

The Origins and Evaluations of Hadith Transmitters in Shi`i Biographical Literature

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine the provenance of the Shi`i biographical lexica on the imams' disciples (the *rijal*) and propose possible reasons for the composition of these works in the eighth and ninth centuries. I then consider the authentications (*tawthiqat*) of those who report traditions from the imams and compare and contrast the methods of authentication in both the early and later biographical works. I also suggest possible reasons for the development of subsequent modes of authentication.

Introduction

ʿIlm al-rijal is a discipline that examines the status of the transmitters of traditions who figure in the *isnad* (chain of transmission) that is usually prefixed to a hadith (tradition) report. Studying biographical works is important, for it provides information on the traditions' transmitters, who are evaluated to assess their character, reliability, moral probity, and religious affiliations. On the basis of such information derived from these works, a tradition can

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be classified as authentic, reliable, or weak.¹ The biographical literature's evaluation of a reporter directly affects the authenticity of the tradition he transmits, since his status is the single most important factor in classifying the hadith.² Due to its influence on the hadith literature, jurists are required to study this discipline.

To understand the biographical texts' importance and their indispensable role in helping a jurist reach a juridical decision, it is essential to briefly mention the role of hadith as a source from which legal precepts are derived.³ In Shi'ism, as in Sunnism, most Shari'ah rulings are derived from the Sunnah, which, in Shi'i legal theory, comprises the sayings, acts, and periods of acquiescence of the Prophet and the imams. Since the Sunnah is transmitted primarily in the form of hadith reports, those who narrate traditions from the Prophet and the imams play a decisive role in determining which hadith reports are accepted in the juridical manuals. If the biographical works have authenticated the transmitters, a jurist can cite their reported traditions as a sound proof in support of his legal judgment. It is in this context that the significance attached to the biographical texts can be comprehended. Besides furnishing information on the veracity or otherwise of the imams' disciples, Shi'i biographical texts influence which legal traditions a jurist will deem authentic, thereby determining, in the final analysis, the community's religious practices.

An interesting study, but one which is beyond the scope of this paper, is to compare the origins of and the genre of Shi'i biographical literature with that of the Sunni scholars. As I will show later, because they did not need to know the certainty of a tradition through the certainty of the *mukhbir* (narrator), Shi'i jurists approached their traditions in a way that differed from that of the Sunni jurists and authors of *rijal* works, as well as *tabaqat*, *jarh*, and *ta'dil*.

The Provenance of Shi'i Biographical Works

An inquiry into the genesis of Shi'i biographical works entails a close study of Muhammad ibn al-Hasan Tusi's (d. 1067) *Kitab al-Fihrist*⁴ and Ahmad ibn `Ali Najashi's (d. 1058-59) *Kitab al-Rijal*. These two works are indispensable for constructing a coherent picture of the pre-*ghaybah* (occultation) Shi'i biographical works. A study of these texts indicates that the incipience of Shi'i *rijal* works can be traced to `Abd Allah ibn Jabala al-Kinani (d. 834), who is reported to have written a *rijal* work.⁵ He was a contemporary of al-Hasan ibn `Ali al-Faddal (d. 838), who is also credited with writing a book

on the same topic.⁶ Shi`i sources credit another contemporaneous disciple of the imams, al-Hasan ibn Mahbub (d. 838), with a *rijal* work entitled *Kitab al-Mashyakhah*. Strictly speaking, a *mashyakhah* work is a list of the author's *shuyukh* (teachers) rather than an enumeration of the imams' companions.⁷ Shi`i *rijal* works also indicate that al-Hasan al-Faddal's son `Ali (n.d.) and Ahmad ibn `Ali al-`Aqiqi (d. 893) both composed biographical works in the ninth century.⁸ `Ali ibn al-Hakam al-Zubayr (active in the early ninth century) is also reported to have authored a *rijal* work. Although neither Tusi nor Najashi mention this text, Ibn Hajar (d. 1449) occasionally quotes from it. Thus, in the case of Jabir ibn Sumayra, Ibn Hajar cites Ibn al-Hakam's appraisal of him.⁹

After the times of al-Kinani and al-Faddal, many other Shi`i *rijal* works were compiled. These early *rijal* works were classified in alphabetical order. Around the same time, a new genre of *rijal* literature, *tabaqat*, came to be recognized. In these works, the transmitters' names were classified according to their generations. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi (d. 887) composed a *tabaqat* work, still extant, that enumerates and identifies each imam's companions. However, it does not provide a substantive analysis of the lives or status of the *rijal*. Since al-Barqi does not evaluate the veracity of the imams' associates, the value of his work is limited. Thus, some Shi`i scholars have not considered it as being among the principal sources on the *rijal*.¹⁰ Other biographical works composed at this time, like those of Ibn Dawud al-Qummi (d. 978) and Ahmad ibn `Ammar al-Kufi (d. 957), enumerated and detailed the praiseworthy (*mamduhin*) or blameworthy (*madhmumin*) hadith transmitters.¹¹

According to Ayatullah Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i (d. 1992), a prominent scholar of Shi`i biographical literature, over one hundred *rijal* works were composed between the times of al-Hasan ibn Mahbub and Tusi. Although Muhsini, a contemporary *rijal* scholar, says that this figure is exaggerated, a perusal of the biographical texts of Najashi and Tusi indicates that many *rijal* works had been composed before their time. These works also indicate that the science of *al-jarh wa al-ta`dil* ("the wounding and the authentication") was developed among Shi`i circles by the eleventh century.¹² The development of this science by Tusi's time can be discerned from several statements made in the *rijal* works of both Tusi and Najashi. For example, Tusi states in his work on *usul al-fiqh*.¹³

We have encountered a community which has differentiated between the [different] *rijal* reporting these traditions; they have authenticated those who are reliable (*al-thiqat*) among them and have considered weak the

unreliable ones (*al-du`afa*). They have distinguished between those whose traditions and reports can be relied upon and those whose transmissions cannot be relied upon; they have [also] commended those [who are] worthy of praise (*al-mamduh*) among them and have criticized those who deserve to be censured (*al-madhmum*). They have said: “So and so is suspect (*muttahaam*) in his traditions, so and so is a liar; so and so is confused (*mukhallat*) [in his traditions]; so and so is an adversary (*mukhalif*) in his school and beliefs; so and so is a Waqifi; so and so is a Fathi,” and other accusations which they have mentioned.¹⁴

He stresses that the processes of identifying and discriminating between the various transmitters had developed before his time. Najashi also attests to the development of this discipline among the Shi`is by his frequent statements: “The *ashab* (experts of) *al-rijal* have mentioned [his status to be] so.”¹⁵ At one point in his biographical text, he profiles Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Ubayd Allah al-Jawhari. Even though Ahmad was his friend, Najashi states: “I have seen that our teachers have considered him to be weak so I did not narrate anything from him and I avoided him.”¹⁶

