A Concise Treatise of Authentic Traditions Regarding the Right to Divine Leadership (Imamate) of the Twelve Imams

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Mirza Jawad Tabrizi

Translated by
Afzal Sumar

Al-Islam.org

Article

Authors(s):

Mirza Jawad Tabrizi [1]

Translator(s):

Afzal Sumar [2]

Dedication

This translation is devoted in gratitude to the memory of the late Mr Gulamhussein Bhai Somji, Mrs Tahera Bai Somji, Mr Mahmud Bhai Somji and all the deceased Believers worldwide.

The Late Shaykh Al-Tabrizi had this booklet published in Arabic. The edition consulted for this translation was the second edition, published in the year 1425 AH and obtained by the translator whilst studying in Damascus in the year 2008 AD.

Introduction

All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Universe, and may His peace and blessings be upon Muhammad and his purified progeny.

Questions frequently arise concerning theological issues relevant to Muslims, especially among the adherents of the Ahlulbayt. The motives underlying these questions tend to be diverse. Some raise questions in order to learn; and seek evidence regarding a subject. Such people need to be given convincing and complete answers, which is the objective of this treatise, with the help of Allah (swt).

However others have a different motive in raising such questions; their aim tends to be; to create doubts with regards to those issues and to cast suspicion in the hearts of the lay adherents of the Ahlulbayt.

One of the identifying marks of the second category of people is that they do not put forward their questions and arguments to the scholars of religion; those who are specialists in doctrinal affairs and capable of substantiating those doctrines with definitive proofs. Rather they spread their doubts and misgivings among the lay people; those who have not examined in a precise and meticulous manner the farthest limits of those problems nor have they scrutinised its proofs. Therefore such mischievous people

find a ready market and a great demand for their scepticisms and doubts among the naive believers.

These mischievous sceptics tend not to be concerned with the type of question asked, nor do they wait for an answer. Rather, if they are supplied with a convincing answer, they only ignore and sideline it and jump on to another question and doubt.

Hence, you will observe them on one day doubting some historical incidents connected to the doctrine of divine leadership (Imamate) and on another, doubting the life and existence of the Imam al-Mahdi (May Allah hasten his re-appearance); or asking about the benefit of his occultation; or doubting the traditions about the infallible Imams, saying that no traditions exist about the Imams or about the Imams who came after al-Husayn (a.s.)

We are not concerned here with such people nor are we addressing them in this treatise; rather we do not even hope for their guidance after they have chosen this path for themselves, the path of scepticism. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an; 'Allah shall never forgive them, nor shall He guide them to any way...'1. Instead our discourse is addressed to the people of justice, 'who listen to the word (of Allah) and follow the best (sense) of it.'2

Furthermore it is addressed to the lay believers of the true sect who are looking forward to obtaining clear proofs with which to refute the allegations of the sceptics and the doubts of the deviant. It is for those who have come across questions put forward by sceptics who may have demanded answers for questions on the subject of the traditions concerning the divine leadership of the infallible Imams.

Thus this short treatise is undertaken for these people, knowing full well that it is impossible to carry out an all-encompassing investigation of the evidences; for an exercise such as that would necessarily require recourse to the books and compilations of traditions compiled in this field.

The Method Adopted in this Treatise

The method adopted in this treatise will be to present some of the clear and authentic traditions which specify the names of the Imams (a.s.) in order to refute the claims that suggest that no traditions exist for their divine leadership or for the divine leadership of some of them. This will further prove that those who make such suggestions -if they are sincere- are deficient in their knowledge of, and familiarity with, the traditions of the Ahlulbayt and lacking insight in their narrations. We shall endeavour to make sure that the traditions, which we cite, are authentic and devoid of doubts or controversy.

This treatise is divided into two parts. The first part is further sub-divided into three sections. The first section consists of traditions, which discuss the institution of divine leadership (Imamate) under the

general title of 'the sons of al-Husayn'. The second section consists of traditions, which stipulate the right to divine leadership for a specific group from amongst the sons of al-Husayn (a.s.), such as the narrated texts specifying the Imams till Imam al-Baqir (a.s.). The significance of this body of traditions is to refute the claims of the sceptics who maintain that no traditions exist for the Imams *after* al-Husayn (a.s.). The third section consists of traditions, which stipulate the identity of the Imams all at once.

The second part consists of transmitted traditions, which describe the right to divine leadership of the Imams subsequent to Imam al-Baqir (a.s).

It is not necessary to present *all* these traditions, because for the one who requires evidence; a single authentic tradition, which mentions the Imams collectively, should suffice, irrespective of whether they are under a general title or mentioning each Imam individually. However, they shall be presented in this treatise for the sake of confirmation and assurance and to demonstrate that the traditions regarding the Imams are available through numerous chains. As Allah says in the Qur'an 'There is indeed an admonition in that for one who has a heart, or gives ear, being attentive.'[3]

In addition to citing these traditions, a mention will be made of the extremely challenging and harsh circumstances, which surrounded the Imams of the Ahlulbayt and their followers in the different phases of history. This made, narrating traditions, which specified the divine leadership of the infallibles, especially those Imams who lived in the later periods extremely dangerous.

Traditions that Specify the Names of the Infallible Imams

Numerous traditions can be found in Shi'a hadith literature, which specify the names of the infallible Imams. However, as the aim of this treatise is to be succinct, it will be sufficient to mention one or two authentic and clear traditions in every section. This will be adequate for one who requires evidence and proof. These traditions can be divided into several types in light of their contents.

Transmitted Traditions, Which Specify that the Imams Are From 'The Progeny of Al-Husayn (A.S.).'

