

STUDIES

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al-Kāsānī, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn

‘**Alā’ al-Dīn** Abū Bakr b. Mas‘ūd **al-Kāsānī** (or al-Kāshānī; d. 10 Rajab 587/3 August 1191) was a celebrated scholar of the Ḥanafī school of Islamic law, best known for his encyclopaedic exposition of Ḥanafī jurisprudence, *Badā’i’ al-ṣanā’i’* (“Wonders amongst crafts”). His *nisba*, al-Kāsānī, relates to the town of Kāsān (also Kāshān), in Transoxania (Yāqūt, 4:430; al-Dhahabī offers the town of Qāsān, also known as Kāsān, as an apparently alternative origin; see *al-Mushtabih*, 2:495–6). After receiving his early training in Transoxania, he had an illustrious scholarly career, first in Anatolia and then in Aleppo, where he held distinguished teaching positions, managed large endowments, was honoured by successive rulers, and trained many of Aleppo’s leading jurists.

1. EARLY TRAINING

The only teacher al-Kāsānī is known to have studied under is ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Samarqandī (d. 450/1058–9), with whom he forged a deep bond. He studied under al-Samarqandī in Bukhara, and we may infer that they then travelled together to Anatolia, as we are told that several Anatolian princes

sought to marry al-Samarqandī’s daughter Fāṭima—herself a scholar of Ḥanafī law—but he refused and married her to al-Kāsānī instead. This was after al-Samarqandī read his student’s *Badā’i’ al-ṣanā’i’*, a brilliant expanded exposition of al-Samarqandī’s own *fiqh* (jurisprudential) work *Tuḥfat al-fuqahā’* (“Gift from/for the jurists”). Al-Samarqandī was a key figure in what has been termed a “theological turn” that took place in Transoxanian Ḥanafī thought (Correa, Taking; Correa, *Testifying*). Al-Samarqandī, his teachers Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114–5) and Abū l-Yusr al-Pazdawī (or al-Bazdawī, d. 493/1100), and al-Samarqandī’s colleagues ‘Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) and Maḥmūd b. Zayd al-Lāmishī (fl. sixth/twelfth century) were key figures in the consolidation of orthodox Ḥanafī theology into the Māturīdī school, which was named after the Ḥanafī theologian Abū Maṣ‘ūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944–5; Correa, *Testifying*; Rudolph). Al-Samarqandī’s written works show a marked interest in reorganising and re-presenting Ḥanafī teachings: his *Mīzān al-uṣūl* (“The measure of legal theory”) offers a new presentation of Ḥanafī legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) that incorporated the conclusions of the Māturīdī theologians into legal theory (al-Samarqandī, 1–5), and his *Tuḥfat al-fuqahā’* presents a more rational organisation of Ḥanafī doctrine than offered in the renowned epitome (*mukhtaṣar*) of the Iraqi jurist Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qudūrī (d. 428/1037), on which the book is based. Al-Kāsānī’s written works, discussed below, further his mentor’s both legal and theological projects.

2. TEACHING CAREER

Throughout his teaching career, in both Anatolia and Aleppo, al-Kāsānī was

received with much respect by scholars and rulers alike. The epithets awarded to him, such as Prince of Kāsān (*amīr Kāsān*) and King of Scholars (*malik al-‘ulamā’*), reflect perhaps not only his outstanding scholarly contributions but also his regal manner; Ibn al-‘Adīm (d. 660/1261–2), who studied with al-Kāsānī’s students and whose *Bughyat al-talab* is the leading reference for al-Kāsānī’s biography and times, remarks that he carried himself with the haughtiness of a prince (*nakhwat al-imāra wa-‘izzat al-nafs*), only riding a horse wherever he went—stating that “a stallion rides only a stallion”—always carrying a spear, and eating a daily meal of meat cooked with water and beans. During a heated debate before Kiliġ Arslān II, the Seljuq (Saljūq) sultan of Rūm (r. 550–88/1155–92; Madelung, Westward, 50), the sultan was vexed when al-Kāsānī raised his stick to strike his opponent for ascribing to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), the eponymous founder of the Ḥanafī school of law, the doctrine of *taswīb*, namely, that there is no one “correct” answer to questions of Islamic law and that all Islamic legal experts (*mujtahids*) arrive equally at God’s truth, a position that al-Kāsānī denied and ascribed to the Mu‘tazilī school of theology, to which the Māturīdī tradition was strongly opposed. His prestige was such that the sultan was advised not to banish him as he had initially wished to do, but rather to send him away as an ambassador bearing a message to Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zangī (r. 541–69/1147–74), the military commander (*amīr*) based in Aleppo.