Muhammad ibn `Umar Kashshi (d. 978), another important scholar of Shi`i biography, also had access to erstwhile *rijal* scholars. For example, he quotes the views of `Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Faddal and Fadl ibn Shadhan (d. 873) on several occasions. At one point, he states that his teacher, Muhammad ibn Mas`ud al-`Ayyashi (n.d.), had asked Ibn al-Faddal about the status of `Ali ibn al-Hassan.¹⁷ Kashshi also states that he had earlier biographical texts at his disposal. At another place in his work, he quotes Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Bandar al-Qummi’s (n.d.) book in a profile of a disciple.¹⁸

It should be noted that despite the presence of biographical works at this point, the science of hadith criticism had yet to be fully developed among the Shi`is. In fact, most Shi`i jurists before the time of Tusi did not accept the validity of singular traditions (*khavar al-wahid*) as a source of law. For example, his teacher, Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Nu`man al-Mufid (d. 1022), argued that such traditions could only be accepted if they agreed with reason, the Qur’an, or another well-authenticated tradition.¹⁹

Sharif al-Murtada (d. 1044), one of al-Mufid’s students, was even more critical of *khavar al-wahid*. He said that any practice based on this genre of traditions was invalid, for it led only to preponderant possibility (*zann*). Legal decisions, he insisted, must be based on certainty (*qat`*). Al-Murtada also claimed that earlier Shi`i scholars had agreed on prohibiting the use of single traditions in deducing the law.²⁰ For any *khavar al-wahid* to be valid, he maintained that it must be accompanied by other forms of corroboration.²¹ Thus, instead of discussing a transmitter’s character and trustworthiness, al-

Murtada stressed the *qara'in* (concomitant factors) that have to accompany a tradition for it to be accepted as reliable.

Tusi engages in a lengthy discourse to prove the validity of *khavar al-wahid* and refute his opponents' arguments. He agrees that *khavar al-wahid* did not give rise to certainty, but nonetheless accepted it based on certain qualifications: the traditions should be narrated by a member of the righteous sect (*firqah muhiqqah*) who reported from the Prophet or an imam, the transmitter be reliable in his reporting, or it must be accompanied by a *qarinah*.²² Tusi sought to justify his stance by claiming that this was a Shi'i practice dating from the time of the Prophet onwards. In essence, he was claiming an *ijma`* (consensus) of *firqah muhiqqah* on this.²³ By accepting the validity of *khavar al-wahid*, Tusi was expanding the corpus of Shi'i sacred law.

Jamal al-Din Ahmad ibn Musa Tawus (d. 1274-75) was the first scholar to classify Shi'i traditions based on the reliability of their transmitters. He also coined new terminologies to differentiate between different genres of traditions and laid the basis for the principles of hadith criticism, principles that were used by later Shi'i hadith scholars.²⁴ `Allama Yusuf ibn Mutahhar al-Hilli (d. 1325), Ibn Tawus' student, developed and implemented hadith classification in his legal works. Not only did `Allama accommodate singular traditions, but he also drew subtle distinctions between them. He argued that although *khavar al-wahid* provided only *zann*, it was acceptable because the Lawgiver had allowed it.²⁵ Thus, like the Sunnis, the Shi'is were now working on preponderant possibility rather than certitude.²⁶

Reasons for Compiling Biographical Works

The obvious question that arises is this: Why did the Shi'is find it necessary to compose biographical works during the ninth century? It is impossible to ascertain the form that these early Shi'i *rijal* works took or the information they provided, since, apart from al-Barqi's text, none of them are extant. In addition, it is impossible to know why they were compiled at this point in Shi'i history. It is possible to surmise, however, that as the imams' disciples came to play pivotal roles in different parts of the Islamic world, the Shi'is may have found it essential to identify and acknowledge those who claimed to function on the imams' behalf.²⁷

Furthermore, the emerging legal/doctrinal works and concomitant religious practices at about the same time may have precipitated the study of the *rijal* who, according to Shi'i sources, were largely responsible for disseminating the imams' teachings. The Shi'is probably felt the need to

identify those from whom authoritative guidance could be sought. Stated differently, the transmission of the imams' teachings by their disciples and the latter's diverse functions in the community may have generated the biographical dictionaries, which had to establish the reliability of those who transmitted Shi'i theological and jurisprudential pronouncements. In addition, collecting the imams' hadiths created the need to distinguish between faithful transmitters from those whose reliability had not been established.

Moreover, the reported proliferation of spurious hadiths and the rise of extremist factions within the Shi'i community, like the *ghulat* and other sects that would emerge after an imam's death, may have given rise to the biographical works. (The term *ghulat* is applied to a myriad of different groups who held extremist views regarding various figures.²⁸) The Shi'is had to distance themselves from such extremist beliefs, since these could endanger their lives and reputation. Shi'i concern at repudiating *ghulat* beliefs can be seen from the fact that the authors of all seventeen books that refute the *ghulat* (*Al-Radd `ala al-Ghulat*) were Shi'i.²⁹

With the appearance of various factions and the spread of fabricated traditions, there may have been an identity crisis within Shi'ism. By composing biographical works that identified a particular imam's companions, it was hoped that the community's extremist elements would be exposed. This explanation may have been particularly germane to al-Kazim's companions, many of whom had accepted the Waqifi doctrine of his messiahship. Thus, the formation of diverse sects within the community and its resulting fragmentation may have necessitated works that would identify its contemporary and past leaders. It is possibly because of this reason that Shi'i biographers cite titles of works on the virtues of some *rijal* (e.g., *Kitab Manaqib al-Rijal*) that separate these associates from those espousing heretical beliefs.³⁰ This view is corroborated by certain remarks in the biographical dictionaries that identify various figures as belonging to extremist groups. The foregoing discussion suggests that eighth-century Shi'is laid the foundation of biographical literature and that some of their statements were reproduced in later *rijal* works.

Shi'i Biographical Works of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

Most of our information regarding the status of the imams' disciples and their functions in the Shi'i community is based on biographical works that were compiled during the tenth and eleventh centuries. As I have discussed

elsewhere, the compositions of Kashshi, Tusi, and Najashi, the primary Shi`i biographers of this time, are indispensable for assessing the characteristics and structural framework of the biographical literature on the *rijal*.³¹ These texts are also important for constructing a coherent picture of the authority that the *rijal* wielded during the times of the imams.

Although Kashshi's seminal *rijal* work is not extant, Tusi's abridged version of the original text is available.³² A distinctive feature of Kashshi's work is the presence of contradictory reports on a disciple, sometimes from the same imam. His work also includes many reports that link some of the imams' major companions, such as Salman al-Farisi (d. 644-47), Jabir al-Ju`fi (d. 745), and Mufaddal ibn `Umar (d. 796), with extremist groups. Kashshi also cites both laudatory and pejorative remarks, which the imams reportedly made about some of their most eminent disciples, among them Zurara ibn A`yan (d. 767), Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafi (d. 767), and Yunus ibn `Abd al-Rahman (d. 823). These reports are juxtaposed with the social reality of the disciples' often-strained relationship with the imams and the latter's attempts to limit their disciples' authority and restrict their activities. Rarely does Kashshi directly authenticate a person.

