
The Najaf Ḥawzah Curriculum¹

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Abstract

Najaf has been the cradle of Shi'ī learning for many centuries. According to Najaf tradition, it has been so ever since the prominent scholar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, called shaykh al-tā'ifa or "senior scholar of the the sect", migrated there shortly after the Saljuq conquest of Baghdad in 447/1055.

We have very little information about the teaching system and curriculum in Najaf before the nineteenth century. In this essay, I will try to present the basic elements of a Najaf ḥawza education as they exist in contemporary Iraq and compare it with a Najaf curriculum of 1913. Quite remarkably, the curriculum, teaching methods and patronage networks have been remarkably stable over the last century. Politics and reform movements have, however, had their effects on the curriculum too, as I shall explain in the course of this essay.

The contemporary curriculum given below is well described in an excellent book by 'Abd al-Ḥādī al-Ḥakīm published in 2007.² Some preference may be shown to the curriculum of the Madrasa al-Ḥakīm, as the author belongs to the family of the founder of this *madrasa*. Over twenty *madrasas* are part of al-Ḥawzah al-'Ilmīya at Najaf. (See Appendix C.)

The curriculum begins with the study of Arabic grammar. The *Alfiya* by Ibn Mālik who died in 672/1274, which usually gets memorised from intensive study, remains the primary text. The slightly easier *Ājurrūmīya* of the North African scholar Ibn Ājurrūm (d. 723/1323), is also studied at Najaf (though seldom, if ever, used at Qum).

At the first level, *al-muqaddamāt*, two rhetoric works of the great Eastern scholar al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390), *Mukhtaṣār al-Ma'ānī* and his *Muṭawwal* are occasionally used. One innovation in the curriculum is the addition of the very popular work on logic of Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muzaffar (d. 1383/1964), commonly called *al-Mantiq*. Some go on to study commentaries on the long favoured traditional logic called *al-Risāla al-Shamsīya* by Najm al-Dīn 'Alī al-Kātībī (d. 693/1276).

The fourth area of elementary study is theology, using *Sharḥ al-Bāb al-Ḥādī 'Ashar*, which is the commentary of Miqdād as-Suyūrī (d. 826/1423) on a work by 'Allāmah al-Ḥillī

¹The first version of this paper was a lecture delivered in 2009 at the British Academy through the kind offices of Professor Robert Gleave of Exeter University. The version given here was prepared in January 2011 and does not discuss developments after that date. I thank my colleague Professor Intisar Rabb for her very thorough proof-reading of this article.

²*Ḥawza al-Najaf al-Ashraf: al-Niẓām wa-mashārī' al-iṣlāh*, 1428/2007.

(d. 726/1326), itself a commentary on a part of the brilliant *Tajrīd al-Aqā'id* of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274).

These works are called *muqaddamāt*, which means ‘preliminary’ disciplines for the study of subsequent subjects. The more difficult of these books, however, might not be studied in the preliminary phase of study.

The middle level of study, rather unusually called *suṭūḥ* ‘surfaces’, meaning the word-by-word study of set texts, begins with one of the practical manuals of law issued by one of the *marāji'*, the highest Shī'ī authorities on the law. Teaching such works has long been the custom in Najaf, perhaps to guarantee the correctness of advice given by ulema who do not continue their education to higher levels. It has recently been introduced in Iran. A useful traditional book for introducing *fiqh* is *al-Mukhtaṣar al-Nāfi'* by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī (d. 676/1277). After that, the student is introduced to the *Sharā'i' al-Islām* by the same al-Ḥillī, one of the first compendious works on Shī'ī *fiqh*. It established the basic divisions of Shī'ī law, most of which have stood the test of time. The great and voluminous commentary on this work, much consulted by students and teachers, is the *Jawāhir al-kalām* by Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī (d. 1266/1849), the forty-six volumes of which are sometimes considered the greatest published work on Shī'ī *fiqh*. The author is known to students as Ṣāḥib al-Jawāhir, the “master of the Jawāhir”, and the great twentieth-century Iraqi poet al-Jawāhirī is one of his descendants.

