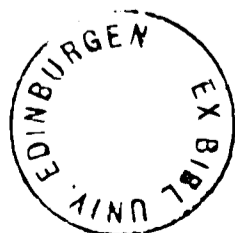A CRITICAL STUDY OF <u>NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA</u>

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis consists of six chapters, the summary of which is as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction to the book; a critical examination of the collection; the object of the thesis; a brief biographical note on the collector of the book, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

Chapter Two: The survey of the literature on Nahj al-Balāgha; medieval and modern criticism with regard to the book's authenticity; religious and political background of the criticism; a brief survey of some of the commentaries.

Chapter Three: Speeches of ʿAlī in the early historical works; comparisons with the versions existing in Nahj al-Balāgha.

Chapter Four: Literary background to Nahj al-Balāgha: (1) Pre-Islamic literature; (2) the Qurʾān.

Chapter Five: The stylistic analysis of Nahj al-Balāgha: (1) al-sajʿ; (2) al-majaz; (3) al-tashbīh; (4) al-muqabalah wa al-mutabaqah; (5) al-aghlāt al-naḥwiyyah; (6) al-amthāl; (7) the language.

Chapter Six: Conclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration used in this thesis is that of modern Western scholars, with the exception of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, in which <u>tā'</u> <u>marbūta</u> has been substituted with <u>a</u> instead of <u>ah</u>. This is in conformity with the translators of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> in the sub-continent of India and Pakistan and elsewhere.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Nahj al-Balāgha is a book which, in its present form, consists of 239 speeches, 79 letters and 480 wise and sagacious sayings, all attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40A.H./660 A.D.), the fourth of the Orthodox Caliphs of the Sunnites and the first Imam of the Shīʿites. The above material was collected by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, who records at the end of the collection that he had completed it in the year 400 A.H./1009 A.D.

The system that the collector has employed is described by him in the following words:

> I observed that his [i.e. ʿAlī's] utterances revolve round three aspects. The first being the sermons, the addresses and the commands. The second category is found in the form of letters. And the third in the pronouncements of wisdom and the literary merits expressed in short sentences. I have, therefore, selected some of the best of the speeches [in the first part of the book]. Then the best of his letters [in the second part of the book]; and [finally] the short and wise sayings [in the third part of the book].[1]

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1. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Nahj al-Balāgha (Cairo, n.d.), 3.

However, it appears that the collection falls short of perfection. For one thing, there is no systematic approach in selecting either the sermons and speeches or letters and there is no chronological order in the material presented.[1] Secondly, unlike the Qur'ān where the length of the sūrah seems to be the determining factor, in Nahj al-Balāgha, the long and the short utterances have been placed side by side, which shows that the collector has recorded them at random.[2] Similarly, there is no attention paid to the degree of eloquence as some of the best utterances have not been given priority.[3] Nor does there

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1. For examples, see entry No. 2, which is a speech said to have been delivered after 'Alī's return from Şiffīn, and entry No. 5, which is said to have been delivered after the death of the Prophet. Then entry Nos. 8 and 9 which concern those who fought 'Alī at the battle of Jamal, but in entry No. 10, there again is a flashback to Mu'āwiya and Şiffīn. While No. 15 and 16 are said to have been delivered at the beginning of 'Alī's caliphate.

2. Cf. entry Nos. 1, 2, 3, with entry Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, etc.

3. For example, the speeches beginning with dhimmatī bi-mā aqūl rahīnah and fa-innā al-jihād bāb min abwāb al-jannah fataḥahū Allāh li-khāṣṣati awliyā'ihī, which have been described by outsiders as belonging to the best of 'Alī's speeches, have been recorded at Nos. 16 and 27 respectively.

seem to be any attempt on the part of the collector to classify the subject-matter and record the material accordingly.[1]

The importance of Nahj al-Balāgha lies in the fact that the book became a focus of attention for Muslim scholars, and Shī'ites in particular, from the time it came into being. In fact the first commentary on it was written by 'Alī ibn Nāṣir who was a contemporary of the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.[2] Thenceforth over a hundred commentaries have been written on the book, the most important of which are dealt with later in this thesis. As to its linguistic merits to the Arabs, "it has been said that it ranks below the Words of God but above all the speeches of His Creation."[3] This sentence quoted by

1. For example, the first speech deals with the unity of God, creation of the heavens and earth, creation of Adam and then it is followed by that which concerns the holy pilgrimage. Speeches, say, concerning the event of Ṣiffīn have been recorded at Nos. 2, 10, 43, 46, 48, 51, 55, 64, 105 in the first part, and Nos. 169, 198, 204, 205, 214, 236 in the second part. Notice the gaps in between.

2. Al-Kintūrī, Kashf al-Ḥujub (Calcutta, 1912), 253; also 'Abd al-Zahra al-Khaṭīb in his Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1 (Beirut, 1975), 203-4, claims to have seen the manuscript of the commentary in the library of Muḥammad Ḥusain Kāshif al-Ghiṭā, No. 848, and it had been copied from the manuscript dated 700 A.H. The date of the manuscript seen by al-Khaṭīb being 901 A.H./1495 A.D.

3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, vol 1 (Cairo, 1959), 24.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656 A.H./1258 A.D.) has been repeated time and again by later commentators and writers on Nahj al-Balāgha. The belief in the supreme linguistic qualities of the material that the book contains, seems to have survived up until modern times. Nāṣif al-Yāzji, the renowned Christian scholar of the nineteenth century, is said to have advised his son: "If you ever wished to excel your equals in ʿilm and adab [roughly translated, traditions and literature], then you must memorise the Qurʾān and Nahj al-Balāgha."[1] Similar sentiments of admiration have been expressed by Shaikh Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1323 A.H./1905 A.D.) in his comments in the Preface to Nahj al-Balāgha[2] and Zakī Mubārak, who has been quoted as saying: "If we did not believe in the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha, then we would have to admit that of all the people, the Shīʿites were the most capable of producing eloquent prose."[3]

The book has enjoyed equal reverence in Iran, where the Shīʿites constitute the majority of the population, and amongst the scholars of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt,

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1. Al-Khaṭīb, op. cit., 90, 91.
2. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Nahj al-Balāgha, the Preface to (letters) yā, kāf, lām, mīm, nūn, and sīn.
3. Zakī Mubārak, al-Nathr al-Fannī fi Qarn al-Rābiʿ (Cairo, 1934), 68; al-Khaṭīb, op. cit., 87.

India, and Pakistan. In the subcontinent, two recent works on Nahj al-Balāgha are from scholars who are not Shī'ites.[1] The contribution of Shī'ites to the book, in terms of commentaries, translations, and associated works, is considerable.[2] The importance of the book is further underlined by the fact that at the middle of the present century, the population of the Shī'ites stood at 40,000,000[3] and to all of them Nahj al-Balāgha is the genuine collection of the utterances of their first Imam and therefore, it is their most important, most revered, and most authoritative book after the Qur'ān.

Of all the major works of Islamic scholarship, only Nahj al-Balāgha seems to have received scant attention from Western scholars and this thesis is designed in some measures to provide a balanced study of the book. It questions the validity of some parts of the book in the light of the stylistic analysis, historical evidence, and 'Alī's character as it filters through Nahj al-Balāgha. It takes account of those who have doubted the authenticity and provides a brief background of their spiritual or intellectual station. While it pieces together some parts

1. ʿArshī Rampūrī and Ra'īs Aḥmad: the former has written a book on the sources of Nahj al-Balāgha, while the latter has done an Urdu translation.
2. Some of the translations are by 'Alī Naqī, Faiḍ al-Islām in Persian (printed Iran); by Zafar Mahdi; Muḥammad Ṣādiq in Urdu (printed Lucknow); Muftī Ja'far Ḥusain in Urdu (printed Lahore, Pakistan); English translation by Muḥammad 'Askarī, from Karachi, Pakistan.
3. Encyclopaedia Britannica (U.S.A., 1974), vol. IX, 141.

of it from independent early sources to prove that the charge of total fabrication is not sustainable.

However, those seemingly positive and proven parts of Nahj al-Balāgha should be further considered in the light of the literary background of the period and the people. A few decades away, that is, at the time known as Jāhiliyyah, literacy amonst people was rare and therefore, the nation had no recorded history. And yet its past had managed to survive in the form of poetry and in the speeches of renowned orators. The latter used short rhymed sentences in order, as it now seems, to assist the memories of the illiterate listeners. The lengthy speeches attributed to Aktham ibn Saifī, Ḥājib ibn Zurārah, 'Amr ibn Ma'dīkarīb, and others, on such occasions as in the presence of the Persian king[1] may have been forged by the later Arab school trying to score a victory, through history, over the now up and coming mawālī. Yet there is a strong case for the claim that some of the poems and speeches of the Jāhiliyyah had been preserved and were quoted when the occasion arose. It seems that Muhammad, while cancelling all the practices that used to take place in the days of the Jāhiliyyah, barring those customs which had some religious significance such as the institution of the holy pilgrimage to Mecca, encouraged the recitation of the Jāhilī prose. This gesture of his became doubly significant when he appeared

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1. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol. I (Cairo, 1928), 174.

indifferent to poets and frowned on their works. But
when it came to prose, he even quoted some of it himself.
Al-Jāḥiẓ, quoting some of the speeches of Qus ibn Sā'idā
al-Iyādī as quoted by Muḥammad, remarks: "And this is an
isnād which surpasses all that one can desire or hope for."[1]
The evidence that Muḥammad actually encouraged eloquent
speakers is provided by the remarks he is reported to
have made to 'Amr ibn Ahtam, after he had heard him
speak eloquently, "Verily, magical powers are reserved
for this kind of speech!"[2]

Thus aided by traditions and the forces of pre-Islamic
habits and now further encouraged by the edict of the
Messenger of Allāh, the making and preserving of eloquent
speeches became the order of the day and by the time
Muḥammad was dead, the speech, al-khuṭbah, had assumed
religious significance. That religious significance lasted
the entire period of the Orthodox Caliphate, the Umayyad
Caliphate, and up until the last days of the 'Abbāsid
power, as the fourth century writer, al-'Askarī, testifies:

> And what is also understood from al-khuṭbah,
> i.e. public-speaking, and al-kitābah, i.e.
> prose writing, is that these two are closely
> associated with matters of religion and
> government. For on these two rests their

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1. 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn (Cairo, 1332 A.H.), 31.
2. Ibid.

entire structure. While <u>al-shiʻr</u>, i.e.
poetry, has no such links with those two.[1]

Speeches of Orthodox Caliphs

In the brief period of sovreignty, two years, three
months and ten days, according to al-Masʻūdī, the first
Caliph, Abū Bakr (11-13 A.H./632-4 A.D.) does not seem to
have made many speeches which have been recorded. His
prime and important address, that at al-Saqīfā of Banū
Sāʻidah, along with some other speeches have been preserved.
The austere, shrewd and statesmanlike ʻUmar, the second
Caliph, (13-23 A.H./634-44 A.D.) seems to have been more
concerned with practical politics and, perhaps, less with
<u>al-balāghah</u>, i.e. eloquence in speeches. It appears that
when the second Caliph did speak, his speech was not
necessarily designed to contain linguistic decor or rhymed
synonyms. Confronted with such important a task as
mobilising people to go to war against the mighty Persian
Empire, he is reported to have made a speech which takes no
more space in the page than approximately one and a half
lines. "<u>Innakum</u>," said he, "<u>qad aṣbaḥtum fī ghair dār</u>
<u>maqām bi-al-Ḥijāz wa-qad waʼadakum al-nabī fatḥ bilād</u>
<u>kisrā fa-sīru ilā arḍ fārs</u>."(i.e.,"Hijaz is no longer the
place for you; and the Prophet had promised you the conquest
of Persia. So go to the land of the Persians.")[2]

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1. Al-Ḥasan b. ʻAbd Allāh al-ʻAskarī, <u>Al-Ṣanāʻatain</u>
   (Cairo, 1952), 136.
2. Al-Masʻūdī, <u>Murūj al-Dhahab</u>, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1948), 315.

However, short or long, the Caliphs had to deliver speeches, being the successor to the man who had founded the state using as one of his means the power of his speeches, and had administered it according to the pronouncements of the Qur'ān. In fact speaking on the pulpit had become such an important symbol of authority that when the third Caliph, 'Uthmān (24-35 A.H./643-655 A.D.), was raised to the caliphate, he showed signs of not being accustomed to public speaking. He stood on the pulpit not knowing what to say for quite a while, then he said:

> Verily Abū Bakr and 'Umar used to prepare for
> this place [and occasion]. But you are more
> in need of a just leader [imām 'ādil] than
> the leader who carves out the speeches [imām
> yushaqqiq al-khuṭub]. If you are still alive
> the speeches will come [in due course].[1]

Here the Caliph was trying to rectify the hitherto held belief that good speech-making was one of the major symbols of authority. Nevertheless, it had been infused in the system. In the Friday prayer the khuṭbah constitutes a necessary part of the service; and perhaps it was because of the khuṭbah that the Friday prayer became the sign of authority. For in the days when Caliphs had lost all power to, say, Buwaihids or Saljuqs, they were still recognised as Caliphs because they were allowed to exercise

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1. Ibn al-Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī, Al-Ta'rīkh, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1960), 163.

the prerogatives which included leading the Friday prayer.
"What a good thing it is to have authority," said 'Ubaid
Allāh ibn Ziyād (d. 67 A.H./686 A.D.), the Umayyad governor
of Basrah and Kufah, "if one did not have to put up with
the rattle of official robes and [in delivering speeches]
did not have to strive after eloquence."[1] Another story
which strengthens the point in question is the one about
'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (65-86 A.H./684-705 A.D.), the
Umayyad Caliph who was told by someone: "Old age has
hastened to you, O Commander of the Faithful!" He replied:
"Why should it not do so while I have to submit my
intelligence to the people every Friday, once or twice?"[2]

Since the weekly khuṭbah was the one of the functions
of the incumbent, he was naturally looking for fresh
material to base his speech on. In the long list of the
Umayyad and 'Abbāsid Caliphs, and in the speeches that
have been recorded in their names, there is hardly one
which speaks about the current and the contemporary
conditions of their domain. Nor did they refer very
frequently to the social or economic conditions of their
people, or about the steps they had taken or were going to
take, to improve the living conditions, if such improvement
was necessary, of their subjects. Instead, the Caliphs
concentrated on the mode, eloquence, and the styles of the
Prophet and the Orthodox Caliphs. On coming to power, one

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1. Al-Jāḥiẓ, Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1332 A.H.)
    75.
2. Ibid.

of the first measures which al-Saffāḥ (132-136 A.H./749-753 A.D.), the first Caliph of the 'Abbāsids, took, was to order a collection of speeches, al-khuṭub, and that resulted in bringing forth a thousand booklets which contained the same number of speeches.[1] A hundred years later, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 A.H./868 A.D.) was thus able to say:

> And there are the speeches of the Prophet,
> all recorded, protected, immortalised, and
> well known. And there are the speeches of
> Abū Bakr [the first Caliph], 'Umar [the
> second Caliph], 'Uthmān [the third Caliph],
> and 'Alī [the fourth Caliph], may God be
> pleased with them.[2]

Yet, as we have mentioned earlier, the collections of the speeches of the first three Caliphs do not appear to have survived to any great extent.

Collections of 'Alī's speeches prior to Nahj al-Balāgha

However, in the case of 'Alī, it seems that there were many collections in existence before Nahj al-Balāgha came into being (400 A.H./1009 A.D.). 'Abd al-Zahrā al-Khaṭīb provides the following collections of 'Alī's

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1. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Faqīh, Al-Buldān (Leiden, 1885), 2.
2. Al-Jāḥiẓ, op. cit., 113.

speeches which are said to have existed prior to Nahj al-Balāgha:

1. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn fī al-Juma' wa al-A'yād wa ghairihimā[1] by Zaid ibn Wahb al-Juhnī. This collection according to al-Khaṭīb, appeared to be the earliest as the author lived in the pre- and post-Islamic periods. He died 96 A.H./714 A.D.[2]

2. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn collected by Abū Rawḥ Faraj ibn Farwah through Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah, from Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.[3]

3. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn collected by Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah al-'Abdī. "This book was extant," writes al-Khaṭīb, "at the time of Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, who died in 1107 or 1109 [A.H./1695 or 1697 A.D.] and who has quoted from it in his commentary al-Burhān."[4]

4. Kitāb Khuṭbah al-Zahrā' by Abū Mikhnaf who died 157 A.H./773 A.D.[5]

5. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by Ismā'īl ibn Mihrān al-Sukūnī. Al-Khaṭīb cites both al-Najjāshī and al-Kashshī as the people who have mentioned al-Sukūnī and his collection, in their Fihrists.[6]

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1. Al-Māmiqānī, Itqān al-Maqāl (Najaf, n.d.), 192. (kh) All the references quoted by al-Khaṭīb have the letters "kh" in brackets.

2. Al-'Asqalānī, al-Iṣābah fī Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥābah, vol. 1, 567. (kh)

3. Agha Buzurg, al-Dharī'ah ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī'ah, vol. 7, 190. (kh)

4. 'Abd al-Zahrā' al-Khaṭīb, Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1 (Beirut, 1975), 52-3.

5. Ibid., 53.

6. Ibid., 54.

6. Khuṭub Amīr al-Muʾminīn by al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm.[1]

7. Khuṭub ʿAlī by Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥakam al-Fazārī.[2]

8. Khuṭub Amīr al-Muʾminīn by al-Wāqidī, who died 207 A.H./ 822 A.D.[3]

9. Khuṭub ʿAlī by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī, who died in 212 A.H./827 A.D. (al-Khaṭīb mentions the year to be 202, which seems to be a printing mistake.)[4]

10. Khuṭub ʿAlī by Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204 or 206 A.H./819 or 821 A.D.).[5]

11. Khuṭub ʿAlī wa Kutubihī ilā ʿUmmālihī by ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Madāʾinī, who died 225 A.H./839 A.D.[6]

12. Khuṭub Amīr al-Muʾminīn by Ṣāliḥ ibn Ḥammād al-Rāzī, one of the Companions of al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī.[7]

13. Miʾat Kalimah li-Amīr al-Muʾminīn by ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ.[8]

14. Rasāʾil Amīr al-Muʾminīn by Ibrāhīm ibn Hilāl al-Thaqafī al-Kūfī, who died 283 A.H./896 A.D. Al-Khaṭīb quotes Taʾsīs al-Shīʿah to say that he was at first a Zaydite then converted to the Imamites.[9]

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1. Ibid., 54-55.
2. Al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Najaf, n.d.), 27. (kh)
3. Agha Buzurg, op. cit., vol. 7, 7. (kh)
4. Al-Khaṭīb, op. cit., vol. 1, 58.
5. Al-Ṭūsī, op. cit., 146. (kh)
6. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (Cairo, n.d.), 155. (kh)
7. Al-Najjāshī, al-Fihrist (Najaf, n.d.), 148. (kh)
8. Hādī Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ, Mustadrak Nahj al-Balāgha (Najaf, n.d.), 47. (kh)
9. Al-Ṭūsī, op. cit., 27. (kh)

15. _Al-Khuṭub al-Mu'arrabāt_ by the above author.[1]

16. _Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn_ by Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaimān al-Nahmī.[2]

17. _Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn_ and the commentary on it, by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān.[3]

18. _Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn_.[4]

19. _Mawā'iz 'Alī_.[5]

20. _Rasā'il 'Alī_.[6]

21. _Kalām 'Alī_.[7]

22. _Al-Malāḥim_ by 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Yaḥyā al-Jalaūdī (d. 332 A.H./943 A.D.).[8]

The list which I have taken from al-Khaṭīb's book, _Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha_, and which, perhaps incorporates all that has been written on the subject of pre-_Nahj al-Balāgha_ collections of 'Alī's speeches, by others, appears to be impressive, at least at first glance. On a closer examination, however, it appears that there may be room for doubts in respect of many works and their authors that have been listed. A few examples are as follows:

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1. Al-Shahristānī, _Mā Huwā Nahj al-Balāgha_ (Najaf, n.d.), 43. (kh)

2. Agha Buzurg, _op. cit._, vol. 7, 183, 188. (kh)

3. M. Kāmil Ḥusain, _al-Himmah fī Ma'rifat al-A'immah_ (Cairo, n.d.). (kh)

4. Al-Khaṭīb, _op. cit._, vol. 1, 64.

5. _Ibid._

6. _Ibid._

7. _Ibid._

8. Al-Najjāshī, _op. cit._, 166. (kh)

(a) Nos. 2 and 3, i.e. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn collected by Faraj ibn Farwah and Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah are more likely to be one and the same. As the latter is the source of the former.

(b) Kitāb Khuṭbah al-Zahrā' (No. 4 in the above list) by Abū Mikhnaf has only been mentioned by al-Ṭūsī. Ibn Nadīm who gives a long list of Abū Mikhnaf's works does not mention this book. Furthermore, the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha in all probability, would have referred to it had it existed.

(c) The same is applicable to al-Wāqidī's collection (No. 8 in the list). The collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, refers to al-Wāqidī's work al-Jamal in Nahj al-Balāgha (entry No. 75 part 3) but there is no mention of the said collection in all the three parts of Nahj al-Balāgha.

(d) As far as Khuṭub 'Alī by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (No. 9 in the above list) is concerned, there is no mention of it, as far as I know, in the recognised bibliographical works of either Sunnites or the Shī'ites. Here even al-Khaṭīb does not provide a reference. Similarly, there are no references given by al-Khaṭīb against Nos. 18, Khuṭub 'Alī, 19, Mawā'iz 'Alī or No. 21, Kalām 'Alī. However, taking account of those authors who have been commonly mentioned by the authors of the books of al-Ṭabaqāt, like al-Najjāshī, al-Kashshī, al-Ṭūsī, Ibn Nadīm, Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī, it can safely be assumed that Nahj al-Balāgha was not the first collection of 'Alī's utterances.

Reasons for people being interested in 'Alī's speeches

The interest in 'Alī's speeches was generated, and
sustained, owing to reasons, some of which may be as follows:
(1) Eloquence: Being a product of the household that
presented al-kitāb, i.e. the Qur'ān, and a constant companion
to his first cousin and father-in-law, Muḥammad, 'Alī
spoke in the language, which through the force of Islam,
abrogated all the contemporary dialects. He was eloquent
in speech and elegant in style. There is the evidence to
suggest that he was studied and imitated by the following
generations. The two persons who became renowned in the
art of eloquence in the post-Orthodox Caliphate period,
were 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Yaḥyā, the secretary to the last
Umayyad Caliph, Marwān II (127-132 A.H./744-50 A.D.), of
whom Gibb has the following to say: "The earliest Arabic
prose works known to us are, in fact three 'epistles'
composed by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā (d. 750 A.D.) . . ."[1]
Now this 'Abd al-Ḥamīd is reported to have said: "I have
memorised [no less than] seventy sermons of al-aṣla' [i.e.
the bald, a nickname given to 'Alī] and they still poured
forth and they still remained unencompassed!"[2] The other
person of letters and literature was Ibn Nubātah (d. 374 A.H./
984 A.D.) "who was," says Gibb, "Saif al-Dawla's court
preacher . . . wrote entire sermons in saj', these collected

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1. Gibb, Arabic Literature (Oxford, 1974), 51.
2. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1959), 24.

by his son, have always been highly esteemed for their style and contents."[1] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd quotes Ibn Nubātah to the effect that he too had memorised 'Alī's sermons[2] and then proceeds to compare some of the sermons of Ibn Nubātah with some of the sermons of 'Alī[3] showing how the former had appropriated, in some instances, the ideas, even the words of the latter. It also appears that interest in 'Alī's speeches was not confined to the specialists like the aforesaid two, but the speeches had become the pastime of society at the time, as al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345 A.H./956 A.D.) records:

> And that which has been memorised by the people
> of his speeches on all occasions, amounts to
> four hundred and eighty-two which he had
> delivered spontaneously and which has been in
> currency from him, in people's conversations
> and in their actions.[4]

(2) **A form of protest against the governments of the day:**
The six decades that followed 'Alī's death had witnessed the mass persecutions of his supporters. Prominent Companions like Ḥujr ibn 'Adī (executed 52 A.H./672 A.D.) and 'Amr ibn al-Ḥamiq had not, on the available historical evidence, organised a revolt against the government apart

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1. Gibb, op. cit., 89.
2. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 7, 211-16.
3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 2, 80.
4. Al-Mas'ūdī, op. cit., vol. 2, 431.

from disobeying the official order to renounce and curse
'Alī. The populace of Ḥijāz and Iraq found itself not
allowed to mention the name of 'Alī or relate a tradition
from or a saying of him. Those who disobeyed were
subjected to severe punishments which in many cases took
the form of execution. In Kufah scores of houses were
razed to the ground and many, like Sulaim ibn Qais
al-Hilālī (d. 93 A.H./711 A.D.) were made to flee. The
sermons and the speeches of 'Alī would have been forgotten,
as we have noted above that the collections of the speeches
of the three Orthodox Caliphs seemed to have been lost,
but for the fact that the sufferings of the people made
them immortal. It is a fact that the organised Shī'ism
was not born on the day of al-Ghadīr, but it was born
after 'Alī, in the basements of deserted homes and amongst
the bereaved families and the community of the under-
privileged.

(3) The wide coverage of 'Alī's words and wars by the early
historians: Another far reaching result of the persecution
was the drift of the intellectuals towards 'Alī and a
pro-'Alī attitude. Fleeing from the atrocities at home,
some of the followers of 'Alī headed east, to the lands of
modern Iran, and preached the merits, al-faḍā'il, the
imamate, and the infallibility, al-'iṣmah, of 'Alī and
that was one of the reasons for the eventual overthrow of
the Umayyads. But those who stayed did so living with
burning resentment against the oppressors. In the year

83 A.H./702 A.D. some of them took to arms and joined
'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Ash'ath against the Umayyads. The
ensuing battle, which is known to the historians as the
"battle of al-Jamājim", was lost and many of the Qurrā'
were killed or drowned. Apart from taking up arms against
the government, their act of defiance included the
recitation of a sermon of 'Alī.[1]

Those Qurrā' included Sa'īd ibn Jubair, 'Abd al-Rahmān
ibn Abī Lailāh, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, and al-Sha'bī, together
with others who became sources for the early historians.
This is, perhpas, one of the reasons that the early
historians have given more coverage to the battles fought
by 'Alī (although they were no more than civil wars) than,
say, to the more important battles against the Persian or
Byzantine empires. The same applies to the coverage of
'Alī's words which alone constituted the act of defiance
against the early governments of the Umayyads. Abū Mikhnaf,
al-Wāqidī, al-Balādhurī, al-Ya'qūbī, al-Tabarī, al-Mas'ūdī,
all have been said by someone or the other to be Shī'ites.
Some of them may have been. But it is more likely that
they were echoing the sentiments of their sources and the
society. Al-Dīnawarī, who is interested in the wars of
Islam but only as far as they involved Persians, does,
however, cover the battles of al-Jamal, Siffīn and Nahrawān,
not probably because of the scale or the nature of the wars
but more, perhaps, because they involved the personality
of 'Alī.

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1. Al-Tabarī, Ta'rīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk, vol. 6 (Cairo,
1964), 357.

(4) <u>Religious motives</u>: To the Shī'ites, the utterances
of 'Alī, who is their first Imam, have always been
important. They regard him as <u>manṣūṣ min Allāh</u> (i.e.
divinely appointed) and <u>ma'ṣūm</u> (i.e. free from sins).
Their motives in preserving and transmitting 'Alī's
utterances are not unlike other religious communities
which have done the same in respect of the utterances of
the founder or the leader of their respective religious
communities.

The collector — al-Sharīf al-Raḍī

Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain commonly known as al-Sharīf
al-Raḍī was born at Baghdad in 359 A.H./969 A.D. His
father, al-Ḥusain ibn Mūsā was one of the notables of the
city to whom the office of <u>Naqīb al-Ṭālibīn</u> was assigned
by the government of the day; which meant managing the
affairs connected with the community claiming to be the
descendants of 'Alī's father, Abū Ṭālib, and looking into
the injustices done to them, if there were any, on behalf
of the government.[1] This office was delegated to al-Sharīf
al-Raḍī in 380 A.H./990 A.D. while his father was still
alive.[2]

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī is said to have received his early
education in theology, grammar, language and associated
subjects from Muḥammad ibn Nu'mān al-Mufīd, Abū al-Fatḥ

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1. 'Abd al-Malik al-Tha'ālabī, <u>Yatīmat al-Dahr</u>, vol. 3
   (Cairo, 1947), 131.
2. Ibn Khallikān, <u>Wafayāt al-A'yān</u>, vol. 4 (Beirut, n.d.),
   414.

'Uthmān ibn al-Jinnī, al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Sīrāfī, al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad commonly known as Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, and Muḥammad ibn 'Imrān al-Marzubānī. Ibn al-Jawzī's comments on the last mentioned are that his weaknesses were three: Inclination towards Shī'ism, inclination towards the Mu'tazilites, and mixing up what he had heard from one source (but probably not authorised to transmit) with what he had been authorised to transmit.[1]

Al-Sharīf appears to have been inclined towards poetry from a very early age. Al-Tha'ālabī (d. 429 A.H./ 1037 A.D.) states that he composed poetry when he was little over ten years of age.[2] Then the same author goes on to say that al-Raḍī was the arch-poet, al-ash'ar, amongst the Ṭālibites if not amongst the Qurashites at large.[3] Ibn Khallikān quotes Ibn al-Jinnī to the effect that al-Raḍī had memorised the Qur'ān in his early youth and in a very short period.[4]

He composed much poetry which was collected in four volumes. Amongst the books he wrote there were many dealing with the Qur'ān such as: Majāzāt al-Qur'ān, Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān, Al-Mutashābih fī al-Qur'ān, Talkhīṣ al-Bayān 'an Majāzāt al-Qur'ān. His other works include:

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1. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, Al-Muntazam fī Ta'rīkh al-Mulūk wa-al-Umam, vol. 7, 177.
2. Al-Tha'ālabī, op. cit., vol. 3, 131, 148.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1972), 20.

Majāzāt al-Āthār al-Nabawīyah, Akhbār Qudāt Baghdād. He
also wrote a life of his father and collected the poems of
al-Ḥajjāj. He had also written some treatises which were
in three volumes.[1] It is only al-Ṣafadī who mentions
Nahj al-Balāgha in the list of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's
compositions quoting Ibn Taymīyya's view on it.[2]

Basing themselves on the statement which first
appeared in Ibn Khallikān's biographical note on al-Sharīf
al-Murtaḍā, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Ḥajar, Brockelmann, Huart, and
Gibb have assigned the authorship of Nahj al-Balāgha to
al-Raḍī's brother, al-Murtaḍā. There, of course, is the
possibility that al-Murtaḍā, who lived thirty years
longer than his younger brother, al-Raḍī, may have added
something to the book. This possibility is further
strengthened by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, who at one point
towards the end of his commentary, points out that al-Raḍī
had ended the original book there, adding: "It is said
that the additional material was incorporated in the life
time of the collector and with his approval."[3]

The fact that Nahj al-Balāgha was collected by al-Raḍī
and not by his brother, al-Murtaḍā, is proved firstly, by
Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd who has written a short biographical note
on the collector, al-Raḍī[4], in his commentary, and,

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1. Khalīl ibn Aibak al-Ṣafadī, Al-Wāfī bi-al-wafayāt,
   vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1949), 374.
2. See the Chapter: "Doubts on the authenticity of Nahj
   al-Balāgha" in this thesis.
3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 20, 180.
4. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, 31-41.

secondly, in some of the books listed above, and still extant, al-Raḍī refers to Nahj al-Balāgha calling it his collection[1] and, thirdly, the unanimity of the commentators of the Nahj al-Balāgha from the time of al-Raḍī up to the present time, that the compilation of Nahj al-Balāgha belongs to al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

The Motives of the collector

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī explains in his introduction to Nahj al-Balāgha, the reason for his compilation: "Early in my youth," writes al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, "I began to write a book on the exclusive merits of the Imams [intending] that it should consist of the best that has been said of them and has been attributed to them in the way of speeches. I gave the reason for writing the book in the beginning of it. However, I could only finish the part which concerns the merits of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī. As for the rest, the impediments of time and the daily preoccupation [with other matters] came between me and it. [But what I had written] I had divided it into chapters and sections. The last chapter contained what has been attributed to 'Alī of short, wise and sagacious sayings and proverbs without including either long speeches or letters. This part [of my intended book] was appreciated by brothers and friends who, being highly impressed by its contents, asked me to

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1. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Al-Majāzāt al-Nabawīyah (Najaf, 1328 A.H.), 21, 22, 41.

compose a book containing the selected utterances of 'Alī
in all aspects, i.e. the speeches, the letters, the
preachings and any other utterance of literary quality . . ."[1]

However, there is a couplet quoted by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī
in the above introduction which points to some other
possible reason than the one stated. The couplet belongs
to Farazdaq as he addresses Jarīr:

> When all has been said and done
>
> Then those are my forefathers
>
> Bring O Jarīr
>
> The like of them if you can.[2]

Here perhaps, is the message to the Shī'ite rulers, the
Buwaihids, who had kept the Sunnī Caliph as the head of
the state. It was a fact that 'Alī was al-Raḍī's direct
ancestor and it was also a fact that according to the
Shī'ites, the caliphate originally and actually belonged
to him. Through 'Alī's utterances, therefore, it may have
been intended to remind people of 'Alī and of his lineage's
claim to the caliphate.

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1. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, (Preface to) Nahj al-Balāgha (Cairo,
   n.d.), 1-6.
2. Ibid.

CHAPTER II

A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE ON NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

A. Criticism

Roughly, those who have expressed doubts about Nahj
al-Balāgha divide into the following categories: (1) Those
who have doubted some of the ideas; (2) those who have
doubted the work on the basis of the language and the
expressions; (3) those who have doubted the compilation of
the book, whether it was done by al-Sharīf al-Radī or his
brother, al-Sharīf al-Murtadā; (4) those who have doubted
some of the contents vis-a-vis some of the Companions
(al-Saḥāba); (5) those who have doubted some of the contents
as they fail to conform with their image of 'Alī; (6) those
who have doubted the authenticity basing their arguments
on the parts of the book which appear to be offensive to
a certain section of the community such as women; and, (7)
those who have questioned the work or some of its contents
on the basis of isnād. Now let us examine the literature
connected with criticism in details:

Group I -- the Syrian School of the Mamlūk period

(1) Ibn Khallikān: Shams al-Dīn, Abū al-'Abbās, Aḥmad
ibn Muḥammad, 608-681 A.H./1211-1282 A.D.

As far as I am aware, Ibn Khallikān was the first to
speak about the uncertainty. His book Wafayāt al-A'yān

is a biographical work covering 865 biographical notes on
the same number of people who, for one reason or the other,
were acknowledged to be distinguished by the Islamic world
of his time. Excluding, of course, the Companions of
the Prophet on whose lives the biographical literature,
even in Ibn Khallikān's time, was readily available. In
the said book, Ibn Khallikān, while speaking about 'Alī
ibn al-Ḥusain, better known as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā wrote
thus:

> Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, Abu al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn
> al-Ṭāhir Dhī al-Manāqib Abī Aḥmad al-Ḥusain
> ibn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm: He was
> naqīb al-ṭālibīn[1] and a leader in the

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1. Naqīb al-Ṭālibīn: for the description of the office
   called al-Niqābah I quote Jurjī Zaidān as follows:
   "Al-Niqābah: the headmanship of the nobility. The
   full title being al-Niqābat al-Ashrāf indicating that
   the concern of the office was with the nobility of
   the Muslims, the members of the Prophet's household.
   The Prophet's family enjoyed honour and respect through
   the measures which the authorities took to safeguard
   for them. They used to appoint a chief amongst the
   descendants of the Prophet to look after their affairs;
   keep a check on their genealogy; record their births
   and deaths; prevent them from engaging in an unsuitable
   occupation; prevent them from committing the unlawful
   acts, make representations to the government on their
   behalf; make the members of the household pay their
   dues; claim the share of dhū al-qurbah from the
   allocated grants and the booty and distribute the
   same amongst the descendants; prevent their girls ~~to~~ from
   ~~marry/~~ marrying/

sciences of scholastic theology and of refined culture, taste, and literary graces and poetry. He is the brother of al-Raḍī who will be mentioned, God Willing later on. He is the author of several books on the Shī'ite religion and an essay on the fundamentals of religion. He is also the author of a voluminous collection of poems. In his poetry, wherever he handles the subtle perceptions he excels and this he has done on many occasions. People differ about the book called Nahj al-Balāgha which is a collection of the utterances of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, whether it was collected by him or his brother, al-Raḍī. It has been said that the book is not the collection of the utterances of 'Alī and the one who has collected it and attributed to him is the one who has invented it. And God knows best.[1]

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marry(ing) non-Sayyids; and other things like the above which needed enforcing on that section of community, they were enforced through Naqīb al-Ashrāf, their representative." Jurjī Zaidān, Tārīkh Tamaddun al-Islāmī, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1902), p. 201.

1.   Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān, vol. 1 (Istanbul, n.d.), p. 423. The text reads:

الشّريف المُرتَضى أَبُو القَاسم علي ابن الطّاهِر ذى المَناقِب
أَبي أَحمد الحُسَين إِبن مُوسي إِبن مُحمّد إِبن إِبراهيم : كَانَ
نَقِيبَ الطّالِبين وَ كَانَ إِماماً في عِلم الكلامَ وَ الادَب وَ الشّعر
وَهُو أَخُو الرّضي وَسيَأتي ذكرُه إِنشاَ اللهُ وَلَهُ نصا رِنيف عَلي
مَذهَب الشّيعه وَ مَقالة في أُصُولِ الدّين وَ لَهُ دِيوَانُ شِعر كَبير
وَ إِذا اوصَفَ اللّطِيف أَجادنِيه وَ قَد إِستَعمَلَه في كَثير مِن المَواضِع
وَ قَد إِختَلَف النّاسُ في كِتاب نَهج البَلاغه المَجمُوع مِن كلام الإِمام
عَلي ابن أَبي طَالِب رضى اللهُ عنهُ هَل هُوَ جَمَعَهُ أَم جَمَعَ أَخُوه الرّضي
وَقَد قِيلَ أَنّهُ لَيسَ مِن كلامِ عَلي وَ إِنّما الذَّي جَمَعَهُ وَنَسَبَهُ إِلَيه هُوَ الَّذي
وَضَعَه. و اللهُ اعلم .

(2) Ibn Taimiyyah: Taqī al-Dīn, Abū al-'Abbās, Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halīm, 661-728 A.H./1262-1327 A.D.

Ibn Taimīyyah was born at al-Harrān in 661 A.H./1262 A.D. But he was brought to Damascus, together with his two brothers, by his father in the year 667 A.H./1268 A.D. when he was only six years of age. Unlike Ibn Khallikān, who was a product of partly Ayyūbid and partly Mamlūk periods, Ibn Taimīyyah's birth is in the Mamlūk period. Although according to al-Dhahabī, Ibn Taimīyyah's written works exceed five hundred, not even one-tenth of that seems to be extant or traceable. However, one of his noted works called Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah, which he wrote in four great volumes and which was written in refutation of the Shī'ites and the Qadrīyites as the title Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nawbawīyah fī rad al-Shī'a wa al-Qadarīyyah, specifies, is the case in point. At one point in the book[1] he turns to Nahj al-Balāgha and remarks:

> As for transmitting of the transmitter from
> 'Alī the sentence: "Abū Quhafah [Abū Bakr,
> the second Caliph] has worn the caliphate
> like a shirt knowing full well that I am,
> in relation to it, like the pivot to a
> mill [q.v. Sermon No. 3, part one of Nahj
> al-Balāgha]." So we say where is the isnād

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1. Ibn Taimīyyah, Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah, vol. 4, (Bulaq, 1904), p. 24.

of this narration in the way in which a
tradition is transmitted from one thiqah
[trustworthy _person_] to the other without the
chain being broken? This is not found ever!
A tradition of this sort is found only in
Nahj al-Balãgha and the books like it.
The learned know that the majority of the
Sermons of this book is a forgery _attributed to_ 'Alĩ
and therefore, most of it is not found in
the earlier books. Nor has it the isnãd
which is well known. So all this which this
man has transmitted where does he transmit
it from? But these Sermons are like the one
who claims to be an 'Alid or 'Abbãsid with-
out knowing that none of his ancestors laid
claims to such genealogy or a claim of this
nature was made for him by someone else.
And thus we know his lie. For a genealogy
is known with its roots before it reaches
its branches. The same thing is equally
applicable to the material related and
transmitted that it should be proven and
known before it reaches us. So if a man
wrote a book mentioning many of the speeches
of the Prophet, Abũ Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmãn and
'Alĩ although no one before him had reported
those speeches with the known isnãd, we shall
know with certainty that it was a lie. In

these speeches there are many matters the
contrary of which is known to us with
certainty [at the very time and place]
where we are. It is not for us to say
that it was a lie. But sufficient it is
for us to demand the proof of the soundness
of the narration. For God does not make
incumbent on His creation to testify any-
thing which has not a positive proof on its
truthfulness. In fact such testifying would
be forbidden unanimously especially in view
of the rule which forbids asking someone to
perform some thing which is beyond his
ability. [And asking to believe in such
speeches as have been quoted] would be a
greater act of asking to perform something
beyond one's reach. How will it be possible
to prove 'Alī's claim on Caliphate through a
story attributed to him during the fourth
century when the forgeries about him were many
and when they had a government[1] which accepted
whatever they said whether a truth or a lie
with no one demanding from them a proof of
the soundness of their narrations.

