

THE HISTORY OF THE ISLAMIC SEMINARIES OF QUM, PART I

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ABSTRACT: The preceding articles in this series explored the historical origins of important religious seminaries in the Shi'a world given its importance in promoting the instructions of the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt, and its role in engendering a unique culture in the scientific, social, and political spheres. The seminaries created knowledgeable and pious Shi'a scholars who pursued *ijtihad* with the use of the Qur'an, sunnah, and reason to respond to the needs of the Muslim community. The previous part focused on the Islamic Seminaries of Jabal Aamel, Isfahan, and Mashhad. This article delves into the history of the Islamic seminaries of Qum. Using Islamic traditions and historical records, the significance of Qum according to the Ahlul Bayt will be stated, along with its link to Lady Ma'sumah's arrival to the city and its impact on the future of the seminaries' success.

Imam Ali said, "May God bestow His salutations on the people of Qum. They are the people of ruku' (bowing before God), sajdah (prostrating to God), salah (daily prayers) and fasting. They are wise jurist scholars. They are the religious who love the family of the Prophet, and they are the

people of proper worship. May God grant them His mercy, salutations, and blessings.”¹

History of Qum

Located 145 kilometres south of Tehran in the middle of the highway from Tehran to Isfahan, the holy city of Qum is one of the most important cities in the Islamic world. There have been many discussions regarding the history of Qum and its inception. Some historians believe that Qum had become a holy city given its many fire temples after being reformed religiously and architecturally by a ruler named Qubad during the Sassanid Era.² Other historians believe Qum was made after Islam’s dominance over Iran and from its beginning its entire population were Shi’a.³

In the year 23 AH, the last year of the life of Umar ibn Khattab, the second Muslim Caliph, Qum was conquered by the Muslims. The commander of the Muslim army in this defeat was Abu Musa Ash’ari who, having conquered Ahwaz, now had his eyes on Qum.⁴

The Bani Asad Arabs were among the first groups of Arabs to live in Jamkaran, Qum.⁵ After the advent of Islam, many of the fire temples were demolished and mosques were built in their stead, one of them being the ‘Atiq Mosque.⁶ Only a fire temple, *Mozdjan*, remained until the end of the

¹ Majlesi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Volume 57, Page 217

² Qummi, Hasan ibn Muhammad, *Tarikh-e-Qum*, page 24

³ Al-Hamawy, Yaqut, *Mu’jam ul-Buldan*, volume 5, page 396

⁴ Qummi, Hasan ibn Muhammad, *Tarikh-e-Qum*, page 295; Ahmad ibn Yahya Balazary, *Futuh ul-Buldan*, page 304, 305

⁵ Ibid. page 38

⁶ Ibid. page 37

third century as it was located in a mountainous region and because many Maguses lived in the route that led to it.⁷ According to some historians, the first mosque was built in the village of Jamkaran.⁸ Some scholars believe the history of the Shi'a in Qum began after the 'Ash'arites moved to Qum in 83 AH. Abd ul-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Ash'as was appointed by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf as the governor of Sajestan. He then rebelled against Hajjaj but was defeated and escaped. Among the companions of Abd ul-Rahman there were seven children of Sa'd ibn Malik Ash'ary who were from the Tab'e'in of Iraq. They came to Qum and made major efforts in spreading Shi'a culture. Abdullah ibn Sad Ashlar and his son, Musa, played a key role in these efforts.⁹

This happened during the Imamate of the last Imams and had a great impact on spread of Shi'as in Qum to the extent that, based on the narration of some scholars, at the time of Imam Hadi, Qum had become the most important center for the gatherings of the Shi'as in Iran. It is narrated that Muhammad ibn Dawud Qummi used to give the news regarding Qum to Imam Hadi.¹⁰ Imam Hadi had said that the people of Qum were "forgiven by God" because they had visited the shrine of his grandfather, Imam Rida.¹¹

Qum in the hadiths

⁷ Ibid. page 89

⁸ Ibid. page 38

⁹ Al-Hamawy, Yaqut, *Mu'jam ul-Buldan*, volume 4, page 397-398; Sam'any, Abdul Karim ibn Muhammad, *al-Ansab*, volume 10, page 485

¹⁰ Ja'farian, Rasul, *Hayat-e-Fekri wa Siasy-e-emaman-e-shii*, page 530 and 531

¹¹ Shaykh Saduq, *'Uyun Akhbar ur-Reza*, volume 2, page 260

Qum and its people have been praised in many hadiths; as when Imam Ali was asked what city is the safest place to be during wars and seditions, the Imam mentioned Qum. He also stated that the best of people in terms of lineage come from Qum, and it is the city in which Gabriel journeyed to.¹²

In this regard, Imam Sadiq said, “Calamities are repelled from the people of Qum, and they are [God’s] proof (*hujjah*) over other people.”¹³ The sixth Imam also said, “The soil of Qum is sacred, and its people are with us and we are with them.”¹⁴