The first book in *uṣūl al-fiqh* used to be *Ma'ālim al-dīn* by Shaykh Ḥasan (d. 1011/1602), son of Zayn al-Dīn b. 'Alī, called al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 965/1558), a scholar from Jabal 'Āmil. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, the famous twentieth-century Najafī jurist-scholar, tried twice to replace this book. His first attempt, *al-Ma'ālim al-jadīda*, is still worth study, but was never widely adopted as a textbook. His second attempt, *Durūs fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, is a brilliant book. Strangely, while it has come to dominate the elementary teaching of *uṣūl* in Qum, the teachers of Najaf have preferred the *Uṣūl al-fiqh* of Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, first published in 1966, because of its extreme clarity. The Ḥawza in Qum believes that the work of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr raises subtle points missed by al-Muẓaffar. In general, the Ḥawza in Najaf considers itself deeper in *fiqh*, while that of Qum considers itself deeper in jurisprudence proper (*uṣūl*). The rivalry between the two institutions is somewhat reminiscent of the rivalry between Harvard and Yale, or Oxford and Cambridge.

At this level of study, students gain some acquaintance with arithmetic, which is considered essential to mastering inheritance law. They also acquire a very considerable knowledge of the science of verifying transmitters and transmission of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet and the Imams, in particular through study of the vast work of *ḥadīth* called *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* written by al-Hurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1112/1700). Another *fiqh* book that is carefully studied is *al-Rawḍa al-bahīya fī sharḥ al-Lum'a al-Dimashqīya* by al-Shahīd al-Thānī previously mentioned. This work is characterised by its careful use of inference from the sources of law and the variety of opinions it gives on disputed points of law.

After the *Rawḍa*, the students begin *al-Makāsib*, the epoch-making work of nineteenth-century Shī'ī jurisprudence by Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī (d. 1281/1864) which, while containing a great deal of practical law, is extremely innovative in its use of jurisprudential theory. This work was so widely influential that we can speak of “the school of al-Anṣārī” which dominates the Najaf *Ḥawza* right down to the present. His expansion of jurisprudence dealt

mostly with the procedural principles, *al-uṣūl al-‘amalīya*, and led to a restructuring of the law in the area of transactions. A number of other works may be studied along with, or after, *al-Makāsib*. By far the most important of these is the master work on jurisprudence proper, *Kifāyat al-uṣūl* by Ākhūnd-i Khurāsānī (d. 1329/1911).

For those interested in philosophy and *kalām* – an interest not much encouraged by some past *marāji‘* in Najaf – the works of Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, d. 1050/1641) are sometimes read. Philosophically-inclined students nowadays often read *Bidāyat al-ḥikma* and *Nihāyat al-ḥikma* of the great Qur’ān commentator ‘Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1981).³

We have a survey of the set texts used in Najaf in 1913 (See Appendix A).⁴ Two-thirds of the books I have mentioned were in use at that time, although a different set of texts was more favoured in 1913 than at present. It will be noticed that many of the more advanced books of 1913 were written in the nineteenth century when Shī‘ī jurisprudence underwent a great transformation. It is interesting to note that several of these works were written in the Arab world in the period from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries, when among Shī‘īs *ijtihād* came more into favour. Such works include books of the al-Ḥillīs and of Fāḍil al-Miqdād and of both al-Shahīd al-Thānī and his son Shaykh Ḥasan. The rise of the popularity of the books of Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar and the overwhelming influence of Ākhūnd-i Khurāsānī stand out as major changes in the Najaf curriculum.

Two autobiographical accounts from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century give us an idea of the texts and the methods of teaching in use at that time. One of these accounts is by the Lebanese Shī‘ī scholar, Muḥsin al-Amīn, who arrived in Najaf in 1891. There he studied the following books:

a commentary [presumably *al-Rawḍa al-bahīyaḥ*, mentioned above] on the *Lum‘a al-Qawānīn* by Mīrzā Abū’l-Qāsim Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Jilānī
al-Rāsā’il of Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī
al-Kifāya by Ākhūnd-i Khurāsānī
Miṣbāḥ al-faqīh by Riḍā ibn Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī (d. 1322/1904).⁵

Interestingly, all of these books except the last, which was never completed, are still in use.