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1. Reference to the Buwaihid government. Text reads:

2.

أما نقل الناقل عنه أنه قال لقد تقمصها ابن أبي حتانه وهو يعلم
أن محلي منها محل القطبين الرحى فنقول: أين إسناد هذا النقل؟ بحيث
ينقله ثقة عن ثقة متصلاً إليه وهذا الأبو جدفقط وإنما يوجد مثل هذا في
كتاب "نهج البلاغة" وأمثاله وأهل العلم يعلمون أن أكثر خطب

(3) **Al-Dhahabī: Shams al-Dīn, Abū 'Abd Allāh, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, 673-748 A.H./1274-1347 A.D.**

Al-Dhahabī is yet another renowned scholar of the Syrian school of the Mamlūk period. His **Tarīkh al-Islām**, which he wrote in twenty-one volumes is regarded as one of the standard works in the field of history and has served as the major source for Taghrī Bardī (813-874 A.H./ 1410-1469 A.D.) in his history of the kings of Miṣr and al-Qāhirah. For the first three centuries he bases his history more or less on al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H./922 A.D.) yet there are some useful additions. As well as writing his own history he wrote compendiums to some of the important historical works existing at his time like **Tarīkh Dimashq** of Ibn 'Asākir, **Tarīkh Baghdād** of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and, in the field of traditions, on **al-Sunan** of al-Baihaqi. But it is in the Islamic science of

_____   Continuation of Ibn Taimiyyah's text:

هٰذَا ٱلْكِتَابُ مُفْتَرَاةٌ عَلَيَّ عَلِيَّ وَلِهٰذَا لَا يُوجَدُ غَالِبُهَا فِي كِتَابٍ مُتَقَدِّمٍ وَلَالَهَا إِسْنَادٌ مَعْرُوفٌ فَهٰذَا ٱلَّذِى نَقَلَهَا مِنْ أَيْنَ نَقَلَهَا؟ وَلَٰكِنْ هٰذِهِ ٱلْخُطَبُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ مَنْ يَدَّعِي أَنَّهُ عَلَوِيٌّ أَوْ عَبَّاسِيٌّ وَلَا نَعْلَمُ أَحَدًا مِنْ سَلَفِهِ إِدَّعَى ذَالِكَ قَطُّ وَ لَا أَدَّعَى ذَالِكَ فَنَعْلَمُ كِذْبَهُ فَإِنَّ ٱلنَّسَبَ يَكُونُ مَعْرُوفًا مِنْ أَصْلِهِ حَتَّى يَتَّصِلَ بِفَرْعِهِ وَ كَذَ اِلَكَ ٱلْمَنْقُولَاتُ لَابُدَّ أَنْ تَكُونَ ثَابِتَةٌ بِثِقَةٍ مَعْرُوفَةٍ عَمَّنْ نَقَلَ عَنْهُ حَتَّى تَتَّصِلَ بِنَا فَإِذَا صَنَّفَ وَاحِدٌ كِتَابًا ذَكَرَ فِيهِ خُطَبًا كَثِيرَةً لِلنَّبِيِّ وَأَبِي بَكْرٍ وَ عُمَرَوَعُثْمَانَوَعَلِيٍّ وَ لَمْ يَرِدْ أَحَدٌ مِنْهُمْ تِلْكَ ٱلْخُطَبَ نَقَلَهُ بِاسْنَادٍ مَعْرُوفٍ عَلِمْنَا يَقِينًا عَلَيَّ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُوَنَحْنُ فِي هٰذَا ٱلْمَقَامِ وَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ نُبَيِّنَ أَنَّ هٰذَا اكْذِبٌ بَلْ يَكْفِينَا ٱلْمُطَالَبَةَ بِصِحَّةِ ٱلنَّقْلِ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَمْ يُوجِبْعَلَي ٱلْخَلْقِأَنْ يُصَدِّقُوا بِمَا لَمْ تَقُمْ لَهُ دَلِيلٌ عَلَيَّ صِوْنِهِ بَلْ هٰذَا أَمْتَنِعٌبِالِاتِّفَاقِ لَاسِيَّمَاعَلَي ٱلْقَوْلِ بِاثْبَاتِنَا بِتَكْلِيفِ مَا لَا يُطَاقُ فَإِنَّ هٰذَا مِنْ أَعْظَمِ تَكْلِيفِ مَا لَا يُطَاقُ فَكَيْفَ يُمْكِنُ ٱلْإِنْسَانِ أَنْ يُثْبِتَ إِدِّعَاءٍ عَلَي ٱلْخِلَافَةِ بِمِثْلِ مَا يَقُ ذَكَرَتْ عَنْهُ فِي أَثْنَاءِ مَائَةِ ٱلرَّابِعَةِ لَمَّا كَثُرَ ٱلْكَاذِبُونَعَلَيْهِ وَ صَارَ لَهُمْ دَوْلَةٌ تَقْبَلُ مِنْهُمْ مَا يَقُولُونَ سَوَاءً كَانَ صِدْقًا أَوْ كِذْبًا وَ لَيْسَ عِنْدَهُمْ مَنْ يُطَالِبُهُمْ بِصِحَّةِ ٱلنَّقْلِ.

al-Rijāl that he became best known. His works in the field
of al-Rijāl are known as Tahdhīb al-Rijāl, Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥuffāz,
Ṭabaqāt al-Mashāhīr al-Qurrā', al-Tajrīd fī Asmā' al-Ṣaḥābah
and Mīzān al-I'tidāl. In his work, Mīzān al-I'tidāl he
refers to Nahj al-Balāgha when writing the following
biographical note on al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā:

'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain al-'Alawī, al-Ḥusainī,
al-Sharīf, al-Murtaḍā. The scholastic
theologian, the Rāfiḍite, the Mu'tazilite.
Author of many books. Took his traditions
from Sahl al-Dībājī and al-Marzubānī and
others. He was assigned the niqābah of the
'Alids and he died in the year 436 [A.H./
1044 A.D.]. He has been accused of
inventing Nahj al-Balāgha. His contribution
to the [Islamic] sciences is quite
considerable. One who has read his book
Nahj al-Balāgha knows for sure that it
was fabricated and attributed to amīr
al-mu'minīn 'Alī, may God be pleased with
him. Because there is in it the patent
curse on and the degradation of, the two
leaders, Abū Bakr and 'Umar, may God be
pleased with both of them. In the book
there are also contradictory matters and
things of lowliness which, for someone
who really knows the psychological make-up

of the Qurashite Companions and of those
others who came after them and who belonged
to the later period, make it certain that
the most of the book is untrue.[1]

(4) al-Ṣafadī: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Khalīl ibn Aibak

Al-Ṣafadī was born in 697 A.H./1297 A.D. and died at
Damascus in 764 A.H./1362 A.D. He was a Turk who probably
spoke Turkish at home, but rose to a position where it
became possible for him to offer himself to lecture at the
great mosque of the Umayyads (al-Jāmiʿ al-Umawī) at
Damascus where only the privileged and the top scholars
were allowed to do so. H. Ritter says that he was a
pupil of al-Shihāb Maḥmūd, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Ibn Nubāta
and Abū Ḥayyān.[2] Three years older than Ibn Kathīr
(700-774 A.H./1300-1372 A.D.), the author of the history
known as al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, he is said to have
taken from him too. Ibn ʿImād quotes al-Dhahabī as saying:

_____ al-Dhahabī's text reads:

عَلِيُّ ابنِ الحُسَيْنِ العَلَوِى الحُسَيْنِي الشَّرِيفُ المُرْتَضَى المُتَكَلِّمُ الرَّافِضِي [1]
المُعْتَزِلِي صَاحِبُ التَّصَانِيفِ حَدَّثَعَنْ سَهْلِ الدِّيبَاجِي وَ المَرْزُبَانِي وَغَيْرُهُمَا
وَوَلِي النِّقَابَةَ العَلَوِيَّةَ وَمَاتَ سَنَة سِتَّةٍ وَثَلَاثِينَ أَوْسَبْعِيلَةٌ عَنْ إِحْدَى وَثَمَانِيْن
سَنَة وَهُوَ المُتَّهَم بِوَضْعِ نَهْجِ البَلَاغَةِ وَلَهُ مُشَارِكَةٌ قَوِيَّةٌ فِي العُلُومُ وَمَنْطَالَعَ كِتَابَه
نَهْجُ البَلَاغَةِ جَزَمَ بِأَنَّهُ مَكْذُرٌ بَعَلِى أَمِيرِ المُؤمِنِينَ عَلِيرَضِي اللّهُ عَنه فِفِيهِ السَّبُّ
الصَّرَاحُ وَ الحَطُّ عَلَى سَيِّدَيْنِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَرَضِي اللّهُ عَنْهُمَا وَفِيهِ مِنَ التَّنَاقُضِ
وَ الأَشْيَاءِ الرَّكِيكَةِ وَ العِبَارَاتِ التِي مَنْ لَهُ مَعْرِفَةٌ بِنَفْسِ القَرَشِيِّينَ مِنْ
الصَّحَابَةِ وَبِنَفْسِغَيْرِهِم مِمَّن بَعْدَهُمْ مِن المُتَأخِرِينَ جَزَمَ بِأَنَّ الكِتَابَ أَكْثَرُهُ بَاطِلٌ.

2. H. Ritter, Preface to al-Wafayāt al-Aʿyān (Istanbul,
1931), p. "h".

Al-Ṣafadī is: al-Imām [the spiritual leader],
al-'Ālīm [the knowledgeable], al-Adīb [man of
literature], al-Balīgh [the rhetorician],
al-Akmal [the most accomplished]. He sought
knowledge and elevated himself to share the
distinction and leadership in his vocation.
He studied the [Islamic] science of al-Ḥadīth
and the books which are related to that
science.

Then al-Dhahabī goes on to admit that while he had been
the source for some of al-Ṣafadī's traditions, the latter
was a source for some of his.[1] H. Ritter quotes Ibn
Kathīr in stating that al-Ṣafadī wrote about two hundred
books[2] but Ibn 'Imād's information is perhaps more
dependable because he says: "I came across an autobio-
graphical note by al-Ṣafadī which was written in two quires
[of paper] and in which he had mentioned his early life
stories, the names of his tutors [al-Mashā'ikh], and the
names of the books he had written." Those books, says
Ibn 'Imād, were about fifty some of which he had completed
and some of which he had not.[3] In his work, al-Wāfī bi
al-Wafayāt, the work for which he is most remembered, he
refers to Nahj al-Balāgha. And for the first time a break

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1. Ibn 'Imād, Shadharāt al-Dhahab, vol. lv (Bulaq, 1932),
    p. 200.
2. H. Ritter, op. cit.
3. Ibn 'Imād, op. cit.

with the traditional Mamlūk School is noticeable. Firstly,
he mentions the book under the biographical note on
al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and not under al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā as
the previous three scholars had done. Then he lists
al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's other books in fuller detail than Ibn
Khallikān, or al-Dhahabī. But he joins the rest of the
Mamlūk School in the question of the authenticity of Nahj
al-Balāgha and remarks:

> People think that Nahj al-Balāgha was
> written by him. But I have heard al-Shaikh,
> al-Imām, al-'Allāmah, Taqī al-Dīn ibn
> Taimīyyah say that it was not so. But what
> there was in it from the speeches of 'Alī
> was well known and what there was in it from
> the compositions of al-Raḍī was well known
> too. Or words to that effect.[1]

(4) al-Yāfi'ī: 'Abd Allāh ibn Asad, Abū Muḥammad,
d. 768 A.H./1366 A.D.

Although al-Yāfi'ī was born (c 700 A.H./1300 A.D.) in
the South of the Arabian Peninsula and belonged to a

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1. Al-Ṣafadī, Al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt, vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1949), p. 374.

branch of Ḥimyarite tribe of Yaman, he, having received
his early education in Aden, proceeded to Mecca and there
settled down for good. Given to literature and poetry,
he also wrote a biographical history and called it Mir'āt
al-Jinān wa 'ibrat al-Yaqzān. I have classed him with the
Scholars of the Mamlūk Dynasty, despite his Yamanite origin
and later, Meccan residence, for in the reign of the
Sultan Baybers, when al-Yāfi'ī was writing his history,
al-Ḥijāz was firmly controlled by the Mamlūk Sultan. And
so, it seems, the viewpoints of his scholars. It is note-
worthy that his comments on Nahj al-Balāgha which he makes
in the third volume of his history, are composed of the
very same words enunciated by Ibn Khallikān and al-Dhahabī.[1]
I refrain from quoting his text as the only new point
he introduces into it is his observation that there was
thirty years of difference between the deaths of the two
brothers, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā.
However, his quoting Ibn Khallikān and al-Dhahabī's words
in his history proves that he shared their views as far as
the book Nahj al-Balāgha was concerned.

(5) Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī: Aḥmad ibn 'Alī

Aḥmad ibn 'Alī better known as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī
was born in 773 A.H./1371 A.D. in one of the southern
parts of the old Egypt called al-'Asqalān. Although he

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1. al-Yāfi'ī, Mir'āt al-Jinān (Hyderabad, 1919), p. 56.

visited Syria, and lived there for some times, and also he visited the Ḥijāz, but it was Egypt where he lived most of his time and where he died in 852 A.H./1448 A.D. But he is very much the product of the Syrian School as his many works based on al-Dhahabī's earlier works show. In volume four of his Lisān al-Mīzān, Ibn Ḥajar turns to Nahj al-Balāgha and gives it the treatment of Ibn Khallikān and al-Dhahabī. In fact, Ibn Ḥajar's comments are the repetition of al-Dhahabī's words[1] and therefore, need not be quoted here. But like al-Yāfi'ī, Ibn Ḥajar's entry does signify the views he held of Nahj al-Balāgha.

These are then, the principal doubts expressed by the Medieval Islamic writers on Nahj al-Balāgha. And all are the product of the Mamlūk Dynasty. In the first Chapter we considered the questions as to why people were interested in 'Alī's speeches and what made al-Raḍī collect Nahj al-Balāgha. Here, at this point, it would be appropriate to reflect on certain features of criticism of it.

Following the progress of the criticism of Nahj al-Balāgha the reader must have noticed the pronounced weakness of the Muslim scholars in the Middle Ages in that once a tradition, an interpretation, a viewpoint is recorded by one recognised and popular scholar, it is carried through by the following erudites without carrying

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1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Lisān al-Mizān, vol. 4 (Hyderabad, 1912), p. 223.

out their own researches. Many of the Muslim scholars have been credited with literally scores of works, as we have just seen and there are other cases like al-Suyūṭī, where the numbers of works produced are staggering. But originality still remained a rare commodity and that was entirely due to the lack of independent research. None of the aforesaid Mamlūk scholars made a thorough investigation on the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha and all of them merely repeated the view which was first expressed by Ibn Khallikān in c 654 A.H./1256 A.D.. In other words, two and a half centuries after Nahj al-Balāgha had been compiled.

The second factor which ought to be considered is the political background of the criticism. Ibn Khallikān's birth, early training, and even what is termed as "the intellectual maturity" took place under the Ayyūbid Dynasty. A Dynasty which was wrested by Salāḥ al-Dīn (566-589 A.H./1170-1193 A.D.) from the Faṭimid Caliphs of Egypt, which was a dynasty whose religion, in Ibn Kahllikān's own words, "was Imāmite". It was founded in 297 A.H./ 909 A.D. and it had ruled for 208 years over North Africa, Egypt, Syria and even in al-Ḥijāz. The size of the Faṭimid domain fluctuated but the 'Abbāsids Caliphs never, in their best days, had a greater rival. The last Faṭimid Caliph, al-'Ādid (55-567 A.H./1160-1170 A.D.) had made Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh, Salāḥ al-Dīn's uncle, his Chief Minister, in 565 A.H./1169 A.D. Upon his death, the office was assumed by Salāḥ al-Dīn. It was a matter of

regret even to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn that while the ailing master, the Faṭimid Caliph, was still alive, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn let the caliphate of the 'Abbāsids be declared on the pulpits of Miṣr and Cairo.[1] The motive which may have prompted Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was not power, for he already had it, but the fact that the Caliph in Baghdad was the head of the orthodoxy whereas the Faṭimid was not. But it was more for political reasons than religious that a campaign against Shī'ism was launched. Not perhaps, against religion or its doctrines which in certain respects, differed from the orthodoxy, but because it happened to be the religion of the state and the people who must now be discredited.

> When Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn became the master
> of Egypt and its dependencies [writes Ibn
> Khallikān] there were no schools. For the
> previous government had been Imāmite by
> religion and they did not believe in these
> matters [i.e. the tenets of Sunnite orthodoxy]
> and so the Sultān built one school at
> al-Qarāqah al-sughra, the other near the
> mausoleum attributed to al-Ḥusain. He made
> the house of Sa'īd al-Su'adā', a servant of
> the Faṭimid Caliphs, as the residence quarters

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1. Taghrī Bardī, Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, vol. 5 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 356.

[khānqāh] for the students, making a trust
for its maintenance. He created likewise
trusts for the maintenance of all the
schools he built. He made the house of
'Abbās, the minister to the Faṭimid Caliph,
as the School for the propagation and the
teaching of the Ḥanafite Sect. This school
is in Cairo. He also built a school for
the Shāfi'ites and this is known as Zain
al-Tujjār, creating a trust for its
maintenance also . . .[1]

Now it will be noted that when Ibn Khallikān said that
there were no schools, he must have meant that there were
no schools to teach Ḥanifi or Shāfi'i doctrines and the
matters associated with them. How much truth the state-
ment contains, is the matter for scholars to investigate
for themselves. My purpose in rendering the above quotation
is to establish the pattern. The fact that the two
hundred years or so which intervene between Ibn Khallikān
and Taghrī Bardī had not changed the attitude of the
Mamlūk intellectuals, is illustrated by the report the
latter's history contains and which is as follows: Reporting
the death of al-Sharīf Qatādah ibn Idrīs in 617 A.H./
1220 A.D., the historian says:

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1. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 54.

In this year al-Sharīf Qatādah ibn Idrīs
Abū 'Azīz al-Ḥusainī al-Makkī, the Amīr
of Mecca died. He was learned, just, and
and it was noted that during his term of office the
highways were secured for pilgrims as were their lives
and their belongings. He used to say the adhān
himself reciting "Ḥayyā 'alā Khair al-'amal"
in it as the Shī'ahs do. He was beyond
casting gain-seeking eyes on anyone. Never
did he tread the caliphal carpet nor did
he call on anyone else. Gold and precious
garments used to be carried to him from
Baghdad every year. He used to say that
I am more worthy for Caliphate than al-Nāṣir
li-Dīn Allāh. He never committed a major
sin [al-Kabīrah] in his life. [Taghrī
Bardī remarks] I say what sin is greater
than al-rafḍ [Shī'ism], and cursing of the
Companions![1]

That was the policy of discrediting the Faṭimids,
in particular, and the Shī'ites in general. But there
was also the desire to shift the seat of Caliphate and
intellectual activities to Syria and Egypt. When, in
648 A.H./1250 A.D. Hulāgū conquered Baghdad and had the
Caliph, al-Musta'ṣim and his officials killed, the fourth

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1. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 249-50.

Mamlūk Sulṭān, Baybers (658-676/1259-1277 A.D.), who had
appointed Ibn Khallikān as the Qaḍī al-Quḍāt in Syria,
lost no time to exploit the situation as Sir William Muir
records:

> Shortly after his accession to throne, Beibers
> hearing that a scion of 'Abbāsid descent
> survived in Syria, conceived the design of
> setting him up as Caliph, and of receiving at
> his hands a spiritual blessing and title to the
> Sultanate. Sought out from his hiding, the
> Abbāsid was brought to Cairo. At his approach,
> the Sulṭān with his court went forth in pomp
> to meet him. Even the Jews and Christians had
> to follow in the train, bearing the Book of the
> law, and the Evangel, in their hands. Soon
> after this, Mustanṣir Caliph-nominate, robed in
> gorgeous apparel, girt with the sword of State
> and mounted on a white steed, was installed in
> the office, and sworn fealty to by Beibers, his
> Ameers, and the people; which function ended,
> there was read from the pulpit a pompous patent
> by the Caliph, conferring on Beibers the sovereign
> title, and impressing upon him the duty of warring
> for the Faith, and other obligations which
> Mustanṣir now devolved on him. Then with sound
> of trumpet and shouts of joy, the royal procession

wended its way through the streets back to
the palace; -- The Caliph following the Sultān
on horseback, the rest on foot.[1]

This was the climax or the royal manifestation of the
simmering ambition on the part of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk
Sultans to make their domain as the intellectual and
material centre of Islam. Baghdad had enjoyed an unchallenged
intellectual monopoly for five hundred years and the
Baghdadis were proud of it. In fact, when in the early
fourth century, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih produced his al-'Iqd
al-Farid and it reached from Spain to Baghdad, Ṣāḥib ibn
'Abbād, after examining it exclaimed: "hādhihī bidā'atunā
ruddat ilainā" (i.e. these are our own goods returned to
us!). Now, in the seventh century, a book like Nahj
al-Balāgha, which was Baghdadi in compilation and Shī'ite
in sympathy, had little prospects in prospering in the
lands of the Mamlūks.

But the third, and perhaps more important historical
factor lies in the rivalry of the two powers. The Mongols
who had destroyed Baghdad and its 'Abbāsid empire, had now
settled in Iran. They had become deadlier. For they had
embraced Islam. But the kind of Islam they had adopted
bore distinctly the Shī'ite stamp. The great-grandson of
Hulāgū, Ghazan Maḥmūd (695-704/1295-1304 A.D.) was the patron

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1. Sir William Muir, The Caliphate (London, 1891), p. 587-8.

of Ḥasan ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726 A.H./1325 A.D.) whose book, Minhāj al-karāmah aroused the anger of no other than the Mamlūk's spiritual leader Ibn Taimiyyah. And the remarks of Ibn Taimiyyah on Nahj al-Balāgha which the reader has already noted, are contained in the book specifically written in refutation of al-Ḥillī's book. Thus if Ibn Khallikān's comments are seen in the context of that power struggle between the Mamlūk and Mongol empires, the validity and impartiality of them becomes less credible.

But judging on its own merits, the Mamlūk Criticism of Nahj al-Balāgha cannot altogether, be rejected. There is no isnād mentioned in Nahj al-Balāgha before any of the sermons or the sayings attributed to 'Alī. And isnād was the only yardstick with which the medieval scholars used to measure the early traditions. To this extent Ibn Taimiyyah's criticism seems to be sustainable. It is also curious that at the time of Ibn Taimiyyah's criticism, some of the prominent Shī'ite writers, like Ḥasan ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī himself, were alive and could have attempted to attend to it and supply the required isnād. Particularly when Ibn Taimiyyah's criticism revolved around one sermon, i.e. the sermon which has been named al-shiqshiqiyyah. But his demand for isnād would be applicable to each and every entry in Nahj al-Balāgha.

Group II, Modern Criticism

(a) the Western Scholars on Nahj al-Balāgha

(1) **Carl Brockelmann**: In his ~~encyclopaedia~~ bibliographical survey of Arabic literature, Carol Brockelmann, as Ibn Khallikān and those who followed him, mentions Nahj al-Balāgha together with other compositions of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā. His words are as follows:

> Nahg al-balāga angebliche Ausspruche 'Ali's
>
> von einigen und so meist in Yemen . . . seinem
>
> Bruder as-Sarīf ar-Radī . . . zugeschrieben,
>
> ohne dass die Autorschaft des einen oder das
>
> andern mit entscheidenden Argumenten bewiesen
>
> werden konnte, wenn nicht des Schweigen
>
> at-Tusi's
>
> als solches gelten soll . . . , auch bei den
>
> Isma'iliten viel gebraucht . . .[1]

(2) **Clement Huart**:

> Amongst the Imamites, the Sharīf al-Murtaḍā,
>
> whose name was Abu'l Qāsim Ali Ibn Ṭahir [sic!]
>
> the descendant of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (966-1044)
>
> held the post of inspector (q.v. the footnotes)

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1. Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabschen literature, Supp., pp. 704-5.

of the 'Alid family [sic!] at Baghdad . . .
He is also the author (unless it be his
brother Raḍī) of Nahj al-Balāgha, a collection
of sayings which he himself attributed to
'Alī; the commentator Mustaqīm Zāde, has even
asserted him to be the real author of the dīwān
attributed to 'Alī, and this is by no means
an impossibility.[1]

(3) H. A. R. Gibb: Discussing the literary activities of
the Buwaihid period, H. A. R. Gibb notes that they were
mainly of religious and related topics. "The term," says
Gibb, "would hardly cover the famous treatise on the
Principles of Government by the qāḍī al-Māwardī (d. 1058),
were it not that it is a programme for the ideal government
of the theocratic state with but slight concessions to
what the theologians regarded as the corrupt and illegal
practice of the day." Between 945 and 1055 A.D. although
the official religion remained Sunnite, the state was run
by the Shī'ites and to this fact he points when Gibb says:

> The Shi'ites, of course, made the most of
> their opportunity of open activity, and the
> bibliography of Shi'ite books composed by
> the jurist Muhammad at-Ṭūsī (d. 1067 A.D.) is

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1. C. Huart, A History of Arabic Literature (London,
   1903), p. 253.

of interest as showing the volume of Shi'ite
literature then existing that has since perished,
the greatest part no doubt suppressed by the
orthodox Sunnīs. Somewhat before this, however,
the Zaidi sect of the Shī'a had founded an
independent state in the Yemen, which has
maintained its existence to this day. In this
secluded corner they produced a considerable
literature whose monuments are only now being
investigated and found to possess, in spite of
their predominant theological contents, no
little interest and value. Of the general
literary work of the Shi'ites special interest
attaches to the pseudographs attributed to the
Prophet's son in law Ali, but written by two
brothers, the Sharīfs (i.e. descendants of Ali)
al-Murtaḍā (966-1044) and ar-Raḍī (970-1015),
the latter of whom was one of the most noted
poets of the day. These forgeries consist of
a poetic dīwān and a work containing, under the
title of The Highway of Eloquence, the supposed
sermons and letters of Ali. The latter work,
in particular, written in pleasing and not too
ornate saj', has enjoyed a great reputation
not only amongst the Shi'ites (who revere it
as an authentic monument of their Imām) but also
among Sunni Muslims.[1]

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1. H. A. R. Gibb, Arabic Literature (Oxford, 1963), p. 98.

(b) Modern Egyptian School

(4) Aḥmad Amīn, Fajr al-Islām

Writing about the early commentators of the Qur'ān, Aḥmad Amīn comes to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and comments:

> The fourth personality is more difficult
> than can be imagined. The amount of
> exaggeration and lies that has entered into
> it is such that leaves a historian confused.
> And that personality is of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.
> For there is no other personality of the age
> which was so much the centre of disputes, in
> which both the lovers and the disinclined
> indulged in excesses and around which the
> creators placed their creations, and because
> of which religious sects came into being, as
> the one 'Alī possessed. They have narrated
> traditions of the Prophet through him which
> amount to six hundred and eighty-six and of
> which no more than fifty may be correct. They
> have ascribed to him a collection of poems
> [dīwān] and, according to al-Māzinī, 'Alī may
> not have composed more than two of the couplets
> . . . They have attributed to him all that
> there is in Nahj al-Balāgha although the
> critics both of the old times and the modern
> ones, like al-Ṣafadī and Huart [q.v.], have
> doubted it in its totality [shakka fī majmū'ihā]

[sic]. Those doubts spring from matters
which are contained in some parts of it --
things like "rhymed prose" [al-saj'] and the
"word craft" [ṣanā'at lafzīyā] which were not
known to the time. As his saying: "Honour
your clan for they are the wings you fly by
and the roots to which you return." And then
there are some of the expressions which could
have been used only after the Greek Philosophy
had been translated into Arabic and after the
sciences had properly been recorded; [expressions
like] "Repentance [al-Istighfār] comes for six
different meanings and [al-Īmān] Faith stands
on four pillars." And like that part in which
the house has been defined and its four
boundaries specified all of which is more in
the style of sophisticated [al-mu'annaqīn] as
his saying [defining the house of this world
-- dār al-dunyā (as opposed to the house of the
next world -- dār al-ākhirah)]: "The four
boundaries that bound this house the first of
which ends where the calamities are invited
in . . ." and other expressions like it, so
subtle and sophisticated in a style that was
not known except in the 'Abbāsid period as you
see in the description of the peacock. As they
have ascribed to him a book in the 'Ilm al-Jafr
[divination] in which he mentions all that was

going to happen until the end of the world.
The story of him teaching Abu 'l-Aswad al-Du'alī
the foundations of the Nahw [grammar] is well
known. All this makes it very difficult for the
critical historian to describe his knowledgeable
personality with a description he can be satis-
fied with as to what there is in Nahj al-Balāgha
which belongs to 'Alī and what there is which
does not. And which of the wise-sayings [al-ḥikam]
and proverbs [al-amthāl] originates from him and
which does not. And which of the traditions and
the judgements said to have come down from him,
and advice, he is said to have given to the
Caliphs on sundry matters, is correct and which
is not. All these matters are yet liable for
discussion.[1]

(c)   The modern Iraqi School

(5)   S. A. Khulusi, Islamic Review, October, 1950

Under the article headed by "The Authenticity of Nahj
al-Balāgha", Dr. Khulusī has made a number of points
concerning the doubts in the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha
most of which he derives from the sources already quoted.
In line with the pattern of this chapter, however, it is
perhaps not unsuitable to quote his own words:

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1.   Aḥmad Amīn, Fajr al-Islām, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1928), p. 179.

Reasons that the Nahj al-Balāgha in its present
form is full of spurious matter. We do not
deny that certain parts of the book are authentic,
but the rest is spurious. We suspect the
authenticity on the following grounds:

1. All the literary and historical works that
appeared before the time of the two brothers
al-Sharīf Raḍī and al-Sharīf Murtaḍā, who are
regarded the compilers of the book, do not
contain most of what is mentioned in the Nahj
al-Balagha (See Ibn Taimiyya . . .) Even a
man with a strong Shi'ite vein like Abul Faraj
al-Isfahānī (897-967 C.E.) does not mention more
than a few of Ali's short speeches.

2. The compilation of the speeches of any
literary personage in the form of a book was
quite unknown before the time of the Sharīfs,
except in so far as concerned the sayings and
the speeches of the Prophet. As for others,
their sayings and speeches were to be found
scattered in historical annals and books of
literary miscellanies. Yet, what is preserved
of the speeches of any of Ali's contemporaries
does not equal one tenth of the Nahj al-Balāgha
. . . It is claimed that 'Ali's speeches were,
for the most part, memorised. There were people
who knew four hundred and eighty of his speeches
by heart . . . How is it then that speeches of
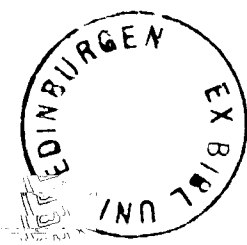
his contemporaries, of whom some had great
authority and even greater number of followers,
were not likewise memorised?

3. The detailed outlook of the subjects dealt
with and the complex themes could not be safely
attributed to 'Alī or his time. It is the work
of a much later period and a more complex stage
of civilisation.

4. The lengthy documents of the type exhibited
by the Covenant of Ali with al-Ashtar . . . or
the Speech of Shadow were unfamiliar to the
Prophet or the Imams. Our suspicions of the
Covenant of 'Alī are strengthened by the fact
that the Imam had made similar covenants with
other governors; yet, he had not made them so
lengthy. Moreover, al-Ashtar was one of his
intimate companions and his right arm in the
battle of Ṣiffīn. He was in no need of such
a lengthy covenant. Why did 'Alī not provide
his other governors with similar ones? . . .
It may be argued that such covenants were lost
or not preserved wholly, and that the only one
that had come down to us intact is that of
al-Ashtar. Granted, but surely if it were
genuine, it could not have been preserved in
two different versions; for besides the version
that we have in the Nahj al-Balagha, there has
fortunately come down to us another version

that had been transcribed in 858 A.H. and was
for sometime in the possession of the Ottoman
Sultan Bayazid II (died 1512 C.E.). This is
not only shorter but is also different . . .
Perhaps, if one day we chance to discover an
earlier copy it will be still shorter, until
we come to the original one, which was probably
no more than a few lines, a thing which is to
be expected since at 'Alī's time there was no
paper (paper became available in the middle of
the second century A.H.; see H. A. R. Gibb,
khawāṭir fi 'l-Adab al-'Arabī, al-Adab wa'l-Fann
1943, 1, 2, p. 6), and what was written down
on skin and bones had to be greatly reduced in
size and made succinct and to the point . . .
Moreover, the language is so ornate that one
is forced to believe that it is the work of a
careful composer rather than that of a Caliph
troubled by war and dissensions. Similarly,
a comparison of speech NO 26 in the Nahj (vol 1
pp 63-66) with an earlier version of the same
in Aghānī (vol xv p 45) will reveal that the
former is a careful paraphrase of the latter.
On comparing the Nahj as it stands in the
Commentary of Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid with Muhammad
'Abduh's edition we found that the latter
contained fifty extra pages! To return to the
Covenant, it may be argued with full conviction

that it was fabricated in imitation of Ṭāhir
Ibn al-Ḥusain's Covenant to his son 'Abdullāh
(206 A.H.), on the latter's appointment as
Governor of Raqqa, Egypt, and the neighbouring
districts . . . The similarity between the two
covenants is striking!

5. The abusive language, cursings and revilings
of the Companions, especially in the famous
shiqshiqīyyā . . ., are not attibutable to a
pious and God-fearing Imam like 'Alī. He
strongly resented the cursing of the Companions
(See Ibn al-Jawzi, Talbīs Iblīs pp 106-108). He
even praised 'Umar (Balādhurī, futūḥ al-Buldān
. . . p 67, and Ibn Sallām, Kitab al-Awwal p 98).

6. The Ṣūfi touch of some of the speeches is
characteristic of a later age than that of 'Alī.

7. The many variants of some of the speeches,
even al-Sharīf al-Raḍī does not seem to be sure
of the genuineness of certain parts of his
compilation and admits that there are widely
divergent versions of one and the same speech
(cf. Majlisi's remark on one of Ali's speeches
in Bihār al-Anwār vol XVII p 91 . . . "and this
speech was produced by al-Kaf'amī with great
variation), and that he had to include them
all (Ibn Abi 'l-Ḥadid, vol. 1 p. 17). Thus,
for instance, al-Sharīf gives 'Alī's speech on
Ṭalḥā and Zubair in one place in ten lines

(the Nahj, vol 1 p 55), and in other in twelve
lines (Ibid., vol ii pp 26-29). That the speeches
had been tampered with is evident from the fact that
sentences uttered at different occasions had
been blended together and given as one speech.
Now, speech NO 36, for instance, is composed of
four separate parts (vol 1, pp. 84-85). In the
third piece there is even a sentence from one
of 'Umar's speeches (See Ibn Rashīq, al-'Umda
vol 1 p 170, the wording is slightly different).
8. The neo-phraseology and the linguistic
mistakes that could not have been committed by
the Imam, or even by the people of his time,
because those phrases and mistakes appeared at
a much later period. The following are some of
the mistakes and neologies occurring in the Nahj:
(i) Kayyafa: to modify . . . The derivation of
a verb from the indeclinable word kayf was quite
unknown at 'Alī's time . . .
(ii) Ma'lūl: morbid. (Hadīd op cit p 203.
Firuzabādī gives ma'lūlun and 'alīlun and forbids
the use of ma'lūlun, (see Qamūs vol viii p 32).
(iii) Kaada 'an: to be on the point of (Hadid
op cit vol 1 pp 270, 480), the verb kaada is
normally used without 'an. It is used in the
Quran as such (see 'ilmī Zada's Fath al-Rahmān
li tālib āyāt al-Qurān p 423).
(iv) iltaqā bi: to meet (Hadid vol ii p 62).
iltaqa does not take the preposition bi.

(v) <u>Mu'takif</u>: devoted to prayers in a
reclusive manner. It is used only in a
religious sense. But the <u>Nahj</u> uses it in the
sense of applying oneself to anything
assidously, in which case the kindred word
<u>'ākif</u> is the correct one.

(vi) The preposition <u>ka</u> is incorrectly used
with a pronoun in the following phrase: <u>innī</u>
<u>lastu ka-anta</u>, I am not like you (Hadid vol 1
p 449).

Apart from these mistakes the <u>Nahj</u> contains
words which were not known at 'Alī's time, such
as: <u>Tarhīb</u>, to frighten; <u>azalī</u>, eternal
(according to the author of <u>Shifā' al-Ghalīl</u>,
<u>azal</u>, <u>azalī</u>, <u>azaliyya</u> are all wrong. They have
never been used by the Arabs in their speech
(see Shifā p 32). Similarly the words <u>kammiyya</u>,
quantity and <u>talāshī</u>, annihilation, were not
known to the Arabs (see Jamīl Sultān, Etudes
sur Nahj al-Balagha, Paris 1940, pp 32-33). The
phrase: ". . . he who is contented with God on
the garment of Jabriyya" (Hadid vol iii part 13,
p 225), could not have been used by 'Alī as the
Jabriyya did not appear in his time. Still
another phrase occurring in the following
sentence claims one's attention: "<u>fa-yā 'ajaba</u>
<u>bayna huwa yastaqīluhā fī ḥayātihi, idh 'aqadahā</u>
<u>li-ākhara ba'da wafātihī [la-shadda ma tashattarā</u>

dhra'aiha], fasayyarāhā fī ḥawzatin kashnaa

yaghluzu kalimuha . . . (Ḥadīd vol 1 p 54, Nahj

MS NO 2423 Paris fol 13a). Translated into

English it reads: "I wonder at him (i.e. Abu

Bakr), for while he resigned it (i.e. the

Caliphate) in his lifetime, behold! he handed

it over to someone else (i.e. 'Umar) on his

death. [How eagerly they shared its udder]

(he is comparing Caliphate to a cow whose udder

was shared by Abū Bakr and 'Umar). So he

rendered it to a man who was rough and whose

speech was harsh." It is obvious that the use

of the fa of consequence or fa al-sababiyya in

the last sentence shows that it was originally

linked up directly with the first one and that

the middle part, marked in square brackets, was

dragged in forcibly by a forger.[1]

(d) Syrian School

(6) Jamil Sultan, Etude sur Nahj al-Balagha, Paris, 1940

In the foregoing quotation from Dr. Khulūsī, I have

quoted all the grounds on which to him, the authenticity

of Nahj al-Balāgha was suspected, and as they were rendered

by the said author. But there was another reason namely,

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1. Ṣafā' Khulūsī, "The Authenticity of Nahj al-Balagha",
   article published in the Islamic Review, October,
   1950, pp. 31-35.

that the above quotation has so much of Jamil Sultan's
Etude sur Nahj al-Balagha which make the points enumerated
above serve a double purpose i.e. to voice the opinions of
two different authors expressed in two different languages.
The views expressed by Dr. Khulūsī on (1) the detailed
outlook of the subjects dealt with and the complex themes,
(2) the Covenant of al-Ashtar, (3) the language, (4) the
Sufi touch, (5) al-Khafājī's comments concerning the words
azalī, azalīyyā, etc., are strikingly similar with Jamil
Sultan's. The remark that "On comparing the Nahj as it
stands in the commentary of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd with Muhammad
'Abduh's edition we found that the latter contained fifty
extra pages", is also made by Jamil Sultan.[1]

The reader would have observed that most of the modern
criticism is based on the works of the Mamlūk scholars,
like Ibn Khallikān, al-Dhahabī and others all of whom have
already been quoted and discussed. However, there are
some new areas, based on style, vocabulary and the history
of ideas, which have been brought to focus by Aḥmad Amīn,
Khulūsī and Jamil Sultān. As in the following Chapters,
I shall be discussing these, there is no need to mention
them here.

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1. Jamīl Sulṭān, Etude sur Nahj al-Balagha (Paris, 1940).

