

Between Qum and Qayrawān: Unearthing early Shii *ḥadīth* sources*

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Abstract

In this article, I develop and test a new methodology of unearthing early Shii *ḥadīth* sources that served as the basis for the later collections of the fourth/tenth century. This method, besides answering the question of historicity, enables us to understand the dissemination of texts across times and regions. As a case-study, I examine what is alleged to have been the first Shii legal *ḥadīth* collection, a work attributed to ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī (d. c. 148/765). By comparing the reports transmitted on the authority of al-Ḥalabī in the Twelver *ḥadīth* compendium originating in Qum, al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfī*, and an Ismaili legal *ḥadīth* composition, al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s *al-Īḍāh*, composed in Qayrawān, I demonstrate that both works trace their material to an earlier Kūfan source of the second/eighth century, with each work drawing on the same material independently. A cross-regional textual analysis of later *ḥadīth* compendia, in this case composed by contemporaneous scholars, residing in different regions, affiliated to dissimilar religious persuasions, reveals the transmission of identical material; this finding contributes to our understanding of both geographical transmission of early sources and compositional arrangements of the later *ḥadīth* compendia.

Keywords: Shii *ḥadīth*, Twelver tradition, Ismaili tradition, Geographical transmission, Al-Ḥalabī, Al-Kulaynī, Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān

Introduction

In academic research to date, limited attention has been paid to the origins and development of Shii *ḥadīth*. It stands distinct from its Sunni counterpart in three different respects: theological extension, geographical location, and mode of

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transmission.¹ Regarding theological extension, the cosmic role assigned to the Imams in Shii theology facilitated the theorization of their religious authority; and hence the reports that recorded their sayings and practices also qualified as *ḥadīth*. The reports attributed to the Imams, Shiites assert, enjoy the same standing and force as those that have been attributed to the Prophet,² though the former, as a mark of distinction, is occasionally referred to as *akhbār* (reports).³ In terms of geography, the Imams continued living in Medina but their followership largely consisted of Kūfans. The Shii *ḥadīth* literature, therefore, in case of its rightful attribution to the Imams, is a confluence of Medinese legal tradition, in which the Imams participated, and Kūfan legal thought, in which their companions operated. The transmission of material in early Shii *ḥadīth* collections is believed to have been predominantly through written records: a *ḥadīth*'s *isnād*, therefore, reflects, at least at some stage, the transmission chain of a written document.⁴ These early documents, after having served

- 1 For a general overview on Shii *ḥadīth*, see Etan Kohlberg, "Introduction", 165–80 in Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (eds), *The Study of Shi'ī Islam: History, Theology and Law* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).
- 2 For one such claim, see Twelver sources such as Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī and Muḥammad Ākhūndī (Tehran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 1407/1986), 1: 53. Ibn Ṭāwūs, alluding to these narrations, states, in generic terms, that whenever a *ḥadīth* is transmitted on the authority of Imam 'Alī, it should be considered as it was from the Prophet. See 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Iqbāl bi al-a'māl al-ḥasana*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī al-Iṣfahānī (Qum: Daftar-i tablighāt-i islāmī, 1376 Sh./1997), 1: 29. For Ismaili sources, see al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *al-Manāqib wa al-mathālib*, ed. Mājīd b. Aḥmad al-'Atīyya (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'alamī li al-maṭbū'āt, 1423/2002), 327; al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Kitāb ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib*, ed. and tr. Devin J. Stewart (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 227–9.
- 3 Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī 'ilm al-dirāya*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Jalālī (Qum: Manshūrāt ḍiyā' al-Fayrūzābādī, 1390 Sh./2011), 6–7; Robert Gleave, "Between ḥadīth and fiqh: the 'canonical' imāmī collections of *Akhbār*", *Islamic Law and Society* 8/3, 2001, 352.
- 4 For the purposes of this article, I have classified Shii *ḥadīth* collections into "early" and "later" sources. By the former, I refer to those collections which are believed to have been composed during the times of the Imams, i.e. before the end of lesser occultation (260/874). The collections of this period include, but are not limited to, *uṣūl* (foundational collections), *jawāmi'* (comprehensive collections), *nawādir* (anthologies of miscellaneous reports), *muṣannaḥāt* (thematically arranged collections), *mubawwabs* (topically arranged collections), among others. A clear distinction between these genres is yet to be made, for often they are used inconsistently and interchangeably, referring to early Shii *ḥadīth* or *ḥadīth*-based works. It is evident, however, that not all of these sources enjoyed the same status as *uṣūl* in serving as the primary source for the early *ḥadīth* material. They are all grouped together, it should be noted, because they share the characteristic of being composed before the end of lesser occultation. By later, I refer to the larger organized collections of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries. These collections, in the Twelver context, collectively came to be known as *al-uṣūl al-arba'a* (The Four Foundational Collections) around 896/1491 or *al-kutub al-arba'a* (The Four Books) in 950/1543. For various titles used for early sources, see Etan Kohlberg, "Al-Uṣūl al-Arba' umi'a", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10, 1987, 128–66, reproduced with minor revisions in Etan Kohlberg, *In Praise of the Few: Studies in Shi'ī Thought and History*, ed. Amin Ehteshami (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 403–38; Kohlberg, "Introduction", 166; Hossein Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi'ite Literature* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), xiv. For the collective designation of "The Four Books", see Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'ī, *Kāshifāt al-ḥāl 'an aḥwāl*

as key sources and been absorbed by the more developed, refined, elaborate and thematically arranged larger collections, fell into disuse or were lost. Unearthing these early sources and examining their relationship with the later *ḥadīth* compendia is the primary concern of my study.

Given the absence of contemporaneous, consistent, and independent early sources, it is highly unlikely that we can be certain of whether there was a real historical referent (i.e. whether the reports recorded actual events) for the material found in the later *ḥadīth* compendia. However, a credible layer and historical kernel of early *ḥadīth* material preserved in the later Shii *ḥadīth* collections of the fourth/tenth century can, I propose, still be uncovered. *Al-Īdāh* and *al-Kāfī* could contribute significantly to our understanding of that early material, but an appropriate methodology with which to analyse them has not yet been devised. Here, I argue that a cross-regional textual analysis of these two earliest surviving larger *ḥadīth* collections unearths a layer of early sources accessed by both the authors independently of each other. Cross-regional textual analysis entails conducting a comparative study of a set of reports preserved in the later collections composed in two distant geographical locations by contemporaneous authors adhering to distinct religious persuasions. As a case study, I will cross-examine the reports of 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī cited in *al-Īdāh* and *al-Kāfī* in a quest to unearth its earliest layers. Such cross-regional textual analysis offers exciting possibilities for tracing the origins and dissemination of early texts across times and regions. For the purpose of the present article, I will analyse the result of this investigation in three areas: historicity of al-Ḥalabī's collection; its incorporation into *al-Īdāh* and *al-Kāfī* and their compositional arrangements; and the question of its authorship.

The geography and geographical transmission of early sources lie at the forefront of this project, for they contribute to examining not only the origins of early sources but also their amalgamation and absorption in the later larger collections. Haider and Sadeghi have argued for the consideration of regionalism and geographical associations of the transmitters in the study of *ḥadīth* transmission. Sadeghi highlights the importance of geographic clustering of narratives, vocabulary, syntactic structures and legal positions in dating *ḥadīth*.⁵ Haider, on the other hand, concentrates on identifying the regional associations of the transmitters of reports in order to reconstruct, and thereby date, the religious practices of a specific region.⁶ Both studies have convincingly demonstrated

al-istidlāl, ed. Ahmad al-Kinānī (Qum: Mu'assasat Umm al-qurā li al-taḥqīq wa al-nashr, 1416/1995), 89; Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Rasā'il al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, ed. Riḍā Mukhtārī and Ḥusayn Shafī'ī (Qum: Daftar-i tablighāt-i islāmī, 1421/2000), 2: 1143–4.

5 Behnam Sadeghi, "The traveling tradition test: a method for dating traditions", *Der Islam* 85/1, 2008, 203–42.

6 Najam Iftikhar Haider, "The geography of the *isnād*: possibilities for the reconstruction of local ritual practice in the 2nd/8th century", *Der Islam* 90/2, 2013, 306–46. See also Haider, "To Basmalah or not to Basmalah: geography and isnad in early Islamic legal traditions", in K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Prosopography Approaches and Applications: A Handbook* (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research, University of Oxford, 2007), 459–98. For his third case study, see Haider, *The Origins of the Shī'a: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth Century Kūfa* (Cambridge: Cambridge

the contribution of regionalism to our understanding of early *ḥadīth* material and therefore remain extremely pertinent to my project because of its direct concern with the geographical movements of early Shii *ḥadīth* texts. My study, however, employs regionalism to examine the dissemination of early sources across regions and how it informs our understanding of the historicity of early sources, on the one hand, and their reception and treatment, on the other, in the regions in which they travelled.

