darulfunun ilahiyat

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Determining Taftāzānī's *madhhab*: Insights after the Decline Paradigm

Teftâzânî'nin Mezhebini Belirleme: Gerileme Paradigmasından Sonraki Anlayışlar

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Abstract

Modern scholarship has largely rejected the decline paradigm, allowing for the evaluation of the Islamic intellectual tradition on its own terms. Rather than viewing the commentary tradition as a sign of decline, scholars have sought to understand the different literary genres and their functions. However, a gap has emerged between the insights gained from works published in Anglo-Saxon languages and those published in Arabic and Turkish. This paper presents insights from recent works published in the Muslim World on the commentary tradition, focusing on the concept of *taqrīr* and how it helps to solve an issue regarding the debate surrounding Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī's *madhhab* in *fiqh* and *kalām*. The conclusion of the investigation argues that al-Taftāzānī should be considered an Ashʿarī in *kalām* and Shāfiʿī in *fiqh* based on a careful reading of his works in the context of the commentary tradition.

Keywords: Commentary tradition, Taftāzānī, *taqrīr*, *madhhab*, *fiqh, kalām*

Öz

Modern araştırmalar, gerileme paradigmasını büyük ölçüde reddederek İslâm entelektüel geleneğinin kendi terimleriyle değerlendirilmesine olanak sağlamıştır. Âlimler, şerh geleneğini bir gerileme işareti olarak görmek yerine farklı edebî türleri ve işlevlerini anlamaya çalışmışlardır. Ancak, Anglo-Sakson dillerinde yayımlanan eserlerden elde edilen bilgiler ile Arapça ve Türkçe yayımlanan eserler arasında bir boşluk ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu makale, takrîr kavramına ve bu kavramın Saʿdüddîn et-Teftâzânî'nin fıkıh ve kelâmdaki mezhebini çevreleyen tartışmalarla ilgili bir meseleyi çözmeye nasıl yardımcı olduğuna odaklanarak, İslâm dünyasında şerh geleneği üzerine yayımlanan son çalışmalardan görüşler sunmaktadır. Araştırmanın sonucu, Teftâzânî'nin eserlerinin şerh geleneği bağlamında dikkatli bir şekilde okunmasına dayanarak, onun kelâmda Eşʿarî, fıkıhta ise Şâfiî olarak kabul edilmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şerh geleneği, Teftâzânî, Takrîr, Mezhep, Fıkıh, Kelam

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Introduction

1. Taftāzānī's Biography

The biographical data about Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. ʿUmar al-Taftāzānī al-Khorasānī is scarce, as is the case with most of the scholars from Transoxiana. Given this scarcity, we will make do with the key data and address two issues in his biography: his relationship to ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1356) and Taftāzānī's *madhhab* in *kalām* and *fiqh*.

Fortunately, Taftāzānī mentions at the end of his works when and where he finished his writings, giving us hints about his travels and the places in which he resided. So, we have a chronological order of his books, which will be enumerated in a later chapter. Taftāzānī was born in the year 722/1322 in Taftāzān, a village near Nasā in Khurāsān.[1] Some biographers mention the year 712/1312, but this seems incorrect given that his grandson, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ḥafīd al-Saʿd al-Taftāzānī (916/1510), mentions the year 722/1322 AH.[2]

It is clear that Taftāzānī comes from a scholarly household since he refers to himself as "Masʿūd the son of the judge" (Masʿūd b. al-Qāḍī) in his first commentary *Sharḥ Taṣrīf al-ʿIzzī* which he wrote at the age of 16.[3] This book is still used to this day and has been reprinted many times by different publishing houses, which shows that Taftāzānī, from a young age, showed the skills of clarity in writing. The point about the scholarly household and his first book leads us to the first matter to be addressed in this short biography. Almost all biographers mention that Taftāzānī had been a student of ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, and some even add a rather anecdotal detail that Taftāzānī had apparently been "very slow to learn" in his youth and that he had been the "most dull-witted" student in the circle of Ījī.[4] However, there are issues with the story and with Taftāzānī being the student of ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī. The first biography that mentions the story seems to be that of Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1089/1679) in his *Shadharāt al-dhahab*. He introduces the story with: "Some virtuous men tell …" (ḥakā baʿḍ al-afāḍil), which is more

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1   See: Şükrü Özen, "Teftâzânî," in: TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/teftazani [last access 07.01.2023]; Wilfred Madelung, "al-Taftāzānī", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. [last access 07.01.2023].

2   Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Niʿam al-sawābigh fī sharḥ al-Nawābigh* (Istanbul: Dār al-Lubāb, 2018), 43 (introductions by the editor). From here onwards abbreviated with: *Niʿam*.

3   Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ Taṣrīf al-ʿIzzī* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj 2011), 69.

4   See: Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār min dhahab* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2008), vol. 8, 548-549.

reminiscent of a story than an actual event. Adding the fact that Taftāzānī grew up in a scholarly household and that he wrote his first book at the age of 16 makes it very likely that the story is made up.

Taftāzānī does not mention any of his teachers by name in the books that have reached us.[5] However, five scholars that Taftāzānī apparently studied with are ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 766/1346), Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ʿAbd Allah b. Saʿd Allah al-ʿAfīfī (d. 780/1379), Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (unknown), and ʿAlā al-Dīn al-al-Sighnāqī (unknown).[6] Probably the most famous of these scholars is Ījī, but there are no indications that Taftāzānī was his student, so it seems questionable that he studied with him.[7] The closest to Taftāzānī in scientific output is Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿAfīfī. It is mentioned that he was among the students of Ījī and well-versed in the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī school of law. Ibn Ḥajar mentions that he used to issue fatwas in both *madhhabs* and used to say about himself: "I am Ḥanafī in the foundations (*uṣūl*) and Shāfiʿī in the branches (*furūʿ*)."[8] He is probably referring to his method in *uṣūl al-fiqh,* which is according to the jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), that is, the Ḥanafī scholars. This piece of information about Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿAfīf will be important in the following chapter which addresses the identification of Taftāzānī's *madhhab*.