Najashi, probably due to the inclusion of contradictory and disparaging remarks about some disciples, considered Kashshi's work to be full of errors because he reported from "weak" transmitters.³³ The details contained in his text make Kashshi's work indispensable for comprehending the construction of and struggle for authority within the Shi`i community. It is also an invaluable source for comprehending the relationship between the imams and the *rijal*, as well as the struggle to legitimize the disciples' claim to authority.

Najashi's work is arguably the most important Shi`i *rijal* work. In his introduction to it, Najashi mentions that he composed it in response to the criticisms leveled by the Shi`is' adversaries, who taunted them for lacking reliable compositions or renowned scholars. In his work, Najashi mentions 1,240 *rijal*, 640 of whom he either praises or considers trustworthy and a further 100 who he considers *da`if* (weak). Apart from examining the lives of more *rijal*, he describes each transmitter in greater detail, citing his ancestry, tribe, and place of residence, and often quotes previous opinions about him. In addition, he lists the books composed by each disciple and, where relevant, the imams from whom he reported hadiths. Due to the depth of information contained on the lives of the *rijal* and clearer enunciations of their veracity or mendacity, Najashi's work has been deemed particularly valuable on these people's status.

Tusi wrote two books on the *rijal* (*Fihrist* and *Rijal*). His *Kitab al-Rijal*, written in the form of a *tabaqat* work, chronologically links the *rijal* with the imams from whom they related traditions. He divides his work into two parts: those who lived during the times of the Prophet and imams and reported from them, and those who lived during their times but did not narrate from them. Occasionally, he cites a person in both groups, a point that provoked great debate in subsequent *rijal* works. Besides indicating when a person lived, Tusi occasionally indicates his factional affiliations and reliability as regards transmitting hadiths. However, as he authenticates only a few transmitters in this work, its value is limited.

In his *Fihrist* (Index), Tusi surveys the lives of many *rijal* and cites their literary contributions. The motivating force behind this work can be discerned from his initial remarks: Tusi states that although indices of various Shi`i works had been compiled, he could not find any index that had made a detailed study of the Shi`i works in various fields. Thus, his aim was merely to fill the lacuna. Although Tusi mentions 888 *rijal* in this book, less than twenty are considered *da`if* and a further twenty are counted as *thiqah* (reliable) or worthy of direct praise. In most cases, he merely cites the titles of their works without commenting on their reliability or mendacity. It is surprising, therefore, that Tusi states in the introduction:

When I mention every author of a composition, I will also indicate what has been said about his reliability (*ta`dil*) and unreliability (*tarjih*) and whether his narrations can be relied upon.³⁴

Having expressed his intention to scrutinize and assess the *rijal* mentioned in his work, he then appraises only a small portion of them. Due to these limitations, the value of his work, as far as evaluating the reliability of the hadith transmitters is concerned, is diminished.

Both Tusi and Najashi outlined the various literary compositions and other functions of the *rijal*. These biographers based their profiles on the discrete components that they found in various genres of literature. The texts they used to define the *rijal*, depict their functions, and evaluate their reliability ranged from previous Shi`i autobiographical fragments and doctrinal works to polemical discourses and juridical compilations. They also used reports contained in various Sunni polemical, biographical, and heresiographical tracts. These accounts were supplemented with oral narratives transmitted by the Shi`i community.

Several other biographical works were composed by the Shi`is around this time. A distinctive feature of Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Nadim's (d. 990-

91) *Fihrist* is that it deals with all branches of knowledge, arts, schools of jurisprudence, and traditions prevalent among Muslims. In fact, he does not restrict himself to citing the works of Muslims, for he lists the compositions of both Muslims and non-Muslims in different fields. However, his treatment of the imams' disciples is very brief, amounting to less than ten pages, and he mentions only a few of the imams' supposed thousands of disciples. Thus, the value of his biographical work is limited.³⁵

The Shi'i view of Ibn al-Nadim's work can be discerned from the following account. According to Muhammad Taqi al-Shustari, Tusi committed many errors in his *Fihrist* because he followed Ibn al-Nadim's accounts, at times quoting his statements *ad verbatim*. Al-Shustari continues that when there is a difference of opinion between Tusi and Najashi, the views of Najashi should be preferred because he did not depend on Ibn al-Nadim's text.³⁶ This factor, according to al-Shustari, made Tusi's text less dependable than that of Najashi.

Abu al-Hasan Ahmad ibn al-Husayn al-Ghada'iri (d. 1020) was a senior contemporary of Tusi and Najashi. Tusi mentions that al-Ghada'iri wrote two books; one was a study of Shi'i authors and another, entitled *Al-Du'afa'*, enumerated weak and untrustworthy narrators. According to Tusi, both of these works were destroyed.³⁷

Why did these tenth- and eleventh-century biographers compose their works? Historically, Kashshi, Tusi, and Najashi lived under the more favorable period of the Buyid dynasty (945-1055). Hence, their sociopolitical conditions were not drastically different. The only exception to this was the later period of Tusi's life, when he had to flee Baghdad due to anti-Shi'i riots. However, nothing indicates that these events affected the composition of his *Kitab al-Rijal* and *Fihrist*.³⁸

As noted above, Najashi's work was compiled in response to critics who taunted the Shi'is for not having a scholarly tradition of past compositions upon which they could rely. Tusi's *Fihrist* was concerned with enumerating previous Shi'i literary works. However, both Tusi and Najashi mention the other contributions of the *rijal*, such as the narration of traditions, polemical disputes, and close association with the imams. The purpose of compiling biographical works in the tenth and eleventh centuries was evidently to compile a list of early Shi'i scholars, as well as their works, and to respond to their critics.

Furthermore, it has to be remembered that many Shi'i juridical works, among them those of al-Kulayni (d. 939-40), Ibn Babuya (d. 991), al-Mufid, and al-Murtada, had been composed just before or during the times of Tusi

and Najashi. The systematization and canonization of Shi`i *fiqhi* works during the time of Tusi and Najashi necessitated a close scrutiny of the *isnads* that often accompanied the legal traditions. This additional factor prompted them to compose their biographical works in which they not only enumerated the hadith transmitters, but also indicated their factional affiliations, thereby distinguishing the reliable *rijal* from those whose traditions were suspect.

