

DECONSTRUCTING Kitab Sulaym bin Qays

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Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. Kuzal:

I was with Yahya b. Ma'in in Medina when he was struck with the illness that eventually led to his death. He died in Medina, and his body was carried upon the Prophet's coffin, while a man in front of him cried out:

“This is the man who negated falsehood from the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allah!”

~ *Ma'rifat 'Ulum Al-Ḥadīth* p.72

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I. Preface

The Book of Sulaym b. Qays is a controversial early Shī'ite text that is ascribed to the obscure first century figure, Sulaym bin Qays Al-Hilālī (d. 76). The text has been a matter of controversy in various scholarly circles across the centuries for a multitude of reasons, most importantly: it's transmission and its content. What makes this book the center of a polarized polemical debate today is its radically polarizing content: the book contains a detailed Twelver Shī'ite rendition of the events that followed the Prophet's death after 11 AH. It also contains several gruesome accounts of the alleged attack on the house of Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter, which is an event believed to have occurred by various Twelver Shī'ite authorities.

The earliest explicit criticism of Kitāb Sulaym can be dated back to Shī'ite scholarship from the 5th century AH ¹, and it has been subject to various contentions by Sunni and Shī'ite authorities since then. Many notable Twelver religious authorities, nevertheless, still held the position that the Book of Sulaym was an authentic text that can be reliably ascribed to its alleged author, Sulaym bin Qays. Shī'ite polemicists have thus often argued that the Book of Sulaym is the earliest extant Islamic source in existence. The book has also been cited to justify and substantiate various elements of the Shī'ite historical and theological narratives.

To give the readers a brief glimpse into the nature of the book's contents, here is a gruesome excerpt from the book that describes the alleged attack on the house of Fāṭimah carried out by 'Umar bin Al-Khattāb and several companions of the Prophet:

He ['Umar] commanded a group of men around him to carry the firewood, so they carried it with him, and they placed it around the house of 'Alī, Fāṭimah and their two sons. 'Umar then yelled until 'Alī and Fāṭimah were able to hear him, and he said: "By Allah, you shall come out of your house and pledge your allegiance to the caliph of the Messenger of Allah O 'Alī, or I shall set your house on fire!"

Fāṭimah then responded saying: "O 'Umar, what have you to do with us?!"

Umar responded saying: "Open the door, or we shall otherwise burn your house upon you!"

1 The 5th century Shī'ite ḥadīth critic, Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī, was the first authority to reportedly criticize the book and openly declare it a forgery. There is some controversy regarding Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī and some of his statements, which I shall address later in this book.

She told him: “O ‘Umar, do you not fear Allah such that you want to enter my house?!” ‘Umar refused to leave.

‘Umar then asked for a fire, and he set the door on fire and then he shoved it and entered the house. Fāṭimah confronted him and shouted: “O my father! O Messenger of Allah!”

‘Umar then raised his sword as it was in its sheath, and he beat her with it on her side. She thus screamed: “O my father!” ‘Umar then raised his whip and struck her with it on her arm, to which she called out: “O Messenger of Allah! Evil is what Abū Bakr and ‘Umar have done after you!”² (Ibn Qays 150)

Mohammad Amir-Moezzi accurately summarizes the book saying:

In short, the Book of Sulaym is the account of a conspiracy, hatched long before the Prophet’s death, and aiming to remove the latter and the closest members of his family, to alter the very nature of his religion in order to take hold of power and wrest Muslims away. The protagonists of this diabolical conspiracy were Umar, Abū Bakr, and Abū Ubaydah b. Al-Jarrāḥ, their accomplice.³

As evident, the text is saturated with weirdly detailed accounts of great controversy and grave historical and theological implications. In this publication, I shall evaluate the historicity of Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays along with the various indicators different authorities have cited to argue that the book, in fact, is a later forgery that cannot be reliably traced back to its alleged author in the 1st century AH.

II. What is a Forgery?

When evaluating the historicity of Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays, it is important that we first define our terms and objectives. As stated in the previous section, the Book of Sulaym b. Qays is often described as a forgery by skeptics. In his book, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God*, Bart Ehrman defines forgery as “a writing that claims to be written by someone (a known figure) who did not in fact write it.”⁴

2 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays* ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Anṣārī al-Zanjānī (Qum, 1420), 150.

3 Mohammad AlīAmīr-Moezzi, *Violence and Scripture in the Book of Sulaym Ibn Qays*, in *The Silent Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an : Scriptural Sources of Islam Between History and Fervor*, 22.

4 Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, (New York, 2011), 24.

Ehrman's definition of forgery is a good, precise definition in the context of early Christian sources, where forgery mostly manifested in the form of pseudepigraphy, which is the false attribution of a work to an author that is not its true author. This definition, however, requires a bit more nuance in the context of early Islamic sources simply because forgery was not limited to writings and transcriptions.

Since the Islamic tradition spans oral reports that were eventually compiled into later ḥadīth collections, it is important that any definition of forgery in this context spans both oral traditions and written texts. Thus, we shall define forgery as: speech that is claimed to have been produced by someone (a known figure) who is not its true source.

The motives behind the forgery of reports and documents have always varied depending on the scenario and its context. An early Pagan commentator on Aristotle's works by the name of David, however, provides an insightful description of the primary motive behind most forgeries. Ehrman quotes him saying:

“If someone is uninfluential and unknown, yet wants his writing to be read, he writes in the name of someone who came before him and was influential, so that through his influence he can get his work accepted.”⁵

This description of the primary motive behind forgeries, in general, is probably characteristic of many (if not most) forgeries that have existed in the Islamic tradition as well. When attempting to propagate a certain idea, teaching or sentiment, early Muslim forgers seemed to have recognized that ascribing those notions to the Prophet lent them an exponentially more significant magnitude of authority and weight (assuming their deceit was not identified). Forgers of various theological, political and social leanings thus began disseminating their own sentiments as Prophetic traditions. Naturally, some of these fabrications were intended to vilify the forgers' theological and/or political opponents. This phenomenon seems to have been observed since early antiquity, as pointed out by Ehrman:

As already intimated in earlier examples, sometimes forgeries were created with the express purpose of making a personal enemy look bad (as with Dionysius the Renegade) or getting an opponent into serious trouble (as with the person who forged

5 Ibid., 31

a letter to King Herod). As it turns out, this is one of the best-attested motivations for creating forgeries in the ancient world.⁶

Luckily, identifying such instances of forgery was relatively easy for the early ḥadīth critics, who employed several reliable methods that objectively allowed them to do so. My friend, Abdullah Moataz, elaborated on a few of those methods in his book, [In Defense of the Ḥadīth Method](#).

Many *Rafidi* forgers in the early Islamic tradition, for example, were noted for fabricating ḥadīths that explicitly condemned the companions of the Prophet. The notable ḥadīth critic, Ibn Hibban, described the forger, Ziyad b. Al-Mundir saying:

He was a *Rafidi* who used to fabricate reports about the blunders of the companions of the Prophet, and he used to transmit reports in the virtues of *Ahlulbait* that are baseless. It is not permissible to transcribe his ḥadīth.⁷

Ibn ‘Adiyy described another staunch Shī’ite transmitter, ‘Amr b. ‘Abdulghaffar Al-Faqimi, saying:

He is suspected [of forgery] whenever he transmits anything pertaining to the *fada’il*. The predecessors used to accuse him of fabricating reports in the virtues of *Ahlulbait* and in the blunders of others.⁸

This phenomenon can also be observed on the other end of the spectrum where *Nasibi* transmitters fabricated reports that portrayed ‘Alī bin Abī Tāleb in a negative manner. An example of this phenomenon is the forged report in *Tarikh Dimashq*, which Ibn ‘Asaker transmits with a chain of obscure Syrian transmitters. This report subtly undermines ‘Alī b. Abī Tāleb while inflating Mu’āwiyah’s status: a very Umayyad sentiment. The report goes as follows:

A Bedouin once approached the Prophet and said: “O Messenger of Allah, wrestle me.” Mu’āwiyah thus went to him and said: “O Bedouin, I shall wrestle you.” The Prophet then said: “Mu’āwiyah shall never be beaten,” and he thus beat the Bedouin.

⁶ Ibid., 28-9.

⁷ Ahmed Ibn Hibban, *Al-Majruhin* ed. Mahmud Ibrāhīm Zayed, (Aleppo, 1396), I, 306.

⁸ Abū Ahmed Ibn ‘Adiyy, *Al-Kamil fī Du’afa’ Al-Rijāl* ed. ‘Adel Ahmed Abdulmawjud and ‘AlīMuḥammad Awād, (Beirut, 1997), VI, 253.

On the day of the Battle of Siffin, ‘Alī said: “I would not have fought Mu’āwiyah had I recalled this ḥadīth.”⁹

This phenomenon can also be observed in some of the inter-*madhhab* debates that occurred between different schools of jurisprudence. Staunch fanatical followers of certain schools sometimes forged reports that openly condemned the heads of other schools. A forger by the name of Ma’mun b. Ahmed Al-Sulami, for example, seemed to have been a staunch Hanafi who fabricated ḥadīths that condemned Al-Shafi’i and praised Abū Hanifah. Ibn Hibban described him saying:

He transmitted a ḥadīth from Ahmed b. ‘Abdillah, from ‘Abdullah b. Ma’dan Al-Azdi, from Anas that the Prophet said: “There shall be in my nation a man by the name of Muḥammad b. Idris who shall be more harmful upon my *Ummah* than *Iblis*; and there shall be a man in my nation called Abū Hanifah. He shall be the torch of my *Ummah*.”

[Ibn Hibban said:] Whoever transmits reports like these ones, or parts of them, then he should not be listed among the people of knowledge. I only listed him [in this book] because the people of Khorasan transcribed his ḥadīths so they may identify his lies and his purposeful slander of the people of knowledge.¹⁰

Many other examples demonstrate this early phenomenon in the early centuries of Islam where forgers took advantage of Prophetic authority to disseminate the slander of their theological and political opponents. In this context, the Book of Sulaym b. Qays does precisely that: it ultimately aims to vilify the majority of the companions of the Prophet and the early Muslim community. This sentiment was openly expressed by the main transmitter of this very same book, who is quoted saying:

“My chest tightens as a result of some things in this book, for it embodies the imminent destruction of the *Ummah* of Muḥammad from the *Muhajirin*, the *Ansar*, and the followers.”¹¹

As evident, the book is a very charged and interested document that is deeply connected to several polemical debates on history and theology which have brought forth hundreds of

9 ‘Alī Ibn ‘Asaker, *Tarikh Dimashq* ed. ‘Amr Al-‘Amrawi, (Damascus, 1995), LIX, 87.

10 Ibn Hibban, *Al-Majruhin*, III, 46.

11 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 128.

fabrications across the centuries. Thus, the existence of a motive to forge such a text is obvious.

Nevertheless, the Book of Sulaym bin Qays is a written document that contains oral reports; thus, both definitions of forgery listed above may be relevant when evaluating the historicity of the book along with its various claims. Several matters come to play when analyzing this text:

1. The veracity of its ascription to Sulaym b. Qays (d. 75).
2. The veracity of its contents.

Though both matters are of grave importance, we will primarily be addressing the first point.

Did Sulaym bin Qays even author a book in the first place?

Can we authentically ascribe the book's copy we possess today to Sulaym bin Qays?

Can Kitāb Sulaym be dated to Sulaym b. Qays' era?

These are the questions I primarily intend to address in this publication, and I am not interested in evaluating the authenticity of the many historical and theological claims that are made in Kitāb Sulaym. The results of my findings, however, will be of grave implications on the veracity of many of the book's claims.

To assess the authenticity of Kitāb Sulaym, we shall primarily evaluate two aspects of the book:

- The Book's Transmission
- The Book's Text

In light of these 2 features of the book, we shall show why the text known as Kitāb Sulaym today is a text that screams forgery.

The Transmission of Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays

When discussing the authenticity of Kitāb Sulaym, it is important that one first evaluates the book's transmission, which has been a matter of controversy for centuries. I have constructed diagram which spans all of the book's different chains of transmission, as listed in figure 1 below:

As seen in figure 1, the isnads all eventually converge to a few specific transmitters upon whom revolves the transmission of this book. In this section, we shall discuss these pivotal points and bundles of isnads, and we shall evaluate their reliability

The Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani Bundle (I_x)

As observed in figure 1, four of the six isnad strands for the Book of Sulaym converge back to Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani. This phenomenon is an example of what I refer to as a **bottleneck**. At first glance, the viewer may be deceived into thinking that the isnads in the diagram are multiple and independent. After a careful analysis, however, it becomes apparent that all isnads mostly converge to a few transmitters. Thus, what may seem to be a multiplicity of isnads may be, in fact a single redaction that can be traced back to a single source.

Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani, in figure 1, is a perfect example of a bottleneck. The bundle of isnads that converge to him, which we shall call “the Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani Bundle (I_x)” is evidently problematic for several reasons:

1. The reliability of the sources transmitting from Ibrahim.
2. The conflicting redactions from Ibrahim.
3. The reliability of Ibrahim b. ‘Umar himself.

The Sources of Ibrahim b. 'Umar's Transmission

Before analyzing Ibrahim b. 'Umar's transmission of the Book of Sulaym, it is important that we evaluate the reliability of the sources that have claimed to transmit Kitāb Sulaym from him. In the figure below, we can observe Ibrahim's transmission as cited in several sources:

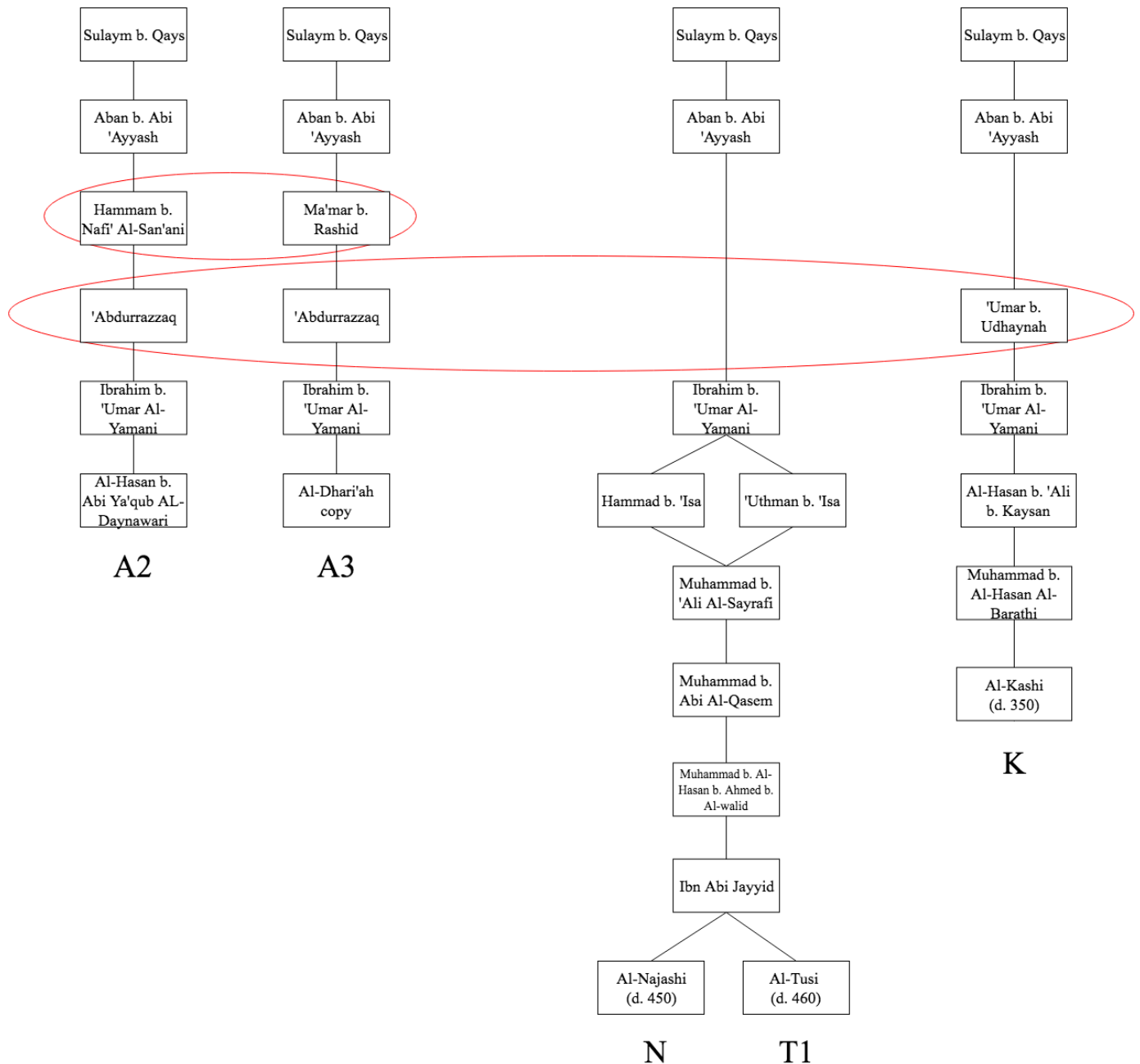


Figure 2. The multiple redactions of the I_x bundle along with several discrepancies in its isnads.

As seen in figure 2, multiple sources are quoted transmitting this book from Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani. Let us evaluate each of these sources to develop a better understanding of what is taking place in this diagram:

Redaction A2:

The isnad for this redaction is found in several later manuscripts, such as:

- Al-Hummu’i Al-Khurasani’s manuscript from the 10th century.
- Abū ‘Abdillah Al-Mujtahid Al-Musawi’s manuscript (d. 1001).¹²

The redactions commence with the following statement:

Al-Hasan bin Abī Ya’qub Al-Daynawari, from Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani, from his uncle ‘Abdurrazzaq b. Hammam Al-San’ani, from his father Hammam bin Nafi’, from Abān bin Abī ‘Ayyāsh, from Sulaym bin Qays Al-Hilālī.¹³

As evident this redaction is baseless: there is over a 700-year gap in the transmission of this book such that we do not know any of the intermediaries between Al-Hasan bin Abī Ya’qub Al-Daynawari and the possessors of the manuscripts, who came 700+ years later.

Similarly, Al-Hasan bin Abī Ya’qub’s is an obscure and unknown figure in both the Sunni and Shī’ite traditions. Thus, this redaction is worthless, and the isnad is evidently not authentic to Ibrahim bin ‘Umar Al-Yamani.

Redaction A3:

The isnad for this redaction was listed by Agha Bozorg Al-Tehrani in his book, *Al-Dari’ah*, where he said:

The intro in some of the manuscripts commences as follows:

From Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani, from his uncle ‘Abdurrazzaq who died in 211, from Ma’mar b. Rashid, from Abān, from Sulaym.¹⁴

Agha Bozorg does not list anything else about these manuscripts, nor does he even date them. Nevertheless, most of the manuscripts he listed in this context usually came after the 9th century, and we know nothing about the intermediaries between the authors of these

¹² Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 91.

¹³ Ibid., 91.

¹⁴ Agha Bozorg Tehrani, *Al-Dari’ah ila Tasanif Al-Shi’a*, (Beirut, 1983), II, 154.

manuscripts and Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani. The transmission is disconnected, and the redaction is not authentic to Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani since the transmitters from him are anonymous.

What is further noteworthy is that redaction **A3** conflicts with redaction **A2**, which we shall discuss in further detail later in this publication.

Redactions *N* and *TI*

The isnad to this redaction is listed by Al-Tūsī and Al-Najāshī in their books on *rijāl*.

Al-Tūsī¹⁵ and Al-Najāshī¹⁶ transmit it from Ibn Abī Jid, from Ibn Al-Walid, from, Muḥammad b. Abī Al-Qasim Majiloyah, from Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Al-Sayrafī, from Hammad b. ‘Isa and ‘Uthman b. ‘Isa, from Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani, from Abān b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh, from Sulaym.

This isnad is extremely weak due to Muḥammad bin ‘Alī Al-Sayrafī, Abū Saminah, who was a known liar and forger.

Al-Najāshī described him saying:

He was very weak, corrupt in his beliefs, and he cannot be relied upon for anything. He had migrated to Qom, and he was infamous in Al-Kufa for lying. He stayed with Ahmed b. Muḥammad b. ‘Isa for a while, then he became known for his *ghuluww*. Thus, Ahmed b. Muḥammad b. ‘Isa expelled him from Qom.¹⁷

Ibn Al-Ghaḍā’irī described him saying:

A Kufan liar who was extreme. He had entered Qom, and his status was exposed in it; and Ahmed b. Muḥammad b. ‘Isa Al-Ash’ari expelled him from the city. He was famous in the highland. He should never be considered, and his ḥadīth should not be written.¹⁸

Al-Kashi said:

15 Muḥammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist* ed. Muḥammad Sadeq Al-Bahr Al-‘Ulum, (Najaf), 81.

16 Ahmed b. ‘Alī Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl Al-Najāshī* ed. Musa Al-Shobeiri Al-Zanjani, (Qum, 1418), 8.

17 Ibid., 332.

18 Ahmed b. Al-Husayn Al-Ghaḍā’irī, *Al-Rijāl* ed. Muḥammad Rida Al-Husaini Al-JalAlī, (Qum, 1422), 94.

Al-Fadl [b. Shaḍan] said in one of his books: “The infamous liars are Abū Al-Khattāb, Yunus b. Ḍabyan, Yazid Al-Sayegh, Muḥammad b. Sinan, and Abū Saminah is the most infamous of them all.”¹⁹

As evident, this redaction is exclusively transmitted through the liar and forger, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Al-Sayrafi. Thus, it is worthless. Similarly, it also conflicts with redactions **A3** and **A2**, which we shall address.

Redaction **K** :

This isnad is mentioned by Al-Kashi in his book on *Rijāl*. He said:

Muḥammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Barathi, from Al-Hasan b. ‘Alī b. Kaysan, from Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani²⁰, from from Ibn Uḍaynah, from Abaan b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh, he said: “This is the copy of the Book of Sulaym b. Qays....”²¹

This isnad is problematic:

Muḥammad bin Al-Hasan Al-Barathi is an unknown and anonymous transmitter.²²

Al-Hasan bin ‘Alī bin Kaysan is an unknown and anonymous transmitter as well.²³

This redaction is transmitted through 2 consecutive anonymous transmitters, and it is extremely weak. Evidently, it is not authentic to Ibrahim bin ‘Umar Al-Yamani. Again, this redaction conflicts with all the previously mentioned redactions as well: **A3**, **A2**, **N** and **T1**.

The Conflicting Transmission from Ibrahim b. ‘Umar

As noted in the previous section, the sources that allegedly transmit Kitāb Sulaym from Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani are problematic and unreliable sources. This issue manifests as another significant problem: the conflicting transmission from Ibrahim.

Each of these sources quotes Ibrahim transmitting this book with a different isnad:

A2: Ibrahim b. ‘Umar → ‘Abdurrazzaq Al-San’ani → Hammam b. Nafi’ → Abān → Sulaym

19 Muḥammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Tūsī, *Ikhtiyar Ma’rifat Al-Rijāl* ed. Jawad Al-Qayyumi, (Qum, 1427), 451.

20 The original text states that the transmitter’s name was Ishaq b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Umar Al-Yamānī; however, Al-Khoei rightfully pointed out that this is a scribal error. The transmitter actually is Abū Ishaq, Ibrāhīm b. ‘Umar Al-Yamānī.

21 Ibid., 99-100.

22 Muḥammad Al-Jawaheri, *Al-Mufid min Mo’jam Rijāl Al-Ḥadīth*, (Qum, 1424), 512.

23 Ibid., 148.

A3: Ibrahim b. ‘Umar → ‘Abdurrazzaq Al-San’ani → Ma’mar b. Rashed → Abān → Sulaym

N & TI: Ibrahim b. ‘Umar → Abān → Sulaym

K: Ibrahim b. ‘Umar → ‘Umar b. Uḍaynah → Abān → Sulaym

Asides from the unreliability of the sources that quote Ibrahim bin ‘Umar Al-Yamani, the defective nature of the book’s transmission manifests in the multiple conflicting isnads ascribed to Ibrahim bin ‘Umar, as seen above.

The reliability of Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani

(Note: None of the isnads listed for this book can be authentically traced back to Ibrahim; however, we shall simply display the difference in opinion regarding his reliability to further demonstrate the defective transmission of this book.)

Asides from the fact that the isnads are not authentic to Ibrahim bin ‘Umar, and the fact that these different unreliable sources transmit conflicting isnads from Ibrahim, another issue comes to play when studying the *I_x* bundle: the reliability of Ibrahim himself.

