

Peshawar Nights **DEBUNKED**



~~Sayyid~~ Muhammad al-Musawi al-
Shirazi

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A (summarized) Response To Peshawar Nights by Islamicweb.com

Introduction

The art of fictional narration

The art of fictional narration can be traced back to the earliest civilizations, and has assumed various different appearances over the centuries. The fact that this form of narration is **fictitious** was never really used to discredit literary fiction, since the lessons the author of Aesop's Fables, for example, wished to impart, did not depend upon whether his animal characters could or did really speak. Similarly, Shakespeare, in his quasi-historical works, does not attempt to convey to the reader the notion that the words or actions he ascribes to his characters were really said or done by them.

However, it is when the author of the fictional narrative tries to overstep the bounds of fiction and confer upon his work the appearance of historical authenticity, that his work loses the respectable designation "literary fiction", and earns for itself the ignominious epithet "literary hoax".

The Historicity Of "Peshawar Nights"

In the book "Peshawar Nights", whose author is styled as "Sultan al-Wa'izin Shirazi", we have an example of a work which purports to be the record of a Sunni-Shi'i debate. However, an objective analysis of the book leads us to the inevitable conclusion that in this particular work Shirazi has done nothing more than employ the literary device of fictional narration—a device that for centuries has found favour with Shi'i polemicists.

Shi'i polemicists were quite aware that to actually engage the 'ulama of the Ahl as-Sunnah in debate would considerably curtail their advantage, and therefore they resorted to the more convenient ploy of creating their own opponents, since by doing so they would be able to manipulate the "opponent's" arguments to their own advantage. Thus, when Sultan al-Wa'izin Shirazi decided to choose this style of writing for his book, he was not being original at all. He was merely imitating the precedent set by earlier Shi'i writers like Abul Futuh ar-Razi and Radiyy ad-Din Ibn Tawus. Below we look at three works in this genre by these two authors.

Husniyyah

A book by this title appeared during the latter half of the previous century, purporting to be the record of a debate that had taken place at the court of Harun ar-Rashid between Husniyyah, a slave girl owned by a merchant friend of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, and the Imams Abu Yusuf and ash-Shafi'i. This slave girl had supposedly stayed with Imam Ja'far upto the age of twenty, and had acquired expertise in numerous branches of knowledge from him. In the book she publicly humiliates the two Imams, defeating their arguments and presenting them with "incontrovertible evidence" of the truth of the creed of the Shi'ah.

The book is full of anachronisms. For one, ash-Shafi'i came to Baghdad only after the death of Abu Yusuf, so it is impossible that they could ever have taken part together in any discussion. The book also speaks of a third learned man by the name of Ibrahim Khalid of Basrah, who was supposedly regarded by Abu Yusuf as "superior in knowledge to them all." When they themselves were unable to answer the arguments of Husniyyah, they referred the matter to this Ibrahim Khalid, but he too, was incapable of responding to her. History, however, has recorded nothing of a person by this name, and the effort to identify him with Abu Thawr, whose name was Ibrahim ibn Khalid, is futile, since Abu Thawr was a Baghdadi by birth and lived there all his life. Far from being regarded as ash-Shafi'i's superior, he was his student, and one of the four narrators of his **qadim** views. Even of Husniyyah herself, the annals of history and biography have recorded nothing at all. It is only in this belated document that mention is made of her existence.

It is recorded by the prominent Shi'i bibliographer, Aqa Buzurg Tihrani in his bibliographical lexicon **adh-Dhari'ah** that this booklet was originally found in the possession of a sayyid in Syria by Mulla Ibrahim al-Astarabadi when the latter returned to Iran from Hajj in the year 958/1551. He translated it into Persian, and it was first published in 1287/1870. (**adh-Dhari'ah**, vol. 4 p. 97 no. 452, 3rd edition, Dar al-Adwa', Beirut 1401/1981)

The Shi'i biographer Mirza 'Abdullah Effendi al-Isfahani has done us a favour by exposing the real author of the book [Husniyyah](#), and his purpose in writing such a book. He writes in his book [Riyad al-'Ulama'](#):

Such a degree of learning and eminence is accorded to Husniyyah in this booklet, that it creates the impression of it being the fraudulent work of Shaykh Abul Futuh ar-Razi, written and forged by him. He ascribed it to Husniyyah in order to bring disgrace to the beliefs of the Ahl as-Sunnah, and to humiliate them by exposing their beliefs. ([Riyad al-'Ulama'](#) vol. 5 p. 407 (Maktabat Ayatullah al-Mar'ashi, Qum 1401/1981)

This identification of Abul Futuh ar-Razi with the authorship of the booklet [Husniyyah](#) is supported by Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin, the author of [A'yan ash-Shi'ah](#), one of the most authoritative contemporary biographical dictionaries of the Shi'ah. He states categorically that this book "is the work of Abul Futuh ar-Razi".

Yuhanna The Christian

This same Shaykh Abul Futuh ar-Razi is credited with the authorship of another spurious polemical tract called [Risalat Yuhanna an-Nasrani](#) (the tract of Yuhanna [John] the Christian). In this tract, quoted by a number of Shi'i writers as factual truth, a Christian by the name of Yuhanna engages the Sunni 'ulama of Baghdad in a debate during which he demonstrates the "fallacies" in the creed of the Ahl as-Sunnah. Eventually he declares his acceptance of Shi'ism as the true religion. Mirza 'Abdullah Effendi ascribes this work to Abul Futuh ar-Razi. The "strength" of this polemic is supposed to derive from the fact that even a non-Muslim is able to discern the "falsehood" of Sunni belief from the "truth" of Shi'ism.

'Abd Al-Mahmud The Dhimmi

Radiyy ad-Din Ali ibn Tawus belonged to a prominent Shi'i family that lived at Hillah near Najaf at the time of the sack of Baghdad by the Tartars under Hulagu. Shi'ite complicity in the fall of Baghdad is a fact of history. This explains why the Mongol conquerors favoured the Shi'i intellectuals. Ibn Tawus, for example, was appointed Naqib al-Ahsraf by Hulagu, the destroyer of Baghdad. He gladly accepted this office, having earlier persistently refused it from the late Khalifah, al-Mustansir.

With the fall of Baghdad came a new surge in Shi'ite propagation, the like of which was only seen in the days of the Buwayhids during the 5th century. The high positions occupied by Shi'i dignitaries in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) administration afforded the Shi'ah the influence and leverage they needed to prosper. In Iraq the town of Hillah soon developed into the most important center of Shi'i learning.

This age also saw the composition of a number of polemical works. As the most prolific Shi'i author of the time, it would be only natural for Ibn Tawus to contribute to this genre of literature. However, he preferred to do so under an assumed identity. His book, entitled [at-Tara'if fi Madhahib at-Tawa'if](#), was written under the nom-de-plume ' Abd al-Mahmud ibn Dawud al-Mudari.

He commences his book with the (patently false) statement that he is a man from amongst the Ahl adh-Dhimmah (Jews or Christians living under the protection of the Muslim state). He then proceeds on to a comparative study of different religious persuasions, and predictably enough, ends up with Ithna 'Ashari (Twelver) Shi'ism as the only true religion. Like Abul Futuh ar-Razi before him, he seeks to inject objectivity into his work by assuming the identity of a supposedly unbiased observer. (See [Riyad al-'Ulama'](#) vol. 5 p. 407)

This survey of the use of fictional narration by Shi'i polemicists in history creates the background against which we will now proceed to examine the historicity of "Peshawar Nights" and its contents.

