

# AN INTRODUCTION TO *THE COLLECTION OF WARRAM*

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**ABSTRACT:** *Tanbih al-Khawatir wa Nuzhat al-Nawazir*, better known as *Majmu'a (Collection)* of Warram, is a celebrated work on moral and ethical doctrines of the Shi'a school of thought. Written by a renowned and reliable scholar, this book enjoys a prominent position among the books on ethics and etiquette of pious people. In addition to the biography of the author and various names of the book, this paper presents a general outlook of its authenticity and content, and offers citations of its narrations in other hadith collections.

Warram ibn Abi Firas's *Tanbih al-Khawatir wa Nuzhat al-Nawazir*, better known as *Majmu'at Waram (The Collection of Warram)* is a precious collection of narrations on the moral practices and etiquettes of God-wary and pious believers.

## ***Biography of the author***

Warram ibn Abi Firas is counted among the scholars of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries A.H. He was born in Hilla, the centre of Shi'a teachings, particularly in jurisprudence. No information currently exists regarding the date of his birth. Most researchers believe that he belonged to an Arab tribe among the descendants of Malik al-Ashtar, the great

companion of Imam Ali.<sup>1</sup> According to this view, his lineage is as follows: Abu al-Husayn Warram ibn Abi Firas ibn Hamdan ibn 'Isa ibn Abi al-Najm ibn Warram ibn Hamdan ibn Khuldan ibn Ibrahim ibn Malik ibn Harith al-Ashtar al-Nakha'i. Some researchers such Mustafa Jawad, however, hold that his ancestors were among the Kurdish *mawali* (non-Arab Muslims) of Bani Ashtar who took part in the uprising of Mukhtar al-Thaqafi in 66 AH.<sup>2</sup> He is the maternal ancestor of Sayyid Radi al-Din ibn Tawus<sup>3</sup>, the famous Shi'i scholar and the author of *Al-Luhuf*. Some authors mistakenly assumed that Warram is the paternal ancestor of Sayyid ibn Tawus<sup>4</sup>. This assumption, however, is incorrect since the paternal ancestors of Sayyid ibn Tawus have been numerated in various books and there is no mention of Warram amongst them. Moreover, his father was among the great jurists of his time, and his brother, Mujir al-Din Ja'far ibn Abi Firas, was a well-known scholar.<sup>5</sup>

Warram's spouse is a descendant of Shaykh Tusi<sup>6</sup>. It is for this reason that Sayyid ibn Tawus occasionally wrote "my grandfather Warram ibn Abi Firas" and sometimes "my grandfather Shaykh Tusi" in his books – although in reality, it was his great ancestor. His scholarly and spiritual status is apparent in his valuable works; furthermore, Sayyid ibn Tawus's testimony is the best evidence - he says in his *Falah al-Sa'il*, "My grandfather is among those on whose deeds one can rely." Shaykh Muntajab al-Din also has called him a pious scholar and a great jurist. He said, "I saw him in Hilla and found him just as [good as] I had heard of." Also, Sayyid ibn Tawus explicitly declares that his grandfather had a great influence in his scholarly life. Furthermore, he speaks about his

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<sup>1</sup>See. Muntajab al-Din Razi, *Al-Fihrist*, pp. 128-9; Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili, *'Amal al-'Amil*, sec. 2, p. 338; Muhsin 'Amin, *'A'yan al-Shi'a*, vol. 4 p. 621.

<sup>2</sup>Mustafa Jawad, *Jawan al-Qabilat Al-Kurdiyya al-Mansiyya*, in *Majaala al-'Ilmiyya al-'Iraqiyya*, vol. 4 num. 1 pp.84-121

<sup>3</sup> 589-664 AH

<sup>4</sup> As said in the words of Qadi Nur Allah Shushtari

<sup>5</sup> Died in 626 AH in Baghdad and buried in the holy shrine of Imam Ali (a).