Al-Najāshī endorsed Ibrahim saying:

A sheikh from our companions who was a reliable transmitter.²⁴

Al-Tūsī simply lists his biographical entry in his book without commenting on his reliability. He said:

Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani (he is Al-San’ani). He has an *Asl*.²⁵

Ibn Al-Ghaḍā’irī, however, severely criticized Ibrahim. He said:

Ibrahim b. ‘Umar Al-Yamani, he is nicknamed Abū Ishaq. He is extremely weak.²⁶

Though none of the isnads are authentic to Ibrahim, they may not be of any value even if they were hypothetically authentic, since Ibrahim’s reliability is not necessarily verified.

²⁴ Ahmed b. ‘Alī Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl Al-Najāshī*, 20.

²⁵ Muḥammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, 9.

²⁶ Ahmed b. Al-Husayn Al-Ghaḍā’irī, *Al-Rijāl*, 36.

The ‘Abdurrazzaq Bundle (A1, A2, A3)

This bundle of redactions is a collection of isnads that all converge to the known transmitter ‘Abdurrazzaq bin Hammam Al-San’ani (d. 211). This bundle is an evident forgery, and it problematic for several reasons:

1. The unreliable sources that ascribe the book of Sulaym to ‘Abdurrazzaq
2. The conflicting isnads ‘Abdurrazzaq is quoted transmitting back to Sulaym b. Qays.

The Sources of ‘Abdurrazzaq’s Transmission

Before analyzing ‘Abdurrazzaq’s supposed transmission of this book, it is important that we first evaluate the sources that claim to transmit this book from ‘Abdurrazzaq.

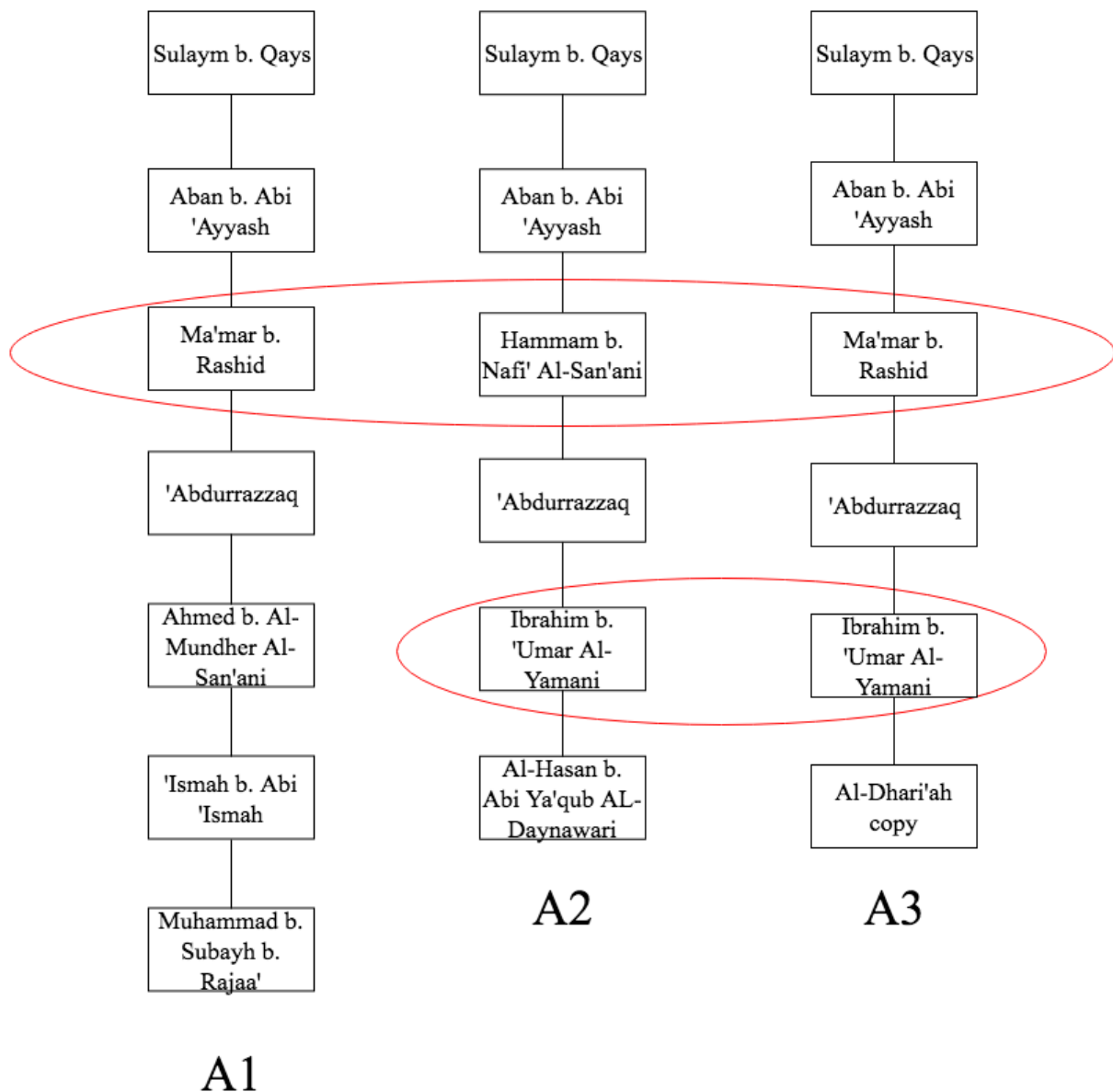


Figure 3. The multiple redactions of the ‘Abdurrazzaq bundle along with some discrepancies in their isnads.

As seen in figure 3, multiple sources claim to transmit this book from ‘Abdurrazzaq. Let us evaluate the reliability of these sources:

Redaction AI:

The isnad for this redaction was found in several very later manuscripts, which were cited by Agha Bozorgh in *Al-Dari’ah* ²⁷ :

- An “old” manuscript found in Hadi Al-Kashef Al-Ghitaa’s (d. 1361) library.
- A manuscript written by Muhammed Al-Musawi Al-Khawansari (d. 1313) in 1270.
- A manuscript in the possession of Abū ‘Alī Al-Ha’eri (d. 1216).

These manuscripts commence with the following statement:

Abū Tāleb, Muḥammad b. Subayh b. Rajaa’, informed me in Damascus in the year 334, from ‘Abū ‘Umar ‘Isma b. Abī ‘Isma Al-Bukhari; he said: Abū Bakr Ahmed b. Al-Mundir b. Ahmed Al-San’ani informed me in San’aa, he was a pious and trustworthy sheikh and the neighbor of Ishaq b. Ibrahim Al-Dabari; he said: Abū Bakr ‘Abdurrazzaq b. Hammam b. Nafi’ informed us, he said: Ma’mar b. Rashid informed me:

“Abaan b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh once invited me ...” ²⁸

Evidently, this redaction is extremely problematic and unreliable for several reasons. There is a huge gap in transmission between the possessors of the manuscripts and Muḥammad b. Subayh, who is quoted transmitting the book in the year 334. We are not aware of the intermediaries that existed between them in the 1000-year gap in the transmission of this book, and we cannot ascertain their reliability. Thus, the transmission is broken and worthless by default.

With that being said, the transmitters actually listed in the isnad are quite worthless as well: Muḥammad bin Subayh bin Rajaa’ is an absolutely unknown transmitter in Shī’ite and Sunni sources alike. ‘Isma b. Abī ‘Isma is also obscure and unknown. Similar to him in status is Ahmed bin Al-Mundir. The endorsement of Ahmed b. Al-Mundir that is quoted in this isnad is of no value, since we do not know its source. If it were from ‘Isma, then it too would be worthless since he is anonymous. The editor of Kitāb Sulaym, himself, acknowledges that he

²⁷ Agha Bozorg Tehrani, *Al-Dari’ah ila Tasanif Al-Shi’a*, II, 157.

²⁸ Ibid., II, 157.

was not able to find any biographical entries for any of these transmitters due to their obscurity.²⁹

Redaction **A1** is thus evidently worthless, and the isnad is not even authentic to ‘Abdurrazzaq.

Redactions **A1** & **A2**:

Both of these redactions have already been addressed in the past section as part of the **I_x** bundle.

It is apparent that there is not a single reliable source that has transmitted Kitāb Sulaym from ‘Abdurrazzaq Al-San’ani.

The Conflicting Transmission from ‘Abdurrazzaq

The unreliability of the sources that claim to transmit Kitāb Sulaym book from ‘Abdurrazzaq manifests as another problem: the conflicting isnads they cite from ‘Abdurrazzaq, which can be observed in figure 3.

Like the Ibrahim bin ‘Umar bundle, the ‘Abdurrazzaq bundle also consists of several unreliable sources ascribing conflicting isnads to the common link (in this case, ‘Abdurrazzaq.) This phenomenon only serves to further demonstrate the unreliability of these sources and their false ascription of this book to ‘Abdurrazzaq.

A1: Ahmed b. Al-Munder → Abdurrazzaq Al-San’ani → Ma’mar b. Rashed → Abān → Sulaym

A2: Ibrahim b. ‘Umar → ‘Abdurrazzaq Al-San’ani → Hammam b. Nafi’ → Abān → Sulaym

A3: Ibrahim b. ‘Umar → ‘Abdurrazzaq Al-San’ani → Ma’mar b. Rashed → Abān → Sulaym

The **T2 Outlier**

The **T2** chain of transmission is a very interesting yet alarming phenomenon. The isnad for this redaction is found in the preface of some manuscripts, where “an individual” is quoted listing multiple chains of transmission for Kitāb Sulaym back to Al-Tūsī. This obscure figure is quoted saying:

²⁹ Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* ed. Muḥammad Baqer Al-Zanjani, (Qom, 1428) I, 253.

The virtuous master Abū Al-Baqā', Hibatullah b. Nama b. 'Alī b. Hamdun, informed me as [the text] was being read to him in his house in *Hillat Al-Jami'yyin* in Jumada the first, 565 AH.

He said: "The trustworthy and knowledgeable sheikh, Abū 'Abdullah Al-Husayn b. Ahmed b. Tahhal Al-Miqdadi informed me as [the text] was being read to him in the shrine of our mawla, the commander of the faithful in 520 AH." He said: "Al-Sheikh Al-Mufid Abū 'Alī Al-Hasan b. Muḥammad Al-Tūsī informed me in 490 AH.

This unnamed individual then proceeds to list several other isnads back to Al-Tūsī, where he is then quoted reproducing isnad **T2**.³⁰

There are several major red flags in these supposed isnads:

1. The individual who is quoted reproducing these chains of transmission is absolutely anonymous. His name is not even listed in the isnads.
2. There is a significant gap in transmission between this anonymous figure and Shī'ite scholarship. Al-Majlisi (d. 1111), prior to quoting this individual, said: "Let us list the isnads we have found at the preface of Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays."³¹ He does not list the intermediaries between himself and this obscure figure who is quoted transmitting the book in 565 AH. Thus, it is evident that there is a more than a 500-year gap in transmission between Majlisi and this anonymous figure.
3. Out of all the different isnads for Kitāb Sulaym, isnad **T2** is the most authentic according to Shī'ite *rijālī* standards. This isnad that is ascribed to Al-Tūsī, however, is not listed in his bibliographical book (*Al-Fihrist*). Instead, he opted to list isnad **T1**, which is a severely defective chain of transmission that contains a known forger, Muḥammad b. 'Alī Al-Sayrafī, as shown earlier. The absence of this chain of transmission from Al-Tūsī's works along with Al-Tūsī's reliance on other defective chains of transmission casts further doubts upon this supposed isnad.

All of these factors cumulatively indicate that isnad **T2** probably is a later forgery that did not exist during Al-Tūsī's life. Otherwise, there would be no reason for him to omit this isnad and opt for the worthless **T1** isnad listed in his *Fihrist*. When one takes that into

30 Muḥammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Bihar Al-Anwar* ed. 'Abdulzahra' Al-'Alawi, (Beirut), I, 76-7.

31 Ibid., I, 76.

account along with the anonymity of *T2*'s sources and the significant gap in its transmission, the dubious nature of this redaction becomes apparent.

The Weakest Link: Abān or Sulaym?

Asides from the fact that every single isnad for this book is defective and problematic in some shape or form as demonstrated, another problem remains. All of these conflicting and unreliable isnads converge to a common link: Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh → Sulaym b. Qays. This common link further demonstrates the unreliability of Kitāb Sulaym's transmission for two main reasons: Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh's unreliability and Sulaym's obscurity.

The classical debate regarding the authenticity of this book has revolved around the transmitter, Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh,. Abān is the sole transmitter of the book from Sulaym. The book usually begins with Abān's supposed anecdote of his secret receipt of the book from Sulaym near the end of his life while Sulaym was on his deathbed ³², which we shall address later in this book.