The traditions, which specify this, provide responses to several queries: firstly, they respond to those who are sceptical of the existence of traditions for the right to divine leadership (Imamate) of the Imams after al-Husayn (a.s.). This is because these traditions are considered explicitly clear texts on this subject. These traditions also stipulate the genealogy of the Imams after al-Husayn (a.s.), restricting

them to his pure lineage and denying this station to those who do not belong to this house.

Therefore whoever claims that divine leadership (Imamate) is from other than them, his claim is void even if he was a Hashimite or a Qurayshite, rather even if he was from the progeny of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) but not from the progeny of al-Husayn (a.s.) as the traditions specifically stipulate the particular progeny that the Imams belong to.

These traditions also prove, by implication, that the Imams are from the tribe of al-Quraysh, in fact the traditions transmitted from non-Shi'a sources often include that the Imams are from the tribe of al-Quraysh, and this is an explanation for these traditions, whereby one who is from the sons of al-Husayn (a.s.) is by necessity a Qurayshite.

From among those traditions, the following selection have been chosen:

The authentic tradition reported by Shaykh al-Kulayni, may Allah bless him...[4] from Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq (a.s.), who said the following in the course of mentioning the Imams... 'Thus Allah continued to choose them (the Imams) for His creatures, **from the progeny of al-Husayn (a.s.)**, from the offspring of every Imam. Whenever an Imam would pass away from among them, He (Allah) would appoint for His creatures an Imam, and a guiding authority from his (i.e. the deceased Imam's) offspring...'[5]

And from among the traditions is the authentic tradition reported by Shaykh al-Saduq, may Allah bless him, from...[6] Abu Hamza al-Thumali, from Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (a.s.). Abu Hamza al-Thumali said: 'I heard the Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) say; "Surely, the closest of people to Allah, the Exalted the Majestic, and the most learned and gracious of them is Muhammad, the blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny, and the Imams. Therefore follow them[7] and dissociate yourselves, from those whom they dissociate, **I mean al-Husayn and his progeny**, for the truth is with them and they are the vice-regents and from them are the Imams.

Thus wherever you see them, follow them. And if a day dawns upon you when you do not see any one from them, then call for the help of Allah, the Exalted the Majestic, and observe the established practice which you were observing and adhere to it, and love those whom you used to love and hate those whom you used to hate, for indeed, how soon will the relief come to you!!'[8]

A tradition which corroborates the above tradition, is one which Shaykh al-Saduq reports in Kamal al-Din, from his father, from...[9] Sulaym bin Qays al-Hilali from Salman al-Farisi who said; 'I came into the presence of the Prophet, may the blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny, and al-Husayn was on his lap and he was kissing his eyes and mouth and saying: "You are a leader and son of a leader, you are an Imam and the son of an Imam and **the father of Imams**. You are a proof of Allah and the son of His proof and **the father of proofs. They will be nine in number and they will be from your progeny**, and the ninth of them will be their Qa'im (the one who will rise.)[10]

Traditions that Specify the names of the Imams Beginning from Amir Al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A.S.) till Imam Muhammad Bin 'Ali Al-Baqir (A.S.)

Traditions of this nature are numerous, and it is sufficient in this case to cite two examples.

Firstly, the authentic tradition narrated by Shaykh al-Kulayni, may Allah bless him, from...[11]Abu Basir who said; 'I asked Abu Abdillah al-Sadiq (a.s.) regarding the Qur'anic verse "Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from amongst you".[12] He responded: "It descended in favour of 'Ali bin Abi Talib, al-Hasan and al-Husayn (a.s.)"

So I said: "People ask, what was the reason that He (Allah) did not name 'Ali and the people of his house in the book of God?" The Imam replied: "Tell them; the command for the ritual prayers (al-Salat) was revealed to the Prophet, but Allah did not designate the number of cycles for them (i.e. for the people), whether they would be three or four, till the Prophet of Allah explained that. The command for the alms-tax (al-Zakat) was revealed to the Prophet, but Allah did not specify for them (i.e. for the people) that it was to be a dirham for every forty dirhams, till the Prophet of Allah explained that for them.

The ordinance for the annual pilgrimage (al- Hajj) was revealed but Allah did not say "go round (the Ka'ba) seven times" till it was the Prophet of Allah who clarified that for them, and the verse "Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from amongst you" was revealed and it was revealed in favour of 'Ali, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and the Prophet of Allah (in clarification) said in favour of 'Ali "whosever's master I am, then 'Ali is also his master" and he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) said "I bid you to follow the Book of Allah and the people (worthy) of my house, for I asked Allah that He should not separate them from each other till He brings them to me at the fountain and He has granted me that", and he (pbuh) said "do not teach them for they are more learned than you all, and they will never drive you away from the door of guidance nor will they ever make you enter the door of misguidance".

(The Imam continued his speech). "If the Prophet had remained silent and not clarified who the people (worthy) of his house were, then the progeny of such and such would have laid claim to it, but Allah revealed this verse in His book, "Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People (worthy) of the Household (of the Prophet) and purify you with a thorough purification"[13] as an endorsement for His Prophet.

Thus the Prophet made 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and Fatima to enter the blanket / robe in the house of Umm Salama and then said: "O Allah! Every Prophet has those who are (worthy) of his house and significant to him and these are (worthy) of my house and significant to me." So Umm Salama said: "Am

I not (worthy) of your house?" (The Prophet replied): "You are on the path of righteousness, but these are (worthy) of my house and significant to me"

(The Imam continued his speech). "When the Prophet passed away, 'Ali was the worthiest of all men, on account of the abundant virtues which the Prophet had conveyed about him and on account of him (i.e. the Prophet) establishing him ('Ali) and raising him by his hand[14], yet when 'Ali passed away, neither was he able to nor did he bring in Muhammad bin 'Ali[15] or al-'Abbass bin 'Ali[16] or anybody else from his children into the divine leadership (Imamate)...