B. Commentaries on Nahj al-Balāgha

The impact of a book on the intellectual community used to be measured, up until modern times, in terms of the number of commentaries made upon it. The Qur'ānic commentaries, that of al-Ṭabarī, al-Bayḍāwī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Ṭabarsī, to name only the famous few, are reminders to the outside world of the influence and the veneration the revealed book has enjoyed amongst the Muslim community. The commentaries on Nahj al-Balāgha which exceed the hundred mark and which have been done in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, are also indicative of both its calibre and the mark it has made upon the successive generations since the early fifth century of the Islamic era. Of those commentaries I have only selected some of the most important.

1. A'lām Nahj al-Balagha: Written by 'Alī Ibn Nāṣir, who was a contemporary of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī. "The oldest of the commentaries and comments," writes al-Kintūrī, "made on Nahj al-Balagha. The most dependable, the most sound, and the most precise of them all. It begins: "al-ḥamd li-allāh al-ladhī najānā min mahāwī al-ghaī wa zulumātih wa hadānā sabīl al-ḥaqbi ayāt ayātih, etc.[1] Two copies of this commentary survive. One in the library of Tehran University. The other in the private library of Muḥammad Husain Kāshf al-Ghiṭā' at Baghdad. The manuscript

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1. Al-Kintūrī, Kashf al-Ḥujub wa al-Astār (Calcutta, 1912), p. 253.

is numbered 848 and at the end it reads: "This copy was compared with the one dated 700 A.H. and read over. The manuscript is dated 901 i.e. 1495 A.D.[1]

2. <u>Ma'ārif Nahj al-Balāgha</u>: Written by Ali ibn Zaid al-Baihaqī. A prolific writer of his time Yāqūt quotes the writer as saying that he composed the commentary in one volume. Al-Baihaqī died 565 i.e. 1169 A.D. In the beginning of this commentary he points out that he was writing it on the request of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Khawnaqī who had also asked him to dedicate it to 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Naisāpūrī. As he calls the latter <u>malik al-nuqabā'</u> it appears that 'Alī ibn Muḥammad must have been a "<u>naqib</u>" himself, the designation which was held by the collector of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> at his time. And that <u>al-niqābah</u> had still been in existence as an office and designation.[2]

3. <u>Minhāj al-Barā'a</u>: This commentary, written by Sa'īd ibn Hibat Allah better known as Quṭb al-Rāwandī, is the only one cited by Ibn Abi al-Ḥadid. In fact he is specific in the remarks he makes about al-Rāwandī's commentary saying that as far as he knew no other commentary existed.[3] However, when he does refer to this commentary, Ibn Abi al-Ḥadid is often, critical of the comments and the

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1. 'Abd al-Zahrā'al-Khaṭīb, <u>Maṣādir Nahj al-Balagha</u>, vol. 1, (Beirut, 1975), pp. 203-4.

2. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, <u>Irshād al-Arīb</u>, vol. 5 (Cairo, 1934), p. 211.

3. Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, <u>Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1959), p. 5.

explanations of al-Rāwandī. This in turn, aroused the partisan feelings in some of the Shi'ite scholars who composed books the main object of which was little else apart from refutation of Ibn Abi al-Ḥadid. Works like Salāsil al-ḥadīd litaq'īd ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd written by Shaikh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrainī who died in 1186 i.e. 1772 A.D. However, a copy of al-Rāwandī's commentary has been preserved by Imām Riḍā Library at Mashhad, Iran. Al-Rāwandī died in the year 573 A.H. i.e. 1177 A.D.

4. Commentary by Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar better known as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the celebrated author of the al-Tafsīr al-kabīr. 'Alī Ibn Yūsuf al-Qifṭī, in his Ta'rīkh al-Ḥukamā' states that al-Rāzī was not able to complete his commentary on Nahj al-Balagha.[1] It is not known whether the work still exists. If it does, it should be of extreme value to the scholars. (Amongst other things, his comments and reactions to the sermon called al-shiqshiqīyya which has so much incensed Ibn Taymiyya and those who followed him.) Fakhr al-Din al-Razi died in the year 606 A.H. i.e. 1209 A.D.

5. Commentary: by 'Izz al-Dīn, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Muḥammad better known as Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. He was engaged in writing his commentary between the years 644 to 649 A.H. corresponding to 1246 to 1251 A.D. A comprehensive work which the author wrote in twenty volumes and which has been printed several times in Iran, Egypt and Lebanon. I refrain

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1. al-Qifṭī, Tarīkh al-Ḥukamā' (Leipzig, 1903), p. 293.

from giving a detailed description of this commentary in
this intended "bird's-eye-view" of the commentaries, but
permit me to indulge in the few "ifs". If by some device
al-Mubarrad was persuaded to extend and Abu 'l-Faraj
al-Iṣfahānī to restrain, if al-Mas'ūdī had lived long
enough to cover down to the first quarter of the thirteenth
century (of the Christian era), and Badī' al-Zamān had paid
more attention to the simplicity and naturalness rather than
the rhyming of his stylish language, the results would have
been the work such as Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has produced. There
is a method even in his deviations and purpose in his
occasional fanaticism. His work may be devoid of the
critical approaches but then this would be a blame and
blemish, all the writers of the age, including I dare say,
the commentators of the Qur'ān, will have to share. Indeed
this element known to us as critical approach or analysis,
was not thought of in those days and the light of the
loyalties illuminated the shaded areas. One thing, however,
which is very modern in Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd is that he always
gives his source when discussing a historical fact or
presenting a debateable point. And thus some of the works
which have been lost are still preserved, or at least
partly preserved, in Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd's commentary. Works
like Kitāb al-maqālāt by Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq (Muḥammad ibn
Hārūn, died 868 A.D.) and Kitāb al-maqālāt by al-Ḥasan ibn
Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (active in the first half of the tenth
century A.D.). Even for extant and available works, Ibn
Abī al-Ḥadīd's commentary serves as an invaluable source

of reference. ʻAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, for example, reports that while carrying out his researches on Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's (died 212 A.H., i.e. 827 A.D.) Waqʻat   Siffīn (which was printed with his corrections and comment in 1945), he had one copy of the book available to him which was printed in Iran in 1883 and had a number of additions and omissions and printing mistakes. The other copy was printed in Beirut 1921, but the printers of the book had eliminated all the isnāds and therefore, from the research point of view that had no value. But the third "hidden" version which he was able to discover bit by bit and compare the aforesaid two with, was embedded in the commentary of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd.[1]

On the issue of his religious beliefs, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has been a convenient target for both the major Islamic camps. His advocacy of the legitimacy of the orthodox caliphate, his defences of Abū Bakr and ʻUmar, and his not altogether unjustifiable criticism of al-Rāwandī, all that brought wrath of the Shīʻites upon him. Their ʻulamāʼ (religious leaders) from time to time, have been directing their refutations and renunciations towards him. Perhaps, the first amongst them was Aḥmad ibn Mūsā (d. 677 A.H. i.e. 1278 A.D.), a brother to ~~Saiyyid~~ Sayyid Ibn Ṭāʼūs. He was followed by Hāshim ibn Sulaymān al-Bahrainī (d. 1107 A.H. i.e. 1695 A.D.). The Silsilat al-Ḥadīd li-Taqʻid Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd of

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1. A. Salām, Waqʻat al-Ṣiffīn (Qumm, 1962), Preface, p. 9.

Shaikh Yūsuf al-Bahrainī (who died 1186 A.H. i.e. 1772 A.D.)
we have already noted. Shaikh Yūsuf was followed by Shaikh
Ḥasan al-Bilādī who died in the year 1340 A.H. corresponding
to 1921 A.D.

The Sunnites, on the other hand, seem not too willing
to accept him. Whether their indifference has been based
on Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's overt and al-rawāfid-like love for
'Alī or whether it stems from his not questioning
al-shiqshiqīyya or some other contents of the book we shall
never know. All we do know is that by the time Muṣṭafā
ibn 'Abd Allāh, better known as Ḥājjī Khalīfa (b. 1017 A.H.
i.e. 1608 A.D., d. 1081 A.H. i.e. 1670 A.D.), wrote his
famous/ literary encyclopedia Kashf al-Ẓunūn, he called him: "The
poet, the writer, the Shī'ite."[1]

However, there is no reason to doubt Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's
own statement that he was a Mu'tazilite belonging to the
Baghdādī school which, while accepting the first three
Caliphs who preceded 'Alī, held that he was on account of
his faḍā'il (God-given and self-cultivated distinctions)
superior to them. A view which was also held by Abū Ja'far
al-Iskāfī, Abu 'l-Ḥusain al-Khayyāt, and Abu 'l-Qāsim
al-Balkhī. The fact that Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd was singled out
and became the subject of a heated controversy is, in a
way, a testimony to his outstanding work, his reverence for
justice, his persistent desire to steer the middle course

1. Ḥajjī Khalīfah, Kashf al-Ẓunūn, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1943),
   p. 1991.

and his scholarly approaches to often passion and prejudice
tainted Islamic history. A point which may be of interest
to the specialists of Islamic history is that the 'Abbāsid
period which produced almost all the major and existing
works ended with Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's work. As if he was
chosen by destiny to have the last word!

6. Commentary by 'Alī ibn Maitham (Kamāl al-Dīn)
al-Bahrainī. Said to be a pupil of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī
(d. 673 A.H./1274 A.D.) and therefore, it is not surprising
that it is in the philosophical analysis and approaches
that his commentary most distinguishes itself in. He is,
perhaps, amongst the commentators of Nahj al-Balāgha what
Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is amongst the commentators of the
Qur'ān. Unlike Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's commentary, to understand
his commentary fully, one has to get acquainted with the
Greek philosophy together with the Arabs' interpretation
and adaptations of it. The differences of approach and
methods between him and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd are at once visible.
While the latter commences by giving brief life-sketches
of the author, 'Alī, and the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī,
the former turns to "not who has spoken but what has been
spoken". He observes what happens to the words and how
their meanings change according to the conditions of usage.
He discusses the technical components of kalām and identifies
that which make it eloquent. Having illustrated when a
word is used in its real (al-ḥaqīqī) meaning and when it is
used metaphorically, he proceeds to describe the kinds and
variations of metaphor. Similes abound in Nahj al-Balāgha,

'Alī ibn Maitham defines what a simile is and how many kinds it divides itself into. He answers the question: "What constitutes al-balāghah?"and goes on to discuss what elements of the part of speech make a kalām balīgh (i.e. oratorical). Al-Tawhīd constitutes one of 'Alī's favourite themes, 'Alī ibn Maitham explains the essence of and the degrees pertaining to it. He is in the regions of pure philosophy when he is investigating the senses (al-hawās) both the obvious and the occult (al-zāhirah wa'l-bātinah). So is the case when he is engaged in defining "al-zulm" (injustice) and the variations of it.

It is not easy to pay a fitting complement to a work of this calibre. But the obvious virtue is that he wrote his commentary after Ibn Abī al-Hadīd's twenty-volume commentary, carving a new path and expressing his philosophical notions in simpler language than,say, Hasan ibn al-Mutahhir al-Hillī who followed him. His work is universally acknowledged by the Shī'ite world. He died in the year 679 A.H./1280 A.D.

7. Commentary by Shaikh Muhammad 'Abduh, the celebrated Egyptian judge, writer and reformer, and one of the leaders of the Muslim community of his day. In his commentary he is mainly engaged in explaining out-of-usage words and difficult phrases. However, he is, perhaps, more than anyone else, responsible for making Nahj al-Balāgha a talking point in the intellectual circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while refraining from entering the areas which remain divisive between the

Sunnites and the Shī'ites. This was perhaps the most advisable course at the time but the reader of his commentary would have gained enormously had he not been deprived of his valuable and historical judgements.

This brief survey of only seven commentaries, whereas they exceed the hundred mark, is obviously far from being exhaustive. It leaves out some of the other important commentaries, such as Hadāiq al-haqā'iq of Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Kaiderī (d. 576 A.H.), Sharh Nahj al-Balāgha of Husain ibn Shahāb al-Dīn al-Karkī (d. 1076 A.H.), Bahjat al-haqā'iq of Muhammad ibn Abī Turāb al-Isphahānī (d. 100 A.H.), and, the modern amongst them, Minhāj al-Barā'a of Sayyid Habīb Allāh al-Khū'ī (d. 1324 A.H.).[1]

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In the course of the chapter the two main attitudes towards Nahj al-Balāgha have been demonstrated. On the one hand the medieval Syrian school have rejected much of Nahj al-Balāgha and in this they have been followed by certain modern scholars. On the other hand, a considerable body of medieval scholarship, not all of it by any means Shī'ite, have accepted Nahj al-Balāgha as the genuine words of 'Alī

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1. For further information see Kashf al-hujūb wa'l-astar of I'jāz Husain al-Kanturī (Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1912); A'yān al-Shī'a of Sayyid Muhsin al-Amīn al-Amūlī (Damascus, 1935); al-Dharī'a ilā tasanif al-Shī'a of Aqa Buzurg Tehranī (Najaf, 1355 A.H.); al-Ghadīr of 'Abd al-Husain al-Amīnī (Tehran, 1372 A.H.); Masādir Nahj al-Balāgha of Sayyid 'Abd al-Zahrā' al-Khatīb (Beirut, 1975, 2nd ed.).

ibn Abī Ṭālib. Again, there has been a tendency among some
modern scholars, notably Muḥammad 'Abduh, to regard Nahj
al-Balāgha as authentic. The attitude of Aḥmad Amīn
expresses an intermediate viewpoint. During the remainder
of the thesis, there will be an attempt to get to grips
with the actual text of Nahj al-Balāgha and by a process
of analysis both historical and rational to draw some
conclusions on the text.

CHAPTER III

EARLY SOURCES FOR NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

Unfortunately al-Sharīf al-Raḍī rarely cites the source from which he has taken a particular speech, letter or saying. As already noted this lack of isnād led to serious criticisms of the contents by such writers as Ibn Taimiyyah. As the earlier collections of the speeches of ʻAlī have not survived, it is necessary to search through a whole range of writings to find the sources which al-Sharīf al-Raḍī may have used. The nature of the surviving literature and the difficulty of the task ensure that this compilation cannot be comprehensive. There are three major areas of Arabic literature where we might expect to find possible sources for Nahj al-Balāgha. They are: historical writings, works on rhetoric (balāghah) and works belonging to the corpus of traditional Shīʻite works. This search will not, of course, prove that the words in Nahj al-Balāgha are the words of ʻAlī but it will help to give us some idea of the reliability of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and it may indicate that the speeches, or at least some of them, are very much earlier than al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

A. Historical writings

1. Al-Kitāb of Sulaim ibn Qais

This work is of both historical importance and
religious importance, at least to the Shī'ites. For while
in Sunnī traditional writings, the tradition must be
traced back through an isnād to the Prophet, to the Shī'ites
the door of the first-hand reporters remained open by
virtue of their belief in the institution of Imamate and
the fact that a tradition emanating, say, from 'Alī, their
first Imam, was as authoritative as that of the Prophet.
Hence the sentence which they boast from time to time in
the books connected with Islamic jurisprudence, al-fiqh,
and the basis of it, usūl al-fiqh, when introducing some
of the authorities: lahū kitāb wa aṣl (i.e. he has written
a book and an aṣl). By aṣl they mean the collection of the
traditions heard by the author from the Imam.

Sulaim ibn Qais, who is said to have died ca. 90 A.H.,
has left such an aṣl known as the Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais
al-Hilālī. Probably the first reference to it which
survives, comes from al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345 A.H.) who, speaking
of the Shī'ites and the Imams writes: "And their limiting
the number of their Imams [to twelve] is according to what
is mentioned by Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī in his book which
has been related by Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh. [But] this
tradition has not been related by anyone else apart from

Ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh."[1]   Then came Ibn Nadīm (d. 380 A.H.), who
described Sulaim as:

> Among friends of the Commander of the Faithful,
> for whom there may be peace, there was Sulaim
> ibn Qais al-Hilālī. As a fugitive from
> al-Ḥajjāj [ibn Yūsuf], who sought to kill
> him, he took refuge with Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh,
> who gave him shelter. When death drew near
> to him, he said to Abān: "I am indebted to
> you and now death is present with me. Oh,
> son of my brother, by the order of the Apostle
> of God, may Allāh bless him and give him peace,
> it is thus as described in my book." Then he
> gave him a book, which was the well-known book
> of Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī, from which Abān
> ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh quoted, but which was not
> quoted by anyone else. Abān said in his
> narratives: "Qais was a Shaikh with me with
> an [inner] light which uplifted him." The
> first book to appear about the Shī'ah was the
> book of Sulaym ibn Qais al-Hilālī. Abān ibn
> Abī 'Ayyāsh quoted it, but it was not quoted
> by anybody else.[2]

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1.   al-Mas'ūdī, al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf (Cairo, 1938), p. 198.
2.   Ibn Nadīm, trans. Bayard Dodge, al-Fihrist, vol. I
     (New York, 1979), p. 535.

In the fifth century of the Hijrah the book of Sulaim ibn Qais was mentioned by Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 A.H.), adding (to what has already been said) that the book was also quoted by Ḥammād ibn 'Īsā through Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar from Sulaim ibn Qais.[1] As to whether it was the first ever book which came out from the Shī'ite sources, is disputed by the Shī'ites but Badr al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 769 A.H.) said it was.

The book seems to be in circulation when Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulainī was writing his Uṣūl al-Kāfī for he quotes it in several places[2] and so does Ibn Bābwaih al-Qummī (d. 381/991) in his Kamāl al-Dīn.[3] There have been various claims that this book is a later work, notably by Goldziher.[4] However, no evidence has been presented to substantiate that claim.

Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais	cf.	Nahj al-Balāgha
p. 100		No. 30, vol. 3, pp. 157.
p. 104		No. 208, vol. 2, pp. 214-16.

1. al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), p. 162.
2. al-Kulainī, Uṣūl al-Kāfī (Najaf, 1969), vol.2, p. 57, p. 65, p. 131; vol. 6, p. 516, p. 546, etc.
3. Ibn Babwaih al-Qummī, Kamāl al-Dīn (Tehran, 1395 A.H.), p. 262, p. 270, p. 274; traditions Nos. 9, 10, 15, 25, etc.
4. Ignaz Goldziher, Muslim Studies, vol. 2 (London, 1971), p. 24.

Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais	cf.	Nahj al-Balāgha
p. 125		No. 95, vol. 1, pp. 188-190.
p. 147		No. 56, vol. 1, pp. 100-1.
p. 156		No. 91, vol. 1, pp. 182-5.
p. 158		No. 91, vol. 1, p. 184.
p. 161		No. 457, vol. 3, p. 261.
p. 161		No. 42, vol. 1, pp. 88-89.
p. 162		No. 50, vol. 1, p. 95.
p. 208		No. 17, vol. 3, pp. 18-20.
p. 238		No. 191, vol. 2, pp. 185-190.[1]

2. Abū Mikhnaf

Although no writings of the above writer survive as
complete works, much of his writing survives in later
historians. The work of Ursula Sezgin has established that
most of these quotations must belong to him. Thus in the
works of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, and as we shall see in
Naṣr b. Muzāhim's Waq'at Ṣiffīn, there are extensive passages
from Abū Mikhnaf. In the lists appended to each work of
the possible sources for the different speeches of Nahj
al-Balāgha, the name of the second century rāwī, such as
Abū Mikhnaf, will be included.

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1. Number of pages of Sulaim b. Qais al-Hilālī's book (on
   the left) appear according to a recent edition of it
   which was printed at Qum (Iran) but unfortunately bears
   no date. Number of pages of Nahj al-Balāgha (shown on
   the right) are according to the al-Istiqamah Press,
   Cairo, edition but it too bears no date.

This means that the dating of parts of Nahj al-Balāgha must go back at least to his lifetime. He died between 157 and 170.

The authorities on tradition did not regard him as reliable, some even claiming that he was a Shī'ite.[1] Yet to the historians, as opposed to the traditionists, Abū Mikhnaf is very important. The two principal Islamic historians al-Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H.) and al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H.) rely heavily on him. Ibn Nadīm (d. 380 A.H.) gives the following list of the books Abū Mikhnaf had written: "(1) Apostasy [al-riddah]; (2) The invasion of Syria; (3) The invasion of al-'Irāq; (4) Battle of the Camel; (5) Battle of Ṣiffīn; (6) The people of Nahrwān and the Khawārij; (7) Raids [al-Ghārāt] [early wars of Islam involving plunder]; (8) al-Ḥārith ibn Rashīd and the Banū Nājiyyā; (9) The assassination of 'Alī, for whom may there be peace; (10) The execution of Ḥujr ibn 'Adī; (11) The Slaying of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and of al-Ashtar and Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥudhayfah; (12) al-Shūrā and the assassination of 'Uthmān; (13) al-Mustawrid ibn 'Ullāfah; (14) The Slaying of Ḥusain, for whom may there be peace; (15) The death of Mu'āwiya, the reign of al-Yazīd, the battle of al-Ḥarrah and the fortifications of al-Zubair; (16) al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubaid; (17) Sulaymān ibn Surad and 'Ayn al-Wardah; (18) Marj Rahit, the election of Marwān and the slaying of Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qais; (19) Muṣ'ab and his province, al-'Irāq;

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1. al-Dhahabī, Mīzān al-I'tidāl, vol. III (Cairo, 1963), p. 420.

(20) The Slaying of 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubair; (21) The slaying of Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ; (22) The story of Yā Ḥumairā and the slaying of ibn al-Ash'ath; (23) Bilāl al-Khārijī; (24) Najdah and Abū Fudayk; (25) The story of Azāriqa; (26) The story of Rustubādh; (27) Shabīb al-Harūrī and Ṣāliḥ ibn Musarrah; (28) Muṭarraf ibn al-Mughīrah; (29) al-Jamājim and the disposal of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ash'ath; (30) Yazīd ibn Muhallab and his murder at al-'Aqr; (31) Khālid ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qaṣrī and Yūsuf ibn 'Umar, the death of Hishām and the reign of Walīd ibn Yazīd; (32) Zaid ibn 'Alī, for whom be peace; (33) Yaḥyā ibn Zaid; (34) al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Khārijī."[1] Al-Najjāshī (d. 450 A.H.) adds two more works to the long list given by Ibn al-Nadīm, viz., Kitāb al-Saqīfah and Kitāb akhbār Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah.[2] "He is," says al-Najjāshī, "the Shaikh [leader or mentor] of the traditionists at Kufah and the leader of the Kufans."[3] Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 458 A.H.) reveals the general weakness amongst the early Muslim traditionists while speaking of Abū Mikhnaf, viz., the tendency in some of them of not regarding anachronism as something to be refrained from. "Al-Kashshī," says al-Ṭūsī, "describes him as one of the Companions of 'Alī and of his sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain. The fact is that his father was one of the companions of

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1. Ibn Nadīm, trans. Bayard Dodge, al-Fihrist, vol. I (New York, 1970), pp. 201-2.
2. al-Najjāshī, al-Rijāl (Tehran, n.d.), p. 245.
3. Ibid.

'Alī but as far as Abū Mikhnaf is concerned, he had never met him."[1] I suspect even this assertion of al-Ṭūsī that his father was a companion of 'Alī but would rather accept the statement of Ibn Shākir that his grandfather, Mikhnaf, may have been one.[2] As to whether Abū Mikhnaf was Shī'ite in the conventional sense, is contradicted by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd who describes him as: "A traditionist who believed that al-imāmah can be acquired [as opposed to the Shī'ite belief that it can only be bestowed by God, al-naṣṣ min Allāh.] He was not a Shī'ite nor has he been counted amongst their rijāl [accepted traditionists]."[3] But perhaps Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd was not aware of either of al-Najjāshī's views (quoted above), who also adds that Abū Mikhnaf related traditions from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Imam of the Shī'ites[4], or that of al-Ṭūsī, also quoted above. But I do tend to agree with what Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd states to be Abū Mikhnaf's view concerning the imām and imāmah. The fact that he wrote books both on the martyrdom of al-Ḥusain and Zaid ibn 'Alī side by side, tends to confirm that if Abū Mikhnaf was not a Zaidite, his sympathies were certainly with them.

Ibn al-Nadīm wrote: "I have read, what was written in the handwriting of Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Khazzāz, that the

1. al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad,1351 Shamsī), p. 261.
2. Ibn Shākir, Fuwāt al-Wafayāt, vol. II (Cairo, 1951), p. 288.
3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, The Commentary, vol. I (Cairo, 1950), p. 147.
4. al-Najjāshī, op. cit., p. 245.

scholars have said that Abū Mikhnaf excelled others in connection with al-'Irāq, for its historical traditions and invasions; al-Madā'inī in connection with Khurāsān, India and Persia; al-Wāqidī in connection with al-Ḥijāz and the biography [of the Prophet]. They shared together in the knowledge of the invasion of Syria."[1] This view has also been quoted by Yāqūt, who has certainly copied it from Ibn al-Nadīm.[2] However, it seems certain that the historians turned to Abū Mikhnaf when they had to render the accounts of historical events during the first one hundred and fifty years of the Hijrah. The list provided by Ibn al-Nadīm and quoted in this section, reveals that most of what Abū Mikhnaf had written was connected with al-'Irāq; and a considerable part of that, directly or indirectly, connected with 'Alī. Some of Abū Mikhnaf's works are claimed to survive, like the one circulating in Iraq, Iran, India and Pakistan, called Maqtal [of] Abū Mikhnaf. However, I consider the authenticity of this work together with any other which is claimed to exist separately and independently, to be of doubtful proposition.

However, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, when writing his commentary (between the years 645-649 A.H.) seems to have both al-Jamal and Ṣiffīn of Abū Mikhnaf; see his comments: "This sermon is not from the sermons of Ṣiffīn as al-Rāwindī mentions but it is from the sermons of al-Jamal, a great deal of

1. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 202.
2. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, al-Irshād al-Arīb (Cairo, 1930), p. 221.

which has been quoted by Abū Mikhnaf."[1] When recording
the War-Poetry (al-Arājīz) Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd remarks:
"These poems and the pieces of war-poetry have been quoted
in totality by Abū Mikhnaf in al-Jamal."[2] Again when
narrating the sermon delivered by ʻAlī at the place called
Dhū Qār, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd quotes Abū Mikhnaf's version which
is both different and longer from the one quoted in Nahj
al-Balāgha[3], and so on and so forth.

Al-Ṭūsī speaks of a book called al-Khuṭub al-Zahrāʼ
written by Abū Mikhnaf and related to him by Aḥmad ibn
Muḥammad, which may have been a single speech called
al-Zahrāʼ or it may have been al-Khuṭub al-Zahrāʼ, meaning
several speeches. However, no speech of ʻAlī   has
been referred to by this name by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī or any-
body else after him, as far as I know.

3. Waqʻat Ṣiffīn of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim

Naṣr ibn Muzāhim al-Minqarī was, like Abū Mikhnaf, a
Kufan traditionist and, in the words of Ibn Nadīm, "belonged
to the generation of Abū Mikhnaf."[4] Yāqūt points out that
he was a very staunch supporter of ʻAlī, to the point of
extremism.[5] Yet in the work under discussion, i.e. Waqʻat

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., I, p. 306.
2. Ibid., I, p. 147.
3. Ibid., I, p. 309.
4. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., vol. I, p. 202.
5. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, op. cit., vol. VII, pp. 210-211.

Siffīn, there is nothing to show his extremism. The
importance of the book lies in the fact that it must have
been composed in the latter part of the second century or
in the first decade of the third century if it was the
last work that Naṣr composed. For Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim died in
212/827. Thus Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's works come in the class
which have been recognised as the sources of Islamic
historiography; like that of Muḥammad ibn Sā'ib al-Kalbī
(d. 146/763), al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), Hishām ibn Muḥammad
al-Kalbī (d. 204/819), and Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, better known
as Abū Mikhnaf (d. ca. 170/786).

In Waq'at Siffīn, however, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim has not
referred to al-Wāqidī at all. Of the two Kalbīs, the
father Muḥammad and the son Hishām, there are but only two
traditions which merely cite "al-Kalbī" as the authority
and there is the possibility that the al-Kalbī quoted is
Hishām. As far as Abū Mikhnaf is concerned there are a
number of traditions which point to him as the source.
But by a curious gesture, Naṣr does not appear to be eager
to acknowledge Abū Mikhnaf as one of the authorities. It
is true, that Naṣr's immediate source, ʿUmar ibn Saʿd,
who in turn quoted Abū Mikhnaf's traditions, often omitting
his name or merely saying ʿan rajūl (i.e. from a man), may
have been responsible for suppressing Abū Mikhnaf's name,
but it is unlikely that Naṣr was unable to identify the
tradition's source with the rest of the isnād. For example,

in traditions recorded on pages 7, 27, 51, 60, 471, 518 and 520[1], 'Umar ibn Sa'd, one of Naṣr's main sources, quotes traditions from Namīr ibn Wa'lah. This Namīr, quoting in turn al-Sha'bī as the source, has not been quoted by anybody else except Abū Mikhnaf. So there is the indication that Abū Mikhnaf's name has been deliberately suppressed by 'Umar ibn Sa'd, by not naming him, and by Naṣr by not identifying him in the book which he must have been able to do.

It is fairly certain that Waq'at Siffīn is one of the several works of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim. Al-Ṭūsī credits him with the following works: (a) Kitāb al-Jamal; (b) Kitāb Siffīn; (c) Kitāb Maqtal al-Ḥusain; (d) Kitāb al-'Ain al-Wardah; (e) Kitāb Akhbār al-Mukhtār; (f) Kitāb al-Manāqib and others (al-Ṭūsī's words).[2] Ibn Nadīm lists a different set, viz., (a) al-Maghāzī; (b) Kitāb al-Jamal; (c) Kitāb Siffīn; (d) Kitāb Maqtal Ḥujr ibn 'Adī; (e) Kitāb Maqtal al-Ḥusain.[3] In these two lists some of the books appear to be identical with the ones Abū Mikhnaf has been credited with. It appears, therefore, that Abū Mikhnaf may have been the inspiring factor behind the aforesaid works. For like the above-discussed traditions, we observe that Naṣr has borrowed from Abū Mikhnaf both the subject matter and the titles of the works he is said to have written.

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1. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Waq'at Siffīn (Cairo and Qum, 1962), edited by 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn.
2. Al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), p. 347.
3. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 202.

In view of the above shortcomings, it would not be unfair to examine the dependability of the author before examining the book and its narrators, al-ruwāt. If the Shī'ite traditionist, Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Najjāshī (d. 450/1058), calls him Mustaqīm al-ṭarīqah (i.e. the treader of the straight path) and Ṣāliḥ al-amr (i.e. the worthy of the task), it would be natural for him to do so. But it seems that the Sunnī authorities have not been happy with him on balance.[1]

Waq'at Ṣiffīn: The book begins with 'Alī's arrival in Kufah on his way back from al-Baṣrah and ends with the count of the losses of the battles of Ṣiffīn and Nahrwān. The

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1. Amongst those is Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347). In his Mizān al-I'tidāl he makes the following comments: "He [Naṣr] is a rāfiḍī [i.e. the extremist amongst the Shī'ites]. They have left him out. He died in 212 [A.H.] and he has been quoted by Nūḥ ibn Ḥabīb and Abū Sa'īd al-Ashajj and others. Al-'Uqailī said he was a liar. Abū Ḥātim said that he was of worthless traditions and has been left out. Al-Dār Quṭnī said he was weak. However, I must say that some of the traditions Naṣr quoted came from Shu'bah [ibn al-Ḥajjāj, d. 160/776]." Mizān al-I'tidāl, vol. IV 9Cairo, 1963), pp. 253-4. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī speaks of Naṣr in the following words: "Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Abū al-Faḍl, al-Minqarī: lived in Baghdad and transmitted traditions from Sufyān al-Thawrī [d. 161/777], Shu'bah, Ḥabīb ibn Ḥassān, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Siyāh, Yazīd ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tustarī, Abī al-Jārūd, Ziyād ibn al-Mundhir . . . [after naming the rest of the authorities Naṣr quotes from, al-Khaṭīb quotes al-Jawzānī as saying:] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim was a deviator from the right path inclined towards [the
    opposite/

following are the major sources and authorities of the book under discussion:

'Umar ibn Sa'd: One of the two rocks Waq'at Siffīn has been built on (the other being 'Amr ibn Shāmir as we shall see). 'Umar, in turn quotes from the following authorities: (1) Ḥārith ibn Haṣīrah; (2) Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd; (3) Namīr ibn Wa'lah; (4) 'Aṭṭīya ibn al-Ḥārith; (5) Ismā'īl ibn Yazīd; (6) Abū Mikhnaf; (7) Abū Zuhair al-'Absī; (8) Laith ibn Sālim; (9) Yūsuf ibn Yazīd; (10) Yazīd ibn Khālid ibn Qaṭan; (11) 'Umar ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Yu'la; (12) Muslim al-A'war; (13) al-Kalbī; (14) al-Ḥajāj ibn Arṭāt; (15) A man; (16) Sa'd ibn Ṭarīf; (17) A man from the family of Khārijah ibn al-Ṣalt; (18) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Āṣim; (19) Abū al-Mujāhid Sa'd ibn Akhram al-Ṭā'ī; (20) A man quoting 'Abd Allāh ibn Judab; (21) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd; (22) Yaḥyā ibn Yu'lā; (23) Abū Yaḥyā Zādhān al-Kūrī; (24) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jundab; (25) Mālik ibn A'yan; (26) 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān; (27) Faḍl or Fuḍail ibn Khadīj; (28) al-Ḥur ibn Sayyāḥ; (29) Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq; (30) Abū 'Alqamah al-Khath'amī; (31) Abū al-Ṣalt al-Taimī; (32) Yūnus ibn Abī Isḥāq; (33) Suwaid ibn Ḥabbah; (34) A man quoting from Ju'aifar ibn Abī al-Qāsim; (35) A man from the tribe of Bakr ibn Wā'il; (36) al-Zubair ibn Salīm; (37) al-Barrā' ibn Ḥayyān al-Dhuhulī; (38) Khālid ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid; (39) Muthannā ibn akhī 'Itāb;

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opposite direction]." Then al-Khaṭīb adds: "What al-Jawzānī meant was Naṣr's extreme rafd [i.e. refutation of some of the Companions of Muḥammad]." Aḥmad ibn 'Alī, Tārīkh Baghdād, vol. XIII (Hyderabad, 1325 A.H.), p. 414.

(40) A friend of the narrator's father; (41) al-A'mash; (42) al-Sha'bī; (43) al-Ajlah ibn 'Abd Allāh; (44) A man quoting Shaqīq ibn Salamah; (45) Abū Ishāq al-Shaibānī; (46) Abū Janāb al-Kalbī; (47) Abū 'Abd Allāh Yazīd al-Ūdī; (48) Ishāq ibn Yazīd; (49) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Āsim; (50) Mujālid.

Most quoted among the authorities listed above is Hārith ibn al-Hasīrah, who is the source of the traditions which appear on pages 3, 34, 37, 50, 51, 100, 102, 104, 121, 127, 131, 167, 172, 203, 227, 242, 262, 263, 302, 340, 395, 426, 439, 466, 489, 500, 501, 508, 551 of the edition of the book under study.[1] Al-Hārith was a member of the tribe of Azd and a Kufan by birth and residence. He narrates traditions from Zaid ibn Wahab, Abū Sādiq, Jābir al-Ju'fī, Sa'īd ibn 'Amr and others. Al-Bukhārī at his mention points out that he used to believe in al-Raj'ah (i.e. the coming back of 'Alī and other Imams). While Ibn 'Adī says of him the following: "The Kufan traditions in the praise of, or describing the distinctions of, Ahl al-Bait [i.e. the people of Muhammad's household] generally emanate from him. And if the people of Basrah quoted him, they did so here and there in the scattered traditions. He is the one who is regarded as the scorching Shī'ite but despite his weakness his traditions are to be quoted and written down." To al-'Ijī, Ibn Namīr, and Abū Daūd, al-Hārith was dependable. And so he was to Imām al-Bukhārī and al-Nasā'ī, both of whom have quoted traditions from him.[2]

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1. Nasr ibn Muzāhim, op. cit., pages as mentioned in text.
2. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. 2 (Hyderabad, 1325 A.H.), 140.

Next most quoted in the list is Namīr ibn Waʻlah who in turn quotes al-Shaʻbī. We have already pointed out that his traditions have been transmitted only by Abū Mikhnaf, who has been named by ʻUmar ibn Saʻd no more than once amongst his authorities. As D. S. Straley points out, all the traditions quoted by Naṣr ibn Muzāhim through ʻUmar ibn Saʻd and Namīr ibn Waʻlah, are in fact those of Abū Mikhnaf.[1]

Next comes ʻAṭṭīyah ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kūfī, who narrated traditions from Anas ibn Mālik, Abū ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Salāmī, Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd al-Taimī, ʻUbaid Allāh ibn Khalīfah, ʻIkrimah, al-Shaʻbī and Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāhim. He is said to have written a commentary on the Qurʼān. Abū Daūd, al-Nasāʼī and ibn Mājah all have quoted traditions from him in their works known as al-Sunan.[2]

Most prominent in the list of authorities is Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yāsir, the well-known traditionist and the historian and the author of al-Sīrah. He was born ca. 85/704 at Madina and associated with the second generation of the traditionists, al-Tābiʻīn, like al-Zuhrī, ʻĀṣim ibn ʻUmar, ʻAbd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr and Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr. Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq left Madina to settle finally in Baghdad, whose foundations were laid down in the closing decade of his life (142/759). He died there in 150/767.

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1. Dona Sue Straley, Perspective and Method in Early Islamic Historiography, Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh, 1977, p. 85.

2. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. VII (Hyderabad, 1326/1908), p. 224.

His books, notably al-Sīrah and al-Maghāzī, have been
regarded as the standard works of the second century.[1]

'Amr ibn Shamir al-Ju'fī al-Kūfī: After 'Umar ibn
Sa'd, he is the second major source of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim.
'Amr ibn Shamir (or Shimr) lived at the time of Ja'far
al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Imam of the Shī'ites, and was in touch
with him and his father, Muḥammad al-Bāqir and quotes
traditions from both of them.[2] But his major sources are
the traditions from Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī. Jābir was
a Kufan and was a well-known authority in 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth.
As a result of being a Shī'ite, the judgements of the
Sunnite authorities on him are varied and interesting. Abū
Nu'aim quoted al-Thawrī (Sufyān) as saying:

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1. For more details see A. Guillaume's introduction to
   The Life of Muhammad, i.e. al-Sīrah of Ibn Isḥāq,
   translated by him (Oxford University Press, London,
   1968), pp. xiii-xlvii.
2. 'Amr ibn Shamir quotes traditions from Muḥammad al-Bāqir,
   the fifth Imām of the Shī'ites on pp. 156, 167, 204,
   237, 300, 500 and 504. But most of 'Amr's traditions
   come from Tamīm al-Nājī, whose traditions are quoted on
   pp. 169, 174, 230, 244, 272, 273, 293, 271, 476, 554;
   and from al-Sha'bī, whose traditions are quoted on
   pp. 236, 239, 243, 245, 295, 301, 315, 330, 340 and 480.
   Next comes Ismā'īl al-Suddī, whose traditions are
   mentioned on pp. 170, 171, 274, 342, 353 and 524.
   Last of the most quoted is 'Āmir ibn Wāthilāh, whose
   traditions are recorded on pp. 174, 179, 241 and 457.

"When Jābir says that I have been told [such and such tradition] from so and so, then that is that!" (i.e. His words are final). Ibn Mahdī ('Abd al-Raḥmān) also quoted Sufyān al-Thawrī as saying that he had never seen a more cautious traditionist than Jābir.[1] While Ibn 'Ulayyā quotes Shu'bah (ibn al-Ḥajjāj) as saying: "He [Jābir] is most truthful in transmitting traditions."[2] Wakī' used to say: "Whatever else you may doubt, do not doubt that Jābir is a dependable narrator [the word used is al-thiqah]. For from him all, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shu'bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj and Ḥasan ibn Ṣāliḥ have narrated and quoted.[3]

Yet Jābir al-Ju'fī seemed to have been the powerhouse the traditionists of the day wanted to keep for themselves. People were forbidden to see him and were discouraged from taking traditions from him, and to prove this there is the tradition from Abū 'Uwāna, who said that both Shu'bah and Sufyān had asked him not to see Jābir. But whenever Abū 'Uwāna went to see Jābir he was told that they (Shu'bah and Sufyān) had been to see him! And then there is the tradition from Muḥammad ibn Rāfi'; he said: "I met [Imām] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal at the house of Yazīd ibn Hārūn and found him holding in his hands the book Zahīr, written by Jābir al-Ju'fī. I told the Imam: 'How is it that you ask us not to contact Jābir, whereas you yourself write down his

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1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 47.
2. Ibid.
3. al-Dhahabī, Mizān al-I'tidāl, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1963), p. 379.

traditions?' The Imām replied that '[We do so, so that]
we know."[1] Wakī' also is said to have told Shu'bah: "Why
is it that you left out so and so and took traditions from
Jābir upon which he replied that he could not help it."
Ibn Ḥabbān accuses him of being a follower of 'Abd Allāh
ibn Saba' and believing that 'Alī will return to this
world.[2] But that may not have agreed upon by others, of
the Sunnite authorities, who recorded al-Ju'fī's traditions
in their works like Abū Dāūd in his Sunan, al-Tirmidhī in
his collection, and Ibn Mājah in his book. In short,
Jābir ibn Yazīd, though much quoted, remains a disputed
authority.

