

Thematic Analysis of the Political-Social Functions of the Imam in the Hadiths of Imam Reza (A.S.)

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Article info

Abstract

Article type:

Research Article

Received:

24 November 2024

In Revised form:

12 January 2025

Accepted:

18 January 2025

Published:

26 February 2025

This research aims to explain the position of the institution of Imamate in the social and political spheres by analyzing the socio-political functions of the Imam within the discourse of Imam Reza (peace be upon him). The underlying assumption of this study is that the Imam, as the executor of divine will, not only did not abandon his role in the public sphere but actively and proactively shouldered the responsibility of guiding and governing society. The central question is to identify and extract these functions from the narrative texts left by Imam Reza (peace be upon him), thereby providing a theoretical model for the Imam's agency in the world and revealing the capacities of this divine institution to address the needs of human societies. The research methodology is qualitative and employs "thematic analysis". This method, focusing on narrative texts, extracts, organizes, and analyzes basic, organizing, and global themes, and by drawing a coherent network of inter-thematic connections, leads to the structuring of a model. The research findings, based on the thematic analysis of the hadiths of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), identify four fundamental functions of the Imam in the socio-political arena: First, the function of invitation and spirituality-creation, which is tasked with explaining and promoting religious foundations. Second, the executive-legislative function, based on which the Imam is the executor and establisher of the Shari'ah within society. Third, the management and leadership function, which establishes the Imam as the central axis for administering and managing the social order. And fourth, the function of providing order and security, which guarantees the survival and stability of society under religious governance. Collectively, these four functions outline a coherent framework of the Imam's key roles, which can provide a suitable theoretical basis for redefining religious governance in contemporary Islamic societies.

Keywords: Razavi Hadiths, Functions of the Imam, Islamic Society, Thematic Analysis, Political Conduct.



Reference: Emami, Mohammad & Behrouzi Lak, Gholamreza. (2024). A Thematic Analysis of the Political-Social Functions of the Imam in the Narrations of Imam Reza (A.S.). *Imam Reza (A.S.) and Contemporary Sciences*. 2(6). 6-35.

Publisher: Imam Reza (A.S.) International University

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijs.2025.427000.1048>



1. Introduction

Imamate ,as a fundamental pillar of Shi'a thought ,is not merely a doctrinal position but an influential institution within the social and political spheres of Islamic society .A correct understanding of the various dimensions of this divine institution, especially in the social and political arenas ,is essential to the Shi'a intellectual system .This research aims to explain the position of the institution of Imamate in the social and political spheres by analyzing the socio-political functions of the Imam within the discourse of Imam Reza(A.S).

The primary research problem is to identify and extract these functions from the narrative texts(Hadith)remaining from Imam Reza(A.S) ,in order to present a theoretical model for the Imam's agency in the world and to reveal the capacities of this divine institution for responding to the needs of human societies .Contrary to minimalist views that introduce the Imam solely as a religious scholar and deny his involvement in social ,political ,and administrative affairs ,this research emphasizes the Imam's active and proactive role in guiding and governing society.

2. Research Objectives

The central question of this research is :From the perspective of Imam Reza(A.S). what functions does the existence of the Imam have for society ,and what do these functions encompass ?The subsidiary objectives are:

To systematically extract themes related to the functions of the Imam from Razavi narrations.

To map the network of themes and identify inter-thematic relationships.

To present a structured model of the Imam's functions in the socio-political sphere.

To provide a reasoned response to views that deny the socio-political role of the Imam.

To explain the real position of the Imam in society and demonstrate the various dimensions of his role.

To provide theoretical foundations for redefining religious governance in contemporary Islamic societies.

3. Methodology

The chosen research method is the qualitative method of "Thematic Analysis".

This method has been used as a systematic approach for identifying ,analyzing ,and

presenting latent patterns within qualitative data .Thematic analysis is considered an efficient process for analyzing texts ,transforming non-centralized and heterogeneous data into deep and structured information .The statistical population of the research consisted of narrations transmitted from Imam Reza(A.S). in reliable sources such as‘ Uyun Akhbar al-Rida and Musnad al-Rida ,from which twenty narrations were selected and analyzed using a purposive sampling method .The analysis process was conducted at three levels :extraction of basic themes ,identification of organizing themes ,and finally ,extraction of global themes.