My study demonstrates the usefulness of cross-regional textual analysis in four ways. First, it independently attests to the historicity of the titles, otherwise thought to have become extinct, recorded in the Twelver bio-bibliographical works of the fifth/eleventh century.⁷ Second, it enhances the credibility of the reports incorporated in the later, larger, thematically arranged *ḥadīth* compendia. Their contemporaneous compilation coupled with the authors' geographical distance renders any possibility of collusion or forging of material highly unlikely. Third, it identifies the trajectory, travel history, and transmission network of the early sources. Fourth, it offers the opportunity to examine the intellectual connections not only between two later *ḥadīth* compendia but also between them and their shared sources: what dictated their choices, arrangements, and adjustments in their respective collections? In this respect, my conclusions are in broad agreement with those of Motzki and Schoeler in relation to the Sunni *ḥadīth* corpus: that is, the bulk of *ḥadīth* material (including forgeries) has a history before the surviving works, and earlier credible layers of material can be excavated from the later, fourth/tenth century, *ḥadīth* collections.⁸

In search of early Shii *ḥadīth* sources: approaches and methodologies

The pioneering studies of Goldziher and Schacht concerning the historicity of Muslim tradition shaped the academic discourse on the dating and attribution of *ḥadīth* works throughout the twentieth century.⁹ The next generation of scholars in relation to the credibility of the corpus of *ḥadīth* were found at two

University Press, 2011), 138–86. In this study, he also examines Twelver, besides Sunni and Zaydi, *ḥadīth* sources.

7 Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, xv.

8 Harald Motzki, “The murder of Ibn Abi al-Huqayq: on the origins and reliability of some Maghazi reports”, 170–239 in Harald Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Source* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Harald Motzki, “Dating Muslim traditions: a survey”, *Arabica* 52/2, 2005, 251; Harald Motzki, *Analyzing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 235; Gregor Schoeler, *The Biography of Muhammad: Nature and Authenticity*, trans. U. Vagelpohl, ed. J.E. Montgomery (London: Routledge, 2010), 105–16.

9 For the mention of Shii *ḥadīth*, see Ignaz Goldziher (tr. Joseph Desomogyi), *A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966), 60–1; Ignaz Goldziher (tr. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, ed. S.M. Stern), *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 2, 19; Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 140; Etan Kohlberg, “Western studies of Shi’a Islam”, 31–44 in Martin Kramer (ed.), *Shi’ism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 38–40.

ends of a spectrum: “sceptical” to “sanguine”, or “revisionist” to “traditionist”.¹⁰ Their fundamental concerns were: is dating and reconstructing Islamic traditions possible? Is an *isnād* (chain of transmission) a useful tool for the dating of early sources? Should the *isnāds* be trusted as reliable documentary evidence? And can the text (*matn*) and its stylistic structure help us determine its earliest date of circulation? In order to engage critically with these questions, several methodological approaches were designed to examine the historicity of the Muslim traditions. Motzki has summarized them into four major approaches: *isnād* criticism, *matn* criticism, *isnād cum matn/matn cum isnād* analysis, and examining the dating of the collections where traditions appear.¹¹

Shii *ḥadīth*, it should be noted, does not necessarily face the challenges posed to Sunni *ḥadīth* tradition, nor is it an ideal ground for testing the approaches designed to investigate the historicity of the latter. This is because it comes predominantly from Imams al-Bāqir (d. 114/733) and al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) who belonged to an intellectual milieu which had just witnessed the emergence of the written transmission of *ḥadīth*. In other words, contrary to Sunni *ḥadīth*, which purports to extend back to the time of the Prophet or Companions, the bulk of Shii *ḥadīth* is a production of the first half of the second/eighth century. This feature, along with other peculiarities of Shii *ḥadīth* tradition discussed in the introduction, I argue, demands a completely different approach that could address the issues with which it has historically grappled.

Modarressi's *Tradition and Survival* is by far the most extensive study on Shii literary activities of the first two centuries of Islam. His laborious work neatly fits into the larger project of reconstructing early Islamic works initiated by Abbott, A'zamī, and Sezgin, sharing precisely the same concerns, addressing exactly the same questions, and using a similar methodological approach.¹² Modarressi's scholarship centres around the idea that the earliest sources of *ḥadīth* were recorded

- 10 See Herbert Berg, *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 259–60; Judith Koren and Yehuda D. Navo, “Methodological approaches to Islamic studies”, *Der Islam* 68/1, 2009, 87–8.
- 11 Motzki, “Dating Muslim traditions”, 205–6. I have slightly relabelled the names and re-ordered the sequence. Motzki argues that the method of *isnād cum matn/matn cum isnād* analysis is more reliable than the other approaches which are either “inaccurate” or “less sound”. He acknowledges that his method is a “revival” of the project initiated by Jan Hendrik Kramers and Joseph van Ess (see Motzki, “Dating Muslim traditions”, 250 and the sources cited there). It should be noted that the method of *isnād cum matn* analysis was reconstructed by both Motzki and Schoeler independently of each other at about the same time. This is based on the latter's self-assertion in Gregor Schoeler, *The Biography of Muhammad*, 146 (n. 176).
- 12 Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'anic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976); Muḥammad Muṣṭafā A'zamī, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature: With a Critical Edition of Some Early Texts* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1978); Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, Band I: Qur'ānwissenschaften, Hadīth, Geschichte, Fiqh, Dogmatik, Mystik bis ca. 430 H.* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); Fuat Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-turāth al-'Arabī*, trans. Maḥmūd Fahmī Ḥijāzī et al. (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Sa'ūd al-islāmiyya, 1411/1991), 1: 103–17.

in writings and were accessible to the fourth/tenth-century scholars of Qum and Baghdad who faithfully incorporated them into their larger collections after extracting and classifying their material into thematically arranged chapters. This seemingly organic development is believed to have been so smooth that the early *ḥadīth* corpus, with a careful deconstruction of *isnāds*, could possibly be reconstructed. These *isnāds*, Modarressi posits, “predominantly represented authors’ chains of transmission to those earlier records rather than oral transmission of individual quotations”.¹³ To ascertain whether a later collection has drawn its material from earlier written sources, he proposes cross-verifying the *isnāds* of the *ḥadīth* with the transmission lines of books recorded in bio-bibliographical dictionaries. In his view, the correspondence between both the chains (i.e. chains of report transmission and chains of book transmission) helps us “ascertain whether a later work quotes directly from an earlier source”.¹⁴ For instance, al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941) cites a total of 504 reports on the authority of Ismā‘īl b. Abī Ziyād al-Sakūnī with the following recurring *isnād*:

‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim → his father [Ibrāhīm b. Hāshīm] → al-Nawfalī → al-Sakūnī¹⁵

On the other hand, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058 or after 463/1070) and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), two distinguished Shiite bibliophiles of fifth/eleventh-century Baghdad, report that they had access to the *ḥadīth* collection(s) of al-Sakūnī via the following *isnāds*:

Al-Najāshī → Abū ‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Nūḥ → Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamza → ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim → his father [Ibrāhīm b. Hāshīm] → al-Nawfalī → Ismā‘īl b. Abī Ziyād al-Sakūnī al-Sha‘irī¹⁶
 Al-Ṭūsī → Ibn Abī Jīd → Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan → al-Ṣaffār → Ibrāhīm b. Hāshīm → al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Nawfalī → al-Sakūnī¹⁷
 Al-Ṭūsī → al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Ubaydullāh → al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamza al-‘Alawī → ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm → his father [Ibrāhīm b. Hāshīm] → al-Nawfalī → Ismā‘īl b. Muslim al-Sha‘irī al-Sakūnī¹⁸

13 Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, xv.

14 Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, xv.

15 The statistical data, in this instance and throughout this article, is obtained through a rigorous search in the database of the Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences, *Dirāyat al-nūr 1.2* (Qum: CRCIS, 2012). It should be noted that the total figure might include a small number of repetitions and dissection (*taqīf*) of certain reports. These instances are believed to be negligible and do not, therefore, affect the force of my conclusions.

16 Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī* (Qum: Mu‘assasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1365 Sh./1986), 26.

17 Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist kutub al-Shī‘a wa uṣūlihim wa asmā’ al-muṣannifīn wa aṣḥāb al-uṣūl*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī (Qum: Maktabat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, 1420/1999), 33.