Waq'at Ṣiffīn as one possible source of Nahj al-Balāgha

There are quotations of the writings and the speeches
of 'Alī which conform to the recordings of Nahj al-Balāgha,
such as:

1. Tradition No. 13, p. 20 -- inna 'amalaka laisa biṭu'mati
   wa lakinnahū amānat. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 5, vol.
   3, p. 7.

2. Tradition No. 23, p. 55 -- 'Alī's letter to Jarīr ibn
   'Abd Allāh. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 8, vol. 3, p. 9.

3. Tradition No. 23 (b), p. 57 -- 'Alī's reply to Mu'āwiya's
   letter. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 7, vol. 3, pp. 7-8.

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1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, op. cit., p. 50.
2. Ibid.

4. Tradition No. 34, p. 85 -- Mu'āwiya's letter and 'Alī's reply to it. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 28, vol. 3, p. 34.

5. Tradition No. 41, p. 102 -- 'Alī's instructions to Ḥujr ibn 'Adī. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 204, vol. 2, p. 211.

6. Tradition No. 42, p. 107 -- 'Alī's letter to Ibn 'Abbās. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 22, vol. 3, p. 23.

7. Tradition No. 42, p. 107 -- suggesting how the people of al-Baṣrah should be treated. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 18, vol. 3, p. 20.

8. Tradition No. 42, p. 107 -- Letter to the commanders of the army. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 50., vol. 3, p. 88-89.

9. Tradition No. 43, p. 108 -- Letter to Mu'āwiya. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 10, vol. 3, p. 12.

10. Tradition No. 48, p. 121 -- Instructions to Ziyād ibn Naḍr and Shuraiḥ ibn Hānī. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 56, vol. 3, pp. 24-5.

11. Tradition No. 48, p. 123 -- instructions to the aforesaid men. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 11, vol. 3, p. 14.

12. Tradition No. 49, p. 125 -- another letter to the seniors in the army. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 60, vol. 3, p. 128.

13. Tradition No. 51, p. 131 -- on departure for the battle of Ṣiffīn. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 48, vol. 1, p. 93.

14. Tradition No. 51, p. 132 -- on departure for the battle of Ṣiffīn. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 46, vol. 1, p. 92.

15. Tradition No. 53, p. 134 -- on the way to the north,
a short prayer. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 48, vol. 1,
p. 93.

16. Tradition No. 96, p. 203 -- instructions in connection
with treating the opponents. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha,
No. 14, vol. 3, p. 16.

17. Tradition No. 97, p. 204 -- instructions at the time
of war. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, p. 24
and No. 14, vol. 3, p. 16.

18. Tradition No. 125, p. 231 -- the speech on the day
of Siffīn. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 15, vol. 3, p. 17.

19. Tradition No. 128, p. 232 -- another speech on one of
the days of Siffīn. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 169,
vol. 2, p. 101.

20. Tradition No. 130, p. 235 -- the speech made to the
army. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, p. 4.

21. Tradition No. 143, p. 250 -- the address to Sa'īd.
Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 201, vol. 3, p. 198.

22. Tradition No. 148, p. 256 -- address to the army. Cf.
Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 105, vol. 1, p. 205.

23. Tradition No. 233, p. 466 -- a letter to Mu'āwiya
replying. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 17, vol. 3, p. 18.

24. Tradition No. 240, p. 480 -- speech on the night
known as al-harīr. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 206, vol. 2,
p. 212.

25. Tradition No. 242, p. 490 -- speech when the copies of
the Qur'ān were raised. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 48,
vol. 3, p. 87.

26. Tradition No. 258, p. 520 -- the speech of 'Ali. Cf.
Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, pp. 6-7 and No. 56,
vol. 1, pp. 100-1.

4. Ansāb al-Ashraf of al-Balādhurī

Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H.) was one of
the eminent historians of the third century of the Islamic
era. The year of his birth is unknown but during the years
of his intellectual activities he was in the company of
the 'Abbāsid Caliphs al-Mutawwakil (d. 247 A.H.) and then
al-Musta'īn (d. 248 A.H.). "He was," writes Ibn Nadīm
(d. 380 A.H.), "one of the people of Baghdad but his
grandfather, Jābir, was the secretary of al-Khaṣīb, the
master of Egypt."[1] If that is true then the good taste and
refined manners in him, may have come from his grandfather.
He was not only a poet but a satire-writer too as Ibn Nadīm
tells us the story of Wahb ibn Sulaymān, who "broke wind"
in the presence of 'Ubaid Allāh ibn Khāqān and was quickly
greeted by al-Balādhurī with the piece of poetry composed
in his ridicule![2]

He lived at a time when the processes of preservation
of what had happened during the first and the second
centuries (of the Islamic era) were in full swing. He had
followed a celebrated trio, i.e. Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq (d.
151 A.H.), Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204 or, according

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1. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 247.
2. Ibid.

to Ibn Nadīm, 206 A.H.), and Abū Mikhnaf (d. ca. 170 A.H.).
I have not included al-Wāqidī not because he was any less
important but because he happens to be al-Balādhurī's
immediate source.[1] Although I must admit that according
to Yāqūt, al-Balādhurī took, akhadha, from Muḥammad ibn
Sa'd (d. 230 or 231 A.H.), that is, al-Wāqidī's secretary.[2]

However, as Hitti says: "Al-Baladhuri was one of the
first to integrate the many stories of conquests of various
cities and lands into one comprehensive whole, thus ending
the era in which the monograph was the typical form of
historical composition."[3] There is little doubt about the
dexterity of the presentation of material and clearness
of the language in the works al-Balādhurī has produced.
His work seem free from any obvious partisanship. His
Futūḥ al-buldān presents him as an impartial observer.

In his work Ansāb al-Ashrāf, al-Balādhurī deals with
the lives of many of those important to Islamic history
and culture. The following comparisons with Nahj al-Balāgha
are based on the Beirut edition which was printed in 1974,
edited by al-Shaikh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī. The volume
deals with the lives of Zubair ibn Muṭṭalib, Abū Ṭālib and
'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. In this volume al-Balādhurī not only
covers the grounds of the general events but adds some

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1. On p. 45 of vol. 2 of Ansāb al-Ashrāf under reference,
    al-Balādhurī begins the tradition with the sentence:
    "I have been told by al-Wāqidī . . ."
2. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1924),
    p. 127.
3. Hitti, History of the Arabs (London, 1961), p. 388.

invaluable fresh material not covered in such detail else-
where. For example, the letter Abū al-Aswad wrote to
'Alī concerning certain violations in the financial matters
by Ibn 'Abbās.[1] Ibn 'Abbās' curt reply to 'Alī's letter
and his eventual vacating the post and running away with
the official money regarding it as belonging to him.[2]
Secondly, at the time of the arbitration (al-Taḥkīm),
al-Balādhurī reports that the delegation was headed by
Ibn 'Abbās, who was "the judge" or khalīfa of 'Alī. They
stayed together for one month at the place called Tadmur,
corresponding with their respective parties, then they
moved on to Dummat al-Jandal, staying there a month as
well and from there they moved on to Adhrāh and stayed there
for a month again. All these are remarkably different
from the versions rendered by al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ṭabarī and
al-Mas'ūdī. So is the report that Mu'āwiya, having arrived
at the place of al-Taḥkīm, actually approached the tent of
'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar with the firm intention of giving the
oath of allegiance (al-Bai'ah) but turned back on hearing
that 'Abd Allāh had refused to accept the Caliphate and
had said so to 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ.[3] Yet another piece of new
information concerns the speech (which in Nahj al-Balāgha
is numbered 27) which was not delivered by 'Alī but was
written by him and was read out on his behalf, for 'Alī

1. Al-Balādhurī, Ansāb al-Ashrāf, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1973),
   p. 169.
2. Ibid., p. 172.
3. Ibid., p. 345.

was ill at the time. That explains why this particular speech has been quoted by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 A.H.), Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnāwarī (d. 282 A.H.) and others with striking conformity.[1]

One also observes that al-Balādhurī mostly quotes only a few lines of the given speeches, cutting them short with the sentence: fī kalām ṭawīl lahū, conveying, by implication, that the historian is more interested in the event than enunciations. However, the following are the speeches of Nahj al-Balāgha which have been partly or fully reported by al-Balādhurī in the volume described above.

al-Baladhurī's Ansāb al-Ashrāf as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

Tradition No. 054, p. 114, source: 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭālibī from his usual isnād. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 42, vol. 3, pp. 88-9.

Tradition No. 055, p. 114, source: Mūsā b. Ja'far from his forefathers. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 183, vol. 3, p. 194.

Tradition No. 056, p. 115, source: Mūsā b. Ja'far from his forefathers. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 20, vol. 3, p. 155.

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1. Ibid., pp. 442-443. Cf. Al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1332/1913), pp. 25-26; and Abū Ḥanīfah al-Dīnāwarī, al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl (Cairo, 1960), pp. 211-212.

Tradition No. 057, p. 115, source: Mūsā b. Ja'far from his forefathers. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 81, vol. 3, p. 168.

Tradition No. 058, p. 115, source: al-Madā'inī ('Alī b. Muḥammad, d. 225 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 192, vol. 3, p. 196.

Tradition No. 060, p. 115, source: Isrā'īl (b. Yūnus, d. 161 or 162 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 312, vol. 3, p. 228.

Tradition No. 067, p. 116, source: Hishām ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204 or 206 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 66 (the section dealing with letters), vol. 3, p. 139.

Tradition No. 076, p. 119, source: Muḥammad ibn Sirīn (d. 110 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 369, vol. 3, p. 264.

Tradition No. 077, p. 119, source: Yūnus b. Arqam. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 57, vol. 1, p. 101.

Tradition No. 083, p. 122, source: 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ṭālibī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 194, vol. 3, p. 197.

Tradition No. 098, p. 127, source: al-Madā'inī ('Alī ibn Muḥammad, d. 225 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 82, vol. 1, p. 145.

Tradition No. 171, p. 158 (letter), source: 'Abbās ibn Hishām al-Kalbī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 18, vol. 3, p. 20.

Tradition No. 173, pp. 158-9, source: Hishām al-Kalbī (as above). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 42, vol. 3, p. 75.

Tradition No. 178, pp. 160-1, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 43, vol. 3, p. 76.

Tradition No. 180, pp. 161-2, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 19, vol. 3, p. 21.

Tradition No. 182, p. 163, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 20, vol. 3, p. 22.

Tradition No. 183, p. 163, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 71, vol. 3, p. 145.

Tradition No. 200, p. 174, source: al-A'yān from Shu'bah ibn Sammak. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 41, vol. 3, pp. 72-75.

Tradition No. 231, p. 188, source: Abū 'Ubaid, Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 223 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 83, vol. 3, p. 168.

Tradition No. 298, p. 240, source: Abū Mikhnaf (d. ca. 170 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 14, vol. 3, p. 16.

Tradition No. 359, p. 279, source: Abū Mikhnaf, al-Madā'inī, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, Nos. 9 and 28, vol. 3, pp. 11 and 34-40, respectively.

Tradition No. 373, p. 302, source: Abū Mikhnaf, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, p. 4.

Tradition No. 422, p. 349, source: Hishām al-Kalbī, Abū Mikhnaf. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 123, vol. 2, p. 7.

Tradition No. 423, p. 352, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 40, vol. 1, p. 87.

Tradition No. 436, pp. 365-6, source: Abū Mikhnaf, 'Aṭṭīya ibn al-Ḥārith, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 35, vol. 1, pp. 81-2.

Tradition No. 437, pp. 368-9, source: Abū Mujliz (Lāḥiq ibn Ḥamid, d. ?). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 77, vol. 1, pp. 124-5.

Tradition No. 439, p. 371, source: Ḥamid ibn Hilāl. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 36, vol. 1, p. 82.

Tradition No. 451, p. 380, source: Abū Isḥāq (al-Sabi'ī, d. 127 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 34, vol. 1, pp. 78-80.

Tradition No. 452, pp. 380-1, source: Abū Mikhnaf, etc.
Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 29, vol. 1, pp. 69-71.

Tradition No. as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 58, vol.
1, p. 102.

Tradition No. 453, p. 382, source: Hishām al-Kalbī, Abū
Mikhnaf, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 27, vol. 1, p. 64.

Tradition No. 455, p. 383, source: Yaḥyā ibn Ma'in (d. 233
A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 25, vol. 1, p. 60-1.

Tradition No. 463, p. 400, source: Ṣāliḥ ibn Kaisān (d. ca.
140 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 34, vol. 3, pp. 66-7.

Tradition No. 464, p. 402, source: as above. Cf. Nahj
al-Balāgha, No. 39, vol. 1, p. 86.

Tradition No. 465, p. 404, source: as above. Cf. Nahj
al-Balāgha, same speech as quoted above.

Tradition No. 472, p. 417, source: Abū Mikhnaf. Cf. Nahj
al-Balāgha, No. 44, vol. 1, pp. 90-1.

Tradition No. 489, p. 438, source: Ibn Sirīn, Muḥammad ibn
Zubair al-Hanzalī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 66, vol. 1,
p. 113, and No. 95, vol. 1, p. 189.

Tradition No. 492, pp. 442-3, source: Abū Bakr ibn 'Ayyāsh, Abū Ḥusain. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 27, vol. 1, pp. 63-6.

Tradition No. 493, pp. 447-8, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 67, vol. 1, p. 113, and No. 35, vol. 3, p. 67.

Tradition No. 508, pp. 473-4, source: Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, Abū Mikhnaf. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 61, vol. 3, p. 129.

Tradition No. 510, pp. 477-8, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 34, vol. 1, p. 78.

5. al-Dīnāwarī

Abū Ḥanīfa, Aḥmad ibn Da'ūd al-Dīnāwarī was an out-standing authority in history and astronomy. He was born at al-Dīnāwar sometime in the first decade of the third century and died in the year 282 A.H. Of all the historians of Islam and the Arabs, al-Dīnāwarī is, perhaps, the only one who has provided us with the information prevailing in the subjugated great empires, especially Persia, prior to the conquest of Islam. By not altering the name of his grandfather, Wanand, as so many others had done, al-Dīnāwarī conveyed that he was not ashamed of his Persian origin. Although he travelled to almost all the centres of Islamic learning, he lived for most of his life in the place of his birth, the Persian conurbation of al-Dīnāwar. Speaking with obvious affection for the Persian emperors and their achievements and the administration of their

empire, and, at the same time, covering some of the important events down to 227 A.H., al-Dīnāwarī writes a very useful work.

Although different in many aspects, al-Dīnāwarī has one thing in common with most of the other late Islamic historians, in that he omits his isnād. When he does choose to provide the isnād, he confines it to the immediate source, for example, Haitham ibn 'Adī, al-Sha'bī, al-Asma'ī, etc.

Al-Akhbār al-Tiwal[1] of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnāwarī as a source of some of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha:

p. 140, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 134, p. 26.

p. 151, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 14, p. 16.

p. 151, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 13, p. 41.

p. 151, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 14, pp. 41-42.

p. 153, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 6, p. 8.

p. 163, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 49, p. 88.

p. 165, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 204, p. 211.

p. 166, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 11, p. 14.

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1. Published in Cairo, 1960.

p. 181, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 122, pp. 4-6.

p. 187, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 17, pp. 18-20.

p. 191, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 48, p. 87.

p. 208, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 36, pp. 82-3.

p. 208, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 123, pp. 8-9.

p. 208, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 175, pp. 117-8.

p. 208, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 58, p. 102.

p. 210, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 14, p. 16.

p. 211, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha,</u> vol. 1, No. 27, pp. 66-3.

6. Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī

Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb, better known as Ibn al-Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī, was born in the north-east of modern Iran and spent his youth in Armenia. Later, in Khurasan, he was in the service of the Ṭāhirids and when their dynasty fell, al-Ya'qūbī moved to Egypt where he died in 284/897. The third century historian apparently wrote his history, which he called "The history of the world", while still in the eastern parts of the then Islamic 'Abbāsid empire. The history is not as detailed or elaborate as that of al-Ṭabarī, but it is in the pattern that the latter followed. He was, in the words of Brockelmann, "A Shī'ī of the moderate Musawīyā who belonged to the Imāmīs."[1]

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1. C. Brockelmann, <u>Encyclopaedia of Islam</u>, vol. IV (Leyden, 1934), pp. 1152-3.

Yāqūt mentions other books that the 'Abbāsid historian wrote, viz., <u>Kitāb al-Asmā' al-Buldān</u> (in one volume); <u>Kitāb Akhbār al-Umam al-Sālifah</u>; <u>Kitāb Mashākilat al-Nās li-Zamānihim</u>; apart from the history, which Yāqūt names as <u>Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr</u>.[1] Al-Ya'qūbī's history begins with the history of the patriarchs of Israel, then gives the story of the Messiah and the Apostles; of the rulers of Syria, Assyria and Babylon, the Indians, Greeks, Romans and Persians; northern people including Turks, Chinese, Egyptians, Berbers, Abyssinians, Bedja and Negroes, and lastly the pre-Islamic Arabs. The second part begins with the era of Islam and ends in 259/872.[2]

Al-Ya'qūbī's <u>History of the World</u> as one of the possible sources of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>:

p. 191, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 50, p. 95.

p. 193, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 91, pp. 182-3.

p. 193, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 237, pp. 259-60.

p. 193, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 58, p. 102.

p. 195, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 67, pp. 113-14.

p. 198, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 95, pp. 188-90.

p. 201, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 42, p. 75.

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1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, <u>Irshād al-Arīb</u>, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1924), pp. 156-7.
2. For details see D. S. Straley, <u>Thesis</u>.

p. 201, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 43, p. 76.

p. 203, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 19, p. 21.

p. 203, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 71, p. 145.

p. 204, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 20, p. 22.

p. 205, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 66, p. 139.

p. 205, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 147, pp. 186-89.

p. 206, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 81, p. 168.

p. 206, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 82, p. 168.

p. 206, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 116, p. 178.

p. 207, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 30, p. 157.

p. 207, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 23, p. 56.

p. 208, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 350, p. 336.

p. 208, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 131, pp. 181-83.

p. 208, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 42, p. 88.

p. 209, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 102, p. 173.

p. 209, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 121, pp. 3-4.

p. 211, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 16, pp. 42-44.

p. 211, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 17, p. 50.

p. 211, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 85, pp. 152-53.

p. 212, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 17, pp. 50-51.

7. Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī

Fairness has always been an accessible commodity.
But some of the buyers have had to pay a high price for it.
One such person has been the later celebrated and universally
acknowledged historian, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.
Yāqūt tells us of the tradition according to which the
historian was buried at night for fear of some religious
fanatics of the time who accused him of being a Shī'ite.[1]
While Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, one of the leading Shī'ī
authorities, could only spare a line or two for his mention
in his al-Fihrist and dismisses him as the person following
the "common faith" ('āmi al-madhhab).[2] In fact his Shī'ism
is no more provable than the fact that he wrote a book
defending the authenticity of the tradition known as
ḥadīth al-ghadīr[3] and yet another book describing and
defending the tradition known as ḥadīth al-tair.[4] His
Sunnism is no more undesirable, from the Shī'ite viewpoint,
than his rendering of the events as and when they occurred
during the period of the Orthodox Caliphate together with
refraining from recording the traditions which so patently
breathed the air of partisanship. Unlike Ibn Isḥāq (d. 151/768)

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1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. VI (Cairo, 1930),
   p. 423.
2. al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), p. 281.
3. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, op. cit., p. 452.
4. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Muqaddimah to Tārīkh
   al-Ṭabarī (Cairo, 1960), p. 11.

he does not drop hints suggestive of the author's partiality in favour of some traditions and doubts in respect of others.[1] At first glance his Annals appear to be repetitive, as a single event is related by several traditions recorded side by side. Yet this very device of his adds a further dimension to his work. It portrays how an event could be, and was, interpreted by each school of thought through its narrators (al-ruwāt) to support its point of view.

al-Ṭabarī was born at a place called 'Amul in the district of Ṭabaristān, in the year 224/838 or 225/839, and died at Baghdad, where he lived most of his life and perhaps composed most of his works too, in the year 310/922. The quest for knowledge took him from his birth place, 'Amul, first to Rayy and thence to Baghdad, to which he primarily set off to meet Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), but the Imām died before he could reach Baghdad. On reaching Baghdad for the first time, he did

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1. But D. S. Straley rightly points out that while various opinions on a given event are recorded and "at first glance it would seem that there is little to choose between them", she proceeds to illustrate how an historian's view in favour of some traditions is indirectly expressed in the order of recording of them, i.e. those favoured by the historian coming first, and those least acceptable given the last place. Dona Sue Straley, Perspective and Method in Early Islamic Historiography, Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh University, 1977), p. 61.

not stay there for long and left for Baṣra. Subsequently
he visited Syria and Egypt before returning to Baghdad.
It was the information gathered during and through these
journeys and the maghāzī of Ibn Isḥāq, which he learned
and copied from Salama ibn al-Faḍl that must have served
as the foundations of his history.[1]

Yet in the very field, the sources, lie the main
weaknesses of Islamic history. Confining ourselves
to the Annals of al-Ṭabarī only, we observe that in
considerable parts of history he relies on al-Surrī
who, if Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī is right in the tradition
he has about him from Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal[2], may have
been a reliable person, but then further ahead in the
chain (al-silsilah) we meet Saif ibn 'Umar and Shu'aib.
Now it is true that Saif has been credited with two
books he had written: one was called Kitāb al-Riddah
and the other Kitāb al-Futūh[3] and these books may have
been available to al-Ṭabarī. But how reliable was he
and how reliable were his sources? The traditionists
do not think highly of him. "He is of weak traditions,"
says Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn (d. 233/847) and, "His traditions

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1. For details see D. S. Straley, Thesis.
2. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol.
    IX (Hyderabad, 1327/1909), pp. 70-71.
3. Ibid., vol. IV, pp. 294-95.

have been found unacceptable," said Abū Hātim (d. 354/
965). Ibn Ḥibān adds that he used to forge traditions
and put them in the mouths of well known and acceptable
narrators.[1] And as far as Shu'aib is concerned, no
one seems to know anything about him.

Ibn Nadīm gives an account of al-Ṭabarī's early
training and known teachers, in his al-Fihrist:

> He acquired knowledge of the hadīth
> from the eminent shaikhs like Muḥammad
> ibn Ḥumaid al-Rāzī; Ibn Juraij; Ibn
> Kuraib; Hanād ibn Surrī; 'Abbād ibn
> Ya'qūb; 'Ubaid Allāh ibn Ismā'īl
> al-Habbarī; Ismā'īl ibn Mūsā; 'Imrān
> ibn Mūsā al-Qazzāz; and Bishr ibn
> Mu'ādh al-'Uqdī. He studied the law
> under Dā'ūd and learned the legal
> system of al-Shāfi'ī from Rabī' ibn
> Sulaimān in Egypt, and also from
> Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Za'faranī at
> Baghdad. He learned the legal system
> of Malik [ibn Anas] from Yūnus ibn
> 'Abd al-'Alā and the descendants of

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1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 294-
   295.

'Abd al-Ḥakam, who were Muḥammad, 'Abd
al-Raḥmān, and Sa'd; also from the sons of
the brother of Wahb. He learned the legal
system of al-'Irāq from Abū Muqātil at
al-Rayy and mastered the asānīd in Egypt,
Syria and al-'Irāq and at al-Kūfah, al-Baṣra
and at al-Rayy.[1]

This mode of training reflects in his Annals. For example,
his adherence to isnād and his recording of the varying
versions of the same tradition. He was, to quote Gibb at this
point, "essentially a traditionist but independent
withal."[2]

Al-Ṭabarī begins his history from the Creation of
the World and ends it in the year 302 A.H. According to
the tradition recorded by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, al-Ṭabarī
completed his annals on Wednesday, 27th Rābi' al-Awwal,
303/915.[3] As to what impression al-Ṭabarī's history has
created on the Western mind, it is well represented in
Dona Straley's work in which she discusses the person
al-Ṭabarī was and the methodology and attitudes he applied
to his history, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk.[4]

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1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist, vol. I (New York, 1970, trans.
   Bayard Dodge), pp. 563-64.
2. Gibb, H. A. R., Arabic Literature (Oxford, 1963), p. 80.
3. Yāqūt, op. cit., p. 426.
4. D. S. Straley, op. cit.

The possible extracts which the collector of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> may have taken from the <u>Annals</u>:

Extract No. 1 -- 'Alī's address to 'Uthmān, vol. 5, p. 96. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 162, vol. 2, p. 84.

Extract No. 2 -- Having been approached to accept the Caliphate, vol. 5, p. 157. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 90, vol. 2, p. 182.

Extract No. 3 -- 'Alī's first speech after becoming Caliph, vol. 5, p. 157. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 165, vol. 2, pp. 97-98.

Extract No. 4 -- On the request to punish the killers of 'Uthmān, vol. 5, p. 158. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 166, vol. 2, pp. 98-99.

Extract No. 5 -- Inviting people to go to war with Mu'āwiya, vol. 5, pp. 163-64. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 167, vol. 2, pp. 99-100.

Extract No. 6 -- On hearing the news of the revolt brewing at Mecca, vol. 5, p. 164. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 167, vol. 2, p. 100.

Extract No. 7 -- Instructions to Ziyād and Shuraih to hand over the command to Malik al-Ash'ar, vol. 5, p. 238. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 13, vol. 3, p. 15.

Extract No. 8 -- Instructions to the army, vol. 6, p. 6. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 13, vol. 3, p. 16.

Extract No. 9 -- An invocation at the time of war, vol. 6, p. 8. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 13, vol. 2, pp. 101-02.

Extract No. 10 - Instruction on the manners of fighting, vol. 6, p. 9. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, pp. 4-7.

Extract No. 11 - A reaction to the retreat of the right wing of the army in one of the days of the battle of Ṣiffīn, vol. 6, pp. 13-14. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 105, vol. 1, p. 205.

Extract No. 12 - After hearing the judgement of <u>al-Ḥakamain</u>, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, vol. 6, p. 43. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 35, vol. 1, p. 81.

Extracts No. 13 and 14 - Addressing al-Khawārij before the battle of Nahrwān, vol. 6, p. 47. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 36, vol. 1, pp. 82-83, and No. 58, vol. 1, p. 102.

Extract No. 15 - An address to people inciting them for war, vol. 6, p. 51. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 37, vol. 1, pp. 78-79.

Extract No. 16 - A letter to the people of Egypt appointing Malik al-Ashtar as the governor, vol. 6, p. 55. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 38, vol. 2, pp. 70-71.

Extract No. 17 - A letter to Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, explaining the resons owing to which he has been replaced, vol. 6, p. 55. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 34, vol. 3, pp. 66-67.

Extract No. 18 - Addressing al-Khawārij, vol. 6, p. 36.
Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 123, vol. 2, p. 7 and No. 125,
vol. 2.

Extract No. 19 - On hearing the news that Egypt has been
conquered, vol. 6, p. 62. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 39,
vol. 2, p. 86.

Extract No. 20 - The letter to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, then
the governor of al-Baṣra, informing him of the above
conquest, vol. 6, p. 63. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 35,
vol. 3, p. 67.

Extract No. 21 - Comments after hearing the news that
Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr had been put to death, vol. 6,
p. 63. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 65, vol. 1, p. 113.

Extract No. 22 - Comments when Masqalah ibn Ḥubairah, the
governor of Azarbayjan, emancipated the captives and then
ran away to Damascus with his debts to the state, vol. 6,
p. 76. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 44, vol. 1, pp. 90-91.

Extract No. 23 - The speech when Nu'mān ibn Bashir,
commanding an army of two thousand, attacked 'Ain al-Tamr,
vol. 6, p. 77. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 67, vol. 1, p. 113,
and No. 29, vol. 1, pp. 70-71, and No. 95, vol. 1, p. 189.

Extract No. 24 - The will to his sons, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusain,
and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah, vol. 6, p. 85. Cf. Nahj
al-Balāgha, vol. 2, pp. 85-87.

8. Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī

At the time when Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H.) was engaged in composing his renowned Annals, there was another historian, Ibn A'tham who, to quote Carl Brockelmann, was writing "from the Shi'ite point of view a romantic history of early Caliphs and their conquests."[1] Ibn A'tham died just four years after al-Ṭabarī, i.e. 314 A.H. But unlike al-Ṭabarī his personality remains obscure. Was he a Shī'ite? If so, then it is strange indeed that al-Ṭūsī (d. 458 A.H.) should ignore him. Or Ibn Nadīm, writing earlier than al-Ṭūsī and being nearer to Ibn A'tham, in terms of time, should not mention him or his books. It seems that at least by some Shī'a scholars Ibn A'tham was not regarded as a Shī'ite. Sayyid Nūr Allāh Shūstarī, in his book Majālis al-Mu'minīn, calls him a Shāfi'ī.[2]

However, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (575-627 A.H.) says the following about him:

> A Shī'ite historian, weak to the traditionists [aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth], he wrote a book called al-Māluf and a book called al-Futūḥ which is well known in which he has recorded the events down to the time of [Hārūn] al-Rashīd [149-194 A.H.]. He wrote yet another book

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1. Carl Brockelmann, Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. II (Leyden, 1927), pp. 364-65.

2. Muḥsin al-'Amulī, A'yān al-Shi'ah, vol. VII (Damascus, 1938), p. 429.

> beginning with al-Māʾmūn's period down to
> the last days of al-Muqtadir [killed, 320 A.H.].
> . . . This last book is probably a sequel
> to the first one [al-Futūh] and I have seen
> both of them.[1]

Now this creates further doubts in respect of the year in which Ibn Aʿtham actually died. Carl Brockelmann, in the above quoted comments says it to be 314 A.H., but if Yāqūt is correct then Ibn Aʿtham was still alive at least around 320.

Of the notable Shīʿite scholars who have accepted Ibn Aʿtham as a Shīʿite and quoted from his history is Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111) in his Bihār al-Anwār. Muṣṭafā ibn ʿAbd Allāh, better known as Ḥajjī Khalīfa, omits mentioning his religious tendencies and simply refers to his al-Futūh adding that it was translated into Persian by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad.[2]

Al-Futūh of Aḥmad ibn al-Aʿtham al-Kūfī as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha: vol. 2, p. 37. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 132, pp. 24-25.

1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. I (Cairo, 1923), p. 379.

2. Ḥajjī Khalīfah, Kashfal-Ẓunūn (Istanbul, 1942), p. 1239.

vol, 2, pp. 92-93. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 226, p. 249.

vol. 2, p. 244. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 90, p. 182.

vol. 2, p. 287. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 167, pp. 99-100.

vol. 2, p. 307. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 121, pp. 3-4.

vol. 2, p. 314. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 122, pp. 4-7.

vol. 2, pp. 347-48. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 42, pp. 88-89.

vol. 2, p. 352. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 6, p. 8.

vol. 2, p. 367. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 5, p. 7.

vol. 2, p. 373. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 6, p. 8.

vol. 2, p. 381. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 43, p. 89.

vol. 2, p. 393. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 8, p. 9.

vol. 2, p. 431. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 7, pp. 8-9.

vol. 2, p. 448. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 204, pp. 211-12.

vol. 2, p. 461. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 46, p. 92.

vol. 2, p. 462. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 48, p. 93.

vol. 2, p. 474. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 28, pp. 37-39.

vol. 2, p. 477. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 28, p. 34.

vol. 2, pp. 490-91. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 13-14, pp. 51-56.

vol. 3, p. 44. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 14, p. 16.

vol. 3, p. 72. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 122, pp. 4-7.

vol. 3, pp. 259-60. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 17, p. 18.

vol. 4, pp. 66-67. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 25, pp. 60-61.

vol. 4, pp. 66-67. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 27, pp. 63-66.

vol. 4, p. 198. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 26, pp. 62-63.

vol. 4, pp. 100-101. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, Nos. 28, 58, 35, pp. 69, 102, 85.

vol. 4, pp. 104-05. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 62, pp. 130-32.

9. al-Kulainī

Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulainī's book, al-Kāfī
fī 'l-Hadīth became to the Shī'ites what al-Saḥīḥ of
Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H.) has been to
the Sunnites, the first and the prime source of Islamic
traditions. The number of traditions al-Kulainī has
collected in the book amounts to over 16,000 and it has
been stated that this exceeds the number of the traditions
recorded in all the Siḥāh al-Sitta put together.[1] The
second noteworthy fact about al-Kāfī is that it was
composed during the period known to the Shī'ites as the
period of al-Ghaibah al-Sughrā, i.e. the period when
allegedly it was possible to get in touch with the
hidden Imam through one of his four deputies. Hence the
saying attributed to the said Imām about the book:
Kāfin li Shī'atinā (Sufficient it is for our followers).
This, although most likely to be spurious, does neverthe-
less indicate the deference and the esteem with which the
early Shī'ites regarded the book. In modern times, they
have taken pains in counting and classifying its traditions,
according to the terminologies of the late traditionists,
as: al-Saḥīḥ (the sound ones), 5,072; al-Ḥasan (the good
ones), 140; al-Muwaththaq (the trustworthy), 1,118; al-Qāwī
(the strong or likely), 302; and al-Ḍa'īf (the weak), 9,489.[2]

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1. Agha Buzurg Tehranī, al-Dharī'ah, vol. XVII (Tehran, 1967), p. 17.

2. al-Kintūrī, Kashf al-Hujūb (Calcutta, 1920), p. 418.

Born in Kulain, a village in the district of Rayy, roughly the site of the present Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīm in Iran, al-Kulainī spent most years of his life in Baghdad where he composed his book al-Kāfī and where he died in the year 328 A.H.

Al-Kāfī fī 'l-Ḥadīth as one of the possible source of Nahj al-Balāgha is shown by the following comparisons and examples:

1. The tradition No. 25 (Chapter: al-'Aql wa 'l-Jahl) is identical with Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 113, vol. 3, p. 177, in an augmented form. Al-Kāfī attributes the two sentences which it quotes, to Muḥammad, addresseing 'Alī.

2. The tradition No. 115 (Chapter: Fadl al-'Ilm, section: al-Mustā'kil bi 'Ilmihi wa 'l-Mubāhī bihī) is quoted verbatim in Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 457, vol. 3, p. 261. However, in al-Kāfī it is attributed to the Prophet.

3. The tradition No. 158 (Chapter, Fadl al-'Ilm, section: al-Bid' wa'l-rā'i wa 'l-Maqā'īs) is quoted in Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 50, vol. 1, p. 95.

4. Tradition No. 163 (Chapter and section as above, No. 3) is almost self same with what is quoted in No. 17, vol. 1, p. 47, of Nahj al-Balāgha.

5. Tradition No. 190 (Chapter as above, No. 3, section: Ikhtilāf al-Ahādīth), the contents appear in No. 208, vol. 2, p. 214, of Nahj al-Balāgha.

6. The tradition No. 346 (Chapter: al-Tawhīd, section: Jawāmiʻ al-Tawhīd), parts of the speech reported in this tradition have been quoted in No. 1, vol. 1, p. 7, and No. 89, vol. 1, p. 159.

7. The tradition No. 349 (Chapter: as above, No. 6, section: as above, No. 6), a shortened version of this tradition appears in No. 177, vol. 2, p. 120.

8. The tradition No. 350 (Chapter and section as above, No. 6), Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 150, vol. 2, p. 53, an augmented form which contains a slightly varied version of this tradition.

9. The tradition No. 352 (Chapter and section as above, No. 6), of this tradition there are sentences in No. 180, vol. 2, p. 125, and in No. 184, vol. 2, p. 142.

10. The tradition No. 398 (Chapter: al-Tawhīd, section: al-Jabr wa ʼl-Qadr wa ʼl-Amr bain al-Amrain), the contents of this tradition appear in the entry No. 78, vol. 3, p. 168.

11. The tradition No. 783 (Chapter: al-Ḥujja, section: al-Ishārāt wa'l-Naṣṣ ʻalā al-Ḥasan bin ʻAlī), the contents of the speech No. 147, vol. 2, p. 45, conform.

12. The tradition No. 1541 (Chapter: al-Īmān wa'l-Kufr, section: Nisbat al-Islām), the first part of this tradition concerning the definition of Islam has been quoted verbatim by the entry No. 125, vol. 3, p. 180.

13. The tradition No. 1549 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: Ṣifat al-Īmān), the contents of the tradition appear in the entry No. 30, vol. 3, pp. 157-58.

14. The tradition No. 1549 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: Da‘ā’im al-Kufr wa-Shu‘abuh [al-Kāfī, vol. 2, Najaf, 1381 A.H.]), cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 30, vol. 4 [Beirut, n.d.], p. 88.

15. The tradition No. 1911 (Chapter, as above, No. 12, section: Dhamm al-Dunyā wa ’l-zuhd fīhā), parts of the contents of this tradition appear in No. 42, vol. 1, p. 88. In al-Kāfī's version, however, the speaker is said to have been ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusain, the fourth Imam of the Shī‘ites and a grandson of ‘Alī; the remaining parts of this tradition appear in No. 104, vol. 3, pp. 173, 174, and No. 30, vol. 3, p. 157. The remainder in No. 191, vol. 2, pp. 186, 187 -- the sermon which is said to have been delivered by ‘Alī in response to the request made to him by one of his companions, Humām ibn Ghālib, to define the God-fearing (al-muttaqīn).

16. The tradition No. 1996 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: Ṣilat al-Raḥm), the contents of this tradition concerning one's tribe and the members of his household, is contained by No. 23, vol. 1, pp. 57, 58.

17. The tradition No. 2254 (Chapter, as above, No. 12, section: al-Taqīya), this tradition may have been the source of No. 57, vol. 1, p. 101.

18. The tradition No. 2279 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: al-Kitmān), attributed to the Prophet, a part of No. 101, vol. 1, p. 198, conforms with the contents of the tradition.

19. The tradition No. 2284 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: al-Mu'min wa 'Alāmatuhu wa Ṣifātuhū), this tradition states that 'Alī was on the pulpit when he was interrupted by one of his companions, Humām, who asked him to define a mu'min (believer), his signs and the attributes, upon which 'Alī delivered the speech. If we were to assume this tradition to be the possible source of No. 191, vol. 2, then it is obvious that the editor has thoroughly revised it. The version of this tradition or a part of it, which has already been referred to in No. 14 above, appears to be the concise but more genuine rendering of the tradition.

20. The tradition No. 2304 (Chapter and section as above, No. 19), this description of some of Muḥammad's companions constitutes a part of No. 95, vol. 1, p. 190.

21. The tradition No. 2506 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: al-Riya), the tradition constitutes a part of No. 23, vol. 1, p. 57.

22. The tradition No. 2652 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: al-Ẓulm), the varieties of oppression as this tradition describes, have been quoted in No. 174, vol. 2, p. 116.

23. The tradition No. 2677 (Chapter as above, No. 12,
section: Ittibā' al-Hawā), this tradition is properly
referred to by No. 42, vol. 1, p. 88. But it has also
been contained by No. 28, vol. 1, p. 68.

24. The tradition No. 2684 (Chapter as above, No. 12,
section: al-Makr wa 'l-Khdī'ah), this tradition forms a
part of the remarks made by 'Alī while speaking about
Mu'āwiya in No. 198, vol. 2, p. 206.

25. The tradition No. 2833 (Chapter as above, No. 12,
section: Mujalasat Ahl al-Ma'āsī), the contents of this
tradition correspond with the wording of No. 38, vol. 3,
p. 160. But here again, the speaker, according to al-Kāfī,
is 'Alī ibn al-Husain as in the tradition No. 1911
described above.

26. The tradition No. 2868 (Chapter as above, No. 12,
section: Da'ā'im al-Kufr wa Shu'abuhū), an extracted
version of this tradition appears in No. 31, vol. 3,
p. 158. The collector records in the said entry that he
had extracted it from a longer version of the speech.

27. Tradition No. 2996 (Chapter: as above, No. 12,
section: Fī anna al-Dhunūb Thalāthatun), with the change
of the word al-ẓulm instead of al-dhunūb, the contents
of the tradition have been recorded in No. 174, vol. 2,
p. 116.

28. The tradition No. 3045 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: Muḥāsabāt al-'Amal), this tradition constitutes a part of No. 80, vol. 1, p. 127.