From the entries at the end of Taftāzānī's books, we can see that he traveled frequently and did not reside for too long in one city. However, he does not discuss details regarding his travels or reasons for them.[9] Although students flocked around him whenever he traveled into a city, some take his frequent travels as a reason for the lack of close students who studied with him for an extended period.[10] Taftāzānī was invited by order of Timur (d. 808/1405) to Samarqand, where he spent the last years of his life.[11] Some sources mention an event that apparently led to his death. He and Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī were invited to have a debate which Taftāzānī

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5   See: Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Qālish, *Taftāzānī wa ārāʾuhu al-balāghiyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Nawādir, 2010), 36.

6   See: *Niʿam*, 44 (introductions by the editor). The number of scholars that are mentioned varies.

7   See: Madelung (2005), 228.

8   *Niʿam*, 51.

9   See: *Niʿam*, 44 (introductions by the editor); Qālish, 31.

10 Qālish, 38.

11 Madelung (2005), 228; Qālish, 34; *Niʿam*, 48 (introductions by the editor).

    For an investigation into the relationship between Timur and Muslim scholars, see Mustafa Akkuş and İzzetullah Zeki, "Timur'un âlimlerle ilişkileri" in *Selçuk Üniversitesi Selçuklu Araştırmaları Dergisi* (2019): 227-244.

lost.[12] He was struck by "intense grief" to the point that he died soon afterwards. Just like the story about the young "dull-witted" Taftāzānī, it is questionable that a lost debate was a cause for his death, given that he lived a tumultuous life as indicated in his introduction to his *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*. He describes how time tossed him around, how different events tested him, and how circumstances changed leading to uncertainty and only a hope for the better.[13] One could argue that a man who had experienced hardship would not die merely due to grief because of a debate. However, it is also not far-fetched to argue that Taftāzānī was about 70 years of age when the debate took place. His opponent was 29 years younger than him, and Taftāzānī might have felt public humiliation, which can have psychological implications on a man his age, especially when he knew he was right but still lost the debate. This line of reasoning is also possible. This does not mean that the debate itself or the outcome did not occur as mentioned, but to make it the reason for the end of Taftāzānī's life sounds far-fetched. At least the last point about him being right can be substantiated by the fact that some of the scholars after Taftāzānī took sides with him and mentioned that he had actually held the correct position.[14]

Taftāzānī died in Samarqand in 792/1390 and his body was taken to Sarakhs in keeping with the request mentioned in his testament.[15] Some biographers mention the date of his death, 791/1389 or 793/1391, but these are incorrect for two reasons. First, his grandson, who should be taken as a reliable source given the ancestral and time closeness, mentions the year 792/13920. Second, Taşköprüzade (d. 968/1561) mentions that Taftāzānī`s grave was visited by Fatḥ Allah al-Shirwānī who says that it mentions the year 792/1390 as the year of his passing.[16]

2. Commentary Tradition in the Post-Classical Period

We are in a fortunate situation because many of Taftāzānī`s works have been

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12 For a collection about the differences of opinion regarding grammar and rhetoric between the two scholars see ʿAbd Allah b. ʿUthmān Mastjīzādeh, *Ijtimāʿ al-baḥrayn fī bayān al-ikhtilāf al-saʿdayn* (Cairo: Dār al-Iḥsān, 2019).

13 See: Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid fī ʿilm al-kalām* (Cairo: Dār Mīrāth al-Nubūwa, 2022), vol. 1, 10. The whole introduction is written in very eloquent and high-level Arabic which makes it extremely difficult to capture in translation.

14 For an investigation of the debate and its impact on later scholarship, see: Yüksel Çelik, *Sa'düddîn Teftâzânî İle Seyyid Şerif Cürcânî'nin İlmî Münazaraları ve Yankıları*, *Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, vol.. 1, no. 1, 170-183, 2015.

15 See: *Niʿam,* 48.

16 See: Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā Taşköprüzade, *Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), vol 1, 192.

published or republished with critical editions in the last couple of years.[17] Taftāzānī wrote several independent works and commentaries to varying schools of thought. The distinction between these two broad categories is a means to differentiate between works in which the author is primarily voicing his own opinion or acting as a *shāriḥ* (explainer) of a text regardless of his ascription to the position found

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17 To avoid too many footnotes in the chronological enumeration of his works, we will mention the published works in this footnote according to their genre. In case there are multiple editions for one work, we will suffice with the critical editions.

Morphology, grammar, rhetoric, and *tafsīr*

Sharḥ Taṣrīf al-ʿIzzī (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011)

al-Mukhtaṣar: Sharḥ Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ (Damascus: Dār al-Taqwā, 2021)

Sharḥ Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ (Istanbul: Dār al-Lubāb, 2022)

Sharḥ Miftāh al-ʿulūm (Damascus: Dār al-Taqwā, 2022)

Irshād al-hādī (Jeedah: Dār al-Bayān al-ʿArabiyya, 1985)

Ḥāshiya Taftāzānī ʿalā al-Kashshāf (Ḥalab: Markaz Jaylānī lil-Buḥūth, 2021)

Niʿam al-sawābigh fī sharḥ al-Nawābigh (Istanbul: Dār al-Lubāb, 2018).

