

Lebanese ‘Āmili Scientific Missions to the City of Najaf al-Ashraf from the Beginning of the Twentieth Century until 1968

Hassan Ali Salman
University of Kufa

Corresponding Author: Hassan Ali Salman haoo83237@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This research examines and analyzes the phenomenon of Lebanese ‘Āmili scientific missions to Najaf al-Ashraf during the period extending from the early twentieth century until 1968. It highlights the profound historical and intellectual ties between Jabal ‘Āmil—one of the most important Shi‘i centers in Bilād al-Shām—and Najaf al-Ashraf, which for centuries served as the supreme religious authority and a major destination for students of Islamic sciences from across the world.

The study demonstrates that Najaf was not merely a religious center for acquiring knowledge; rather, it played a foundational role in shaping the ‘Āmili scholarly elite. These scholars transmitted Najafi intellectual traditions back to their homeland, thereby enriching knowledge, establishing schools, and founding religious institutions in Lebanon. Moreover, the research clarifies that the outcomes of these missions were not confined to intellectual and religious domains but extended into social, cultural, and political spheres. They contributed to consolidating the Shi‘i communal identity and strengthening the bond with the Najafi marja‘iyya (supreme authority).

Accordingly, Najaf al-Ashraf became a source of intellectual, spiritual, and civilizational radiance, while the ‘Āmili scholars served as a primary channel for transmitting and localizing this heritage within their environment. This laid the groundwork for a dynamic civilizational interaction whose effects endured until the late 1960s.

INTRODUCTION

The scientific and cultural interaction among Islamic centers represents one of the most significant factors that contributed to shaping the religious and intellectual identity of Shi'i communities in the Arab East. Within this context, the city of Najaf al-Ashraf emerged as a religious and scholarly hub that, for centuries, attracted students of knowledge from various regions due to its supreme religious authority and its venerable ḥawza institutions. These institutions made Najaf a destination for those seeking to deepen their understanding of jurisprudence, the fundamentals of religion, Islamic thought, and the propagation of divine doctrine.

As for Jabal 'Āmil in Lebanon, it constituted one of the principal arenas for the spread of Shi'ism in Bilād al-Shām. From it arose scientific and cultural movements that left a notable imprint on Islamic history. The relationship between Jabal 'Āmil and Najaf al-Ashraf thus represented a distinctive model of civilizational and intellectual complementarity. 'Āmili scholars and students maintained close contact with the Najafi ḥawza, where they studied and absorbed its sciences, later returning to their homeland as envoys of peace carrying Najafi thought. This contributed to enriching the intellectual life of Jabal 'Āmil and to reinforcing ties with the supreme religious authority.

Najaf al-Ashraf, heir to the glory of Kūfa during the caliphate of Imām 'Alī (peace be upon him), traces its foundation back to the Abbasid ruler Hārūn al-Rashīd (170–193 AH), who ordered the first construction over the grave of the Imām following a miraculous sign that revealed the site. This event laid the cornerstone for the sanctified city, as people began to visit the shrine and bury their dead nearby, seeking his intercession (al-Qazwīnī, 1311 AH; al-Amīn). The enshrinement of the grave of Imām 'Alī thus effectively established the city of Najaf al-Ashraf, which soon eclipsed al-Ḥira and dominated over Kūfa (al-Ḥasanī). Around the sacred shrine a small settlement gradually developed, whose inhabitants catered to the needs of visitors and pilgrims (al-Najaf, 1377 AH). From that time onward, Najaf became a capital and a key center for the dissemination of the sciences of the Prophet's Household (peace be upon them) throughout the Islamic world.

The problem of this research lies in the absence of a comprehensive study that documents the 'Āmili scientific missions to Najaf up until 1968. Most of what has been written about the subject remains fragmented or limited to mere documentation, without delving deeply into its intellectual, social, and political dimensions.

