



Amir-Moezzi's Shi'a Studies: A Critical Analysis of Sources and Citations*

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Abstract

In his Shi'a studies, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi has built his historical analyses and reconstructions of early Shi'ism upon a spectrum of Shi'i hadith, narrative, and historical sources. The main issue of this research is a critical examination and evaluation of his sources and citations, assessing their reliability and the methodological coherence of Amir-Moezzi's research in his utilization of them. Adopting an analytical-critical approach, this study examines the most significant hadith sources cited by Amir-Moezzi, the manner in which he utilizes these sources, and the critical viewpoints raised regarding them. The findings indicate that Amir-Moezzi faces serious problems in source selection, evaluation of traditions, and data analysis, including an extensive reliance on texts with dubious attribution or lacking definitive authenticity, disregard for hadith studies and rijāl (biographical) criteria in evaluating traditions,

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selective treatment of data, biased translations and interpretations, and references that are inaccurate or inconsistent with primary sources. Furthermore, the results indicate that a portion of his analyses is influenced by esoteric presuppositions and Orientalist approaches, which, in some cases, has led to the imposition of specific readings upon narrative texts.

Keywords

Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Orientalists, Shi'a Studies, Early Shi'ism, Shi'a.

Introduction

Sources and citations are among the most important pillars of any scientific research, and the credibility of the research results depends to a great extent on the authenticity, accuracy, and manner of their utilization. This issue gains greater importance in historical and religious studies, especially Shi'a studies, because historical analyses and reconstructions in this field are primarily based on hadith texts, commentaries, and historical reports, and any weakness in evaluating these sources can lead to a distorted picture of Shi'i history and thought.

Among contemporary Shi'a scholars, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi has attracted widespread attention by proposing the theory of "early esoteric Shi'ism." Relying on hadith texts, he argues that a significant portion of early Shi'is attributed a status to the Imam beyond the human level, and this esoteric tradition continued until the 10th century CE. In his belief, with the victory of the rationalist Baghdad school over the hadith-oriented Qom school, Imami Shi'ism shifted from supra-rational esotericism toward theological and jurisprudential rationalism, and thus the final form of Imami doctrines was shaped.

Although Amir-Moezzi's viewpoints have been the subject of numerous studies and critiques, these studies have often focused on topics such as Imamology, Mahdism, ghuluww (extremism), esotericism, and his historical reading of Shi'ism. However, an independent and methodical examination of his sources and citations and an evaluation of his method of utilizing hadith and historical data have received less attention; whereas without evaluating the credibility of sources and the accuracy of citations, judgment regarding his results and claims will not be complete.

The present study seeks to fill this gap and, through a critical examination of Amir-Moezzi's sources and citations, evaluates their credibility, authenticity, and methodological coherence. To this end, first, the position of the Holy Quran in his works and the implications of his view on the issue of the distortion (tahrīf) of the Quran are examined. Then, the hadith sources he cites are analyzed in terms of authenticity and reliability. Subsequently, his manner of encountering hadith and historical texts is evaluated from the perspective of source selection, methodological inconsistency, disregard for the research of Muslim scholars, and certain instances of misunderstanding or distortion of texts. Also, by matching his references with primary sources, examples of inconsistency between research data and cited texts will be demonstrated. In total, this article attempts to show that a part of Amir-Moezzi's historical reconstructions, rather than being based on definitive historical evidence, is influenced by a specific type of source selection and interpretive reading of texts.

First: The Holy Quran

Although Amir-Moezzi has not independently named the Holy Quran among the primary sources of his research, he has cited Quranic verses throughout his Shi'a studies and has utilized them in historical, theological, and Imamological analyses. In discussions such as Imamate, Wilayah, esotericism, the issue of ta'wīl (esoteric interpretation), Mahdism, and even explaining the epistemic status of the Imams, he has repeatedly referred to the Quran and has attempted to reinforce his specific reading of early Shi'ism by citing certain verses and narrative commentaries. Therefore, although the Quran does not have an independent position in his official list of sources, it is effectively one of his most important argumentative backings, and examining his perception of the Quran is necessary for understanding the foundations and results of his research.

The importance of this issue is doubled because the type of perspective toward the Quran has a foundational impact on the manner of understanding Islamic history and theology. In the Islamic tradition, the Holy Quran is considered the most reliable and foundational source of religious knowledge, and other sources, including hadiths, are evaluated and validated in its light. In the Shi'i hadith heritage as well, the compatibility of a tradition with the Quran is considered one of the most important criteria for assessing the credibility of a hadith. Therefore, any historical or theological analysis regarding Shi'ism that is formed based on a specific type of perception toward the Quran will inevitably affect the final results of the research.

Examination and Critique The Holy Quran, as previously stated, is among Amir-Moezzi's research sources. In our view, the Holy Quran is considered an important source for religious beliefs, and in traditions, one of the criteria for validating hadiths is their compatibility with the Quran. Amir-Moezzi, although acknowledging this, has damaged the credibility of the Quran by implying its problematic nature. He considers important examples of the problematic nature of the Quran to be issues such as the authenticity of the Quran, the distortion of the official Quran, the lack of organization of the Quran in terms of the order of revelation, the interference of Meccan verses in Medinan surahs and vice versa, and the belief in *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* (abrogator and abrogated) to settle glaring contradictions in the Quran. In his analysis of why the Quran was compiled with such a text, he points to numerous factors and, in a way, assigns a centrality to Shi'ism in them. Internal conflicts and also enmity and opposition to Imam Ali are among the most important factors he has addressed. Amir-Moezzi has considered the belief in the distortion of the Quran as the origin of the necessity for Quranic exegesis and believes that the Shi'i Imams initially provided the undistorted text of the verses to their followers, as evidenced by the

examples of Shi'i verses in traditions. Based on this very approach and the belief in the deletion of phrases or names from the Quran, Shi'ism believed in the theory of the "silent Quran" and considered the understanding of the Quran to be conditional upon its interpretation by the Imams. However, according to Amir-Moezzi, around the 10th century CE, Shi'ism, for various reasons, abandoned the claim of the distortion of the Quran and subsequently believed in the theory of the levels of Quranic meaning so that it could provide a Quranic basis for proving its claims in the discussion of Imamate through interpretation and ta'wīl (Amir Moezzi, 2019, pp. 919-967). Accordingly, if the credibility and authenticity of the Quranic text are considered so damaged, ultimately the Quran itself can no longer be used as a definitive and reliable source for extracting religious beliefs and historical analyses; an issue that will have important methodological implications for Amir-Moezzi's entire intellectual system.