Forms of Authentications in the Biographical Literature

A salient feature of Shi`i biographical texts is that a transmitter can be authenticated in two distinct ways: *al-tawthiqat al-khassah* (specified authentication) refers to authenticating one disciple as opposed to *al-tawthiqat al-`ammah* (generalized authentication), in which several people are authenticated at the same time. Most cases of *al-tawthiqat al-khassah* appear in the earlier biographical works. This mode of authentication occurs when a disciple is praised by an imam or other disciples and/or laudatory remarks concerning him are mentioned. The clearest case of this type of authentication arises when an imam directly authenticates a person. However, such a report must also be based on a sound *isnad* and considered reliable (*riwayah mu`tabarah*). A typical example is the following case cited by Kashshi. `Ali ibn al-Musayyab (n.d.) had asked `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (d. 813), the eighth imam:

“I live far away and cannot reach you at all times. From whom can I obtain religious guidance?” Al-Rida is reported to have replied: “From Zakariyya ibn Adam al-Qummi, who is well-trusted on issues that pertain to this and the next world.”³⁹

Besides such authenticating reports from the imams, the problem of a disciple’s reliability was resolved by authenticating statements provided by Kashshi, Najashi, and Tusi. Their appraisals were also seen as embodying the correct evaluation of a reporter. Due to the sources at their disposal, such *rijal* scholars as al-Khu`i and al-Subhani claimed that these biographers could “feel” or “sense” (*hiss*) a transmitter’s reliability (*withaqah*).⁴⁰

The question of feeling the *withaqah* of the *rijal* is also relevant to *al-tawthiqat al-`ammah*, whereby a biographer authenticates several transmitters, provided he clearly pronounces the reliability of the *rijal*. An example of such an evaluation is Najashi’s statement: “The family of Abu Shu`ba

have a house in Kufa and all of them are *thiqah*.”⁴¹ When he considers Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Abi Sara’s veracity, Najashi states: “The people of al-Rawasi (which Muhammad belonged to) are all *thiqah*.”⁴²

It is difficult to assess the criteria employed by Tusi and Najashi in their evaluations, for they do not cite their sources or reasons for their appraisals. They may have based their authentications on erstwhile reports that were transmitted in the aforementioned texts. Apart from such books, they further relied on other concomitant factors (*qara’in*) through which they could sense the status of the *rijal*.

Different types of *qara’in* were possibly available to them:

- The biographers obtained some of their information from their hadith teachers, which was transmitted through direct hearing (*sama`*) of the *tawthiqat*.
- Details concerning the associates’ reliability could have been derived from information prevalent among the *rijal* experts of the time. An appeal is made to the concept of *istishar*, a commonly acknowledged opinion that may not have been documented.
- The authors of the biographical works may have deduced their assessments of certain figures from reports like those transmitted by Kashshi. As will be seen, their subjective inferences from such reports may have engendered differences among them.
- The *qara’in* available to the early scholars also included such other factors as the number of traditions a person reported, whether he belonged to the *ashab al-ijma`*,⁴³ reports from his teachers and students, his retentive powers, and so on.⁴⁴

It is important to comprehend the significance of the *qara’in* and connection to authenticating the people mentioned in Shi`i biographical literature. To be seen as binding, an appraisal had to be based on *qat`* (certitude). Any authentication based on *zann* (probability) was bound to be dismissed, for *zann* could not indicate, with absolute certainty, that the correct appraisal of a transmitter had been established. Since subsequent scholars could not precisely locate the basis of earlier authentications, appealing to *qarinah* allowed them to presume that these earlier appraisals were not based on conjecture (*hads*).

Thus, even if the reports reaching the *mutaqaddimun* (early scholars) did not satisfy the requirements of *qat`*, claiming that the earlier scholars had access to indicators through which they could sense the reliability of the *rijal* made it possible for the Shi`is to remove any possible elements of *zann* in

these evaluations.⁴⁵ Shi`i *rijal* scholars had to resolve the tension between not knowing the basis of the early authentications on the one hand, and the need to prove that these were *hujjah* (binding) on the other. This conflict was resolved by appealing to *qarinah*, which has the indispensable function of removing doubts surrounding a report. Since the earlier scholars purportedly had access to *qara'in*, their statements regarding and authentications of the *rijal* were viewed as binding on posterity.

Contradictions in the *Tarajim*

The discussion on the types of authentication by the likes of Tusi and Najashi raises the question of differences in their evaluations and the possibility that the authenticating process may have included some of their own conjecture. Despite the sources and *qara'in* at their disposal, these biographers often contradicted themselves and differed in their evaluations of a reporter. For example, in his *Rijal*, Tusi states that Salim ibn Mukrim (n.d.) is *da'if*; on another occasion, he states that he is *thiqah*.⁴⁶ Najashi calls the same figure “*thiqah, thiqah*.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Tusi contradicts himself in his appraisal of Sahl ibn Ziyad (n.d.), an important source for Kulayni’s traditions, by considering him *da'if* in his *Fihrist*, but *thiqah* in his *Kitab al-Rijal*.⁴⁸ Al-Mufid also contradicts himself on Muhammad ibn Sinan (d. 835), considering him reliable in one book but *da'if* in another.⁴⁹

The differences between the authentications may have arisen from a biographer’s subjective evaluations and his interpretations of reports on a person. Assessing a particular person’s reliability based on, say, Kashshi’s work could create such differences, because not only does he cite contradictory narrations about a transmitter, but some reports are open to diverse interpretations. Such factors were bound to produce differences in the profiles of some *rijal*, especially when no clear reports regarding their reliability had emerged.

Later scholars like Zayn al-Din ibn `Ali al-Shami (Shahid II - d. 1558) and Muhammad al-Mahdi Bahr al-`Ulum (d. 1797) claimed that whenever Tusi and Najashi differ, Najashi’s evaluation of the transmitter should be preferred.⁵⁰ This is because unlike Tusi, Najashi pronounces clear judgments on the *rijal*. One possible reason for the difference in Najashi’s evaluation is that he was a specialist in this field, whereas Tusi made major contributions in other disciplines as well. This may have contributed to Najashi being more thorough in his work. Other scholars, on the other hand, have stated that when Tusi and Najashi differ, both appraisals negate each other and thus should be considered invalid (*tasaqut*).⁵¹

Contradictions in the *tarajim* (biographical profiles) provided by Tusi and Najashi raise considerable doubts about the reliability of their sources and their basis for authentication. The sources and principles of their authentications have not been explained, a point that, when combined with the contradictions in the *tarajim* of some *rijal*, has led such contemporary *rijal* scholars as Muhsini and al-Ghurayfi to question the validity of their evaluations. Muhsini, for example, asks: “How can we be sure that the bases of their authentications (*usul tawthiqatihim*) are acceptable to us or not? How can we ascertain that Tusi did not depend on *hads* (conjecture based on interpretation of sources) in his appraisals? Is it possible that these authentications were based on *zann*?”⁵² According to Muhsini, he repeatedly posed such questions to al-Khu’i and other *rijal* scholars but never received a satisfactory response.⁵³

The possibility that the authentications were based on a mixture of *hiss* and *hads* (certainty in some cases, conjecture in others) cannot be dismissed. The discussion on *hiss* and *hads* in the early authentications underlines a major problem in Shi`i biographical literature: that of ascertaining if the assessments were based on certainty, since without this factor no authentication can be admitted as authoritatively binding. If based on *zann*, the appraisals would raise serious questions about the reliability of the *rijal* and would exclude their traditions from the juridical manuals, since no reliable link between the imams and the jurists could have been established.⁵⁴

In all probability, since it was impossible to distinguish between *hiss* and *hads* in the earlier texts, all authentications have been assumed to have arisen from *hiss*, unless there was a contradiction in the authentications when various hermeneutics were employed to resolve the tension and idealize the *rijal*. If the possibility of *hads* in the earlier *tawthiqat* is admitted, it would inevitably cast doubt on the reliability of many *rijal* and thus engender discord in the legal works.⁵⁵

