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

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**Abstract**

In this article, I develop and test a new methodology of unearthing early Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī legal ḥadīth collection, a work attributed to ʿUbaydullāh b. ʿAlī 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-Nuʾmān’s al-Īḍāh, composed in Qayrawān, I demonstrate that both works trace their material to an earlier Kūfān 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:** Shīʿī ḥadīth, Twelver tradition, Ismaili tradition, Geographical transmission, Al-Ḥalabī, Al-Kulaynī, Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʾmān

**Introduction**

In academic research to date, limited attention has been paid to the origins and development of Shīʿī ḥadīth. It stands distinct from its Sunni counterpart in three different respects: theological extension, geographical location, and mode of...
transmission. Regarding theological extension, the cosmic role assigned to the Imams in Shi‘i 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, Shi‘ites assert, enjoy the same standing and force as those that have been attributed to the Prophet, though the former, as a mark of distinction, is occasionally referred to as akhbār (reports). In terms of geography, the Imams continued living in Medina but their followership largely consisted of Kūfāns. The Shi‘ī ḥadīth literature, therefore, in case of its rightful attribution to the Imams, is a confluence of Medinese and force as those that have been attributed to the Prophet, though the former, as a mark of distinction, is occasionally referred to as akhbār (reports). In terms of geography, the Imams continued living in Medina but their followership largely consisted of Kūfāns. The Shi‘ī ḥadīth literature, therefore, in case of its rightful attribution to the Imams, is a confluence of Medinese

1 For a general overview on Shi‘ī ḥadīth, see Etan Kohlberg, “Introduction”, 165–80 in Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (eds), The Study of Shi‘i Islam: History, Theology and Law (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

2 For one such claim, see Twelver sources such as Mu‘tama al-Mu‘tama. The collections of this period include, but are not limited to, al-ma‘ṣūma‘, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. 

3 For the purposes of this article, I have classified Shi‘ī 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, usūl (foundational collections), javāmī‘ (comprehensive collections), nawādir (anthologies of miscellaneous reports), muṣannafāt (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 Shi‘ī ḥadīth or ḥadīth-based works. It is evident, however, that not all of these sources enjoyed the same status as usūl 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-usūl 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-Arbā‘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‘i Thought and History, ed. Amin Ehteshami (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 403–38; Kohlberg, “Introduction”, 166; Hossein Modarresi, Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi‘i Literature (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), xiv. For the collective designation of “The Four Books”, see Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā‘ī, Kāshīf 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 Shīʿī *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 ʿUbaydullāh b. ʿAlī 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*. 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. Both studies have convincingly demonstrated

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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 Shi‘a: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth Century Kūfah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
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. 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.

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. The next generation of scholars in relation to the credibility of the corpus of ḥadīth were found at two
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, Aʿẓamī, 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/matin 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 Nabiya Abbott, Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur’anic Commentary and Tradition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976); Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Aʿẓamī, Studies in Early Hadith Literature: With a Critical Edition of Some Early Texts (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1978); Fuat Sezgin, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, Band I: Qurʿān.wissenschaften, Hadith, Geschichte, Fiqh, Dogmatik, Mystik bis ca. 430 H. (Leiden: Brill, 1967); Fuat Sezgin, Tārīkh al-turāṭ al-ʿArabī, trans. ʿAbd al-Fāhrī Hijāzī et al. (Riyadh: Jāmiʿat al-Ḥāʾīm Muḥammad b. Saʿūd 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 hadith 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”. To ascertain whether a later collection has drawn its material from earlier written sources, he proposes cross-verifying the isnāds of the hadith 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”. 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. Hāshim] → al-Nawfalī → al-Sakūnī

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 hadith 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. Hāshim] → al-Nawfalī → Ismā‘īl b. Abī Ziyād al-Sakūnī al-Sha‘īrī

Al-Ṭūsī → Ibn Abī Jīd → Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan → al-Ṣaffār → Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim → al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Nawfalī → al-Sakūnī