Logic

Sharḥ al-Risāla al-Shamsiyya fī taḥrīr qawāʿid al-manṭiqiyya (Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyāʾ, 2022)

Tahdhīb al-manṭiq wal-kalām (Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyāʾ, 2017)

Fiqh and uṣūl al-fiqh

al-Fatāwā al-ḥanafiyya (Karachi: Dār al-Kutub, 2020)

Sharḥ al-talwīḥ ʿalā al-Tawḍīḥ (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2009)

Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahā al-uṣūlī wa ʿalayhi majmūʿa ḥawāshin (Amman: Dār al-Nūr, 2020). This edition includes a number of glosses one of which is by Taftāzānī.

Kalām

Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid al-nasafiyya (Damascus: Dār al-Taqwā, 2020)

Tahdhīb al-manṭiq wal-kalām (Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyāʾ, 2017)

Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid fī ʿilm al-kalām (Cairo: Dār Mīrāth al-Nubūwwa, 2022) or *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1998). Unfortunately, both have their shortcomings. The first is not a critical edition but has fewer mistakes than the second, in which sometimes whole sentences and passages are missing.

in the main text. So broadly defined, the meaning of *commentary* in the current usage refers to a work written on a text from a different author regardless of the text being a *matn* (main text), *sharḥ* (commentary), or *ḥāshiyya* (gloss). The term *independent work* refers to every work that is not a commentary on a text by a different author.[18]

The twofold distinction between *independent work* and *commentary* is crucial to avoid confusion regarding Taftāzānī's *madhhab* in *fiqh* and *kalām,* a point on which traditional Muslim scholars and academics have differed. Some claim that he follows the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, while others say that he is a Shāfiʿī. Similarly, there is a debate regarding his school of thought in *kalām*. Some claim he is a Māturīdī while others say that he is an Ashʿarī.[19] There is even the opinion that he changed his *kalām* position throughout his life.[20] Although some of the views were due to the inaccessibility of his works, the issue was not clarified after more of his books were published. One could even argue that the accessibility of his works added to the confusion. Due to this uncertainty, it is first necessary to clarify an essential feature of the commentary tradition starting around the 7th/14th century. Only then will we get a better understanding of Muslim scholarship of the Post-Classical Period in general and of Taftāzānī's works and position regarding *fiqh* and *kalām* in particular.

The following investigation will first give a brief overview of how and why commentaries and glosses were written. Second, the concept of *taqrīr* and other notions that relate to it will be analyzed. Then, the crucial change of this concept, which started around the 7th/14th century, will be highlighted. Lastly, the conceptual tool with its changes will be pointed out in some of Taftāzānī's works to show the importance of evaluating an intellectual tradition according to its own standards. As a result, two problems will be resolved. First, the problem of the axiomatic position is that the commentary tradition is seen as a sign of stagnation of a tradition. Second, the issue of determining Taftāzānī's *madhhab* in *fiqh* and *kalām*.

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18 The point of this distinction is to aid the investigation on the *madhhab* of a scholar. It is not a precise conceptual tool but a means to make a broad distinction of the author's work.

19 See for a concise summary of all the different positions: *Niʿam,* 48-50 (editor's introduction).

20 See: Thomas Würtz, "Der frühe Saʿd ad-Dīn at-Taftāzānī als māturīditischer Autor," in *Rationalität in der Islamischen Theologie. Band I: Die klassische Phase,* ed. Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth, Reza Hajatpour and Mohammed Abdel Rahem (Berlin: De Gruyter 2019), 351-372.

2.1. Commentaries and Glosses: An Overview[21]

Contemporary Western academics have begun to pay more attention to the commentary tradition in its different forms and have abandoned a categorical dismissal of abridgments (*mukhtaṣar*) and glosses (*ḥāshiya*).[22] With that, they conclude that commentaries and glosses are more demanding as they presuppose knowledge of the auxiliary sciences and their terminologies.[23] The following investigation focuses on some of the features of the commentary tradition and gives a general overview of what Muslim scholars mention regarding the motivation for writing a book, commentary, or gloss and their criteria.

Islamic scholarship has its own parameters of what constitutes originality. It is not always about producing something unprecedented and completely new but also about improving or advancing a written work.[24] This notion can be illustrated by the seven reasons a new work is written. The following points are a list that can be found in Ibn Khaldūn's *al-Muqaddima*:

1. Bringing forth something new [this includes new sciences, as al-Shāfiʿī did with his *al-Risālā* for *uṣūl al-fiqh*]

2. Correcting what is deficient

3. Pointing out different mistakes

4. Explaining what is difficult to understand due to excessive brevity

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21 For a comprehensive overview on this topic see: Kamāl ʿArafāt Nabhān, *ʿAbqarīyatu al-ʿarab fī al-taʾlīf* (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awqāf wal-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya 2015). For concise but useful entries see: Tevfik Rüştü Topuzoğlu, "Haşiye", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hasiye [last access 07.01.2023]; Sedat Şensoy, "Şerh", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/serh#1 [last access 07.01.2023]. See also: İsmail Kara, İlim Bilmez Tarih *Hatırlamaz Şerh ve Haşiye Meselesine Dair Birkaç Not* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2022).

22 See for example: Asad Q. Ahmed and Margaret Larkin. "The Ḥāshiya and Islamic Intellectual History", *Oriens* 41, 3-4 (2013): 213-216 and Wisnovsky, Robert. "Towards a Genealogy of Avicennism", *Oriens* 42, 3-4 (2014): 323-363.