At approximately the same time, the Iranian scholar Āqā-Najafī Qūchānī went to Najaf. He mentions many teachers but few books. These books are:

al-Rāsā’il of Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī
al-Kifāya by Ākhūnd-i Khurāsānī

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 89–100, although on pp. 449–451 are listed the statistics for students registering and students actually taking exams in the major texts. For example, for the *Kifāya* of Khurāsānī, perhaps the most difficult advanced set text, in 1427 AH, 54 registered for the exam and 31 actually sat the exam (p. 452). See Appendix B for a 2010 version of an abstract Shī‘ī Ḥawza curriculum, not specific to Najaf.

⁴ Sabrina Mervin includes the 1913 book list in her outstanding article, “La quête du savoir à Najaf,” *Studia Islamica* 81 (1995), pp. 179–180, without, however, fully identifying the dates of the authors and the full titles of the books.

⁵ Muḥsin al-Amīn has been the subject of several very fine studies by Sabrina Mervin, including an outstanding translation along with Haytham al-Amīn, of his autobiography: *Autobiographique d’un clerc chiite du Jabal ‘Āmil* (Damascus, 1998). See pp. 179–180 for the books he studied in Najaf.

Sharḥ Maṭāli‘ al-anwār fī ‘ilm al-manṭiq by Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Rāzī al-Taḥṭānī (d. 766/1364).⁶

This third book, which is on logic, is no longer in general use.

To some extent these books form part of the shared intellectual endeavour of *madrasa* learning in the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires. All three empires were heirs to the Timurid ‘renaissance’, in which Taftāzānī and Sayyid Shārif Jurjānī played important roles. As Francis Robinson has pointed out, not only did they contribute books to the curriculum but they also wrote commentaries on earlier books of grammar, rhetoric and logic, such as the *Shamsīya*, which encouraged the canonisation of these books among later generations.⁷

After the set texts, students begin the stage called *al-baḥṭh al-khārij*. In this stage the teacher speaks from a raised bench and pursues for several weeks or months a subject not necessarily treated in the textbooks. He gives a survey of views that support or contradict his own, which he presents last, with the arguments and proofs that he considers decisive. After his talk, students question him and the discussion can become so heated that the professor has to demand quiet. Some few teachers did not encourage much disputation, such as Ayatollah al-Khū‘ī, who taught *al-baḥṭh al-khārij* for sixty years with four to five hundred students at his lectures.⁸ An interesting anecdote of an earlier period concerns the leading Sunnī authority of the Ottoman Empire, the Shaykh al-Islām of Istanbul. He went to visit the Ḥawza some time before al-Khurāsānī’s death in 1911. Although al-Khurāsānī’s lectures were thronged by up to two thousand listeners, the students made way for the Shaykh al-Islām to sit in front. Khurāsānī took a maxim from Abū Ḥanīfa, the great Sunnī jurist whose tomb in Baghdad the Shaykh al-Islām had just visited. He offered the visitor the lecturer’s bench, but the offer was declined.⁹ The anecdote illustrates the freedom of the teacher of *al-khārij* to choose his approach to the general topic of his lectures.

Methods of Teaching

The methods of teaching throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Najaf have remained largely traditional, although outside influences, principally from the civil educational system, have caused significant changes. Many contemporary *madrasas* offer hourly classes for the elementary and intermediate texts, in a model clearly taken from civil education. The *ḥalqa* or ‘circle’ which surrounds the teacher is still the usual method for teaching set texts. Sometimes the most favoured students sit nearest the teacher, and in theory any of the students can raise objections at any point. When the lesson is finished and the teacher has left, the students often pair up to review the explanations offered by the teacher. Serious students write down the lesson every day and may carry it to the professor for review. If the teacher finds such study notes outstanding, he may authorise their publication.

⁶ Āqā-Najafī Qūchānī, *Siyāhat-i Sharq u Gharb* (Qum, 1377), pp. 201, 225, 227, 234.

