

Guiding the Sound Mind: Ebu's-su'ūd's *Tafsir* and Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an in the Post-Classical Period*

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Akl-ı Selîme Rehberlik Etme: Klasik Dönem Sonrasında Ebussuud'un Tefsir'i ve Kur'an'ın Belâğî Tefsiri

Öz ■ En kapsayıcı yönüyle bu makalenin amacı, genellikle çağdaş tefsir araştırmalarında ihmal edilen klasik dönem sonrası tefsirini incelemek ve bu aşamada şekillenen tefsir geleneğinin iç dünyasını kavramaya çalışmaktır. Bu sebeple makale, çeşitli kaynaklarda belâğî yorumlama özelliğiyle Zemahşerî ve Beydâvî'nin tefsir eserleriyle aynı seviyede değerlendirilerek büyük bir övgüye layık görülen Ebussuud'un (ö. 982/1574) *İrşâdü'l-akli's-selîm ilâ mezâyâ'l-kitâbi'l-kerîm* (Kitâb-ı Kerîm'in Üstün Anlam İncelikleri Konusunda Akl-ı Selîm'e Rehberlik Yapma) adlı Kur'an tefsiri üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Temelde bu çalışma, *İrşâd*'ın hem kendi metnini ve hem ortaya çıktığı bağlamı incelemekte, özellikle belâğat ve Kur'an tefsirinin kesiştiği noktada Ebussuud gibi onaltıncı yüzyıl Osmanlı ulemasının tefsir alanındaki meselelerinin şekillenmesinde rol oynayan entelektüel tartışmaları ve fikir alışverişlerini ele almaktadır. Temsil ve onun bir türü olarak istiare, çalışmamızın metin ve bağlam incelemesinde temel malzemeyi oluşturmaktadır. Konuyla ilgili *İrşâdü'l-akli's-selîm*'den getirilen ve Ebussuud Efendi'nin bir tefsir aracı veya üslubu olarak temsili, nasıl temellendirip uyguladığını gösteren örnekler, titizlikle incelenerek önceki tefsirlerle mukayese yapılmıştır. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, bir klasik dönem sonrası tefsiri olarak *İrşâd*'ın temel özelliklerini yansıtmakta ve tefsirin 16. Yüzyıl Osmanlı entelektüel dünyasındaki fikri ve siyasi önemiyle ilgili bazı gözlemler ve tespitler içermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ebussuud, Kur'an Araştırmaları, Tefsir, *İrşâdü'l-akli's-selîm ilâ mezâyâ'l-kitâbi'l-kerîm*, Osmanlı Entelektüel Tarihi, Klasik Dönem Sonrası, Belâğat, Cürcâni, Temsil, İstiare

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The scope of studies on the literary genre of *tafsīr* is generally limited to classical exegesis from al-Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr,¹ and modern exegesis since the nineteenth century.² Much of the *tafsīr* produced after Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1371) and until Muḥammad ‘Abdū (d.1323/1905) remains neglected largely due to the dominant perception that in the post-classical period described as the ‘Period of Decadence,’³ scholarly production within the Islamic disciplines was ‘moribund repetition’⁴ of the intellectual achievements of past generations. This is often attributed to an unceasing process of scholastic explication and instruction aided by different literary forms of commentary (e.g. *sharḥ*, *ta’līq* and *ḥāshiyā*), which became the means for preserving and transmitting established knowledge. This enduring view has been recently challenged by studies on Islamic law⁵ and Arabic rhetoric for example.⁶

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- 1 In his description of formal *tafsīr*, Norman Calder marks the beginning and end of the classical period with the works of these two exegetes. “*Tafsīr* from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr, Problems in the description of a genre, illustrated with reference to the story of Abraham,” in G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, eds., *Approaches to the Qur’ān* (London: Routledge, 1993), 101-140. Jane Dammen-McAuliffe takes a similar position when delineating “The Tasks and Traditions of Interpretation.” Following her account of classical *tafsīr*, she “jumps six centuries” - from Ibn Kathīr to modern Qur’an interpretations - apparently presupposing the futility of the *tafsīr* genre in the period in between. Dammen-McAuliffe, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 181-209, 199.
 - 2 See, for example, J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).
 - 3 In terms of historical periodization, the beginning of the ‘post-classical’ period varies from one historical model to another but is generally placed sometime between the sack of Baghdad in 1258 and the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluks in 1516, while its end is marked by Bonaparte’s invasion of Egypt in 1798. See, for example, Roger Allen and D. S. Richards, eds., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature in the Post-classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 5-6; see also Isa Boullata’s review of this book in *Digest of Middle East Studies*, vol. 16, issue 1, 2007, 108–113, 108.
 - 4 William Smyth, “Controversy in a Tradition of Commentary: The Academic Legacy of al-Sakkākī’s *Miftāḥ al-‘Ulūm*”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 112, no. 4, 1992, 589-597.
 - 5 A notable example is the work of Wael Hallaq on Islamic Law, particularly *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
 - 6 See the work of William Smyth “Controversy in a Tradition of Commentary”, 1992; “Some Quick Rules Ut Pictura Poesis: The Rules for Simile in *Miftāḥ al-‘Ulūm*,” *Oriens*, vol. 33, 1992, 215-229; “The Canonical Formulation of *‘Ilm al-Balāgha* and al-

In light of the common observation in these studies that the literary legacy of this period should be accorded greater attention, the overarching aim of the paper is to gain an insight into *tafsīr* after Ibn Kathīr. For this purpose, the paper will examine the sixteenth century Qur'an commentary *Irshād al-'aql al-salīm ilā mazāyā al-kitāb al-karīm* (Guiding the sound mind to the benefits of the Noble Book) by Abū al-Su'ūd (Ebu's-su'ūd hereafter)⁷ Muḥammad b. Muḥiyy al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā al-'Imādī (896/1490- 982/1574). This examination involves both the text and its context, prioritising the study of the world of the exegete to understand the historical and intellectual backdrops against which the exegetical text was produced. This will be achieved through: i) exploring the exegete's status and the reception of his work as construed within the genre's self-narrative by biographical historians, bibliographical compilers, and scholars of *tafsīr* (Section 1); ii) investigating *Irshād's* historical linkages to other exegetical works; and the clues these linkages provide for reconstructing a picture of the intellectual context of *Irshād's* production (Section 2) and for iii) expounding the debates on rhetoric which informed *Irshād's* exegetical approach (Section 3). The historical study of context is then followed by the literary analysis of the text itself, its content, method and formal characteristics by means of a close reading of Ebu's-su'ūd's interpretation of Q. 33:71-72. This will help illustrate his interpretive method in comparison with past exegetes (Section 4). The concluding Section 5 will briefly reflect on the broader historical implications of *Irshād's* production.

1. Locating Ebu's-su'ūd the exegete

The choice to examine Ebu's-su'ūd's *Irshād al-'aql al-salīm ilā mazāyā al-kitāb al-karīm* was initially guided by a brief comment in Colin Imber's monograph on this Ottoman jurist. Imber noted that the Ottoman biographers of Ebu's-su'ūd, once *Muftī* of Istanbul and the longest-serving Shaykh al-Islam at the height of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, considered his *tafsīr* together with the classical commentaries of al-Zamakhsharī (d.538/1144) and al-Bayḍāwī (d.685/1285)

Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm*", *Der Islam*, vol. 72, issue 1, 1995, 7-24; and, more recently, Allen and Richards, eds., *Arabic Literature in the Post-classical Period*, including the chapter by William Smyth on "Criticism in the Post-Classical Period", 387-417.

7 Transliteration of the names of famous Ottoman scholars is provided in the first instance according to both Arabic and Turkish, then according to Turkish thereafter. However, the bibliographical details of Arabic sources written by Turkish scholars are all transliterated according to the Arabic script. All transliteration follows the *IJMES* style guidelines.

to be the greatest contributions to the *tafsīr* genre.⁸ Further investigation of biographical and bibliographical material confirmed that Ebu's-su'ūd's *Irshād* acquired status in the post-classical *tafsīr* tradition. His Ottoman peers received it with acclaim. Even before it had been completed, Ṭāshköprizāde (d.968/1561), author of the famous biographical work *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'māniyya* as well as a jurist and exegete, composed a short panegyric on Ebu's-su'ūd and his Qur'an commentary when he reviewed a part of *Irshād* sent to him by Ebu's-su'ūd himself.⁹

Later Turkish, Indian and Arab cataloguers concur that *Irshād* is written in an exquisite style of Arabic which, according to Ḥajjī Khalifa (d. 1057/1657), earned Ebu's-su'ūd amongst the most prominent of his contemporaries the epithet *khatīb al-mufasssīrīn* (orator of the exegetes).¹⁰ The seventeenth century Yemeni historian 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Aydārūs likens Ebu's-su'ūd's eloquence in Arabic to the native fluency of the ancient pure Arabs.¹¹ In support of his view, he recorded the words of Shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn, a *muftī* who met Ebu's-su'ūd in 943/1536 when the latter was Judge of Istanbul. Quṭb al-Dīn was highly impressed with Ebu's-su'ūd's literary eloquence and superiority, and marvelled that: "for someone who never journeyed to the homelands of the Arabs, this [ability] is, without doubt, a divine gift."¹² Though Ebu's-su'ūd was an accomplished linguist, described as an '*imām ahl al-lisān*' in one source,¹³ it is his exegetical prowess that is mainly extolled by seventeenth century scholars and cataloguers. An

8 Colin Imber, *Ebu's-su'ūd: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 18; Ḥajjī Khalifa (=Kātib Chelebi), *Kashf al-zunūn 'an asmā' al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltqāyā and Rif'at Bilka al-Kilīsī, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Wikālat al-Ma'ārif, 1941, reprinted in Beirut: Dār iḥyā al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.), vol. 1, 65; Abū al-Ḥasanāt Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Lakhnawī (d. 1304/1886), *al-Fawā'id al-bahiyya fi tarājim al-ḥanafiyya* (Lahore: al-Maṭba' al-Muṣṭafā'ī, 1293/1876), 36.