23 "[W]e have lost the skills required to read and understand the gloss tradition. We simply have no way handling the gloss in *tafsīr*, and therefore we have been incapable of advancing our knowledge (...) of the entire scholastic Qurʾān commentary tradition that was written mainly in the form of the gloss. (...) We simply are not equipped to read glosses now." (Walid A. Saleh, "The Ḥāshiya of Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284) on al-Kashshāf of al-Zamakhsharī". In *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 87-88.) Saleh's observation applies to the commentary tradition as a whole, not only to *tafsīr*.

24 See: Franz Rosenthal: The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship. In: *Analecta Orientalia*, (Rom: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1947), 64.

5. Shortening tedious and long passages without making the work more complicated and leaving out passages necessary for comprehension

6. Restructuring what is poorly structured in a way that the original structure is not disturbed

7. The proper arrangement of materials that were badly arranged in the work of a predecessor in an intelligent manner to make the new work more suitable for didactic purposes.[25]

It is noteworthy that almost all of the reasons presuppose a work or tradition that a new book relates to and departs from. Even something novel, like the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh* or *ʿilm al-waḍʿ*, is not detached from the other sciences but embedded in them. In other words, the notion of *originality* and *novelty* does not manifest itself only in something completely new, which detaches itself from everything that has preceded it. In this context, it makes sense that a well-written and well-structured *mukhtaṣar* (abridgment) is desirable even if it does not add something "new*"* in the modern sense. Scholars have observed the following criteria to consider a book a successful *mukhtaṣar*.

1. Brevity of expressions (*ikhtiṣār al-lafẓ*)

2. The presence of the same meanings as in the main text (*tamṯīl al-maʿānī al-mawğūda bi al-naṣṣ*)

3. Removing things like: (a.) filler words and prolixity, (b.) examples, evidence, reasons, and similes unless there is a need to mention them, (c.) some chapters, (d.) obscure definitions, and (e.) repetitions

4. Carefulness in style (*al-ihtimām bil-uslūb*), which includes a good mode of expression and taking into account the reading level for which the abridgment is written.

5. Explanation (*tawḍīḥ*), such as:(a.) using clearer definitions, (b.) making it easier to understand, and (c.) clarifying what is important.

6. Criticism and comparison (*al-naqd wal-muqāranah*), i.e., (a.) presenting

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25 See Rosenthal (1947), 64. For a more comprehensive presentation with similar points see: Ibn Khaldūn: *Al-Muqaddima* (2005), vol. 3, 206-208; Ibn Khaldūn: *The Muqaddima* (New Jersey 2006), 413-414.

  The difference between points two and three is that the latter can happen through an appendix, which leaves the mistake and points it out, whereas the first happens, for example, by revising the text, after which the mistake is not there anymore.

one's own opinion and discussing that of the main text, (b.) commenting and comparing, (c.) weighing the opinions and choosing the better and more obvious one.

7. Correction and vocalization of difficult words (*al-taṣḥīḥ wa ḍabṭ al-mushkil*)

8. Verification, specification, and scrutiny (*al-taḥqīq wal-tadqīq wa al-taqaṣṣī*)

9. Checking the structure of the main text (*iʿādat al-tartīb*)

10. Being guided by the example of previous abridgments of the same work.[26]

Once a *mukhtaṣar* is accepted by the scientific community, which manifests itself by being taught and commented on, it has the potential to become a new pivotal point for later generations and replace the original work(s) it was based on. A prime example of that is Taftāzānī.[27] Even within his lifetime, scholars recognized and acknowledged the value and benefits of his books. Ibn Khaldūn, who was a contemporary of Taftāzānī, says this about him:

> In Egypt, I have come across several writings by a man from the greats of Herat who is known as Saʿd al-Din al-Taftāzānī. [His works] include *kalām, uṣul al-fiqh,* and *balāgha*, attesting that he has a firm mastery of these sciences. In them, there is evidence that he has knowledge of the *ʿulūm ḥikamiyya* and a deep understanding of the rational sciences.[28]

Contrary to Ibn Khaldūn's assessment, some modern academics say that "his originality as a thinker was limited."[29] This view is based on the notion that works of the later period, especially commentaries, are perceived as a sign or reason for intellectual stagnation and decadence.[30] However, once this axiomatic position is questioned and one starts to read and analyze commentaries in their different forms, it becomes clear that they are, on the one hand, the place where many subtle

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26 Nabhān, 209-212.

 The observations of the author are mainly based on classical scholars that have written encyclopedic works in which they also touch upon the way scholars write and evaluate the works.

27 Another great example is the text *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid* by Nāṣr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, which became a central text for Sunnī and Shia scholars. For a detailed analysis of this work, its commentaries, glosses, and its influence on the intellectual tradition, see the editor's introduction: Maḥmūd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Isfahānī, *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2020), vol. 1.

28 Ibn Khaldūn, vol. 3, 1091.

29 Madelung (2005), 227.

30 See: Walid A. Saleh, "Marginalia and Peripheries: A Tunisian Historian and the History of Qurʾanic Exegesis," in *Numen* 58 (2011), 304-305; Asad Q. Ahmed and Margaret Larkin (2013), 213-216.

discussions are taking place and, on the other hand, the means to understand the discussions and issues the author of the main text is reacting to. Commentaries clarify and disclose the implicit questions lurking between the lines that the main text's author or *mukhtaṣar* does not mention explicitly. Generally speaking, there are three things a *shāriḥ* (explainer) does: He explains the meanings of the main text, discusses the different views on the subject, and presents objections.[31]

Glosses can serve a similar function depending on the author's goal. They can be very brief annotations about the main text or the commentary,[32] and at other times they become the ground for detailed discussions.[33] Scholars observed the following features of the glosses.