In Shi’a hadiths, Qum is referred to by expressions such as “The small Kufa”, “The relying place of Qaim¹⁵ Aale Muhammad,”¹⁶ “The place of awaiting of Aale Muhammad,” “The place of safety and comfort for believers,” “A piece of the Bayt al Muqaddas,” “The nest of Aale Muhammad” and “The shelter of the Fatemiyyun.”¹⁷

Once, a group of people from the city of Rey gathered around Imam Sadiq in Medina. When they told the Imam they were from Rey, the Imam said, ‘Greetings to our brothers from Qum.’ They repeated that they are from Rey yet the Imam said the same again and this happened for a couple of times. Then the Imam said:

إن لله حرما وهو مكة وإن للرسول حرما وهو المدينة، وإن لأميرالمؤمنين
حرما وهو الكوفة، وإن لنا حرما وهو بلدة قم

¹² Hamedany, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, *al-Buldan*, page 531

¹³ Majlesi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Volume 57, Page 262

¹⁴ Ibid. Volume 57, Page 218

¹⁵ One of the titles of Imam Mahdi meaning “He who arises”

¹⁶ The household of the prophet

¹⁷ Ibid. Volume 57, Page 211-228

Truly for God there is a sanctuary and that is Mecca; and for the messenger there is a sanctuary and that is Medina; and for the Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali) there is a sanctuary and that is Kufa; and, truly, there is a sanctuary for us and that is the land of Qum.¹⁸

In another hadith, Imam Sadiq said:

The soil of Qum is sacred. Its people are with us and we are with them. As long as they do not betray [us], anyone who has an evil intention towards them will be quickly punished and if they happen to betray [us], God will make oppressing rules dominant over them. However, they are the helpers of our Qa'im (Imam Mahdi) and the seekers of our right.¹⁹

Then Imam raised his head looking at the sky and said:

الهم اعصمهم من كل فتنه

Oh God, protect them from any tribulation.²⁰

Imam Rida, regarding Qum, said:

When calamity and sedition become widespread, go to Qum and its surrounding areas; for Qum is kept immune from calamities.²¹

The arrival of Lady Ma'sumah to Qum

¹⁸ Ibid. Volume 57, Page 216

¹⁹ Majlesi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Volume 57, Page 218 and 219

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. Volume 57, Page 218 and 214

Due to numerous hadiths about Qum's high status, even before Lady Ma'sumah's arrival in Qum many descendants of the Shi'a Imams – including the descendants of Imam Husayn, Imam Hasan, and Imam Kazim – had moved to Qum.²² As a result, there are over four hundred tombs belonging to the descendants of the Shi'a Imams in Qum today. Imam Rida also stopped at Qum during his journey to Khurasan. The house where he resided is now an Islamic seminary.²³

The arrival of Lady Ma'sumah, the daughter of Imam Kazim, marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Qum. After Lady Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet, and Lady Zaynab, the respected daughter of Imam Ali, Lady Ma'sumah holds a special status among all women. It was not long after Imam Rida's migration from Medina to Khurasan in 200 AH due to Mamun's order that Lady Ma'sumah decided to visit her brother. According to some historians, she left Medina in 201 AH, and when her caravan reached Saaveh they changed their direction towards Qum due to her illness. Being received by Musa ibn Khazraj, they arrived in Qum, and after seventeen days, she passed away.²⁴ Her place of worship during this short period, *Bayt al-Noor (The House of Light)* is now a place of visit in Qum.

The Shi'a Imams spoke about Lady Ma'sumah's high rank and had informed their followers of her arrival in Qum beforehand. Imam Sadiq had said:

²² Qummi, Hasan ibn Muhammad, *Tarikh-e Qum*, Page 207-240

²³ Ibn Tawus, Sayyed Abdul Karim, Farhat ul-Guza, Page 105

²⁴ Qummi, Hasan ibn Muhammad, *Tarikh-e Qum*, Page 213

الا و إن قم، الكوفه الصغيره الا إن للجنه ثمانيه ابواب ثلاثه منها الى قم تقبضنيها
امراه من ولى اسمها فاطمه بنت موسى و تدخل بشفاعتها شيعتى الجنه
باجمعهم

Be aware that Qum is the small Kufa. Be aware that heaven has eight gates, three of which open to Qum. A lady from my descendants whose name is Fatima, the daughter of Musa, will be buried there and it is through her intercession that all my Shi'as will enter heaven.²⁵

It can be understood from this hadith that, like Kufa, Qum is the centre for spread of the knowledge of the household of the Prophet, while three of the eight gates of heaven open towards Qum. These three gates may refer to the three valuable privileges of Qum which are:

1. The shrine of Lady Ma'sumah in Qum and its remarkable influence of guiding people towards heaven;
2. The Islamic seminaries of Qum which have guided people for centuries and directed them towards heaven;
3. The holy mosque of Jamkaran and the central position of Qum after Mecca and Kufa as the foothold of Imam Mahdi.

