

Imam Sadiq's Contribution to the Scientific Movement in the Early Period of Islam

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Abstract

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Shi'a Imam, played a major role during the scientific movement in the early 2nd century Hijrah, more so compared to that of other Imams from the Prophet's progeny. Several factors rendered this era a golden opportunity for the Imam to spread his knowledge: the Umayyids' and Abbasids' preoccupation with their struggle to attain power, the scholars' acquaintance with the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt, the general thirst for knowledge during this era, and Imam al-Sadiq's prominence in both religious and natural sciences. A meticulous study of the works of Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, history, and hadith studies depict the Imam's great contributions in science and politics.

This article focuses on the Imam's role in developing this scientific movement, offers an account of the number and religious denominations of his students and narrators, and reveals the degree to which this influence extended to include Sunni literature of Islamic studies. Indeed, many scholars and students are indebted to the Imam's vast knowledge and contributions in religious and academic fields.

Introduction

The scientific movement in the Islamic world emerged in the early 2nd century Hijrah, coinciding with the shift of political power from the Umayyads to the Abbasid dynasty. Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq has been one of the most distinguished personalities of this critical period in Islamic history. He was the focus of attention and the point of reference for scholars and academics, particularly the scholars of hadith, the jurists, theologians, and commentators of the Qur'an.

A close analysis of the life and scholarly activities of Imam al-Sadiq clarifies the mysteries that surround the birth, growth, and spread of Islamic sciences and culture. His approach and style in the field of politics, education and training, and in the upbringing of erudite and devoted students during his own time, bears invaluable lessons for scholars, thinkers, and reformers of all ages to come.

A thorough study of the works of hadith, Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, history, and biography (sirah) reveals his influence and contribution in different arenas of science and politics. He left behind valuable works as his legacy as well as renowned students in the areas of jurisprudence, biography, theology, and Qur'anic exegesis. Their names, works, views, and narrations reported from the Imam have been recorded in the books related to the above-mentioned sciences.

This paper aims to discuss Imam al-Sadiq's influence on the scientific movement of the 2nd century Hijrah in the Islamic world. However, we shall first briefly discuss the origins of this scientific movement, and thereafter explain the Imam's role in its development.

The inception of the scientific movement in Islam

Until the end of the 1st century Hijrah, the Islamic sciences, in the specific sense of the word, like jurisprudence, theology, Qur'anic exegesis, ethics, and history were communicated mainly in the form of narrations (hadith) and through word of mouth from one generation to the next. According to historians and scholars of hadith, Islamic sciences in general – and the science of hadith in particular – were not yet available in written form up until this time. It was only in the first half of the 2nd century Hijrah that the recording of hadith was initiated by scholars in large Muslim cities and centres of learning.

This view is partially correct although it cannot entirely be accepted. This is because almost all the companions of the Holy Prophet did not write; hence, his words were not recorded. However, with regard to whether or not the recording of hadith was permissible in the first instance, two apparently contradicting opinions have been ascribed to the Prophet. After a lengthy discussion concerning them, Muslim scholars reconciled between the two views in the following manner:

First view: The Prophet did not permit the recording of hadith in the early days lest his words were confused with the Qur'an. He allowed it towards the end of his life as the Qur'an was already in circulation amidst the Muslims, and hence there was no room for such confusion.

Second view: He allowed it to only those of his companions who were competent to do so. Otherwise, he would not encourage it in general.^{[1](#)}

Even if we were to accept the above opinion in the case of other companions of the Prophet, we cannot accept it to include Ali ibn Abi Talib who, according to Shi'a sources of hadith, individually recorded the words of the Prophet in the Book of Ali that was inherited after him by the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt.^{[2](#)}

In any case, the above dispute was regarding the Prophet's companions. In the case of those who

followed them in position and knowledge (tabi'in), the recording of hadith was unquestionably common amongst them. Muhammad ibn Shihab al-Zuhari (d. 125 H), the teacher of Malik ibn Anas, is said to have collected epistles in this regard, such that he would sit in his house surrounded by this huge collection of books.³

Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar are reported to have said that the recording of hadith started in the 2nd century H. He writes:

In the year 143 H, the Muslim scholars during this period began to write on hadith, jurisprudence, and Qur'anic exegesis. Ibn Jurayj in the city of Mecca, Malik – the author of Al-Muwatta' – in Medina, Awza'i in Damascus, Ibn Abi 'Uribah, Hammad ibn Salamah, and others in Basrah, Ma'mar in Yemen, and Sufyan Thawri in Kufa. Ibn Ishaq wrote Al-Maghazi, Abi Hanifah – may God have mercy on him, composed works on jurisprudence, analogy (quays) and personal opinion (ra'y). Soon after this, Hushaym, Layth, and Ibn Lahya'ah, and thereafter Ibn al-Mubarak, Ibn Yusuf, and Ibn Wahab all began to author works in different areas. From then onwards, the trend of writing in the area of Islamic sciences and the systematic arrangement of them escalated. Books on the Arabic grammar, lexicons, history, and the important events and days in the history of societies were compiled. Prior to this age, the leading scholars used to impart knowledge from memory or reading from the revised and scrambled up epistles.