29. The tradition No. 3046 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: Man Ya'īb al-Nās), this tradition and others which follow it immediately, under this section, the ideas and words appear in No. 349, vol. 3, p. 235, as elsewhere in Nahj al-Balāgha. The narrator of the tradition in al-Kāfī is Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir, the fifth Imam of the Shī'ites, and the son of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain, already spoken of in this section.

Extracts from al-Kulainī's al-Rawḍah min al-Kāfī (Tehran, 1389 A.H.)

30. The tradition No. 3, p. 17 ('Alī's will to his companions). This tradition appears as part of No. 101, vol. 1, p. 197.

31. The tradition No. 4, pp. 18-30 (the speech of 'Alī, called al-Wasīlah). Of this long speech quoted by al-Kulainī, only parts appear in Nahj al-Balāgha. First, the part beginning: "Man naẓar fī 'aib nafsihī...", p. 19, appears in No. 349, vol. 3, p. 235. Next, the part beginning with "Lā māl a'wad min al-'aql", p. 20, appears in No. 113, vol. 3, p. 177. The part of the speech beginning: "Inna al-manīiyya qabl al-danniyya", p. 21, appears in No. 396, vol. 3, pp. 248-49. The part beginning "A'jab mā fī al-insān qalbuhū", p. 21, appears in No. 108, vol. 3, p. 175.

32. The tradition No. 21, p. 58, has been recorded, if the collector's source were al-Rawḍah, in two parts. The first part beginning: "Inna akhwaf mā akhāf ᶜilaikum khullatān", p. 58, appears in No. 42, vol. 1, p. 88. Next, the part beginning: "Wa innamā badᶜ wuqūᶜ al-fitan", p. 58, appears in No. 50, vol. 1, p. 95.

33. The tradition No. 22, pp. 63-66, appears in Nahj al-Balāgha in two parts. First, No. 86, vol. 1, pp. 154-55, beginning: "Inna Allāh lam yaqsim jabbārī dahr qaṭṭ", al-Rawḍah, p. 64; the second, in No. 164, vol. 2, pp. 95-96, beginning: " Alā inna Allāh sayajmaᶜukum lisharr yawmin", al-Rawḍah, pp. 64-66.

34. The tradition No. 23. The beginning of this tradition has been omitted by the collector as he begins the speech from the sentence: "ᶜAlā wa inna ballīya takum qad ᶜādat", al-Rawḍah, p. 67. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 16, vol. 1, pp. 42-47. Note that the end of the speech has appeared in Nahj al-Balāgha vastly improved from the version rendered by al-Kulainī.

35. The tradition No. 25. This tradition appears in No. 102, vol. 3, p. 173. Note the difference in the closing words: in al-Rawḍah, p. 69, it is "Sulṭān al-imāʾ wa amr al-ṣibyān", whereas in Nahj al-Balāgha it is "Imārat al-ṣibyān wa tadbīr al-khiṣyān".

36. The tradition No. 251. This speech addressed by
'Alī to Abū Dharr appears in No. 128, vol. 2, p. 17.
Note that in al-Rawḍah, pp. 206-08, al-Kulainī assigns
parts as spoken by al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain whereas the
collector assigns the whole speech to 'Alī.

37. The tradition No. 327. This letter to Ibn 'Abbās
from 'Alī has been recorded by the collector in No. 22,
vol. 3, p. 21.

38. The tradition No. 368, 'Alī's speech after the battle
of al-Jamal. Although the beginning of No. 109, vol. 1,
p. 216, conforms, the remainder is so different that this
tradition could not have been the collector's source in
the aforesaid khuṭbah.

39. The tradition No. 479, al-Rawḍah, pp. 307-08. The
augmented form of this tradition appears in No. 369,
vol. 3, p. 241.

40. The tradition No. 550, al-Rawḍah, pp. 352-60, the
speech of 'Alī at Ṣiffīn. The speech appears in No. 214,
pp. 223-27. Although the speech appears to be the same,
there are linguistic improvements in al-Raḍī's version.
I have also observed that the collector leaves out the
sentences which do not appear to be eloquent or so
eloquent as he would like them to be. As for his leaving
out the names, he may, perhaps, have had some valid
reasons.

41. The tradition No. 586, the speech at the place called Dhū Qār, al-Rawḍah, pp. 386-91. The speech No. 145, vol. 2, pp. 40-43. Looking at al-Kulainī's version, it appears that this speech has been recorded in Nahj al-Balāgha in the edited form. Here and there there is the difference in words between the two versions. The speech No. 17, which appears at the first part of Nahj al-Balāgha, appears to be the part of this speech.

10. al-Mas'ūdī

"This man," writes Ibn Nadīm, "from among the people of al-Maghrib [North Africa], was known as Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī. He was the descendant of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd and a compiler of books about the history and traditions of the kings."[1] This statement is duly rectified by Carl Brockelmann, who points out that "according to his own statement, however, he was born in Baghdad and descended from an Arab family."[2]

Al-Mas'ūdī's style is markedly different from the historians who had preceded him. Writing in simpler language, he usually ignores isnād and the study of his Murūj al-Dhahab gives the impression of a historian

1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (tr. Bayard Dodge, New York, 1970), p. 338.
2. Carl Brockelmann, Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden, 1936), pp. 403-04.

writing his notes in shorthand and expecting that the
reader will refer to his detailed works which he lists
at the beginning. Unfortunately most of his works have
been lost and the works which have survived may not
qualify to be called "historical", except, of course,
Murūj al-Dhahab.

Al-Mas'ūdī is said to have been a Shī'ite, and in
addition to his works al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf and Murūj
al-Dhahab, it is also alleged that he is the author of
an Ithnā 'asharī work called Ithbāt al-Waṣiyya. Although
this claim is disputed, the historical work Murūj
al-Dhahab shows distinct Shī'ite tendencies. It covers
the history of the world as it was known at the author's time
and ends around the year 332 A.H. He died in 345 A.H.

Al-Mas'ūdī's Murūj al-Dhahab as one of the possible
sources of and containing some of the utterances of
'Alī as reported in Nahj al-Balāgha:[1]

p. 371, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 14, p.

p. 377, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 13, pp. 40-41.

p. 431, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 131, p. 182.

p. 432, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, Nos. 28 and 42,
     pp. 66-68 and 88-89.

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1. All the following references occur in the second
   volume of Murūj al-Dhahab.

p. 432, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 3, No. 104, p. 173.

p. 432, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 191, p. 185.

p. 433, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 80, p. 127.

p. 436, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, No. 147, p. 45.

p. 436, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 28, pp. 66-68.

p. 437, cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 1, No. 28, pp. 66-68.

B. Literary Sources

1. 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ

Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ used to say that
he was older than Abū Nūwās, the 'Abbāsid poet (d. 198/
813), for he was born in the beginning of the year 150/
767, while Abū Nūwās was born at the end of it.[1] If
this report of Yāqūt is correct then Ibn Khallikān's
statement that al-Jāḥiẓ died in the ninety-second year
of his life[2] does not seem to be correct. As all the
biographers agree that he died in 255/868, he must have
died a centenarian. However, al-Jāḥiẓ's works represent
an early landmark in the fields of literary, zoological
and anthropological 'Abbāsid works which became the
acknowledged source of the writers who came after him.

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1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, <u>Irshād al-Arīb</u>, vol. VI (Cairo,
   1930), p. 56.
2. Ibn Khallikān, <u>Wafayāt al-A'yān</u>, vol. I (Cairo,
   1892), p. 492.

His <u>Kitāb al-Ḥayawān</u> served as the source for al-Damīrī
while his <u>al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn</u> remained one of the
essentials in the area of early Arabic and Islamic
prose and poetry. Al-Jāḥiz was, as reflected in his
writings, a man of sharp intelligence, simple but
elegant style but as it seems, shifting conviction. The
examples of the latter are in the list of the books he
is said to have written and which include a book in
praise of <u>al-nabīdh</u> and another in condemnation of
<u>al-nabīdh</u>; a book in praise of scribes and yet another in
condemnation of scribes; a book in praise of the book-
sellers and another in condemantion of booksellers.[1]
However, his independence of mind gained many followers,
even amongst the Muʿtazilites, to whom he is said to
have belonged, who became known as the members of the
Muʿtazilite sect, <u>al-Jāḥizīyah</u>.

The following extracts and comparisons are from
al-Jāḥiz's <u>al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn</u>, which may have served
as one of the possible sources of the collector, al-Sharīf
al-Raḍī. It may be observed that the four addresses
which al-Jāḥiz quotes in the aforesaid book, appear in
<u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> in the same sequence and order.[2]

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1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 78.
2. Cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> (No. 16, part II of the sermon)
and <u>al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn</u>, pp. 50-51, vol. 2 (Cairo,
1975, edition); <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 28, and <u>al-Bayān
wa al-Tabyīn</u>, p. 52; <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 27, and
<u>al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn</u>, p. 53; and <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>,
No. 29, and <u>al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,</u> p. 56.

al-Jāḥiẓ as one of the sources of some of the contents
of Nahj al-Balāgha:

vol. 2, p. 52, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 28/part 1.

vol. 2, p. 53, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 27/part 1.

vol. 2, p. 56, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 29/part 1.

vol. 2, p. 77, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 82/part 3.

vol. 2, p. 190, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 131/part 3.

vol. 3, p. 148, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 130/part 3.

vol. 3, p. 155, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 130/part 3.

2. Kitāb al-Irshād

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nu'mān, better known as
al-Mufīd, was born in the village known as Suwaiqat ibn
al-Baṣrī, which was situated at the time about twenty
-five miles from Baghdad, in the year 338. Writing
sometime in the late fourth century, Ibn Nadīm remarks:
"He belongs to our time. With him there culminates
leadership among his associates of the Imamiyyah [Sect]
of the Shī'a, in connection with the law, theology and
ancient traditions."[1] Although al-Mufīd died in the
year 413/1022 it appears that most of his books were

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1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (tr. Bayard Dodge, New York,
   1970), p. 443.

written within the fourth century. I have included him
with the "pre-Nahj al-Balāgha" authors for two reasons:
first, because al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, together with his
brother al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, were brought to al-Mufīd
as children to be taught by him.[1] It is therefore more
likely that al-Raḍī used some of his teacher's books as
his source than the opposite. Al-Mufīd's accounts of
'Alī's speeches, sermons, etc., which we shall study
below, do vary in certain degrees and this is an
indication that al-Mufīd's sources were different. That
none of his material quoted from and attributed to 'Alī
has been taken from Nahj al-Balāgha is almost a certainty.
The second reason is that most of the comparisons with
Nahj al-Balāgha have been made with his book called
al-Irshād. Now there is evidence provided by the
contemporary authors that the book existed twenty-odd
years before the compilation of Nahj al-Balāgha. Ibn
Nadīm died in the year 380/990 and he cites al-Irshād as
one of al-Mufīd's books.[2] Nahj al-Balāgha, according to
the compiler's statement, was completed in the year 400.[3]

Kitāb al-Irshād is then an important work with
regard to the collections of the speeches of 'Alī, since
a substantial section in the book is devoted to speeches

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on Nahj al-Balāgha, vol.
   I (Cairo, 1959), p. 41.

2. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 491.

3. Al-Raḍī, Nahj al-Balāgha, part III (Cairo, n.d.),
   p. 267.

attributed to 'Alī. Furthermore, al-Mufīd has attempted
to impose some sort of order on the speeches, taking them
in terms of theology and chronologically according to
historical events which the speeches referred to.

Kitāb al-Irshād[1] by al-Mufīd as one of the possible sources
of Nahj al-Balāgha:

> p. 119. Chapter: The speeches, sermons and
> sayings of 'Alī briefly quoted.

Section (al-faṣl) No. 1. In the necessity of knowing God
and believing in his Unity and the negating of all
ajectival comparisons of Him [with the things He has
created].

The speech of 'Alī quoted under this section can
be compared with sermon No. 1 (al-Mufīd's text: sentences
1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and the sermon No. 184 (al-Mufīd's text:
sentences 15 and 16). The second tradition of the same
section (i.e. a man came to 'Alī and asked him: Tell me,
do you see your God when you worship him?), in Nahj
al-Balāgha this man has been identified as Dhi'lib
al-Yamānī, Sermon No. 177, vol. 1, and 'Alī's answer
appears to be the same as rendered by al-Mufīd.

Section 2. His ('Alī's) speech in praise of the learned;
classification of the people; advantages of knowledge
and the act of acquiring it and concerning wisdom. Under

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1. Printed at Qum, n.d.

this section 'Alī's address to Kumail b. Ziyād al-Nakha'ī
is quoted by al-Mufīd. Almost verbatim, the same has
been reported in the Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 147, vol. 3.

Section 5. His speech concerning the innovators and
those who when giving judgements expressed their own
views as opposed to the religious ones, etc. Now here
is the example where the accounts of al-Mufīd and al-Radī
are quite different from each other. They agree in only
the opening sentence of the speech, viz, dhimmatī bimā
aqūl rahīna (al-Mufīd: p. 123; Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 16,
p. 42). The sentence, innahū lā yahīju 'alā al-taqwā
zar' qawmin wa lā yazma' 'anhu sinkh aṣl (al-Mufid, ibid.)
has been rendered by Nahj al-Balāgha (ibid.) as: lā
yuhlik 'alā al-taqwā sinkh aṣl wa lā yazma' 'alaihā
zar' qawmin. The sentence: wa inna al-khair kullahū
fiman 'araf qadrahū does not appear in Nahj al-Balāgha.
The next sentence, viz, wa kafā bil mar'i jahla 'an lā
ya'rifa qadrahū, however, does. The next part of the
speech, beginning inna abghaḍ al-khalq ilā Allāh ta'ālā
rajulun wakkalahū Allāh ilā nafsihī... appears in No. 17
(Nahj al-Balāgha, p. 47, vol. 1), but parts with it in
the closing sentences. Al-Mufīd has 'Alī quoting the
tradition innī tārik fīkum al-thaqalain mā in tammasktum
bihimā lan taḍillū ba'dī kitāb Allāh wa 'itratī ahl
baitī.... But this tradition does not appear in Nahj
al-Balāgha.

Section 6. His speech describing the world (as opposed to the Hereafter). This is the letter 'Alī addressed to Salmān al-Fārisī and it appears in augmented form in the letter No. 68 in the third volume of Nahj al-Balāgha. It has been repeated in the chapter of the "Wise Sayings" (No. 119) of the book.

Section 7. His speech in connection with getting equipped for the next world.... It appears in the second volume of Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 202 (p. 209), with slight variation.

Section 8. Inviting people to devote their lives to the service of God.... It is recorded in the third volume of Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 267, p. 217, up to the sentence: yātiy Allāh fīhi birizqika; No. 192, p. 196, the sentence: mā kasabta fawqa qūtika fa anta fīhi khāzin li ghairika; the last two lines or so of the speech do not appear to be in the book.

Section 9. His speech famous amongst the learned and memorised by the intelligent and the wise. Here what al-Mufīd has quoted as one speech, al-Radī's record shows that this speech may have been delivered in two parts and on two separate occasions. It sppears in Nahj al-Balāgha in sermon No. 28, p. 66, and then (the latter part) in sermon No. 42, p. 88, both in the first volume. There is slight variation in the texts rendered by al-Radī. A part of it appears in the entry No. 120, vol. 1.

Section 11. In description of his devoted followers.
What al-Mufīd records in this section may possibly be
the part of the speech No. 119 in the first volume of
Nahj al-Balāgha, p. 233.

Section 12. His speech concerning the end of man (al-mawt).
The first part of the speech quoted under this section
appears in No. 121, p. 3, vol. 2; the second in No. 143,
p. 38, vol. 2, except the last sentence beginning innā
khuliqnā wa antum lilbaqā' lā lil fanā'....

Section 13. His speech in calling people to his cause, etc.
This speech has also been quoted by Abū 'Ubaida Ma'mar b.
al-Muthannā (d. 210) and al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255) (see Chapter III,
respective sections). Al-Mufīd comments that this sermon
has been quoted by all, the Sunnites and the Shī'ites.
His naming Ma'mar particularly indicates that he may
have been his source. Al-Sharīf mentions it in the
latter part of the sermon No. 16, vol. 1, but the major
part of it he leaves out.

Section 16. His speech when some of the people (viz,
'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, Muḥammad b.
Maslama, Ḥassān b. Thābit and Usāma b. Zaid) refrained
from performing the bai'at. It has been partly quoted
in No. 134, vol. 2, p. 26.

Section 17. His speech when Talha and Zubair broke the oath of fealty to him and went away to Mecca to join hands with 'Ā'isha.... Eliminating the names, al-Radī quotes a part of it in No. 54, vol. 1, p. 99.

Section 20. On his way to al-Basra he stopped at al-Rabdha... See sermon No. 33, vol. 1, p. 76.

Section 23. His speech on leaving Dhū Qār on his way to al-Basra. Sermons No. 10, p. 33, vol. 1, and No. 22, p. 55, vol. 1, have the contents of the speech quoted by al-Mufīd under this section. The collector repeats apparently the same speech in vol. 2, No. 135.

Section 25. His speech at the time Talha had been killed and the opposing army scattered. Sermon No. 4, p. 33, vol. 1, with slight variation.

Sections 32, 33, 34, and the first part of 35. In exhorting his army at the time of war. Extracts of the speeches quoted in the above sections, with some additions and omissions, are recorded by al-Sharīf al-Radī under the sermon No. 122, vol. 2, p. 4.

The latter part of Section 35. Sermon No. 56, vol. 1, p. 100; al-Radī does not say when the speech was delivered.

Section 36. His speech to his companions when they returned from the battle of Siffīn. This sentence: la qad fa'altum fi'lat da'da'at min al-Islām quwāh wa

asqaṭat munnatahū wa awrathẓat wahna, according to
al-Mufīd, refers to their acceptance of al-Taḥkīm. While
al-Raḍī quotes it on the occasion when 'Alī had been
given the people's oath of fealty (Sermon 168, p. 98,
vol. 2). Then the setence is in the mood of proscription:
wa lā taf'alū fi'lat tada'da' qūwat wa tusqiṭ munnat wa
tūrith wahna wa dhillat.

Section 38. His address to al-Khawārij when he returned
to al-Kūfa and it appears that he delivered it before he
entered it (al-Kūfa). The part of the sermon recorded
by al-Mufīd in this section and which begins: inna lam
nuḥakkim al-rijāl, etc., has been copied by al-Raḍī in
No. 123, p. 7, vol. 2. The rest of the contents can be
identified in the sermon or the address No. 120, p. 2,
vol. 2, although the wording of al-Sharīf is, for the
most part, different.

Section 39. His speech when Mu'āwiya broke his treaty.
The last sentences of the speech have been quoted in
'Alī's address to the people of al-Kūfa, No. 67, vol. 1,
p. 113.

Section 41. His speech over the delaying tactics of
some of his supporters in the war with Mu'āwiya. This
speech may have also been copied by al-Sharīf from
al-Mufīd, as it appears verbatim in Nahj al-Balāgha,
No. 29, vol. 1, p. 69.

Section 42. His speech in connection with the same as described above. The last paragraph (or part): wa ka-annī anzuru ilaikum takhashshunā, etc., appears in sermon No. 121, vol. 2, p. 4.

Section 45. His address to the people of al-Kūfa for the aforesaid purpose (i.e. in sections 41 and 42). Cf. sermon No. 25, vol. 1, p. 60: wa innī wa-Allāh lā azunnu anna hā'ulā'i al-qawm sa yudālūna minkum, etc.; and sermon No. 95, vol. 1, p. 188: laqad aṣbaḥat al-umam takhāfu zulama ru'ātihā, etc.

Section 46. His speech on another occasion. On the evidence provided by some of the writers of the third century, like al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255) and al-Dīnawarī (d. 280), al-Mufīd has mixed up a number of addresses and has rendered them as one speech in this section. The parts of this speech are, therefore, contained by several sermons in Nahj al-Balāgha and here is the list of them: No. 25, vol. 1, p. 59; No. 26, vol. 1, p. 63; No. 28, vol. 1, p. 69; No. 34, vol. 1, p. 78; No. 39, vol. 1, p. 86; No. 67, vol. 1, p. 113; No. 69, vol. 1, p. 115; and finally, No. 95, vol. 1, p. 186.

Section 50. (From) 'Alī through Ibn 'Abbās — an address which has been recorded by a group of ahl al-naql through several routes (al-ṭuruq).... The address quoted under this introduction is the address known as "al-shiqshiqīya". There is little variation in the text from that which appears in Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 3, vol. 1, p. 25.

Section 52.   This has been narrated from Mus'ida b.
Sadaqa through Abū 'Abd Allāh....   A shorter version of
this speech is contained in sermon No. 86, vol. 1, p. 154.

Section 54.   His sayings -- wise and philosophical....
Cf. No. 201, vol. 2, p. 209; No. 131, vol. 3, p. 182;
No. 82, vol. 3, p. 183; No. 298, vol. 3, p. 225; No. 392,
vol. 3, p. 248; No. 396, vol. 3, p. 249; No. 408, vol. 3,
p. 251.

Section 55.   His speech on the definition of man.   Man's
weaknesses: No. 108, vol. 3, p. 175; No. 174, vol. 2,
p. 116; wisdom and ignorance: No. 54, vol. 3, p. 164.

3.   Kitāb al-Jamal

It concerns, as its title suggests, the Battle of
the Camel.   However, the book is not primarily a
historical work and is concerned with many theological
issues.

Kitāb al-Jamal[1] by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nu'mān al-Mufīd
(d. 413 A.H.), as one of the possible sources of Nahj
al-Balāgha:

p. 46, source: 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha,
     No. 3, vol. 1, p. 25.

p. 48, source: Abū Mikhnaf, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 90,
     vol. 1, p. 182.

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1.   Printed at Najaf, n.d.

p. 76, source: "the well-known", cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 215, vol. 2, p. 227.

p. 84, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 162, vol. 2, pp. 84-86.

p. 116, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 1, vol. 3, p. 2.

p. 122, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 227, vol. 2, p. 249.

p. 128, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 135, vol. 2, pp. 26-29.

p. 129, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 10, vol. 1, p. 38.

p. 159, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 8, vol. 1, p. 38.

p. 141, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 9, vol. 1, p. 38.

pp. 174-75, source: al-Wāqidī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 121, vol. 2, p. 4.

p. 203, source: Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 13, vol. 1, p. 41.

p. 209, source: al-Wāqidī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 76, vol. 3, p. 149.

al-Shiqshiqīyah -- Address No. 3

Out of the 239 speeches that have been recorded in
Nahj al-Balāgha and which have been dealt with as a whole
in the previous chapter, the address No. 3, known as
al-Shiqshiqīyah, however, needs to be discussed separately.
For it was this address, quoting which Ibn Taimīyah
lodged his demand for isnād and it was this address to
which al-Dhahabī was referring when he said:

> One who reads Nahj al-Balāgha knows for
> certain that it has been forged and
> attributed to Amīr al-Mu'minīn, may God
> be pleased with him, because in it there
> is the patent curse and the degradation
> of, the two leaders, Abū Bakr and 'Umar,
> may God be pleased with both of them.[1]

Then al-Dhahabī proceeds to point out there were things
of lowliness (al-ashyā' al-rakīkah) in the book. Here
again there is the strong possibility that he was
referring to al-Shiqshiqīyah, for there is no other
sermon or address in Nahj al-Balāgha which speaks in
derisory terms about other Companions of the Prophet.
Modern criticism of Nahj al-Balāgha has also al-Shiqshiqīyah
as one of its main targets. "The abusive language,
cursing, and revilings of the Companions," writes Ṣafā

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1. al-Dhahabī, Mīzān al-I'tidāl (Cairo, 1943), p. 124.

Khulūṣī, "especially in the famous Shiqshiqīyah are not attributable to a pious and God-fearing Imam like Ali. He strongly resented the cursing of the Companions..."[1]

It is, therefore, necessary that a translation of the text of al-Shiqshiqīyah be rendered in English so that the reader may be able to grasp the full meanings of allusions and references that have been made to it. It is also hoped that the discussion that follows will be better understood if the text is laid out before the reader.

The translation of the third address in part one of Nahj al-Balāgha, which is known as al-Shiqshiqīyah, is as follows:

"Lo, by God, Ibn /Abū Quḥāfah [Abū Bakr, the first Caliph] has worn it [the caliphate] like a shirt! Knowing full well that my position to it is like that of the pivot to a mill! It is from me that the inundations of [knowledge] spring. And it is to me that the flights of the fliers fail to reach. [However,] I let the curtains be drawn [on the issue, postponing my claim] and allowed my attention to wander away from it. I found myself confronted with two courses of action of either proceeding to [press] my claim with the hand that had been cut or bearing the darkness that was blinding, with fortitude. Although the nature of that darkness was

1. Ṣafā Khulūṣī, "The Authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha", Islamic Review, October, 1950, pp. 31-35.

such which made young old, and old decrepit; and it made
the believer struggle all the while before he met his
creator. [However,] I saw that to remain patient was
the better of the two courses and did so experiencing
the agonies of the person who has a mote or a speck in
his eye; or the agony of a person who has a bone or the
like stuck in his throat! Seeing that my inheritance was
being plundered. [This state of affairs remained until]
the first [Caliph] passed away; but not before he had
passed it [the caliphate] on to ['Umar, the second
Caliph. Then 'Ali quoted the poem of al-A'sha, which is:]

> Oh, what a difference
>
> between the two days of mine;
>
> the one, on the barren back of the mount,
>
> the other, with the friend Hayyan [and wine].

But how amazing! For while he [the first Caliph] was
wanting to be relieved of it [i.e. the caliphate] in
his lifetime, he gifted it to someone else after his
death.[1] How grave became the matter as they [Abu Bakr
and 'Umar, the first and second Caliphs] shared the
udders of it [the caliphate] between them! They place
it in a position where its wounds became severe, its
holding became harder; the mistakes and the stumbles

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1. Allusion to the reported speech of the first Caliph,
    Abu Bakr: "Aqiluni fa lastu bi khairikum" (i.e.
    Relieve me of the burden of the Caliphate for I am
    not the best of you); Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. I
    (Cairo, 1959), p. 169.

more frequent; and the explaining [for the errors] more sought after. The rider of the Caliphate is like the rider of the unruly mount. If he pulls the reigns of it, he injures its nose but if he lets them go, the mount lands him in the abodes of hazards even death! People, by God, have been tested with this [kind of] deviation and off course treadings and the changing from (one attitude to another]. I remained patient despite the length of time and the hardness of the ordeal till [the time when] the [second Caliph, 'Umar] passed away, but before that he placed it [the Caliphate] in a group he thought were my equals! Oh God, what has it got to do with al-Shūrā [the electoral college]! When was there any doubt about my being [equal to the task] with the first of them so that now I was to be compared with the like of these people![1] [However, I went along with them], flying when they flew and landing when they landed. [But what actually happened in the committee was that] one was prevented by the ill will he bore against me[2] and the other[3] opted for his brother-in-law, along with other

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1. Allusion to the members of the Electoral College appointed by the Second Caliph, 'Umar; they were: 'Alī, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubaid Allāh, Zubair ibn al-'Awwām.
2. Allusion to Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (according to the commentator, al-Rawandī) and Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubaid Allāh, according to Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., p. 189.
3. Allusion to 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who was married to 'Uthmān's sister; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd,ibid.

unspeakable things. In the end, the third of the group
[meaning the third Caliph, 'Uthmān) stood up, thrusting
his breast forward from the point of intake of fodder
to its exit. With him stood his brothers [all, eventually,]
eating up what belonged to God, like eating of a camel
of the greenery of the spring harvest! Till the rope
[of his life] was broken and his deeds led to his
assassination and he fell, being a victim of his stomach!
Before long I found myself surrounded by people, coming
in from every direction. The crowd became so intense
and unruly that Ḥasan and Ḥusain were trampled and my
mantle torn at the sides; people, pouring in around me
like a flock of sheep. But when I stood up with the
task, lo, there was one group who broke their pledge of
loyalty[1]; the other went astray[2] and yet another remained
stuck with their crime of injustice! As if they had
never heard the Word of God: ["That is the abode of the
hereafter which has been reserved for those who do not
rise in rebellion on earth nor do they propagate
corruption. Verily, the happy end is for those who fear
God!"][3] Yes, they heard it and heard it well. But the
world appeared sweeter in their eyes and they were taken
in by its ornaments and the make up! I swear by One Who

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1. Allusion to Ṭalḥa and Zubair and their followers, who
   fought 'Alī at the Battle of al-Jamal.
2. Allusion to Mu'āwiyah and his followers, who fought
   'Alī at Ṣiffīn.
3. Qur'ān, al-Fath, 10.

cleaves the seed and brings into life that which breathes,
were it not for those [who offered their services and
begged me to stand for the office[and the termination
of the previous excuses [for not standing for the office]
by now availability of support,and the fact that God has
taken the pledge from the learned and the powerful not
to allow the atrocities of the oppressors or the agonies
of the oppressed to continue, I would swing back the
rope to where it belonged and would have treated the
matter in the same manner as in the beginning of it.
You would have found then that this world of yours, in
my eyes, is less significant than the sneeze of a goat."[1]

They said [the tradition continues], that at this
point a man from al-Sawād [i.e. Iraq] stood up and handed
'Alī a piece of paper and 'Alī started to look at it.
Afterwards Ibn 'Abbās said: "O Commander of the Faithful,
if/you would resume the address from where you terminated
it." Thereupon 'Alī replied: "Haihāt, tilka shiqshiqat
inhadarat thumma qarrat [Alas; it has now gone! It was
like the faucal bag of the camel coming out with its
anger but settling back once the excitement was over!]"[2]

This then is the full text of the address. Earlier
we noted al-Dhahabī's remarks about there being degrada-
tion of the first Caliph, Abū Bakr and the second Caliph,

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1. The end of the text of al-Shiqshiqīyah.
2. Nahj al-Balāgha, part one (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 25-33.

'Umar. What he did not say is the fact that there is the degradation of the third Caliph, 'Uthmān, too, as the above translation brings out. This attitude is not reflected in any other of 'Alī's speechs quoted in <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>. In fact there are examples where the contrary can be proved,[1] as we shall see further on in this chapter.

Since this is the only <u>khutbah</u> in <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> which seems to fall in line with their doctrine of <u>al-tabarrī</u> (i.e. repudiation of the first three Caliphs), the Shī'ites have regarded it as one of the important addresses of 'Alī. Muḥammad ibn Nu'mān, better known as al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), has the following to say about it:

> And the address which has been transmitted
> through Ibn 'Abbās is so well known that
> there is no need to support it through
> other means [i.e. <u>isnād</u>, etc.]. It is
> the address in the beginning of which
> he says: <u>Amā wallāh laqad taqamaṣahā
> ibn Abī Quhāfah</u>....[2]

Mulla Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699) quotes the address with <u>isnād</u>, copying it from Sa'īd ibn Hibat Allāh, better known as Qaṭb al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177), who is said to have quoted it in his commentary

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1. For example, see the address No. 226, <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2, p. 249.
2. al-Mufīd, <u>al-Jamal</u> (Najaf, n.d.), pp. 46-47.

of Nahj al-Balāgha, known as Minhāj al-Barā'ah (q.v.
Chapter two -- Commentaries). Majlisī also points out
that the same address has been quoted by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih
in the fourth volume of al-'Iqd al-Farīd. But the
address does not seem to appear in the present editions
of the book. However, al-Khaṭīb claims that it was the
hands of the interested parties which eliminated it from
the book either at the time of copying it from another
manuscript or at the time of its printing.[1] In any
event, it seems that Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258), who
devotes the entire twelfth volume of his commentary in
praising and defending the second Caliph, 'Umar, against
the attacks on him by the Shī'ites, however, seems to be
convinced of the authenticity of al-Shiqshiqīyah, as he
comments on the address in the following words:

> I was told by my tutor ⌊shaikhī⌋ Muṣṣadiq
> ibn Shabīb al-Wāsiṭī [d. 605/1208] in
> 603 [A.H.] that he had read the address
> [i.e. al-Shiqshiqīyah] with al-Shaikh
> Abī Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, better
> known as Ibn al-Khashshāb [d. 567/1171].
> When Ibn al-Khashshāb reached the point
> [where Ibn 'Abbās is quoted to have said
> that he had never regretted an abrupt

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1. al-Khaṭīb, Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. I (Beirut,
   1975), p. 312.

interruption of any other speech as he did
that which interrupted the Shiqshiqiyah],
he said that had he heard Ibn 'Abbas make
that remark he would have told him: "Was
there anything more to be said by your
cousin so that you regret the termination
of the speech? By God, he had neither
spared the forebearers nor the late-comers!
Nor was there anyone in his heart he did
not mention except the Prophet of God!"
Ibn Khashshab, said Mussadiq, was a man
with a sense of humour [as his above
remarks have indicated]. So Mussadiq
asked him: "So, do you say that this
address was forged?" Ibn Khashshab
replied: "By God, no. For I know that
this is of his as I know that you are
Mussadiq." Mussadiq said to Ibn Khashshab
that people were saying that it was of
al-Radi, to which he replied: "How could
it be of al-Radi or of anybody else? We
have come across the writing of al-Radi
and have known his style in prose and that
compared with this piece of prose, is
neither here nor there! I have come across
this address in the books which were
written before al-Radi's birth by two
hundred years. I found the address

written down in the handwritings I knew, of
the learned and the literary [people who
flourished] before the time of Abū Aḥmad,
the father of al-Raḍī."

Having quoted that, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd adds:

I myself have found most of the address
in the books of Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī,
who was active in the reign of al-Muqtadir
[the 'Abbāsid Caliph, 296-320/908-932],
that is a long time before al-Raḍī was born.
I have also found the major portion of it
in the books of one of the Imamite
theologians, Abū Ja'far ibn Qibbah, which
is called al-Inṣāf, and which is well known.
Ibn Qibbah was one of the pupils of Abū
al-Qāsim al-Balkhī and he also died a
long time bfore al-Raḍī's birth.[1]

Quoting all the above but without naming Ibn Abī
al-Ḥadīd (!), Ibn Maitham (d. 679/1280), the Shī'ite
commentator of Nahj al-Balāgha, adds that he had also
seen the address (al-Shiqshiqīyah) written in the hand-
writing of 'Alī ibn Muḥammad, commonly known as Ibn
al-Furāt, the minister of the said 'Abbāsid Caliph,
al-Muqtadir. That, Ibn Maitham points out, "was one
hundred and sixty-two years before al-Raḍī's birth."[2]

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., p. 206.
2. Ibn Maitham, Sharh Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. I (Tehran,
    1368/1948), pp. 252-53.

Then comes the important evidence of the Arabic
lexicographers. Amongst them first comes Ibn al-Athīr
(d. 606/1209) who, at the mention of the word al-Shiqshiqah,
remembers the address and remarks: "And this word has
been used by 'Alī in [one of] his address; [the sentence
this word has been used in being] tilka shiqshiqat
inhadarat thumma qarrat."[1] Similar entries are made by
Muḥammad ibn Mukarram, better known as Ibn al-Manẓūr,
(d. 630/1232), in his Lisān al-'Arab[2]; al-Fīrozabādī
(d. 817/1414) in his al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt.[3]

However, my investigations lead me to believe that
like the book, the claim to the total authenticity of
the address known as al-Shiqshiqīyah can not be
substantiated. In the following I shall try to examine
the issue as objectively as I am able to. The areas
which point against the belief in the total authenticity
of al-Shiqshiqīyah are as follows:

1. The evidence of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd and Ibn Maitham,
even the vague statement of Ibn Khashshāb, takes the
address to the third century or, if Ibn Khashshāb is
right, to somewhere in the second century, but no
further.

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1. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa
   al-Athar, vol. II 9Cairo, 1963), p. 490.
2. Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-'Arab, vol. XII (Būlāq, 1301),
   p. 53.
3. Firuzabādī, al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt, vol. 3 (Beirut,   ),
   p. 59.

2. None of the lexicographers have quoted the address but only have alluded to it. Thus only one sentence, i.e. <u>tilka shiqshiqat inhadarat thumma qarrat</u>, may be assumed to have been said by 'Alī. It may also be accepted that based on the aforesaid sentence the address was called <u>al-Shiqshiqīyah</u>, but all that would be far from proving the total authenticity.

3. While the historical evidence proves that at the time of Muhammad's death 'Alī saw in himself the prime contender for the office, he seems to have accepted the prevailing situation eventually. The tradition of Jundab ibn 'Abd Allāh, quoted by al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), seems to be the true indicator as to how 'Alī read the situation at that time and what were his reasons for not opposing it actively. In the tradition Jundab exhorts 'Alī to call people to his cause, saying that even if only ten per cent of the people answered, that would be sufficient and 'Alī replied that he did not expect even two per cent to rally to his call because "People look to Quraish and the Quraish say that the lineage of Muhammad think that of all the people, they are the chosen ones; and thus the most worthy claimants to the Caliphate. [The case being so] if one of them is [elected or nominated as Caliph] then the Caliphate will never pass to anyone else."[1] When Jundab offered to canvass the people on his behalf, 'Alī forbade him to do so, "because," 'Alī said, "this is not the time for

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1. al-Mufīd, <u>al-Irshād</u> (Tehran, 1377/1957), p. 116.

it." In another tradition, 'Alī is more specific: "By God, if I were not afraid of creating divisions amongst the Muslims and turning them or most of them infidels yet again, or ⌊if I were not afraid of causing⌋ reversion in religion, we would have changed the position to the extent of our ability."[1] And the very same reasons appear in the speech quoted by al-Madā'inī (d. 225/839): "By God, if there were no fear of dividing the Muslims, the return of faithlessness, and of causing reversion in religion, our position would have been different from what it was."[2] While the text rendered by al-Kalbī (d. 204/819) states: "When God took away His prophet from amongst us, the Quraishites by-passed us, appropriating the government for themselves. Preventing us from acquiring what was ours by right more than anyone else's. But I saw that to remain patient and forego the right was far better than shedding the blood of Muslims and causing divisions amongst them..."[3] The common factors in all these early reported speechs of 'Alī are, firstly, that 'Alī had no doubts that he was the rightful contender amongst all the people, for the Caliphate; secondly, that he preferred to forego the claim in favour of the unity amongst Muslims and, thirdly, that although all the speeches quoted above

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1. al-Mufīd, al-Irshād, pp. 117-18.
2. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., p. 307.
3. Ibid., pp. 308-09.

have one theme, viz injustices done in the past, the language is very different from al-Shiqshiqīyah.

4. Whatever has been said in al-Shiqshiqīyah about the first Caliph, Abū Bakr, and the second Caliph, 'Umar, (q.v. translation of the address) does not conform to the historical facts. Nor does it conform to the speech in praise of the second Caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, by 'Alī and reported in Nahj al-Balāgha .[1]

In conclusion, it may be said that in view of the speeches quoted by early historians like al-Madā'inī and al-Kalbī, and in view of the fact that the contents of those speeches more or less conform with the contents of al-Shiqshiqīyah, the address is not historically baseless. Yet it is likely that in Nahj al-Balāgha 's al-Shiqshiqīyah, the language, stating the same claim as made elsewhere, has been hardened and thus made unattributable to the person 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib was.

The Covenant of 'Alī

In the section of Nahj al-Balāgha which deals with the letters and the written documents by 'Alī, the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, introduces the 'Ahd which, according to the collector, 'Alī wrote for al-Ashtar al-Nakha'ī (d. 38/658) when he appointed him as the

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1. Address No. 226, Nahj al-Balāgha , vol. 2, p. 206, and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's commentary on it, vol. XII, pp. 3-4.

governor of Egypt and its districts at the time when
under Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, the previous governor, the
disorder and disruption began to appear and the control
of the situation seemed to be slipping from his hands.
"This," adds the collector, "is the longest 'Ahd of 'Alī
and the embodiment of all the merits which are contained
by other of his writings."[1]

The word "'Ahd" has been translated as "covenant".
But since the word "covenant" meaning contract or
treaty, suggests two equal parties, the word "'Ahd" may
simply be translated as "the written instructions". For
then the authority of the giver over the receiver, as is
understood by the word "'Ahd", will be manifested. On
the other hand, the Biblical Covenant between God and
the Israelites, where the two parties are not equal, may
have been the source of the present translation of the
'Ahd as "covenant."