For had he done that then al-Hasan and al-Husayn would have protested that: "Certainly Allah, the Blessed the Exalted has revealed about us just as He revealed about you and He commanded our obedience just as He commanded your obedience. The Prophet of Allah conveyed our merits just as He conveyed yours, and He (Allah) removed impurity from us just as He removed it from you."

When 'Ali passed away, al-Hasan was the worthiest of them all (i.e. of all of 'Ali's children) due to his seniority, however when he passed away, he did not and neither was he able to bring in his son into the divine leadership (Imamate), even though Allah the Dignified, and the Majestic says (in the Qur'an) "...The blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another in the Book of Allah..."[17] and so he (al-Hasan) could have applied this verse to his son...

But then al-Husayn would have protested that "Allah has commanded my obedience just as He commanded your obedience and the obedience of your father, and the Prophet conveyed my merits just as he conveyed yours and your father's, and Allah removed impurity from me just as He removed it from you and your father."

But when the office of divine leadership (Imamate) reached al-Husayn there was none from his house who could protest at him, as he would have to his brother and father had they wanted to divert the affair (of the Imamate) away from him, though they did not do it.

So then the matter reached the point where the divine leadership (Imamate) passed to al-Husayn, at which point the interpretation of this verse "...The blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another in the Book of Allah..." came to pass, and so it (the divine leadership) devolved upon 'Ali bin al-Husayn after al-Husayn, and after 'Ali bin al-Husayn it devolved upon Muhammad bin 'Ali." Then he (al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The impurity (referred in the verse above[18]) means "doubt". By Allah! We do not doubt our Lord, ever!!"[19]

Here, it is necessary to draw attention to two important points, which this tradition makes:

Firstly, the tradition responds to the reservation that some may have had concerning the reasons why the names of the Imams are not clearly mentioned in the Qur'an; especially if the institution of divine

leadership (Imamate) is so essential; and mentioning the name of Amir al-Mu'minin could prevent doubt and uncertainty. The tradition replies to this question by drawing a similitude between how revelation deals with this matter and the matter of the ritual prayers, the alms-tax and the annual pilgrimage in the Qur'an. In all these cases, the finer details of these ordinances have not been made manifest in the text. Thus the issue of divine leadership (Imamate) is dealt with in a similar way; where the obligation to obey the Imams and those vested with authority was revealed, but the *specification* of their names was entrusted to the Prophet, and he fulfilled that duty excellently!

Secondly, the tradition makes clear that the appointment of the Imam is a divine affair which is not related to the matter of inheritance, or the desire of the previous Imam in designating the succeeding one, for he (the Imam) cannot – and neither will he divert its course from the one who is entitled to it by divine sanction. And in this matter, just as Amir al-Mu'minin was appointed by divine sanction, so was 'Ali bin al-Husayn Zain al-'Abidin, and Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Baqir (a.s.). There is no difference between them in this regard, in contrast to the claims of some sceptics who claim that explicit designation was only for the first three Imams.

An additional tradition to support the above claim; that the Imamate is a divine affair, and that divine designation is not limited to only the first three Imams, is recorded by al-Kulayni where he narrates from...[20]

Sulaym bin Qays who said: 'I witnessed the last testament of Amir al-Mu'minin, when he was making his last will to his son al-Hasan, and I witnessed his testament to al-Husayn and Muhammad[21] and all his sons, as well as to the leaders of his Shi'a and the members of his house. Then he handed over to him (al-Hasan) the book and the weapon and said to him: "O my son, the Prophet of Allah commanded me to express my last bequest to you and to bequeath you his books and his weapon, and he ordered me to command you that when death approaches you, then you should bequeath them to your brother al-Husayn."

Then he turned to his son al-Husayn and said: "The Prophet of Allah commanded you to bequeath them to this son of yours," and he clasped the hand of 'Ali bin al-Husayn. Then he said to 'Ali bin al-Husayn "the Prophet of Allah has commanded you to bequeath them to your son Muhammad bin 'Ali, and to convey to him mine and the Prophet's greetings."[22]

Traditions that Stipulate the Names of the Imams all together

These traditions will serve to bring to an end the excuses of every sceptic as a result of their clarity; force of conviction and content. In the first tradition, the names of the Imams that are found in the text of the formula are supposed to be recited in the thanksgiving prostration following every ritual prayer. This is where the worshipper calls upon his Lord, His angels and His creation to testify to a condensed

version of his beliefs, which a worshipper must necessarily meet his Lord with.

This includes his allegiance and devotion to the infallible Imams from the Prophet's household and that he will love and obey them and disown and dissociate from their enemies. Furthermore, the relationship between the ritual prayer and mentioning the rightly guided Imams and their excellence over creation is not hidden, for it lies in their teaching the creation the essential teachings of the faith.

From among these traditions are the following:

The authentic tradition which Shaykh al-Saduq reports with his chain of transmitters, from 'Abdullah bin Jundab, from Musa bin Ja'far (a.s), who said: 'Say (the following) in your prostration of thanksgiving: "O Allah! Indeed I call upon You as a witness and I call upon Your angels, Your Prophets and Messengers and the entirety of Your creation as a witness, that surely You O Allah are my Nourisher, that Islam is my religion, that Muhammad is my Prophet and that 'Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'Ali bin al-Husayn, Muhammad bin 'Ali, Ja'far bin Muhmmad, Musa bin Ja'far, 'Ali bin Musa, Muhammad bin 'Ali, 'Ali bin Muhammad, al-Hasan bin 'Ali and the Hujjat (i.e.Proof), son of al-Hasan are my leaders. Them I love and obey and from their enemies I dissociate."[23]

Another authentic tradition, which Shaykh al-Kulayni narrates from a number of his companions, from Ahmed bin Muhammad al-Barqi, from Abu Hashim Dawud bin Qasim al-Ja'fariy, from Abu Ja'far the Second (a.s.) who said: 'Amir al-Mu'minin approached the Sacred Mosque (of Mecca) and with him was al-Hasan bin 'Ali who was leaning on the hand of Salman. They entered and sat down, when a man, of pleasant appearance and attire approached them.

