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Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī: An Early Source for Historical Inquiry into the 1st/ 7th Century

Hossein Modarressi Tabataba'i has argued that the *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī* is the oldest surviving Shi'i book and one of the rare written works of the Umayyad period, the original core of which is preserved as part of the current. However, no comprehensive examination of its historical authenticity has been conducted in academic scholarship on the history of hadith. Moreover, he and other scholars such as Amir-Moezzi have cast doubt on the identity of the author of the book. The questions probed here are whether Sulaym was a real person and whether the original core of the *Kitāb Sulaym* can be identified.

In this paper, I address these questions by applying a source-critical approach. Analysis of all the traditions relating to Sulaym b. Qays in the hadith literature yields a substantial amount of evidence that a historical figure must be responsible for what can be confidently identified as the core of the book. The *Kitāb* is revealed as a pastiche of individual reports and is found to have distinctly Basran contents and features. Building up on these findings and following a methodology that accounts for regionalism—the “Traveling Tradition Test” proposed by Behnam Sadeghi—, one can nominate a specific historical figure as the author of the *Kitāb*'s putative original kernel, namely, Sulaymān b. Qays al-Yashkurī, a prominent Basran *tābi'ī* and student of Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 78/697). This real person had much in common with the mysterious author of the *Kitāb Sulaym*, including his name, estimated time of death, informants, socio-political tendencies, being among the few in the first/seventh century to whom books were ascribed, and having transmitted strikingly similar and otherwise unattested reports. It is thus possible to date the accounts that are in common between these two sources (i.e., the *Kitāb Sulaym* and the reports of Sulaymān b. Qays al-Yashkurī) to the first/seventh century.



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