⁷ Francis Robinson, “Ottomans–Safavids–Mughals: Shared knowledge and connective systems”, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 8:2 (1997), pp. 151–184 (especially p. 155). Many of these texts are also met with in Khaled El-Rouayheb, “Opening the gate of verification: The forgotten Arab-Islamic florescence of the 17th century”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38 (2006), pp. 263–281.

⁸ Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥakīm, *Ḥawza al-Najaf*, pp. 120–121.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, many of the stages of education coincided with stages in recognition of the adulthood of the student. The upbringing of a young Muslim boy rested with his mother up to age six, when he started to go to the public bath with his father instead of his mother. At about the same age, he begins to accompany his father to visit male relatives and receive them at home. It was also around the sixth year that Muslim boys were introduced to the traditional system of education. Such education took place in Qur'ān schools, in which the sacred text was taught word by word with little grammatical explanation. Children brought up in this system have described to me their initial sense of being at sea and then experiencing a sudden leap of understanding. When the student went on to the Ḥawza at age ten to fourteen, roughly the age of puberty, a somewhat similar situation obtained: again a sense of being at sea with extraordinarily abstruse texts, and, for the more able students, a sudden leap of understanding about the subject matter.

Incidentally, a fair number of teachers in Qur'ān schools were women both for pre-pubescent boys and girls. In villages boys and girls were sometimes even taught together in the same school. In contrast, the Ḥawza corresponds to a period in which men and women (who are not related) are kept strictly divided from each other. Many Ḥawza students who formerly lived at home would now live in the all-male or all-female atmosphere of Ḥawza dormitories.

Students had comparative freedom in choosing with whom to study the set texts and, in agreement with the premodern educational system of the Middle East, a pupil usually needed written permission, the *ijāza*, before he could teach a book to others. Unlike the secular system in both the Middle East and in the West, the *ḥawza* system recognises achievements text by text and, in this way, allows middle-level students many opportunities to teach and therefore to support themselves as *madrassa* teachers while continuing their education.

In both past and present great respect is shown to the teacher. Sometime lifelong bonds of affection join pupil and teacher. Although the subject matters of the books vary considerably, there is a fairly consistent use of technical terminology. To give a very simple example: grammar, law, and theology all organise their subject into 'roots' (*uṣūl*) and 'branches' (*furū'*). Many of the subjects studied present the material in schemata which lead the student up decision trees to the branch which determines the solution to a problem. This technique is much used in *uṣūl al-fiqh* or jurisprudence proper.

Nowadays almost all Iraqi students have received some degree of state-sponsored education before they arrive at the Ḥawza. There is also some accommodation to the difficulty in understanding the set texts. The very much simplified and clear exposition of Ḥawza subjects offered by contemporary writers such as the Saudi Shī'ī author Shaykh 'Abd al-Hādī Faḍlī eases the path of students. Nevertheless, the traditional set texts can be extremely difficult. The Ḥawza atmosphere continues to be all male or all female.

It is interesting to note that in contrast with many Sunnī systems of education, memorisation is not formally required, although many basic texts will in the end be thoroughly committed to memory. Another contrast with most living Sunnī traditions of education is the strong emphasis on dialectic and disputation (*jadāl* and *munāzara*) in class as the most respected achievement of students. In the most elegant uses of disputation, one shows that the opponent's position leads to an infinite regress or a vicious circle. There are many stories of teachers ceding their position to more able students. The famous Shaykh

Wahīd al-Bihbihānī, considered by Shī'īs to be the *mujaddid* or 'renewer' of the thirteenth Hijrī century, retired from the *marja'īya* in his later years and referred questions to his leading students. The prominent mullah Sa'īd al-'Ulamā' al-Māzandarānī, even though he had many followers, wrote to Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī: "What makes you different from me is your preoccupation with research (*baḥth*) and writing. I have given that up! Therefore you are more learned than I and it is religiously incumbent upon the *īā'ifa* to emulate you and entrust you with *marja'īya* in their affairs".¹⁰

This passage brings us to the question of the *marja' al-taqlīd*, a term usually translated as 'source of imitation' but most correctly understood as 'point of authoritative reference in matters of behaviour and belief'. Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī is usually considered the first *marja'* accepted by the great majority of the Shī'ī world, although lists of *marja'*s going back to al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067), founder of the Najaf Ḥawza, are often met with. The informality by which a person is recognised as 'the most learned' and therefore the *marja'īya* has concerned many reformers of the Najaf Ḥawza. Preeminent among these is Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (d. 1980), who called for a council of *marja'*s, a point of view also supported by the Iranian mullah Mortaza Motahheri. This proposal failed. However, Ṣadr did succeed in making some of his books, such as *Iqtisādunā* ("Our Economy"), the subject of study circles and in this sense achieved his goal of making the teaching of the Ḥawza more relevant to contemporary life.

