

Critical Review of the Ḥadiths Regarding the Magic Against the Prophet (PBUH) in Ḥadith Sources Attributed to the Shia"

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Introduction

The Shi'a maintains that the Prophet (PBUH) possesses infallibility (*iṣmah*) in all aspects of his life; consequently, they reject any tradition incompatible with this doctrine. However, certain reports found in Sunni ḥadith collections, such as *Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ*, allege that a Jewish individual named Labid ibn A'sam bewitched the Prophet (PBUH). These traditions have permeated the fields of Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) and theology (*kalam*), becoming subjects of scholarly discussion. For instance, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi links the revelation of the *Mu'awwidhatayn* (*Surahs al-Falaq and al-Nas*) to this purported incident.

Existing research has critiqued these traditions, including through analysis of their chains of transmission (*isnad*), indicating that these ḥadiths are considered weak even by Sunni authorities in biographical evaluation (*'ilm al-rijāl*). This study addresses the following critical questions: Do analogous traditions exist within Shi'i ḥadith sources? What is the provenance and reliability of such potential Shi'i reports? Furthermore, is the claim of the Prophet (PBUH) being subjected to bewitchment theologically tenable from a Shi'i perspective? The objective is to critically assess the credibility of these reports through a dedicated analysis of Shi'i primary sources.

Materials and Methods

To answer these questions, it is necessary to consult early Shi'i sources. Subsequently, by assessing the authors/compiler and the nature of the reports found therein, the degree of their reliability and trustworthiness can be ascertained.

In some Shiite sources, ḥadiths have been narrated from which it is understood that the Prophet (PBUH) was bewitched. These ḥadiths have been reported in books written up to the fourth century, such as *Da'ā'im al-Islām* by al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad al-Maghribī, *Ṭibb al-A'imma* attributed to the sons of Bisṭām, and *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī*. Similar reports are found in

Sunni sources of tradition such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*; therefore, there is a possibility that they were transferred from Sunni sources to the aforementioned sources.

Specifically, *Da'ā'im al-Islām* contains one such report, *Ṭibb al-A'imma* includes three, and *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī* contains one report. Furthermore, al-Ḥasan b. Faḏl al-Ṭabarsī, One of the thinkers who lived in the sixth century AH/twelfth century CE, alludes to two similar accounts concerning the claim that the Prophet (PBUH) was bewitched in his *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, albeit without providing any chain of transmission (*isnād*).

Da'ā'im al-Islām stands as a foundational and significant early Isma'ili source for jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and doctrine (*'aqida*). Nonetheless, it can also be categorized among Shiite ḥadith compilations, as a substantial portion of its content aligns with reports found in Imami Shi'i literature. Scholarly evaluations of this work's reliability are divergent: some authorities regard both the text and its author as credible; others deem both unreliable; a further perspective accepts the author's trustworthiness but considers the book itself unreliable due to the absence of *isnāds* for its reports.

Regarding 'Abd Allāh and Ḥusayn (sons of Bisṭām), the putative authors of *Ṭibb al-A'imma*, extant biographical information is negligible. Consequently, their reliability as transmitters (*ruwāt*) cannot be affirmed. This authorial anonymity potentially compromises the overall credibility of the work's contents, or at the very least, substantially diminishes their evidentiary value. Moreover, the specific *isnāds* accompanying the ḥadiths related to the subject of bewitchment against the Prophet (PBUH) within this text are assessed as weak.

Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī is a narrative exegesis (*tafsīr riwā'ī*) attributed to an author for whom descriptive biographical data is lacking. Due to its pervasive practice of omitting transmission chains, it is conventionally classified among those Qur'anic commentaries whose constituent reports are presented without *isnāds*.

Results and Findings

To validate reports (*Akḥbār*), in addition to scrutinizing the transmitters (*ruwat*) and trusting their accounts, it is essential to examine the content (*matn*) of the reports themselves. Traditions concerning the alleged bewitchment (*sihr*) of the Prophet (PBUH) in Shi'i sources are unacceptable both in terms of their source (*manba'*) and chains of transmission (*sanad*). Furthermore, their content is inconsistent with the Quran and authentic (*mu'tabar*) reports. Shi'i scholars, relying on credible (*mu'tabar*) ḥadiths, consider non-contradiction with the Quran as a condition for accepting a report. Therefore, contradiction with the Quran is a significant flaw in the content of these traditions.

It is important to note that some scholars have associated the traditions concerning the alleged bewitchment (*sihr*) of the Prophet (PBUH) with the

occasion of revelation (*sha'n nuzūl*) of *Sūrah al-Falaq*. This association implies that the surah should be considered to have been revealed in Medina. However, many scholars of Quranic sciences (*ulum al-Quran*) maintain that *Sūrah al-Falaq* was revealed in Mecca. Furthermore, the notion that magic could exert influence over the Prophet (PBUH) is contradicted by verses 17:47-48 (*Sūrah al-Isrā*) and 25:8-9 (*Sūrah al-Furqān*).

Shia scholars of both intellectual (*uqlī*) and textual (*naqlī*) sciences, considering the flaws in the sources, chains of transmission, and content of these reports, have rejected the notion that the Prophet (PBUH) was bewitched. They deem it contrary to the Quran, the Prophet's divine status, and rational arguments.

Conclusion

An examination of the sources and reports related to the incident of the alleged bewitchment (*sihr al-Nabī*) of the Prophet (PBUH) reveals the following:

1. These sources cannot be definitively categorized as belonging to Twelver Shia ḥadith literature, as some of them are attributed to followers of the Ismaili and Zaydi branches of Shia Islam.
2. Upon analyzing these ḥadiths, it becomes evident that, in addition to weaknesses in their chains of transmission (*sanad*), they also exhibit problems with their content.
3. These ḥadiths have not been transmitted or accepted in authoritative (*mu'tabar*) Shia sources.
4. Shia scholars have rejected the content of these reports, deeming them contrary to the Quran, reason (*aql*), and the exalted status of the Prophet (PBUH).
5. In Shia theology (*ilm al-kalam*), it has been established that all prophets, especially the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), are infallible and protected from error (*ma'sum*). This *ismah* (infallibility) not only prevents them from committing sins but also safeguards them from error and forgetfulness. However, accepting the traditions of the incident of the alleged bewitchment (*sihr al-Nabī*) of the Prophet (PBUH) would necessitate acknowledging that the Prophet (PBUH), in this instance, lost his power of discernment and decision-making ability, and experienced errors in his imagination and perception. Therefore, accepting the veracity of these reports implies belief in the possibility of *sahw al-Nabi* (the Prophet's inadvertent error), which many prominent scholars of Imami theology consider to be untenable.

Keywords: *Sihr al-Nabi*, The Prophet (*Muḥammad*)(PBUH), *Ismah* (Infallibility), Labid ibn A'sam, Shia Ḥadith Sources.