<sup>6</sup> 385-460 AH

considerable love for the progeny of the Holy Prophet.<sup>1</sup> In praising him, an anonymous Arab poet wrote:

ورام بحر لا يجاء بمثله  
حلف الزمان بان يجيء بمثله  
في كل بحر منه سبعة اجر  
حنث يمينك يا زمان! فكفر

*Warram is an ocean which has no parallel. There are seven seas in each ocean of him.<sup>2</sup> Time had sworn to bring a like of him. O time! You did not fulfill your pledge. Thus pay the atonement (of the breach of promise).*

It has been proven that several generations of the family of Abi Firas were among the military high officials and generals. Warram is said to have been among the commanders for some time. However, he abandoned all his worldly engagements and chose the path of spiritual wayfaring as his way of life and became an example of piety and spirituality.<sup>3</sup> Little is known about his teachers and students. Among his teachers, however, one may refer to Sayyid Abu al-Hasan al-'Arifi al-'Alawi and Sadid al-Din Mahmud al-Himmasi.<sup>4</sup> Muhammad ibn Ja'far, known as Ibn Mashhadi, has been cited as one of his students.

Beside *Tanbih al-Khawatir wa Nuzhat al-Nawazir*, which is among the sources of *Bihar al-Anwar*, he has authored another book namely *Mas'alatun fi al-Muwasa'a wa al-Mudayaqa*.<sup>5</sup> Regarding this book, Shaykh Aqa Buzurg Tihrani states: "According to Shahid in his *Ghayat al-Murad fi Sharh Nukat al-Irshad*, this is a very useful and informative book..."<sup>6</sup> His fame, however, is mostly due to his *Majmu'a Warram*.

<sup>1</sup> See. Sayyid ibn Tawus. *Al-'Aman min Akhtar al-Asfar wa al-Azman*.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. his book

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Lisan ak-Mizan*, vol. 6 p. 218; Hasan Amin, *Mustadrakat 'Ayan al-Shi'a*, vol. 1 p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> Muntajab al-Din Razi, *ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> Aqa Buzurg -i- Tihrani, *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 20 p. 395.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Shaykh Warram ibn Abi Firas passed away in Muharram in 605 AH in Hilla and was buried there.<sup>1</sup> In his *Al-Kamil*, Ibn Athir, the famous historian, describing the events of the year 605 AH, writes: "On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Muharram of this year, Abu al-Husayn Warram ibn Abi Firas, the pious scholar, passed away in Sayfiyya located in the city of Hilla. He was a righteous person."

### *Various names of the book*

The original name of the book is *Tanbih al-Khawatir wa Nuzhat al-Nawazir*. It is, however, commonly known as *Majmu'a Warram*. Different scholars, however, when referring to this book, have used other names as well such as:

*Tanbih al-Khatir wa Nuzhat al-Nazir* by 'Allam Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1 pp. 10, 22, 106;

*Nuzhat al-Nazir wa Tanbih al-Khatir* by Agha Bozorge Tehrani in his *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 12 p. 66;

*Tanbih al-Khawatir* by Muhaddith Nuri in *Mustadark al-Wasa'il*, vol. 1 p. 109 and Muhsin Amin in his *'A'yan al-Shi'a*, vol. 3 p. 448;

*Tanbih al-Khatir*, by 'Allam Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1 p. 29; vol. 85 p. 4 ;

*Nuzhat al-Nazir* by Agha Bozorge Tehrani in his *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 20 p. 109;

*Tanbih al-Khawatir wa Nuzhat al-Nazir* by Hasan Amin in his *Mustadrakat 'Ayan al-Shi'a*, vol. 1 p. 250.

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<sup>1</sup> Hasan 'Amin, *ibid.*

Also in some sources, the title is followed by *في الترغيب و الترهيب و المواعظ و* "الزواجر" (*On Encouragement, Discouragement, and Wisdom*) indicating that the main theme of the book is ethical.