The problem, however, is that Abān is a severely criticized and condemned transmitter in the Shī'ite and Sunni traditions alike. Let us evaluate what both traditions have said about this transmitter:

Abān in the Shī'ite Tradition:

Al-Tūsī described him saying:

“Abān bin Abī 'Ayyāsh, Fayruz: A weak *tabī'i*.” ³³

Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī described him saying:

“He was weak, and he should not even be looked at. Our companions ascribe to him the forgery of Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays.” ³⁴

As evident, the criticism of this transmitter is not solely rooted in the Sunni tradition, as claimed by some Shī'ite polemicists. Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī, as seen, even noted that some of his companions held the position that Abān was the forger behind the fabrication of Kitāb Sulaym. In this context, Shī'ite polemicists attempt to deflect Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī's criticism by latching onto Al-Khoei's conclusion that Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī's book is not authentically

³² Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 126.

³³ Muḥammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Tūsī, *Rijāl Al-Tūsī* ed. Jawad Al-Qayyumi Al-Asfahani, (Qum, 1373), 126.

³⁴ Ahmed b. Al-Husayn Al-Ghaḍā'irī, *Al-Rijāl*, 36.

ascribed to him and that the opinions mentioned in it are not actually representative of Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī's positions.

Several points must be made before addressing this claim:

1. Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī is not the only authority that is cited criticizing Abān; thus, deflecting his criticism does not necessarily absolve Abān in any shape or form.
2. Mosab Al-Idrisi, addressed each of Al-Khoei's contentions against the book in his publication, *Kitāb Sulaym bin Qays Al-Hilālī: Bayn Al-Tahqiq wal-Talfiq*, Various Shī'ite scholars similarly disagreed with Al-Khoei's conclusion that Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī's book was unreliable. Rather, they asserted that a variety of indicators countered Al-Khoei's claims. Renowned scholars, such as Al-Sistani³⁵, Al-Behboodi³⁶ and others held the position that Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī's book was, in fact, reliable and authoritative. Al-Khoei's ad hoc dismissal of the book and its author's criticism is thus unfounded and unwarranted.³⁷
3. Biasedly dismissing the overwhelming criticism of Abān does not entail that he is a reliable transmitter, since none of the early Shī'ite traditionists endorsed his reliability.

Abān in the Sunni Tradition:

Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh was severely criticized in the Sunni tradition prior to the Shī'ite tradition. Over 27 Sunni ḥadīth critics criticized Abān for his extreme weakness as a transmitter. Some even accused him of forgery, while others vindicated him and simply asserted that he was severely weak and delusional in his transmission. Ibn Hajar listed most of the criticism Abān had received under his biographical entry in *Tahḍīb Al-Tahḍīb*³⁸, which I shall cite below:

Al-Fallas said: "He is Abāndoned (*matruk*) in ḥadīth, and he was a pious man. His nickname was Abū Isma'il, and Yahya [b. Sa'id] and 'Abdurrahman [b. Mahdi] used to not transmit from him." Ahmed b. Hanbal said: "He is Abāndoned (*matruk*) in ḥadīth. The people

35 In Al-Sistani's biography listed on his official website (<https://www.sistani.org/arAbic/data/1/>), it stated that he accepts Ibn Al-Gada'eri's book, and that he, in fact, considers it more authoritative than *Rijāl Al-Najāshī*!

36 Muḥammad Baqir Al-Behboodi, *Ma'rifat Al-Ḥadīth*, (Beirut, 2006), 116.

37 Al-Behboodi, after performing a comprehensive cross-reference of *Rijāl Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī*, also noted that earlier citations of Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī often matched what is mentioned in the book in our possession today, further solidifying the case for its reliability.

38 Ahmed Ibn Hajar, *Tahḍīb Al-Tahḍīb*, (Hyderabad, 1326), I, 98.

Abandoned his ḥadīth since a while.” On another occasion, Ahmed is quoted saying: “Ḥadīth should not be transcribed from him, and it is said that he had some [heretical] whims.” On another occasion, Ahmed described him saying: “He is disapproved (*munkar*) in ḥadīth.” Ahmed is also authentically quoted calling him a liar in an encounter between him and Yahya b. Ma’in.

Yahya b. Ma’in said: “His ḥadīth is worthless,” and on another occasion he said: “He is weak.” He also described Abān saying: “He is abandoned (*matruk*) in ḥadīth.” Al-Nasa’i, Al-Daraqutni and Abū Hatem described him saying: “He is abandoned (*matruk*) in ḥadīth.” Abū Hatem added: “He was a pious man, but he was inflicted with bad memory.” Al-Nasa’i, on another occasion, described him saying: “He is not reliable, and his ḥadīth should not be written.”

Abū Zur’ah was once asked about Abān, and he said: “His ḥadīth has been abandoned,” and he refused to narrate his ḥadīth. Then Abū Zur’ah was asked: “Did he purposefully lie in reports?” He said: “No. He used to hear ḥadīths from Anas, Shihr [b. Hawshab] and from Al-Hasan [Al-Basri], and he would not be able to distinguish between their transmission.”

Ibn ‘Adiyy described Abān saying: “Most of what he transmits is not corroborated, and his weakness is clear. I hope that he did not purposely lie [in ḥadīth], and that he was rather deluded and erroneous in transmission. He is closer to weakness than he is to truth, as stated by Sho’bah.” Al-Jawzajani described him saying: “He is debased (*saqit*)” ‘Alī b. Al-Madini said: “He was weak.”

Sho’bah stated that Abān was a forger. He said: “My cloak and donkey are charity for the poor if Abān was not a liar in ḥadīth.” Abū Dawud said: “His ḥadīth should not be written.”

Abū Ahmed Al-Hakem said: “He is disapproved (*munkar*) in ḥadīth. Sho’bah, Abū ‘Awanah, Yahya and ‘Abdurrahman abandoned him [in ḥadīth.]”

Ibn Sa’d described him saying: “A Basran who was abandoned (*matruk*) in ḥadīth.”

As evident, Abān was heavily criticized and condemned by many critics of various leanings, and some, such as Abū Zur’ah Al-Razi, even listed explicit reasons as to why he was disparaged as a transmitter. Ibn ‘Adiyy, in *Al-Kamil*, proceeded to list several examples of Abān’s erroneous transmission in his biographical entry in his book.³⁹

39 Abū Ahmed Ibn ‘Adiyy, *Al-Kamil fi Du’afa’ Al-Rijāl*, II, 59-67.

Sulaym: An Obscure Anchor

Sulaym b. Qays is the figure who allegedly authored this book. Besides from the anecdotes mentioned in the introductory note of his book and a few bits of data found in his entries in Shī'ite biographical sources, not much is known about his life. Other than that, Sulaym seems to be an obscure and relatively unknown figure in early Shī'ite and Sunni sources alike.

One of the earlier Shī'ite authorities to address Sulaym's obscurity was the Shī'ite critic, Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī. Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī said:

This famous book is ascribed to him, and our companions used to say: "Sulaym is unknown and he is not mentioned in a single report." I have found him mentioned in several instances outside his book independently of Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh. Ibn 'Uqdah mentioned him among the companions of the commander of the faithful, and he listed some ḥadīths transmitted from him. The book is fabricated without a doubt.⁴⁰

Ibn Abī Al-Hadid (d. 656), the author of one of the most important commentaries on *Nahj Al-Balaghah*, similarly quoted a figure stating that Kitāb Sulaym is a pseudepigraphical work, and that the book was forged and falsely ascribed to Sulaym b. Qays, who was a nonexistent figure.⁴¹ On that, Hossein Modarresi similarly addresses Sulaym's obscurity saying: "It is, however, obvious that such a person never existed and that the name is only a pen name used for the sole purpose of launching an anti-Umayyad polemic in the troublesome later years of that dynasty."⁴²

After a careful analysis of the data, it becomes evident that a figure by the name of Sulaym b. Qays probably did exist at one point in history. This figure, however, is very obscure, and his transmission is minimal. Al-Najāshī and Al-Tūsī's entries for Sulaym in their books further demonstrate his obscurity, as they barely mention anything pertaining to his life or his reliability.

Al-Najāshī listed him under the category of "pious predecessors who authored works" and said: "Sulaym bin Qays Al-Hilālī. He has a book. He is nicknamed 'Abū Sadeq.'" ⁴³

40 Ahmed b. Al-Husayn Al-Ghaḍā'irī, *Al-Rijāl*, 63.

41 'Abdulhamid Ibn Abī Al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah* ed. Muḥammad Abū Al-Fadl Ibrāhīm, (Qom, 1404), XII, 217.

42 Hossein Modarresi, Hossein Modarresi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of early Shī'ite Literature*, I, 83.

43 Ahmed b. 'Alī Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl Al-Najāshī*, 8.

Al-Najāshī then lists his isnad back to the book, and that is all the biographical data listed under Sulaym bin Qays' biographical entry in *Rijāl Al-Najāshī*.

Al-Tūsī said:

Sulaym bin Qays Al-Hilālī. He is nicknamed Abū Sadeq. He has a book...⁴⁴

Al-Tūsī then proceeds to list his isnad to the book. He also listed him as a companion of 'Alī, Al-Hasan, Al-Husain, 'Alī bin Al-Husain, and Al-Baqir on various occasions.

As evident, the only details one can extract from the biographical entries authored by Al-Tūsī and Al-Najāshī are his name, nickname, his authorship of a book, and his companionship with 'Alī and the other imams.. Nothing is said about his life, his origins, his age, his reliability/status as a transmitter, his students, and his death. Nothing is known about his personal life.

The only semblance of an endorsement of Sulaym is by Al-Barqī, where he listed Sulaym as one of the *Awliya* ' of 'Alī's companions.⁴⁵

Sulaym's obscurity can be similarly observed in Sunni biographical sources, where Abū Hatem Al-Razi (d. 277) described him saying:

Sulaym b. Qays Al-'Amerī. He transmitted ḥadīth from Suhaym b. Nawfal, and Abān transmitted from him.⁴⁶

This statement by Abū Hatem is, in fact, the earliest of all biographical attestations to Sulaym b. Qays, and it further demonstrates his obscurity.

Other than the small bits of biographical data found in a few Shī'ite biographical sources, we literally know nothing about Sulaym's life besides from what is claimed in his very own book. There are no independent endorsements of Sulaym by his contemporaries, nor are there any early attestations regarding his life. The few endorsements of Sulaym b. Qays mentioned in Shī'ite biographical sources are actually derived from the information in the introductory note of his own book, rendering them useless and of little value.⁴⁷

44 Muḥammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Tūsī, *Al-Fihrist*, 81.

45 Ahmed b. 'Abdullah Al-Barqī, *Rijāl Al-Barqī* ed. Haydar Muḥammad 'Alī Al-Baghdadi, (Qum, 1433), 39.

46 'Abdurrahman Ibn Abī Hatem, *Al-Jarh wal-Ta'dil*, (Beirut, 1952), IV, 214.

47 Hossein Modarresi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of early Shī'ite Literature*, (Oxford, 2003, I, 83.

The endorsements of Kitāb Sulaym listed throughout the book cannot be cited to verify the veracity of the book's contents as that would be circular reasoning: one would be citing an alleged claim from the book to substantiate that same book's authenticity. We shall further expound on these endorsements when addressing the "Discovery Narrative" on page 26.

III. Textual Indicators of Forgery in Kitāb Sulaym

The book's faulty transmission manifests as another problem that has been noted by various scholars: the numerous textual indicators of forgery within Kitāb Sulaym. The criticisms in this context are plenty, with varying Orientalist, Shī'ite and Sunni contentions alike.

Anachronisms in Kitāb Sulaym

An anachronism is defined as a "a thing belonging or appropriate to a period other than that in which it exists, especially a thing that is conspicuously old-fashioned."⁴⁸ The presence of anachronisms in a text is often indicative of a larger problem pertaining to the historicity of that text.