Second: Hadith Sources

Amir-Moezzi has divided the hadith sources of his research into two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. In stating the primary sources of his research, he calls them the first systematic compilers of Imami hadiths as well as sources of supra-rational esoteric Imamiism, of which Ibn Babawayh is the loyal last presenter from the early period. These sources are:

- Basā'ir al-Darajāt written by Sheikh Saffar Qumi (died 903 CE)
- Usūl al-Kāfī and Furū' al-Kāfī by Sheikh Kulayni
- al-Ghaybah written by Nu'mani
- Some works of Saduq such as 'Ilal al-Sharā'i', Kamāl al-Dīn, al-Tawhīd, al-Amālī, 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā, Ṣifāt al-Shī'ah, and Faḍā'il al-Shī'ah.

He has divided the secondary sources into three categories:

- Works whose Imamological and esoteric aspects are inseparably connected to each other, such as the book *al-Maḥāsin* by Abu Ja'far Ahmad ibn Muhammad Barqi (died 887 or 893 CE).
- Sources whose dependence on supra-rational esoteric Imamiism, i.e., the original belief, is partial; such as the exegetical works of early Imami exegetes like Furat ibn Ibrahim Kufi (died 912 CE), Ali ibn Ibrahim Qumi (died 919 CE), and Muhammad ibn Mas'ud Ayyashi (died 932 CE).
- Primary sources whose authenticity and completeness have not been definitively proven; for example, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, or *Ithbāt al-Waṣiyyah li-l-Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*, which Shi'is attribute to the famous Mas'udi (died 956 CE), author of *Murūj al-Dhahab*.

Amir-Moezzi has considered the exercise of maximum caution necessary in using secondary sources and considers their utilization permissible where they confirm or complete the contents of the primary and original sources (Amir Moezzi, 1994, pp. 19-22). With the argument that a few decades after the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, rationalists gained superiority and marginalized the irrational esoteric tradition, and in truth, Imamiism engaged in self-censorship, he believes that old lithograph prints and also manuscripts of some primary sources, i.e., manuscripts related to the irrationalist esoteric tradition, are still widely used and in some cases, reference to them is even necessary (Amir Moezzi, Schmidtke, 1997, pp. 73-122). Among the mentioned sources, Amir-Moezzi has paid the most attention to the book *Basā'ir al-Darajāt* written by Saffar Qumi. He has even written a

lengthy article about this book and its author entitled “Al-Saffār al-Qummī et son Kitāb basā’ir al-darajāt.” According to him, Saffar Qumi’s book is the oldest systematic collection of hadiths related to Twelver Imamology and has gathered the foundations of the metaphysics and ancient mysticism of Imamiism within itself. For this reason, this book undoubtedly belongs to the original tradition, i.e., “irrationalist esotericism” (ésotérique non-rationnelle). Amir-Moezzi has attributed the reason for referring to specific hadith sources like Basā’ir al-Darajāt to the immense transformation of Shi’ism in the 10th century CE, in which the rationalist theological current became dominant. In his opinion, if we want to know Shi’ism before this jurisprudential-theological transformation, which is a late transformation and goes back to the 10th century CE and the Buyids, through these texts, we are forced to rely on texts like those of Saffar and Kulayni. Because after them, Shi’ism transforms and, as stated in the texts, distances itself from the teachings of the Imams. Amir-Moezzi has considered his work in referring to such sources as similar to Majlisi’s reference to the sources of the Akhbaris and the first Shi’i sources, and states that if it is permissible to criticize him, it should be possible to criticize Majlisi as well (Amir Moezzi, 2018, v. 3, p. 47).

Examination and Critique

1- The Challenge of Authenticity and Credibility of Sources

As mentioned earlier, citing sources that possess scientific credibility, historical accuracy, and narrative firmness not only provides a solid backing for the researcher's arguments but also places the analyses in a documented, coherent, and evaluable context. However, the sources that Amir-Moezzi cites the most in his works are not at the same level in terms of authenticity, credibility, and degree of reliability. They can be classified into two general categories:

1. Sources with Valid Attribution and Textual Authenticity

This category includes works whose attribution to known authors is based on sufficient historical evidence and documentation, and there is no serious doubt about the general authenticity of their text. These works have a consolidated position in the Imami hadith and exegetical tradition and are considered among the most important sources for studying Shi'i doctrines; although the critical evaluation of their individual traditions is still necessary. Among the most important sources in this category is al-Kāfi by Kulayni, which has always been trusted by Shi'i scholars in terms of narrative and historical accuracy, although validating its individual traditions remains a necessity in hadith studies. The works of Sheikh Saduq also possess the same status and have been widely used throughout the history of Imami thought. Also, the Tafsīr of Ayyashi, despite the fact that the chains of transmission of many of its traditions have been removed in the existing version, is not in doubt in terms of attribution to Muhammad ibn Mas'ud Ayyashi. As Allameh Tabataba'i stated in his introduction to this work, it is "the best and most authentic book in ma'thūr (narrated) exegesis" (see: Ayyashi, 1959-1960 CE, pp. 2-4).

2. Sources with Doubts in Attribution or Textual Authenticity

This category includes works about whose attribution to authors, text authenticity, completeness of the work, or the process of their compilation there are ambiguities that may stem from weak chains of transmission, late additions and edits, the absence of old manuscripts, or the existence of inconsistent historical evidence. Therefore, utilizing these sources requires critical examinations and precise historical, rijāl, and textual evaluations.

