

Endnotes

1. Biographical entries include (in Arabic): AmÐn, AÝyÁn al-ShÐÝa, v.9, p.182; KhwÁnsÁrÐ, RawÁÁt al-JannÁt, v.2, p.91 and (in Persian) TunukÁbunÐ, QiÒaÒ al-ÝUlamÁP, p.198; QummÐ, FavÁPid al-RaÁawiyya, p.404; TabrÐzÐ, RayÁÁnat al-Adab, v.1, p.51. An analysis of the biographical entries on BihbihÁnÐ is found in Gleave, "The Akhbari-USuli Dispute".
2. A combination of the different versions of this story can be found in DavÁnÐ, ValÐd-i BihbihÁnÐ, p.123-126, together with other stories exemplifying the relationship between the two scholars.

14. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, al-Khilāf (Qum: al-Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1407)
15. Muḥammad b. Makkī al-‘Āmilī al-Shahīd al-Awwal, Al-Durūs al-shar‘iyya fī fiqh al-imāmiyya (Qum: Mu'assasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1419Sh)
16. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ḥāirī al-Fuṣūl al-Gharawiyya (lithograph reprint, Qum, 1404)
17. Muḥammad Mahdī al-Narāqī, Mustanad al-Shī‘ā (Qum: Sata-ra, 1419)), v.17, p.35.
18. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muzaffar, Uṣūl al-fiqh (Najaf, 1968)
19. R. Gleave, Scripturalist Islam (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
20. Wilferd Madelung, “Shi’i Attitudes Toward Women as Reflected in ‘fiqh’,” in Afaf Lutfī al-Sayyid-Marsot, ed., Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979), pp. 69-79.
21. Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī al-Shahīd al-Thānī, al-Rawḍa al-Bahiyya fī sharḥ al-Lum‘a al-Dimashqiyya (Qum: Amīr, 1410)
22. ‘Alī Mishkīnī, Iṣtilāḥāt al-uṣūl wa-mu‘ḥam abḥāthihā (Qum, 1409AH)

Bibliography (in addition to works of Bihbihani and Bahrani)

1. al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, Qawā‘id al-aḥkām (Qum: Mu’assasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1419Sh)
2. Al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, Tabṣirat al-Muta‘allimīn fī aḥkām al-dīn (Tehran: Intishārāt-e faqīh, 1368Sh)
3. Al-Fāḍil al-Tūnī, al-Wāfiyya fī uṣūl al-fiqh (Qum, 1412AH)
4. Al-Mīrzā al-Qummī, Ghanā‘im al-ayyām (Qum : Maktab al-I‘lām al-Islāmī, 1417)
5. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, Sharā‘i‘ al-islām (Qum: Amīr, 1409AH)
6. al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, al-Ikhtiṣāṣ (Beirut: Dār al-Mufīd, 1414/1993)
7. Al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa-Kashf al-Ṣidq (Qum, 1407AH)
8. Ardabīlī, Majma‘ al-fā‘idah (Qum: Mu’assasat al-nashr al-islāmī, 1414)
9. Husayn b. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Karakī, Hidāyat al-Abrār fī ṭarīq al-āimma al-aṭḥār (Najaf, 1396AH)
10. Ibn al-Barrāj, al-Muhadhdhab (Qum: al-Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1406)
11. Ibrahīm b. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Qazwīnī Ḍawābiṭ al-Uṣūl (Karbala, 2018)
12. Mīrzā Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, Mustadark al-Wasā’il (Qum: Mu’assasat Āl al-Bayt, 1408/1988)
13. Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarābādī al-Fawā‘id al-Madaniyya (Qum, 1324AH)