However, 'Ahd is the branch of the classical Arabic
prose which goes back to the time of Muḥammad. Aḥmad
al-Qalqashandī (d. 817/1418) discusses the two styles of
'Ahd writing by the Muslim prose writers of the Middle
Ages. The one patterned itself on the method and the
style of the 'uhūd (i.e. covenants) of Muḥammad and 'Alī,
while the other, that of the modern writers (of his time)
on that of Shaikh Shahāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ḥalabī. Opening

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1. al-Sharīf al-Radī, Nahj al-Balāgha ,part 3 (Cairo,
   n.d.), p. 92.

his discussion on the first category of 'Ahd writing,
al-Qalqashandī quotes the 'Ahd Muḥammad wrote, or had it
written, for 'Amr ibn Ḥazm when deputing the latter to
Yaman. For his source of the 'Ahd, al-Qalqashandī quotes
Ibn Hishām and others.[1] The second "model" 'Ahd which
follows that of Muḥammad is the 'Ahd of 'Alī to al-Ashtar.
Although al-Qalqashandī quotes only a part of it (about
one-quarter) the text conforms with the text given in
Nahj al-Balāgha . However, al-Qalqashandī quotes Ibn
Ḥamdūn (d. 562/1166) as his source, and not al-Sharīf
al-Raḍī, the collector.[2] At this point it would be
relevant to pay due attention to al-Qadī's observation
that it was noteworthy that al-Qalqashandī does not
mention the 'Ahd among the testaments of the Rāshidūn
Caliphs, but quoted its introductory sections on the
authority of Ibn Ḥamdūn as the method of writing testa-
ments.[3] In may view there are a number of reasons which
interpret this attitude of al-Qalqashandī in favour of
the 'Ahd under discussion rather than the opposite, as
al-Qadī contends.

(a) Al-Qalqashandī, quoting the 'Ahd of 'Alī to
al-Ashtar, side by side with that of Muḥammad, and quoting
both the covenants as the model of the classical 'Ahd
writing, has, in the strongest terms, acknowledged the
authority of the 'Ahd.

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1. al-Qalqashandī, Ṣubh al-A'shā, vol. 10 (Cairo, 1916), p. 9.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. W. al-Qadī, "An Early Fatimid Political Document",
   Studia Islamica, XLVIII (1978), p. 79.

(b) He quotes it to the extent with which he is satisfied that the "pattern" has been established. But having established the pattern, he proceeds to quote the 'Ahd of Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣabī (d. 384/994) which he composed for the Caliph al-Tā'i' in 366/976 addressed to Fakhr al-Dawlah (d. 344/955), in full. The other 'Ahd al-Qalqashandī reports fully is the 'Ahd of Amīn al-Dīn Abū Sa'īd al-'Alā ibn Wahb which he composed for the Caliph, al-Qā'im bi Amr Allāh and addressed to Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn, on entrusting the latter with the governments of North Africa and Spain after the year 420/1029. The common factor in all the cited covenants being that they were styled on the covenants of 'Alī's 'Ahd under discussion.

(c) Of the masters (al-shuyūkh) of the Syro-Egyptian school of the seventh and the eighth centuries of the Islamic era, there was much which had made Nahj al-Balāgha and its contents common knowledge among the intelligentsia and had shaped its positive views, whether in favour of it or against it. The latter has been discussed at some length in this thesis in Chapter II. But the example of the former is Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwairī (d. 733/1332). This al-Nuwairī was one of al-Qalqashandī's shuyūkh who had produced the 'Ahd in full, with a comment which may have influenced al-Qalqashandī to select it to serve as the "model" in his book. Those remarks of al-Nuwairī are as follows:

> In whatever I have read so far by way of
> al-waṣāyah [the commands, directives] and
> 'Ahd [covenant], there is nothing more
> comprehensive, more universal and more
> complete than the 'Ahd which 'Alī wrote
> for Mālik ibn al-Ashtar al-Ḥārithī when he
> appointed him as the governor of Egypt.
> And so I wish to record it in full, neither
> leaving out the fullness of its details
> nor the import of its finer objectives.
> Because an 'Ahd like this one is not to be
> overlooked nor its priority and urgency to
> be lost through ignorance.[1]

Al-Nuwairī's orthodoxy may be noted by the fact that he
copied al-Ṣaḥīḥ of Imām al-Bukhārī eight times with his
own hands, a distinction specifically pointed out by
another erudite orthodox Sunnī historian, Taghrī Burdī.[2]
Thus the likelihood of the Orthodox Mamlūk School, which
served as the source of doubts in the authenticity of
Nahj al-Balāgha in the Middle Ages, seemed, however,
convinced of the authenticity of the 'Ahd. It is note-
worthy that whereever the 'Ahd appears in the writings
of the Mamlūk Syro-Egyptian scholars, no references are
made to Nahj al-Balāgha.

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1. Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwairī, Nihāyat al-'Arab,
   vol. 6 (Cairo, 1925), p. 19.
2. Taghrī Burdī, al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, vol. 9 (Cairo,
   n.d.), p. 299.

Even the Shī'ite al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) does not
refer to Nahj al-Balāgha when he mentions the 'Ahd. In
the biographical note on al-Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭah, al-Ṭūsī
says that he was one of the close companions of 'Alī
and he related the 'Ahd 'Alī wrote for Mālik al-Ashtar
al-Nakha'ī when he appointed him. He also related the
waṣīyah (i.e. the will, the directives, etc.) of 'Alī to
his son Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyah.[1] Al-Ṭūsī was following
the pattern which had been set earlier vis-a-vis the 'Ahd
of treating it independently of Nahj al-Balāgha. This
was shown in the writings of Miskawaih (d. 429/1037) and
al-Qāḍī al-Quḍā'ī (d. 454/1062). Now considering that
Nahj al-Balāgha was completed in 400/1009 and the
collector's death in 406/1015, all the aforesaid scholars
could have referred to both the collector, al-Sharīf
al-Raḍī, and the book, Nahj al-Balāgha. But they do not,
indicating that their source was other than Nahj al-Balāgha.
Here al-Qāḍī seems to be right when he states: "The
Nahj recension, however, must have existed some decades
[sic] before the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century."
This is ascertained by the fact that Abū al-Ḥasan
al-'Āmirī, who died in 381/992, reproduces about twenty
citations from it, all of which are introduced by "'Alī
said to al-Ashtar", and adds at one instance, "when he
sent him to Egypt".[2]

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1. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad,
    1351 Shamsī), pp. 62-63.
2. W. al-Qāḍī, op. cit., p. 75.

More important than Abū al-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī, to whom
al-Qāḍī has referred, is Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī,
better known as Ibn Shu'bah, who was active in the first
half of the fourth century. His date of death is not
certain. What seems to be certain is that he was the
contemporary of al-Shaikh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) and
references to him are made by al-Ḥurr al-'Āmulī.
Al-Majlisī and, in this century, Agha Buzurg Tehrānī, who
quoting 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain al-Baḥrānī, records: "One
of the early Shī'ite authorities who is a source of even
Muḥammad ibn Nu'mān al-Mufīd [d. 413/1022]." One of the
sources of Ibn Shu'bah is Abū 'Alī Muḥammad ibn Humām,
who died in 336/947.[1] When I said that Ibn Shu'bah was
more important I meant that unlike the aforesaid
scholars of the fourth and fifth centuries, he quotes
the Covenant in full and his recension may have been the
source for al-Raḍī, the collector; for it is followed,
with some minor omissions, by the text of Nahj al-Balāgha
both in words and in the sequence of ideas. The
following are a few examples of the manner in which the
recension of Nahj al-Balāgha differs from that of Ibn
Shu'bah:

(1) In the beginning of the Covenant, where the
responsibilities of the governor are described, the word
in Ibn Shu'bah's text is mujāhadah whereas it appears in
Nahj al-Balāgha as jihād.

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1. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī Ibn Shu'bah, Tuhuf al-'Uqul (Beirut,
   1974), p. 7.

(2) <u>wa ittibā' mā amar Allāh bihī fī kitābihī</u>, in <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> it is <u>wa ittibā' mā amar bihī fī kitābihī</u>.

(3) <u>fa innahu qad takaffal bi naṣr man naṣarahu</u> has been changed to <u>fa innahu jall ismuhū qad takaffal</u>. All the changes point to one weakness, or one strength, of the collector, viz, to place the correct prepositions (which may have been the error of the scribes) and eliminate the sentences which appeared to him as less eloquent. However, this is done without the structure of the Covenant or the sequence of ideas being affected.

Nevertheless, Ibn Shu'bah's recension cannot be positively placed as the one preceding that of Qāḍī Nu'mān (d. 363/973) because, while we are told that "it was about the year 347/957 and during the reign of the fourth Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz li Dīn Allāh [341-365/ 952-975], that al-Qāḍī Nu'mān b. Muḥammad b. Ḥayyūn [d. 363/974] wrote his ... <u>Da'ā'im al-Islām</u>"[1], we cannot ascertain positively as to when Ibn Shu'bah composed his <u>Tuḥuf al-'Uqūl</u>. Indeed, as has already been pointed out, we cannot ascertain even the date of his death. But to say that Qāḍī Nu'mān and Ibn Shu'bah were contemporaries would, however, not be far from the truth. Even so, because of the vast differences of the two texts, and because of the theory al-Qāḍī bases on the assumption of <u>Nahj</u>'s recension of the Covenant being an adaptation of the earlier text rendered by Qāḍī Nu'mān[2], it remains

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1. W. al-Qāḍī, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 71.
2. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 94.

important that the date of completion of <u>Tuḥuf al-'Uqūl</u> be known which, on the present available resources to me, does not seem feasible.

However, the answer may lie in the book called <u>Akhbār Ṣiffīn</u>. It has survived in manuscript form, one copy of which, bearing number H 129, is at Ambrosiana, the other, bearing the number Q.U. 2040, is at Berlin. Both of these were edited by 'Abd al-'Azīz Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥalabī at St. Andrews University (Scotland) in 1974 for the degree of Ph.D. The editor quotes Griffiń[1] for the author of <u>Akhbār Ṣiffīn</u> as being Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Kalbī. "This," says the editor, "is consistent with his suggestion that the beginning of this work is foll 53a because Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Kalbī is the first name in the first folio under the heading of <u>Dhikr al-ta'bi'a al-thānīyah al-ḥarb bi Ṣiffīn.</u>" But further on in his introduction to the book, the editor admits that there was nothing in the book itself to suggest that Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān was the author. He had tried to identify the author under the names of Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Kalbī, Muḥammad ibn 'Imrān al-Kalbī, Muḥammad ibn 'Uwānah al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Kūfī, but had not been able to locate the required information. Now Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 204/819 or 206/821) did write <u>Kitāb Ṣiffīn</u>, which he composed in

1.   'Abd al-Azīz al-Ḥalabī, ed., <u>Akhbār Ṣiffīn</u>, Ph.D. Thesis (University of St. Andrews, Scotland, 1974), p. 35.

the last decades of the second century and to which references are made by Ibn Nadīm in his al-Fihrist[1], and by Yāqūt in his Irshād al-Arīb[2], but this book is ruled out by the editor, saying:

> It must also be added that Ibn al-Kalbī
> was unfamiliar with some of the authorities
> quoted in this work, such as 'Umar ibn Sa'd,
> 'Amr ibn Shamir, al-Ju'fī, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṣadaqah
> and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qūrashī.
> Al-Kalbī usually transmits the material
> from Abū Mikhnaf and to a lesser degree,
> his father, [Muḥammad ibn Sā'ib] and
> 'Uwānah ibn al-Ḥakam al-Kalbī.[3]

Going through Akhbār Ṣiffīn, one is at once struck by the similarity of contents, even style, between Akhbār Ṣiffīn and Waq'at Ṣiffīn of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212/827). Both open up with 'Alī's arrival in Kufah after the battle of al-Jamal. Both report 'Alī's conversations with some of the Kufan leaders who failed to join him at al-Baṣrah. Both record the subsequent events leading to the battle of Ṣiffīn. What is more important in many cases is the self-sameness of isnād.

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1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (trans. Bayard Dodge, New York, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 206.
2. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 36.
3. Ibid., p. 37.

Following are the common sources of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and the author of Akhbār Ṣiffīn: 'Amr ibn Shamir; 'Umar ibn Sa'd; al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥaṣīrah; 'Amr ibn Salamah; Yaḥyā ibn Salamah; al-Ṣaq'ab ibn Zuhair; Jābir al-Ju'fī; al-Kalbī; 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd; Abū Rūq al-Hamadanī, and others. Although the degree of references to them varies, as the editor of Akhbār Ṣiffīn points out, 'Amr ibn Shamir, for example, appears thirty-six times in Naṣr's Waq'at Ṣiffīn, whereas he is referred to only four times by the author of Akhbār Ṣiffīn.[1] But on account of the many similarities, could Akhbār Ṣiffīn be another recension of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's Waq'at Ṣiffīn? The editor of the former book answers in the negative, and he gives the following reasons for it: "It is probable that the author of Akhbār Ṣiffīn was a contemporary of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim or comparatively younger because the youngest known source in Akhbār Ṣiffīn is Haitham ibn 'Adī (d. 207/822)." However, the strong resemblance to Waq'at Ṣiffīn and the self-sameness of some of the contents are taken account of as the editor adds:

> Unless the author of Akhbār Ṣiffīn shared
> with Naṣr a common source, he must, then,
> have used Naṣr's material particularly in
> the first part of Akhbār Ṣiffīn and deliberately
> suppressed Naṣr's name.[2]

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1.   'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 40.
2.   Ibid., p. 50.

Then the factors separating the two works are cited and
listed as:

(a)   The information provided by Akhbār Siffīn on
some matters is in much more detail than in Naṣr's
Waq'at Siffīn and at this point 'Alī's dismissal of
Ash'ath ibn Qais from the leadership over al-Kindah and
Rabī'ah is cited as an example.[1]

(b)   Ṣa'ṣa'ah's mission to Mu'āwiyah, which Naṣr
does not mention, nor does anybody else, according to
the editor's information.[2]

(c)   The second part of Akhbār Siffīn deals with the
disposition of the two armies at Siffīn. Here the
author of Akhbār Siffīn provides "the fullest information"
and "the first ever" illustrations of the banners of the
tribes who participated in the battle of Siffīn. At this
point the editor observes that if there were no other
reasons, this feature of the book alone would have
justified the project.[3] In all there are forty-four
"beautiful illustrations" of the banners. The first
four are the banners of Muḥammad and the tribe of Quraish
and the rest are those of the tribes which took part in
the battle of Siffīn. The source the author of Akhbār
Siffīn used in describing the shapes and the hues of the
banners of Muḥammad and the tribe of Quraish, is Ibn

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1.   'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 51.
2.   Ibid., p. 56.
3.   Ibid., p. 58.

Isḥāq and the transmitter of the traditions Haitham ibn
ʿAdī. The editor of Akhbār Siffīn states that he has
compared these reports with their parallel ones
reported by Ibn Isḥāq (d. 151/768) and found them to be
identical.[1]

(d)   The author of Akhbār Siffīn also provides the
Shiʿār (translated by the editor of Akhbār Siffīn) as the
distinctive slogans of every tribe, which did not usually
exceed three words.[2]

Yet another separating factor of the two books is
the fact that while Naṣr ibn Muzāhim terminates his book
at the conclusion of the episode of al-Taḥkīm, the author
of Akhbār Siffīn proceeds to mention the appointments of
Qais ibn Saʿd, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and Mālik al-Ashtar
as the respective governors of Egypt. This appears to
the editor of Akhbār Siffīn as "irrelevant" to the battle
of Siffīn. But it would cease to be so if one bears in
mind that while Naṣr ibn Muzāhim looked at the "event"
(i.e. the battle of Siffīn) and terminated his book on
its sequel (i.e. al-Taḥkīm), the author of Akhbār Siffīn
looked at the year (i.e. 38 A.H.) and recorded all that
happened in it. As to the appointments of Qais ibn Saʿd
ibn ʿUbādah and Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, it may have been
to introduce Mālik al-Ashtar's predecessors, who had been
appointed in the same position and for the same region
by ʿAlī.

1.   ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 59.
2.   Ibid., p. 48.

In any event, the 'Ahd appears in Akhbār Siffīn and conforms with the recension of Ibn Shu'bah word for word, indicating the strong possibility of its being the source of Ibn Shu'bah's recension. Now it is open to discussion whether the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha took and edited his recension of the 'Ahd from Ibn Shu'bah's text or directly from Akhbār Siffīn. I assume the latter to be the case.

It has been agreed in the aforesaid thesis that the writing of the author of Akhbār Siffīn "represents an early stage in the development of Arabic narrative"[1] and this, coupled with the sources which have already been discussed, places the book somewhere in the second half of the second century or early third century, if the author was the second generation from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim.

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1.   'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITERARY BACKGROUND TO <u>NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA</u>

<u>A. Pre-Islamic Literature</u>

I. <u>The Jāhilī Poetry</u>

The utterances of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib contained in

Nahj al-Balāgha (according to the compiler, al-Sharīf

al-Raḍī) and supposed to have been used as the vehicle for

exerting influence over the societies they were addressed

to, have parallels both in the utterances of the Jāhilī <u>al-shā'ir</u>,

poet, the <u>Khaṭīb</u> (orator) and the <u>Kāhin</u> (soothsayer), and

the Qur'ān. Since the first three provide the literary

background for the latter, it would be appropriate to

examine them first.

Judging by the traditions that the third and fourth

century Muslim historians have preserved for us, it

seems that pre-Islamic Arab societies were greatly

influenced by these three. However, of these three prime

movers of the society, it was the poet who came first in

importance. Ibn Rashīq (d. 438/1046) illustrates the

position of the Jāhilī poet in his society in the

following words:

> When there appeared a poet in a family of
>
> the Arabs, the other tribes round about
>
> would gather together to that family and
>
> wish them joy for their good luck. Feasts
>
> would be got ready, the women of the

tribe would join together in bands, playing
upon lutes, as they were wont to do at the
bridals, and the men and boys would congratu-
late one another; for a poet was a defence
to the honour of them all, a weapon to ward
off insults from their good names, and a
means of perpetuating their glorious deeds
and of establishing their fame forever.
And they used not to wish one another joy
but for three things -- the birth of a
boy, the coming to light of a poet, and
the foaling of a noble mare.[1]

To the ordinary members of his tribe, the poet was the
spokesman of their sentiments and an interpreter of their
emotions. The magnet which attracted the members of
other tribes and the esteem of the general populace. He
served as the identifier of his people and put them on
the map of tribal importance. Physically the tribe
submitted to the head of the clan, emotionally it
followed the poet. Nicholson remarks,

Poetry gave life and currency to an ideal
of Arabian virtue, murūwah, which, though
based on tribal community of blood
insisting that only ties of blood were
sacred, nevertheless became an invisible

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1. al-Ḥasan ibn Rashīq, al-'Umadah (Cairo, 1955), p. 65.

bond between diverse clans, and formed,

whether consciously or not, the basis of

a national community of sentiments.[1]

The means through which the powers of the poet were
attained were his manipulation of words in describing the
raids, in lamenting the former occupants of ruins, in
portraying the beauty, the trot and the gallop of the
horses, in emphasising the deadliness of the swords of
his tribe and their lances; all that came together with
refreshing intervals of amorous pronouncements and
devotions to his beloved. The poet spoke in a language
which was understandable to his listeners and in a style
which enchanted the general populace.

Jāhilī poetry has come to us through collections
made in the second and third centuries of the Islamic era.[2]

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1. R. A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs
   (Cambridge, 1969), p. 72.
2. Probably the first collection of the Jāhilī poetry
   was made by Ḥammād ibn Maisarah, generally known as
   Ḥammād al-Rāwiyah. According to al-Madā'inī (d. 225/
   839), he was the most learned, a'lam al-nās, in the
   wars of the Jāhilī people, the Jahilī events, the
   Jāhilī poetry, the Jāhilī geneaology and the Jāhilī
   terminologies. When the Umayyad Caliph, Walīd ibn
   'Abd al-Malik (86-96/705-714) asked him how he came
   to be known as al-Rāwiyyah (i.e. the transmitter),
   Ḥammād replied: "Because I am able to recite to you
   the work of every poet you know and also of the ones
   you do not know. ⌊Reciting the works of the poets⌋
   in their original form so that you would be able to
   distinguish between the old [i.e. Jāhilī] and the new
   [i.e./

[i.e. Islamic and the post-Islamic]!" (Yāqūt al-Hamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. IV (Cairo, 1927), p. 137). The tradition goes on to say that when put to the test by Walīd, Hammād recited 2900 odes belonging to the Jāhilī period. Yāqūt quotes al-Asma'ī as saying: "Hammād was the most learned of the people provided he remained faithful." Yāqūt explains that what al-Asma'ī meant was that "provided he did not add or curtail in the poem and the events (of the Jāhilī) he narrated. For he was accused of composing poetry and attributing it to the Jāhilī poets." (Yāqūt al-Hamawī, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 137.) The work known as al-Mu'allaqāt al-Sab' or al-Sab' al-Tiwal is attributed to Hammād by most authorities in the Arabic literature. Hammād is said to have been born in 95/713. He died in 155/771.

2. Mufaddal al-Dabbī's collection, known as al-Mufaddaliyyāt, "contains some 120 odes and fragments, chiefly from lesser pre-Islamic poets,..." (H. A. R. Gibb, Arabic Literature, [Oxford, 1963], p. 24). The collection was made at the instance of al-Mansūr, the 'Abbāsid Caliph (d. 158/774) for the instruction of his son, al-Mahdī. al-Dabbī died ca. 170/786.

3. The collection of Habīb ibn 'Aws al-Tā'ī, who is generally known as Abū Tammām, is known as al-Hamāsah. It is the best known collection, in which "he is more of a poet in selection than in his own poems" (R. A. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 130). Although he is said to have composed another collection, or rather "selection", of the Jāhilī poets, known as al-Fuhūl. One of the literary debates undertaken by the Islamic writers of the medieval times was the subject whether Abū Tammām was a better poet than al-Mutannabī. In fact the time at which the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha, al-Sharīf al-Radī, was born and lived, i.e. the latter part of the fourth century, the literary circles of Baghdad were engaged in fighting pitched battles over the/

the issue. And it is, perhaps, one of the reasons
that when Abū al-Faraj came to talk about Abū Tammām
in his famous Book of Songs (al-Aghānī), he found it
difficult to add to so much that had already been said
of Abū Tammām. However, without referring to
al-Mutannabī, the writer of al-Aghānī makes it clear
as to whom he thought to be the best poet of his
time (Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, al-Aghānī, vol. 16
[Cairo, n.d.], p. 384.). Abū Tammām, therefore,
constitutes the valuable evidence in favour of the
authenticity of the Jāhilī literature, for the collector
had his own dīwān (printed in Beirut, 1889) and his
al-Hamāsah attained fame through his method of
selection and his personality. In his al-Hamāsah,
Abū Tammām is guided by the subject matter rather
than by the poets themselves. For example, the first
bāb (i.e. the chapter) is called al-Hamāsah (and the
collection takes its name after this chapter,
meaning courage or valour) and consists of all that
had been written under the subject by the Jāhilī poets
down to his own time. "No one," writes Gibb, "who
reads the poems preserved in the Hamāsah of Abū Tammām
(or the pieces translated from it by Sir Charles Lyall)
will deny that there is an art, springing out of
natural feeling and popular consciousness, and
expressing with vigour, with a certain wild beauty,
and often with a strangely moving power, the personality
of the poets and the conceptions and ideals of their
age." (H. A. R. Gibb, op. cit., p. 25). Abū Tammām is
said to have been born in 172/788. He died in 231/845.

There are other collections, like the one which
al-Buḥtarī (205-284/820-897) collected, calling it
al-Hamāsah also. But his collection, either due to
the fact that in his collection he is rather guided by
his own taste which was not shared by others, or the
fact that it came after Abū Tammām's and failed to
rise above it, is amongst the less known and quoted.

And/

In many ways they have a great deal in common with Nahj
al-Balāgha. They all share the same processes, viz, their
existence in fragments in early works; their reliance on
the oral transmissions from one generation to the next;
and their laying claim to the utterances of those who lived
two or three centuries before. However, the collections
of the Jāhilī poets have been generally accepted by the
Muslim intelligentsia. In the face of recent criticism of
their authenticity, notably Ṭāhā Ḥusain in his work Fī
al-Adab al-Jāhilī[1], the general academic consensus still
accepts that a considerable part of these collections
belongs to the period to which they were generally
attributed.[2]

And so is the Lāmiyyat al-'Arab, which although still
taught in some of the Islamic universities for its
linguistic merits, has, however, come to be regarded as
the work of Khalaf ibn Ḥayyān, generally known as Khalaf
al-Aḥmar (d. ca. 180/796) rather than al-Shanfara,
the Jāhilī poet, to whom it had initially been attributed.

1. Ṭāhā Ḥusain, Fī al-Adab al-Jāhilī (Cairo, 1927), p. 64.
2. R. A. Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 139-40: "That considerable
traces of religious feelings are to be found in Pre
-Islamic poetry admits of no denial," writes Nicholson,
after quoting some verses of 'Adī ibn Zayd, "but the
passages in question were formerly explained as due to
interpolation. This view no longer prevails. Thanks
mainly to the arguments of Von Kremer, Sir Charles
Lyall, and Wellhausen, it has become to be recognised
(1) that in many cases the above mentioned religious
feeling is not Islamic in tone; (2) that the passage
in which it occurs are not Islamic in origin; and
(3) that it is the natural and necessary result of the
widely spread, though on the whole superficial, influence
of Judaism and especially of Christianity."

The subject matter of Nahj al-Balāgha being mainly preachings, commands, Unity of God, descriptions of Holy Pilgrimage, the Angels and the images of the Qur'ān, it could not have been further apart from the themes and the subject matter of the Jāhilī poetry. Yet there are quotations from it, although infrequent, which have been employed to emphasise the point and to borrow the power the Jāhilī poetry still exerted on the minds of the people.[1] Here and there one finds some indication that a Jāhilī idea is expressed although the words and the construction of the sentences are different. The sentence ilā an qām thālith al-qawm nāfija hudnaih[2] in Nahj al-Balāgha perhaps borrows from al-Huṭaï'ah (d.678 A.D.)in his satire which has been regarded as the worst of its kind, and in which he ridicules the over-fondness of eating.[3]

II. The Jāhilī Prose

On the other side of the linguistic art of the Jāhilīyah, the prose, stood the khaṭīb and the kāhin. Perhaps it is due to the part played by memory that the Jāhilī prose that has come down to us is insignificant compared with the Jāhilī poetry. Zakī Mubārak reports a conversation between Khalīl Muṭrān and Muḥammad Haikal in the University of Cairo in 1928, when Khalīl Muṭrān pointed

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1. Nahj al-Balāgha, Address Nos. 3, 24, 34, etc.
2. Ibid., vol. 1, Address No. 3, p. 30.
3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, The Commentary, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1959), p. 197.

out that the total work in the field of prose belonging
to the Jāhilīyah period did not exceed the volume of a
booklet, and yet, despite its insignificance, it proved
sufficient to produce literary figures like 'Alī ibn
Abī Ṭālib and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. "This," says Zakī
Mubārak, "is a mistake. For the literary qualities which
manifested themselves in the khuṭubāt [i.e. speeches] of
the Arabs at the time of the Prophet were proofs of the
many collections which must have existed at the time, of
poetry, prose, speeches and proverbs."[1]

However, Zakī Mubārak's claim is not substantiated
with necessary evidence. Although al-Jāhiz's remark can
be quoted to endorse his statement. Al-Jāhiz (d. 256/
869) says: "What the Jāhilī Arabs spoke in the way of
eloquent prose was much more than what they wrote and
spoke in the way of poetry. But not the tenth of that
prose was preserved and not the tenth of the poetry was
lost."[2] The same author lists a number of the speakers
who were active in the Jāhilī period. Amongst the ancient
speakers he cites Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy, who used to adress the
Jāhilīs generally and the tribe of Kinānah in particular.
His influence over the ancient societies of the Jāhilī
period was so profound that when he died the calendars
of Kinānah were made to take the date of his death as the

1. Zakī Mubārak, al-Nathr al-Fannī fī al-Qarn al-Rābi'
   (Cairo, 1934), p. 33.
2. Al-Jāhiz, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1928),
   p. 158.

starting point. And it remained so up until the time when
Abraha came to Mecca with his army and elephants to invade
Mecca and destroy the Temple; it was only then that the
Year of the Elephant became the starting point of the
Arabian calendars.[1] According to one report Ka'b was the
first man to name Friday jum'ah, for prior to that the day
was called 'arūbah, perhaps owing to the fact that on that
day the people gathered round him to be addressed by him.
Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 395/1004) records one of his
speeches, as follows:

> Listen, and listen carefully; seek knowledge
> in order to be knowledgeable; ask in order
> to understand. The night is dark and the
> day is still while the earth [serving you as]
> the floor and the sky as the roof; all this
> is a test; for the late-comers as it has
> been for the forerunners. Treat your
> relations with kindness and generosity.
> Protect your relations through marriage.
> And put your wealth to fruitful uses. Purify
> your deeds. For have you seen a dead person
> ever returning? Or a dead body every
> resurrected? The abode is in front of you
> and the probable happening is the opposite
> of what you say! Adorn your Temple [the

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1. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, al-Awā'il, vol. 1 (Damascus,
   1975), pp. 47-48.

Ka'bah] and revere it; and hold fast to it;

never forsaking it. For a great news there

is for it in store; [as] a noble prophet

is going to rise from it.[1]

Amongst other public speakers of the period of the
Jāhilīyah, Akhtham ibn Saifī, Ḥājib ibn Zurārah, al-Ḥarth
ibn 'Ubād al-Bakrī, 'Amr ibn Sharīd, Khālid ibn Ja'far
al-Kilābī, 'Alqamah ibn 'Alāqah al-'Āmirī, Qais ibn
Mas'ūd al-Shaibānī, 'Āmir ibn Ṭufail al-'Āmirī, 'Amr ibn
Ma'dīkarīb, have been noted. But prominent amongst the
khuṭabā' of the Jāhilī period and most renowned of them
all, was Quss ibn Sā'ida al-Iyādī, who became a proverbial
khatīb in the spheres of al-balāgha and good preaching.
Apart from his words, his manners were also noted as the
Muslim historians point out that he was the first to

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1. Ibid., p. 84. The text reads:

اِسْمَعُوا اَوْعُوا ، وَتَعَلَّمُوا تَعَلَّمُوا وَ تَفَهَّمُوا تَفَهَّمُوا . لَيْلٌ
دَاجٌ وَنَهَارٌ سَاجٌ وَالْارْضُ مِهَادٌ وَ السَّمَاءُ بِنَاءٌ وَالْجِبَالُ
اَوْتَادٌ ، وَالْاوَّلُونَ كَالْآخِرِينَ كُلٌّ ذَلِكَ اِلَى بَلِى . فَقَلَّوا
اَرْحَامَكُمْ وَاحْفَظُوا اَصْهَارَكُمْ وَثَمِّرُوا اَمْوَالَكُمْ و اَصْلَحُوا
اَعْمَالَكُمْ . فَهَلْ رَاَيْتُمْ مِن هَالِك رَجَعَ ، اَوْ مَيْتٍ نُشِرَ؟
الدَّارُ اَمَامَكُمْ وَ الظَّنَ خِلَافَ مَا تَقُولُونَ . زَيِّنُوا حَرَمَكُمْ
وَعَظِّمُوهُ وَ تَمَسَّكُوا بِهِ وَلَا تُفَارِقُوهُ فَسَيَأْتِي لَهُ نَبَاءٌ
عَظِيمٌ سَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ نَبِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ .

preach while leaning on a walking stick.[1] He may have
been a Christian and, according to some, a Unitarian.[2]
The impact of his words, style, and the message was so
great as to engage the attention of all the literary
writings of Muslim scholars, like al-Jāḥiẓ, Abū al-Faraj
al-Iṣfahānī, Abū ʻAlī al-Qālī, Ibn ʻAbd Rabbih and others.
Analysing the rational causes and the earliest influences
which may have helped Muḥammad in conceiving the idea of
prophethood and, eventually, the formulation of the Qur'ān,
some of the Orientalists mention Waraqa ibn Nawfal al-Asadī,
who was a leading member of the group known as al-Ḥunafā'
in the Jāhilī period. Others have cited Baḥīrah, the
Christian monk whom Muḥammad had visited with his uncle
Abū Ṭālib on his way to Syria. The Muslims, however,
point out that neither of the two have been noted either
as al-khaṭīb, i.e. the public preacher or speaker, or as
the writer of a prose work such as the Qur'ān is. In the
case of Qus, however, we have a clear indication of
a lasting impression on Muḥammad. We have already noted
earlier in the first   chapter how al-Jāḥiẓ, quoting
a speech of Qus through Muḥammad, had said that no better
isnād (for Qus' specches) could be asked for. On the
authority of Ibn ʻAbbās, Ibn ʻAbd Rabbih records the
following story:

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1. al-Jāḥiẓ, op. cit., p. 151.
2. Fardinan Total, Muʻjam al-Aʻlam (Beirut, 1956), p. 416.

A deputation came to the Messenger of God
from the tribe of al-Iyād. He [Muhammad]
asked them: "Which of you know Qus ibn
Sā'idah?" They replied: "We all know him."
He asked: "What happened to him?" They
answered that he had died. Thereupon
Muhammad said: "I shall never forget him
as he appeared at the Market of 'Ukāz,
riding a red camel and thus addressing the
people:

"Listen and listen carefully; whosoever
dies is lost and whatever there is to come
will come. The news of what is to come is
in the heavens. [But here on earth] there
are lessons to be learned [in the] passing
clouds and the sinking stars; and the
revolving heavenly bodies. Qus swears by
God that there is one religion which unto
God is more pleasing than this one which
you practice." [Then he said:] "Why do I
see people go but not return? Were they
pleased with the place and therefore
stayed on or were they [for once] left
alone so they went to sleep?"[1]

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1. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1928), p. 385.

The third component of the language-oriented society
was al-kāhin. His functions ranged between the Brahman of
India and the Kohen of the Jews. He foretold the future,
interpreted dreams and gave judgements in the people's
disputes. His vehicle of influence through which he
manifested his skills was, like the poet and the public
speaker, al-khatīb, short sentences carefully measured
and prophetically pronounced. His rhymed endings that
have been reported are somewhat similar to the early
sūrahs of the Qur'ān; in the pattern of the sentence, the
force of adjurations and the usage of rhymes are all common
between the two. Al-balāghah has been defined as mā
yaqtadī al-ḥāl, meaning that the speech is fasīh or
eloquent if it conformed with the requirements of the
occasions and the place. Thus it seems likely that the
early revelations were made in the style people of the
day had grown accustomed to, i.e. the language and the
style of the kāhin. Ibn Ishāq's version of the two most
prominent kāhins, Shaqīq and Satīh is given as follows:

> Rabī'a b. Nasr, king of the Yaman, was of
> the true stock of the Tubba' kings. He had
> a vision which terrified him and continued
> to cause him much anxiety. So he summoned
> every soothsayer, sorcerer, omenmonger and
> astrologer in his kingdom and said: "I have
> had a vision which terrifies me and is a
> source of anxiety. Tell me what it was and

what it means?" They replied: "Tell us the
vision and we will tell you its meaning."
"If I tell you it," said he, "I can have no
confidence in your interpretation; for the
only man who knows its meaning is he who
knows about the vision without my telling
him." Thereupon one of them recommended
him to send for Shaqīq and Saṭīḥ, for they
knew more than others and would be able to
answer his questions. Saṭīḥ's name was
Rabī' b. Rabī' b. Mas'ūd b. Māzin b. Dhi'b
b. 'Ady b. Māzin Ghassān. Shaqīq was the
son of Sa'ab b. Yashkur b. Ruhm b. Afrak
b. Qasr b. Abqar b. Anmar b. Nizār, and
Anmar was the father of Bajīla and Khath'am.
So he sent for them and Saṭīḥ arrived first.
The king then repeated his words, ending,
"If you know the vision you will know what
it means." Saṭīḥ replied:

> A fire you did see
>
> Come forth from the sea.
>
> It fell on the low country
>
> And devoured all that be.[1]

─────────────────────── The text reads:

[1] حَمِمَةٌ خَرَجَتْ مِنْ ظُلَمَهُ نَوَقَّمْتُ بِاَرْضٍ تَهِمَةٍ فَاَكَلَتْ مِنْهَا
كُلَّ ذَاتِ جُمْجُمَه •

The king agreed that this was exactly what
he had seen, and what was the meaning of it
all? He answered:

> By the serpent of the lava plains I swear
> The Ethiopians on your land shall bear
> Ruling from Abyan to Jurash everywhere.[1]

The king exclaimed that this was distressing
news, but when would these things come to pass
-- in his time or after him? Saṭiḥ replied
that more than sixty or seventy years must
first pass. "Would the new-comers' kingdom
last?""No, an end would be put to it after
seventy years or more; then they would be
slain or driven out as fugitives.""Who
would do this?""Iram b. Dhū Yazan, who would
come against them from Aden and not leave
one of them in the Yemen." Further questions
drew the information that their kingdom would
not last, but a pure prophet to whom revela-
tion came from on high would bring it to an
end; he would be a man of the sons of Ghalib
b. Fihr b. Malik b. al-Nadr. His dominion

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[1] اَحْلِفُ بِمَا بَيْنَ الْحَرَّتَيْنِ مِنْ حَنَشٍ، لَتَهْبِطَنَّ اَرْضَكُمُ الْحَبَشُ
فَلَيَمْلِكُنَّ مَا بَيْنَ اَبْيَنَ اِلِي جُرَش

would last till the end of time. Has time
an end? asked the king. Yes, replied Satih,
the day on which the first and the last
shall be assembled, the righteous for
happiness, the evildoers for misery. Are
you telling me the truth? the king asked.
[Satih replied:]

Yes, by the dark and the twilight

and the dawn that follows the night

Verily what I have told you is right.[1]

قـال نَـم ،و الـشَّفَقَوَ الـغَسَق وَ الـفَلـق إذا َ اِتسق إنّ مَا َ اَبَاتَك بـه لَحقّ

The above extract from Ibn Isḥāq is as it appears in the
translation of A. Guillaume. I have provided the Arabic
text for the parts of the kāhin's speech where Guillaume
has translated it in verse. But the object of the
exercise is to provide pattern of kāhin's speech which
the part of the story quoted accomplishes. Al-Mas'ūdī
has, in his Murūj al-Dhahab, several utterances of kāhins
in the chapter he devotes to their stories.[2] And those
utterances conform to the pattern quoted above.

It may be noted, in conlusion, that the characteristic
of Jāhilī prose, whether in the speeches or in the sayings
of the soothsayers, is its stress on the rhyme and it
conveys the impression that the ideas were made to follow
the available rhymes rather than the opposite. Generally

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1. Ibn Isḥāq, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
2. al-Mas'ūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1948),
   pp. 180-84.

there seems to be the lack of natural flow in the constructions. Many of the Jāhilī quotations end up in prophesying the arrival of the Arabian prophet as we have noted in the speech of Ka'b ibn Lu'ī (from amongst the khatībs) and the above dialogue between Satīḥ and the king. All of which brings into question the authenticity of it. However, there can be no doubt as to the pattern the Jāhilī khatīb and kāhin must have spoken in. Nor can there be doubt about the tremendous influence they exercised over the Jāhilī societies. The quotation of kāhins prophesying the arrival of the Prophet, if attributed to him falsely, do nevertheless, speak of his importance even to the Islamic societies. And the example of Qus ibn Sā'idah al-Iyādī is another testimony where the Jāhilī influence and the voice still echoed when much else had died away.

Following are some of the examples where al-Saj' (i.e. rhyme), the other feature of the Jāhilī prose, seems to be the pattern in Nahj al-Balāgha: (1) Address No. 1, note the short and rhymed sentences which conform well with the Jāhilī style; (2) Address No. 81, in some of the sentences of which the ideas seem to be made to follow the rhyme, a characteristic feature of the speeches of al-Kāhin as noted above; (3) Address No. 88, where the language of al-Kāhin is most audible; (4) Address No. 101, where there are striking similarities with the speech of Qus ibn Sā'idah quoted above; (5) Address No. 153, which is in the description of al-Khuffāsh (i.e. the

bat) and which seems to be sustained purely by rhymes, for there is little information about the creature itself.

In fact it would not be wrong to state that in Nahj al-Balāgha the speeches of which the dominant feature is rhyme are more frequent than those which do not seem to deliberately follow the rhyme.

