

(.Some of the Works of Imam Reza (A.S

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I do not think that I will be able in this research to do justice in recording all the rich aspects of the intellectual life of Imam al-Reza (A.S.), but I will try my best to provide a quick and clear idea about the intellectual output presented by the Imam for mankind in various fields of knowledge. Thus, we would be able from a distance to conduct a complete definition of the aspects of the portrait in which we can view the life style of Imam al-Reza (A.S.), having
.finished researching its historical side

Ibn Khaldun Doubts Imams' Knowledge

Some historians doubted the scholarship of the Imams, let alone their scholarly superiority, basing their doubts on the claim that had they been truly scholars, their books would have been
made available to the public as is the case with all other scholars.

Anyone who considers the revolution of Imam Husain (A.S.) against Yazid as a mistake committed by the Imam (A.S.) and a gross miscalculation cannot be expected to refrain from making such a statement which we cannot attribute to ignorance or lack of the ability to know, but it is nothing other than the cloud of sectarian prejudice which stood as a curtain between
him and seeing the events,

issues, and their reflections as they really were. The "fair-minded" historian is asked to tell us about the books authored by the sahaba and their works from whom he derived the principles and precepts of the creed of the Prophet (S.A.W.), or even the works of the tabi'in whom he regards as the second class that is knowledgeable of the issues of the shari'a, custodians of its
structure.

He may seek his excuse by saying that the narratives of hadith and news of events narrated through them are suitable as a criterion for judging the extent of their knowledge. This is actually how we, too, defend our Imams, for the legacy they have left us in various fields of knowledge and which is narrated about them is sufficient to acquaint us with the extent of their
knowledge and even superiority over others.

Is it really possible that Ibn Khaldun did not review such legacy of ahadith which reached us through them and recorded by scholars and thinkers and upon which the structure of their school of thought, in which a large section of the nation believes, stood? We doubt it; nay, we

may even be positively sure about the unrealistic nature of such an odd question especially since Ibn Khaldun is one of the most knowledgeable, most highly intellectual, and most mature .writers

Imams and the Persecution of Rulers

The Imams were tested during various periods of their lives by pressing crises due to the trespassing of oppressive rulers on their civil liberties. They pursued their followers and sincere adherents, straitening on them in various aspects of their everyday life, so much so that the word rafidi came to represent in the eyes of the rulers the final indictment of anyone proven to be "guilty" of its context, a believer in its background. Because of that, the chance was lost for many of those who sought knowledge to derive from that leading fountainhead, and the chance to find the scholarly solutions for the intellectual problems because of which they were disturbing their minds. Despite all these pressures and violent trespassing, mankind is not intellectually deprived of a great deal of intellectual masterpieces which the Imams (A.S.) dictated to their students and disciples in various aspects of scholarship.

Some of those students used to give jailers whatever they demanded so that they might agree to carry written questions to the jailed Imam (A.S.) and bring them back his answers thereto, out of their desire to benefit from the presence of the Imam (A.S.), and due to their desire to be faithful to the trust of scholarship, and in order to protect it from the labyrinths of doubt. The biography of the jailed Imam Mousa ibn Ja'fer (A.S.) bears witness to that according to those who quoted him.

Historians and biographers of Imam al-Reza (A.S.) do in fact mention some books authored by the Imam (A.S.) besides his narration of hadith and issues which he dictated to those who asked him and to his close companions who used to frequently question him about the types of knowledge which they could not understand. To positively identify these books as authored .by the Imam (A.S.) may require a convincing evidence which we may not sometimes have

Al-Fiqh al-Radawi

Among those books is Al-Fiqh al-Radawi which was for quite some time the subject of debate among scholars, for there are among them those who considered it to be authored by the Imam (A.S.), relied on it, and established their arguments on such a basis, such as the Majlisis, Sayyid Bahr al-Uloom, the author of Al-Hadaïq, Shaikh al-Nawari, and others. But the large

number of scholars of verification conceded that it could not have been said for sure that it was authored by Imam al-Reza (A.S.) because of the lack of sufficient evidence in addition to their doubt, or the lack of conviction, of the arguments brought forth by those who considered it one of the Imam's works.

