



KONYA I. HISTORY AND PERSIAN CULTURE IN THE ISLAMIC PERIOD

Little is known of the pre-Islamic history of Konya, known in Greek as Ikonion. From the 4th century CE, it was the metropolis of the Byzantine province of Lykaonia, and in the 8th to 10th centuries it was subject to numerous Arab attacks from the Muslim base at Tarsus (Belke, 1984). However, the city first achieved prominence under the Saljuq sultanate of Rum (see SALJUQS iii. SALJUQS OF RUM), the Muslim state established in Byzantine Anatolia in the wake of the Turkish victory at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. Konya's fall to the Turks probably occurred around 1080 to 1082, but the capital of the Seljuk sultanate was initially at Nicaea (Tk. İznik) in western Anatolia. However, this city was lost to the First Crusade in 1097 and never subsequently recovered by the Saljuqs. As a result, the centre of the Saljuq state shifted to the middle of Anatolia and Konya in particular. The history of the Saljuqs in the 12th century is obscure, but the first evidence for the development of Konya comes from the very end of the reign of Sultan Mas'ud (r. 1118-55), when the city's mosque was apparently extended and furnished with a still extant dated minbar (Redford, 1991). Next to the mosque, Mas'ud's successor Qelej Arslan II (r. 1155-92) erected the first of the tomb towers that would serve as the Saljuq family's dynastic mausoleum, and on the same hill in the centre of Konya stood the palace he built, of which scant remains survive today. Konya's place



as the dynastic burial ground gave it a special importance to the sultans, although the city cannot quite be conceptualised as a capital in modern terms. By the late 12th century, two other central Anatolian cities, Aksaray and Kayseri, also performed roles as centres of government administration and as homes to royal palaces. The sultans seem to have maintained a partially itinerant existence, seasonally moving between these three cities and down to the south coast into the 13th century.

By the beginning of the 13th century, Konya was also a major commercial centre, owing to its strategic positioning on the major east-west and north-south trade routes. It was home to an immigrant Iranian community, whose nesbas suggest close links to Tabriz (Peacock 2017, pp. 143-4; Peacock 2019, pp. 138-9). With the final collapse of the Saljuq sultanate in Iran and Iraq in 1194, scholars and litterateurs from there were attracted to Konya in search of the patronage of the Anatolian branch of the dynasty. Dynastic interest in Persian culture, and possibly also in Šehāb-al-Din Sohravardi's (d. 1191) synthesis of Iranian and platonic thought in his philosophy of Illumination (see ILLUMINATIONISM), was reflected in the custom of Saljuq rulers of adopting names redolent of the Šāh-nāma such as Kay Ƙosrow, Kay Kā'us and Kay Qobād, which first appear at the end of the 12th century (Yalman, pp. 131-40). Indeed, by the 1220s, verses from the Šāh-nāma were inscribed on Konya's city wall, along with quotations from the Qor'an and Hadith (Ebn Bibi, p. 254).

Konya's role as a center of Persian culture was consolidated by the influx of refugees from political disorder in Khurasan and the Mongol invasions under the reign of Sultan 'Alā'-al-Din Kay Qobād I (r. 1219-36), when the Saljuq state reached its apogee. Among them were the famous Kobrawi (see KOBRAWIYA ii. THE ORDER) author Najm al-Din Rāzi (d. 1256 see DĀYA, NAJM-AL-DĪN), and the father of Jalāl-al-Din Rumi (q.v.; d. 1273), Bahā'-al-Din Moḥammad Walad (q.v.; d. 1231), who brought his family from Balḵ (q.v.) to Anatolia, eventually settling in Konya where he received the patronage of 'Alā'-al-Din Kay Qobād as a holy man. Indeed, the patronage of the Saljuq court for Sufis encouraged Konya's emergence as a major center for the study of Sufism, attracting students from across the Islamic world, but especially its Persian speaking parts. Rumi, who made Konya his home for most of his career, soon established a significant reputation that attracted disciples as well as court patronage. The prestige of Rumi's compositions, especially his Maṭnawī, ensured that Persian remained the major literary language of the Mevlevi tariqa long after Turkish started to be widely used in other spheres in



Anatolia. The *ṭariqa* was established by Rumi's son and successor Bahā'-al-Din Solṭān Walad (q.v.; d. 1312), who promoted the order through a network of *ḳalifas*, or deputies, although its center remained in Konya under Solṭān Walad and his descendants, where Rumi's shrine attracted both devotees and royal patronage into Ottoman times. However, students of Sufism were also drawn to Konya by Ṣadr-al-Din Qonawi (d. 1274) the eminent interpreter of Ebn al-'Arabi (q.v.; d. 1240), who himself had resided in Konya for a few years in the early 13th century. Qonawi wrote in both Arabic and Persian, and among his prominent pupils were the poet Faḳr-al-Din 'Erāqi (q.v.; d. 1289) and Mo'ayyed-al-Din Jandi (d. ca. 1292), author of a commentary on Ebn al-'Arabi's *Foṣuṣ al-ḥekam*. By the second half of the 13th century, Konya had thus acquired a reputation as one of the foremost centers of Sufism in the Islamic east.