An earlier and more modest effort was begun by Shaykh Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, who favored a partial integration of the Ḥawza into the national university system by establishment of the Kullīya al-Fiqh. In 1935 he and several like-minded mullahs established the Club for Publication (*Muntadā al-Nashr*). Interestingly, this group included Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Ṣadr. Its aim was to publish works in a style less archaic than that used in the textbooks at the Ḥawza. Towards the end of the 1930s Muẓaffar established a religious college called Kullīya al-Fiqh, which in 1957 was recognised by the Ministry of Education. Overt opposition to this institution among the ulama of the Ḥawza ceased when Ayatollah al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1946) indicated his acceptance of it.¹¹

Another dramatic change in the life of the Ḥawza took place when Muḥammad Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Ṣadr, a graduate of the Kullīya al-Fiqh and son of the founder mentioned above, was allowed limited access to the Iraqī media to publish and broadcast his sermons in the 1980s. At the time the *marja'īya* of Ayatollah Abū'l-Qāsim al-Khū'ī was powerful and widespread in Iraq. Nevertheless, Muḥammad Ṣadr put himself forward as a *marja'* and a nationalistic element in the regime of Saddam Hussein welcomed the presence of an 'Iraqī *marja'*' in contrast with the so-called 'Persian' *marja'*s of the past, including Khū'ī. On the death of Khū'ī in 1992, although Khū'ī had clearly recognised the Iranian-born 'Alī al-Sīstānī as his successor and the majority of Ḥawza teachers had accepted him, a large popular element began to follow Ṣadr, who revived the practice of preaching sermons at the Friday prayer, a custom strictly forbidden by the senior Shī'ī clergy of Iraq for centuries. Ṣadr's Friday sermons on the radio with their admixture of colloquial Arabic and repeated chanting of slogans by his congregations were broadcast in Shī'ī mosques throughout Iraq.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 268–270.

¹¹ See Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton, 2003), pp. 265–266.

This success brought him accusations of being an agent of the government, which had already given him supervision of the Hawza. These activities also brought him both a reputation for theological naiveté and fame as a renewer of Shī'ī spirituality in the face of the 'reactionary' Hawza of Najaf. In the end his demand that Shī'ī processions be performed in the traditional way convinced the government to kill him and his two sons in 1999. A third son, Muqtaḍā al-Ṣadr, survived and claims to be the heir of both his populist father and his cousin Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, the highly respected jurist.¹²

The Hawza, whose members had dwindled to less than two thousand in the last years of Saddam Hussein, has more than doubled its numbers since the fall of the Ba'ath and continues to attract students from most parts of the Shī'ī world. One of the great ironies of the recent upheavals in the Hawza is that Kāẓim al-Hā'irī, who was an outstanding student of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr and was recognized by Muḥammad Ṣadr as his successor in religious matters, has steadfastly refused to return to the Hawza in Najaf and remains at his own *madrasa* in Qum. Hence there is a vacuum of senior religious leadership in the Ṣadrīst movement led by Muqtaḍā al-Ṣadr. Likewise, in the Islamic Da'wah Party, which is devoted to the memory of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, there is internal disagreement as to which living religious authority should be recognised.

Sīstānī has grown in stature both within Iraq and beyond while moving from a cautious to a bolder position toward politics. Whenever possible, he has his important *fatwās* co-signed by Muḥammad Bashīr al-Najafī, Muḥammad Ishāq al-Fayyāḍ and Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Ḥakīm. The Ḥakīm family has never overcome their loss of the *marja'īya* at the death of Ayatollah Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm in 1970 and continues to champion Ayatollah Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Ḥakīm. Meanwhile, Sīstānī's international recognition has made him the most important source of funds for the Iraqi Hawza. Perhaps the time will come for reconsideration of the model of collective leadership by the *marāji'* proposed by the most brilliant Iraqi Shī'ī of the twentieth century, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr.

