

Shiite Authorities in the Age of the Major Occultation Part 3: Sayyid Murtadha

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Abstract

Abu Al-Qasim Ali Ibn Husain Al-Sharif Al-Murtadha (d. 436 A.H), known as Sayyid Al-Murtadha, was one of the most renowned scholars of his time. After the death of Sheikh Mufid and his brother Sayyid Radhi, Sayyid Murtadha shouldered the governmental responsibilities by leading the Shi'a society. He was the head of high court of justice who led the Alawites and supervised the hajj pilgrimage. In addition to his social activities, he was well known for his piety and expertise in various fields of theology, jurisprudence, literature, and poetry. In this exposition, after outlining the preceding notions, Sayyid Murtadha's publications, teachers, and students have been listed, as well as a description of his religious, scientific, and political authority during a golden age of Islamic history. Abu Al-Qasim Ali Ibn Husain, commonly known as Sharif Sayyid Al-Murtadha 965 – 1044 AD; 355 – 436 AH with the epithet of Allam Al-Huda (The Banner of Guidance), was one of the most prominent scholars of his time. He was the elder brother of Sayyid Al-Radhi, Sayyid Radhi the compiler of Nahjul Balagha, and lived during the era of Buyid Dynasty, a flourishing period of intellectual and cultural renaissance in Islamic history. The epithet Sayyid reveals his descendancy from Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h): his paternal lineage is directly traced to the seventh Twelver Imam, Musa Al-Kadhim, while his maternal lineage is traced back to the fourth Twelver Imam, Ali Zaynul Abidin.

The Political situation during the time of Sayyid Murtadha

As distinguished students of Sheikh Mufid, Sayyid Radhi and Sayyid Murtadha spent a part of their lives with their teacher during the times of the Abbasid caliphs Ta'i (363 – 381) and Qadir (381 – 422). The rest of Sayyid Murtadha's life was spent during the reign of caliph Qaim Abbasi and the beginning of the decline of the Buyid Dynasty. The Seljuks rose to power as Tugrul, the head of the Seljuk Dynasty,

entered Baghdad in 347 A.H and seized the throne from the Buyids. After his brother Sayyid Radhi, Sayyid Murtadha lived up to 436 A.H. He passed away eleven years before Tugrul entered Baghdad. After he passed away, Sheikh Tusi held the authority and the leadership of the Shi'ites.

Caliphate of Qaim Bin Amrillah

After Qadir's death, people paid allegiance to Abu Ja'far Abdullah Al-Qaim Bi Amrillah 422 – 467 A.H . As a result, bitter disputes escalated among the Shiites and Sunnis, resulting in anarchy, murder, and plunder. The army of Jalal Al-Dawla Daylami revolted and asked Abu Jafar to dismiss him and then the Turks plundered his house. As a result, Jalal Al-Dawla escaped from Baghdad. Rebels called Abu Kalijar, son of Sultan Al-Dawla and Jalal Al-Dawla's nephew who controlled Fars and Kerman, although Jalal Al-Dawla refused to join them. They eventually brought Jalal Al-Dawla back. He continued his rule in Iraq as his army rebelled several times until his death in 1044 (435 A.H), a year before Sayyid Murtadha passed away, and following which Abu Kalijar managed to gain control of Iraq. After Jalal Al-Dawla's death, a group of people gave allegiance to his son Al-Malik Al-Aziz living in Wasit and called him to Baghdad. Meanwhile, Abu Kalijar, nicknamed Muhyiddin by the caliph, made many promises to the soldiers and seized the throne. In 436 A.H, speeches were made in his name in Baghdad. Abu Kalijar died six years after Sayyid Murtadha passed away in 440 A.H, after which the people gave allegiance to his son, Abu Nasr Firuz Buyihi nicknamed Malik Rahim. Cf. Hasan Pirnia, Iqbal, Tarikh-e Iran, p. 165 – 176 and Bayat, op. cit. p. 148. More information concerning these political changes will be given in the section about political changes of the time of Sheikh Tusi.

