

# The Role of the Four Deputies of Imam Mahdi (a) in Shiite Hadith Literature

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## Abstract

After the holy Qur'an, Hadith is the second source of Islam in terms of authority and the first in terms of extent. Contrary to the Qur'an, hadith is prone to manipulation and forgery, as the Prophet (s) warned about it and history testifies to it. Prior to the era of occultation, many hadiths were presented to the Imams, and they rejected some of them and corrected or explained the others. Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) gathered many of these hadiths in his *Ma'ānī al-akhbār*. On the other hand, the most important Shiite hadith books were compiled after the occultation of the Twelfth Imam. The period of the Minor Occultation was a crucial time in Shiite history. With a historical and analytical approach, this article studies the identity and conditions of the Four Deputies and their role in guiding the Shiite community in relation to Hadith. In this regard, the article discusses the stance of the Four deputies against the hadiths of false claimers like Shalmagānī (d. 322/933), their relation with the scholars of Qom, the reason why *al-Kāfi* was not presented to them so as to obtain the approval of Imam Mahdi (a), and finally the relation between al-Kulayni (d. 329/941) and the Four Deputies.

**Keywords:** Hadith, the Four Deputies, al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, Minor Occultation.

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### The Infallible Imams and the Correction of Ahadith

Hadith being the largest source of Islamic teachings, and gaining authenticity from Qur'an, contain vast details in a variety of matters. They contain fundamental importance in all subjects of practical Islamic life, and are often the main source of reference for Islamic scholars in different fields. Even general public of Muslims were advised to engage in listening, reciting and reiterating these as per the following, narrated from the Prophet (s) that:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص تَذَاكَرُوا وَتَلَاقُوا وَتَحَدَّثُوا فَإِنَّ الْحَدِيثَ جِلَاءٌ لِلْقُلُوبِ

*Gather together and repeat my Ahadith, since these are a polish for the heart.* (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:41)

Contrary to Qur'an, the Hadiths are not the word of Allah , and were not compiled during or immediately after the demise of Prophet (s). Consequently, these were prone to alteration and forgery. Hence, the Prophet warned anyone who fabricated Hadith on his behalf.

مَنْ قَالَ عَلَيَّ مَا لَمْ أَقُلْ فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ

*Whoever attributes to me what I have not said, must be prepared for his place in Hell.* (Ṣadūq 1413 AH, 3:569)

However, due to many reasons - including almost one century of ban on writing and compiling Ahadith- many were forged or manipulated. That was the reason why many people tried to refine them and established tough conditions for their acceptance.

Even in the Shi'a collections, false Hadith can be found and Shia 'Ulama (except for Akhbāris) did not consider all in any collection or book as fully authenticated. However, Shi'a collections have the advantage in that these Ahadith were presented and verified by the infallible Imams (a) during their lifetimes, spanning almost 230 years.

Immediately after the demise of Prophet (s) the Shi'a community had the privilege and advantage of having 'the gate to the city of knowledge', Imam Ali (a) in their midst. Sheikh Kulayni (d. 239/941) narrates from Sulaym b. Qays that he said: Once I told Imam Ali (a) that I heard Ahadith from people and when I asked you about them, you certified some and rejected others. Do you hold that people attributed to the Prophet (s) what he had not said? Imam (a) said: Listen! What people are narrating is mixed of right and wrong, true and false, permanent and abrogated, general and specific, definitive and metaphorical. No one has been with the Prophet (s) like my companionship with him, and no one learned from him as much as I did (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:62-64). [You must refer to me to discriminate the Ahadith of the Prophet (a).

The Imams (a) also explicitly commanded their pupils to present before them any Ahadith that they heard from any other sources. As Kulayni narrated, Imam Kāzim (a) asked his cousin to gather these and present them before him to be verified.

قَالَ أَذْهَبَ فَتَفَقَّهُهُ وَاطْلُبِ الْحَدِيثَ قَالَ عَمَّنْ قَالَ عَنِ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ ثُمَّ اغْرِضْ عَلَيَّ الْحَدِيثَ

*Go and seek deep knowledge and Ahadith. He said from where? Imam answered; From the Fuqaha of Medina. And then present them before me. (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:353)*

There are many examples of offering Ahadith to one of the Imams (a) and they rectified or denied them; like the Hadith of Imam Sadiq (a):

عَبْدُ الْأَعْلَى مَوْلَى آلِ سَامٍ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَ إِذَا نُرِوَى عِنْدَنَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يُبْغِضُ الْبَيْتَ اللَّحْمِ فَقَالَ عَ كَذَبُوا إِثْمًا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَ الْبَيْتَ الَّذِي يَعْتَابُونَ فِيهِ النَّاسَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ لُحُومَهُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ أَبِي عَ لِحْمًا وَلَقَدْ مَاتَ يَوْمَ مَاتَ وَفِي كُفْمِ أُمِّ وَلَدِهِ ثَلَاثُونَ دِرْهَمًا لِلْحِمِّ.

*'Abd al-'a'lā said: I asked Imam Sadiq (a): People narrate Ahadith from the Prophet (s) that he have said Allah dislikes a house in which there*

*is meat [much of meat]. Imam (a) said: They lie. Indeed, Prophet (s) said Allah hates a house in which people commit backbiting and they eat each other's flesh. Otherwise, my father used to eat meat; even the day that he passed away he had 30 Dirhams in the hand of his servant to buy meat. (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 6:308).*

Or they verified the Hadith by accepting, like the Hadith of ‘Amār b. ‘Omayr who narrated:

عَمَّارُ بْنُ عُمَيْرٍ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع بَلَّغْنِي عَنْكَ أَنَّكَ قُلْتَ لَوْ أَنَّ رَجُلًا مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَحُجَّ حَجَّةَ الْإِسْلَامِ فَأَحَجَّ عَنْهُ بَعْضُ أَهْلِهِ أَجْرًا ذَلِكَ عَنْهُ فَقَالَ أَشْهَدُ عَلَى أَبِي ع أَنَّهُ حَدَّثَنِي عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص أَنَّهُ أَتَاهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ أَبِي مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَحُجَّ حَجَّةَ الْإِسْلَامِ فَقَالَ حُجَّ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ يُجْزِي عَنْهُ.