2-1. Kitāb al-Qirā'āt by Sayyari

Abu Abdallah Ahmad ibn Muhammad Sayyari, author of Kitāb al-

Qirā'āt, has been weakened by a number of Shi'i rijāl scholars and scientists, and some have considered the corruption of his school of thought to be a matter of consensus. Furthermore, although a portion of the traditions included in this book has been reflected in ancient sources, the attribution of the existing version of the book to him has not been definitively proven, and the characteristics of the existing late versions also strengthen the possibility of tampering with the text (See: Tusi, 1983-1984 CE, v. 2, p. 865; Najashi, 1986, p. 80; Khu'i, 2009, p. 225).

2-2. Kitāb Basā'ir al-Darajāt

Basā'ir al-Darajāt, despite the famous attribution to Saffar, based on some new research, was probably compiled by Muhammad ibn Yahya Attar and based on a work by Sa'd ibn Abdallah Ash'ari and has undergone additions and changes over time (Ansari, 2009, p. 62).

2-3. Kitāb al-Maḥāsin

This book, although confidently attributed to Ahmad ibn Muhammad Barqi, does not have a complete version in hand. Furthermore, the existing content of the book, rather than reflecting a coherent hadith system, consists of moral themes, literature, mursal (interrupted chain) traditions, and various anecdotes, and in this respect, it differs from reference hadith sources (See: Najashi, 1986, pp. 76–77; Tusi, 1986, v. 1, pp. 62–63; Majlisi, 1993, p. 193).

2-4. Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays (Asrār Āl Muḥammad)

There are many differences of opinion regarding the chain of transmission, attribution, and content of this book. Some rijāl and hadith scholars have rejected the original book (Ibn al-Ghadha'iri, 2001, p. 36; Shahid Thani, 2000, pp. 992–993), and another group, while accepting the original work, has considered it to have been subject to extensive

distortion and additions (Mufid, 1993, p. 149; Shushtari, 1993, p. 239; also see: Javadi, 2005, pp. 163–179).

2-5. Tafsīr attributed to Imam Hasan Askari

This exegesis, in the view of many researchers, is not considered an authentic work issued by Imam Hasan Askari (Ibn al-Ghadha'iri, 2001, p. 98; Shushtari, 1993, p. 558; Balaghi, 1994, pp. 161–216).

2-6. Tafsīr of Ali ibn Ibrahim Qumi

The Tafsīr of Qumi, contrary to popular belief, is not completely a direct work of Ali ibn Ibrahim, but is a collection that has been compiled from material attributed to him and other sources (Sheikh Agha Bozorg Tehrani, 1987, p. 302; Ma'rifat, 2007, p. 197).

2-7. Tafsīr of Furat Kufi

Regarding Furat ibn Ibrahim Kufi, the content of the only remaining work of his shows that he was either Zaydi or at least had considerable sympathy and inclination toward Zaydism. In this book, many narrations from Zaydi figures are seen, and there is no tradition regarding the doctrine of the Twelve Imams. Furthermore, in some traditions narrated from Zayd ibn Ali, infallibility has been negated for anyone other than the Five of the Ahl al-Bayt (See: Kufi, 1990, throughout the book). Therefore, this work cannot be considered a representative of the Imami exegetical tradition.

2-8. Tafsīr of Habari

There is no consensus regarding the religious identity of Habari; some researchers have considered him to be from among the Sunni scholars, and others have considered him to be Zaydi (See: Habari, 1984, introduction to the book, pp. 36–38). Therefore, attributing the interpretive and esoteric

tendencies of this work to the Imami tradition faces serious difficulties.

2-9. Works of Rajab Barsi

Rajab Barsi has not only been accused of ghuluww (extremism) and excess in the field of thought and beliefs, but based on some new research, his original historical existence is also faced with ambiguities (Hurr Amuli, n.d., p. 117; Danesh Shahraki et al., 2021, pp. 195–215). Allameh Majlisi has also considered his *Mashāriq al-Anwār* and *al-Alfayn* to consist of confusing, incorrect material, a mixture of correct and incorrect, and extremist themes, and has explicitly stated that he only narrated from him traditions compatible with reliable sources and has not trusted his individual traditions, such as *Khutbat al-Iftikhār* and *Khutbat al-Ṭunjiyyah* (Majlisi, n.d., v. 1, p. 10). Furthermore, a portion of the traditions and themes existing in his works either do not have a precedent in early Imami sources or are reported only in some Nusayri texts with dubious chains of transmission (See: Ansari, 2021).

The outcome of the aforementioned discussions is that a significant portion of the sources cited by Amir-Moezzi are matters of debate in terms of authenticity, attribution, or historical credibility. Therefore, reconstructing the history of Imami thought and attributing esoteric and interpretive doctrines to early Shi'ism based on such sources, without critical and precise historical and textual evaluation, does not possess a solid backing.

2- Disregard for Sources or Research of Muslim Scholars

Amir-Moezzi, apart from the primary sources mentioned earlier and examined in terms of credibility and authenticity, has also referred to other sources. An interesting point in this source selection is that he has given special attention to Orientalist sources and has referred to them throughout his research. As he has only referred to the books and

articles of Orientalists regarding the theme of the covenant (mīthāq) (Amirmoezzi, 1994, p. 163). Also on pages 42 and 43, most references are to Orientalist sources. Even the fact that studies have been conducted regarding the will (waṣiyyah) in Islam and especially in Shi'ism has been referred to the work of Goldziher (Amirmoezzi, 1994, pp. 42-43). This is while Islamic scholars, at least in the commentaries of hadith books, have addressed these issues and explained them. In the issue of Mahdism, Amir-Moezzi emphasizes that because Imami and Shi'i Mahdism, the occultation and its historical consequences, the person of the occult Imam, and some personal aspects have already been studied, he avoids entering into these aspects. He then refers to numerous sources, all of which are Orientalist sources (Amirmoezzi, 1994, p. 211).

