

THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN KITAB AL-ALFAYN BY ALLAMA AL-HILLI (648 AH – 726 AH)

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Abstract

This study examines Kitab al-Alfayn by Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him), highlighting its scientific, methodological, and historical significance within Islamic intellectual heritage. The findings reveal that the work reflects an advanced level of rational and inferential thought, systematically addressing theological and jurisprudential issues with rigorous argumentation. It served as a major source of inspiration for subsequent doctrinal studies, consolidating the traditions of calm and balanced scholarly discourse free from sectarian bias. With over two thousand issues discussed, the book demonstrates Al-Hilli's profound analytical abilities, methodological depth, and rational approach to sectarian dialogue. Historically, it became a foundational reference in Imami theology, shaping the intellectual identity of Twelver Shi'ism and influencing theological research methods in the 7th century AH. A key feature of the work is its integration of theology and jurisprudence, reflecting a holistic vision that links doctrine to practice. As a scholarly response to opposing views, Kitab al-Alfayn stands as a landmark in the development of Imami kalām, providing a rational model of theological debate and contributing significantly to the consolidation of Twelver Shi'a identity.

Keywords: Kitab al-Alfayn, Imami theology, Islamic, Intellectual

Introduction

Al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (648–726 AH) was the most distinguished scholars of the Twelver Shi'a tradition. Renowned for his intellectual rigor and scholarly breadth, he demonstrated a unique ability to synthesize theological and jurisprudential discourse. This integrative approach is exemplified in his seminal work Kitāb al-Alfayn, where he presents a cohesive framework that unites doctrinal theory with its legal implications. Kitāb al-Alfayn is particularly notable for its scholarly depth and methodological precision. The text systematically compiles theological and jurisprudential issues, offering well-structured and meticulously reasoned arguments. Through this rigorous analytical method, the work offers a compelling illustration of the rational foundations underpinning Imamite theological thought and testifies to the profound intellectual capacity of al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (may God's mercy be upon him). Owing to its substantial historical and epistemological significance, Kitāb al-Alfayn has become a foundational reference in the field of Islamic theology—especially in discussions surrounding the doctrine of the Imamate. Its enduring relevance lies in its capacity to address and resolve theological ambiguities and misconceptions, thereby enriching the broader discourse of Islamic thought. Thus, the historical and methodological stature of Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) is evident in this work, which can be regarded as an important scholarly document that reflects the nature of theological discourse in the 7th century AH. It highlights the evolution of kalam (Islamic theology) methodologies during that period, reinforcing the identity of the Twelver Shi'a school and clarifying its features in contrast to other theological trends

The historical significance of *Kitab al-Alfayn* lies in its role as a comprehensive source presenting the evidences for Imamate and infallibility, supported by both transmitted (naqli) and rational ('aqli) proofs. This was during a period when the Islamic intellectual arena was rife with sectarian debate and theological disputation. Despite this, Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) succeeded in presenting *Kitab al-Alfayn* using the tools of logic and reason, grounded in scriptural texts. This approach gave the work a distinctive scholarly and methodological depth, setting it apart as a unique contribution to Islamic theology.

The book *Al-Alfayn* demonstrates the intellectual depth, scholarly capacity, and broad cultural awareness of Allama Al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him), as well as his extensive knowledge of the views of other Islamic schools and sects. It also showcases his remarkable skill in argumentation, critique, analysis, and comparative reasoning. These qualities have established *Al-Alfayn* as a work of enduring scholarly significance, attracting the attention of theologians and jurists alike. It is widely regarded as a valuable resource for understanding the principles of theological disputation and the intellectual foundations of rational discourse within Islamic thought. Studying this book is therefore both a historical and religious necessity, as it offers critical insight into the development of doctrinal and methodological thought during a pivotal period in Islamic history. Moreover, *Al-Alfayn* is based on a strong evidentiary methodology, with Allama Al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) presenting one thousand proofs for the Imamate of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (peace be upon him), and another thousand proofs refuting the legitimacy of the Imamate of others.

In this study, the researcher examines the historical significance of *Al-Alfayn*, preceded by a concise overview of the life of al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (may God's mercy be upon him). This includes his full name, lineage, upbringing, and foremost teachers, along with a mention of the prominent scholars who studied under his guidance. The study then touches upon the passing of Allama Al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him). Following this, the researcher explored the motivations behind the composition of *Al-Alfayn*, and how Allama Al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) was able to benefit from the political and religious circumstances of his time to lay a strong intellectual foundation in the fields of theology and jurisprudence. He presented scholarly material supported by solid logical evidence concerning the issues of Imamate and infallibility. The researcher then explored the historical significance of *Al-Alfayn*, drawing upon a range of primary sources that enriched the study with substantive academic content. In addition, selected works by al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (may God's mercy be upon him) were employed to further substantiate the analysis. The study concludes with a set of key findings derived from this historical study.