Authorship

The first thing which draws the attention of the unbiased reader should be the fact that while there were two sides who participated in the discussion, the book itself came from the pen of the Shi'i participant exclusively. This fact might at first glance escape the notice of the unsuspecting reader who has complete faith—to the point of gullibility—in the goodwill of the author. However, no one possessed of a sense of discretion can help but notice this discrepancy.

The writer of the foreword seeks to make amends for this serious indictment of the book's historicity by stating that "four reporters recorded the discussions in the presence of approximately 200 people (Shia and

Sunni Muslims),” and that “local newspapers published these accounts each following morning.” Yet, both Shirazi and his publishers fail to produce the least bit of factual evidence in the form of copies of the newspaper reports from which it is alleged that Shirazi ultimately compiled the book. All we have to vouch for the occurrence of this ten-night discussion is the word of Shirazi himself.

There is furthermore no external corroboration at all, least of all by the Sunni participant or the five other dignitaries who are alleged in the translator’s preface (p. xviii) to have publicly acknowledged their conversion to Shi’ism. Once again, we have nothing but Shirazi’s own claim to support the historicity of the event upon which “Peshawar Nights” is based.

Publication

The book is published not in Peshawar, the city in which the discussion reportedly took place, but in Tehran. It is published not in Urdu or Pushtu, the language of the North West Frontier, but in Persian, the language of Iran.

It is highly unlikely that there was a Persian language newspaper in Peshawar, or in the rest of India for that matter, at the time of the alleged debate. In India at that time, Persian had diminished into an archaic language, more suited for the occasional moments of inspiration of the romantic poet than for the practical use of the media. Shirazi himself was merely a visitor to India, and is therefore not likely to have known either Urdu or Pushtu. The question about how he came to transcribe his book from newspaper accounts published in a language he did not know will remain a mystery for as long as one believes that the book is the record of an historical debate. On the other hand, if one accepts the much more plausible, rational, and indeed logical position that the author of the book has employed the literary device of fictional narration, for whatever reason, the mystery is immediately and conclusively solved.

The Participants

The names of the participants are given as Hafiz Muhammad Rashid and Shaykh ‘Abd as-Salam, and they are said to be from Kabul. None of these two persons are identified beyond their first names. Eponymous descriptions that identify persons in terms of their localities or family connections, and which are so common amongst the ‘ulama of India and Afghanistan, are conspicuously absent. The same is true for the third person, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Hayy. Even the Nawab Sahib, whose conversion at the end of the 10th session is prominently touted, is not clearly identified. Why, if the incident and the personalities were as real as the author tries to make them seem, does he prefer to keep it secret?

Furthermore, Sunni-Shi’i polemics was at that time a very well developed discipline. Shi’i proselytization in the established Sunni community had led to some Sunni ‘ulama taking up the task of debating and refuting the Shi’ah. Beginning with Shah Waliyullah and his son Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, there were literally scores of Sunni ‘ulama who specialized in Sunni-Shi’i polemics. At the time this debate was supposedly taking place in the remote city of Peshawar, there lived in India an intellectual giant like ‘Allamah ‘Abd ash-Shakur of Lucknow, a scholar whose devotion to Sunni-Shi’i polemics had earned him the title “Imam Ahl as-Sunnah”. In 1345 when this debate allegedly occurred ‘Allamah ‘Abd ash-Shakur was in his prime at the age of 52.(See [Nuzhat al-Khawatir](#), vol. 8 p. 271) The erudite Mawlana Anwar Shah Kashmiri was at that time 53 years of age. (See [Nuzhat al-Khawatir](#), vol. 8 p. 90) If Sultan al-Wa’izin Shirazi was at all serious about an objective discussion of Sunni-Shi’i differences, he would have been engaging scholars of this caliber, and not figures of obscure historicity, who probably never existed outside his own imagination.

Sources

Shirazi’s citation of sources cannot fail to attract the reader’s attention. The translators ascribe this to his erudition: “Although the dialogue was extemporaneous, such was the erudition of Sultanu’l-Wa`izin Shirazi ... that the transcript serves as a detailed bibliographical reference to hundreds of Sunni treatises well known and little known, in which the claims of the Shi`ites are acknowledged.” (p. xviii) However, to the careful—and knowledgeable—reader, this very same manner of citation reveals a fatal fault in the authenticity of the book as a faithful record of a debate in 1345/1927.

There are many occurrences of this phenomenon throughout the book, but a few random examples should suffice to clarify its nature to the reader.

1. One of the sources quoted by Shirazi, complete with volume and page numbers, is the book [at-Tarikh al-Kabir](#) by Imam Bukhari. (See p. 229) This work would be printed in Hyderabad, Deccan for the first time ever in the year 1362/1943, no less than 16 years after the “debate” took place.
2. Another work cited by Shirazi is [Hilyat al-Awliya](#) by Abu Nu‘aym al-Isfahani. (See p. 139) The first edition of this work was published in Cairo, from 1351/1932 to 1357/1938. The printing of this first edition commenced 6 years after the date of the alleged debate in Peshawar, and was completed 12 years after that date.
3. The book [Tarikh al-Khulafa](#) by Suyuti is quoted with page number by Shirazi. (See p. 147) Yet the first ever edition of this book would appear in print in 1371/1952, 26 years after the event.
4. The [Tarikh](#) of Ya‘qubi would be published for the first time by Dar Sadir in Beirut only in 1960. Shirazi quotes from it, complete with page reference, 33 years before its first edition would see the light. (See p. 147)
5. The fifth volume of Baladhuri’s [Ansab al-Ashraf](#) would be published by the University Press in Jerusalem in 1936. Sultan al-Wa‘izin Shirazi cites from this very same volume, to the point of supplying the page number, 9 years earlier. (See p. 146)
6. [Muruj adh-Dhahab](#) by Mas‘udi was first published by Dar Sadir in Beirut in 1368/1948, 3 years before Shirazi could quote it with volume and page numbers. (See p. 146)
7. [al-Iqd al-Farid](#) by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih is quoted with page and volume numbers by Shirazi. (See p. 190) Yet it was printed for the first time in Cairo in 1952, a quarter century after the alleged debate in Peshawar.
8. al-Haythami’s book [Majma' az-Zawa'id](#) is confidently cited by Shirazi, with page and volume numbers. (See p. 82) Yet the book would be printed for the first time in 1352, 7 years later.
9. [‘Umdat al-Qari](#) by Badr ad-Din al‘Ayni was first published in 1348. Shirazi manages to cite this work by page and volume numbers 3 years before its publication. (See p. 239)
10. The book [Tarikh Baghdad](#) was first published by Maktabat al-Khanji in Cairo in 1349/1930. Again Sultan al-Wa‘izin Shirazi manages the impossible by citing from this work with page and volume numbers 4 years before its publication. (See p. 183)

Thus Shirazi’s habit of supplying copious lists of references, and thereupon attempting to inject authority into them by citing page and volume numbers, had an unexpected—and a most definitely undesired—side effect. Instead of bolstering the authority of his book, it destroyed the entire image of the book as the authentic record of an objective debate.

Aside from the above cases where Shirazi has made reference to sources which were to be printed several years after the date of his alleged debate in Peshawar, he also has the tendency to list a large number of references which he could never possibly have laid hands or eyes on. Most of his references lack volume and page numbers. This shows that he did not have access to these works, and was merely quoting them from secondary, unnamed sources. A substantial number of them refer to books that have been completely missing for ce, and of which nothing is known besides their titles.

Source Methodology

One point of criticism which will recur throughout the book is the author’s indiscriminate use of sources. In matters of Shari‘ah and history, source methodology accounts for four fifths of any textual argument. No quotation can be presented as an authoritative argument if its authenticity has not satisfactorily been accounted for.