As to Ibn Hajar, he says in his commentary on the Sahih of Bukhari:

The first people to have compiled the hadith were Rabi' ibn Subayh (d. 160 H) and Sa'id ibn Abi 'Urubah (d. 156 H). They were followed by the scholars of the third generation like Imam Malik (d. 179 H) who composed Al-Muwatta' in Medina, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Jurayj (d. 150 H) in Mecca, Awza'i (d. 156 H) in Damascus, Sufyan Thawri (d. 161 H) in Kufa, and Hammad ibn Salamah ibn Dinar (d. 176 H) in Basrah, all of whom compiled works. Thereafter, many leading figures followed their footsteps, each one authoring works according to his understanding and level of knowledge.

The words of Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar would be misleading and incomplete without considering the following two points:

One: To consider the 2nd century H to be the period in which the movement to record the hadith was initiated by the above-mentioned pioneers does not necessarily imply that these traditions had not been recorded at all by any person in the earlier periods. It rather means that up until this period the massive body of hadith had not been collected, compiled, and methodically arranged in books. This in no way controverts the fact that in the earlier times the scholars of hadith used to pen down that which they came across of the narration in their journals or books (suhuf) as termed by Dhahabi.

It is also worthy of consideration here that according to the findings of the scholarly research by Ahmad Amin, the above initiation in the history of the documentation of hadith was other than the one that was banned during the time of the second caliph, or the one that was about to be launched by 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz.

It has been reported that the second caliph had proposed to the companions of the Prophet the need to collect the Prophetic practice (Sunnah) in the same manner the Qur'an had been collected. They all gave their consent to it. However, a month later the second caliph withdrew his suggestion and said, "I do not think this is the right thing to do. The People of the Book embarked on a similar task before us the outcome of which was that the Children of Israel abandoned the Torah and clung to the practice of their Prophet."[4](#)

The Umayyad caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz also endeavoured to collect the hadith towards the end of the 1st century H. For this reason, he instructed his governors in different cities, including Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn Hazm – the chief justice in Medina, to collect the Prophetic narrations and send them to him. Although his success in accomplishing this is dubious[5](#), it appears from a report in Al-Ta'rikh of Bukhari that this task was accomplished. In any case, even if this task was successfully carried out, no effect of it has remained.

Considering what has been said above, we conclude that the movement to record the hadith that emerged in the 2nd century H was different in nature to what was in the mind of the second caliph or 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz. What they had thought of was collecting the entire body of the narrations and practices of the Prophet in one place, like the Qur'an, whereas the scholars in the 2nd century collected only the traditions that were in circulation within their respective cities.

Two: What has been said above is true of the history of hadith in the Sunni world. With regard to the Shi'a Imamiyyah, there are clues that indicate that some of the companions of Ali ibn Abi Talib like Abi Rafi' – his scribe, and his two sons Ubaydullah and Ali, had compiled the judgements of Ali in a book.[6](#) There are also reports that mention works composed by Ali and the Imams after him before the 2nd century H.[7](#)

What is obvious is that even the generation after the companions (tabi'in) did not give consent for their works to be circulated and destroyed them prior to death. However, it was from the 2nd century AH onwards that the recording of hadith and its circulation became widespread as explained earlier.

Some questions worthy of discussion at this stage are: What were the factors that led to the emergence of such a movement in different cities of the Muslim world, almost around one specific period of time? And who was the pioneer leading the way in these important developments in the history of Islam?

Some researchers assume Ibn Jurayj to be the foremost in recording the hadith than his other contemporaries since he died earlier than all of them. And because he lived in the city of Mecca, it is highly probable that the pilgrims transcribed his work and took it with them to their respective cities. Hence, other scholars of hadith came to know of his work, so they followed his example and compiled the traditions that were with them in separate works.[8](#)

Another factor that was decisive in the emergence of the movement to document the hadith was that the jurists in Iraq, Imam Abi Hanifah being on top of them, were vigorously promoting analogical reasoning.

And considering that the scholars in other Muslim cities, especially in Mecca and Medina, did not approve the use of this method, they initiated the move to record the hadith as a means, in their judgement, to preserve the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet and to get away with the innovation of analogical reasoning.

Although each of the above two factors may have been decisive in its own right, none of them can be considered to be the sole reason for the emergence of such a movement. The following two points also need to be taken into consideration:

One: The interest and love to record the hadith and to compose works on it seem to have been existing amidst Muslim scholars since the early days of Islam. There can be no doubt about this. What is worthy of investigation here is rather the reason as to why the documentation of hadith did not start earlier. In other words, what are the factors that led to the delay in the recording of hadith? In response to this question, a number of factors can be stated:

1. The disapproval of recording the hadith by the Holy Prophet himself as mentioned earlier. However, the correctness of this view is subject to skepticism.
2. The ban imposed on the recording of hadith by the second caliph. This appears to have become a norm after him in the later period that was carried on by the Umayyad caliphs with the exception of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz. They declared the documentation of hadith to be illegal, or, at the least, did not approve of it by encouraging people to compile them.
3. The religious and political disputes between different groups like the Khawarij, Shi'a, Murji'ah, or similar to the contention between Hasan Basri and Wasil ibn 'Ata that resulted in the birth of the Mu'tazilah tradition. Similarly, the continuation of the bloody wars between Ali and Mu'awiyah, between the clan of Zubayr and the Umayyads, and between them and Mukhtar ibn Abi 'Ubaydah. This was in addition to the continuous uprisings by the supporters and family members of Ali that stretched throughout the period of the Umayyad rule.