Al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (may God's mercy be upon him) held a prominent intellectual, scholarly, and social standing within the Islamic community. This esteemed position was the result of his systematic and methodical approach to knowledge, which enabled him to author numerous influential works across a range of disciplines—including his renowned book *Al-Alfayn*. Before delving into the historical significance of this work and the factors that contributed to its authorship, it is essential to understand the life of Allama Al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him):

First: A Brief Biography of Allama Al-Hilli (PBUH):

Allama Al-Hilli (PBUH) is Al-Hasan ibn Sadiq Al-Din ibn Zayn Al-Din Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Al-Mutahhar Al-Hilli ⁽¹⁾, born in (648 AH / 1250 CE) ⁽²⁾. He was known as "Al-Hilli" about the city of Al-Hillah, where he was born and raised. His lineage traces back to the Banu Asad tribe ⁽³⁾. His father was Sheikh Sadiq Al-Din, one of the most eminent scholars of Al-Hillah, recognized for his vast knowledge, jurisprudential expertise, and deep understanding of the sciences of theology (*kalam*) and principles of jurisprudence (*usul*) ⁽⁴⁾. He was described as: "a jurist, a scholar, and a teacher of great stature" ⁽⁵⁾, and also referred to as "the verifying scholar, the authoritative jurist" ⁽⁶⁾. His mother was the daughter of Al-Hasan ibn Yahya ibn Al-Hasan ibn Sa'id Al-Hilli, a respected figure among the notable scholars of Al-Hillah ⁽⁷⁾. Allama Al-Hilli (PBUH) lived for approximately seventy-eight years, a life rich in events and contributions, particularly in the realm of intellectual scholarship. He passed away in the month of Muharram, in the year (726 AH / 1325 CE), a date unanimously agreed upon by his biographers ⁽⁸⁾. His blessed body was transported to the holy city of Najaf, where he was buried near the shrine of Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (PBUH) ⁽⁹⁾. His grave is now located beside the golden minaret, on the right side within the sacred precinct of the Haydari shrine, in the golden iwan facing the Grand Bazaar ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Throughout his scholarly career, al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (peace be upon him) studied under a remarkable number of distinguished scholars, benefiting from the vibrant intellectual environment that characterized the city of al-Ḥillah. In addition to studying under his father, Ṣādiq al-Dīn, al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (peace be upon him) was also a student of his uncle, Najm al-Dīn Ja'far ibn al-Ḥasan (d. 676 AH / 1277 CE). Both mentors played a pivotal role in shaping his intellectual formation—particularly in the fields of theology and philosophy, disciplines in which he would

¹ Al-Hilli: *Khilasat al-Aqwal*, p. 103; Al-Majlisi: *Bihar al-Anwar*, 25/39.

² Al-Hilli: *Khilasat al-Aqwal*, p. 48; Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 14/125

³ Al-Khaqani: *Poets of Al-Hillah*, 2/89; Karkush: *History of Al-Hillah*, 2/31.

⁴ Al-Hurr al-'Amili: *Tadhkirat al-Mutabakhirin fi al-'Ulama' al-Muta'akhhirin*, p. 514; Al-Tustari: *Maqabis al-Anwar fi Nafais al-Asrar*, p. 16; Al-Qummi, Abbas: *Al-Fawa'id al-Radawiyya*, p. 717; Al-Mamaqani: *Tanqih al-Maqal fi Ahwal al-Rijal*, 3/336.

⁵ Ibn Dawud: *Rijal Ibn Dawud*, p. 120.

⁶ Al-Majlisi: *Bihar al-Anwar*, 25/39.

⁷ Al-Qummi: *Al-Fawa'id al-Radawiyya*, p. 125.

⁸ Ibn al-Wardi: *Tarikh Ibn al-Wardi*, 2/279; Al-Yafi'i: *Mir'at al-Jinan*, 4/276; Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 14/125; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani: *Al-Durrar al-Kamina*, 2/72; also *Lisan al-Mizan*, 2/317; Al-Tafrishi: *Naqd al-Rijal*, p. 100; Al-Istirabadi: *Manhaj al-Maqal*, p. 109; Baha' al-Din al-'Amili: *Al-Kashkul*, p. 261; Al-Turayhi: *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, p. 384; Al-Afandi: *Riyad al-'Ulama'*, p. 106; Al-Khuwansari: *Rawdat al-Jannat*, p. 176; Abu 'Ali al-Ha'iri: *Muntaha al-Maqal*, p. 107; Al-Qummi: *Al-Fawa'id al-Radawiyya*, p. 128.