9 'Alī b. Bālī (= Manq 'Alī), *al-'Iqd al-manzūm fi zikr afādil al-rūm*, the supplement to Aḥmad b. Mūṣṭafā Ṭāshkubrī Zāda's (Ṭāshköprizāde) *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'māniyya fi 'ulamā' al-dawla al-'uthmāniyya*, both works printed in one volume (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-'arabī, 1975), 340.

10 Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 65.

11 al-'Aydārūs, 'Abd al-Qādir b. Shaykh b. 'Abd Allah (d. circa 1034/1624), *Tarikh al-nūr al-sāfir 'an-akhbār al-qarn al-'āshir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥālu *et al* (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 2001), 319. Cf. al-Lakhnawī, *al-Fawā'id*, 36; al-Shawkānī, Muḥammad b.'Alī (d.1250/1834), *al-Badr al-ṭālī' bi-maḥāsīn man ba'd al-qarn al-sābi'*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-islāmī, n.d.), vol.1, 261.

12 al-'Aydārūs, *Tarikh al-nūr al-sāfir*, 320.

13 Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib a'lām al-akhyār min fuqahā madhhab al-Nu'mān al-mukhtār*, Kitābkhaneh-yi majlis-i shūra-yi millī, Tehran, 2 vols., MS 87827/11361 & 11362, see vol. 2, MS 87827/11362, f. 263r.

Ottoman author of one of few bibliographical works devoted to *tafsīr* describes him in hyperbolic terms as “*muftī* of the peoples and sultan of the exegetes.”¹⁴ Two centuries later, al-Shawkānī (1250/1834), a reformist Yemeni scholar and exegete, is still expressing great enthusiasm for Ebu’s-su’ūd and his *Irshād*, deeming it “one of the greatest, most excellent and most accurate works of *tafsīr*.”¹⁵

Such views are the more intriguing given that from his first appointment as Judge of Bursa (939/1533) until his death (982/1574), Ebu’s-su’ūd spent a lifetime greatly preoccupied with the practice and administration of law;¹⁶ and that, as Imber correctly observes, of his literary legacy the work for which he has become well-known according to his Ottoman biographers is not one of jurisprudence but one of *tafsīr*.¹⁷ Later biographers maintain a similar view. In a nineteenth century Indian biographical dictionary of Ḥanafī scholars, Ebu’s-su’ūd is, interestingly, listed as ‘the Qur’an exegete’: “*Abū al-Su’ūd al-mufasssīr al-‘Imādī*.”¹⁸ A secondary aim of the paper is, thus, to investigate Ebu’s-su’ūd’s Qur’an commentary, *Irshād*,¹⁹ in order to shed light on the reasons for its outstanding reception, and its success in securing a place in the exegetical tradition as indicated by a good number of supercommentaries and glosses written on it by scholars from

14 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Adirnavī (d. ca. 11th/17th century), *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ed. Sulaymān b. Šāliḥ al-Khizzī (al-Madīna: Maktabat al-‘ulūm wa-l-ḥikam, 1997), 398.

15 al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭālī*, vol.1, 261.

16 For a detailed biography of Ebu’s-su’ūd in English, see Imber, *Ebu’s-su’ūd*, 8-20. Cf. Joseph Schacht, “Abu’l-Su’ūd,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edn), vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 152-3. For biographies in Arabic, see in addition to the sources referenced in notes 9 & 11, ‘Alī b. Bālī, *al-‘Iqd al-manẓūm*, 439-454; Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651), *al-Kawākib al-sā’ira bi-a’yān al-mi’a al-‘ashira*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1997), vol. 3, 31-3; Ibn al-‘Imād, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Falāḥ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad, *Shadharāt al-dhabab fī akhbār man dhabab*, 10 vols., ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir and Maḥmūd al-Arna’ūṭ (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1993) vol. 10, 584-6.

17 Imber, *Ebu’s-su’ūd*, 18.

18 al-Lakhnawī, *al-Fawā’id*, 5.

19 The edition cited hereafter is *Tafsīr Abī al-Su’ūd aw Irshād al-‘aql al-salīm ilā mazāyā al-kitāb al-karīm*, 5 vols, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Atā (Cairo: Maktabat al-riyāḍ al-ḥadītha, 1971). ‘Atā’s edition is based on earlier prints of *Irshād* in Cairo, as well as the earliest manuscripts available in Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya (n.d.). I compared ‘Atā’s edition to the Leipzig manuscript copy of *Irshād* on the parts discussed in this paper and found it accurate in all cases (Leipzig University Library, no. 12, 2 vols., MS.or.333 & MS.or.334, dated 1203/1789, see *waqf* note, MS.or.334, 1r). For text-mining purposes, i.e. searching across the text for certain key terms, I used the digitised edition available through the academic website www.altafsir.com launched by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought.

the Levant, North Africa and Egypt.²⁰ It is noteworthy that these continued to appear until the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, *Ḥāshiyat al-Saqqā ‘alā tafsīr al-mawlā Abī al-Su‘ūd* by the Azharite scholar Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī b. Ḥasan al-Saqqā (d. 1298/1881), a contemporary of the Egyptian reformist thinker and exegete Muḥammad ‘Abdū.²¹

These glosses and supercommentaries suggest that *Irshād* was incorporated into religious education. The sources contain some supporting evidence that it became a core text of the religious curriculum in several parts of the Ottoman Empire. In 998/1590, few years after Ebu’s-su‘ūd died, the Levantine historian Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651) recounts his study of *Irshād* with one of Ebu’s-su‘ūd’s students who introduced and taught the text during his service as Judge of Aleppo.²² The sources also mention that Tunisian scholars taught and commented upon *Irshād* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²³ By the nineteenth century, al-Shawkānī asserts, *Irshād* had reached all the Ottoman provinces and protectorates, becoming a major reference work for various disciplines.²⁴

More significantly, a number of formal works of Qur’an commentary make frequent references to Ebu’s-su‘ūd’s exegetical opinions in *Irshād*, for example: *Rūḥ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān* by Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī of Bursa (d. 1127/1715); *al-Baḥr*

20 Ḥajjī Khalifa records three incomplete commentaries on *Irshād*, see *Kashf*, vol. 1, 66; Ismā‘īl Pāsha al-Baghdādī records another four in *Idāḥ al-maknūn fī-l-dbayl ‘alā kashf al-ḡunūn ‘an asmā’ al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltaqāyā and Rif‘at Bilka al-Kilīsī, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Wikālat al-ma‘ārif, 1947, reprinted in Beirut: Dār iḥyā al-turāth al-‘arabī, n.d.), vol. 1, 64 and vol. 2, 497 & 579; and another one in al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘arīfīn fī asmā’ al-mu‘allifīn wa āthār al-muṣannifīn*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Wikālat al-ma‘ārif, 1951, reprinted in Beirut: Dār iḥyā al-turāth al-‘arabī, n.d.), vol. 1, 344. I came across two other commentaries: one by Shaykh Maḥmūd Maqdīsh al-Ṣafāqsī, mentioned by Muḥammad al-Fāḍil Ibn ‘Āshūr (d. 1973) in *al-Tafsīr wa-rijālūh* (Cairo: al-Azhar, majma’ al-buḥūth al-islāmiyya, 1970), 114; and another by the Egyptian Shaykh al-Saqqā, see note 21 below.

21 MS 1/182 [250] al-Saqqā 28478, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, Cairo.

22 al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651), *al-Kawākib al-sā‘ira*, vol. 3, 32.

23 Ibn ‘Āshūr refers to an extensive commentary written by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Zaytūna which he began in Tunis and continued to work on during his travels to teach *tafsīr* in Egypt, Mecca and Medina. See *al-Tafsīr wa-rijālūh*, 113-4. This commentary is recorded by Ismā‘īl Pāsha as completed in 1129/1717 under the title *Maṭāli‘ al-su‘ūd wa fath al-wadūd ‘alā irshād shaykh al-islām Abī al-Su‘ūd*, see *Idāḥ*, vol. 2, 497-8.