groupings). Whether to count Usulis as merely misguided fellow Shi'a or heretical deviants from the true faith was never resolved, giving Akhbarism less coherence on such questions than their Usuli counterparts. Because it had failed to resolve certain basic questions concerning its role within the Shi'i scholarly elite, a disruption of Akhbarism's institutional structure (such as a reduction in the supply of high grade scholars following the 1134–1135/1772–1773 plague) would therefore dent the prospects of the school relative to their more intellectually coherent opponents. Finally, whilst Akhbari legal theory was not devoid of an emphasis on scholarly authority, Usuli-mujtahid theory was, perhaps, be a more attractive theory for the Ulama. It left little room for doubt as to who the keepers of religious knowledge were, with its explicit division of the population into mujtahid and muqallid, and its pronouncement that the community need only follow the commands of a mujtahid without knowing the reasoning behind the command. This, combined with the already established position in Shia fiqh concerning the distribution of community taxes and the leadership of public prayers, made Usulism a clear favourite. For the Ulama, jockeying for community loyalty (and the power that it might bring) at the beginning of a new dynastic reign, Akhbari legal theory may have seemed too much of a risk, and too easily abused by those who wished to undermine their position as the keepers of religious knowledge within the community.

lost. With this setback, and whilst Akhbarism was attempting a recovery, al-Bihbahani and his pupils were able to establish themselves in the shrine cities. Al-Bihbahani had been teaching Usulism in secret for some time, and al-Bahrani's death enabled him to assume the position of scholarly pre-eminence in Najaf and Karbala. Second, the assumption of power of Fath Ali Shah Qajar in 1134–1135/1772–1773 brought to the throne a monarch who was intensely interested in religious movements. This meant that the Shah's personal religious preference for Usuli clerics (if not for Usulism itself), Sufism and even his flirtation with Sheikhism encouraged competitor schools to gain ground at Akhbarism's expense. This prevented a scholar of undoubted intellectual weight such as Mirza Muhammad from re-establishing Akhbarism within Iran following the set of the plague and al-Bihbahani's death. He did, it seems, attempt to gain the Shah's favour through the famous Tsianov episode (in which he "magically" brought about the death of a Russian general), though the Shah seems to have reneged on their agreement. Whilst Akhbarism did not die out, its influence was restricted to marginal areas (southern Iran and the southern Gulf littoral). The patronage of court nobles, to be found in the major towns and cities was no longer available. Third, as mentioned above, Akhbarism never managed to achieve internal coherence over its identity. By this, I am referring to the intra-Akhbari debates about how to view their opponents (be they Usulis or other Shi'i

1205/1791), al-Bihbahani trained scholars, taught in the madrasas and wrote additional works of jurisprudence. His pupils were Sheikh Kashif al-Ghita' (d.1228/1813, and credited with defeating Akhbarism in Iran), Abu 'Ali al-Ha'iri (d.1215/1800, author of an important Usuli work of *Tabaqat*), Muhammad Mahdi Bahr al-'Ulum (d.1212/1797-1798, who also gained an *Ijaza* from al-Bahrani) and Sayyid 'Ali al-Tabataba'i (d.1231/1816, al-Bihbahani's brother in law). All of these scholars participated in the Usuli revival initiated by al-Bihbahani. Some stayed in the 'Atabat, but many of his pupils founded seminaries and teaching establishments in Iran. However, they themselves were always quick to identify themselves as the pupils of al-Bihbahani and it is through their industry that Usulism flourished once more. Akhbarism is today restricted to a few villages in southern Iran, Bahrain and pockets of Akhbarism in India. Al-Bihbahani died in 1205/1791 (the dates 1206/1792 and 1208/1794 are also mentioned) and was buried in the Graveyard of the Martyrs in Karbala, next to his father.

The demise of Akhbarism appears, rather, to have resulted from a confluence of historical accidents. First, the plague which hit the Akhbari dominated shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala in 1134–1135/1772–1773 claimed the lives of many learned scholars, and one can presume that a generation of promising Akhbari scholars, who would have continued al-Bahrani's legacy, were

age of 50 (i.e. between 1165/1751 and 1170/1757). In Karbala, he set up rival classes to those of Yusuf al-Bahrani, and the two scholars engaged in regular debates. Al-Bihbahani is said to have declared that prayer behind Bahrani was invalid, implying that Akhbaris did not have the requisite 'adala (moral probity). One story tells of how al-Bahrani and al-Bihbahani were seen arguing in the courtyard of the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala one evening. The gatekeepers wanted to close the shrine, so the two scholars carried on arguing in the outer courtyard. Eventually that too had to be closed and they moved out onto the street. When the gatekeepers returned the next morning, the two scholars were still arguing. The time for dawn prayer came, the worshippers gathered in the haram, and al-Bahrani went to lead prayer. Al-Bihbahani laid out his cloak in the courtyard and prayed in the courtyard, apparently refusing to join the worshippers in the haram.⁽²⁾ Despite these differences, there was a certain scholarly respect between the two scholars. Al-Bahrani left a request in his will that al-Bihbahani say his funeral prayers, which, by all accounts, al-Bihbahani did.