The eternal value and authority of a *hawza* education is brought home by a florid passage in Ayatollah Khū'ī's *ijāza al-ijtihād* which he granted to Sīstānī:

The nobility of knowledge cannot be overestimated nor its virtue reckoned. Inheritors of [knowledge] are the heirs of the prophets. By it they attain deputyship to the Seal of the prophets so long as earth and sky endure! Among those who followed the path of virtue to seek Him is... Ḥujjat al-Islām Sayyid 'Alī al-Sīstānī (may God prolong the days of his effusion of learning and excellence and multiply his like among the active scholars!). For he has expended in this path a sizable portion of his noble life, devoting himself to living in the vicinity of 'Alī... at Noblest Najaf.¹³

Few systems of knowledge can have been more self-confident, and even fewer can have claimed more inherited authority than the Hawza system. Yet, in spite of all this self-confidence, the emergence of Shakespeare, who according to Ben Jonson had "small Latin and less Greek" shows that some creative advantage can be acquired by escaping too many set texts. In contrast, the great Iraqi poet Jawāhirī, who started in the *Hawza* system, shows

¹²Among the large number of books defending Muḥammad Ṣadr, the earliest by 'Ādil Ra'ūf, *Muḥammad Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Ṣadr, Marja'īya al-Maydān* (Damascus, 1999), gives a good general overview.

¹³'Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥakīm, *Hawza al-Najaf*, p.159.

that a deep knowledge of classical Arabic acquired while learning set texts can also inspire memorable modern poetry written in the classical style. mottahed@fas.harvard.edu

APPENDIX A Curriculum in Najaf in 1913¹⁴

The first grammar book used was the *al-Ājurrūmīya*,¹⁵ followed by *Sharḥ Qaṭr al-nadā [wa-ball al-ṣadā]*.¹⁶ Some deepened their knowledge of Arabic grammar by studying Ibn Hishām's *al-Mughnī [al-labīb]* and a commentary on the *al-Alfīyah*.¹⁷ To learn syntax students often studied *al-Nukat*,¹⁸ the *Lum'a [fi'l-naḥw]*,¹⁹ and the *Kitāb [Sībawayhi]*.²⁰

Persian students followed a somewhat different curriculum which included the books printed in Jāmi' al-Muqaddamāt such as the grammar books, the 'Awāmil,²¹ *al-Namūdhaj*,²² and *al-Fawā'id al-Ṣamadīya*.²³ They also studied the *Sharḥ al-Jāmī [al-Fawā'id al-diyā'īya]*²⁴ and a commentary on the *al-Alfīyah [al-Bahja al-marḍīya]*.²⁵

In the study of logic the students turned to the *Hāshīya* of Mullā 'Abdallāh²⁶ and the *Sharḥ al-Shamsīya*.²⁷ Many also read *al-Jawhar al-naḍīd*.²⁸

In *fiqh* a wide range of books were studied, including *al-Tabṣira*²⁹ as well as the manual of the *mujtahid* that the student followed. The students then progressed to *Kitāb Sharā'i [al-Islām]*.³⁰

In rhetoric the well-known works were *al-Fawā'id al-diyā'īya*,³¹ *Sharḥ [Talkhīṣ] al-Miftāḥ*,³² and *al-Muṭawwal*³³ with the commentaries of Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'i³⁴ and Shaykh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī.³⁵

¹⁴Anon., "Le programme des études chez les chiites et principalement ceux de Nedjef", *Revue du Monde Musulman* 23 (June 1913), pp. 268–279.

¹⁵Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Dā'ūd al-Ṣanhājī, also known as Ibn Ājurrūm, 672–723 AH.

¹⁶Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf, also known as Ibn Hishām, 708–761 AH. The work consists of a basic text with the author's own commentary included.