Al-Ṭūsī → al-Ḥusayn b. `Ubaydullāh → al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamza al-ʿAlawī → `Alī b. Ibrāhīm → his father [Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim] → al-Nawfalī → Ismā‘īl b. Muslim al-Sha‘īrī al-Sakūnī

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-nīr 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, Rījāl al-Najāshī (Qum: Mu’assasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1365 Sh./1986), 26.
17 Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, Fihrist kutub al-Shi’a wa uṣūlīhim wa asma’ al-muṣannīfūna wa ashāb al-uṣūl, ed. `Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Ṭabātābā’ī (Qum: Maktabat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭabātābā’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. Hāshīm is the common link responsible for the transmission of al-Sakūnī’s collection(s). 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). Madarressi 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.

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 hadith 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-ijāzāt) in an attempt to demonstrate that Shī‘ī hadith is, essentially, transmitted through the medium of writing. Second, the sceptics consider isnāds to be the most vulnerable component of a hadith. But even a sound isnād does not necessarily indicate the veracity of a hadith, for it is quite possible that an astute forger will deploy a sound isnād for a bogus text. 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. 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 Ḥarfiz, for instance, is reported to have been transmitted by Ḥammād b. ʿĪsā, as illustrated by the three isnāds of al-Ṭūsī and two isnāds of al-Najāshī. These

19 It should be noted that Ibrāhīm b. Hāshīm is credited with being the first transmitter to disseminate Kūfī hadith 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 hadith 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 hadith studies, see Motzki, “Dating Muslim traditions”, 235.
23 Mahdi Khuddāmiyān al-ʿĀrānī, Fahāris al-Shīʿa (Qum: Muʿassasat turāth al-Shīʿa, 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī ḥadīth sources through the existing pool of literature is increasingly coming to be known as “bio-bibliographical analysis (tahlīl-i fihristī)”. Al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Maḍādī al-Musawī (b. 1951), a leading scholar of the Shiite seminary of Qum and the chief advocate of this approach, postulates that Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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, Maḍādī 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 (hujjāya) 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 Maḍādī’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-Maḍādī 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 Shiʿī Literature by Hossein Modarressi”, Islamic Law and Society 15, 2008, 413.

²⁷ For an overview of this approach, see Muḥammad Bāqir Malikīyān, “Manhaj al-qudamāʾ fī al’-ʿamal bi’l-akhbār wa dawr al-fahāris fīhī”, al-Ijtihād wa al-tajdid 45, 2018, 200–7. A detailed outline of Maḍādī’s method is also captured in a written interview published in ʾEmādī Ḥāʾerī, Bāzsāzī-ye mutān-i kuhān-i ḥadīth-i Shīʾ yeh (Tehran: Kitābkhāneh-ye mūzē 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 Shi'i hadith corpus was, in the main, recorded and transmitted through writing rather than orally. The early rudimentary collections of the second/eighth century furnished the collectors of the later thematically arranged works (musannafat) 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 hadith 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.

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.
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 Shi‘i literary activities. In what follows, I test this method to unearth the earliest layers of ‘Ubaydullah b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī’s collection and demonstrate the ways in which it deepens our understanding of this early, arguably earliest, Shi‘i 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: ‘Ubaydullah b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī’s collection

The fifth/eleventh century Shi‘i bio-bibliographies introduce ‘Ubaydullah b. ‘Alī al-Ḥalabī as the most distinguished member of the Kūfān Shi‘ite 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 Shi‘ites 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.