***The definition of 'majmu'a' (collection) as a scholarly term***

According to Shaykh Agha Bozorge Tehrani in his *Al-Dhari'a*, 'majmu'a' is a general title for a kind of writing containing information the author has gathered during his lifetime. Some other names for such writings are *kashkul* (anthology), *jung* (miscellany), and *khirqa*.<sup>1</sup> Such books are not exclusively on religious or ethical matters; rather, different collections have been authored on different fields such as experimental sciences, social sciences, mathematics, humanities, and philosophy. Furthermore, sometimes collections were done exclusively containing narrations with the titles of 'Amali (literally meaning dictations) or *Arba'iniyyat* (a general titles for collections of forty hadiths).

In his *Al-Dhari'a*, Agha Bozorg cites 313 works under the title of *Majmu'a* and their authors. *Majmu'a Warram* is one of these books, on which he writes:

*Majmu'a Warram*, the original name of which is *Nuzhat al-Nazir* is written by Shaykh Sa'id Abu al-Husayn Warram ibn Abi Firas ibn Warram ibn Hamdan, a descendant of Malik al-Ashtar al-Nakha'i, who passed away in 605 AH. This book was published in 1300 AH in Tehran for the first time and has been republished 3 times thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See. *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 20 p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Regarding this book, Allama Majlisi says, "*Tanbih al-Khatir wa Nuzhat al-Nazir* (another title used for the book) has been written by Shaykh Warram...The chain of transmission of this book has been mentioned in *Ijazat*."<sup>1</sup>

### ***A general outlook of the book***

*Majmu'a Warram* has two sections published in one volume. The first section is divided into several chapters with about 70 titles. The content of the first section is divided into six categories:

- 1- Wisdoms and admonitions;
- 2- Etiquette of social relations;
- 3- Excellent ethics and virtues and ways to obtain them;
- 4- Ill manners and the ways to treat them;
- 5- Discussions on love and hatred for God and inward accounting (*muhasabat al-nafs*);
- 6- Far-fetched hopes and discussions on death, the Purgatory (*Barzakh*) and Resurrection.

The second section contains various subjects such as:

- 1- The wisdoms and admonitions of the Holy Prophet of Islam and his progeny as well as the previous Prophets;
- 2- The sermons of the Holy Prophet of Islam and his progeny and their supplications;
- 3- Aphorisms;

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<sup>1</sup> *Bihar al-'Anwar*, vol. 10 p. 10.

- 4- The qualities of a pious believer;
- 5- Debates of great companions of Imams with their opponenets like the one between Hujr ibn 'Udayy and Mu'awiya;
- 6- Some thoughtful sayings of great companions of the Imams such as Abu Dharr, Miqdad, and Salman, and those of great scholars such as Shaykh Mufid and Fudayl ibn 'Ayyad.

The book serves more as an anthology containing instructive narrations, stories, poems, and aphorisms rather than containing a particular arrangement in categorizing the subjects. Despite the existence of definite titles, especially in the first section, the material in each chapter can go off topic. According to some researchers, the first section of the book was considerably influenced by Ghazali's *'Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* so much so that one may claim that *Majmu'a Warram* is a part of Ghazali's book. Warram in many cases quoted the writings of Ghazali either precisely or with slight changes, although he has not referred to the name of Ghazali.

Mirza 'Abd Allah 'Afandi Isfahani believes that *Tanbih al-Khawatir* contains a detailed and abridged version.<sup>1</sup> What may confirm this claim is that Sayyid ibn Tawus in his *Falah al-Sa'il* and *Al-Yaqin* has quoted some sayings from this book. These quotations, however, are not found in the printed version of the work.

What distinguishes this book is that both moral and immoral qualities have been mentioned jointly; in other words, how to obtain both a good quality and purge an immoral one. For example, after describing haughtiness, the author suggests ways to remove it and afterwards explains humbleness and its intrinsic worth.

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<sup>1</sup>*Riyad al-'Ulama'*, vol. 5 p. 286.

***The authenticity of the book***

Scholars' views differ on the authenticity of *The Collection of Warram*. An objection repeatedly mentioned in the books on the biographies of the narrators (*tarajim*) and has been repeated by prominent scholars such as the author of *Amal al-Amil* is that Warram has mixed both sound and weak traditions in this collection. Therefore, his book is not a trustworthy one.

