Ḥadīth, the Shī'a Cultural Memory: An Investigation of the Orientalists' Opinions on the Status of Ḥadīth and the Later Shī'a Collections of Ḥadīth with an Emphasis on Rainer Brunner's Views

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Abstract

One of the specialized Ḥadīth domains in the recent orientalist studies is the investigation of the reasons and factors of the appearance and advent of the Shī'a Ḥadīths and the reason behind the Shī'a followers and scholars in the learning and recording of the narrations and formation of "The Shī'a cultural memory" in the later years and so, the advent of the "later narration collections". The first question of the study at hand regards the points and issues considered by them in studying and analyzing this cultural memory as well as the goals they pursued. In this regard, it is argued that this consideration has not been away from harms and incorrect conclusions, and so, in some cases it has challenged the origin and authenticity of Ḥadīth among the Shī'a. Moreover, from among the main Ḥadīth cultural memories of the Shī'a, the orientalist studies have mostly paid attention to Biḥār al-anwār. The extensive consideration of this work along with a criticism of it is the other question of this article. The article at hand presents and describes the main suggested orientalists' opinions regarding the two foregoing questions through an emphasis on Rainer Brunner's "The role of Ḥadīth as cultural memory in Shi'i history" so as to identify and analyze the discrepancies and commonalities of their thoughts.

Keywords

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Introduction

The western efforts on the Shī‘a Ḥadīth studies have mainly relied on Sunnī resources and works, and up to the recent years, little attention has been paid to presentation, evaluation, and analysis of the Shī‘a narrations. It can be claimed that the orientalists and the Shī‘a Ḥadīth both appeared concurrently with the general and historical studies of Ḥadīth by the orientalists from the middle of the 20ᵗʰ century, especially if we adopt a principlist view (Motzki, 2010: 41). From the second half of the 20ᵗʰ century and especially the victory of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, changes occurred toward deeper identification of the Shī‘a as well as its beliefs and principles through narration collections. During this time, the westerners moved from a slow process of knowing the Shī‘a in general to endeavors to accurately know the Imamite Shī‘a and the bases of its beliefs and thoughts. In their route, they gradually took note of the more specialized narration discussions of the Imamite Shī‘a, such as the analysis of their earlier and later narration texts. Motzki believes that the beginning of the development of non-Sunnī Ḥadīths can be dated back to the 2ⁿᵈ century AH, as if the process of its standardization has been longer than the Sunnī narrations (Ibid.).

The scope of the orientalist studies in the specialized domains of the Shī‘a Ḥadīth in recent years has got exceedingly extended and their studies cover almost all branches of the Shī‘a Ḥadīth studies (Ḥasannīyā, 2015: 23-59). Some of the discussed issues are of such importance that although they have seemingly been discussed as scientific and methodical studies, when all these studies are brought together and seen as a general movement, critical and challenging points are revealed. In the light of the expansion of the orientalist studies about different issues and presentation of their results in different universities and scientific centers, the intellectual and doctrinal bases of the Shī‘a will be seriously scientifically challenged if the foregoing critical points are not answered appropriately.

One of the orientalist research approaches[1] is their consideration of the Shī‘a narration texts and resources. In fact, after analysis of the early Shī‘a texts, which have been said by Kohlberg to have the largest share in the orientalists' studies on the Shī‘a (Kohlberg, 2013: 166), studying and analyzing the later Shī‘a texts is another topic that has been undertaken on the content, structure, and argumentative reviews of the Shī‘a narration resources. Moreover, with regard to the status and appearance of the Shī‘a Ḥadīth, the importance and necessity of it, and the reason for the Shī‘a

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1. For more information on the orientalists' approaches and fields of study regarding the Shī‘a Ḥadīth, q.v. Kohlberg, 2013: 165-180

scholars' and notables' attention to narrating, collecting, and presenting the Infallibles' (a) speech, the orientalists believe that in the Shī'a doctrine, history, and jurisprudence, Ḥadīth – like the Qur'ān – has the highest importance and undoubtedly, it is the oldest form of the Shī'a literature, though dialectic theology also was formed in the early periods (2nd to 4th centuries AH/ 8th to 10th centuries CE) (Ibid.: 165). They emphasize that the Shī'a Ḥadīth literature has been effective on all aspects of the Shī'a life, from rites and rituals to beliefs, more than any other literature, and although the main the Shī'a Ḥadīth literature dates back to their early period, this Ḥadīth-oriented effort continued in the next generations (Kohlberg, 1983: 304). Orientalists' emphasis on this status and importance in the Shī'a Ḥadīth caused them to adopt a systematic approach to the Shī'a Ḥadīth as well as its appearance and growth.