Travel history and isnād network

The correspondence between the Shi‘i community of al-Mayāfāriqīn (in present-day Silvan, Turkey) and al-Sharī‘ī al-Murtadā (d. 436/1044) concerning the “Book of al-Ḥalabī” (Kitāb al-Ḥalabī) demonstrates its widespread fame

31 Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Khālid al-Barqī, Rījāl al-Barqī/ al-Ṭabaqāt, ed. Ḥasan Muṣṭafawī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1342 Sh./1964), 23; al-Najāshī, Rījāl, 230–1, 361; Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, Rījāl al-Ṭūsī, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī al-Īṣfahānī (Qum: Muʿassasat 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 tablīghāt, 1411/1990), 162; Modarressi, Tradition and Survival, 228, 380–1.
among rather distant Shii communities. In a similar correspondence, the Shii community of Rass is reported to have sought al-Murtadā’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 asl) such as Kitāb al-Ḥalabī”. 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.

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 Shalmaghanī, 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 asl (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-mansīb ilayhi (a book attributed to al-Ḥalabī), whereas al-Ṭūsī introduced it as kitāb muṣannaf ma’mūl ʿalayhi (a composition that is widely used). 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 (asl), 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 hadīth related on the authority of al-Ṣādiq. In other words, it appears to be a legal hadīth 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 Kūfah. 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 Kūfah, typical of any early Shii work, from where the book made its way to Qum, Baghdād,

32 Ṭālī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtadā, Rasā‘il al-Murtadā, ed. al-Sayyid Mahdi al-Rajjāq (Qum: Dār al-Qur’ān al-ḵārim, 1405/1984), 1: 279.
33 Al-Sharīf al-Murtadā, Rasā‘il al-Murtadā, 2: 331.
34 Al-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Iqbal, 1: 48; Ṭālī b. Mūsā al-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, ed. al-Sayyid Muhammad Ṭālī al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī al-Marāghā, “Risāla ‘adam muḍāyaqaṭ al-fawā’it”, in Turāthunā 2–3, 1407/1986, 340–1.
35 See al-Najāshī, Rījāl, 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 dāʿīs in Qayrawān. Reporting the distinguished status of his teacher and the extent of his scholarly activities, the senior Ismaili dāʿī Ibn al-Haytham (b. c. 273–77/886–87) reports:

And whatever I may forget, I shall never forget the dāʿī of Malūsa, the shaykh of the community and their legal authority, Afḍāl b. Ḥārūn al-ʿĪbānī. He combined his activity as a dāʿī with the sciences of the religious law, and he reached back to the time of Abū Maʿṣar and al-Ḥuwānī 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 dāʿīs in North Africa. Given the fact that al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (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 ʿUbaydillāh b. ʿAlī 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. ʿUthmān (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 hadith collections.

Al-Ḥalabī’s collection in al-Īdāh

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

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36 Jaʿfar b. ʿAbd al-Haytham, The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shiʿi Witness: An Edition and English Translation of Ibn al-Haytham’s Kitāb al-munāzara, ed. and tr. Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 168–9.
37 Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī, Risāla Abī Ghālib al-Zurārī, 162.
38 Muḥammad b. Išāq Ibn al-Nadīm, Kitāb al-fihrist, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyūd (London: Muʿassasat al-Furqān li al-ṭurāṭ al-islāmī, 1430/2009), 3: 70. Kitāb ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥalabī should be corrected and read as Kitāb ʿUbaydillāh al-Ḥalabī.
39 Al-Ṭūsī, Fihrist, 305–6; al-Najāshī, Rījāl, 231; Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī, Risāla Abī Ghālib al-Zurārī, 162; al-Faqīḥ, 4: 429.
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 tabaqa (generation) does not support the possibility of their direct transmission from al-Ḥalabī.
Table 1. Number of citations from Jāmiʿ al-Ḥalabī and Kitāb al-masāʾil in al-İdāḥ

| Number of citations | Jāmiʿ al-Ḥalabī | Kitāb al-masāʾil |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 51                  |                | 52              |

al-Ḥalabī al-maʿrūf bi al-masāʾil (henceforth Kitāb al-masāʾil).41 Diverting from his method of quoting complete isnāds for the sources that he cited, al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān does not follow the same practice for these two titles, nor does he provide the full name of their author(s). Jāmiʿ al-Ḥalabī is cited 51 times in al-İdāḥ whereas Kitāb al-masāʾil is quoted in 52 instances (Table 1).