⁹ Al-Tafrishi: *Naqd al-Rijal*, p. 100; Al-Afandi: *Riyad al-'Ulama'*, p. 107.

¹⁰ Kamal al-Din, Hadi: *The Jurists of Al-Fayha' and the Development of the Intellectual Movement in Al-Hillah*, p. 226.

later achieve wide renown⁽¹⁾. The teacher of Allama Al-Hilli was Radi al-Din Abu al-Qasim Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far (d. 664 AH / 1266 CE), whom his student described as a man of asceticism and spiritual virtues ⁽²⁾. One of the most prominent scholars under whom Allama Al-Hilli later studied was Khawaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 672 AH / 1274 CE). Al-Hilli considered his tutelage under him as a divine blessing, stating: "Now that God, the Exalted, has granted us the success to benefit from our master, the most virtuous, the most complete scholar—Nasir of Truth, Religion, and the Community, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi—may God sanctify his pure soul—in the divine sciences and intellectual disciplines, we found him to follow the path of verification, committed to renewed precision, turning away from the method of disputation, and abandoning the way of sophistry..." ⁽³⁾

The most prominent student of Allama Al-Hilli (PBUH) was Radi al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Mazidi (d. 757 AH / 1356 CE) ⁽⁴⁾, as well as Zayn al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Tarad al-Mutarrabadi (d. 762 AH / 1361 CE) ⁽⁵⁾. Another notable student was Qutb al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Razi, known as Al-Tahtani (d. 766 AH / 1365 CE) ⁽⁶⁾. His son, Fakhr al-Din Abu Talib Muhammad (d. 771 AH / 1369 CE), was also considered one of the most distinguished students of his father, Allama Al-Hilli (PBUH). He held a high status in his father's eyes and was greatly loved and respected by him ⁽⁷⁾.

Allama Al-Hilli was one of the most prolific and productive scholars in the fields of authorship and scholarship. He left behind numerous works across various branches of Islamic knowledge. He authored writings in exegesis and hadith, and produced extensive volumes in jurisprudence and its principles, as well as in theology and philosophy—works that are considered primary sources in their respective fields among the Twelver Shia. He also wrote on biographical evaluation (rijal), grammar, and other subjects, in addition to composing numerous treatises in response to legal questions and granting scholarly permissions (ijazat). Due to the extensive scope of his scholarly output, historians have differed in their estimations of the total number of works authored by him. Some have suggested he authored 120 volumes ⁽⁸⁾, others claim more than 500 ⁽⁹⁾, while some have estimated close to 1,000 works ⁽¹⁰⁾. His most notable contribution in legal theory (usul al-

¹ Al-Hurr al-'Amili: *Tadhkirat al-Mutabakhirin*, p. 476; Al-Qummi: *Al-Fawa'id al-Radawiyah*, p. 199; Al-Amini: *A'yan al-Shi'a*, 33/401

² Al-Majlisi: *Bihar al-Anwar*, 25/22.

³ Allama Al-Hilli: *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-I'tiqad*, p. 2.

⁴ Al-Khuwansari: *Rawdat al-Jannat*, p. 387; Al-Afandi: *Riyad al-'Ulama'*, p. 104.

⁵ Al-Khuwansari: same source, p. 387; Al-Afandi: same source, p. 104.

⁶ Al-Majlisi: *Bihar al-Anwar*, 25/28.

⁷ Allama Al-Hilli: *Al-Alfayn*, pp. 21–22; *Qawa'id al-Ahkam*, p. 2.

⁸ Ibn al-Wardi, *Tarikh Ibn al-Wardi*, vol. 2, p. 279; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, vol. 14, p. 144; Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Al-Durar al-Kamina*, vol. 2, p. 71.

⁹ Al-Turayhi, *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, p. 348; *Rawdat al-Jannat*, p. 174; Al-Tustari, *Maqabis al-Anwar*, p. 107.

¹⁰ Al-Khuwansari, *Rawdat al-Jannat*, p. 174.

fiqh) is the book "*Mabadi' al-Usul ila 'Ilm al-Usul*" ⁽¹⁾, which is regarded as one of the most renowned foundational texts in Shia usul al-fiqh. Accordingly, the work has garnered significant attention from Shia scholars and jurists, many of whom have authored commentaries and annotations to further elucidate its content.⁽²⁾

Among Allama Al-Hilli's most prominent contributions to the field of *Ilm al-Rijal* (biographical evaluation) is his book *Khilasat al-Aqwal fi Ma'rifat al-Rijal* ("The Summary of Opinions on the Knowledge of Narrators"). Due to the importance and distinctive nature of this work compared to earlier writings in the field, Allama Al-Hilli (PBUH) emphasized its uniqueness in his introduction, stating: "No one has followed the method that we have adopted in this book. Whoever examines it will recognize its value and status, and its distinction from what the earlier scholars have compiled..." ⁽³⁾. What further affirms the significance of this work is that many scholars wrote marginal notes and commentaries on it ⁽⁴⁾, and it became a foundational reference for most Twelver Shia scholars who authored in the field of *Ilm al-Rijal*, drawing extensively from it ⁽⁵⁾.

