Religious Inquiries (2025), 14(1): 91-109
DOI: 10.22034/ri.2025.450934.1906 https://ri.urd.ac.ir/

Critical Analysis of Firestone's View on al-Ṣadūq's Role in Fabricating and Organizing Hadiths of Sacrificing Ishmael in Shiite Sources

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(Received: 3 April 2024 ; Accepted: 11 June 2024)

Abstract

The story of Ibrahim's sacrifice has always been a controversial issue in monotheistic religions. There are also differences among Muslims in determining the slaughter due to the ambiguity of the verses related to the story of sacrifice. Orientalists, such as Firestone, have concluded from these differences that ancient Islamic sources considered Isaac to be slaughtered. However, later sources fabricated accounts of Ishmael being sacrificed in order to compete with Jews and boast about it. In particular, he accuses al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq of organizing the hadiths of the slaughter of Ishmael. Drawing on an analytical-critical approach, this research examines and evaluates Firestone's claim through hadith analysis. Findings show that the accusation of forgery is rejected due to the existence of hadiths related to the slaughter of Ishmael in sources predating al-Ṣadūq, as well as the authenticity of the hadiths solely attributed to al-Ṣadūq. Therefore, it can be concluded that al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's nations are not the result of methodological forgery.

Keywords: Firestone, Abraham, Dhabīḥ Allāh, Ishmael, Isaac, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq.

Introduction

In the Qur'an, the name of Ishmael occurs twelve times (2:125, 127, 133, 136, 140; 3:84; 4:163; 6:86; 14:39; 19:54; 21:85; 38:48) and the name of Isaac fifteen times (2:133, 136, 140; 3:84; 4:163; 6:84; 11:71; 12:6, 38; 14:39; 19:49; 21:72; 29:27; 37:113; 38:45). The identity of Ibrahim's sacrifice is the interpretive component that has attracted the attention of scholars in these verses more than anything else. Since the Qur'an does not mention

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the name of the child sacrificed or the place of slaughter, there are different interpretations regarding this issue. A group of commentators, based on the evidence and possibly referring to narrated versions of this story in the Testament sources, concluded that the sacrifice was Isaac. Another group, considering the contextual and historical evidence, believed that Ishmael was slaughtered. This duality of statements has led some orientalists to argue that the theory of Ishmael's sacrifice is an Islamic modification made by commentators in later centuries. In other words, the perspective of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muḥammad was different. The book, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, explores the perspectives of Islamic commentators on the subject. After analyzing their views, the author mentions that Goldziher concluded that Muḥammad himself likely regarded Isaac as a potential sacrifice. This belief was also shared by early commentators without any doubts (Noort 2002, 130).

One Orientalist who made accusations against some Muslim scholars in this regard is Firestone.[4] He considers the hadiths related to the story of the slaughter to be the result of rivalries among Muslims, Jews, and Christians. He concludes that the accounts of slaughtering Ishmael have been systematically fabricated for centuries. He blames al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq for fabricating and promoting these hadiths among Shi'as (Firestone 1998, 110). Quoting al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's hadiths regarding the connection between the story of slaughtering Ishmael and the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn, he says:

> This tradition takes the paradigm of the Abrahamic sacrifice, applies it to the foundational narrative of Shiite Islam, and through a unique innovation equates the martyrdom of Ḥusayn with the sacrifice of the redemptive offering in place of Abraham's son, the *dhibh 'aẓīm* magnificent sacrifice of Q.37:107.… The identity of Abraham's son in this exegetical tradition is given as Ishmael - not Isaac – but it is a relatively late tradition for which its earliest provenance seems to be the tenth-century Ibn Bābawayh. (Firestone 1998, 110)

According to Firestone, the repetition of this narrative in later hadith collections, such as al-Bahrānī's commentary and al-Majlisī's hadith collection, has reinforced the Shiite belief that Ishmael was indeed slaughtered. Based on this claim, the following questions are mainly considered to be addressed here:

1. What is the background and support for the hadiths of the slaughter of Ishmael or Isaac in Shiite sources?
2. How strong is the claim that the hadith related to the verse, "and we ransomed him with a feat sacrifice," reported by al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq is fabricated?

4. Reuven Firestone is an American academic and historian of religion. He currently holds the position of Regenstein Professor of Medieval Judaism and Islam at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Skirball Campus in Los Angeles. Additionally, he is an Affiliate Professor of Religion at the University of Southern California. For more information about him, see: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=d319w_oAAAAJ&hl=en).

Research Background

Although this research has a general background in Imami and Sunni interpretations and specific monographs on this subject, no attention has been given to the accusation made by Firestone against al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, a highly esteemed Shiite scholar of hadiths (traditionist). No research has been conducted to either confirm or refute this accusation. The majority of available research can be categorized into two main types.

1) The first type deals with the issue of differences in determining the sacrifice. For example, Afsar's paper "A Comparative Study of the Intended Sacrifice of Isaac/Ishmael in the Bible and the Qur'an" (2007) examines which texts from the Qur'an and the Bible portray the sacrifice of Isaac/Ishmael more accurately and identifies any differences between the texts. In their book, *The Only Son offered for Sacrifice: Isaac or Ishmael*, Abdus Sattar Ghauri and Ehsanur Rahman Ghauri (2007) examine the story of Ibrahim's sacrifice in the Bible. They quote the details of the story from the Bible and analyze the issue of Ishmael or Isaac. In addition, some scholars briefly discuss the issue of Ibrahim's only child. For example, in his paper "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version," Dale Moody, under the meaning of the word "Monogenes," briefly points to the issue of Ibrahim's sacrifice and his only child (Moody 1953, 216-17).