The key word here is [authenticity](#). No hadith is authentic simply for the reason of it being documented in a book. Of all people, the Shi‘ah are supposed to be the first to take note of this fact. Whenever they are

confronted with the fact that their hadith literature contains a huge number of ahadith (2000, according to Ni'matullah al-Jaza'iri in [al-Anwar an-Nu'maniyyah](#)) indicating that the present Qur'an suffered interpolation at the hands of the Sahabah. To know just how much importance the Shi'ah attach to authenticity, one needs only to look at the vehemence and fervour with which Ayatullah Muhammad Husayn Burujirdi—the supreme Shi'i mujtahid upto his death in 1961—rejected the Shi'i ahadith proving interpolation in the Qur'an as being “extremely weak”. (Lutfullah as-Safi, [Ma' al-Kahtib fi Khututihi al-'Aridah](#), p. 53)

Is authenticity a principle that only the Shi'ah can invoke when things turn against them? No person possessed of a sense fairness can fail to see the double standards of him who complains when unauthentic quotations from his own legacy are used against him, but freely quotes from the literature of his opponents without bothering to secure the authenticity of what he quotes.

In the following pages I will survey the sources of Sunni hadith cited by Shirazi. The sources from which he cites Sunni hadith may be classified under three headings: (1) primary sources (2) secondary sources (3) obscure sources.

1. Primary Sources

Hadith books in this category are characterized by the fact that they utilize [isnads](#) (chains of narration) for their material. It includes books such as the [Musnad](#) of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the six major works of al-Buhkari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah, the works of al-Bayhaqi, ad-Daraqutni, and of authors as late as Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi.

The narrated material in any collection utilizing isnads is as a rule only as good as the isnad. In [Sahih al-Bukhari](#) and [Sahih Muslim](#) we have a unique case, in that these two authors have applied a rigorous set of criteria to the ahadith which they admitted into their collections. The ahadith in the [Sahihayn](#) are therefore all authentic, not simply for the fact that they appear in those books, but because they conform to the criteria of authenticity stipulated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Books besides the [Sahihayn](#) are all subject to scrutiny of their isnads to determine to what extent they conform to the criteria of authenticity. There never has been a claim, neither by the authors of these works, nor by anyone else, that these works incorporate exclusively authentic material. Muhaddithin like al-Hakim, the author of [al-Mustadrak](#), and Ibn Hibban, the author of [at-Taqaqim wal-Anwa'](#) (commonly known as [Sahih Ibn Hibban](#)), have attempted to follow the example of al-Bukhari and Muslim by documenting only authentic ahadith, but their criteria, as well as the extent to which they abided by those criteria left a lot to be desired, and consequently came under censure from later muhaddithin.

Indiscriminate quoting from these works would therefore only occur if a person suffers from one of two defects: ignorance of the science of hadith; or a Machiavellian attitude of the end—in this case the conversion of the Ahl as-Sunnah—justifying the means. Either of these defects is sufficient to disqualify anyone as an objective polemicist.

2. Secondary Sources

Books in this category do not use isnads. Instead, they reproduce the texts of hadith from the primary sources, and give a reference to the source from they have taken it. An example here would be the book [Majma' az-Zawa'id](#) by Abul Hasan al-Haythami. In this work the author has collected those ahadith in the [Musnads](#) of Ahmad, al-Bazzar and Abu Ya'la, and the three [Mu'jams](#) of at-Tabarani—[al-Kabir](#), [al-Awsat](#) and [as-Saghir](#)—that do not appear in the six major collections.

Since the hadith collections in this category basically draw from the previous category, the same is applicable to it in terms of authenticity as was stated for the primary sources. In fact, when quoting from such secondary sources, the onus to prove authenticity is even greater.

Shirazi seems quite oblivious to—or ignorant of—the fact that works such as [Majma' az-Zawa'id](#) merely reproduce ahadith from primary sources. Therefore he thinks nothing of adducing [Majma' az-Zawa'id](#) as a source after having already ascribed the hadith to [al-Mu'jam al-Awsat](#) of at-Tabarani. (See p. 82) This is but one example of many. One wonders how someone who displays such an astonishing lack of proficiency in hadith could be bold enough to present himself as an erudite scholar.

Other books in this category are [ad-Durr al-Manthur](#) and [Tarikh al-Khulafa](#), both by as-Suyuti, [Ihya' 'Ulum ad-Din](#) by al-Ghazali, [Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb](#) (also known as [at-Tafsir al-Kabir](#)) by Fakhr ad-Din ar-

Razi, *Jami' al-Usul* by Ibn al-Athir, and *Kanz al-'Ummal* by 'Ali al-Muttaqi. This list is by no means exhaustive. These titles are mentioned merely by way of example.

3. Obscure Sources

Shirazi has shown an idiosyncratic predilection to quote from obscure and doubtful sources. A number of his sources stand out prominently in this regard: *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah* by Sulayman al-Qanduzi al-Hanafi; *Kifayat at-Talib* by Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Kanji ash-Shafi'i; and *Fara'id as-Simtayn* by al-Hamawayni.

The first of the three, al-Qanduzi, is described in *Mu'jam al-Mu'allifin* (vol. 4 p. 252) as a Sufi who lived during the latter half of the 13th/19th century. Al-Kanji, although very prominently labelled by Shirazi as a Shafi'i, is completely unknown to biographers of the Shafi'i fuqaha such as Imam an-Nawawi in *Tahdhib al-Asma' wal-Lughat*, Ibn as-Subki in *Tabaqat ash-Shafi'iyyah al-Kubra*, Ibn Qadi Shuhbah in his *Tabaqat ash-Shafi'iyyah*, and Jamal ad-Din al-Isnawi in his *Tabaqat*. Having died in 658 (as stated by Zereky in *al-'Alam* vol. 7 p. 150) he lived at least a century before an-Nawawi (who died in 767) and two centuries before the remaining biographers. It is therefore of great significance that that not one of these biographers make any mention of him. Of al-Hamawayni I have not been able to locate a single trace in any of the biographical dictionaries.

When authors such as these compile works in which they include ahadith the like of which was never heard of before them, what status shall be accorded to such ahadith? Shall they be regarded as "authentic ahadith" from "your own reliable Sunni scholars"? I leave this question to the great Imam Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi to answer. In his book *al-Mahsul fi 'Ilm al-Usul* (vol. 4 p. 299) he lists the kinds of narrations which are known with certainty to be untrue and baseless. The fourth kind is the following:

The narration which is narrated at a time when narrations have already become established, and when it is searched for it cannot be found in books nor in the memories of the narrators—such a narration is known to be baseless.

The same line reasoning is to be found in Abul Husayn al-Basri's book, *al-Mu'tamad* (vol. 2 p. 79):

A narration which, after the stabilization of hadith, is searched for but cannot be traced in the corpus of hadith, is known for a fact to be a forgery, since we know that the ahadith have been documented. The narration of a hadith after documentation can therefore only be the narration of documented ahadith. So if we do not find that (i.e. we find a hadith being narrated which was not previously documented) then we know it to be an untrue narration.

Thus, when you see the gloating manner in which Shirazi cites hadith from latter day "Sunni" authors such as al-Qanduzi and al-Kanji, or the unknown Ibn al-Maghazili and al-Hamawayni, then pity his gross lack of knowledge of this field of hadith, of which he has set himself up as an expert. And if Shirazi deserves pity, how much more deserving of pity would those be whose utter gullibility would lead them to swallow the fruits of his "erudite scholarship" hook, line and sinker?

The question one cannot help asking oneself is this: Can a book as elliptical, as blatantly dishonest, and as seriously defective in scholarship as this one ever serve to build bridges over the yawning chasm which separates the Ahl as-Sunnah from the Shi'ah? This book was never intended for that purpose. Its publication today stands as the unmistakable recommitment by the Shi'ah of today to the ideal of yesterday. That ideal is to convert the Ahl as-Sunnah to the faith of the Shi'ah. The author preferred to refer to himself in the book as "Da'i". This was mistranslated by the translators—who obviously do not know Arabic—as "well-wisher". Da'i does not mean well-wisher. It means missionary.

After this introduction I will proceed to analyze and criticize the arguments of the author in detail. The destruction of the historicity of the book has only removed the veil of objectivity and fair dialogue that was clouding their sight of the credulous reader. Now that the book has been revealed to be the work of a Shi'i missionary using a deceptive literary device to win the trust and confidence of his credulous reader, the only thing that remains is to critically analyze his arguments. Towards the fulfillment of that objective I seek the aid of Allah.

Peshawar Nights - The First Session

Three issues are discussed by Shirazi in this session. After making reference to the fact that he is a descendant of Rasulullah [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#), he has the Hafiz inquire about his line of descent. Then, after having the Hafiz object to his genealogy, he launches into a three page justification of his descent.

Thereafter, he introduces a break for the 'Isha prayer. He uses this juncture to introduce discussion of a phenomenon which is to the lay person one of the most conspicuous points of divergence between the Ahl as-Sunnah and the Shi'ah. This is the issue of combining prayers. The Shi'ah are known to combine the Zuhr and 'Asr, as well as Maghrib and 'Isha prayers; Sunnis perform each prayer in its appointed time. The questioner in this case is the Nawab, being the lay participant in the discussion. By citing a hadith from Sunni books, he attempts to prove the validity of joining prayers, and at the same time makes use of the opportunity to indulge in another favoured strategy of the Shi'i proselytizer: casting aspersions against Imam al-Bukhari and his book, [al-Jami' as-Sahih](#).

Shirazi then introduces the matter of how the grave of Sayyiduna 'Ali ibn Abi Talib [radiyallahu 'anhu](#) was discovered at Najaf. He gives an apocryphal story of exactly how the grave was discovered, and makes reference to Umayyad atrocities in history.

Shirazi's Genealogy

Before the actual discussion ensues, the Hafiz is made to stipulate it as condition that "reference be made to ahadith and events that are based on indisputable evidence." He asks that they should "refrain from referring to doubtful sources." To this Shirazi readily and confidently agrees, but his lamentable failure to abide by this condition has already been noted in the introduction.

In trying to assure his audience of his integrity in this regard, he makes reference to the fact that he is a descendant of Rasulullah [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#). He presents his personal pride in this descent as guarantee that he would abide by this condition. The fact that he fails to abide by it demonstrates one of three things: (1) He does not possess the knowledge and skills required to distinguish between authentic and unauthentic sources; or (2) he does not care enough for his genealogy to fulfil the condition for which he has made it a guarantee; or (3) the genealogy itself is doubtful. This third deduction may appear petty and vindictive at first glance, but closer inspection of Shirazi's genealogy as stated in the book gives us very solid grounds for having reservations about it.

The historian Ibn Khaldun, through an inductive study of genealogies, formulated a method of testing the authenticity of any genealogy. This method is based upon the natural law of averages. It involves the median age to which people of this Ummah live, the age at which they have children, and the fact that at any given time there are three generations in co-existence. Essentially it comes down to assigning 3 persons for every 100 years spanned by the genealogy.

The line of descent given by Shirazi contains 27 persons. The name of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is missing between Imam Musa al-Kazim and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, which I assume to be the error of the typesetter or the translators. We may therefore consider this genealogy to contain 28 persons. Considering that the person at the one end—Sayyiduna 'Ali ibn Abi Talib [radiyallahu 'anhu](#)—was born 23 years before the Hijrah, and that Shirazi himself at the other end of the genealogy died 1390 years after the Hijrah, we have a timespan of 1413 years. If we were to assign 3 persons for every hundred years, we would be looking for a genealogy consisting of at least 42 persons. Shirazi's genealogy falls short of this figure by at least 14 persons. A difference of 3 or 4 would have been acceptable, but it requires an extremely credulous mind to accept a genealogy that suffers from 14 missing links as authentic.

Next we turn to the issue of the descendants of Sayyidah Fatimah [radiyallahu 'anha](#). Shirazi makes the Hafiz object to him tracing his descent from the Nabi [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#) through Sayyidah Fatimah [radiyallahu 'anha](#), since he is of the opinion that "descent is recognized from the male side only." Shirazi responds firstly by quoting an alleged dialogue between Imam Musa al-Kazim (erroneously described in the text of [Peshawar Nights](#) as Imam Musa Ja'far) and the Khalifah Harun ar-Rashid. This is the first place in the book where he fails to comply with his undertaking to use only authentic quotations, and it is significant to note that he is quoting from Shi'i sources. He fails to inform his opponents that the quotation is documented in the books ['Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida](#) and [al-Ihtijaj](#) on the authority of a defective chain of narrators.

As-Saduq Ibn Babawayh, author of ['Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida](#) narrates it on the authority of Abu Ahmad Hani ibn Muhammad al-'Abdi, and he on the authority of a person named simply as Abu Muhammad. Abu Mansur

at-Tabarsi has in [al-Ihtijaj](#) merely reproduced this narration from [‘Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida](#). (See [al-Ihtijaj](#) vol. 2 p. 389) Abu Ahmad Hani ibn Muhammad al-‘Abdi and his source of information, Abu Muhammad, are completely unknown figures. The only thing known about the former is that Ibn Babawayh narrates from him, and that after mentioning his name, he writes “[radiyallahu ‘anhu](#)”. Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Mamaqani, the Shi‘i expert on narrator biography, found himself at a total loss for evidence of this person’s integrity, and could only rely upon Ibn Babawayh’s invocation in his attempt to prove his integrity as a narrator. (See [Tanqih al-Maqal](#) vol. 3 p. 290) However, even the acceptance of Hani ibn Muhammad al-‘Abdi as a reliable narrator fails to solve the problem, since we face an insurmountable problem in the person of the second narrator, named as Abu Muhammad. Nothing at all is known about this person. He is not mentioned by name; only by his ambiguous [kunya](#), Abu Muhammad.

The dialogue between Imam Musa al-Kazim and Harun ar-Rashid is lengthy one. It covers four A4 pages in relatively fine print. It covers a variety of issues and is not restricted to the deduction from the Qur’an that the progeny of Fatimah are descendants of the Nabi [sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam](#). The brilliance of that deduction is marred by a hadith which the Imam supposedly quotes to the Khalifah in the opening paragraph of the dialogue. This hadith, which Imam Musa reportedly narrates on the authority of his forefathers, the preceding Imams, from Rasulullah [sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam](#), says that when blood relations meet one another, the blood in their veins moves and becomes agitated. The Khalifah is reported to hug the Imam in order to test the veracity of this hadith, and—predictably enough—experiences an abnormal activity of the blood in his veins. Any person who wants to ascertain the authenticity of this narration merely has to hug a blood relative. He will soon come to know that this entire narration—the deduction from the Qur’an included—was invented, either by Abu Ahmad Hani ibn Muhammad, or by his source of information, the ambiguous Abu Muhammad.

The fact that Sayyiduna Hasan and Sayyiduna Husayn [radiyallahu ‘anhuma](#) are the sons of Rasulullah [sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam](#) has never been an area of contention to the Ahl as-Sunnah. For the Hafiz to contest this fact shows either his own ignorance—in which case he is effectively disqualified as a spokesperson for the Ahl as-Sunnah—or reveals the manipulative hand of Shirazi himself behind the characters in his drama. Had he been courageous enough to engage recognized scholars like ‘Allamah ‘Abd ash-Shakur of Lucknow in debate, he would not have had the puppeteer’s freedom to make his marionette say whatever he wishes him to say. What he needed was an “opponent” with enough flexibility that he can be made to appear helpless in the face of Shirazi’s own “erudition”, and thereby effect a victory for Shi‘ism over Sunnism.

Since the point is really undisputed, there seems to be no sense in prolonging discussion about it. However, since Shirazi is bent upon ridiculing the knowledge of his self-copponent, he devotes another page to citations from a variety of “Sunni” books. The first source he quotes is Ibn Abil Hadid, the commentator of [Nahj al-Balaghah](#), whom he describes as “one of your own great scholars”. ‘Abd al-Hamid ibn Hibatillah al-Mada’ini, better known as Ibn Abil Hadid (died 655 AH) is not of the Ahl as-Sunnah, and never even claimed to be. He was a self-professed Mu’tazili and a Shi‘i. Shirazi himself calls him “Ibn Abil Hadid Mu’tazali”. The Mu’tazilah never claimed to be of the Ahl as-Sunnah. If anything, they regarded themselves as the opponents of the Ahl as-Sunnah. Is Shirazi so blinded by his proselytizing zeal that he no longer sees his won glaring contradictions? Or is he simply lacking in knowledge?

As for Ibn Abil Hadid being a Shi‘i, that is borne out by his own poetry. Some of his most explicit declarations in this regard may be seen in Abul Fadl Ibrahim’s introduction to his [Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah](#). Ibn Kathir describes him as follows in [al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah](#) (year 655, vol. 9 p. 82):

Ibn Abil Hadid al-‘Iraqi: the poet ‘Abd al-Hamid ibn Hibatillah ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Husayn, Abu Hamid, Ibn Abil Hadid, ‘Izz ad-Din al-Mada’ini; the man of letters, the eloquent poet, the extremist Shi‘i. He is the author of a commentary on [Nahj al-Balaghah](#) in 20 volumes. He was born at Mada’in in the year 586. Then he went to Baghdad and became one of the poets in the court of the Khalifah. He enjoyed the favour of the wazir Ibn al-‘Alqami, on account of the two of them having literature and Shi‘ism in common.

In the following paragraph Shirazi cites a hadith from Jabir ibn Abdillah: “Allah created the progeny of every Prophet from his own generation, but my progeny was created from the generation of ‘Ali.” He ascribes this narration to [Kifayat at-Talib](#) of Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji, and [as-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqah](#) of Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, both of whom cite it from at-Tabarani. The books [as-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqah](#) and [Kifayat at-Talib](#) are both secondary sources; they derive their material from primary sources. In this case the primary source is [al-Mu’jam al-Kabir](#) of at-Tabarani, which was unavailable in print at the time when Shirazi was writing his book. Today this book is in print, and thus reference to the original source is possible. In [al-Mu’jam al-](#)

Kabir (vol. 3 p. 45, hadith no. 2630) this hadith is found to be narrated with an extremely defective chain of narrators. One narrator, namely Yahya ibn al-'Ala ar-Razi, is a notorious forger known for narrating falsified ahadith. (See **Tahdhib al-Kamal** vol. 31 pp. 484-488) Once again Shirazi fails to fulfil his promise of making reference to authentic ahadith exclusively. The only excuse that can possibly be made for him is ignorance.

A similar narration from Ibn 'Abbas is quoted from the **Manaqib** of Khatib Khwarizmi. This author, Abul Mu'ayyad Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Khwarizmi lived during the seventh century, and died in 655AH. (**Mu'jam al-Mu'allifin** vol. 12 p. 3; **al-'Alam** vol. 7 p. 87) This source therefore falls squarely within the bracket of late "obscure" sources referred to in the introduction. The fact that al-Khwarizmi can come more than two centuries after the era of documentation, and produce a hadith from Ibn 'Abbas that no one else before him knew of, is sufficient proof to reject it. Until and unless anyone can produce an isnad for it, and prove the authenticity of that isnad, it will remain an unauthentic quotation. Shirazi, having promised upon the sanctity of his descent to quote exclusively from reliable sources, should have known better than to produce evidence from a source of such obscurity.

Next he cites a hadith from the above mentioned al-Khwarizmi in **al-Manaqib**, Sayyid 'Ali al-Hamadhani in **Mawaddat al-Qurba**, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his **Musnad**, and Sulayman al-Balkhi (al-Qanduzi) in his book **Yanabi' al-Mawaddah**. He does not produce page and volume numbers for any of these sources. The text of the hadith is as follows: "These my two sons are flowers of this world, and both of them are Imams, whether they are Imams openly or silently sitting at home."

Out of the four sources cited, only one is worthy of mention, which is the **Musnad** of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The other sources are all secondary sources by latter day authors who do not document their material with chains of narration. Al-Khwarizmi, as we have seen, died in 655AH; Sayyid 'Ali al-Hamadhani died in 786AH (more will be said about his book **Mawaddat al-Qurba** later); and al-Qanduzi died as late as 1294AH/1877. It is therefore most unscholarly for Shirazi to cite all three of these sources together with the **Musnad** of Imam Ahmad, who died in 241AH. Out of the four cited sources, it is only the **Musnad** that can give us an idea of the authenticity of the hadith.

When we turn to the **Musnad** to look for the hadith, we encounter a most unpleasant surprise. This hadith, so confidently quoted by Shirazi, is nowhere to be found in the **Musnad**. The concordance **al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li-Alfaz al-Hadith an-Nabawi**, the 11 volume **Mawsu'at A'raf al-Hadith an-Nabawi**, as well as modern day computer software have given no trace of any hadith of this kind in the **Musnad**. It seems therefore that Shirazi, beyond breaking his pledge of citing only reliable ahadith, has even resorted to blatant dishonesty. This would explain why he has omitted to supply volume and page numbers for this particular hadith.

In what remains of this passage he once again makes reference to al-Qanduzi's **Yanabi' al-Mawaddah**, but this time he makes it clear that the author of this book uses material from other sources. However, in one of the names he mentions in this regard, Hafiz 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Abi Shaybah, he once again reveals his ignorance of history and hadith literature. There never was a person by this name. The Ibn Abi Shaybah family of Kufah had three scions who made a name for themselves as muhaddithin. One was Abu Bakr, the other 'Uthman, and the last one Muhammad. Allah alone knows where Shirazi unearthed the name 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Abi Shaybah. His blunt insistence upon producing a authoritative sounding list of references has produced many a ludicrous situation like this.

In the next passage he quotes out of the blue from the writings of a person whom he names as Abu Salih. This incoherent citation contains a hadith from Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al-Khattab **radiyallahu 'anhu**, which he ascribes to Hafiz 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn al-Ahkdar, Abu Nu'aym, at-Tabari, Ibn Hajar al-Makki and the suppositious Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji. However, he consistently fails to provide authentication for the ahadith which he adduces as proof. The same is true for the rest of the references which he provides in the passage. What Shirazi sadly fails to comprehend is that a hadith is not proven authentic by the amount of books which contain it, but rather by the hadith itself conforming to the criteria of authenticity.

It is worthy of note here that in this same passage Shirazi makes reference to the marriage of Umm Kulthum, the daughter of Sayyiduna 'Ali and Sayyidah Fatimah **radiyallahu 'anhum** without denying its historical occurrence, as many Shi'i scholars are known to do. He does this in the course of quoting a hadith which he presents as factual evidence. Does this mean that Shirazi accepts the historicity of this marriage?

In any event, here we have had our first sampling of Shirazi's source methodology. In an issue upon which there really exists no need for protracted debate he felt compelled to brandish as many references as he could lay hands upon. In the process he unwittingly revealed his unfamiliarity with his supposed sources. He

also gave ample evidence of a stark lack of expertise in the field of hadith. More importantly, he proved his readiness to resolve to deception for the sake of impressing his reader with references.

Combining Prayers

After having the Nawab ask him the reason for the Shi'ah combining prayers, Shirazi introduces this phenomenon into the discussion. The Hafiz is made to offer the explanation that the Nabi [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#) combined prayers only in extraordinary situations, like when he was on a journey, or due to rain, and that he always offered his prayers separately when he was at home.

In refutation of this explanation, Shirazi cites a hadith of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#) in which it is reported that Rasulullah [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#) combined the Zuhr and 'Asr, and Maghrib and 'Isha prayers while in residence. Here Shirazi has used a creative method of citation. The hadith he cites is in reality one single hadith. However, he boldly states that "many ahadith confirm this fact". Then, in order to show just how many ahadith confirm this fact, he quotes the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas several times from a number of different sources. By mentioning the various chains of narration up to Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#), even going to the extent that "Imam Muslim quotes a number of ahadith on the issue", Shirazi deceitfully tries to create the impression that there exists a multitude of ahadith that prove the combining of prayers in residence. The fact of the matter is that there is only one hadith, which is that of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#), which happens to be narrated from Ibn 'Abbas by a number of his students. The careful reader will not fail to notice that each "separate" hadith cited by Shirazi ends with Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#), and even the corroboration by Abu Hurayrah [radiyallahu 'anhu](#) is part of Ibn 'Abbas' hadith, and not technically an independent hadith.

Be that as it may, the fact that there is only one hadith on this issue is inconsequential as far as its authenticity is concerned. Since it conforms to the criteria of authenticity, it has been accepted as authentic. What now remains to be done is to see how this hadith fits in with the rest of the ahadith on the times of salah. Shirazi has the Nawab express amazement at how this hadith (which is slyly referred to as "these ahadith") was ignored by the Ahl as-Sunnah, and how "learned men have adopted a different path". He brushes off the "explanations" of the Sunni scholars as unintelligible, but turns a conspicuous blind eye to (or is perhaps ignorant of) the proper treatment of this hadith by the 'ulama of the Ahl as-Sunnah.

The hadith literature of both the Ahl as-Sunnah and the Shi'ah concur upon the fact that that the times of salah were given to Rasulullah [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#) by Jibril during the Meccan period. They agree that the time for Zuhr and Maghrib were given as separate and distinct from that of 'Asr and 'Isha. This is further corroborated by the model example of the Nabi [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#). The Shi'i scholar Ayatullah Musa al-Musawi confirms this where he writes that "the habit of Rasulullah by which Muslims should abide, was to perform every prayer within its time. Rasulullah [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#) used to lead the Muslims in prayer five times every day." (*al-Muta'amirun 'ala al-Muslimin ash-Shi'ah* p. 173)

The only case which represents an ostensible departure from this norm is this hadith of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#). Shirazi would be well aware of the fact that in the entire hadith literature there is only this one solitary hadith which apparently departs from the established norm. He knows fully well that his argument in favour of combining prayers would be crippled by mention of the fact that such combination is supported by a single isolated hadith. He therefore attempts to make it appear as "several ahadith".

In any event, the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#) appears to be out of harmony with the Prophetic norm of performing every prayer within its specified time. This norm is established on the basis of a substantially large number of ahadith, even in the Shi'i hadith literature, and also the continuous practice of the Ummah. The 'ulama of the Ahl as-Sunnah were thus faced with two possible approaches: either to harmonise this one irregular hadith with the rest by giving it a suitable explanation; or to regard it as a normative hadith in its own right, which sets an independent precedent. The majority of them opted for the former approach.

The reader might at this point get the impression that their opting for this position was based on some sort of subjective bias. But this impression will soon disappear when he learns that what led them to this option was two aspects of the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#) which Shirazi, for obvious reasons, preferred to keep unknown to his readers. The first of the two aspects is the fact that not in a single version of the hadith is it stated that either of the two combined prayers was performed out of its prescribed time. Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of hadith is a matter of consensus, states in *Fath al-Bari* that "in all of the versions of this hadith there is nothing which indicates the exact time when the combining occurred." (*Fath al-Bari* vol. 2 p. 30)

The second aspect to consider here is the fact that one of the students of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#) who narrates this hadith from him, explained the hadith in such a way that it is left fully in accordance with the established norm. This student, Abu ash-Sha'tha Jabir ibn Zayd, whose version of the hadith is documented by both al-Bukhari and Muslim, and several of the other well-known books of hadith, states that what this "combination" of prayers entailed was for Zuhr to be performed during the last minutes of its prescribed time, with 'Asr then being performed immediately upon commencement of its time. In this way the two prayers are combined without the established norm being violated. This explanation for the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#) was given by Ibn 'Abbas' own student, and was accepted by a large majority of scholars, including the Hanafi jurist Abu Ja'far at-Tahawi, the Malikis Ibn al-Majishun and Abul 'Abbas al-Qurtubi, and the Shafi'is Imam al-Haramayn, Ibn Sayyid an-Nas al-Ya'muri and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, amongst others.

The other approach—of regarding this hadith to be normative in its own right—was adopted by a minority of scholars of the Ahl as-Sunnah, including Imam Malik's teacher Rabi'ah ibn Abi 'Abd ar-Rahman, the tabi'i Muhammad ibn Sirin, the Maliki jurist Ashhab ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz and the Shafi'i jurists Ibn al-Mundhir and al-Qaffal ash-Shashi. These scholars allow the combining of prayers, but with the proviso that it be for a need, and more importantly, that it does not become a habit.

It is this second point that is the point of divergence between them and the Shi'ah. The Shi'ah have permitted the combination of prayers even without a need. This has given rise to a situation where they habitually perform Zuhr and 'Asr together, and Maghrib and 'Isha together. Although they theoretically assert the superiority of performing each prayer within its prescribed time according to the Prophetic norm, in practice they are very rarely seen to uphold this norm. As such the combination of prayers has become the hallmark of the Shi'ah.

Shirazi has ventured to pour scorn on some of the explanations given by Sunni commentators in explaining the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#). If only he had consulted his own hadith sources before doing so he would have been spared the embarrassment of revealing his ignorance of the hadith of the Shi'ah. One of the explanations given by the Ahl as-Sunnah for the combining of prayers in the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas is that it was done due to rain. Shaykh Abu Ja'far at-Tusi in his book [al-Istibsar](#), which is one of the four major books of hadith for the Shi'ah, records from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir that on rainy nights the Nabi [sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam](#) used to delay Maghrib and hasten 'Isha (exactly as explained by Jabir ibn Zayd) and perform the two prayers jointly; and he used to say: "Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy." ([al-Istibsar](#) vol. 1 p. 267, no. 966)

This Shi'i hadith alone should have been reason enough for Shirazi, and indeed the Shi'ah in general, to reconsider their habitual joining of prayers for no reason at all. It is therefore very strange to see Shirazi reverently stating that "the Shia ulema, in obedience to the Holy Imam and the progeny of the Holy Prophet, have unconditionally pethe offering of prayers together." What sort of obedience is this which ignores the words of the Imam when it goes against their own desires? What sort of obedience is this which abandons the established Prophetic habit of performing every prayer within its prescribed time for an isolated incident which is subject to interpretation?

Shirazi makes use of the opportunity to strike a blow at the integrity of Imam al-Bukhari. He has the Hafiz meekly object that the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#) is not in [Sahih al-Bukhari](#). He has no reason for introducing al-Bukhari into the issue, since it is already accepted that hadith is recorded by Muslim, and its authenticity has thus been established. Even if al-Bukhari did not document it, its authenticity will not be affected. Therefore, this objection from the Hafiz must be read to serve another purpose. That purpose is to malign the character of al-Bukhari. This Shirazi does by asserting that al-Bukhari did in fact document the hadith, but not under the expected chapter heading. He has "deceitfully put them away from their proper place." Did it ever occur to Shirazi or his reader that al-Bukhari was under no compulsion to include the hadith into his book, and that had he wanted to be deceitful, he would have omitted this hadith from his collection altogether? Did it even occur to them that mentioning the hadith under the heading "[Bab Ta'khir az-Zuhr lil-'Asr](#)" (meaning "Chapter on the delaying of Zuhr till 'Asr") is in fact its proper place?

Shirazi once again sacrifices his honesty upon the altar of expediency when he asserts that people like an-Nawawi (misspelt as Nuri), Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, al-Qastalani and az-Zurqani (misspelt as Zarqani) have "admitted that these ahadith are proofs of the acceptability of combining two prayers." Yes, they have done so, and so have numerous commentators and jurists before them. But they have never allowed the unconditional combining of prayers like the Shi'ah do. Without exception, they have made the permissibility of combining prayers subject to certain conditions. However, Shirazi could not find within himself the honesty to reflect the conditions stipulated by the men whose names he mentioned.

Lastly, Shirazi has added the name “Zakariyya-e-Razi” to the above list of well known hadith commentators. There has never been a commentator of [Sahih al-Bukhari](#) by the name of “Zakariyya-e-Razi”. The only Razi whose name comes close to this is the famous philosopher and physician Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya ar-Razi. The last thing a philosopher would contemplate doing is write a commentary on hadith. Mention of his name in this regard must therefore be seen as evidence of Shirazi’s penchant for inflating his list of “authorities” so as to impress his gullible reader. This tendency occurs throughout the book [ad nauseam](#).

How Shirazi’s Ancestors Migrated From Hijaz To Iran

A story is briefly related here of how Shirazi’s “ancestor” Muhammad al-‘Abid was murdered in Shiraz on the orders of the “Abbasid King”. The details of the story have been left out by Shirazi, but we will nevertheless take a closer look at the historicity of this alleged event.

Muhammad al-‘Abid was the son of Musa al-Kazim. Mentioned of him has been made by Shaykh al-Mufid in his book [Kitab al-‘Irshad](#) (p. 459). However, al-Mufid mentions nothing at all about his supposed murder in Shiraz. Even Majlisi in [Bihar al-Anwar](#) mentions nothing about this event. If any author had to mention an event of this nature, that author would have been Abul Faraj al-Isfahani, who devoted an entire book, entitled [Maqatil at-Talibiyyin](#), to documenting the killing of the descendants of Sayyiduna ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib [radiyallahu ‘anhu](#) and his brothers, by the Umayyads and the Abbasids. However, [Maqatil at-Talibiyyin](#) is conspicuously silent on the murder of Muhammad, Ahmad and Husayn, the sons of Musa al-Kazim, in Shiraz by the order of the “Abbasid King”. We are justified therefore to question the historicity of the event.

The story surrounding how Muhammad al-‘Abid came to be buried in Shiraz, as related by Sayyid Ja‘far Al Bahr al-‘Ulum in his book [Tuhfat al-‘Alim](#), is that he entered Shiraz in Abbasid times and lived there till he died. He is reported to have made a living by copying the Qur’an, and is said to have manumitted 1000 slaves. His grave was “discovered” 6 centuries later during the time of the Zangid dynasty in a garden belonging to a person named as Qutlugh. ([Tuhfat al-‘Alim](#), published as appendix to [Bihar al-Anwar](#) vol. 48 p. 191) This story is supported by Muhammad Madhi al-Kharsan in his footnotes to [Bihar al-Anwar](#) (vol. 48 p. 174) He informs us that a large number of those who trace their descent from Musa al-Kazim, including himself, claim descent through this Muhammad al-‘Abid. Neither of these two sources mention anything about Muhammad al-‘Abid being killed. More importantly, none of them venture any information about the state of the alleged grave for the 6 centuries before its “discovery”.

His brother Ahmad, commonly known in Shiraz as “Shah Chiragh” is reported by Sayyid Ja‘far Bahr al-‘Ulum to have come to Shiraz during the time of the Abbasid Khalifah al-Ma‘mun. The Abbasid governor of Shiraz, conspicuously named here as Qutlugh Khan, stopped him on his way. A fight ensued and Ahmad’s followers deserted him. He is reported variously to have been killed in that skirmish, or to have escaped into the city to where he was followed and killed, and thirdly to have managed to elude his enemies in Shiraz where he lived an anonymous life until he died a natural death. His grave too, was discovered during Zangid times, when for the first time a structure was built over it.

As for the third brother, Husayn, known as ‘Ala ad-Din, his story brings a weird twist to the conspicuous Qutlugh. Sayyid Ja‘far Bahr al-‘Ulum tells us that during Zangid times, several centuries after Abbasid rule, the governor of Shiraz was a person called Qutlugh Khan. This governor had a garden, and the gardener noticed a wonderful light emanating from the garden at night. Upon investigation they discovered a grave, and through some means or the other they discovered that the person buried in the grave is Husayn ibn Musa al-Kazim. Qutlugh Khan thereupon ordered a building to be constructed over the grave.

All three graves were discovered in Zangid times, 6 centuries after the death of persons supposedly buried in them. All three brother came to Shiraz at the same time, but none seem to have known of the other’s presence. All three became involved with a Qutlugh Khan, but each one in his own unique way. It wouldn’t take an expert historian to smell a rat here. A complete and rewarding study could be made of the proclivity of the Iranians, especially in later centuries, to find the graves of sons of the Imams in Iran. Sites called [imamzadahs](#) flourish in Iran. The Persian [Da‘irat al-Ma‘arif-e Tashayyu’](#) (Encyclopaedia of Shi’a) lists over 350 such sites in Iran. In several cases the same person is claimed to be buried at different locations. In the case of Ahmad ibn Musa al-Kazim, for example, there is a rival grave for him in Kashan. ([Da‘irat al-Ma‘arif-e Tashayyu’](#) vol. 2 p. 433) Muhammad al-‘Abid too, has an alternate grave in Kakhak. (ibid. p. 432) The rival grave of Husayn ibn Musa al-Kazim is in Tabas. (ibid. p. 322)

This embarrassing confusion, and these obvious pointers to the fraud of the ones who invented the graves at Shiraz, help one to understand the reason why Shirazi refused to devote anything more than a 7 line paragraph to the story about how his ancestors originally came to Iran. The actual history of Shi'ism in Iran will be dealt with later, under the second session, where Shirazi has spoken of Iran and Shi'ism under the heading "Causes of Iranians' receptivity to Shi'ism".

The Grave Of 'Ali

Hereafter mention is made of the discovery of the grave of Sayyiduna 'Ali ibn Abi Talib [radiyallahu 'anhu](#) at Najaf 150 years after his death. Shirazi explains the initial secrecy surrounding the location of the graves in light of fear that the Umayyads would desecrate the grave. However, what he does not explain is why the location of the grave was revealed by Imam Musa al-Kazim to the Khalifah Harun ar-Rashid when the Abbasids, according to the Shi'ah, were no less cruel to the 'Alawis than were the Umayyads.

Hasan al-Amin writes in his [Shorter Shi'ite Encyclopaedia](#): "Then came Abbasid rule. They were more severe upon the Alawides in their persecution and cruelty as well as upon the Shi'ites as compared to the Omayyides. Their rule was more troublesome and bitter for them, as a poet has said: 'By God, the Omayyids did not do one-tenth in their case, as Banu Abbas did.' Amir Abul Faras al-Hamadani says: 'Banu Harab (Omayyids) did not succeed in these crimes even though they intended to, as compared to your success.' (p. 36)"

Harun ar-Rashid is the Khalifah to whom Imam Musa al-Kazim is reported to have revealed the location of the grave. This same Harun is described by Hasan al-Amin as having "made himself notorious for his cruelty to the Alawides and their friends and took to extremes in their persecution." (p. 40) It is interesting that just a few lines earlier Shirazi was recalling how his "ancestors" were slaughtered by the Abbasids, and now he presents the Abbasids as benevolent enough for Imam Musa al-Kazim to reveal to them the location of his grandfather's grave.

He cites the martyrdom of Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, and that of his son Yahya ibn Zayd as examples of Umayyad cruelty. If the cruelty that was visited upon these two great personalities gives one reason to believe that the Umayyads were given to desecrate graves, why is it that the alleged slaughter of Shirazi's ancestors and others gave no one reason to fear that the Abbasids would desecrate the grave of Sayyiduna Ali [radiyallahu 'anhu](#)?

Shirazi appears ignorant of the fact that the exact manner and time of the "discovery" of the grave at Najaf is a matter of contention in the Shi'i hadith literature. He cites the story of Harun ar-Rashid and Musa al-Kazim as the point at which the grave became known, but fails to take note that Mulla Baqir Majlisi has recorded in [Bihar al-Anwar](#) (vol. 97 p. 164) a report according to which the location of the grave was known to Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, who was Harun ar-Rashid's grandfather. Abu Ja'far is reported to have actually excavated the site to see if it really contains a grave. He also mentions that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq revealed its location in the time of the first Abbasid ruler Abul 'Abbas as-Saffah, who died in 130 AH. Shirazi is therefore clearly mistaken to claim that "the grave remained virtually unknown until the days of Harun ar-Rashid."

His claim that Harun built a structure over the location shown to him by Imam Musa al-Kazim clashes headlong with a report documented by Majlisi in [Bihar al-Anwar](#) (vol. 42 p. 185) in which a person by the name of Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Duhaym reports visiting the site secretly sometime after the year 260 AH, and found no building. All they found was a few black stones around the grave. Harun ar-Rashid died in the year 193 AH.

Furthermore, the discovery of a tablet in Syriac that bore an inscription declaring this grave to have been prepared for 'Ali [radiyallahu 'anhu](#) by the Prophet Nuh ['alayhis salam](#) 700 years before the Deluge presents an anomaly in itself. Although Shirazi promised to use only authentic sources, he fails to provide a source for this fantastic story. There is also no trace of this aspect of the story in [Bihar al-Anwar](#), a source which has given considerable attention to the issue of the location of the grave. What Majlisi does record is that the grave of Sayyiduna 'Ali [radiyallahu 'anhu](#) is in fact the grave of Sayyiduna Nuh ['alayhis salam](#) (vol. 97 p. 171) and not only that of Nuh, but also Adam, Hud and Salih ['alayhimus salam](#). (vol. 97 p. 173)

But let us turn to another matter now. Shirazi has cited as examples of Umayyad atrocities the martyrdom of Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn and his son Yahya. However, there is an element in the tragedy of Zayd, and even in that of his grandfather Husayn [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#) which the Shi'ah always carefully avoid. That element is the role of the Shi'ah themselves in those lamentable tragedies. The Umayyads were only half the problem. The other half was the Shi'ah.

When Zayd ibn 'Ali declared revolt against the Umayyads, 40 000 of the Shi'ah pledged allegiance upon his hand, 15 000 of them from the city of Kufah alone. With a force this mighty, the Umayyad army would have been easily vanquished, and justice would have been established. What happened that at the hour of the battle Zayd was left with only 300 men? The story behind the disgraceful desertion of Zayd by the Shi'ah is told by virtually every historian who has given a biography of Zayd or recorded the events of the year 122 AH.

Just before the battle could start they decided upon a whim to ask Zayd's opinion about Abu Bakr and 'Umar [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#). His reply was, "I have never heard any of my family dissociate himself from them, and I myself have nothing but good to say about them." Upset with this reply, they deserted him en masse, and decided that he could not be the Imam, but that the true Imam was his nephew Ja'far as-Sadiq. Out of the 40 000 who had pledged loyalty to him Zayd was left with only a few hundred. On the departure of the defectors Zayd remarked, "I am afraid they have done unto me what they had done unto Husayn." It was here too that for the first time in history the Shi'ah were given the name "Rafidah", meaning "the rejectors". This name was given to them by Zayd when they rejected him after his refusal to dissociate himself from Abu Bakr and 'Umar [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#).

If the Umayyads were guilty on that day of shedding holy blood, then just as guilty as them were the thousands of Shi'ah who would rather see a distinguished member of the Ahl al-Bayt and the son of their Imam perish at the merciless hands of the Umayyads than hear him speak favourably of Abu Bakr and 'Umar [radiyallahu 'anhuma](#). It is perhaps for this reason that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is reported in the Shi'i hadith literature to have said that "no one bears us greater hatred than those who claim to love us." ([Miqbas al-Hidayah](#) vol. 2 p. 414)

However, Shi'i rancour against Zayd did not stop at that cowardly act of desertion. To this very day their hadith literature is filled with sayings attributed to their Imams in which Zayd is denounced as misguided innovator, and even an unbeliever for falsely claiming to be an Imam. ([Tanqih al-Maqal](#) vol. 1 p. 467-471) The Umayyads killed Zayd once, and crucified his body once. The Shi'ah, on the other hand, insult the memory of Zayd ibn 'Ali every time that they assert, in terms of the hadith which they ascribe to their Imams, that "whoever raises the standard of revolt before the coming of the Mahdi is a taghut (tyrant)"; and "whoever unrightfully claims Imamah is a kafir" and "a mushrik", "even if he be a descendant of 'Ali and Fatimah" and "whoever revolts and calls people towards himself, while there is amongst them someone who is better than him, is a deviant innovator". ([Bihar al-Anwar](#) vol. 25 pp. 325-328)

It was not only Zayd who was maligned by the Shi'ah. Even his faithful followers, who courageously kept up the resistance against the Umayyads, were branded as "enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt" ([Rijal al-Kashshi](#) vol. 2 p. 494) despite the fact that they too, follow Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt. It is a strange philosophy which denounces those who refused to submit to injustice and humiliation as "enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt" while lauding those who deserted the Ahl al-Bayt at the hour of need, and whose opposition to perceived injustice was limited to the ritual cursing of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr and 'Umar radiyallahu 'anhuma in the safety of their private gatherings.

Therefore, if Zayd's martyrdom was a tragic event, then so much more lamentable is the attitude of the Shi'ah towards Zayd, both at the hour of his martyrdom and all the way down history up to the present day. Therefore, it is blatant opportunism for Shirazi to tell only half of the story, and to conveniently omit any sort of reference to the treachery of his ancestors, the Shi'ah, and their disgraceful role in that tragic martyrdom.