Authentications in the Later Biographical Lexica

Authentications by the ancient scholars reached their pinnacle under Tusi. In fact, post-Tusi *rijal* works are only more systematized reproductions of the biographical details collected by the *mutaqaddimun*.⁵⁶ After Tusi, the *tawthiqat* could also be provided by such slightly later scholars as Muntajab al-Din `Ali al-Qummi (d. 1188) and Muhammad ibn `Ali (a.k.a. Ibn al-Shahrashub [d. 1192]). For their evaluations to be considered binding, they

had to have access to the *qara'in* and other sources available to earlier scholars.⁵⁷ As for the evaluations by subsequent *rijal* scholars like Ibn Tawus, Ibn Dawud al-Hilli, (d. 1249-50) and `Allama al-Hilli, their evaluations are seen as arising from *hads* and *ijtihad* (a jurist's independent judgment to infer precepts from revelatory sources) and are therefore not binding upon other jurists.⁵⁸

The *muta'akhhirun* (later scholars) were forced to rely on the remarks made by the *mutaqaddimun* because of their lack of access to the earlier sources and the *qara'in* referred to by the ancient scholars. Due to the sources at their disposal, the *muta'akhhirun* argue that the earlier scholars could feel the *withaqah* of the *rijal*, thereby making their authentications binding for later scholars. The critical factor is access to the earlier indicators and sources through which the transmitters' reliability could be perceived. Thus, later scholars have not been able to significantly ameliorate the assessments made by the *mutaqaddimun*.

Due to the inability of the later scholars to attain *hiss*, the *tawthiqat* in the ancient biographical works assume additional importance, for they represent the standard source of reference on the status of the *rijal*. Henceforth, any authentication of a disciple by the *muta'akhhirun* had to be traced to the earlier works. This fact further supports the view that Tusi marks the culmination of the normative appraisal of the *rijal*. In fact, he can be said to have played a major role in forming a link between the later scholars and the information contained in the early sources, for they frequently refer to his works. Al-Khu'i argues that the chain (*silsilah* [of authentication]) is shorn after Tusi and that most scholars follow (*taqlid*) him in his authentications.⁵⁹

The Rise of Akhbarism and the Compilation of Hadith

To understand why later scholars had to authenticate more hadith transmitters, it is essential to discuss, albeit briefly, the rise and challenge of the Akhbari school of thought. From the times of the imams, the Shi'is had rejected *ijtihad*, which they equated with arbitrary reasoning, because it led to conjecture rather than certitude. Similarly, as I stated earlier, most Shi'i scholars rejected singly transmitted traditions for the same reason.⁶⁰

However, subsequent scholars could not insist on attaining certitude in every legal case that arose, especially as the source of certitude, the Twelfth Imam, was in occultation. In the thirteenth century, the prominent Shi'i jurist

al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (d. 1277) proposed adopting *ijtihad* as an important source of law.⁶¹ By doing so, he was sacrificing certitude and accepting an element of probability in the Shi`i juridical system.

His nephew, `Allama al-Hilli, incorporated newer rational principles into Shi`i jurisprudence. Seeing *ijtihad* as an effort to establish the best probability of truth by using *usuli* rationalist tools and methodology, he legitimized it as a potent source of law and argued that the actions of the Shi`i populace were to be based on the *zann* of the *mujtahid*. In the process, he divided the community into *mujtahidun* and their followers.⁶² The rationalist trend was then adopted by the Shi`i scholars of Jabal `Amil.⁶³

In the seventeenth century, a resurgent Akhbari movement challenged the Shi`i rationalist movement and its reliance on *usul al-fiqh*. The chief proponent of Akhbari ideas, Muhammad Amin al-Astarabadi (d. 1626), attacked the *usulis* for depending on *ijtihad* and applying reason in Shi`i jurisprudence. *Usul al-fiqh*, he claimed, relies on probability and, in the process, sacrifices certitude. Al-Astarabadi also claimed that the *usuli* methodology was responsible for the issuance of conflicting legal opinions, which could not lead to an understanding of the divine intent.⁶⁴ He further argued that the rationalists' dependence on reason had led them to issue rulings and hold positions that went against the imams' traditions on many theological and jurisprudential points.

It has to be remembered that such tension between the rationalist and traditional schools in Shi`ism was not new. Debate over the fundamentalism of *usul* or *akhbar* in deriving juridical decisions had its roots in the theological debates about the priority of reason over revelation. Even during the times of the imams, there were discussions between their close associates about the roles of *`aql* (the authority of human reasoning) and *akhbar* (the authority of revelation) in deriving juridical rulings.⁶⁵ After the Twelfth Imam's occultation, the eminent Shi`i jurist-theologian al-Mufid was very critical of the traditionalists, especially of his own teacher Shaykh al-Saduq, in his *Tashih al-Fiqadat*.⁶⁶ His student, Sharif al-Murtada, even labeled the scholars of traditions in Qum as deviants.⁶⁷

Al-Astarabadi's search for certitude in the derivation of Shi`i law led him to believe that the truth was rooted in the imams' traditions, which, he claimed, provide customary certitude (*yaqin al-`adi*), a form of certitude that the masses rely upon in their daily lives. Anyone with a sufficient knowledge of Arabic and an understanding of the terminology of the imams' statements could have access to their teachings. In essence, this eliminated the need to rely on those *mujtahidun* who based their legal system on probability. Even

the proper understanding of the Qur'an, al-Astarabadi argued, was to be based on the imams' hadith reports.⁶⁸ By repudiating the *usuli* methodology, the Akhbaris were rejecting the Sunnis' juridical system and the conception of religious authority on which it was based.⁶⁹

The spread of Akhbarism in the seventeenth century meant that the imams' lives and sayings became extremely important for the Shi'i populace. The imams became figures of intense devotional attachment, and their statements were seen as reflecting the divine intent. Subsequently, there was a renewed interest in both their lives and the sayings attributed to them. The promulgation of Akhbari ideas also led to the accumulation of massive hadith collections by the likes of Hurr al-'Amili (d. 1688), Mulla Muhsin al-Fayd al-Kashani (d. 1680), and Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi (d. 1699). This emphasis on the imams' hadith reports led to a renewed interest into the status of the hadith reporters and to the need to authenticate more hadith transmitters. This further authentication was contingent upon inferences deduced from statements made by previous *rijal* scholars. As direct authentication was ruled out, later scholars sensed the possibility of indirect *tawthiqat*, which gave them a say in the status of the *rijal* and increased the scope of traditions that could be incorporated into Shi'i juridical works.

The *muta'akhhirun* felt the need for further authentication due to the limited efficacy of the earlier *tawthiqat*. This is because Tusi authenticates only a small portion of the *rijal* mentioned in his *Fihrist*, whereas al-Barqi does not evaluate his transmitters at all. The possibility of authenticating transmitters from Kashshi's work was also circumscribed. Although containing many reports on the *rijal*, his work suffers from contradictory reports on some eminent *rijal*. Moreover, his *tawthiqat* generally take the form of reports on the *rijal*. However, many of these reports' *isnads* are not sound. In fact, most of the early authentications could be based only on Najashi's work. Given these constraints, later scholars undertook their own form of *al-jarh wa al-ta'dil*.

