

Note on the Edition and Translation: Manuscripts and Methodology

The manuscripts and methodology used to prepare the present volume are described in the following pages. My hope is to have produced a highly accurate critical edition and translation of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, based on the earliest and most important extant manuscripts, and on a carefully constructed stemma.

1 Manuscripts

As can be expected for a text of such fame, several hundred manuscripts are extant in collections in the Middle East and worldwide,¹ some dating from the 5th/11th century just decades after Rađī finished his compilation in 400/1010. To prepare my edition, I have consulted fourteen of the earliest manuscripts, dating from the 5th/11th through the 7th/13th centuries,² some examined for the first time in modern scholarship. These manuscripts are valuable not only because of their early provenance, but also because of their eminent genealogies: eight are copied or corrected by renowned scholars, and three even trace their lineage to Rađī's own autograph manuscript.

1.1 Summary List of Manuscripts

The following is a summary list of the manuscripts—five primary and nine secondary—consulted for the present edition:

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- 1 In a series of articles from 1986/1987 to 1992, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ṭabāṭabā’ī listed and described 172 manuscripts from the 5th/11th through the 12th/18th centuries: Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī min makhtūtāt *Nahj al-balāghah*,” 62–102, MSS §1–86; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Mā tabaqqā min makhtūtāt *Nahj al-balāghah*,” 13–36, MSS §87–147; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Fī Rīḥāb *Nahj al-Balāghah: Makhtūtātuhu*,” 3:7–20, MSS §148–172. In a 2016 online article, Ḥusayn Muṭtaqī listed 458 manuscripts from the 5th/11th through the early 14th/ late 19th centuries: *İtlālah ‘alā makhtūtāt Nahj al-balāghah fī al-maktabāt al-‘ālamiyah*, <http://manuscripts.ir/fa/90>; also listed and further manuscripts added in his 2019 publication, *Mu‘jam al-Āthār al-makhtūtāh fī al-Imām ‘Alī*, pp. 374–386.
 - 2 I collected copies of eleven additional early manuscripts dating from the 7th–9th/13th–15th centuries, located in Iranian and Turkish libraries; I eventually decided not to consult them for the present edition, realizing that they would clutter the apparatus without adding anything new. All the manuscripts are relevant, however, to the text’s reception history, which awaits detailed study.

TABLE 1 Primary manuscripts

<i>Sigla</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Library</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Catalog number</i>	<i>Special Merit</i>
M	م 469/1077	Mar'ashī	Qum, Iran	3827	Checked against manuscript read out to Rađī
Sh	ش 5th/11th c.	Shahrastānī	Baghdad, Iraq	—	Perhaps earliest manuscript, 406/1015 or 1016
N	ن 494/1101	Našīrī	Tehran, Iran	—	Early manuscript
H	ه 553/1158	Rampur Raza	Rampur, India	1190	Copied from Faḍlallāh al-Rāwandi's 511/1158 ms, which was checked against Rađī's autograph copy
Y	ي 608/1212	Tehran University	Tehran, Iran	1782	Copied from Ya'qūbī's 474/1081 ms, which was checked against Rađī's autograph copy

TABLE 2 Secondary manuscripts

<i>Sigla</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Library</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Catalog number</i>
L	ل 510/1116	Mumtaz ul Ulama	Lucknow, India	—
Z	ز 538/1144	Maulana Azad, AMU	Aligarh, India	485
D	د 544/1149	Imam Reza	Mashhad, Iran	13847
Q	ق 565/1170	Iraqi National Museum	Baghdad, Iraq	356
S	س 567/1171	Sulaymaniye	Istanbul, Turkey	REISULKUT-TAB 942
Ch	چ 588/1192	Chester Beatty	Dublin, Ireland	5451
A	ا 598/1202	Sulaymaniye	Istanbul, Turkey	AYASOFYA 4344
T	ت 615/1218	Topkapi Palace	Istanbul, Turkey	Aḥmad III 2556
K	ک 684/1285	Sulaymaniye	Istanbul, Turkey	REISULKUT-TAB 943

1.2 *The Manuscripts' Contents*

The manuscript evidence shows that Rađī's original *Nahj al-Balāghah* consists of three main sections of 'Ali's words: 232 orations, 78 letters, and 429 sayings, including 9 sayings in a subsection on rare words; some texts are followed by

Rađī's brief commentary. The anthology is bookended by Rađī's introduction and brief conclusion.

Two ancillary aspects of the manuscripts' contents are as follows:

SEQUENCE OF ORATIONS: A set of eight orations—§ 1.183–190—are arranged in two different sequences:

Sequence 1 is the one followed in the present edition. It is found in primary manuscripts M and Sh, and secondary manuscripts Z, S, Ch, A, T, and K.

Sequence 2 is as follows: Oration § 1.182 is followed by § 1.191–232. Orations § 1.183–190 come after § 1.232, the final oration in Sequence 1; § 190 (*Qāšī’ah*) is the final oration in Sequence 2. Sequence 2 is found in primary manuscripts N, Y, and H, and secondary manuscripts L, D, and Q.

ADDENDA: A number of manuscripts contain the following post-Rađī addenda (details are noted in the individual manuscript descriptions that follow this section):

Additional texts: Several manuscripts contain extra texts attributed to 'Alī—six orations (§ 1.233–238), one letter (§ 2.79), and seventeen sayings (§ 3.430–446)—that are inserted at the end of each of the three sections. The insertions are early, perhaps from Rađī's lifetime and perhaps with his approval, but they were not part of his original compilation.³ Other than K and Ch, all manuscripts signal the inserted sayings as additions (*ziyādah*), and earlier scholarship has noted their insertion. Y, H, and L also signal the added orations, and H and L the added letter—in modern scholarship, the present edition is the first to identify their insertion.

Supplements: Some manuscripts contain up to four supplements inserted right after Rađī's conclusion (and others contain further ad hoc supplements):

- Three sets of verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah* by: (1) Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ahmad al-Naysābūrī (d. 474/1081, who also penned an important lost manuscript of *Nahj al-Balāghah* consulted by some of our manuscripts); (2) his son Abū Bakr al-Hasan ibn Ya‘qūb (d. 517/1123); and (3) the grammarian 'Alī ibn Ahmad al-Fanjkurdī (d. 513/1119).
- Inscriptions of 'Alī's signet-rings (*nuqūsh khawātimihi*).

Marginalia: All manuscripts contain a larger or smaller number of study notices, marginalia, and stamps of ownership.

³ According to Ibn Abī al-Hadīd (H 20:180) and Bahrānī (B 1029), whose comments are cited at the end of the present edition's notes. As Rađī mentions in his conclusion, he left spaces at the end of each of his three sections for himself or others to write in additional texts, and scholars appear to have done so.

I have transcribed the additional texts in the edition and translation notes, but not the supplements or marginalia.

1.3 Primary Manuscripts

For the present edition, I have relied primarily on five precious manuscripts, all probably originating in Iraq and Iran. The first three—M, Sh, and N—are each claimed by specialists, as detailed below, to be the oldest known manuscript of the work. They were transcribed in the 5th/11th century by scholars either contemporaneous to the compiler, Rađī (d. 406/1015), or a generation or two after him; Sh may even be from as early as 406/1015 or 1016. M is especially valuable because it is said to have been checked against a manuscript corrected by Rađī, but the other two manuscripts also go back to Rađī's original: of the others making up the five primary manuscript sources, H was transcribed from the early 6th/12th manuscript of the scholar Fadlallāh al-Rāwandī, and Y from the manuscript of the aforementioned 5th/11th-century scholar-poet Ya'qūb al-Naysābūrī, both parent manuscripts said to have been copied from Rađī's manuscript. In terms of preservation, manuscript Y is complete, while M, Sh, N, and H are nearly complete, missing only the first few folios and a few inner ones.