In the study at hand, first the importance and status of Ḥadīth among Shī'a[1] and the reason of their attention to it from the viewpoint of the orientalists are addressed. Then, the orientalists' approach to the later Shī'a narration resources is examined. From among the later resources, Biḥār al-anwār – which has been the most attended resource in this regard – is discussed, and the orientalists' opinions about it are investigated. Consequently, the content of the article is presented in two sections and the discussed opinions are generally evaluated after each section. The basis of this study is on a comprehensive work published by Rainer Brunner on "the role of Ḥadīth as cultural memory in Shi'a history" (Brunner, 2005). This article is the first work that addresses Brunner's study. Besides, based on the inquiries undertaken by the authors, no research project has been carried out on this topic in Iranian publications.

Purposeful appearance of the Shī'a Ḥadīth

Regarding the appearance of the Shī'a Ḥadīth and its expansion from the first century AH to the last century of Imams (a) apparent presence, western researchers believe that advent of Ḥadīth among the Shī'a undoubtedly has been done purposefully by Imams (a) and their companions, a point that should be especially considered in their analyses and opinions. They have put forth various opinions in this regard. Out of all viewpoints discussed in their articles and works, some ideas can be extracted, especially from the viewpoints of some of the most famous orientalists active in the field of

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1. In this study, the term Shī'a is taken to mean "Imamite Shī'a" or "Twelver Shī'a"; today, whenever the word *Shī'a* is used, it refers to the "Imamite Shī'a". If other sects of the Shī'a are intended, they should be accompanied by a correlative word. (Shahristānī, 1948, vol. 1: 234-235; Qism al-kalām fī Majma'al-Buḥuth al-Islāmiyah, 1994: 180-181).

Shī‘a studies. When compared, these viewpoints have some commonalities. These opinions are presented in the following in four parts.

Considering Imams (a) as the speaking Qur'ān

Brunner believes that the first reason for the appearance of the Shī‘a Ḥadīth has been to comprehend the Qur'ān (Ibid.: 332). He tries to prove that one of the goals of the Shī‘a Ḥadīth formation has been to give it a status similar to the Qur'ān and justify the verses distorted for the benefit of the Imams (a), especially Imām ‘Alī (a) (Ibid.: 336).

Brunner stipulates that since the Shī‘a believed the qur'ānic meanings can be comprehended through Imams (a) as the speaking Qur'ān against the silent Qur'ān (q.v. Ayoub, 1988), they formed a concept called "Ḥadīth" to understand these meanings. That is to say, it is only through Imams and after them through their narrations that the connection to the divine revelation and God is guaranteed, and consequently, if Ḥadīth comes to its end, the Qur'ān will necessarily come to its end (Brunner, 2005: 332).

Formation of the Shī‘a identity structure

The other reason that Brunner presents for the formation of Ḥadīth in the Shī‘a is the Shī‘a *identity building* (Ibid.: 335). In his opinion, establishment and foundation of the Shī‘a identity building based on the narrations is a very important feature of the Shī‘a Ḥadīth that should be considered carefully:

> Despite the essential function of the Imams' traditions as a tool for the interpretation of the Qur'an, it would be superficial to reduce Shī‘ī *Ḥadīth* to a mere auxiliary role. Rather, it forms in itself a connection to salvation history, because its second — and in our context decisive — purpose is one of identity building. Shī‘ī *Ḥadīth* from the very beginning was characterized by its sharp and uncompromising distinction from Sunnī Islam. With the exception of only a very small number of persons, all Sunnī Companions of the Prophet, viz., the *saluiba* (and also the *Tcibegn* or following generations) upon whose shoulders rests the Sunnī corpus of traditions, were rejected. In the eyes of the Shī‘as, it was they who were primarily responsible for the fact that Muhammad's designation of ‘Alī as his legitimate successor was frustrated (Ibid.: 335-336).

In his view, the Shī‘a narration collections as the Shī‘a cultural memory that comprise the whole existence and corroboration of the Shī‘a are considered as the second goal after *comprehending the meanings and concepts of the Qur'ān*. Therefore, the role of the Shī‘a scholars in

protecting this memory is deemed paramount and ‘Allāmah Majlisī is introduced as the biggest Shī‘a scholar in this regard. His valuable work *Biḥār al-anwār* is imagined as the most important and enormous cultural memory of the Shī‘a, and in other words, "the monumental program of identity building" (Ibid.: 336).