*I told Imam Sadiq (a) , we have heard that you had said if a person dies and he has not fulfilled his obligatory Hajj then his family or relatives can perform it on his behalf and that Hajj would suffice for him. Imam (a) said: Yes. (Tūsī 1407 AH, 5:404)*

Or another Hadith that Kulayni narrates: *Ahmad b. Ishāq said: I asked Imam Hasan Askari (a) about a Hadith on how to sleep: that prophets sleep on their back, faithful people on their right (side) and hypocrites on their left side and evildoers on their face (stomach). He certified what I have heard and gave an explanation about that (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:514).*

Also the Imams (a) used to correct the narrated Hadith if it was wrongly narrated or was false such as the Hadith of ‘abd al-‘Azim Hasani from Ibn Abi Mahmud:

قُلْتُ لِلرِّضَاعِ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ مَا تَقُولُ فِي الْحَدِيثِ الَّذِي يَرَوِيهِ النَّاسُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص أَنَّهُ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يُنْزِلُ فِي كُلِّ لَيْلَةٍ جُمُعَةً إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا فَقَالَ ع لَعَنَّ اللَّهُ الْمُحَرِّفِينَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَاللَّهُ مَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص ذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا قَالَ ع إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يُنْزِلُ مَلَكًا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا كُلِّ لَيْلَةٍ فِي الثَّلَاثِ الْأَخِيرِ وَلَيْلَةَ الْجُمُعَةِ فِي أَوَّلِ اللَّيْلِ فَيَأْمُرُهُ فَيُنَادِي هَلْ مِنْ سَائِلٍ فَأَعْطِيَهُ هَلْ مِنْ تَائِبٍ فَأَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِ

*He said: I asked Imam Reza (a): what is your idea about the Hadith that people narrate from Prophet (s) that he said: Every Friday nights Allah descends to the heaven of this world. Imam (a) said: May Allah curse those who change the words of the Prophet. By Allah, he did not say that. The Prophet (s) said: Every Friday night Allah sends an angel to the heaven of this world to call if there are any repentant to be forgiven. (Şadūq 1413 AH, 1:421)*

And finally sometimes the Imams (a) explained the narrated Hadith by interpreting its meaning. An example can be the dialogue of one of the companions of Imam Sadiq (a) with him:

قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عِ إِنَّ قَوْمًا رَوَوْا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص قَالَ إِنَّ اخْتِلَافَ أُمَّتِي رَحْمَةٌ فَقَالَ صَدَقُوا قُلْتُ  
إِنْ كَانَ اخْتِلَافُهُمْ رَحْمَةً فَاجْتِمَاعُهُمْ عَذَابٌ... قَالَ لَيْسَ حَيْثُ ذَهَبْتَ وَذَهَبُوا إِنَّمَا أَرَادَ اخْتِلَافَهُمْ مِنَ  
الْبُلْدَانِ لَا اخْتِلَافًا فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنَّمَا الدِّينُ وَاحِدٌ.

*He said: I asked him: People narrated from the Prophet (s) that he said: The difference between my nation (and others) is mercy. Imam (a) said that it is true. Then I asked: If disagreement [Ikhtilāf] is mercy then agreement must be affliction? Imam (a) said: This is not (true) as they and you understand. Ikhtilāf here doesn't mean being in relation, but going and coming back. This Hadith means Ikhtilāf among the cities. That means traveling for gaining knowledge and does not mean disagreement in the religion. Imam (a) (then) mentions the verse of the chapter Tawbah. (Şadūq 1403 AH, 175)*

Anyhow, there are plenty of examples where the infallible Imams (a) explained or corrected by proofreading, or rejected or added the missing part. Some of the Ahadith that Sheikh Saduq (d. 381/991) gathered in his Ma'āni al-Akhbār, are of this kind.

This is an indication of the privilege and superiority of the Ahadith of the Shi'a. Not only did the Imams (a) narrate Ahadith in vast detail, they also rectified the existing Ahadith of the Prophet (s) and the preceding

Imams (a) that were presented before them. This methodology continued throughout up to the time of Imam Hasan Askari (a) 260/874.

### **Who Were the Four Deputies?**

Remaining is the question about what the Nuwwāb Arbi‘eh (Four Deputies) of Imam Mahdi (a) did in this regard after the period of his presence and during his Minor Occultation? This question is very important since we know that the first main book of Shi‘a al-Kāfi was compiled during this time. And as we will discuss later, there is also the question whether this book was presented to the Nuwwāb Arbi‘eh or Imam Mahdi (a) or not.

Since some orientalist have raised doubts about the authenticity and authority of the Four Deputies (Newman 1386 Sh, 377), we have to know who they were and how they were appointed as deputies, even before any discussion about their duties and responsibilities.

Obviously, we know that the twelfth Imam (a) of the Shi‘a, the son of Imam Hasan Askari (a) was in Occultation. However, in order to prepare the people in general and the Shi‘a community in particular for the long absence of the Imam (a), there is a period of almost seventy years when selected people were appointed as the medium between the Imam (a) and his followers. This period is called the Minor Occultation and the Nuwwāb Arbi‘eh, which sometimes are called special representatives (Wakil), deputies (Nā‘ib) or doors (Bāb) of the Imam (a), and they were:

1. Abu ‘Amr Uthmān b. Sa‘id ‘Amri
2. Abu Ja‘far Muhammad b. ‘Osmān b. Sa‘id ‘Amri
3. Abu al-Qāsim Husain b. Ruh Nowbakhti
4. Abu al-Hasan Ali b. Muhammad Samori

Sheikh Tusi said that Abu ‘Amr Usmān b. Sa‘id ‘Amri was in the

house of Imam Hādī (a) since he was just eleven years old when Abu ‘Amr was appointed by Imam Hadi (a), Imam Hasan Askari (a) and Imam Mahdi (a) as the Niyabat (deputy) of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam (a) (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 354). After the demise of Imam Ali al-Naqi (a) (in 245/859) he became the special representative of Imam Hasan Askari (a). Imam Hasan (a) used to say: Abu ‘Amr is a reliable and trustworthy person and his words are in fact, my words (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:330). He also became the special representative of Imam Hasan Askari? (a) and he was the head of the representatives. Sheikh Tusi said that ten people worked under his instructions (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 356).