Religious and political accomplishments

After Sheikh Mufid passed away in 413 A.H, Sharif Murtadha was the head of all seminaries and became the authority over Shia society. The great contemporary scholars during his time believed that his position was higher than Sheikh Mufid's. Abu Mansur Tha'alib. 429 says concerning Sayyid Murtadha, "Today in Baghdad, the position of a leadership with eminence, dignity, knowledge, courtesy, grace, and generosity exclusively belongs to Sharif Murtadha." Yatimat Al-Dahr, vol. 1, p. 53 quoted from Davani, op. cit, vol. 3, p. 247 and "Memorial of 'Allamah Sharif Murtadha", the section concerning Muhammad Javdan's statements, p. 290. Sayyid Murtadha was also highly revered by Ibn Basam Andulusi: This Sharif, the leader of Iraqis leaders was present [and offered solutions] regardless of whether they were involved in disputes or they were in agreement. Iraqi scholars sought his advice [to solve their problems], and the nobles of Iraq acquired knowledge from him. People quoted him everywhere and his poems were infamous. Al-Dhakhirh. Ibn Khalkan, Wafayat Al-Ayan, p. 443; and Sayyid Ali Khan, Al-Darajat Al- Rafiah, p. 459. Ibn Khalkan mentions that Sharif Murtadha was the leading scholar in Kalam (Islamic theology), literature, and poetry. Ibid, p. 313. According to Allameh Hilli, Sayyid Murtadha was an expert in sciences such as Kalam, Islamic jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, and literature including syntax, poetry, and morphology. He truly was ahead of all

scholars in his era. Cf. *Khulasat Al-Aqwal*, p. 94; quoted from Davani, op. cit. p. 272. For more information, refer to *Fawa'id Al-Radawiyah*, p. 282 further; *Rayhanat Al-Adab*, vol. 3, p. 116 further; *Ayan Al-Shia*, vol. 8, p. 213 further. In addition to being the Islamic authority and leader of the Shiites, Sayyid Murtadha was a nationwide reputable person whose authority was the result of his personality, since he was a peerless leader in the above-mentioned sciences, and his poetry had a great impression on the Arab people's minds and souls. Moreover, his positions of the high leadership of the Alawites, the supervision of the Hajj pilgrimage, and being head of the high court of justice in Inabah, 'Umdat Al-Talib fi Ansab Al-e Abi Talib, pp. 204 – 5. gave him the power to solve social issues. He used financial resources to solve many social problems which rendered him more socially influential than his teacher. About Sayyid Murtadha, it is quoted from judge Tanukhi, friend and contemporary with him that said: "He [Sayyid Murtadha] was at high level of knowledge and official ranks. He was in position of leadership of the entire Islamic world, supervision of hajj pilgrimage and Ka'bah and the shrine of the Prophet (s), being the head of high court of justice for 30 years until the end of his life. (quoted from Sayyid Mohsen Amin, Ibid, p. 214; Abbas Qomi, *Fawa'id*, p. 283.) Earlier, during the time of Sheikh Mufid, religious classes were held at Karkh, the mosque of Baghdad, though Sayyid Murtadha and Sayyid Radhi built different religious schools. For more information refer to Ibn 'Inabah, 'Umdat Al-Talib Fi Ansab Al-e Abi Talib, pp. 209 – 210; Sayyid Murtadha built a library in his school which held 80 thousand books accessible to students and teachers. (Cf. *Majalis Al-Muminin*, vol. 1, p. 501; *Al-Darajat Al-Rafiah*, p. 463.) for research and teaching sessions. His classes were not exclusive to the Shiites; scholars, jurists and scholars of literature from different Islamic schools participated in his classes. Sharif Murtadha provided financial aid to his students to facilitate a peaceful study environment. Sayyid offered salaries according to their conditions, such as giving Sheikh Tusi twelve dinars every month and to Ibn Barraj eight dinars. Sayyid Ali Khan, *Al-Darajat Al-Rafiah*, p. 460. Sayyid Murtadha sold a part of his estate to provide paper for jurists and scholars. *Rawdat Al-Jannat*, vol. 4, p. 296. and established a great library. In 422 A.H., his father's house was burnt due to the riots of the Hanbalis and Sayyid was moved to another house in Karkh where he resumed his lessons. He equipped other houses with libraries, and it was not long until a scientific community of researchers was established in the Shia mosque of Karkh. The knowledge and sciences that developed as a result were due to the great efforts of Sayyid Murtadha and Sayyid Radhi. Due to the increase in students, the Shiites of Karkh owned the greatest scientific site in Baghdad and in the Islamic world. More than three hundred scholars reached a high scholarly level of having the authority of judgment (Ijtihad) in the school of Sheikh Tusi. This number were from only the Shiite students of Sheikh Tusi, since the rest of his students were countless.