Defending Imamate and guardianship

The third reason of the orientalists for the Shī‘a approach to Ḥadīth is the existence of challenging issues related to "Imam's religious and political authority", which was formed during Imams' era (a). In the eyes of some, the engagement of the Shī‘a with Ḥadīth in the first three centuries AH was not the result of their motivation to protect and spread the Shī‘a heritage, but rather, it was due to the Shī‘a religious and doctrinal structure (Kohlberg, 1983: 301). Kohlberg believes that since Imamate was not an accepted principle in the society, there were a lot of arguments about this issue between Imam's companions and different groups (e.g. debates between Hushām and Mu’min al-Ṭāq). Therefore, Ḥadīth – which in fact reflected the authority of Imām – was the only branch that the Shī‘a scholars could largely address (Ibid.)

He also believes that in the light of the absolute significance of Imām during his presence time and lack of access to him during the later times and due to the need to keep and expand the Shī‘a Ḥadīth heritage, the Shī‘a scholars in different parts of the world set out to write down and record Ḥadīth books (Ibid.: 300-302).

Ḥadīth: the criterion for accuracy/inaccuracy of the Noble Qur’ān verses

One of the main and worth-mentioning points in this section is the Noble Qur’ān "distortion verses"; in the orientalists' opinion, the Shī‘a believe that the Qur’ān which was revealed to the Prophet (s) has numerous references to Imams (a) in general, and especially refer to Imām ‘Alī (a) as the most appropriate person for the caliphate. As the existing Qur’ān is void of these references, the Qur’ān that was collected and developed during ’Uthmān time is not the same as the one which was revealed to the Prophet and some of its verses are omitted or changed. In many of these so-called deleted verses, the phrase "about ‘Alī" has existed; for instance, in the 70th verse of the Table Spread chapter, it says, "O Apostle! proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord." It is asserted that the Shī‘a believe the original phrase "about ‘Alī" in the rest of this verse has been removed. Or in the 110th verse of the House of ’Imrān chapter, the clause "***kuntum khayra ummatin***" (Ye are the best of peoples) has originally been "***kuntum khayra a'immati***n" (Ye are the best of Imams) (Brunner, 2005: 322).

Brunner stipulates that the root of all these distortions is with no exception the narrations that are narrated from Imams (a), and it was after these narrations that the Shī'a Ḥadīth was considered as the criterion for identification and accuracy of the divine revelation. In other words, Ḥadīth found such a high status that it even surpassed the Qur'ān and was considered and relied upon by the Shī'a even more than the Qur'ān. The distortion narrations were developed and referred to, while the existing version of the Qur'ān was considered defective, or at best, was disputed. He calls this movement as true oppression and to prove this claim, refers to Shaykh Kulaynī and his teacher, 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm, and writes:

> "At around the same time that al-Kulayni, in his *kafi,* cited a number of (sometimes even contradictory) traditions in this regard, a number of books were written in which the authenticity of the Qur'an was explicitly called into question. Al-Kulayni's teacher,'Alī b. Ibrahim al-Qomī, considered it as a matter of course to reserve one chapter of the introduction to his *tafstir* to 'that what is in contradiction to what was revealed by God.'" (Ibid.: 334)

Another noteworthy orientalist is Meir Michael Bar-Asher. In his book *Scripture and exegesis in early Imami shiism*, he asserts that in many early commentaries such as Furāt Kufī, 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm, 'Ayyāshī, and Nu'mānī, the use of such distortion narrations can be seen. In his opinion, the Imamite Shī'a challenged the legitimate authority of the 'Uthmānic manuscript and doubted the quality of its development based on a claim about the political whims of the developers (the first three Caliphs, especially 'Uthmān). He believes that in the early centuries of Islam, and in fact up to Buyid dynasty, the criticisms of the Imamite Shī'a on the qur'ānic text was very strict and the [aforementioned] developers were accused of distorting the Qur'ān through deletion of or addition to its verses. In the Buyid dynasty era and due to the political and social reforms that the Imamite Shī'a underwent, a tendency to modification appeared and their criticisms abated to some extent. The Imamite scholars in the Buyid dynasty era such as Shaykh Mufīd and Sayyīd Murtiḍā believed that although the Qur'ān at their hands was not complete, there was no distortion in it. In other words, whatever found in the 'Uthmānic manuscript of the Qur'ān is true, but it is not the whole truth, since it does not include all of what was revealed to the Prophet (s) (Bar-Asher, 1999: 17). Bar-Asher emphasizes that because the Imamite Shī'a, like other Muslims, believe that the Qur'ān is the word of God, they have tried to find "proofs" for their beliefs from the Qur'ān; various issues around which the Shī'a doctrinal works have developed and evolved can be seen in Imamite commentaries, as if the

Qurʼān has really addressed those beliefs, while in fact those beliefs have appeared among the Shīʻa in later periods. Based on the Imamite commentators' opinion, the true understanding of the Qurʼān can only be found in Imamite Ḥadīth – one which is on Imams (a) to provide, i.e. the children of ʻAlī (a) and Fāṭimah (s). According to an exclusive Shīʻa Ḥadīth, Imams are expert in inferring [the covert mysteries] of the Qurʼān and are the highest authority in discerning licit from illicit. (Ibid.)