This state of affairs continued up until the time of Mansur Dawaniqi when the Abbasid rule was almost established. The relative peace and stability achieved during this period laid the groundwork for the increasing interest in recording the hadith. Put differently, the ground for such a move had been there for long; however, there were obstacles in the way. With the shift of power to the Abbasid dynasty, these hurdles were relatively removed.

This is in addition to the fact that Mansur himself was a broadminded person who was fond of knowledge and wisdom. He encouraged educational activities and persuaded scholars to author works in various subjects. As recorded in the books, it was him who instructed Muhammad ibn Ishaq, the author of Al-Maghazi, to compose a work on the life of the Holy Prophet for his son Mahdi, and he complied.[9](#)

Furthermore, the Iranians, who played a significant role in the shift of caliphate to the Bani 'Abbas, gave more importance to knowledge and learning than the Arabs, and had a long history of involvement in this regard. This in itself was a decisive factor in the flourishing of knowledge throughout the period of their influence in the court of the caliphate.

Two: The second point is related to the actual theme of this paper that we shall now turn our attention to after the above preamble. Researchers have mentioned numerous factors that led to the emergence of the scientific movement in the Islamic world in the 2nd century H.

However, there is another vital factor in this regard which the historians, scholars, and researchers seem to have turned a blind eye to: The role of the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt, particularly the contributions of Imam al-Sadiq, in the appearance, blossoming, and spread of this blessed movement throughout the Muslim world during that era.

The Imams' role in the Scientific Movement

The history of the involvement of the Prophet's progeny in the spread of the Islamic sciences dates back to the time of Imam Ali himself. According to the testimony of the Prophet's companions and the generation after them (tabi'in), Ali was the most learned of all companions in matters related to the Qur'an, Sunnah, Islamic law, and judiciary. Instances that allude to this fact are beyond numeration. The Shi'a and the Sunni sources are replete with the narrations he reported from the Prophet of God, alongside his words and views.

In his work Al-Musnad, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal has named one of its chapters as Musnad of Ali in which 3,000 hadiths were reported from him.

In Al-Musnad, Ali apparently comes second after Abi Hurayrah to have narrated the largest number of hadiths in this book.

These copious but scattered narrations were in circulation through word of mouth for decades amongst Muslim scholars and traditionists. Each one of them was aware of only part of this massive body of reports and used to transmit it to others. The complete version of these reports, according to the belief of the twelver Shi'a, was to be found only with the Imams from the Prophet's progeny. They inherited them from one another and imparted them to their followers.

The narrations from Ali have reached us through the following five channels:

- 1) The Sunni sources purely through their chains of narration. Most of the reports found in Al-Musnad of Ahmad and other Sunni collections of hadith are of this kind.
- 2) The Imams of the Prophet's progeny, but through the Sunni narrators. They are many in number to be discussed later in this paper.

3) The Shi'a narrators who have reported most narrations from the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt.

4) The Zaydiyyah narrators attributed to Zayd son of Ali, son of Husayn ibn Ali. Zayd was a learned, ascetic, and revolutionary person who rose against the Umayyad rule in 122 H. Despite the fact that he was defeated and ultimately martyred in Kufa, his movement had massive impact in the weakening of the Umayyad caliphate and its eventual decline.

These narrations have appeared in the book *Al-Majmi' al-Fiqhi* which is also called *Musnad Zayd ibn Ali*, and in the book *Ra'b al-Sad* famously known as *Amali Ahmad ibn 'Isa ibn Zayd* or *Al-Amali* of Shajari, as well as in other Zaydiyyah works like *Al-Bahr al-Zakhkhar*. The total number of these reports is considerable.

5) The Shi'a Ismaili creed, attributed to Isma'il son of Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad. They believe in the first six Imams from the Prophet's progeny. This sect emerged after the demise of Imam al-Sadiq in 148 H as a result of their acceptance of the leadership of his son Isma'il who had already passed away during Imam Sadiq's lifetime. They did not follow Imam Misa ibn Ja'far and were divided into a number of sub-sects in the course of time. The Bohra and the Agha Khanis are the two important subsisting sub-sects within the Ismaili tradition.

The narrations from the Imams of the Prophet's progeny through the Ismaili sources are mainly from the famous and authentic work of *Da'aim al-Islam* by Qadi Nu'man Misri. He was greatest distinguished jurist, chief justice, and missionary of the Fatimid caliphate, and has authored many significant works. He passed away in Cairo in 363 H.

In his *Da'a'im al-Islam*, he reported narrations, though without their chains of narration, related to all chapters of the Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) from Imam al-Sadiq and the Imams before him. Many of these traditions go back to the Holy Prophet and Imam Ali through the intermediary of other Imams.

Nonetheless, considering that Qadi Nu'man lived 150 years after the time of Imam al-Sadiq, there has been a lengthy debate as to the sources of his reports from the Imams before al-Sadiq. In any case, this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. [10](#)

The narrations that have reached us from Imam al-Sadiq and the Imams before him have also been through the same five channels as mentioned above. The volumes of traditions reported from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq by Sunni and Shi'a narrators brought together is considerably large.