He greeted Amir al-Mu'minin and sat down. The he said: "O Amir al-Mu'minin, I will ask you three questions. If you will answer them (correctly) then I will know that the community has turned away from your affair in what was prescribed and made incumbent upon them and that they are neither faithful in their worldly affairs nor in the affairs of the hereafter. However, if you are unable to answer them, then I will know that you and they are the same." So Amir al-Mu'minin said, "Ask me whatever you wish." So he asked: "Inform me as to where the spirit of a human being goes when he sleeps? And how does a human being remember and forget? And how does a son resemble his paternal and maternal uncles?"

Amir al-Mu'minin turned to al-Hasan and said "O Abu Muhammad, answer him! So al-Hasan answered him, whereupon he said "I testify that there is no deity but Allah and I will continue to attest to it, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and I will continue to attest to it, and I testify that you are the trustee of the Messenger of Allah and established as such on his authority" – and he pointed to Amir al-Mu'minin – "and I will continue to attest to it.

And I testify that you (i.e. al-Hasan) are his ('Ali's) trustee and established as such on his authority" – and he pointed to al-Hasan – "and I testify that al-Husayn bin 'Ali is the trustee of his brother and established as such on his authority after him, and I testify in favor of 'Ali bin al-Husayn that he is the Imam by the command of al-Husayn after him, and I testify in favor of Muhammad bin 'Ali, that he is the Imam by the command of 'Ali bin al-Husayn, and I testify in favor of Ja'far bin Muhammad, that he is the Imam by the command of Muhammad, and I testify in favor of Musa bin Ja'far, that he is the Imam by the command of Ja'far bin Muhammad.

And I testify in favor of 'Ali bin Musa, that he is the Imam by the command of Musa binJa'far, and I testify in favor of Muhammad bin 'Ali, that he is the Imam by the command of 'Ali bin Musa, and I testify in favor of 'Ali bin Muhammad, that he is the Imam by the command of Muhmmad bin 'Ali, and I testify in favor of al-Hasan bin 'Ali, that he is the Imam by the command of 'Ali bin Muhammad, and I testify in favor of a man from the offspring of al-Hasan (i.e. the eleventh Imam), who is neither to be called nor to be named till his affair becomes manifest, so he will fill the earth with justice just as it was filled with tyranny, and peace be upon you O Amir al-Mu'minin as well as the mercy and blessings of Allah." The he got up and went away.

(At that moment) Amir al-Mu'minin said "O Abu Muhammad, follow him and see where he is headed for!"

So al-Hasan bin 'Ali (a.s.) went out and remarked: "the man had hardly placed his foot outside the mosque when he vanished and I didn't know where he had disappeared to! So I returned to Amir al-Mu'minin and informed him (about it). He said: " O Abu Muhammad, do you know him?" I replied, "Allah, His Messenger and Amir al-Mu'minin know better." So he said, "that was the Prophet Khidhr."[24]

Traditions that Specify Each Imam Individually

Having mentioned the traditions, which contain the names of the purified Imams, we will now cite specific traditions, which specify each Imam individually. These traditions sometimes mention the Imams by their names and at other times allude to them by certain attributes or by indication. For example, some of the traditions mention direct commands, which imply the one ordered in the tradition to possess the station of divine leadership such as in the last testament of Imam al Baqir (a.s.) to his son al-Sadiq (a.s).

In this tradition Imam al Baqir asks his son al-Sadiq to give him the funerary bath, prepare him for burial and enshroud him. Such a command is taken to be an explicit designation to the office of divine leadership for him since it is established through traditions as well as consensus that none but an Imam is able to carry out the last rites of another Imam.

Very few people, if any, are able to recognize such allusions or indications, except those who possess the ability to recognize such modes of expressions used by the Imams. Thus, when Hisham bin al-Hakam heard the statement of Imam al-Kadhim from 'Ali bin Yaqtin that he (al-Kadhim (a.s.) said that 'Ali al-Ridha' is the best of his children and that he had conferred on him his epithet, he concluded that al-Kadhim had designated al-Ridha' to the office of divine leadership (Imamate).

Likewise, the transferring of the Prophet's weapon and books is also considered to be an indication of divine leadership (Imamate) as well as miracles such as the testimony of the Black Stone in favor of the divine leadership of 'Ali bin al-Husayn.

This event took place in the context of the Imam's dispute with his uncle Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya. This event has been reported by al-Kulayni in al-Kafi in the form of an authentic transmission.[25] The report goes, that after 'Ali bin al-Husayn had challenged his uncle by claiming that the Prophet's weapon was with him and that al-Husayn had bequeathed it to him, he invited his uncle to the Black Stone so that it may decide between them. So Muhammad al-Hanafiyya addressed the stone first but received no reply, then 'Ali bin al-Husayn addressed it and the Black Stone responded with the capability granted it by Allah as follows: "Surely the bequest and the divine leadership (Imamate) after al-Husayn bin 'Ali is for 'Ali bin al-Husayn." Thereafter, Muhammad al-Hanafiyya relinquished his claim and affirmed and believed in the claim of 'Ali bin al-Husayn.

In the second section of the previous part, traditions, which specify the Imamate of the Imams from Amir al-Mu'minin up until Imam Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Baqir (a.s.) were mentioned. In this part, traditions regarding the right to divine leadership (Imamate) of the Imams beginning from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) up until the Seal of the Imams, the Master of the Age, May Allah hasten his blessed reappearance will be considered. It will be sufficient to mention one tradition for every Imam, but numerous and different traditions with regards to the last Imam will be mentioned for extensive study.