A general review of the theories about the "purposeful appearance of the Shīʻa Ḥadīth"

The summary of the orientalists' opinions in this section – discussed as the era of Imams (a) presence in which the Shīʻa evaluated all their actions and behaviors based on a person as Imām (a) – Imams' companions and followers published their narrations to prove their beliefs and achieve their social and religious goals. This presentation of the religious literature in the form of Ḥadīth helped the Shīʻa rely on this cultural memory to actively demonstrate itself as a distinct religious and social identity among other denominations and sects of that time, i.e. the Buyid dynasty, and beyond. The creation of a set of narrations, known today as the Noble Qurʼān "distortion narrations" was established to prove the Shīʻa religious beliefs, especially the most important and challenging of them as the belief in the rightfulness of the guardianship and succession of ʻAlī (a) and his progeny. Moreover, the orientalists believe that Ḥadīth has been deemed the same level or in some cases even higher than the Qurʼān by the Shīʻa. This has brought about a pivotal role for Ḥadīth and Imām (a) and their massive use in understanding and comprehending the concepts and verses of the Qurʼān, judicial and jurisprudential issues, settling the doctrinal-theological disputes and arguments, etc.

The common point in the suggested viewpoints is that the Shīʻa used narrations with regard to its *needs*. This need is on the one hand related to understanding and comprehending the Qurʼān through those who were called *the speaking Qurʼān* – against *the silent Qurʼān* – and on the other hand, it regards the creation of the Noble Qurʼān distortion narrations and the justification of the removal of some verses which were claimed by the Shīʻa to have been about the virtues of ʻAlī (a) and his progeny as well as blames against their enemies but have been deleted later due to some concerns. In addition, the orientalists have referred to the political and jurisprudential status of the Progeny of the Prophet (a) and the disputes between their companions and opponents during their lifetime, and believe that these arguments led to recording of the Imams' words by their companions and later Shīʻa scholars to demonstrate their authority and to show their

scientific, jurisprudential, and political status. This brought about increasing importance to Ḥadīth among Imamite Shī‘a. Besides, paying attention to Shī‘a narration collections caused them to build an identity structure, one which has been representative of the Shī‘a cultural memory and so, Ḥadīth recording in the early centuries of Islam has been due to the massive importance of Ḥadīth for the Shī‘a due to the foregoing reasons.

The claim by Brunner and other orientalists that appearance, maintenance, and expansion of Ḥadīth have been due to the Shī‘a needs has its roots in the general yet shallow view they have toward this sacred and luminous collection; in the Shī‘a viewpoint, Ḥadīth is issued through a glowing source which along with the Qur’ān form a single beam of light. In the Shī‘a view, Imams (a) were the same guiding torch that should be referred to if one wanted to understand the deep concepts of the Qur’ān and to stay away from interpretation based on personal opinions. The association and harmony of the Imams (a) with the Qur’ān is an evidence for their impeccability and authoritativeness. The Shī‘a has had access to this shining source for a long period of 250 years, and this extensive existence next to the 23-year-long Ḥadīth heritage of the Prophet of Allah (s) is considered a valuable support exclusively for the Shī‘a. The Noble Prophet (s) has introduced his progeny as the companion of the Qur’ān. The famous and frequently narrated Ḥadīth of Thaqalayn is the strongest evidence among the Shī‘a and Sunnī for this assertion (Shaykh Mufīd, 1992, vol. 1: 233; Kulaynī, 1969, vol. 1: 294; Muslim, 1991, vol. 7: 123). Unlike what Brunner and some others have deemed, this association has never meant replacing the Noble Qur’ān or being higher than it. Therefore, this claim that Imams' Ḥadīths in the Shī‘a view have been even superior to the Qur’ān is false and fallacious. The status of the Noble Qur’ān in Imams'(a) view has been so high that they have stated that in evaluating the narrations, one of the most important evidences for them to accept the authentic Ḥadīth is its lack of disagreement with the Noble Qur’ān (Majlisī, 1982, vol. 22: 487; Sharīf Raḍī, 1985: 75). If Ḥadīth has been superior to the Qur’ān in the Shī‘a view, how is it possible that the Qur’ān has been introduced as the criterion for judging the accuracy of the Ḥadīth?!