The following are details of my primary manuscripts, in approximate chronological order:

[م] or [M]: Mar'ashī Manuscript: Iranian manuscript dated 469/1077,⁴ located in the library of Ayatollah al-Mar'ashī, Qum, catalog no. 3827, in two parts,⁵ published in a single-volume facsimile edition titled *Nahj al-balāghah: Muṣawwarah min nuskhah makhtūṭah nādirah min al-qarn al-khāmis*, edited by Maḥmūd al-Mar'ashī (Qum: Maktabat Ayatollah al-Najafī al-Mar'ashī, 1406/1986); the full manuscript is available online.⁶ Mīrzā 'Abdallāh Afandī, an 11th/17th-century historian who once owned the manuscript, writes that it was “checked against a manuscript read out [in a study session] to the compiler, Rađī.”⁷ The eminent

⁴ The final folio 171^v (p. 335 of facsim. ed.) contains a mostly undotted date: سنه سع و سع (سنه سع و سع) that can be read as “sanata tis'in [or: sab'in] wa-sittīna wa-arba'i-mi'a" (in the year nine [or: seven] and sixty and four hundred). Afandī (*Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*, 49) confirms the 469 AH dating.

⁵ Part 1—fol. 1^r–91^v (pp. 1–174 of facsim. ed.)—includes Rađī's introduction and orations § 1.1 to § 1.186. Part 2—fol. 92^v–171^v (pp. 176–335 of facsim. ed.)—begins with oration § 1.187 and goes to the end of the compilation.

⁶ <http://arabic.balaghah.net/sites/default/files/book/lh64/1.pdf>.

⁷ Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*, 2:87, in his biography of the copyist, Ibn al-Mu'addib. Afandī adds that Ibn al-Mu'addib received a license to transmit the text from his teacher, Ja'far ibn

Nahj al-Balāghah scholar ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Tabāṭabā’ī calls it “one of the oldest and most valuable manuscripts” of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, “perhaps even the most valuable of them all.”⁸

- The copyist is the well-known scholar Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mu’addib al-Qummī (d. early 6th/12th c.). Place is not mentioned.
- The manuscript is almost complete in 171 folios, numbered in the facsimile edition in 335 pages.⁹ The opening folios (Raḍī’s introduction, orations § 1.1–18), and folio 24^r (orations § 1.55–59) are missing, and the facsimile edition inserts folios from later manuscripts to complete the text—in the present edition, I do not consult the inserted folios. The Sayings section is also missing a substantial portion (§ 3.132–355, § 3.429). A few sayings are in a different sequence than in some other manuscripts.
- The manuscript is written in clear Naskh script, though cramped in some places and difficult to read, fully dotted and vocalized. Numerous study notices, corrections, variant readings, and lexical explanations are provided in different hands in the margins.
- The added orations are transcribed without signaling the insertion. The added letter is transcribed by a later hand in the margin without flagging the insertion. The added sayings are not included.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- Blessings for the Prophet Muḥammad are invoked throughout with the formula, “God’s blessings and peace on him and his descendants” (*ṣalla llāhu ‘alayhi wa-ālihi*). Blessings for ‘Alī are invoked with the formula “peace on him” (*‘alayhi al-salām*).
- Raḍī’s explanatory remarks are not prefaced by the copyist’s added phrase found in several other manuscripts, viz., “The Sayyid [al-Raḍī] said.”

[ش] or [Sh]: Shahrastānī Manuscript: Early 5th/11th-century manuscript, possibly dated 406/1015 or 1016,¹⁰ located in the private library of Ayatollah Hibatal-

Muhammad ibn al-‘Abbās al-Dūrīstī, and that the well-known early commentator of the text Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177) transmitted in turn from him (ibid., 2:79); see more on Ibn al-Mu’addib in ibid., 2:43, 49.

8 Tabāṭabā’ī, “al-Mutabaqqi,” 5:62, MS § 1.

9 There are two cases of misnumbering in the facsim. ed.: (1) Fol. 42^{rv} (pp. 75–76) and fol. 43^r (p. 77) are incorrectly numbered and switched around; the editor is mistaken in noting that three folios after fol. 43 are missing. (2) The numbering jumps from fol. 109 to fol. 111—there is no fol. 110—but no text is missing.

10 The date is transcribed on the penultimate folio as “the month of Rajab, in the [Hijri] year four hundred and [undotted number].” An entry on a prefatory folio clarifies the undotted number as six, saying, “This manuscript was written in Rajab, 406 AH [1015 or 1016 AD].”

lāh al-Shahrastānī in al-Kāzimiyyah, Baghdad, Iraq,¹¹ beautiful facsimile printing by Alulbayt Foundation (London: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 2013). *Majallat al-Murshid al-Baghdādiyyah* (vol. 2, no. 2, 1927, p. 75) deems it the oldest known manuscript; and a notation on the final folio states that the esteemed Iraqi scholar Hibat al-Dīn al-Husaynī al-Shahrastānī (d. 1967) has certified it as the oldest extant manuscript.

- Place is not mentioned, and the copyist's name is unreadable.
- The manuscript is almost complete in 175 folios. The first three folios of Raḍī's introduction are missing,¹² and there is some water damage throughout, especially on the last folios. The manuscript is written in clear Naskh script with Kufic undertones, the latter also suggesting early provenance. It is fully dotted and vocalized, with headings in red. The same red is used for some corrections in the margins and the text. Other corrections, variant readings, and lexical explanations are provided in several different hands, in black, in the margins.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- The original manuscript contains the fuller blessings formula throughout for the Prophet Muḥammad as "God's blessings on him and his descendants" (*ṣallā llāhu 'alayhi wa-ālihi*). The phrase "and his descendants" (*wa-ālihi*), has been brushed out in most (though not all) places and overwritten with "and grant him peace" (*wa-sallam*), possibly signaling a "correction" by an overzealous Sunni reader. Blessings for 'Alī are invoked with the formula "peace on him" (*'alayhi al-salām*).
- The added orations are transcribed in the margin in a different hand. The added letter is transcribed in the original without flagging. The added sayings are transcribed in the original and flagged in red with the line, "Extra texts added from a manuscript written in the lifetime of the compiler" (*zīyādah min nuskħah kutibat fī 'ahd al-muṣannif*).
- The final folios transcribe Ya'qūb's and Ḥasan's verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, which would appear to be a later addition.
- Raḍī's explanatory remarks are prefaced with the line, "The Sayyid [al-Raḍī] said."

To complicate matters, though, the final folio contains verses of praise for the work by Ya'qūb, who died in 474 AH, and his son Ḥasan, who died in 517 AH, with blessings for the deceased invoked for both—if the manuscript date of 406 AH is correct, as it appears to be, the verses must be a later addition.

¹¹ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā'ī, "Fī Rihāb," 29:8 MS § 148.

¹² Also, folios containing oration § 1.80.6 (from: *satarahā 'ankum*) to § 1.88.7 (to: *aw sā'in hāfid*) are misplaced in the facsimile edition, where they are transcribed within § 1.104.

[ن] or [N]: **Naṣīrī Manuscript:** Manuscript dated 494/1101, located in the library of Muṣṭafā Ṣadr al-Afāḍil Dānish Naṣīrī al-Amīnī al-Shīrāzī, Tehran;¹³ facsimile printing by Madrasat Chihil Sutūn in the Grand Mosque of Tehran, titled *Nahjul Balaghah of Hazrat Ali*, edited by Ḥasan Saīd (Tehran: Matba‘at Gulshan, 1981; Library of Congress MLCMN 2001/01154). The copyist had likely consulted Ya‘qūb’s manuscript.¹⁴

- The copyist is Fadlallāh ibn Ṭāhir ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥusaynī. The date is transcribed as 494/1101.¹⁵ Place is not mentioned.
- The manuscript is almost complete in 162 folios, numbered in the facsimile edition in 324 pages, with the first 15 or so folios missing: the manuscript begins at § 1.32.¹⁶ The manuscript is written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted and vocalized. Numerous corrections, variant readings, and lexical explanations are provided in different hands in the margins. The orthography is archaic—e.g., عَمَن with no *alif* after *mīm*.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 2.
- Blessings for the Prophet Muḥammad are invoked with the formula, “God’s blessings and peace on him” (*sallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam*), consistently leaving off the phrase “and his descendants” (*wa-ālihi*), probably signaling Sunni affiliation—notably, a few pious epithets present in most other manuscripts are also omitted, such as “the queen of all women” (*sayyidat al-nisā’*) for the Prophet’s daughter and ‘Alī’s wife, Fāṭimah (§ 1.200). Blessings for ‘Alī are invoked with the formula “peace on him” (*‘alayhi al-salām*).
- The added orations are not included. The added letter is transcribed without flagging it as an insertion. The added sayings are transcribed and titled in red with the line, “Extra texts added from an excellent Iraqi manuscript” (*ziyādah kutibat min nuskhah sariyyah Trāqiyah*).
- The final folios transcribe Ya‘qūb’s, Ḥasan’s, and Fanjkurdī’s verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, probably a later addition.
- Rađī’s explanatory remarks are prefaced with the line, “The Sayyid [al-Rađī] said.”

