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The Influence of Tusi's School on Shī'ah Scholars of Iran

The ideas of Shaykh Tusī continued to be regarded as being beyond criticism by his pupils and disciples as well as by the succeeding generations. This is a point which has been mentioned by Ibn Idrīs Hillī (598/1201). Naturally, this matter was also recognized by Iranian scholars. In the period when 'Abd al-Jalīl Qazwīnī was involved in debates with the opponents of the Shī'ah (about 560/1164) he takes recourse mainly in Shaykh Tusī.

Throughout his discussions—mostly relating to theological issues rather than to law (fiqh)—concerning main-current Shī'ism, to which he refers to as an Usulī school, Shaykh Tusī is his principal mainstay and source of recourse. In his criticism of the Shī'ah Akhbarī school (by which he means the extremist traditionist tendency), while referring to the disappearance of that tendency, he writes, “Should they exist anywhere, they try to conceal this matter from the Usulis that 'Alam al-Huda, Shaykh Bu Ja'far Tusī and our latter-day scholars have repudiated them and they have blasted and routed them so that they may not dare to express it.¹”

These “latter-day scholars” were the same as the pupils of Shaykh Tusī with whose Iranian generation 'Abd al-Jalīl was in contact and who accepted the ideas of Shaykh Tusī. He refers to “'Alam al-Huda, the Murtada of Baghdad, and the great Shaykh Bu Ja'far” as the intellectual authorities (muhaqqiqan) of Usulī Shī'ism². His manner of reference to Shaykh Tusī clearly indicates his dominance over the intellectual tradition of the Shī'ah during this period.

He writes, “Bu Ja'far Tusī is well-known and widely reputed. Residing in the neighbourhood of the sacred shrine of Amīr al-Mu'mīnīn, he is the author of various works, a man of great respect and high station (buzurg qadr wa rafī' jah), whose statements and fatwas enjoy consummate trust and credibility.³” He considers such men as “Shaykh Bu Ja'far Tusī, Muhammad Fattal, Abu 'Ali Tabrisī and Shaykh Bu al-Futuh Razī” to be the true interpreters of the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt⁴.

Tabrisī, in the exegesis *Majma' al-Bayan*, draws much on Shaykh Tusī's *Tibyan*. Elsewhere, while

mentioning the pioneers among outstanding Shī‘ah scholars, he begins with Mufīd and Sharīf Murtada and refers to Tusī as “Shaykh Abu Ja‘far Tusī, faqīh, scholar, mufassir, muqri’, mutakallim, who has written more than 200 works in different fields.” Thereafter he mentions some outstanding Iranian scholars including some persons belonging to the Hamdanī family residing at Qazwin and Ray, and then goes on to name “al–Shaykh al–mu‘tamad Ja‘far Duryastī” and ‘Abd al–Jabbar Razī, “who had more than four hundred eminent pupils,” as well as several others⁵.

The impact of the works of Shaykh Tusī may be traced in different ways. It was indicated that one example of this impact was the influence of the Shaykh’s Tibyan on Tabrisī’s Majma‘ al–Bayan. Similar influences can be seen in works written on the subject of supplication (du‘a). The book Misbah al–mutahajjid of Shaykh Tusī was a comprehensive work on this topic and its abridgement, which was also made by him, was greatly popular in the Shī‘ah community.

The influence of the Misbah on the du‘a works of the sixth/twelfth century in Persian, such as the Dhakhīrat al–akhirah, by ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd al–Samad Sabzawarī (alive in 533/1138), and the Nuzhat al–Zahid (compiled in 596/1199) is quite visible. Shaykh Tusī’s Mukhtasar al– Misbah was translated several times into Persian in the seventh/thirteenth century and afterwards. In one of its very old translations (ms. in Ayatullah Mar‘ashī Public Library, MS. No. 877) the translator writes at the beginning, “I translate it into Persian for the ease of its use for those who lack the knowledge of the Arabic language and seek to act upon its contents.”

There is another old translation in the same library (MS. No. 5987) whose prose is also old but its translator is not known. A manuscript of another old translation in the same library (MS. No 8911) bears the date 961/1553.

1. Ibid., p. 568.

2. Ibid., p. 504.

3. Ibid., p. 191.

4. Ibid., p. 526, see also p. 212.

5. Ibid., p. 210, see also p. 40.

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