The theoretical framework of the research is based on the“ Theory of Imamate in Shi’a Thought ”with an emphasis on” Socio-Political Functionalism “.Within this framework ,Imamate is defined not only as a divinely appointed position and succession to the Prophet ,but as an influential institution in organizing the social, political ,and cultural affairs of Islamic society.

4. Findings

Based on the thematic analysis of the narrations of Imam Reza(A.S).four fundamental functions for the Imam in the socio-political sphere have been identified:

1.The Function of Invitation(Da’wah)and Spirituality-Creation :The Imam acts as the one who invites people to religion and spirituality ,explains divine knowledge, and guides society towards absolute perfection .This function is manifested in narrations such as” He invites to the way of his Lord “and” The inviter to God “.By combining eloquent speech and an exemplary practical conduct ,the Imam guides in such a way that it directs truth-seekers to the pure spring of knowledge.

2.The Executive-Legislative Function :The Imam is the executor and establisher of the Shari’ah within the fabric of society .This role includes establishing divine limits ,executing legal rulings ,and institutionalizing religious obligations .Narrations such as” He establishes the limits of God “and“ The enactment of limits and rulings ”emphasize this function .The Imam ,as the one upholding God’s command on earth ,undertakes the responsibility of establishing divine limits in society.

3.The Function of Management and Leadership :The Imam ,as the central pivot for administering and managing the social system ,possesses the ability to manage society and has knowledge of political affairs .Narrations such as“ Charged with Imamate” ”,Knowledgeable in statecraft “,and the simile of the Imam as“ a pillar in the middle of a tent ”illustrate this role .The Imam is a capable manager and ad

ministrator who possesses the competence to administer various spheres of society.

4. The Function of Providing Order and Security :The Imam is the guarantor of the survival and stability of society under religious governance .This function includes protecting borders ,safeguarding Islamic identity ,and creating social peace .Narrations such as” He prevents them from transgression “and“ Indeed ,the guardian of the Muslims is like the pillar ”emphasize this responsibility .In addition to ensuring internal security and safeguarding the identity and essence of the society ,the Imam is also responsible for protecting the borders against external threats.

The mapped thematic network shows that these four functions coherently outline the key roles of the Imam in society .Each of these functions has various dimensions addressed in numerous narrations.

5. Conclusion

This research demonstrates that Imamate is a living ,dynamic institution responsive to the needs of society in all spheres .From the perspective of Imam Reza(A.S). the Imam is at the forefront of social actors ,and his existential philosophy necessitates that he plays a central and decisive role in all social and political arenas .The absence of the Imam places both the religion and the worldly affairs of people in danger and peril.

The four identified functions—Invitation and Spirituality-Creation ,Executive-Legislative ,Management and Leadership ,and Providing Order and Security—collectively outline a coherent system of the Imam’s key roles .These functions show that the Imam is not confined to the realm of spirituality and worship but also acts as the manager of society and a builder of civilization .The model extracted from this research can provide a suitable theoretical basis for redefining religious governance in contemporary Islamic societies.

Suggestions:

This model be examined comparatively in future research focusing on other Imams(A.S)

The practical capabilities of these functions be studied for designing a contemporary Islamic political system.

The theoretical foundations of this research be developed in interdisciplinary fields such as the sociology of religion and political management .Furthermore ,it should be investigated how these functions can be realized under different historical and social conditions.

This research is a step towards explaining the comprehensiveness of the theory of Imamate and its capacities for addressing the complex challenges of contemporary societies .It shows that Imamate is not an isolated institution but an active and influential one in all aspects of individual and social life.

Keywords: Functions of the Imam ,Islamic Society ,Political Conduct(Sirah)Imam Reza(A.S).Theory of Imamate ,Religious Governance.