18 Al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 33.

The *isnāds* of *al-Kāfī* and the transmission lines of al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī illustrate that Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim is the common link responsible for the transmission of al-Sakūnī's collection(s).¹⁹ The correspondence between al-Kulaynī's *isnāds* to al-Sakūnī's reports and al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī's transmission lines to al-Sakūnī's collection(s) indicates that *al-Kāfī*'s citations most probably originate from al-Sakūnī's collection(s). Modarressi maintains that his method is based on "concrete evidence" that takes the data of bio-bibliographical dictionaries – a resource not available to Sunni authors – into account to examine the origins of the early sources.²⁰

This approach faces several methodological challenges. First, it presupposes that the *isnāds* recounted in bio-bibliographical dictionaries are independent attestations for the genuine transmission of a book and they have not been lifted from the *isnāds* of the reports to advance the idea that the transmission of *ḥadīth* has taken place through the medium of writing. The biographical dictionaries reveal that duplicating and synthesizing *isnāds* were not uncommon practices. Ibn Buṭṭa (d. c. 330/942), for instance, is accused of blending chains of individual reports into transmission lines of books (*kāna ... yu'alliqu al-asānīd bi al-ijzāt*) in an attempt to demonstrate that Shīi *ḥadīth* is, essentially, transmitted through the medium of writing.²¹ Second, the sceptics consider *isnāds* to be the most vulnerable component of a *ḥadīth*. But even a sound *isnād* does not necessarily indicate the veracity of a *ḥadīth*, for it is quite possible that an astute forger will deploy a sound *isnād* for a bogus text.²² The same applies to bio-bibliographical transmission lines: they are not immune to the challenges posed to *isnāds*. Though some recent studies have carefully reconstructed the sources of existing bio-bibliographical dictionaries by tracing the citations supposed to have been preserved in the latter, it is evident that, methodologically, such reconstructions, until supported by independent attestations, do not contribute to investigating the historicity of the sources in question.²³ Third, the approach of cross-referencing *isnāds* does not take into account the redactions of any specific early collection that is not listed in the bio-bibliographical dictionaries. The book of Ḥarīz, for instance, is reported to have been transmitted by Ḥammād b. 'Īsā, as illustrated by the three *isnāds* of al-Ṭūsī and two *isnāds* of al-Najāshī.²⁴ These

19 It should be noted that Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim is credited with being the first transmitter to disseminate Kūfān *ḥadīth* in Qum. See al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 26; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 12.

20 In a similar enterprise of discovering the "sources of the sources", Ansari attempts to partially reconstruct 14 earlier *ḥadīth* sources concerning imamate and occultation by tracing their quotations in the later works. See Hasan Ansari, *L'imamat et l'Occultation selon l'imamisme* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1–268.

21 Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 372–3.

22 James Robson, "The *Isnād* in Muslim tradition", *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 15, 1953, 15–26; Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 163–75; Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 107–12; Robert Gleave, "Early Shiite hermeneutics and the dating of *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*", *BSOAS* 78/1, 2015, 99. For the importance of *isnād* in *ḥadīth* studies, see Motzki, "Dating Muslim traditions", 235.

23 Mahdī Khuddāmiyān al-Ārānī, *Fahāris al-Shī'a* (Qum: Mu'assasat turāth al-Shī'a, 1431/2009).

24 Al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 156–7; al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 144–5.

bio-bibliographical dictionaries do not speak about another possible recension of Ḥarīz's book, that which is transmitted by Yāsīn al-Ḍarīr and was accessible to al-Kulaynī through his teachers.²⁵ Fourth, this approach takes as its starting point the idea that Shii *ḥadīth* were transmitted through the medium of writing and thereby engages in what Stewart calls "educated guesswork" by assigning *ḥadīth* that may have been transmitted orally to certain works that match its content.²⁶

Another approach that also attempts to trace the origins of early Shii *ḥadīth* sources through the existing pool of literature is increasingly coming to be known as "bio-bibliographical analysis (*taḥlīl-i fihristī*)". Al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Madadī al-Musawī (b. 1951), a leading scholar of the Shiite seminary of Qum and the chief advocate of this approach, postulates that Shii *ḥadīth*, since its very early stages, has been transmitted through the medium of writing. The early writings were then fully incorporated in the later larger collections. He shares this premise with Modarressi. The process of "authentication" of Shii *ḥadīth*, therefore, requires, he adds, bio-bibliographical analysis of the *isnāds* that identifies the source from which a set of reports has been transmitted rather than the conventional approach of biographical (*rijālī*) assessment which evaluates the trustworthiness of individual transmitters. The bio-bibliographical analysis will result, Madadī argues, in mass authentication of the reports if: (a) the source text is identified; (b) its attribution to an early author is established; and (c) its faithful transmission to the next generation of scholars is ascertained. The primary aim of this approach, it emerges, is to establish the authoritativeness (*ḥujjiya*) of the early *ḥadīth* sources, as opposed to evaluating individual isolated reports, and hence serves the legal, not historical, interest of a jurist. In other words, the supposed beneficiary of this analysis is *fiqh* and not the study of history. Though Madadī's approach appears to be more rigorous, as it entails several layers of biographical and bio-bibliographical examination, how it substantially differs from Modarressi's method is an open question that merits further investigation.²⁷ Due to the methodological challenges such *isnād*-based reconstruction projects face, I propose an alternative approach that undertakes the task of identifying independent attestation as to the genuine existence of the sources in question. This is ascertained through "cross-regional textual analysis" – from where it derives its name – of the later larger *ḥadīth* collections.

25 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2: 629, 4: 146, 4: 390 and *passim*. I am thankful to Sayyid Aḥmad al-Madadī for this reference. It should be noted that early works were subjected to sustained editorial redactions and reformulations that were reportedly endorsed by the Imams. See al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1: 51.

26 Devin J. Stewart, "Review of *Tradition and Survival: A Biographical Survey of Early Shī'ite Literature* by Hossein Modarressi", *Islamic Law and Society* 15, 2008, 413.

27 For an overview of this approach, see Muḥammad Bāqir Malikiyān, "Manhaj al-qudamā' fi al-'amal bi al-akhbār wa dawr al-fahāris fihī", *al-Ijtihād wa al-tajdīd* 45, 2018, 200–7. A detailed outline of Madadī's method is also captured in a written interview published in 'Emādī Ḥā'eri, *Bāzāsāzi-ye mutūn-i kuhan-i ḥadīth-i Shī'yeh* (Tehran: Kitābkhāneh-ye mūze wa markaz-i asnād-i majlis-i shūrā-ye islāmī; Qum: Dār al-ḥadīth, 1388 Sh. /2009), 77–138.

Cross-regional textual analysis

At the outset, it should be made clear that my approach, like Modarressi's, works on the basis that the Shii *ḥadīth* corpus was, in the main, recorded and transmitted through writing rather than orally.²⁸ The early rudimentary collections of the second/eighth century furnished the collectors of the later thematically arranged works (*muṣannaḥāt*) with some first-hand written sources. Building on this premise, my proposed method attempts to trace the trajectory of those early sources through a rigorous cross-regional textual analysis of the later works that have drawn their material from them.

The following three considerations form the nucleus of this method:

1. The later collections under analysis should, for optimum results, be contemporaneous. This is particularly important because, if they were not contemporaneous, the possibility of direct access to an early source by the later of the two non-contemporaneous secondary collections could always be contested. That is, it is possible (perhaps likely), that the citations in the later collection are simply drawn from those in the earlier one. Consider the case of Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991) who had access to the *ḥadīth* compendia of al-Kulaynī. One cannot reject the possibility that Ibn Bābawayh relied (if in only few instances) on the citations of al-Kulaynī, rather than citing the original source directly.²⁹
2. The later collections should have been compiled in different regions to eliminate the possibility of them having consulted the same (physical) copy of the text; if they consulted the same copy, then they would fail to provide independent attestation as to the original text's existence.
3. The force of the conclusion is augmented by entertaining a third supportive consideration: the religious persuasions of the authors. The religious affiliation of the author with a particular set of doctrines involves, it is assumed, accepting or rejecting texts that are rejected or accepted (respectively) by their opponents. In cases when both parties preserve and cite an identical text without any distortion or interpolation, the chances of it being forged are substantially reduced.³⁰

28 In reference to Shii *ḥadīth* tradition, this is convincingly demonstrated in a number of studies. See Wilferd Madelung, "The sources of Ismā'īlī law", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 35, 1976, 29–40; Kohlberg, "Introduction", 165–80; Maria Massi Dakake, "Writing and resistance: the transmission of religious knowledge in early Shi'ism", 181–201 in Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (eds), *The Study of Shi'i Islam: History, Theology and Law* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

29 For some representative examples of Ibn Bābawayh's citations on the authority of al-Kulaynī, see Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī (Qum: Daftar-i intishārāt-i islāmī, 1413/1992), 3: 353, 4: 203, 222, 227 and *passim* (henceforth *al-Faqīh*).

30 Amir-Moezzi downplays the role of establishing "any sharp distinction between the early Shi'i authors belonging to different trends, especially in what concerns *ḥadīth* literature". See Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "The *Tafsīr* of al-Ḥibārī (d. 286/899): Qur'anic exegesis and early Shi'i esotericism", 113 (n. 2) in Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (eds), *The Study of Shi'i Islam: History, Theology and Law* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013). Though these authors adhering to different trends read the same early sources, their selections, arrangements, and presentations of *ḥadīth*, I argue, help us

The case study presented in this article will demonstrate that a cross-regional textual analysis of the later thematically arranged collections which factors in the aforementioned three considerations helps us determine the historicity of early sources. In addition to investigating the historicity of early sources, it enhances our understanding of the intellectual connections and the emerging traditions as they developed and spread out in different regions. Cross-regional textual analysis also underscores the importance of geography in the transmission of knowledge and how, textually, we can uncover geographical distributions and functions of early Shii literary activities. In what follows, I test this method to unearth the earliest layers of ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī’s collection and demonstrate the ways in which it deepens our understanding of this early, arguably earliest, Shii *ḥadīth* source: its historicity, travel history and *isnād* networks; its incorporation into later larger *ḥadīth* collections and the latter’s compositional arrangements; and its authorship.