B. The Qur'ān

With the Qur'ān, the processes of emulation become more apparent in Nahj al-Balāgha. There are examples where the words have been borrowed and there are examples where both the words and the ideas have been borrowed and these are in addition to the direct quotations from the Qur'ān which freely occur in Nahj al-Balāgha. The examples of all these groups are as follows:

1. In the first Address the sentence wala yuhsī na'mā'hū al-'āddūn (i.e. His blessings cannot be counted by the reckoners) seems to be a direct borrowing from Sūrah XIV:34 and Sūrah XVI:18, where the sentence wa in ta'uddū ni'mat Allāh lā tuhsūhā appears, indicating that both the words and the idea has been borrowed in Nahj al-Balāgha. Similarly the word fatara which occurs in fatara al-khalāi'iq bi qudratih is used in the same context in the Qur'ān in Sūrahs VI:79 and XI:51. The sentence wa nashar al-riyāh bi rahmatihi occurs in the Qur'ān (Sūrah XXVI:24) where the idea of spreading the winds is associated with God's mercy and is expressed in

the same words. Again the idea of mountains being the stabilisers of earth which is expressed in the same address has the Qur'ānic precedent in Sūrah LXXVIII:7. At the time of the creation God "decorated" the skies with stars. This is expressed in Nahj al-Balāgha in the setence: thumma zayyanahā bi zīnat al-kawākib and has the Qur'ānic parallel in Sūrah XXXVII:6. Again, the idea of "cleaving the space" at the time of creation is expressed as: thumma ansha'ā subhānahū fatq al-ajwā', which occurs in the Qur'ānic Sūrah XXI:30. The story of the creation of Adam, is told in the words of the Qur'ānic Sūrahs XXXVIII:21-22, XXXVII:11, II:264, XV:26, and VII:11.

2. In Address No. 23, wealth and children have been described as the harvest of this world and the good deeds as the harvest of the next world: inna al-māl wa al-banīn harth al-dunyā wa al-'amal al-sālih harth al-ākirah, which, both the idea and the words, appear in the Qur'ānic Sūrahs II:40 and XLII:20 and are seemingly the source.

3. In Address No. 27, al-Jihād has been described as the raimᵉnt of piety, libās al-taqwā, which apparently has been borrowed from the Qur'ān, Sūrah VII:26.

4. The beginning of Address No. 48 has the eloquence of the Meccan Sūrahs and compares with Sūrah CXIV:30.

5. In Address No. 85, the <u>Ahl al-Bait</u>, the people of Muḥammad's household, have been described as <u>alsinat al-ṣidq</u> (i.e. the tongues of truth); this metaphor appears in the Qur'ān, Sūrah XXVI:84, although in singular form, i.e. <u>lisān ṣidq</u>.

6. In Sūrah No. LXXXIV, heaven has been described as the heaven of the constellations, <u>dhāt al-burūj</u>; the expression is borrowed by <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> in Address No. 88.

7. Address No. 95 opens with the sentences: If God has granted a respite to the oppressor and the transgressor, [He has done so] for he will never be able to escape Him; God, who is watchful over the passages the tyrant is likely to pass by, and [being near to him as] the passage of his saliva.[1] These ideas of God's nearness, His watchfulness, the inevitability of one's falling back to His judgement and Command are also expressed in the Qur'ān, Sūrahs LVII:4, LXXXIX:14 and L:16.

8. A Prophet is sent to call people towards truth (<u>al-Ḥaqq</u>) and to be a witness (<u>al-Shahīd</u>), over His creation. This constitutes the theme of Address No. 112 and has parallel in the Qur'ān, Sūrahs II:143 and IV:40.

1.

وَ نَحْنُ اقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيْدِ.

9.   'Alī was censured over treating people as equals in distributing the state allowances. His reaction is Address No. 124, which begins: atāmurūnnī an aṭlub al-naṣr bi al-jawr fī man wullīt 'alaih?, which speaks in the language and the style of a fa ghair Allāh tā'mrūnnī a'bud ayyuhā al-Jāhilūn?, verse 64 of Sūrah XXXIX.

10.   In Address No. 131 and alluding to God, the following is said:

> He under whose Command stand This and the
> Next World; to Whom heaven and earth have
> surrendered their keys; and to Whom the
> green trees prostrate day and night in
> worship; and with the Will of whom the
> green boughs and branches yield a luminous
> fire; [Or] with the Blessings of Whom the
> [green trees] bring forth fruits that are
> ripened.

Both the style and the contents of this part of the address have parallels in the Qur'ān which, in Sūrah XXII:18, says:

> Hast thou not seen that unto Allāh
> payeth adoration whosoever is in the
> heavens and whosoever is in the earth,
> and the sun, and the moon, and the stars,
> and the hills, and the trees, and the
> beasts and many of mankind, while there
> are many unto whom the doom is justly due.

And the idea of a green tree yielding the luminous fire is also spoken of in Sūrah XXXVI:80: "[He] Who hath appointed for you fire from the green tree, and behold! Ye kindle from it!"

These examples are sufficient to show the profound influence of the Qur'ān over the style and the ideas of the speaker in Nahj al-Balāgha. But by the same token, the conformity with the Qur'ān of some parts and the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha brings into question the ideas and the constructions which are not known to the Qur'ān and yet are still a part of the book and thus attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. One notices that concepts like al-Īmān (i.e. Belief), al-Ṣabr (i.e. Patience), al-Yaqīn (i.e. Faith or Conviction), al-'Adl (i.e. Justice), al-Jihād (i.e. Holy War), are used in the Qur'ān in their simple and basic forms. Let us take the first word, al-Īmān, which occurs in many Sūrahs of the Qur'ān.[1] Now in all the usages the word has been used to mean "belief" and "faith". But no further refinement of the term has been attempted. Nor the possible sub-divisions of the concept are either mentioned or alluded to. In Nahj al-Balāgha, however, the very word al-Īmān meets with a logical, sophisticated and analytical treatment.

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1. Sūrahs II:108; III:166, 173, 177, 193; V:6; VIII:2; IX:24, 125; XVI:106; XXX:56; XXXIII:22; XL:10; XLII:52; XLIX:7, 11, 14, 17; LI:21; LVIII:22; XLVIII:4; LIX:9, 10; LXXIV:31.

"Al-Īmān," it says, "stands on four pillars, viz, al-Sabr
[forbearance], al-Yaqīn [the certainty of Faith], al-'Adl
[Justice], and al-Jihād [the Holy War]." Then al-Sabr
[the first pillar of al-Īmān] in turn, is said to be of
four variations: al-Shawq [longing], al-Shafaq [fear],
al-Zuhd [asceticism] and al-Taraqqub [expectation].

> And so whosoever longed for heaven, refrained
>
> from the worldly desires; and whosoever
>
> feared Fire [of Hell] abstained from doing
>
> the forbidden; and whosoever practiced
>
> ascetisism, calamities came easier to him;
>
> and whosoever anticipated his death, raced
>
> to perform good deeds.[1]

The speech goes on to describe the variations of al-Yaqīn
(Faith, positively believed), al-'Adl (Justice) and
al-Jihād (the Holy War). In the variations of the last
mentioned, the term is extended to include al-Amr bi
al-Mā'rūf (asking people to perform that which has been
enjoined), al-Nahī 'an al-Munkar (preventing people from
committing that which has been forbidden), al-Sidq fī
al-Mawātin (being true to one's convictions and one's
stand), and Shan'ān al-Fāsiqīn (repudiation of and enmity
towards the Godless and the sinful). This analytical
style with regard to these concepts is somewhat alien to

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1. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3 (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 157-58.

the style and the language of the Qur'ān, praiseworthy
in itself though it may be. However, this seems to be
a later theological development.

Moving away from the conceptual and turning to
material and bodily forms, there is yet another descriptive
and stylistic aspect in Nahj al-Balāgha which is not
found in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān's central theme remains
Man; yet a great attention is paid to environment: the
sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the mountains, the earth and
the ones which breathe and move on it. Creatures sharing the
existence of man, the animals, have not been overlooked
but the mention is either in the historical context, as
in the story of Joseph (Sūrah XII), when Joseph's brothers
wanted him to go with them and asked their father for
his permission, he said: "It grieves me that you should
take him with you, and I fear the wolf may eat him"
(XII:13). Or on the occasion when the mighty army of
Solomon is on the march: "An ant said, 'Ants, enter
your dwelling places, lest Solomon and his hosts crush
you'"(XXVII:18). Or the animals are mentioned in the
process of inviting man's attention to God through His
creation, as: "Do you not see the camel, how was it
created?" (LXXXVII:17). Or: "Lo! those on whom you call
beside Allāh will never create a fly though they combine
together for the purpose" (XXII:73). Or to stress that
God remains the source of inspiration not only for man
but even for small creatures such as a bee: "And thy Lord
inspired the bee, saying: Choose thou habitations in the

hills and in the trees and in that which they hatch"
(XVI:68).

The point to note is that when creatures or animals
are mentioned in the Qur'ān, their mention is brief and
confined to illustrating a given point. There is no
attempt in the Qur'ān to render a scientific or analytical
account of any of the animals it mentions. Nahj al-Balāgha
on the other hand, has the descriptive addresses on
peacocks, bats, and ants.[1] In sharp contrast with the
Qur'ān, the accounts are detailed and the language
highly ornamented. Yet the actual information communicated
on the bird, the nocturnal mammal, and the insect is far
less than the space devoted to it would demand. It
appears that the forced artificiality of the language of
the accounts under discussion in Nahj al-Balāgha not only
alienates them from the style of the Qur'ān but also
from much of the book itself. In fact one is inclined
to say that the casual references of the Qur'ān, to the
beasts, the birds, and the insects, are more in harmony
with the knowledge and the spirit of the time than those
deliberate renderings in Nahj al-Balāgha and attributed
to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

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1. Nahj al-Balāgha, description of bat: No. 153, vol. 2,
   p. 60; description of peacock, No. 163, vol. 2,
   p. 163; description of ant and locust: No. 183, vol. 2,
   p. 183.

CHAPTER V

THE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

The language and the style of a book which has been
regarded for the last thousand years as next only to the
Qur'ān in its excellence of language and superiority of
expression, and which has been extensively quoted by both
Sunnites and Shī'ites up to the present time, must be
examined in the context of this thesis. Despite the
differing views concerning 'Alī, what are the common
factors which made the Sunnī scholars like 'Amr ibn Baḥr
al-Jāḥiz (d. 255 A.H.), Abū 'Alī al-Qālī (d. 356 A.H.),
Qāḍī Nu'mān (d. 358 A.H.) and other medieval scholars
quote 'Alī? Reverence for 'Alī's position in Islam is
one possible answer. But the other which is more in
conformity with the nature of the works of the authors
cited above, is the language and the style. Fakhr al-Dīn
al-Rāzī (d. 606 A.H.), while commenting on the verse
about the angels in the chapter of al-baqarah, quotes
from Nahj al-Balāgha and states: "Know that there is no
description more sublime and more grandiloquent than this
of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī bar the speeches [al-kalām] of
God and His Prophet."[1]

Chronologically speaking, Nahj al-Balāgha, or the
material contained therein, is claimed to begin in the

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1. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Mafātiḥ al-Ghaib (better known
   as Tafsīr al-Kabīr), vol. 2 (Cairo, 1307), p. 256.

year 11 of the Islamic era, i.e. immediately after the
death of Muḥammad (see No. 230, vol. 2; No. 64, vol. 1,
etc.) and end in the year 40 A.H., i.e. the year 'Alī
was assassinated (see No. 145, vol. 2; No. 23, vol. 3,
etc.). If genuine, it is the nearest literature in terms
of time, to the Qur'ān and the only substantial surviving
material which is said to have been produced in the first
half of the first Islamic century.

It should be remembered that 'Alī was adopted by
Muḥammad when only six years of age, and he remained with
him in the Meccan and Medinan periods. All that, in
addition to his being Muḥammad's first cousin and son-in-law,
would have affected 'Alī's intellectual upbringing and it
is most probable that he emulated Muḥammad after the
latter's death and before his own Caliphate, by restraining
his sword while engaging in oratory. The association of
the two, the Prophet and 'Alī, was so close that it
would make it difficult to find an occasion when a verse
was "revealed" and when 'Alī was not present either in
Mecca or in Medina. The influence of the Qur'ān therefore
upon him is another factor to be borne in mind when
analysing his style.

The Usage of al-Saj'

Al-saj' is a type of prose composition which is
characterised by short rhyming phrases. Although little
of that has survived and although that which has survived
may not be genuine, the certainty of the usage of al-saj'

at an early period is guaranteed by the very fact that
efforts were made to forge it. One observes that the
parts of the Qur'ān nearer in terms of time to the
Jāhilī period contain more short rhyming phrases. Like
the Qur'ān, 'Alī was a product of the Jāhilī period, too.
One therefore would expect to find al-saj' in his pro-
nouncements emulating either the Qur'ān or the Jāhilīs
or both. In Nahj al-Balāgha one does find that the
usage of al-saj' has been relied upon extensively. Not,
perhaps, so effectively as in the Qur'ān, but in the same
pattern nevertheless, and seemingly to achieve the same
objectives, viz., conformity with the existing literature,
in this case more to the Qur'ān perhaps. This would take
due regard to the shortcomings of those who were
illiterate and would attempt to create the desired impact
on the minds of the listeners. We take, for example,
No. 12 (vol. 1, p. 40), where the victorious commander
addresses the rebellious army now defeated. Note how the
rhyme is made to create the profoundest of impact;
"kuntum jund al-marā; wa-atbā' al-bahīma; raghā
fa-ajabtum wa-'uqira fa-harabtum".[1] "You were the army
of a woman; and the followers of the beast of burden; it
howled and you responded; it was slaughtered and you ran
away!" The suggestions of fighting under unwise leader-
ship, of not knowing the cause, of not being able to

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1. The text reads: كُنْتُمْ جُنْدَ الْمَرَاةِ وَ اتْبَاعَ الْبَهِيمَةَ رَغَى
فَاجَبْتُمْ وَ عُقِرَفَحَرَبْتُمْ .

sustain the effort, are crammed in the rhymes. In another place (No. 20, vol. 1, p. 54), the usage of assonances and rhymes has combined with effect: "fa-inna al-ghāyāt amāmakum; wa inna al-sāʿata taḥdūkum; takhaffafū talhaqū fa-innamā yuntaẓar bi-awwalikum ākhirakum."[1] "Lo, your destination is in front of you, behind is time urging you along, lighten your burdens and catch up. For with the arrival of your first one [the arrival of] your last one is awaited." The idea of death and destiny being in front of man to which he is being pushed by time and the suggestion of lightening one's burden in the form of worldly possessions and racing towards the better world (instead of meandering along) is conveyed so effectively that the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, intervenes to say: "If it were to be weighed, barring the speeches of God and His Prophet, with any other piece of prose, the scale would tilt in its favour...."[2] In No. 26 (vol. 1, p. 63), the holy war, al-jihād, has been praised and the meta-phorical usages of the rhymes is noteworthy:

$$\text{وَهُوَ لِبَاسُ التَّقْوَى وَدِرْعُ اللهِ الْحَصِينَهْ وَجُنَّتُهُ الْوَثِيقَهْ .}$$

It is the attire of piety; and the God
-given shield that protects; and the armour
which is impenetrable.

---

1. $$\text{فَإِنَّ الْغَايَةَ أَمَامَكُمْ وَإِنَّ كُمُ السَّاعَةَ تَحْدُوكُمْ تَخَفَّفُوا اتْلَحَقُوا}$$
$$\text{فَإِنَّمَا يُنْتَظَرُ بِأَوَّلِكُمْ آخِرُكُمْ .}$$

2. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, p. 54.

This is imagery which must have been equally appreciated by the soldiers in 'Alī's army and the ascetics in the mosque.

Writing on the features of Qur'ānic style, Montgomery Watt remarks:

> Occasionally a phrase is added at the end of a verse which is really otiose as regards sense but supplies the assonance, as in 12.10 and 21.68, 79, 104. Sometimes the sense is strained in order to produce the rhyme, for instance in Sura 4, where statements regarding God are thrown into the past by the use of kāna, "was", in front of them, and are thereby given the accusative ending on which the rhyme depends. The form of a proper name is occasionally modified for the sake of rhyme, as sinīn (95.2) and ilyasīn (37, 130).[1]

Over-indulging the rhymes is, of course, a Jāhilī attitude, of the old literary pattern, which neither the Qur'ān nor Nahj al-Balāgha is free from. In Nahj al-Balāgha, the following is one occasion on which the rhyme seems to serve no other purpose than to conform to the one which follows in the next sentence:

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1. W. Montgomery Watt, Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 71.

أَرْضُكُمْ قَرِيبَةٌ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَعِيدَةٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ.

Your land is near water and far from

heavens.[1]

This 'Alī has been quoted as having said while addressing the people of al-Baṣra. Now if the latter sentence is interpreted as "far from heaven" meaning "far from God's Mercy" (at that particular juncture and in that act of rebellion), the former, "ardukum qarībat min al-mā'", still remains inexplicable. What was wrong, one would be inclined to wonder, in being near water in a land where the sun was hostile and water a valuable commodity? We are, therefore, forced to assume that it was al-Samā', for which the rhyme al-Mā' has been brought in. The other example appears as follows:

نَقَمْتُ بِالأَمْرِ حِينَ نَشِلُوا وَتَطَلَّعْتُ حِينَ تَقَبَّعُوا وَنَطَقْتُ حِينَ
تَخَتَّمُوا وَمَضَيْتُ بِنُورِ اللَّهِ حِينَ وَقَفُوا وَكُنْتُ أَخْفَضَهُمْ صَوْتًا
وَأَعْلاهُمْ فَوْتًا، فَطِرْتُ بِعِنَانِهَا وَاسْتَبْدَدْتُ بِرِهَانِهَا، كَالْجَبَلِ
لاتُحَرِّكُهُ الْقَوَاصِفُ وَلاتُزِيلُهُ الْعَوَاصِفُ، لَمْ يَكُنْ لِأَحَدٍ فِيَّ مَهْمَزٌ
وَلاَلِقَائِلٍ فِيَّ مَغْمَزٌ، الذَّلِيلُ عِنْدِي عَزِيزٌ حَتَّى آخُذَ الْحَقَّ لَهُ
وَالْقَوِيُّ عِنْدِي ضَعِيفٌ حَتَّى آخُذَ الْحَقَّ مِنْهُ، رَضِينَا بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ
وَسَلَّمْنَا لِلَّهِ أَمْرَهُ، أَتُرَانِي أَكْذِبُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَآلِهِ، وَاللَّهِ لَأَنَا أَوَّلُ مَنْ صَدَّقَهُ فَلاَ أَكُونُ أَوَّلَ مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيْهِ،
فَنَظَرْتُ فِي أَمْرِي فَإِذَا طَاعَتِي قَدْ سَبَقَتْ بَيْعَتِي وَإِذَا الْمِيثَاقُ
فِي عُنُقِي لِغَيْرِي.

1. No. 13, vol. 1, p. 41.

I stood for the task when they had deserted
the field and placed myself forward when they
had withdrawn to their shells; I spoke when
they deprived [the community] of their
speech; [Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd corrects the text
at this point and writes ta'ta'ū, in which
case it would mean: I spoke when they were
lost for words.]; I went forward with the
help of divine light when they had
stopped; of their voices the lowest was
mine and yet most original; so I flew with
the reins and was left on my own in the
race; like the mountains which are unmoved by
the ravages of the hurricanes and are not
uprooted by the toils of the tempests; no
one was able to find a fault with me; nor
a speaker to speak ill of me; important
with me is the down-trodden till I secure
his rights for him while the strong is weak
with me till I get what is due from him.
We are satisfied with God's Will and have
entrusted to Him our affairs. Do you
assume I would lie about the Prophet? I
swear by God that I was the first to testify
his mission and I will not be the first to
lie about him. I considered my position
and found that my pledge had preceded my

claim and hanging over my head was a
covenant for someone else.[1]

Guided by the rhymes we have a contradictory text. It
began with fashalū, taqabba'ū, tammana'ū, and waqafū,
contrasted with qumtu, tatalla'tu, nataqtu and madaitu.
Together, the rhymes draw the picture of a courageous
man. Then comes akhfadukum sawta which nullifies the
effects of the aforesaid rhymes, for it suggests a prudent
man, if not one devoid of grit and guts! Because we have
to assume akhfadukum sawta as a merit acquired by choice
and something which one is forced into. For in the latter
case it would cease to be a virtue worth boasting about.
That being so, we are forced to assume that akhfadukum
sawta was brought in to rhyme with a'lākum fawta and for
no other purpose. Then the stated resolution vis-a-vis
the weak and the strong is followed by the statement of
resignation to the Will of God. Here again the premise
has been weakened as in the first example. Then the
passage which began with the announcement of courage
ends with rhymes which again portray a man who is a victim
of indecision and swept away by the force of events.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd does not fail to notice this and
he remarks:

These in fact are from four separate speeches
and therefore do not mix together. And with
each of these Amīr al-Mu'minīn seemed to have

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1. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 36, vol. 1, p. 36.

followed a different direction。 But

al-Raḍī has picked them up from the long

and scattered speeches of ʻAlī...[1]

I would, however, point out that when al-Raḍī has

extracted a passage from a long sermon or picks up a

piece he thinks to be a part of a particular sermon or

speech he usually indicates it with the words minhā or

minhu. However, in the passage quoted above there is no

such indication given by him.[2]

Usage of Metaphor

Ibn Rashīq (390-456 A.H.) wrote:

The Arabs very often make use of al-majāz

and regard it as a praiseworthy feature

in their speeches. For it ⌊al-majāz⌋ is

a sure sign of al-faṣāha ⌊i.e. being free

from the undesirable pitfalls of the

language⌋ and the summit of eloquence

[al-balāghah]. And it is though ⌊the use

of⌋ al-majāz that the language ⌊Arabic⌋

has surpassed the others。[3]

To the literary critics, this al-majāz had a large family,

viz., al-tashbīh (i.e. comparisons and allegories),

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on Nahj al-Balāgha, vol.
    2 (Cairo, 1959), p. 284。
2. al-Sharīf, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 84.
3. Ibn Rashīq, al-ʻUmdah (Cairo, 1955), p. 265.

al-tamthīl (i.e. analogies), al-isti'āra (literally,
borrowing of an expression), al-kināya (allusions or
more precisely, metonymical expression). Now although
I have translated the varieties of al-majāz, the subtlety
of the differences makes these translations only
approximate. Even read and understood in Arabic, it is
not always easy to distinguish say, between al-talmīh
and al-kināya. Indeed both the terms al-majāz and
al-isti'āra have been translated as "metaphor". It is
possible to describe all these varieties of al-majāz as
"speaking metaphorically or figuratively."

The manifestation of al-majāz is found throughout
the known Jāhilī and post-Jāhilī periods. They used
metaphor not only as the recognized vehicle for figures
of speech but also for compressed allusions and allegories.
This is illustrated by the following lines composed by
the Jāhilī prince-poet, Imru' ul-Qais:

سَمَوْتُ إِلَيْهَا بَعْدَ مَا نَامَ أَهْلُهَا
سُمُوَّ حَبَابِ الْمَاءِ حَالاً إِلَى حَال
فَقَالَتْ يَمِينُ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ فَاضِحِي
أَلَمْ تَرَى السَّامَرَ وَ السُّمَّارَ أَخْوَالِي
فَقُلْتُ يَمِينُ اللَّهِ مَا أَنَا بَارِحٌ
وَلَوْ قَطَعُوا رَأْسِي لَدَيْكِ وَ أَوْصَالِي

I rose to her, after her people had gone
to sleep, rising like the water-bubble,
now in one position, now in another!

She said: "By God you are going to disgrace

me! Do you not see the people and the

story-tellers around me?"

I said: "I swear by God, too, that I

never let you go. Even if they cut

my head and the limbs [but] if that act

was done near you!"[1]

The metaphors in question come in the first couplet.
The compression of the following facts in samawtu and
sumua ḥabāb al-mā' ḥāla 'alā ḥāl is noteworthy:(1) that
the girl is a bedouin; (2) that the habit of the roaming
tribes was to choose an elevation or a hill to spend the
night; (3) that the poet was afraid advancing at times
and retreating in other times like the water-bubble tossed
up and down by the waves, advancing and retreating;
(4) that the poet was as helpless in his actions as the
water-bubble.

Metaphor in the Qur'ān

Metaphor is found in the Qur'ān just as much as it
was used by the Jāhilī poets. No Sūrah said to have been
revealed in Medina is devoid of metaphor. And those of
the Meccan Sūrahs which do not contain a metaphor can be
counted on one's fingers. An example can be taken from
Sūrah XIX, called "Mary", which begins:

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1. Imru' ul-Qais, Dīwān (Beirut, 1970), p. 232.

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا ۚ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا ۚ
قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ مِنِّي شَيْبًا
وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ۚ

This is a mention of your Lord's mercy

unto His servant Zachariah. When he called

upon his Sustainer and enunciated his

prayer in whisper. He said: "O Lord, the

bones within me have grown feeble and my

head is aflame through [the mischief of]

the old age. And in calling you, my Lord,

I have never been a loser!"[1]

Here the metaphor, wa-ishta'ala, is the case in point,
which, as far as the evidence of the Jāhilī literature
indicates, is used for the first time in this context.
And what a difference it has made!

In the story of Noah which is told in Sūrah XI,
there are further examples where the metaphors are used
with equal dramatic effects. At the point when the waters
begin to rise and he is asked to embark on the ark with
his followers, the course of the ship is thus described:

قَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرِيهَا وَ مُرْسِيهَا ۚ

And he said: "Embark on it, the name of God
be its course and its mooring!"[2]

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1. Qur'ān (Karachi, n.d.), Sūrah XIX:2-4, p. 456.
2. Ibid., Sūrah XI:41, p. 337.

Usage of Metaphor in Nahj al-Balāgha

As has already been pointed out, 'Alī was well
known for his style and use of language. The early
traditions suggest that the literary skill came naturally
to him. Traditions like the one narrated by al-Kalbī
(Muḥammad b. Sā'ib, d. 146 A.H.) from a member of the
al-Anṣār community: "While I was standing in one of the
first rows on the Day of al-Jamal when 'Alī came and I
turned back to look at him. He asked me: ' ابن
مَثرَى الَقَوم ؟ ' and I replied there, pointing towards 'Ā'isha."
Now al-Kalbī explains that by the word al-mathrā he meant
the bulk and the majority of the enemy.[1] If anything,
this is a strong indication of the taste of the man who
would use a metaphor even in the crisis of a battle.
However, as metaphor abounds in Nahj al-Balāgha I have
chosen only a few examples which I propose to render
under classified subjects:

God

(No. 1, p. 7):

الَذِىلَايَدرِكُه بُعدُ الِهَمَم وَلَايَنَالُه غَوصُ الِفَطَن

cannot be reached by flights of ambition

or deep diving of intelligence...

(No. 2, p. 22): فَإِنَه أَرجَحُ مَا وُزِنَ وَ أَفضَلُ مَا خُزِنَ

weighs more than all the things weighable.

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 258.

More precious than all the things
treasureworthy.

(No. 8, p. 94):

فَلَا إِسْتِيلاؤُه بَاعَدَه عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ وَلَاقَرَبُه سَاوَاهُم
بِىْ المَكَانِ بِه ،

His heights have not distanced Him from
the things He has created. Nor His
nearness to them has made Him their equal.

People of Mecca
(No. 2, pp. 24-25):

نَوْمُهِم سُهُودُ وَكُحْلُهِم دُمُوع بِأَرضٍ عَالِمُهَا مُلْجَم وَ جَاهِلُهَا
مُكرَّم .

Their slumber is sleeplessness; and the
make-up [al-kuhl] of their eyes, their
tears. [They are] of a land in which
the learned is bridled and the ignorant
honoured.

Mu'āwiyah and his people
(No. 2, p. 24):

زَرَعُوا الْفُجُورَ وَ سَقَوْه الْغُرُورَ وَ حَصَدُوا الثُّبُورُ .

They have sown corruption and watered it
with deception and the crop therefore, is
bound to be, in the form of, waste [and
regrets].

At the mention of the people of al-Shūrā
(No. 3, p. 30):

أَسْفَفْتُ إِذ أَسَفُّوا وَ طِرْتُ إِذَا طَارُوا٠

I landed when they landed and flew when
they flew.

Waves of temptations and trials
(No. 4, p. 35):

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ شُقُّوا أَمْوَاجَ الْفِتَنِ بِسُفُنِ النَّجَاةِ٠

Cleave the waves of temptation and trials
with the boats of salvation.

Loyalty
(No. 40, p. 88):

إِنَّ الْوَفَاءَ تَوَامُ الصِّدْقِ وَلاَأَعْلَمُ جُنَّةً أَوْقَى مِنْهُ٠

Loyalty is a twin child to truthfulness.
I do not know of any other shield more
protecting [the sovereign and the subject].

Sins
(No. 15, p. 44):

إِنَّ الْخَطَايَا خَيْلٌ شُمُسٌ حُمِلَ عَلَيْهَا أَهْلُهَا وَ خُلِعَتْ
لُجُمُهَا فَتَقَحَّمَتْ بِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ٠

Sins are the uncontrollable mounts whose
riders have been loaded upon them and

their reins were let loose. So they

crashed with their riders into the fire.

To his son, Muhammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya

(No. 10, p. 39):

تَزُولُ الجِبَـال وَلاتَزَل • عَضّ عَلِي نَـاجذَكَ أَعِرِ الـلـه جُمجُمتكَ • تِدْ فِي الارَض قَدَمَكَ • ارْم بِبَصَرِك أَقْصَيَ الـقَـوم وَ غَضّ بَصَرك • وَ اَعلَمْ اِنَّ النَّصَّرَ مِنْ عِنْدِ الـلـه سُبْحَانَه •

Mountains may move but you should not;

clamp [the two sets of] your teeth

together; loan to God your head and

plant in earth your feet; set your eyes

at the back row [of the enemy's line] and

close your eyes. And know that the victory

is in God's hands only.

The World (as opposed to the next one)

(No. 79, pp. 187-88):

مَا أَصِفُ مِنْ دَارٍ اولَهَا عَنَـاء وَ آخِرُها فَنَـاء رِي حَلالِهَا حِسَـاب وَ فِي حَرامِهَا عِقَـابٌ مَنْ اِسْتَغنَى فِيـهَا فُتِنَ وَمَنْ افتَقَرَ فِيهَا حُزِنَ وَ مَنْ سَاعَاهَا فَاتتَهُ وَمَنْ قَعَدَ عَنهَا وَ أَتتَهُ وَ مَنْ ابْصَرَ اِلَـيهَا اعمَتهُ •

How do I define the house the beginning

of which is hardship and the end of which

is nothingness? In it, the permitted

earnings are accountable and the unlawful
gains, subject to punishment! In which
the prosperous becomes the object of set
traps and the needy, the haunt of permanent
sadness! Whoever runs after it, it eludes
him. Whoever tries to look through it, it
assists him to see clearly and yet, whoever
tries to look to it, it blinds him!

Similes and Allegories

These two technical terms of al-Bayān are in fact
one and the same. The evidence comes from H. W. Fowler,
who points out:

It may fairly be said that parable is
extended metaphor and allegory extended
simile. To which may be added the
following contrast. Having read a tale,
and concluded that under its surface
meaning another is discernible as the
true intent, we say: This is an allegory.
Having a lesson to teach, and finding
direct exposition ineffective, we say
let us try a parable.[1]

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1. H. W. Fowler, Modern English Usage (Oxford, 1968),
   p. 559.

And on the point of definitions, I would point out that the Arabic terms al-majāz and al-isti'āra both have been translated in English as metaphor although, technically, every isti'āra is al-majāz but every expression of al-majāz is not isti'āra.

But al-tashbīh (simile) is an isti'āra or metaphorical expression with qualifications. Like al-isti'āra it is a "borrowed expression" with the purpose of defining the object wholly or partly by means of comparisons. Thus

زيد اسد is an isti'āra and زيد كا الاسد is a tashbīh (simile). Although in translation both the expressions will appear the same, the distinguishing features of al-tashbīh are comparisons in meaning and " ك " in letter. In rare cases when the latter is omitted the former still marks the difference.

Similes are used in Nahj al-Balāgha but very sparingly. Not like the Qur'ān, which is fertile in similes. And that marks yet another difference between the stylistic nature of the two. Examples of similes used in Nahj al-Balāgha are:

No. 1, p. 21 (describing the holy pilgrimage to al-Ka'bah): People flock to it like cattle [to waters] and descend to it like eager pigeons [to their nests].

بَرِدُونَهُ وُرُودَ الانَعَام وَ يَأْلِهُونَ اِلَيْهِ وُلُوه الحَمَام.

No. 3, p. 28 (describing the Caliphate): "The holder of
its office is like the rider of an unruly camel; if the
rider pulls back the reins, he injures the nose of it
and yet, if he lets them go, the camel crashes with him
[into the hazard)!"

$$\text{نِصَاحِبُهَا كَرَاكِبِ الصَّعْبَهِ اِنْ اَشْنَقَ لَهَا خَرَمَ وَاِنْ اَسْلَسَ لَهَا تَقَحَّمَ}$$

No. 98, p. 196 (describing the civil disturbances):
"These turmoils are like the darkened parts of the night
which cannot be assailed by the charges of cavalry or
advances of the infantry."

$$\text{فِتَنٌ كَقِطَعِ اللَّيلِ المُظلِمِ لَا تَقُومُ لَهَا قَائِمَةٌ}$$

No. 182, p. 150, vol. 2 (forecasting the forthcoming
events of the future): "... and this will happen when
you will be bitten by afflictions as the load bites the
back of the camel [leaving lasting marks]."

$$\text{وَذَالِكَ اِذَا عَفَكُمُ البَلَاءَ كَمَا يَعَضُّ القَنَبُ غَارِبَ البَعِيرِ}$$

No. 263, p. 216, vol. 3: "The companion of a king is
like the rider of a tiger! Envied by the onlookers but
knowing himself only the true position!"

صَاحِبُ السُّلْطَانِ كَرَاكِبِ الاَسَدِ يُنْبَطُ بِمَوْقِعِهِ وَهُوَ
اَعْلَمُ بِمَوْضِعِهِ •

No. 64, p. 164, vol. 3 (concerning the inhabitants of the
earth): "They are like the carried travelers, asleep,
while the caravan continues its journey."

اَهْلُ الدُّنْيَا كَرَكْبٍ يُسَارُ بِهِمْ وَ هُمْ نِيَامٌ •

Parallelism in Nahj al-Balāgha

We have already noted the distinguishing features
of al-tashbīh or simile. In the following example
comparisons have been made and the letter kāf (ك) has
also been used. Yet it is more of parallelism than
of simile (al-tashbīh):

لَامَالَ اَعْوَدُ مِنَ الْعَقْلِ، وَلَا وَحْدَةَ اَوْحَشُ مِنَ الْعُجْبِ وَلَا
عَقْلَ كَا التَّدْبِيرِ وَلَاكَرَمَكَا التَّقْوَى وَلَاقَرِيْنَ كَا الْحُسْنِ
الْخُلْقِ وَلَا مِيْرَاثَ كَا الْاَدَبِ وَلَا قَائِدَ كَا التَّوْفِيْقِ وَلَا
تِجَارَةَ كَا الْعَمَلِ لِلْصَالِحِ وَلَا رِبْحَ كَا الثَّوَابِ وَ لَا وَرَعَ
كَا الْوُقُوفِ عِنْدَ الشُّبْهِ وَلَازُهْدَ كَا الزُّهْدِ فِي الْحَرَامِ وَلَا
عِلْمَ كَا التَّفَكُّرِ وَلَا عِبَادَةَ كَادَاءِ الْفَرَائِضِ وَلَاايمَانَ
كَا الْحَيَاءِ وَالصَّبْرِ وَلَا حَسَبَ كَا التَّوَاضُعُ وَلَا شَرَفَ كَا الْعِلْمِ
وَلَا عِزَّةَ كَا الْحِلْمِ وَلَا مُظَاهَرَةَ اَوْثَنَ مِنَ الْمُشَاوَرَهْ •

There is no asset more beneficial than
intelligence; there is no solitude more
lonely than ⌊that] of vanity; there is
no foresight [more praiseworthy] than
practical planning; there is no generosity
[more giving] than fearing the Munificent;
there is no companion [more pleasing⌋ than
good-naturedness; there is no inheritance
[of more value⌋ than being of good manners
and intellect; there is no leader [more
guiding] than self-motivation; there is
no business [more profiting⌋ than performing
good deeds; there is no [investment] return
[more lasting] than Divine rewards; there
is no godliness [more self-vindicating] than
stopping [at the deeds and the concepts]
not clearly defined; there is no piety
⌊more worthy of its name] than refraining
from the forbidden; there is no knowledge
⌊more profoundly acquired⌋ than that which
comes through thinking; there is no act of
worship ⌊more necessary⌋ than that which has
been enjoined; there is no Faith [al-Īmān]
more symbolising it, than that which is
manifested through self-esteem and patience;
there is no act proving more a noble descent
than the act of humility; there is no honour
more elevating than [that of] knowledge;

> there is no nobility more manifestly noble
> than [the acts of] tolerance; and there is
> no gathering of people more useful than
> that which is convened for mutual consultations.

The above passage has been quoted from No. 113, p. 177, vol. 3. Other examples can be located in No. 28, p. 156, vol. 3; No. 32, p. 159, vol. 3; No. 54, p. 164, vol. 3; No. 56, p. 164, vol. 3; No. 82, p. 168, vol. 3; No. 98, p. 172, vol. 3, among others.

Ellipsis

At first sight there appear to be no cases of ellipsis in Nahj al-Balāgha and this would seem to reflect the frequently cited tradition of 'Alī being the first compiler of Arabic grammar. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the text has been subject to occasional changes. This evidence comes from Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. It is as follows: in No. 16, p. 47, vol. 1, the collector has provided the heading as: "In the definition of the one who puts himself forward in order to solve people's problems (al-ḥukm bain al-umma) although he is not capable of it." The speech begins thus:

إِنَّ أَبْغَضَ الخَلائِقِ إِلى اللهِ رَجُلانِ : رَجُلٌ وَكَلَه اللهُ إِلى نَفْسِه فَهُوَ جائِرٌ عَن قَصْدِ السَّبيلِ مَشْغُوفٌ بِكَلامِ بِدْعَةٍ وَدُعاءِ ضَلالَةٍ فَهُوَ فِتْنَةٌ لِمَنِ افْتَتَنَ بِه ضالٌ عَن هُدى مَن كانَ قَبْلَه مُضِلٌّ لِمَنِ اقْتَدى بِه في حَياتِه وَبَعدَ وَفاتِه حَمّالٌ خَطايا غَيْرِه رَهْنٌ بِخَطيئَتِه .

Verily, the most removed from God's mercy
are men of two categories: [Of the first is]
the man who has been left by Him to his own
devices. So he continues to wander away
from the right path, engaged in the innova-
tive discourses, inviting people to error.
He is a personification of deception for
whomsoever is deceived by him. [Being
himself] away from the guidance which was
the way of his predecessors; leading astray
those who follow him in his life, taking
others' follies with him when he dies; and
thus doubly pawned, [firstly] with his own
sins, [secondly] with the others'.

I have quoted in full the description of the men in the
first category to illustrate the pattern. The description
of the second category of men is long but in it lies
the evidence of changes. I quote only that part
immediately connected with the sentence in question.

جَاهِلٌ خَبَّاطُ جَهَالاتٍ عَانٍ رِكَابِ عَشَوَاتٍ لَمْ يَعَضَّ عَلَى
الْعِلْمِ بِضِرْسٍ قَاطِعٍ يَذْرِى الرَّوَايَاتِ اِذْرَاءَ الرِّيحِ الْهَشِيمَ
لَا مَلِيٌّ وَاللهِ بِاصْدَارِ مَاوَرَدَ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا هُوَ اهْلٌ لِمَا فُوِّضَ
اِلَيْهِ لَا يَحْسَبُ الْعِلْمَ فِي شَيْئِي مِمَّا اَنْكَرَ وَلَا يَرَى اِنَّ مِنْ
وَرَاءَ مَا بَلَغَ مَذْهَبًا لِغَيْرِهِ ٠

He is ignorant, the confused walker of the
darkness; or a blind rider with no sense of
direction; he has never had the "bite" of
knowledge; he blows out the traditions as
the wind does with the hay!

Neither he is competent to produce or issue
from what he has [known] nor is he worthy
of what has been assigned to him.

He does not think that there might be some
aspects of knowledge in that which he does
not know or denies. Nor does he appreciate
that there might be some people who have
travelled far byond his reaches!....

Commenting on the underlined sentence, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd
says that it is grammatically wrong if one begins a
sentence with the word "lā" and omits to supplement it
with the following sentence beginning with the "lā" also.
"It is wrong," says Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, "if you say lā
zaidun qāimun unless you say wa lā 'Amrun."[1] However,
Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd locates the required sentence in Ibn
Qutaibah's book (Gharīb al-Ḥadīth) which, after the
underlined sentence had: وَلَا أَهْلٌ لِمَا فُرِّطَ بِهِ •

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 285.