Others have rejected the above-mentioned criticism in several ways:

- Most of the narrations of this book as well as the chains of transmitters of the narrators have been mentioned in other collections of *hadith*;
- Warram has omitted the chain of transmitters or has mentioned one or two of the narrators only for brevity; for this reason there are several *mursal*<sup>1</sup> and *maqtu*<sup>2</sup> traditions in this work.
- There are many sayings from well-known scholars other than the Infallibles. These sayings function only as a confirmation.
- The author used authentic collections of *hadith* from both Shi'i and Sunni sources such as *Al-Kafi*, *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, *Al-Mahasin*, *Zuhd al-Nabi*, *Gharib al-Hadith*, and *'A'lam al-Nubuwwa*.
- According to Shaykh Agha Bozorge Tehrani, some Sunni narrations and great scholars have been added to the book mainly for Sunnis to acknowledge it.

***The narrations of this book in other hadith collections***

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<sup>1</sup> A tradition which does not include the names of the transmitters of a given narration from an Infallible

<sup>2</sup> A tradition with an interrupted chain of narrators

Many hadith collections composed after the time of Warram include some of the narrations of *Tanbih al-Khawatir* in their works, such as:

- Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili<sup>1</sup> in his *Wasa'il al-Shi'a* has narrated 20 traditions from it in various volumes.<sup>2</sup>
- 'Allama Majlisi<sup>3</sup> in his *Bihar al-'Anwar* has made mention of Warram and his book in several cases.<sup>4</sup>
- Muhaddith Nuri<sup>5</sup> in his *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il* has quoted about 25 traditions from it.<sup>6</sup>
- Other books that cite Warram along with or without the name of his book are: *Irshad al-Qulub* and *'Alam al-Din* by Hasan abn Abi al-Hasan al-Daylami,<sup>7</sup> *Al-'Aman*, *Faraj al-Mahmum*, *Falah al-Sa'il*, *Al-Mujtana*, *Al-Yaqin* and *Sa'd al-Su'ud* all by Sayyid ibn Tawus, and *Al-Fihrist* by Shaykh Muntajab al-Din.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, several exegeses of the Holy Qur'an also cite the narrations of *Majmu'a Warram*. Among these works are:

- *Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* by Sayyid Hashim Bahrani cites more than 10 narrations from Warram's collections in various volumes.<sup>9</sup>
- *Tafsir al-Muhit al-'A'zam wa al-Bahr al-Khedam* by Sayyid Haydar 'Amuli cites 3 traditions from the collections, all in its 4<sup>th</sup> volume.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1033-1104 AH

<sup>2</sup> e.g. vol. 2 p. 445; vol. 3 p. 200; vol. 5 pp. 35, 214, 297; vol. 6 p. 184; vol. 7 pp. 153, 178, 509, etc.

<sup>3</sup> 1037-1110 AH

<sup>4</sup> e.g. vol. 40 p. 23; vol. 106 pp. 22, 104 etc.

<sup>5</sup> 1254-1320 AH

<sup>6</sup> Vol. 1 p. 109; vol. 2 pp. 96, 109, 477; vol. 3 pp. 244, 257, 382, 467; vol. 5 pp. 222, 263; vol. 6 pp. 335, 459, 506, etc.

<sup>7</sup> d. 841 AH

<sup>8</sup> 504-after 600 AH

<sup>9</sup> Vol. 1 pp. 10, 72, 691; vol. 5 pp. 113, 261, 456, 750. etc.

- *Tafsir Sitt Suwar* by Habib Allah Sharif Kashani cites four narrations from *Majmu'a Warram*.<sup>2</sup>
- *Al-Tafsir al-Mu'in li al-Wa'izin wa al-Mutta'izin* by Muhammad Huwaydi Baghdadi cites more than 70 narrations from *Tanbih al-Khawatir*, the high number indicating the authenticity of the book according to Baghdadi.
- Among the narrations mentioned in *Al-Tafsir al-Mansub 'ila al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari*, 30 narrations are in *Tanbih al-Khawatir*.
- Other books referring to Warram and his book are Mulla Habib Allah Sharif Kashani's *Bawariq al-Qahr fi Tafsir Sura al-Dahr* by, Ayat-Allah Makarim Shirazi's *Tafsire Nemuneh*, Jawad ibn Sa'id Kazimi's *Masalik al-Afham 'ila 'Ayat al-Qur'an* and 'Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i's *Tafsir al-Mizan*.