3-Selective Reading of Sources in Data Collection

A. Methodological Inconsistency in Encountering Hadith Sources: In Amir-Moezzi's works, a type of methodological inconsistency is clearly evident in encountering hadith sources. He sometimes attributes a tradition from Sheikh Saduq directly to Imam Sadiq without textual/chain-of-transmission analysis and makes the date of the tradition the basis of analysis; but in other cases, he merely makes the date of the compilation of the source the criterion for analysis. This duality shows that the choice of method is not a follower of scientific principles, but stems from the author's theoretical presuppositions and analytical goals. A clear example of this issue can be seen in Amir-Moezzi's analysis of the following tradition: « قَالَ الصَّادِقُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ (ع): مَنْ أَنْكَرَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَشْيَاءَ فَلَيْسَ مِنْ شِيعَتِنَا الْمِعْرَاجِ وَالْمُسَاءَلَةِ فِي الْقَبْرِ وَالشَّفَاعَةِ » (Saduq, 1997, pp. 294-295). Amir-Moezzi writes: "'Whoever denies three things is not our Shi'a: the Ascension, the questioning in the grave, and intercession.' According to this hadith and similar

hadiths reported by Ibn Babawayh - Sheikh Saduq, the belief in the Ascension is clearly one of the pillars of Imami Shi'i faith; but the Ascension of whom? These hadiths are silent about this issue just like the subject of intercession. But there is a reason, because in the period when Ibn Babawayh was writing, it was completely accepted in Shi'i circles that the Imam, like the Prophet, has the ability to go on the Ascension (just as he can intercede) and this - as we will see - was taking place despite efforts that were trying to use the term Ascension exclusively for the celestial journeys of the Prophet. The silence of the hadith about this point seems intentional; because this subject was sensitive, especially in this era." (Amir Moezzi, 2011, p. 169).

The above tradition has come with a connected chain of transmission in the works of Sheikh Saduq, but as can be seen, Amir-Moezzi makes the time of the compilation of the source the criterion in analyzing it, not the time of its issuance from the Imam. Furthermore, by raising the question "the Ascension of whom?", he tries to induce ambiguity in the text of the tradition, whereas in the hadith tradition, the term "Ascension" (Mi'rāj) is conventionally applied to the Ascension of the Prophet of Islam and does not need further clarification. On the other hand, historical analysis also shows that this tradition clearly lies within the framework of the doctrinal demarcations of the early Islamic periods.

The triple content of "Ascension, questioning of the grave, and intercession" is a reaction to currents like the Mu'tazila and Jahmiyya who denied these doctrines. This combination is seen exactly in the works of early Sunni scholars; for example, Abu al-Hasan Ash'ari (d. 935 CE) (Ash'ari, 1980, pp. 293-296) and Abu Muzaffar Isfarayini (d. 1078 CE) (Isfarayini, n.d., pp. 56-57) introduce these very elements as indicators of the Sunni faith and subjects of denial by the Mu'tazila (cite: 1). Therefore, the tradition narrated from Sheikh

Saduq is completely valid and in accordance with the intellectual space of its time in meaning, structure, and historical context. While Amir-Moezzi implies that this tradition is fake by making the time of the source's compilation the criterion in analyzing the tradition, he sometimes attributes traditions with extremist (ghāli) contents from late sources, without any critical examination, to the Ahl al-Bayt. Such as hadiths which he has cited regarding the divinity of the Imams (Amir Moezzi, 2011, pp. 103-133). These contradictions not only show the weakness of methodology but also indicate the precedence of mental and ideological traditions over scientific analyses.

B. Focusing on Specific Viewpoints and Deleting Counter-Evidence: Amir-Moezzi's research method is primarily based on the selective choice of sources; that is, he only considers those traditions and texts that are consistent with his theoretical framework and deletes or downplays opposing sources for various reasons. This issue has caused his analyses in some cases to be reliant on incomplete data. For example, Amir-Moezzi definitively claims that hadiths that indicate that the Mahdi shares the same name and kunyah (agnomen) with the Prophet are fabricated and related to the uprising of Mukhtar in support of Muhammad ibn Hanafiyya.

His evidence is a statement by Muhammad ibn Hanafiyya who introduces himself as the Mahdi and shares the Prophet's name (Ibn Sa'd, 1990, v. 5, p. 70), but even if we consider this tradition valid, the mere statement of Muhammad ibn Hanafiyya is no indication of the fabricated nature of the hadiths attributed to the Prophet. This tradition actually shows that in the mind of the general public during the Mukhtar uprising, the Mahdi was someone who shared the Prophet's name and kunyah. In addition, other reports that Ibn Sa'd has brought before this tradition clearly indicate the Prophet's statement regarding the Mahdi sharing his name and kunyah; just as the Prophet had

promised Ali that he would have a son whose name and kunyah would be similar to the Prophet's, and others have no right to such naming (Ibn Sa'd, 1990, v. 5, pp. 67-68). These evidences reinforce the authenticity of the hadiths related to the shared name of the Mahdi and weaken the hypothesis of their fabrication. However, Amir-Moezzi, by overlooking these valid evidences and incorrectly interpreting the material, engages in presenting baseless and immature claims.

4- Distortion or Misunderstanding of Sources

In religious research, reliance on reliable sources and precise understanding of sacred and historical texts play a basic role in producing valid analyses and reliable results. However, sometimes for reasons such as incorrect understanding, intellectual presuppositions, or interpretive misunderstandings, the ground is prepared for distortion or misunderstanding of sources; an issue that can lead to presenting an incomplete or incorrect picture of religious concepts. Amir-Moezzi's research and works in the field of Shi'a studies suffer from such harm.