The importance of this research, therefore, is that it seeks to uncover the dual role of these missions: on the one hand, Najaf functioned as a source of religious, linguistic, and intellectual sciences; on the other hand, the return of these scholars to Jabal 'Āmil contributed to revitalizing its intellectual environment and to establishing schools and cultural centers there.

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- To document the major stages of scientific migration from Jabal 'Āmil to Najaf until 1968.

- To highlight the impact of these migrations on the formation of religious and political elites in Lebanon.
- To analyze the social and political contexts that facilitated the continuation of this scholarly movement.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has adopted the historical-analytical method, which combines narration and documentation on the one hand, with critical analysis of the influencing factors on the other—while relying on historical sources and contemporary references.

The structure of the study is organized as follows: an abstract, introduction, two chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter introduces Jabal ʿĀmil and Shiʿism, while the second examines the scholarly influence of Najaf al-Ashraf on Jabal ʿĀmil. The conclusion presents the main findings reached through the course of this research.

RESEARCH RESULT

Chapter One: Jabal ʿĀmil and Shiʿism

The region of Jabal ʿĀmil has been associated with devotion to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), since the time of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (Saʿd, 1957), the Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny). Abū Dharr carried a deep conviction of loyalty to Imam ʿAlī, embracing it wholeheartedly in both spirit and intellect, to the extent that this belief became an essential part of his religious identity (Rizq, 2005). He was among the *murābiṭūn* (frontline fighters) and advocates of this cause. He resided in the fortress of al-Ṣarfandī on the coast near Ṣaydā, and in the fortress of Mays (present-day Mays al-Jabal) in the highlands of Jabal ʿĀmil (Rizq, 2005). This noble Companion thus played a clear role in the spread of Shiʿism in Jabal ʿĀmil, a region that came to embrace Shiʿism even before many other Islamic lands.

It appears that only a small number of people in Medina, Mecca, Ṭāʿif, Yemen, and Persia had adopted Shiʿism during this early period, whereas the majority of Shiʿis were in Jabal ʿĀmil (al-ʿĀmilī, 1983). It is reported that upon the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him and his progeny), only four faithful adherents to Imam ʿAlī remained—Salman al-Muḥammadī, al-Miqdād, Abū Dharr, and ʿAmmār (al-Ḥusaynī, 2009). Gradually, their numbers increased, reaching around one thousand by the time of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān’s caliphate. When Abū Dharr was exiled to Syria, he stayed there for some time, which led some people to adopt Shiʿism. Later, Muʿāwiya banished him to the countryside, and when he settled in Jabal ʿĀmil, its inhabitants embraced Shiʿism from that day (al-ʿĀmilī, 1983).

The community continued to uphold its beliefs across the centuries. Several foreign travelers who visited Jabal ʿĀmil documented what they observed. For instance, Laurent claimed that Shiʿis were Kurds who had migrated from the Persian frontier in the thirteenth century (Lammens, 1932), while Van Dyck argued that the *Mutāwila*—another designation for Shiʿis—

appeared, based on their customs and outward appearance, to be of Persian origin (Curtius, 1939; Makki, 1963). However, these conclusions were based largely on external cultural practices, attire, and traditions common among Shi‘is of various ethnic backgrounds. Such misinterpretations prompted travelers to attribute Jabal ‘Āmil’s Shi‘is to Persian or Kurdish origins. This was refuted by Edward Robinson, who observed:

“We are now in a district called Bilād Bishāra, which includes the villages of Yābarūn and Mārūn... extending to the plain of Şūr (Tyre), bounded to the north by the Litani River. It encompasses Marj‘ayūn and other villages, with its own governor seated in Tyre and its capital at Tibnīn. The region contains many thriving villages, most of whose inhabitants are Mutāwila” (Robinson, 1949).