One of the important discussions that has not received due attention from researchers in the field is the critical examination of the Ahlul Bayt's narrations transmitted through the above five channels to discover a) both the areas in which they are congruent with one another and the areas in which they are not, b) that which have been the causes of such incongruity between these reports, and c) which of these five channels is more authentic and reliable than the other. In addition to this, the number of traditions commonly reported by all five channels, and the ones exclusive to each of them, need to be precisely

identified.

The conflict between these reports is to be considered as one of the factors that has led to the difference between the Shi'a and the Sunni, and also between the various sects within the Shi'a tradition. Moreover, the differences within one particular sect, such as the differences between the Zaydiyyah and the Shi'a Imamiyyah scholars, have their root definitely in these conflicting narrations.

The narrations of the Ahlul Bayt from Sunni sources

The traditions of the Ahlul Bayt have not been reported only through the twelver Shi'a sources or those of other Shi'a sects; rather, these narrations are to be copiously found in Sunni sources as well, as mentioned in the introduction to *Al-Muqni' wa al-Hidayah*. Afterwards, research has been conducted through 25 major Sunni works of hadith, tafsir, and biographies (*sirah*) written from the third to the sixth century.

More than ten thousand hadiths from the Ahlul Bayt in these works on different topics were found. Those hadiths were classified and sent to a number of instructors in the Islamic seminary in Qum. The idea was that they should take the project further by adding to its narrations from other Sunni works and eventually have it published. It is hoped that when the project is finished and the result is published it will unearth the attachment and friendly relationship based on the love that prominent Sunni scholars and traditionists had with the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt, especially with Imam al-Sadiq. Moreover, it also uncovers the fact that studying under the tutelage of the Imams and citing religious precepts and hadith from them was widely common in those days amongst the Sunni scholars and masters of hadith.

Imam al-Sadiq's role

The contributions of Imam al-Baqir and al-Sadiq in the diffusion of Islamic sciences and hadith is much greater compared to that of other Imams from the Prophet's progeny. In comparison with other Imams, the number of traditions reported from these two Imams in the works of hadith is also considerably high.

One of the reasons behind this is that the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt who came after Ali were under great pressure, especially after the tragic event of Karbala and during the rule of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the bloodthirsty Umayyad governor over Iraq. They were less able during this period to disseminate their knowledge until after the death of Hajjaj in 95 H when the atmosphere of suppression was replaced by relative freedom.

Indeed, this period had coincided with the inception of the Abbasid campaign to assume the caliphate. It was in the early 2nd century that Ibrahim al-Imam began his call to invite people to support the Bani 'Abbas which eventually culminated after decades of struggle in the coming to power of the Abbasid dynasty in 132 H. The Umayyads and the Abbasids were preoccupied during this time with their struggle to attain power and thus, showed less concern for the Imams' activities.

This period of time that lasted for almost 70 years coincided with the divine office (imamah) of Imam al-Baqir (d. 114 H), Imam al-Sadiq (d. 148 H), and partially included the time of Imam Musa al-Kadhim. Al-Baqir and al-Sadiq made the maximum of this opportunity to spread their knowledge.

However, the period in which Imam al-Sadiq lived was more conducive for such scientific activities compared to other times due to the following reasons:

1. The period of his divine office was longer and lasted for about 34 years.
2. The prolongation of the political and military confrontation between the Umayyads and the Abbasids brought about great opportunity and freedom for the Imam, as well as for the growth of the scientific movement in general. This is taking into consideration that the events that transpired before and after the shift of power coincided exactly with the times of Imam al-Sadiq.
3. Many students and masters of hadith had already become acquainted with the noble teachings of the Ahlul Bayt through Imam al-Baqir. The sweetness of these teachings aroused in them the desire and craving for the knowledge and wisdom of the Prophet's progeny. Hence, they gathered after him around his son Ja'far al-Sadiq with unparalleled enthusiasm and zeal.
4. The scientific fame and position of Imam al-Sadiq himself contributed to the intensification of such an interest amongst the seekers of knowledge during that period.
5. The political stand of Imam al-Sadiq on the outside together with his total devotion to scientific activities was a decisive factor in attracting students to attend his lessons without any concern or fear.
6. The prevalence of knowledge and the increase in the number of its seekers during this period of time, in addition to the growth of Islamic sciences and other disciplines related to it as mentioned earlier, were effective in the creation of a favourable atmosphere for scientific activities during Imam al-Sadiq's time.
7. Besides being well-grounded in religious sciences like tafsir, jurisprudence, and theology, Imam al-Sadiq was also thoroughly familiar with the natural sciences. This is attested by numerous reports, including the works attributed to Jabir ibn Hayyan – which in itself requires an independent research, as well as by narrations transmitted from Mufaddal ibn 'Umar and others. This dimension of the Imam's scholarship also played its role in attracting around him those interested in this field of study.

All these factors brought together were crucial in creating a brilliant image of Imam al-Sadiq in the people's minds that such scientific fame and position had not been acquired in the history of Islam by anyone up until that time. The same holds true of the considerable number of narrators who have recounted reports from him. The position of Imam al-Sadiq during this period can be equated to that of Imam Ali during his time; it could perhaps be even said that, taking into account the atmosphere during Imam al-Sadiq's time, his scientific fame excelled over that of his grandfather Ali.