In a congregation of forty reliable and selected people, during the last days of Imam Hasan Askari (a), he introduced Imam Mahdi (a) to them. He confirmed the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (a) and discussed his Occultation. Then he emphasized the representation of Imam Mahdi (a) by Uthmān b. Sa‘id, and said: Accept whatever he says and obey him, as he is the representative of your Imam (a) and he has that authority (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 357).

Sheikh Tusi commented that he also managed the funeral proceedings of Imam Hasan Askari (a) (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 356).

The most important tasks that the first deputy had were to prove that the Imam (a) had a son and that he was in occultation. He also had to prove the concept of Occultation and prove that he was the appointed special representative of the Imam (a). The other three deputies only had to prove their appointment to this position as the issues of representation and occultation were already established.

What aggravated the problem for him was that he had to do all of this in secret because of the belligerent Abbasid government. In ensuring that the spies of the government could not detect the first deputy’s activities, he was involved in the (vegetable) oil business and he had the nick-name



of Zayyat (oil-vender). There seemed to be a more relaxed and open atmosphere in the Baghdad community and Uthmān b. Sa‘id moved there to continue his duties as the caretaker of the office of Imamate until the end of his life (Modarresi 1993, 92).

Although, it was reported that the entire community agreed to recognize him as the deputy of the Imam, there were also signs indicating that some groups of the Shi‘a community were in serious doubt. However, he did his job the date of his death is uncertain but it is estimated to be between 260/874 and 267/881.

When the First Deputy passed away, a Tawqi‘ (sealed letter) from Imam Mahdi (a) was issued to his son, Muhammad b. Uthmān, praising his father and offering condolences on his passing (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 361; Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:510). This Tawqi‘ as well as the will of Imam Hasan Askari (a) (in which he had introduced Uthmān and his son to be his deputies) (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 356) served as the authority and appointment of Muhammad b. Uthmān as the second Wakil or Na‘ib for Imam Mahdi (a).

In another Tawqi‘, in the handwriting of Imam Mahdi (a), that Ishāq b. Ya‘qud testified that he had read, was the following:

وَأَمَّا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عُمَانَ الْعَمْرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ وَعَنْ أَبِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَإِنَّهُ ثِقْتِي وَكِتَابُهُ كِتَابِي

*Muhammad b. Uthmān al-‘Amri, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, is authorized and reliable and his writing is my writing. (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 291)*

The main problem that Muhammad had was that some people, who had accepted the deputyship of his father, refused to accept his. One of them was Ahmad b. Hilāl ‘Abartā’i but he died shortly afterwards in 267/881. However, the other opponents accepted his deputyship when they saw another Tawqi‘ from the Imam (a) disowning Ahmad b. Hilāl. Muhammad b. Uthman also issued the handwriting of Imam Mahdi (a) confirming his



deputyship and, miraculously, also foretold about Muhammad b. Ali b. Mahzyār (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 362, 291).

His long deputyship continued until 305/917 and in the last days of his life, he gathered a group of close companions who elected Husain b. Ruh al-Nowbakhti as his successor and the Nā'ib of Imam (a). The family of Nowbakhti was famous and they made uncountable contributions to the Shi'a community. They also wrote books in debate with the Gholāts and serviced the people in official positions (see Farahmandpur 1388 Sh, 101).

Husain b. Ruh, as Sheikh Tusi narrates, was respected by al-Muqtadir (the Abbasid caliph). His mother was a Sayedah and even the Sunni community respected him and he used to observe Taqiyah (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 384). The following also shows that he was highly regarded by the government:

كَانَ لَهُ مَحَلٌّ عِنْدَ السَّيِّدَةِ وَالْمُقْتَدِرِ عَظِيمٍ وَكَانَتْ الْعَامَّةُ أَيْضاً تُعَظِّمُهُ وَكَانَ أَبُو الْقَاسِمِ يَحْضُرُ تَقِيَّةً  
وَخَوْفًا.

*Seikh Saduq narrates that one of the Shi'a people had a financial problem but the minister Ali b. 'Isā did not listen to him. Then Nowbakhti sent a message to the minister that solved his problem. (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:505-6)*

Despite all of this, he spent five years in the Abbasid' prison, for any of the following hypothesized reasons:

1. Financial: refraining from paying what government had asked for.
2. Political: having relations with Qarmatians (Dhahabī 1423 AH, 24:191).
3. Theological: Ghulāt (exaggerators) of his opponents who maligned him to the government ( 'Azimzādeh 1382 Sh, 69).

However, the third reason is rather weak since the government itself

was against them and Husain b. Mansur Hallaj and Shalmaghāni were hanged due to their exaggerative ideas (‘Azimzādeh 1382 Sh, 72).

Considering that Nowbakhti was extremely cautious and he was always observing Taqiyah, the second reason is also possess less weight. Furthermore, there was no reason for his tendency towards the Qarmatians. Proof of observing Taqiyah and keeping his belief secret lies in the fact that in one of his meetings with some Sunnis, he praised the first and the second Caliph then one of his companions quietly laughed. When the session ended, Ibn Ruh came to that companion and threatened: I swear by your life if you do it again I will leave you forever! (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 385)

It seems that rather the first mentioned financial reason was the cause of his imprisonment. During this period, the government of the Abbasids had financial problems to the extent that, according to some reports, positions in the ministries were given to anyone who could give sufficient money to the Caliph. Moreover, according to reports there was even a special office to deliver a definite amount to the caliph and his family from expropriated properties (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 367).

In addition, it is most likely that since Nowbakhti was the third Na‘ib and this position was established at this time, he could have owned many properties. Some reports of Sheikh Tusi also suggest this (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 367). Hence, it makes sense that greed was the reason for disagreement with the government and maybe also his wealth were the reasons why many false Na‘ib claimed to be the deputy of Imam (a) during his time (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 397).