The fact that it was not at all common knowledge that that book was authored by the Imam (A.S.) prior to the late time of the Majlisis, in addition to the lack of knowledge of scholars before their time of any information about such an authorship, all of that negates the belief that it was attributed to or personally authored by the Imam (A.S.). There was no reason why that book would not have been famous during the life-time of the Imam (A.S.) especially since the knowledge of the Imam (A.S.) was very well known to everyone, so much so that when he narrated hadith to the scholars of Nishapur, more than twenty thousand scribes wrote it down .there and then, besides others, as scholars of hadith tell us

How the Book Appeared

The story how this book appeared says that a group of the residents of Qum brought a copy with them to Mecca where the ruler-judge (qadi-amir) Sayyid Husain al-Isfahani saw it and testified to its being authored by al-Reza (A.S.) and made a copy of it for himself which he brought to Isfahan. There he showed it to the first (senior) Majlisi who likewise was sure it was authored by the Imam (A.S.) and so was his son the second (junior) Majlisi, and he quoted the ahadith it contained in the volumes of his book Bihar al-Anwar, making the book one of his own book's references, and this is how its fame spread.

In his Introduction to Bihar al-Anwar, al-Majlisi writes, "I was told about the book Fiqh al-Reza by the virtuous traditionist the ruler-judge Husayn, may God be Gracious unto his soul, after coming to Isfahan. He said to me, 'It happened that during the time when I was neighbouring the House of God, a group of the residents of Qum visited me while performing their hajj and they had with them an old book the date of its writing agreed with the date during which al-Reza (A.S.) was alive.'" Then al-Majlisi continues to say, "I heard my father saying that it was in the handwriting of al-Reza (A.S.), and a large number of dignitaries testified to the same."

Sayyid Husayn al-Isfahani said: "Through those evidences, I came to know that it was indeed authored by the Imam (A.S.); therefore, I too the book and made a copy of it and corrected my copy by comparing it with the original, then my father took my copy and made yet another copy of it and compared the copy with the original, and most of its statements agree with what is mentioned by al-Saduq Abu Ja'fer ibn Babawayh in his book Man la Yahdaruhu al Faqih without giving credit to the book, and in agreement with what his father states in his letter to

him. A large number of ahkam which our fellows have mentioned and whose source is
".unknown are mentioned in it

Doubting the Accuracy of Rendering it to the Imam

What makes us doubt the attribution is that Shaikh al-Saduq, who took pains in documenting all the legacies of Imam al-Reza (A.S.) and who researched him in his book 'Uyoon Akhbar al-Reza, and in others, did not mention that he had authored such a book. Also, other scholars who came after him, be it residents of Qum or others, did not mention anything about it, and Sayyid al-Isfahani did not say anything about those pilgrims from Qum who showed him the book as to how they acquired the book, and who the person who was telling its story was. It is also unusual that the book should remain obscure for such a long period of time in the hands of some residents of Qum without any of the city's scholars or traditionists getting to have a look at it, although those scholars were known not to leave anything small or big .without writing it down in order to safeguard it against loss

There are three possibilities regarding the book:

1. That it is authored by the Imam (A.S.) on the account of evidences in it which give that impression such as his statement at its beginning, "Abdullah Ali ibn Mousa al-Reza says...," and "... one of our own customs, we people of the Ahl al-Bayt." In its chapter on zakat, it states, "It is narrated about my father the scholar..." In its chapter on usury, it states, "My father ordered me and I obeyed." In the chapter on hajj, it states: "My father said that Asma daughter of Amees..." It also says, "... my father from my grandfather from his father said: `I saw Ali ibn al-Husayn walking without running."
" It also contains: "I heard the scholar. I heard him say..." "Scholar" is the title of Imam al-Kazim (A.S.), up to the end of such statements which give the impression that the book was his, that he was its author, and they may be the evidences which encouraged many scholars to be positively sure that the book was written by the Imam (A.S.), and to act accordingly.
2. That it was authored by the man's father, whose name happens to be Ali ibn Mousa. He authored it for his son al-Saduq, and it is a compilation of narratives which came through Imam al-Reza (A.S.). This view was tolerated by some scholars, but the word "al-Reza (A.S.)" in the title of the book negates the possibility of its being authored by him except this may be the fault of those who made copies of the book and of the scribes since the complete name of the Imam (A.S.) comes to mind.

