



Print ISSN 2891-040X
Onlin ISSN 2891-1341
ijs.imamreza.ac.ir

Imam Reza (A.S.) and Contemporary Sciences



Center for Applied Research in Religious
Propagation and Education

Understanding the Political Thought and Conduct of Imam Reza (A.S.) with Emphasis on the Perspective of the Supreme Leader

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Article info

Abstract

Article type:

Research Article

Received:

23 August 2024

In Revised form:

8 October 2024

Accepted:

16 November 2024

Published:

20 Desember 2024

This research examines the understanding of the political thought and conduct of Imam Reza (A.S.), with emphasis on the perspectives of the Supreme Leader. By posing the central question, "How did Imam Reza (A.S.) interact with Al-Ma'mun's policies after accepting the position of Crown Prince, and what were the constant principles of his political struggle within the framework of spatio-temporal conditions?", this article analyzes the Imam's behavior and political stances against the Abbasid rule. The research method employed in this study is descriptive-analytical, based on data collection from library sources and reliable historical and hadith texts. The findings indicate that Imam Reza (A.S.), with a deep understanding of the critical situation of his time, upon the forced acceptance of the crown princehood, never recognized the legitimacy of Al-Ma'mun's government. By setting conditions such as non-interference in executive affairs, he neutralized the conspiracy to legitimize Al-Ma'mun's rule. Furthermore, he utilized this position to explain the issue of Imamate, expand the communication network with the Shiites, and expose the true nature of the Abbasid rule. Ultimately, his conduct presents a model of wise political struggle and active resistance within the framework of apparent interaction.

Keywords: Imam Reza (A.S.), Al-Ma'mun, Political Struggle, Crown Princehood, Abbasid Rule



Reference: Sazandegi, Mohammad Taghi; Safari Foroshani, Nematallah. (2024). Understanding the Political Thought and Conduct of Imam Reza (A.S.) with Emphasis on the Perspective of the Supreme Leader. *Imam Reza (A.S.) and Cotemporary Sciences*, 2(5), 31-62.

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

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijs.2025.426572.1042>



1. Introduction

The Imamate of Imam Reza (A.S.) coincided with one of the most complex and critical periods in Islamic history—the caliphate of the most capable Abbasid caliph, Al-Ma'mun. Al-Ma'mun's political position was extremely fragile due to internal conflicts with his brother, Al-Amin, and successive uprisings by the Alids. In such an atmosphere, Al-Ma'mun, by devising a strategic plan, moved the capital of the caliphate to Marv and, through insistence and threat, imposed the position of crown prince (wali al-'ahd) upon Imam Reza (A.S.). This seemingly friendly gesture was, in essence, a multi-faceted political maneuver aimed at legitimizing the illegitimate Abbasid rule, politically disarming the Imam, curbing the Alid uprisings, and gradually separating him from his popular base. Recognizing the importance of this critical juncture, this research delves into the political conduct (sirah) and thought of Imam Reza (A.S.) in confronting this intricate conspiracy. Relying on the analytical perspectives of the Supreme Leader as a complementary framework, it endeavors to reinterpret the Imam's strategy of interaction and resistance.

2. Research Objectives

The overarching goal of this research is to elucidate the political thought and conduct of Imam Reza (A.S.) in his encounter with the Abbasid rule, focusing on the period of the crown princehood and emphasizing the viewpoints of the Supreme Leader. The specific objectives of the research are:

To analyze the motives and hidden objectives of Al-Ma'mun behind proposing the crown princehood.

To explain the political strategy of Imam Reza (A.S.) regarding the imposition of the crown princehood and his apparent interaction with the caliphal apparatus.

To identify the constant principles of the Imam's political struggle within the framework of the spatiotemporal conditions of his era.

To examine the practical methods employed by the Imam to utilize the position of crown princehood for explaining the Imamate and expanding Shi'ism.

To present a practical model based on the Imam's sirah, informed by the analyses of the Supreme Leader, for confronting illegitimate political systems.