### ***Selected topics***

The second volume of the book includes a section on “*Forbidden Acts according to the Holy Prophet (s)*.” Some of these acts are just disliked and not prohibited. In other words, the list includes both haram and makruh acts. Some of these acts include:

- Eating by the left hand and while leaning;
- Burning the limbs of the animals by fire;
- Talking a lot while being in matrimonial relations;
- Keeping the rubbish in the house at night;
- Women's make-up for men other than their husbands;
- Referring to fortune-tellers;
- Drinking wine;

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<sup>1</sup> pp. 267, 291 and 296

<sup>2</sup> pp. 11, 54, 84 and 262

- Hiring a wage-earner without determining his wage;
- Building a construction just for snobbery;
- Looking at the interior side of the neighbours' house;
- Concealment of a testimony;
- Deceptiveness in transactions which causes a Muslim to be mustered with the Jews;
- Slapping on the face of a Muslim;
- Denying a Muslim of a loan which he is in need of.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

For those interested in Islamic ethics, *Majmu'a* of Warram is a valuable work to be studied time and time again given its reliable author and authenticated content. As the general outlook of this precious work shows, various aspects of moral principles as viewed by Shi'a narrations have been meticulously dealt with. In a nutshell, *Majmu'a of Warram* describes both good and negative characteristics and offers instruction on how to obtain praiseworthy qualities and abstain from the immoral ones. Indeed, *Majmu'a of Warram* is a source for wayfarers in spiritual path who seek to progress in this journey through pure Islamic doctrines.

### ***References***

'Abd Allah ibn 'Isa 'Afandi Isfahani, *Riyad al-'Ulama' wa Hiyad al-Fudala'*, Qum 1401;

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<sup>1</sup> See. *Tanbih al-Khawatir wa Nuzhat al-Nawazir*, vol. 2 pp. 256-264.

*Adab wa Akhlaq dar Islam*, the Persian translation of *majmu'a Warram* by Muhammad Rida 'Ata'i, Mashhad 1387 SH.

Ali ibn 'Ubayd Allah Muntajab al-Din Razi, *Al-Fihrist*, Qum 1366 SH;

Aqa Buzurg –i- Tihrani, *Al-Dhari'a 'ila Tasanif al-Shi'a*;

Hasan 'Amin, *Mustadrakat 'Ayan al-Shi'a*, Beirut 1408-1416/1987-1996;

Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, *Lisan al-Mizan*, Heydar Abad 1329-1331, Beirut 1390/1971;

Ja'far Subhani, *Musu'a Tabqat al-Fuqaha'*, Qum 1418;

Muhaddith Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, Tehran 1318-1321;

Muhammad ibn Hasan Hurr 'Amili, *'Amal al-'Amil*, Qum 1362 SH;

Muhsin 'Amin, *'Ayan al-Shi'a*, Beirut 1403/1983;

Mustafa Jawad, *Jawan al-Qabilat Al-Kurdiyya al-Mansiyya*, in *Majaala al-'Ilmiyya al-'Iraqiyya*, vol. 4 num. 1 (1375-1956);

Sayyid ibn Tawus, *Al-'Aman min Akhtar al-'Asfar wa al-Azman*, Qum 1409;

*Idem.*, *Falah al-Sa'il wa Najah al-Masa'il fi 'Amal al-Yawm wa al-Layla*, Qum 1377 SH;

*Idem.*, *Kashf al-Mahajja li Thamara al-Muhja*, Najaf 1370/1951;

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Jalali, *Fihris al-Turath*, Qum, 1422.