2) There are articles specifically focusing on criticizing Firestone's views, including the following: Rezaei Haftador and Valizadeh (2012) in their paper titled "Pathology of Firestone's Research on Abraham" criticize the entry of "Ibrahim" in The Encyclopedia of The Qur'an. As Firestone briefly references the sacrifice in his article, they criticize his views on the subject. Moreover, Raisian and Abrishami (2014) in their article titled "Critique of the Article Comparing the Shiite Attitude to the Story of Ibrahim's Sacrifice with Judaism, Christianity, and Sunni Traditions from Firestone's Perspective," focus on criticizing the method, structure, and some of the content of Firestone's article. Some other approaches to the same topic seem very short (for example, see Shafiei 2016, 365). However, they did not evaluate the accusation against al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and his hadiths.

Accordingly, this study serves as a complimentary for previous studies. It examines the hadiths reported by al-Ṣadūq on this subject in his works, striving to trace these narrations in the sources before him. Then, through evaluating other pieces of evidence, the article investigates the charge against al-Ṣadūq.

1. Sacrifice Hadiths in al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's Works

In al-Ṣadūq's works, there are two categories of hadiths about the story of sacrifice: those attributing the sacrifice to Ishmael and those attributing it to Isaac.

1.1. Narratives Attributing the Sacrifice to Ishmael

A. Dāwūd al-Riqqī narrates: "I asked Imam Ṣādiq, 'Which of Ibrahim's two sons was older, Ishmael or Isaac? And which one was sacrificed?' The Imam replied, 'Ishmael was five years older than Isaac. It was Ishmael who was sacrificed, and Mecca was his place

of residence. Abraham intended to sacrifice Ishmael during Hajj in Mina... There was a gap of five years between the glad tidings for Ishmael and the promise of Isaac given to Ibrahim. Have you not heard Abraham say, "My Lord! Grant me a righteous son" (Qur'an 37:100)? He prayed for a pious son, and Allah said, "So We gave him the good news of a boy, possessing forbearance" (Qur'an 37:101), indicating that Ishmael was born to Hagar, and a large ram was sacrificed in place of Ishmael. Then God says, "And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet among the righteous, and We showered Our blessings on him and on Isaac" (Qur'an 37:112-113), which shows that the glad tidings of Ishmael came before those of Isaac. So, whoever believes that Isaac is greater than Ishmael, and that Isaac was the one sacrificed, is contradicting what God states in the Qur'an about them'" (Ṣadūq 2000, 391). This hadith is also icted in *Man lā-yaḥḍuruh al-faqīh* through a broken (*mursal*) chain of transmission (*isnād*) (Ṣadūq 1993, 2:230).

In this hadith, which is sound in its chain of transmission, the Imam cites the sequence of verses and pronouns in Surah Ṣāffāt. An eloquent speech requires that such pronouns have a single reference. In the final verse of the discussion, God says: "and We showered Our blessings on him and on Ishaq; and of their offspring are the doers of good, and (also) those who are clearly unjust to their own souls" (Quran 37:113). In this verse, the conjunction "and" indicates that the pronoun in "ʿalayh" refers to someone other than Isaac, i.e., Ishmael. Therefore, in the previous verses, which speak of the good news of a child and the command to slaughter him, the reference should be to Ishmael (Imani 2010, 5-21). In fact, the good news given to Abraham in the first verses is different from that given to Isaac in the last verses. For re-tiding Abraham after tiding him with "a *ḥalīm* son" indicates that there was another child before Isaac. It is widely agreed that Ishmael was the first child (Ṭabātabāʾī 1997, 7:232). Likewise, al-Ṭabrisī does not support the hadiths of Isaac's slaughter, citing numerous narrations relating to the slaughter of Ishmael (Tabrisī 1995, 8:320)

B. Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAli b. Faḍḍāl asked Imam al-Riḍā about the meaning of the Prophet's saying, "I am the son of two sacrifices (*dhabīḥayn*)." The Imam said, "The two sacrifices are Ishmael and ʿAbd Allāh." He then explained why ʿAbd Allāh is described as *dhabīḥ* (Ṣadūq 1983, 55; Ṣadūq 1984, 1:189). The chain of transmission of this hadith, which is different in Sunni sources (Ṭabarī 1968, 1:185; Ibn Kathīr 1987, 1:184; Ibn Athīr 1385 AH, 1:108), is ambiguous due to Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Qaṭṭān. This is because only al-Ṣadūq narrated from him, and his name is not mentioned in books of *rijāl* (evaluation of the reliability of hadith transmitters). However, some *rijāl* scholars have considered al-Ṣadūq's supplications of blessing (*taraḥḥum*) and satisfaction (*taraḍḍī*) for him as indications of his reliability (Māzandarānī 1996, 1:247; Burūjirdī 1990, 1:155; Wahīd al-Bihbahānī, n.d., 65). In contrast, Khoei rejects the claim that al-Ṣadūq's supplications for him indicate his reliability, suggesting that he was probably a Sunni transmitter of hadiths (Khoei 1993, 2:93). It is worth noting that he is not mentioned in Sunni sources of *rijāl*. Accordingly, his hadith may not be

trustworthy. Moreover, although there are no problems in the subsequent generations of this chain of transmission, the text concerning the story of ʿAbd Allāh's sacrifice is not without fault. Ghaffari strongly challenges this hadith, arguing that, despite its popularity in Shiite and Sunni sources, it includes a peculiar element that cannot be attributed to even an inexperienced person. How can we attribute it to ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib?[5] In another hadith with a weak chain of transmission, two sacrifices are mentioned: Ishmael and Isaac. According to this account, Isaac, who was born after the incident of Ishmael's sacrifice, wished he had been born before Ishmael and before God's command for his sacrifice was given, so he too could have been tested in the virtue of patience. God honored this wish and commanded the angels to regard him as a sacrifice. Thus, while Ishmael is the true sacrifice, Isaac is considered a symbolic one. Since in the language of the Qur'an, uncles are also described as fathers, the Prophet considered himself the son of two slaughtered individuals (Ṣadūq 1983, 58).