Among the prominent works of Allama Al-Hilli (PBUH) in the fields of theology (*'Ilm al-Kalam*), dialectics, and doctrinal argumentation is his book *Minhaj al-Karamah fi Ma'rifat al-Imamah* ⁽⁶⁾, which is referred to in some sources under the title *Minhaj al-Istiqamah* ⁽⁷⁾. He composed this work for Sultan Khudabanda, stating at the beginning: "To proceed: This is an honorable treatise and a refined discourse, encompassing the most important issues in the rulings of religion and the noblest matters concerning Muslims—namely, the subject of Imamate..." ⁽⁸⁾. One researcher argued that Allama al-Hilli's representation of Mongol ideology was reflected in his authorship of *Minhaj al-Karamah*, which embodied the Shia ideology adopted by the Ilkhan Oljeitu. This ideology provided him with a legitimate political solution regarding the governance of the Islamic world ⁽⁹⁾.

Second: The Reasons for Authoring the Book *Al-Alfayn*

Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) possessed a remarkable intellectual capacity and vast scholarly knowledge, which he skillfully employed in affirming the rightful Imamate of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), relying on definitive evidence and rational proofs. He dedicated a significant portion of his time and effort to proving the legitimacy of Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) Imamate, and he translated this effort into authoring the book *Al-Alfayn*. Allama al-Hilli

¹ Allama al-Hilli, *Khilasat al-Aqwal*, p. 46.

² Al-Tihirani, *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 6, p. 190; Al-Sadr, *Ta'sis al-Shi'a*, pp. 313–314.

³ *Khilasat al-Aqwal*, p. 2.

⁴ *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 6, pp. 82–84.

⁵ Al-Ardabili, *Jami' al-Ruwat*, vol. 1, p. 7; Al-Tustari, *Qamus al-Rijal*, vol. 1, pp. 3–5; Al-Kalbasi, *Sama' al-Maqal fi 'Ilm al-Rijal*, pp. 71–72; Al-Amini, *A'yan al-Shi'a*, vol. 24, p. 325.

⁶ Allama al-Hilli, *Khilasat al-Aqwal*, p. 48.

⁷ Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, vol. 14, p. 25; Haji Khalifa, *Kashf al-Zunun*, vol. 2, p. 1870; Al-Baghdadi, *Hadiyat al-'Arifin*, vol. 1, p. 285.

⁸ Al-'Allāma al-Hillī: *Minhāj al-Karāma*, p. 27.

⁹ Ibrāhīm, Ṭhāb Nabīl Rifā'i: *The Ideology of Power between the Mamluks and Mongols during the 6th and 7th Hijri Centuries: A Study in the Thought of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Hillī*, pp. 117–118.

himself emphasized this motivation in the preface of his book, stating: “Indeed, I, the weakest of God’s servants, Hasan ibn Yusuf al-Mutahhar al-Hilli, responded to the request of my dear son Muhammad—may God rectify his worldly and religious affairs, just as he has shown dutifulness to his parents, and grant him both worldly and eternal happiness, just as he has obeyed me in employing his rational and sensory faculties, and help him attain his ambitions just as he has pleased me with his words and actions, and may He grant him both spiritual and worldly leadership—for he has never disobeyed me for even the blink of an eye—to compile this book entitled *Al-Alfayn*, which distinguishes between truth and falsehood.”⁽¹⁾

This passage represents a clear and significant indication of the historical and intellectual importance that the book *Al-Alfayn* holds. It is evident that Allama al-Hilli (may God’s mercy be upon him) praised his son for his dedication and the effort he exerted—both intellectually and physically—despite the fatigue he endured, all to present *Al-Alfayn* in a proper and accurate form. The book presents both rational and textual evidence in support of the doctrine of Imamate. Allama al-Hilli confirmed this by referring to it as “*the Book of Al-Alfayn, the distinguisher between truth and falsehood*”⁽²⁾. The significance of this book has been emphasized in the following statement: “*Suffice it to mention the Book of Al-Alfayn, which reveals his vast reservoir of knowledge, brimming with all forms of evidence—so much so that it blocked every loophole, silenced the eloquent debaters, and bewildered minds with the sheer number of its chapters.*”⁽³⁾

