THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE ERA IN WHICH JALAL AL-DIN AL-GURLANI LIVED

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Abstract. *This paper analyzes the era in which the fourteenth-century (8th century AH) Hanafi jurist Jalal al-Din al-Gurlani, author of al-Shafi fi al-Usul, lived–namely, the socio-political situation of Khwarazm and Transoxiana (Mawarannahr) and the historical development of the Hanafi legal school in the region. The study examines the consequences of the Mongol conquest, the political rivalry between the Chagatai Ulus and the Golden Horde, the revival of scholarly and religious life in Khwarazm under the governance of the Sufi dynasty, and the legacy of major Hanafi authorities such as al-Sarakhsi, al-Bazdawi, and al-Marghinani. Through an analysis of the list of sources cited in al-Gurlani's al-Shafi fi al-Usul, the richness and diversity of the scholarly milieu of the period are revealed. The study is grounded in the methods of source studies and historical-comparative analysis.*

Keywords: *Jalal al-Din al-Gurlani; Hanafi school of law; Khwarazm; Transoxiana (Mawarannahr); Chagatai Ulus; Golden Horde; al-Shafi fi al-Usul; madrasa; source studies; 14th century CE; 8th century AH.*

INTRODUCTION

The fourteenth century was a period of significant political transformation and intellectual development in Khwarazm and Transoxiana. Despite the consequences of the Mongol conquest and political conflicts between the Chagatai Ulus and the Golden Horde, the region preserved its rich Islamic scholarly traditions. The Hanafi school of jurisprudence continued to develop through the intellectual legacy of prominent scholars such as al-Sarakhsi, al-Bazdawi, and al-Marghinani. Jalal al-Din al-Gurlani emerged within this scholarly environment and contributed to Islamic legal thought through his works, particularly al-Shafi fi al-Usul. This study examines the socio-political conditions, scholarly institutions, and Hanafi intellectual traditions that influenced al-Gurlani's academic development, employing historical-comparative and source analysis methods.

MAIN TEXT

To properly understand the scholarly formation of Jalal al-Din al-Gurlani, it is necessary to broadly examine the socio-political situation of Khwarazm and Transoxiana (Mawarannahr) during his lifetime (8th century AH / 14th century CE), as well as the

scholarly and methodological tradition of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence that had developed in these regions over several centuries. This examination can be divided into two parts: the first part addresses the socio-political history (from the Khwarazmshah period up to the era of al-Gurlani), while the second part explores the historical development of the Hanafi legal school in Transoxiana and Khwarazm.

Until the early thirteenth century (7th century AH), Khwarazm–under the rule of the Khwarazmshah (Anushteginid) dynasty–was one of the most powerful and scientifically and culturally advanced states in Central Asia (Bartold, 1963a:396–420). However, between 1219 and 1221 (616–618 AH), Mongol forces led by Genghis Khan invaded Transoxiana and Khwarazm (Bartold, 1963a:468–495). As a result, major scientific and cultural centers such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Urgench were reduced to ruins; in particular, the city of Urgench was completely razed to the ground after a prolonged siege, and numerous scholars and book treasuries perished (Bartold, 1963a:496–500). This event dealt a severe blow to the scholarly life of Khwarazm and Transoxiana, requiring several generations to overcome its consequences.

Following the death of Genghis Khan, his empire was divided among his sons, and Transoxiana became part of the Chagatai Ulus (Bartold, 1963a:520–530). Throughout the fourteenth century, the Chagatai Ulus was largely characterized by political instability, rivalry among local emirs, and the weakening of central authority (Bartold, 1963a:530–545). In the second half of that same century–shortly after al-Gurlani's death (767/1365)–Amir Temur emerged on the political stage and, beginning in 1370, initiated the process of unifying Transoxiana (Bartold, 1963b:39–45). Thus, the period in which al-Gurlani was active represents the phase of the decline of the Chagatai Ulus and the eve of the birth of the Timurid state.

Khwarazm, following the Mongol conquest, became an object of contention between the Chagatai Ulus and the Golden Horde, and ultimately throughout the fourteenth century came to be governed primarily within the sphere of influence of the Golden Horde, under the governorship of the local Sufi dynasty (Mukminova, 1985:12–18; Bartold, 1963b:558–561). This period of relative stability led to the restoration of trade routes in Khwarazm (particularly the revival of Urgench's strategic position on the Great Silk Road), the revitalization of urban life, and–closely linked to these developments–the resurgence of religious and scholarly activity. It was during this period of revival that scholars such as Jalal al-Din al-Gurlani emerged.

