

Recognizing the Early Shiite Hadith Schools of Khorasan and the Quality of their Interaction with Other Shiite Hadith schools

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Introductin

Hadīth schools or scholarly circles, meaning groups of scholars engaged in the study of Hadīth based on specific methodological principles, have been identifiable from around the 3rd century AH (9th century CE) onwards in both the eastern and western parts of the Islamic world, including the region of Khorasan. In fact, Khorasan, which has always held significant historical and cultural importance, became a major scientific hub in the eastern Islamic world after the arrival of Islam, and both Sunni and Shiite Hadīth schools were formed there. The Shiite Hadīth schools were established following the presence of Imam Rīdā (as) in Khorasan in 200 AH, through the efforts of the Imam's companions and followers. Indeed, al-Faḍl ibn Shādhān (d. 260 / 873) and Muḥammad ibn Ma'sūd al-'Ayyāshī (d. 320/ 932) founded strong Shiite Hadīth schools in Nishapur and Samarkand, respectively. This article introduces the key scholars and elucidates the foundational principles of these early schools, as well as examining how they interacted with other Shiite Hadīth schools.

Materials and Methods

The research employs a library-based method and a historical-analytical approach. The sources and materials of this research are historical documents and books, biographical works, bibliographies, and early hadith sources. In fact, the history and geography of the Khorasan region, as the most important cultural center of Greater Iran, have been studied in Classical sources such as *Aḥsan al-Taqāṣīm fī Ma'rīfat al-Aqālīm* by Al-Maqdisī, *Al-Buldān* by Ya'qūbī, *Al-'Ibar* by Ibn Khaldūn, and *Futūh al-Buldān* by Al-Baladhurī, covering both the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic eras. On the other hand, the hadith scholars of Khorasan have been identified through early biographical works such as *Ikhtiyār Ma'rīfat al-Rijāl* (Rijāl al-Kashshī) and *Al-Rijāl* by Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī. The hadiths of Ibn Shādhān and 'Ayyāshī, the two figures under study, have been examined from books such as *Man Lā Yahdūruhu al-Faqīh* by Ibn Bābawayh and *al-Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī* by 'Ayyāshī. Furthermore, various historical, hadith, and encyclopedic sources on Shi'a hadith schools have been examined.

Results and Findings

The term "Hadith School" is a modern concept in the science of Hadith studies that originates from the perspectives of Joseph Schacht. In essence, a Hadith school refers to a specific discourse or tradition of Hadith established by a master of Hadith and continued by his students and followers. The most important early Shiite Hadith schools in Khorasan are associated with Faḍl ibn Shādhān al-Nīshābūrī and Muhammad al-'Ayyāshī in Samarkand. Faḍl ibn Shādhān was a prominent Shiite figure in Khorasan, and some consider him to have been a student of Imam al-Jawad, as well as Imam al-Hadi and Imam al-'Askari (as). Many of Faḍl ibn Shādhān's teachers were among the "Companions of Consensus" (Aṣḥāb al-Ijmā'), whose knowledge and jurisprudential expertise are confirmed according to the principles of Shiite biographical evaluation (Ilm al-Rijal), and the traditions transmitted from them are considered reliable. In any case, Ibn Shādhān's school is very close to the Hadith school of Baghdad. It is crucial to note that Baghdad served as a hub of rationalism in Shiism, and even the Hadith school of Baghdad adhered to a rationalist approach. In fact, Ibn Shādhān was a student of both Muhammad ibn Abī 'Umayr and Yūnus ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān and he made scholarly trips to Kufa and Baghdad. Ibn Shādhān appears in the chains of transmission (isnād) of about 775 Shiite traditions. Najashi listed 180 titles and Kashshī enumerated 160 titles of his works. None of these works have reached us. According to Kashshī, during the rule of Abdullāh ibn Tāhir over Khorasan (214-230 AH), Faḍl ibn Shādhān was subjected to an inquisition (taftīsh al-'aqā'id) due to his Shiite beliefs, was exiled from Nishapur, and while fleeing from the Kharijites, he fell ill and subsequently passed away. Muhammad ibn Maṣ'ud al-'Ayyāshī al-Samarqāndī was also a student of Ibn Shādhān's school, and Shiite biographers consider him trustworthy and of high status. Al-'Ayyāshī, who was previously a Sunni Muslim converted to Shiite and founded Hadith school of Samarkand. 'Ayyāshī was a prolific and highly productive scholar. Sheikh Ṭūsī has mentioned approximately 200 works by him, and Ibn Nadīm has listed 208 of his works. However, Najashi, in his list, has named about 160 of 'Ayyāshī's books, some of which are not mentioned in Ibn Nadīm's or Ṭūsī's lists. Rationalism, attention to the conformity of Hadith with the Quran, combating the beliefs of deviant sects such as the Ghulat, and explaining Shiite theological and jurisprudential beliefs are among the characteristics of the Hadith schools of Ibn Shādhān and al-'Ayyāshī. It should be noted that the masters of the Qom School also strictly avoided narrating hadiths from the exaggerators (ghulāt).

Conclusion

1. Khorasan, with its significant political, economic, and cultural characteristics, from the second half of the first century AH, more or less hosted Shiites who had grown weary of the oppression of the caliphs.
2. The presence of Imam Reza (as) in Khorasan in the year 200 AH effectively paved the way for the expansion and prevalence of Shiite hadith. In fact, the emergence of Shiite hadith schools in Khorasan, where great Sunni scholars such as Bukhari, Muslim ibn Hajjaj Nīshābūrī, and Tirmidhi lived, is considered a turning point in the history of Shiite hadith.

3. Faḍl ibn Shādhān al-Nishapuri and Muhammad ibn Mas'ud al-'Ayyāshī, despite enduring governmental pressures and after numerous scholarly journeys to Baghdad, Kufa, and Qom, and studying under Shiite hadith masters, established powerful schools of hadith in Nishapur and Samarkand.
4. Rationalism and attention to theological issues, the necessity of a hadith's conformity with the Quran, the non-transmission of hadiths from exaggerators (ghulat), and the extensive presentation of ethical and jurisprudential hadiths are among the characteristics of these Shiite hadith schools in Khorasan. These characteristics are, to some extent, shared with the hadith schools of Baghdad and Qom.

Keywords: Khorasan, Hadith school, Imam Rīḍā (as), Shia, Fazl bin Shādhān, Ayashshī.