24 al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭāli‘*, vol.1, 261.

al-madīd fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-majīd by the Moroccan sufi Ibn ʿAjība (d.1244/1828); *Rūḥ al-maʿānī fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm wa-l-sabʿ al-mathānī* by the Iraqi scholar al-Alūsī (d. 1270/1854).²⁵ The diverse locations of the authors of these commentaries corroborate al-Shawkānī’s observation on the wide-reach of *Irshād*, which he himself relied upon in his Qurʾan commentary *Fath al-Qadīr*. But this could not have been achieved without *Irshād* gaining a place in the learning and teaching of *tafsīr*. Contemporary traditional *tafsīr* works such as *al-Tafsīr al-wasīṭ* by Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭanṭawī (b.1928-2010), the late Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar, and *Ṣafwat al-tafsīr* by the Syrian Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ṣabūnī (b. 1930-) also draw on Ebu’s-suʿūd’s *tafsīr*. These recurrent citations in the *tafsīr* genre, where citation is a formal characteristic indicating recognition of past authorities,²⁶ is evidence of the status which Ebu’s-suʿūd acquired within the exegetical tradition. Further investigation of his influence on later exegetes is beyond the scope of this study but suffice it to say that the sustained exegetical interest in *Irshād* - across time, place, and genres of scholastic (supercommentaries and glosses) and formal *tafsīr* writing - is a clear sign of an enduring influence on Qurʾan commentary beyond its initial promotion by the Ottomans.²⁷

25 I used the digital search facility of www.altafsir.com to trace citations of Ebu’s-suʿūd across this repository’s extensive *tafsīr* corpus. The search yields results by the Qurʾanic verses under which the citation was made. For example, in his interpretation of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī cites Ebu’s-suʿūd and *Irshād* in the course of his discussion of verses 3, 13, 82, 102, 104, 129, 135, 221, 256, 285. Not included here are *tafsīr* works which make the occasional reference to Ebu’s-suʿūd. This search method is useful in excavating formal citations and identifying potential locations of intertextualities. A more comprehensive appreciation of the impact of Ebu’s-suʿūd on later exegetes requires closer textual examination.

26 Calder, “*Tafsīr* from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr,” 101-104.

27 Ḥajjī Khalīfa recounts that, in 973/1566, on receiving the manuscript of the incomplete *tafsīr* (up to Qurʾan 38, *sūrat Ṣād*) sent with Ibn Maʿlūl, Ebu’s-suʿūd’s son in law, Sultan Süleyman I bestowed great rewards and honours on Ebu’s-suʿūd; and that when *Irshād* was completed by the following year, it was widely copied and circulated throughout the Ottoman Empire. See *Kashf*, vol. 1, 65. Cf. Imber, *Ebu’s-suʿūd*, 18-19. On dates and copies, Adem Yerinde contends that on the basis of the autograph and other copies the incomplete manuscript was sent to Süleyman I in 972/1565 and the *tafsīr* completed in 973/1566 (Adam Yerinde, “Ebusuud’s Tafsir and Its Copies”, an unpublished paper presented at the *History of Ottoman Thought Study Meeting II*, Istanbul: Sabancı University, 14-15 December 2011). Yerinde’s finding is lent support by Ḥajjī Khalīfa’s citation of Muḥammad al-Munshī’s comments on *Irshād* which

Well-known modern writings on the history of *tafsīr* similarly assign Ebu's-su'ūd a place amongst the renowned Qur'an exegetes, and seem to generally echo the remarks of pre-modern biographers and cataloguers. One such work is *Tārīkh al-tafsīr* by Qāsim al-Qaysī (1876-1955), late *Muftī* of Baghdad. According to al-Qaysī, *Irshād* is the first complete work of *tafsīr* by an Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam.²⁸ The only Shaykh al-Islam before Ebu's-su'ūd to have written a *tafsīr* worthy of note in al-Qaysī is Aḥmad b. Sulaymān Ibn Kamāl Pāsha (Kemālpāshazāde, d. 940/1534) who reached Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt (Q. 37)²⁹ but died before completing it.³⁰ Al-Qaysī also observes that *Irshād* was one of the earliest Qur'an commentaries to be printed in the late nineteenth century in Egypt, which substantiates the observation that it was one of the key exegetical texts around that time. Al-Qaysī, however, is more reserved in his assessment of the *tafsīr* work itself and tempers down earlier remarks on the great exegetical triad of al-Zamakhsharī, al-Bayḍāwī and Ebu's-su'ūd, commenting briefly that *Irshād* "is appended [in mention] to these two works of *tafsīr*...because it is another version of them with very few additions."³¹

Ibn 'Āshūr (d.1973), Tunisian scholar and exegete, dismisses this view in *Al-Tafsīr wa-rijālūh*, emphasising Ebu's-su'ūd's 'linguistic genius'.³² He argues that Ebu's-su'ūd's attentiveness to aspects of al-Zamakhsharī's commentary which al-Bayḍāwī disregarded,³³ as well as the coherence and accuracy of his investigation of these two 'outstanding works'³⁴ is what rendered *Irshād* an essential reading.³⁵ In his seminal work *Al-Tafsīr wa-l-mufasssirūn*, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī

include two chronograms that place the sending of the incomplete manuscript in the year 972 and its completion in the following year.

28 Qāsim al-Qaysī (1876-1955), *Tārīkh al-tafsīr* (completed in 1944 and published posthumously, Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-majma' al-'ilmī al-'irāqī, 1966), 130. However, there appears to have been an earlier but less famous *tafsīr* work written by the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam Aḥmad b. Ismā'il al-Gūrānī (d. 893/1488). Al-Gūrānī's *Ghayat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-kalām al-rabbānī* is a short (one-volume) and apparently basic work by the standards of the *tafsīr* genre. It was completed in 865/1461 and dedicated to Mehmed II, the Conqueror. See *Kashf*, vol. 1, 1290.

29 al-Qaysī, *Tārīkh*, 81; cf. Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 439.

30 Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 227.

31 al-Qaysī, *Tārīkh*, 130.

32 Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa-rijālūh*, 109.

33 Ibid., 111.

34 Ibid., 112.

35 Ibid., 113.

(d. 1976),³⁶ late Egyptian Minister of Awqāf, is in accord that *Irshād* is more than simply a merged edition of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī. Rather, al-Dhahabī concludes following an analysis of several excerpts from *Irshād* that Ebu's-su'ūd's linguistic method of analysing the syntactic (i.e. sentence) structure of the Qur'an to reveal the deeper meanings is almost unprecedented, and that his interpretative insights are only attainable by "the most endowed with knowledge of the subtle [meanings] of the Arabic language."³⁷

Al-Dhahabī, who employs the pre-modern classificatory division of tradition-based (*bi-l-ma'thūr*) and opinion-based (*bi-l-ra'y*) *tafsīr*, places Ebu's-su'ūd together with nine other exegetes as those who best represent the exegetical school of permissible independent opinion (*al-tafsīr bi-l-ra'y al-jā'iz*). Among those are some of the most prominent exegetes in Islamic history such as al-Fakhr al-Rāzī and al-Bayḍāwī.³⁸ Like earlier cataloguers, al-Dhahabī too praises *Irshād's* eloquence. He is most keen, however, on underlining the extraordinary novelty of Ebu's-su'ūd's rhetorical interpretations of the Qur'an, considering him to have surpassed all preceding exegetes.³⁹

This survey of *Irshād's* reception and status since its completion in 973/1566 confirms Colin Imber's observation on the perceived significance of Ebu's-su'ūd's contribution to the literary genre of *tafsīr*. It further draws our attention to two important observations made about *Irshād* by biographers, historians and mod-

36 Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-l-mufasssīrūn*, originally a doctoral thesis completed for the 'ālīmiyya degree at al-Azhar in 1946, and first published in 1970, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat wahba, 2000).

37 Ibid., vol. 1, 248.

38 Ibid, vol. 1, 205-206. The nine exegetes are in this order: the Persian exegetes al-Fakhr al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), *Maḥāṭib al-ghayb*; al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-ta'wīl*; and Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310), *Madārik al-tanzīl wa ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl*; the Iraqi exegete al-Khāzin (d. 741/1340), *Lubāb al-ta'wīl fī ma'ānī al-tanzīl*; the Andalusian exegete Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745/1344), *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*; the Persian exegete al-Naysabūrī al-Qummī (d. ca. 750/1349), *Gharā'ib al-Qur'an wa-raghā'ib al-furqān*; the Egyptian exegetes al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, and the less known al-Shirbīnī (d. 977/1569), *al-Sirāj al-munīr fī-l-i'āna 'alā ma'rifat kalām rabbīnā al-ḥakīm al-khabīr*; and finally, after Ebu's-su'ūd, the Iraqi exegete al-Alūsī (d. 1270/1854), *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-Qur'an al-'aẓīm wa-l-sab' al-mathānī* which is noted by al-Dhahabī for its reliance on *Irshād* - a view corroborated by the results of the preliminary digital search through al-tafsir.com (cited above). See Ibid, 253. Interestingly, al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*, a key reference for almost all of those exegetes, as al-Dhahabī himself admits, is excluded on count of its Mu'tazilism.

