

Introduction

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In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The domination of the Sunnī creed during the first nine Islamic centuries characterizes the religious history of Iran during this period. There were however some exceptions to this general domination which emerged in the form of the Zaydīs of Tabaristan, the Buwayhids, the rule of Sultan Muhammad Khudabandah (r. Shawwal 703–Shawwal 716/1304–1316) and the Sarbedarīs. 7

Nevertheless, apart from this domination there existed, firstly, throughout these nine centuries, Shīʿī inclinations among many Sunnīs of this land and, secondly, original Imamī Shīʿism as well as Zaydī Shīʿism had prevalence in some parts of Iran.

During this period, Imamī and Zaydī Shīʿism in Iran were nourished from Kufah, Baghdad and, later, from Najaf and Hillah. The character of these links is a topic which requires study. Identification of the channels of this nourishment and its duration and phases will assist us in the study of Shīʿī ideas and their prevalence in Iran.

The connection between Iraqī Shīʿism and Iran has existed continuously from the beginning until the present time. However, during the first nine centuries there are four high points in the history of this linkage:

- First, the migration of a number of persons belonging to the tribe of the Ashʿarīs from Iraq to the city of Qum towards the end of the first/seventh century, which is the period of establishment of Imamī Shīʿism in Iran.
- Second, the influence of the Shīʿī tradition of Baghdad and Najaf on Iran during the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries.
- Third, the influence of the school of Hillah on Iran during the eighth/fourteenth century.

- Fourth, the influence of the Shī‘ism of Jabal ‘Amil and Bahrayn (not mainly through the channel of Iraq) on Iran during the period of establishment of the Safavid rule.

From a historical point of view there does not exist much vagueness concerning the first and the fourth phases. But the second and the third phases stand in need of further study. During the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries, a large number of Shī‘ī scholars from the central (Ray and Qum), northern (Amul and Sarī) and north–eastern (Bayhaq and Nayshabur) parts of Iran brought Shī‘ism to Iran following their sojourns in Iraq and the cities of Baghdad and Najaf.

Some of them were pupils of Shaykh Mufīd (d. 413/1022) and Shar‘f Murtada (d. 436/1045) and many were pupils of Shaykh Tusī (d. 460/1068) and his son, Abu ‘Ali (alive in 511/1117), and other teachers of the Shī‘ī centre of Najaf.

For another time in the eighth/fourteenth century we are witness to the migration of a large number of Shī‘ī scholars of Iranian origin from the above–mentioned regions to Hillah. Many of them were pupils of ‘Allamah Hillī (d. 726/1326) and his son, Fakhr al–Muhaqqiqīn (d. 771/1369), and they brought the works of these two Shī‘ī scholars to Iran and translated some of them into Persian. This period of growth of Shī‘ism in Iran is in marked contrast to the state of stagnation of Sunnī thought in Iran in the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad, and during it we do not come across any vigorous work in Sunnī kalam and fiqh in Iran. Rather, we witness the development of Sunnī tasawwuf followed by Shī‘ī ‘irfan.

Among the most important effects of this intellectual nourishment was the control of Iranian Shī‘ism by Arab Shī‘ism, with the result that during this period we do not find anything that may be termed as ‘Iranian Shī‘ism’ with characteristics independent of Arab Shī‘ism. Possibly some of the features of Iranian Shī‘ism, such as the festival of Nowruz, became more prominent than they were ever in Iraq, but the foundation and essence of Iranian Shī‘ism is nothing but Arab Shī‘ism. The present article is devoted to describing the second and third phases of this influence.

The Shī‘ī academic centre of Baghdad benefited from two sources. First was the Shī‘ī hadīth tradition, which was mainly drawn from Iran (Qum and Ray), and besides the works of Shaykh Saduq other works were hardly any significant. The second source was the rationalist Shī‘ī school which had roots in Kufah and Baghdad itself.

