

# The Sh'ites' Share in Regional Historiography

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## Regional Histories from the 4th to 8th Centuries AH

The Sh'ites have also had a share in regional historiography. Among the earliest work in this field, which predates all other books is *Nihl al-'Arab* by Muhammad bin Bahr Rahni-.<sup>[1]</sup> Ya-qut al-Hamawi-, commenting on this book and its author, writes: He has written many works including the one titled *Kita-b Nihl al-'Arab*, in which he has mentioned the dispersion of Arabs in the lands of Islam, noting whether they were Shi'ite, Kharijite or Sunni, but he had good words for the Shi'ites as well as for others. I know about the part of the book which deals with the people of the east, especially of Kirma-n, Si-sta-n, Khura-sa-n and Tabarista-n. Nothing

remains of this book except what Ya-qut al-Hamawi- has written in *Mu'jam al-Bulda-n*. The book *al-Bulda-n wa al Masa-hah* or *al-Tibya-n fi- Ahwa-l al-Bulda-n* as it is also known, was written by Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Kha-lid al-Barqi-. The author of *Ta-ri-kh al-Qum* used this work in the fourth century as a source for his history of Qum (Mudarrisi- has pointed out the quotations from *al-Tibya-n* in *Ta-ri-kh al-Qum*; refer to Bibliography of Works related to Qum, p. 18. Ra-fi'i- has also quoted some passages from it in *al-Tadwi-n*, pp. 44-48). In the printed edition of *Ta-ri-kh al-Qum*, al-Barqi- has been quoted extensively, and in one instance, it says: "In the book *al-Bunya-n al-Barqi-* thus writes...".<sup>[2]</sup> It is possible that *al-Bunya-n* is the misspelling of *al-Bulda-n*. Another possibility is that the author of the bibliographical work *Kashf al-Zunun* has misspelled the book whose actual title is *Kita-b al-Tibya-n fi- Ahwa-l al-Bulda-n*.<sup>[3]</sup> Muhammad bin Kha-lid al-Barqi-, the father of Ahmad al-Barqi- has also been named as the author of *al-Bulda-n wa al Masa-hah*.<sup>[4]</sup> Another book of the same name *al-Bulda-n wa al-Masa-hah* was written in the third century by Abi- Ja'far Muhammad bin 'Abdulla-h bin Ja'far bin Husayn bin Jami' al-Himyari-. When he failed in his efforts to get a copy of Ahmad al-Barqi-'s book in Baghdad, Rayy and Qum, he decided to write a new book in this connection under the same title.<sup>[5]</sup>

Another important book on the history of Qum is the one written in 378 AH by Hasan bin Muhammad bin Hasan al-Qummi-. It is one of the most interesting and academic books of the early period of Islamic civilization. In contrast to the regional historiography of this period which mainly concerns the life of the notables of the cities, this particular work is a scholarly account of the various issues, including civic affairs, related to the city's history. In the introduction, the compiler has divided the book into twenty chapters but unfortunately the

Persian translation of only the fifth chapter is extant. There is no information either on the Arabic version or the rest of the translation.

The Persian translation was completed in 805 AH by Hasan bin 'Ali- bin Hasan bin 'Abd al-Malik Qummi-. Apart from the information given on the city of Qum, the book mentions valuable details concerning the collecting of taxes in those days. In addition the author has elaborated in detail on the Ash'ari- tribe of the city beginning with its place of origin in Yemen and the meeting with Prophet Muhammad (S) in Medina on the advent of Islam till its migration to Iraq and then to Qum. He has also focused on the role of Ash'arite tribesmen in the early Islamic conquests especially the conquest of parts of Iran.

Another valuable but lost book is the Ta-ri-kh Rayy by Muntajab al-Di-n Ibn Babawayh the author of al-Fihrist who lived in the sixth century. Ibn Hajar 'Asqala-ni- in his Lisa-n al-Mi-za-n has quoted accounts of several Shi'ite and Sunni notables from this book, of which 47 have been mentioned by the late Urmawi- in his introduction to the edition of al-Fihrist published by the Ayatulla-h Mar'ashi- Najafi- Library, Qum (pp. 11-16). Ta-ri-kh Rayy was also the title of a historical book written by Abu Sa'i-d Mansur bin Husayn Abi- the author of the valuable book Nathr al-Dur.[6] Another important book is the Ta-ri-kh Tabaristan of Ibn Isfandiya-r who lived in the 6th century AH. It is considered the most important work on the history of Tabarista-n by a Shi'ite historian. Mention should also be made of the Ta-ri-kh Ruya-n of Mawla-na-Awliya-' Allah Amuli-. It is a precious work on regional history in which the author has