¹³ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:64, MS § 3.

¹⁴ Fadlallāh transcribes Ya‘qūb’s verses (p. 316) and says they “were written by Ya‘qūb in his own hand in his manuscript of this work,” perhaps indicating that he had seen the verses in Ya‘qūb’s manuscript and thus, presumably, the rest of the manuscript too.

¹⁵ The 494/1101 dating is corroborated by the fact that the final folios contain Ya‘qūb’s and Ḥasan’s verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah* and the copyist pronounces the formula of blessings for the deceased for the former, and a prayer for the long life of the latter—thus confirming the dating of the manuscript between the deaths of the two men, in 474/1081 and 517/1123 respectively.

¹⁶ The facsim. ed. has inserted folios from a later manuscript to fill this lacuna—those are not consulted in the present edition.

[*▲*] or [H]: **Rampur Raza Manuscript.** Manuscript dated 553/1158, located in the Rampur Raza Library in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, India, catalog no. 1190,¹⁷ in two parts.¹⁸ A beautiful single-volume facsimile edition has been published under the auspices of the Government of India's Ministry of Culture, with an introduction in English, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, and Hindi by the Library's director, S.M. Azizuddin Husain (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library Publication Series, 1433/2012). A microfilm is owned by the Central Library of Tehran University, catalog no. 5046. The manuscript is copied from an earlier manuscript dated 511/1117, transcribed by the eminent scholar *Fadlallāh al-Kāshānī al-Rāwandī* (d. 571/1175, author of a lost commentary on *Nahj al-Balāghah*), which was copied directly from *Rādī*'s own manuscript. Presumably copying from *Rāwandī*'s manuscript, moreover, the copyist of our manuscript transcribes in a colophon on the saying at § 3.354 (fol. 164^r) *Rādī*'s contextualizing comments, prefaced with the words, “[Perused] in *Rādī*'s copy (*fī nuskhat al-Rādī*).”

- The copyist is ‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn al-Ḥusayn bin Abī al-Qāsim al-Farāḥānī. He transcribed the manuscript in Jawsaqān near Rāwand, in Isfahan.
- The manuscript is almost complete in 169 folios: The first folio of *Rādī*'s introduction is missing, as are a couple of folios from the first part of volume two, from the beginning of oration § 1.191 to just before the beginning of oration § 1.192. There is water damage on the lower end of the first few folios.
- The manuscript is written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted, and vocalized, and has some corrections and annotations in the margins.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 2.
- The added orations, letter, and sayings are transcribed,¹⁹ and all three sets are flagged by a line that states, “Additional texts added from a manuscript written in the lifetime of the compiler.”
- Ya‘qūb’s and his son’s verses are not present in the facsimile edition, though they may be present in the original manuscript.

¹⁷ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:71, ms §17.

¹⁸ The first part contains *Rādī*'s introduction to the end of oration § 1.182, with a tag saying it is the end of part one. The second part contains oration § 1.183–190, followed by the chapter on letters, etc., to the end of the book.

¹⁹ The sequence of added orations in ms H is different than their sequence in the other manuscripts, and the same as ms Y, viz., § 1.238, 1.237, 1.233, 1.236, 1.234. These are followed by the phrase, “end of additional texts” (*intahat al-ziyādah*), then another phrase, “[another] additional [oration] from a Baghdad manuscript” (*ziyādah min nuskah Bagh-dādiyyah*), followed by the added oration § 1.235.

- Blessings for the Prophet Muhammad are invoked throughout with the formula, “God’s blessings on him and his descendants” (*ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-ālīhi*). Blessings for ‘Alī are invoked with the formula “peace on him” (*‘alayhi l-salām*).
- Raḍī’s explanatory remarks are prefaced with the line, “The Sayyid [al-Raḍī] said.”

[ي] or [Y]: “Ya‘qūbī” Tehran University Manuscript. Manuscript dated 608/1212, located in the Central Library (al-Maktabah al-Markaziyyah) of Tehran University, catalog no. 1782.²⁰ A facsimile copy is preserved in the library of the Ṭabāṭabā’ī Foundation (Bunyād-i Muhaqqiq Ṭabāṭabā’ī) in Qum, catalog no. M/214. The manuscript was copied from Ya‘qūb al-Naysābūrī’s (d. 474/1081) manuscript,²¹ which was copied from or checked against Raḍī’s original manuscript.²²

- The copyist is ‘Alī ibn Ṭahir ibn Abī Sa‘d. Place is not noted, but since the manuscript derives from Ya‘qūb al-Naysābūrī’s manuscript, it too could be from Nishapur.
- The manuscript is complete in 193 folios, also numbered as 386 pages.²³ It is written in a rough but clear hand and is fully dotted and vocalized. The orthography is archaic. It contains numerous variants and lengthy annotations in the margins that appear to be in the original copyist’s hand.
- In the Sayings section, the introductory phrase in most manuscripts preceding each text—viz., “‘Alī, peace be on him, said” (*wa-qāla ‘alayhi l-salām*)—is mostly, though not always, absent.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 2.
- The added letter is transcribed without flagging it as an insertion, but the added orations and sayings, which are also transcribed, are flagged by a line that states, “Additional texts added from a manuscript written in the lifetime of the compiler.”²⁴ As for the added sayings, the copyist states (p. 384) that he copied them from Ya‘qūb’s manuscript.

²⁰ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:77, MS § 33.

²¹ As seen from the colophon on p. 2.

²² Another colophon states that “Raḍī wrote in his own hand here on the margin of his [original] manuscript” a lexical explanation for a word transcribed in saying § 3.436 (p. 383). There is a similar colophon for saying § 3.355 (p. 359). Ṭabāṭabā’ī (“Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:77) says, “it appears that [Ya‘qūb] copied his manuscript from al-Sharīf al-Raḍī’s original manuscript in his own hand.”

²³ The facsimile edition’s sequence of folios containing orations § 1.88–111 is jumbled.

²⁴ The added orations are in a different order than several other manuscripts, presented in two parts: The “Additional texts” title is followed by five added orations (§ 1.238, 237, 233,

- Though copied from Ya‘qūb’s manuscript, the manuscript does not appear to contain Ya‘qūb’s or his son’s verses—perhaps the folios that contained them are lost.
- Blessings for the Prophet Muḥammad are invoked throughout with the formula, “God’s blessings on him and his descendants” (*ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-ālihi*), and sometimes, “Peace upon him” (*‘alayhi l-salām*). Blessings for ‘Alī are invoked with the formula “peace on him” (*‘alayhi al-salām*). The pious epithet for Fāṭimah, dropped from §1.200 of manuscript N, is also dropped from Y.
- Raḍī’s explanatory remarks are prefaced with the line, “The Sayyid [al-Raḍī] said.”