However, it shows that the sentence we find in the present version of Nahj al-Balāgha, i.e. wa-lā huwa ahl li-mā fuwwida ilaihi was not in it when Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd was writing his commentary between the years 644 and 649 A.H. And by his own admission, amongst many versions of the book, he had had one which was either written or authorised by the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, himself.[1] Now once the practice of "grafting" is proved in one place, the existence of the same in another becomes more than a possibility.

Proverbs

The static nature of Arabic assists in fixing the introduction of proverbs into the language. Being unchanged and recorded faithfully, they point to the social tastes and customs and the linguistic usages of the earlier Islamic societies.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maidanī (d. 518 A.H.) in his Majma' al-Amthāl, however, has rendered a valuable service, for at the end of each chapter he has recorded proverbs which were at his time regarded as modern, separately. This enables us to use the ancient proverbs as the source for verification of the early linguistic usages apart from the Qur'ān and the Jāhilī poetry. It may not be possible to identify a given Arabic proverb with a particular class, but they do transmit information

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 12, p. 3.

about a person, a custom, a taste, the society and the mode of living. More often we are told of the person who originated the proverb and that, if taken to be true, reflects not only his approach and reactions but of his immediate circle and his contemporary society as well. "Idhā ḥakakt qarḥat admaituhā" ("When I rub a wound, I make sure it bleeds") is the proverb attributed to ʻAmr ibn al-ʻĀṣ (d. 43 A.H.) which gives the impression of the vindictiveness of his nature but the fact that it became a proverb indicates also, that the sentiments were shared by most members of his society. This common agreement is again reflected in the proverbs which ascribe an attribute to a person, like fulān aḥfaz min al-ʻumyān and al-Shaʻbī (So and so is better of memory than the blind and al-Shaʻbī [d. 105 A.H.]). A few proverbs are constituted in a way that the time of their coming to existence can easily be ascertained, as adhal min umawī bi al-kūfa yawm ʻāshūrāʼ (More despised than the Umawī [a member of the Umayyad tribe] in al-Kūfa on the day of ʻĀshūrā). Now this proverb could have only been coined during the brief period when the Shīʻites, under the leadership of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī ʻUbaid al-Thaqafī (d. 66 A.H.), had taken over the city. While yet another group of proverbs communicate the tastes of the early Islamic society: al-ḥusn aḥmar (Beauty is red) tells us that the reddish complexions were favoured and that umm al-muʼminīn ʻĀʼisha, who was named al-ḥumairāʼ, must have possessed good looks.

But what converts a saying into a proverb? And what were the qualities the Arabs were looking for in a proverb? Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. 221 A.H.), a distinguished Mu'tazilite and a teacher of al-Jāḥiẓ, spells them out.

> Four of the linguistic merits which unite
> in a proverb do not do so in any other
> branch of al-kalām [prose, speech, saying]:
> 1. Ījāz al-lafz, the compactness of the
> text; 2. iṣābat al-ma'nā, scoring the right
> meanings; 3. ḥusn al-tashbīh, the simile
> -like excellence together with 4. jawdat
> al-kināya, metonymical delights.[1]

Al-Nazzām omits what I have already pointed out to be one of the most essential attributes of a proverb, viz, general agreement of people with its import. There is no ḥusn al-tashbīh or jawdat al-kināya in qimat kull imra'ī mā yuḥsinuh (The price of a man is according to his expertise), a proverb of Nahj al-Balāgha but quoted by everyone who succeeded in leaving a mark on Arabic literature, people like Abū 'Ubaid, Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā (d. 210), Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224), Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350), al-Qālī (d. 356), Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 327) and Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. ca. 395). In the following proverbs of Nahj al-Balāgha I have imposed the condition upon myself of arriving to them from outside sources as

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1. al-Maidanī, Majma' al-Amthāl (Cairo, 1955), p. 6.

I have done in connection with the proverb just quoted.[1]

There is no <u>husn al-tashbīh</u> and no hint of <u>al-kināya</u>
in 'Alī's other saying which became a proverb: <u>wa lākin
lā raya li-man lā yuṭā'</u> (...But there is no opinion for a
man who is not obeyed!)[2] but it became a proverb for its
<u>Ijāz al-lafz</u> and <u>isābat al-ma'nā</u>, conforming with the
approval and the agreement of the people. On another
occasion when Ash'ath ibn al-Qais[3] praised him and in so
doing, perhaps, annoyed him, 'Alī said: <u>anā dūna mā
taqūl wa fawqa mā fī qalbik</u> (I am below what you have
said but above what you have hidden ⌊of your opinion of
me⌋ in your heart.).[4] The sentence is, perhaps, devoid
of most of the artificial and intended decorative techniques
as outlined by al-Nazzām but it became a proverb for
people could identify the image in their own everyday
life, dealing with similar people.

A group of people is described in the Qur'ān and
then it is stated that they will never enter Paradise.
And the <u>never</u> or the impossibility is further emphasised
through borrowing from a Jāhilī proverb with the startling
results:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفْتَحُ لَهُمْ
أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ
الْخِيَاطِ.

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1. al-Raghib al-Iṣfahānī, <u>Muhadirat al-Udabā'</u> (Beirut,
   1941), p. 32.
2. al-Maidanī, <u>op. cit.</u>, proverb No. 3662, p. 341.
3. Abū 'Ubaid al-Bakrī, <u>Kitāb al-Amthāl</u> (Khartoum, 1958),
   p. 28.
4. <u>Ibid.</u>

The gates of heaven shall not be opened
to them, nor shall they enter Paradise
until the camel passes through the eye of
the needle.[1]

The technique of borrowing is also employed in Nahj
al-Balāgha. In Sermon No. 155, for example, the proverb
fa 'ind al-sabāh yahmad al-qawm al-surā (It is in the
morning when people get to praise the travellers who left
during the night.) is quoted to someone unappreciative
of the lasting rewards of asceticism.[2] In Sermon No. 3,
tilka shiqshiqat inhadarat thumma qarrat is also a
probable borrowing from the Jāhilī period. Amongst the
proverbs actually attributed to 'Alī, some examples of
which we have already noted, there are some which do not
exist in Nahj al-Balāgha, as they are quoted in the sources
outside it. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, for example, quotes a
proverb adding:

I have been told by Abū Ahmad who had
heard Abū al-Hasan al-Akhfash quote
al-Tha'lab as saying: "We do not know
if someone has narrated better in the
meaning than the following proverb from
'Alī: 'alaikum bi al-numruqat al-wustā
fa ilaihā yarja' al-ghālī wa bihā yalhaq

1. Qur'ān, Sūrah V:39.
2. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 156, vol. 2, p. 76.

al-tālī [Keep to the middle course because to
it will return the exaggerater (in modern
terms, the extremist] and at it will aim the straggler wh
has been left behind].[1]

Now, this proverb does not exist in Nahj al-Balāgha in the
form recorded by al-'Askarī. However, the concept does
appear twice. Firstly, in Sermon No. 16:

شُغِلَ مَنْ الجَنَّةُ وَالنَّارُ أَمَامَهُ . سَاعٍ سَرِيعٍ نَجَا وَ طَالِبٌ
الْبَطِيءِ رَجَا وَ مُقَصِّرٌ فِي النَّارِ هَوَى . الْيَمِيْنُ وَ الشِّمَالُ
مَضَلَّةٌ وَ الطَّرِيقُ الْوُسْطَى هِيَ الجَادَّه .

"Preoccupied is the one who has heaven
and hell in front of him! Amongst the
competitors, there is the one who has
arrived at the winning post of salvation
with speed; while there is the other who
is slow-moving but is desirous of
emulating the winners; and then, there
is the slack, the negligent who is
falling to perish in the fire! The
[extreme] right or left [positions] are
misleading. The only 'high way' is the
middle course."[2]

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1. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, Jamharat al-Amthāl, vol. 2
   (Cairo, 1964), p. 408.
2. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 15, vol. 1, p. 45.

In the third volume of Nahj al-Balāgha the same idea
occurs again: "We are the central support [literally,
cushion] to which the late-comer does [finally] arrive
and to which the extremist in [the end] returns."[1] This,
although making al-ṭarīq al-wusṭā, the pride-object,
exclusive to one household at the time, the idea,
however, remains the same.

The Language

The question as to what changes took place in the
language when the Arabian societies were converted to
Islam has not been answered in detail. We know, for
example, that the terms al-ṣalāt, al-ṣawm, al-hajj had
different meanings. Of the adjectives the post-Islamic
societies so freely branded people with, terms like
al-mu'min, al-kāfir, al-munāfiq, the Jāhilī people were
aware but they understood them differently.[2] But the
few examples of change in meanings which have been
handed down to us, prove either that little change had
taken place or that not sufficient attention was devoted
to it by the Muslim scholars. As far as the post-Islamic
changes in the language were concerned, and as regards
the new words, phrases and expressions which were either
borrowed from other languages or were coined subsequently,

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1. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 109, vol. 3, p. 176.
2. al-Suyūṭī, al-Muzhir, vol. 1 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 295.

the attitude of Muslim scholars remained hostile. The fact that although nearly a thousand years had elapsed but this hostility had not lessened, is reflected by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 A.H.) who, when describing the post-classical terms and words, remarks: "This is what had been innovated by the post-classical authors and writers whose words cannot be used as evidence [on linguistic matters]."[1]

It is interesting to note the evolution of the Arabic-cum-Islamic prose literature. In the beginning, one element alone seems to have the power to bestow respectability on a piece of elegant language written or spoken, and that element was the Qur'ān. It was important that an idea was presented in the attire of al-balāghah. It was still more important that it was done through borrowing some of the words from the Qur'ān. Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 A.H.) records an incident which took place in the court of Ziyād ibn Abīhi (d. 56 A.H.), the dreaded governor of Mu'āwiya. 'Imrān ibn Ḥiṭṭān having delivered a speech which he thought "by no means fell short of the oratorical heights nor did it leave any room for the blemish-seekers to discredit me", passed some of the people present and heard one of the shaikhs say: "This man would have been the most accomplished in oratory had his speech contained some quotations from the Qur'ān!"[2]

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1. al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., p. 304.
2. al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1932), p. 3.

Next, we see the recognition of the traditions as the second pattern an author was to conform with. Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (d. 821 A.H.) was merely repeating what Ibn Qutaibah (d. 213 A.H.) had already pointed out in his book Adab al-Kātib, when he said: "It is necessary for a writer to memorise a great deal of traditions from the Prophet."[1] But when al-Qalqashandī proceeded to add: "and also the related āthār from the Companions of the Prophet..."[2] he in fact pointed out the third phase of the evolution -- the stage where the processes came to rest. One notices that all the models or the standard patterns which were eventually recognised belonged to the same period, i.e. the first half of the first Islamic century, although the recording, amplification and purification of them continued up until the second half of the fifth century.

As a result, some of both the traditions and the āthār was invented in order to escape from the charge of innovation. The matter Nahj al-Balāgha consists of falls into the third category, al-āthār, and it is small wonder that it, too, has not escaped criticism.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has put forward stylistic and linguistic arguments for the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha. In the sixth volume of his commentary he comments on the

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1. Ibn Qutaibah, Adab al-Kātib (Cairo, 1300 A.H.), p. 6.
2. al-Qalqashandī, Ṣubḥ al-A'shā, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1914), p. 201.

language of the book and says:

> Know that we do not doubt that of all the
> speakers of the Arabic language amongst the
> forebears and the forthcomers, he ['Alī] is
> the most skilful in using the correct
> literary language except the words of God
> and the utterances of the Prophet. [And we
> hold such views] because the distinction of
> a speaker or a writer rests on two factors:
> firstly, on the words used as units; secondly,
> words used compoundly [in a phrase or a
> sentence]. The merit in using words, taking
> them as units, is that they must be clear and
> easy and conforming with one another. Neither
> should they be strange, nor complicated. The
> words used by 'Alī are so in totality. The
> merit in the words used in a clause is that
> the sentence, as a whole, should render clear
> and good meaning and to be quickly understood
> by the listener. In addition, it should also
> be the bearer of the qualities which distinguish
> one piece of kalām over the other. And those
> are the ones which have been named by the
> following generations as al-badī' [the art of
> good style] which might be achieved through
> al-muqābala (comparisons] or al-mutābaqa
> [corresponding conformity], or ḥusn al-taqsīm

[meritorious classification] or radd ākhir al-kalām ilā ṣadrih [keeping in touch with the beginning till end], or al-tarṣī' [the art of inlaying and decorating the words], or al-tashīm [proportioning the words rightly], or al-tawshīh [arranging the words in stanzas] or al-mumāthala [analogy, using of] or al-takāfu' [mutual correspondence of the words] or al-tasmīṭ [interlinking of the words], or al-istiʿāra [the metaphor], or latāfat istiʿmāl al-majāz [subtleness derived from figurative usage of words], al-muwāzana [the balancing] and al-mushākala [using words of common similarity]. There is no doubt that all these merits are to be found in his sermons and letters scattered and spread out. These two qualities are not to be found in the kalām of any one else...[1]

A question arises: could it not have been possible for a forgerer to manufacture the pieces which resembled the original and the said variations of al-badīʿ? In a society of restricted pursuits and bonded stylistic variations was there a hallmark, a distinct pattern, an individual style? Were ʿAlī's utterances distinguishable for critics nearer to him in terms of time?

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 278.

"Yes," says al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 A.H.). And the occasion
on which he says it could not have been more in contra-
position. It is in fact, when he is quoting a <u>khutbah</u>
(sermon) from Muʻāwiya when he records the following:

> This <u>khutbah</u> was related by Shuʻaib ibn
> Ṣafwān and was also reported by al-Yaqturī
> in an augmented form and also some other
> people apart from him. They said: "When
> Muʻāwiya was dying he asked his <u>mawlā</u> [in
> this context, slave or servant] as to who
> was at the door. The <u>mawlā</u> replied: "A group
> of the Quraishites who are exchanging
> pleasantries between them over your pending
> death!" Muʻāwiya said: "I swear by God,
> there is nothing for them after me except
> the harmful." Then he gave permission for
> people to enter [and when they came in] he
> recited the following sermon:..."

Having recorded the sermon, al-Jāḥiẓ comments:

> And in this sermon, may God prolong your
> life, there are varieties of wonders! One
> of which is that it bears no reference or
> [indeed] relevance to the circumstances under
> which Muʻāwiya had called the people in! The
> second is the style, categorising of men and
> the [type] of information given about them;

the [description of the] plight the people
had been [living] in, viz, continuous
suppression, [unjustifiable] social degradation,
and being constantly in the state of "look
out" [al-taqiyya], all this resembles more to
that of 'Alī's style. The circumstances
that the sermon describes and the meaning
that it purports are more of 'Alī than of
Mu'āwiya. The third is the fact that we do
not find Mu'āwiya under any circumstances
treading the path of the ascetic nor do we
find him travelling along the way of the
devotee! However, we write it for you and
inform you as we, ourselves, have heard it.
God only knows about the veracity of the
informers -- a great deal of them![1]

Now, if this quotation proves that there was such a thing
as an "identifiable style", it also indicates that the
early periods were crowded with the reports whose
truthfulness was very much in doubt. A book of Nahj
al-Balāgha's magnitude and depending on the early traditions
transmitted by reporters, some of whom may not have been
as trustworthy as others, would thus be logically subject
to spurious entries.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 655 A.H.), however, disagrees.
To him the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha is beyond any

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1. al-Jāḥiẓ, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 29.

shadow of doubt. He bases his argument first on style:

> I will give you an example which you may apply
> when comparing the speeches [al-kalām] of
> Amīr al-Mu'minīn ['Alī] and the speeches of
> the writers and the speakers who came after
> him. Compare the poems of Abū Tammām [d.
> 189 A.H.], al-Buḥturī [d. 284 A.H.], Abū
> Nuwās [d. 198 A.H.] and Muslim [d. 208 A.H.],
> with the poems of Imru' ul-Qais (d. 92 B.H.),
> al-Nābigha [d. 28 B.H.], al-Zubair [d. 3 B.H.]
> and al-A'shā (d. ?]. Now when you have
> compared the two, will you say that the poems
> of Abū Nuwās and of others named with him,
> are better than the poems of the poets
> belonging to the second group? I do not
> think you will say that. Nor anyone before
> you has done so. And the view [of the first
> named group being superior to the second]
> will not be held apart from the one who is
> completely ignorant of the science of al-bayān,
> the usage of linguistic decor and simplicity,
> al-faṣāḥah, and the circumstantial and required
> eloquence, al-balāghah. [Abū Nuwās and other
> members of his class will be preferred over
> Imru' ul-Qais and other poets of his class by
> the] one who does not know the difference
> between the original and the artificial and
> the distinction of the foregone over the

late-comers. Now that you have duly noted
the difference, know that the kalām of Amīr
al-Mu'minīn has the same relation [when
compared with the other speakers and writers]
as of Imru' ul-Qais over that of Abū Nuwās.
In ['Alī's] case the excellence is even more
obvious. For in the poems of Imru' ul-Qais
there are some strange constructions and quaint
words whereas you will not find similar
features in the kalām of Amīr al-mu'minīn. And
if you want to know more about 'Alī's style,
look at the Qur'ān and know that people have
agreed that the Qur'ān is in the highest class
of al-faṣāha. Examine the Qur'ān thoroughly
and consider how it has been free from
complications in phrases and sentences
(al-ta'qīd) and strangeness and oddity
[al-gharābat] in the usages of words. And
then look at the kalām of Amīr al-Mu'minīn.
You will find it derived from its ⌊the Qur'ān's⌋
words and based upon its meanings and the
school of thoughts. Being on the same track
and in the same foot steps. Although it is
not equal to it, nevertheless, it can be
said that there is no speech [al-kalām]
more eloquent, more high, more of prime
merits...[1]

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 83.

However, was al-Shu'ba (d. 160 A.H.) exaggerating when he stated that nine-tenths of the traditions were a pack of lies? Or was al-Dār Quṭnī (d. 385 A.H.) being poetical when he said that a genuine (al-ṣaḥīḥ) tradition was as rare as a white hair on a black bull?[1] We have clear evidence that in the reign of Mu'āwiya (41-61 A.H.) there were some people who deliberately forged traditions.[2] Now when Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd found that the works of both the traditionists and the historians were full of 'Alī's utterances, could that be the reaction of the later men of letters who, regardless of the fact whether they were or were not Shī'ites, were enraged by the oppression of the truth? In short, are the 237 sermons, 79 letters and 480 short sayings that Nahj al-Balāgha consists of, the very utterances of 'Alī? Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd says:

> There can be only two possibilities of either
> Nahj al-Balāgha being a total forgery and
> fabrication or the book being so in parts
> only. The first possibility is null and
> void for we know through the means of
> al-tawātur [i.e. acceptance of a tradition
> by one generation and its passing it to the
> next without the chain being broken] the
> soundness of the isnād [the list of the known

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 9, p. 105.
2. Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 63-73; Ibn al-Athīr, Jami' al-Uṣūl (Cairo, 1964), pp. 136-38.

narrators or transmitters] of some of the
material right up to ['Alī] Amīr al-Mu'minīn.
And that has been recorded by all or most
of al-muhaddithūn [the recorders of traditions]
and a great deal of which has also been
preserved by al-mu'arrikhūn [the historians].
And these are not from the Shī'ites so that
they had an axe to grind. The second
possibility [i.e. the book being a part
forgery] is also invalid in the light of what
we have already said [about the style]. For
whoever is familiar with the speech and the
oratory and has mastered some aspects of the
science of al-bayān [i.e. the art of stylish
speaking and writing], and has acquired a
taste in such matters, is bound to distinguish
between the poor and the eloquent and between
the eloquent and the most eloquent. Between
the original [the early] and the muwallad
[the modern]. [Such a man] will see the
difference at once even if he comes across a
few sheets of paper containing orations of a
number of orators or even two of them. And he
will be able to distinguish between the
styles. Do you not see that we, with out
knowledge of poetry and poetical criticism,
when going through the poetical collection
of Abū Tammām, if we come across a cluster

of al-qaṣā'id [odes] or a single qaṣīda which
does not belong to him, we will know through
our taste its alienation from that which truly
belongs to Abū Tammām, his way, his method and
his style in poetry? Do you not see that the
specialists have eliminated many of the qaṣīdas
from his collection of poems, simply because
they did not conform to his pattern of style?
The same was done in respect of the poems of
Abū Nuwās when it was realised that some of
them were neither his words nor from the
accepted poems. This was done in respect of
the poems of the other poets too [for the same
reasons]. And the implements employed in the
process [of elimination] were led by "taste".
Now, you, when you examine Nahj al-Balāgha,
will find that all of it is from the same
water, same mould and the same style. Like
the simple structure whose components do not
vary from one another in essence. Or like
the Qur'ān whose beginning is like its middle
and the middle is like the end. Every Sūrah
of it, every āya [verse] from it, is similar
in its source, method, technique, manner and
structure to the rest of the chapters and
verses. If some of Nahj al-Balāgha were
authentic and some forged, this would not
have happened. And with this clear reasoning

the error of the one who assumes that the
book or part of it has been wrongly attributed
to Amīr al-Mu'minīn ['Alī], peace be on him,
should be obvious to you.[1]

Disagreeing with Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd about the total
authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha, I propose to base my
criticism on the very method he has employed and the very
data he has provided and the most of which I have trans-
lated in this chapter.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has been quoted as saying: "...the
distinction of a speaker or a writer rests on two factors:
firstly, on the words used as units; secondly, on the
words used as components [of a sentence]." Let our first
step, therefore, be to examine Nahj al-Balāgha for that
characteristic and consider whether some of them are not
in conformity with the language of the time. As Ibn Abī
al-Ḥadīd has also said: "[see pages 228-29 of this
chapter] that Nahj al-Balāgha is derived from the
Qur'ānic words...", and as the Qur'ān is the only
surviving guide of the early usages of the language, apart
from the Jāhilī literature, comparisons with the Qur'ān
would not only be necessary but, so to speak, natural.
That has partly been done in this chapter. But here we
would consider the words and the sentences which do not
seem to be either in harmony with the Qur'ānic vocabulary
or with the style, which can safely be assumed to be that
of 'Alī and which we hope to discuss later on.

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 10, pp. 128-29.

1. <u>Al-Sil'a</u>. This word is used in Sermon No. 143
(vol. 2, p. 41) and it means "commodity" or assets
connected with commerce. There is some evidence that
this word came to be used when the Arabs became prosperous
and attained sophistication after the conquests, and
turned to commerce on a large scale. In the Qur'ān an
asset or commodity has been expressed through the word
al-matā' which has been used twenty-nine times. If
al-sil'a had existed or, assuming it did exist, was in
usage, the Qur'ān would have used it at least once out of
that twenty-nine times if only for the sake of variation.
But the word does not exist in the Qur'ān in the
meaning it has been used in <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> or in any
other meaning. Al-matā', on the other hand, has been
used in: 2:36, 7:24, 21:111, 2:241, 3:14, 3:5, 57:20,
3:197, 4:77, 9:39, 33:60, 42:36, 43:34, 10:70, 13:26,
16:117, 24:29, 40:39, 13:17, 2:236, 2:240, 5:99, 10:23,
28:61, 11:3, 16:80, 36:44, 33:53, 56:71-3, 79:32-3,
80:25-32. Note particularly the following usages of
al-matā' which has been used in the same meaning as
al-sil'a in <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>: 3:14, 3:197, 24:29, 16:80,
33:53 and 80:25-32.

2. <u>Al-hawā'ij</u>. The word <u>al-hāja</u> meaning need, want or
pressing requirement, has been used by the Qur'ān in
singular form only as in Sūrahs: 12:68; 40:80; and 59:9.
But the plural form of it, <u>al-hawā'ij</u>, which has been
used in <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> in No. 101, vol. 3, p. 172;

No. 372, vol. 3, p. 242; and No. 51, vol. 3, p. 90, is
the least likely to have been uttered by ʻAlī. There is
sufficient evidence to prove that the word was not in
usage at the time. Al-Mubarrad (d. 285 A.H.) writes:

> The plural of al-ḥāja is ḥāj on the scale of
> faʻla. As you say ḥāma [the singular, meaning
> the skull, head, top or summit] and ḥām
> plural of the same word] and sāʻa [meaning time,
> present (or "promised") time, hence the use
> of the word for a wristwatch] and sāʻ [the
> same word in plural form]. As for the plural
> word al-hawāʼij is concerned, this is not
> found in the utterances of the Arabs despite
> its being used frequently by al-muwalldīn
> ⌊the writers and the speakers of the post-
> classical period]. There is no set measure
> [qiyās] for it either ⌊in the language of the
> early Arabs].[1]

The second evidence comes from a person who was perhaps
the highest authority on linguistic matters in his time,
that is al-Aṣmaʻī (d. 213 A.H.). Abū Naṣr, Ismāʻīl
al-Jawharī (d. 406 A.H.) was contemporary to the collector
of Nahj al-Balāgha, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, and quotes
al-Aṣmaʻī as saying that the word al-hawāʼij is the

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1. al-Mubarrad, al-Kāmil, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1936), p. 242.

innovation of the late age (_muwallad_). "Al-Asma'ī,"
writes al-Jawharī, "never accepted al-hawā'ij being the
plural form [of al-ḥāja]."[1]

3. **Al-Jabrīyah.** This word occurs in the sermon called
al-Qāsi'a, No. 187, vol. 2, p. 161, and for the evidence
of its being manufactured at a later date, we have the
authority of Abū 'Ubaid, Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224 A.H.),
who asserts that the term is _muwallad_, an innovation of
the post-classical age[2] and it is not unlikely that the
word was attributed to 'Alī by the upholders of the
doctrine of al-jabr [3] to gain respectability.

There are times when the technocrats and the
specialists, because of haste or because of high office,
tend to overlook the simple yet fundamental dictates of
common sense. One such rule is that a man, in the store-
house of his memory, has some pet words and some favourite
ideas which he tends to repeat in some form or other. In
a book containing 237 speeches, 79 letters and 480 sayings,
we expect to find repetitions. And so there are. For
example, 'Alī's repudiation of the involvement with the
murder of 'Uthmān occurs in No. 21, p. 55, then again in
No. 30 , p. 71; No. 72, p. 122; No. 163, p. 98; No. 169,

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1. al-Jawharī, al-Ṣiḥāh, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1956), p. 308.
2. al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 307.
3. For the details of the doctrine and the intellectual
   sect which came to be known as al-Jabrīyah, see
   al-Milal wa al-Nihāl by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristanī.

p. 107, vol. 2. In the early days of Islam and under the command of Muḥammad, 'Alī's sword had shed some valuable blood; that of his own tribe, the Quraishites, and particularly of the house of the Umayyads which had not been forgotten and the memories of it played the major part when it came to choosing a Caliph. The most of the prominent members of that house, therefore refrained from voting if they did not come out in open opposition to him. Reaction to this is reflected in No. 32, p. 78, vol. 1; No. 167, p. 103, vol. 2; but when the Caliphate did in the end come to him he was not keen. This is reflected in No. 3, p. 31, vol. 1; No. 53, p. 99, vol. 1; No. 88, p. 128, vol. 1, amongst others. Yet 'Alī had always considered himself to be the prime person, if not the only one, worthy of the Holy Office. This is shown in No. 3, p. 25, vol. 1; No. 5, p. 37, vol. 1; No. 9, p. 38, vol. 1; No. 25, p. 62, vol. 1; No. 71, p. 120, vol. 1; No. 73, p. 123, vol. 1; No. 167, p. 102, vol. 2, amongst others. The battle of al-Jamal was fought on two fronts: the first is the obvious, but the second was the linguistic. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd quotes both al-Madā'inī and al-Wāqidī in saying that never before so much rajaz was composed, recited, and memorised as on the day of al-Jamal.[1] This is further confirmed by the sheer magnitude of the books composed by the early writers on subjects of al-Jamal and al-Ṣiffīn, although both the wars proved no less than

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 253.

a disaster for 'Alī and his followers. Yet it seemed that a victory had been scored on the linguistic front which was to echo down to the present time. And those wars also manifest 'Alī's partiality towards eloquence and style more than they do his skill in the fields of prudence and expediency. References to al-Jamal abound in Nahj al-Balāgha, as in No. 12, p. 40, vol. 1; No. 13, p. 41, vol. 1; No. 21, p. 55, vol. 1; No. 98, p. 196, vol. 1; No. 154, vol. 2, p. 44; No. 164, p. 99, vol. 2; No. 167, p. 103, vol. 2, No. 168, p. 105, vol. 2.

These, however, are themes. If we return to vocabulary items and the criticism of the words as units, one finds that there are some which, apart from the fact that they have not been used by the Qur'ān, occur in Nahj al-Balāgha just once, which considering the volume of the sermons, the letters and the sayings, suggests a different taste, a different memory and a different time. Now let us examine some words of this nature:

4. On page twenty-three, in the second sermon, occurs a sentence: wa taza'za'at suwarī al-Yaqīn, i.e. "The columns of belief were shaken right down to their foundations." The key word on which the sentence has been constructed is suwārī (which is the plural of sarīya, meaning column or pillar), which has been annexed to al-yaqīn (literally, certainty in the existence of God, the Hereafter, etc.). Now this word al-yaqīn has been used, in one form or the other, twenty-five times in the book, but al-suwārī appears no more. Like the

palatial and elaborate constructions, which the word
suggests, the metaphorical use of it points to a later
period.

5. Similarly, al-takhyā which has been used in sermon
No. 3, p. 24, vol. 1, is not used by the Qur'ān. Nor in
Nahj al-Balāgha elsewhere. For the word "cloud" (which
al-takhyā means) the Qur'ān used al-sahāb, which has also
been used in Nahj al-Balāgha in No. 87, p. 175, vol. 1;
No. 111, p. 225, vol. 1; No. 161, p. 95, vol. 2; No. 180,
p. 142, vol. 2; No. 472, vol. 3, p. 265; or ghamām, which
also appears in Nahj al-Balāgha, in No. 145, p. 46, vol. 2;
No. 206, p. 218, vol. 2; No. 177, p. 127, vol. 2; No. 111,
p. 225, vol. 1, No. 87, p. 175, vol. 1.

6. Sajīs. Yet another word appears in No. 33, p. 78,
vol. 1, which has been annexed with the next noun,
al-layālī, the two nouns together giving the meaning of
"never". This expression does not occur in the Qur'ān
nor has it been used elsewhere in Nahj al-Balāgha. And
as it does not seem to exist in the Jāhilī poetry, it
is probable that it belonged to the third century A.H.

7. Al-laqam. This word appears in No. 55, vol. 1, p. 100,
meaning "the high way" and it is likely to be of late
usage. It does not appear in the book again nor has it
been used by the Qur'ān. Its "transplantation" into
'Alī's sermon, if the rest, or most of the text, is
accepted as genuine, is further proved by the text quoted

by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212 A.H.) in his book, Waq'at
Siffīn. His version is "'alā ammaḍ al-alam".[1] And here
perhaps, is one of the strongest indications of the mani-
pulations the collection had been subjected to. It is a
possibility that someone, noticing the preceding word
muḍiyan, thought that al-laqam would be more eloquent than
ammaḍ al-alam. That may be true. But at the same time it
does prove the possibility that the ornaments were
exchanged for originality.

8.   Zabrah. This word has been used in No. 80, vol. 1,
p. 132 and again it has the same anomalies as the previous
one. It is not used by the Qur'ān and it appears just
once in Nahj al-Balāgha. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd translates it
as "the call", then proceeds to qualify, "the one which
has the air of admonition or rebuke."[2] It also appears
that the word was in fashion in the second or third
centuries, or both, but then it was foresaken as no
reference to it is made by the modern dictionaries.

9.   No. 87, vol. 1, is a sermon which has been recorded
by the collector with the following remakrs: "It is known
as al-Ashbāh and is one of the most glorious speeches of
him ['Alī], peace be on him. He delivered it when annoyed
by someone's request to define God as if he ['Alī] had

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1.   Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Waq'at Siffīn (Cairo, 1382 A.H.),
     p. 520.
2.   Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 251.

seen Him!" In this case the <u>isnād</u> has also been mentioned:
Mas'ada ibn Sadaqa, who took it from the sixth Imām of
the Shī'ites, Ja'far al-Sādiq (d. 148 A.H.). According
to al-Khatīb, the book in which Mas'ada had collected
the speeches of 'Alī was called <u>Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn</u>
and had survived up to the time of Sayyid Hāshim
al-Bahrainī (d. 1107 or 1109 A.H.). For Hāshim al-Bahrainī
makes use of this book in his <u>Tafsīr al-Burhān</u>.[1] However,
the authenticity of the sermon in question is subject to
doubt on account of certain words which it contains,
words like <u>dhāt</u> which, in the genitive case, is used with
God as the second and the governed noun. The sentence
actually reads: <u>wa ghamadat madākhil al-'uqūl fī haith</u>
<u>lā tablughuhū al-sifāt litanāwuli 'ilm dhātihī</u>.[2] The
entrances, says the above sentence, of rational approaches
are shut to His attributes so that the knowledge of His
Self cannot be acquired (through the attributes). And this
is the philosophical premise that one can only acquire
the knowledge of a being through its attributes. This
distinction between the Divine Self and His attributes is
not understood, or at least spoken of, by the community
of the Companions or the Muslims of the first century.
This is the language of the Mu'tazila who appeared in the

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1. al-Khatīb, <u>Masādir Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, vol. 2 (Beirut,
   1975), p. 168.
2. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, No. 89, vol. 1, p. 161.

first decade of the second century and who, on record,
were the first to formulate and propagate what became
known as "dogmatic theology". They preached al-tawhīd
(the belief in the Unity of God) as

> the strictest profession of monotheism
> ⌊against any kind of dualism⌋; denial of
> all resemblance between Allāh and His
> creatures (against the anthropomorphism of
> the muhaddithūn on the one hand and those
> of the Rāfiḍa (?) and Manichaeans on the
> other); the divine attributes recognised
> (against the Jahmīya) but depreived of their
> real existence; they are not entities added
> to the divine being (this would be shirk;
> against the Ṣifatīyah among the ahl al-hadīth)
> but identical with the being (Waṣil, Abu Hudhail)."[1]

The Qur'ān enlists ninety-nine ṣifāt of His Beautiful
Names (al-asmā' al-husnā) but does not distinguish Self
(dhāt) and the attributes (al-Ṣifāt). The opening of
every Sūrah, except LX, viz, bismillāh al-rahmān al-rahīm,
has the dhāt and ṣifāt together and was understood as:
In the name of God who is Merciful and who is Compassionate.
The Muʿtazila insisted that the verse must be understood
as: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate".

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1. H. S. Nyberg, "al-Muʿtazila", Encyclopaedia of Islam,
   pp. 787-93.

Self being the same as the attribute and the attribute same as Self. This is how the verse is translated now. But this is a step forward both in the understood concept of al-tawhīd and in time. And, therefore, this sentence of al-Ashbāh, and others like it, are not likely to have been originated in the first half of the first century.

These examples, together with others cited earlier, do not invalidate the claim of the general authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha. However, they do make it clear that parts of the text have been subjected to revision and embellishment by later writers. Al-Sharīf al-Radī himself may have been responsible for some of these "improvements".

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The first Chapter of this thesis has already intro-
duced Nahj al-Balāgha to the reader and, in fair measure,
underlined its importance. Yet the person who has read
it would, perhaps, tend to ask: why is it then that the
book has so far remained, relatively speaking, in total
obscurity? Why is it that even some of the Muslim students
of Islamic disciplines are not aware of it? The answer
lies in the attitude of the early Western scholars who
regarded Nahj al-Balāgha as total fabrication. However,
they held such views because they were led by the seventh
century biographer, Ibn Khallikān, who recorded in his
Wafayāt al-A'yān: "It has been said that the book is not
the collection of the utterances of 'Alī and the one who
has collected it and attributed it to him is the one who
has invented it" (q.v. Chapter II). This view was further
strengthened by the eighth century writer and scholar,
al-Dhahabī, who added a few more words of his own in
repudiation of the authenticity of the book. Al-Dhahabī's
contemporary, Ibn Taimiyyah, with all his undisputed
religious authority, also challenged the authenticity of
some of the contents of the book and pointed to the area
which happens to be the weakest point of the book, i.e.
lack of isnād. However, it should be noted that while
Ibn Khallikān's remarks imply total fabrication, al-Dhahabī

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uses the sentence: <u>aktharuhū bāṭil</u> (i.e., most of the contents of the book are invalid). On account of al-Ṣafadī's evidence (q.v. Chapter II), it appears that Ibn Taimiyyah did believe that some of the contents of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> were genuine. Modern criticism of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> either follows Ibn Khallikān, as Clement Huart and Gibb, or questions part of the contents, like Ahmad Amīn, Ṣafā Khulūṣī, and Jamīl Sulṭān (q.v. Chapter II) and in doing so, they really take the same position as that of al-Dhahabī and Ibn Taimiyyah in the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, there is the weight of the total Shī'ite population, which, since the year 400 A.H., has held the book to be totally authentic;and then there are the commentators, over a hundred or so, who wrote their commentaries on <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>, believing that every word that <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> contained was actually enunciated by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 655 A.H.), who was not a Shī'ite, takes up the issue of the authenticity of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> and concludes that it cannot be assumed that the book was totally or partially forged (q.v. Chapter V).

In order to discover the truth, attempts have been made in this thesis to locate the contents of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> in the accepted historical works which were composed prior to the existence of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>. The sources investigated include Sulaim ibn Qais (d. ca. 90/708); Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, better known as Abū Mikhnaf (d. 170/786); Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212/827); al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868);

al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892); al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/895);
al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897); al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922); Ibn
A'tham al-Kūfī (d. 314/926); al-Kulainī (d. 328/939);
al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), and al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022)
(q.v. Chapter III). This investigation, while proving
some of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha to be as early as
the work containing them, nevertheless leaves out a
considerable area for which only Nahj al-Balāgha constitutes
the earliest source. For example, entries Nos. 63, 76,
83, 85, 88, 93, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 106, 110, and 111
in the first volume, and Nos. 126, 127, 136, 138, 148,
149, 152, 154, 155, 158, 159, 163, 173, 174, 181, 183,
184, 186, 189, 192, 193, 194, 196, 209, 212 and 221 in
the second volume, remain outside the works mentioned
above. It is true that some of these speeches have been
reported by Qāḍī al-Quḍā'ī (d. 454 A.H.), 'Alī ibn
Muḥammad, Ibn Shākir (d. 457 A.H.), al-Āmidī (d. 550 A.H.),
and Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654 A.H.); yet their works are
post-Nahj al-Balāgha and, therefore, cannot constitute a
positive evidence in the authenticity of its contents.

The third aspect of the investigation engages itself
in identifying the parts or the sentences in the speeches
of Nahj al-Balāgha which can positively be stated to be
spurious. Like some words which on the evidence of the
third and the twelfth centuries' linguistic authorities,
like al-Aṣma'ī (d. 213 A.H.), al-Mubarrad (d. 285 A.H.)
and al-Jawharī (d. 406 A.H.), were not in use at the time
of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (q.v. Chapter V); or like some of

the philosophical notions and detailed expressions used
in Nahj al-Balāgha which are neither found in the Qur'ān
nor in the contemporary literature (q.v. Chapter IV).

But the parts of Nahj al-Balāgha which have been
positively proved are further supported by the circum-
stantial evidence, i.e. the prominence of the sermons or
public speaking in the Jāhilī prose, Islam's endorsement
of it, the role of the khuṭbah in the Islamic and post
-Islamic governments, and the compilation of it by the
succeeding generations. Ṣafā Khulūṣī argues (q.v. Chapter II)
that the usage of al-saj', or rhymed prose, goes against
the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha. This has been
disproved by rendering the examples of the speechs of
al-kāhin and the khaṭīb of the Jāhilī period, the main
body of whose speeches contained rhymed prose (q.v.
Chapter IV).

Yet in the same area (i.e. the proven parts of Nahj
al-Balāgha) a hitherto untouched feature has been highlighted.
That is, the part played by the editor, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī,
in, perhaps, polishing up the words or possibly substituting
a plain word for the more elegant one. One example of
this is the word al-laqam, which appears in entry No. 55,
vol. 1, p. 100, meaning the high way. This was perhaps
substituted, for in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's text the sentence
appears as 'alā amd al-alam, and his version appears to be
more in conformity with the rest of the sermon (q.v.
Chapter V). Other examples of the same pattern have been
pointed out in the same chapter, and in Chapter IV.

An examination of Chapter II in this thesis will reveal that amongst the critics of the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha, both the medieval and modern, the majority stand for the authenticity of some unspecified parts of Nahj al-Balāgha. While the objections of the critics have been directed to some specified areas of the contents of the book, for example both al-Dhahabī and Ibn Taimiyyah concentrate on entry No. 3 only. The main contribution of this thesis, therefore, is seen to be in pinpointing the areas of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha which can positively be proved, while underlining the areas which can safely be assumed to be spurious, entry No. 3 included.

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