Later Shī‘a narration collections
Investigations show that from among the later Shī‘a narration sources, only one work has been of special importance for the orientalists: Biḥār al-anwār. Other sources have not been greatly taken into account!

Biḥār al-anwār is a Shī‘a Ḥadīth collection that has been authored under the supervision of ‘Allāmah Majlisī. This book is the most extensive Shī‘a narration collection. In other words, it’s an encyclopedia of the Islamic

knowledge and sciences (Ma'āif, 2008; 78). Compilation of this book as a collection of the Shī'a doctrines and teachings took more than 30 years and a group of 'Allāmah Majlisī's students assisted him. The author has designed the book based on 25 general topics and has presented it in 25 volumes (though it has been recently published in 110 volumes). In each volume, the subtopics of it have been offered in distinct sections. In each section, first the qur'ānic verses related to that issue are mentioned and then, their interpretations are provided, and after that, the Ḥadīths about that section are narrated.[1]

Biḥār al-anwār has had a high position in the minds of the researchers due to its presentation of the evidences related to most of the Ḥadīth narrated from the Shī'a Imams (a), the categorization of topics into different sections, explanation and provision of numerous narrations, and various theological, historical, jurisprudential, interpretive, ethical, narration, and syntactic studies. As a result, right after its completion and despite its huge volume, it has been repeatedly reproduced by scribes and later by publishers in part or totality.

Just like their approach to the early Shī'a narration sources, the orientalists adopt the descriptive and then, methodological and analytical stance to evaluate and study the later sources. There are few suchlike studies, though the general review of the books written about the Shī'a Ḥadīth by Brown in his book (q.v. Brown, 2009: ch. 4) and the comprehensive review of the later works by Kohlberg can be referred to as the outstanding examples in this regard. In the second part of the " Shī'a Ḥadīth", Kohlberg presents a complete discussion on the Shī'a narration collections up to the 7th century AH and also later sources such as Wasā'il al-Shī'a , Biḥār al-anwār, and Safīnah al-biḥār. In this section of his work, Kohlberg recounts the history of the Shī'a narration literature writing from Baṣā'ir al-darajāt to the later Ḥadīth collections via a descriptive-analytical method (Kohlberg, 1983: 303-307). Kohlberg has also reported some other later works in his other writings.[2] Moreover, an investigation of Mustadrak al-wasa'il from Mīrzāye Nūrī (d. 1320 AH/1902 CE) by Brunner, the descriptive case study by Gleave who has briefly described and reported the Four Books of the Shī'a (Gleave, 2001: 352-353, 355-356 and 357), and the brief review of Wasā'il

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1. Majlisī has tried to cover all then-existing issues in Biḥār al-anwār; for instance, this collection starts with the section Al-Aql wa al-jahl (reason and ignorance) and then, continues with discussions about the theology and the Divine Unity, the Divine Justice, and the history of the Prophets (Ibid.).

2. For instance, to see his opinions about Wasa'il al-Shī'a, q.v. Kohlberg, 1987: 138, and about Biḥār al-anwār, q.v. Kohlberg, 1989

al-Shī'a by Najm Haider (2001: 37) are the other examples in which the Shī'a Ḥadīth resources are addressed.

Among these Shī'a works, however, 'Allāmah Majlisī's Biḥār al-anwār has a special status. Some reasons for this are "the collection of a massive set of narrations and previous narration books", "inclusion of Safavid era history", and "the status of 'Allāmah himself". This book is of great importance and value for different reasons for any interested reader and researcher in different fields of Ḥadīth and Islamic studies. For instance, Māhīr Jarrār believes that Biḥār al-anwār is a very significant and critical source for the Shī'a Ḥadīth studies and is very helpful in examination of the Prophet's life manners, since seven volumes of it have been allocated to the life of the Prophet (a) (Jarrār, 2000: 98). From among different topics and issues discussed by the orientalists about this great collection, their holistic view to it as a cultural and identity-oriented collection can be regarded as the most outstanding view of the westerners in this regard. In the following some instances of this view are presented.

Biḥār al-anwār, Shī'a's monumental program of identity building

Brunner has considered 'Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī as the head and ringleader of the Shī'a scholars during the Safavid dynasty, and has described him as the greatest, the most powerful, and the most effective jurist in the Safavid era and a strict, prejudiced traditionalist. He has regarded Biḥār al-anwār a valuable work among Shī'a scholars. However, he doubts the sacredness and soundness of the whole book because of the existence of some unsound narrations in it. He introduces Biḥār al-anwār as the Shī'a's "monumental program of identity building" (Brunner, 2005: 336).