Upon the strong recommendation of Aleppo’s jurists, Nūr al-Dīn received al-Kāsānī with great respect and offered him the prestigious position of professor of the Ḥalāwiyya *madrasa* (“college of law”), the largest *madrasa* in Aleppo, which

he accepted. In addition to this professorship, al-Kāsānī was made *ḥadīth*-teacher of the library of Aleppo’s Grand Mosque (*jami’*) and also professor of the Jāwuliyya *madrasa*. He retained considerable prestige with the rulers of Aleppo, who regularly sought his visits and counsel, including the Zangids Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd and his son al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā‘īl (r. 569–77/1174–81)—the latter asked al-Kāsānī if he could drink wine to cure his colic (*qūlanj*), al-Kāsānī replied in the affirmative, though Ismā‘īl decided against the course of action and subsequently died of the illness when al-Kāsānī confirmed that this would not affect the length of his predestined lifespan (*qjal*; Ibn al-‘Imād, 6:425)—and the Ayyūbid al-Malik al-Zāhir Ghāzī (r. 579/1183 as his father’s governor, then 582–613/1186–1216 as an independent ruler), who even took responsibility for educating al-Kāsānī’s son after his death.

An edict (*manshūr*) recorded by ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597/1201), the secretary (*kātib*) of both Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin, 564–589/1169–1193), confirms al-Kāsānī’s high position in Aleppo’s society. It declares, after heaping copious praise on al-Kāsānī and his learning, that he had full control of and the final say in all matters—including all appointments and salaries—relating to the *madrasas* that were under his charge in the two cities of Aleppo and Raqqā: the Ḥalāwiyya (called here the Nūriyya), the Ḥaddādiyya, the Jāwuliyya, the library of Aleppo’s Grand Mosque, and the Nūriyya *madrasa* of Raqqā (al-Iṣfahānī, 5:134–5).

Al-Kāsānī is remembered as a passionate teacher who did not let the pain of gout prevent him from being carried to his classes to continue teaching. His students, many of whom assumed key teaching positions, include Khalīfa b. Sulayman

al-Qurashī (d. 638/1241), professor of the Jāwuliyya after al-Kāsānī and first professor of Aleppo’s Atābikiyya *madrasa* (Ibn al-‘Amīd, 7:3369–70); ‘Umar b. ‘Alī al-Tamīmī al-Darāqūṭnī (d. 623/1226), first professor of Aleppo’s Jurdikiyya *madrasa* (al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, 45:162–3; Ibn Shaddād, 1:275); ‘Umar b. Ḥaffāz b. Khalīfa al-Ḥamawī, professor of Aleppo’s Ṭumāniyya *madrasa* (Ibn Shaddād, 1:278), Abū Bakr al-Mujallid, monitor (*naqīb*) of the Ḥalāwiyya *madrasa* (Ibn al-‘Adīm, 10:4367–8); Najā b. Sa’d b. Najā, professor of the *madrasa* of Buṣrā (Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, 2:191); Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad al-Ghaznawī (d. after 593/1196), the recapitulator (*mu’ad*) of lessons in the Ḥalāwiyya and author of renowned works in Ḥanafī law and theology (Ibn al-‘Amīd, 3:1029–30); Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. al-Khaḍir (d. 614/1217), an army judge (*qāḍī l-‘askar*) and professor of Aleppo’s Shādhbakhṭiyya *madrasa* (Ibn Abī l-Wafā’, 2:390; al-Ṭabbākh, 4:320); and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Mawṣilī (d. 622/1225–6; al-Ṭabbākh, 4:325).

Al-Kāsānī’s wife Fāṭima is also remembered as a scholar of Ḥanafī jurisprudence who had memorised her father’s *Tuhfat al-fuqahā’*; her signature was added to *fatwās* produced by her father and husband, and she was known on occasion to correct her husband in his *fatwās* (al-Ṭabbākh, 4:259). She inaugurated the *iftār* (fast-breaking meal) for jurists in the Ḥalāwiyya, which she initially paid for by selling her bangles, and the tradition continued after her death (al-Ṭabbākh, 4:259). She died several years before al-Kāsānī, who would visit her grave every Friday until his own death and subsequent burial by her side. The couple remained significant after their deaths: biographers

record the common belief that prayers were answered at their graves, though in this regard the wife appears the more significant of the two, as the gravesite was popularly referred to as *qabr al-mar’a wa-zawjihā* (“the grave of the woman and her husband”).

3. WRITTEN WORKS

Al-Kāsānī’s only legal work is *Badā’i’ al-ṣanā’i’ fī tartīb al-sharā’i’* (“Wonders amongst crafts in arranging sacred injunctions”), recognised in the Ḥanafī tradition as a commentary on ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Samarqandī’s *Tuhfat al-fuqahā’*, although it does not read as a commentary, but rather as a standalone exposition of Ḥanafī law that was inspired by al-Samarqandī’s interest in arranging the chapters of law in a more rationally consistent way than found in prior standard Ḥanafī texts. The book is encyclopaedic in scope and stands out amongst Islamic legal works by the author’s making justificatory arguments and legal rationales the book’s organising principle, with substantive legal cases introduced to illustrate and develop rational argumentation. It should be noted that the book was not intended to offer a new way to rationalise the sacred law: both the book’s title and introduction make only the modest claim of offering a new way to *present* the law (al-Kāsānī, 1:2–3), as commentaries are typically organised around substantive legal cases, not their underpinning rationales. In jurisprudential method, the book is a continuation of the Ḥanafī commentary tradition’s commitment to explaining substantive legal cases through a particularly rational legal epistemology (Hanif). Though his book retained great importance in the Ḥanafī tradition, the “wondrous craft” of his presentation was generally not replicated, with

subsequent authors preferring the traditional approach of embedding rational reflections within interlineal commentary on the leading epitomes of the school.