In any case, the above factors gave Imam al-Sadiq a great share from this golden opportunity, more so

than his father Imam al-Baqir and his son Imam Musa ibn Ja'far.

The lesson circles of Imam al-Sadiq in Kufa

Beside his academic activities in Medina, Imam al-Sadiq travelled several times to Kufa¹¹ where he spent a considerable amount of time delivering lessons at a location inside the mosque of Kufa commonly known today as Imam al-Sadiq's place (maqam). A close study of the biographies of those who narrated reports from him reveals that most of them were from Kufa.

Sheikh Tusi in his work *Al-Fihrist* as well as Abi al-Abbas Najjashi in his *Al-Fihrist*, famously known as *Rijal al-Najjashi*, are committed to refer to this group of narrators by the term *kifi* ("The Kufian"). This term seems to have been employed by them to denote the reliability or – most likely – the weakness of a narrator. However, this matter requires further investigation.

In any case, it is uncontested that Kufa was the first and most important centre in which the Shi'a faith and the divine teachings of the Prophet's progeny emerged. It was the hub of Shi'a scholarship that gave birth to all other Shi'a centres of learning.

In support of what has been said above, consider the following example: Najjashi narrates in his work¹² that Ahmad ibn Ahmad ibn Isa Ash'ari Qummi – one of the masters of Hadith in Qum, says:

I went to Kufa in the pursuit of collecting narrations. For this purpose, I went to see Hasan ibn Ali al-Washsha', one of the companions of Imam al-Ridha'. He gave me a book and asked me to copy [reports] from it so that he may thereafter read them for me [to ensure that I have copied them correctly]. But I said, 'Read it for me right now, as no one knows what will happen in the future.' He said, 'May God have mercy on you! Copy them first and then come to me. Had I known that these narrations are so much in demand, I would have strived to collect more than these, for I have seen 900 scholars and tutors in this mosque of Kufa, all of whom used to say, 'Ja'far ibn Muhammad has told me ...

The approximate number of Imam al-Sadiq's students

Abi al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'id (d.333H) – famously known as Ibn'Uqdah, who was amongst the Zaydiyyah scholars, and one of the masters and reporters of hadith in the twelver Shi'a tradition, has composed a work on the people who have narrated from Imam al-Sadiq and has mentioned 4000 of them by their names.¹³

Although this work is no longer available, it cannot be disputed that Sheikh Tusi and other masters of biography (*rijal*) during that period have seen this work and benefitted from it.

In his work of biography¹⁴, Sheikh Tusi has listed alphabetically 3223 students of Imam al-Sadiq, that is, 777 persons less than the number given by Ibn 'Uqdah. Even if we assume that Sheikh Tusi had seen the work of Ibn 'Uqdah which contained 4000 names, it remains unknown as to why he did not record all

the names in his own work.

However, we also need to take into consideration that the sources from which Sheikh Tusi has narrated the names of these people who have transmitted reports from Imam al-Sadiq or other Imams are not known for us. In other words, it is not known whether he was only quoting these names from other scholars, or it was the result of his own research by looking into the chains of narration, the indexes, and the works of biography before him.

In any case, the valid scientific methodology to identify the names of the narrators of Imam al-Sadiq and other Imams would be to examine the text and chains of narration of all the traditions that have been recorded in the Shi'a and Sunni books, and note the name of every narrator who has reported from any of the Imams.

The late grand Ayatullah Burujerdi composed two books on Shi'a works of biography and important Shi'a works of hadith like Al-Kafi of Kulayni, Al-Tahdhib of Sheikh Tusi, Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih, and other books of Sheikh Saduq, both waiting to be published.

Although it is obvious that the work on Rijal by Sheikh Tusi does not contain the names of all the narrators who have reported from Imam al-Sadiq or other Imams, a quick comparison of the number of narrators of each Imam reveals that the number of Imam al-Sadiq's students exceeds that of the students of the other Imams; the number of his students alone is almost equal to the total number of all who have narrated from other Imams.

Unfortunately, the narrators in the work of Sheikh Tusi are not numbered; their names have been listed only in alphabetical order. As such, although I could only count the narrators of Imam al-Sadiq from the book, we can roughly understand the major difference in the number of his narrators compared to those of the rest of the Imams by looking at the number of pages the narrators of each Imam occupy in the book: the names of Imam al-Sadiq's reporters alone appear in about 200 pages, while the companions of the Prophet and those of the rest of the Imams occupy only about 197 pages.

Identifying the religious denominations of Imam al-Sadiq's narrators

Bearing in mind the distinguished personality of Imam al-Sadiq and the position he enjoyed during his time, it could be easily misconceived that all of his students followed the Shi'a faith. A similar misconception is held by the people concerning the companions and supporters of Imam Ali and other Imams, whereas this contradicts the historical evidence at hand.

In the case of Imam Ali, apart from a group of his distinguished companions, the rest of his supporters were jurists and traditionists who belonged to the Sunni school of thought. Their position in favour of Ali was on the basis of considering him to be the rightful and legal caliph after Uthman, contrary to the

people of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan who were not willing to accept his caliphate even at this level. Most of them showed their love for Ali and the Prophet's progeny, and as such, they were Shi'a in the broader sense of the word, and not in the specific sense of the term.

