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Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī^(1,286 words)

, MUḤAMMAD B. MURTADĀ (1007-90/1598-1679), usually called Mullā Muḥsin or simply Fayḍ, the latter being a *takhalluṣ* that was given to him by his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640 [q.v.]); one of the greatest scholars of Ṣafawid Persia.

Life. Fayḍ was born into a family that has continued to produce respected *‘ulamā’* down to modern times. He studied *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, and related fields with his father and maternal uncle in Kāshān. At the age of twenty, he went to Iṣfahān to further his studies; within a year he went on to Shīrāz to study *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence with Sayyid Mādjid Baḥrānī (d. 1028/1619). Returning to Iṣfahān after some months, he studied *ḥadīth* with Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī (d. 1030/1621 [q.v.]). Perhaps it was at this time that he studied philosophy with Mīr Dāmād (d. 1041/1631 [see [AL-DĀMĀD](#)]). Ma’ṣūm ‘Alī Shāh claims in his *Tarā ik al-ḥakā ik* Tehran 1319, ii, 143-4) that both ‘Āmilī and Fayḍ were *khalīfa*s of the Nūrbakhshī Karakhī *shaykh* Muḥammad Mu’min Sadīrī. Fayḍ left for the Pilgrimage in 1029/1620 and studied *ḥadīth* in Mecca with Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī (d. 1030/1621). On returning to Persia, he wandered from teacher to teacher until he found Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī) in Ḳum in 1033/1624 or 1034/1625. He remained with him in Ḳum for eight years, occupying himself not only with study but also with ascetic practices. Eventually, he tells us, he gained mystical insight (*baṣīra*) into the esoteric dimensions of the sciences (*Mishkāt*, *Maḥadjdja*. iv, 7). He married Mullā Ṣadrā’s daughter, then went to Shīrāz with him in 1042/1532-3. He returned to Kāshān in 1045, where he wrote and taught. Shāh Ṣafī (1038-52/1628-42) invited him to the capital, but he declined. In 1064 Shāh ‘Abbās II (1052-77/1642-66) summoned him and he accepted. He was made leader of the Friday prayer and advised the *shāh* on religious matters. In at least two of his works, *Sharḥ-i ṣadr* (written in 1065/1655) and *al-Iṭidhār* (1067/1657), he complains of the intrigues at the court and the difficulties he faced in trying to help the *shāh* in his sincere desire to support Islam (*ibid.*, iv, 9). He wrote at least five works at the *shāh*’s request, including *Āīna-yi shāhī* on true kingship and *Wasf-i khayl* on horses in the teachings of the Imāms. He returned to Kāshān some time after 1067/1657, where his tomb is a place of pilgrimage. Among his students was the well-known scholar Ḳāḍī Sa’īd Ḳumī (d. 1103/1692).

The biographers demonstrate great respect for Fayḍ’s learning and moral qualities. In his *Lu lu’at al-Baḥrayn*, however, Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī criticises him because of his extreme *akḥbārī* views [see [AKHBĀRIYYA in Suppl.](#)], which he expressed in works like *Safīnat al-naḍjāt*, and because he supported the ideas of “Ibn al-‘Arabī *al-zindīk*” (*ibid.*, i, 29). Various *‘ulamā’* have complained that he departed from *idjmā’* in certain questions of jurisprudence, such as the legitimacy of music and the definition of impurity (*ibid.*, i, 34-40; iv, 16-17). Sayyid Ni’mat Allāh Dījazā’irī (d. 1112/1700-1), one of Fayḍ’s well-known students, blames him in *Kashf al-asrār fī sharḥ al-istibṣār* for encouraging his students to listen to music (*ibid.*, i, 37). Muḥammad Bākīr Maḍjlīsī’s son-in-law, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Khawātūnābādī (d. 1116/1704-5), gives him a notice in his *Ḥadā ik al-muḥarrabīn* as one of the thirty great Shīrī *‘ulamā’* of history (*ibid.*, i, 53-54).