Scientific and governmental positions of Sayyid Murtadha during the time of Qadir Abbasi

Sayyid Murtadha, who lived in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, was known for his scholarship and piety among Shi'i hadith scholars: Mirza [Sayyid Murtadha] had many written works which I have mentioned in my book, *Kabir*. The Shiite scholars of our time – 693 A.H – have benefitted from his books

and he has been their teacher. May Allah bless his soul and reward him from his fathers the best of rewards. Allamah Hilli, quoted from *Majalis Al-Muminin*, vol. 1, p. 503, in *Khulasah* In his time, Sayyid Murtadha was close to the Abbasid caliph. It has been reported: Muhammad Ibn Al-Hasan Ibn Abdur Rahim, the minister of Qadir Abbasi fell sick in 420 A.H and his illness continued until he saw the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) in his dream who said to him, "Tell Allam Al-Huda to recite a supplication for you and you will become healthy." The minister says that I asked the Imam (a.s.), "Who is Allam Al-Huda?" Imam (a.s.) answered, Ali Ibn Al-Husain Al-Musavi.' Then the minister wrote a letter to ask Sayyid Murtadha to supplicate before Allah to cure him and wrote the nickname he had heard in his dream as the address of his letter. When Sayyid Murtadha read the letter, he did not feel he deserved that nickname and wrote to the minister, "[I ask] Allah [to help me in my affairs]. Certainly, this nickname is too great for me!" The minister replied, "By Allah, I swear that I did not do anything but what I was ordered to by the Commander of the Faithful." After the minister recovered from illness thanks to Sayyid Murtadha's prayer, he wrote his story to Qadir Abbasi and mentioned Sayyid Murtadha's refusal of accepting the nickname. Qadir told Sayyid Murtadha, "O Sayyid Murtadha! Accept what your great ancestor has nicknamed you." He also ordered writers of the government to add that name to their documents. Since then Sayyid Murtadha became well known by the name Allam Al-Huda. Cf. *Majalis Al-Muminin*, vol. 1, p. 501; *Al-Darajat Al-Rafiah*, p. 460. After Sayyid Radhi passed away, Sayyid Murtadha shouldered his governmental responsibilities and became the leader of Shiites and head of the high court of justice. With all these responsibilities, he managed to heed to scientific discussions and wrote on Shiite theology and jurisprudence: Ibn Kathir Shami's history book Sayyid Murtadha was a noble man and elder of his brother, Sayyid Radhi. He was the supervisor of religious students, Shiites and Mutazilites. Discussions concerning all religions would be held before him. He wrote books about Shiites' major and minor principles. Quoted from *Majalis Al-Mu'minin*, vol. 1, p. 502; *Riyad Al-Ulama*, p. 460. Regarding Sayyid Murtadha's knowledge and position, Yafi'i wrote, "Sayyid Murtadha was the leader in theology, literature, and poetry. He wrote books about Shiites and a treatise about principles of religion." Quoted from Qadi Nurullah Shushtari op cit.; *Riyad Al-Ulama*, p. 460. Also, with regards to Sayyid Murtadha, Allamah Bahr Al-Ulum wrote *Fawa'id A-Rijaliyyah* : Sayyid Murtadha was a great personality who wrote a book called *Thamanin*. He lived for eighty years and eighty months. About Sayyid Murtadha, his friend Judge Tanukhi said: "He [Sayyid Murtadha] reached high scientific and spiritual states. He became the leader and guardian of the Sayyids in the east and the west. He was the supervisor of Hajj pilgrimage. He was also the head of high court of justice for thirty years. *Fawa'id A-Rijaliyyah*, Allamah Tabatabai, (Bahr Al-Ulum) and Sayyid Ali Khan Shirazi, *Al-Darajat Al-Rafiah*, quoted from *Ayan Al-Shiah*, vol. 8, pp. 213 – 4; Cf. Mudarrisi, *Rayhanat Al-Adab*, vol. 3 & 4, p. 16. In addition to Sheikh Mufid, Sayyid Murtadha, and Sheikh Tusi's efforts, other Shiite governmental officials were also involved in propagating Islamic sciences, among whom was Shapur Ibn Ardeshir, the minister of Baha Ad-Dawla and Sharaf Ad-Dawla. He established a great library in 381 A.H. to the advantage of scholars of all fields. It held ten thousand books handwritten by their own authors. Cf. Ali Davani, *Millenium of Sheikh Tusi*, Lecture script of Va'iz Zadeh, p. 41; cf. Muhammad kurd Ali, *Khutatush Sham*, vol. 6, p. 185, quoted from *Ayan n Ash-Shia*, vol. 9, p. 159. The availability of books and the expansion