3. That it was compiled by Ibn Babawayh, or someone else, which he compiled on behalf of the Imam (A.S.) and in which he recorded the traditions which were narrated about Imam al-Reza (A.S.) and classified them in a way which gives the impression that he was an author for the Imam (A.S.) since the traditions about him are actually his own with only one difference: references of those traditions were eliminated. This may be the best possibility since other possibilities do not say anything about why the book's subject-matters were classified the way .they are

Views of Some Scholars About the Book

Our master mentor Imam al-Khoi has stated that, "It is not proven that it is al-Reza's fiqh by narration, but it contains evidences which point out to its being a collection of fatawa of some ulema, and due to the agreement of most of its contents to the letter Ibn Babawayh wrote to

his son¹; had it been otherwise, al-Saduq would have had to acquaint us with it."

The verifier (muhaqqiq) Mirza Abdullah al-Afandi, in his book Riyad al-'Ulemaa, is positive about the book being the same letter referred to above, adding that the reason for the occurrence of the Imam's name in it is due to the fact that both men share the same first and second names, and this is why it is attributed to the Imam (A.S.).

Sayyid Hassan al-Sadr wrote a dissertation about the lack of evidence (that it was the Imam's), saying in his authorization to Shaikh Agha Bazrag of Tehran that it is the same book authored by Ibn Abu 'Azaqir better known as al-Shalmaghani. Anyhow, attributing the book to the Imam (A.S.) is doubtful enough to almost a firm belief that the book was not authored by him. But the book, although we disagree with our master mentor, may God prolong his shade, in his description of it as a collection of fatawa of some ulema, is no less than a narration whose narrator is anonymous; therefore, we cannot attribute it to the Imam (A.S.) and accept it as a .reference to rely upon for issuing religious verdicts or to know what is Islamically unlawful

Al-Risala al-Dahabiyya fil Tibb

Among such books is Al-Risala al-Dahabiyya fil Tibb (the gold medical dissertation) for which sources are counted reaching sometimes to Muhammad ibn Jumhoor, and sometimes to al-Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Nawfali who was accepted as trustworthy by al-Najjashi who described him as "highly esteemed and trustworthy; he narrated one text about al-Reza (A.S.)," which could be "the gold medical dissertation."

It is possible that the dissertation's fame among scholars, and their consensus in various

centuries that the Imam (A.S.) was its author, and that nobody doubted such an authorship, are enough proofs leading the researcher to comfortably and almost positively conclude that it was indeed from the intellectual output of Imam al-Reza (A.S.) himself

Dissertation Was Authored by the Imam

Despite all of this, we see no reason to doubt that it was authored by the Imam if we apply the criterion generally applied to derive legislative verdicts (ahkam), or to be familiar with the principles of the creed (usool), for in that case there are conditions which are not required here; otherwise, doubt would have necessitated the attribution of authorship to a large number of books due to the lack of a method which would assure us of the reliability of such an attribution. Yet the fame which many verifiers consider as a means towards confirmation can by itself prove to us the accuracy of attributing this dissertation to the Imam (A.S.).

If it is proven for us that al-Najjashi meant this same gold dissertation when he was quoting al-Nawfali saying that he narrated one text from al-Reza (A.S.), the knot would surely be untied. What supports this assumption about al-Najjashi is that some scholars have said that the library of allama al-'Askari in Samarra (Iraq) contains a copy of a manuscript dealing with the medical knowledge of Imam al-Reza (A.S.) narrated by Abu Muhammad al-Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Nawfali², provided there is no other copy by al-Nawfali in which he quotes the Imam (A.S.) other than this dissertation; otherwise, we would be confused and we would not be able to reasonably understand why al-Najjashi did not provide sufficient details about the books which he attributed to their respective authors or narrators, or at least indicate their titles!

This dissertation is one of the most precious pieces of Islamic legacy dealing with the science of medicine. This inclusive, scientific and invaluable dissertation is a summary of a number of medical sciences such as anatomy, biology, physiology, pathology and the science of health care. It provided most of the knowledge related to the science of protective medicine, nutrition, chemistry, and a large portion of other sciences as well.