1.4 Secondary Manuscripts

I have consulted nine further manuscripts from the 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries in order to transcribe the initial few folios that are missing from all but Y of the primary manuscripts, and for a further check of substantive variants throughout. These manuscripts also have important scholarly pedigrees. Among them, K was copied from the manuscript of the famous premodern editor of texts ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sakūn (or: Sukūn, d. ca. 600/1204).²⁵

The following are details of my secondary manuscripts in chronological order:

[J] or [L]: Mumtaz ul Ulama Lucknow Manuscript. Manuscript dated 510/1116, located in the Mumtaz ul Ulama Library in Lucknow, India.²⁶ A facsimile copy is located in the library of the Theology Faculty (Dāneshkadeh-yi Ilahiyyāt), Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, catalog no. 77.

- Copyist and place are not noted. The date is written in a different hand on the margin of the final folio.
- The manuscript is almost complete in 158 unpaginated folios; the last lines of letter §2.11 to the middle of §2.31.11 appear to be missing, while parts of the

^{236, 234, in this order), followed by a line stating, “End of extra texts” (*intahat al-ziyādah*), followed by another line stating, “In a Baghdadi manuscript there is an addition from an oration by [‘Alī] in which he speaks of Muḥammad’s family,” followed by oration §1.235.}

²⁵ Ibn al-Sakūn was born in Ḥillah, and lived in Baghdad, Medina, and Damascus. His biography is transcribed from Muhibb al-Dīn Ibn al-Najār, Mīrzā Afandī, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, and other medieval scholars by Aṭṭār in the Introduction (pp. 10–13) of his 2016 ed. of Ibn al-Sakūn’s *Nahj al-Balāghah* manuscript.

²⁶ Listed cursorily by Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:67, ms §11; listed also by Waseem and Naqavi, *Nahjul Balaghah*, 30.

first folios, and most of the final eight folios, have water damage. It is written in mostly clear Naskh script, fully dotted and partially vocalized, with some annotations and corrections in the margins. The first line of Radī's brief conclusion is transcribed as it appears in the other manuscripts, but the next two lines, which are blurred, appear to contain a different prayer formula.

- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 2.
- The added orations, letter, and sayings are transcribed, and all three sets are flagged by a line that states, “Additional texts added from a manuscript written in the lifetime of the compiler.”
- Seven lines of verse by an unnamed poet in praise of ‘Alī’s words, in the same hand, are appended after Radī’s conclusion.

[J] or [Z]: Maulana Azad Aligarh Manuscript. Manuscript dated 538/1144, located in Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, catalog no. 485,²⁷ in two parts.²⁸ A beautiful facsimile edition has been published by Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh, and the Cultural Center of the Iranian Embassy in New Delhi, 2011. A microfilm is owned by Imam Reza Library in Mashhad.

- The copyist is ‘Alī ibn Abī al-Qāsim ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥājj. Place is not noted.
- The manuscript is complete in 173 folios. It is written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted and vocalized, with some corrections and annotations in the margins.
- A colophon on the final folio notes that the manuscript was checked against the copy of a scholar named Afḍal al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Fādār al-Qummī. Several ownership marks are found at the beginning and end of each of the two parts.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- The added orations, letter, and sayings are included but not flagged as insertions.

[S] or [D]: Imam Reza Mashhad Manuscript. Iranian manuscript dated 544/1149, located in the Imam Reza Library in Mashhad, catalog no. 13847, from the *Waqf* endowment of the library of Fādil Khān al-Khurāsānī al-Tūnī (d. 1060/

²⁷ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:69, ms §15; listed also by Waseem and Naqavi, *Nahjul Balaghah*, 30.

²⁸ Part 1 contains Radī’s introduction to the end of oration §1.190, with a line stating it is the end of part one. Part 2 contains oration §1.191 to the end of the book.

1650).²⁹ A facsimile copy is preserved in the library of the Ṭabāṭabāī Foundation in Qum, catalog no. M/203, and a microfilm in the Central Library of Tehran University, catalog no. 2134.

- The copyist is Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Naqīb, who finished writing the manuscript in Sabzevar (previously known as Bayhaq, in NE Iran, near Mashhad).
- The manuscript is almost complete in 183 folios, numbered in a later hand in 366 pages, with the first folio of Raḍī's introduction missing. A couple of folios from within the first oration (§ 1.1.2–1.1.7) and sayings § 3.195–332 are also missing.³⁰
- The manuscript is written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted, and mostly vocalized, and it has some corrections and annotations in the margins.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 2.
- The added orations are not included. The added letter is transcribed without flagging it as an insertion. The added sayings are transcribed and titled in red, “Additional texts added from a manuscript written in the lifetime of the compiler.”
- The final folios transcribe Ya‘qūb’s and Ḥasan’s verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah*.

[ق] or [Q]: Iraqi National Museum Manuscript. Manuscript dated 565/1170, located in the Library of the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad, catalog no. 356.³¹

- The copyist is Muḥammad ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-Husayn al-Āmirī. Place is not noted.
- The manuscript is complete in 243 folios,³² written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted and vocalized, with one- or two-word lexical and grammatical annotations in somewhat blurred red, in the margins or between the lines.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 2.
- The added orations are not included. The added letter is transcribed without flagging. The added sayings are transcribed and titled in red, “Additional texts added from a manuscript written in the lifetime of the compiler.”
- The final folios transcribe Fanjkurdi’s verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah*.

²⁹ Listed by Ṭabāṭabāī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:69–70, ms § 16.

³⁰ Ṭabāṭabāī (“Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:70) incorrectly states that the last folios containing sayings § 210–350 are also missing.

³¹ Listed by Ṭabāṭabāī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:71, ms § 18.

³² Two folios—containing sayings § 3.345 to the middle of § 3.352—are misplaced, and come at the end of the volume, after the copyist’s name and Fanjkurdi’s verses.

[س] or [S]: Sulaymaniye Ra'īs al-Kuttāb Manuscript 1. Manuscript dated 567/1171, located in the Sulaymaniye Library in Istanbul, catalog no. REISUL-KUTTAB 942.³³ The manuscript was part of the collection of Ra'īs al-kuttāb Ahmad ibn Muṣṭafā ibn Khalīl (Ṭāshkubrīzādah, d. 968/1561) whose ownership mark is on the cover folio, along with his name in his own hand.

- The copyist is 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Sa'īd ibn Maṇṣūr. Place is not noted.
- The manuscript is complete in 172 folios, written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted and partially vocalized, with some annotations and corrections in the margins.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- The first three of the six added orations are transcribed, and the first fifteen of the seventeen added sayings, without noting for either set that they are insertions. The added letter is also transcribed without flagging.

[چ] or [Ch]: Chester Beatty Manuscript. Manuscript dated 588/1192, located in the Chester Beatty library in Dublin, catalog no. 5451.³⁴

- The copyist is Ahmād ibn al-Mu'ayyad ibn 'Abd al-Jalīl ibn Muḥammad. The place is not noted. An ownership notice on the cover folio with the name Sadīd al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Muṭahhar Ḥillī [= al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325)] is written in Persian, with the mark of a library whose name is blotted out, also in Persian.
- The manuscript is complete in 169 folios. It is written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted and vocalized, and has numerous marginal variants and annotations.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- The added orations are transcribed, as are the first fifteen of the seventeen added sayings, without noting for either set that they are additions. The added letter is also transcribed without flagging.

[۱] or [A]: Aya Sofya Manuscript. Manuscript dated 598/1202, located in the Sulaymaniye Library in Istanbul, catalog no. AYASOFYA 4344.³⁵

- The copyist is Muḥammad ibn Ahmād ibn 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Fāmī al-Harawī. Place is not noted.

³³ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā'ī, "Al-Mutabaqqī," 5:72, MS § 20.

³⁴ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā'ī, "Al-Mutabaqqī," 5:73, MS § 22. The Chester Beatty catalog incorrectly attributes it (à la Ibn Khallikān) to al-Sharīf al-Murtadā.

³⁵ Not listed by Ṭabāṭabā'ī, "Al-Mutabaqqī."