Now, by referring to the works on biographies (rijal), the same fact can be easily established with regards to Imam al-Sadiq's students and companions, some of whom were renowned Sunni scholars who held the positions of judiciary and issued religious verdicts (fatwa) [15](#).

In fact, many of them were the descendants of the Prophet's companions and the past caliphs [16](#). Furthermore, the names of quite a few of the distinguished theologians [17](#) of the time, as well as some of the well-known scholars of Prophetic biography, historians [18](#), commentators of the Qur'an [19](#) and members from the progeny of Ali and his companions – who rose against the oppressive rule of the time, are also to be seen among the names of his students. [20](#)

The relationship of the four Imams of the Sunni schools with Imam al- Sadiq

Imam Abi Hanifah (80 – 150 H) preceded the other three Imams in time, and as such he was more in the company of Imam al-Sadiq and his father Imam al-Baqir than any of the other three Imams. His birth and demise dates are very close to those of Imam al-Sadiq (85–148 H).

It is for this reason that some scholars such as Sheikh Abu Zuhrah do not consider their relationship to be a teacher–student one; rather, they look at them to be contemporaries of one another. It appears from some reports that Imam al-Sadiq addressed him as the learned (faqih) of the people of Iraq, and dealt with him as a scholar and not as his student.

However, there are reports that have appeared in Jami' al-Masanid which Abu Hanifah has narrated from Imam al-Sadiq. But before we mention those reports, we will briefly look at the relationship between Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Baqir. We shall mention here a summary of one report that reveals the height of his veneration towards Imam al-Baqir [21](#):

Abu Hanifah reports that one day I went to see Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al- Husayn, I greeted him and took a seat. He said, "O my brother from Iraq! Avoid sitting here as the people of Iraq have been banned [by the authorities] to have audience with us." Abu Hanifah says that thereafter I inquired from him about the second caliph and his relationship with the scholars and the learned, and then he also spoke of the fine relationship between him and Ali.

Abu Hanifah then said to Imam al-Baqir, "You do not disown the first two, whereas there are people amidst us who disown them; you could write a letter to them [and stop them from this]." The Imam replied, "You are closer to me than they are. But still when I ordered you not to sit in my audience, you did not obey me; so how can I expect them to obey me?" [22](#)

As to his reports from Imam al-Sadiq, they are of two categories:

1) The traditions that he reported from Imam al-Sadiq which, through his father and forefathers, traced back to Ali. The following are a few examples:

a) I report from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, who reported from his father, who reported Ali – may God be pleased with him, to have said, "A slave man can marry two wives, and can divorce two times."[23](#)

b) I narrate from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, who narrated Ali as saying, "The legal punishment of a slave when he accuses a married person of adultery is half [that of a free man]."

c) I report from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, who reported from his father, who reported that Ali, may God be pleased with him, punished a slave with forty lashes because of accusing somebody of illegitimate birth (firyah)."[24](#)

2) Reports in which he quotes from Imam al-Sadiq himself, such as the two narrations below:

a) Abu Ja'far al-Mansur once sent me a message that I should prepare some difficult questions for Ja'far ibn Muhammad as people have been extremely fascinated by his knowledge. I thus prepared forty questions and sent them to him at Hayrah. One day, he summoned me as well as Ja'far ibn Muhammad to his court. He then reclined on his seat, and Ja'far ibn Muhammad sat to his right. He inspired such awe in me that the personality of Mansur did not. Mansur then asked me to take a seat.

He then turned towards Ja'far and said: "O Abu 'Abdillah, this is Abu Hanifah." He answered, "Yes, I know him." He then turned towards Abu Hanifah and told him: "O Abu Hanifah, ask him what is on the paper." Abu Hanifah says, "I started posing the questions to him one after the other, and he answered all the forty questions so well that he made everyone dumbfounded." I found him to be the most acquainted of people with regard to the different opinions held by scholars. Hence, I consider him to be the most learned scholar I have ever seen.[25](#)

b) 'Abd al-Jabbar ibn 'Abdal-'Aziz ibn Abi Ruwwad reports that we were at Hajj with Ja'far ibn Muhammad when Abu Hanifah came to see him. He greeted him and embraced him, and thereafter started asking him questions to the extent that he even inquired from him about his close family members. So a person asked the Imam, "O son of the Apostle of God, do you know who this man is?" Abu Hanifah retorted at this saying, "I have not seen a man more ridiculous than you! You see me inquiring from him about his inner family circle, and you are asking him whether or not he knows me? I am Abu Hanifah, and this [Ja'far] is the most learned of person of this land."[26](#)

Imam Malik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH) – the jurist of the people of Medina, and the head of the Maliki school of jurisprudence, saw the times of Imam al-Sadiq since his youth through to his middle adulthood, and also took lessons from him.

In his book Al-Muwatta', Malik has reported around 40 narrations from the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt

through the following ways:

1. From Malik, from Shihab, from Ali ibn Husayn...[27](#)
2. From Malik, from Rabi'ah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn ...[28](#)
3. From Malik, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from Ali ibn Abi Talib said...[29](#)
4. From Malik, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from Jabir ibn 'Abdillah [Ansari], from the Messenger of God ...