The Imam (A.S.) sent this dissertation to the caliph al-Mamoon around the year 201 A.H. when medicine was a primitive science and its research was not conducted scientifically but based on practice alone rather than on scientific discoveries, and when the science of bacteriology was not discovered yet, nor was there any significant knowledge of nutritional supplements such as vitamins, or other significant medical discoveries for fighting microbes such as penicillin, streptomycin, oromycin, etc.

On the surface, the dissertation seemed to be very simple in order to be in line with the

mentality of that time, but it is quite deep and complicated in its implications and it needs a scientific study and lengthy researches to unveil its secrets and uncover its treasures, and it should be compared with modern scientific facts.³

Al-Mamoon Evaluated Dissertation

Al-Mamoon was very pleased to receive that dissertation and he expressed how much he cherished it by ordering to have it written down in gold and to be deposited at his "depository of wisdom," thus its name "the gold dissertation." In praising it, al-Mamoon said, "I have reviewed the dissertation of my learned cousin, the loved and virtuous one, the logical physician, which deals with the betterment of the body, the conduct of bathing, the balance of nutrition, and I found it very well organized and one of the best blessings. I carefully studied it, reviewed and contemplated upon it, till its wisdom manifested itself to me, and its benefits became obvious, and it found its place in my heart, so I learned it by heart and I understood it by my mind, for I found it to be a most precious item to post, a great treasure, and a most useful item, so I ordered it to be written in gold due to its being precious, and I deposited it at the depository of wisdom after I had it copied down by the descendants of Hashim, the youths of the nation. Bodies become healthy by balanced diets, and life becomes possible by overcoming disease, and through life wisdom is achieved, and through wisdom Paradise is won, and it is worthy of being safeguarded and treasured, and an object of value and esteem and a reliable physician and a counsellor to refer to and a substance of knowledge in its injunctions and prohibitions. "Because it came out of the house of those who derive their knowledge from the knowledge of the Chosen One (S.A.W.), the missive of the prophets, the proofs of successors to the prophets, the manners of scholars, the cure to the hearts and the sick from among the people of ignorance and blindness..., may God be pleased with them, bless and be merciful to them, the first of them and the last, the young and the old, I showed it to the elite among my closest train who are known for their wisdom, knowledge of medicine, authors of books, those who are counted among the people of knowledge and described with wisdom, and each one of them lauded it and thought highly of it, elevated it with esteem and appreciated it in order to be fair to its author, submitting to him, believing in the wisdom he included therein."⁴

Al-Mamoon Asked the Imam to Write It

The story of this dissertation is that al-Mamoon had a very inquisitive mind eager for knowledge, fond of obtaining more of it. During one of his scientific debates, a group of physicians and philosophers in Nishapur, including Yohanna (John) ibn Masawayh the physician, Jibraeel (Gabriel) ibn Bakhtishoo' the physician, Salih ibn Salhama the Indian philosopher, in addition to others, had gathered. Discussion turned to medicine and how in it the bodies are improved. Al-Mamoon and his attendants were involved in a very lengthy discussion of the subject, and how God created the human body and the contradictory things in it,

the four elements, the harms and benefits of various types of food, while the Imam (A.S.) kept silent and did not take part in any of that. Al-Mamoon, therefore, said to him, "What do you have to say, O father of al-Hassan, in today's subject of our discussion?" Abul-Hassan (A.S.) said, "I have of this the knowledge of what I have personally tested and came to know about its accuracy by experience and by the passage of time in addition to what I was told by my ancestors of what nobody can afford to be ignorant of nor excused for leaving out. I shall compile that with an equal share of what everyone need know."

Al-Mamoon then rushed to Balkh and Abul-Hassan (A.S.) did not accompany him; therefore, al-Mamoon sent him from there a letter asking him to fulfill his promise and make that compilation, so al-Reza (A.S.) wrote him saying:

"In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful; My reliance is upon Allah I have received the letter of the commander of the faithful regarding what he ordered me about acquainting him with what is needed of matters I have tested and heard about foods and drinks, medicines, venesection, blood letting, bathing, poisons, what should be avoided, and other things which manage the health of the body, and I explained what is needed to be done regarding one's own .body, and God is the One Who gives success." After that he initiates the dissertation

Commentaries on the Dissertation

A good number of scholars attempted to write commentaries on the dissertation; here is a partial listing of some of them:

1. Tarjamat al-Alawi lil Tibb al-Radawi by Sayyid Diaud-Din Abul-Rida Fadlallah ibn Ali al-Rawandi (d. 548 A.H.).
2. Tarjamat al-Dhahabiyya by mawla Faydallah 'Usarah al-Tasatturi who was an authority on medicine and astrology during the regime of Fath-Ali Khan. This book was written under the cover of secrecy in about 107 A.H. A handwritten copy of the manuscript dated 1133 A.H. is available at Mishkat Library of the Tehran University.

