

## On the Validity of the Chain of Narration for *Ziyārat al-Arbaʿīn*\*

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The chain of transmission (*isnād*) for the 40th Day Visitation (*Ziyārat al-Arbaʿīn*) reads as follows: Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) narrated in *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *al-Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid*, saying:

A group of our companions informed us from Abū Muḥammad Hārūn b. Mūsā b. Aḥmad al-Tallaʿukbarī, who said: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar narrated to us; he said: Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Masʿada and al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Faḍḍāl narrated to me, from Saʿdān b. Muslim, from Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl who said: “My master [Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad] al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said to me regarding the Fortieth Day Visitation: ‘Visit at the rising of the day and say: Peace be upon the friend of God and His beloved, peace be upon the intimate of God and His chosen one, peace be upon the pure one of God and son of His pure one, peace be upon al-Ḥusayn the oppressed martyr, peace be upon the prisoner of afflictions and the slain of tears...’”<sup>1</sup>

This narration is the primary evidence used to demonstrate the recommended nature of visiting Imam al-Ḥusayn (a.s.) on the 20th of Ṣafar, commemorating forty days after his martyrdom. There should be no doubt about its complete indication of this recommendation

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<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* (Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya: 1407/1986), 6:113; idem., *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid* (Muʿassasa Fiqh al-Shīʿa: 1990), 2:788.

given the narration clearly reveals its connection to visiting Imam al-Ḥusayn (a.s.). In addition, there is no doubt that—in the understanding of the believers, as passed down from predecessor to successor—the title *Ziyārat al-Arbaʿīn* specifically refers to visiting the Imam (a.s.) on the occasion of the 40th day.

Nevertheless, an objection has been raised regarding the completeness of this narration's *isnād*, even though its completeness can be established since it includes only two individuals whose reliability is questioned:

1. Saʿdān b. Muslim, who is not explicitly deemed reliable in the biographical (*rijālī*) works, but he is among the narrators of Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad Ibn Qūlawayh's (d. 368/978) *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*<sup>2</sup> and among the teachers of Ibn Abī ʿUmayr (d. 217/832).<sup>3</sup> His reliability can be established according to these two well-known principles: namely, trustworthiness inferred from being among the narrators of Ibn Qūlawayh, or from being among the teachers of Ibn Abī ʿUmayr. However, I accept the second principle but not the first.
2. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar, who is also not explicitly deemed reliable in the biographical works, but it is noteworthy that Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990) mentioned him in his *Fihrist*<sup>4</sup> as “Abū l-Ḥusayn ... Ibn Maʿmar al-Kūfī” among the Shīʿī jurists, traditionists, and scholars, indicating he was among the notable figures of his time. No criticism has been reported about him, which necessitates accepting his narrations.

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<sup>2</sup> Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* (Dār al-Murtaḍawiyya: 1356 Sh./1977), *al-Khitām*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi fī ʿilm al-dīn* (Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya: 1986), 1:178.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad b. Ishāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist Ibn al-Nadīm* (Dār al-Maʿrifa: 1997), 274.

As for ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Mas‘ada, the lack of confirmation of his reliability is not problematic, because Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ma‘mar narrated from both him and al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Faḍḍāl together, and the reliability of the second is sufficient.

I say: Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ma‘mar was indeed one of those who narrated from Ḥamdān b. al-Mu‘āfā,<sup>5</sup> who died in 265/878-888, and from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abī l-Khaṭṭāb,<sup>6</sup> who died in 262/875-876, and they are both from the seventh generation of *ḥadīth* transmitters. Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941)<sup>7</sup> and Furāt b. Ib-rāhīm al-Kūfī (d. 352/963),<sup>8</sup> who are from the ninth generation, narrated from him. Therefore, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ma‘mar must be from the eighth generation, though it appears from al-Talla‘ukbarī’s narration—who is from the tenth generation—that he lived long enough to be encountered by the scholars of that generation as well.

According to the chain or narrations, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ma‘mar narrates from Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Mas‘ada and al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Faḍḍāl. However, the latter belongs to the sixth generation, and so it would not have been possible for Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ma‘mar—from the eighth generation—to narrate from him directly, suggesting a possible missing intermediary, as shown in *isnād* 1:

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī → al-Talla‘ukbarī → Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ma‘mar  
→ <missing intermediary?> → Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b.  
Mas‘ada *wa* (and) al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Faḍḍāl → Sa‘dān b. Muslim  
→ Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl → Imām al-Ṣādiq (a.s.).

In light of this, it seems probable that the conjunction *wa* (“and”) in *isnād* 1 is, in fact, a corruption of the preposition ‘*an* (“from”), as has occurred in dozens of instances in *ḥadīth* books. This would then suggest a different chain of narration, as shown in *isnād* 2 (the chain of

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<sup>5</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī* (Dār al-Thaqāfa: 1993), 630.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 3:66.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 8:18.

<sup>8</sup> Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī* (Kitābchī: 1376 Sh./1997), 8.

narrators with *ʿan* instead of *wa*):

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī → al-Tallaʿukbarī → Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar  
→ Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Masʿada → al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī  
b. Faḍḍāl → Saʿdān b. Muslim → Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl →  
Imām al-Ṣādiq (a.s.).

Accordingly, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Masʿada serves as an intermediary between Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar and al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Faḍḍāl. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Masʿada—who appears from some *isnāds* to be the grandson of Masʿada b. Ṣadaqa—is considered from the seventh generation, since Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar (who is also from the eighth) narrates from him, and his narration from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Najrān (who is from the sixth generation, like Ibn Faḍḍāl) has been recorded.

Thus, it becomes clear that the problem in the mentioned *isnād* is not limited to the presence of Saʿdān b. Muslim and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar—issues that could be addressed by what was previously discussed—but also includes ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Masʿada. Additionally, the claim that there is sufficient ground to accept the narration of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar because he was among the notable figures, coupled with the absence of criticism against him, is only valid according to the methodology of some scholars. However, this approach cannot be considered sufficient for establishing reliability.

Of course, one could argue that Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar's status as a well-known Shīʿī jurist, traditionist, and scholar is in itself sufficient grounds for relying on the material he narrates, but this requires further consideration.

However, it can be said that, aside from what has been mentioned above, it is possible to establish the reliability of the aforementioned narration, because Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Maʿmar and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Masʿada were not among the authors of books but rather among the scholars who granted licenses for the transmission of books written by others. It is noteworthy that Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Najāshī

(d. 450/1058) counted the *Kitāb al-ziyārāt* among al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Faḍḍāl’s books.<sup>9</sup> It appears that al-Talla‘ukbarī—whom Shaykh al-Ṭūsī explicitly stated had narrated all foundational works and compilation<sup>10</sup>—extracted Ṣafwān b. Mihrān al-Jammāl’s aforementioned narration from that book. Since the books of the Banū Faḍḍāl were well-known and recognised in that era, there is no need to examine the chain of transmission when relying on what has been extracted from them.

In conclusion, my recommended approach to the question of the validity of the *isnād* of the *Ziyārat al-Arba‘īn* is to accept the completeness of its *isnād*, and specifically the possibility of relying upon it in establishing the recommendation of the 40th day (*arba‘īn*) visitation.

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<sup>9</sup> Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī* (Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī: 1365 Sh./1986), 36.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* (Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī: 1373 Sh./1994), 449.