39 Ibid., vol. 1, 247.

ern scholars of *tafsīr*: primarily, its lineage to the work of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī, and, secondly, its rhetorical approach to Qurʾan interpretation, an approach closely linked in the genre to the work of al-Zamakhsharī. This raises a question about the extent of Ebuʾs-suʿūd’s indebtedness to these two past exegetes. Investigating *Irshād*’s exegetical lineage would therefore be necessary for understanding its intellectual context.

2. *Contextualising Irshād: Exegetical lineage and intellectual trajectory*

Ebuʾs-suʿūd’s narrative in the preface to *Irshād* about how he came to compose this work is illuminating in this regard. He presents *Irshād* as belonging to a genre which matured from a first stage of ‘verification’ during which exegetes were preoccupied with doing the groundwork of “explicating meanings, constructing structures, elucidating purposes, and organising rules according to what has been transmitted to them,”⁴⁰ to a second stage of in-depth examination during which they devoted their efforts to “showing its [the Qurʾan] superb qualities and revealing its magnificent hidden [meanings] in order for people to behold the evidence of its inimitability.”⁴¹ Ebuʾs-suʿūd locates his own commentary in this latter stage which he clearly associates with a subgenre of *tafsīr* that developed from the intersection between the disciplines of rhetoric and the theological concept of the Qurʾan’s linguistic inimitability, a point that will be revisited later in the discussion. In his view, this second stage reached a pinnacle in the commentaries of al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) and al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286). *Irshād*, he maintains, is the continuation of this subgenre: its very production is justified as the fruition of decades of reflection upon these two commentaries which began long before he embarked on writing it:

In earlier days and long past times and years, when I occupied myself with studying and revising them [al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī], and took the stand to dispute and study them [with others], it occurred to my mind, day and night, that I should thread together their pearl-like merits in a refined style and arrange the most brilliant of their marvels in an elegant order.⁴²

Although Ebuʾs-suʿūd proclaims his indebtedness to al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī alike, there is evidence that he cultivated a special interest in al-

⁴⁰ Ebuʾs-suʿūd, *Irshād*, vol.1, 3.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 3-4.

Zamakhshari's *tafsīr*, widely known as *al-Kashshāf*. During his years as professor at one of the prestigious Eight Colleges (1527/8-1533) of al-Fātiḥ (Mehmed II) mosque in Istanbul, *al-Kashshāf* was the main work of *tafsīr* which Ebu's-su'ūd taught. A sixteenth century jurist and a former student, 'Abdu'l-Kerīmzāde, recalled that he "heard from him *al-Kashshāf* on Qur'anic exegesis and al-Bukhārī on the prophetic traditions."⁴³ There is also evidence that Ebu's-su'ūd continued teaching *al-Kashshāf* during his years as judge. The Ottoman biographer 'Alī b. Bālī (d. 992/1584) relates that a Ḥasan Beg employed in the service of the Grand Vizier Rustum Pāsha befriended Ebu's-su'ūd, who was the-then Military Judge of Rumelia, and studied with him *al-Kashshāf* starting from the Victory Chapter (Q. 48).⁴⁴ This motivated Ebu's-su'ūd to write a gloss on *al-Kashshāf* during the Hungarian campaign in 1541.⁴⁵ Ḥajjī Khalīfa confirms the story, adding that Ebu's-su'ūd actually taught *al-Kashshāf* during the Hungarian campaign, writing for this purpose a gloss entitled *Ma'āqid al-tirāf fi awwal tafsīr sūrat al-fath min al-Kashshāf* (The Nodes of New Treasures in the First Part of the Interpretation of the Victory Chapter in *al-Kashshāf*).⁴⁶ Also of note is that in the year *Irshād* was completed Sultan Süleyman I issued a decree stipulating the acquisition of key text books for the imperial colleges,⁴⁷ quite likely in consultation with Ebu's-

43 'Abdu'l-Kerīmzāde also related that in addition to law, prophetic tradition and Qur'an exegesis, he greatly benefitted from his intensive training with Ebu's-su'ūd in the following subjects: "semantics, rhetoric, and [literary] embellishment; the special characteristics and benefits of speech; oratory; and prose composition." See al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, f. 265v. The memoir is also cited in Imber, *Ebu's-su'ūd*, 11-12.

44 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-Iqd al-manzūm*, 444.

45 Ibid.

46 Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1480-1. Later cataloguers list variant titles such as *Ma'āqid al-nazar* (The Nodes of Thought), see al-Adirnavī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 399; and *Ma'āqid al-tirāz* (The Nodes of Adornment), see Isma'īl Pāsha, *Hadiyyat al-ārīfin*, vol. 2, 254. *Ma'āqid al-nazar* is thought to go up to the Victory Chapter, and to have been studied after formal *tafsīr* classes. The variance may be due to confusion over the title but, in light of Ebu's-su'ūd's continued academic interest in *al-Kashshāf*, there is no reason why these titles may not have been a series of glosses on this work written for teaching purposes at different stages of his career.

47 Shahab Ahmed and Nenad Filipovic, "The Sultan's Syllabus: A Curriculum for the Ottoman Imperial Medreses Prescribed in a *fermān* of Qānūnī I Süleymān, Dated 973 (1565)", *Studia Islamica*, no. 98/99 (2004), 183-218, 191-2. Ahmed and Filipovic argue that this *fermān* laid out the curriculum for the imperial colleges in an act of educational reform largely influenced and implemented by Ebu's-su'ūd. However, it was pointed out by the editor of this issue that the imperial medreses were a private endowment, and that this part of the *fermān* most likely relates to the medreses' library

su'ūd who enjoyed a close relationship with the Sultan.⁴⁸ It is not insignificant, therefore, that the first book named in the decree is actually al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* work *al-Kashshāf*;⁴⁹ and, that of the twelve *tafsīr* works which constitute third of the required books, four are supercommentaries on *al-Kashshāf* and one is the related work of al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl*.⁵⁰

The view that *al-Kashshāf* was the epitome of the *tafsīr* genre was not unique to Ebu's-su'ūd. Kemālpāshazāde, his predecessor as Shaykh al-Islam, similarly produced a number of glosses on *al-Kashshāf*.⁵¹ In fact, *al-Kashshāf*, is unparalleled in the level of literary interest it attracted in the history of the *tafsīr* genre.⁵² The conventional coupling of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī in the sources, not the least in Ebu's-su'ūd, emerged by way of heeding the caution often voiced against *al-Kashshāf*'s Mu'tazilism.⁵³ The later exegete al-Bayḍāwī condensed *al-Kashshāf*'s "grammatical, semantic and rhetorical" discussions in his commentary

needs and is thus an aspect of endowment administration rather than a stipulation of curriculum reform.

- 48 On Ebu's-su'ūd's relationship with the Sultan, see *Ibid.*, 193-194, particularly footnote 28; cf. Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ūd*, 15. In addition, an anecdote in 'Alī b. Bālī which highlights the strong friendship between the two relates the severe punishment which 'Arabzāde received by orders of the Sultan for appointing one of Ebu's-su'ūd's students in the Süleymāniye as lecture repeater, a lowly job in the college system. Ebu's-su'ūd complained to the Sultan and the result was a *fatwā* that anyone who insults the Shaykh al-Islam would be dismissed permanently from his post, beaten severely, and banished from the land. 'Arabzāde was beaten publicly in Süleymān's court and banished to Bursa. See *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 349.
- 49 See the translation of the *fermān* booklist in Ahmed and Filipovic, "The Sultan's Syllabus", 196.
- 50 See *Ibid.*, 196-198.
- 51 Al-Adirnavī mentions several glosses by Kemālpāshazāde on *al-Kashshāf*, *Ṭabaqāt*, 373; but Ḥajjī Khalifa mentions one only, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1481.
- 52 Ḥajjī Khalifa's entry on *al-Kashshāf* lists the titles of dozens of well-known supercommentaries and glosses from the 13th to 17th centuries. Compared to other *tafsīr* works, this is probably the longest entry in *Kashf*. See *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1475-1484.
- 53 Two centuries earlier than Ebu's-su'ūd, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) warned against the heresies of *al-Kashshāf* in his *Muqaddima fī usūl al-tafsīr* (Cairo: Dār al-jil li-l-ṭibā'a, n.d.), 87. A century later, the historian Ibn Khaldūn (d.808/1406) expressed similar concerns in his famous *Prolegomena*: "If the student of the work [*al-Kashshāf*] is acquainted with the orthodox dogmas and knows the arguments in their defence, he is, no doubt, safe from its fallacies." Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 2nd revised edition, trans, Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), vol. 2, 447.

Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-tāwīl,⁵⁴ providing a theological antidote for the student of *tafsīr* against al-Zamakhsharī's 'theological incorrectness'.⁵⁵ Al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār* became a necessary supplement for those interested in the rhetorical insights of *al-Kashshāf*. Its summaries and explanations also gained popularity for their own merit, giving rise to numerous glosses and supercommentaries which addressed all or parts of it.⁵⁶

Although the primacy of *al-Kashshāf* remained uncontested because of its historical and intellectual precedence as the first *tafsīr* work dedicated to rhetorical interpretation, Ottoman scholars of Ebu's-su'ūd's milieu in the sixteenth century wrote far more commentaries on al-Bayḍāwī's work than on that of al-Zamakhsharī.⁵⁷ A possible reason is that *Anwār* was part of the foundational *tafsīr* curriculum, whereas *al-Kashshāf* was studied at a higher stage as evidenced in Ṭāshkōprizāde's autobiographical account of his own education (further examined in Section 3).⁵⁸ It was also very common at this stage of education to study primary texts through secondary works (commentaries, marginal notes and glosses), and *Anwār al-tanzīl*, though a formal *tafsīr* work, was also a commentary on *al-Kashshāf*. It is not unlikely then that the scholastic commentaries on *Anwār* were aimed at a wider student readership.⁵⁹ For example, among those who commented on al-Bayḍāwī in Ebu's-su'ūd's milieu are Muḥiyy al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn al-Qujuwī (Muḥyiddīn el-Qojevī, d. 950/1543, son of the mystic guide of Ebu's-su'ūd's father,⁶⁰ and a relative of Ebu's-su'ūd's own teacher Sayyidī Muḥammad al-Qujuwī/Seydī Mehmed el-Qojevī⁶¹). Muḥyiddīn

54 Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 187.

55 Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 53; cf. Frederick Denny, 'Exegesis and Recitation', in Frank Reynolds *et al*, eds., *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 108.

56 Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 186-194.

57 See al-Adirnavī's chapter on the famous exegetes of the ninth century in *Ṭabaqāt*, 358-404. Of the eighty exegetes he discusses, fifty wrote glosses on al-Zamakhsharī (twelve) and al-Bayḍāwī (thirty eight).

58 Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 325-331.

59 According to an anecdote which shows that al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* was in high demand, Ṭāshkōprizāde vowed to feed his students during Ramadan by copying and selling al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* once every year. The copy used to fetch three thousand dirhams, enough to feed his students for the whole month. See *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 338.

60 Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 206.

61 For Ebu's-su'ūd's mention of Seydī Mehmed el-Qojevī, see 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 364.

el-Qojevi wrote an eight volume commentary on *Anwār al-tanzīl* intended as a *tafsīr* primer for the beginner. It became very popular, and he later produced another significantly revised edition which copiers merged with the first one because of the high student demand.⁶² Ebu's-su'ūd's own father also produced a gloss on al-Bayḍāwī,⁶³ known as *Ta'liqat al-Iskilibī*.⁶⁴

Reasons for this avid attention to the Qur'an commentaries of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī can be attributed primarily to the importance of the religious discipline of *tafsīr*,⁶⁵ as reflected in the list of books required for the imperial colleges in 1565.⁶⁶ But why these two *tafsīrs*? And, why *al-Kashshāf* at all, especially in light of its unorthodox theological content? There is no one explanation for the centrality of *al-Kashshāf* and *Anwār* in the *tafsīr* activities surrounding Ottoman education during the sixteenth century. There are, however, a number of varied but interrelated factors which may have contributed to the significance of these two works. Some of the more evident ones are: i) The fundamental necessity for the study of Arabic for religious education, which encompassed *tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth*, law and theology; ii) the rise of the college (*madrasa*) system as the key provider and regulator of religious education,⁶⁷ hence, iii) the institutionalisation of the primacy of language studies in the colleges;⁶⁸ and iv) the emergence of the Ottoman college as one of the main routes for entering and rising in the administrative hierarchy of the Ottoman Empire, at the centre of which was the judiciary which drew its members from the ranks of college professors.⁶⁹ Competence in the Arabic language, obviously, would have been necessary for anyone who aspired for a career as a college professor and judge. Ottoman college students must have striven to achieve the high levels of Arabic proficiency requisite for the advanced study of the religious disciplines to

62 Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 187.

63 Ibid., 192.

64 al-Adirnavī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 369.

65 For example, the three *ijāzas* which the historian Ṭāshkōprizāde recalls all list *tafsīr* first and, afterwards, all other subjects. See *al-Shaqā'iq*, 327-8.

66 Ahmed and Filipovic, "The Sultan's Syllabus", 191-2.

67 This is a development which George Makdisi masterfully delineates in his book *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

68 Michael G. Carter, "Humanism and the Language Sciences in Medieval Islam", in Asma Afsaruddin & A. H. Mathias Zahniser, eds., *Humanism, Culture, and Language in the Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 27-38.

69 Imber, *Ebu's-su'ūd*, 8.

progress in their college careers. Mastery of Arabic would have characterised the most successful, as exemplified by Ebu's-su'ūd and his remarkable career progression from a college teacher to Shaykh al-Islam. It is not inconceivable, then, that the linguistic disciplines became more than auxiliary forms of religious knowledge instrumental for legal reasoning. Knowledge and expertise in the linguistic disciplines including rhetoric likely became a marker of high culture and prestige for the Ottoman intellectual class of college professors and legal bureaucrats in a way not too dissimilar to the more secularly oriented study of *adab* (literary studies or *studia adabiyya*,⁷⁰ incl. literature, poetry and grammar) for the Umayyad and Abbasid milieu of secretaries and administrators during the eighth and ninth centuries.⁷¹ With the rise of the scholastic tradition, literary and linguistic studies became religiously anchored in works of rhetorical Qur'an commentary. Interest in *al-Kashshāf*, a commentary only narrowly addressing matters of law, attests to this shift.

More specific reasons which account for *al-Kashshāf*'s prominence is that it captures in its hermeneutic effort the convergence in the tenth and eleventh century of two trajectories: the trajectory of Arabic literary studies and that of the theological preoccupation with the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. This convergence was ultimately established through the work of the Persian Ash'arite scholar 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078)⁷² who firmly defined the Qur'an's miracle in terms of its linguistic and literary beauty.⁷³ Both his works *Asrār al-balāgha* (Secrets of Eloquence) and *Dalā'il al-i'jāz* (The Evidence of Inimitability) developed a concept of the Qur'an's literary inimitability on the basis of a linguis-

70 Noteworthy is that early *Adab* works, concerned mainly with prose and poetry appreciation, provided the concepts and terms associated with Arabic literary theory in general, including rhetoric and poetics (which also provide the basis for rhetorical interpretation of the Qur'an). See Smyth, "Criticism in the Post-Classical Period", 394.

71 On the study of *Adab*, see Asma Afsaruddin, "Muslim Views on Education: Parameters, purview, and possibilities", *Journal of Catholic Legal Studies*, vol. 44, 2005, 143-178, especially 159-163.

72 I will refer to him as 'Abd al-Qāhir hereafter in order to distinguish him from the later scholar al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī who will also be discussed in the paper.

73 Earlier arguments about the inimitability of the Qur'an ranged between notions of miraculous effect (*ṣarfā*, God preventing any imitations of it), content (*ghayb*, information about the unknown), and language (unsurpassable style) of the Qur'an. Issa Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an: *I'jāz* and related topics" in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 139-157.

tic theory of eloquence (*balāgha*): eloquence resides in how the structure of meanings and ideas (*maʿānī*) is effectively expressed through the word arrangement (*naẓm*), particularly of figurative speech. Rhetorical devices, such as metaphor and metonymy, are the ‘fulcrum’ of this effectiveness.⁷⁴ In his two works, ‘Abd al-Qāhir applied his theory of eloquence to a selection of poetic and Qur’anic examples. It was not until the following century that a more systematic application of his theory to the whole Qur’an was attempted by al-Zamakhsharī in a work of *tafsīr*.⁷⁵

Al-Kashshāf became the definitive work not only for the subgenre of rhetorical *tafsīr* but also for the study of Arabic eloquence, as epitomized in the Qur’an. Through the work of both ‘Abd al-Qāhir and al-Zamakhsharī, analysis of the relation of the semantic to the grammatical (or, more precisely, the syntactic) structures of the Qur’an’s figures of speech to reveal its *asnār* (secrets, deeper meanings) emerged as important in and of itself, and not as ancillary to the study of law. The convergence between literary and *tafsīr* studies, brought about by these works, resulted in an independent interest in the cultivation of a taste for Arabic rhetoric and poetics in order to grasp the beauty of the Qur’an; and, thus, strengthened the intersection between culture (study of language, literature and poetry) and religious piety (attention to the divine word), also evident in other aspects of Muslim civilisation. From the thirteenth century onwards, *al-Kashshāf* was at the centre of the scholastic linguistic, literary and *tafsīr* studies, stimulating a striking number of glosses and supercommentaries.⁷⁶ The intellectual engagement with *al-Kashshāf* represents, therefore, not so much a concern for fathoming the depths of the Qur’an’s meaning as the primary source of law, but a genuine interest in linguistic and literary studies.

To a certain degree, this considerable and constant preoccupation with al-Zamakhsharī also endured due to the theoretical interests of central Asian schol-

74 See ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Dalā’il al-i’jāz*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr (Cairo: Maktabat al-khanjī, 1984). ‘Abd al-Qāhir proposes that to grasp the effectiveness and benefit of speech in general (pp. 64-5), figurative speech should be examined and explained (p. 66).

75 See Muṣṭafā al-Juwaynī, *Manhaj al-Zamakhsharī fi tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (Cairo: Dār al-ma’ārif, 1968), 214-260; and Issa Boullata, “The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur’ān,” 147.

