



KOLAYNI

KOLAYNI (or Kolini, erroneously Kalini), Abu Ja'far Moḥammad b. Ya'qub b. Eshāq Rāzi, prominent Imami traditionist. He was born (at an unknown date) in the village of Kolēn (Arabicized as Kolayn or Kolin), situated 38 km southwest of Ray in the district of Pašāpuya. He must have lived for a time in Qom, since many of his authorities were leading Qomi scholars. Among them were 'Abd-Allāh b. Ja'far Ḥemyari, Aḥmad b. Edris Aš'ari, 'Ali b. Ebrāhim b. Hāšem, Dāwud b. Kura (or Kuza), Moḥammad b. Ḥasan Ṣaffār and Sa'd b. 'Abd-Allāh Aš'ari. He also transmitted from a number of scholars in Ray, including his maternal uncle 'Ali b. Moḥammad b. Ebrāhim Kolyani Rāzi, known as 'Alān (or 'Allān), who is credited with a *Ketāb aḵbār al-qā'em* (Najāši, II, p. 88). Kolayni later moved to Baghdad, where he lived in the *darb al-selsela* (Ṭusi, 1970, IV, p. 310) near the Bāb al-Kufa, in the southwestern part of the old city. He was therefore also known as Selseli (Moḥsen Amin, X, p. 99). In his *Fehrest* (p. 166), Abu Ja'far Ṭusi gives Kolayni's death-date as 328/939-40; in his *Rejāl* (pp. 495-96), which is a later work (and therefore perhaps more reliable; see Māmaqāni, IV, p. 201), the date provided is Ša'bān 329/May 941, and this is also the year noted by Najāši (II, p. 292). The funeral prayer was led by Abu Qirāt Moḥammad b. Ja'far, and Kolayni was buried in the cemetery of Bāb al-Kufa. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥed b. 'Abdun, known as Ebn Ḥāšer (d. 423/1032), reports that he had still been able to identify the tomb but that it had since been obliterated (Najāši, II, p. 292). According to [Moḥammad Mahdi Baḥr-al-'Olum](#) (d. 1212/1797), Kolayni's shrine was renovated and had become a center of pilgrimage (Kvānsāri, VI, p. 110).



Kolayni's greatest claim to fame is his *Kāfi* ("The Sufficient"), the oldest of the four canonical books of traditions (*al-kotob al-arba'a*) of the Imami Shi'a. He worked on it for twenty years, completing it in Baghdad. In his introduction, Kolayni maintains that it is incumbent upon the believer to perform the religious duties on the basis of knowledge, certainty and understanding (*'elm wa-yaqin wa-baṣira*). Without these he will remain in a state of doubt (*šakk*) and will not be eligible for reward (*ṭawāb, jazā'*) (Kolayni, I, pp. 6-7). This knowledge is to be found in traditions on the authority of the Imams, and Kolayni describes his aim as providing a book of such traditions that would include all branches of religious knowledge and would serve as a guide to the believers (Kolayni, I, p. 8). Continuing the work of earlier Qomi scholars, Kolayni sifted what he considered reliable from unreliable traditions, retaining only those traditions which he considered to reflect orthodox teaching.

A recent study suggests that in the *Kāfi*, Kolayni set out to counter the brand of Imami Shi'ism promoted in Baghdad by a number of powerful families, such as Banu'l-Forāt and the Banu Nawbaḳt. The latter in particular upheld Mo'tazeli rationalism, maintained that in the wake of the disappearance of the Imam the community had to be organized along hierarchical lines, and worked for cooperation with the 'Abbāsīd authorities. Kolayni's response was to include traditions underlining the Imams' special authority on issues of both doctrine and practice. A further aim was to combat the claims of Sunni traditionists to be the sole guardian of authentic *ḥadiṭ* (Newman, 2000, pp. 94-112).

Over 16,000 traditions are cited in the *Kāfi*. In virtually all of them the text (*matn*) is preceded by an *esnād*, though some of the *esnāds* are abbreviated by the use of the formula "a number of our masters" (*'edda men aṣḥābenā*; see Najāši, II, p. 292; Qohpā'i, VII, pp. 200-201). Only rarely are the views of Imami scholars quoted. Thus the *Ketāb al-naqz 'alā Abi 'Obayd fi'l-ṭalāq* by Faḏl b. Šādān Nišāpuri is partially preserved (Kolayni, VI, pp. 93-96); also recorded are some of Faḏl's elaborations on the laws of inheritance, which may well have been taken from his *Ketāb al-farā'eż* (Kolayni, VII, pp. 88-90, 95-96, 98-99, 105-08, 116-18, 120-25, 142, 145-46, 148-49, 161-62, 166-68).