In some hadiths the reward given for visiting the shrine of Lady Ma'sumah is said to be so much to the extent that the visitors of her holy shrine are promised heaven: Imam Rida said, "Heaven is for whomever who visits Fatimah, the daughter of Musa ibn Ja'far, while acknowledging her rights."²⁶

²⁵ Majlesi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*, Volume 57, Page 228

²⁶ Ibid. Volume 48 ,Page 317

Imam Jawad, the son of Imam Rida, said: “Whoever visits my aunt in Qum will be granted [the pass to] heaven.”²⁷

Considering what has been mentioned thus far, the history of the Shi’a and Shi’a culture in Qum goes back years before Lady Ma’suma’s arrival; however, since her arrival in Qum and her burial there, Qum attracted Shi’as from all other cities. The scholars who visited her would sometimes prolong their stay; hence, a strong scholarly community consisting of devotees of the Shi’a school of thought was formed in Qum.

The history of the Islamic seminaries of Qum

Ayatullah Ha’eri Yazdi is generally considered as the founder of the Islamic seminaries of Qum, although these holy seminaries may have an older history. Through scrutinizing the hadiths it becomes clear that the Imams had informed people of great and glorious seminaries in Qum: “Soon Kufa will become empty of believers and, like a snake hiding in its shelter, knowledge will be retracted. And then it will appear in a city called Qum, and it will become the centre of knowledge and virtue.”²⁸

The historical eras of the Qum seminaries are divided as follows:

-The First Era

The first era of the Islamic seminaries of Qum goes back to the lifetime of the Shi’a Imams. The students of the Imams, with their knowledge and ability to propagate the Islam, chose Qum as the foothold of the Shi’a and were involved in spreading the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt. This period

²⁷ Ibid. Volume 48, Page 316

²⁸ Ibid. Volume 57, Page 213

coincided with the arrival of Ash'arites in the second half of the first century and the first half of the second century during the lifetime of Imam Sadiq. It was at that time that the Ash'arites made remarkable efforts to spread Shi'a culture. According to some hadiths it was from that period on that the scholars in Qum had interactions with the Shi'a scholars in Medina and received the attention from the Imams. For instance, it is narrated that once Umran ibn Abdullah Qummi went to visit Imam Sadiq. The Imam first received him warmly in front of the others and then quietly told him something. When he left the session the people asked the Imam about him and Imam replied, "He is the noble one in the group of nobles."²⁹

Isa ibn Abdullah Qummi, the brother of Umran ibn Abdullah, was also a noble. Imam Sadiq said about him, "He is one of us, alive or departed."³⁰

In the second half of the second and third century, Qum was the centre for compiling the Shi'a Imams' hadiths. Meanwhile, Kufa was no longer the first Shi'a base. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa Qummi Ash'ari, a companion of Imam Sadiq, is one of the elites of that period.³¹ He was one of the sons of Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Amer who had entered Qum along with his brothers.³² It was in the same period that narrators of hadiths (*muhaddith*) who were companions of Imam Jawad and Imam Hadi, namely Husayn ibn Saeed Ahwazi and his brother moved, first to Ahwaz,

²⁹ Kashy, Muhammad ibn Umar, *Rijal-e Kashy*, page 333

³⁰ Ibid. page 332

³¹ Shaykh Tusy, *Rijal-e Tusy*, Page 373

³² Alame Hely, Hasan ibn Yusuf, *Izah ul-Ishtibah*, Page 99 and 100

and then to Qum. Among the books they have written, one of Saeed's works, *Al-Zuhd*, is available to us today.³³

Some of the great scholars of this era are: Adam ibn Abdullah Qummi, Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Ash'ari, Ibrahim ibn Hashim Qummi, Ahmad ibn Ishaq ibn Abdullah Ash'ari, Ismaeel ibn Sa'd Ash'ari, Husayn ibn Aban, and Husayn ibn Malik Qummi.³⁴

During this period, the main fields of knowledge that were common in the Islamic seminaries of Qum were jurisprudence and ethics, both communicated using the hadiths of the Ahlul Bayt.

-The Second Era

This period includes the Minor Occultation and continues after that until the sixth century. During this period, the Islamic seminaries of Qum were very superior to other Shi'a seminaries in terms of quality and quantity; the narrators in Qum are said to have been two hundred thousand and important figures like Ahmad ibn Isa Ash'ari, Muhammad ibn Isa Ash'ari Qummi, Abdul Aziz ibn Muhtadi Qummi, Ali ibn Husayn ibn Babuyeh Qummi, Ibn Waleed Qummi, Muhammad ibn Hasan Furukh us-Saffar, Ibrahim ibn Hashim Qummi and Shaykh Saduq were among the scholars.