The *muta'akhhirun* traced the general statements made by the *mutaqaddimun* and cited them as proofs for the veracity of thousands of transmitters. This further substantiates my observation that the later scholars have concentrated more on the possible implications of the *tawthiqat* undertaken by the earlier scholars than on making an independent contribution to the assessments of the *rijal*, thus reflecting their inability to attain *hiss*. From the following discussion, it will become clear that the inferences of the *muta'akhhirun* drawn from statements made by the *mutaqaddimun* considerably increased the ambit of reliable transmitters.

The Concept of Mass Authentication

The time of Hurr al-`Amili marks the beginning of discussions about the possible significations of various statements made by the earlier scholars. Several forms of interpretation are used to authenticate thousands of *rijal*, these being further examples of the later form of authentication. An example of this later mass authentication has been inferred from remarks made by Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Qawlawayh (d. 978) in his preface to his *Kamil al-Ziyarat*. The work pertains to the salutations to be recited when visiting (*ziyarat*) the imams' shrines:

We realize we cannot cover all that which has been transmitted from the imams on this subject [the salutations at the shrines], nor on any other issue except that which has been related to us by reliable [transmitters] from our companions. I have not cited a tradition in it [the book] which has been transmitted by reporters who are rarely mentioned (*shudhdhadh*) ...⁷⁰

According to al-`Amili, this statement means that all of the transmitters mentioned in this work are *thiqah*,⁷¹ a view endorsed by al-Khu`i.⁷² Thus, all of the 388 transmitters who appear in Ibn Qawlawayh's work⁷³ are authenticated by this inference. Others, among them Mirza al-Husayn Nuri (d. 1898), construe Ibn Qawlawayh's statement as suggesting that only his teachers are reliable, a point that reduces the number of those authenticated by his statement to thirty-two.⁷⁴

Such inferences from the earlier scholars' statements evince the desire to authenticate more transmitters. By claiming that all persons who feature in Ibn Qawlawayh's works are reliable, a tradition reported by any of them could be admitted into the juridical corpus on the grounds that all of them have been pronounced reliable just by being cited in this work. This may be construed as a radical form of authenticating the *rijal* since, by such deductions, hundreds of them are authenticated and their traditions are considered binding. Behind this form of mass *tawthiqat* lies the desire to admit more traditions into the juridical corpus, even though such interpretations are conspicuously absent in the biographical texts before al-`Amili's time.

The consequences of authenticating all of those who appear in Ibn Qawlawayh's work can be demonstrated in the case of `Abd Allah ibn al-Qasim al-Harithi, whom Najashi classifies as *da`if* and a *ghali* (extremist).⁷⁵ However, al-Khu`i states that Najashi's remark refers to al-Harithi's beliefs, not to his reliability as a hadith transmitter. Moreover, he continues, since al-Harithi is mentioned in Ibn Qawlawayh's work, he is reliable.⁷⁶ Al-Harithi's appearance in this work also negates Najashi's pejorative remarks. Instead of

ruling for *tasaqut* (canceling out due to the contradiction), al-Khu'i rules in al-Harithi's favor. Thus, a transmitter who has been unequivocally deemed "weak" and "extremist" by Najashi is, due to his appearance in this particular work, authenticated.

Similarly, the biographical works do not authenticate Isma'il ibn Murar. However, `Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi (d. 919), who is believed to have cited traditions only from reliable reorters, cited him in his *tafsir*. Due to Isma'il's inclusion in one of al-Qummi's *isnads*, al-Khu'i maintains that he has been authenticated and thus is a reliable transmitter of traditions.⁷⁷ In a reversal of his earlier statement, al-Khu'i subsequently issued a rescript in which, after quoting Ibn Qawlawayh's statement, he states:

After examining the traditions of the book and investigating its *isnads*, it appears that it [the book] contains many traditions – maybe more than a half [of the traditions in the book] – which do not accord with his [Ibn Qawlawayh's] description in his introduction [that the work contains reliable transmitters only]. Moreover, the book contains many traditions whose *isnads* are not complete or which do not culminate in a *ma`sum* (the infallible one). Persons who are not from our companions also occur in the *isnads*. Some figures who are not cited in our biographical works at all are also mentioned. Others who are known to be weak, like Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah al-Mihran, are also cited. Therefore, there is no alternative but to alter [our stated position] and to maintain that only his [Ibn Qawlawayh's] *mashayikh* (teachers), from whom he reports directly (*bi la wasitah*), are reliable.⁷⁸

The ramifications of such a revision in the transmitters' status are felt in the juridical and theological works. As indicated above, there are instances where al-Khu'i authenticates an "extremist" because he appears in one of Ibn Qawlawayh's traditions. An evaluation such as this would, therefore, have to be re-examined in light of the above rescript. The above case is further proof that inferential deduction of the *withaqah* of hundreds of figures, if not verified, could lead to authenticating many liars and figures unknown to Shi'i hadith literature.

In the later works, the earlier assessments are reproduced and the principles of authentication evolve so that more *rijal* are added within the ambit of reliable transmitters. The claim that the traditions of numerous *rijal* are reliable is a later biographical innovation designed, as are many of the later authentications, to authenticate more disciples and justify including their traditions in the juridical manuals.

The key concern of the *tawthiqat*, whether it is in the earlier or later forms, is to raise a person to the level of *thiqah*, a topos in the authentication processes. As later *rijal* scholars could not authenticate the *rijal* directly (since they did not have *hiss*), they authenticated them inferentially. By their interpretations of earlier statements, they verified hundreds of figures. The authenticated *rijal* performed a critical function insofar as the *isnads* in which they appeared linked a jurist to the imams, the authentic source of all knowledge. Stated differently, the authentications linked a jurist, through an authenticated chain, to the original source: the imam. The important *rijal*, therefore, had to be shown as being reliable, if not in the earlier biographical literature then at least in the later one. In a sense, the later mass authentication of the *rijal* is further proof of the later idealization of these people.⁷⁹ As I have discussed elsewhere, this idealization took different forms: resolving contradictions in the profiles, portraying the *rijal* as members of the Prophet's family (hence as a saved sect), or authenticating many figures who up until then had not been considered reliable.⁸⁰

This idealization did not meet with universal approval. The claims of al-`Amili and Nuri were often contested by contemporary scholars like Muh-sini, Subhani, and al-Khu'i. The post-Tusi era shows difference in, rather than agreement on, the *withaqah* of the *rijal*, especially when this was deduced from statements made by the *mutaqaddimun*.

Conclusion

Biographical narratives and the authentications they provide are important, because they construct and identify a normative reading of the historical lives of the *rijal*. The authority of the disciples in Shi'i biographical literature is premised on their characterization as the bearers of Islam's canonical tradition and the embodiment of correct juridical praxis. By citing their functions and appraising their veracity or mendacity, Shi'i biographers construct a sense of "orthodoxy" and express a normative evaluation of the *rijal* in order to insert them into the body of tradition utilized by the biographical culture.

