

# Historical Books of Shi'ites in Kalam, Hadith and Rijal

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## Kalāmī-Historical Books

Part of the Shi'ite kalāmī works have extended the discussion to history in proportion with its importance to the issue of Imamate. The discussions on the Imamate could generally be divided into two sections. A rational discussion to prove the necessity for the existence of the Imam, and a historical discussion to prove existence of divine designation (nass) and the reason for lack of attention to nass by others as well as criticism of the actions of certain companions of the Prophet in this regard.

The historical part of these works mainly contains strong criticism of the caliphate and the caliphs, a subject that is referred to as matā'in. The noteworthy point in this regard is that some of these works are kalāmī-historical and some are historical-kalāmī, the latter being presented mainly in the framework of hadīth.

An example of the extant works that have been published is the book al-Istighāthah fī Bida' al-Thalāthah by Abī al-Qāsim al-Kufī who is accused of exaggeration. Another is a book written by Sulaym bin al-Qays, which apart from ambiguities with regard to certain narrations, is an early text on the historical defense of the kalāmī beliefs of the Shi'ites within the framework of hadīth on the issue of Imamate.

Mas'udi's Ithbāt al-Wasiyyah, which should definitely be attributed to someone besides the author of Muruj al-Dhahab could also be placed among the hadīthī-historical-kalāmī works. Among the earliest such works is the brief book al-Muqni' fī al-Imāmah by al-Sudābādī (belonging to the village of Sudābād near Rayy) published by Intishārāt-i Islāmī, Qum.

A famous work of this kind is Kitāb al-Shāfī of Sayyid Murtazā which has been published. Shaykh Tusī wrote a new edition of his teacher's book under the title Talkhīs al-Shāfī, which has also been published. Several works of Shaykh Mufīd also contain numerous historical issues especially concerning the hadīth al-Ghadīr and the meaning of wilāyah and related words spoken by the Prophet on the occasion. Shaykh Mufīd's al-Jamal should be considered a historical- kalāmī work rather than a kalāmī-historical one.

This book is part of the purely historical works written by the Shi'ites during the 4th century AH. They form part of the historiographical works concerning a single specific event written by the Shi'ites of Iraq to record subjects in view.

The historical nature of this work cannot be disputed. In fact that Shaykh Mufīd has used his

knowledge of history as an instrument to prove the viewpoints of the Shi'ites in his debates with the 'Uthmānis and Mu'tazalites, and thus made pioneering efforts in combining the school of history with the science of kalām.

Books that have been written on the history of the Shi'ites contain kalāmī-historical discussions. Two works that are quite similar to each other in this regard are Firaq al-Shi'ah by Nowbakhti and al-Maqālāt wa al-Firaq by Sa'ad bin 'Abdullāh al-Ash'arī. These two works contain valuable information on Shi'ite history.

The book al-Ihtijāj by Tabrisī could be placed in the same category. It is a work, which in addition to the debates and argumentations, provides valuable accounts of the life of the Imams ('a). The book al-Tarā'if fī Ma'rifah Mazāhib al-Tawā'if also contains historical information and hadīth in criticism of the rival sects

### **Hadīthī-Historical Books**

Undoubtedly hadīth and history are closely intertwined in Islam. Some times more emphasis has been laid on history and at other times more on hadīth. Many historical issues are found in the book al-kāfī. Among the Shi'ite hadīthī works of the 3rd and 4th centuries AH, as is the case with Sunni books of hadīth, plenty of historical material is found. In al-kāfī, the section dedicated to discussion of the Imamate, also includes historical issues about the lives of the Imams' ('a). Unfortunately, no other early Shi'ite book like al-kāfī has remained extant to throw more light on such issues. Perhaps one can point to Basā'ir al-Darajāt which contains some historical material.

The most outstanding work concerning the life of Imam Rizā ('a) is Shaykh Saduq's masterpiece 'Uyun Akhbār al-Rizā. The life of the 8th Imam ('a) and the situation of the Shi'ites of that period has been fully reflected in this book. Saduq's other works also contain more or less historical ahādīth. His book 'Ilal al-Sharā'i' is among the most outstanding in this regard.

One can also find similar narrations in Saduq's Amālī. Since Saduq lived at a time when the great literary current for compiling voluminous books was about to start, and used in his books most of the early heritage of the Shi'ites - part of which was on the point of being lost forever to posterity - his works are considered quite valuable from an historical point of view.