Works. Fayḍ wrote his first book *Naḥd al-uṣūl fiḥhiyya*, in his early twenties and continued writing until the year of his death. He composed Three annotated lists of his own works (texts in *ibid.*, ii, 5-23, 39-46). The second, written in 1090/1679 shortly before his death, lists 116, while the third, written in the same year, divides the works into twenty groups of five according to subject matter or genre, adding Three works not found in the second list and leaving out thirteen. In his thorough bibliographical study, S.M. *Mishkāt* (*ibid.*, ii, 3-46, iv, 10-11) has shown that Fayḍ wrote 122 works for a total of over 550,000

lines; of these, about forty have been published. He wrote some 20,000 verses of Persian poetry, mostly in Ṣūfī style, and thirty Persian prose works. Almost 90% of his writing is in Arabic. Most of his works can be placed in the following categories:

1. *Ḥadīth* (4 books, about 33% of his total output). The most important of these is *al-Wāfī* (Tehran 1324/1906), which is usually ranked on the same level as Maḍjlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār*. It is by far the longest work, about 150,000 lines, Three times as long as his major Ḳur'ān commentary. In it Fayḍ rearranges and comments on the *ḥadīths* found in the four basic Twelver Shī'ī collections (al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*, al-Ṣadūq's *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu 'l-faḳīh*, and al-Ṭūsī's *al-Tahḍīb* and *al-Istibṣār*).
2. Philosophy, theoretical Ṣūfism (*īrfān*), and *kalām* (37 works, 20%). The longest of these ¶ works is a selection of texts from Ibn al-'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. The most important are probably *ʿAyn al-yaḳīn*, written in 1036/1626-7, and *Ilm al-yaḳīn*, written in 1042/1632-3 (published together in Tehran 1303/1885-6). The first is oriented more toward rational philosophy and the second toward mystical philosophy; Fayḍ warns us that the latter should be kept away (*maḥnūn*) from those not worthy of it. He wrote an epitome of the first, *Uṣūl al-ma'ārif* (ed. S.Dj. Āshṭiyānī, Mashhad 1354/1975) in 1089/1679, and an epitome of the second, *al-Ma'ārif* in 1090/1679.
3. Ethics (10 works, 16%). The longest and most important of these, completed in 1046/1636-7, is *al-Maḥādīdjat al-bayḍā' fi iḥyā' al-Iḥyā'* (a four-volume critical facsimile edition in the hand of Fayḍ's son, the well-known scholar Muḥammad 'Alam al-Hudā, was published by Miṣḥkāt, Tehran 1339-40/1960-1). In it, Fayḍ rewrites al-Gḥazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, replacing the weak *ḥadīths* and accounts of the pious forbears with appropriate and reliable reports from Shī'ī sources. He follows the structure of the *Iḥyā'* almost exactly, except that he drops book 7 of volume 2, on *samā'*, and adds at the end of volume 2 a new book, *Akhlāq al-imāma wa-ādāb al-shī'a*. He wrote an epitome of *al-Maḥādīdja* called *Kitāb al-Ḥaḳā' iḳfī asrār al-dīn* in 1090/1679.
4. *Tafsīr* (4 works, 13%). Fayḍ's major *tafsīr*, written in 1075/1664-5, is known as *al-Ṣāfī* (Tehran 1375/1955-56). It consists mainly of sayings of the twelve Imāms concerning Ḳur'ānic verses. Most of it sticks to the outward meaning, but, he tells us, it also has "something of esoteric interpretation (*shay' min al-ta'wīl*)".
5. Jurisprudence and its principles (28 works, 8%). Neither of his two major works in this field, *Mu'taṣam al-shī'a*, completed in 1027/1618, and *Maḳāṭīḥ al-sharā'ī'*, completed 1042/1632-3, has been published. *Maḳāṭīḥ* is more important and has been the subject of at least eight glosses and fourteen commentaries.
6. Poetry (20 collections, 4%). Several of these works are excerpted from his *Dīwān*, which has been published (Tehran 1338/1960), but without his several *mathnawīs*.
7. Prayers and supplications (12 works, 3%). These are mostly collections of prayers by the Imāms.

Bibliography

S.M. Miṣḥkāt quotes from the standard biographical sources and gathers a great deal of information on the editions and manuscripts of Fayḍ's works in the introductions to the four volumes of *al-Maḥādīdjat al-bayḍā'*. Fayḍ's autobiographical *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*, partly translated into Arabic by Miṣḥkāt (iv, 5-9), was published in *Djilwa* (1/8, Bahman 1323, 393-409). *Ā'ina-yi shāhī* was translated by W.C. Chittick in A. Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and political culture in Shi'ism*, Albany 1988, 269-84. See also H. Corbin, *Anthologie des philosophes iraniens*, ii, Tehran 1975, 32-49

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(W.C. Chittick)

Cite this page

"Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. University of Toronto. 19 June 2014 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/muhsin-i-fayd-i-kashani-COM_0785>
First appeared online: 2012
First Print Edition: isbn: 9789004161214, 1960-2007