Numerous instances show that he has imposed his own mystical-esoteric understandings upon texts, sometimes with incorrect translation, sometimes with incomplete reporting or changing the location of the tradition, to which instances are mentioned as examples. In the book *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Beliefs and Practices*, after claiming a doctrinal link between Shi'ism and the culture of ancient Iran, he writes: "Let us suffice with a few examples: a hadith according to which the sacred book of Zoroaster has 12,000 volumes and contains all sciences and Ali as the ultimate acquaintance of this book..." He then refers to *al-Kāfī*, *Amālī al-Saduq*, *al-Tawhīd*, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*, and *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām* in note 130 related to this point and then writes: "References to Ali as knowing

Zoroastrian sciences are also found in Sunni books." He then refers to Abu Yusuf's al-Kharāj and Abd al-Razzaq's Muṣannaf (Amir Moezzi, 2011, p. 97). Ignoring the ambiguities in the addresses provided by Amir-Moezzi regarding this hadith, his intention is apparently traditions that count the Magians among the People of the Book and explain the legitimacy of taking jizyah from them; traditions that have also been reported in some Shi'i hadith sources (Kulayni, 1986, v. 3, p. 567; Tusi, 1986, v. 1, p. 113; Saduq, 1992, v. 2, p. 53; Saduq, 1997, p. 343). However, Amir-Moezzi's understanding of these hadiths is not consistent with the text of the traditions; because firstly, the expression «فِي اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ أَلْفَ جُلْدٍ ثَوْرٍ» in these traditions, the word "جلد" does not mean "volume" as Amir-Moezzi has brought, but the expression «جلد ثور» means "bull skin." Secondly, in none of these traditions is there any talk of the Zoroastrian book "containing all sciences."

Thirdly, in the text of the hadiths, Imam Ali has also not been introduced as the "ultimate acquaintance" or interpreter of Zoroastrian sciences. In Sunni sources as well, expressions such as «وَاللَّهِ مَا عَلَيَّ «الْأَرْضِ الْيَوْمَ أَحَدٌ أَعْلَمُ بِذَلِكَ مِنِّي، إِنَّ الْمَجُوسَ كَانُوا أَهْلَ كِتَابٍ يَعْرِفُونَهُ وَعِلْمٌ يَدْرُسُونَهُ قَالَ عَلِيُّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ النَّاسَ بِهِمْ، كَانُوا أَهْلَ « (San'ani, 1983, v. 6, p. 70) and «كِتَابٍ يَقْرَأُونَهُ، وَعِلْمٌ يَدْرُسُونَهُ؛ فَتَزَعُ مِنْ صُدُورِهِمْ» (Abu Yusuf al-Qadi, n.d., p. 143) have come; but these expressions also have no indication of Imam Ali's special knowledge of Zoroastrian sciences, but the whole point is in proving the Magians are People of the Book and explaining why the taking of jizyah from them is permissible. Furthermore, none of these traditions have any indication of a link between Shi'ism and ancient Iran, and what Amir-Moezzi has raised in this regard is in fact an imposed interpretation stemming from his own presuppositions, not a concept that the text of the hadith has indicated. Amir-Moezzi, in numerous instances, in translating or interpreting traditions, uses

concepts such as "secret," "acquaintance with secrets," and "teaching of secrets," while these expressions do not exist in the original text of the hadiths and are the result of his interpretive and esoteric reading of the traditions. For example, after narrating this hadith from Imam Sadiq: «إِنَّ أَمْرَنَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَحَقُّ الْحَقِّ وَهُوَ الظَّاهِرُ وَبَاطِنُ الْبَاطِنِ وَهُوَ السِّرُّ وَ سِرُّ السِّرِّ وَ «سِرُّ الْمُسْتَسِرِّ وَ سِرُّ مُقَنَّعٍ بِالسِّرِّ» (Saffar Qumi, 1983, p. 29), he writes: "Perhaps the repetitive words of the Imams that have been repeated like a theme throughout their collections should be understood in this sense: We are the treasury and treasurers of God's secret and our Shi'is are our treasury and treasurers" (Amirmoezzi, 1994, p. 148). As can be seen, in the text of the tradition, there is talk of the "affair" (amr) of the Ahl al-Bayt and describing its levels and butūn (inner meanings). This approach is repeated in different parts of his works; such that when talking about the knowledge of the Imams, he utilizes expressions such as "teaching of acquaintance with secrets," "knowledge of acquaintance with secrets." He states: "The knowledge of acquaintance with secrets (Initiatory Knowledge) is the constituent element of the Imam's existence.

What makes the Imam is the possession of this knowledge. The titles and descriptive expressions of the Imam, in most cases, are related to this knowledge: treasurer of God's knowledge, mine of God's knowledge, knower of the Quran, firmly rooted in knowledge (rāsikh fī al-ʿilm), heir to knowledge, etc." (Amirmoezzi, 1994, p. 177). This is while none of these expressions in hadith sources necessarily indicate "acquaintance with secrets" in the conventional sense intended by Amir-Moezzi. Concepts such as "treasurer of God's knowledge," "heir to knowledge," or "firmly rooted in knowledge" in Shi'i hadith literature are observant of the scientific, divine, and exegetical authority of the Imams, and carrying them on to a type of mysterious and ritual knowledge requires premises and evidences that

Amir-Moezzi does not provide. Another example is his translation of a tradition narrated from Imam Husayn at the beginning of the third chapter of the book. He translates the hadith «لَوْلَا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنَّا» (Hammuwi Juwayni, n.d., v. 1, p. 45; Qunduzi, v. 1, p. 75) as: "Because of us, the guides who are acquainted with secrets, the sky does not collapse onto the earth," while in the text of the tradition, there is no expression equivalent to "guides who are acquainted with secrets," and the tradition merely indicates the role of divine proofs in the survival of the universe.

The addition of the expression "acquainted with secrets" in the translation is in fact a reflection of Amir-Moezzi's interpretive presupposition, not the content of the hadith itself. Amir-Moezzi writes on page 48 of the book *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*: "Regarding this, the Imam says: In relation to the Lord, three things are impossible for servants: manifestation, reception, and knowledge, because there is no eye that can bear His manifestation, no heart that can bear His reception, and no intellect that can bear His knowledge." He then brings the Arabic text of this part of the hadith in note 243 and refers it to *Tafsīr Ja'far al-Šādiq*, Nuwaya edition, pp. 196-197 and Zi'ur edition, p. 141. Ignoring the issue of the credibility of this book and its hadiths, observing the complete text of the hadith shows that Amir-Moezzi's translation and understanding of the tradition is not precise; because the second part of the tradition (فلا عين تراه...) has been considered as the reason for the first part of the tradition, while this part of the tradition is in truth not an argument but an exposition of the previous material, and its argument comes in the continuation of the tradition, which Amir-Moezzi has not narrated: The complete text of the tradition is: «ثلاث من العبيد الى ربهم محال: التجلي والوصلة والمعرفة. فلا عين تراه ولا قلب يصل اليه ولا عقل يعرفه. لان اصل المعرفة من الفطرة واصل المواصلة ثلاث من العبيد الى ربهم محال: التجلي والوصلة والمعرفة. فلا عين تراه ولا قلب يصل اليه ولا عقل يعرفه. لان اصل المعرفة من الفطرة واصل المواصلة من المسافة واصل المشاهدة من المباينة» (Sulami, 1990, pp. 29-30).