The death of al-Bahrani in 1772, due to the plague that hit southern Iraq, gave al-Bihbahani an opportunity to develop his Usuli madrasa in the 'Atabat. The Akhbaris were left without a leader, and a large number of al-Bahrani's Akhbari scholars also died in the plague. For the next 20 years (until his death in

Muhammad Baqir al-Bihbahani and his Relationship with Yusuf al-Bahrani

Al-Bihbahani's life and travels are described in a number of biographical notices devoted to him. However, these accounts do contradict each other and there is considerable uncertainty about the dates of the major events in al-Bihbahani's life.⁽¹⁾ His birth, as is commonly agreed, was in Isfahan, though his year of birth is put at 1116, 1117 and 1118AH (i.e. between 1704 and 1707) by different biographers. He studied first with his father, a scholar in his own right, and moved with his father to the town of al-Bihbahani in the Iranian province of Fars, at an unknown date. It is said that the move was prompted by a down turn in Isfahan's security, perhaps due to the Afghan capture of the city in 1135/1722 which marked the beginning of Safavid demise. Al-Bihbahani also spent time studying in the 'Atabat, completing his seminary studies in the great madrasas of Najaf. In Najaf he married the daughter of Sayyid Muhammad al-Tabataba'i al-Burujirdi, one of the few Usuli scholars of the period. This may have been before moving to Bihbahan, or perhaps after his initial move there. Whatever the exact itinerary of al-Bihbahani's travels, he arrived in Bihbahan and spent 30 years there, teaching, writing and involving himself in local politics. He eventually returned to the 'Atabat, settling in Karbala, probably at the

The Akhbariyya drew on the diverse areas of Safavid Twelver intellectual life. There were Akhbaris who were influenced by mysticism and philosophy (such as Muhammad Taqi al-Majlisi (d.1070/1659-60) and Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani (1091/1680)), as well as the stricter, more legalistic manifestations of Shi'ism (such as, Mulla Muhammad Tahir al-Qummi (1098/1686) and al-Hurr al-Amili (d.1104/1693)). What they shared was a common attitude towards the manner in which the Shari'a might be known. They were, then, in the main a movement of law, and often referred to themselves as a madhhab (sect). As an intellectual force, the Akhbariyya died out in Iran and Iraq in the early 19th century, though they continued for a short time thereafter to be influential in India. Even today, there continue to be scholars who follow a methodology similar to Akhbarism in the Shi'i world, particularly in the Persian Gulf area and southern Iran.

both interpretation of the movement's origins. Early Muslim historiographical works, such as al-Shahrastani's *al-milal wa'l-nihal*, talk of the division of the Imamiyya into *mu'taziliyya* and *akhbariyya*. Whether these early Akhbaris can be linked to the later, better defined, the movement is unclear.

In biographical works, Muhammad Amin al-Astarabadi (d.1036/1626-7) is normally described as the founder of the movement, though al-Astarabadi views himself as its "reviver". He was followed by a number of scholars who explicitly identified themselves with the Akhbariyya. What united these scholars was a call for the return to the sources in a belief that the meaning of the Imams' words and actions had been lost by centuries of excessive interpretation. This excessive interpretation they identified with the introduction of the doctrine of *ijtihād* into Shi'i legal thinking by Allama al-Hilli. Akhbaris also criticized other juristic practices linked with the theory of *ijtihād*. In particular, they viewed the "canonical four books" (*al-kutub al-arb'a*) of Twelver Shi'a hadith as containing only "sound" (*sahih*) akhbars. The hadiths in these books should not be examined by the traditional means (criticising their *isnads* or *tawatur*) of establishing historical accuracy. Furthermore, these sound hadiths were never ambiguous in meaning, and were in no need of interpretation. In this sense, the Akhbariyya can be viewed as literalist, or even fundamentalist.