Al-Ḥalabī’s collection in al-Ḳāfī

Contrary to al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān 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 Shīʿī ḥadīth compendia, collectively known as “the Four Books” (al-kutub al-arbaʿa), depicts the astounding figure of 1,544 reports attributed to ʿUbaydullāh b. ʿAbbās al-Ḥalabī.42 His chief reporter, Ḥammād b. ʿUthmān al-Nāb (d. 190/806), is credited with transmitting 1,261 of those reports. Furthermore, Ibn Abī ʿUmayr (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 Tahdhib al-aḥkām and al-İstibsār ṣimāʾ ukhtulīfa min al-akhbār are not only composed by a single author, Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, but also cite verbatim the reports of al-Ḳāfī, it is safe to conclude

41 The editor of al-İdāḥ has incorrectly interpolated al-Ḥalabī (Kitāb al-masāʾil) in the isnād of a report transmitted on the authority of al-Baqir that has been discounted in my calculation. Neither the tabaga (generation) of the transmitters – al-ʿAlī b. Razīn and Muhammad b. Muslim – support the occurrence of al-Ḥalabī in the given isnād nor does the manuscript contain such a name. Compare al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, ed. Kāẓim Rahmati, al-İdāḥ (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-aʾlam li al-maṭbūʿat, 2007), 55 with al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, al-İdāḥ, MS Tübingen-Hamdāni, 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 ʿUmayr contains a second opinion it should be understood as an interpolation of the latter. Ibn Bābawayh, Maʿānī al-akhbār, ed. ʿAllī Akbar Gaḥfārī (Qum: Jāmiʿ at 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 Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, Tahdhib al-aḥkām, ed. Sayyid Ḥasan al-Mūsawī Khārsān (Tehran: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, 1407/1986) and Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, al-İstibsār ṣimāʾ ukhtulīfa min al-akhbār, ed. Sayyid Ḥasan al-Mūsawī Khārsān (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 ḥadīth 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 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| al-Ｋāfī                  | 504                               | 446                                             | 52346                                           |
| al-Faqīh                 | 201                               | 8047                                           | 448                                             |
| Tahdhīb                  | 582                               | 506                                             | 579                                             |
| al-Istibṣār              | 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-Īḍāh 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-Īḍāh 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 Shī 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: manbā‘i maktūb dar ta‘īl-i al-Kāfī”, Faṣnāma-ye ʿulūm-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.
readings of an early source reaching back to the author (who may not even be the individual to whom the reports are attributed): these readings 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-Ḥalabi’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. 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. 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 milieus of Rayy, Qum, and Baghdad. Though the early Shī‘a ḥadīth is justifiably considered a shared legacy of both Ismailis and Twelvers (they do, after all, share the same lines of Imams from ʿAlī 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-Ḥalabi’s reports cited in al-Īdāh, from both Jāmī’ al-Ḥalabī and Kitāb al-masā’il, which are also traced in al-Kāfī and other Twelver ḥadīth compendia. 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. Poonawalla’s dating complements that of Lokhandwalla. See Ismail K. Poonawalla, “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 Shī‘a 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. Yaʿqūb 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. Yaʿqūb 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-Īdāh* that are traced or untraced in *al-Kāfī* and other Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia

|                              | No. of reports identical to *al-Kāfī* | No. of reports identical to other *ḥadīth* compendia | No. of reports with identical content | Obscured<sup>52</sup> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| On the authority of ʿUbaydullāh al-Ḥalabī | 9                                     | 2                                                   | 3                                   | 32                    |
| On the authority of certain al-Ḥalabī: Ubaydullāh, Muḥammad or ʿImrān | 2                                     | –                                                   | 3                                   | 6                     |
| On the authority of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī via Ibn Muskān | 3                                     | 3                                                   | 3                                   | 21                    |
| On various authorities throughout Twelver *ḥadīth* compendia | 5                                     | 3                                                   | 6                                   | 13                    |
| **Total**                    | 23                                    | 5                                                   | 6                                   | 53                    |