mentioned part of the historical viewpoints of the Shi'ites in the days of the Imams ('a). Arabic and Persian Works of 'Twelver Sunnis' on the Twelve Imams ('a) from the 6th to the 10th Centuries From among the Sunnis, several scholars for various reasons, have written books on the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a). This is apart from those Sunni scholars who wrote books on the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in general and whose works have been introduced by Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azi-z Taba-taba-'i- in his series of articles entitled Ahl al-Bayt fi al-Maktabah al-'Arabiyyah in the quarterly magazine Tura-thana-. The term 'Twelver Imami-Sunnis' can be safely used to describe this group of authors. The first book in this regard is the Tadhkirah al-Khawa-ss of Yusuf bin Farghali- bin 'Abdulla-h al-Baghdadi- Sibt Abi- al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahma-n bin al-Jawzi- (581-654). The author has dwelt on the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and given an account of the lives and merits of all the Twelve Imams ('a). Among the books which no longer exist Kita-b al-Al of Ibn Kha-lawayh (d. 370) must have been a similar

work as could be gleaned from its passages quoted by Irbili- in his Kashf al-Ghummah. One of the outstanding figures of this trend among the Sunnis was Kama-l al-Di-n Muhammad bin Talhah Sha-fi'i- (d. 652) the author of the renowned book Mata-lib al-Su'ul fi- Mana-qib

Al-i al-Rasul. Irbili- has praised him for his excellent account of the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a). 'Abd al-'Azi-z bin Muhammad known as Ibn Akhzar Guna-ba-di- (d. 611) in his book Ma'a-lim al-'Itrah al-Nabawiyyah wa Ma'a-rif Ahl al-Bayt al-Fa-timiyyah al-'Alawiyyah has written on the lives of only eleven of the Twelve Imams ('a) and for this reason he has been criticised by 'Ali- bin 'Isa- Irbili-.<sup>[7]</sup>

Two other important examples of Sunni books are al-Fusul al-Muhimmah fi- Ma'rifah Ahwa-l al-A'immah by Ibn Sabba-gh Ma-liki- (d. 855) and al-Shadhara-t al-Dhahabiyyah fi- Tara-jim al-A'immah al-Ithna- 'Ashariyyah 'ind al-Ima-miyyah by Shams al-Di-n Muhammad bin Tulun (d. 953). Hamdulla-h Mustawfi- the author of Nuzhat al-Qulub in his historical account titled Ta-ri-kh-i Guzi-dah, begins with the history of the first three caliphs and then elaborates on the life and virtues of Ami-r al-Mu'mini-n Imam 'Ali- ibn Abi- Ta-lib ('a). In continuation, on page 198 he writes about the life of Imam Hasan ('a) using the phrase Ami-r al- Mu'mini-n wa Hafi-d Rasul Rabb al-'Alami-n Imam al-Mujtaba-, Hasan bin 'Ali- al-Murtaza- ('a) which means "Commander of the Faithful, Grandson of the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds, the Chosen Imam, Hasan the son of 'Ali- the Pleased." The thirtieth chapter of the thirtieth section deals with the lives of the other Imams. Mustawfi- writes: "Concerning the rest of Imams, the pleasure of Allah be upon them all, they were the proof of Allah for mankind. The period of their imamate, starting from 4th of Safar 49 AH till Ramaza-n 264, was 215 years and 7 months. The Imams did not rule as caliphs, but since they were deserving (to be caliphs), the benediction of their status travels like perfume on the road of epitome to bring proof." This discussion continues till the account of the life of the Imam of the Age ('a).<sup>[8]</sup>

Another important work is Fasl al-Khita-b by Khwa-jah Muhammad Pa-rsa- who lived in the ninth century AH. Despite his insistence on being a Sunni and even his strong stances against the Rafidites, he has written about the lives of the Imams ('a). This part of the book has been published in volume 4 of the series of books titled Islamic Heritage of Iran. The author of Rawza-t al-Jina-n wa Janna-t al Jina-n, Darwi-sh Husayn Karbala-'i- (10th century AH) has also dedicated a lengthy section in his book on the lives of the Imams ('a). This book has been published.