- The manuscript is complete in 187 folios, written in clear Naskh script, fully dotted and vocalized, with headings of new orations, etc., in red. It contains numerous marginal variants and explications in the same red.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- The six added orations are not included.³⁶ The added letter is transcribed without flagging. The added sayings are transcribed and titled in red, “Extra texts added from a manuscript written in the lifetime of the compiler.”
- Rađī’s conclusion is followed by: the text of ‘Alī’s seal rings; a further added oration (the *alif*-less oration titled *Badīhah* or The Spontaneous), reported by Muḥammad ibn al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣalīḥ (fols. 183^v–185^v); and Ya’qūb’s, Hasan’s, and Fanjkurdi’s verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah*.

[ت] or [T]: Topkapi Manuscript. Manuscript dated 615/1218, located in the Topkapi Palace Library in Istanbul, catalog no. Ahmād III 2556.³⁷

- The copyist is ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ibn ‘Abd al-Ghaffār ibn Ahmād ibn Marzawayh al-Kātib. Place is not noted.
- The manuscript is complete in 357 folios, with no lacunae, but the copyist has left out Rađī’s final texts in each section: the manuscript ends at oration § 1.224 (missing eight texts, § 1.225–232), at letter § 2.72 (missing five texts, § 2.73–78), and at saying § 3.407 (missing twenty-one texts, § 3.408–429). The added orations, letter, and sayings are also not included.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- The manuscript appears to be either a special display copy or one used sparingly by Ottoman royalty: It is written in clear, handsome Naskh script, fully dotted and vocalized. Chapter headings are decorated with extensive gold illumination. Phrases introducing individual pieces are centered and sized larger. Only two variants, written in the margin in a different hand, are noted in the entire manuscript.

[ع] or [K]: Sulaymaniye Ra’īs al-Kuttāb Manuscript 2. Manuscript dated 684/1285, located in the Sulaymaniye Library in Istanbul, catalog no. REISULKUTTAB 943.³⁸ The manuscript is copied from the manuscript of the aforementioned scholar Ibn al-Sakūn (d. ca. 600/1204). Like S, this manuscript was also part of the collection of Ra’īs al-kuttāb Tāshkubrīzādah (d. 968/1561).

³⁶ Oration § 1.231 is also missing, and § 1.177 is (mis)placed between § 1.230 and § 1.232.

³⁷ Listed by Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī,” 5:77, MS § 34.

³⁸ Not listed by Ṭabāṭabā’ī, “Al-Mutabaqqī.” Used by ‘Aṭṭār (he calls it MS “S-T”) in his 2016 edition of Ibn al-Sakūn’s copy of *Nahj al-Balāghah* (see his description of the manuscript in *ibid.*, 38–43).

- Place is not noted, and a gold-bordered rectangle after the date which may have contained the copyist's name is pasted over with a blank piece of paper.
- The manuscript is almost complete in 225 folios, with just a few folios missing in the middle (folio 85, oration § 1.163–172). It is written in beautiful and clear Naskh script, fully dotted and vocalized, with red rondelles separating the phrases, up to the end of folio 187. There are many corrections and variants in the margins in different hands, annotations in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish. The title folio has numerous ownership marks, Waqf notices, and hadith praising 'Alī. The title folio and final folio contain verses in the genre of renunciation of worldliness. The final folio also contains, after the sign-off, additional texts attributed to 'Alī.
- Oration texts are arranged in Sequence 1.
- The added orations, letter, and sayings are transcribed, without noting that they are insertions.
- An earlier unreadable form of pious invocation attached to 'Alī's name in the manuscript has been systematically erased and replaced with "May God be pleased with him (*radiya llāhu 'anhu*)," presumably changed from a Shi'ite formula to a Sunni one.

1.5 *Manuscript Family Tree*

Based on four classification matrixes that will be discussed shortly, I have constructed the following family tree to show the relationships between my fourteen manuscripts. In conjunction with the matrixes, the relative chronology in the stemma provides a visual of possible parentage and sibling relationships. Some of the later manuscripts could derive from the earlier ones, or from manuscripts related to the earlier ones.

MANUSCRIPT GROUPS: The manuscripts may be divided into two broad groups:

- Group 1:** primary manuscripts M and Y, and secondary manuscripts Z, S, Ch, T, and K.
- Group 2:** primary manuscripts Sh and N, and secondary manuscripts D, Q, and A.
- N.B.:** primary manuscript H and secondary manuscript L possess features from both groups.

CLASSIFICATION MATRIXES: Four matrixes have been used to construct the stemma, weighted in the following order: (1) the principal matrix is variants in wording, then (2) sequence of texts, then (3) presence or absence of added

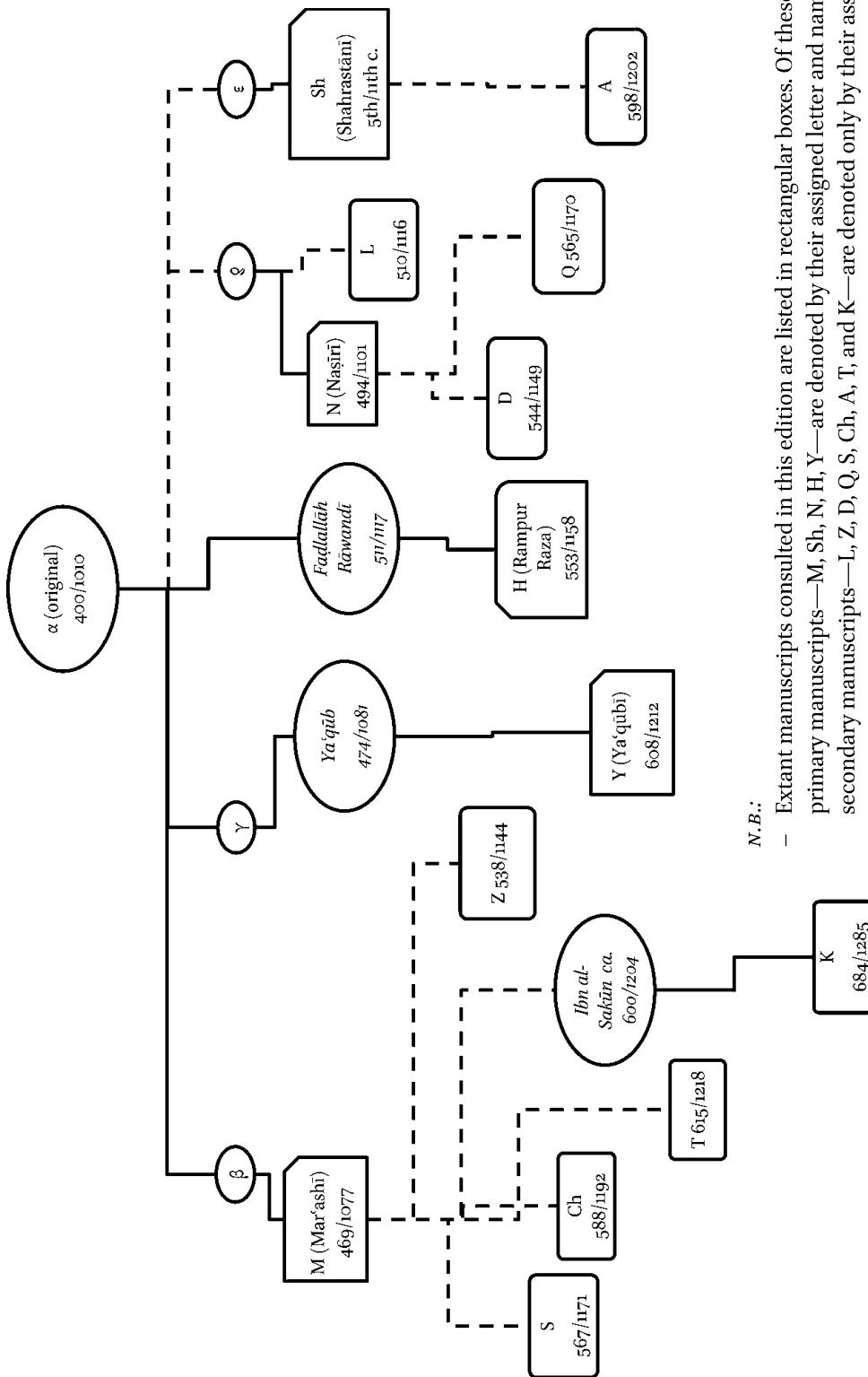


FIGURE 1
Nahj al-Balaghah manuscript family tree,
5th–7th/10th–13th c.