The preceding discussion indicates that the appraisals provided by earlier Shi'i biographers lay claim to an exclusivist hermeneutic, which became sufficiently entrenched to impose an authoritarian construction on the history of those profiled. In selecting and evaluating the *rijal*, tenth- and eleventh-century Shi'i biographers undertook a hermeneutical activity and an interpretive enterprise that became cumulative and evolved into a canon-

ical representation of the disciples. The normative and “standardized” reading of the individuals’ lives was a construction that would be impossible for later scholars to ignore. It has to be remembered that the imams also conferred authority on the *rijal* by appointing them as their deputies in the Shi`i community.⁸¹

The preceding discussion also indicates that post-Tusi Shi`i *rijal* scholars had to deal with various issues. The first was to justify the earlier scholars’ authentications by appealing to *qarinah* and *hiss*. Later scholars also had to tackle the vexing question of contradictions in the *tarajim*. These were never satisfactorily explained, especially as the eighth- and ninth-century texts were not extant. Although the authentications culminated with Tusi, later sources either deduced authentications from their predecessors or introduced new features on the *rijal*, enriching, in the process, Shi`i biographical literature. The later mass authentication of the *rijal* reasserts the disciples’ canonical and often idealized profiles. The reason for such idealization is obvious: they report the traditions upon which the Shi`i legal edifice rests.

Endnotes

1. See Agha Buzurg Tihrani, *Al-Dhari`ah ila Tasanif al-Shi`ah*, 29 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1983), 10:80.
2. Other considerations such as *qara'in* (concomitant factors) and the tradition’s text can also determine the tradition’s acceptability. See the discussion in Liyakatali Takim, “The Rijal of the Shi`i Imams as Depicted in Imami Biographical Literature” (Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 1990, chapter six).
3. For a more detailed discussion on the importance of hadith as a source of law, see Abu al-Qasim al-Khu`i, *Mu`jam Rijal al-Hadith*, 23 volumes (Beirut: Dar al-Zahra, 1980), vol. 1.
4. The term *fihrist* is applied to a bibliographical work that cites names of authors and the titles of their works. Occasionally, historical details of the author and his reliability are also cited.
5. Ahmad ibn `Ali Najashi, *Kitab al-Rijal* (Qum: Maktabat al-Dawari, 1976); Scarcia Amoretti, “‘Ilm al-Ridjal,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, n.d.), 1151. According to al-Barqi, al-Kinani was also a companion of al-Kazim. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi, *Kitab al-Rijal* (Tehran: 1963), 49. Tusi cites a profile of al-Kinani but does not mention his *rijal* work. See Muhammad ibn al-Hasan Tusi, *Kitab al-Fihrist* (Qum: 1983), 104.
6. Najashi, *Rijal*, 26. On al-Faddal’s work, see Tihrani, *Al-Dhari`ah*, 10:89-90.
7. I am grateful to Ayatullah al-Sayyid Fadil Milani for this observation.

8. On `Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Faddal, see Najashi, *Rijal*, 181-82. On al-`Aqiqi, see *ibid.*, 59; and Tusi, *Fihrist*, 24-25. According to Tihrani, Yusuf ibn Mutahhar (Allama) al-Hilli depends on al-`Aqiqi's work in his *Khulasa' al-Aqwal*. See *Al-Dhari`ah*, 10:131.
9. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Lisan al-Mizan* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1988), 2:112. On `Ali ibn al-Hakam, see Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, *Mu`jam Rijal*, 11:394.
10. Muhammad al-Din al-Ghurayfi, *Qawa'id al-Hadith* (Najaf: n.d.), 159. Al-Barqi was a prolific author who was expelled from Qum for reportedly transmitting hadiths from weak sources. See al-Khu'i, *Mu`jam Rijal*, 2:264; Etan Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period," in *Authority and Political Culture*, ed. Said Arjomand (Albany: SUNY, 1988), 39.
11. Ayatullah Sayed `Ali Khamene'i, "Two Principal Works of `Ilm al-Rijal: The *Rijal* of Kashshi and Tusi's *Fihrist*," *Tawhid*, no. 12 (1993): 1 and 150-52. On the list of *rijal* works before the times of Tusi and Najashi, see *ibid.*
12. Although *wounding* is the word's correct literal meaning, it is an incorrect translation of the technical usage: "to present negative information about a transmitter's character) was well developed among the Shi'is. See *ibid.*, 1:42; Asaf Muhsini, *Buhuth fi `Ilm al-Rijal* (Qum: 1983), 130-31. For a list of early Shi'i *rijal* works, see Tihrani, *Al-Dhari`ah*, 10:81 ff.
13. Jurist Muhammad al-Baqir Sadr (d. 1980) defines *usul* as "the study of the collective principles [established] in the extrapolation of a juridical ruling" in his *Durus fi `Ilm al-Usul* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1978), 1:38-39. Besides establishing the collective principles, *usul al-fiqh* sets forth the theory of juristic practice to deduce further laws that cannot be directly derived from the revealed sources.
14. Tusi, *Uddat al-Usul* (Tehran: Sayyid al-Shuhada', 1983), 366.
15. See, for example, Najashi, *Rijal*, 90 and 118.
16. *Ibid.*, 62-63.
17. Muhammad ibn `Umar Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar Ma`rifah al-Rijal*, ed. al-Mustafawi (Mashad: Danishgah Mashad, 1969), 451-52.
18. *Ibid.*, 604. At times, Kashshi also states "I have found [a book] in the handwriting of Jibril ibn Ahmad ..." See *ibid.*, 300 and 393. On the *rijal* works before his time, see Ja`far al-Subhani, *Kulliyat fi `Ilm al-Rijal* (Qum: Markaz Mudiriyat, 1987), 38-39.
19. Wilferd Madelung, "Authority in Twelver Shi'ism in the Absence of the Imam," in *La notion d'autorite au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, ed. George Makdisi et al. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982), 168.
20. Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamite Jurisprudence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 71-72.
21. `Ali ibn al-Husayn (Sharif) al-Murtada, *Al-Dhari`ah ila Usul al-Shari`ah*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Tehran: Daneshgah Tehran, 1983), 2:554-55.

