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Fāṭima's Most Treasured Possession: 'Wisdom Hadith' and Imāmī Shi'i Taxonomies of Knowledge

Imāmī (latterly Twelver) Shi'i hadith literature contains an extensive, distinctive and often enigmatic corpus of what might be termed 'wisdom' texts. Such text differ in vocabulary and emphasis from more familiar legal and theological discourses, enunciating broadly ethical teachings and advice in forms ranging from short aphorisms to lengthy epistles and sermons. Many of these texts – as collected in works like *Nahj al-balāgha* – are amongst the most beloved elements of hadith literature among contemporary Shi'is, but the corpus as a whole has been largely ignored in studies of early Shi'ism, notwithstanding its antiquity. This paper will aim to redress this imbalance, mapping the presence of these wisdom texts in the early Imāmī hadith corpus and examining the role that they play in Imāmī and early Twelver thought. The textual focus of the paper will be a broad survey of the Shi'i hadith literature of the fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries. Wisdom hadith are a widespread presence across this literature, both in dedicated collections such as al-Ḥarrānī's *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl* and al-Ṣadūq's *al-Mawāʿiẓ*, and also around the edges of other, more conventional hadith compendia, such as al-Kulaynī's *al-Rawḍa* and al-Mufīd's *al-Irshād*. These texts, moreover, can connect to a number of overlapping themes in Shi'i hadith, including the nature of the intellect ('*aql*'), proofs (*dalā'il*) of the Imāms' nature, and questions of how to relate to non-Shi'is. By examining how different hadith compilers manage and respond to these texts, this paper will offer a preliminary account of the extent to which wisdom hadith were integrated into the structures and concerns of Imāmī thinking in this period, as well as testing the utility of 'wisdom' as a category, and exploring how Imāmī attitudes to these sorts of hadith differed from those of other groups. While 'wisdom literature' is often constructed as being somewhat detached from systematic religious thought, it will be argued that this large and diverse sub-corpus of the Imāms' hadith was an important part of how early Twelvers engaged questions of ethics, epistemology, and the very nature of the Imāms' knowledge.



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