of knowledge and research in Karkh continued until 448 A.H. Afterwards, Togrul, the second Seljuk king, along with some of the Hanbalis, burned Baghdad in a fire of bigotry. It was not too long until Sheikh Tusi's official class was terminated, his own library and Shapur's great library destroyed, and the people's lives and properties were lost. In addition, Sheikh Tusi's great contribution of knowledge was lost when he left Baghdad. More details about these events will be discussed later when Sheikh Tusi's life will be discussed. Knowledge, sciences, invention, experimental studies, and research were promoted to the highest degrees during the government of the Shiite Buyid dynasty in the fourth and fifth centuries throughout Sayyid Radhi and Sayyid Murtadha's lives. During these two centuries, scholars were dedicated to all sciences, especially natural sciences and cosmological studies. Scholars such as Abu Nasr Farabi, Abu Al-Hasan Masudi, Yahya Ibn Uday, Abu Al-Faraj Isfahani, Abu Al-Hasan Amiri, Abu Reyhan Biruni, Sheikh Rais Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Abu Sulayman Mantiqi Sajistani, Ibn Heytham, Ali Ibn Isa Umar Khayyam, Nasir Khusrou, Ghazzali and Bahmanyar existed at that time. The numbers of similar scholars were reduced in the next centuries since the grounds for spreading knowledge during that time were not prepared. However, the weakness of the Abbasids helped the Shiites to establish a temporary authority. Cf. Yadnameh-ye Sharif Radhi, pp. 292 – 293.

Sayyid Murtadha's Publications

Sayyid Murtadha published many works in different Islamic sciences. The author of Rayhanat Al-Adab lists more than seventy works of Sayyid Murtadha, among which are: 1) Al-Shafi Fi Al-Imamah, 2) Al-Dhakhiratu Fi Al-Kalam, 3) Jumal Al-Ilm Wa Al-Amal Fi Al-Fiqh, 4) Taqrib Al-Wusul, 5) Dalil Al-Muwahidin, 6) Al-Rad Ala Yahya Ibn Uday, 7) Tabiat Al-Islam, 8) Tanzih Al-Anbiyai Wa Al-Aimmah, 9) Al-Muqniu Fi Al-Ghaybah, 10) Al-Sarfuhu Fi Al-Ijaz, 11) Al-Dhariat Fi Al-Usul, 12) Masail Al-Khalaf, 13) Sharh Al-Risalat Fi Al-Ijaz, 14) Sharh Al-Khutbat Al-Shaqshaqiyyah, 15) Funun Al-Qur'an, 16) Tafsir Al-Hamd Wa Al-Baqarah, 17) Al-Fiqh Al-Makki, 18) Al-Intisar Fima Infaradat Bihi Al-Imamah, and 19) Al-Khalaf Fi Al-Usul Al-Fiqh. Cf. Rijal Najashi, pp. 270 & 271; Rawdat Al-Jannat, vol. 4, pp. 301 & 302; Sayyid Muhsin Amin Amili, Ayan Al-Shiah, vol. 8, p. 219; Rayhanat Al-Adab, vol. 3 & 4, p. 119. Sheikh Mufid, Sayyid Murtadha, their teachers, and the contemporary scholars who accompanied them were mostly considered authorities in Islamic theology (Kalam). Their task was to remove doubts raised by adversaries and it seems that this knowledge was more important than other sciences, including Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) and Hadith studies at that time due to the availability of many treatises called 'Responses to Issues' (Ajwabat Al-Masa'il). These treatises were requested from the mentioned authorities by people from near and far cities. There were also many books written to reject criticisms against the Shia. The names of all books and treatises are mentioned in the bibliographies of the sources of that time. Ali Davani, ibid. p. 38.

