

Validation of the Hadith “law waqa'a qaṭratun fī bi'rīn...”

Yunus Bameri

PhD Student, Department of Quran and Hadith Sciences, University of Shiraz, Shiraz, Iran, (Corresponding Author). Email: ybameri@shirazu.ac.ir

Ali Sameni

Assistant Professor, Department of Quran and Hadith Sciences, University of Shiraz, Shiraz, Iran. Email: asamani@shirazu.ac.ir

Received: 10/11/2023

Accepted: 18/03/2024

Introduction

The authentication of Islamic traditions (Hadiths), as one of the most fundamental disciplines of Hadith studies, plays a decisive role in establishing the theological, ethical, and jurisprudential foundations of the Islamic religion. The validity of a tradition depends not only on the authenticity of its source but also on the compatibility of its content with other definitive religious knowledge. The present study, focusing on a hadith attributed to Imam Ali (as) which states, "If a drop of wine falls into a well, I will not perform the call to prayer (adhān) on a minaret built over it; and if it falls into the sea and after the sea dries up, vegetation grows from its land, I will not graze any animal on it," seeks to examine the foundational aspects of this report: its chain of transmission (sanad), its text (matn), its jurisprudential (fiqh) implications, and its historical context. This tradition requires re-evaluation due to its apparent inconsistency with the principle of inherent purity (al-Asālah al-Ṭahārah), the jurisprudential rules of "Istihlāk" (annihilation/disintegration) and "Istihālāh" (transformation), as well as its commonalities with Sunni jurisprudence. The aim of this research is to determine the degree of reliability of this specific tradition and the possibility of its correct attribution to Imam Ali (peace be upon him).

Materials and Methods

The present research has been conducted using a descriptive-analytical method based on library data. In the first step, the original written source of the tradition was identified through classical sources. Its first written source is Al-Kashshāf by Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH), who cited the tradition without a chain of transmission (isnād) in his commentary on the verse "yasalunak ani al-khalr..." (Qur'an 2:219). A comparative study shows that subsequent transmitters after Al-Zamakhsharī—including Ibn Ṭāwūs in Sa'd al-Su'ūd, Al-Miqdād al-Siyūrī in Kanz al-'Irfān, and Al-Muḥaddith al-Qummī in Safīnat al-Biḥār—have quoted the tradition from Al-

Kashshāf with textual variations. These variations are mainly observed in words such as "baḥr" (sea) and "nahr" (river), or in the omission of the second part of the tradition ("grazing sheep"). In the analysis of the chain of transmission (sanad), the research demonstrated that none of the Imami or even Zaydi sources have provided a chain for this tradition, and Sunni Hadith verifiers also consider it baseless. The second part of the research was dedicated to intra-textual analysis, where the vocabulary, sentence structure, and context of the expressions were measured against the criteria of the speech of the Infallibles (peace be upon them). Furthermore, historical context analysis revealed that the architectural structure of the minaret (manārah) did not exist during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and its emergence belongs to the Umayyad era. Therefore, the use of the term "minaret" in the tradition indicates its late issuance or fabrication. On the other hand, in the jurisprudential analysis, the three jurisprudential principles of Istihlāk (annihilation), Istihālāh (transformation), and Inqilāb (fundamental change) were examined to determine the degree of the tradition's compatibility with the principles of Imami jurisprudence.

Results and Findings

The results of the analysis of the chain of transmission (sanad) revealed that the aforementioned tradition lacks any chain of transmission in reliable Shi'a or Sunni sources. Its first documented mention in the 6th century AH indicates a high probability of fabrication. Intra-textual and comparative analyses also indicate the presence of indicators of fabrication within the text. The metaphorical expressions and emotional framing of the tradition do not correspond with the style of speech of Imam 'Alī (peace be upon him). A comparison with his documented statements in Nahj al-Balāghah shows that the purport of the tradition is incompatible with his linguistic and jurisprudential framework. From a jurisprudential perspective, the content of the tradition contradicts the definitive rules regarding the purity of well and sea water. Imami jurisprudence, based on the principle of "the purity of abundant water" (ṭahārat al-mā' al-kathīr), stipulates that water connected to a source or flow does not become impure by the falling of an impurity unless its color, taste, or smell changes. Therefore, the falling of "a drop of wine" neither renders the entire body of water impure nor constitutes a legitimate religious impediment to performing the call to prayer (adhān) or grazing sheep. Furthermore, reliance on the verses and hadiths concerning "precaution in doubtful matters" (iḥtiyāt fī al-shubuhāt) to confirm this tradition is incomplete, as in jurisprudence, precaution is meaningful only where the ruling of permissibility or prohibition is unclear, whereas the ruling on the purity of water in these cases is definitive. Comparative analysis demonstrated that the content of the tradition aligns with Sunni jurisprudence, particularly the fatwas of Abū Ḥanīfah, who issues rulings declaring the entire water of a well impure. It is therefore

probable that the hadith was fabricated with the motive of aligning with non-Imami jurisprudential principles. Historical analysis further revealed that some Sunni traditionists fabricated this tradition in connection with the incident of the prohibition of wine, falsely attributing it to Imam 'Alī (as) to mitigate criticism regarding the consumption of wine by some Companions. Analysis of the established practice (sīrah) of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) also reveals a clear contradiction with this tradition, as, according to reliable traditions, the Imams recommended the use of vinegar produced from wine, and such an extreme level of caution is not reported in their conduct. Consequently, an examination of all the textual, content-based, jurisprudential, and historical evidence leads to the judgment that the issuance of this tradition cannot be established.

Conclusion

The present study, through a comprehensive examination of the sources, linguistic style, jurisprudential implications, and historical context of the hadith attributed to Imam Ali (as), concludes that the tradition "Law waqa'at qatratun fī bi'r" ("If a drop [of wine] falls into a well...") lacks a supporting chain of transmission and is incompatible with the definitive content of the knowledge transmitted from the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). The tradition neither exists in early Imami sources, nor is it compatible with the established principles of ritual purity (ṭahārah), nor can a similar example be found in the established practice (sīrah) of the Imams (peace be upon them). An examination of the tradition's written origin in Sunni exegetical works also indicates the possibility of its fabrication within the theological milieu of the early centuries, aimed at aligning it with non-Shi'i jurisprudential opinions. Therefore, this hadith is deemed fabricated and unreliable, lacking any value for narrative (riwāyī), jurisprudential (fiqhī), or theological (kalāmī) purposes. This research, by presenting a model of integrated analysis—encompassing the study of the chain of transmission (sanad), the text (matn), historical context, and jurisprudential dimensions—demonstrates that reliance on the apparent meaning of traditions without investigating their origin and content can weaken the foundations of Hadith studies. Hence, the critical evaluation of similar traditions is essential for the development of Islamic textual criticism.

Keywords: Authentication, Attributed Tradition, Imam Ali (as), Transformation (Istihālah) and Annihilation (Istihlāk), Jurisprudential Comparison.