The manner in which the Holy Prophet performed his Hajj has been reported by Malik and all other Sunni authorities only through the above chains of transmission[30](#). It was due to this very reason that Abu Hanifah has been reported to have said, 'Were it not for Ja'far ibn Muhammad, the Muslims would not have known the Hajj rituals.'

Besides Malik, Muhammad ibn Ishaq has also narrated reports in his book Al-Maghazi, directly and indirectly, from Imam al-Sadiq and Imam al-Baqir.[31](#)

As to Imam Shafi'i (150–204 H) and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.241 H), although there is no evidence that they were in contact with any of the Imams during their time such that they may have narrated from them directly, there are reports in the book Tartib Musnad al-Shafi'i[32](#) as well as in Musnad Ahmad that trace back to the Prophet through Imam al-Sadiq and the Imams before him.

Conclusion

Imam al-Sadiq's role in the scientific movement during the early days of its inception in the 2nd century H was, indeed, significant. His scientific influence was not limited to the Shi'a jurisprudence or hadith only; rather, it extended to include the Sunni literature of hadith, jurisprudence, theology, history, and the commentary of the Qur'an. Many renowned scholars are, directly or indirectly, are indebted to his vast knowledge and multi-dimensional scholarship.

This is in addition to his unique contributions in the field of physical sciences observed mainly in the works of Jabir ibn Hayyan. Moreover, he was indirectly involved in the political movements initiated by the descendants of Ali, some of whose activists were amongst his students.

- [1.](#) See: Subhi Salih, Mabathithi'Ulim al-Hadith.
- [2.](#) See the introduction in Jami'Ahadith al-Shi'ah, v. 1.
- [3.](#) Ibn Sa'd, Al-Tabaqat, biography of Muhammad ibn Shahab al-Zuhri.
- [4.](#) Fajr al-Islam, v. 1, p.8–11; and Al-Mabathith fi 'Ulum al-Hadith, the section on Tadwin al-hadith.
- [5.](#) Ibid.
- [6.](#) Rijal al-Najjashi, biography of Abi Rafi', pp. 2–3, Mumbai edition.
- [7.](#) See vol. one of A'yan al-Shi'ah,; and Ta'sis al-Shi'ah li 'Ulum al-Islam.
- [8.](#) Fajr al-Islam, p. 81 onwards.

[9.](#) Sirah Ibn Hisham, Introduction.

[10.](#) I have prepared notes on this discussion.

[11.](#) The city of Kufa was the stronghold of the Shi'a faith. It was in this city that Tashayyu' developed and came on the scene.

[12.](#) Rijal al-Najjashi, p.28.

[13.](#) The figure 4000 has not appeared in Al-Rijal of Najjashi or Al-Fihrist of Sheikh Tusi, but it appears in Nadlat al-Idah as an appendix to Al-Fihrist of Sheikh Tusi, p. 42, Spingar edition.

[14.](#) First edition, 1381/1961, Najaf, pp. 142-342.

[15.](#) Such as: Isma'il ibn Muslim ibn Abi Ziyad al-Sakuni al-Kufi (p. 147); Isma'il ibn 'Abdillah al-A'mash (p. 147); Al-Hakam ibn 'Utaybah al-Kufi al-Kindi (p. 171); Hammad ibn Abi Hanifah al-Nu'man (p. 173); Hafs ibn Ghiyath al-Qadi (p. 175); Kharijah ibn Mus'ab al-Khurasani (p. 188); Zayd ibn Aslam Mawla 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (p. 197); Sa'd ibn Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf al-Zuhri (d. 125 H) – the chief justice of Medina (p. 202); Sulayman ibn Mahran al-A'mash – d. 148 H– (p. 206); Sufyan ibn Sa'id al-Thawri – d. 161 H– (p. 212); Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah – d. 198 H– (p. 212); 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ansari – Abu Tawalah, the chief justice of Medina during the reign of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (p. 224); 'Abullah ibn Shibrimah al-Kufi al-Faqih (p. 228); 'Abdullah ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani – the brother of Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Faqih (p. 228); 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Umar al-Awza'i al-Faqih – d. 157 H, the Imam of Sham (p. 231); 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar ibn Hafs ibn 'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (p. 229); 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam (p. 232); 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Jurayj al-Umawi (p. 233); 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Abi Salamah al-Majishun – who is considered as reliable by the Sunni scholars (p. 234); 'Ubayd ibn 'Abdillah ibn 'Isa ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla al-Qadi (p. 240); 'Amri ibn Jami', Abi 'Uthman al-Azdi al-Basri – the chief justice of Ray (p. 249); 'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn Hafs ibn 'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (p. 243); Ghiyath ibn Ibrahim (p. 270); Malik ibn Anas ibn Abi 'Amir al-Asbahi al-Imam (p. 308); Nuh ibn Darraj al-Nakha'i al-Qadi (p. 323); Al-Nu'man ibn Thabit Abu Hanifah al-Taymuli al-Kufi al-Imam (p. 325); Wahab ibn Wahab Abu al-Bakhtari al-Qarashi al-Madani (p. 327); Yahya ibn Sa'id ibn Qays al-Ansari – d. 143 H, who was the chief justice at Hashimiyyah during the rule of Abu Ja'far al-Mansur (p. 333); Qasim ibn 'Abdillah ibn 'Umar ibn Hafs ibn 'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (p. 274); Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla al-Ansari al-Qadi al-Kufi – d. 148 H (p. 293); Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf al-Zuhri (p. 294); Muhammad ibn 'Uthman ibn Rabi'ah – famously known as Rabi'at al-ra'y (p. 295); Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn 'Ubayd al-Ansari al-'Attar al-Kufi – d. 176 H, who was said to be equal to a thousand men (p. 296); and Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhri – Ibn Shahab who was the teacher of Malik ibn Anas, d. 124 H (p. 300).