Regardless, some important events occurred during Ibn Ruh’s twenty one years of deputyship (305-326/917-937). Some years before his capture he had a hidden life between 306/918 to 311/923. Ibn Ruh was freed in 317/937 and soon regained his position in managing the Shi‘a affairs (Dhahabī 1423 AH, 24:191). During this time he appointed Shalmaghāni

as his successor and this person created many problems for him.

When Ibn Ruh was about to leave this world, he appointed Ali b. Muhammad al-Samori (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 393), from the tribe of Samori, a famous Shi‘a family. They used to live in Basrah and had devoted half of their income to Imam Hasan Askari (a) . Since Samori was from such a noble family, he had fewer objectors to his deputyship. However, his deputyship was rather short - almost three years – and a few days before his death, he released a Tawqi‘ from Imam Mahdi (a) that read:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ يَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ السَّمْرِيِّ أَعْظَمَ اللَّهُ أَجْرَ إِخْوَانِكَ فِيكَ فَإِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ مَا بَيْنَكَ  
وَبَيْنَ سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ فَاجْمَعْ أَمْرَكَ وَلَا تُوصِ إِلَى أَحَدٍ فَيَقُومَ مَقَامَكَ بَعْدَ وَفَاتِكَ فَقَدْ وَقَعَتِ الْعَيْبَةُ التَّامَّةُ فَلَا  
ظُهُورَ إِلَّا بَعْدَ إِذْنِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى ذِكْرُهُ

*In the name of Allah the companionate the merciful, Oh Ali b. Muhammad al-Samori, may Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ increase the reward of your brothers over your loss. You are going to die in six days, be prepared and do not make a will (to appoint) anyone to be your successor. After your death it is the time of Major Occultation [Ghiybat] and there will not be reappearance until the time that Allah permits. (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 395)*

Accordingly, Samori passed away in 329/941 and was buried in Baghdad. The period of the Minor Occultation ended with the death of the last of the four deputies.

To understand the difficulty of the time of Minor Occultation, it is noteworthy that functioning as the Nā‘ib of the Imam (a) was not an easy task. First of all, this was a very difficult time for the Shi‘a. Some people called this, the age of astonishment (Majlisī 1403 AH, 51:11, 118, 135; Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:426). The present (11<sup>th</sup>) Imam (a) had passed away, and apparently left no heir. Even the close community of the Shi‘a was unaware that he had an heir. People assumed that an Imam (a) should have a successor and this brought even the Imamatus of Imam Hasan Askari (a) under question.

However, on the other hand, this divergence in the Shi'a community happened after the demise of almost every Imam, yet every time there was an heir of the present Imam to solve the problem. But this time, there was neither a present Imam nor his heir!

In addition, many of the previous Shi'a factions that split from the mainstream used the concept of Ghiybah: The Kaysanites claimed for Muhammad b. Ali al-Hanafiyyah(d.81/700); the Nawusiyah for Imam Sadiq (a) (d.148/765); the Waqifiyyah for Imam Musa Kazim (a) (d. 183/799). And now, at this time, the Nuwwāb Arbi'eh had to prove the same for Imam Mahdi (a). Since all those earlier factions were wrong in their beliefs, there was doubt in the minds of the people, especially about the claim of the first Nuwwāb.

Another problem for the Nuwwāb was the false Mahdis and false Nuwwāb. Sheikh Tusi has a chapter in his book al-Ghiybah mentioning seven people who claimed to be Nā'ib and they were defeated by the Nuwwāb (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 397-415). What exacerbated the problem was that Imam Hasan Askari's (a) brother Ja'far b. Ali also claimed that he was his brother's successor (Khaṣībī 1419 AH, 390).

Another problem was communication between the Shi'as in different cities and this problem persisted up to the time of sheikh Saduq, who said in the beginning of his Kamal al-Din: When I was traveling for the pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Reza (a) , I found people are in confusion because of the Occultation of Imam Mahdi (a) (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 1:3). On the other hand, there were also groups of Qarmatians and Gholāt who considered themselves Shi'a and the Nuwwāb had to also defeat them.

They also had to deal with the six Caliphs who ruled during the period of Minor Occultation: Mu'tamid (d. 279); Mu'tadhid (d. 289); Muktafi (d. 295); Moqtadir (d. 320), Qāhir (d. 322); and Razi (d. 329). During the ten year rule of Mu'tadhid, the Shi'a faced intolerable pressure and this was

the main reason why the Nuwwāb had to operate entirely in secret.

### **How Were People Sure That They Were Appointed by the Imams?**

As mentioned earlier, the first and the second Nā‘ib were appointed by Imam Hasan Askari (a) and in support of their recognition was also his letters. One may ask how people were sure that these were not forged.

First of all, the people close to the Imams knew their handwriting. Reports mention that some people asked for samples of the handwriting of the Imam (a) in order to recognize the validity of these letters. In one case Ahmad b. Ishāq Ash‘ri, who is described by Najāshī as being the head of the Shi‘a of Qom (Najāshī 1365 AH, 91). Another was someone that Imam Hasan Askari (a) introduced to Imam Mahdi (a) (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:384), who said: Once I asked Imam Hasan Askari (a) to write something for me so that I may know his handwriting and he did. In my heart I wished I could ask him to give me his pen and he gave it without me expressing my wish (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:513). We also know that Ahmad b. Ishāq lived during the time of the first and the second Na‘ib.