76 See note 52 above. In light of its place in the college curriculum and the intellectual interest it garnered, one might venture to speak speculatively of ‘*al-Kashshāf* studies’ as a subfield in its own right, though this would require further historical and textual investigation to substantiate such claims.

ars in the work of ‘Abd al-Qāhir in the following centuries.⁷⁷ Of great significance is al-Sakkākī’s (Abū Ya’qūb Yūsuf b. Abī Bakr d.626/1229) elaboration of ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s theory in his complex *magnum opus*, *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm* (Key to the Sciences, widely known just as *al-Miftāḥ*) where he proposed a tripartite paradigm for the study of language (*ṣarf* and *naḥw*, i.e. morphology and grammar in the first two parts) and eloquence (*balāgha*, technically rhetoric). In this final part, al-Sakkākī introduced a formal distinction between ‘meaning’ and ‘rhetorical devices’, thus establishing in his theoretical treatment of eloquence the two subfields of ‘*ilm al-ma‘ānī* (the science of meanings) concerned with the study of syntax (sentence structure) and meaning, and ‘*ilm bayān* (the science of expression) which focuses on figurative usage and rhetorical devices. This, no doubt, reflects not only the influence of ‘Abd al-Qāhir on *balāgha*, but also that of al-Zamakhsharī who considered *ma‘ānī* and *bayān* the two foremost essential disciplines in his interpretation of the Qur’an.⁷⁸ Al-Sakkākī’s integration of linguistic and literary studies in *al-Miftāḥ* generated a number of influential supercommentaries between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries that would become essential in the scholastic curriculum. The most famous of these works devoted much attention to *al-Miftāḥ*’s third part on *ma‘ānī* and *bayān*.⁷⁹

Ebu’s-su‘ūd’s own education attests to *al-Miftāḥ*’s importance and, indeed, to the centrality of linguistic and literary studies to religious education. In a memoir preserved by his biographers, Ebu’s-su‘ūd recounts that his elementary education with his father covered three key texts including *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ*, an influential commentary on al-Sakkākī’s work by the Persian scholar al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d.816/1413). The other two, *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd* and *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, are theological glosses also by al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī.⁸⁰ Interestingly, *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ* is the only text Ebu’s-su‘ūd studied twice with his father, probably due to the difficulty of the subject area as well as to its perceived significance to his

77 On al-Sakkākī’s contribution, see William Smyth, “The Canonical Formulation,” 8.

78 al-Zamakhsharī, Abū al-Qāsim Jār Allāh Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar, *al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqāiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa ‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*, 6 vols., ed. ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd *et al* (Cairo: Maktabat al-‘ubaykān, 1998), vol. 1, 86.

79 Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1763. For a list of all supercommentaries and glosses on *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm*, see *Ibid.*, 1762-7.

80 The first is a commentary on Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī’s (d.678/1274) theological primer *Tajrīd al-kalām* and the second is another commentary on ‘Adud al-Dīn al-Ījī’s *al-Mawāqif fī ‘ilm al-kalām*. These appear to have been standard texts taught at the lower colleges. Ahmed and Filipovic observe that the lower colleges in the educational hierarchy, as laid out by Mehmed II, were actually known as *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd madrasas*. See “The Sultan’s Syllabus,” 191-2.

education.⁸¹ The attention of Ebu's-su'ūd's father to his son's linguistic and literary training is especially noted by the late sixteenth century Ottoman historian Maḥmūd al-Kafawī (d. 990/1582) who observes that under his father's rigorous tutelage Ebu's-su'ūd excelled at a young age in literary studies, poetry and belles-lettres, and surpassed his peers in *balāgha* (the science of eloquence).⁸² Moreover, biographers draw attention to Ebu's-su'ūd's later studies with Müeyyedzāde ('Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī al-Mu'ayyad of Amasya, d. 922/1516)⁸³ whose intellectual lineage goes back to al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī and the famous Shirāz school.⁸⁴ Ebu's-su'ūd derived a special sense of honour from his studies with Müeyyedzāde,⁸⁵ a scholar renowned for his erudition in the literary arts, the Arabic language, rhetoric and *tafsīr*. Acquiring solid training in these subjects must have contributed to Ebu's-su'ūd's noted abilities in teaching them to his aforementioned student 'Abdu'l-Kerīmzāde who recalled benefitting greatly from his linguistic and literary studies with Ebu's-su'ūd.⁸⁶

Evidently, Ebu's-su'ūd had excellent knowledge of these disciplines, but by no means was he the only one well-trained in them. There is ample evidence in the Ottoman biographical literature that linguistic and literary studies were focal to the learning of Ebu's-su'ūd's Ottoman milieu and to their exegetical and

81 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 440.

82 al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, f. 264r; cf. al-'Aydārūs, *Tarikh al-nūr al-sāfir*, 319.

83 In addition to his father, Ebu's-su'ūd gives details of two other teachers in the *ijāza* (a license to teach) he composed for his student 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sheikhzāde, cited in 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 363-4. The two teachers are Müeyyedzāde and Seydī Mehmed el-Qojevi. Their individual biographies can be found respectively in Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 176 & 182.

84 al-Kafawī provides a detailed account of Müeyyedzāde's seven year journey to the initially Ash'arī Shirāz school associated with famous scholars such as al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī and the great philosopher of the seventeenth century Mulla Ṣadrā. It was unusual, however, for established Turkish scholars of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to travel outside of the Ottoman Empire for further education but Müeyyedzāde had to leave for political reasons. In Shirāz, Müeyyedzāde studied with the prominent Persian scholar and theologian Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī (Davānī) whose father was a student of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. On Bayezid II's succession in 888/1483, Müeyyedzāde returned first to Amasya then to Istanbul where his Shirāz education and intellectual connections highly impressed his Ottoman contemporaries. See *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, ff. 252r-253v.

85 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 363-4.

86 See note 47 above.

intellectual preoccupations more generally.⁸⁷ Two prominent sixteenth century scholars can serve as illuminating examples. Ṭāshkōprizāde, one of Ebu's-su'ūd's notable contemporaries and three years his junior, offers a rare insight into Ottoman education in his extensive autobiographical account on the subjects, texts and topics he studied with his teachers, and his later independent learning after he became a teacher himself. The other example is Kemālpāshazāde, Ebu's-su'ūd's influential predecessor as Shaykh al-Islam and one of the most prolific writers of his time whose legacy of writings provides a model of the intellectual preoccupations and the literary output which ottoman religious education stimulated.

Like Ebu's-su'ūd, Ṭāshkōprizāde studied al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ*, but only after a long foundational course in Arabic morphology and grammar, followed by a period of focused study of theology.⁸⁸ He was in his late twenties when he began to study *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ* with Muḥiy al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Fanārī, (Fenārīzāde Muḥyiddīn, Shaykh al-Islam from 948/1541-2 to 951/1544-5), continuing independently for eleven years after his first appointment in the College of Dimotica in 931/1524-5.⁸⁹ Ṭāshkōprizāde's dedication and persistence in the study of *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ* are unmatched except by his studies of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, and serve to shed light on why Ebu's-su'ūd's early mastery of the text was particularly recalled by him and admired by his biographers. Shortly after Ṭāshkōprizāde began studying *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ*, he began studying al-Zamakhsharī's rhetorical interpretation of the Qur'an, *al-Kashshāf*, with Seydī Mehmed el-Qojevī circa 929/1523⁹⁰ (one of Ebu's-su'ūd's three teachers, with whom he might have studied the same text some years earlier⁹¹), thus substantiating the view that *al-Kashshāf* was already part of the higher studies curriculum, and that, more significantly, it complemented an advanced course in Arabic lin-

87 This evidence raises doubts about George Makdisi's conclusion that the literary arts deteriorated with the rise of the medieval college which gave greater importance to the study of law. See Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 76-7.

88 Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 326-7.

89 Ibid., 328.

90 Ibid., 327.

91 Ebu's-su'ūd's first appointment as teacher in the college of Inegöl came sometime between 1516 and 1520 (See Imber, *Ebu's-su'ūd*, 10) right after he had become one of Seydī Mehmed's close students, see 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 440. This means that Ebu's-su'ūd began his studies with Seydī Mehmed at least a decade before Ṭāshkōprizāde.

guistic and literary studies mainly focused on al-Sakkākī's formulation of these disciplines.⁹²

Ṭāshkōprizāde also studied al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār* at different stages and acquired a license in *tafsīr* from at least two of his teachers.⁹³ He eventually composed works in *tafsīr*, Arabic language and rhetoric, in addition to other historical, juristic and theological writings.⁹⁴ But his key works include several commentaries on Arabic rhetoric related to al-Sakkākī's *al-Miftāḥ*, for example: a commentary on *al-Miftāḥ*'s third part on eloquence [*balāgha*], covering the sciences of meaning and rhetoric; an extensive critical gloss on al-Ījī's ('Aḍud al-Dīn, d. 756/1355) *al-Fawā'id al-ghiyāthiyya*, a specialist commentary on the same part of *al-Miftāḥ*;⁹⁵ and an incomplete supercommentary on al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ*.⁹⁶

Interest in language, rhetoric and *tafsīr* is similarly evidenced in Kemālpāshazāde's enormous literary legacy which largely remained in draft form according to biographers. It comprises original works, glosses, commentaries, and a large number of treatises estimated between one hundred⁹⁷ and three hundred in total.⁹⁸ Kemālpāshazāde is often compared in his erudition and prolificacy to the encyclopaedic Egyptian scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) but perceived as far more rigorous and superior to al-Suyūṭī,⁹⁹ especially in Arabic literary

92 Another evidence of the linkage between these two texts in the sources is recorded by Ḥajjī Khalifa where he mentions that Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muṣliḥ al-Shirāzī (d. 710/1310), the author of one of the earliest commentaries on *al-Miftāḥ*, entitled *Miftāḥ al-Miftāḥ* (Key to the Key), intended to incorporate a gloss on *al-Kashshāf* to complement his commentary. See *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1763.