[16.](#) Like Muhammad ibn al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam (p. 301); Muhammad ibn Abi al-Hakam ibn al-Mukhtar ibn Abi 'Ubaydillah al-Thaqafi (p. 306); Hisham ibn 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam (p. 329); Kulayb ibn 'Ubayd ibn Malik Abi 'Ubaydah ibn 'Abdillah ibn Mas'ud al-Kufi (p. 278); and others whose names have appeared under footnote 15.

[17.](#) Like Zafar ibn al-Hudhayl al-Kufi (p. 201); and 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd al-Basri (pp. 80-144).

[18.](#) Such as Musa ibn 'Uqba ibn Abi 'Ayyash al-Madani, who was apparently amongst the tabi'in and had authored a book on the battles of the Holy Prophet (p. 307); Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar al-Madani – d. 151 H, who had a work on the battles fought by the Holy Prophet (p. 281); Hisham ibn 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (p. 329); and Lut ibn Yahya – Abi Mikhnaf, who composed a work on the martyrs of Karbala (p. 279).

[19.](#) Like Muqatil ibn Sulayman al-Khurasani – the exegete (p. 313).

[20.](#) Al-Hasan ibn Salih al-Hayy – among the great scholars of Zaydiyyah (p. 166); Sulayman ibn Khalid Abu al-Rabi' al-Hilal – who accompanied Zayd in his uprising but did not leave the company of Abu Ja'far and others (p. 207); Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-'Abbasi ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn 'Abd ibn al-'Abbas (p. 280); Muhammad ibn Zayd ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn (p. 287); Abu Khalid al-Kabuli – the senior as well as the junior (p. 328); Yahya ibn Zayd ibn Ali who was martyred in Juzjan in 125 H (p. 332); and Yahya – the martyr, son of 'Abdallah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan – Sahib al-Daylam (p. 332).

[21.](#) Taking into consideration that Imam al-Baqir passed away in 114 H, it is evident that Abu Hanifah must have met with him in his youth and received pedagogical instructions from him.

[22.](#) Jami' al-Masanid, vol. 1, p. 204.

[23.](#) Ibid. vol. 2, p. 145.

[24.](#) Ibid. p. 211.

[25.](#) Ibid. vol. 1, p. 222.

[26.](#) Ibid. vol. 2, p. 83.

[27.](#) Al-Muwatta' (Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, reviewed by Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Baqi), vol. 1, p. 76.

[28.](#) Ibid, vol. 2, p. 501.

[29.](#) Ibid, vol. 1, p. 385.

[30.](#) See: Al-Hajj fi al-Sunnah by the author.

[31.](#) Like in: 4/144: Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn –Abi Ja'far– reported to me.; 1/258: Abu Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn narrated to me from the Messenger of God.; 4/203: From Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Shahab al-Zuhri, from Ali ibn al-Husayn.; and 1/225: From 'Amr ibn Abi Ja'far, from Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Labibah, from Ali ibn al-Husayn.

[32.](#) The following are the chains of narration through which Imam al-Shafi'i narrated reports from Imam al-Sadiq and the Imams before him:

- (1) From Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from the Holy Prophet (pp. 97, 251 & 216).
- (2) From Muslim, from Ibn Jurayj, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from Jabir (p. 370).
- (3) From 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Darawardi, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from Jabir ibn 'Abdillah (pp. 163 & 371).
- (4) From Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Khalid ibn Abi Karimah, from Abu Ja'far (p. 180).
- (5) From al-Thaqafi –who is reliable, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from Jabir (p. 180).
- (6) Ibn 'Uyaynah, from al-Zuhri, from Ali ibn al-Husayn (p. 190).
- (7) From Malik, from Ibn Shahab, from Ali ibn al-Husayn (pp. 86 & 190).
- (8) From Malik, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father (pp. 130 & 204).
- (9) From a group of people, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from Ali (p. 83).
- (10) From Ibn 'Uyaynah, from Muhammad ibn Ishaq who said: I said to Abu Ja'far. (p. 97).
- (11) From Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shafi' –my uncle, from 'Abdallah ibn Hasan ibn Hasan, from a group of his family members, from Zayd ibn Ali. (p. 240).
- (12) From Ibrahim ibn Muhammad and others, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from the Messenger of God (s). (p. 163).
- (13) From Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from 'Amri ibn Dinar, from Abu Ja'far. (p. 127).
- (14) From Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shafi' –my uncle, from Ali ibn al-Husayn, from the Apostle of God. (p. 129).
- (15) Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far. (p. 216).
- (16) From Sufyan, from Ja'far, from his father, from Jabir, from the Messenger of God. (p. 39).

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