3. Tarjamat al-Dhahabiyya by Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi. It is available at the private library of the late Sayyid Hassan al-Sadr in Kazimiyya (Iraq).
 4. 'Afiyat al-Bariyya fi Sharh al-Dhahabiyya by Mirza Muhammad Hadi son of Mirza Muhammad Salih al-Shirazi. It was authored during the regime of Sultan Husayn al-Safawi. It is in handwritten manuscript form and it is available at the Sayyid Husayn al-Hamadani Library, Najaf al-Ashraf (Iraq).
 5. Sharh Tibb al-Reza by mawla Muhammad Sharif al-Khatoonabadi. He authored it around 1120 A.H.
 6. Tarjamat al-Dhahabiyya by Sayyid Shamsud-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad Badi' al-Radawi al-Mashhadi. It was finished in 1155 A.H., and it is available at the Shaikh Muhammad Ali Akbar al-Nahawandi library in Khurasan (Iran).
 7. Sharh Tibb al-Reza by Sayyid Abdallah al-Shubbar who died in 1242 A.H. Shaikh al-Nawari mentioned that he saw that copy himself.
 8. Sharh Tibb al-Reza by mawla Muhammad ibn al-Hajj Muhammad Hassan al-Mashhadi who taught at Mashhad and died in 1257 A.H.
 9. Sharh Tibb al-Reza by mawla Nawrooz Ali al-Bastami.
 10. Al-Mahmoodiyya by al-Hajj Kazim al-Moosawi al-Zanjani who died in 1292 A.H. It is in manuscript form and it is available with the author's grandsons.
- There are others besides these scholars who explained and commented on it, revealing what is hidden of its secrets and obscure treasures. Probably the latest person who explained it and conducted a comparative study between its theory and the latest modern scientific discoveries is Dr. Abdul-Sahib Zaini in the "Multaqā al-'Asrayn" series

Sahifat al-Reza

Among those works is Sahifat al-Reza which deals with fiqh. Apparently, it is not confirmed by our famous scholars although the author of Mustadrak al-Wasail described it as "among the well-known books which is relied upon and which no other book, before it or after it, is more esteemed or reliable," and we do not know how realistic some of the judgement issued by the author of this Mustadrak about such an evaluation are. What is unusual is that al-Majlisi, in his Muqaddimat al-Bihar, stated that despite its fame, it is on the level of a lecture rather than a musnad.

But Sayyid al-Amin, in his A'yan mentions an isnad (ascription) related to it alone from Shaikh Abdul-Wasi' al-Yamani al-Zaydi for the copy brought by the said Shaikh from Yemen and published in Damascus. Also, some of its copies contain its ascription to Abu Ali al-Tibrisi, but

Shaikh al-Majlisi says that he does not know anything about that.

Al-Mustadrak states: "The esteemed Mirza Abdallah al-Afandi, in his Riyad al-'Ulema, has compiled all its sources and said, 'Among that is a copy of this Saheefa which I saw at the town of Ardabil, and its sanad was...,' and he goes on to indicate its sanad after that.

But the ascription he mentioned is debatable in as far as his narrators are concerned, and what we opt for regarding the dissertation is that its authenticity is not verified and is not suitable in its context for deciding about ahkam. Suffices us the fact that great scholars and verifiers of past centuries refused to acknowledge its authenticity, refusing also to believe it was authored by the Imam (A.S.); therefore, we have no excuse if we include it among the works of the Imam (A.S.) and his scholarly production.