Thus, the original inhabitants of Jabal ‘Āmil were from the Arab Qaḥṭānī tribe of Banū ‘Āmila, and they adhered to Shi‘ism. This is corroborated by the Persian traveler Nāṣir Khusraw, who visited the region in 437/1045 and recorded in his *Safar-nāma* that he had passed through Tripoli, Jubayl, Beirut, and Şūr (Tyre), describing Tyre as a wealthy city whose majority population was Shi‘i, though its judge was a Sunni named Ibn Abī ‘Aqīl (Khusraw, 1970). He further noted that most inhabitants of Tyre and its surrounding villages – Tibnīn, Hūnīn, Qudus, and al-Shaqīf – were Imāmī Shi‘is. The largest towns were Şaydā and Tyre, while the largest villages were al-Nabīṭiyya, Banīt Jubayl, and al-Khiyām (al-Amīn).

The connection of Jabal ‘Āmil to Shi‘ism thus stretches back to the dawn of Islam. In this regard, ‘Allāma Muḥammad Jawād Maghniya remarked: “Historians affirm that human societies are always in flux. Yet this general observation does not apply to the people of South Lebanon’s villages. The name of Jabal ‘Āmil has remained bound to Shi‘ism from the visit of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (may God bless him) until the advent of the Awaited Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance)” (Maghniya, 1425 AH).

This association is also reinforced in *Amal al-Amal* by al-‘Āmilī (1983), who transmits a narration from Imam Ja‘far al-Şādiq (peace be upon him) that when asked about the state of the Shi‘a during the occultation of the Mahdī and who his true followers would be, he replied:

“A town in al-Shām... in the district of al-Shaqīf Arnon... Its inhabitants are our true Shi‘a, our helpers and supporters, those who safeguard our secrets, show compassion toward us, and are harsh against our enemies. They are like the passengers of a ship in our occultation...”

Regarding the Arab lineage of Jabal ‘Āmil’s inhabitants, Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn confirms:

“They are deeply rooted in Arabness, their customs bear witness to their Arab descent, and their language is Arabic, with a dialect closer to Classical Arabic than that of others” (*Khiṭaṭ Jabal ‘Āmil*, 2022).

Their steadfast adherence to Shi‘ism throughout history enabled Jabal ‘Āmil and its surrounding regions, such as the Beqā‘ Valley, to become centers of religious scholarship. These centers not only produced distinguished jurists but also transmitted their intellectual and religious traditions across the Arab world and beyond (al-Taḥqīq, 2014). The people of Jabal ‘Āmil were also

renowned for their intelligence and linguistic adaptability, quickly mastering the languages of other regions and blending seamlessly into local cultures (al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 2022).

Over the centuries, Jabal 'Āmil produced a remarkable number of scholars, poets, writers, and leaders. Since the early Islamic conquests, and particularly from the sixth century AH onward, the region became a cradle of learning, producing prominent scholars in various fields, whose contributions enriched Islamic civilization (al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, 2022). As Rizq (2005) notes, Bilād al-Shām was home to many of the Prophet's Companions, such as 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, and al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. Their presence significantly contributed to spreading Islam in the region.

Najaf al-Ashraf, for its part, became renowned for its centuries-old religious schools and libraries, which attracted thousands of students from across the world to pursue Islamic sciences, attend religious lectures, and participate in intellectual life (al-Qurashī, 2008). Moreover, the city was distinguished by its historic mosques, including the Great Mosque of Kufa, the Mosque of al-Janāba, 'Umar ibn Shāhīn, al-Khaḍrā', al-Ra's, and the mosque of the Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' family, among others. These institutions left a profound mark on the religious and intellectual life of Jabal 'Āmil's students.

The Academic Influence of Najaf on Jabal Amel

The twelfth century CE witnessed a phenomenon of migration among scholars from **Jabal Amel** who traveled to **Najaf** in pursuit of knowledge. **Ismail bin Hassan al-Jizi'ini** (d. 1190 CE) is considered a pioneer of this academic journey to Al-Hillah, followed by **Sheikh Saleh bin Musharraf al-Tab'i al-Amili** and **Sheikh Najm al-Din Tuman bin Ahmed al-Amili** (d. 1327 CE), after which the migration of scholars continued.