Ja'far Bin Muhammad Al-Sadiq (a.s.)

One of the traditions transmitted about the divine right to leadership (Imamate) of Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.) is the authentic tradition which al-Kulayni reports in al-Kafi, from...[26] Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq (a.s.) who said: 'My father entrusted me with what was to be entrusted. When his time of death arrived, he said, "Call some witnesses for me."

So I invited four witnesses from the tribe of Quraysh, one of whom was Nafi' the client of 'Abdullah bin 'Umar.[27] My father then commanded me to write as follows: "This is what Ya'qub[28] willed to his sons 'O my children! Allah has indeed chosen this religion for you; so never die except as Muslims.'[29]

Now Muhammad bin 'Ali wills to Ja'far bin Muhammad and commands him to enshroud him in the garment in which he (i.e. al-Baqir) prays the Friday prayers, to attire him in his turban, to make square his grave and to raise it to the measure of four fingers. To remove from him his old clothes at the time of burial…"then he said to the witnesses: "You can now depart, may Allah's blessings be upon you all."

When the witnesses had left, I said to him, "Father, what was the reason that you called for witnesses?" He replied: "My son! I hated for you to feel helpless and powerless and that it be said that 'he (al-Baqir) did not make his bequest to him (al-Sadiq)', so I wanted this to serve as proof for you."[30]

As mentioned earlier, this is what a group of relevant traditions prove, and on the basis of which a consensus has been established that the funeral rites of an Imam are not undertaken except by an Imam like him, if he is present. The bequest is one of the distinguishing marks of the divine leadership from which the evidence of the explicit designation of al- Sadiq is obtained.

Musa bin Ja'far (a.s.)

From the traditions transmitted about the explicit designation of Imam Musa bin Ja'far to divine leadership is the authentic tradition reported by al-Kulayni in al-Kafi, from…[31] Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq (a.s.). Mansur bin Hazim said to him: 'May my parents be your sacrifice, indeed, people are born and they die.[32]

Therefore if you were to pass away, then who would be the Imam after you?' Abu 'Abdillah replied: 'If that were to happen then the Imam will be this companion of yours' and he tapped the right shoulder of Abu al-Hasan (al-Kadhim) - in what I recollect - and he (al-Kadhim) was five years old on that day and 'Abdullah bin Ja'far[33] was sitting there with us.'[34]

'Ali bin Musa al-Ridha' (a.s.)

Regarding the explicit designation of Imam 'Ali bin Musa al-Ridha' (a.s.) to the office of divine leadership there is the following authentic report from Muhammad bin Yahya, who reports from Ahmad bin Muhammad, who reports from Ibn Mahbub, who in turn reports from al-Husayn bin Na'im al-Sahhaf, who said: 'Hisham bin al-Hakam, 'Ali bin Yaqtin and I were in Baghdad when 'Ali bin Yaqtin said; "I was sitting in the company of al-'Abd al-Salih (i.e. Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) when his son 'Ali came in. Al-Kadhim said to me: 'O 'Ali bin Yaqtin, 'Ali is the best of my children and I have conferred on him my epithet."

Suddenly Hisham bin al-Hakam struck his forehead with the palm of his hand and said: 'Woe unto you,

how do you say this?'[35] So 'Ali bin Yaqtin replied: 'By Allah! I heard it from him just as I have reported.' At this Hisham bin al-Hakam said: 'He (al-Kadhim) was actually informing you that the divine leadership would devolve on him (al-Ridha') after him (i.e. after the demise of al-Kadhim).'[36]

Here it is clear how Hisham bin al-Hakam, being well versed in theology, and aware of the indicative allusions of the Imams regarding the subject of divine leadership and the qualities necessarily required in abundance in an Imam, was able to grasp what the Imam meant by his statement; which was to signify the designation of Imam al-Ridha' to divine leadership. On the other hand, men like 'Ali bin Yaqtin despite their high status, were unable to recognise and grasp the same meaning and with the same ability.

Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Jawad (a.s.)

Al-Kulayni reports an authentic tradition in al-Kafi with respect to the right to divine leadership (Imamate) of Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Jawad (a.s.) from Muhammad bin Yahya, who reports it from Ahmad bin Muhammad, who in turn reports it from Ma'mar bin Khallad, who said: 'I heard al-Ridha' (a.s.) mention something and then he said; "What is your need for that? Here is Abu Ja'far! I have bestowed on him my status[37] and rendered to him my position." Then he said; "Indeed the young ones from among us, the people (worthy) of the House of the Prophet, inherit from the older ones, being exactly identical to each other."[38]

'Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi (a.s.)

From the traditions which stipulate the right to divine leadership of Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi (a.s.) is the authentic tradition which al-Kulayni reports in al-Kafi from 'Ali bin Ibrahim, from his father, from Isma'il bin Mihran who said: 'When Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Jawad left Medina for Baghdad for the first time, I said to him at the time of his departure; "May I be sacrificed for you, but I fear for the safety of your life in this journey, so who has been bequeathed the responsibility of divine leadership after you?"

He turned to me with a smiling face and said; "The disappearance which you fear is not destined for this year." When he left for Baghdad for the second time at the behest of Mu'tasim, I came to him and said: "May I be sacrificed for you, but you are leaving us, so inform me about the one who has been bequeathed the responsibility of the Imamate after you." This time the Imam wept so hard that his beard got drenched with his tears. He turned towards me and said: "This journey is to be feared, the responsibility of the Imamate after me will be with my son 'Ali."[39]

Al-Hasan bin ‘Ali al-’Askariy (a.s.)