One of the key factors that contributed to the composition of *Al-Alfayn* was the intellectually conducive environment that encouraged rigorous research and deep inquiry into theological issues—particularly those concerning Imamate and infallibility. Foremost among these influences was the presence of his son, Fakhr al-Muḥaqqiqīn, whose intellectual capacity and ability to grasp the concepts and arguments played a significant role in supporting and facilitating the writing of the book. This is affirmed by al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī (may God be pleased with him), who stated: “Just as he obeyed me in applying his intellectual and sensory faculties, and was aided in attaining his aspirations, and just as he pleased me with his words and actions, and attained both forms of leadership, he did not disobey me for even the blink of an eye in dictating this book.”⁽⁴⁾

It is important to note that one of the most significant factors underlying the composition of *Al-Alfayn* was the presence of religious and intellectual freedom, as well as the unrestricted space granted for various religions and sects to practice their rituals and ceremonies. This environment granted Shi‘a Islam a level of freedom comparable to that enjoyed by other religious traditions and sects within the Mongol state. Consequently, debates and theological disputations became frequent at the royal court, each aimed at demonstrating the superiority of one creed over another through reasoned arguments and evidence. These intellectual exchanges were often aimed at persuading the Sultan and his entourage to adopt a particular religious orientation. This openness played a pivotal role in leading some Mongol Khans to convert to Islam and adopt various Islamic denominations.⁵

¹ Al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī: *Al-Alfayn*, p. 22.

² Al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī: *Al-Alfayn*, p. 22.

³ Al-Husayni, *Al-Imāma fī Fikr al-‘Allāma*, p. 38.

⁴ Al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, *Al-Alfayn*, p. 22.

⁵ Ibn al-‘Ibrī (Gregorius Bar Hebraeus), *Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*, p. 475; al-Hamadhānī, *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 292.

The researcher believes that the spiritual and religious void experienced by Sultan Öljeitü (Khodabandeh) and the statesmen of his court, including military leaders, played a significant role in creating the conditions necessary for the composition of *Al-Alfayn*. The Shi'a Imami school of thought found a timely opportunity to capitalize on the ongoing disputes between scholars of the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools within the Sultan's court. This opportunity arose after a group of Shi'a scholars, led by Taj al-Din al-Awi ⁽¹⁾, met with Sultan Öljeitü and encouraged him to adopt the

Shi'a school of thought ⁽²⁾. As a result, the Shi'a school of thought began to emerge prominently on both religious and political levels ⁽³⁾. These circumstances created a favorable environment for Imami Shi'a thought to flourish freely, without restrictions or conditions. One of the most critical factors was Sultan Khodabandeh's conversion to Shi'ism and his acceptance of Islam. The Sultan was intellectually and spiritually influenced by the Imami Shi'a doctrine, primarily through the teachings and guidance of al-'Allāma al-Hillī (may God be pleased with him) ⁽⁴⁾. He publicly declared his absolute allegiance to the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), which significantly strengthened the Imami Shi'a school of thought by gaining direct support from the ruling authority ⁽⁵⁾. These conditions provided al-'Allāma al-Hillī with an ideal atmosphere to author *Al-Alfayn*. Thus, doctrinal thought enjoyed considerable freedom during this period. Al-'Allāma al-Hillī, in particular, exhibited exceptional intellectual and scholarly acumen, as evidenced by his extensive and diverse body of work, which spans a range of disciplines including jurisprudence, legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh), theology, philosophy, and dialectical theology (kalām). Among these contributions, his work *Al-Alfayn* stood out as a testament to both intellectual and sensory strength. He translated these abilities into definitive arguments that supported his theological claims, presenting rational and historical evidence on the issues of leadership and infallibility. He employed logic and reason as fundamental tools in articulating the core content of his beliefs, underpinned by both transmitted (naqlī) and rational ('aqlī) proofs—as exemplified in *Al-Alfayn*. This work was fundamentally aimed at defending the legitimacy of the leadership of the Commander of the Faithful. He completed it in the city of Jurjan⁶ in 712 AH / 1312 CE. The work was later organized by his son, who compiled the first volume, which contains one thousand arguments in support of leadership and infallibility.⁷

¹ **Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī** was born in Kufa and raised in Najaf al-Ashraf. He was a virtuous Sayyid and one of the close companions of Sultan Khodabandeh, later appointed as the Naqīb (head of the Prophet's descendants) of the realms. See: **Ibn 'Inaba**, *Umdat al-Ṭālib*, p. 342.

² Kashani, *The History of Oljeitu*, pp. 131–132.