C. Another hadith can be found in the pilgrimage text of Imam al-Riḍā, which includes the phrase "peace be upon you, oh the heir of Ishmael *Dhabīḥ Allāh* (Allah's sacrifice)" (Ṣadūq 1984, 2:300). This hadith has on chain of transmission. In addition, it is cited in other sources without the phrase "Ishmael Allah's sacrifice" (Tūsī 1987, 6:88; Ibn Qūlawayh 1937, 312). This compromises the acceptability of this hadith.

D. Another account, which forms the basis of Firestone's accusation against al-Ṣadūq, is attributed to Imam al-Riḍā. He stated: "When God sent a ram to be sacrificed in place of Ishmael, Abraham secretly wished in his heart that this substitution would not happen, so he might receive the full reward for sacrificing his own child and enduring such a great calamity. God asked him, 'Which of My creations is dearest to you?' Abraham replied, 'No creature is more beloved to me than Muhammad.' God asked, 'Do you love him more than yourself?' Abraham said, 'Yes, I love him more.' God asked, 'Do you love his child more than your own child?' Abraham replied, 'His child.' God asked, 'Does his slaughter at the hands of his enemies pain your heart more, or would the slaughter of your own child by your own hand in My way hurt you more?' Abraham replied, 'His slaughter pains me more.' Then God informed him of the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn. Abraham wept greatly, and God said, 'O Abraham! I accept your tears in place of your son, Ishmael, even if you had sacrificed him yourself. I grant you the ultimate reward for enduring calamity. This is the meaning of God's words: "We ransomed him with a magnificent sacrifice."'"[6] (Ṣadūq 1983, 58; Ṣadūq 1984, 1:187).

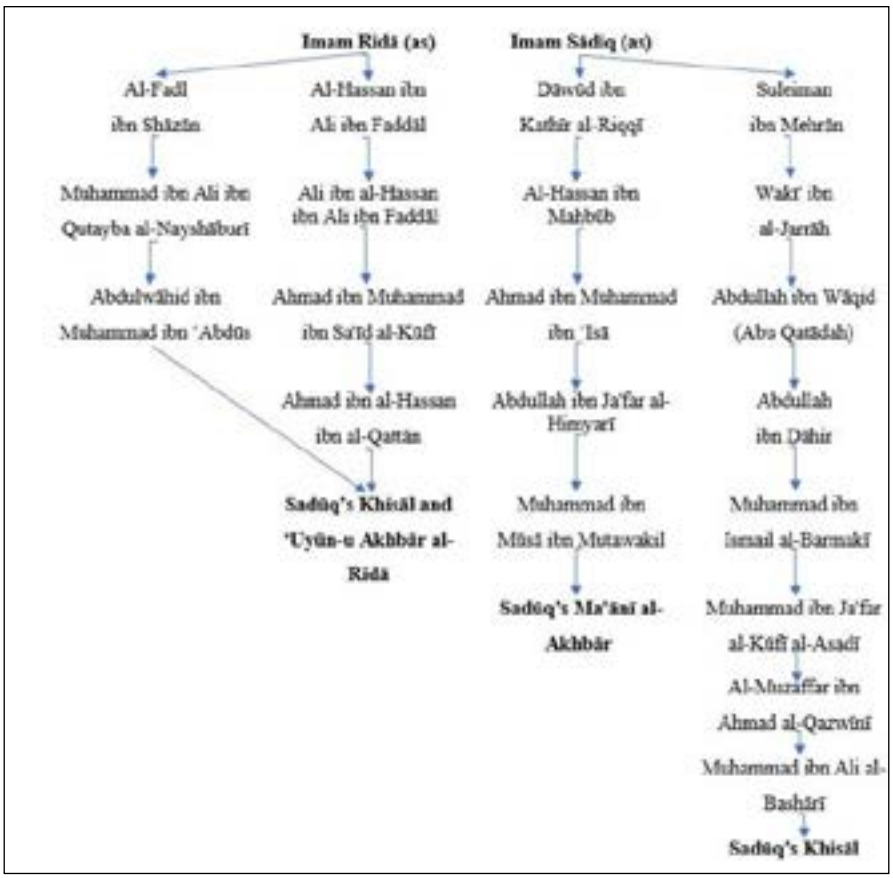
Contrary to Firestone, this hadith is not fake, but has a valid chain of transmission: "'ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdūs, quoting ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Qutayba, quoting Faḍl b. Shādhān." There is no dispute about the trustworthiness of Faḍl b. Shādhān (Māmaqānī 1927, 275). Regarding ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Muḥammad, some have authenticated him for being a master (shaykh) of al-Ṣadūq, citing al-Ṣadūq's consent to

5. For the hadith and the discussions surrounding it, refer to the translator's notes on Sadūq 2006, 4:114.
6. This is an allusion to the Quranic verse, "and we ransomed him with a feat sacrifice" (Quran 37:107).

his "shaykh" (Ardabīlī, n.d., 1:522; Burūjirdī 1990, 1:174; Māzandarānī 1996, 4:275; Wahīd al-Bihbahānī, n.d., 235). Some have considered this consent only as praise (Khoei 1993, 12:42). ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Qutaybah has also been mentioned due to al-Kashshī's high level of trust in him (Najāshī 1996, 259; Ḥillī 1997, 28). Accordingly, most scholars have deemed this chain of transmission reliable, or at least "ḥasan ka-l-ṣaḥīḥ" (close to reliable). Al-Māmaqānī expressed surprise at those who referred to this chain of transmission as "ḥasan ka-l-ṣaḥīḥ," as he considered it fully reliable (Māmaqānī 1927, 275). Additionally, the text of the hadith shows no signs of textual defects.