¹⁷Abū 'Abdallāh Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, also known as Ibn Mālīk, 600 or 601–672 AH. The *Alfīya*, his thousand-verse poem, was a standard textbook. Although it was commonly known as the *Alfīya*, its proper title is *Kitāb al-Khulāṣah fi'l-naḥw*.

¹⁸Probably the *Nukat* written by Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, 849–911 AH.

¹⁹Abū'l-Faṭḥ 'Uthmān ibn Jinnī, 330–392 AH.

²⁰Abū Bishr 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān ibn Qanbar Sībawayhi, d. circa 177 AH.

²¹The author attributes the '*Awāmil* to Mullā Ḥusayn, but the correct name is Mullā Muḥsin, better known as Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, d. c. 1090 AH.

²²Abū'l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamaksharī, 467–538 AH.

²³Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, 953–1030 AH.

²⁴This commentary on the *Kāfiya*, written by Ibn al-Ḥājib, d. 646 AH, is by the celebrated Persian poet 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, d. 898 AH.

²⁵This commentary of the *Alfīya* was written by al-Suyūṭī; see n. 5.

²⁶This book is most likely the *Hāshīya 'alā Tahdhīb al-Mantiq* written by 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥusayn Yazdī, d. 981 AH, a commentary on the *Tahdhīb al-Mantiq* by Mas'ūd ibn 'Umar Taftazānī, d. between 791 and 797 AH.

²⁷Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Rāzī, d. 766 AH.

²⁸al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, d. 726 AH.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Ja'far ibn al-Ḥasan Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, d. 726 AH.

³¹See n. 10.

³²This is a commentary by 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Sharīf Jurjānī, 740–816 AH, on the *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* by Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Qazwīnī, 666–739 AH.

³³Mas'ūd ibn 'Umar Taftazānī, d. between 791 and 797 AH.

³⁴d. 901 AH.

³⁵d. 1186 AH.

In the study of jurisprudence proper, the students began with *al-Ma'ālim [al-dīn wa-malādh al-mujtahidīn]*³⁶ although some read beforehand *al-Mabādi' wal-Ma'ārif*.³⁷ After these books, students moved on to *al-Qawānīn [al-muḥkama]*³⁸ which was usually read alongside the *al-Lum'a al-dimashqīya*³⁹ studied with the commentary by al-Shahīd al-Thānī.⁴⁰ At a yet higher level, the students read two classics, *al-Rasā'il*⁴¹ on the principles of jurisprudence and *al-Makāsib*,⁴² applying these principles to a specific area of law.

In the author's time, the work 'most in vogue' was the *al-Kifāya [al-uṣūl]*,⁴³ which for many had replaced *al-Qawānīn [al-muḥkama]*. The author adds that students interested in theology read the commentary on *Tājīd al-'Aqā'id*⁴⁴ by ['Alī ibn Muḥammad] al-Qūshjī⁴⁵ or by 'Allāma [Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī].⁴⁶ Two books formerly popular in Najaf, the *Majma' al-bayān [fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān]*⁴⁷ and *al-Shāṭibīya* [on Qur'ān readings],⁴⁸ were completely neglected by the author's time.

APPENDIX B "Standard Hawza Curriculum"

1. Logic

While the *Sharḥ al-Manzūma fil mantiq* by Sabzawārī is still used, the most popular work on this subject is the *Uṣūl al-mantiq* by Shaykh al-Muzaffar. Some *hawzas* begin with the simpler *Khulāsa al-mantiq* of Shaykh 'Abd al-Hādī Faḍlī.

2. Uṣūl al-Fiqh

Some students begin with *Mabādi' Uṣūl al-Fiqh* by Shaykh Faḍlī or the second volume of *al-Mūjaz fī uṣūl al-fiqh* by Ayatollah Ja'far Subḥānī. After finishing these preliminary books the most widely used works are *Durūs fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (or *Durūs fī 'ilm al-uṣūl*) by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr and *Uṣūl al-fiqh* by Shaykh al-Muzaffar. At a higher stage, students advance to the *Ma'ālim* by Shaykh Ḥasan ibn al-Shahīd al-Thānī, *al-Rasā'il* by Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī, and the *Kifāya* of Ākhūnd-i Khurāsānī.