orations, and/or (4) supplements. The place where a manuscript was copied would also have been a useful matrix but unfortunately this data is mostly not available. Rađī, as we know, compiled *Nahj al-Balāghah* in Baghdad, Iraq. Among our fourteen manuscripts, only two name the place where they were written: near Rāwand, in Isfahan, for H, and Sabzevar, in NE Iran, for D. Also, M's copyist was from Qum, Iran, so it may have originated there; and Ya'qūb (whose manuscript is the parent of Y) lived in Nishapur, so his manuscript probably originated there. It should be noted, moreover, that the manuscript genealogy is not always clear cut, and a handful of apparently contradictory positionings—discussed briefly below—complicate stemma relationships.

TABLE 3 Matrixes of manuscript family tree

<i>Matrix</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
1. Variants of words	M Y {H} / {L} Z S Ch T K	Sh N {H} / {L} D Q A
2. Sequence of orations	followed in present edition: M [Sh] / Z S Ch [A] T K	Sequence 2: N [Y] {H} / {L} D Q
3. Added orations	present: M Y {H} / {L} Z S Ch K	absent: Sh N / D Q A [T]
4. Ya'qūb and Ḥasan verses	absent: M Y H / {L} Z [Q] S Ch T K	present: Sh N / D A

N.B.:

- Manuscripts in this table are listed in chronological order: primary manuscripts are listed first and followed by a slash; secondary manuscripts are listed after the slash.
- Square brackets signal manuscripts that in that particular matrix are not with their variant-matrix group.
- Curly brackets are used for the Mixed Group manuscripts, H and L.

Matrix 1: Variants of Words

Based on the variant matrix, manuscripts are clustered in the two groups listed in Table 3 above.³⁹ A sample list of seventeen substantive variants within the *Nahj al-Balāghah* text, and variant-based manuscript distribution, is provided in Table 4:

39 Note that H and L contain almost an equal number of variants from both groups. A—which is categorized in Group 2—contains three variants from Group 1.

TABLE 4 *Nahj al-Balāghah* manuscript variants

Text no.	M	Sh	N	H	Y	L	Z	D	Q	S	Ch	A	T	K	Variants
1.2.7	الإسـادـاـبـ	الإـسـادـاـبـ	بالإـسـادـاـبـ / بالإـسـادـاـدـ												
1.2.7	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ	ذـمـاـ / سـدـمـاـ
1.80.11	سـدـمـاـ	دـهـاـقـاـ	دـهـاـقـاـ / دـهـاـقـاـ												
1.102.22	يـبـكـيـ	يـشـكـيـ	يـشـكـيـ / يـبـكـيـ												
1.161.1	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ	أـبـدـيـةـ / أـبـدـيـةـ
1.166	أـعـرـابـكـ	أـغـارـاكـ	أـغـارـاكـ / أـعـرـابـكـ												
1.170.2	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ / جـبـ
1.171.2	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ	أـعـلـمـهـمـ / أـعـلـمـهـمـ
1.183.2	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ	جـبـ / جـبـ

TABLE 4 *Nahj al-Balāghah* manuscript variants (*cont.*)

Text no.	M	Sh	N	H	Y	L	Z	D	Q	S	Ch	A	T	K	Variants
1.183.2	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة	النخلة / النخلة	النخلة
1.196	أكـام	إـمام	أـكام	أـكام	أـكام	أـكام / إـمام	أـكام								
2.10	جـن	مـنـج	جـن	مـنـج	جـن	مـنـج	جـن	مـنـج	جـن	مـنـج	جـن	مـنـج	جـن	جـن / مـنـج	جـن
2.28.2	جاـهـيـثـكـم	جاـهـيـثـتـنـا	جاـهـيـثـكـم	جاـهـيـثـتـنـا	جاـهـيـثـتـنـا	جاـهـيـثـتـنـا / جـاهـيـثـكـم	جاـهـيـثـتـنـا								
2.45.4	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر / كـالـصـنـوـر	كـالـصـنـوـر من الصنوـر	
3.33	الـفـاجـر	الـعـاجـز	الـعـاجـز	الـعـاجـز	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر	الـفـاجـر / العـاجـز	الـفـاجـر
3.137	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر	أـمر / أمرـيـة	أـمر
3.237	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة / الـإـمـامـة	الـإـمـامـة

Matrix 2: Sequence of Orations

Our manuscripts transcribe *Nahj al-Balāghah*'s orations in two different sequences, and these have been described earlier as Sequence 1, which is followed in the present edition, and Sequence 2, which is not.

Matrix 3: Added Orations

The six orations inserted into Rađī's original (§ 1.233–238) are found in all manuscripts in Group 1, except T (which is missing all end texts anyway), and they are also found in H from the Mixed Group. The added letter (§ 2.79) is transcribed in all our manuscripts and is thus not particularly useful as a matrix for mapping the family tree. Similarly, the added sayings (§ 3.430–446) are also present in all our manuscripts except M and T. Two manuscripts, S and Ch, include only fifteen out of seventeen added sayings, and they may be more closely related to each other than to others in their group.

Matrix 4: Ya'qūb's and Hasan's verses

Ya'qūb's and Hasan's verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah* are found in all manuscripts of Group 2, except Q.⁴⁰ In Sh and N, though, these are presumably later additions, as these manuscripts predate the poets. Further supplementary materials are also found in some Group 2 manuscripts:

- Fanjkurdi's verses in praise of *Nahj al-Balāghah* are transcribed in N, Q, and A. In N, this is presumably a later addition, as the manuscript predates the poet.
- Inscriptions of 'Alī's signet rings are transcribed in D and A.

NB: Lost Parent Manuscripts

Some of our manuscripts derive from three lost parent manuscripts transcribed by the following scholars:

- Ya'qūb al-Naysābūrī (d. 474/1081), who copied his manuscript from, or checked it against, Rađī's original. Our manuscript Y is copied from it, N's copyist consulted it, and the copyists of D and A—because they contain Ya'qūb's verses—may have consulted it or a manuscript derived from it.
- Faḍlallāh al-Rāwandī (d. 571/1175), who copied his manuscript in 511/1117 from Rađī's original. Our manuscript H is copied from it.
- Ibn al-Sakūn (d. ca. 600/1204). Our manuscript K is copied from it.

⁴⁰ Surprisingly, Group 1's manuscript Y—said to be copied from Ya'qūb's own manuscript—does not contain Ya'qūb's verses. Perhaps they were present in the original Y, and in H, and the end folios containing them are lost.

2 Previous Editions

From the late 1800s onward, *Nahj al-Balāghah* has been printed numerous times, including the printing with Muhammad ‘Abduh’s commentary, first published by al-Maṭba‘ah al-Adabiyyah in Beirut in 1885. Most *Nahj al-Balāghah* printings are trade editions which do not mention any manuscripts at all, and their texts contain unflagged insertions of headings and words, as well as numerous errors.