The request of Ahmad b. Ishāq for a handwriting sample shows that it was important for the remote communities to recognize the Imam’s (a) handwriting. According to some sources, the handwriting of Imam Mahdi (a) was exactly like that of his father, Imam Hasan Askari (a). In one report after the demise of Imam Hasan Askari (a) there was a disagreement among the Shi‘a people of Ray about his son. They then wrote a letter to Baghdad and received the answer in his handwriting, despite the fact that he had passed away some time earlier (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 285). In another report, Abdollah b. Ja‘far Himyari says:

لَمَّا مَضَى أَبُو عَمْرٍو رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ أَتَيْنَا الْكُتُبَ بِالْخَطِّ الَّذِي كُنَّا نُكَاتِبُ بِهِ بِإِقَامَةِ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ  
رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ

*When the first Nā‘ib passed away, his son Abu Ja‘far delivered letters*

*to us with exactly the same handwriting that we used to receive from abu 'Amr. (Ṭūsī 411 AH, 362)*

Additionally, some of the Tawqī'at were issued in a miraculous way and this was a sign to the community and the companions to recognize the authenticity of the claimer. For example, the Tawqī' that renounced Shalmaghāni, was issued to the third Nā'ib Ibn Ruh when he was in prison (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 410; Majlisī 1403 AH, 51:376). Another example is that Abu al-Husain al-Asadi said that he read one Tawqī' and this raised a second question in his mind. When he looked at the (same) letter for the second time, he found the answer to it (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:522). Another Tawqī' foretold the death of the last Na'ib in six days and it happened (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 395). Sheikh Tusi also narrated that once Samori, the last Nā'ib, spontaneously said: May Allah have mercy on Ali b. Husain b. Bābweyh, and the audiences recorded the date of that saying only to discover later that he had passed away on that exact day (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 394). Many of these miraculous signs were reported in the books during the Ghibyah that shows the authenticity (and the authority) of the Nuwwāb.

They were also very pious people and were even praised in the Sunni books, yet they did not record any of the Imam's (a) words. Muhammad b. Ibrāhim, one of the companions of Husain b. Ruh, reported that he was with him when another man came and asked a question. He asked whether Imam Husain (a) was the guardian of Allah (s.w) and if his enemies were the enemies of Allah, then why did Allah allow them to be dominant over Imam Husain (a) and kill him? Ibn Ruh explained with a comprehensive answer and this is also narrated in Sheikh Saduq's Kamāl al-Din (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:508). Then Muhamad b. Ibrahim said that he saw Ibn Ruh and asked him about the event of the last day and when he received the answer the next day, he asked whether the answer was from him or from the Imam (a). He said: O Muhammad b. Ibrahim, falling from the sky and to be eaten by the birds or to be taken by the winds to the deserts is preferable to me

than saying anything on behalf of religion that is my own opinion (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:508).

### **Presentation of Ahadith before the Nuwwab and Imam Mahdi (a)**

The Nuwwāb Arbi‘eh were under tough conditions and were restricted in this regard, yet, we have some reports that they contributed to the evaluation of Ahadith in several ways. In the same way that Ahadith were presented to the earlier Imams (before), they also accepted the same as well as questions to forward to the Imam (a) .

In one example, Muhammad b. Salih said: I asked about the Hadith that was narrated that the Imams (a) said that their servants were the worst creations of Allah. In response, the Tawqi‘ chastised them and asked whether they recite Qur’an, because according to a single verse, this Hadith can’t be true (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:483).

Contrary to what some of the scholars believe (Nūrī 1408 AH, 21:467-70), presenting Ahadith and books to Imam Mahdi (a) was not common practice except when there were doubts about their authenticity. This can be deduced from a Tawqi‘at that was issued in response to a question about one of the people who had narrated Ahadith but later had gone astray.

Imam (a) said:

وَمَا شَكَّكُمْ فِيهِ أَوْ لَمْ يَخْرُجْ إِلَيْكُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ إِلَّا عَلَى يَدِهِ فَزِدُّوهُ إِنَّا لِنُصَحِّحَهُ أَوْ نُبْطِلُهُ

*The Ahadith that you are doubtful about or a Hadith that had no narrator except this person, refer them to us and we will either rectify or reject them.* (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 374)

In this regard, many ‘questionable’ Ahadith were presented to the Nuwwab in order to be judged by the Imam (a) . Muhammad b. ‘Abdollah b. Ja‘far al-Himyari said: I wrote to Imam Mahdi (a) asking about the Hadith which is narrated from Imam Sādiq (a) about preparation for prayer (Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī 1408 AH, 6:25-26).



In another Hadith, ‘Abdollah b. Ja‘far said: I wrote to Imam Mahdi (a) asking about the Hadith that some people narrate that fasting during the whole month of Rajab is considered as sin. The Imam (a) answered that the month of Rajab is the best month for Qaḍa (compensation). However, al-Faqih (Imam Hadi (a) ) used to fast only fifteen days and not the whole month (Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī 1408 AH , vol. 10:480).

The same person said: I wrote a letter to the Imam (a) and asked about the Hadith that reported that Imam Sadiq (a) wrote on the shroud that [his son] Ismā‘il testified that there is no God but Allah, and whether it was permitted for us to write the same on the graves? He answered there is no problem with that (Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī 1408 AH, 3:53).

### **Opposition to the Sources of Forged Ahadith**

The ‘correcting’ responsibilities of the Nuwwāb included opposition to the Gulāt (those who exaggerated about the Imams (a) as well as defeating the false claimants of being the Nā‘ib or Imam Mahdi (a). Sheikh Tusi mentioned seven people who made such claims. They were: Hasan Shari‘i; Muhammad b. Nasir al-Nomayri; Ahmad b. Hilāl al-Karkhi; Muhammad b. Ali b. Bilāl; Husain b. Mansur al-Hallāj; Abu Ja‘far b. Abu al-‘Azāqir (Shalmaghāni ); and Abi Bakr al-Baghdadi (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 397-412).

The one who had narrated many fake Ahadith is the false claimant Shalmaghāni and Tusi described that the abundance of his narrations at the time of Minor Occultation prompted one of the Shi‘a who was worried about this matter to ask (advice) from Ibn Ruh the third Na‘ib:

فَكَيْفَ نَعْمَلُ بِكُتُبِهِ وَبُيُوتُنَا مِنْهَا مِلَاءٌ

*What must we do with his narrations (because) our houses are full of his Ahadith?* (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 389-90)

Shalmaghāni was the appointee of Husain b. Ruh before going astray. When Husain b. Ruh was forced to live a hidden life, he appointed

Shalmaghāni as his deputy, but out of jealousy (as reported by Najāshī and Ibn Dāwud) (Ibn Dāwud 1342 Sh, 508; Najāshī 1365 AH, 378), or greed for the wealth of Ibn Ruh (as it was said about the Waqefiyah leaders [Ḥimyarī 1413 AH, 351-2]) or ambition, which was natural for such a position, he first claimed that he is the Na‘ib.