Undoubtedly, these journeys instilled a scholarly atmosphere in the cultural centers of Jabal Amel, preparing an environment from which the **First Martyr** would emerge to establish an academic revival. This revival was centered in Jezzine, to which he introduced the intellectual thought of the al-Hillah school after more than five years of study under **Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin Yusuf al-Hilli**, known as **Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin** (d. 771 AH), from 1349 to 1357 CE.

The First Martyr, whose name was **Shams al-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Makki al-Jizi'ini al-Amili**, is the progenitor of the "Al Shams al-Din" family in Southern Lebanon. He was born in Jezzine in 1333 CE, then traveled to Iraq to acquire knowledge. He graduated under the tutelage of Allama al-Hilli's students at an early age, and Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin granted him an *ijazah* (a license to narrate and teach) in 1357 CE. Upon reaching the level of *ijtihād* (independent juristic reasoning), he narrated not only from Shi'a scholars but from forty sheikhs from Mecca, Medina, Baghdad, Egypt, Damascus, and Jerusalem. It is said he had more than a thousand chains of narration. After an academic tour of several Arab countries, the First Martyr returned to his homeland and founded the Jezzine school, which was the vanguard of Shi'a cultural and political activity in Jabal Amel. Before this, no schools were known

to exist in the region due to the political instability that had forced scholars to seek their religious education secretly.

The First Martyr is considered the first to dispatch agents to various parts of the Levant and to order the collection of religious dues. This established, for the first time in the history of the **Marja'iyya** (religious authority), a strong religious entity for Shi'a Muslims. He also initiated an academic transformation in Jezzine, which became home to major jurisprudence schools that later spread after his death to several areas of Jabal Amel, including Mays, al-Karak, al-Nouriyya, al-Biqā', Jubba', 'Ayatha, al-Khalil, Nabatieh, and Juwaya, leading to a region filled with Shi'a jurists.

Subsequently, some members of the **Al Abi Jami'** family, known as **Al Muhyi al-Din**, relocated to Najaf, as did some of the **Al Sadr** family, who migrated to Baghdad and then to Najaf to escape the brutality of **al-Jazzar** after he attacked their village, Shuhur. Some Ameli families, such as the Lebanese **Al Sharara** family, became deeply rooted in Najaf, establishing two branches – one in Lebanon and the other in Najaf. One of the city's alleyways ('*Akad*') was named "Beit Sharara" in their honor.

Prominent Ameli figures emerged as pioneers of reform in Najaf's academic circles, such as **Muhsin bin al-Sheikh Abdul Karim bin Musa Sharara**. A jurist, man of letters, and professor of jurisprudence, he migrated from Jabal Amel to Najaf, where he studied under Sheikh Muhammad Ali al-Khurasani. He later returned to his homeland, giving religious and cultural lectures and writing research papers and articles for newspapers. Like others, Sharara contributed to the reform of academic studies in Najaf through a series of articles published in *Al-Irfan* magazine in the summer of 1928, titled "Between Anarchy and Proper Education."

Another notable scholar was **Muhsin al-Amin**, who was born in the village of Shaqra in Jabal Amel. He traveled to Najaf and studied religious sciences under its scholars, adopting several reformist stances. He advocated for the reform of Hussaini rituals after he was dismayed by the shallow knowledge of reciters in Jabal Amel and Iraq, their poor command of the Arabic language, and the fallacies they propagated. He took the initiative to reform mourning gatherings, training a new generation of reciters proficient in classical Arabic and providing them with the necessary tools, including his own writings on the subject, to prevent the spread of baseless narratives.