Jeremy Bentham elaborates on this phenomenon saying: "In a living language there are always variations in words, in the meaning of words, in the construction of phrases, in the manner of spelling, which may detect the age of a writing, and lead to legitimate suspicions of forgery."⁴⁹

Joe Nickell further says: "Anachronistic word usage, however, especially combined with other suspicious elements, can provide evidence that underscores the word questioned in the case of a questioned historical document, and in some cases the evidence can be decisive."⁵⁰

Various scholars have made note of the presence of anachronisms in Kitāb Sulaym. In his paper, *Violence and Scripture in the Book of Sulaym Ibn Qays*, Mohammad Amīr-Moezzi said:

The pseudographical character of the Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays is obvious. The presence in its midst of data at times originating several centuries later than the period of its presumed author—and especially the many passages on the Abbasid Revolution or even the number twelve of the Imāms—permits the historian no doubt in this regard.⁵¹

48 Oxford Dictionary 2019

49 Jeremy Bentham, *A Treatise On Judicial Evidence*, (London, 1825), 140.

50 Joe Nickell, *Detecting Forgery: Forensic Investigation of Documents*, (Lexington, 2005), 104.

51 Mohammad Alī Amīr-Moezzi, *Violence and Scripture in the Book of Sulaym Ibn Qays*, in *The Silent*

This existence of anachronisms in the book of Sulaym was noted by various scholars, such as Robert Gleave, who made note of the usage of advanced hermeneutical terms in Kitāb Sulaym that only emerged after the death of its alleged author. In his paper, “Early Shiite hermeneutics and the dating of Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays,” he sheds light on the following passage, where Sulaym is quoted saying:

[‘Alī] came over and said to me, “You have asked, so understand the answer. In the hands of the people there is both valid and invalid (*ḥaqqan wa-bāṭilan*), truthfulness and falsity (*ṣidqan wa-kiḍban*), abrogating and abrogated (*nāsikhan wa-mansūkhan*), general and particular (‘*āmmān wa-khāṣṣan*), decisive and ambiguous (*muḥkaman wa-mutashābihan*), preservation and whimsy (*ḥifẓan wa-wahman*).”⁵²

Gleave comments on this passage saying:

Turning to the report’s text in detail, the listings of category pairs are a common means of presenting the findings of hermeneutic reflection. Most of the pairings given here were taken up within the later hermeneutic tradition and given technical definitions: *ṣidq/kiḍb*, *nāsikh/mansūkh*, ‘*āmm/khāṣṣ* and *muḥkam/mutashābih*. They are well known and regularly found located together (often with supplements, such as *ẓāhir/bāṭin*, *ḥaqīqa/majāz* and *muṭlaq/muqayyad*) in later *tafsīr* and *uṣūl* works. The *muḥkam/mutashābih* pairing is, of course Quranic (Q. 3:7); the notion of *naskh* is less explicitly (or easily) traced within the Quran; and while the other terms exist within the Quran, they do not appear as hermeneutic categories, either individually or in pairs. I would argue that the collocation of the categories here, as a list of pairings into which revelatory material can be placed, probably reflects a mature hermeneutic science, rather than any rudimentary exegetical theory of the first century AH. This apparent anachronism hints at the report being considerably later than the period of “Sulaym”. An examination of whether the terms (either individually or in pairs) are used in a manner congruent with later conceptions of (say) abrogation and particularization also indicate a point of formulation sometime after the turn of the second century AH (late eighth century CE).⁵³

Gleave concludes his analysis of the passage saying:

Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an : Scriptural Sources of Islam Between History and Fervor, 18.

52 Sulaym b. Qays, Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays, 181.

53 Robert Gleave, “Early Shiite hermeneutics and the dating of Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays”, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 78, 89.

The content of the first section of the tenth report appears, then, as a rather audacious attempt to attribute to ‘Alī knowledge and mastery of exegetical techniques and a level of hermeneutic sophistication which came into existence in the late eighth/early ninth century. Having said that, there are points in the text where the fit between the use of technical terminology and concepts within later Muslim hermeneutic understanding and those found in the report is not perfect. This perhaps indicates that the appropriate context in which to view the report is the early formative period of hermeneutic thinking in the Muslim religious sciences (namely the late eighth and early ninth century CE), rather than the fully flourished theoretical awareness one finds in tenth-century works of tafsīr and uṣūl al-fiqh.⁵⁴

He also concluded his paper saying:

My argument is that the listing of these hermeneutic categories together, as a sort of “tool box” for the exegete, shows a level of interpretative self-awareness that is most likely to have emerged contemporary with (and arguably after the impact of) the work of al-Shafī‘ī.⁵⁵

As evident, he dates this report to a period between the late second and early third centuries AH, which is around a century after Sulaym’s death in 76 AH.

After reading Gleave’s paper, I was made aware of several analogous anachronisms that were dispersed across the book. The third report in Kitāb Sulaym contains a poem supposedly composed by Al-‘Abbas (d. 32) where he is presented lamenting the fact that rulership had been taken away from Banī Hashem and ‘Alī b. Abī Tāleb. He is quoted saying:

“Is he [‘Alī] not the first to pray towards your *Qiblah*,
and the most knowledgeable of people in the *Athār* and *Sunan*?”⁵⁶

The term, “*Athār*”, when used to denote Prophetic traditions, only became popular in the mid-late second century AH. The usage of this term in this context first appears in a bundle of middle/late second century polemical works, such as the works of Muḥammad b. Al-Hasan Al-Shaybanī (d. 189)⁵⁷, Abū Yusuf Al-Qaḍī (d. 182)⁵⁸, and ‘Abdullah b. Wahab (d. 197)⁵⁹.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 78, 99.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 78, 102.

⁵⁶ Sulaym b. Qays, Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays, 142.

⁵⁷ The term can be regularly found in several of his books, such as: *Al-Asl*, *Al-Hujjah ‘ala Ahl Al-Madinah*, and *Kitāb Al-Athar* etc.

The term clearly is characteristic of 2nd century hermeneutics. Outside the Book of Sulaym, there is not a single reference to an early 1st century figure using the term in the aforementioned manner. This text was probably authored some time in the 2nd century

What further supports this assertion is the fact that this poem, in other independent sources, is ascribed to a later figure who died after Al-‘Abbas. The Medinite historian, Al-Zubayr b. Bakkar (d. 256) ascribed this exact poem to “a descendent of Abū Lahab bin ‘Abdulmuttalib.”⁶⁰ Ibn ‘AbdalBarr identified this descendent of Abū Lahab as Al-Fadl b. Al-‘Abbas b. ‘Utbah b. Abī Lahab.⁶¹ Al-Fadl’s death date is unknown, but he, however, was a contemporary of Al-Farazdaq (d. 114). His death date probably is at some time in the early 2nd century AH. It would be much more appropriate to ascribe this poem to Al-Fadl instead of Al-‘Abbas b. ‘Abdulmuttalib (d. 32), as in Kitāb Sulaym.

Other analogous anachronisms exist in the book, such as the author’s usage of the term “*rawaw hadīthahū*”⁶² and “*riwāyāt*”⁶³ when quoting the companions of the Prophet.

The Discovery Narrative

A common theme that has been recurrently observed in forged texts is a phenomenon known as a “discovery narrative.” Ehrman elaborated on this phenomenon saying:

One final technique used by some forgers involves a “discovery narrative.” If a book shows up this week claiming to have been written two hundred years ago, one might well wonder where it has been all this time. Forgers sometimes begin or end their writing by describing what has led to the book’s disappearance and discovery. For example, an author might begin a book by explaining that he had a dream, and in this dream he was told to dig a deep hole on the south side of the oak tree in the field across the stream from his farm. When he dug the hole, he found an ancient wooden box. Inside the box was a deteriorating manuscript. He has now copied this manuscript out by hand, and this is it, a revelation given directly by Christ to the apostle James and hidden from the world until now.

58 The term can be found in his books: *Al-Radd ‘ala Siyar Al-Awza’I*, *Kitāb Al-Athar*, and *Al-Kharaj* etc.

59 ‘Abdullah b. Wahab authored a book known as *Al-Qadar wa ma Warada fi Dalika min Al-Athar*

60 Al-Zubayr b. Bakkar, *Al-Akhbar Al-Muwaffaqiyyat* ed. Sami Al-‘Ani, (Beirut, 1996), 221.

61 Abū ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abdilbarr, *Al-Isti’ab fi Ma’rifat Al-Ashab* ed. AlīMuḥammad Al-Bajjawi, (Beirut, 1992), III, 133.

62 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 279, 314, 317.

63 *Ibid.*, 320 & 323.

The book then claims to have been written by James, as “copied” by the discoverer of the manuscript. The book is not widely known, because it has been hidden all these years. But now it has come to light, and here it is. Except it’s not really here. What is here is a book not written by James, but by a forger claiming to be James, who has conveniently included an explanation for why no one has ever heard of this book before.⁶⁴

The purpose of such anecdotes that often accompanied past forgeries was to justify and explain away their obscurity. The Book of Sulaym, in this regard, is no exception. The preface of the book contains a long anecdote from the book’s sole transmitter, Abān , where he provides a detailed story that attempts to explain his exclusive possession of the book. That anecdote is also meshed with another anecdote by Ibn Uḡaynah. Ironically, the anecdote involves a dream as well. We shall list this detailed anecdote which is an utter manifestation of what Ehrman called a “discovery narrative”:

‘Umar b. Uḡaynah said:

Abān b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh once invited me around a month before his death. He told me: “I saw a dream yesterday [which hinted that] my death is imminent. I then saw you next morning, and I was happy to see you. I saw Sulaym in a dream last night, and he told me: ‘O Abān, you shall die in these coming days, so fear Allah with regards to my entrusted deposit, and do not lose it. Conceal it as you have promised, and only share it with a man from the *Shia* of ‘Alī b. Abī Tāleb of piety and status.’

When I saw you this morning, I was happy to see you, and I remembered my dream of Sulaym b. Qays.”⁶⁵

Abān then provided an anecdote which supposedly explains his clandestine retrieval of Kitāb Sulaym. He said:

When Al-Hajjaj was appointed to Iraq, he inquired about Sulaym b. Qays. Sulaym thus fled from him, and he covertly came upon us in Nawbandajan; and he stayed in our house. I have never seen a man who honored himself, was pious, taken by sadness, and hateful of fame more than him. I was 14 years old at the time, and I had recited the Quran. I used to ask him, and he would tell me about the people of Badr.

64 Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible’s Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, 35.

65 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 125.

I've heard many ḥadīths from him he transmitted from 'Umar b. Abī Salamah – son of Umm Salamah the Prophet's wife – Mu'ad b. Jabal, Salman Al-Farisi, 'Alī b. Abī Tāleb, Abū Ḍarr, Al-Miqdad, 'Ammar, Al-Bara' b. 'Azeb. He then asked me to conceal them, but he did not make me swear upon that.

When death eventually was near, he invited me and spoke to me individually. He said: "O Abān, I have lived by you, and I have only seen from you that which I like. I possess some books I had heard from the reliable transmitters and transcribed with my own hands. In them are ḥadīth which I do not want exposed to the public, since the people will deny and reject them. They are the Truth, and I have taken them from the people of Truth, understanding, patience and piety; from 'Alī b. Abī Tāleb, Salman Al-Farisi, Abū Ḍarr Al-Ghifari, Al-Miqdad b. Al-Aswad.

There is not a single ḥadīth in it I had heard from one of them except that I asked another about it until they'd all eventually agree upon it, so I followed them upon that. It also has things I heard later from the people of Truth. When I fell ill, I initially intended to burn them, but I then felt bad and avoided doing so.

If you promise me by Allah and His covenant to not inform anyone of it so as long as I am alive and that you do not transmit anything from it to anyone after my death asides from those whom you trust from the *Shi'a* of 'Alī b. Abī Tāleb who have piety and status."

[Abān said]: I then promised him, so he handed me the books and read them to me. Sulaym died soon after that.⁶⁶

This anecdote, ascribed to Abān, is a classical example of a "discovery narrative" as described by Ehrman. What is noteworthy is that the source of the entire anecdote is the criticized transmitter, Abān b. Abi 'Ayyāsh, who was accused of fabricating the entire book by some earlier authorities. The book's faulty transmission and problematic content (as we shall demonstrate later) along with this phenomenon, serve as a testimony to the notion that this book simply was a later forgery falsely ascribed to Sulaym bin Qays.

The discovery narrative, however, does not end there. The author of this text further attempts to grant his work legitimacy by claiming, at the preface of the book, that it was endorsed by

⁶⁶ Ibid., 125-6.

the 4th *Imām*, ‘Alī b. Al-Husayn.⁶⁷ It seems as though the author, however, was not satisfied with an individual endorsement by the 4th Shī’ite *imām*, since he additionally claimed that the book was endorsed by Al-Hasan Al-Basri, ‘Umar b. Abī Salamah and Abū Al-Tufail.⁶⁸

Historical Errors in Kitāb Sulaym

The recurrence of clear-cut and obvious historical errors throughout an alleged early primary source often is indicative of a greater problem in that source: the unreliability of its author, the unreliability of the author’s source(s), the unreliability of the book’s transmission after its authorship, or perhaps all those factors combined. When paralleled with faulty and questionable transmission, these indicators may even further suggest that the work is a forgery.