Based on this hadith, Firestone concluded that Shi'as believe Imam al-Ḥusayn was slaughtered in place of Ishmael (Firestone 1998, 111). This mistake appears to have arisen from a misunderstanding of the hadith's meaning. He interpreted it as stating that God sacrificed Imam al-Ḥusayn to Ishmael, while the actual sacrifice to Ishmael was a ram sent down by God. The true meaning of the hadith is what Imam al-Riḍā explained regarding the Quranic verse: "And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice" (Quran 37:107) (see above).

Chart 1: Al-Ṣadūq's hadiths where Ishmael is deemed the sacrifice



1.2. The Hadiths in which Isaac Is Deemed the Sacrifice

In one instance, al-Ṣadūq narrated a hadith that implicitly suggests Isaac was the intended sacrifice. In *ʿIlal al-Sharāʾiʿ*, he quotes a lengthy hadith from Imam ʿAli, in which someone asks, "Who are the most esteemed people in terms of lineage?" The Imam replies: "God's friend Joseph, the son of Jacob the Israel, the son of Isaac, God's sacrifice, the son of Abraham, the friend of God" (Ṣadūq 2007, 2:596). This hadith, which is also found in *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* with slight textual variations (Ṣadūq 1984, 1:222), does not have a reliable chain of transmission. Both Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Baṣrī (Burūjirdī 1990, 1:190; Khoei 1993, 18:84) and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Jibillah are considered unknown (Tustarī 2001, 9:365; Namāzī Shāhrūdī 1985, 7:164). Although ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. ʿĀmir al-Ṭāʾī is mentioned in *rijāl* sources, there is no indication of his reliability as a hadith transmitter (Najāshī 1996, 229). Al-Tūsī also refers to him as unknown (Tūsī 1997, 316). Additionally, the hadith contains content that contradicts established knowledge, raising further doubts about its credibility. For instance, it mentions the moon's length and width as nine hundred cubits, which is not supported by scientific evidence.

Chart 2: Al-Ṣadūq's hadiths where Isaac is deemed the sacrifice



1.3. Al-Ṣadūq's Strategies for Identifying the Sacrifice

Al-Ṣadūq himself acknowledges that the existing hadiths differ in identifying the intended sacrifice. However, since he likely believed that Ishmael was the true sacrifice, he showed little interest in citing hadiths that identify Isaac as the sacrifice. Instead, he sought to find a resolution to this dilemma. His primary strategy is based on the hadith mentioned after the hadith of "the son of the two sacrifices," which states that Ishmael is the actual sacrifice while Isaac is a symbolic one (Ṣadūq 1983, 58). However, as noted, the chain of transmission for this hadith is not reliable, and therefore, it cannot adequately resolve the issue.

2. Hadiths on the Sacrifice in Pre-Ṣadūq Shiite Texts

To fairly assess Firestone's accusation against al-Ṣadūq, it is necessary to examine the Shiite sources predating al-Ṣadūq. We need to understand which hadiths regarding the sacrifice were available to Shiites before al-Ṣadūq. If evidence of hadiths supporting Ishmael's sacrifice can be found in earlier works, the charge of forgery against al-Ṣadūq would be largely refuted. Studies show that many hadiths indicating Ishmael was the sacrifice exist not only in Shiite sources before al-Ṣadūq but also in Sunni sources from the same period (see Amini et al., 2022). On the other hand, while the presence of hadiths related to Isaac's sacrifice in pre-Ṣadūq sources does not alone substantiate the accusation of forgery against al-Ṣadūq, the frequency and quality of the transmission chains of these hadiths are significant for clarifying and resolving the issue.

2.1. The Hadiths in which Ishmael Is Identified as the Sacrifice

A. The earliest available source that mentions the sacrifice of Ishmael is *Qurb al-isnād* by al-Himyarī. In this text, al-Ḥusayn b. Asbāṭ asks Imam al-Riḍā about the identity of the sacrifice. Referring to the verse "And We gave him the good news of Isaac" (Quran 37:112), which was revealed after the story of the sacrifice, the Imam identifies Ishmael as the one who was sacrificed (Ḥimyarī 1993, 389). This hadith is considered sound in terms of its chain of transmission, with no issues or ambiguities in its text. It closely resembles al-Ṣadūq's first hadith as well.

B. In another hadith transmitted by ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, Imam al-Ṣādiq explicitly refers to Ishmael as the "dhabīḥ" (Qummī 1984, 2:226). This hadith has two chains of transmission, both of which appear to be sound, with no ambiguities or issues in the text.

C. In another hadith, Imam al-Riḍā addressed Saʿd b. Saʿd's comment about his family's refusal to eat ram's meat, saying, "If God had created something superior to a ram, He would have undoubtedly sacrificed it instead of Ishmael" (Kulaynī 1988, 6:310). The chain of transmission for this hadith is sound, with reliable transmitters including Muḥammad b. Yahyā (Najāshī 1996, 353), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Ashʿarī (Najāshī 1996, 82), Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī (Tūsī 1995, 363), and

Saʿd b. Saʿd (Tūsī 1995, 358). The chain is connected (*muttaṣil*). Although the book does not include this hadith in the chapters specifically on the determination of the sacrifice, it does discuss "the superiority of lamb over goat meat." This suggests that the hadith is genuine. Had it been fabricated to support the idea that Ishmael was sacrificed, it would likely have been included in sections dealing with the sacrifice dispute. Clearly, the hadith was issued in a context free of controversies concerning the identification of the sacrifice.

