
- [36.](#) Ibn al-Safadiy: al-Wafi bi'l-Wafiyat 5:226.
- [37.](#) Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalaniy: Lisan al-Mizan 5:433.
- [38.](#) Al-Fayruz'abadiy: al-Qamus al-Muhit 4:363.
- [39.](#) Al-Zubaydiy: Taj al-`Arus 9:322.
- [40.](#) Thamir al-`Amidiy: Difa` `An al-Kafi 1:38.
- [41.](#) Ibn al-Athir: Jami` al-Usul 12:220.
- [42.](#) Al-Dhahbiy: Siyar A`lam al-Nubala' 16:303 H. 112.
- [43.](#) Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalaniy: Lisan al-Mizan 202, 279.
- [44.](#) Al-Dhahbiy: Siyar A`lam al-Nubala' 16:304 H. 212.
- [45.](#) Shaykh al-Tusiy: al-Fihrist 156.
- [46.](#) Shaykh al-Saduq: al-Muqni`, The Introduction 22.
- [47.](#) Al-Najashiyy: al-Rijal 276.
- [48.](#) Al-Muhaddith al-Qummiy: Safinat al-Bihar 2:22.
- [49.](#) Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalaniy: Lisan al-Mizan 5:368.
- [50.](#) Ibn al-Nadim: al-Fihrist 226, 247.
- [51.](#) Al-Muntadham 8: 11.
- [52.](#) Al-Yafi`iy: Mir'at al-Jinan 3:28; Ibn al-`Imad: Shadharat al-Dhahab 3: 199.
- [53.](#) Al-Dhahbiy: Siyar A`lam al-Nubala' 17:344.
- [54.](#) Al-Dhahbiy: Siyar A`lam al-Nubala' 18:344.
- [55.](#) Al-Sabkiy: Tabaqat al-Shafi`iyyah 3:51.
- [56.](#) Al-Suyutiyy: Tabaqat al-Mufasssirin 29.
- [57.](#) Al-Katib al-Chalabiy: Kashf al-Dhunun.
- [58.](#) `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi: al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq 258.
- [59.](#) `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi: al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq 186.
- [60.](#) `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi: al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq 163.
- [61.](#) `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi: al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq 160.
- [62.](#) `Abd al-Halim al-Jundi: al-Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq 160.

[63.](#) Al-Mirza al-Nuriy: Mustadrak al-Wasa'il wa-Mustanbat al-Masa'il (The Epilogue, Fourth Point) 3:482.

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