Case study: ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī’s collection

The fifth/eleventh century Shii bio-bibliographies introduce ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī as the most distinguished member of the Kūfan Shiite family Abū Shu‘ba and a close associate of al-Ṣādiq. He authored a book (*kitāb*) that reportedly attracted the Imam’s attention and met his endorsement. The latter, we are told, could not stop rejoicing over this accomplishment of his disciple saying, “Have you ever seen them [Sunnis] compile such a collection?” The *ṭabaqāt* work ascribed to Aḥmad al-Barqī (d. 274 or 280/887 or 893) claims that the book is the first of its kind Shiites ever produced. Because of its supposed thematic arrangement, the collection generated unprecedented interest resulting in its widespread circulation. The numerous copies of al-Ḥalabī’s work and the detailed descriptions of its features, as illustrated in various biographical and bio-bibliographical dictionaries, testify to its prominence and popularity.³¹

Travel history and *isnād* network

The correspondence between the Shii community of al-Mayāfāriqīn (in present-day Silvan, Turkey) and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) concerning the “Book of al-Ḥalabī” (*Kitāb al-Ḥalabī*) demonstrates its widespread fame

analyse the regional and religious factors that dictated their choices. I have examined this hypothesis in chapter 7 of my doctoral thesis entitled “Making sense of Ismaili traditions: the modes and meanings of the transmission of Ḥadīth in the works of al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān (d. 363/974)”, DPhil thesis, University of Exeter, 2019.

- 31 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Khālīd al-Barqī, *Rijāl al-Barqī/al-Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Ḥasan Muṣṭafawī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i dānīshgāh-i Tehrān, 1342 Sh./1964), 23; al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 230–1, 361; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī al-Iṣfahānī (Qum: Mu’assasat al-nashr al-islāmī al-tābi‘a li-jāmi‘at al-mudarrisīn, 1373 Sh./2014), 431, 452; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 106, 305; Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī, *Risālat Abī Ghālib al-Zurārī* (Qum: Intishārāt-i daftar-i tablighāt, 1411/1990), 162; Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, 228, 380–1.

among rather distant Shii communities.³² In a similar correspondence, the Shii community of Rass is reported to have sought al-Murtaḍā's opinion on whether, given their inability to deduce law, it was appropriate for them to consult, for their religious practices, a "foundational text (*kitāb aṣl*) such as *Kitāb al-Ḥalabī*".³³ These exchanges highlight the wider appeal of al-Ḥalabī's work; they also indicate that it continued being copied and circulated in the fifth/eleventh century, especially considering the fact that other, similar, early sources had ceased to exist by this period. Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1265), based on the references made in two of his works, is arguably the last Shii scholar believed to have had access to al-Ḥalabī's collection.³⁴

The juxtaposition of *Kitāb al-Ḥalabī* with the likes of some mature and established compositions of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries such as *Risālat al-muqni'a*, *Risālat Ibn Bābawayh*, *Kitāb Shalmaghānī*, and *al-Kāfī* illustrates its extensive popularity despite the fact that its content had already been subsumed by the very texts with which it was equated. It is worth noting that *Kitāb al-Ḥalabī* is introduced as a *kitāb aṣl* (source text) vis à vis *Risālat al-muqni'a* and *Risālat Ibn Bābawayh*, both characterized as *kitāb muṣannaf* (composition, usually a legal composition), and *al-Kāfī*, characterized as *kitāb riwāya* (*ḥadīth* collection). Al-Najāshī referred to al-Ḥalabī's text as *al-kitāb al-mansūb ilayhi* (a book attributed to al-Ḥalabī), whereas al-Ṭūsī introduced it as *kitāb muṣannaf ma'mūl 'alayhi* (a composition that is widely used).³⁵ Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, on the other hand, consistently cites the work with the title *Jāmi' al-Ḥalabī* ("al-Ḥalabī's collection"). It appears that al-Ḥalabī's work did not bear any specific title and, therefore, different scholars assigned different titles, mainly in adjectival form, based on its early origins (*aṣl*), thematic arrangement (*muṣannaf*) and comprehensiveness (*jāmi'*). In reference to the content of the book, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly it entailed, but based on the citations recorded in the later collections, it can be assumed that the work contained legal issues in the form of *ḥadīth* related on the authority of al-Ṣādiq. In other words, it appears to be a legal *ḥadīth* collection rather than a treatise of *fiqh* or a handbook of legal opinions.

The paucity of sources does not allow us to determine whether al-Ḥalabī composed this work in Medina where his Imam lived, or whether it was a result of his interaction with the latter during his sojourn in Kūfa. Nonetheless, based on the multiple *isnāds* illustrating the networks through which al-Ḥalabī's collection was disseminated, it is safe to conclude that it was Kūfa, typical of any early Shii work, from where the book made its way to Qum, Baghdād,

32 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Rasā'il al-Murtaḍā*, ed. al-Sayyid Mahdī al-Rajā'ī (Qum: Dār al-Qur'ān al-karīm, 1405/1984), 1: 279.

33 Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Rasā'il al-Murtaḍā*, 2: 331.

34 Al-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Iqbāl*, 1: 48; 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṭabātabā'ī al-Marāghī, "Risāla 'adam muḍāyaqat al-fawā'it", in *Turāthunā* 2–3, 1407/1986, 340–1.

35 See al-Najāshī, *Rījal*, 231; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 305.

Silvan, Rass, and Ḥilla. The reports transmitted on the authority of al-Ḥalabī were also known to North African Ismaili *dā'īs* in Qayrawān. Reporting the distinguished status of his teacher and the extent of his scholarly activities, the senior Ismaili *dā'ī* Ibn al-Haytham (b. c. 273–77/886–87) reports:

And whatever I may forget, I shall never forget the *dā'ī* of Malūsa, the shaykh of the community and their legal authority, Aflaḥ b. Hārūn al-'Ibānī. He combined his activity as a *dā'ī* with the sciences of the religious law, and he reached back to the time of Abū Ma'shar and al-Ḥulwānī and transmitted on their authority from al-Ḥalabī.³⁶

Notwithstanding the anecdotal nature of this report, it offers a valuable piece of information about the accessibility of al-Ḥalabī's collection to the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth-century Ismaili *dā'īs* in North Africa. Given the fact that al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974) was not only a contemporary of Ibn al-Haytham but also a junior colleague in charge of the Fatimid collections, in his capacity as a librarian between 322–334/934–946, it is conceivable that he also had access to this work.

In the second half of the fourth/tenth century, Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī (d. 368/978) reports that his family collection contained *Kitāb 'Ubaydillāh b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī*.³⁷ It was also known to Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/990) who lists it among the popular legal works of Shiite scholars.³⁸ Its popularity in Qum can be gauged by Ibn Bābawayh's (d. 380/991) reception of it from three of his teachers. The collection continued to receive attention in Baghdad in the fifth/eleventh century. Al-Najāshī states that he had several *isnāds* for the transmission of this collection but, restricted by his commitment to brevity, he offers only one *isnād*. In contrast, al-Ṭūsī listed all four of his transmission lines.³⁹ Careful scrutiny of these extensive bundles of *isnāds* reveals that they all converge at a single common link, i.e. Ḥammād b. 'Uthmān (d. 190/806). Since the collection did not survive the vagaries of time, one has to trace its content and reconstruct it through cross-regional textual analysis of the later *ḥadīth* collections.

Al-Ḥalabī's collection in *al-Īḍāḥ*

The *nisba* al-Ḥalabī appears 103 times in the extant fragment of *al-Īḍāḥ*. It draws reports from two titles ascribed to al-Ḥalabī: *Jāmi' al-Ḥalabī* and *Kitāb*

36 Ja'far b. Aḥmad b. al-Haytham, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi'i Witness: An Edition and English Translation of Ibn al-Haytham's Kitāb al-munāzarāt*, ed. and tr. Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 168–9.

37 Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī, *Risālat Abī Ghālib al-Zurārī*, 162.

38 Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid (London: Mu'assasat al-Furqān li al-turāth al-islāmī, 1430/2009), 3: 70. *Kitāb 'Abdullāh al-Ḥalabī* should be corrected and read as *Kitāb 'Ubaydillāh al-Ḥalabī*.

39 Al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 305–6; al-Najāshī, *Rījal*, 231; Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī, *Risāla Abī Ghālib al-Zurārī*, 162; *al-Faqīh*, 4: 429.