1. Explanation and clarification of difficult-to-understand parts of the text

2. Valid verifications and close examinations of the text

3. Explanation of parts that are kept short

4. References to sources

5. Derivation and highlighting of valuable things in the text

6. Correction of the text, correction of errors or criticism, and refutations of the author.[34]

Another important observation is that the "*matn-sharḥ-ḥāshiya* string" is a "tradition of understanding" in which the latter explains the former and moves from concise to detailed and from ambiguous to clarified. Short texts, like the *ʿAqāʾid nasafiyya,* become clearer and more understandable with the commentary, and his commentary also becomes more accessible through the glosses. This is a general observation, so it does not mean that every gloss only aims at explaining the text.[35] All of the features and criteria for the *mukhtaṣar*, *sharḥ*, and *ḥāshiya* show that, in many cases, an author advances the discourse with his contribution. As mentioned earlier, notions of *novelty* or *advancement* must be understood within a framework other than the predominating modern understanding. After this brief overview, we will examine a concept central to the commentary tradition.

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31 See: *Tasdīd al-qawāʿid,* vol. 1, 124. For a general overview see: Sedat Şensoy, "Şerh", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/serh.

32 See: Şükrü Özen, "Teftâzânî", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hasiye.

33 A prime example of this is the various glosses on *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*. For an overview of them, see: İbiş (2017), 134-152; Çağlayan (2018), 15-43.

34 Nabhān, 334-335.

35 See: İbiş (2017), 148.

2.2. The Concept of *taqrīr*

In the context of the commentary tradition, the notion of *taqrīr* needs to be investigated. It is essential to clarify this concept, as it was a widespread practice among later scholars, especially from the 7th/13th century onwards. First, we will look at the linguistic meaning, other concepts that relate to it, and how this notion was understood in the early period. Second, we will focus on changes around the 7th/13th century concerning the idea of *taqrīr* and how it relates to the commentaries. After these investigations, the aim is to see how the findings apply to Taftāzānī`s works and how they help to resolve the issue of his *madhhab* in *fiqh* and *kalām.*

2.3. Linguistic and Technical Meaning of *taqrīr* and Similar Concepts

The linguistic meaning of *taqrīr* is *taḥqīq* and *tathbīt*. As the following analysis will show, the term *tathbīt* is also used to explain *taḥqīq* and *tadqīq*.[36] So linguistically, the three terms (*taqrīr*, *taḥqīq,* and *tadqīq*) can be used as synonyms. In their technical usage, however, they are more distinct but still close in meaning. *Taqrīr,* in the technical sense, means "a pure clarification insofar as the addressee and anyone who is listening can understand it with ease."[37] The technical term of *taḥqīq* can be used synonymously for *taqrīr* but is also more specific with the following meaning: "Establishing an issue (*tathbīt al-masʾala*) with its evidence or cause and repelling its criticism."[38] Now, *tadqīq* is even more specific: "It means precisely establishing (*al-tathabbut bi diqqa).* So it is establishing something through evidence with precision. Hence, it is more specific than *taḥqīq.*"[39] Here is another important term: *taḥrīr.* To do *taḥrīr* of something means "to abstract it from that which is attached to it and to free it from its accidents (*aʿrāḍ*)."[40] A common usage in the classical texts is the expression *taḥrīr maḥall al-nizāʿ* which, if translated literally, means: to isolate the point of contention. This phrase is used when scholars investigate the exact matter of debate without all the other propositions that branch off it.[41]

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36 This chapter is based on the following paper: Hamzeh al-Bakri, *Uslūb al-taqrīr fī rasāʾil Ibn Kamāl Bāshā*, in *Kemalpaşazade Felsefe-Din-Edebiyat Araştırmaları,* ed. Murat Demirkol, Yusuf Şen, Hayriye Özlem Sürer, Ahmet Şehit Tuna (Ankara: Fecr, 2022), vol. 2, 250-265.

37 al-Bakri, 251.

38 al-Bakri, 251.

39 al-Bakri, 251-252. An alternative meaning is: "Establishing a topic with its evidence is *taḥqīq* and establishing it with different evidence is *tadqīq.″* See: Ibid.

40 al-Bakri, 251-252.

41 A good example for that is the difference of opinion between the Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs regarding the attribute of *takwīn*. The actual point of contention starts from the attribute of *qudra* (power). See, for example, how the arguments regarding *takwīn* between the two schools keep coming back to the attribute of *qudra:* Shaykhzādeh ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAlī, *Naẓm al-farāʾid wa jamʿ al-fawāʾid* (Egypt, 1317 AH) 17-21.

The following section will focus on the usage of the term *taqrīr* among the early scholars and then show how it slightly changed from the 7th/14th century onwards in the commentary tradition.

2.4. *Taqrīr* before and after the 7th/13th century

The term *taqrīr* can be found in works as early as the 5th/11th century. Scholars like Juwaynī (d. 478/1085 AH), Ghazālī (d. 505/1111 AH), Shahristānī (d. 548/1153 AH), Rāzī (d. 606/1210 AH), Āmidī (d. 631/1233 AH), and others used it in their works.[42] The context in which they used it differs, but all of them have the meaning of *tathabbut* (establishing). *Taqrīr* is used in different expressions, like *taqrīr al-ḥukm, taqrīr al-madhhab,* or *taqrīr al-dalīl.* The common point between all of them is the meaning of establishing the judgment (*ḥukm*), position in the school (*madhhab*), or the evidence (*dalīl*) irrespective of the opinion of the author insofar as he agrees with it or not. So when, for example, Āmidī says, "According to what has been earlier established of the school (*taqrīr al-madhhab*) from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī and his followers,"[43] he is pointing to what he has clarified and explained based on Ashʿarīs *madhhab*, which does not tell us if Āmidī agrees or not. This is not stating the obvious, since Āmidī is an Ashʿarī, but is not necessarily following him regarding this matter.