Increasingly, he had had some exaggerative (deviant) beliefs in that he claimed that the soul of Prophet (s) was reincarnated in the body of Muhammad b. Uthmān and that Imam Ali’s (a) soul was in the body of Ibn Ruh (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 404). And worse, he believed in the embodiment of Allah (Majlisī 1403 AH, 51:374).

However, Ibn Ruh sent a message to the people of Bastām to abandon him (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 404), but it seemed that they did not obey the message of Ibn Ruh (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 403) and he then released the Tawqi‘ of the Imam (a) (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 410). The interesting thing is that this Tawqi‘ was issued when Ibn Ruh was in prison and Muhammad b. Hammam said that we saw this Tawqi‘ while its ink had not yet dried (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 410; Majlisī 1403 AH, 51:376).

The Nuwwāb responded in a similar manner against both Ahmad b. Hilal ‘Abarta‘i and Ja‘far b. Ali, the brother of Imam Hasan Askari before they could release their false Ahadith. These confrontations made scholars very cautious about Ahadith already narrated by such people and this is the reason why ‘questionable’ Ahadith were scrutinized by the ‘Ulama.

Ja‘far, the brother of Imam Hasan Askari claimed that the Imam (a) had no heir:

مَضَى أَبُو مُحَمَّدٍ أَخِي وَلَمْ يُخَلِّفْ أَحَدًا وَلَا ذَكَرًا وَلَا أُنْثَىٰ وَأَنَا وَصِيُّهُ

*My brother died and left no child; not male, nor female and I am his successor.* (Khaṣībī 1419 AH, 390)

According to Ahmad b. Ishāq Ash‘ari, Ja‘far wrote a letter to the

scholars of Qom introducing himself as a knowledgeable man and the successor of Imam Hasan. Then Ash‘ari wrote a letter to Baghdad asking ‘Amri about his claim and in response, a Tawqi‘ arrived from Imam Mahdi (a) that, after a long prologue, said:

وَقَدْ ادَّعَى هَذَا الْمُبْطِلُ الْمُفْتَرِي عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ بِمَا ادَّعَاهُ فَلَا أُدْرِي بِأَيِّهِ حَالَتِ هِيَ لَهُ رَجَاءً أَنْ يُتِمَّ  
دَعْوَاهُ أَوْ يَفْقَهُ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ فَوَاللَّهِ مَا يَعْرِفُ حَلَالًا مِنْ حَرَامٍ وَلَا يُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ خَطَاٍ وَصَوَابٍ ...

*This claimant and liar attributed lies to Allah. I do not know how he is going to prove his claim and if it is by knowledge, I swear by Allah, that he is not able to detect Halal from Haram and he can't differentiate between right and wrong. (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 288)*

This problem was solved when a group of Shi‘a went to render their religious taxes to Imam Hasan (a) but he had passed away and Ja‘far claimed it. According to as-Saqud, he asked the Caliph to help him with gaining those properties but the people of Qom asked for extraordinary signs that would prove that he is the legitimate Imam. When he could not present any proof, they decided to leave the city for Qom without giving the properties to anyone. After their departure, Imam Mahdi (a) met with them, showed the signs and received the money (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:477).

There were more efforts in correcting Ahadith by the Nuwwāb but, as we mentioned before, many of the writers during the time of the Minor Occultation avoided talking about the Nuwwāb and narrating from them due to observing Taqiyah. Almost one hundred Tawqi‘ were issued (Ahmadi Miyanaji 1426 AH, vol. 7) but it is estimated that there must have been many more.

### **Presenting al-Kāfi before Nuwwāb**

Now we can turn to the question whether al-Kāfi was presented to them to acquire the approval of the Imam (a) or not, and if not, what the reason was.

On the issue of presenting al-Kāfi to Nuwwāb there are three opinions:

1. The first opinion was that Al-Kāfi was presented to the Imam (a) and received admiration from him.

Seyed b. Tawus is one of the people who claimed that since Kulayni lived at the time of the Four Deputies and was also in the city of Baghdad, he must have presented his book to them (Ibn Ṭāwūs 1375 Sh, 220). At the time of the Akhbaris, most of them believed that all Ahadith of the Four Books are Sahih (authenticated) and some of them even claimed that al-Kāfi was presented to the Imam (a) . Some scholar stated that:

ان الكافي باجمعه قد شاهد الصاحب واستحسنه

*Al-Kāfi was presented to the Imam (a) and he had praised it.* (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:25)

Also some scholars believed that Imam (a) had said the following in virtue of al-Kāfi:

الكافي كاف لشيعتنا

*Al-Kāfi is sufficient for our Shi'a [followers].* (Kulaynī 1369 Sh, 1:8)

In some of the issues of this al-Kafi, the publisher had this sentence carved on its cover. In addition, while the Muhadith Nuri stated that this narration is not recognized as a Hadith, he tried to prove that the book was presented before the Nuwwāb and Imam Mahdi (a) (Nūrī 1408 AH, 21:467- 474). He said that because some books such as the al-Taklif of Shalmaghāni was presented to them, this book (al-Kafi) which was more comprehensive, demanded to be presented to them as well.

Muhadith Nuri says that Kulayni stayed for twenty years in Baghdad, and it is less likely that while people went to them for any dispensable matter, Kulayni have not presented his book to the Nuwwāb. Hence, some questions remain: Why did Kulayni not refer to them for such a great

book, which is a pivot for Shi'a thought (Nūrī 1408 AH, 21:467- 470)? And shouldn't there have been normal relations between them?

This was not because of conflict between them but rather because of the difficult circumstances for the Shi'a under the Abbaside persecution but also because of the absence of any need for that.<sup>1</sup> Both Aga Bozorg Tehrani and Āyatollāh Sobhani supported this opinion (Subḥānī 1425 AH, 367). It seems that the third opinion is more sensible and preferred.