Among the outstanding works of this nature is the valuable book Wasi-lah al-Kha-dim ila- al-Makhdum dar Sharh Salawa-t Cha-hardah Ma'sum by Fazlulla-h bin Ruzbaha-n Khunji- (d. 927) who is famous for his antagonism towards the Shi'ites and especially the Safawid dynasty. This is an exclusive book on the lives of the Fourteen Infallibles.<sup>[9]</sup> Kunh al-Akhba-r is the title of a book on the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a) and was compiled in the 10th century AH in the Ottoman realm.<sup>[10]</sup> Even Ibn Hajar Haythami- who wrote al-Sawa-'iq al-Muhriqah in

refutation of what he called the beliefs of the Rafidites, has devoted the whole book to the lives and merits of the Twelve Imams ('a). One of the most important figures in this regard is Mulla-Husayn Ka-shifi- who in his book *Rawzah al-Shuhada-*' has written a brief account of the lives of the Prophets and the Twelve Imams ('a) as well as issues concerning mourning for them. The most detailed section of this book is dedicated to Imam Husayn ('a). Another noteworthy book by this particular group of Sunnis is *Kama-l al-Di-n Khwa-razmi-'s al-Maqsad al-Aqsa-*, .(which in addition to the lives of the caliphs gives an account of the Twelve Imams ('a

### **Persian Works by Imamis from the 7th till 10th Centuries**

Few Persian works written by the Imami- Shi'ites during the 7th-10th centuries AH have survived today. However, whatever extant literature of this type is available it is worth full consideration. The invaluable work entitled *Naqz* by 'Abd al-Jali-l Qazvi-ni- Ra-zi- is a kala-mi--historical book written in defence of Shi'ites as a refutation of a work written against the Shi'ites. This important work includes exclusive information from the sixth century AH especially on the Shi'ites, their cultural situation and the political circumstances of the time. In this book the author also mentions that he has written a book on *hadi-th ifk*<sup>[11]</sup> in defence of 'Ayishah. He mentions this work in order to say that the Shi'ites do not insult the wives of Prophet Muhammad (S) as alleged.

Three works have been compiled by a very active Shi'ite writer of the late 7th century AH which are all of kala-mi--historical nature. 'Ima-d al-Di-n Tabari- the author of *Ka-mil Baha-'i-*, *Mana-qib al-Ta-hiri-n* and *Tuhfat al-Abra-r* takes a kala-mi--historical look at important Shi-'ah issues and occasionally gives information on the times they were written. The voluminous book *Ahsan al-Kiba-r fi- Ma'rifat al-A'immah al-Abra-r* by Sayyid Muhammad bin Abi- Zayd bin 'Arabsha-h Wara-mi-ni- on the lives of the Imams was written in the year 740 AH. Several copies of this work are found including the manuscript in the Ayatulla-h Mar'ashi- Library. The summary of this book by 'Ali- bin Hasan Zawa-reh'i- titled *Lawa-mi' al-Anwa-r* is also available.

The book *Ra-mesh Afza--ye Al-i Muhammad* by Muhammad bin Husayn Muhtasib is a ten-volume work on the history of the Prophets and Imams ('a). *Muntajab al-Di-n Ibn Ba-bawayh* had seen the book and studied part of it under the author.<sup>[12]</sup> Two quotations from it are also mentioned in the *Mana-qib* of Ibn Shahr Ashub, one of which concerns the life of Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba ('a) and the other on the knowledge of Imam Sa-di-q ('a).<sup>[13]</sup> *Muntajab al-Di-n* has mentioned this book in *al-Fihrist* but no trace has been found of it after the 8th century. *Maba-hij al-Muhaj fi- Mana-hij al-Hujaj* is the work of Qutb al-Di-n Kayzari- the outstanding Shi'ite writer who most probably lived in the sixth century AH. This book which is in Arabic was

translated into Persian by Hasan bin Husayn Shi-'i- Sabziwa-ri- in the eighth century under the  
 tllte Bahjat al-Maba-hij.  
 He presented this translation to Khwa-jah Niza-m al-Di-n Yahya- bin Shams al-Di-n who ruled  
 in Khura-sa-n as one of the commanders of the Sarbeda-ra-n movement from 753-759 AH.  
 Bahjat al-Maba-hij was rendered into rhyme during the 10th century AH by the poet Hayrati-  
 Tuni- of Ka-sha-n. Hasan Shi-'i- Sabziwa-ri- is also the author of Ra-hat al-Arwa-h wa Munis  
 al-Ashba-h, a book which devotes itself to the life of Prophet Muhammad (S) and his Ahl al-  
 Bayt ('a). Copies of this work are available.[14]