In the field of Hadith, the scholars of Qum would not trust all narrators; and narrators such as Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Barqi were expelled from Qum for narrating weak hadiths.³⁵ Qum reached its peak of

³³ Musawi Khouyi, Sayyed Abulqasim, Mu'jam Rijal il-Hadith, Volume 6, Page 266

³⁴ Sayyed Kabayery, Sayyed Alireza, *Howze Haya Elmiyye Shi'e Dar Gostare-ye Jahan*, page 365

³⁵ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Barqi who was originally from Kufa was a trusted narrator himself but he used to narrate from unreliable narrators. He wrote a lot of books the most well-known of which is *Al-Mahasin*. Barqi was expelled from Qum by Ahmad ibn 'Isa Ash'ary because

magnitude and glory in the third and the fourth century. During this period the hadith-oriented school was the dominant school in Qum. The presence of narrators, who were influenced by the Islamic seminaries of Qum in the city of Rey, helped the Islamic Seminaries of Qum continue to exist in Rey as well. Great scholars in the field of hadith, such as Kulayni, were educated in the seminaries of both Qum and Rey.³⁶

An important point about the available hadith collections from the fourth century is that their authors have cited only the hadiths they believed to be authentic and representing the Shi'a faith. For example, Shaykh Kulayni clearly explains in the introduction of *Al-Kafi* that he compiled this book after being requested by someone who found it difficult to identify authentic hadiths in order to represent the authentic hadiths.

Al-Mahasin by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi and *Basair ud-Darajat* by Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Saffar Qummi, the famous Shi'a scholar in the field of hadith and also the companion of Imam Askari are some books of hadith in the third century available to us today.

It is during this era and in the Islamic seminaries of Qum that the four hundred principles of hadiths of Shi'a Imams³⁷ remaining from the

he would narrate from unreliable narrators. However, after some time he was returned to Qum. He died in the year 275 AH. Refer to: Najjashy, Ahmad ibn Ali, *Rijal al-Najjashy*, page 76 and 77 and Musawy Khouyi, Sayyed Abulqasim, Mu'jam Rijal il-Hadith, Volume 3, Page 49-61

³⁶ For more information refer to: Jabbari, Muhammad Reza, *Maktab-e Hadithi-ye Qum*, Page 107-115 and Muaddab, Sayyed Reza, *Tarikh-e Hadith*, Page 119 and 120 and Ma'aref, Majid, *Tarikh-e Umumi-e Hadith*, page 328

³⁷ Principles of jurisprudence (usul) are the texts which were compiled by the early Shi'a scholars. Most of the authors of these texts were those who had heard the hadith from one of the Imams, in particular, from Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq, writing them down in notebooks. Out of these texts compiled the popular ones were four-hundred in number by different authors.

companions of the Imams were classified in chapters by scholars of this field such as Kulayni and Shaykh Saduq. It is for this reason that the fourth century is considered as the period of completing of compilations of Shi'a hadiths. Furthermore, scholars of hadith also compiled books on hadiths of specific subjects: Ibn Babuyeh Qummi wrote *Al-Imamah wal-Tabsarah Min al-Hayrah* to remove the confusion of some Shi'as regarding the Imamate of Imam Mahdi. Likewise, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Nu'mani compiled *Al-Ghaybah* on Imam Mahdi and Ali ibn Muhammad Khazzaz Qummi compiled *Kifayat al-Athar* to prove the Imamate of all Shi'a Imams.

Shaykh Saduq's treasured books written in this period are the most prominent Shi'a scholarly resources. Having access to the main hadith sources that remained from the companions of the Imams, and writing about three hundred books, Shaykh Saduq managed to compile and formulate ideologies of Islam using his creativity. Such efforts demonstrate the dynamic nature of this field and its scholars.

Parallel to the development of the seminaries of Qum in the field of hadith, the theologians of the school of Baghdad also entered the field of hadith. The book *Amali*³⁸ by the students of Shaykh Mufid, Sayyed Murtadha, and Shaykh Tusi, and compilations such as *Tahzib* and *Istibsar* by Shaykh Tusi reveals the passion these scholars had for compiling hadiths. The key and essential difference between the seminaries of Qum and Baghdad is the rational attitude of the scholars of the school of Baghdad whom, unlike the scholars of Qum, gave importance to reason in

³⁸ The books by the name of *Amali*, as it can be understood from its name, are notes taken by the students in the courses.

their study of hadiths. This difference between the two schools led to theological disputes in different areas as the books *Tashih ul-I'tighad* and *Risalat fi Sahv un-Nabi* were written to study and reject some of Shaykh Saduq's views.³⁹

In the fourth century, the seminaries of Rey flourished and this overshadowed the seminaries of Qum, since with the presence of figures like Shaykh Saduq in Rey, students of Islamic studies preferred Rey over Qum. However, hadith scholars had the tendency not to stay in a specific city for long, and by the means of their travels, in addition to spreading the hadiths of the Infallibles, they would learn hadiths from the teachers of other areas as well. Thus, the scholars of Qum and Rey had cultural interactions and this may be the reason why some scholars of this period are known by some historians of both Qum and Rey as the scholar of their own city.