<sup>52</sup> 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 *dāʾir*. It was then incorporated and absorbed in the larger *hadith* collections compiled in these regions. Reading *al-Īdāh* gives the impression that al-Qāḍī al-Nu’mān had numerous early sources of *hadith* 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 Aflāḥ b. Hārūn al-Ībānī, the *dāʾir* 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 Shi‘ī *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. Ḥābīb Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūḥ 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-muṣannafa*). See al-Najāshī, *Rījāl*, 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 *uṣūl* in its broader sense, i.e. works that were composed during the time of the Imams. See Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Shahrāshīb, *Kitāb ma‘ālim al-ʿulamā‘ fī fihrist kutub al-Shī‘a wa asmā‘ al-muṣannifīn*
The sources of *al-Kāfī*, in reference to al-Ḥalabi’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-Ḥalabi58 that are found in other Twelver hadith compendia. The tracing of identical reports in other collections highlights two points: first, al-Ḥalabi’s collection also served as a source for hadith compendia of Qum and Baghdad; second, al-Kulaynī, unlike al-Qāḍī al-Nu’mān, did not fully extract all the reports of al-Ḥalabi’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-Ḥalabi and the unmatched reputation of his collection? Do we know if al-Ḥalabi’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 musammatūt (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. Ḥāshim (d. c. 260/873), *Kitāb al-nawādir* of Ahmad b. Ṣā’s Ash’ārī (fl. 274/887) and *Nawādir al-ḥikma* of Muḥammad b. Ḥāmād b. Yaḥyā (d. 280/893).60

56 From Jāmī’ al-Ḥalabī: *al-Idāh*, 72 (al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhib al-ahkām*, 2: 278); *al-Idāh*, 164 (al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhib al-ahkām*, 2: 71). From Kitāb al-masā‘īl: *al-Idāh*, 100 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīḥ*, 1: 236); *al-Idāh*, 106 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīḥ*, 1: 236); *al-Idāh*, 131 (Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār, *Bāṣīr il-ar-ḍarajāt*, ed. Muḥammad Küchle-bāghī (Qum: Kitābkhāneh ye Ayatullāh Mar‘āshī, 1404/1983), 420).

57 *Al-Idāh*, 46 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīḥ*, 1: 416); 118 (Ibn Bābawayh, *al-Faqīḥ*, 1: 397); 146 (Muḥammad b. al-Mas‘ūd al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī* (Qum: Chāfkhāneh ye ‘ilmīyey, 1380/1960), 2: 270). All three instances are cited from Kitāb al-masā‘īl.

58 Most likely ʿUbaydullāh but could also be his brother, Muḥammad, or his nephew, Yaḥyā b. ‘Īmān b. ʿAlī 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, *Rījāl*, 132; al-Ṭūsī, *Fiḥrist*, 155.

60 Of these scholars, Ibrāhīm b. Ḥāshim merits the most mention. Al-Kulaynī cites almost one-third of *al-Kāfī*’s reports on the authority of Ibrāhīm b. Ḥāshim via his son ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm (alive in 307/919). For the details of these three works, see al-Najāshī, *Rījāl*, 16 (Ibrāhīm b. Ḥāshim), 81–2 (Ḥāmād b. ʿĪsā al-Asḥā’īr) and 348–9 (Muḥammad b. Ḥāmād b. Yaḥyā).
Al-Kulaynī’s reliance on an unusually broad range of these navādir partly explains why al-Kāfī is stylistically different from the other three Twelver hadith compendia, namely al-Faqīh, Tahdhib al-ahkām, and al-Istibsār.