In theology, al-Kāsānī authored *al-Sulṭān al-mubīn* (“The clear authority”), which was also called *al-Muṭamad fī l-muṭaqad* (“The reliable book of doctrine”, al-Laknawī, 53). Ibn al-‘Adīm most likely meant the latter text when he spoke of al-Kāsānī’s *Iṭiqād*, which he studied with two of al-Kāsānī’s students (Ibn al-‘Adīm, 10:4349). Brockelmann does not record manuscripts of this theological treatise, but other catalogues do (*Khizānat al-turāth; al-Fahras al-shāmīl*, 10:48). Al-Kāsānī was also one of the main transmitters of the theological treatise ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa by Abū Muṭ‘ al-Balkhī (d. 199/815), known popularly as *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ* (“The clearest understanding”, al-Kawtharī, 6, 40; on *al-Fiqh al-absaṭ*, see Rudolph, 53–71).

Brockelmann records a Qur’ān commentary, *Kitāb al-ta’wīlāt* (“The book of interpretations”), authored by al-Kāsānī. Premodern sources mention no such work. As ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Samarqandī is known to have authored a commentary on Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī’s Qur’ān commentary, *Ta’wīlāt ahl al-sunna* (“The interpretations of the people of the Sunna”; Götz, 30), this manuscript might contain al-Samarqandī’s work, or perhaps al-Kāsānī’s notes on his mentor’s commentary. Alternatively, it might be a misattribution of the *Ta’wīlāt al-Kāshānī* by Kamāl al-Dīn al-Kāshī (d. c.730/1329–30; Kātib Çelebī (Ḥājjī Khalīfa), 1:336).

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Kazan

Kazan is a city in the Russian Federation, located at N 55°50' and E 49°04', 797 kilometres east of Moscow, at the confluence of the Volga and Kazanka rivers.

Kazan was founded by the Volga Bulghārs in the late 300s/900s or early 400s/1000s as an entrepôt between the Baltic region and lands to the east. A commercial settlement is known to have existed in the vicinity of the modern city by the 500s/1100s. Its population grew significantly in the 630s-640s/1230s-1240s, swelled by refugees fleeing the Mongols. Under Mongol rule, Kazan became a vassal of the Golden Horde/Jochid Ulus and a point for tribute collection from the Kama River valley, making it a major economic centre in the Middle Volga region by the late 600s/1200s. After Muscovite Grand Prince Vasilii II (r. 1425–62) sacked the city of Bulghār in 835/1431, Kazan became the most important city in the Middle Volga region.

1. KAZAN KHĀNATE

In 839/1436, Ulugh Muḥammad (d. 849/1445), having been deposed (for the

second time) as *khān* of the Golden Horde, made Kazan the capital of his newly founded Kazan khānate in 841/1438. Ulugh Muḥammad's successors controlled the Middle Volga region and the Kama River valley. At the height of the khānate's power its influence extended into the South Urals (Izmailov, 147).

The Kazan khānate followed the Golden Horde's model of governance, dividing its territory into four units (*darugas*) (Turkic Alat/Russian Alatskaya, Archa/Arskaya, Gärech/Galitskaya, Jöri/Zyureyskaya) (Izmailov, 147). Each *daruga* was ruled by an official holding the title of *qarachı bey*, who came from the khānate's ruling tribes (Shirin, Argın, Barın, Kıpçak) (Schamiloglu, 10–8). The Nogai *daruga* was added later. Each *daruga* was divided into districts (sing. *ulus*) administered by an *amīr*, *mīrżā*, or elder (*starshina*), who collected taxes and tributes for the *khān* of Kazan (Izmailov, 147).

The khānate's population comprised Turkic-speaking peoples (Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvashes), Finno-Ugric peoples (Maris, Udmurts, Mordvins), and Russians. This population included peasant farmers, landholding nobles, mobile pastoralists, and urban merchants and artisans. Sunnī Islam was the religion of the khānate's ruling elite; the Ḥanafī *madhhab* was the predominant legal school. In addition to tribute (*yasak*), Kazan's Muslim subjects paid *zakāt* (alms, religious tax) and land tax (*kharāj*), while its non-Muslim subjects paid the *jūzʿya* (poll tax) (Izmailov, 147). The Yasawi and later the Naqshbandī Şūfī orders played an important role in the khānate's spiritual and cultural life.

Throughout the 800s/1400s, the Kazan competed with Moscow for economic and political control of the Volga Basin and went to war frequently. The Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III (r. 1462–1505) briefly seized control of Kazan in