Kitāb Sulaym is no exception in this regard. The text has consistently embodied numerous historical errors which indicate that the author of this text was not well-acquainted with the events of the 1st century AH. Let us evaluate some of these errors to get a better idea of what we are dealing with:

Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr & His Father

In the 37th report in Kitāb Sulaym, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr is quoted elaborating on his father’s death and describing it as a primary eyewitness. Sulaym is quoted saying:

I then met Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, and I asked him: “Has anyone besides from your brother, ‘Abdurrahman, ‘Aisha and ‘Umar witness your father’s death?” He said: “No.” I asked: “Did they hear from him what you had heard?” He said: “They heard parts of it, and they cried and said: ‘he has gone insane!’, but they did not hear everything I had heard.”⁶⁹

Sulaym then quoted Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr saying:

When I was alone with him [Abū Bakr], I told him: “O father, say: *la ilaha illa Allah*.” He replied: “I shall never say it nor am I capable of saying it until I am admitted into Hellfire and I enter the coffin.”

⁶⁷ Ibid., 125-6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 127-8.

⁶⁹ Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 348.

When he mentioned the coffin. I initially thought he had gone insane, so I asked him: “What coffin?” He said: “A coffin made of fire, locked with a lock of fire. It contains 12 men: me and my companion.”

I asked: “ ‘Umar?” He replied: “Yes. Who else could I be referring to? Along with 10 other men in a pit in *Jahannam* covered by a boulder. Whenever Allah wants to inflame the Hellfire, He would lift that boulder.”⁷⁰

Though this account may sound like a plausible summary of a conversation that may have taken place besides a deathbed, it is, in fact, an absolute forgery. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr was born in 10 AH, while his father, Abū Bakr, died in 13 AH. This means that the entire conversation cited above was allegedly carried out by a THREE-year old and his 60-year old father.

Nevertheless, it should be self-evident that this forged account was probably fabricated by a staunch Shi’ite transmitter who had attempted to vilify Abū Bakr by ascribing this anecdote to Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr. It is also evident that this forger was not necessarily the brightest of forgers, since he chose the wrong characters at the wrong time for his fictional fabrication.

One of the earliest figures to draw attention to this blunder is the fifth century Shi’i critic, Ahmed b. Al-Husain Al-Ghaḍā’irī. In his book, *Al-Rijāl*, he said:

The book is fabricated without a doubt, and there are several indicators in it which indicate this. One of them is what is mentioned in it regarding Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr giving his father (Abū Bakr) a reminder while he was on his deathbed.⁷¹

Al-Khoei attempts to bypass Ibn Al-Ghaḍā’irī’s criticism by repeatedly claiming that Ibn Al-Ghaḍā’irī’s book is inauthentically ascribed to him; however, that is irrelevant, since the point still stands regardless of whether it was made by Ibn Al-Ghaḍā’irī or not.

Al_Khoei then proceeded to quote Al-Mirza Al-Astarabadi claiming that his own copy of the book mentions that it was ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar who addressed his father, ‘Umar, while he was in his deathbed and not Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr. Al-Khoei also quoted Al-Tafrishi stating that a “virtuous individual” (probably referring to Al-Mirza Al-Astarabadi) stated that he had a copy that quoted ‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar admonishing his father and that it did not quote

⁷⁰ Ibid., 349.

⁷¹ Ahmed b. Al-Husayn Al-Ghaḍā’irī, *Al-Rijāl*, 63.

Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr doing so. Al-Khoei then comments saying: “and I did not find anything throughout the book that is not in-line with Al-Tafrishi had stated.”⁷²

These attempts to dismiss this historical defect are futile, since the printed copy of Kitāb Sulaym today, which is based on 14 different manuscripts of the book, actually contains this problematic excerpt as described by Ibn Al-Ghaḍā’irī.

It is evident that this forged account has a basis in Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays. The question thus should be: who forged it? Was it Sulaym? Abān? A later malicious transmitter?

That is the question.

Abū Al-Darda’ at Siffin

The 25th report in Kitāb Sulaym revolves around certain events that took place prior to the Battle of Siffin. Sulaym is quoted saying:

Mu’āwiyah called Abū Al-Darda’ and Abū Hurayrah , while we were with the commander of the faithful, and he told them: “Go to ‘Alī, and convey to him my *salam*. Tell him...”⁷³,

The report eventually states that Abū Al-Darda’ and Abū Hurayrah conveyed the message to ‘Alī, and then returned to Mu’āwiyah.⁷⁴

The battle of Siffin occurred in 37 AH, two years after the murder of ‘Uthman in 35 AH. Abū Al-Darda’ reportedly died in Damascus during the reign of ‘Uthman. It would thus be impossible for him to witness the battle of Siffin, let alone participate in it as an envoy.

Various earlier Damascene authorities made note of this:

Abū Zur’ah Al-Dimashqi authentically reported that Sa’id b. ‘Abdul’Aziz Al-Dimashqi (d. 167) said: “Abū Al-Darda’ and Ka’b Al-Ahbar both died during the reign of ‘Uthman.”⁷⁵

Abū Zur’ah then authentically quoted Al-Awza’i (d. 157), saying: “Abū Al-Darda’ died 2 years prior to the murder of ‘Uthman.”⁷⁶

72 Abū Al-Qasem Al-Khoei, *Mo’jam Rijāl Al-Ḥadīth*, (Najaf, 1992), IX, 230-1.

73 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 288.

74 Ibid., 291.

75 Abū Zur’ah Al-Dimashqi, *Tarikh Abī Zur’ah* ed. Shukrullah Al-Qawjani, (Damascus, 1980), 689.

76 Ibid., 689.

It was also reported by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Tarikh Al-Awsat* ⁷⁷, Ibn Abī ‘Asem ⁷⁸, Al-Tabarani⁷⁹, Abū Nu‘aym ⁸⁰ and others from Abū ‘Abdillah Al-Ash‘ari, from Abū Al-Darda’:

I once said: “O Messenger of Allah, I was informed that you mentioned that some individuals will apostatize after accepting Islam.”

The Prophet replied: “Indeed, and you are not from among them.”

[Abū ‘Abdillah Al-Ash‘ari] said: “Abū Al-Darda’ thus died prior to the murder of ‘Uthman.”

Ibn ‘Asaker reported in *Tarikh Dimashq* that Muḥammad b. ‘Abdillah b. Numayr (d. 234) said: “Abū Al-Darda’ died in the year 32 in Al-Sham.” ⁸¹

The Medinite historian, Ibn Sa’d, quoted Al-Waqidi reiterating this theme as well. He said:

Muḥammad b. ‘Umar informed us that Abū Al-Darda’ died in Damascus in the year 32 during the reign of ‘Uthman, and he has descendants in Al-Sham.

Muḥammad b. ‘Umar also informed me from Thawr b. Yazid, from Khaled b. Ma’dan: “Abū Al-Darda’ died in Al-Sham in 31 AH.” ⁸²

The 7th century historian, Ibn Al-Athir, similarly stated that Abū Al-Darda’ died during ‘Uthman’s reign. He said: “During it [‘Uthman’s reign], Abū Al-Darda’ died. It is said that he lived after him; however, the first position is more correct.” ⁸³

Thus, it is evident that all of the sources cited above agreed that Abū Al-Darda’s death preceded ‘Uthman’s murder and the battle of Siffin. The forger who fabricated this passage in *Kitāb Sulaym*, however, was clearly not well-acquainted with the biographies of the characters involved in his fabricated tales.

77 Muḥammad b. Isma‘il Al-Bukhari, *Al-Tarikh Al-Awsat* ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Zayed , (Aleppo ,1977) I, 60.

78 Abū Bakr Ibn Abī ‘Asem, *Al-Ahad wal-Mathani* ed. Basem Al-Jawabrah, (Riyad, 1991), IV, 81.

79 Sulayman b. Ahmed Al-Tabarani, *Al-Mo‘jam Al-Kabīr* ed. Hamdi Abdulmajid Al-Salafi, (Cairo, 1994), I, 89.

80 Abū Nu‘aym Al-Asbahani, *Ma‘rifat Al-Sahabah* ed. Adel Yusuf Al-‘Azazi, (Riyad, 1998), I, 72.

81 ‘Alī Ibn ‘Asaker, *Tarikh Dimashq*, LIX, 87.

82 Muḥammad Ibn Sa’d, *Al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra* ed. Muḥammad Abdulqader ‘Ata, (Beirut, 1990), VII, 276.

83 Ibn Al-Athir, *Al-Kamil fi Al-Tarikh* ed. Umar AbdulSalam Tadmuri, (Beirut, 1997) II, 564.

Abū Bakr and the title “*Amīr Al-Mu’minīn*”

On at least two occasions in *Kitāb Sulaym*, Abū Bakr is referred to as “*Amīr Al-Mu’minīn*.”⁸⁴ We know, however, that ‘Umar b. Al-Khattāb was the first caliph to assume that title only after the death of Abū Bakr.

Al-Bukhari⁸⁵, Al-Hakem⁸⁶ and others authentically reported that ‘Umar b. ‘Abdulaziz once asked the Medinite *tabī’i*, Ibn Abī Khaythamah:

“Why did Abū Bakr refer to himself as the ‘successor of the Prophet’, and then ‘Umar referred to himself after that as ‘the successor of Abū Bakr, so who first referred to himself as commander of the believers?”

Ibn Abī Khaythamah responded saying: My grandmother, Al-Shifa’, who was among the first *muhajirat*, informed me that whenever ‘Umar b. Al-Khattāb entered the market, he would visit her.”

She said: Umar once asked the governor of the two Iraqs to send him 2 noble men so that he may ask them about the status of Al-‘Iraq and its inhabitants. The governor of the two ‘Iraqs thus sent Labīd b. Rabī’ah and ‘Adiyy b. Hatem. They came to Medina, and then tied their mounts in the courtyard of the mosque. They then entered the mosque and found ‘Amr b. Al-‘As. They told him: “O ‘Amr, seek permission from the commander of the believers, so that we may enter upon him.”

‘Amr thus got up and entered upon ‘Umar saying: “Peace be upon you O commander of the believers!”

‘Umar replied to him saying: “What made you say this title O son of Al-‘As? You shall tell me.”

‘Amr said: “Yes. Labīd b. Rabī’a and ‘Adiyy b. Hatem came, and they told me: ‘Seek permission from the commander of the believers so that we may enter upon him.’ So I said: ‘Indeed you have got his name right. He is the commander and we are the believers.”

The title was written since then.

84 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 148 & 386.

85 Muḥammad b. Isma‘il Al-Bukhari, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* ed. Muḥammad Fuad AbdulBaqi, (Beirut, 1989), 353.

86 Al-Hakem Al-Naysaburi, *Al-Mustadrak ‘ala Al-Sahihayn* ed. Mustafa Al-Bugha, (Beirut, 1990), III, 87.

The Medinite historian, Ibn Shabbah, dedicated an entire chapter in *Tarikh Al-Madinah* for reports that demonstrated how ‘Umar was the first to assume that title.⁸⁷

The historian, Al-Tabarī, said: “The first person to be referred to as *Amīr Al-Mu‘minīn* was ‘Umar b. Al-Khattāb. It then became a habit, and the caliphs have been using this title till this day.”⁸⁸ Ibn Khaldun similarly stated that Abū Bakr was merely referred to as “successor of the Prophet” throughout his reign and that ‘Umar was the first caliph to assume the title “*Amīr Al-Mu‘minīn*.”⁸⁹

It is clear that Abū Bakr was not referred to as “*Amīr Al-Mu‘minīn*”, nor are there any authentic texts independent of Kitāb Sulaym that display him being called that. The forger of this text, again, was not aware of this reality.

Qunfuḍ: The Fictional Villain

The figure known as “Qunfuḍ” is mentioned more than 22 times throughout Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays. On one occasion, he is described as “a blunt, vulgar, and dry man from among the *Tulaqā’* from the tribe of Banī ‘Adiyy”⁹⁰ It is also mentioned later in the book that Qunfuḍ was a paternal cousin of ‘Umar bin Al-Khattāb.⁹¹ He is also described as a governor who was later appointed by ‘Umar bin Al-Khattāb, and he is given the patronymic, “Al-‘Adawi”.⁹²

In the Book of Sulaym, Qunfuḍ is given a fundamental role in the supposed attack on Fāṭimah’s house: he is ‘Umar’s righthand and executive. In the 4th report in the book, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar are quoted conspiring to force ‘Alī to pledge his allegiance to them, as in the excerpt below:

Abū Bakr asked: “Who shall we send to him [Alī]?” ‘Umar replied: “We shall send Qunfuḍ, since he is a blunt, vulgar, and dry man from among the *tulaqā’* from the tribe of Banī ‘Adiyy bin Ka’b.”