Explicitly clear traditions have been reported about the divine leadership of Imam al-Hasan bin 'Ali al-'Askariy (a.s.). From among them is the report which al-Kulayni reports in al-Kafi from 'Ali bin Muhammad, from Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Nahdiy, from Yahya bin Yasar al-Qanbariy who said: 'Abu al-Hasan (i.e 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi) willed to his son al-Hasan four months before his death and called me and a group of his clients to witness that.'[40]

Al-Hujjat bin al-Hasan al-’Askariy, the Master of the Age (a.s.)

As for the transmitted traditions regarding the divine leadership of Imam al-Hujjat bin al-Hasan al-'Askariy, the Master of the Age, may Allah hasten his noble re-appearance, as well as regarding his attributes, the signs heralding his re-appearance, his helpers and the issues relating to his revolutionary movement after his re-appearance, these are exceedingly abundant, to the extent that special books and volumes have been written on this topic. However, as the aim in this treatise is to be succinct, mentioning a few will suffice:

Regarding his explicit designation to the station of divine leadership, there is the tradition transmitted by Shaykh al-Saduq from...[41] Mu'awiya bin Hakim and Muhammad bin Ayyub bin Nuh and Muhammad bin 'Uthman al-'Amriy,[42] that they said: “We were a group of forty men in the house of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan bin 'Ali (a.s.) when he presented to us his son and said: 'This is your Imam after me and my successor to you. Obey him and do not divide and disunite after me in matters of your religion, for you will be destroyed. However, you will not see him after today.” They said; “We departed from his presence and a few days later Abu Muhammad passed away.”[43]

Regarding the principle that faith in the Imams and acknowledgement of all of them, is indivisible and that recognition of all the Imams to the exclusion of Imam al-Hujjat amounts to naught and is similar to the rejection of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), there is the tradition which Shaykh al-Saduq records in his book Kifayatul Athar from...[44] Musa bin Ja'far al-Baghdadiy, who said: “I heard Abu Muhammad al-Hasan bin 'Ali al-'Askariy saying; 'It is as if I can see you disagreeing and entertaining contradictory opinions about my successor after me!

Indeed the person who acknowledges the Imams after the Holy Prophet but rejects my son is like one who acknowledges all the Prophets and Messengers and then rejects the Prophet hood of the Messenger of Allah (saw). This is because obedience to the last one from us is similar to the obedience of the first one from us and the rejection of the last one of us is similar to the rejection of the first one of us. As for my son, he will experience an occultation during which people will entertain doubts and misgivings, except one whom Allah protects and preserves.”[45]

Shaykh al-Saduq transmits from his father, who transmits from...46 Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq (a.s.), that he said regarding the speech of Allah (swt) in the Qur'an: “The day when some of your Lord's signs will come, faith shall not benefit any soul that had not believed beforehand...”47 that “the signs (mentioned in this verse) are the Imams and the awaited sign is the Qa'im (may Allah hasten his reappearance). Thus on that day a man's faith shall not benefit him if he had not believed (in the Qa'im) before the Qa'im's uprising by the sword, even if he had believed in his forefathers a foretime.”48

Imam al-Hujjat (atfs) resembles the Prophet the most from among all mankind, and has the same name and epithet as that of the Prophet. This is according to what Shaykh al-Saduq reports in Kamal al-Din from his father and Muhammad bin al-Hasan, and Muhammad bin Musa al-Mutawakkil (all-together), who in turn report, from...49

Abu Basir, from al-Sadiq Ja'far bin Muhammad (a.s.), who reports from his forefathers, that: “The Holy Prophet (saw) said: 'The Mahdi is from my progeny. His name and epithet are the same as mine. He resembles me the most from among all mankind, in respect of creation and character. He will experience a period of occultation, which will cause confusion and perplexity, such that people will go astray from their religions. At that moment he will reappear like a piercing meteor and will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it was filled with oppression and tyranny.”50

One of the misfortunes among the people during his occultation is that some will doubt his birth. Shaykh al-Saduq reports in Kamal al-Din from...51 Zurara bin A'yan who said: 'I heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say; 'Surely, the Qa'im will have an occultation prior to his rising.” I asked: “why will he have an occultation?”

He replied; “because of fear” and pointed to his stomach. Then he said: “O Zurara, he is the one awaited and he is the one regarding whose birth mankind will have doubts. From among them will be some who will say that he is still at the stage of conception while others will say he is hidden. Yet others will say that he has not been born and yet others will say that he was born two years before his father's death. But Allah, Exalted and Majestic, loves to test the Shi'as for 'it is through these means that the liars are filled with suspicions and misgivings.52.'53

From the traditions substantiating the birth of the twelfth Imam are those, which report that he attends the annual Hajj pilgrimage and observes the people there. Those who have seen him include his special deputy during the minor occultation, Muhammad bin 'Uthman al-'Amriy who saw him holding fast to the drapes of the Ka'ba.

The importance of reports such as this is that it not only confirms his birth but also his ties with the people. The question of the Mahdi (May Allah hasten his appearance) is an issue on which all Muslims are unanimously agreed upon, as it is an issue regarding which many consecutively transmitted traditions have been received from the Prophet (saw).

However the differences between the Muslims are with respect to the question of whether he will be born at the end of time as the non-Shi'as claim or that he has already been born, and that his father is al-Hasan bin 'Ali al-'Askariy; that he is hidden from sight after his father had designated him, that a select group of his adherents saw him as in the tradition reported above in the context of the matter of his designation and that he will experience two occultations; a minor one during which he will exercise his duty of guiding the people through the means of his four special deputies and that he will reappear when Allah will permit him, which is the truth and which is the claim of the Shi'as (adherents) of the Ahlul bayt (a.s.).