Three valuable books remain with regard to the ghaybah (occultation) of Imam Mahdī ('a), each of which reflects an important part of the Shi'ite history during the third century. The books Kamāl al-Dīn by Saduq, al-Ghaybah by Shaykh Tusī and al-Ghaybah by Nu'mānī are the most important works in this connection. Shi'ite history in this period is based on these few works

since many other similar works are not extant today. Two examples are the works of the third century scholar Muhammad bin Bahr Rahnī, part of which is mentioned in Kamāl al-Dīn. Among the hadith corpus, mention should be made of the manāqib books. Such works also constitute a kind of historiography. Among the earliest books in this regard is Manāqib al-Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) by Muhammad bin Sulaymān Qāzī al-Kufī who lived in the third century.[1] This book is full of historical information on the characteristics of Prophet Muhammad (S) and the life of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a). Despite the fact that its compiler is a

Zaydi Shi'ite the book contains many narrations from Imam Bāqir ('a). Like the above mentioned work, among the Ismā'ilī Shi'ites one can point to the valuable book Sharh al-Akhhbār by Qāzī Nu'mān bin Muhammad Tamīmī Maghribī (d. 363) who compiled many books and was the most outstanding Ismā'ilī scholar during the Fatimid rule in Egypt and North Africa. This book which has recently been published,[2] deals with the merits of the

Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and is also very rich in historical information. For example the first, second and third sections describe Imam 'Alī's ('a) merits in the words of Prophet Muhammad (S), his companionship of the Prophet and his participation in the Battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq and other expeditions. The fourth section of the book is on the Battle of Jamal and the War of Siffin. The fifth section is continuation of the narrations on Siffin. The sixth section deals with the filthy characteristics of the enemies of Imam 'Alī ('a) especially Mu'āwiyah and his killing of Hujr bin 'Adī.

The seventh to tenth sections describe the virtues of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a). The eleventh section is the continuation of the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt, especially Hadhrat Fātimah ('a). The twelfth section discusses the merits of Imam Hasan ('a), his life and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a).

The thirteenth section is continuation of the sufferings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and also talks about other outstanding members of the Banī Hāshim such as Ja'far ibn Abī Tālib and other descendants of the Prophet's grandfather 'Abd al-Mutallib. This section also focuses on the merits of Imam Zayn al-Abidin ('a) and Imam Muhammad Bāqir ('a).

The fourteenth section is on Imam Sādiq ('a), the history of Shi'ite sects till the time of Mu'tazid al-'Abbāsī, and the appearance of the Fatimid Mahdī. The fifteenth section is one the characteristics of the promised Mahdī and the sixteenth and last section on the characteristics of the Shi'ites. Although it has distinctive Ismā'ilī tendencies, the book is a valuable, comprehensive and accredited work on the history of the Ahl al Bayt ('a), and in view of its antiquity it is considered unique within its own time frame.

If we take into account that Qāzī Nu'mān has relied on al-Tabarī's lost work al-Wilāyah for the

event of Ghadīr, then we will come to know the importance of this work and its contents in view of the books and treatises that were available to him and which are not extant today, although, unfortunately, he does not always mention the sources of his quotations. al-‘Umdah by Ibn Bitrīq is also considered among these works

### **Rijālī-Historical Books**

The Science of rijāl is one of the important branches of Islamic history. The Shi‘ites have given much attention to this particular field by meticulously recording the names of the companions of the Prophet and the Imams (‘a), as well as the chains of narrations. Although most of the early Shi‘ite works of rijāl have not survived, the most important of the extant works is the book al-Ikhtiyār Ma‘irfah al-Rijāl or Rijāl al-Kashshī as it is also known.

It should be considered important from every aspect. Another important work is Rijāl al-Najāshī, which apart from its rijālī details, is a mine of information on Shi‘ite books of the early centuries of Islam as well as Shi‘ite cultural history. During the later eras, such works were not compiled as much as before, but every work compiled in this regard is important from the historical point of view. Among them are such books as al-Fihrist and al-Rijāl by Shaykh Tusī and also the al-Rijāl by ‘Allāmah Hilli.

The valuable book al-Fihrist by Ibn Nadīm should also be considered a fully Shi‘ite work, something that has been duly proved. Ibn Abī Tayy, the Shi‘ite scholar of the seventh century AH (d. 630) wrote a book entitled Tabaqat al-Imāmiyyah which has unfortunately been lost.

Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalānī has quoted from it in his al-Isābah on Yaghus Sahābī. Ibn Abī Tayy also wrote a history which was in chronological order. This work has also been given up for lost. A

few quotations from it are found in Safdī’s Nukat al-Hamiyān on prominent blind figures.<sup>[3]</sup>

We should not overlook the books of ansab or geneology which are also in a way related to history. This science was prevalent among the Shi‘ite and two of the earliest books in this field are al-Mujdī and Sirr al-Silsilah. This branch in the history of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) cannot be overlooked. A list of the scholars related to the late Ayatullāh Sayyid Shihāb al-Dīn Mar’ashī Najafī has been mentioned in the introduction to Lubāb al-Ansāb. In addition to elaborating on the geneologies these books also mention historical issues.

During the Safawid and Qajarid eras several encyclopaedic rijālī works such as Riyāz al-‘Ulamā’ and Rawzāt al-Jannāt were written, giving us more detailed historical information especially in the field of the history of culture

## Notes

- [1]. Refer to *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, *al-Tadwīn al-Tārīkhī*, pp. 208, 209. This book has been researched by ‘Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir Mahmudī and published in three volumes by Majma‘ al-lhyā’ al- Thiqāfah al-Islamiyyah.
- [2]. This book has been published in both Lebanon and Iran. Dār al-Thaqalayn Publishers, Beirut; The Intishārāt-e Islamiyyah edition has been researched by Sayyid Muhammad Husaynī Jalālī.
- [3]. Refer to *al-Dharī‘ah*, vol. 3, page 219