Introduction

The relationship between Sheikh Yusuf al-Bahrani and Muhammad Baqir al-Bihbahani is one of the most interesting in the history of the ‘ulama of Karbala. They were, of course, in opposition to one another, since al-Bahrani tended towards Akhbarism and Bihbahani was a staunch advocate and reviver of Mujtahid Usulism. In this paper, I examine the lives of the two scholars, and their relationship during their time together in Karbala. The Akhbariyya was a legal movement in Twelver Shi’ism which emphasised a return to the sources of the law (Qur’an and hadith). The hadith in the Twelver Shi’ism includes accounts of the sayings and actions of the Imams (normally termed akhbar). The Akhbariyya styled themselves as followers of the Imams through the texts (akhbar) which record their rulings, rather than the interpretations of these texts by later scholars. The origins of the Akhbari movement are a debated point both within the Twelver tradition, and amongst Western commentators. The Akhbaris themselves see their movement as the original Shi’ism which was later corrupted by scholars who had imitated Sunni methods of jurisprudence. Their opponents, termed Usulis (or in some texts mujtahids) considered the Akhbaris an innovative (bid’a) movement, arising in the 16th century with the work of Muhammad Amin al-Astarabadi. There is evidence to support

Abstract

Toward the end of the 18th. Century there was a heated debate between the two schools: the Akhbari and the Usuli. The Akhbaris, headed by Al-Bahrani, believed that the sources of Islamic jurisprudence were only The Quran and the Sunnah (The Prophet's Traditions). Their school was firm and solid at that time. Yet, the Usulis, led by Al-Bahbahni, thought that such two sources need elucidation and interpretation. Thus, they put forward the theory of «Ijtihad» (i.e. independent reasoning or the thorough exertion of a jurist's mental faculty in finding a solution to a legal Islamic question; the independent effort used to arrive at the rulings of sharia).

This present study would investigate the reason why the Akhbaris were well known in Karbala, why it was weakened at the hands of Al-Bahbahni, in the last decades of the 18th. century, whose knowledge and published works with the efforts of his students paved the way to originate for the doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism in modern era.

Key words: Asuli School, Akhbari School, Al-Wahid Al-Bahrani, Sheikh

الملخص:

في أواخر القرن الثامن عشر الميلادي كانت هناك مناقشة علمية ساخنة بين المدرسة الأخبارية وبين المدرسة الأصولية وكان رأي الأخباريين فيها أن مصادر الشريعة هما الكتاب والسنة فقط - ومذهبهم كان الاقوى في ذلك الوقت. اعتقد الأصوليون (علماء المذهب الأصولي) إن المصدرين (الكتاب والسنة) بهما حاجة الى التفهيم والتفسير ولذلك طرح الأصوليون نظرية الاجتهاد - بمعنى "استفراغ الوسع في طلب ظن الحكم الشرعي" - والذي كان لازماً لفهم مراد الشارع المقدس من النصوص الشرعية.

كان زعيم الأخباريين آنذاك هو الشيخ يوسف البحراني، وزعيم الأصوليين هو الوحيد البهبهاني وفي هذا البحث سنوضح سبب شهرة الأخبارية في كربلاء وتاريخ ضعف المدرسة الأخبارية على يد الوحيد البهبهاني في العقود الاخيرة من القرن الثامن عشر. وبسبب الوحيد البهبهاني ونتاجه ونتاج تلامذته ايضاً تأصل الفقه الشيعي الأثنا عشري في العصر الحديث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المدرسة الأصولية، المدرسة الأخبارية، الوحيد البهبهاني، الشيخ

يوسف البحراني.

**The End of Akhbari School
and the Beginning
of Asuli School in Karbala:
The Co-Relation between Sheikh
Yousuf Al-Bahrani
and Al-Wahid Al-Bahbahni**

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نهاية المدرسة الأخبارية
وبداية المدرسة الأصولية في كربلاء
العلاقة بين الشيخ يوسف البحراني والوحيد البهبهاني

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