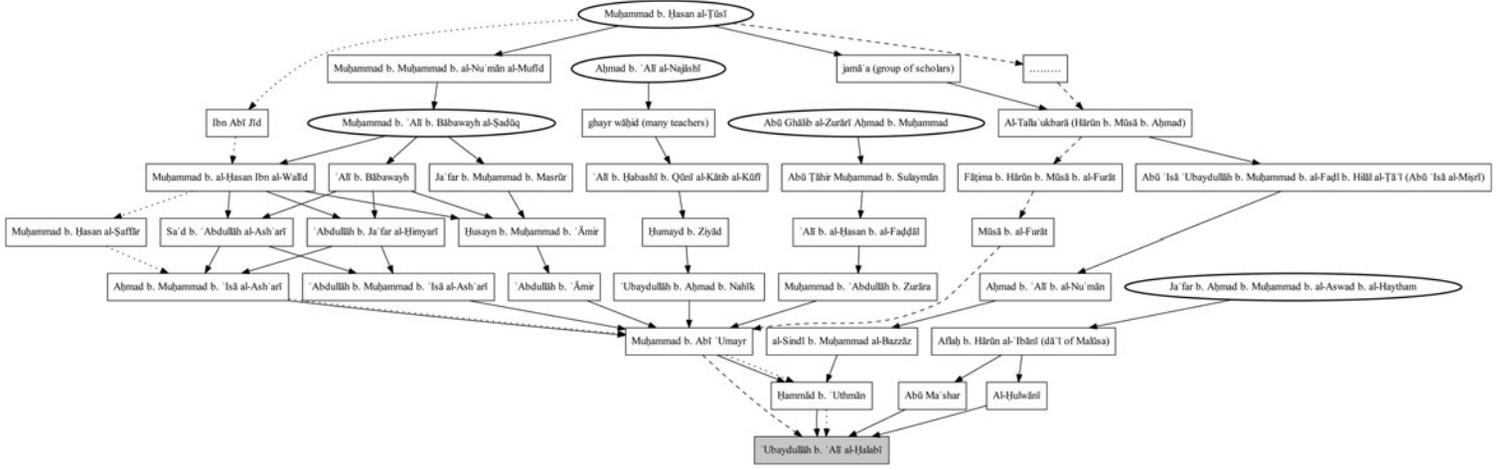


Figure 1. *Isnād* network of al-Ḥalabī’s *ḥadīth* collection⁴⁰

40 In order to better understand Figure 1, it is worth bearing in mind the following three points: first, the five oval nodes in this *isnād* chart represent the names of authors who offer their lines of transmission to al-Ḥalabī’s collection; second, in order to distinguish between four *isnāds* rendered by al-Ṭūsī, I have used dotted and dashed lines for the two less dense lines of transmission; third, in reference to the transmission of Abū Ma’shar and al-Ḥulwānī on the authority of al-Ḥalabī, it should be noted that their *ṭabaqa* (generation) does not support the possibility of their direct transmission from al-Ḥalabī.

Table 1. Number of citations from *Jāmi' al-Ḥalabī* and *Kitāb al-masā'il* in *al-Īdāh*

	<i>Jāmi' al-Ḥalabī</i>	<i>Kitāb al-masā'il</i>
Number of citations	51	52

al-Ḥalabī al-ma'rūf bi al-masā'il (henceforth *Kitāb al-masā'il*).⁴¹ Diverting from his method of quoting complete *isnāds* for the sources that he cited, al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān does not follow the same practice for these two titles, nor does he provide the full name of their author(s). *Jāmi' al-Ḥalabī* is cited 51 times in *al-Īdāh* whereas *Kitāb al-masā'il* is quoted in 52 instances (Table 1).

Al-Ḥalabī's collection in *al-Kāfī*

Contrary to al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and his own fellow Twelver traditionists, al-Kulaynī does not cite his sources, but rather adopts the style, prevalent in Sunni *ḥadīth* tradition, of rendering complete *isnād* for every single report. Given this limitation, it is difficult to ascertain whether al-Kulaynī had direct access to al-Ḥalabī's collection. Nonetheless, its content, judging from a significant number of reports cited on the authority of al-Ḥalabī, appears to have been available to him in Qum. The statistical data obtained by examining major Shii *ḥadīth* compendia, collectively known as "the Four Books" (*al-kutub al-arba'a*), depicts the astounding figure of 1,544 reports attributed to 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī.⁴² His chief reporter, Ḥammād b. 'Uthmān al-Nāb (d. 190/806), is credited with transmitting 1,261 of those reports. Furthermore, Ibn Abī 'Umayr (d. 217/832),⁴³ the key transmitter of Ḥammād's reports, related 1,362 *ḥadīth* on the latter's authority (Table 2).⁴⁴ Considering the fact that *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār fīmā ukhtulifa min al-akhbār* are not only composed by a single author, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, but also cite verbatim the reports of *al-Kāfī*, it is safe to conclude

41 The editor of *al-Īdāh* has incorrectly interpolated al-Ḥalabī (*Kitāb al-masā'il*) in the *isnād* of a report transmitted on the authority of al-Bāqir that has been discounted in my calculation. Neither the *ṭabaqa* (generation) of the transmitters – al-'Alā' b. Razīn and Muḥammad b. Muslim – support the occurrence of al-Ḥalabī in the given *isnād* nor does the manuscript contain such a name. Compare al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, ed. Kāzīm Raḥmatī, *al-Īdāh* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'alamī li al-maṭbū'āt, 2007), 55 with al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *al-Īdāh*, MS Tübingen-Hamdani, 77.

42 For the collective designation of "the Four Books", see n. 4.

43 Ibn Bābawayh, via his teacher Ibn al-Walīd, reports on the authority of al-Ṣaffār that whenever a *ḥadīth* transmitted by Ibn Abī 'Umayr contains a second opinion it should be understood as an interpolation of the latter. Ibn Bābawayh, *Ma'ānī al-akhbār*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī (Qum: Jāmi' al-mudarrisīn, 1403/1982), 149–50.

44 *Dirāyat al-nūr* 1.2 (Qum: CRCIS, 2012). The instances of repetition of the *isnād* in this table are not sufficient to jeopardize the force of my conclusion. Most such cases are from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, ed. Sayyid Ḥasan al-Mūsawī Kharsān (Tehran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 1407/1986) and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Istibṣār fīmā ukhtulifa min al-akhbār*, ed. Sayyid Ḥasan al-Mūsawī Kharsān (Tehran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 1390/1971).

that the latter remains the most important source for unearthing the earliest layers of al-Ḥalabī's collection.⁴⁵

Table 2. Reports attributed to 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī in Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia

Twelver <i>ḥadīth</i> compendia	From 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī	Ḥammād b. 'Uthmān on the authority of 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī	Ibn Abī 'Umayr on the authority of Ḥammād b. 'Uthmān
<i>al-Kāfī</i>	504	446	523 ⁴⁶
<i>al-Faqīh</i>	201	80 ⁴⁷	4 ⁴⁸
<i>Tahdhīb</i>	582	506	579
<i>al-Istibṣār</i>	257	229	257
Total	1,544	1,261	1,362

Analysis

Having introduced the *isnād* networks and travel history of al-Ḥalabī's collection, I now turn to conduct a cross-regional textual analysis of its reports cited in *al-Īdāh* and *al-Kāfī*. Such an analysis, I will illustrate, contributes to our understanding of both its early origins and later dissemination in Qum and Qayrawān. It not only allows us to unearth the earliest layers of al-Ḥalabī's collection, but also helps us gain insight into how its content was received, processed, and arranged in the later larger *ḥadīth* compendia. In what follows, I demonstrate the utility of this analysis in three areas: historicity of al-Ḥalabī's collection; its incorporation into *al-Īdāh* and *al-Kāfī* and their compositional arrangements; and the question of its authorship.

1. Historicity

This part may be misread as an attempt to establish the authenticity of early Shii sources on which the later collections relied. This is not the objective of my study. The process of authentication requires the availability of various

45 For a detailed study of the variants of the *isnāds* of al-Ḥalabī in *al-Kāfī*, see Ehsān Sorkheī, "Kitāb Ḥalabī: manba'ī maktūb dar ta'līf-i *al-Kāfī*", *Faṣḥnāma-ye 'ulūm-i ḥadīth* 51, 1388 Sh./2009, 34–58.

46 The number of reports in the first and third columns of this row denotes that Ibn Abī 'Umayr reportedly transmitted some reports on the authority of Ḥammād that have not come down to the latter through 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī. In other words, though Ḥammād's primary source is al-Ḥalabī, he also transmitted some reports, albeit fewer, from others.

47 This figure only represents the number of times the name Ḥammād appears in *al-Faqīh*. The reader should not assume that al-Ḥalabī's reports were transmitted via a non-al-Ḥalabī route by Ibn Bābawayh. This is due to the author's convention of citing *isnād*. The recurring *isnāds* are cited not in the body of the text, but rather in a dedicated section appended to the book.

48 See n. 47. The same is partially true in respect to *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār* mentioned in the third and fourth rows of Table 2.

redactions of an early source reaching back to the author (who may not even be the individual to whom the reports are attributed): these redactions are not immediately available to researchers. The application of cross-regional textual analysis only suggests that it is safe to assume that the sources of the later collections could be traced historically at least one generation earlier, if not more.