Other scholars who studied in Najaf's schools included al-Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Kulabiyān, Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Kashif al-Ghita, Sheikh Kadhīm al-Shirāzi, al-Sayyid Abi al-Hasan al-Asfahani, and Mirza Hussein al-Na'ini. Academic life in Najaf has passed through many stages over its long history of more than a thousand years, making it a beacon that carried the torch of the Islamic faith for all humanity. During this time, the city held a position of academic leadership, illuminating the path for successive generations. One could say that Najaf has produced princes of poetry as well as imams of jurisprudence and philosophy. While the literary school left its mark on inherited Arabic prose and poetry, its influence on prose was much stronger than on poetry.

DISCUSSION

Najaf's Literary Circles

Poetry and literature were inseparable from the sciences taught in Najaf, and the literary current infiltrated its circles to the point where it was said: "Najaf in poetry and literature is yesterday's Kufa of Iraq during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras." **Sheikh Jawad al-Shabibi** confirmed this by stating, "Let any town in the Arab world be known to rival Najaf in the multitude of poets it has produced, especially in the last four centuries."

These circles were frequented by litterateurs, poets, scholars, and jurists who managed to combine their study of religious sciences with literary creativity in both prose and poetry. This engagement was evident in many of their works, to the extent that many books of jurisprudence were written in the form of poetic rhymes (*arajiz*). Some, however, took a literary path, abandoning the core sciences of the seminary to recite poetry and delight in hearing it. Some scholars also composed and recited poetry, and it appears that poetry did not stand in the way of their academic excellence in Islamic law. These literary circles gained widespread acclaim, with some calling them "Najaf's hallmark."

Najaf's poets were accustomed to holding literary gatherings in academic schools or private homes. Among these prominent figures were **Muhammad Saeed al-Haboubi**, **Jaafar al-Khalili**, **Ibrahim al-Tabataba'i**, **Sheikh Jawad al-Shabibi**, **Sheikh Abdul Karim al-Jaza'iri**, **Sheikh Muhammad al-Samawi**, **Sayyid Ridha al-Hindi**, **Baqir al-Hindi**, and **Sheikh Abdul Hussein al-Hilli**, the youngest of the group.

These circles and literary gatherings contributed to the intellectual and academic development of many people from Jabal Amel. The paths to knowledge were open to them, and the religious schools, led by the Holy Shrine and its libraries with diverse books, attracted scholars and students. These gatherings provided a great opportunity for them to reach high academic and literary ranks. **Sheikh Musa Sharara al-Amili** was a regular at al-Haboubi's council, which was held on the roof of the Safi al-Safa al-Yamani dome overlooking the Sea of Najaf. During his time in Najaf, Sharara acquired new ideas, which led him to revitalize the poetic and literary gatherings in his homeland, drawing inspiration from the Najaf experience. This influence also led him to strengthen the commemoration rituals for Imam Hussein, utilizing a book he had brought back from Najaf that was co-authored by several Iraqi religious speakers. Ultimately, Sharara's most significant contribution was his ability to create a comprehensive vision for religious reform, aiming to improve literary life alongside ritual practices and religious education.

In this pioneering field, a group of brilliant Ameli scholars also emerged as masters of poetry and literary composition, each establishing his own school of thought. This, in turn, enriched the history of Jabal Amel, giving it intellectual and literary continuity that challenged periods of darkness and backwardness and produced a large number of intellectual and literary figures who excelled throughout the ages.

With the advent of the modern renaissance, signs of innovation appeared in the words, meanings, meters, and rhymes of poetry. This led to the emergence

of political and religious currents that clashed with two poetic trends: a conservative trend that upheld the heritage of the past, epitomized by spiritual and scholarly figures like Sheikh Jawad al-Shabibi, Sayyid Ridha al-Hindi, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Samawi; and a modernist trend that sought innovation. Amidst these conflicting poles, the poetic movement became as divided as the city itself. On the one hand, Najaf was a hub for humanities and Islamic sciences, where the greatest schools of jurisprudence originated. On the other hand, it was a fertile ground for spiritual, poetic, revolutionary, social, and political rebellion and liberation.