A similar text has been reported by another transmitter named Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl (Kulaynī 1988, 6:310). However, his chain of transmission is not considered reliable due to the unreliability of Sahl b. Ziyād, who appears in the chain, as determined by *rijāl* scholars (Najāshī 1996, 185; Tūsī 1997, 142). Nevertheless, based on the previously discussed version, the text can be verified.[7]

In another hadith reported by Saʿd b. Saʿd, the final phrase is: "If Allah the Almighty had known something better than the lamb, He would have sacrificed it, i.e., Isaac" (Kulaynī 1988, 6:310). The chain of transmission for this hadith is not considered valid because it starts with the vague phrase "some of our companions," and the next transmitter, Jaʿfar b. Ibrāhīm al-Haḍramī, has an uncertain reliability status according to *rijāl* sources (Jawāhirī 2003, 105). Although al-Tūsī includes him as one of the companions of Imam al-Riḍā, he does not comment on his reliability. From a textual perspective, the phrase "i.e., Isaac" appears to be an explanatory addition by the transmitter rather than part of the original hadith. Therefore, this hadith does not support the claim that Isaac was the one being sacrificed.

D. Another hadith is reported by al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, in which Imam al-Kāẓim describes himself as "the son of Muḥammad, God's loved one, the son of Ishmael, God's sacrifice, the son of Abraham, the friend of God" (ʿAlam al-Hudā 1998, 1:199). The chain of transmission is generally acceptable, with authenticated transmitters such as Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Marzbānī (Ibn Khallikān, n.d., 3:475; Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 3:353), Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl (Najāshī 1996, 97; Hillī 1997, 66), and Ayyūb b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hāshimī (Khoei 1993, 4:166). However, for ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Muḥammad al-Khaṣībī, while many hadiths involving him are reported in Sunni sources, only his name and works are mentioned, with no indication of his reliability status (Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 11:7). This report is also mentioned in *Dalāʾil al-imāma* by al-Ṭabarī with a different chain of transmission (Ṭabarī 1993, 320). Despite Qāḍī Abū al-Faraj al-Maʿāfī's fair assessment of this chain (Tustarī 2001, 10:104), it is not considered valid due to the unknown identity of Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl al-Kātib (Jawāhirī 2003, 22).

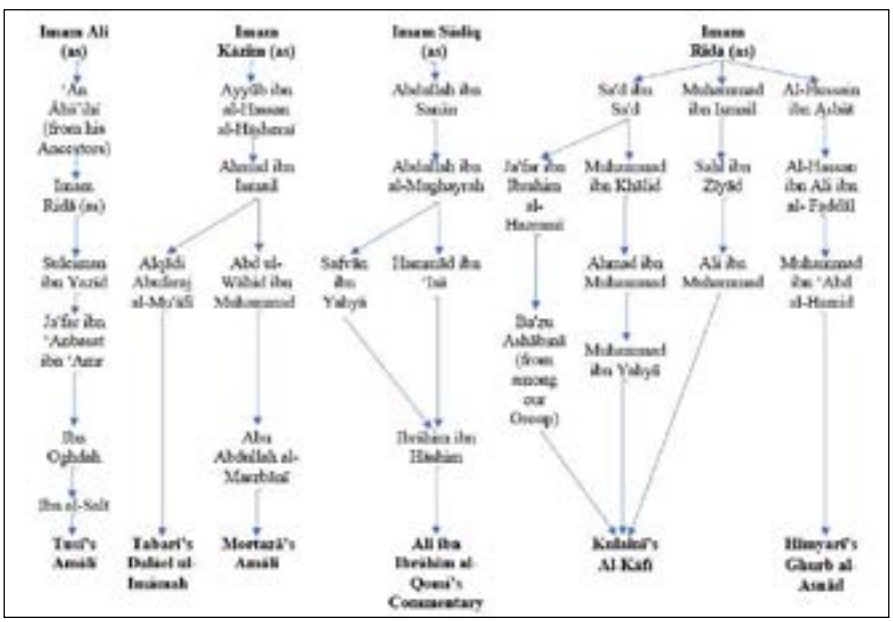
E. Other hadiths in the form of pilgrimage texts for the Imams are reported in pre-Ṣadūq sources, containing the phrase "Ismāʿīl Dhabīḥ Allāh" (Ishmael Allah's

7. Methodologically, a hadith with weak sanad that is accepted by extra-textual proofs, is preferable to a hadith containing the same content with sound sanad but without any other extratextual proof.

sacrifice). One such text, performed in the middle of Rajab, is known as the Ghufayla pilgrimage, reported by al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (Majlisī 1983, 98:345; Makkī al-ʿĀmilī 1990:162). Another is the Arbaeen pilgrimage, reported by al-Majlisī from Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh (Majlisī 1983, 98:329). These reports cannot be considered reliable, as they lack a continuous chain of transmission back to the Infallible. Moreover, in other versions of these texts, there is no mention of the phrase "Ishmael Allah's sacrifice." Although al-Shahīd al-Awwal states at the beginning of his book that all the pilgrimage texts of the Imams mentioned therein are hadiths, methodologically, his claim alone cannot be accepted. For a more accurate assessment, the chains of transmission must be evaluated, which, unfortunately, are not available.

F. Additionally, there is a hadith in later sources close to al-Ṣadūq in which Ishmael is explicitly referred to as "Dhabīḥ Allāh." This narration is reported by al-Tūsī in his *al-Amālī* (Tūsī 1994, 338), but its chain of transmission is considered weak due to the unknown status of Jaʿfar b. ʿAnbasa (Jawāhirī 2003, 110; Namāzī Shāhrūdī 1985, 2:177) and Sulaymān b. Yazīd (Namāzī Shāhrūdī 1985, 4:154).