Firstly, the first opinion is not acceptable since there is insufficient proof, as the proposed Hadith had no root, and also because of another Hadith in Ma'āni al-Akḥbār of Saduq:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عُمَارَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ: حَضَرْتُ عِنْدَ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ الْبَاقِرِ عَ فَدَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ فَسَأَلَهُ عَنْ كَهَيْعَصَ فَقَالَ عَ كَافٌ كَافٌ لِشِيعَتِنَا هَا هَادٍ لَهُمْ يَا وَلِيِّ لَهُمْ.

*A person asked from Imam Sadiq (a) about Ka, Ha, Ya, 'Eyn, Sad. And he said "Kaf" is sufficient for our Shi'a and "Ha" is guidance for them. (Ṣadūq 1403 AH, 28)*

However, it is quite possible that a part of this Hadith was cut and mistakenly reported in some book with a slight change, hence their assumption that it referred to the book al-Kāfi.

Secondly, in comparing the book of al-Kāfi to al-Taklif of Shalmaghāni to deduce that since the latter has been presented to the Nuwwāb, the first must have been presented also is not accurate. Considering that Shalmaghāni wrote al-Taklif when he was on the right path before he went astray and reports that the Shi'a houses were full of his narrations, yet when Nowbakhti was in prison, he had some delusional ideas. Despite his background as the first assistant of Nowbakhti, and the fame of his book, people questioned its authenticity after he went astray. 'Abollah al-Kufi, the servant of Ibn Ruh the third Na'id, asked Tusi about the books

1. Aghā Buzurg Tihrānī believes in this idea (see Tihrānī 1383 Sh).

of Shalmaghāni (that the Shi‘a houses are full of) he answered that his response is the same as that of Imam Hasan Askari (a) about the books of Banu Faḍāl: Do accept what they narrated, but reject (the opinions) that they stated (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 390).

The probability of manipulation of the writings of Shalmaghāni was extremely high, so-much-so that the people of Qom once received some letters from Baghdad but they were afraid that Shalmaghāni had manipulated their content. They wrote a letter to Bagdad to ask Nowbakhti about the contents of these letters and he confirmed the fact that they were not (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 373).

Accordingly, there was sufficient reason to present his book before the Nuwwāb for authentication. However, in the case of al-Kāfi there was no reason to do so. Aga Bozorg Tehrani said that the presentation of books to the Nuwwāb was quite impossible and this practice was not prevalent and rather the exception as in the case of Al-Taklif of Shalmaghāni (Ṭihranī 1383 Sh, 73). Even Sheikh Kulayni had no doubt that all Ahadith in al-Kāfi were reliable, hence there was no need to present it (Ṭihranī 1383 Sh, 73).

Thirdly, we know that Kulayni wrote the prologue of his book after its completion and would have mentioned such presentation to the Imam (a.s). However, he did state that he tried his best to gather (only) the correct Ahadith. Also it is not clear why Muhadith Nuri claimed that there was a relationship and companionship between Kulayni and the Nuwwāb, despite the fact that Kulayni hardly narrated from them, even regarding issues related to Imam Mahdi (a), except for a few from the first and the third Na‘ib (Subhānī 1425 AH, 369).

Fourthly, the Nuwwāb in verification of the Book of al-Ta‘dib of Shalmaghāni, referred to the scholars of Qom. Sheikh Tusi said that Husain b. Ruh sent the book of al-Ta‘dib by Shalmaghāni to the scholars

of Qom to see if it contained any defective Ahadith. They replied that except for two points, there is nothing wrong in it (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 390; Subhānī 1425 AH, 371). Even in this case, he could have rather asked the Imam (a) to verify the authenticity of this book, but he did not. This can be because he considered trusting the ‘Ulama and training them for the Major Occultation in solving such problems (in future). Hence, in the time of the Ghiybah, it is the responsibility of the ‘Ulama and this is the procedure mentioned in a Tawqī‘ from Imam Mahdi (a) who wrote the following to Muhammad b. Uthmān:

وَأَمَّا الْحَوَادِثُ الْوَاقِعَةُ فَارْجِعُوا فِيهَا إِلَى رِوَاةِ حَدِيثِنَا فَإِنَّهُمْ حُجَّتِي عَلَيْكُمْ

*In the case of unprecedented events [when you don't know what to do] refer to the Hadith narrators, they are my proofs with you. (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:484)*

And in the case of al-Kāfi, who was in a better position than the author to verify that? Hence, there was no need for referral.

Furthermore, how could Imam (a) or the Nuwwāb possibly confirm the voluminous book al-Kāfi filled with the Islam of the Shi‘a while the Imam (a) and themselves observed security and Taqiyah?

We also have many reports that the Imam (a) used to give different answers to a given issue in order to keep their followers safe. In one example, Zurarah said that he was with Imam Sadiq (a) when someone came and asked a question and the Imam (a) answered. Then another person came and asked the same question and the Imam (a) answered differently. Not long after, a third person asked the same question and the Imam (a) gave a third answer. When the person left he asked the Imam (a) why he gave different answers, and he said:

«فَقَالَ يَا زُرَّارَةُ إِنَّ هَذَا خَيْرٌ لَنَا وَأَبْقَى لَنَا وَلَكُمْ وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعْتُمْ عَلَيَّ أَمْرًا وَاحِدًا لَصَدَّقْتُمُ النَّاسَ عَلَيْنَا  
وَلَكَانَ أَقَلَّ لِبَقَائِنَا وَبَقَائِكُمْ»



*This is better for us and for you; it is safe for us and for you, the followers. If you are concerted on the same issue, people will find out who we are and that is harmful to our survival and yours. (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:65)*

Therefore, all of Nuwwāb observed Taqiyah and even the quality of their character (being cautious about observing Taqiya) was thought to be one of the criteria for the appointment of the Na‘ib. Sheikh Tusi narrated that once Aba Sahl al-Nowbakhti was asked: You are a knowledgeable man, why was Husain b. Ruh chosen as Na‘ib rather than you? He said: they know better whom to choose but Abu al-Qasim has a character that I do not have. If the Imam is under his cloak and he is cut by clipper he will not disclose him” (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 391).