3. Fiqh

Students usually begin with *Mukhtaṣar an-Nāfi'* by Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, although this book is fast being replaced by *al-Durūs fī'l-fiqh al-istidlālī* of Muḥammad al-Bāqir al-Īrawānī. The next book is *al-Lum'a al-Dimashqīya* by al-Shahīd al-Awwal Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Makkī al-'Āmilī, usually studied with the commentary by al-Shahīd al-Thānī, which is

³⁶Shaykh Ḥasan ibn al-Shahīd al-Thānī, d. 1011 AH.

³⁷[author still unidentified]

³⁸Abū'l-Qāsim ibn Ḥasan al-Qummī, d. 1231 AH.

³⁹Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Makkī al-'Āmilī al-Shahīd al-Awwal, d. 786 AH.

⁴⁰See n. 22.

⁴¹Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī, d. 1281 AH.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Muḥammad Kāzīm Ākhūnd-i Khurāsānī, d. 1329 AH.

⁴⁴Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, d. 673 AH.

⁴⁵d. 879 AH. The author misspells his *nisba*.

⁴⁶d. 726 AH.

⁴⁷al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī [or Ṭabrisī], d. 548 AH.

⁴⁸al-Qāsim ibn Farrukh al-Shāṭibī, d. 590 AH.

commonly called *Sharḥ al-Lum'a*. At the same stage, some students study *Sharā'i' al-Islām* by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī and the *Āyāt al-Aḥkām* of al-Ṭrawānī.

4. Tafsīr al-Qur'ān

The most popular book in this category is *al-Mīzān* by al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

5. 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān

The most popular work in this category is *al-Tamhīd fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Hādī Ma'rifa.

6. 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth

The most used reference book in this study is *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* by al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī.

7. 'Ilm ar-Rijāl

A popular book in this category is *Mu'jam al-Rijāl* by Abū'l-Qāsim al-Khū'ī.

9. 'Aqā'id

Widely used works include the *Tajrīd al-'aqā'id* by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and the *al-Bāb al-hādī 'ashar* by 'Allāma al-Ḥillī. The *Tajrīd* is often read with a commentary by 'Allāma al-Ḥillī.

10. Arabic Language

The *Alfiyah* of Ibn Mālik is read with the commentary of Ibn 'Aqīl and/or of al-Suyūfī.

11. Philosophy

This subject is usually broached with the *Bidāya al-Ḥikma* and the *Nihāya al-Ḥikma* by 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

12. 'Irfān

[Since this subject is not publicly taught in most *ḥawzas* the curriculum given here is idiosyncratic.]

Sources:

al-Islam.org (accessed December 2010)

imamreza.net (accessed December 2010)

[The information on these sites reflects a mixture of the practice in Najaf and Qum.]

APPENDIX C List of Madrasas in Najaf in 2010

- 1 Jāmi'a al-Najaf (Madrasa al-Kalāntar)
- 2 Madrasa 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Baghdādī
- 3 Madrasa Mahdī
- 4 Madrasa Yazdī
- 5 Madrasa Lubnāniya

- 6 Madrasa Shīrāzīya Buzurg
- 7 Madrasa Imām ‘Alī
- 8 Madrasa Afghānīya (founded by ‘Allāma Mudarris al-Afghānī)
- 9 Madrasa Kāzīmīya (Ṣadr al-A‘zam)
- 10 Madrasa Burūjirdī al-Kubrā (founded by Ayatollah Burūjirdī)
- 11 Madrasa Ākhūnd al-Kubrā
- 12 Madrasa Ākhūnd al-Ṣughrā (like no. 11, founded by Ākhūnd-i Khurāsānī)
- 13 Madrasa Imām Ṣādiq (Madrasa Shubarīya)
- 14 Madrasa Qiwām
- 15 Madrasa Hindīya
- 16 Madrasa Mahdīya Kāshif al-Ghiṭā
- 17 Madrasa Kāshif al-Ghiṭā
- 18 Madrasa Qazwīnī
- 19 Madrasa Dar al-Abrār
- 20 Madrasa Dar al-Muṭṭaqīn
- 21 Madrasa Ḥusaynīya al-Shīrāzīya

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