³ Kashani, *The History of Oljeitu*, pp. 131–132; Abro, *Continuation of the Compendium of Histories*, p. 84; Bayani, *The Mongols*, p. 338.

⁴ Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, p. 149.

⁵ Ibn Kathir, *The Beginning and the End*, vol. 14, p. 144; Qazwini, *Jawdat, The Supreme Religious Authority*, p. 110.

⁶ Jurjan: A well-known and significant city situated between Tabaristan and Khorasan. Some consider it part of the former, others the latter. It is said that its initial construction was commissioned by Yazid ibn al-Muhallab. The city produced many scholars, jurists, and hadith narrators. See: Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Geographical Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 119.

⁷ Al-Hilli, *Al-Alfayn*, p. 445.

Third: The Historical Significance of the Book *Al-Alfayn*:

Sultan Oljeitu (Khodabanda) (703–716 AH / 1304–1316 CE), the eighth Mongol ruler in Iraq and Iran, governed during a pivotal period in the history of the Mongol state. His reign witnessed internal stability contributed to the development of state institutions. During this time, the Sultan issued a decree declaring the Twelver Shi'a doctrine the official madhhab (school of thought) of the state ⁽¹⁾. This significant development occurred following a scholarly debate led by 'Allāmah al-Hilli (may God be pleased with him), who had been summoned by Sultan Oljeitu along with his son, Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqīn, to present definitive evidence and rational proofs demonstrating the weaknesses and invalidity of arguments advanced by scholars of other Islamic schools. As a result, the strength of the Twelver Shi'a doctrine was brought to light through the presentation of truthful and convincing arguments. Nidham al-Din al-Maraghi ⁽²⁾, who was the leading scholar of the opposing schools, ultimately acknowledged the strength of 'Allāmah al-Hilli's (may God be pleased with him) reasoning, and he greatly revered and respected the 'Allāmah ⁽³⁾.

The historical context provided a favorable environment for 'Allāmah al-Hilli (may God be pleased with him) to author *Al-Alfayn*, and the timing was well-suited to support the success of the intellectual and religious path he had charted for himself. The methodology he adopted aimed at disseminating and preserving the thought and legacy of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). 'Allāmah al-Hilli (may God be pleased with him) maintained proximity to Sultan Oljeitu (Khodabanda), especially after the Sultan recognized and honored the distinguished intellectual and scholarly capabilities the 'Allāmah possessed ⁽⁴⁾. The researcher also notes the significant influence of the *mobile madrasa* (al-madrasa al-sayyārah) ⁽⁵⁾, which played a key role in the spread of knowledge and scholarship during that period. This greatly contributed to the prominence and scholarly reputation of 'Allāmah al-Hilli (may God be pleased with him) both at the court of the Sultan and among the general public ⁽⁶⁾.

The historical significance of the book *Al-Alfayn* is evident in the fact that 'Allāmah al-Hilli (may God be pleased with him) authored and composed it with remarkable precision. The book represents the pinnacle of intellectual and theological argumentative maturity in Imāmī Shī'ī thought, as it combines the strength of reasoning with the depth of evidence. *Al-Alfayn* granted the issue of *imāmah* a solid evidentiary dimension, elevating it from a mere traditional belief to a rational conviction grounded in rigorous proofs and arguments. This was the result of al-Hilli's exceptional intellectual and scholarly capacities, his sharp mental acuity, and his possession of

¹ Ibn Baṭūṭah: *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭūṭah*, p. 149.

² Niẓām al-Dīn al-Marāghī: One of the most prominent and skilled scholars of the Shāfi'ī school, known for the strength of his evidence and arguments. He was appointed by the Sultan as Chief Judge. See: al-Ardabīlī: *Majma' al-Fā'idah*, vol. 1, p. 22.

³ Ibn Baṭūṭah: *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭūṭah*, p. 149.

⁴ Ibn Kathīr: *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, vol. 14, p. 144; al-Qazwīnī, *Jawdat: Al-Marja' iyyah al-Dīniyyah al-'Ulyā*, p. 110.

⁵ *Al-Madrasah al-Sayyarah*: A school established during the reign of Sultan Muḥammad Oljeitu at the request of 'Allāmah al-Hilli. The Mongol rulers had a custom of residing during the summer in Marāghah-Sultaniyyah (Azerbaijan) and wintering in Baghdad. See: al-Ṭūsī: *Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli*, p. 159.