Despite political instability, it was precisely in the eighth century AH that the construction of madrasas and the patronage of scholarship reached a new peak in Khurasan and Transoxiana. The famous traveler Ibn Battuta testifies to this as follows: «No one can count the madrasas of the eighth century–they were so numerous» (Ibn Battuta, n.d.:1/20; Bartold, 1963a:502–504). This testimony is not coincidental: competing in the construction of madrasas among emirs, viziers, and wealthy individuals, showing respect to scholars, and supporting students of knowledge constituted an important component of the social life of that era (Ibn Battuta, n.d.:1/20). Scholars like al-Gurlani were nurtured in precisely such an environment. The fact that his student, Jalal al-Din al-Khujandi, traveled in pursuit of knowledge for twelve years across various cities (Samarkand, Bukhara, Khwarazm, Sarai Berke, Aksaray, Crimea, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad, and Medina) is a vivid example of this scholarly mobility, demonstrating that geographical boundaries posed little obstacle to students of knowledge in the medieval Muslim East.

Although the Hanafi school of law, founded by Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 150/767), initially took shape in Iraq–in Kufa and Baghdad–it spread widely across Khurasan and Transoxiana over the subsequent two to three centuries (al-Dhahabi, n.d.:6/390–403). One of the primary reasons for this was the leading position of Hanafi jurists within the administrative and judicial system during the Abbasid period, as well as the close scholarly and cultural ties of Transoxiana and Khurasan with Baghdad. Consequently, by the ninth and tenth centuries (3rd–4th centuries AH), Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khwarazm had become major centers of Hanafi jurisprudence (al-Qurashi, n.d.:1/intro).

In the development of the Transoxianan Hanafi school of jurisprudence, a continuous chain of great scholars played a vital role. Shams al-A'imma Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Sarakhsi (d. 483/1090), through his famous work al-Mabsut, created an encyclopedic system of Hanafi substantive law (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:13–14). His contemporary, who holds special significance for this study, Fakhr al-Islam Ali ibn Muhammad al-Bazdawi (d. 482/1089), firmly systematized Hanafi legal theory (usul al-fiqh) with his work Kanz al-Wusul ila Ma'rifat al-Usul (Usul al-Bazdawi) (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:12–19). Various scholars have praised al-Bazdawi highly; in particular, al-Dhahabi referred to him as «Shaykh al-Hanafiyya, the scholar of Transoxiana ('alim ma wara' al-nahr)» (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:16). Subsequently, Burhan al-Din Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Marghinani (d. 593/1197),

with his work al-Hidaya, produced the most comprehensive and widely circulated textbook of Hanafi jurisprudence–a work upon which, as noted above, al-Gurlani also wrote a commentary (al-Marghinani, n.d.:intro; al-Qurashi, n.d.:1/393–395). Thus, both of al-Gurlani's works–al-Shafi and al-Kifaya–were built directly upon the legacy of these two great scholars (al-Bazdawi and al-Marghinani).

The work al-Shafi fi al-Usul itself testifies to the richness of the scholarly environment of that era. In the field of usul al-fiqh, he consulted the works of al-Dabusi, al-Bazdawi, al-Sarakhsi, Abu al-Yusr al-Bazdawi, al-Samarqandi (author of Mizan al-Usul), al-Khabbazi, al-Nasafi, al-Sighnaqi, and al-Bukhari (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:40–42). In substantive jurisprudence (fiqh), he utilized the works of major jurists such as Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani, al-Tahawi, al-Dabusi, al-Sarakhsi, al-Marghinani, and al-Kasani (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:42–43). In the field of Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), he referred to the commentaries of al-Tabari, al-Jassas, al-Nasafi, al-Zamakhshari, Ibn al-Arabi, and al-Qurtubi (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:40), while in the field of hadith, he consulted the collections of al-Bukhari, Muslim, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and al-Bayhaqi (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:41). Finally, in the field of the Arabic language, he drew upon the works of Sibawayh, Ibn al-Sarraj, al-Jawhari, al-Zamakhshari, and Ibn Malik (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.:43–44). This list alone demonstrates how rich and diverse the scholarly literature was in the milieu in which al-Gurlani lived, and illustrates the intellectual standard requiring a jurist not to be confined solely to jurisprudence, but also to possess deep knowledge in Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, and linguistic sciences.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the era in which Jalal al-Din al-Gurlani was active was a period of political flux in Khwarazm and Transoxiana (marked by the aftermath of the Mongol conquest, conflicts between the Chagatai Ulus and the Golden Horde, and the eve of the rise of the Timurid state), yet one that maintained strong continuity in the religious and scholarly sphere. The Hanafi legal tradition formed over centuries–the legacy of al-Sarakhsi, al-Bazdawi, and al-Marghinani–was preserved through the network of madrasas and transmitted to subsequent generations. Both the richness of the list of sources consulted by al-Gurlani himself and his long-term teaching career at the Tankiziyya Madrasa were shaped within, and must be understood in light of, this historical and scholarly context.

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