There is a work titled Ta-ri-kh-i Muhammadi-, or Ta-ri-kh-i Rashi-di- as it is also known. This  
 book has also been mentioned by two other names: Ta-ri-kh-i Dawa-zdah Ima-m or Fihrist-i  
 A'immah. The description of this book in the library catalogue says: "On the dates of the birth  
 of the Prophet and the Imams as well as their places of birth, their agnomen, titles, geneology  
 and resting place." The manuscript of this work is in the Tabri-z National Library, number 3626  
 and dated 20th of Dhi- al-Qa'dah 819 AH.[15] The author of this book is Mulla- Hasan Ka-shi-  
 , who was close to Sulta-n Muhammad Khoda--Bandah and played an important role in the  
 Tashayyu' of that era. He wrote this book in Hillah and Baghdad in the year 708 AH when he  
 was sixty years old.[16] A book under the title Ta-ri-kh-i 'lrat was also compiled in the year  
 803 in Aleppo, Syria, and has recently been published by the late Da-neshpazhuh.[17]

Among the most detailed works on the early history of Islam by Persian-speaking Shi'ites is  
 Nuzhat al-Kira-m wa Busta-n al -'Awa-m, written by Jama-l al-Di-n Murtaza- Muhammad bin  
 Husayn bin Hasan al-Ra-zi- who lived in the late sixth and early seventh century AH. This two-  
 volume work has recently been researched and published by Muhammad Shi-rwa-ni-. The  
 book contains narrations on the characteristics and biography of Prophet Muhammad (S) until  
 the twenty-first chapter. After that until the 30th chapter of the first volume, the author writes  
 about Abi- Bakr and other topics. The second volume of the book till the sixtieth chapter  
 focuses on the miracles of the 14 Infallibles till Imam Mahdi- (may Allah hasten his  
 reappearance). This work along with the book Ahsan al-Kiba-r should be considered the most  
 comprehensive Shi'ite work in Persian written in the medieval period of Iranian history since  
 the advent of Islam. It is worth noting that this book despite being in Persian, drew the  
 attention of Ibn Ta-wus who asked it to be translated into Arabic in view of its importance. In  
 one case he has quoted some topics of this book in his own work Faraj al-Mahmum.[18] A  
 maqtal written in Persian verse by Abu al-Mafa-khir al-Ra-zi- in the 6th century, was used as a  
 .-source for Rawza-h al-Shuhada-' by Mulla- Husayn Ka-shifi

**Notes:**

- [1] Mu'jam al-Udaba-, vol. 18, p. 31 al-Wa-fi- bi al-Wafaya-t, vol. 2, p. 244; al-Dhari-'ah, vol. 24, p. 82.
- [2] Ta-ri-kh Qum, p. 56.
- [3] Refer to al-Dhari-'ah, vol. 3, pp. 145 under the letter Shi-n 497.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Riya-l al-Naja-shi-, p. 355.
- [6] Al-Dhari-'ah, vol. 3, p. 254.
- [7] Kashf al-Ghummah, vol. 2, p. 306. It seems that nothing has remained from the book Ma'a-lim, although parts of it have been mentioned by Irbili-; refer to Kashf al-Ghummah, p. 121.
- [8] Ta-ri-kh-e Guzi-dah, p. 207.
- [9] This book was published with the efforts of the writer of this article (Rasul Ja'fariya-n) by the Ayatulla-h Mar'ashi- Library, Qum. The new edition of this book, after due research on the basis of a newly discovered manuscript, has been published by Ansa-riya-n Publishers, Qum.
- [10] Refer to the Persian quarterly, Nashr-e Da-nesh, 14th year of publication (1376 SH, month of Esfand (Feb.-March, 1998), p. 58.
- [11] Kita-b al-Naqz, pp. 115, 295.
- [12] Muntajab al-Di-n, al-Fihrist, p. 108.
- [13] Refer to Ta'li-qat al-Fihrist, Muntajab al-Di-n, published by Urmawi-, pp. 435, the letter Shi-n, p. 394.
- [14] Ibid, p. 785.
- [15] Munzawi-, 'Ali- Naqi-, List of Persian Manuscripts, p. 2704
- [16] Storey, Persian Literature, p. 899.
- [17] Refer to the Introduction in Busta-n al-Kira-m, p. 15, where the late Da-neshpazhuh has given a account of Arabic and Persian on the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) written by both the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. Unfortunately this information is not so complete.
- [18] Kohlberg, Etan, A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work - Ibn Ta-wus & His Library, p. 306