Sa'd-e Salt, Athir al-Mulk, Sayyed Saeed 'Izzuddin Murtadha, Shamsuddin Murtadha, and Zahiruddin Abdul Aziz are the names of some of the schools in the Islamic seminaries of Qum during that period.⁴⁰

Therefore, the second period of the seminaries of Qum was formed by a large group of scholars in the field of hadith and jurisprudence; these scholars were students in the first period and the teachers of the scholars of the fifth century.

³⁹ Refer to: Jabbari, Muhammad Reza, *Maktab-e Hadithi Qum*, page 434 – 438 and Muaddab, Sayyed Reza, *Tarikh-e Hadith*, Page 122 and 123

⁴⁰ Sayyed Kabavery, Sayyed Alireza, *Howze Haya Elmiyye Shi'e Dar Gostare-ye Jahan*, page 370

-The Third Era

The period starting with the sixth century up until the ninth century is the third era of the seminaries of Qum. By and large, the Islamic seminaries of Qum experienced difficulties during this period. The inhabitants of Qum were massacred several times and the city was turned into ruins. However, for some time Qum was the capital of the Teymurid Dynasty. Of the numerous instances of genocide and demolition observed throughout the history of Qum, the Mongol's attack was the most devastating one, lasting until the Teymurid Dynasty. Perhaps the foundation of the Razawiyah School is the only positive development during this period.

Yet, Shaykh Agha Bozorg Tehrani has named more than thirty of the scholars of the sixth century in his book, *Tabaqat-e A'lam al-Shi'a*. This number decreased to three in the seventh century.⁴¹ Thus, the scientific recession of the seminaries of Qum started in the sixth century and it grew during the seventh and the eighth centuries due to the presence of the ruinous Mongol and Timurid dynasties. In the ninth century, the scholars of Qum took shrewd measures in confronting the cultural recession and strengthening the scholarly foundations of the seminaries.

Qutb al-Din Rawandi (573 AH) was among the great scholars in jurisprudence and hadith who lived in this period and was buried in Qum. He lived in Qum part of his life and had a great impact on protecting the seminaries of Qum and upgrading their academic level by training students. Some of his works during this period are: *Asbab al-Nuzul*, *Fiqh*

⁴¹ Agha Bozorg-e Tehrani, Muhammad Hasan, *Tabaghat-e A'lam-e Shi'a*, Volume 2, Page 225 and 226 and Volume 3, Page 136

al-Qur'an, Jawahir al-Kalam, Sihat-u Ahadith-i Ashabina, and al-Niyah fi Jami' al-'Ibadat.

In addition to Qutb al-Din Rawandi, Shaykh Muhammad ibn Hasan Tusi, the father of Khaje Nasir ud-Din Tusi, was another scholar who lived in Qum during this period. The hadiths he narrated were quoted by his son, Khaje Nasir.⁴²

-The Fourth Era

This era starts in the tenth century and continues until the thirteenth century coinciding with the Safavid, Afghan, Afsharid, Zand, and Qajar dynasties. It is during this period that intellectual sciences became part of the common sciences taught in the seminaries of Qum.

The first part of this period coincides with the Safavid dynasty. The Safavid kings had a strong interest in knowledge and scholars; hence, great scholars such as Allamah Majlisi and others were paid special attention by the rulers, generally titled "Shaykh ul-Islam."⁴³

Such attention paid to the scholars in this period led to the migration of many Shi'a scholars of Jabal Aamel in Lebanon to Iran and this caused the spread of the intellectual approach in Shi'a jurisprudence as opposed to the Akhbari⁴⁴ attitude. During this era, the Islamic seminaries of Isfahan, supported by the Safavid rulers, became the most active seminary in the Shi'a world. Establishing new Shi'a schools in Isfahan and other cities of

⁴² Agha Bozorg-e Tehrani, Muhammad Hasan, *Tabaghat-e A'lam-e Shi'a*, Volume 3, Page 371 - 373

⁴³ "Shaykh ul-Islam" is a title of superior authority in the issues of Islam given to those scholars who acquired deep knowledge of Islam.

⁴⁴ Akhbariyun believe in a very literal understanding of the sources leaving little or no room for rational thought and interpretation..

Iran such as Qum, Shiraz, Qazwin, and Mashhad, religious sciences and Shi'a teachings including rational sciences such as philosophy and theology began to progress.

Meanwhile, the Akhbari approach was also formed, and this put strong emphasis on understanding the literal meaning of hadiths and not tolerating any rational contemplation. When this attitude developed in the seminaries of Isfahan, not only did the scholars who were against this view leave the seminaries, but some scholars of the intellectual sciences were also expelled from this region. The famous philosopher Sadr al-Din Shirazi known as Mulla Sadra was among them.

The migration of Mulla Sadra who was originally from Shiraz, from Isfahan to Qum led to the recession of rational sciences in the seminaries of Isfahan, but it led to their flourishing in the seminaries of Qum. Through training students and by the means of his writings, he paved the way for the Usuli⁴⁵ attitude in the seminaries even though before this period the seminaries trained more Shi'a muhaddiths⁴⁶ than scholars of rational sciences.