There is also another interesting point that can be seen in his conclusion. In his opinion, Ḥadīth without Ḥadīth transmitters is nothing. Biḥār al-anwār is on the one hand, the guardian and transmitter of the Shī'a Ḥadīth heritage – or in other words, the cultural memory of the Shī'a – and on the other hand, it is the reflector of the essential role of the Shī'a scholars and their incessant efforts in this process who have significantly contributed to this cultural memory. He believes that if we call Ḥadīth "the cultural memory", we should also call Ḥadīth scholars as "the guardians of the cultural memory" because transmission of the written Shī'a Ḥadīth heritage has not been due to the efforts of one or two scholars, but rather, many specialists during history have tried and distinguished right from wrong and have greatly tried to develop and transmit those Ḥadīths (Ibid.: 347).

Another interesting point in the book Biḥār al-anwār is the "Al-Ijāzāt section" (permissions) which has attracted Brunner's attention. In this part, which includes five volumes in recent imprints of the book, more than 100

permissions are mentioned, and Majlisī introduces it on page 192 of the 105th volume as the guarantee for validation of the scholars' books and works that have been used in Biḥār al-anwār (Ibid.: 348).

When arguing for the existence of exaggeration and dramatization among Shī'a scholars and authorities, Brunner does not exclude 'Allāmah Majlisī and asserts that in some cases, he has also presented long dream narrations (i.e. the ones without authenticity and evidence). An example is as following:

> Two persons who had been hostile towards him and had often calumniated him dreamt simultaneously on the night of al-Majlisī's death how the latter was woken by the Prophet and 'Alī and escorted to heaven. He even takes part in the committee presided over by the Prophet, which on the day of resurrection verifies the justifications of those who desire to enter paradise. (Ibid.: 349-350).

Suchlike perceptions in the description of Biḥār al-anwār probably originate from the same viewpoint that was formerly mentioned: consideration of this great book as the most important later narration collection of the Shī'a and reflector of the internal and cultural identity of the Shī'a. In his last words, Brunner regards 'Allāmah as the inseparable part of the Shī'a cultural memory and warns that researchers should not ignore this issue (Ibid.: 350).

The status of narration collections among the Shī'a

In addition to the deep and focused view of Biḥār al-anwār and 'Allāmah Majlisī, the western Shī'a studies in the Ḥadīth field have also considered the position of the Shī'a notables and scholars in the Shī'a Ḥadīth studies, the events, movements, and confrontations they have faced, and the efforts they have made to consolidate the Shī'a opinions, principles, and foundations. In other words, the discussion of "the role of Ḥadīth collection authors" and "narration collection" among the Muslims in general and among the Shī'a in particular is an important issue that has been regarded by them to some extent, as there have recently appeared independent works in this regard. For instance, in Newman (2000), the status of authors of the early Ḥadīth collections have been well reflected. He comprehensively and specifically examines the role of Kulaynī, Barqī, and Qomī with regard to both their thoughts and their status among their contemporary Shī'a community. He concludes that their studies originated from their general thinking manner about the movements, concerns, and issues they encountered.

Moreover, in Brunner's aforementioned work, the status of 'Allāmah Majlisī as a Ḥadīth transmitter, Shaykh, and high-ranking official has been

analytically described.[1] Other examples include introduction of the character and status of Shaykh Mufīd (may God have mercy on him) in an article by Madelung (1954, vol. 7: 312-313) as well as the books of Bayhom-Daou (2005) and McDermott (1978), character and status of Shaykh Ṭūsī (may God have mercy on him) by Amīr-Muʿizzī (1954, vol. 2: 745-746)[2], and introduction of the dialectic-theological opinions of ʿAllāmah Ṣaffār by Schmidtke (1991). Other scholars such as Feyḍ Kāshānī have also been carefully studied by some orientalists. Nonetheless, no figure or book has been evaluated and studied more than ʿAllāmah Majlisī and Biḥār al-anwār.

A general review of the opinions about "the later Shīʿa narration collections"

Now we turn to this question that why Biḥār al-anwār has received this much attention while there have been numerous and important other later Shīʿa narration collections? The answer to this question can be found when the previous discussions of this article are noted.

First, the general approach of the orientalists is to study and analyze the early resources and it can be said that the main part of their studies has tended to be so. To analyze the early bases, concepts, and principles of Shīʿa from narration studies, they have found the best and the most important act to carefully study and comprehensively explore the early texts and collections and so, they pay less attention to the later works.