93 Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 327-8.

94 Ibid., 230. 'Alī b. Bālī names three treatises by Ṭāshkōprizāde on specific chapters and verses of the Qur'an (Q 112, Q. 5:6 and Q 2:29); see *al-'Iqd al-manẓūm*, 338-9; cf. Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 854 & vol. 2, 1084.

95 al-Ījī's *al-Fawā'id al-ghiyāthiyya* is a concise theoretical summary of al-Sakkākī's discussion of Arabic eloquence, intended for an expert audience according to 'Āshiq Ḥasan, its editor. See *al-Fawā'id al-ghiyāthiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-miṣriyya and dār al-kitāb al-lubnāniyya, 1991), 29.

96 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manẓūm*, 339.

97 Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 227.

98 Taqīyy al-Dīn al-Tamīmī al-Ghazzī (d. 1010/1601), *al-Tabaqāt al-saniyya fī tarājim al-ḥanafiyya*, 4 vols. (incomplete), ed. 'Abd al-Fataḥ al-Ḥilw (Cairo: al-Majlis al-a'lā li-l-shu'ūn al-islāmiyya, 1970), vol. 1, 411.

99 Ibid., 412.

studies and legal theory.¹⁰⁰ Several of his more known works indicate that Kemālpāshazāde's rhetorical, literary and linguistic preoccupations constitute a strong strand of this legacy,¹⁰¹ intersecting with his interest in al-Zamakhsharī's rhetorical interpretation of the Qur'an. One of his master pieces, it is claimed, is a comprehensive gloss on *al-Kashshāf*, highly praised for incorporating and commenting upon the best of *al-Kashshāf* glosses.¹⁰² Kemālpāshazāde further pursued his interest in rhetorical exegesis in his own *tafsīr* work, which despite remaining unfinished, was deemed significant enough to be entered into bibliographical lists of influential *tafsīr* works.¹⁰³

Like Ṭāshköprizāde, Kemālpāshazāde's interest in Arabic rhetoric was intellectually anchored in al-Sakkākī's *al-Miftāḥ*, and, like him, Kemālpāshazāde produced a supercommentary on al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's *Sharḥ al-Miftāḥ*,¹⁰⁴ eventually writing his own critical though incomplete commentary on *al-Miftāḥ* itself, entitled *Taghyyīr (Altering) al-Miftāḥ*,¹⁰⁵ which stimulated supercommentaries in its own right.¹⁰⁶ Kemālpāshazāde's critique of al-Sakkākī transpires in another treatise on metaphor, which attempts to update the medieval taxonomy of figurative speech.¹⁰⁷ The significance of this treatise arises from its engagement with a major controversy in the field of Arabic rhetoric that had persisted since the early fourteenth century, and to which Ebu's-su'ūd was drawn with implications for his hermeneutic approach to the Qur'an. For this reason, it deserves a closer examination in the following section. Suffice it to emphasise here that the intersection of rhetoric and *tafsīr* through the sub-tradition of 'Abd al-Qāhir and al-Zamakhsharī, and the type of concerns and preoccupa-

100 al-Lakhnawī, *al-Fawā'id*, 14.

101 See, for example, Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 566, 758, 846, 847, 853, 881, 887, 889, 894 and vol. 2 1621, 1651, 2054.

102 Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1481; al-Adirnavī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 373.

103 Such as in Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 439.

104 Ṭāshköprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 227; Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1766.

105 See Ibn Kamāl Pāsha, "*Risāla fī bayān anna ṣāhib 'ilm al-ma'ānī yushārik al-lughawīyy*", al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, Cairo, MS 1583, collection 3; printed and edited in Muḥammad Ḥusayn Abū al-Futūḥ, *Thalāth rasā'il fī l-lughā l-ibn al-Kamāl* (Beirut: Maktabat lubnān, 1993), 179-193.

106 Ḥajjī Khalifa refers to a number of Ottoman commentators who completed and commented upon *Taghyyīr*, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1766; *Taghyyīr* is also listed by Isma'īl Pāsha, *Hadiyyat al-'arīfīn*, vol. 1, 141.

107 Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 847. This treatise was edited and published recently; see Ibn Kamāl Pāsha, "*Risāla fī taqṣīm al-majāz*", ed. Jabr Ibrahim Barrī, *Dirasāt al-'ulūm al-ijtimā'iyya wa-l-insāniyyah* (Amman), vol. 38, no. 2, 2011, 491-505.

tions this intersection stimulated in ensuing works, was an important stream in Ottoman intellectual life in the sixteenth century as evidenced in Ebu's-su'ūd's education, Ṭāshköprüzāde's account of his own learning, and Kemālpāshazāde's literary legacy.

3. The post-classical controversy on metaphor and Ebu's-su'ūd's contribution to it

One of the major controversies which dominated the study of rhetoric between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries revolved around the classification of different types of metaphor. The underlying problem was precisely located at the intersection of rhetoric and *tafsīr* which, broadly defined, was about the relation between the theory of metaphor and Qur'an hermeneutics, as will become clear below. At the centre of the controversy was the question of whether the rhetorical device of *tamthīl* (analogy-based metaphor) should be subsumed under the category of *isti'āra* (one-word metaphor, *lit.* borrowing).

This question can be traced back to the work of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī in the eleventh century, especially his *Asrār al-balāgha* where he distinguished between two types of metaphor: i) *isti'āra*, a simple metaphor which occurs at the lexical level and involves borrowing a word for a meaning other than its original one because of a noticeable association between the two as in the standard example 'I saw a lion' in reference to a man who has courage, the most obvious attribute of a lion;¹⁰⁸ and ii) *tamthīl*, a composite metaphor which is made up of "one or more sentences,"¹⁰⁹ and involves a comparison between two different conditions as in the expression "the bow has been taken by its maker" in reference to the return of the caliphate to the rightful caliph.¹¹⁰ The 'bow' itself bears no similarity to the caliphate so it is not borrowed for it as 'lion' is borrowed for the brave man. The likeness, here, is more complex; it is between the condition of the bow and the condition of the caliphate, both of which are represented as returning to their rightful owner.¹¹¹ The individual words making up the analogy (*tamthīl*) are used literally but the metaphorical meaning is a mental image which obtains from the aggregate meaning of these words. A degree of interpre-

108 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr (Cairo & Jeddah: Dār al-madanī, 1991), 33.

109 Ibid., 108-9.

110 Ibid., 258.

111 Ibid., 259.

tation is required to depart from the literal meaning and arrive at the intended one.¹¹²

Although the distinction is clearly argued in ‘Abd al-Qāhir, the controversy ensued from his suggestion that the grammatical structure of *tamthīl* (analogy-based sentence metaphor) undergoes contraction like *isti‘āra* (word-based metaphor) as when ‘I saw a man like the lion’ is contracted into ‘I saw a lion’ as a result of borrowing the word ‘lion’ for ‘man’. The standard example of *tamthīl* in the manner of *isti‘āra* is when the expression ‘I see you in your hesitancy like someone who is moving one foot forward and the other backward’ is contracted into ‘you are moving one foot forward and the other backward.’¹¹³ Here, the expression which describes a physical condition (moving forward then backward) comes to signify the abstract condition of hesitancy.

This led al-Sakkākī to consider *isti‘āra* the fundamental form of metaphor under which *tamthīl* should be classed,¹¹⁴ a view that would become popular despite critics like al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (d. 724/1338, author of the *Talkhīs*, a summary of al-Sakkākī’s *al-Miftāḥ*) who insisted on the independence of *tamthīl*.¹¹⁵ In the wake of *al-Miftāḥ*, rhetoricians oscillated between al-Sakkākī’s view that *isti‘āra* includes analogies on the one hand (referred to as ‘*isti‘āra tamthīliyya*’), and, on the other, ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s position that *tamthīl* is an independent type of metaphor because *isti‘āra* proper involves borrowing a single word to signify a related meaning that displaces its original one, whereas in *tamthīl* no such displacement of word meaning occurs; rather, the metaphorical meaning is understood intellectually from the sum of all the words constituting the analogy.¹¹⁶ By the fourteenth century, most rhetoricians seem to have generally accepted the fundamentality of *isti‘āra* and considered *tamthīl* one of its branches. The term *isti‘āra tamthīliyya* gained wide currency, and the terms of the controversy, ini-

112 Ibid., 139 & 385.

113 ‘Abd al-Qāhir, *Dalā’il*, 68-9.