Sadr al-Muta'allehin Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Shirazi (979 - 1050 AH) was one Shi'a philosopher and theologian who lived in this period. His stay in the seminaries of Qum was contemporary to his seclusion, when he involved himself in compiling and writing books, training students, and contemplating on sciences rather than socializing.

⁴⁵ Usuli attitude is on the other side of the spectrum in contrast to the Akhbari attitude and it believes in the usage of reasoning in having a sound understanding of the hadiths.

⁴⁶ A scholar in the field of hadith who believe hadiths should be narrated and taken literally and rational interpretation is not needed.

As it was mentioned, in this period, the presence of theosophists led to the formation of the science of the principles of jurisprudence (*usul ul-fiqh*). This which was in contrast with the Akhbari attitude, firstly claimed that the *thahir*⁴⁷ sentences of the Qur'an can be used without using the words of the Prophet and his successors, and secondly that using reason in analyse of the hadiths to understand the rulings is allowed, and is indeed necessary.

Philosophers such as Mulla Sadra paved the way for free thinking in the seminaries of Qum. Hence, Mirza Qummi (1151 – 1231 AH) after studying jurisprudence and its principles in Najaf and Karbala with great teachers such as Wahid Behbahani, decided to stay in Qum; as a result, he expanded the domain of *usul* to Qum. That was when having returned from Iraq, Mirza Qummi did not find the level of studies in the seminaries of Shiraz and Isfahan suitable for himself and thus chose the seminaries of Qum. There, he familiarized the students who loved the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt familiar with Shi'a jurisprudence and the foundations of *ijtihad*⁴⁸ in Shi'ism. He thus became the religious authority for the Shi'as of his time. In writing and teaching the principles of *ijtihad*, he became known as "Muhaqqiq Qummi" ("The Researcher of Qum). The book *Al-Qawanin al-Muhkamah fi 'Ilm il-Usul* is one of his most renowned works; until recent years it was still being taught in the seminaries. Due to his great efforts in launching an *usul*-oriented movement, he is known as the reviver of the science of *usul*. He trained students such as Sayyed Muhammad Baqir Hujjat ul-Islam, Hajj Muhammad Ibrahim Kalbasi,

⁴⁷ Those sentences, the meaning of which is obvious or clear, without any assistance from the context (*qarinah*) although there is a slight possibility of another meaning.

⁴⁸ The act of getting the rulings of Islam from the sources, Qur'an and hadiths

Agha Muhammad Ali Hezar Jaribi, Agha Ahmad Kermanshahi, Sayyed Muhammad Mahdi Khansari, Sayyed Ali Khansari, Mirza Abu-Talib Qummi, Hajj Mulla Asadullah Borujerdi, and Hajj Mulla Muhammad Kazzazi. By doing so he managed to expand the usul-oriented attitude from Qum to the seminaries of Isfahan, Qumshah, and Kermanshah. Through his innovations he triggered a dramatic evolution in the seminaries of Qum and after years of silence and recession he initiated the golden age of ijtihad.

Another newfound science meticulously taught and studied in the seminaries of Qum was the science of kalam or *Usul al-Din*; in other words, theology with a rational and philosophical method. Mulla Sadra himself had been engaged in theological subjects with a philosophical approach in his book *Al-Asfaar al-'Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*; however, his son-in-law, Mulla Abdurrazzaq Lahiji (1072 AH) known as Fayyaz, took more serious steps in developing this science. Lahiji was originally from the city of Lahijan in the province of Gilan. Due to his migration to Qum in the early stages of his life⁴⁹ and a long residence there along with teaching in the Ma'sumah school of Qum, he received the title "Qummi."

Writing books such as *Shawariq ul-Ilham*, *Sarmaye Iman*, and *Gowhar-e Murad* and discussing deep theological subjects in the seminaries of Qum, he introduced a new method in writing theological books.

Lahiji was exceptionally talented in theosophy, theology, mysticism, Sufism, logic, poetry and literature. The elites of philosophy and theosophy were astonished by his precision and high attention, saying, "In precision and research this man is one of the great scholars in philosophy

⁴⁹ Bigdely, Azar, *Atashkadeye Azar*, Page 167

and theosophy. He was a strong philosopher in Avicennism, a plenary theosophist in Illuminationism, and an outstanding figure in knowing the opinion of the theologians.”⁵⁰ It has also been said about Lahiji that “Apart from his teacher Mulla Sadra, no one among recent scholars excels him.”⁵¹

After Fayyaz Lahiji, his son, Mirza Hasan Lahijy, and his student Qazi Saeed Qummi, took the field of kalam forward with expanding discussions and publications on it.

During this period more schools were established such as Fayziyeh, Shadghuli, Dar ush-Shifa, Muminyah, and Sarutghi.⁵²

Thus, during this period the seminaries of Qum flourished in academi with an expansion of different sciences such as philosophy, Islamic theology, logic, and principles of jurisprudence.