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. navādir compiled by his Qummī predecessors. This can also be gleaned from Table 2 which demonstrates that Ibn Abī ʿUmayr relates from Ḥammād a total of 523 reports, 446 of which contain a recurring chain of transmission: Ibn Abī ʿUmayr → Ḥammād → al-Ḥalabī. One can surmise, invoking Modarressi’s hypothesis, that al-Kulaynī’s citations are based, albeit through his navādir 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:

$\text{ʿAli b. Ibrāhīm} \rightarrow \text{Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim} \rightarrow \text{Ibn Abī ʿUmayr} \rightarrow \text{Ḥammād} \rightarrow \text{al-Ḥalabī}$\textsuperscript{61}

$\text{Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā} \rightarrow \text{Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭūsā} \rightarrow \text{Ibn Abī ʿUmayr} \rightarrow \text{Ḥammād} \rightarrow \text{al-Ḥalabī}$\textsuperscript{62}

$\text{ʿIdda (group of his teachers)} \rightarrow \text{Ṣahl b. Ziyād} \rightarrow \text{al-Ḥajjāl} \rightarrow \text{Ḥammād} \rightarrow \text{al-Ḥalabī}$\textsuperscript{63}

There is not sufficient internal or external evidence to support the claim that al-Kulaynī had direct access to early usūl of the mid-second/eighth century. I argue that it is due, rather, to his use of navādir 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 Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭūsā 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 navādir al-Kulaynī chose to extract a particular report. Notwithstanding this disintegration, the force of my conclusion remains intact, for navādir works are seen as intermediary works between early usūl works and later hadith compendia. In other words, had navādir 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 hadith 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 Shīʿī 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

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{63} Al-Kāfī, 8: 176.
Twelver Shi‘ī hadīth in the fourth/tenth century, Qum and Baghdad, provided Twelver scholars with a host of early Kūfīn sources that were not necessarily available to al-Qādī al-Nu‘mān in Qayrawān. In these instances, Twelver scholars, it could be argued, opted to cite similar reports from other usūl. 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-Kīfī and al-Īdāh also reveals that the latter contains far more reports than the former. In the chapter of al-ṣalāt in al-Kīfī, 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-Īdāh. This reflects al-Qādī 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-Īdāh. On the other hand, one could also argue that al-Qādī 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-Kīfī through the lens of al-Īdāh facilitates a new understanding of the former’s engagement with intermediary sources that were obscured or forgotten with the emergence of larger thematically arranged hadīth 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-Īdāh are identical with those cited on the authority of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī in Twelver hadīth compendia; second, three of these reports are attributed to Jāmi‘ and the other three to Kitāb al-masā’il. In reference to Twelver hadīth compendia, all six reports are exclusively found in Tahdhib al-akhām and al-Istībār. Al-Ṭūsī relates these reports on the authority of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī via ‘Abdullāh b. Musḵān. Did al-Ṭūsī mistake ‘Ubaydullāh for Muḥammad? Did Baghdādī 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-Qādī 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

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64 Al-Kulaynī, al-Kīfī, 3: 264–495; al-Qādī al-Nu‘mān, al-Īdāh, 20–165.
of the Kitāb ascribed to 'Ubaydullāh in Twelver sources.Kitāb al-masāʾil, according to Modarressi, though different in style, was “part of the larger version of [‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī] al-Halabī’s Kitāb”. 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 -Idāh. The mention of both titles, in several instances with a conjunction, attests to the fact that al-Qādī al-Nu’mān considered them to be two separate works. Furthermore, contrary to his consistent pattern of using pronouns (ṣīḥi or ʿīfāḥ) for the same titles consulted for a previous report, al-Nu’mān cites the full titles, one after the other, of these two works. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that al-Qādī al-Nu’mān treated them as two separate works. Furthermore, there is no mention of Kitāb al-masāʾil under the entries of ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Alī al-Halabī 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-masāʾil is not to be found in Jāmiʿ al-Ḥalabī.