22. In Tusi's view, the Shi`is are the righteous sect. See Tusi, *Uddat*, 290 and 337. Norman Calder, "The Structure of Authority in Imami Shi'i Jurisprudence" (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 1979, 211).
23. Tusi, *Uddat*, 337-38.
24. Asma Afsaruddin, "An Insight into the Hadith Methodology of Jamal al-Din Ahmad b. Tawus," *Der Islam*, no. 72 (1995), 26-27.
25. `Allama al-Hilli, *Mabadi' al-Wusul ila `Ilm al-Usul* (Najaf: Matba`at al-Adab, 1970), 203-05.
26. Madelung, "Authority in Twelver Shi'ism," 168-69.
27. On the diverse activities of the imams' disciples, see Liyakat Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam* (Albany: SUNY, 2006), chapter four.
28. Wadad al-Qadi, "The Development of the Term *Ghulat* in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysaniyya," in *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World: Shi'ism*, ed. Etan Kohlberg (Ashgate: Burlington, 2003), 178-79.
29. *Ibid.*, 183.
30. See, for example, Tusi, *Fihrist*, 144.
31. Takim, *The Heirs*, chapter five.
32. Tusi's abridged version of his text is called *Ikhtiyar Ma`rifah al-Rijal*. For a discussion of Kashshi's work and the notion of authority that emerges from it, see Abdulaziz Sachedina, "The Significance of Kashshi's *Rijal* in Understanding the Early Role of the Shi'ite *Fuqaha*'," in *Studia Islamica in Honorem of Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, eds. R. M. Savory and D. A. Agius (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984 [Papers in Medieval Studies, 6]): 183-206.
33. Najashi, *Rijal*, 263.
34. Tusi, *Fihrist*, introduction.
35. See Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Nadim, *Kitab al-Fihrist*, tr. Bayard Dodge, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1:436-45.
36. Khamene'i, "Two Principal Works of *Ilm al-Rijal*," 169-70.
37. Tusi, *Fihrist*, 1-2.
38. See Liyakat Takim, *The Heirs*, chapter 5.
39. Kashshi, *Ikhtiyar*, 595.
40. *Hiss* connotes the idea of perception by the senses. See Edward Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (Lahore: Islamic Book Center, 1982) 2:563. In biographical literature, *hiss* refers to a biographer's ability to sense the status of a person based on accessible sources.
41. Najashi, *Rijal*, 160.
42. *Ibid.*, 227.
43. When he examines the imams' associates, on three separate occasions Kashshi cites the eminent jurists of the time under the title "Designating the *Fuqaha*' [of the Imams]." He states in each citation that the community had accorded them with [the status of] *fiqh* (*wa inqadu* [or sometimes *inqarru*] *lahum bi al-*

- fiqh*). He clearly implies an acknowledgement or a consensus, reached by the Shi'i community, regarding the eminent jurists' status. According to Ja'far al-Subhani, without these illustrious figures Shi'i *fiqh* would have no foundation upon which to rest. See Subhani, *Kulliyat*, 177.
44. On the possible types of *qara'in* available to the earlier scholars, see Muhsini, *Buhuth*, 100 ff; Subhani, *Kulliyat*, 42; Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah ila Tahsil Masa'il al-Shari'ah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' Turath al-'Arabi, 1965), 20:93.
 45. The history of Shi'i law is usually divided into two periods: that of the ancient or early scholars (*qudama'* or *mutaqaddimun*) and that of the modern or later scholars (*muta'akhhirun*). However, the demarcating line between them has not been uniformly applied. At times, *ancients* is applied to Tusi and his predecessors while those after him are considered *moderns*. In some later sources, *ancients* refers to those who lived before al-Muhaqqiq or al-'Allama, and *moderns* is applied to those who lived after them. See Hossein Modarresi, *An Introduction to Shi'i Law: A Bibliographical Study* (London: Ithaca Press, 1984), 23-24.
 46. 'Allama al-Hilli, *Khulasa' al-Aqwal fi 'Ilm al-Rijal* (Najaf: Matba'at al-Haydariyyah, 1961), 227.
 47. Najashi, *Rijal*, 134.
 48. Tusi, *Fihrist*, 80; Tusi, *Rijal*, 416.
 49. Muhammad al-Mahdi Bahr al-'Ulum, *Al-Fawa'id al-Rijaliyah* (Najaf: 1965), 3:253.
 50. See the discussion on this in Muhammad Jawad al-Na'ini, *Rijal al-Najashi* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1988), 1:16.
 51. Al-Ghurayfi, *Qawa'id al-Hadith*, 178.
 52. Muhsini, *Buhuth*, 50-52.
 53. *Ibid.*, 46.
 54. The concepts of *hiss* and *hads*, although not directly stated, are first alluded to in Hurr al-'Amili's work. In his *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, he insists that the early Shi'is had access to *qara'in* that raised their authentications to the level of *qat'*. Moreover, even if they did not have direct reports concerning a person's reliability, they could discern his status from his books and the vestiges transmitted in the form of narrations from his students and friends. These could all indicate the reliability of a person who has not been explicitly authenticated. Such indicators, which reflect the transmitters' reliability, were restricted to earlier times.
 55. See the discussion pursued by Muhsini, *Buhuth*, 50-53, who questions the validity of the earlier scholars' *tawthiqat*. On the questions of *hiss* and *hads*, see *ibid.*, 21-22 and 11-12; al-Ghurayfi, *Qawa'id*, 189; Subhani, *Kulliyat*, 160; and al-Khu'i, *Mu'jam*, 43-45.
 56. For a list of post-Tusi *rijal* works, see Subhani, *Kulliyat*, 125.
 57. *Ibid.*, 160.

58. Muhammad al-Abtahi, a contemporary *rijal* scholar, rejects this view. He claims that the *mutaqaddimun* were also prone to error. Al-Abtahi maintains that provided the later scholars also had access to sources like those of al-`Aqiqi and Fadl ibn Shadhan, their authentications were binding too. See Muhammad `Ali al-Muwahhidi al-Abtahi, *Tahdhib al-Maqal fi Tanqih Kitab al-Rijal* (Najaf: 1971), 1:102.
59. Al-Khu`i, *Mu`jam*, 1:43-4.
60. Madelung, "Authority in Twelver Shi`ism," 164-65.
61. Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, *Ma`arij al-Usul* (Qum: Al al-Bayt, 1983), 179-94; Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi, *Religious Authority in Shi`ite Islam: From the Office of the Mufti to the Institution of Marja`* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), 29.
62. *Ibid.*, 84. A discussion on the principles of *ijtihad*, as practiced by `Allama Hilli and other Shi`i scholars, is beyond the scope of this paper.
63. *Ibid.*, 30-31.
64. See Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shi`ite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 186.
65. Takim, *The Heirs*, 94-103.
66. Modarresi, *An Introduction*, 40-41.
67. *Ibid.*, 41.
68. Moussavi, *Religious Authority*, 93. See also al-`Amili, *Wasa`il*, 18:129.
69. Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 184.
70. Ibn Qawlawayh, *Kamil al-Ziyarat* (Najaf: 1938), 4.
71. Al-`Amili, *Wasa`il*, 20:68.
72. Al-Khu`i, *Mu`jam*, 1:50.
73. See Subhani, *Kulliyat*, 298.
74. Mirza al-Husayn Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasa`il*, 3 vols. (Tehran: Al-Maktabat al-Islamiyyah, 1964), 3:777.
75. Najashi, *Rijal*, 156.
76. Al-Khu`i, *Mu`jam*, 10:284.
77. *Ibid.*, 3:183. See also Muhsini, *Buhuth*, 65-66, on the controversy surrounding this principle.
78. I am grateful to Ayatullah al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Madadi for sharing this rescript with me.
79. On idealizing the *rijal*, see Liyakatali Takim, "Evolution in the Biographical Profiles of Two Hadith Transmitters," in *Shi`ite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions*, ed. Lynda Clarke (Binghamton, NY: Global, 2001).
80. Takim, *The Heirs*, chapter five.
81. *Ibid.*, chapter three.