Chart 3: Pre-Ṣadūq Shiite hadiths where Ishmael is identified as the sacrifice



2.2. The Hadiths in which Isaac Is Identified as the Sacrifice

A. Isaac is introduced as the sacrifice by al-Kulaynī in two positions.

First, Imam al-Riḍā stated that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but he was reluctant to comply. If he had desired, his will could not have prevailed over the will of God Almighty (Kulaynī 1988, 1:151). Al-Majlisī suggests that this hadith could

involve *taqiyya* (dissimulation) due to its anonymous attribution, which means that the Imam identified Isaac as the sacrifice out of fear from Sunni Muslims. He attempts to interpret it by proposing that Abraham was initially commanded to sacrifice Isaac, but the command was later abrogated (*naskh*), designating Ishmael for the sacrifice instead (Majlisī 1983, 2:162). However, the possibility of *taqiyya* is unlikely, as the question of whether the sacrifice was Ishmael or Isaac is not a matter of dissimulation. The belief in the sacrifice of Isaac is not unique to Sunni Islam, nor is the belief in the sacrifice of Ishmael exclusive to Shiite Islam. Therefore, the Imam would not have needed to practice *taqiyya* on this matter. Moreover, the possibility of abrogation (*naskh*) is also ruled out, as preoperative abrogation is not permissible.[8] Therefore, it appears that the most significant issue with this hadith lies in its chain of transmission, as two of its transmitters—Mukhtār b. Muḥammad al-Hamzānī (Khoei 1993, 18:103-104) and Fatḥ b. Yazīd al-Jurjānī (Ibn Dāwūd 1972, 492; Ḥillī 1997:247)—are considered unknown.

B. Another narration by al-Kulaynī comes from ʿAqaba b. Bashīr, who quotes Imam al-Bāqir or Imam al-Ṣādiq (al-Ṣādiqayn) as saying, "God commanded Abraham to build the Kaaba and erect its pillars." Abraham and Ishmael then carried out this command... Afterwards, Abraham, his family, and his children performed the pilgrimage. "So, anyone who believes that the *Dhabīḥ* (sacrifice) is Isaac believes that he sacrificed him during this Hajj." It is also transmitted from Abū Baṣīr that al-Ṣādiqayn believed Isaac was the one who had been slaughtered, while Zurāra considered Ishmael to be the one who was sacrificed (Kulaynī 1988, 4:205). Although al-Majlisī refers to the first part of the hadith as unknown (Majlisī 1983, 17:38), it is considered sound in terms of its chain of transmission. The second part, quoted from Abū Baṣīr, is *mursal* (broken) in its chain of transmission. However, both parts of the hadith appear textually confused. In the first part, it is stated that Abraham and Ishmael built the Kaaba together, after which Abraham performed Hajj rituals with his family and children.

The question arises: if Isaac was with Abraham at that time and the story of the sacrifice took place after Isaac's birth, why does the hadith not mention Isaac assisting in the construction of the Kaaba?[9] It could be argued that Isaac was not old enough to assist Abraham and Ishmael in building the Kaaba. In this case, this would mean that Isaac had not yet reached puberty. However, the account of the sacrifice in the Qur'an and earlier sources suggests that the child whom Abraham was commanded to sacrifice was an adult at that time, as the Qur'an states: "And when he reached [the age of] exertion' with him" (Quran 37:102). Most commentators interpret "[age of] exertion"

8. According to Islamic belief, it is not reasonable for God to abrogate a ruling before it is implemented. Such an abrogation would imply ignorance on the part of the abrogator, suggesting that God did not know how long the ruling would be valid. Furthermore, if a verdict is to be abrogated before its implementation, issuing the verdict would be rendered pointless.

9. Additionally, in the Holy Qur'an (2:127), Isaac is not mentioned in the story of the construction of the Kaaba. This indicates that the construction of the Kaaba occurred either before Isaac's birth or before he reached puberty.

(*saʿy*) as maturity, which implies that the individual had attained a satisfactory level of physical and mental capability[10] (Tabātabāʾī 1997, 17:152; Ṭabarī 1995, 23:91; Fakhr al-Rāzī 2000, 26:154). Additionally, the story indicates that Abraham shared his dream with his son to seek his opinion, and Isaac willingly chose to be sacrificed. If Isaac had not yet reached puberty, how could he have consciously made the decision to sacrifice himself? Moreover, how could Abraham have decided to slaughter a child who had not reached puberty based solely on his own decision?

Therefore, it is evident that the phrase "anyone who believes that the *Dhabīḥ* (sacrifice) is Isaac believes that he sacrificed him during this Hajj," as noted by al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1986, 12:149), appears to be an addition by transmitters who sought to align the hadith with the theory that Isaac was the one sacrificed. This addition likely arose from how the text of the hadith was interpreted. The hadith states, "And Ibrahim, along with his child and family, performed Hajj." If the relevant term is read as "waladih" (singular form, meaning "child"), it suggests Abraham performed Hajj with his child. However, if it is read as "wuldih " (plural form of "walad," meaning "children"), it indicates Abraham performed Hajj with his children. The confusion seems to stem from this misreading. Those who read it as "wuldih" might have believed that Abraham was with both Ishmael and Isaac, leading them to add the aforementioned phrase. Al-Majlisī writes, "The purpose of the hadith is to refute the notion that Isaac was actually sacrificed" (Majlisī 1983, 17:38-39). He attributes the phrase to *taqiyya*, though this justification is not necessary in this context. Recognizing the phrase as an addition can resolve the issue.

The second part of the hadith, besides being *mursal* (broken) in its chain of transmission, is textually confusing. It suggests that al-Ṣādiqayn believed Isaac was the one sacrificed, while Zurāra held a different opinion. This section may also reflect al-Kulaynī's personal view, as there is no hadith from Abū Baṣīr with a reliable chain of transmission. Additionally, it is unlikely that Zurāra, a disciple of al-Ṣādiqayn, would oppose them. Zurāra either heard a story about the sacrifice from one of the Imams or from other sources. The latter possibility is less plausible given Zurāra's known steadfastness in following the Imams' teachings. There is no evidence of Zurāra opposing the Imams or showing interest in the opinions of other transmitters that contradict the Imams. Therefore, his comment was likely based on what he had heard from the Imams, who, in other hadiths, have affirmed that Ishmael was the one sacrificed.