Below I attempt to unearth al-Ḥalabī's collection by cross-examining its citations recorded in *al-Kāfī* and *al-Īdāh* that meet all three aforementioned conditions. First, though al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān outlived al-Kulaynī by more than four decades, *al-Īdāh*, his first legal work, is believed to have been composed at the very beginning of his scholarly career, between 315–320/927–932, a period that roughly coincides with *al-Kāfī*'s compilation.⁴⁹ Second, as regards the geographical locations of their authors, *al-Īdāh* was composed in Qayrawān, whereas *al-Kāfī*, judging based on the authorities from whom al-Kulaynī transmitted most of his reports, was compiled in Qum.⁵⁰ Third, al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān offered his services to Fatimid Imam-Caliphs under whose patronage he composed *al-Īdāh*, whereas al-Kulaynī was raised, trained, and studied in the Twelver intellectual milieu of Rayy, Qum, and Baghdad. Though the early Shii *ḥadīth* is justifiably considered a shared legacy of both Ismailis and Twelvers (they do, after all, share the same lines of Imams from 'Alī to al-Ṣādiq), the possibility of differences in selection, arrangement, and interpretation of the reports should not be underestimated. The fulfilment of these three conditions, I argue, advances my hypothesis that the sources of the later, larger *ḥadīth* collections date back at least a generation earlier, if not more.

Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of al-Ḥalabī's reports cited in *al-Īdāh*, from both *Jāmi' al-Ḥalabī* and *Kitāb al-masā'il*, which are also traced in *al-Kāfī* and other Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia.⁵¹ Of 103 reports cited on the authority of al-Ḥalabī in *al-Īdāh*, 23 are identical to those cited in *al-Kāfī* via al-Kulaynī's

49 This dating was proposed by Lokhandwalla in a long introduction to his critical edition of *Kitāb ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib*. See al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Kitāb ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib*, ed. S.T. Lokhandwalla (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1972), 17. Poonawala's dating complements that of Lokhandwalla. See Ismail K. Poonawala, "The chronology of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's works", *Arabica* 65, 2018, 91, 107. In reference to *al-Kāfī*, it should be noted that though the compendium appears to have been disseminated in Baghdad, one of the two epicentres of Shii *ḥadīth* of the fourth/tenth century, the bulk of its *isnāds* indicate that it was composed in Qum or within the intellectual milieu of Qum. For a detailed study of the life of al-Kulaynī see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Hassan Ansari, "Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (m. 328/939–40 ou 329/940–941) et son *Kitāb al-Kāfī*: une introduction", *Studia Iranica* 38/2, 2009, 191–247.

50 The vast majority of al-Kulaynī's teachers (*mashāyikh*) were reportedly Qummīs. See Amir-Moezzi and Ansari, "Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī", 142–3. It should be noted that even if *al-Kāfī* was believed to have been composed in Rayy or Baghdad, it still qualifies as fulfilling the requirements of the second condition.

51 Though the investigation of the reports attributed to al-Ḥalabī in the later three Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia would be intriguing (particularly considering their access to early sources), I restrict my focus to *al-Kāfī*, the earliest and most extensive collection of *ḥadīth* among them. I employ a wider range of sources in chapter 6 of *Making Sense of Ismaili Traditions* and the findings outlined there broadly confirm my conclusions in this article. I also conduct a forensic analysis of each of these reports in that chapter.

Table 3. Breakdown of the numbers of reports attributed to al-Ḥalabī in *al-Īdāḥ* that are traced or untraced in *al-Kāfī* and other Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia

	No. of reports identical to <i>al-Kāfī</i>	No. of reports identical to other <i>ḥadīth</i> compendia			No. of reports with identical content	Obscured ⁵²
	On the authority of ‘Ubaydullāh al-Ḥalabī	On the authority of ‘Ubaydullāh al-Ḥalabī	On the authority of certain al-Ḥalabī: Ubaydullāh, Muḥammad or ‘Imrān	On the authority of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī via Ibn Muskān	On various authorities throughout Twelver <i>ḥadīth</i> compendia	Obscured
<i>Jāmi‘ al-Ḥalabī</i>	9	2	–	3	32	6
<i>Kitāb al-masā’il</i>	14	3	3	3	21	7
Total	23	5	3	6	53	13

52 By obscurity I mean these 13 reports do not seem to offer verbatim citations of *ḥadīth*, but rather resemble edicts or editorial statements of the author.

recurring *isnād* leading to al-Ḥalabī. These self-same citations suggest that al-Ḥalabī's collection(s) existed some generations earlier than al-Kulaynī and al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān. The most likely explanation for its provenance and early circulation is that the work should have been compiled in Kūfa in the second/eighth century before it was transmitted to Qum via transmitters such as Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim⁵³ and to Qayrawān via early Ismaili *dā'īs*. It was then incorporated and absorbed in the larger *ḥadīth* collections compiled in these regions. Reading *al-Īdāh* gives the impression that al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān had numerous early sources of *ḥadīth* at his disposal. Given his role as a librarian of the Fatimid *khizānat al-kutub* (library, lit. treasure house of books), it is conceivable that he had access to a redaction of al-Ḥalabī's collection that was present in North Africa, perhaps through Ibn al-Haytham and Aflaḥ b. Hārūn al-'Ibānī, the *dā'ī* of Malūsa.⁵⁴ On the other hand, reading *al-Kāfī* gives the impression that al-Kulaynī, albeit through mediation of other intermediary sources as will be demonstrated below, had access to the reports transmitted on the authority of al-Ḥalabī. Bearing in mind the aforementioned three considerations, we also know that their access to this early source should have been independent of each other. There seems no plausible explanation for the concurrence of these identical renditions except that both al-Kulaynī and al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān had access to works that contained the earliest layers of the source in question. These 23 reports can then be seen as representing that earliest layer of al-Ḥalabī's collection.

2. Composition and compositional arrangements

Reading *al-Kāfī* alongside *al-Īdāh* enables us not only to investigate the historicity of their shared sources – in our case al-Ḥalabī's collection – but also to analyse their own composition and compositional arrangements. The claim that the fourth/tenth-century Shii *ḥadīth* collections were composed directly from the early sources of the mid-second/eighth century is untenable. There were a number of intermediary texts compiled between them. These texts, it is reported, were larger and more structured compared to their predecessors but not as large or thematically organized as their successors of the fourth/tenth century.⁵⁵

53 See n. 19.

54 For Fatimid libraries, see al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Kitāb al-majālis wa al-musāyarāt*, ed. Ḥabīb Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūh and Muḥammad Ya'lāwī (Tunis: al-Jāmi'a al-Tūnisiyya, 1978), 80–1, 533; Paul E. Walker, "Libraries, book collection and the production of texts by the Fatimids", *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 4, 2016, 9–21; Paul E. Walker, "Fatimid institutions of learning", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 34, 1997, 179–200; Paul E. Walker, *Fatimid History and Ismaili Doctrine* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 20–35; Paul E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

55 For instance, the two brothers al-Ḥusayn b. Sa'īd al-Ahwāzī and al-Ḥasan b. Sa'īd al-Ahwāzī are reported to have composed 30 thematically arranged works (*al-kutub al-thalāthīn al-muṣannaḥā*). See al-Najāshī, *Rījal*, 58–60. It is unclear, though, whether these were independent books or, simply, chapters of a single large collection. It should also be noted that these texts were occasionally referred to as *usūl* in its broader sense, i.e. works that were composed during the time of the Imams. See Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Shahrāshūb, *Kitāb ma'ālim al-'ulamā' fī fihrist kutub al-Shī'a wa asmā' al-muṣannifīn*

The sources of *al-Kāfī*, in reference to al-Ḥalabī's collection, as shown below, were comprised of these intermediary texts.

The second and third columns of Table 3 illustrate a small, yet significant, number of five reports⁵⁶ from 'Ubaydullāh al-Ḥalabī and three reports⁵⁷ of a certain al-Ḥalabī⁵⁸ that are found in other Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia. The tracing of identical reports in other collections highlights two points: first, al-Ḥalabī's collection also served as a source for *ḥadīth* compendia of Qum and Baghdad; second, al-Kulaynī, unlike al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, did not fully extract all the reports of al-Ḥalabī's collection in *al-Kāfī* but rather appears to have relied on other sources for similar content. Why did al-Kulaynī choose to quote similar content from a different authority despite the distinguished status of al-Ḥalabī and the unmatched reputation of his collection? Do we know if al-Ḥalabī's collection was accessible to him and his contemporaries in Qum? What does that tell us about the sources of *al-Kāfī*?

