

Historical Study of the Role of Abu al-Reza Rawandi in the Narration of Nahjul-Balagha

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Nahjul-Balagha, as one of the valuable Shiite legacies, has always been one of the books of interest to Muslim scholars. Thus, this research has undertaken a historical study of the role of Abu al-Rida Rawandi in the narration of Nahjul-Balagha during the reign of the Sunni Seljuq rulers. This research is to answer this question: what role Abu al-Rida Rawandi played in the narration of Nahjul-Balagha during this period. A figure like Abu al-Rida Rawandi, as an educated man in the school of Ahl al-Bayt in the Shiite city of Kashan, took valuable steps towards the narration of Nahjul-Balagha, which will be considered in this context. This study is based on the hypothesis that Abu al-Rida Rawandi with the material and spiritual support of influential and wealthy Shiites in Kashan, despite the dominance of the Sunni Seljuk dynasty, traveled to various cities, including Isfahan, and after learning about the most important narrations of Nahjul al-Balagha, started narrating them to his students and the next Shiites generation.

Materials and Methods

Abu al-Reza Rawandi is a scholar whose works and activities in various fields are worthy of attention and importance. The fall of the Shiite Buyid dynasty and the establishment of the Seljuq dynasty in Iran drastically affected the history of Kashan. Since the Seljuq were Sunni, they naturally did not have a positive view of Shiite cities, including Kashan. Considering what has been said about the political and social conditions of Kashan and the Seljuq reign in Iran, some prominent Shiite men play a significant role in this period to transmit Shiite heritage. In this critical historical era for the Shiites, some Shiite scholars, despite great hardships, endeavored to protect and promote Shiite culture. Amongst them, Abu al-Rida Rawandi had a crucial role as one of the main narrators of Nahjul-Balagha in the sixth century AH. Many studies have been conducted about this figure and his works, yet in this study examines the historical role played by Abu al-Rida Rawandi in the narration of Nahjul-Balagha, using an analytical and comparative method.

Results

The Seljuqdomination of Iran world after the fall of the Shiite Buyid dynasty created difficult religious conditions for the Shiites. Shiite scholars, who had compiled much of the Shiite cultural heritage under the support of Buyid rulers, tried their best to pass this Shiite heritage to the nextShiite generations during this period, despite official support for Sunni sects. One of the valuable achievements of the Shiites during the Buyid rule was the compilation of Nahj al-Balagha by Sayyid al-Radi. The importance that this book gradually gained among the Shiites landed itas the second most important religious book among the Shiites after the Holy Quran. In different periods of Islamic history, the dominance of Sunni rulers over the Islamic world created many problemsfor the preservation and transmission of Shiite knowledge and culture. These conditions became doubled during the Seljuq ruleand increasedconcerns regarding the preservation ofShiite valuable assets. Among these figures, Abu al-Rida Rawandi played a great role to transmit Shiite heritage, especially through narration of Nahj al-Balagha. Despite the dominance of Sunni rulers, Abu al-Rida Rawandi did not stop his scientific activities and, with the support of some wealthy Shiites of Kashan, did his best to transmit this Shiite heritage to the next generation. By traveling to different cities and interacting and learning from religious scholars and elders, both Shia and Sunni, Abu al-Rida became able to gain access to authentic versions and narrations of Nahjul-Balagha as healso established scientific relations with thinkers from all Islamic sects. Then he taught and transmitted this valuable knowledge to next generations. Abu al-Rida's activities in the field of narration of Nahjul-Balagha turned him into one of the most authoritative and important narrators of Nahjul-Balagha; as a result,his narration of Nahjul-Balagha is considered one of the most complete and documented narrations. Abu al-Rida's role becomes more prominent and distinctive when located in the historicaland cultural context of the Seljuqrule.

Conclusion

This study showed that in a situation where the Sunni the Seljuqdominated Iran alongside the Abbasid caliphs and imposed harshest restrictions on Shiites scholars such as Abu al-Rida Rawandi, theyaccomplished their mission in transmitting and promoting this valuable Shiite heritage. Abu al-Rida Rawandi, with his extensive efforts during this period, was able to access various versions of Nahj al-Balagha possessed by various individuals, both Shiites and Sunnis, and learnt aboutthem from his contemporary scholars, taught them to his students. In this way, it is claimed that, he helped preserve this valuable heritage for Shiites throughout subsequent historical periods.

Keywords: Abu al-Rida Rawandi, Kashan,Nahj al-Balagha, Seljuq, Shiite history.