The *Kāfi* comprises eight volumes. The first two, known as *al-Oṣul men al-kāfi*, are devoted mainly to theology, prophecy and the imamate. Particular attention is paid to the Imams: they hold a unique position as inheritors of the Prophet and as *moḥaddaṭun* (those addressed by an angel); they possess

limitless knowledge; various Qor'ānic passages refer to them; they are the sole guides for mankind. Another major topic is belief and unbelief (*al-imān wa'l-kofr*): among the subjects discussed here are the characteristics of believers and unbelievers, praiseworthy and blameworthy attitudes and actions, sin and repentance. The *Oṣul* also include chapters on supplications (*do'ā*), the merits of the Qor'ān, and social intercourse (*'ešra*). Volumes three to seven, the *Foru' men al-kāfi*, deal with legal matters, beginning with acts of devotion (ritual purity, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, *jehād*) and continuing with topics such as the means of earning a livelihood (*ma'iša*), marriage and divorce, foodstuffs and beverages, wills and inheritance, penal law, blood-money, the rules of testimony and judgeship. The final volume, entitled *al-Rawza men al-kāfi*, comprises traditions of a doctrinal, exhortatory or exegetical nature. Some late Imami authors expressed doubts as to the authenticity of the *Rawza* (Ḳvānsāri, VI, p. 111; *al-Dari'a*, XI, p. 302); yet these doubts do not seem to be well-founded.

The eight volumes are subdivided into a number of “books” (*kotob*), each *ketāb* being further divided into chapters (*abwāb*). In the modern printed editions of the *Kāfi*, there are 37 *kotob*: books 1 to 8 make up the *Oṣul*, books 9 to 36 are the *Foru'*, and book 37 is identical with the *Rawza*. This deviates somewhat from earlier divisions; Najāši, for example (II, p. 291), lists 31 books, one more than Ṭusi (1983, p. 165); Moḥammad b. Makki Šahid Awwal (d. 786/1384) is reported to have listed 32 books (Ḳvānsāri, VI, p. 109) and both Zayn al-Din b. 'Ali Šahid Ṭāni (d. 965/1557-58) (Majlesi, CVIII, p. 159) and Ḥosayn b. Ḥaydar Karaki (fl. mid-11th/17th century) (Ḳvānsāri, VI, p. 107), as many as 50. On occasion, the relationship between the different divisions can be established. Thus eight of the books in the printed editions appear in Ṭusi's *Fehrest* as four (*al-'aql wa-faẓl al-'elm*, *al-ṭahāra wa'l-ḥayẓ*, *al-šayd wa'l-dabā'eḥ*, *al-aṭ'ema wa'l-ašreba*), while the *Ketāb al-woquf wa'l-šadaqāt* – the only title in Ṭusi's list that does not appear in the printed editions – probably forms part of the *Ketāb al-wašāyā* (cf. Kolayni, VII, pp. 30ff.; Ṭusi, 1970, IV, pp. 97ff.). The order of the books as preserved in the *Fehrest* does not always correspond to that of the printed editions, and this is also true of the titles and order of appearance given by Najāši.

The *Kāfi* was transmitted by a number of Kolayni's students. They include Abu'l-Ḥosayn 'Abd-al-Karim b. 'Abd-Allāh b. Naṣr Bazzāz, Abu 'Abd-Allāh Aḥmad b. Abi Rāfe' Ebrāhim Šaymari, Abu'l-Ḥosayn Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Kufi al-Kāteb, Abu'l-Ḥosayn Aḥmad b. 'Ali b. Sa'id Kufi, Abu Ġāleb Aḥmad b.