Nevertheless, these circles and literary gatherings produced a generation of intellectual, literary, and political figures who played a pioneering role in both culture and politics before and after the First World War. Among them were the two Shabibis, Muhammad Ridha and Muhammad Baqir, Saeed Kamal al-Din, Muhammad Ali Kamal al-Din, Yusuf Raqib, and Ali al-Sharqi, who contributed in one way or another to the public life of the Najafi, and subsequently Iraqi, society.

The hosts of these gatherings made an effort to provide the necessary amenities for their meetings. Structurally, the gatherings took place in the front parts of their homes, which included libraries filled with manuscripts and books, varying according to the host's interests and resources. These gatherings also included lodging for guests. This entire space was called the *al-barrani* (the outer part) to distinguish it from the family's residence, known as the *al-dakhalan* (the inner part).

Najaf's literary circles, or "diwans" as some called them, served as a testing ground for talents and abilities, polishing the skills of writers. They were a key factor in shaping the intellectual awareness of the people of Najaf and Jabal Amel, and of students from various nationalities, especially those from Jabal Amel. In these circles, diverse political ideas and opinions were debated, and the clash of views had a profound effect on the fruitful intellectual activity of the attendees, while these discussions sustained and guided research and investigation among specialists. Discussions also revolved around literature, both ancient and modern, including poetry, literary epistles (*maqamat*), debates (*musaajalat*), and poetic contests (*mutarahat*), attended by scholars, writers, poets, and others.

These gatherings and poetic debates demonstrated the ability of poets from Najaf and Jabal Amel to master the formulation of words, composition, and meter, a style the city inherited from the Abbasid era and preserved in terms of language and structure. For example, Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin showed his prowess by composing a rhyming jurisprudential poem in the style of educational poetry, similar to the *Alfiya* of Ibn Malik, which he called "The Wing of the Riser to Learn Obligations."

Poets and scholars would recite poetry at these gatherings, which were held on Thursdays and Fridays and on social occasions such as weddings and funerals. The poems recited on these occasions were known as "literature of occasions." Poetry was also recited at religious events during the holy months of Muharram, Safar, and Ramadan.

There was also a type of "humor literature" (*adab al-fukahat*) among intellectuals and writers that contained political opposition to foreign rule and the prevailing situation in Iraq and Jabal Amel. These circles were not limited to a literary tone but also addressed legal and civil problems.

These gatherings helped spark the talent of Ameli poets and bring it into existence. This was evident at the city's large celebrations, such as the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, the birth of Imam Ali, and the Day of Ghadir. Poetry was also used to mark other occasions, such as the gilding of a dome, the construction of a sanctuary, the opening of a new gate to the shrine, or the erection of a minaret. These celebrations produced wonderful poetry, giving rise to what is known as "historical literature" or "historical poetry." One can hardly find a mosque without verses of poetry on its entrance recording the date of its construction, and no minaret, major event, writer, or scholar's marriage or birth was without a poetic record in a refined style. For example, on the facade of the minaret at Imam Ali's shrine, a poet wrote:

And the muezzin of history stood within it, Repeating "Allahu Akbar" four times.

Counting the letters of "Allahu Akbar" four times gives the date of the minaret's construction, which was 1156 AH. Poetry was also composed for other occasions, such as the establishment of the constitution in 1908. In these public events and celebrations, poetry was delivered with a sense of artistry and elegance.

The literary, cultural, and religious circles hosted by Najaf's scholarly and literary families played a role in fostering intellectual and cognitive awareness among the people of Najaf and Jabal Amel and all who frequented them. Najafi families took pride in the emergence of a poet, historian, or writer from their midst. As a result, the city witnessed an increase in the number of houses and scholarly families that hosted poetic gatherings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These gatherings were passed down through generations, each producing talented poets, writers, and journalists who enriched the Iraqi cultural scene with their works and activities.