-The Fifth Era

This period begins in the late thirteenth century and continues to the present day. The turning point was when Ayatullah Haeri entered Qum and resided in its seminaries. Throughout its ups and downs, the seminaries had continued to exist; however, they did not enjoy the benefits of an organised system. With the arrival of Ayatullah Haeri, the seminaries of Qum were revived to the extent that he was given the title “The Founder” (“*Muasses*”) of the seminaries.

⁵⁰ Ashtyani, Sayyed Jalal ud-Din, *Muntakhabat az Athaare Hukamay-e Iran*, Volume 1, Page 299

⁵¹ Ibid. Volume 1, Page 324

⁵² Refer to: Sayyed Kabayery, Sayyed Alireza, *Howze Haya Elmiyye Shi'e Dar Gostare-ye Jahan*, page 373 - 383

Ayatullah Haeri was born in 1276 AH in a village called Mehrjerd in the province of Yazd, when almost everyone in the village thought that his father is not going to have any child. He pursued his primary education in Maktabkhane⁵³ in the city of Ardekan, where he spent his time learning the basics of the sciences, literature, and Qur'anic recitation. He then went to the seminaries of Yazd and resided in the school of Muhammad Taqi Khan. It was not long after his arrival that he was known among the scholars as an aspiring and gifted student of Islamic studies.

He went to Karbala at the age of 18 and although the seminaries of Samira were more active during that period, he spent two years in the neighbourhood of the shrine of Imam Husayn learning and engaging himself in self-building. During these two years, his talent and genius became known to other scholars, and especially to his teacher, Ayatullah Fazil Ardekani. He realised that the seminaries of Karbala were not enough for the growth and flourishing of Abdulkarim's scientific innovations; hence, he sent Abdulkarim to Grand Mirza Shirazi.⁵⁴

Ayatullah Haeri was under the supervision of Ayatullah Mirza Shirazi, and soon he became one of the well-known scholars of that area. In 1333 AH, granting the request of Mirza Mahmud, the son of Hajj Agha Muhsin Araki, he moved to Arak. For more than eight years he administered the seminaries in Arak. The number of the students exceeded three hundred, making Arak the foothold of knowledge and research. In the month of Rajab in 1340 AH, the Ayatullah in the company of Ayatullah Sayyed Muhammad Taqi Khansari visited Qum. Some believe that in addition to

⁵³ Before formation of schools in their current form, students would go to places called Maktab Khane where they would learn Qur'an and literature from their teacher.

⁵⁴ A marja' is the religious authority who people refer to for their jurisprudential questions.

his intention to visit the shrine of Lady Ma'sumah in Qum, he was also encouraged to go to Qum due to the requests he received from its Qum.

It was late winter on the 22nd of Rajab 1330 AH⁵⁵ when Ayatullah Haeri accepted the invitation of the people of Qum and left Arak, accompanied by his son, Ayatullah Murteza Haeri, and Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Khansari. Qum, which had already been decorated for the Eid of Mab'ath,⁵⁶ was prepared to welcome the Ayatullah. While he was still outside the city, crowds of people flocked to welcome him upon the news of his arrival. For the next few days, the Ayatullah participated in the celebrations of Mab'ath in different part of the city.

Soon after Mab'ath, the birth anniversary of Imam al-Zaman took place simultaneous with the Persian New Year at that time, and this encouraged many from neighbouring cities to journey to Qum to visit the Ayatullah. During the celebrations, the scholars who were familiar with Ayatullah Haeri during their stay in Samira and Najaf spoke of his knowledge and spiritual qualities, thus encouraging the crowds to keep him in Qum.

Before Ayatullah Haeri's arrival, Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Bafqi Yazdi migrated from Najaf to Qum. He prepared the grounds for the foundation of the seminaries of Qum with the cooperation of great scholars such as Ayatullah Hajj Shaykh Abulqasim Kabir Qummi, Ayatullah Hajj Shaykh Mahdi, and Ayatullah Hajj Muhammad Arbab. In their discussions, they decided that to have a scholar from a city other than Qum – a person who is highly knowledgeable and pious, and can

⁵⁵ 1300 according to Solar Hijri Calendar

⁵⁶ Muslims celebrate this day as the anniversary of the day Prophet Muhammad was appointed by God as a prophet.

supervise the seminaries to revive religious sciences. Thus, after successfully convincing Ayatullah Haeri, he decided to reside in Qum.

The fourteenth century – the first year of the foundation of the seminaries of Qum – coincided with the year some scholars were exiled from Iraq to Iran. Ayatullah Sayyed Abulhasan Esfahani, Ayatullah Mirza Husayn Naini, Ayatullah Sayyed Ali Shahrestani, Ayatullah Sayyed Abdulhusayn Hujjat Karbalai, Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Esfehani Gharawi and Ayatullah Shaykh Mahdi Khalesi were among the great scholars who along with their students were forced to leave Iraq for Iran and hence resided in the seminaries of Qum.