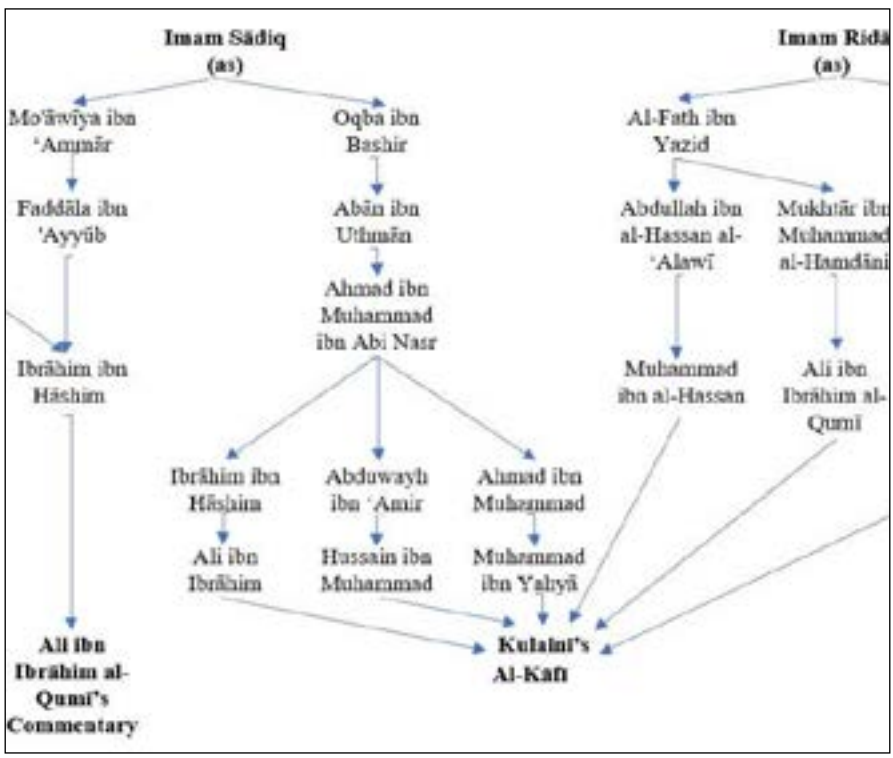
C. Another hadith is reported by ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī regarding the Quranic verse 12:78. It involves a letter written by Jacob in response to a letter from Potiphar, the ruler of Egypt. Sudayr b. Ḥakīm quotes Imam al-Bāqir as saying, "Jacob wrote to the ruler of Egypt that God made calamity the guardian of mankind. Nimrod threw

10. Commentators tend to interpret the age of *saʿy* as thirteen years (e.g. Tūsī 1989, 8:516; Tabrisī 1995, 8:321).

my grandfather Abraham into the fire, but he did not burn. God commanded my grandfather, Abraham, to sacrifice my father, Isaac. However, just as he was about to sacrifice him, God replaced Isaac with a large ram" (Qummī 1984, 1:351). This hadith has no significant issues in its chain of transmission, except for Sudayr b. Ḥakīm, who was accused of mixing (*takhlīṭ*), meaning he mixed good and bad hadiths (Hillī 1997, 165; Ibn Dāwūd 1972, 101). Although this does not necessarily discredit his authenticity (Khoei 1993, 9:39), it does affect the level of trust in his transmitted hadiths. Another version of this hadith is mentioned in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, but with a *mursal* (broken) chain of transmission from Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿAyyāshī 2001, 2:193).

D. The most detailed hadith concerning Abraham's Hajj and the story of the sacrifice is reported by ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī from Imam al-Ṣādiq through Muʿāwiya b. ʿAmmār, in which Isaac is explicitly mentioned as the intended sacrifice (Qummī 1984, 2:224). This hadith is considered valid in terms of its chain of transmission. As for the text, there does not appear to be any problem, except that ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī is the only narrator of this version, and all subsequent commentators have quoted it from his book (Bahrānī 1995, 4:616; Huwayzī 1995, 4:427; Qummī al-Mashhadī 1989, 11:167).

Chart 4: Pre-Ṣadūq Shiite hadiths in which Isaac is deemed the sacrifice



3. Examining the Charge of Hadith Fabrication against al-Ṣadūq

The charge of hadith fabrication against al-Ṣadūq regarding the identification of the sacrifice appears to be baseless for the following reasons.

A. If al-Ṣadūq intended to support the notion of Ishmael's sacrifice through hadith fabrication, he logically would not have included the hadiths concerning Isaac's sacrifice. Instead, he presents both sets of hadiths, acknowledges the contradiction between them, and attempts to resolve the issue to the best of his ability.

B. The hadith related to the verse "The Magnificent Sacrifice," which Firestone considers fabricated, actually has a sound chain of transmission.

C. Firestone made a mistake in interpreting this hadith by confusing commentary (*tafsīr*) with interpretation (*taẇīl*). His unfamiliarity with Shiite culture, and the concept, scope, and function of interpretation, seemingly led to this error. One of the purposes of interpretive hadiths is to identify specific instances (*maṣādīq*). In many hadiths, examples of the content of verses are mentioned, but based on linguistic and interpretive principles, these examples cannot be seen as the only ones for a particular verse. Such hadiths generally do not imply exclusivity (e.g., ʿAyyāshī 2001, 1:168, 177, hadiths no. 29, 62). Tabātabāʾī also discusses many of these hadiths in relation to verses as instances, using the terms *jary* and *tatbīq*, which mean application or instance identification (see Mehrizi 2010, 14). Additionally, one aspect of the Qur'an's novelty is its inclusion of multiple layers of meaning, where each phrase may have several interconnected meanings. Inferences from the Imams that go beyond the apparent vocabulary can also be part of this broader interpretative approach and cannot be considered simple commentary (e.g., see Kulaynī 1988, 1:110, hadith no. 5; Majlisī 1983, 3:323, hadith no. 20; ʿAyyāshī 2001, 1:220, hadith no. 20; Huwayzī 1995, 1:311, hadith no. 12).

