

## The Influence of Ibn Nūḥ al-Sīrāfī on Shia Hadith

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### Introduction

The 4th and 5th centuries AH were pivotal for the formation of core Shia hadith collections. Identifying the sources of these works, such as al-Najāshī's al-Rijāl, is crucial for understanding the transmission of traditions from the era of the Imams to the period of major compilation. This study focuses on Ibn Nūḥ al-Sīrāfī, a 4th-century scholar who was al-Najāshī's most influential teacher in the chains of Isnad (ṭuruq) for his biographical work. Despite his significance, direct historical data about him is scarce. This research employs a descriptive-analytical method to reconstruct his scholarly profile by examining the limited biographical information, the titles of his lost works, and the traditions from them preserved in later sources like al-Najāshī's al-Rijāl, al-Ṭūsī's al-Ghaybah, and the works of Ibn Ṭāwūs. The primary questions addressed are the dimensions of his knowledge and influence, and the methodology for analyzing a figure from this early period whose works are largely lost.

### Materials and Methods

This research is based on a historical analysis of primary sources from the 4th to the 7th centuries AH. The main methodological approach involves tracing and collecting all references to Ibn Nūḥ in classical Shia rijāl and hadith literature. Key sources include the Rijāl books of al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī, which provide biographical sketches and lists of his works. al-Ṭūsī's al-Ghaybah is a central resource, as it contains approximately 70 traditions explicitly cited from Ibn Nūḥ's book on the Four Deputies of the 12th Imam. The works of Ibn Ṭāwūs were also analyzed for isolated transmissions from Ibn Nūḥ's works. The study involved a thematic analysis of the content of these transmitted reports to deduce his scholarly interests and methodologies. Furthermore, a comparative historical analysis was conducted by placing his known book titles and the subjects of his transmitted reports within the context of 4th-century Shia scholarship, particularly in the fields of fiqh (jurisprudence) and 'ilm al-rijāl (biographical evaluation). This involved comparing his approach to contemporaneous scholars like al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq to identify his position within the "traditionist" (ahl al-Ḥadīth) current of Imami scholarship.

## Results and Findings

The findings reveal Ibn Nūḥ as a multifaceted scholar whose influence extended beyond his primary recognition as a biographer.

**Biographical Expertise:** He was a master of 'ilm al-rijāl, praised by al-Najāshī (his student) and al-Ṭūsī as "trustworthy" (thiqah), "precise" (mutqan), and "knowledgeable in hadith" (basīr bi al-ḥadīth). He authored at least two biographical works: al-Ziyādāt, a significant expansion on Ibn 'Uqdah's book on the companions of Imam al-Šādiq (AS), and al-Maṣābīḥ, a general biographical dictionary of the transmitters from all the Imams.

**Jurisprudential Scholarship:** Contrary to being solely a traditionist, he was also a jurist (faqīh). He authored al-Qādī bayn al-Ḥadīthayn al-Mukhtalifayn, a work on reconciling conflicting hadiths arranged according to jurisprudential chapters, indicating a systematic approach to fiqh. Another work, al-Ta'qīb wa al-Ta'fīr, focused on the post-prayer supererogatory acts, specifically the "Prostration of Thanksgiving" (sajdat al-shukr) and "Pressing the face on the soil" (ta'fīr). Analysis of this topic shows his work engaged with a highly debated issue in 4th-century fiqh, where some early traditions suggested the obligation of these acts, a view that later shifted to one of strong recommendation.

**Transmission of Hadith on the Occultation:** His most substantial surviving contribution is through his book Akhlbār al-Wukalā' al-Arba'ah (Reports of the Four Deputies), extensively quoted in al-Ṭūsī's al-Ghaybah. These reports provide detailed historical accounts of the lives, activities, and credentials of the Four Deputies of the 12th Imam during the Minor Occultation. His primary source was Abū Naṣr Hibat Allāh al-Kātib, a grandson of the second Deputy, giving him unique access to firsthand accounts.

**Manuscript Expertise:** The study confirms he was a skilled manuscript critic (nussākhah) who had access to ancient primary texts (uṣūl). He frequently verified and cited from old manuscripts he personally examined, some dating back to the early 4th century AH, which formed the basis for his accurate transmissions to later scholars like al-Najāshī.

## Conclusion

Ibn Nūḥ al-Sīrāfi was a versatile and influential scholar in 4th-century Shiaism, excelling in hadith transmission, biographical evaluation, and jurisprudence. He served as a critical link, preserving and transmitting vital historical and hadith materials from earlier sources to the seminal scholars of the 5th century, most notably al-Najāshī. His jurisprudential works, written in the "traditionist" (ma'thūr) style characteristic of his era, engaged with complex legal debates. Despite some theological criticisms from al-Ṭūsī, which may have related to jurisprudential disagreements like the ruling on ta'fīr, his authority in hadith and history remained unquestioned. Ultimately, reconstructing his profile demonstrates that he was not merely a biographer but a comprehensive scholar whose erudition in fiqh, ḥadīth, and rijāl made him a key node in the intellectual network that shaped classical Shia scholarship.

**Keywords:** Ibn Nūḥ al-Sīrāfi, History of Shia Hadith, Biographical Literature, Tradition-based Jurisprudence, 4th-Century Scholars.