

Foreword

1. We are pleased to announce, thanks due to the Almighty Allah for his guidance, the publication of a complete English translation of the first volume of the Arabic book entitled 'Abdullah ibn Saba' and Other Myths written by the great scholar as-Sayyid Murtadha al-'Askari. Brother Jawad Muqqadas undertook the translation.

2. The research in this book centers around those historical narrations compiled by Sayf ibn 'Umar al-Tamimi al-Usayyid, who lived in the second century after Hijrah. These narrations are to be found in his books covering the early Islamic events.

The contents of the two volumes of the book 'Abdullah ibn Saba' merely represents one part of a series dealing with Sayf ibn 'Umar's narrations, stories and quotations. The second book in the series "One Hundred and Fifty Fictitious Companions of the Prophet" has also been published in Arabic and also consists of two volumes.

3. In this book, the author begins by describing both the Saba'iyyah legend and its originator (Saif ibn 'Umar). Further, he throws some light on the narrations and the researchers who relied on such forgery in their historical and ideological research. The opinions of the great scholars of Islam about the inauthenticity and the unreliability of Sayf ibn 'Umar are also given.

4. The author elaborated on the evaluation of Sayf's narrations which cover events that took place between 11 A.H. and 40 A.H. (cf. at-Tabari's History. In his critical evaluation, he plotted the suspicious movements of this strange personality indicating those areas where Sayf fabricated fictitious ahadith (traditions), stories and events. Not only that, but the author points out the role of this character in distorting, deforming and annulment of great Islamic events, such events being of great significance in the structure of the Islamic history. The timing of the events in question coincided with that very critical period of the four Caliphs.

It is not an exaggeration to consider Sayf as being one of the most characters who willfully endeavored to, and succeeded in, distorting the early Islamic history.

The author started his research and critical evaluation by considering the very first narration of Sayf, namely the event of the sickness and death of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and the events that took place at Saqifah (during which Abu Bakr was chosen as the Caliph). The events that took place between Saqifah and the eventful assassination of Imam 'Ali are very well documented and critically analyzed. The last narration by Sayf as documented by at-Tabari is in fact the martyrdom of Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him).

5. This is a brief resume of the researches in the two volumes of the book. The first volume covered the majority of the researches in question. The second volume, yet to be translated, completes the researches and additionally, has conclusive remarks and some afterthoughts pertaining to many of the researches in the first volume. In the second volume, the author elaborates a great deal on the Saba'iyyah legend.

6. The Saba'iyyah legend – as explained in the introduction of the book – can be summarized thus:

A Yemenite Jew from San'a declared his Islam at the time of 'Uthman. He willfully associated himself with Muslims and travelled in their cities and towns: Sham (Damascus), Kufa, Basrah, Egypt, propagating among Muslims that Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.f.) will be resurrected like Jesus (p.b.u.h.). (It is the origin of the idea of resurrection in Islam?!) He further taught that 'Ali (p.b.u.h.) is Muhammad's vicegerent since every prophet had a vicegerent.

Moreover, 'Ali is the last vicegerent in the same way that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.f.) was the last prophet. (This is how the belief in Imamah or vicegerency has started?!) Moreover, he taught that 'Uthman assumed the caliphate illegally and thus violated 'Ali's rights and hence 'Uthman should be revolted against in order to restore the rights of Imam 'Ali (and this is the basis for the concept of the violation of Khilafah?)

The fictitious 'Abdullah ibn Saba was also given a nickname: the son of the negro slave. It was claimed that the historical events stretching from 'Uthman's time till the assassination of Imam 'Ali (p.b.u.h.) were influenced directly or indirectly by this Jew – as you will read in the text of this book.

7. Naturally then, the book has been entitled 'Abdullah ibn Saba' and Other Legendary Figures or Myths, since this heresy – a fabrication and forgery by Sayf – has been used destructively more so than any other heresy. Besides the willful exploitation of such a heresy, some people could have used it with good faith but without bothering to authenticate the narrators.

Ideological studies indicate that a lot of people opposing the Shi'ah School of Thought – a lot of whom being enemies of Islam anyway – justify their enmity on this obvious heresy which they would exploit rather excessively to back-up their attack on the Shi'ahs, which approach resembles very much the approach adopted by Sayf ibn 'Umar himself.

8. We will refrain from introducing either the author or the translator. Suffice it to say that the reader

himself would be able to appreciate the great analytical ability of the author from the contents of the book itself. Comparison of the English and Arabic versions of the introduction would undoubtedly reveal the competency of the translator.

9. As far as our involvement is concerned, we have been able through Allah's grace and conciliation, to contribute towards the propagation of Islam. We have published a number of books and pamphlets dealing with the true, original ideological and judicial aspect of Islam. Through the literature published by our organization we have managed to rectify some false notions about Islam.

This book is yet another publication that conforms with our basic aims and concepts. It is no wonder then that we have endeavored to translate it and print the English version accordingly.

Again the aim of such endeavor is merely to seek Allah's blessings, His forgiveness, His bounties and His pleasure in this World and in the World to come.

World Organization For Islamic Services

(Board of Writing, Translation and Publication)

1st November, 1977

18th Dhil qa'da, 1397

Tehran — Iran.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/abdullah-ibn-saba-and-other-myths-sayyid-murtadha-al-askari/foreword>