

Kitāb Sulaym Ibn Qays Al-Hilālī

Analysis of the first book authored in Shiasm

Adapted & Translated from *Taḥdhīr ul Muslimīn ‘an Kayd Al-Kādhībīn*

Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays Al-Hilālī

According to the Shia, this book is very important due to a number of reasons.

1. The narrator of it claims to be a student of Sayyidunā ‘Alī ﷺ
2. This is the first book in Shia literature
3. All the Shia Ḥadīth and Fiqh scholars accept it as proof in the principle matters of religion.

Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to have comprehensive knowledge of this book.

History:

Fihrist Ibn Nadīm p.321 states the following with regards to Sulaym Ibn Qays,

‘He fled out of fear of Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf. He sought refuge by Abān Ibn Abī ‘Ayyāsh and remained in hiding for the rest of his life. On his deathbed, he gave this book to Abān. The sole narrator and transmitter of this book is Abān. The entire religion of the Shia is based on the narration of Abān.’

Kitāb Sulaym Ibn Qays Al-Hilālī states in the introduction,

‘Sulaym Ibn Qays was among the companions of Sayyidunā ‘Alī ﷺ. Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf wanted to kill him, so he fled and sought refuge with Abān Ibn Abī ‘Ayyāsh. When the time of his death drew near, he said to Abān, “My nephew, my death is close. I have a right upon me; these are laws from Rasūlullāh ﷺ,” he then gave a book to Abān. This book became famously known as Kitāb Sulaym Ibn Qays Al-Hilālī. The sole narrator of it is Abān. Without him, there is no narration. The first book that appeared for the Shia is this book of Sulaym.’

The historical standing of this book is clarified by Sulaym taking benefit directly from Sayyidunā ‘Alī عليه السلام. As far as the religious standing of this book is concerned, the first point that draws attention is that the sole narrator of this book is Abān, as clarified by Ibn Nadīm.

Similarly, Sayyed ‘Alī Ibn Aḥmad Aqīqī and other Shia scholars have supported the view that the sole narrator of this book is Abān.


Page 6 of the introduction to *Kitāb Sulaym Ibn Qays Al-Hilālī* states, ‘*Kitāb Sulaym* is narrated through a number of chains. Most of them end at Abān. This was the very same book that Sulaym gave to Abān close to his demise and made a bequest regarding it.’

Page 4 of the introduction states, ‘Sulaym lived in hiding during the time of Ḥajjāj.’


Imām Badr ud Dīn Subkī writes in *Maḥāsin al-Wasā’il fi Ma’rifa al-Awa’il*, ‘The first book authored for the Shia was *Kitāb Sulaym*. Sulaym says, ‘The time of my death drew near, so I intended to burn this book, but by doing so, I would be sinful. Therefore, I made a pledge to Allāh that as long as I live, I shall not inform about this book, and after my death, no one will explain anything from it.’

From this explanation, we learn a number of important things:

1. This was the first book authored in the Shia religion
2. Without the author, no one would have come to know of it
3. Close to the demise of the author, he intended to burn it. It is clear that whatever is useless and of no benefit is burnt
4. He then thought that by doing so, he will be sinful, i.e. he was confused about the standing of the book and with regards to being of use
5. The author made a pledge to Allāh that he will not inform anyone of it for as long as he lives. One reason for this could be that it should not reach Ḥajjāj Ibn Yusuf, for he will be hunted down and killed. The second reason could be that when the book comes out, it would be scrutinised, and the people who met Sayyidunā ‘Alī عليه السلام were still living. The secret

should not be leaked that the words are his, but he takes the name of Sayyidunā ‘Alī  - ascribing it to him.

6. He also made a pledge to Allāh that after him, nothing of this book should be brought out in the open. So, what was the problem in burning it? A book which is of no use during the life of the author and of no benefit after his death, and he made a pledge to Allāh regarding it, so its remaining behind has no meaning, i.e. according to the author, the religious standing this book is that it is not worthy of being brought out into the open and in terms of principle, the status of it is that the author prepared it secretly and gave it to Abān close to his demise. He also emphasized upon Abān to keep it hidden and secret because he made a pledge to Allāh. Abān broke his promise and narrated the book. The sole narrator is Abān. It is as though the entire Shia religion is built on a khabar wāḥid, i.e. narration from one person only. Therefore, it is necessary to find out the reliability of such a great narrator from whose mouth the Shia religion was built. There was no witness to what he said, nor was there any need for testimony!?

In *Mizān Al-I’tidāl*, Dhahabī  says with regards to Abān Ibn Abi ‘Ayyāsh, ‘He was the worst liar.’ Also, Shu’bah says, ‘I can tolerate drinking the urine of a donkey, but I cannot tolerate narrating from Abān Ibn Abī ‘Ayyāsh.’

According to the Ḥadīth scholars, the life of Abān shows that he was the worst liar; his statements are worse than the urine of a donkey. In terms of the science of transmitter criticism, the reality of the first Shia book, *Kitab Sulaym Ibn Qays Al-Hilālī* has been clarified.

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