The answers to these questions might lie in al-Kulaynī's reliance on *nawādir* works for the compilation of *al-Kāfī*. These sources are presumed to have incorporated the content of early foundational collections (*uṣūl*) without proper thematic organization (hence the name *nawādir*). Unlike Ibn Bābawayh and al-Ṭūsī, two distinguished members of the scholarly networks of Qum and Baghdad respectively, al-Kulaynī was an "outsider". He hailed from Rayy, studied in Qum and taught in Baghdad where he resided towards the end of his life. It is, therefore, quite conceivable that he might not have had direct access to the *uṣūl* that were available to more well-established Qummī scholars.⁵⁹ A cursory glance at the *isnāds* of *al-Kāfī* reveals that his sources were primarily *nawādir* (anthologies of miscellaneous reports) and *muṣannafāt* (thematically arranged collections) composed by third/ninth-century Qummī scholars. It is no exaggeration that at least half of *al-Kāfī*'s reports, and probably more, are based on three sources: *al-Nawādir* of Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim (d. c. 260/873), *Kitāb al-nawādir* of Aḥmad b. 'Isā al-Ash'arī (fl. 274/887) and *Nawādir al-ḥikma* of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yahyā (d. 280/893).⁶⁰

minhum qadīman wa ḥadīthan: tatimmat kitāb al-fihrist li al-Shaykh Abī Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshiyānī (Tehran: Maṭba'at Fardīn, 1934), 1.

- 56 From *Jāmi' al-Ḥalabī: al-Īdāh*, 72 (al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 2: 278); *al-Īdāh*, 164 (al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 2: 71). From *Kitāb al-mas'āl: al-Īdāh*, 100 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīh*, 1: 236); *al-Īdāh*, 106 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīh*, 1: 236); *al-Īdāh*, 131 (Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Saffār, *Basā'ir al-darajāt*, ed. Muḥammad Kūche-bāghī (Qum: Kitābkhāneh-ye Āyatullāh Mar'ashī, 1404/1983), 420).
- 57 *Al-Īdāh*, 46 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīh*, 1: 416); 118 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīh*, 1: 397); 146 (Muḥammad b. al-Mas'ūd al-'Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī* (Qum: Chāpkhāneh-ye 'ilmīyye, 1380/1960), 2: 270). All three instances are cited from *Kitāb al-mas'āl*.
- 58 Most likely 'Ubaydullāh but could also be his brother, Muḥammad, or his nephew, Yahya b. 'Imrān b. 'Alī al-Ḥalabī.
- 59 A possible exception to this might be the collection of his *shaykh*, Ḥumayd b. Ziyād. The latter is reported to have transmitted several early collections. See al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 132; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 155.
- 60 Of these scholars, Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim merits the most mention. Al-Kulaynī cites almost one-third of *al-Kāfī*'s reports on the authority of Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim via his son 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm (alive in 307/919). For the details of these three works, see al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 16 (Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim), 81–2 (Aḥmad b. 'Isā al-Ash'arī) and 348–9 (Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yahyā).

Al-Kulaynī's reliance on an unusually broad range of these *nawādir* partly explains why *al-Kāfī* is stylistically different from the other three Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia, namely *al-Faqīh*, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, and *al-Istibṣār*.

The reconstruction of al-Ḥalabī's collection from the reports of *al-Kāfī* is, then, based on the grounds that al-Kulaynī's access to it should have been via intermediary sources, i.e. *nawādir* compiled by his Qummī predecessors. This can also be gleaned from Table 2 which demonstrates that Ibn Abī 'Umayr relates from Ḥammād a total of 523 reports, 446 of which contain a recurring chain of transmission: Ibn Abī 'Umayr → Ḥammād → al-Ḥalabī. One can surmise, invoking Modarressi's hypothesis, that al-Kulaynī's citations are based, albeit through his *nawādir* sources, on al-Ḥalabī's collection. The *isnāds* of *al-Kāfī* indicate that the author had access to al-Ḥalabī's reports through the following three chains:

'Alī b. Ibrāhīm → Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim → Ibn Abī 'Umayr → Ḥammād → al-Ḥalabī⁶¹

Muḥammad b. Yahyā → Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Īsā → Ibn Abī 'Umayr → Ḥammād → al-Ḥalabī⁶²

'Idda (group of his teachers) → Sahl b. Ziyād → al-Ḥajjāl → Ḥammād → al-Ḥalabī⁶³

There is not sufficient internal or external evidence to support the claim that al-Kulaynī had direct access to early *uṣūl* of the mid-second/eighth century. I argue that it is due, rather, to his use of *nawādir* works that the reports of a single *aṣl* is transmitted via different *isnāds* in *al-Kāfī*. For instance, both the *Nawādir* of Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim and the *Nawādir* of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Īsā extracted reports from al-Ḥalabī's collection. Naturally, the *isnāds* of *al-Kāfī*, in respect to citing the reports attributed to al-Ḥalabī, will differ depending on the *nawādir* al-Kulaynī chose to extract a particular report. Notwithstanding this disintegration, the force of my conclusion remains intact, for *nawādir* works are seen as intermediary works between early *uṣūl* works and later *ḥadīth* compendia. In other words, had *nawādir* survived, their reports would have directly attested against the citations of *al-Īdāh*. In their absence, our second-best choice is their successor: *al-Kāfī*.

Verbatim citations of a significant number of reports, 53 in total, could not be traced in *al-Kāfī* or any other Twelver *ḥadīth* collection. The legal opinions described in these reports, however, are traced, though they are attributed to other Imams and worded differently. Simply put, the reports cited in *al-Īdāh*, in these instances, are not alien to Shiī legal thought. Whilst these reports may not prove helpful in reconstructing al-Ḥalabī's collection, they do help us gain a better understanding of the authors' selection processes. Their differences, then, could be explained by taking into account the fact that the epicentres of

61 Selective citations out of a total of 446 reports: *al-Kāfī*, 1: 451, 546; 2: 82, 148; 3: 4, 12; 4: 76, 92; 5: 178, 181; 6: 41, 69; 7: 32, 48; 8: 108.

62 *Al-Kāfī*, 3: 48, 513, 549; 4: 76, 98, 101, 104, 105, 108, 109, 233, 248, 381; 5: 178, 185, 186, 387, 392, 397, 398; 7: 181, 183, 222, 283, 287; 8: 176.

63 *Al-Kāfī*, 8: 176.

Twelver Shii *ḥadīth* in the fourth/tenth century, Qum and Baghdad, provided Twelver scholars with a host of early Kūfan sources that were not necessarily available to al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān in Qayrawān. In these instances, Twelver scholars, it could be argued, opted to cite similar reports from other *uṣūl*. Until it is corroborated by more substantial evidence, this hypothesis remains, at best, tentative.

A rigorous cross-examination of al-Ḥalabī’s reports cited in *al-Kāfī* and *al-Īḍāḥ* also reveals that the latter contains far more reports than the former. In the chapter of *al-ṣalāt* in *al-Kāfī*, for instance, al-Kulaynī cites only 46 reports from al-Ḥalabī, compared to 104 reports in a rather incomplete portion of the same chapter in the extant fragment of *al-Īḍāḥ*.⁶⁴ This reflects al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s extensive use of al-Ḥalabī’s collection, so much so that it is safe to assume that he incorporated all its reports in his voluminous *al-Īḍāḥ*. On the other hand, one could also argue that al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān endeavours to offer an exhaustive list of reports in each section, whereas al-Kulaynī appears to be content with citing a representative example relevant to a given chapter. This comparative analysis that reads *al-Kāfī* through the lens of *al-Īḍāḥ* facilitates a new understanding of the former’s engagement with intermediary sources that were obscured or forgotten with the emergence of larger thematically arranged *ḥadīth* compendia.

3. Authorship

One of the issues that cross-regional textual analysis attempts to address is the question of authorship. Here, I am not interested in assessing the veracity of attribution so much as in examining how the dissemination of texts across regions, their absorption into larger collections, and the intellectual vibrancy of the regions to which they travel result in differences in authorship attribution.

The fourth column of Table 3 illustrates two points: first, six reports attributed to al-Ḥalabī in *al-Īḍāḥ* are identical with those cited on the authority of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī in Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia; second, three of these reports are attributed to *Jāmi’* and the other three to *Kitāb al-masā’il*. In reference to Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia, all six reports are exclusively found in *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār*. Al-Ṭūsī relates these reports on the authority of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī via ‘Abdullāh b. Muskān. Did al-Ṭūsī mistake ‘Ubaydullāh for Muḥammad? Did Baghdadī scholars have access to Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī’s collection, which was not available to their Qummī counterparts? Did the two brothers record identical reports in their independent collections, leading to different attributions based on the sources al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān and al-Ṭūsī consulted? What do these discrepancies tell us about the authorship of *Jāmi’ al-Ḥalabī* and *Kitāb al-masā’il*? And how do we make sense of the attributions of identical reports to two different titles in two different regions? These are critical questions with which cross-regional textual analysis attempts to engage.