Kulayni narrated that on one occasion the government had some information about the activities of the Nuwwāb and they wanted to reach them through people who paid religious taxes to them. There was a Tawqi‘ from Imam Mahdi (a) to Muhammad b. Uthmān instructing him not to receive money from the people and he relayed this message to his men and this plot failed (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 1:525).

The third Nā‘ib was especially famous about keeping all his activities secret. There are some reports that he acted in a way that some believed that he was from Ahl al-Sunnah. Nowbakhti heard that one of his servants, a doorkeeper, had cursed Mu‘awiyah and he dismissed him. The man did apologize and after some time asked to be re-instated, but was refused (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 386).

In another report one of the companions of Mumammad b. Uthmān said that he once had a question and was expecting an answer from the Imam and he was taken to a desolate house and showed a Tawqi‘. He was told to memorize it and then it was torn up (Ṣadūq 1411 AH, 2:498).

Additionally, in observing Taqiyah, the Nuwwāb refrained from giving

any receipt for any payment to them. According to Sheikh Tusi, Muhammad b. Ali al-Aswad said: I used to pay some money to Muhammad b. Uthmān [the second Na‘ib] until the time that he told me to give it to Husain b. Ruh and from that time forth and I did. I requested a receipt but he avoided it and I complained about it to Muhammad b. Uthmān but he ordered me not to request any receipt from him, saying: Whatever reaches Ibn Ruh reaches me. And after that I gave him the payment without asking for a receipt (Ṭūsī 1411 AH, 391).

As a result, under these circumstances, with the Nuwwāb living under Taqiyah presenting a book like al-Kāfi to them was quite impossible. Aga Bozorg Tehrani said: How could Kulayni present such a huge book to the Nuwwāb to be verified while they were living under the veil of Taqiya and could not expose their identity as being Shi‘a, let alone being the Na‘ib of the Imam (a)?” (Ṭihranī 1383 Sh, 73)

2. The second opinion is that al-Kāfi was not presented to the Imam because Kulayni, being from the school of Qom, was against the school of Baghdad.

Andrew J. Newman in his *The Formative Period of Twelver Shi’ism*, believes that the writing of al-Kāfi was a response of the Ahadith oriented school of Qom to the intellect oriented school of Baghdad (Newman 1386 Sh, 271).

Accordingly, not only did Kulayni not present this book to them but there was also some friction between them. Kulayni’s refrain from mentioning the names of the Nuwwāb and their position, in addition to avoiding any narrations of Ahadith from them, can be indications of this (friction).

This opinion is also not acceptable because Kulayni never mentions the issue of Niyābat nor does he narrate from the Nuwwāb except two or three Ahadith from the first and the third Na‘ib. However, this is unrelated to the

matter of ‘differences’ between the Nuwwāb and Kulayni.

First of all, abstaining from mentioning the name and the position of the Nuwwāb is not something peculiar to al-Kāfi. All the books of that time, in a consonant way, did not mention their names and avoided talking about them altogether. Therefore, one can’t conclude from the ‘negligence’ of Kulayni in narrating Hadith from them or mentioning their names in his book that somehow they were opposed or in conflict.

Moreover, Newman’s theory is based on the popularized idea that Kulayni stayed for twenty years in Baghdad. While, what we know is that he moved to Baghdad and was there in 327/939. Unfortunately, we do not know when he moved or how long he stayed in Baghdad (Rahmati and Ahmadi 1389 Sh, 1:57). It can however be inferred from the description of Najāshī who mentioned Kulayni as being at the head of the [شيخ أصحابنا] Shi’a community in Ray and that he lived most of his master age in Ray (Najāshī 1365 AH, 377). There is even another opinion that he stayed only for two years in Bagdad (Subhānī 1425 AH, 369), and if this is true, then two matters can be inferred.

Firstly, it is most likely that the entire book or most of it, had been duplicated in Qom and Ray by his students, hence presenting it to the Nuwwāb in Baghdad had no benefit as it had been already popularized.

Secondly, Kulayni did not stay long enough in Baghdad to offer his book to the Nuwwāb, considering that he traveled to Ba’labak and also that the Nuwwāb were also traveling occasionally.

Then after refutation of the two above mentioned ideas the third would make sense that al-Kāfi was not presented before them not because of the difference between the schools of Qom and Baghdad but due to the tough conditioned that Nuwwāb used to live and we explained formerly.

## Conclusion

The Four Deputies (Nuwwāb Arbi‘eh) were the four most pious people appointed by Imam Askari (a) and Imam Mahdi (a) to be the medium between Imam Mahdi (a) and the people. Since, in this period, the Imam (a) had contact with the people through these representatives, it is called the Minor Occultation. The era of the Minor Occultation involved tough conditions for Shi‘a community and the Nuwwāb. The Shi‘a were perplexed; deviant ideas were exposed; and proving the existence of an alive Imam and that the Nuwwāb were his representatives; were not easy tasks. They had to lead the Shi‘a community while observing Taqiyah, fight with false Nuwwāb and false Mahdis without leaving any trace of their activities to the spies of the government. Still, the Imam (a) told them that if they are doubtful about a Hadith to refer that to him and reports indicate that many Ahadith were presented to him through the Nuwwāb, and he responded with specific instructions.

Significantly, two books of Shalmaghāni al-Taklif, and al-Ta‘dib are stated to have been presented to them and it was only Shalmaghāni’s deviation that was the cause of doubt. However, presenting the book of al-Kāfi to them and the Imam (a) had no purpose and due to the circumstances was quite impossible.

Despite this, one can’t claim that since al-Kāfi was presented to the Imam (a) that all of its Ahadith are authorized. It is also not correct to say that since Kulayni did not mention the names and the position of the Nuwwāb in his book, that there was some opposition between them. Rather, the Nuwwāb allowed the ‘Ulama of Qom to rectify Shalmaghāni’s al-Ta‘dib and this shows that they acknowledged each other and proves that the ‘Ulama were ultimately in charge at the time of the Major Occultation. This is a clear indication to the people to rather refer to them in their theoretical questions.

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