

Shafi'i School Of Law

Views 2,686,023

Updated Nov 20 2020



SHAFI'I SCHOOL OF LAW

One of the four systems, or schools, of thought in Sunni Muslim law.



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The Shafi'i school of law was founded by Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (died 820), a disciple of Malik ibn Anas (died 795) and Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Shaybani (died 805). Bringing about a synthesis between the rationalists and the tradition-alists, Shafi'i elaborated a system of positive law and a rudimentary legal theory that attracted a number of scholars who propagated his teachings, thus creating the first personal school of law (*madhhab*) in Islam (/philosophy-and-religion/islam/islam/islam). His two chief treatises that survived are *al-Umm*, a collection of treatises mainly concerned with positive law and disagreements among the early jurists, and *al-Risala* (also known as *al-Kitab*,) a work on legal theory with particular emphasis on Prophetic *hadith* (traditions) as a binding source of law.

The immediate students of Shafi'i who were responsible for propagating his teachings, and thus for laying the first roots of the school, were al-Buwayti (died 846), Harmala (died 857), Muzani (died 878), al-Za'farani (died 874), al-Karabisi (died c. 859), and al-Rabi ibn Sulayman al-Jizi (died 870). Al-Rabi ibn Sulayman al-Muradi (died c. 884) is known as the transmitter of most of Shafi'i's extant works. Other scholars, such as Ibn Hanbal (died 854) and Abu Thawr (died 855), initially the disciples of Shafi'i, became themselves the founders of independent law schools.

The widespread influence of the Shafi'i school must be credited to the work of Ibn Surayj (died 918), significantly nicknamed the "Little Shafi'i." He was responsible for harmonizing the teachings of the school and for training a generation of influential Shafi'i scholars who guaranteed not only the survival of the school but indeed its success. Among the most important of these scholars are [Abu Bakr \(/people/history/middle-eastern-history-biographies/abu-bakr\)](/people/history/middle-eastern-history-biographies/abu-bakr) al-Sayrafi (died 942) and al-Qaffal al-Shashi (died 948), who are considered two of the first major authors of complete works on Shafi'ite legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*).

Among the many names that dominated the later history of Shafi'ism are: [Abu Bakr \(/people/history/middle-eastern-history-biographies/abu-bakr\)](/people/history/middle-eastern-history-biographies/abu-bakr) al-Baqillani (died 1013), Abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini (died 1015), Abu Muhammad al-Juwayni (died 1046) and his son Imam al-Haramayn (died 1085), Bayhaqi (died 1066), al-Mawardi (died 1058), Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi (died 1083), Ghazali (died 1111), Abu Bakr al-Shashi (died 1113), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (died 1209), Rafi'i (died 1226), Izz al-Din (b. Abd al-Salam; died 1262), Muhyi al-Din al-Nawawi (died 1277), and Suyuti (died 1505). The positive law (*furu*) treatises of Juwayni, Shirazi, Ghazali, Rafi'i, and Nawawi became standard for the later period, whereas in legal theory, the works of Juwayni, Ghazali, and Razi gained popularity.

Today the Shafi'i school has followers in Egypt—mainly in rural areas—as well as in [Syria](/places/asia/syrian-political-geography/syria) (</places/asia/syrian-political-geography/syria>), [Lebanon](/places/asia/lebanese-political-geography/lebanon) (</places/asia/lebanese-political-geography/lebanon>), [Palestine](/places/asia/israeli-political-geography/palestine) (</places/asia/israeli-political-geography/palestine>), [Jordan](/places/asia/jordanian-political-geography/jordan) (</places/asia/jordanian-political-geography/jordan>), [Iraq](/places/asia/iraq-political-geography/iraq) (</places/asia/iraq-political-geography/iraq>), Hijaz, [Bahrain](/places/asia/arabian-peninsula-political-geography/bahrain) (</places/asia/arabian-peninsula-political-geography/bahrain>), [Yemen](/places/asia/arabian-peninsula-political-geography/yemen) (</places/asia/arabian-peninsula-political-geography/yemen>), [Pakistan](/places/asia/pakistan-and-bangladesh-political-geography/pakistan) (</places/asia/pakistan-and-bangladesh-political-geography/pakistan>), [Iran](/places/asia/iranian-political-geography/iran) (</places/asia/iranian-political-geography/iran>), [India](/places/asia/indian-political-geography/india) (</places/asia/indian-political-geography/india>), and [Indonesia](/places/asia/indonesian-political-geography/indonesia) (</places/asia/indonesian-political-geography/indonesia>).

see also hadith; hanafi school of law; hanbali school of law; maliki school of law.

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