Mahd al-Islam

Among other works attributed to the Imam (A.S.) is the book titled Mahd al-Islam wa Shara'i ad-Din which is referred to by al-Saduq in his Uyoon from al-Fadl ibn Shathan, but he did not indicate that it was written in response to al-Mamoon's request.⁵

Doubting Its Attribution to the Imam

What appears to us after scrutinizing the list of its ascription is that we cannot rely on its attribution to the Imam simply because some of its narrators are not held reliable. Yet even the style of this dissertation is shaky, with disturbed expressions intermingled in it. This gives us the impression that it is highly unlikely that the Imam (A.S.) dictated it despite its inclusion of some ahkam the upholding to which is not considered obligatory in our school of thought such as making obligatory the qunoot in all five daily prayers, the obligation of sending blessings unto the Prophet (S.A.W.), i.e. salawat, at all places, at sneezing, sacrificial animals, etc., and the obligation of takbir during the Eid al-Fitr prayers after five salawat, during the Eid al-Adha after ten salawat, and at Mina after fifteen salawat, that a woman whose menstrual period continues for eighteen days must not say the daily prayers, but if she became clean before then, she could say them, and if she is not clean till after eighteen days, she would bathe and say her daily prayers and does whatever a woman does during her period.

In his second narrative, he adds to the first one saying, "And he stated in it that the small sins of prophets are forgiven," which is contradictory with the Imam (A.S.) declaring that they are

infallible and do not commit small or big sins.

All of this strengthens our belief that the dissertation was not authored or dictated by the Imam (A.S.), but it contains a nullification of the caliphate of al-Mamoon and other preceding caliphs, calling them misguided and ones who forsook righteousness and guidance, clearly confining the true Imamate to the Twelve Imams (A.S.).

The dissertation also contains a violation of the principle of taqiyya and of its curtain which was upheld by the Imams during their lengthy history. This adds more doubt in the accuracy of the attribution of the dissertation to the Imam (A.S.). What we think to be quite possible is that the dissertation may have been a collection of fatawa (verdicts) of one scholar and his views regarding doctrinal and legislative issues. The lack of order of the dissertation's style and organization in listing subject-matters and their sequence, in addition to the fact that some of its ahkam are simply in disagreement with the established ones, all this leads us to and confirms this possibility

Ajwibat Masail Ibn Sinan

(Or "Answers to ibn Sinan's Queries") What may be described as works by the Imam (A.S.) are his answers to questions put forth to him by Ibn Sinan. But this cannot be described as a book authored by the Imam (A.S.); otherwise, the collection of his answers to the questions of many others, which deal with various fields of knowledge and scholarship, must be described likewise

Ilal Ibn Shahzaan'

Also, the (Imam's answers to) ailments about which Ibn Shahzaan had asked him cannot be considered as a book he authored, as some scholars concluded, since they were organized by Ibn Shahzaan himself though they were derived from the knowledge of Imam al-Reza (A.S.) and his answers to the questions about ailments. For this reason, we find Ibn Shahzaan presenting those ailments in a problem and a solution format, and we do not know whether the texts he mentioned were the exact answers of the Imam (A.S.) verbatim or not, for it is quite possible that he presented them in his own personal style while maintaining the essence of the idea which the Imam (A.S.) presented in his answer, which we think was the case

Summary

From what we have discussed honestly and frankly regarding the authenticity of the books which were attributed to have been authored by the Imam (A.S.), it becomes clear that the only book which we dare to describe as authored by the Imam (A.S.) is Al-Risala al-Dhahabiyya fil Tibb which he wrote in response to caliph al-Mamoon's request. This does not mean at all that the other books attributed to him did not carry views and theories which he had dictated to those who questioned him about this and that, or to those who were seeking his supreme fountainhead of knowledge, and our discussion is only in form, not in context and substance

Notes:

- 1 Al-Muhadarat fi al-Fiqh al-Ja'feri by al-Sayyid al-Shahroodi, "Report on Imam al-Khoi's Lecture," Vol. 1, p. 7
- 2 Tibb al-Reza ("Medicine of al-Reza"), "Multaqqa al-'Asrayn" series, issue number 2, p. 130
- 3 Ibid., pp. 19-20
- 4 A'yan al-Shi'a, Vol. 4, pp. 2, 143 and 144
- 5 Uyoon Akhbar al-Reza, Vol. 2, p. 121