Second, out of the later Ḥadīth collections, the only work that entails a huge collection of attitudes, materials, and texts is Biḥār al-anwār. The reason for the orientalists' attention to this massive work is that it was formed in a period when the Shīʿa found a specific political status and so, it can reflect the different political and doctrinal aspects of this Islamic denomination. On the other hand, this work is the largest Ḥadīth set that has been compiled after the early collections and so, with regard to the high governmental and scientific status of ʿAllāmah and creation of the book during the Safavid era, it is suitable for various studies such as studying the historical-political considerations of the Safavid era, the frictions between

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1. For a critical discussion of the orientalist studies on ʿAllāmah Majlisī, q.v. Algar, 2000: 101-105
2. In this study, an orientalist is a person from the West or any location in the world who, in line with the western writings, has done studies about the East, especially when the latter is defined as Islam and the Muslim Countries. Therefore, people such as Mudarrisī, Amīr Muʿizzī, and Biyukārā are considered orientalists. Motzki believes that with the terms *western* or *non-Muslim* studies, we do not mean that the researchers of these studies are all western or non-Muslim; the main criterion is only that if these researchers follow western research traditions (Motzki, 2010: 11).

the Traditionalists and the Principlists, and the difference between the scholars before and after the Safavid dynasty. Moreover, the exploration of the narrations that existed in the early Ḥadīth collections is not directly possible. Rather, via his access to some books and resources, 'Allāmah has accessed those early Ḥadīths that are now of interest to the orientalists.

Third, the life of 'Allāmah Majlisī has attracted many orientalists. This attention has not been fair and unbiased, and in almost all of their works published in this regard, superficial, prejudiced, and sometimes hostile judgments can be observed. In a comprehensive article, Hāmid Algar has collected the viewpoints of his colleagues and extensively described them. He believes that more than considering 'Allāmah Majlisī as a scholar and Ḥadīth transmitter, they have reviewed his political and social record. He notes that the reason for this is the number and volume of Majlisī's works as well as the orientalists' lack of familiarity with the Islamic sciences and their specific terms. Algar believes that most of the orientalists have attacked 'Allāmah and have attributed many distortions to him. He enumerates several reasons for these attacks. First, the orientalists in many cases deem each other's words as authentic, in a way that if one of them makes a mistake, the other ones also repeat it. If someone highly famous and valued in the orientalist circles expresses his opinions about an issue, his colleagues do not deem it necessary to conduct a study on primary resources to evaluate his assertion. For instance, it can be seen that first the unfair judgment by Brown about Majlisī becomes a truth for Lockhart who then extends Brown's baseless accusations, and finally, his book about the extinction of the Safavid dynasty becomes a cornerstone for the biggest European and American specialists on the history of Safavid dynasty (Algar, 2000: 101-105).

Algar then refers to a more important reason for this enmity and biased studies: the opposition of 'Allāmah to the Safavid. He believes that many orientalists greatly valued Sufism and even now appreciate it – or more accurately, an image of Sufism – and so, quickly label anyone who seems to be an opponent to Sufism as "prejudiced". The western authors did not care to try to analyze the conditions of Sufism during Majlisī's time, assess the accuracy of accusations against him, and seemingly have been ignorant of the point that many scholars of the Safavid era, including the great mystic Mullā Ṣadrā, have written books and pamphlets against Sufism. Opposition to Sufism has not been exclusive to 'Allāmah Majlisī and so, accusing him only because of this is not acceptable (Ibid.)

Fourth, despite this great attention to Biḥār al-anwār, in some cases such as studying the bases and principles of criticism, principles of Ḥadīth transmitter and proofs studies, and the discussions on the jurisprudential

principles in the contextual analysis of Ḥadīth, it can be seen that the orientalists have noted some later resources. For instance, the article by Asmāʾ Afsar al-Dīn entitled " An Insight into the Ḥadīth Methodology of Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ṭāwūs" is among the works in which the Imamite Ḥadīth collection methodology and Ḥadīth criticism has received attention with a glance on the Ḥadīth analysis method applied by Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ṭāwūs Ṣaffār (d. 673 AH/1274 CE) based on his book Banāʾ al-maqālah al-fāṭimiyyah (or ʿalawiyyah) fī naqd al-risālah al-ʾUthmāniyyah. Moreover, the article "the resources and assessments of the Ḥadīth transmitters in the Shīʿa Rijāl books" by Līāqat Ḥakīm examines the origin of Rijāl collections about the Imams' companions and enumerates the possible reasons for the development of these works in the 8ᵗʰ and 9ᵗʰ centuries CE. In this study, he investigates the comparative methodological study of authorization in the early and later works as well as the possible reasons for the appearance of the much later styles of authorization in them.