5- Inconsistency of Research Data with Primary Sources

One of the common harms in research is the non-correspondence of presented data with the actual content of sources; an issue that can stem from incorrect understanding, incomplete reporting, or distortion in reporting sources and ultimately reduces the credibility of the research. In religious studies, loyalty to the text and precision in citation have double importance. However, in Amir-Moezzi's works, numerous examples of inaccurate references and reports inconsistent with primary sources are observed, some of which we will examine below from the book *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*. The hadith narrated in note 156 (page 160) has been referred to 'Ilal al-Sharā'i'.

Amir-Moezzi has only narrated a part of this detailed tradition: « وَقَدْ قَالَ عَلِيٌّ ع أَنَا مِنْ أَحْمَدَ كَالضُّوءِ مِنَ الضُّوءِ مَا عَلِمْتُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا وَ عَلِيًّا ص كَانَا نُورًا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ قَبْلَ خَلْقِ الْخَلْقِ بِأَلْفِي عَامٍ وَ أَنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَمَّا رَأَتْ ذَلِكَ النُّورَ رَأَتْ لَهُ أَضْلًا قَدْ تَشَعَّبَ مِنْهُ شُعَاعٌ لَامِعٌ فَقَالَتْ إِلَهَنَا وَ سَيِّدَنَا مَا هَذَا النُّورُ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِمْ هَذَا نُورٌ مِنْ نُورِي أَضْلُهُ نُبُوَّةٌ وَ فِرْعُهُ إِمَامَةٌ أَمَّا النُّبُوَّةُ فَلِمُحَمَّدٍ عَبْدِي وَ رَسُولِي وَ أَمَّا «إِلَامَةُ فَلِعَلِّي حُجَّتِي وَ وَلِيِّي وَ لَوْلَاهُمَا مَا خَلَقْتُ خَلْقِي (Saduq, 2006, p. 174). He has changed the order of the phrases of the hadith in this section and has moved the phrase «قَالَ عَلِيٌّ ع: أَنَا مِنْ أَحْمَدَ كَالضُّوءِ مِنَ الضُّوءِ» which is at the beginning, to its end. On page 30, he writes: "In Imami hadiths, the Prophet himself repeatedly repeats that he and Ali were created from a single light before the creation of the world." He refers this matter in note 157 (p. 160) to a hadith with this expression: «خلقت انا و على من نور».

This hadith has been referred to three sources: Amālī of Sheikh Saduq, al-'Umdah of Ibn Batriq, and the book *Khaṣā'iṣ Wahī al-Mubīn*. Ignoring that narrating a hadith in multiple sources does not necessarily mean the repetition of the hadith by the Imams or the Prophet, the narrated hadith does not correspond with the sources to which it has been referred. The expression of this hadith in Amālī of

Saduq is: «خُلِقْتُ أَنَا وَ عَلِيٌّ مِنْ نُورٍ وَاحِدٍ». In the book al-'Umdah, the expression is: «خلقت انا وعلى من نور واحد قبل ان يخلق آدم باربعة عشر الف عام» (Ibn Batriq, 1085 AH, p. 91) and in Khaṣā'is Waḥī al-Mubīn as well, it is close to this very expression. (Ibn Batriq, 1096 AH, p. 187). Therefore, in total, in none of these sources has the expression «قبل ان تخلق الدنيا» come. Amir-Moezzi writes on page 30: "In a prophetic hadith it has come: God placed prophecy and blessing in me and Imamate (in another narration: eloquence) and chivalry (al-furūsiyyah) in Ali." He has referred this hadith to 'Ilal al-Sharā'i', chapter 116. However, neither in 'Ilal al-Sharā'i' nor in Ma'ānī al-Akḥbār - where Sheikh Saduq has narrated this very tradition in it - does the term "Imamate" exist, and only the word "al-furūsiyyah" has come.

Therefore, it is not clear from what source Amir-Moezzi has narrated the term "Imamate." Even if we consider this term a variant reading, the requirement of the scientific method is that first the text existing in the cited source should be mentioned and then the difference in version should be pointed to. Furthermore, the examination conducted in the Jāmi' al-Aḥādīth software and the Islamic Theology Library shows that the closest expression to this theme is the statement of Sheikh Hurr Amuli in Ithbāt al-Hudāt, who writes: «إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَ فِيَّ النُّبُوَّةَ وَ فِيَّ عَلِيٍّ الْخِلَافَةَ» (Hurr Amuli, 2001, v. 3, p. 187). With all this, even in this report, the term "Imamate" does not exist and there is talk of "Caliphate," not "Imamate." Amir-Moezzi writes on page 32: "Terms such as 'first world of shadows' (ʿālam al-aẓilla al-awwal) or 'first world of particles' (ʿālam al-dharr al-awwal) that are used from time to time in hadiths related to creation, have naturally been applied to this second world." He refers this matter in note 172 to the book al-Ghaybah of Nu'mani and al-Amālī of Sheikh Saduq. However, examining the sources shows that firstly, the expression «عالم الأظلة الأول» essentially does not exist in the traditions. Secondly,

although the expression «الذرّ الأول» has come in some traditions, the combination «عالم الذرّ الأول» is not seen in hadith sources. Furthermore, in the sources that Amir-Moezzi himself has referred to, the word "world" ('ālam) does not exist. Also, the expression «الذرّ الأول» is not found in the second source, i.e., al-Amālī, and only the phrase «و بوركت بالذرّ» has come in it. Therefore, it seems that Amir-Moezzi, by adding the word "world" and constructing combinations like "world of shadows" and "world of particles," has attributed a systematic and terminological concept to the traditions that does not exist in the text of hadith sources. On page 32, he writes: "In a prophetic hadith it is narrated as follows: When Gabriel saw the name of Muhammad inscribed on the curtain of the Throne, he asked God to show him the content of this name.