⁶ al-Ṭūsī: *Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli*, p. 159.

extraordinary scholarly abilities ⁽¹⁾. He was distinguished as the initiator and pioneer of the Ḥillah philosophical school, possessing a broad intellectual horizon in philosophical and scholarly debates—especially in clarifying doctrinal beliefs ⁽²⁾. In addition to this, ‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī (may God be pleased with him) wisely capitalized on the favorable conditions of his time: the political and religious stability of the state, the intellectual and sectarian freedom, the openness to public debates, and the convening of scholarly assemblies. Known for his profound scholarly abilities and remarkable composure, al-Ḥillī’s approach gained particular esteem in the eyes of Sultan Öljeitü (Khudābanda). What stood out to the Sultan was that al-Ḥillī did not resort to deceptive or manipulative tactics in his debates or writings; rather, he relied on rational arguments and logical proofs.

The book *Minhāj al-Karāmah fī Ma‘rifat al-Imāmah*, authored by ‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī (may God be pleased with him), is closely connected to the central ideas presented in *Kitāb al-Alfayn*. It was composed specifically for Sultan Öljeitü (Khudābanda) ⁽³⁾, as evidenced by a passage in which al-Ḥillī writes: “To proceed: this is a noble treatise and an elegant discourse, encompassing the most important issues in the rulings of religion and the most honorable matters concerning Muslims—namely, the issue of Imamate. Through its understanding, one attains the rank of divine honor, as it is one of the pillars of faith by which one merits eternal abode in Paradise and salvation from the wrath of the Most Merciful. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: ‘Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time has died the death of ignorance.’” ⁽⁴⁾

Among the books authored by Allama al-Hilli (may God’s mercy be upon him) during that period, and which are related to the subject of *Kitāb al-Alfayn*, is the book *Kashf al-Yaqin fī Fada’il Amir al-Mu’minin* (Unveiling Certainty in the Virtues of the Commander of the Faithful). Allama al-Hilli composed it for Sultan Khudabanda in the city of Sultaniyya in the year (710 AH / 1310 AD), and he completed writing it in the month of Muharram of the same year ⁽⁵⁾. In the introduction to this book, after praising and glorifying God, Allama al-Hilli stated: “To proceed: the decree of the Great Sultan... the reviver of the traditions of the prophets and messengers, the establisher and spreader of justice, the eradicator and destroyer of tyranny, the one distinguished by sharp intellect and sound judgment, Öljaitü Khudabanda Muhammad—may his reign always be surrounded by victory and triumph, and his state be safeguarded from harm—commanded clearly that a treatise be composed mentioning the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace and blessings be upon him. I complied with his command and hastened to fulfill his directive, and I compiled this commissioned book, *Kashf al-Yaqin fī Fada’il Amir al-Mu’minin*, in a concise and summarized manner without lengthiness or excess. For opening the door to elaboration would lead to weariness, as his virtues, peace be upon him, are beyond enumeration.” ⁽⁶⁾

The researcher observes that these books do not deviate from the objective behind the composition of *Kitāb al-Alfayn*. The goal is unified, and the historical significance is evident, corresponding to

¹ Āl Yāsīn, Muḥammad Mufīd: *Al-‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī*, p. 101.

² Al-Qurayshī, ‘Alī Karīm ‘Abbās: *The Doctrinal Influence of al-‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī*, p. 797.

³ Al-Ardabīlī: *Majma‘ al-Fā‘idah*, 1/22–23; Al-Kūrānī: *How the Shī‘a Repelled the Mongol Invasion*, p. 1188.

⁴ *Minhāj al-Karāmah*, pp. 27–29.

⁵ Allama al-Hilli, *Irshad al-Adhhan*, vol. 1, p. 99.

⁶ *Kashf al-Yaqin*, pp. 1–3.

a period during which Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) dedicated his efforts and knowledge to defending the truth and clarifying the veracity of the issues of *Imamate* and *Ismah* (infallibility). Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) triumphed in this endeavor through the rational arguments he presented in his debates.

Among the historical dimensions and perspectives of *Kitab al-Alfayn* is that it encompassed both the human and social aspects, which are grounded in the bonds that connect members of society and their mutual need for one another. In other words, a human being cannot live in isolation, as doing so contradicts the very nature of their ability to sustain life. There must exist an infallible figure who plays a vital role in guiding and directing society toward righteousness and enlightenment ⁽¹⁾. Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) presented significant insights in *Kitab al-Alfayn*, through which he laid out the foundational principles and constants of social order to prevent chaos. For, in his view, human nature is inclined toward anger, envy, and attachment to worldly desires, which inevitably leads to conflict and disrupts the cohesion of the system. Therefore, the presence of a just ruler who can suppress injustice is indispensable ⁽²⁾.