Fifth, the orientalists' approach to the Shīʿa Ḥadīth bases is mainly a comparative approach mostly against the Sunnī Ḥadīth. For instance, Brown believes that with regard to books on the contextual analysis of Ḥadīth and studying the authenticity of Ḥadīth transmitters, the Shīʿa are less active and are more affected by the Sunnī scholars (Brown, 2009: 131-143). Kohlberg also regards the style and structure adopted in the Four Books of the Shīʿa as an imitation of the Sunnī works. He states that the Derivative Principles section of the book Al-Kāfī along with the books Man lā ya ḥzuḍruhu al-faqīh, Tahdhīb al-aḥkām, and Al-Istibṣār have been modeled based on the Sunnī-authored books and like them, have collected all narrations related to one topic under a distinct title (Kohlberg, 2013: 177).

Regarding the evidence and text, Brown gives in a comprehensive report on the Shīʿa Ḥadīth works and activities in the period after the early collections and asserts that in evaluation of the proofs and content of the Ḥadīths, the Shīʿa follow the Sunnī scholars without any modification (Brown, 2009: 131-143). Moreover, regarding the review and analysis of the Shīʿa Ḥadīth and the criticisms against it, the orientalists are skeptic toward the existence of Sunnī transmitters in The Shīʿa documents. For instance, they take the presence of the Prophet's companions in the Shīʿa narrations as a way for the Shīʿa to consolidate their assertions in circumstances which were filled with Sunnī suppression and to authenticate their narrations, as mentioned above. Besides mentioning the interaction between the Shīʿa and the Sunnī in Ḥadīth and the manner the scholars of both of them treat the Ḥadīths, Brown stipulates that the Sunnī scholars consider the Shīʿa Ḥadīth and transmitters with more tolerance and have narrated many Ḥadīths from

the Shī‘a Ḥadīth transmitters in their books, while the Shī‘a have been strict and in addition to weakening the Sunnī Ḥadīth transmitters, have refrained from narrating their Ḥadīths, and only have used some Sunnī narrations when they wanted to prove the rightfulness of the Shī‘a beliefs (Ibid.: 137).

Conclusion
A brief glance at the foregoing works and opinions shows that the approach adopted by the majority of the orientalists toward the appearance of the Shī‘a Ḥadīth is a skeptic one. The common point among the orientalists in this regard is that the Shī‘a started to pay attention to the narrations due to the need they had to the Ḥadīth. The Shī‘a's consideration of narration collections helped them construct an identity building that has represented their cultural memory during the coming centuries. In their opinion, emphasis on the maintenance of this heritage has not been due to the luminous nature of its theological thoughts or the inherent authenticity of the Imam's (a) words, but rather, the neediness of the Shī‘a during its history – because of the foregoing reasons – has caused the Shī‘a to maintain and protect the narrations of their notables.

Examinations show that from among the later Shī‘a Ḥadīth resources, only Biḥār al-anwār has received a special attention from the orientalists. Three reasons can be suggested for this issue. First, the orientalists have mostly a tendency to study and analyze the early texts and it can be said that the main share of their studies has inclined this way. To investigate the bases, concepts, and essential principles of the Shī‘a using the narration studies, they have focused on the careful review and comprehensive exploration of the early texts and collections and so, they have paid less attention to the later works. Second, the orientalists noted a massive work such as Biḥār al-anwār since it was formed at a time when the Shī‘a found a specific political status and so, this book can reflect many different aspects of the Shī‘a policy and doctrine. On the other hand, this book is the largest Ḥadīth work that has been collected after the early collections, and in the light of the high governmental and scientific position of ‘Allāmah and the encryption of this book during the Safavid dynasty, it can be suitable for various studies including the investigations of the historical-political considerations of the Safavid era, the tensions between the traditionalists and principlists, and the difference between the viewpoints of the clergy before and after the Safavid era. Moreover, since there has been done no exploration of the narrations that have got to us from the early collections but ‘Allāmah – who had access to some books and resources – could access them, the orientalists have paid considerable attention to Biḥār al-anwār. The

third point to be mentioned is that the life of ʻAllāmah Majlisī has been regarded by many orientalists. Unfortunately, this attention has not been fair and free from ill-will, and in almost any work in this area published by the orientalists, we can observe their superficial, prejudiced, and sometimes hostile judgments.

Despite the extensive attention to Biḥār al-anwār, in some cases such as studying the bases and principles of Ḥadīth criticism, principles of Ḥadīth transmitter and proofs studies, and the discussions on the jurisprudential principles in the contextual analysis of Ḥadīth, one can find orientalists' consideration of some later resources.

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