Two mistranscriptions are egregious and stem from anti-Shi‘i bias:

- § 3.174: The original, transcribed thus in all the early manuscripts that I consulted and all the medieval commentaries that I looked at,⁴¹ is as follows: “How strange! So, the caliphate can be justified through the Prophet’s companionship, but not through companionship and kinship together?” (واعجباً أتَكُونُ الْخِلَافَةُ بِالصَّحَابَةِ وَلَا تَكُونُ بِالصَّحَابَةِ وَالْقِرَابَةِ). In the print editions, this is changed by dropping a few words in the middle—to mean something quite different: “How strange that the caliphate is justified through companionship and kinship!”⁴² (واعجباً أتَكُونُ الْخِلَافَةُ بِالصَّحَابَةِ وَالْقِرَابَةِ!).
- § 3.237: The original, transcribed thus in all my primary manuscripts, and all except S and Ch of the secondary manuscripts, is as follows: ... فَرِضَ اللَّهُ ... إِيمَامَةً نِظَاماً لِلأُمَّةِ (God has mandated the imamate as a system of governance for the community.) In modern printings, deriving perhaps from the later manuscript tradition (cf. S and Ch, just mentioned), the word *imāmah* (imamate) is changed to *amānah* (trustworthiness), by replacing the letter “M” with “N.”⁴³

Modern critical editions have been published by two scholars:

- Hāshim Mīlānī, Najaf: Maktabat al-Rawdah al-Haydariyyah, 2009. Mīlānī consulted the manuscripts I have labelled M and D, and two more from the 6th/12th century located in Iranian libraries.
- Qays Bahjat ‘Aṭṭār, Qum: Mu’assasat al-Rāfid, 2010. ‘Aṭṭār consulted the 5th/11th century manuscripts I have labelled M and N, and two more partial, undated ones, presumably from the 6th/12th or 7th/13th century. In a different edition (Najaf: al-‘Atabah al-‘Alawiyyah al-Muqaddasah, 2016), in which he focused on establishing Ibn al-Sakūn’s vocalization of *Nahj al-Balāghah*,

⁴¹ E.g., Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, 18:416, § 185.

⁴² E.g., ‘Abduh, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, 502, § 190.

⁴³ E.g., ‘Abduh, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, 512, § 252. The original Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd commentary appears to have transcribed *imāmah*, and the later manuscript tradition appears to have changed it to *amānah*: the text before the commentary has *amānah* (H 19:86, § 249), but the explanation (H 19:90) has retained the original *imāmah*.

‘Attār consulted two manuscripts derived from Ibn al-Sakūn’s original manuscript, including the manuscript I have labelled K, and another, also from the 7th/13th century.

Although these are welcome and relatively accurate editions, Mīlānī and ‘Attār do not use my primary manuscripts Sh, Y, or H, nor my secondary manuscripts L, Z, Q, S, Ch, A, and T. Neither scholar flags the added orations or letter as insertions. Neither constructs a manuscript stemma or lays out a concerted methodology. Furthermore, they do not note the substantive variants in an efficient manner: Mīlānī notes only some substantive variants; his focus is on providing meanings of difficult words. ‘Attār in his 2010 edition—an otherwise excellent edition and remarkably free of typographical errors—lists all differences in vocalization. This is a redundant, or, at best, a secondary exercise, and it has come at a cost: the profusion of vocalization differences in the notes obscures the fewer, scattered substantive variants. The original vocalization is not ascertainable in any case, for there is no evidence to suggest that Raḍī vocalized his compilation let alone to establish the exact vowels that ‘Alī used in his oral deliveries. ‘Attār also lists all variants noted in the manuscripts’ margins—this adds to the reception data (albeit sketchily, because we don’t know for the most part when these variants were added to the margins or by who), but it further obscures the manuscripts’ text collation. These editions are also not easily available.

3 This Edition

In formulating a new critical edition of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, I have relied principally on my five primary manuscripts: the three earliest extant 5th/11th-century manuscripts of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, M, Sh, and N, as well as Y, which was copied from a 5th/11th-century manuscript, and H, which was copied from an early 6th/12th-century manuscript. As noted earlier, M is believed to have been copied from a manuscript authorized by Raḍī, and the parent manuscripts of H and Y are said to have been copied from Raḍī’s own manuscript. Substantial variants among these primary manuscripts are relatively few in number.

The manuscript history of the text is extremely complicated, and each of the manuscripts passed through many hands, so—despite best efforts to untangle study notices and colophons—it is extremely difficult to fully tease out what corrections were made, when they were made, by whom they were made, and which other manuscripts or resources were used to make them. Also, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the original transcription from a later correction. Despite recourse to these precious early manuscripts, then, it is still not possible to definitively determine the entirety of Raḍī’s original text (or,

for that matter, his sequence of orations). In the case of some textual variants, the early manuscripts often present two choices that appear equally plausible in the historical, grammatical, and rhetorical context. Indeed, oftentimes the copyists themselves offer two possible readings, marked with the word *ma'a* (both), meaning both readings, according to them, are equally plausible. However, using the method described below, I believe I have constructed the close-to-best version we can hope to attain—barring somebody finding Radī's autograph manuscript!

3.1 *Substantive Features of this Edition*

- The present edition relies principally on the five primary manuscripts M, Sh, N, H, and Y. Of these, there is no one manuscript, and no one group, which consistently gives an indisputably better reading. Although some scholars have claimed one or the other of these as the best manuscript, I do not agree that there is a clear frontrunner. So, where the primary manuscripts differ, I use my best judgment: where they are strongly weighted toward one reading, I prioritize that majority reading; where they are nearly equally distributed, I choose the reading I deem most appropriate to the literary and historical context.
- I footnote all substantial variants occurring in my primary manuscripts. The secondary manuscripts from the 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries are invoked only for variants in the first folios that are missing from the primary manuscripts, and for the substantive variants listed in Table 4 above.
- The manuscripts contain numerous variations in minor components such as conjunctions, prepositions, orthography, number, tense, and gender within ‘Alī’s texts, and more so within Radī’s headers and explanations. For these minor variations, I mostly follow M. I do not footnote these variants except in the few cases where they make a substantive difference to the meaning, for this would obscure the significant variants while not adding to our understanding of the material. Aṭṭār in his 2010 edition has listed all minor variations and the interested reader can find them there.
- In sequencing orations, I follow the primary manuscripts M, Sh, and others described earlier as Sequence 1.
- I transcribe the inserted orations, letter, and sayings following each of the three main chapters, under the sub-heading زيادة على الأصل, set apart from the original text by the sub-heading and a smaller font.

3.2 *Formal Features of this Edition*

- Except for lines from the Qur'an and poetry, which are fully vocalized, I vocalize only those parts of the text where the meaning and correct vocalization may not be obvious to an educated reader of classical Arabic.

- For accessibility, I number the texts, divide them into paragraphs, and add minimal punctuation.
- I present ‘Alī’s words in a larger font, and Rađī’s occasional comments in a smaller font, to further distinguish between the two.
- I follow standard rather than archaic orthography (e.g., إِسْحَاق versus إِسْحَق).
- Manuscripts differ in rendering pious formulae attached to the name of God and exalted personages in Islam (details were provided earlier for the primary manuscripts). I follow the majority reading, which, I believe, would follow Rađī’s original rendering. Note, however, that some formulae may be copyist additions or modifications.
- A few lines of poetry are cited in the text, and I identify their meters in the footnotes.
- Section headings are original from the manuscripts, and I retain them. The titles provided in most *Nahj al-Balāghah* printings are later copyist additions that are not found in the earliest manuscripts, and I do not transcribe those.
- I have used ﴿﴾ for quotations from the Qur'an, and <> for hadith, proverbs, and half-lines of poetry. I have used <> also for citation of phrases from the text that Rađī is explaining in his subsequent commentary, and for variants in my footnotes.

4 Previous Translations

Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, several English translations of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, full or partial, were published in Iran and South Asia, most of them produced via a previous Persian translation. They render some lines effectively, but, for the most part, there is room for improvement: they are inaccurate in places and their English is frequently pedantic.⁴⁴ Two partial translations—selections from the sayings translated by Thomas Cleary (1996),⁴⁵ and the Testament of al-Ashtar (§ 2.53) translated by William Chittick (1981)⁴⁶—are fairly accurate and idiomatic.

⁴⁴ E.g., § 1.88: *Ashbāh*, the name of an oration which speaks of the creation of sky and angels, in my translation, “Ethereal Forms,” which several prior translators have incorrectly rendered as “Skeletons” (<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-91-praise-belongs-god-who>, accessed May 18, 2023).