So he sent Qunfuḍ to him along with a group of supporters. He asked ‘Alī for permission [to enter his house], but ‘Alī refused to allow them inside. The companions of Qunfuḍ thus returned to Abū Bakr and ‘Umar where they were seated

87 ‘Umar Ibn Shabbah, *Tarikh Al-Madinah* ed. Fahim Shaltut, (Jeddah, 1399), II , 677-680.

88 Muḥammad Ibn Jarir Al-Tabarī, *Tarikh Al-Rusul wal-Muluk*, (Beirut, 1387), IV, 208.

89 ‘Abdurrahman Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh Ibn Khaldun* ed. Khalil Shhadeh, (Beirut, 1988), I, 282-3.

90 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 149.

91 Ibid., 385.

92 Ibid., 223.

in the mosque, surrounded by the masses. They told them: “We were not given permission [to enter].”

‘Umar said: “Go, if he gives you permission. If he does not, then enter his house without permission!”

They then returned and asked for permission, and Fāṭimah said: “I bar you from entering my house without permission.” Hence, they left the scene except Qunfuḍ the damned.⁹³

Qunfuḍ’s role in the attack becomes more apparent after ‘Alī’s alleged strangling of ‘Umar, after which the author said:

‘Umar yearned for support, so the people approached until they entered the house, yet ‘Alī swiftly reached for his sword. Qunfuḍ then returned to Abū Bakr fearing that ‘Alī would confront him with his sword, since he was aware of ‘Alī’s strength and toughness.

Abū Bakr told Qunfuḍ: “Go back, if he comes out. Otherwise, break into his house.”

Qunfuḍ - the damned - thus went alongside his companions, and they barged into the house without permission. ‘Alī swiftly reached for his sword, but they outnumbered him, pinned him down and tied a rope around his neck.

Fāṭimah stood as a barrier between him and them at the entrance of the house, so Qunfuḍ - the damned - lashed her with his whip. When she later died, there was a bruise on her shoulder that resembled a bracelet as a result of his blow. May Allah curse him and those who sent him.⁹⁴

Later in the book, Sulaym is quoted criticizing ‘Umar for his decision to fine all of his governors half of their wealth, and he proceeds to mention Qunfuḍ in this context as well. He said:

‘Umar bin Al-Khattāb fined all of his governors half of their wealth that year, as a result of Abū Al-Mukhtar’s poetry. He, however, did not fine Qunfuḍ anything, and he was one of his governors. He returned to him what he had initially taken from him,

93 Ibid., 149.

94 Ibid., 149-151.

and it amounted to 20,000 Dirhams, yet he did not take half of it, or a tenth, or half of that!

Sulaym is later quoted saying:

I met ‘Alī, and I asked him about what ‘Umar had done. He said: “Do you know why ‘Umar refrained from fining Qunfuḍ?”

I said: “No.”

He said: “It is because Qunfuḍ was the one who lashed Fāṭimah with a whip when she attempted to stand as a barrier between me and them. She died – may the blessings of Allah be upon her- with a mark on her shoulder from that lash, which resembled a bracelet.⁹⁵

As seen in the past excerpts, this figure’s role in the alleged attack on Fāṭimah is not minor: he is one of the direct perpetrators who physically attacked her. What is extremely bizarre about this personality is that it is not mentioned in a single 1st, 2nd or 3rd century primary historical source outside the Book of Sulaym.

The closest semblance to this individual I was able to find was the *Saḥābī*, Qunfuḍ b. ‘Umair Al-Taymi. This man, however, was not from the tribe of Banī ‘Adiyy nor was he a cousin of ‘Umar bin Al-Khattāb. He was a Qureshī Arab from the clan of Banī Taym. Thus, it is evident that they are not the same person.

Of all the works that were authored throughout these 3 centuries pertaining to the *Saḥābah*, their companions, historical events, and the thousands of transmitters of ḥadīth, there is not a single mention of any individual by the name of Qunfuḍ who belonged to the tribe of Banī ‘Adiyy. Al-Balāḍuri, in *Ansab Al-Ashraf*, dedicated an entire portion of his book (~ 200 pages) with biographical entries for individuals the tribe of Banī ‘Adiyy, yet there is no mention of an individual from this tribe by the name of Qunfuḍ, who was a cousin of ‘Umar.⁹⁶

Similarly, there is no mention of a man named Qunfuḍ who was appointed as governor by ‘Umar during his reign, even though we are aware of ‘Umar’s governors and their respective jurisdictions.

⁹⁵ Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 222-3.

⁹⁶ Ahmed Al-Balāḍuri, *Ansab Al-Ashraf* ed. Suhayl Zakkar & Riyāḍ Al-Zirikli, (Beirut, 1996), X, 284-483.

The later Shī'ite works that mention Qunfuḍ are books like *Kamil Al-Ziyarat* by Ibn Qulawayh (d. 368), The *Tafsir* of Al-'Ayyāshi (d. 320), *Al-Mustarshid* and *Dala'il Al-Imāmah* by Al-Tabarī (d. post-411), *Al-Ikhtisas* by Al-Mufid (d. 413), and later works.

Al-Hidayah Al-Kubra by Al-Khasibi (d. 334), which is an Alawite work, also mentioned Qunfuḍ.

What is noteworthy about these sources is the fact that they provide conflicting information about Qunfuḍ. Ibn Rustom Al-Tabarī, for example, transmits a report where Ja'far Al-Sadeq is quoted describing Qunfuḍ as the “client (*mawla*) of 'Umar.”⁹⁷ This would entail that Qunfuḍ was not actually a man from the tribe of Banī 'Adiyy as claimed in the Book of Sulaym

Other sources, such as *Al-Hidaya Al-Kubra* by Al-Khasibi⁹⁸ and *Bihar Al-Anwar* by Al-Majlisi⁹⁹ refer to Qunfuḍ as the “*mawla* of Abū Bakr”, not 'Umar. Again, there is not a single mention of a man named Qunfuḍ among the clients of Abū Bakr and 'Umar in early and later biographical sources.

What further casts doubt on this figure is that it was mentioned in the later polemical forgery falsely ascribed to Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276) known as *Al-Imāmah wal-Siyasah*.¹⁰⁰ Orientalist and Muslim scholarship alike have contested the attribution of this book to Ibn Qutaybah for a variety of reasons.¹⁰¹ It must be noted that the author of this book referred to Qunfuḍ as the “*mawla* of Abū Bakr,” further demonstrating the obscurity of this figure.

Since all later Shi'ite sources that were authored several centuries after Kitāb Sulaym exclusively referred to Qunfuḍ in the context of the alleged attack on Fāṭimah, it cannot be

97 Muḥammad b. Jarir b. Rustom Al-Tabarī, *Dala'il Al-Imāmah*, (Beirut, 2018), 45.

98 Al-Husain b. Hamdan Al-Khasibi, *Al-Hidayah Al-Kubra*, (Beirut, 1991), 179.

99 Muḥammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Bihar Al-Anwar*, XXX, 290.

100 Pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Imāmah wal-Siyasah* ed. AlīShiri, (Beirut, 1990), I, 30.

101 The first figure to cast doubt on the ascription of *Al-Imāmah wal-Siyasah* to Ibn Qutaybah was the Maliki jurist, Ibn Al-'ArAbī (d. 543). Various later Muslim authorities asserted that as well. Later orientalist, such as Pascual de Gayangos, Reinhart Dozy, Michael Jan De Goeje and others have similarly rejected the ascription of *Al-Imāmah wal-Siyasah* to Ibn Qutaybah for various reasons. The criticism of this book centers around multiple issues pertaining to the book and its authorship. Dr. Abdullah Al-'Osailan, in his treatise, كتاب الإمامة والسياسة في ميزان التحقيق العلمي, listed 12 indicators to argue that the book was not authored by Ibn Qutaybah. What I found notable was the fact that the author of this book mentioned later events that only occurred after Ibn Qutaybah's death. Take for example his mentioning of the city of Marrakesh, which was founded by Yusuf ibn Tashfin in ~462 AH (around 200 years after Ibn Qutaybah's death!) The author of this book is thus often referred to as “pseudo-Ibn Qutayba” in sever contemporary academic publications.

said that these sources provide independent attestations to the events of Kitāb Sulaym. Rather, these later sources are directly influenced by Kitāb Sulaym, and one cannot dispel the presence of collusion between the authors and transmitters of these books.

In conclusion, it is evident that the character known as Qunfuḍ is a fictional and fabricated character that never existed for several reasons:

1. Outside the Book of Sulaym (d. 76), the earliest attestations to Qunfuḍ appear in 4th century Shī'ite polemical works.
2. These different Shī'ite sources provide conflicting information about Qunfuḍ.
3. In these sources, Qunfuḍ is exclusively mentioned in the context of the alleged attack on Fāṭimah.
4. There is not a single hint of a governor appointed by 'Umar named Qunfuḍ, nor is there any information about his jurisdiction.
5. There is not a single hint of a man by the name of Qunfuḍ who belonged to the tribe of Banī 'Adiyy.
6. There is not a single mention of a *mawla* of 'Umar by the name of Qunfuḍ.
7. There is not a single mention of a *mawla* of Abū Bakr by the name of Qunfuḍ.

Exaggerations at the Battle of Al-Jamal:

Eight century Muslim sociologist and historian, Ibn Khaldun, perhaps was one of the earliest figures to address the issue of exaggeration in historical sources, specifically in the context of military history. In his *muqaddimah*, he said:

Whenever people of this age speak about the dynastic armies of their own or recent times, and whenever they engage in discussions about Muslim or Christian armies, or when they get to figuring the tax revenues and the money spent by the government, the outlays of extravagant spenders, and the goods that rich and prosperous men have in stock; they are quite generally found to exaggerate, go beyond the bounds of the ordinary and succumb to the temptation of sensationalism. When the officials in charge are questioned about their armies, when the goods and assets of wealthy people are assessed, and when the outlays of extravagant spenders are looked at in ordinary light, the figures will be found to amount to a tenth of what those people had

claimed. This is only the result of one's desire for sensationalism, the ease with which one may just mention a higher figure and the disregard of reviewers and critics.¹⁰²

Muslim historian and historiographer, Al-Mas'udi (d. 345), specifically made note of the exaggerations and understatements he had observed in the number of alleged casualties in the Battle of Al-Jamal. He similarly noted that these inaccurate figures were the byproduct of their sources' theological biases.¹⁰³

Unsurprisingly, this phenomenon is observed in Kitāb Sulaym. In the 27th report, Sulaym is quoted saying:

I witnessed the day of Al-Jamal with 'Alī, and we were 12,000 in number. The cohorts of the camel were more than 120,000 in number.¹⁰⁴

This appears to be a great exaggeration of the number of combatants in 'A'isha's camp. Let us list the figures cited by various primary sources and compare them to the figure mentioned in Kitāb Sulaym:

Source:	'Aisha's Camp	'Ali's Camp
Kitāb Sulaym	120,000	12,000
Al-Tabarī ¹⁰⁵	30,000	20,000
Al-Waqidi ¹⁰⁶	15,000	20,000
Al-Haytham b. 'Adiyy ¹⁰⁷	8,000	12,000

Though we probably won't be able to ascertain the exact number of participants in the battle of Al-Jamal, it is clear that the alleged number of combatants in 'A'isha's camp listed in Kitāb Sulaym is extremely exaggerated. This is observed when the figure cited in Kitāb Sulaym is cross-referenced with the figures listed in other independent sources. The author of Kitāb Sulaym attempted to exaggerate and inflate 'Ali's victory at the battle of Jamal by claiming that his army was outnumbered 1:10.

102 'Abdurrahman Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh Ibn Khaldun*, I, 15-6.

103 'Alī b. Al-Husain Al-Mas'udi, *Muruj Al-Dahab wa Ma'adin Al-Jawhar*, ed. Kamal Mir'i, (Beirut, 2005), II, 275.

104 Sulaym b. Qays, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, 325

105 Muḥammad Ibn Jarir Al-Tabarī, *Tarikh Al-Rusul wal-Muluk*, IV, 505.

106 Yusuf Sibṭ Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Mir'at Al-Zaman fi Tawarikh Al-A'yan* ed. Muḥammad Barakat et al., (Damascus, 2013), VI, 175.