Ayatullah Haeri settled in Qum in 1340 AH (1301 SH) and this laid the foundation of the seminaries. These schools gradually blossomed and found their place among the greatest seminaries of the Shi'a world. For this reason, he was known as "The Founding Ayatullah." Had it not been for his presence, not only would have been no signs left of the seminaries, but also the same would have happened to the monotheistic religions.

The most fundamental step the Ayatullah took after funding the seminaries was to renovate the schools. He encouraged discussion circles and deep critical thinking; he also enhanced the instructors' teaching methods and applied the curriculum used in Najaf after his thirty years of teaching experience. These positive changes ended the tragic period of the Qum seminaries that had worsened after Mirzaye Qummi. The Ayatullah's most innovative action choosing a group of scholars whose responsibility was to evaluate the student's academic level, a necessary method applied in today's educational systems.

The initiation of the seminaries coincided with the inception of Reza Pahlavi's sovereignty. The conflicts between the government and the scholars intensified and government restrictions on the seminaries led to the fall of the seminaries and a decrease in the number of its students. According to the statistics, the number of the schools and their students in Iran in the year 1304 SAH were 282 and 5984. After the sixteen years, that is, in the year 1320 SAH towards the end of reign of King Reza Pahlavi this decreased to 207 schools and 784 students.

Despite this, in this period, the Ayatullah made many efforts to organize all affairs of the seminaries. Perhaps it was his non-political attitude that kept the seminaries of Qum less vulnerable to the restrictions planned by Reza Pahlavi's reign. He was very patient with regards to the political events that occurred in the beginning of Reza Shah's period and with respect to the controversial policy that banned the wearing of the *hijab* in Iran. He struggled to protect the newfound Islamic seminaries, as he used to say, "I find protecting the seminaries more important." However, he did confront Reza Shah numerous times regarding the Shah's policies. After that policy was issued and after the massacre of people by the Pahlavi regime in the Gowharshad Mosque in Mashhad, the Ayatullah grieved until his death.⁵⁷

Ayatullah Haeri passed away in 1355 AH at the age of 84. After him, Ayatullah Sayyed Muhammad Hujjat, Ayatullah Sadr, and Ayatullah Khansari administered the seminaries.

In 1363 AH, Ayatullah Burujerdi directed the Qum seminaries. Though he was invited by Ayatullah Haeri to reside in Qum before, he preferred to

⁵⁷ Please refer to Abbas Zadeh, Sa'eed, *Negahban-e Bidar*, Page 67

avoid social positions and kindly turned down the invitation. It was only by the end of 1363 AH and during the presidency of the three Marje's: Ayatullahs Khansari, Hujjat, and Sadr that he resided in Qum and directed the seminaries.

In addition to having mastered Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*), principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), rijal,⁵⁸ hadith, philosophy, and theology, Ayatullah Burujerdi taught different subjects including philosophy before his arrival to Qum. During his stay in Qum, he taught usul for six years and taught fiqh for the rest of his life.

With the arrival of Ayatullah Borujerdi in Qum, the seminaries of Qum under his supervision flourished and in a very short time undertook major changes. Seminaries, libraries, lessons and discussions, journals and different Islamic sciences progressed on a deeper and higher level. During his administration, the number of the scholars in Qum increased to more than six thousand. His activities also extended to the Islamic world outside Iranian borders. Building the mosque in Tripoli of Lebanon and Imam Ali Mosque in Hamburg, Germany are some of his accomplishments.

Ayatullah Khomeini was one of the Shi'a marje's who became the foremost marja' of his time after Ayatullah Burujerdi. He had a great impact on the seminaries of Qum and the social-political movements and transitions of the time. In his classes, he discussed the scope of jurisprudence and expanded it to include political jurisprudence. Using strong arguments, he introduced the idea of an Islamic government based on governance of the jurist (*wilayatul faqih*). Along with teaching, Imam Khomeini pursued his political activities against the Pahlavi regime. One

⁵⁸ The study of the reporters of hadith

of the most important ones was his speech on the 13th of Khordad in 1342 SAH that led to the famous revolt on the 15th of Khordad, an uprising that finally resulted in the victory of the Islamic revolution on the 22nd of Bahman of 1357 SAH. The seminaries of Qum paid an enormous expense for this victory; one of these events was which the Savak⁵⁹ attacked Feyziyeh, one of the seminary schools and killed all its scholars and students.

Finally, when the Pahlavi regime found Imam Khomeini a serious threat to their rule, they exiled him to Turkey, then Iraq, and finally to France.

Ayatullah Sayyed Shahab ud-Din Husayni Mar'ashy Najafi was among the great scholars who came to Qum through Ayatullah Haeri's request to teach. Ayatullah Sayyed Muhammad Reza Golpaygani and Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Ali Araki were among the two great leaders and maraje up until the Islamic Revolution.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ The Pahlavi's Organization of Intelligence and National Security.

⁶⁰ Sayyed Kabavery, Sayyed Alireza, *Howze Haje Elmiyye Shi'e Dar Gostare-ye Jahan*, pages 383-408