Shaykh al-Saduq reports in al-Faqih by means of an authentic chain from 'Abdullah bin Ja'far al-Himyari that he said: "I asked Muhammad bin 'Uthman al-'Amariy (may Allah be pleased with him), 'did you see the Master of this affair?' He replied in the affirmative and said: 'my last pledge / meeting with him was at the sacred House of God and he was saying; "O my Lord, fulfil that which you have promised me." And Muhammad bin 'Uthman al-'Amariy (may Allah be pleased with him and may he be content with Him) said: "I saw him (may Allah's blessings be on him) clinging to the drapes of the Ka'ba and saying: 'O Allah! Avenge me from your enemies!'[54]

Conclusion

Here, it is necessary to mention an important observation. The general situation in which, the Imams lived especially after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (a.s.), was a very difficult and oppressive one. The tyrants made every effort to 'extinguish the light of God with their mouths' and used to impose restrictive surveillance, lying in wait, seeking any excuse to use against them in order to annihilate them.

During the reigns of the later Umayyads and the 'Abbasids, these tyrants did not dare to kill them openly, yet they did attempt to do the same secretly. A testimony to this fact is what we find of their audacious attempts to poison the Imams (a.s).

These circumstances and situations experienced by the Imams are not hidden from a researcher who delves into their lives and histories. It would suffice for the reader to simply look into the circumstances of the bequest of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) to his son al-Kadhim (a.s.). The 'Abbasid authorities were waiting to see whom he would appoint as his successor so that they could murder him. Thus al-Sadiq (a.s.) appointed five people as his successor and thereby lay to waste a potential opportunity for the 'Abbasids to assassinate his successor.

Then there is what happened to our master al-Kadhim (a.s.) with respect to his imprisonment and murder as well as the oppression and persecution suffered by Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) and after him by al-

Hasan al-'Askariy (a.s) and the authorities' efforts at arresting and murdering his successor Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf).

Thus, it was in such trying circumstances of oppression and dissimulation that the Shi'a lived, whereby they were not secure with regards to their beliefs at a time when non-Muslims were secure in the lands of Islam even though they were misguided whilst the adherents of the Ahlulbayt were rightly guided. Revealing the names of the Imams in such circumstances, especially the names of those Imams who were to come in the future, as well as transmitting clear reports of their right to divine leadership among the narrators of Prophetic and Imamic reports was an extremely dangerous exercise, both for the Imams and the narrators themselves.

Despite these dangers the narrators preserved the reports for us – may Allah reward them the best of rewards – and transmitted them among themselves and to posterity. Through these traditions the proof against those who reject the Imams is complete and those who believe can rely on these traditions and use them as evidence.

This issue of the divine leadership (Imamate) has become an undisputable part of the theology of the adherents of the Ahlulbayt (a.s.), rather a consecutively transmitted doctrine, unanimously transmitted through the centuries in general such that they are known even among their opponents as those who associate and love the purified Imams and are distinguished by their title 'al Ithna 'asahariyya' (meaning the Twelvers) which is an indication of their belief in twelve Imams. In fact, for the Shi'a, the one who rejects even *one* of the Imams or appropriates somebody else in their stead is not considered to belong to the true sect.

Moreover, as mentioned previously, mentioning the names of the Imams was bound to the ritual daily prayer and the prostration of thanksgiving as in the authentic tradition transmitted by Ibn Jundub from Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.). Perhaps what was intended by linking the names of the Imams to the daily ritual prayers is that the believer remembers the Imams every day and does not forget these pure souls or that others may not claim the absence of proof or designation for them or for some of them.

In the end we plead to Allah, Glorified and Exalted, to reinforce in us their love and obedience in this world and that we should not be swept away in the currents of tribulations and doubts which the Imams had foretold, in particular during the time of the occultation whereby the liars are filled with suspicions and the believers are strengthened. And that He should allow us to benefit from their intercession in the hereafter; verily He has power over all things and is dependable when He is supplicated to.

O Allah! Render us capable of fulfilling the demands of what you have acquainted us of the Truth, and if we fall short in our capacities, then make do with our deficiencies, with Your grace and blessings, O Merciful and Compassionate.

1. Sura al-Nisa verse 168.
2. Sura al-Zumar verse 18.
3. Sura al-Qaf verse 37.
4. Translator's note: The following is the chain of narrators between al-Kulayni and al-Sadiq (a.s.): Muhammad bin Yahya (who reported) from Ahmed bin Muhammad bin 'Isa, from al-Hasan bin Mahbub, from Ishaq bin Ghalib.
5. Al-Kafi Vol 1 pg 203.
6. Translator's note: The following is the chain of narrators between al-Saduq and Abu Hamza al-Thumali: Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin Ahmed bin al-Walid, from Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Saffar, from Ahmed bin Muhammad bin 'Isa and Muhammad bin al-Husayn bin Abi al-Khattab and al-Haytham bin Masruq al-Nahdiy, from al-Hasan bin Mahbub al-Sarrad from 'Ali bin Ri'ab.
7. Translator's note: Literally; 'Enter where they enter.'
8. Kamal al-Din vol 1, pg 328.
9. Translator's note: The following is the chain of narrators between al-Saduq's father and Sulaym bin Qays al-Hilali: Sa'd bin 'Abdullah, from Yaqub bin Yazid, from Hammad bin 'Isa, from 'Abdullah bin Maskan from Aban.
10. Kamal al-Din vol 1, pg 262.
11. Translator's note: The following is the chain of narrators between al-Kulayni and Abu Basir: 'Ali bin Ibrahim, from Muhammad bin 'Isa, from Yunus, and from 'Ali bin Muhammad bin Sahl bin Ziyad Abi Said, from Muhammad bin 'Isa from Yunus, who narrated it from Ibn Miskan.
12. Sùra al-Nisa verse 59.
13. Sura al-Ahzab verse 33.
14. Translator's note: This is a reference to the Event of Ghadir.
15. Translator's note: Better known as Muhammad al-Hanafiyya.
16. Translator's note: Muhammad bin 'Ali and al-'Abbass bin 'Ali were two sons of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) from wives other than Fatima bint Muhammad (s.a.w.w.).
17. Sura al-Anfal verse 75, Sura al-Ahzab verse 6.
18. Translator's note: The verse of Purification – Àyat al-Tathir (33:33) is meant here.
19. Al-Kafi vol 1, pg 276.
20. Translator's note: The chain of transmission between al-Kulayni and Sulaym bin Qays is as follows: 'Ali bin Ibrahim, from his father, from Hammad bin 'Isa, from Ibrahim bin 'Umar al-Yamani and 'Umar bin Uzayna, from Aban.
21. This refers to Muhammad al-Hanafiyya, the son of Imam 'Ali from a wife other than the Prophet's daughter.
22. Al-Kafi vol 1, pg 297.
23. Al-Wasa'il Vol 7, pg 15. Translator's note: I have given hereunder the full text of the recital in Arabic for those who might wish to recite this text in their prostration of thanksgiving, in obedience to the suggestion of the seventh Imam.