3. Methodology

This research has been conducted using a descriptive-analytical method with a library-based approach. The required data was collected through the study and anal-

ysis of primary historical and hadith sources (such as *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida*, *Usul al-Kafi*, *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*) as well as contemporary analytical sources. The theoretical framework of the research is based on the "Theory of Imamate" in Shi'ism, which emphasizes the infallible leadership of the Imams (A.S.) and concepts such as "denying the legitimacy of oppressive rule," "dissimulation (taqiyyah)," and "wise political struggle." In this regard, the statements and analyses of the Supreme Leader have been used as a complementary part of the analytical framework. Content analysis technique was employed for data analysis, and narrations and historical reports were scrutinized with a critical approach, adhering to the principles of textual and chain criticism.

4. Findings

The findings of this research, extracted by citing reliable sources, indicate the following:

Conditional and Forced Acceptance of the Crown Princehood: Imam Reza (A.S.) only accepted the crown princehood under the threat of assassination and by stipulating the condition of "non-interference in the appointment/dismissal of officials and executive affairs," they neutralized Al-Ma'mun's plan for legitimization at its inception. They explicitly declared that they had accepted this position under duress.

Strategy of "Active Resistance within the Framework of Apparent Interaction": While present in the caliphal court, the Imam did not accept any executive responsibility and did not defend any of the government's actions. This stance demonstrated a model of passive resistance and political disarmament of the ruling power.

Utilizing the Position for Propaganda: The Imam used this position to achieve their lofty goals. Reciting the Hadith of the Golden Chain in Nishapur, expanding the communication network with the Shi'a, holding scientific debates, and explaining the issue of Imamate on a wide scale were among their most important actions, which strengthened the Shi'ite movement.

Explicit and Revelatory Positions: Despite being in the court, Imam Reza (A.S.) did not refrain from stating truths and criticizing Al-Ma'mun's performance. In response to the proposal of the caliphate itself, they challenged the legitimacy of Al-Ma'mun's rule with a compelling argument and, on various occasions, reminded others of its usurping nature.

Model of Interaction Based on Prophetic *Sirah*: The Imam’s symbolic actions, such as taking the oath of allegiance (*bay’ah*) in the manner of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and preparing to lead the Eid prayer according to the method of the Imams (A.S.), emphasized the authenticity and continuity of the Prophetic *sirah* in their practice, standing in contrast to the methods of the Abbasid rulers.

The Failure of Al-Ma’mun’s Conspiracy through the Imam’s Divine Prudence: Contrary to Al-Ma’mun’s goal, the period of Imam Reza’s (A.S.) crown princehood not only did not lead to the weakening of Shi’ism but became a golden era for its expansion and intellectual-social influence, ultimately causing the complex conspiracy of the Abbasid caliph to fail.

5. Conclusion

The political *sirah* of Imam Reza (A.S.) during the period of the crown princehood embodies a wise model of “active resistance within the framework of apparent interaction.” With a deep understanding of the critical conditions and relying on the foundations of Imamate, they were able to neutralize Al-Ma’mun’s conspiracy for legitimization and political disarmament by conditionally accepting the crown princehood under duress. Simultaneously, they effectively utilized this position to advance their divine goals, including explaining the Imamate, spreading pure Shi’ite teachings, and strengthening the network of followers. The perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei, as an analytical framework, emphasizes the Imam’s intelligence, clarity, and refusal to compromise even while interacting, and introduces this *sirah* as a practical model for struggling against illegitimate political systems in all eras.

Practical Applications and Suggestions:

Delineating a Model of Political Struggle: The *sirah* of Imam Reza (A.S.) can serve as a model for truth-seeking movements and resistance against tyrannical and arrogant governments.

Explaining an Islamic Lifestyle: The Imam’s practical stances in rejecting a lavish lifestyle and emphasizing simplicity, even while holding the position of crown prince, offer profound lessons for officials and society.

Strengthening Historical Insight: This research helps strengthen the historical insight of the Shi’a community regarding how to preserve identity and advance goals under the most difficult circumstances.

Suggestions for Future Research:

A comparative study of the political *sirah* of Imam Reza (A.S.) with other Imams (A.S.) in their encounters with the ruling powers of their time.

A detailed examination of the cultural and scientific dimensions of the period of Imam Reza's (A.S.) crown princehood and its impact on Islamic civilization.

A more precise analysis of the role and positions of the specific companions of Imam Reza (A.S.) during this sensitive period.

A case study on how to apply the model of the Razavi *sirah* in contemporary Shi'a societies.

Keywords: Imam Reza (A.S.), Al-Ma'mun, Political Struggle, Crown Princehood, Abbasid Rule, Ayatollah Khamenei.