Sayyid Murtadha's teachers and students

Sayyid Murtadha, or Allam Al-Huda as he was known, was taught by great teachers such as Sheikh

Mufid, Khatib Adib Ibn Nabatah, Sheikh Husain Ibn Babiwayh, Harun Ibn Musa Talukbara, Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Imran Marzbani Khurasani, Ahmad Ibn Sahl Dibachi, and Ahmad Ibn Sa'id Kufi. Cf. Mirza Abdullah Afanil Isfahani, Riyad Al-Ulama, vol. 4, p. 15. Sayyid Murtadha taught students who were to be distinguished scholars such as Sheikh Tusi, Qadl Ibn Barraji, Abu Al-Fath Karajaki, Sallar Ibn Abd Al-Aziz, Abu Al-Salah Halabi and tens of other Shiite scholars.

Short biographies of two great students of Sayyid Murtadha:

Sallar and Abu Al-Salah Halabi

Several of Sayyid Murtadha's students who were also Sheikh Tusi's students were great experts and scientific scholars. In this section we will briefly describe some of the accomplishments of these two students, namely Hamzat Ibn Abd Al-Aziz Daylami and Abu Al-Salah Sheikh Taqi Al-Din Halabi.

Hamzat Ibn Abd Al-Aziz Daylami

Hamzat Ibn Abd Al-Aziz Daylami, also known as Sallar, Sallar is the Arabized word for Salar Persian word meaning "grand" and "commander" was a great Islamic jurisprudent among the luminaries of Shiite jurisprudence. He was born in Mazandaran and grew up there until he moved to Baghdad and Najaf to complete his education. He was one of the greatest early Shiite scholars in science and literature. Being a student of Allam Al-Huda and among the hadith teachers of Abu Ali, Sheikh Tusi's son, he would sometimes teach on behalf of Sayyid Murtadha. Afterwards, he was appointed by Sayyid Murtadha to be the religious authority to resolve disputes in cities around Hallab given his intellectual abilities and talent in jurisprudence. Rayhanat Al-Adab, vol. 2, p. 210; Cf. Ayan Al-Shiah, vol. 7, pp. 71 – 170. Some of his books are Al-Abwab Wal-Fusul concerning Fiqh, Al-Tadhkirat Fi Haqiqat Al-Jawhar on Kalam, Al-Taqrzb on the principles of Fiqh and Al-Radd Meaning: Rejection of. 'Ala Abi Al-Hasan Al-Basri Fi Naqd Al-Shafi. With respect to the last mentioned book, it has been said that Qadi [Judge] Abd Al-Jabbar Mutazili wrote a book in rejection to Shias and titled it as Al-Mughni al-Kafi. Sayyid Murtadha wrote a book to reject it and titled it as Al-Shafi Fi Naqd Al-Kafi. Abu Al-Hasan Basril wrote a book in rejection to Sayyid Murtadha's book. Afterwards, Sallar wrote the mentioned book (Al-Rad Ala Abi Al-Hasan Al-Basri Fi Naqd Al-Shafi by the order of Sayyid Murtadha in rejection to Abu Al-Hasan Basri's book. Ayan Al-Shiah, vol. 7, pp. 71 – 170; Cf. Mir Mustafa Tafrishi, Naqd Al-Rijal, p. 156. At Sayyid Murtadha's funeral, his teacher, Najashi mentioned the name of Sallar among the people who attended the burial. "After Sayyid Murtadha passed away, I washed his body and Abuy Ali Muhammad Ibn Al-Hasan Al-Jafari and Sallar Ibn Abd Al-Aziz accompanied me." Rijal Najashi, p. 271; Cf. Muhammad Taqi Tustari, Qamus Al-Rijal, vol. 7, p. 441.