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

The cross-regional textual analysis of -Idāh and Twelver hadīth 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 -Idāh, I argue, reflect earlier layers of ḫūfān sources than those which can be found in its Qummi and Baghdadi counterparts. The sources of the latter, it is observed, were refined and processed in the then intellectually vibrant Twelver hadīth 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 Qummi and Baghdadi scholars enjoyed access to a greater variety of sources.

65 Madelung, “The sources of Ismāʿīlī law”, 35.
66 Modarressi, Tradition and Survival, 381.
67 Al-Qādī al-Nu’mān, -Idāh, 52, 143, 159.
68 Al-Qādī al-Nu’mān, -Idāh, 40.
69 Al-Qādī al-Nu’mān, -Idāh, 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-Najāshi, Riǧāl al-Najāshi, 325.
71 Al-Qādī al-Nu’mān, -Idāh, 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-Idāh 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 hadith compendia on the authority of ʿUbaydullāh 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-Nuṭmī treated Jāmīʿ al-Ḥalabī and Kitāb al-maṣāʾil as two different works, al-Kulaynī’s insāds make no distinction between them. The same applies to other Twelver hadith compendia. Third, al-Kulaynī’s sources appear to be wider than al-Qāḍī al-Nuṭmī; while only the latter appears to have had direct access to the usūl, 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-Idāh enabled us to trace the historicity and, to an extent, the contents of an early Kūfan hadith 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-Nuṭmī’s works” might “shed further light on Shi‘i tradition as a whole.”

Conclusion

The primary focus of this article centred around developing a methodology that could help us investigate the historicity and geographical transmission of early Shi‘i hadith sources. Two assumptions formed the basis of my hypothesis. First, Shi‘i hadith, 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 hadith. Second, contrary to Sunni hadith tradition, which arguably relied on oral transmission, Shi‘i hadith, since its inception, was transmitted through the medium of writing. I have argued that these two features of Shi‘i hadith merit different treatment and that the tools designed to evaluate Sunni hadith tradition do not appear to be sufficiently effective.

After having examined the existing literature on the origins, circulation, and methodological challenges of early Shi‘i hadith 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 hadith compendia that purport to have faithfully transmitted its content. I argued that a cross-regional textual analysis of hadith 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 Shīī ḥadīth sources, helps trace the trajectory of dissemination of texts across times and regions. I have tested this method on al-Ḵāṭīr and al-Īḍāh in an attempt to excavate the earliest layer of al-Ḥalabī’s collection, arguably the earliest Shīī legal ḥadīth source and, in turn, to examine the geographical movements and intellectual exchange between Kūfā, 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 Shīī collections in order to produce a more complete picture of the early sources of Shīī 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 Shīī ḥadīth collections are composed by non-contemporaneous Twelver scholars of Qum and Baghdad. Second, al-Īḍāh survives only as a small fragment that contains citations from a meagre 21 early sources. A complete manuscript of al-Īḍāh, if ever found, would greatly enrich our understanding of early Shīī 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 Shīī 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 Kūfān and Medinese ḥadīth collections compiled by proto-Sunni and proto-Shīī 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-Īḍāh’s citations of al-Jaʿfarī fārīyāt, a second/eighth-century legal ḥadīth collection transmitted on the authority of Iṣmāʿīl b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar, the grandson of al-Ṣādiq. I have traced similar reports in al-Ḵāṭīr through a completely different chain of transmission. The historicity of al-Jaʿfarī fārīyāt, therefore, is determined by cross-regional textual analysis of its reports cited in al-Īḍāh and al-Ḵāṭīr. I have also tested this method on a Zaydi ḥadīth corpus with similar results. The citations of Kutub Muḥammad b. Sallām b. Sāvyār al-Ḵāṭīr in al-Īḍāh are cross-examined with the Zaydi ḥadīth collection attributed to Muḥammad b. Mānsūr al-Murādī (d. c. 290/903), commonly known as Amālī Ṭāhī b. ʿĪṣā. The cross-regional textual analysis of the reports cited in al-Īḍāh and Amālī indicate that they shared a common source dating back to an earlier period.