These circles addressed various intellectual, cultural, and political topics and were therefore classified by their function. There were the **circles of jurisprudence and fatwa**, which were religious and scholarly gatherings held by a select group of leading religious authorities, jurists, and scholars from the seminary. These were attended by sheikhs and merchants under the supervision of the religious authority, who would answer legal questions and the inquiries of ordinary people. The first to hold such a circle was Sheikh Mirza Muhammad Hussein al-Na'ini.

The **circles of literati** were second in importance and attracted a wider audience. They were where discussions about ancient and modern literature took place, including poetry, essays, literary debates, and poetic contests, attended by scholars and poets alike. These were the most numerous of Najaf's circles, and the most important were those of Al Khudhairi, Al Shabbar Ali, and Al Shamma'. The active role of the **circles of preaching** should also not be overlooked. They were of two types:

1. **Ramadan Circles:** Held during the nights of Ramadan, these gatherings were attended by scholars and literati, and discussions revolved around fasting and its days. Of particular interest were the literary circles, which played a major role in shaping literary awareness through discussions that continued until dawn. These forums and gatherings served as an outlet for intellectuals to express their thoughts. Discussions about poetry, literature, and other matters took place at homes during social and political occasions. Poetry thus became an additional element in the culture of Ameli scholars, influenced by Najaf's poetic environment, a picture of which was carried back to Jabal Amel upon the scholar's return home.
2. **Husseiniyah Circles:** Najaf had many occasions that called for mourning ceremonies, which were not limited to commemorating Imam Hussein on the days of Ashura, Muharram, Safar, and Ramadan. The ascension of speakers to the pulpit to mourn Imam Hussein played a major role in sharpening minds and bringing out the talents of the gifted, especially since poetry had become the medium of expressing feelings and emotions from the city's earliest history. The word "poet" in this city held great significance, measured by the quality of his poetry. Therefore, poetry in the Najafi concept was a rhythmic melody and a sweet song. The speaker had to chant and intone the poem in a way that captivated listeners and gave poetry a special value, even for the illiterate. Public speaking was not for those who lacked a deep, melodious voice and a captivating tone. Along with these elegies, there were thousands of poems dedicated to eulogies that might begin with enthusiasm, praise, or description, and even bacchic poetry would end with an elegy, a form of *husn al-takhalus* (a graceful transition) from the science of *badi'*, which they called *al-kariiz*. The mourning ceremony was nothing but a remembrance that concluded the chapters of poetry, narrations, and news. Among these circles were those of Al Kashif al-Ghita, Al Jawahiri, and Al Bahr al-Ulum.

In conclusion, Najaf was and remains a leading religious and academic center in the Islamic world. It is the primary center of the religious seminary (*hawza*) from which the *hawza* of Jabal Amel branched off through the scholarly missions that traveled to Najaf.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research concludes that Najaf was not merely a religious center; it served as an intellectual incubator and a beacon for shaping the elites of Jabal Amel. These elites went on to play pivotal roles in Lebanon, revitalizing religious movements, establishing reformist intellectual and academic projects, and engaging in political action.

Najaf played a significant role in this academic movement. Stemming from the importance of its scholarly seminary (*hawza*), Najaf's influence helped develop this ancient religious institution to suit the contemporary reality of Muslims. On this basis, Jabal Amel was clearly and significantly influenced by the Najaf seminary. Although Jabal Amel carved its own path, it never strayed

far from the knowledge and culture its scholars acquired in Najaf, which was reflected in Jabal Amel's academic and cultural reality.

The study has shown that:

- **Academic missions** served as a civilizational bridge between Najaf and Jabal Amel.
- **Political transformations** in both Iraq and Lebanon directly affected the size and nature of these missions.
- The increasing presence of scholars from Jabal Amel in the Lebanese sphere after 1968 indicates that Najaf produced not just traditional scholars but also **intellectual and activist leaders**.

Thus, studying this academic movement provides an opportunity to re-understand the relationship between the **religious academic center** (Najaf) and the **socio-political environment** (Jabal Amel), and the interactions they produced, the effects of which are still evident today.

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