Moḥammad Zorāri (d. 368/978), Abu'l-Ḥasan (or Ḥosayn) Eshāq b. Ḥasan 'Aqrā'i (or 'Aqrāni), Abu Moḥammad Hārūn b. Musā Tallā'okbari (d. 385/995), Abu'l-Mofazzāl Moḥammad b. 'Abd-Allāh b. Moḥammad Šaybāni (d. 387/997), and Moḥammad b. Moḥammad b. 'Ešām Kolayni. Particularly noteworthy are Abu'l-Qāsem Ja'far b. Moḥammad b. Qulawayh (d. 368/978 or 369/979), who transmitted all of Kolayni's works to Šayḫ Mofid (d. 413/1022), whence they reached Ṭusi (Ṭusi, 1970, IV, pp. 305-07; Ṭusi, 1983, p. 165); and Moḥammad b. Ebrāhim Ebn Abi Zaynab No'māni (d. 345/956 or 360/971), whose *Ketāb al-ḡayba* (completed in 342/952-53) includes extensive citations from the first volume of the *Kāfi*, especially traditions on the occultation of the Twelfth Imam (No'māni, pp. 95-96, 138-41, 162-63, 166, 183-89, 196, 199-201, 215, 219, 221-22, 224-25, 229, 231, 235-36, 238, 244-47, 249-50, 253, 256-57, 259, 272-74, 278, 294-95, 305, 315-30, 419-23, 470-73). The *Kāfi* formed part of the library of Abu Ḡāleb Zorāri (Abu Ḡāleb Zorāri, pp. 176-77) and was occasionally cited by Ebn Bābawayh (d. 381/991) in his *Man lā yaḥzoroho'l-faqih* (e.g. III, p. 223, IV, pp. 151, 165, 169, 171, 173, 175-76), but was slow gaining recognition: although Mofid praised it as "one of the most important and useful books of the Shi'a" (Šayḫ Mofid, p. 27), neither the *Kāfi* nor its author is mentioned in Ebn Nadim's *Fehrest* (written in 377/987-88). The *Kāfi* was first extensively used by Ṭusi (who possessed a manuscript of the work; see Ebn Ṭāwus, 1998-99, pp. 345-46). It went on to become the most authoritative collection of Imami traditions, gaining for its author the title of restorer (*mojadded*) of the Imami *madhab* at the end of the 3rd/9th century ('Aẓimābādi, XI, p. 392, Māmaqāni, IV, p. 202, both quoting Ebn Aṭir's *Jāme' al-oṣul*). In later periods the *Kāfi* was one of the texts at the heart of the debate between Aḳbāris and Oṣulis, with the latter refusing to acknowledge that all traditions in it derived with certainty from an Imam (*qaṭ'i al-ṣodur*) (Ḳu'i, I, pp. 25-35). Some Imami scholars did not hesitate to point out weaknesses in it. Thus Šarif Mortazā (d. 436/1044) claimed that it included forged traditions (Mortazā, I, p. 410); and Fayḏ-e Kāšāni, while praising the *Kāfi* as the most complete and trustworthy of the *kotob al-arba'a*, maintained that not all legal subjects are represented in it, that at times only one side of an argument is presented, and that some traditions appear under the wrong heading (Fayḏ, I, p. 5).

Beginning in the Šafavid period, numerous commentaries, abridgements, glosses, studies and Persian translations were written on the *Kāfi* (*al-Dari'a*, VI, pp. 180-84, XIII, pp. 95-100, XIV, pp. 26-28; Sezgin, I, pp. 541-42). Arguably the most useful and comprehensive commentary is the *Mer'āt al-oqul fi šarḥ aḳbār āl al-rasul* by Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesi. Majlesi had several manuscripts of

the *Kāfi* at his disposal. He began working on the *Mer'āt* in or before 1076/1665-66 and had almost brought it to completion by the time of his death (*al-Ḍari'a*, XX, pp. 279-80; 'Askari, II, pp. 512-16). Majlesi elucidates the various traditions and also classifies them, in accordance with the principles of *'elm al-derāya* (the science of knowledge of the traditions), as “sound” (*ṣaḥiḥ*), “good” (*ḥasan*), “reliable” (*mowattaq*), “strong” (*qawi*), “weak” (*ẓa'if*) and so forth (for these terms see e.g. Dāmād, pp. 40-42, 115-22; cf. Modarressi, pp. 5-6). Another well-known commentary is the *Rawāṣeḥ al-samāwiya fi šarḥ al-aḥādīṭ al-emāmiya* by Moḥammad-Bāqer Dāmād (d. 1040/1630-31), which covers only a fraction of the text (*al-Ḍari'a*, XI, p. 257). The *Šarḥ oṣul al-kāfi* by Mollā Šadr-al-Din (Šadrā) Širāzi (d. 1050/1640-41) was criticized by Moḥammad Šāleḥ Māzandarāni (d. 1080/1669 or 1081/1670) in his own commentary, which covers the *Oṣul*, the *Rawza* and part of the *Foru'*. Ḳalil b. Ġazi Qazwini (d. 1089/1678) wrote the *Šāfi fi šarḥ al-kāfi*, a commentary on the *Oṣul* and the *Ketāb al-ṭahāra* of the *Foru'*, as well as a Persian commentary on both the *Oṣul* and *Foru'* entitled *al-Šāfi fi šarḥ al-kāfi* (*al-Ḍari'a*, XV, pp. 4-5).

In addition to the *Kāfi*, Kolayni is credited with the following works, all of which are lost: *Ketāb al-radd 'ala'l-qarāmeṭa*; *Ketāb al-rejāl*; *Ketāb mā qila fi'l-a'emma men al-še'r*; *Ketāb ta'bir* (or *tafsir*) *al-ro'yā*; *Ketāb al-rasā'el* (or *Ketāb rasā'el al-a'emma*). The latter two were still available to [Rāzi-al-Din Ebn Ṭāwus](#), who cites a number of excerpts from them (Kohlberg, 1992, pp. 312-13, 337-38).

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