From the 7th/13th century onwards, the term *taqrīr* gained a new meaning in the commentary tradition. Explaining a text according to the author's opinion without intervening became a goal of writing an explanation (*sharḥ*). In other words, the primary purpose of the commentator was to clarify and explain the intention of the author, no matter whether he agreed with the judgment, school, or evidence. If the commentator chose to discuss and argue against the main text, he was free to do so, but only after fulfilling his duty of explaining the text. So the discussion became secondary, whereas the explaining or *taqrīr* was the primary purpose of the commentary (*sharḥ*). To illustrate this point: Naṣr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī criticized Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī`s commentary of Ibn Sīnā's *al-Tanbīh wal-ishārāt* for neglecting his duty as a commentator and exaggerating in his critic. In his introduction, al-Ṭūsī, after praising Rāzī for his "utmost level of investigation," says:

> (…) except that during his writing, he went too far in refuting its author, and in contradicting its fundamental precepts, he transgressed the bounds of fairness. With these efforts, he did nothing more than undermine. For this reason, a certain wag labeled his commentary a "calumny" (…) It is a "prerequisite for the commentators" that they expend every effort, to the extent possible, for the sake of what they have committed themselves to comment on,

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42   al-Bakri, 252.

43   al-Bakri, 253.

and to defend, by means of whichever defenses the founder of that discipline uses, what they have burdened themselves with elucidating, in order that they be commentators and not contradictors, interpreters and not objectors.[44]

Ṭūsī speaking of the "prerequisite of the commentators" clearly shows that the duty in a commentary is first and foremost "elucidating" the main text. Ḥājī Khalīfa even used Rāzī's commentary as a case study when he talked about "the etiquettes of the commentator and his prerequisites" (*min ādāb al-shāriḥ wa sharṭihi*).[45] It does not mean that criticism and discussion are not a part of the commentary at all. As mentioned earlier, it is up to the commentator if he chooses to argue against the author of the main text. Still, he does so only after establishing (*taqrīr*) the author's position with the most charitable reading. Hence, there are two distinct approaches: *taqrīr* without objection or with objection. Later scholars clearly distinguished between these two positions (*maqām*). That is why we find scholars like al-Isfahānī, who is a Ḥanafī, explain an *uṣul al-fiqh* text of Ibn Ḥājib, which is according to the Mālikī *madhhab* without arguing for or defending the Ḥanafī position.[46] So the distinction between the two approaches has to be considered, especially when it comes to identifying the *madhhab* of a scholar like Taftāzānī about whom there is a debate. The investigation prepared the ground to take a closer look at Taftāzānī's works to identify his *madhhab* in *fiqh* and *kalām*.

3. Taftāzānī's School of Thought

There is no doubt that social circumstances influence scholarship to a certain extent, but it would be shortsighted to assume that these circumstances always explain Muslim scholars' positions. Unfortunately, it is quite common that academics in the field of Islamic studies overemphasize societal factors to explain theological discourses. This overemphasis, combined with disregarding the commentary tradition, will inevitably produce insufficient, if not misleading, results.

The recent and most comprehensive work on Taftāzānī in Western academia by Thomas Würtz is an example of the issues mentioned above. In his book on Taftāzānī, he did not consult a single commentary or gloss on Taftāzānī's works.[47] Additionally, he assumes that Taftāzānī changed his stance toward the Māturīdī school from a commentator of the *al-ʿAqāʾid al-nasafiyya* to a critic in his *Sharḥ*

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44 Wisnovsky, 370.

45 See: al-Bakri, 255.

46 al-Bakri, 255.

47 Würtz (2016).

al-Maqāṣid.[48] In an article, he even suggests that Taftāzānī used to be a Māturīdī but later in his life became an Ashʿarī.[49] Würtz, in his book and paper, neither consults the commentaries nor glosses on Taftāzānī's works, but tries to find an explanation in the societal circumstance, which, as he implicitly admits, does not solve the issue.[50] Considering the earlier findings regarding the commentary tradition and the concept of *taqrīr,* it becomes easier to put forth a convincing explanation for Taftāzānī's affiliation.

The previous investigation argued that there are two types of *taqrīr* in the commentaries: those that are limited to establishing the author's position without intervening and those that do *taqrīr* (establish) and then add their own critique and discussion later. A careful reading of *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* carefully will reveal that his commentary is from the second type. Taftāzānī says in his introduction:

> I tried to explain it in a way that puts forth in detail its generalities, clarifies its puzzles, opens up what is folded together, and discloses its concealed meanings while directing the statements with clarification, verifying the topics after establishing (*taḥqīq lil-masāʾil ghibba taqrīr*), explicating the evidences after freeing them up (*tadqīq lil-dalāʾil ithra taḥrīr*), revealing the objectives after introducing (*tafsīr lil-Maqāṣid baʿda tamhīd*), and increasing the benefits after isolating.[51]

Taftāzānī explicitly states what he sets out to do. Due to the brevity of Nasafī's text, which he compares to jewels and precious stones, Taftāzānī's first aim is to explain (*sharḥ*) the meanings embedded in the text by *clarifying*, *opening up,* and *exposing* them. The following keywords include the concepts discussed earlier. Taftāzānī says that he first does *taqrīr* (establish) and then *taḥqīq* (verify)*.* In other words, he first establishes the topics as the author, Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī, intended because Taftāzānī is first and foremost a *shāriḥ* (explainer). After finishing this task, he moves on and does *taḥqīq* (verify). Similarly, he says that he will first free up (*taḥrīr*) a topic, that is, from that which is not part of it, and then do *tadqīq* (explicate). Lastly, he mentions how he starts paving the way to the objectives (*maqāṣid*) after he starts with an introduction (*tamhīd*), which relates to the crucial distinction between the topics which are objectives (*maqāṣid*) of science and those that are introductions (*mabādiʾ*).