⁴⁵ Cleary, *Living and Dying with Grace: Counsels of Hadrat Ali*.

⁴⁶ Chittick, *A Shi'ite Anthology*, 67–89.

5 This Translation

Translating *Nahj al-Balāghah* has been a supremely daunting task. The oceans of meaning infused into its lines cannot be fully plumbed, for a translation loses native implications and associations, while at the same time adding foreign ones. Neither can the eloquence of the Arabic be matched, for the texture of the language and its rhythms and metaphors cannot be reproduced. What I have attempted to do—given that any who set out on this path, no matter how careful and prepared they may be, can only fall short—is to come as close to the original as I can, both in meaning and in beauty.

Two guiding principles drive my methodology: First—to quote Aristotle—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and word-by-word translation fails to capture the clear simplicity of ‘Ali’s expositions. Au contraire, it can lead to a meaningless conglomeration of high-sounding words, as has happened in prior renditions. Instead, it is important for the translator to read each original Arabic sentence as a single unit, to understand ‘Ali’s concepts, with all their rich nuances, as best as she can, then render them forcefully into cogent English. Another aspect of this first principle is to bear in mind the context—historical, political, religious, cultural, and literary, among others—which is crucial for accurate translation. Accordingly, I have consulted the major *Nahj al-Balāghah* commentaries for lexical, contextual, and idiomatic insights, the major premodern lexicons for early usages of Arabic words, and historical and literary works, as well as books from various other genres from the classical Arabic library, for both the specific and the larger milieu of each text. Yet another aspect of this principle is maintaining the formal register. The Arabic of *Nahj al-Balāghah* is different than more informal conversations reported from ‘Ali’s time, or even the more formal narrative prose of early histories; nowhere is the tone colloquial or chatty. Its texts deal with the serious subjects of salvation, succession, and war, and the translation attempts to maintain that gravitas. Yet, it is also important to bear in mind that ‘Ali’s orations and letters were meant to be understood by their contemporary addressees. Since the audience was usually large and public, accessible vocabulary was presumably chosen, and, with some exceptions, rare words were avoided. Although the lexicon seems archaic to us now, that was not the case in its time. Keeping my translation in line with what I believe was the author’s intent of clarity, I endeavor to render the text into lucid, modern English.

My second principle—which is particular to literary translation—is to maintain, as far as possible, the aesthetic spirit of the original. The first aspect of this principle is to preserve where possible the rhythm, especially the parallelism and pithy cadences, of the Arabic words. The second aspect is to keep the

culture-specific imagery intact where possible, and not substitute it with foreign or anachronistic renderings. The third and most difficult aspect is to bring out the desert-and-camel metaphors that underpin the vocabulary, especially the verbs, which most prior translations have erased. An especially complicated example in which a heap of camel imagery is infused into a single verb, *fawwaqa*, is § 1.74: إِنْ بَنِي أُمَّيَّةَ لِيَفْوَقُونِي تَرَاثٌ مُحَمَّدٌ تَفَوَّقَأَ: I have translated this line with some (warranted, I think) prolixity as “The Umayyads stingily throw at me my share of Muḥammad’s inheritance, piece by piece, like those who allow a camel-calf to suckle its mother only lightly, at intervals.” Others have expunged the imagery to translate the line as, “The Umayyads are allowing me the inheritance of Muḥammad bit (by bit).” Yet another challenging line is § 1.80.4: وأَلْجَمَ الْعَرَقَ which I have translated as “Throats choke on sweat like a camel chokes on its bridle-straps.” Others have removed the underpinning animal image to translate the line as, “Sweat would choke the throat.” Bringing in the underlying metaphorical associations of the Arabic words, while preserving the clarity and vigor of the English, has called for a delicate—and highly challenging!—balance.

Additionally in this translation, I have:

- Added words to unpack the dense Arabic, but only minimally, preserving apparently deliberate ambiguities.
- Modified syntax and morphology for an idiomatic English rendering,
- Replaced pronouns with names, and added the name of fame, where needed for clarity.
- Changed some pronouns for idiomatic English rendering, sometimes changing third grammatical person to first, or singular to plural, when denoting generic humans, plural to singular when primarily denoting the speaker, ‘Alī, and so on.
- Translated a single Arabic word differently in different places, depending on context—e.g., ‘āmil is translated variously as “governor,” “agent,” “administrator,” or “tax-collector”; *haqq* is sometimes rendered as “truth,” and sometimes as “right,” while its opposite, *bātil*, is sometimes rendered as “falsehood” and sometimes as “wrong.”
- Where the referent is clear, used lowercase for pronouns and adjectives referring to God.
- Used my own translations of Qur’anic verses, to maintain consistency and to highlight a given verse’s meaning in its context.
- Omitted pious invocations attached to the name of God, and of the Prophet

- Muhammad, ‘Alī, and other revered figures, for a smoother reading (these are preserved in the Arabic text).
- Replaced “Commander of the Faithful” in a few places with “Alī.”
 - Retained the masculine gender in generic references to humans, following classical Arabic practice.
 - Translated some technical religious terms differently from their conventional English rendering, to better reflect the spirit of the word: e.g. I translate “Islam” as “commitment to God’s will” (rather than “submission”); *taqwā* as “piety” or being “conscious of God” or “godfearing” (rather than “fear of God”); *zuhd* as “rejection of worldliness” or “indifference to the world” (rather than “rejection of the world” or “asceticism”); and *bid’ah* as “heresy” or “heretical innovation” and not simply “innovation.”
 - Sometimes used the neutral form ‘it’ for pronouns referring to the world (*dunyā*), while at other times, when the context is clearly playing to the metaphor of the world as temptress, the feminine ‘she’ (note that the word *dunyā* is feminine in Arabic).
 - Translated the standard post-benedictions phrase, *ammā ba‘du* (lit. “As for what comes after”), as “And now to the matter at hand.” I have removed the phrase whenever it occurs at the beginning of a text, and sometimes also after the beginning “from” line (it is retained in the Arabic).
 - Removed the prefacing words, “Alī said,” from most places in the Sayings section (they are retained in the Arabic).
 - As in the edition, presented the text of ‘Alī’s words in a larger font, and Rađī’s occasional prefaces and comments to ‘Alī’s text in a smaller font.
 - Used « » for quotations from the Qur'an, and < > for hadith, proverbs, and half-lines of poetry.
 - I have varied between the more formal “do not” and the less formal “don’t”—and done the same for other contractions—to best fit the register of each text.
 - To identify Rađī’s occasional comments, I preface them with his name followed by a colon, viz., “Rađī:”. The notation appears in some manuscripts too, in some places with the first-person pronoun (“I say”), but more frequently as “The Sayyid [al-Rađī] said (*wa-qāla al-sayyid*)”, where the use of the honorific “*al-sayyid*” indicates a copyist addition.
 - As in the Edition, I have transcribed the additional orations, letter, and sayings, following each of the three main chapters, under the sub-heading “Additional Orations” (or: Letter, or: Sayings), set apart from the original text by the sub-heading and a smaller font.

Where available from the commentaries and historical sources, I have provided in a note for each text, its context, date, and place; I have also identified

unnamed individuals therein.⁴⁷ Further details of people, places, and terms are provided in the Glossary. Additionally, I have provided notes to unpack cryptic lines, but minimally, since this is a translation and not a commentary. A modern English commentary—particularly on the pithy sayings—would be a wonderful addition to the *Nahj al-Balāghah* library, but that is a project for another time!

⁴⁷ When a text is dated to ‘Alī’s caliphate without a specific year, I have transcribed the dates of his full reign, 35–40/656–661, in order to avoid confusion. It should be noted however that ‘Alī was pledged allegiance in the last month of 35 AH, and most of the texts from his caliphate are from early 36 AH onward. ‘Abd al-Zahrā’, *Maṣādir Nahj al-balāghah*, contains further context for some texts, accompanied by primary source quotes.