The researcher notes that the historical trajectory of *Kitab al-Alfayn* coincided with a critical period marked by power struggles and conflict between the Mongols in Iraq and Persia, and the Mamluks in Egypt and the Levant. Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) was well-versed in politics and its dynamics; with his keen intellect, he fully grasped the danger posed by those who sought to undermine the school of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). He successfully secured political support from Sultan Öljaitü (Khudābanda) and key figures within his administration, thereby complementing the force of his intellect and eloquence with strategic political influence. Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) presented a historical perspective of great significance, around which the core of *Kitab al-Alfayn* revolves. He stated: "*Know that the Imam, whose attributes we have indicated, if appointed through divine designation, brings the morally responsible individual—namely, the ordinary human being—closer to acts of obedience and distances him from acts of disobedience. But if the appointment is not of divine origin, the outcome is reversed.*" ⁽³⁾ In this statement, Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) emphasizes the importance of recognizing and conveying this truth to every rational individual, not merely through words, but through lived experience, which is something that cannot be denied.

One of the most essential attributes of the Imam, as emphasized in the core message and substance of *Kitab al-Alfayn*, is infallibility (*'ismah*). This quality sets the infallible apart from all other beings, marked by his ability to avoid sin and immorality, refrain from anger, embody patience, exercise wisdom in decision-making, and uphold reason and sound judgment. All of these qualities were clearly articulated by Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) in *Kitab al-Alfayn*. His efforts proved successful when his intellectual and theological endeavors led to Sultan Öljaitü (Khudabanda) officially adopting the Shi'a doctrine as the state religion.

After reviewing and analyzing the content of *Kitab al-Alfayn* by Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him), the significance of this work becomes evident as one of the foundational pillars of Imami theological thought, and among the most prominent methodological attempts to establish doctrine through rational debate and demonstrative reasoning. In this book, Allama al-Hilli did not

¹ Allama al-Hilli, *Al-Alfayn*, p. 28.

² Allama al-Hilli, *Al-Alfayn*, p. 28.

³ Allama al-Hilli, *Al-Alfayn*, p. 25.

merely defend the Imami school; rather, he presented it in a scholarly manner that balances reason and tradition, skillfully articulating sectarian differences in a calm and dialogical tone. This reflects the intellectual maturity of the Imami school in addressing theological and jurisprudential issues.

Conclusion

This study has reached several key findings, the most important of which include:

1. **Scientific and Methodological Significance:**

Kitab al-Alfayn by Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) reflects an advanced level of rational and inferential thought in both theology and jurisprudence. He did not merely compile doctrinal and legal issues; rather, he organized them systematically and presented their arguments with great care. This makes the work a distinguished model in the development of Imami theological thought. *Kitab al-Alfayn* became a source of inspiration for many subsequent doctrinal studies and has served as an exemplar of rigorous scholarly methodology and rational argumentation. Its profound contribution confirms its prominent place in the evolution of Islamic intellectual heritage in general, and the discourse on Imamate in particular, making it a true landmark in our scientific and jurisprudential legacy.

2. **Promotion of Rational Sectarian Dialogue:**

The book showcases Allama al-Hilli's (may God's mercy be upon him) calm and balanced style in debate and argumentation. This made it one of the most influential works in establishing traditions of scholarly discourse free from emotionalism and sectarian bias. In this book, Allama al-Hilli distilled his theological experience, addressing over two thousand theological and jurisprudential issues, accompanied by precise rebuttals to various Islamic schools of thought. This reflects his extensive knowledge, methodological depth, and exceptional analytical and deconstructive abilities.

3. **Historical and Epistemological Impact:**

The book had a profound influence on the development of Imami theology after Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him), and it maintained a significant presence in Shi'a intellectual discourse. It became a foundational reference for many scholars in refuting opposing views, carrying both methodological and historical value. It stands as a scholarly document that illustrates the nature of theological debate in the 7th century AH and highlights the evolution of theological research methods during that period.

4. **Integration of Jurisprudence and Theology:**

One of the notable features of *Kitab al-Alfayn* is its integration of doctrinal and jurisprudential issues, reflecting a holistic intellectual approach that does not separate theological theory from its practical jurisprudential applications. This harmony aligns with the rational, evidence-based nature of Imami Shi'a thought.

5. **The Book as a Model of Rational Twelver Shi'a Thought:** The work showcases the intellectual prowess of Allama al-Hilli (may God's mercy be upon him) in defending the Twelver Shi'a doctrine through a reasoned and scholarly approach, free from sectarian bias, and grounded in both rational and transmitted evidence.

6. **A Scholarly Response to Opposing Views:** *Al-Alfayn* presents an advanced model of inter-sectarian dialogue, addressing theological issues through purposeful dialectical reasoning, making it a valuable source for studies in polemics and comparative kalām.

7. **Its Role in Establishing the Scholarly Identity of Twelver Shi‘ism:** The book contributed significantly to shaping the theological identity of the Twelver school, clarifying its principles in contrast to other theological trends.

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