The first preliminary conclusion from Taftāzānī's introduction in *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* tells us that he is following the second type of *taqrīr* approach in which a

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48 Würtz (2016), 279-280.

49 Würtz (2019).

50 Würtz (2016), 279.

51 *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, 98.

commentator of a text first establishes the position of the author and then adds his opinion or position. That is why the *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* is first and foremost according to Māturīdī *madhhab* but includes, at least in some instances, the objections and opinions of Taftāzānī. To substantiate this claim further, a brief but very important statement from one of the glossers will be mentioned. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muṣṭafā al-Kastalī (d. 910) says in his gloss on *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*: "The *shāriḥ* (explainer) based many of his statements on their *madhhab* following the author. So beware of that."[52] Kastalī is referring to the Māturīdī *madhhab,* which is Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī's school of thought. Kastalī's statement shows that scholars were aware of the distinction between an independent work, a commentary, and the responsibility of a commentator.

In conclusion, Würtz observed that Taftāzānī has Ashʿarī leanings in his commentary but could not provide a sufficient explanation. Considering the second *taqrīr* approach makes it possible to make a convincing argument. Taftāzānī first establishes the Māturīdī position, and whenever he feels the need to offer his opinion or level a critique, he will do so. As a *shāriḥ* (explainer), his primary aim and duty are to do the first, that is, to explain the main text. His critique and opinion are secondary. Therefore, it is misleading to assume that all of Taftāzānī's works are equal insofar as they reveal his position. This applies to all scholars from the 7th/13th century onwards. That is why the distinction between the independent works and commentaries (*sharḥ* and *ḥashiyya*) is necessary for identifying Taftāzānī's *madhhab* in *kalām* and *fiqh* by allocating his works correctly, which is the topic of the next section.

3.1. Ashʿarī or Māturīdi?

Based on the findings in the previous sections, the books by Taftāzānī will be divided into independent works and commentaries. A detailed analysis of the *kalām* books will help identify his *madhhab*. To achieve this goal, various topics of dispute (*masāʾil khilāfiyya*)[53] will be highlighted to see what position Taftāzānī took. Additionally, specific statements in the *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* will be highlighted to substantiate the claim that he is first and foremost acting as a *shāriḥ* (explainer) for a Māturīdī text.

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52   Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *al-Majmūʿa al-saniyya* (Lebanon: Dār Nūr al-Ṣabāḥ, 2012), 543.

53   See for example: Ibn Kamāl Bāshā, *Masāʾil al-ikhtilāf bayna al-ashāʿira wal-māturīdiyya* (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ, 2009) and Shaykhzādeh ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAlī, *Naẓm al-farāʾid wa jamʿ al-fawāʾid.*

Taftāzānī has three works of *kalām*: *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* and *Tahdhīb al-kalām*. The first is a commentary on the Māturīdī text by Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī. The previous chapter showed that Taftāzānī explicitly mentions in the introduction that he sets out to explain the text first and to do *taḥqīq* afterward. So this work is obviously a commentary in the sense that it is not an independent work. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* is actually two works: the main text and a commentary. According to our terminology, both are independent works, since he is not commenting on another author's text.[54] Lastly, his *Tahdhīb al-kalām* is also an independent work similar in length to his *al-Maqāṣid*.

The claim here is that if we want to identify Taftāzānī's adherence, the primary sources should be his independent works. It does not negate that he might voice his opinion even in his commentaries, but, as discussed earlier, the primary task of a *shāriḥ* is explaining the main text regardless of whether he agrees with the author or not. Voicing his opinion is only secondary and an option he might choose to do throughout the work, never do or sometimes do.

Reading *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* carefully reveals that Taftāzānī only voiced his opinion in some cases and not throughout the work. Two examples will substantiate this claim. The first example will use Taftāzānī's discussion on the attribute of *takwīn*, which is one of the main topics that Ashʿarī's and Māturīdī's differ about.[55] In *al-ʿAqāʾid al-nasafiyya,* Nasafī affirms that "*takwīn* is an eternal attribute of God."[56] In the commentary, Taftāzānī explains the Māturīdī position and mentions the arguments. He points out the position of the *muḥaqiqqūn* (verifiers) and their objections.[57] In this case, the term *muḥaqqiqūn* refers to the Ashʿarī position. He then continues with detailed discussions on some objections and the answers to those objections.[58] At the end of the section on *takwīn*, Taftāzānī concludes with the *taḥqīq* and affirms the Ashʿarī position, which states that *takwīn* is not an attribute (*ṣifa*) but a connection (*nisba*) between the attribute of power and the created thing (*maqdūr*).[59]

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54 Although in its form *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* is a commentary, there should be no confusion in terminology. As mentioned earlier, the word *commentary*, according to our usage here, is in opposition to an independent work. This is a different usage of the term *commentary* which is in opposition to a main text (*matn*).

55 See for example: Ibn Kamāl Bāshā, 20.

56 *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, 82.

57 *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, 191-193.

58 *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, 193-198.

59 *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, 198.

The structure of his discussion follows the template mentioned in the previous chapter: establishing and explaining the author's position (*taqrīr*), mentioning the difference of opinion, followed by a critical discussion and his position. Taftāzānī's investigation of *takwīn* in his *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* is a prime example of a typical procedure in a commentary (*sharḥ*) according to the second *taqrīr* approach.