اللهم اني أشهدك و أشهد ملائكتك و انبياءك و رسلك و جميع خلقك انك انت ا لله ربي والاسلام ديني و محمدا نبيي وعليا والحسن والحسين وعلي بن الحسين ومحمد بن علي و جعفر بن محمد و موسى بن جعفر و علي بن موسى و محمد بن علي وعلي بن محمد و الحسن بن علي والحجة بن الحسن أئمتي بهم أتولى و من أعدائهم أ تبرأ

24. Al-Kafi vol 1, pg 525.
25. Al-Kafi vol 1 pg 348.
26. Translator's note: The chain of transmission between al-Kulayni and al-Sádiq (a.s.) is as follows: 'Ali bin Ibrahim, from Muhammad bin 'Ïsa., from Yunus bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from 'Abd al-Aýla..
27. Translator's note: This is one of the sons of the second Caliph 'Umar bin al-Khattab.
28. Translator's note: This is a reference to the Prophet Ya'qub (a.s.), the father of the Prophet Yùsuf (a.s.) and the son of the Prophet Ishaq (a.s), the son of the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.).
29. Sura al-Baqara verse 132.
30. Al-Kafi Vol 1 pg 307.
31. Translator's note: The chain of transmission beween al-Kulayni and al-Sádiq (a.s.) is as follows: 'Ali bin Ibrahim, from his father, from Ibn Abi Najran, from Safwan bin Jammal.

32. Translator's note: Literally the phrase is as follows – Surely the souls are brought into existence and made to pass away – or alternatively – a coming into and out of existence is destined for souls.
33. 'Abdullah bin Ja'far was an older brother of Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.). He is popularly known as 'Abdullah al-Aftah, which means 'Abdullah the big footed.' The significance of mentioning the presence of 'Abdullah bin Ja'far in this sitting where Musa bin Ja'far is designated as the next Imam is because some Shi'as accepted him as the seventh Imam after the death of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s). This resulted into the coming into existence of the Fathiyya sect in Shi'ism. However 'Abdullah bin Ja'far passed away within seventy-five days of the death of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s).
34. Al-Káfi vol 1 pg 309.
35. Translator's note: This seems to be an expression of surprised disbelief, perhaps similar to the contemporary expression of: "No way, did you really hear him say that?!"
36. Al-Kafi vol 1 pg 311.
37. Translator's note: The literal translation of the phrase would have been; 'I have seated him in my place.'
38. Al-Kafi vol 1 pg 320.
39. Al-Kafi vol 1 pg 323.
40. Al-Kafi vol 1 pg 325.
41. Translator's note: The chain of transmission between Shaykh al-Saduq and the three gentlemen who report the actual incident first hand is as follows: Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Majilawayh, from Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar, from Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Malik al-Fazariy.
42. Translator's note: This particular gentleman was the second special deputy of the Twelfh Imam (a.s.) during his minor occultation.
43. Kamal al-Din vol 2, pg 435.
44. Translator's note: The chain of transmission between al-Saduq and Musa bin Ja'far al-Baghdadiy is as follows: al-Hasan bin 'Ali, who reports from Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar, who reports from Sa'd bin 'Abdullah.
45. Kamal al-Din, pg 291.
46. Translator's note: The chain of transmission between al-Saduq's father and al-Sádiq (a.s.) is as follows: Sa'd bin 'Abdullah, who in turn transmits from Muhmmad bin al-Husayn bin Abi al-Khattab, from al-Hasan bin al-Mahbub, from 'Ali bin Riab.
47. Sura al-An'am, verse 158.
48. Kamal al-Din vol 2 pg 336.
49. Translator's note: The chain of transmission between these three gentlemen and Abu Basir is as follows: Sa'd bin 'Abdullah and 'Abdullah bin Ja'far al-Himyari and Muhammad bin Yahya al-'Attar together, from Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Ïsa and Ibrahim bin Hashim and Ahmad bin Abi 'Abdillah al-Barqiy and Muhammad bin al-Husayn bin Abi al-Khattab together, from Abu 'Ali al-Hasan bin Mahbub al-Sarrad, from Dawud bin Hasin.
50. Kamal al-Din vol 1 pg 287.
51. Translator's note: The chain of transmission between al-Saduq and Zurara is as follows: Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Yahya al-'Attar, who reports from Sa'd bin 'Abdullah, who reports from Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Ïsa, who reports from 'Uthman bin 'Ïsa al-Kilabiy, from Khalid bin Najih.
52. Translator's note: This phrase, which occurs in the tradition, is actually the last part of the 48th verse of Sura al-'Ankabut. Perhaps the Imam is trying to say that it is only through such testing that the true and sincere in faith are distinguished from the liars and insincere sceptics.
53. Kamal al-Din vol 1 pg 342.
54. Al-Faqih vol 2 pg 306.

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