The 13th century also witnessed significant construction activity, with madrasas, *ḳānaqāhs* (q.v.) and mosques sponsored by prominent amirs (see below, KONYA iii. MONUMENTS). Examples include the Karatay (Qarāṭay) madrasa (1251) and the Sahip Ata (Ṣāḥeb 'Aṭā) mosque and *ḳānaqāh* (1258), as well as the development of the shrine complex (*dargāh*, Tk. *dergāh*) of Rumi, construction of which was begun shortly after his death by the architect Badr-al-Din Tabrizi (q.v.), sponsored by the prominent amir, and effective ruler of Anatolia, Mo'in-al-Din Parvāna (d. 1277) (Aflāki, I, pp. 141, 193-94, 387-89). Konya's integration into the broader Islamic world, from which Anatolia had been rather isolated in the 12th century, was further facilitated by the establishment of Mongol authority there in the wake of the Saljuq defeat at the Battle of Köseadağ in 1243. While the Saljuq sultanate was allowed to continue to exist—initially at least—as a Mongol vassal, Anatolia became part of the Il-khanate, the Mongol state based in Iran (see IL-KHANIDS). Yet control over Konya was also sought by the Karamanid Turkmen, arch-enemies of the Mongols based in south-central Anatolia, who seized the city in 1277 and installed their own candidate as Saljuq sultan. According to the historian Ebn Bibi (q.v.; fl. late 13th century), the Karamanid occupation was accompanied by the abolition of Persian as the language of administration and its replacement by Turkish, although this story is likely to be apocryphal (Peacock, 2019, pp. 147-48; Ebn Bibi, p. 696). In reality, Karamanid rulers continued to patronise Persian culture, including major additions to the shrine of Rumi. Yet Karamanid control over Konya was fragile, and the Il-khanid authorities recaptured the city on several occasions (including 1314, 1320, 1323), although the center of Il-khanid power in Anatolia was further east, in



Kayseri and Sivas. The Karamanid 'Alā'-al-Din Beg finally recaptured Konya from the Eretnids, the Mongol successor state in Anatolia, in 1366-67.

Our best source for Konya in the late 13th to mid-14th century is an anonymous history of the Saljuq dynasty, produced in Konya, probably by multiple authors, of which the latter parts are in many ways a local chronicle (the *Tāriḳ-e āl-e Saljuq*). This reveals that life was regularly disrupted not just by Mongol-Karamanid fighting, but also by rival armed groups of *aḳis*, the adherents of *fotowwa* (see JAVĀNMARDI) who played a major social and political role in medieval Anatolian cities. The Saljuq sultans slipped into increasing irrelevance during this period, to such an extent that the sources do not even record the end of the sultanate, although it is clear that members of the dynasty continued to reside in Konya until as late as 1363 (*Tāriḳ-e āl-e Saljuq*, p. 134). Despite these factors, and the establishment of the political center of the Karamanid principality in Larende (Karaman/Qarāmān) to the south, Konya seems to have retained its prestige. Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi (q.v.; tr., pp. 97-98), writing shortly before 1340, devotes more attention to Konya than any other city in Anatolia, although he notes that Sivas was the largest town in the region in his day. He describes Konya as a large town, notes its fortifications and the shrine of Rumi, and its frontier location. He also mentions Konya's extensive extra-mural gardens and its fruit production. Konya's gardens and fruit were also noted by Ebn Baṭṭuṭa (q.v.), who visited around 1332, at which point the town was under Karamanid control, and remarked that its apricots were exported as far as Syria (*Travels*, II, p. 430).

From the late 14th century, Karamanid control of Konya was regularly contested by the Ottomans, and the city finally fell to the Ottomans in 1468 (Yıldız, pp. 310-11). Under Ottoman rule, Konya became the capital of a *beylerbeylik* (governor-generalship) to which high ranking Ottoman princes, including the future Sultan Selim II, were appointed. Despite being caught up in the succession struggles between Ottoman princes, Konya seems to have enjoyed a notable increase in population during the 16th century, if the evidence of Ottoman tax (*tahrir*) records is to be believed. Owing to its position on the main trade routes crossing Anatolia, as well as continued Ottoman patronage of the shrine of Rumi, for the most part Ottoman rule provided prosperity and stability. However, Konya declined as an intellectual centre after the Ottoman conquest, and it is not until the 18th century that is much evidence for new Ottoman investment in *madrasas* and educational establishments (Sarıkaya, *passim*). Modernisation and expansion from the late



19th century onwards saw the destruction of the city walls and numerous other Saljuq-era monuments, and with the coming of the Turkish republic the Mevlevi dergah was closed down in 1925 and converted into a museum in 1927, although it continues to attract devotees.

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