God took His angel to the first world of particles and there showed him twelve spectral bodies without spirits and said: 'This is the light of Ali ibn Abi Talib, this is the light of Hasan and Husayn' up to the light of the Twelfth Imam, the Qa'im of the family of Muhammad.'" Amir-Moezzi has referred this tradition to Kifāyat al-Athar. The text of the hadith in this book is as follows: «عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ص قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنِي جِبْرِيلُ ع لَمَّا تَبَتَّ اللَّهُ عَرْ وَ جَلَّ اسْمُ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَى سَاقِ الْعَرْشِ قُلْتُ يَا رَبِّ هَذَا الْإِسْمُ الْمَكْتُوبُ فِي سُرَادِقِ الْعَرْشِ أَرِنِي أَعَزَّ خَلْقِكَ عَلَيْكَ قَالَ فَأَرَاهُ اللَّهُ عَرْ وَ جَلَّ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ أَشْبَاحاً أَبَدَاناً بِأَلَا أَرْوَاحَ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَ الْأَرْضِ فَقَالَ يَا رَبِّ بِحَقِّهِمْ ... عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا أَخْبَرْتَنِي مَنْ هُمْ قَالَ هَذَا نُورٌ عَلَيَّ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ وَ هَذَا نُورُ الْحَسَنِ وَ الْحُسَيْنِ وَ» (Khazzaz Qumi, 1981, pp. 169-170). As can be seen, there is no talk of the "first world of particles" in the text of the tradition and essentially such an expression does not exist in the hadith. It seems that Amir-Moezzi, with an interpretation beyond the text of the tradition, has explained it in a way that he could consider the hadith as a confirmation of his viewpoint regarding the "world of dharr" and the structure of the worlds of creation.

Amir-Moezzi writes on page 33: "They have used many words to describe the actions of the Imams in this stage and these words can be divided into two categories: testimony to oneness (Tawhid and Tahlil) and praise of God (Tahmid, Tamjid, Tasbih, Taqdis). 'Twelve luminous spectres [floating] between the heavens and the earth ... are busy with the Tawhid and Tamjid of God.'" He has also brought the Arabic text of this tradition in note 176 as: « اثني عشر اشباحا من نور بين السماء والارض ... يوحّدون الله عزوجل و يمجّدونه » and by declaring the tradition to be prophetic, he refers it to Kifāyat al-Athar of Khazzaz Qumi and Muqtaḍab al-Athar of Ibn Ayyash. In this regard, several points are worth noting: Firstly, in the address of Kifāyat al-Athar, there is no tradition from the Prophet; therefore, the mentioned reference seems incorrect. Secondly, on page 72 of Kifāyat al-Athar, there is a tradition with a close theme, but the expression « يوحّدون الله » is not seen in it, but the expression of the tradition is as follows: « تُسَبِّحُ الله تَعَالَى وَ تُمَجِّدُهُ ». Thirdly, in the second source, i.e., Muqtaḍab al-Athar of Ibn Ayyash, neither has there been talk of the "world of dharr" and "world of shadows" nor are expressions like "Tawhid," "Tahlil," and "Tamjid" seen in this context. What has come in this book are mainly traditions regarding the Ascension and the luminous creation of the Prophet and the Imams. (Ibn Ayyash, n.d., pp. 24 and 27). Furthermore, based on searching in the Jāmi' al-Aḥādīth-e-Nūr software, which contains a wide range of Shi'i hadith sources, the expression « يوحّدون الله عزوجل و يمجّدونه » was not found in the traditions. Therefore, Amir-Moezzi's report and reference in this case are also faced with serious ambiguities and inconsistencies, and at least a part of the used expressions do not have a clear backing in the cited sources.

Amir-Moezzi has narrated this hadith in note 183 on page 163 from Imam Sadiq: « كنا ارواح نور فتعلم الأظلة أسرار علم التوحيد و التحميد » and

has referred it to page 63 of the book *Muqtaḍab al-Athar* written by Ibn Ayyash. While not only does such a tradition not exist in the mentioned source, but based on searching in the *Jāmi' al-Aḥādīth* software, it is in no source. Only in *'Ilal al-Sharā'i'* written by Sheikh Saduq, does a similar tradition exist: «قَالَ لِلْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ (ع) أَيَّ شَيْءٍ كُنْتُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ اللَّهُ عَرْزَ وَجَلَّ آدَمَ (ع) قَالَ كُنَّا أَشْبَاحَ نُورٍ نَدُورُ حَوْلَ عَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَعَلَّمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ الشَّيْخَ وَالتَّهْلِيلَ وَالتَّحْمِيدَ» (Saduq, 1983, p. 23). As can be seen, this hadith is merely similar to it and not identical to it. On page 141, he writes: "Often in the speech of the Imams we encounter terms like (العقل قطب ديننا) meaning intellect is the pole of our religion, (العقل هو ...) intellect is the axis around which right revolves, (العقل هو ما يحتاج به في امرنا) and so on. For example (see: Kulayni, 1986, v. 1, p. 10; Ibn Babawayh, 1985, v. 1, p. 88, 107 et seq., Ibn Babawayh, 1997, p. 418)." These expressions do not exist as hadith in any of the stated sources. Only in the third case, the late Kulayni has such an expression in the sermon of the book *Kāfī*, page 9: «إِذْ كَانَ الْعَقْلُ هُوَ» «الْقُطْبُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْمَدَارُ وَبِهِ يُحْتَجُّ، وَلَهُ النَّوَابُ، وَ عَلَيْهِ الْعَقَابُ» which, in addition to this expression not being a hadith, it is not the exact expression narrated by Amir-Moezzi either. On page 31, he writes: "In a hadith from Imam Baqir narrated by his son Imam Sadiq, it has come: "Throne means the religion of truth" He has brought the Arabic text of this hadith in note 164, page 161 and has referred it to (Ibn Ayyash Jawhari, n.d., p. 57) but such an expression was not found in the sources. Amir-Moezzi writes on page 33: "The Prophet journeys to the world of shadows and particles in many of his Ascensions and there observes the lights of the Twelve Imams (or Fourteen Infallibles)." He refers in note 174, page 162 for this claim to two sources, i.e., *Kifāyat al-Athar* (Khazzaz Razi, 1981, pp. 110-111) and *al-Khiṣāl* (Sheikh Saduq, 1983, v. 1, p. 156).

