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Transmission of Hadiths from the Shi'i Imāms: Different Narrators, Same Forms

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the question of how the hadiths were transmitted from the Imāms in Shi'i Islam, particularly focusing on the phenomenon of identical texts emerging even when different narrators are involved. In Shi'i sources, it is noteworthy that nearly identical texts are transmitted, even when the narrators who report the hadith or ask questions to the Imām differ. Robert Gleave, who has made various evaluations about a group of hadith, has also drawn attention to this issue.

To deeply examine this structure, our paper will first ask the question of whether there are any differences in the wording of hadiths transmitted from an Imām. This will shed light on the form of Shia hadiths narrated from an Imām to his students. According to our findings, the general structure in Shi'i narrations is that the wording changes as the Imām's narrators change. Therefore, the question of how nearly identical texts emerge even when the Imām's narrators change needs to be explained. This includes cases where nearly identical texts are reported even when the Imāms change.

In the Shi'i tradition, because the Imāms are infallible and draw from the same source, it is possible for one to repeat what the other said in the same form. However, this paper will explore whether all examples can be explained in this way. The matter of identical forms of hadiths being narrated by different narrators from an Imām may be accounted for by the possibility that the two have written the hadith in the presence of the Imām. Alternatively, a narrator may directly attribute the hadith to the Imām without mentioning the intermediary from whom he received it.

Therefore, it must be determined whether the nearly identical form in Shi'i literature – despite the change of the narrators – arises from the situation referred to as *tadlīs* in Sunni literature or from the hadiths being written in the presence of the Imām. Since it is not possible to make these determinations across the entire Shi'i literature, a systematic examination will be made on the “*al-Uşūl al-sitta 'ashar*”, which are included in the “*al-Uşūl al-arba'a mi'a*” and have survived to the present day. This will not only give us an idea of the nature of the *Uşūl* works which some scholars claim to have received directly from the Imāms, but also answer the question of how different narrators transmitted the same hadiths. This study also aims to clarify issues such as how useful form analysis is in the dating Shi'i hadiths, whether *tadlīs* is common in the literature, and whether attention is drawn in biographical sources to *tadlīs* and narrators who commit it.



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