Abu Al-Salla Sheikh Taqi Al-Din Ifalabi

Abu Al-Salah Sheikh Taqi Al-Din Halabi, a student of Sayyid Murtadha, was a great jurisprudent, hadith

scholar, and exegete known for his reliability and trustworthiness. He was mostly taught by Sayyid Murtadha and Sheikh Tusi. Halabi also participated in the class of Abd Al-Aziz known as Sallar. Later he was appointed by Sayyid Murtadha to teach and revive religious obligations in Damascus and the Halab (Aleppo) regions, attaining him the title 'Caliph of Murtadha.' Majlisi, Bihar Al-Anwar, Book of Al-Ijazat, quoted by Allamah Bahr Al-Ulum, vol. 2, p. 131. After Sayyid Murtadha passed away, Sheikh Tusi kept him in his position and became his delegate, and continued to be named the 'Caliph of the Sheikh.' He would solve people's problems and answer their questions freely. The author of Rawdat Al-Jannat wrote: The well-known and great jurisprudent, Abu Al-Salah Taqi Al-Din Ibn Najm Ibn Ubaydullah Halabi is the trusted jurisprudent before the scholars of the science of Rijal. He is among the luminaries of Shia, famous jurisprudents of Halab and known as 'Caliph of Murtadha' due to being appointed by his great teacher, such as Ibn Barraj who was appointed by Sheikh Tusi. Such appointment has been for the purpose of judgment or teaching. Since both appointment have been confirmed and proved, the great position of this jurisprudent is manifested. Rawdat Al-Jannat, vol. 2, p. 112. He was the author of Al-Bidayah (in jurisprudence), Taqrib Al-Ma'arif in Kalam, Daf Shubhat Al-Malahidah in Kalam, Al-Shafiyyah, Sharh Dhakhireh Alam Al-Huda, Al-Umdah, Al-Kafi and Al-Murshid Fi Tariq Al-Ta'abbud. Ayan al-Shiah, vol. 3, p. 635; Rawdat Al-Jannat, vol. 2, p. 113. He lived about a hundred years and passed away in 447 A.H and was buried in Halab. Sheikh Tusi wrote in his book, Rijal: Taqi Ibn Najm Halabi is a reliable scholar who has some books and has studied before me and Sayyid Murtadha. Muhammad Tusi, Rijal Al-Tusi, p. 457. According to the author of Riyad Al-Ulama, acknowledgement of Halabi by Sheikh Tusi in his book clarifies his great position of in religiosity and science. Halabi was one of the famous Shiite scholars who was appointed by Sayyid Murtadha in Halab and taught many students for years there. He wrote priceless books and disseminated Fiqh and Hadiths there. He wrote Al-Bidayah Fi Al-Fiqh and Al-Kafi Fi Al-Fiqh and also wrote commentary on Al-Dhakhirah written by Sayyid Murtadha. Ibn Shahr Ashub, Ma'alim Al-Ulama, p. 29. and passed away around 449 A.H. In one of his writings, Shahid Thani refers to Halabi as 'the representative of Murtadha in Halab and suburbs, Abi Al-Salah Taqi Ibn Najm Al-Halabi' Bihar Al-Anwar, Book of Al-Ijazat, quoted by Allamah Bahr Al-Ulum, vol. 2, p. 131.

Final Remark

Sayyid Murtadha is believed to be among the greatest models of science and piety in the whole Islamic world, so much so that the blind Arab genius, Abu Al-Ala Mu'irri was proud to accompany him everywhere. It is said that when Abu Al-Ala was leaving Iraq, he was asked about his opinion towards Sayyid Murtadha. He answered in the form of the following poem: *"O' one who asks me about him, Behold that he is a man void of defect, You may see him as all people in one man And the history at a moment and the earth in a house."* Quoted from Ayan Al-Shiah, vol. 8, p. 217.

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