



## KALBĀSI

---

**KALBĀSI** (KARBĀSI), Ḥāj Moḥammad Ebrāhim (b. Isfahan, 1766; d. Isfahan, 1845), prominent Oṣuli jurist, influential in the affairs of Isfahan during the reigns of Fath-‘Ali Shah and Moḥammad Shah. His father, Ḥāj Moḥammad had migrated there, by way of Kākk in eastern Khorasan, from the Shi‘i-inhabited district of Herat known as Ḥawz-e Karbās, the cistern (*ḥawz*) in question having been built by a pious lady from the proceeds of the muslin (*karbās*) that she wove; hence the name “Karbāsi” by which he and his descendants came to be known (Modarres, V, p. 44).

Ḥāj Moḥammad Ebrāhim began his studies in Isfahan and then, in accordance with a well-established trajectory, left for further study in Karbalā’ and Najaf (see ‘ATABĀT). He studied with leading Oṣuli scholars of the day, such as [Sayyed Mahdi Baḥr-al-‘Olum Ṭabāṭabā’i](#), Mirzā Moḥammad-‘Ali b. Mirzā Moḥammad Moḥaffar, [Sheikh Moḥammad-Bāqer Behbahāni](#), Mir ‘Ali Karbalā’i, and [Sheikh Ja‘far Kāšef-al-Ġeṭā](#), receiving *ejāzāt* (certificates) of *ejtehād* from the two last-named. It is, perhaps, surprising that while in Najaf he also studied with Sheikh Aḥmad Aḥṣā’i (q.v.), eponym of the Sheikhi tendency in Shi‘ism that differs significantly in its emphases and views of religious authority from the Oṣuli school of jurisprudence. Returning to Iran, Kalbāsi resided for a while in Qom, where he received a further *ejāza* from Mirzā Abu’l-Qāsem Qomi, and then in Kashan, similarly benefiting there from Mollā Mahdi Narāqi, before settling for the rest of his life in Isfahan. He held classes in jurisprudence at the Masjed-e Ḥakim, a mosque, the foundation of which dated back to the time



of the Buyids (Buwayhids), and involved himself in the affairs of the city in varying ways and with varying results. When some incautious person delivered himself of the opinion that “the *mollās* have no religion,” Kalbāsi sought to have him executed, until, persuaded that the offender was subject to repeated bouts of insanity, he commuted the sentence to one year’s banishment to Najafābād. There were other, more assertive, *foqahā’* in Isfahan at the time, especially Sayyed Moḥammad Bāqer Šafti, with whom Karbāsi was on close terms, but his standing was such that Faṭḥ-‘Ali Shah deemed it wise to pay him his respects when once visiting the city. On another occasion, he is said to have obtained by prayer the dismissal of a governor of Isfahan who had aroused his disapproval (Algar, pp. 59-60). In somewhat contrasting mode, he helped Faṭḥ-‘Ali Shah avoid a renewal of hostilities with Russia in 1829 by persuading a certain Ḥāji Mirzā Masīḥ, regarded as responsible for the sacking of the Russian legation in that year and the death of the envoy, the dramatist [Alexander S. Griboedov](#), to leave Tehran peaceably in accord with Russian demands for his expulsion (Hedāyat, IX, p. 713).

Kalbāsi was renowned for piety, modesty, scrupulosity, and extreme caution (*eḥtiāt*) in matters of legal import, and he was for long reluctant to compile a handbook of legal rulings (the genre known as *resāla-ye ‘amaliya*), thereby declaring his availability as a *marja’-e taqlid*; this, he explained, was because his bones would be unable to endure hellfire. Mirzā Abu’l-Qāsem Qomi persuaded him to relent, and thereafter, whenever approached for a ruling, he would record it immediately in his *resāla* instead of responding orally. The resulting compilation is accordingly known as *Ajwebat al-masā’el*. Kalbāsi’s other works, most of them on *oṣul al-feqh*, include *al-Iqā’āt*; *al-ešārāt fi’l-oṣul*; *Ketāb naqd al-oṣul*; *Menhāj al-hedāya*; *Eršād al-mostaršedin*; *Šawāre’ al-hedāya*, a commentary on Moḥammad Bāqer Sabzawāri’s *Kefāyat al-aḥkām*; a treatise on the impermissibility of *taqlid al-mayyet* (following the guidance in juristic matters of a deceased mojtahed); another on the supposed religious impermissibility of tobacco (or, perhaps, simply of smoking tobacco while fasting during Ramažān); and the refutation of a polemical tract by Henry Martyn, an English missionary who came to Shiraz in 1811.

Kalbāsi died on 8 Jomādā I 1261/15 May 1845, and he was buried next to the mosque where he taught. (The year of his death may, however, have been 1262/1846; see Modarres, V, p. 43.) He was survived by four sons: Sheikh Āqā Moḥammad; Sheikh Moḥammad Mahdi (d. 1292/1875), who held an ejāza from



his father and wrote a well-regarded book on *ejtehād* and *taqlid*; Sheikh Moḥammad Ja'far; and, most eminent of the brothers, Mirzā Abu'l-Ma'ālī (d. 1898), a prolific author on theology as well as jurisprudence (Modarres, VII, pp. 269-70).

*Bibliography:*

Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969, pp. 59, 98, 101.

Rezāqoli Khan Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā-ye Nāṣeri*, 10 vol., Tehran, 1960-66.

Moḥammad Ḥerz-al-Din, *Ma'āref al-rejāl* II, repr., Qom, 1985, pp. 190-91.

Moḥammad Bāqer K̄vānsāri, *Rawzāt al-jannāt fī ahwāl al-'olamā' wa'l-sādāt*, Tehran, 1907, p. 10.

Moḥammad-'Ali Modarres, *Rayḥānat al-adab* V, Tabriz, n.d., pp. 42-44.

Hossein Modarressi Tabātabā'i, *An Introduction to Shi'i Law: a Biobibliographical Study*, London, 1984, pp. 86, 93, 99.

Moḥammad b. Solaymān Tonokāboni, *Qeṣaṣ al-'olamā'*, Tehran, 1887, pp. 84-86.