However, examining these traditions shows that in them there

is only talk of the observation of the lights of the Imams by the Prophet in the Ascension and there is no mention of the "world of shadows" or "world of particles." In fact, Amir-Moezzi has provided an interpretation beyond the traditions that only indicate the observation of the lights of the Ahl al-Bayt and has linked it to a theory regarding the "world of azilla" and "world of dharr"; while these concepts are not seen in the text of the cited traditions. Amir-Moezzi divides shadows into three categories on page 33 and considers the first category as "shadows of non-human spiritual beings who will live in the heavens and the earth in the future" and refers for this claim in note 178 (p. 162) to works such as *Basā'ir al-Darajāt* (Saffar Qumi, 1983, pp. 67 and 69) and *al-Ghaybah* (Nu'mani, 1989, p. 137). However, there is no talk of the "world of shadows" in these sources; just as in *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, under the chapter "What God has assigned to the Imams from the family of Muhammad and the wilayah of the angels," there are only traditions regarding the wilayah-acceptance of the angels and it has no connection to their creation in the world of shadows. Also, in explaining the third category, he speaks of "shadows of the believers of the children of Adam; meaning the devoted followers of the Imams and those acquainted with the secrets of esoteric teachings" and refers in note 180 (p. 163) to *Basā'ir al-Darajāt* and *Usūl al-Kāfi*; while the content of these sources is only regarding the world of the covenant (mīthāq) and taking the pledge from humans or believers and has no indication of "those acquainted with the secrets of series of teachings" or the opposition between "true believers" and "ordinary Muslims". Therefore, Amir-Moezzi's interpretation of the word "believer" as meaning "acquainted with secrets" and the claim of its exclusivity to esoteric Shi'is does not have a clear backing in the cited traditions and is more a reflection of his own specific interpretive framework than the content of the

primary sources. Amir-Moezzi writes in note 183, page 163: "The four oaths have caused the word mawāthiq (plural of mīthāq) to be used sometimes in the hadiths of the Imams" and refers to several sources for this claim.

However, examining the sources shows that only on page 80 of Basā'ir al-Darajāt, which is the first source cited by him, does the term "mawāthiq" come in the chapter title: « ما اخذ الله موثيق الخلق لائمة آل » (محمّد ع) بالولاية لهم, but such a term does not exist in the text of the hadiths. Furthermore, the use of the word "mawāthiq" in the chapter title is observant of the multitude of humans, not the multiplicity of oaths; contrary to the understanding that Amir-Moezzi has presented. Also in other cited sources, i.e., Usūl al-Kāfī, al-Ghaybah, and 'Ilal al-Sharā'i', in the mentioned addresses, the term "mawāthiq" is not seen; although the expression "mawāthiq al-'ibād" has come in other places of these sources. Therefore, Amir-Moezzi's citation in this case as well does not have complete correspondence with the actual content of the sources. Amir-Moezzi narrates this expression as a hadith from Imam Sadiq on page 165 and note 193: « إنّ الإمام يعرف شيعة و أعداءه » and refers it to the two books Muqtaḍab al-Athar and Basā'ir al-Darajāt. However, such a hadith with these wordings was not found in the mentioned sources. What exists in Basā'ir al-Darajāt is a chapter title close to this theme: « باب في الإمام أنّه يعرف شيعة من عدوه بالطينة التي خلقوا فيها بوجوههم و أسمائهم ». Therefore, it seems that Amir-Moezzi has narrated the chapter title in the form of the text of the hadith. Furthermore, the tradition existing in the cited address is narrated from Imam Ali, not Imam Sadiq. Therefore, in this case as well, a clear inconsistency is seen between the narrated text, the narrator of the hadith, and the cited sources.

Conclusion

The present research, with the aim of examining and criticizing the sources and citations of Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi in Shi'a studies, showed that a significant portion of his historical and doctrinal reconstructions regarding early Shi'ism is based on foundations and methods that are faced with serious challenges in terms of validation and methodological coherence. Examining the sources used by him indicates that alongside utilizing some valid hadith texts, there exists an extensive reliance on works that either have serious doubts raised about their attribution or have undergone additions, distortions, and late reworkings throughout history. At the same time, Amir-Moezzi's manner of encountering these sources does not possess methodological coherence in the common criteria of hadith studies, rijāl criticism, and historical analysis, and in numerous cases, a selective and cherry-picking approach is observed. Also, analyzing the data shows that a type of esoteric presupposition rules over his works in interpreting texts; such that many traditions and historical reports have been re-read within the framework of "esoteric and mysterious Shi'ism," even in cases where the text or historical context does not confirm such an indication. Among other methodological shortcomings, one can point to the use of biased translations, adding interpretive layers to the text of traditions, incomplete reporting or moving of phrases, and also references that are sometimes inaccurate or inconsistent with primary sources. Furthermore, strong reliance on Orientalist hypotheses and disregard for the research heritage of Muslim scholars has in some cases led to ignoring counter-evidence and the formation of one-sided readings. In total, although Amir-Moezzi's works are important in drawing attention to some less studied dimensions of the Shi'i hadith and Imamological heritage, a significant portion of his results, due to

weakness in validating sources and being influenced by interpretive presuppositions, does not possess sufficient scientific robustness and requires critical re-reading based on precise criteria of historical and hadith research.

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