The Shī‘ī school of Baghdad drew its strength from what it had drawn from Kufah and Qum, especially from the time when the Buwayhids came to rule in Baghdad. After the Seljuqs came to power there during the first half of the fifth\eleventh century, the Shī‘ī school of Baghdad declined and the ensuing Shī‘ī–Sunnī disturbances led to the migration of some Shī‘ī scholars. The real pillars of this school were Shaykh Mufīd (d. 413/1022) and Sayyid Murtada (d. 436/1044) and, after them, Shaykh Tusī. Each of these three played a basic role in the reconstruction of the intellectual foundations on which the Shī‘ah tradition of the later periods was built.

Shaykh Tusī (Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn al–Hasan ibn ‘Ali Ibn al–Hasan al–Tusī) was born at Tus in

Ramadan of the year 385/995¹. After studying some of the texts in his native town or at Nayshabur he set out for Baghdad in the year 408/1017.

There, he was a pupil of Shaykh Mufīd until the year 413/1022 and thereafter that of Sharīf Murtada until 436/1044. After Sharīf Murtada, he assumed the leadership of the Shīʿī community until, during the Shīʿī–Sunni riots and disturbances, his house and library were set on fire and these events compelled him to set out for Najaf in the year 448/1056². He had the good fortune to transform the small and limited academic circle of this city³ during the rest of his life, until 460/1067, into a major centre of learning.

After him his son and disciple, Abu ʿAli (alive in 511/1117), pursued the work of his father. During that time a large number of Shīʿī scholars of Arab and Iranian origin had gathered at Baghdad and Najaf. Scholars like Sallar ibn ʿAbd al-Azīz Daylamī, Ibn Barraj and Karjajakī were scholars of the second rank after Mufīd, Sharīf Murtada and Shaykh Tusī.

The academic fame of Najaf with its religious uniformity under the leadership of Shaykh Tusī and that too by the side of the shrine of Amir al-Muʾminīn ʿAli (ʿa) drew many students from Shīʿī towns of Syria and Iran and strengthened this academic centre. Ibn al-Futū writes that in his age the learned station of Shaykh Tusī was universally acknowledged and students came from all towns to study under him⁴.

Shaykh Tusī was the product of the academic efforts of the traditionalist and rationalist Shīʿī schools of Iran (Qum and Ray) and Baghdad. He had studied under the most outstanding of Shīʿī teachers such as Shaykh Mufīd and Sharīf Murtada. He had begun the writing of his book *Tahdhīb* in the lifetime of Shaykh Mufīd itself and he wrote some of the best Shīʿī works in the fields of hadīth, fiqh, tafsīr, kalam and rijal, and abridged moreover some of the best existing works, such as Kashshāʾs *Rijal* and Sharīf Murtada's *al-Shafī*. Such a remarkable achievement was on the one hand the product of the efforts of his predecessors and, on the other, it became the cause of the spread of Shīʿī thought in the subsequent periods.

That which is of interest to us in this study is the spread of the ideas of the Shaykh in Iran. In fact, we may conceive of the Shīʿī world of the time as a bird whose body was represented by Iraq with Halab and Ray as its wings. Here we will try to trace the influence of Shaykh Tusī on Shīʿism in Iran.

¹. It appears that he was in Nayshabur all this time or for part of it, as he himself mentions that he had studied the book *Bayan al-Dīn* under Abu Hazim Nayshaburī, and this was at Nayshabur. See Tabatabaʾī, ʿAbd al-Azīz, “Shakhsiyyat-e ʿilmī wa mashayikh-e Shaykh Tusī,” *Mīrath-e Islamī-ye Iran*, daftar 2 (Qum: Kitabkhaneh Ayatullah al-ʿUzma Marʿashī, 1374 H. Sh.), p. 378.

². Hasan ʿIsa al-Hakīm, *Al-Shaykh al-Tusī*, Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad ibn al-Hasan (385–460) (Baghdad, 1975), pp. 78–78.

³. *Ibid.*, pp. 98–101.

⁴. Ibn al-Futū, *Talkhīṣ Majmaʿ al-Adab* (Damascus: Wizarat al-Thiqafah wa al-Irshad al-Qawmī, 1382), ed. Mustafa Jawad, part 2, p. 815.

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