D. Firestone claims that the problem with the Shiites who consider Ishmael to be the sacrifice is that they have resolved a historical issue through an interpretive effort. In response, it should be noted that the Orientalists' approach in critiquing Muslim views is primarily historical, and their misunderstandings, including their interpretation of the verse "The Magnificent Sacrifice," stem from this method. In other monotheistic religions, similar issues are examined under the concept of typology, where one biblical text is interpreted through the lens of another. For example, the Qur'anic verse "O sister of Aaron" (Quran 19:28) refers to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the sister of Aaron, even though, according to the Bible, Mary and Aaron were not siblings. Understanding such typological interpretations can provide commentators with a clearer perspective on the meaning of these verses.

E. Shiite scholars have generally shown little interest in hadiths that identify Isaac as the sacrifice. Instead, they have consistently sought to resolve the apparent contradictions within these hadiths. For instance, some scholars have considered these narrations as examples of *taqiyya* (dissimulation) (Majlisī 1983, 2:162), while others,

like al-Ṣadūq, interpret them as reflecting Isaac's wish. Others propose the idea of multiple events (Jazāʾirī 1984, 131). Consequently, there is no basis for the claim that hadiths were fabricated to favor the theory of Ishmael as the sacrifice. Shiite scholars have always faithfully reported all the hadiths they have received on this topic with sound chains of transmission, even if some of these chains are considered invalid by contemporary standards.[11]

F. The hadiths cited by Firestone concerning the sacrifice of Isaac are all sourced from *Tafsīr al-Qummī*. Even when later sources, such as *Bihār al-anwār* and *Tafsīr al-burhān*, are referenced, they ultimately derive from *Tafsīr al-Qummī*. There are, however, doubts regarding the authenticity and complete attribution of *Tafsīr al-Qummī* to ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm (see Mirzaei 2010). Moreover, in Shiite hadith culture, merely citing a hadith from a scholar's book does not necessarily imply endorsement by the author. Some scholars, including al-Majlisī, have focused on compiling all available hadiths on a topic, deferring the assessment of their authenticity to later scrutiny. He has, at times, included contradictory narrations without resolving their discrepancies.[12]

G. Most of the hadiths regarding the sacrifice of Isaac have entered Islamic sources through Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (Ibn Kathīr 1987, 1:159, 7:28; Hafni 2004, 1:929; Marefat 1990, 2:256). Al-Dhahabī also identifies their origin as Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, noting that Kaʿb was permitted during ʿUmar's era to narrate stories from earlier texts (Dhahabī, n.d., 1:163). Additionally, Isaac is introduced as the sacrifice in later versions of the Old Testament (Genesis 22). Moreover, some of these reports contain contradictions; for instance, while some sources quote Ibn ʿAbbās as saying that the sacrifice was Isaac, others state it was Ishmael (Biomi Mehran 2004, 1:141). This context underscores Ibn Kathīr's assertion, especially considering that Jews, who were the descendants of Isaac, might have had more incentive to fabricate such narratives than Shiites. Given their pride in Isaac and their rivalry with the Arabs, who are descendants of Ishmael, Jews may have fabricated the story to deny the sacrifice of their ancestor and assert that Isaac was the victim. This sentiment is reflected in a hadith from Kaʿb al-Qaraẓī: "When I was in the Levant with Caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, he was asked about the sacrifice and said: 'I do not know!' He then called a Jew who had recently converted to Islam, a Jewish scholar, who said: 'I swear by God that the sacrifice was Ishmael, as Jews know it. They are jealous of the Arabs and cannot accept that their ancestor was the sacrifice in obedience to God's command. So they deny it and claim that Isaac was the sacrifice'" (Ṭabarī 1968, 1:270). Therefore, it seems that the fabrication of the sacrifice story is more attributable to the People of the Book rather than to al-Ṣadūq or similar figures.

11. The reason lies in the differing principles between early and later scholars regarding the definition of an authentic hadith (e.g. see Māmaqānī 2010, 2:166; Jubāʾī al-ʿĀmilī 1988, 77).

12. An example of this is the contradictory hadiths regarding the humiliation (Majlisī 1983, 46:138-139, hadith no. 29) and non-humiliation of Imam al-Sajjād in front of Yazīd (Majlisī 1984, 46:100; cf. 46:138).

Conclusion

1. Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq compiled narrations concerning both Ishmael and Isaac as the sacrifice in his hadith works. He openly acknowledged the contradictions present in these hadiths regarding the identification of the sacrifice.
2. In al-Ṣadūq's works, the hadiths related to the sacrifice of Ishmael are superior to those concerning Isaac's sacrifice in terms of both their chains of transmission and the consistency and number of the texts.
3. Most of the hadiths about the sacrifice of Ishmael cited by al-Ṣadūq can be found in sources predating him. He likely obtained these hadiths either from these earlier sources or through other reliable channels. While some of these hadiths have sound chains of transmission, others are weak. According to hadith evaluation rules, the weak hadiths are strengthened by the presence of sound ones.
4. The hadith related to the verse "The Magnificent Sacrifice," which Firestone uses as significant evidence to accuse al-Ṣadūq of fabrication, has a sound chain of transmission, but it should be interpreted differently from what Firestone suggests. This hadith is intended to provide additional instances for the verse and does not imply that Imam al-Ḥusayn replaces Ishmael as the sacrifice. Furthermore, comparing this hadith with the Christian belief that Jesus replaced Isaac as atonement for Christian sins is not applicable to the Shiite belief regarding Imam al-Ḥusayn. In Shiite interpretation, there is no concept of Imam al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom serving as atonement for sins.
5. In the story of the sacrifice, the forgers are more likely to be found among some scholars of the People of the Book rather than among Shiite or Muslim scholars, based on the available evidence.

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