107 Ibid., VI, 175.

Falsifications in Kitāb Sulaym

Falsification is a deceptive literary activity that occurs whenever someone copies an author's text by hand, but alters it in some way, omitting something, adding something, or just changing the wording.¹⁰⁸

These alterations, in many instances, are mere scribal errors; however, they can also be the result of malicious tampering with a text. Ehrman says:

In the vast majority of the cases, the changes that copyists made were simply an accident: the slip of a pen, the misspelling of a word, the accidental omission of a word or a line. Sometimes, though, scribes changed their texts because they wanted to do so, either because they thought their scribal predecessors made a mistake that needed to be corrected or because they wanted to add something to the text (or take away something or change something). As I've indicated, this kind of falsification is close to forgery; it is one author passing off his own words as the words of a respected authority.¹⁰⁹

The problem should be clear: when later copyists and scribes maliciously tamper with texts and distort their contents, the reliability of those texts is jeopardized, and their original authors are misrepresented.

The evidence indicates that the forged text of Kitāb Sulaym was further tampered with and distorted by later scribes after its authorship. Hossein Modarresi noted that the insertions and constant accretions gradually incorporated into the book eventually gave rise to the variation in the different manuscripts of the book we possess today. He said

Owing to the fact that a number of insertions were made in the book, there are variations among its different manuscripts, as described by Agha Buzurg 2: 152–9.8 Fortunately, later accretions seem always to have been in the form of insertions and additions rather than replacements and alterations. The old core is therefore preserved in most of the manuscripts, even at the cost of obvious contradictions. Some of these variations are noted in the editions of the book: a number of Najaf

108 Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, 259.

109 Ibid., 261.

editions; Beirut, 1407; Qum, 1415 (the one used here is Najaf: Haydariyya, n.d., 236 pp.).¹¹⁰

One of the earliest figures to make note of the presence of falsifications in Kitāb Sulaym was the renowned Twelver theologian, Al-Sheikh Al-Mufid (d. 413). In, *Tashih I'tiqadat Al-Imāmiyyah*, he commented on the book saying:

This book is not trusted, and most of it cannot be acted upon. Distortion and tampering have occurred with its content. The religious one must thus refrain from acting upon all that is in it, and he must not depend on most of it nor should he follow its transmitters. He must leap to the scholars so that they may clarify to him the truth from the falsehood.¹¹¹

Shī'ite polemicists attempt to deflect this point by suggesting that the book, *Tashih I'tiqadat Al-Imāmiyyah*, is inauthentically ascribed to Al-Mufid. This ad hoc dismissal of the book, however, is a pointless endeavor, as various textual indicators do, in fact, suggest that the book has been tampered with across the centuries.

Several early critics, for example, made note of the fact that the book stated the *imāms* were thirteen in number, not twelve. This was one of Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī's objections to the book.¹¹²

The mention of thirteen imāms in Kitāb Sulaym was not exclusively noted by Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī. Al-Najāshī, in his book on *rijāl*, described Hibatullah b. Ahmed in his entry saying:

He used to indulge in *kalam*, and he used to attend the *majlis* of Abū Al-Husain b. Al-Shabīh Al-'Alawī, who was Zaydī in his maḍhab. He compiled a book for him, and he mentioned, in it, that the imāms were thirteen in number along with Zayd b. 'Alī b. Al-Husain. He appealed to a ḥadīth in Kitāb Sulaym which stated that the imāms were twelve descendants of the commander of the faithful.¹¹³

Thus, it is evident that earlier manuscripts of the book embodied the claim that the imāms were thirteen in number. It seems, however, that the content of the book, in this regard, was

110 Hossein Modarresi, Hossein Modarresi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of early Shī'ite Literature*, I, 86.

111 Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Al-Mufid, *Tashih I'tiqadat Al-Imāmiyyah* ed. Husain Dargahi, (Qom, 1413), 149-150.

112 Ahmed b. Al-Husayn Al-Ghaḍā'irī, *Al-Rijāl*, 63.

113 Ahmed b. 'Alī Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl Al-Najāshī*, 440.

later theologically appropriated by later scribes and copyists. Hossein Modarressi expounds on this specific example saying:

There is also a reference to twelve (sic) Imāms from among the descendants of ‘Alī who would succeed him (ibid.: 217–18). The relevant passage is inserted in a paragraph that describes how God looked at the people of the earth and selected from among them the Prophet and ‘Alī as his chosen ones. (This follows the statement about the masters of Paradise noted above). The passage then continues by asserting that God then took a second glance (at the earth) and chose, after the Prophet and ‘Alī twelve legatees of the descendants of the Prophet to be the elect of his community in each generation. The style itself identifies this last line as a later insertion, obviously added after the number of the Imāms was finally determined early in the fourth century. This addition was of course a careless slip as the contributor had failed to note that it would raise the number of the Imāms, when we include ‘Alī himself, to thirteen. Najāshī: 330 reports that a fourth century Shī’ite author, in a book he wrote for a Zaydi patron and in order to please him, used this passage to argue that Zayd b. ‘Alī, the eponym of Zaydi Shi’ism, was also an Imām, adding his name to the list of the Imāmites’ twelve Imāms. This was the only report on the number of the Imāms in the version of the Kitāb Sulaym available to the historian Mas’udi in the early fourth century (see his Tanbih: 198–9) However, soon after that when Nu‘mani wrote his Kitāb al-ghayba around 340, there was at least one copy of the Kitāb Sulaym with many further references inserted here and there on the final number of the Imāms. The sentences were now more carefully drafted to avoid the problems caused by the former passage. These appear in the printed versions of the work too (Kitāb Sulaym: 62, 109, 125, 136, 151, 166, 167, 168, 201, 207). These references made the book a major source for the Imāmites’ argument that the Twelfth Imām lived in occultation (see Nu‘mani: 101–102).¹¹⁴

Tamima Bayhom-Daou analyzed an individual report in the book and concluded that it reflected the early stages of development of the Imāmī doctrine of the imāmate and legal theory. She also stated that the report contained evidence of chronological updating, which

114 Hossein Modarressi, Hossein Modarressi, Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of early Shī’ite Literature, I, 84-5.

may indicate that the report had gone through multiple stages of redaction before assuming its final form in Kitāb Sulaym.¹¹⁵

Patricia Crone, in her analysis of the 23rd report of Kitāb Sulaym, similarly noted the existence of portions that were later added to the text in various epochs in accord with the needs of each epoch.¹¹⁶

All of these examples cumulatively indicate that the book's integrity has not been maintained across the centuries. Its contents have been tampered with and appropriated alongside the gradual development of Shī'ite theology and hermeneutics, as noted in various analyses.

III. Dating Kitāb Sulaym

The past sections of this book serve to demonstrate the defective transmission and preservation of Kitāb Sulaym and, ultimately, its unreliability. After recognizing this reality, one may ask himself: "When was the book actually written?"

To address this question, I shall list out the plausible possibilities behind the authorship of Kitāb Sulaym:

1. The book was fabricated by Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh.
2. The book is a later compilation of Sulaym's reports which are dispersed in Shī'ite sources.
3. The book was actually authored by Sulaym; however, it was tampered with and heavily distorted with later insertions and accretions.
4. The book is a later fabrication that was falsely ascribed to Abān and Sulaym.

Asides from the fact that the majority (if not most) of Kitāb Sulaym is forged, one cannot be certain about the actual source of its content. Ibn Al-Ghaḍā'irī, as shown earlier, stated that Abān was suspected of fabricating the book. If Abān actually is the source of the "discovery narrative" mentioned at the forefront of the book, then it is indeed possible that he is the culprit, especially considering the severe criticism he received in the Sunni and Shī'ite traditions.

115 Tamima Bayhom-Daou, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays revisited*, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 78, 118.

116 Patricia Crone, *Mawālī and the Prophet's Family*, in *Patronage And Patronage in Early And Classical Islam*, 167–94.

The second possibility, which was suggested by Tamima Bayhom-Daou, was that Kitāb Sulaym simply is a later compilation of traditions ascribed to Sulaym, extracted from various works.¹¹⁷ This hypothesis is plausible as well, since the earliest attestations to Kitāb Sulaym came around three centuries after Sulaym's death!¹¹⁸ A later figure would have thus compiled the reports ascribed to Sulaym in Shī'ite sources into a single book. He then would have fabricated the introductory note at the beginning of the book, which attempted to explain away the book's obscurity.

The third possibility, in my opinion, is unlikely when compared to the other hypotheses on the origin of this book. The lack of early attestations to the book along with its defective transmission may suggest that Sulaym is free from the book that is ascribed to him (that is assuming the figure known as Sulaym b. Qays actually existed). I would have been open to this hypothesis had there been earlier attestations to the book and had the book's history of transmission been a bit more refined and transparent.

The fourth possibility is very plausible, since there is not a single sound isnad for this book back to Abān and Sulaym. It is indeed possible that the book was forged much later in history and then retrospectively projected onto Abān and Sulaym, hence the conflicting and weak isnads. Shī'ite scholar, Muḥammad Baqer Behbudi, concluded that the book was a fabrication by one of the *ghulat*, who falsely ascribed it to Ibn Udaynah → Abān → Sulaym. His reasoning was that the forger who authored the book found it relatively easy to falsely ascribe this book to Ibn Udaynah, since Ibn Udaynah had fled from his homeland, Basrah, to the land of Yemen.¹¹⁹ This theory is in-line with Gleave's dating of the tenth report in Kitāb Sulaym, where he concluded that it was authored some time between the late second and early third centuries.¹²⁰ This theory also fits with Crone's dating of the twenty-third report in Kitāb Sulaym, where she stated that the text came into existence right after the Abbasid revolt (132 AH) and, in any case, not after the revolt of Muḥammad Al-Nafs Al-Zakiyyah (145 AH).¹²¹

This theory also happens to be in-line with the statement of the Shī'ite theologian and exegete, Al-Sha'rani (d. 1393), who said:

117 Tamima Bayhom-Daou, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays revisited*, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 78, 106.

118 Ibid., 78, 106.

119 Muḥammad Baqer Al-Behbudi, *Ma'rifat Al-Hadīth*, (Beirut, 2006), 363.

120 Robert Gleave, "Early Shiite hermeneutics and the dating of Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 78, 99.

121 Patricia Crone, *Mawālī and the Prophet's Family*, in *Patronage And Patronage in Early And Classical Islam*, 178–9.

The truth of the matter is that the Book of Sulaym was forged for a righteous cause in analogous manner to *Kitāb Al-Husayniyyah*, the *Tara'if* of Ibn Dawud, *Al-Rihlah Al-Madrasiyyah* by Al-Balaghi and similar texts.

It's forger compiled known and unknown details, and since he was fallible, he included incorrect things in it. Apparently, it was fabricated near the end of Umayyad rule....¹²²

Hossein Modarresi further describes the text saying:

The book is one written by commoners for commoners. It is a display of primitive, unsophisticated beliefs among the rank and file of the Shī'ites of Kufa during the late Umayyad period with clear residues of the usual Kaysani exaggerations on the virtues of the House of the Prophet.¹²³

Indeed, this characterization of the text fits with the theories proposed in the aforementioned studies, which all concurred that the text (or elements of it) were authored later in the second century, near the end of Umayyad rule. This theory can also explain the presence of numerous anachronisms throughout the text, which have been dated to the 2nd century. I lean towards this theory regarding the origins of Kitāb Sulaym.

VI. Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of the text of Kitāb Sulaym and its transmission, one can decisively conclude that it is nothing but a polemical forgery that was later incorporated and normalized in later Shī'ite polemical circles. The book's defective transmission, anachronisms, historical errors, and various indicators of forgery all attest to this reality, as presented in this publication.

Though these various defects are self-evident to any critical reader, Kitāb Sulaym, unfortunately, is still treated as a reliable primary source in many Shī'ite circles today. The book has been printed 5 times in Najaf, once in Tehran, and 3 times in Qom. Several hundred thousand copies of the book have been printed in over 15 years in Iran.¹²⁴ It is indeed

122 Abū Al-Hasan Al-Sha'rani, *Sharh Usul Al-Kafi* ed. Sayyed 'AlīAshour, (Beirut, 2008) II, 307.

123 Hossein Modarresi, Hossein Modarresi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of early Shī'ite Literature*, I, 85.

124 Mohammad Alī Amīr-Moezzi, *Violence and Scripture in the Book of Sulaym Ibn Qays*, in *The Silent Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an : Scriptural Sources of Islam Between History and Fervor*, 20.

unfortunate that such problematic and historically defective texts are still being circulated and promoted as reliable historical sources to the Shī'ite public. Perhaps this publication may be the first step towards ridding the greater Islamic tradition from such polemical forgeries that have distorted and misrepresented multiple key events and figures in early Islamic history.

أتممته بفضل الله ليلة الجمعة، لست عشرة ليلة خلت من جمادى الآخرة، سنة 1440 هـ (2/22/2018)

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين