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In search of the First Shi'i Hadith Book: Are there any Narrations Left from Abū Rāfi's *Kitāb al-sunan wa-l-aḥkām wa-l-qaḍāya*?

According to reports, the writing of hadith among Shi'is began in the first century, and the disciples of Shi'i Imāms are among the first writers of hadith. As for the bibliographic information provided by al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī, the book that Abū Rāfi' had started to write by the title of '*Kitāb al-sunan wa al-aḥkām wa al-qaḍāya*' and was apparently completed by his son 'Ubaydallāh, is the first Shi'i hadith book, or at least one of them. As the title suggests, the content of the book includes legal rules and judgments issued by al-Imām 'Alī. Abū Rāfi' and his son have been introduced as the official scribes of al-Imām 'Alī, so it is natural that they wrote such reports. This book is important because of its age and the direct reporting from 'Alī. Today, the hadith books of the first century have generally not survived, except for limited ones such as those attributed to al-Imām al-Sajjād, the same is true of Abū Rāfi's book. At the same time, some of them were in the possession of later narrators and hadith scholars. So, the main question here is whether its content is also missing, like the original book, or in some way, there are reports of it today. According to some evidence, the content of the book was narrated by Muḥammad b. Qays al-Bajālī al-Kūfī (d. 151) in the main sources of Imāmī Shi'i hadith such as *al-Kāfī*. Apparently, he had Abū Rāfi's book in his possession, presented it to al-Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir to ensure its content and the correctness of attributing his reports to 'Alī. Presenting the hadith to the Shi'i Imāms during their presence has been a common method among the companions and their students to ensure the correctness of the attribution and correctness of the content of the hadith. Except for a few cases, al-Bāqir has confirmed the attribution of its contents to 'Alī and their correctness. Apparently, Muḥammad b. Qays added other cases to the original text and narrated all of them including the original narrations and his additions. An important point is that this time he narrated the hadiths not from the primary speaker – that is, 'Alī – and its narrator – that is, Abū Rāfi' – but directly from al-Bāqir. The confirmation of these hadiths by al-Bāqir has been effective in narrating them from him. Most likely, raising the isnād (*'uluww*) may have been the reason for this. In the main hadith books of the Imāmīs, such as *al-Kāfī*, many narrations have been quoted from Muḥammad b. Qays from al-Bāqir, which include reports of legal rules and judgements by 'Alī. Undoubtedly, a significant amount of them were the narrations of Abū Rāfi's book.



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In 2008, Dr Hamid Bagheri received his MA in the Sciences of Hadith at the University of Qur'an and Hadith (former faculty of "Hadith Sciences") in Tehran. His MA thesis examined the rules for the use of Sunn narrations in the interpretation of the Qur'an from viewpoint of Imāmī Shi'i scholars. Then, in 2012 he moved to the University of Tehran for his doctoral research, where he completed his Ph.D in the science of Qur'an and hadith. In his doctoral work, he discussed the criteria based on which Imāmī scholars used to check the issuance of hadiths from Imāms. This work dealt with the different views of these scholars on the concept of authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) hadith and related issues. After receiving his Ph.D, Dr Bagheri became a member of the University of Tehran, faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies, Department of the Sciences of the Qur'an and Hadith. His research interests include hadith studies, the development and transmission of Imāmī hadith literature, geographical transmission, bio-bibliographical analysis (*taḥlīl-i fihristī*), hadith works and extremist narrators (*ghulāt*) with emphasis on the Nuṣayrīs.