Madelung, rather reluctantly, proposes that *Jāmi’ al-Ḥalabī* and *Kitāb al-masā’il* were either variant versions of a single text or two different sections

64 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 3: 264–495; al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *al-Īḍāḥ*, 20–165.

of the *Kitāb* ascribed to ‘Ubaydullāh in Twelver sources.⁶⁵ *Kitāb al-masā’il*, according to Modarressi, though different in style, was “part of the larger version of [‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī] al-Ḥalabī’s *Kitāb*”.⁶⁶ The assumption that these two works are different versions or sections of a single larger collection is not supported by the treatment they receive in *al-Īdāh*. The mention of both titles, in several instances with a conjunction, attests to the fact that al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān considered them to be two separate works.⁶⁷ Furthermore, contrary to his consistent pattern of using pronouns (*fīhi* or *fīhā*) for the same titles consulted for a previous report, al-Nu‘mān cites the full titles, one after the other, of these two works.⁶⁸ Therefore, it is safe to conclude that al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān treated them as two separate works. Furthermore, there is no mention of *Kitāb al-masā’il* under the entries of ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī in any of the extant Twelver bio-bibliographical dictionaries. Lastly, the styles of the two texts are significantly different: the question-and-answer format of the reports attributed to *Kitāb al-masā’il* is not to be found in *Jāmi’ al-Ḥalabī*.⁶⁹

In reference to their authorship, a closer cross-examination of their content cited in *al-Īdāh* with that recorded in the Twelver sources suggests that the latter treated them as part of one single collection of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī. This collection is presumed to be *Kitāb mubawwab fī al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām* as introduced by al-Najāshī in his introduction of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī.⁷⁰ It can then be argued that the supposed work of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī was known with two separate titles in Qayrawān and Baghdad, namely *Kitāb al-masā’il* and *Kitāb mubawwab fī al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām* respectively. One can, thus, surmise that *Jāmi’* was ‘Ubaydullāh’s work and *Kitāb al-masā’il* was his brother Muḥammad’s. However, numerous instances of overlapping reports do not allow us to form a conclusive opinion on their authorship, particularly when al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān appears to have attributed both collections to a single author.⁷¹

The cross-regional textual analysis of *al-Īdāh* and Twelver *ḥadīth* sources thus enables us to engage with questions concerning the authorship of early sources. As shown above, there are clear discrepancies in these attributions. The sources of *al-Īdāh*, I argue, reflect earlier layers of Kūfān sources than those which can be found in its Qummī and Baghdādī counterparts. The sources of the latter, it is observed, were refined and processed in the then intellectually vibrant Twelver *ḥadīth* tradition. Their content was debated, selected, and appropriated before it could qualify to be cited in a given collection. Such scholarly engagement also indicates that Qummī and Baghdādī scholars enjoyed access to a greater variety of sources.

65 Madelung, “The sources of Ismā‘īlī law”, 35.

66 Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, 381.

67 Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *al-Īdāh*, 52, 143, 159.

68 Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *al-Īdāh*, 40.

69 Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *al-Īdāh*, 40, 44, 56, 63, 68, 69, 77, 79, 80, 84, 95–96, 100–01, 106, 115, 118, 121 (two instances), 146–7, 159 (two instances).

70 Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, 325.

71 Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *al-Īdāh*, 52, 159.

Summary

Several inferences may be drawn from Table 3. First, the striking resemblance of more than 25 per cent of the reports cited in *al-Īdāh* and *al-Kāfī*, having discounted the obscured reports, evidently suggests the mutual provenance of their sources. If one adds 14 identical reports cited in Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia on the authority of ‘Ubaydullāh al-Ḥalabī or other Ḥalabīs to the 23 reports in *al-Kāfī*, this resemblance occurs in 41 per cent of all surviving reports. Second, whereas al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān treated *Jāmi‘ al-Ḥalabī* and *Kitāb al-masā’il* as two different works, al-Kulaynī’s *isnāds* make no distinction between them. The same applies to other Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia. Third, al-Kulaynī’s sources appear to be wider than al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān; while only the latter appears to have had direct access to the *uṣūl*, the former relied on more voluminous intermediary collections (such as *nawādir*) compiled by Qummī scholars.

The preceding investigation has produced promising results. The statistical data obtained through cross-regional textual analysis of *al-Kāfī* and *al-Īdāh* enabled us to trace the historicity and, to an extent, the contents of an early Kūfan *ḥadīth* source with a fair degree of accuracy. It has enhanced our understanding of the composition and compositional strategies of the later collections besides addressing the question of authorship. My findings, thus, complement Kohlberg’s assessment that “a detailed study of [al-Qāḍī] al-Nu‘mān’s works” might “shed further light on Shii tradition as a whole”.⁷² *Al-Īdāh*’s contribution to understanding the dissemination of early texts across times and regions, therefore, remains critical.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this article centred around developing a methodology that could help us investigate the historicity and geographical transmission of early Shii *ḥadīth* sources. Two assumptions formed the basis of my hypothesis. First, Shii *ḥadīth*, at the behest of Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq, originated in the first half of the second/eighth century, which roughly coincides with the Sunni writing of *ḥadīth*. Second, contrary to Sunni *ḥadīth* tradition, which arguably relied on oral transmission, Shii *ḥadīth*, since its inception, was transmitted through the medium of writing. I have argued that these two features of Shii *ḥadīth* merit different treatment and that the tools designed to evaluate Sunni *ḥadīth* tradition do not appear to be sufficiently effective.

After having examined the existing literature on the origins, circulation, and methodological challenges of early Shii *ḥadīth* sources, I proposed a new method that traces the layers of early sources with a higher degree of accuracy. The historicity of a source, this method proposes, is better assessed by conducting a cross-regional textual analysis of the later *ḥadīth* compendia that purport to have faithfully transmitted its content. I argued that a cross-regional textual analysis of *ḥadīth* compendia that contain identical material but are composed by contemporaneous authors with distinct religious persuasions in distant locations

72 Kohlberg, “Introduction”, 179.

indicates the mutual provenance of their sources. My study has demonstrated that such a rigorous analysis, besides enabling us to unearth the earliest layer of Shii *ḥadīth* sources, helps trace the trajectory of dissemination of texts across times and regions. I have tested this method on *al-Kāfī* and *al-Īdāh* in an attempt to excavate the earliest layer of al-Ḥalabī's collection, arguably the earliest Shii legal *ḥadīth* source and, in turn, to examine the geographical movements and intellectual exchange between Kūfa, Qum, and Qayrawān.

The preliminary testing conducted to investigate the historicity of other early sources has produced similar results. The methodology employed here can be applied to a number of early Shii collections in order to produce a more complete picture of the early sources of Shii *ḥadīth* tradition.⁷³ I am well aware of the limitations of my proposed method. First, the three stringent measures suggested, for a holistic assessment, in this analysis are not immediately available in all cases. Most of the later Shii *ḥadīth* collections are composed by non-contemporaneous Twelver scholars of Qum and Baghdad. Second, *al-Īdāh* survives only as a small fragment that contains citations from a meagre 21 early sources. A complete manuscript of *al-Īdāh*, if ever found, would greatly enrich our understanding of early Shii *ḥadīth* tradition. Third, the data obtained through cross-regional textual analysis does not always result in the identification of an overwhelming amount of identical material. In excavating the earliest layers of al-Ḥalabī's collection from the later sources, I was able to discover 41 per cent of identical material. The difference, though minor, of the remaining 59 per cent seems to have resulted from the nature of its dissemination across time and regions.

Notwithstanding the practical limitations caused by the scarcity of early material, my hypothesis, on a rather optimistic note, could also be tested on surviving Zaydi, Ismaili, and even Sunni *ḥadīth* sources. The Shii doctrinal and legal thought emerged in the same scholarly milieu in which Sunni thought flourished, sharing the same concerns, operating within the same intellectual framework, and consulting similar sources. The cross-regional textual analysis of later Kūfan and Medinese *ḥadīth* collections compiled by proto-Sunni and proto-Shii transmitters may help excavate the earliest layer of Islamic thought of the late first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries. This is a very ambitious project, and the efficacy of the method proposed here remains to be seen. It is hoped that the method outlined in this article will serve as a useful point of departure for future work on cross-regional and inter- and intra-sectarian modes of transmission in Islamic literature more broadly.

73 In *Making Sense of Ismaili Traditions*, I have examined *al-Īdāh*'s citations of *al-Ja'fariyāt*, a second/eighth-century legal *ḥadīth* collection transmitted on the authority of Ismā'īl b. Mūsā b. Ja'far, the grandson of al-Ṣādiq. I have traced similar reports in *al-Kāfī* through a completely different chain of transmission. The historicity of *al-Ja'fariyāt*, therefore, is determined by cross-regional textual analysis of its reports cited in *al-Īdāh* and *al-Kāfī*. I have also tested this method on a Zaydi *ḥadīth* corpus with similar results. The citations of *Kutub Muḥammad b. Sallām b. Sayyār al-Kūfī* in *al-Īdāh* are cross-examined with the Zaydi *ḥadīth* collection attributed to Muḥammad b. Maṣū' al-Murādī (d. c. 290/903), commonly known as *Amālī Ahmad b. 'Īsā*. The cross-regional textual analysis of the reports cited in *al-Īdāh* and *Amālī* indicate that they shared a common source dating back to an earlier period.