The second example illustrates that Taftāzānī sometimes suffices with the primary task as a *shāriḥ* (explainer), that is, establishing and explaining the text without adding his own opinion. In his discussion on the topic of *taklīf mā lā yuṭāq* (unbearable obligation), he again clarifies and expands the brief statement in the main text and mentions the point of contention and the position of the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿarīs. The rest of the section investigates the validity of certain inferences.[60] Taftāzānī does not mention his position at any point. So based on this commentary, it is not possible to know whose opinion he affirms. But in his *Tahdhīb al-kalām*, his independent work, he explicitly states: "Our position is that *taklīf* [*mā lā yuṭaq*] is possible because of the negation of that which is evil by the intellect (*qabīḥ ʿaqlī*). However, it does not occur."[61] In *al-Maqāṣid*, he says: "The unbearable obligation is not impossible," and in the commentary, he aligns himself with the Ashʿarī position in which he calls them "our peers" (*aṣḥābunā*).[62]

Regarding this matter, the two independent works show a clear affiliation with the Ashʿarīs, whereas his commentary does not. To substantiate this point further, the topic of *taklīf* is also discussed in the works of *uṣul al-fiqh*. In the gloss on the Ḥanafī book *al-Tawḍīḥ li-matn al-Tanqīḥ* by Ṣadr al-Sharīʿa, one of the most important Ḥanafī/Māturīdī figures of the later scholars, Taftāzānī aligns with the Ḥanafī/Māturīdī position and affirms it as "our position" (*ʿindanā*) contrary to "his position," by which he means Ashʿarī.[63]

Thus far, we have reached two conclusions. First, Taftāzānī does not always disclose his position in the *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, since he is first and foremost a *shārīḥ*. Second, his position can primarily be found in his independent works. If we consider his independent works only, then it is clear that, generally speaking, he should be counted among the Ashʿarī scholars.

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60   *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid*, 229-331.

61   Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Tahdhīb al-manṭiq wal-kalām* (Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyāʾ, 2017), 346.

62   *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, vol. 2, 1502.

63   Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥ ʿalā al-Tawḍīḥ* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2009), vol. 1, 412. In Taftāzānī's gloss on Ījī's *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar al-uṣūlī*, he discusses detailed questions with regards to what *unbearable responsibility* means and does not go into a difference of opinion with the Māturīdī position. See: Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahā al-uṣūlī wa ʿalayhi majmūʿa ḥawāshin* (Amman: Dār al-Nūr, 2020), vol. 2, 567-583.

3.2. Ḥanafī or Shāfiʿī?[64]

The difference of opinion regarding Taftāzānī's *madhhab* reaches back to the Post-Classical Period and has continued in the present.[65] This chapter will briefly analyze and evaluate the different positions to show which conclusion is most convincing. Taftāzānī commented on Ḥanafī and Shafiʿī *uṣūl al-fiqh* works, and has a Ḥanafī fatwa collection, a commentary on a Shāfiʿī textbook, and an independent work according to the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*.[66]

In his commentary on the *uṣūl al-fiqh* text, he follows the method of *taqrīr* mentioned in the previous chapter. So he refers to himself as a Shāfiʿī in the Shāfiʿī *uṣūl* work and as a Ḥanafī in the Ḥanafī *uṣūl* book.[67] Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1567) points out that one cannot assume that Taftāzānī is either one due to the nature of being a commentator (*shāriḥ*) in those works.

> It should not be judged that some of the positions a scholar speaks about in an investigative manner are his *madhhab,* even if he exaggerates his support for it because the concern of the author is only speaking about the evidence and what it leads to without looking at his own belief.[68]

Taftāzānī is considered to be a verifier (*muḥaqqiq*) in the *uṣūl* of both schools of law, and he was able to give fatwa according to both. He resembles his teacher Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, who was also a verifier of both schools.[69] However, the question about Taftāzānī's personal *madhhab* remains. As we saw earlier, it is one thing to be able to do *taḥqīq* and investigate both schools of *kalām,* but it does not tell us about his personal adherence. So the commentaries (in the sense that they are not independent) do not solve this question. Just as we saw in the previous chapter, it is helpful to look at independent works. As mentioned earlier, Taftāzānī wrote a textbook according to the Shafiʿī *madhhab* and a fatwa collection according to the Ḥanafī *madhhab*. The latter contains answers to questions he received while staying in Herat, which was predominantly Ḥanafī. So the *fatwa* collection is according to the *madhhab* of the people in the area.[70] The Shafiʿī textbook, on the other hand, is an independent work in the sense of not being motivated by specific

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64   The present chapter is based on the findings of Hamzeh al-Bakri's comprehensive investigation on this topic in his introduction to *Niʿam*. He evaluated all the positions and reached a convincing conclusion, which will be discussed here.

65   See: *Niʿam*, 48-50 (editor's introduction).

66   See: *Niʿam*, 52-59 (editor's introduction).

67   See: *Niʿam*, 53-54 (editor's introduction).

68   *Niʿam*, 55 (editor's introduction).

69   *Niʿam*, 55-56 (editor's introduction).

70   *Niʿam*, 59 (editor's introduction).

circumstances, like the fatwa collection, and not based on another text in the sense of being a commentary.

In conclusion, Taftāzānī mastered both schools in Sunnī *kalām* and two schools in *uṣūl fiqh*. His commentaries follow the method of *taqrīr,* which first and foremost clarify the text according to the author's *madhhab*. Keeping these two factors in mind and making his independent works the criterion to determine his personal adherence leads to the conclusion that he is an Ashʿarī in *kalām* and Shafiʿī in *fiqh*.

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