114 Abū Ya’qūb Yūsuf b. Abī Bakr al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm*, ed. Akram ‘Uthmān Yūsuf, 1st edition (Baghdad: Dār al-risāla, 1982, published with the assistance of Baghdad University, 1980/1981). See especially his definition of all metaphor as simple or one word (*mufrad*, p. 593), and his assertion that all analogies are *isti‘āra*, one-word borrowings (p. 606).

115 See, for example, al-Qazwīnī’s sub-chapter on critiquing al-Sakkākī, *al-Idāḥ fi ‘ulūm al-balāgha*, ed. Ibrahīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 2003), 236-240; cf. Smyth’s summary of these criticisms, “Controversy in a Tradition of Commentary”, 592.

116 ‘Abd al-Qāhir, *Asrār*, 258ff.

tially about the independence of *tamthīl* from *isti'āra*, shifted to the problem of whether *isti'āra tamthīliyya* occurs at the level of a single word like *isti'āra* proper or requires a grammatically composite structure – a sentence or more – in a manner akin to that described by 'Abd al-Qāhir.

This shift in the controversy was historically embodied in the memorable fourteenth century debate which took place in 791/1389 between the Persian scholar Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. 792/1390) and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, his rival in Timūr's Court (Tamerlane, d. 807/1405) in Samarqand.¹¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, the literary context of the debate was *al-Kashshāf* and al-Taftazānī's supercommentary on it, and it was centred on the interpretation of Q. 2:5 (Those are upon [*'alā*] guidance from their Lord¹¹⁸).¹¹⁹ Al-Zamakhsharī had interpreted the verse as an analogy (*tamthīl*) likening the condition of perfect and steadfast adherence to divine guidance to the condition of a person who mounted atop of something and was securely riding it.¹²⁰ Al-Taftazānī elaborated on this analysis, considering the verse an instance of a word-based metaphor that is simultaneously derivative and analogical (*isti'āra taba'iyya tamthīliyya*): i) it is derivative (*taba'iyya*) because it is based on a meaning (that of 'mounting') not directly signified by a word in the verse but which is related to and derived from the preposition *'alā* (upon/atop of) that occurs in the verse's grammatical structure; ii) it is an analogy because the basis of the comparison (mounting atop of something) is a condition made up of a number of things whereby being firm and steadfast in right-guidedness is likened to mounting and riding atop of something.¹²¹

Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī challenged this explication on the basis that: i) a single word (*mufrad*) signifies a single idea even though this idea may be composite

117 For a historical summary of how the intellectual disagreements between al-Taftazānī and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī shaped the writings of both authors, see Smyth, "Controversy in a Tradition of Commentary", 590-595. Smyth, however, offers no substantive comment on the content of both the literary and the court debates between these two scholars, and treats the controversy as unchanged from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, which is contrary to the textual evidence discussed in this section of the paper.

118 *The Koran Interpreted*, trans. Arthur Arberry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). All translations of Qur'anic passages hereafter are based on Arberry.

119 For a historical account of the intellectual dispute and court rivalry between al-Taftazānī and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, see al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, ff. 141r-150v; for a brief reference to it, see Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 222.

120 al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, f. 145r; cf. al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 1, 158.

121 *Ibid.*; cf. al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's account of al-Taftazānī's opinion, *al-Hāshiya 'alā al-Muṭawwal*, ed. Rashīd A'raḍī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 2007), 383.

(*murakkab*) at the intellectual level, such as the idea of lion which is made up of a number of things (courage, animal nature etc); ii) whereas, the analogy-based *isti'āra* or *isti'āra tamthīliyya* is a form of comparison comprising two sides, each side expressing a condition 'extracted' from a composite grammatical structure (and not just one word) that signifies a number of ideas relevant to the comparison; iii) therefore, analysing the metaphor in Q. 2:5 as occurring in the preposition 'upon' through its derived meaning "mounting" could only form the basis for a derivative one-word metaphor such as *isti'āra taba'iyya* but not the composite metaphor *isti'āra tamthīliyya* which requires at least a sentence or two (Emphasis added);¹²² iv) in contradistinction, an analysis of Q. 2:5 as a case of *isti'āra tamthīliyya* would require that 'upon' is understood as an indicator (*qarīna*, and not the locus of the metaphor itself) for the restitution of the composite (but implicit) grammatical structure expressing the condition of 'someone mounting something securely and riding it', to which the condition of being steadfast in faith is being compared.¹²³

The court debate ended in al-Taftazānī's intellectual defeat, his withdrawal from public life and consequent death within a short period of time.¹²⁴ Its memory, however, served to augment the interest among later scholars who continued with no less fervour to debate the simple-composite dichotomy of metaphor and the classification of *tamthīl*. Kemālpāshazāde's above-mentioned treatise *Risāla fī taqṣīm al-majāz* is unmistakably framed by these two questions, providing a review of the intellectual trajectory of this problem from 'Abd al-Qāhir to al-Taftazānī. His own position reflects the success of al-Sakkākī's view that *isti'āra* is inclusive of *tamthīl*.¹²⁵ The problem of classifying metaphors received further special attention in other works by Kemālpāshazāde.¹²⁶ Ṭāshkōprizāde, the other Ottoman scholar discussed in the previous section, also addressed it in his work, which supports the view that this became one of the key intellectual

122 On this specific point, cf. al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Hāshiyā 'alā al-Kashshāf* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-bābī al-ḥalabī, 1966), 157.

123 This account of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's arguments is based on both al-Kafawī's summary of the court debate in *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, ff.145r-146v, and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's personal and theoretical reflections on it in *al-Hāshiyā 'alā al-Muṭawwal*, 383-5.

124 al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, f. 144r; Ṭāshkōprizāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 29.

125 Ibn Kamāl Pāsha, "*Risāla fī taqṣīm al-majāz*", 499.

126 Kemālpāshazāde refers to some of his other relevant writings such as another treatise on *Taqṣīm al-isti'āra*, and a further discussion of partial and total tropes in his supercommentary on al-Taftazānī's *Talwīḥ* which is a commentary on the legal theory work, *Tanqīḥ al-usūl*, by Ṣadr al-Sharī'ah al-Bukhārī (d.747/1346), see *Ibid.*, 500.

problems of Arabic rhetoric at the time.¹²⁷ But, more significantly, the debate itself was re-enacted again in the Ottoman milieu of the sixteenth century and recorded by contemporary and later historians alongside the fourteenth century debate of al-Taftazānī and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī.¹²⁸ Evidently, the interest of Ottoman scholars in the simple-composite metaphor dichotomy, and how the arguments were played out in the debate between the two fourteenth century Persian scholars was substantial;¹²⁹ a second debate embodying the intellectual engagement of Ottoman scholars with this problem was, perhaps, inevitable.

The protagonist of the sixteenth century re-enactment was no other than Ebu's-su'ūd, and his rival was the contemporary Persian exegete Muḥammad b. Kamāl al-Tāshkandī, a relative from his mother's side.¹³⁰ The debate took place

127 Ṭāshkōprīzāde composed two related treatises entitled *al-'Ināya fī taḥqīq al-isti'āra bi-l-kināya*, see Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 2, 1173; and *Masālik al-khalāṣ min mahālik al-khawāṣ* in which he, like Kemālpāshazāde, defends the position of al-Taftazānī, see al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, f. 150v.

128 Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 221; al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, ff. 148v-149r.

129 A telling anecdote, related by Ṭāshkōprīzāde, reveals the significance this debate acquired in Ottoman intellectual life. According to Ṭāshkōprīzāde, when the famed Transoxianan astronomer, mathematician and religious scholar 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qushjī (d. 879/1474) arrived in Istanbul, Khwājazāde (d. 893/1488), Judge of the city at the time, led a delegation of Ottoman scholars to welcome him on board of his ship. Soon after they met, al-Qushjī and Khwājazāde debated the causes of low and high sea tides, and their conversation evoked the memory of the Taftazānī-Jurjānī debate, leading to another long but amicable debate during which Khwājazāde, who supported al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, sent one of his servants home to fetch a gloss he wrote on the matter for al-Qushjī to read. In the end, the newly arrived scholar al-Qushjī commended Khwājazāde's gloss out of tact despite his support for al-Taftazānī. See *al-Shaqā'iq*, 99; Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 223. Of interest also is al-Kafawī's long discussion of the debate under his biography of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, a discussion pervaded by personal and intellectual sympathy for al-Taftazānī. Al-Kafawī's reflections on his longstanding intellectual dilemma, his efforts to arrive at an impartial answer and his personal account of the debate between Ebu's-su'ūd and al-Tāshkandī are all revealing of the profound impression this debate left on Ottoman scholars. See *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, ff. 141r-151v.

130 There are no dates for al-Tāshkandī in the sources, but al-Adirnavī suggests he died around the end of the sixteenth century. See *Ṭabaqāt*, 403. He was a cousin of Ebu's-su'ūd through 'Alī al-Qushjī (see the previous note), the paternal uncle of Ebu's-su'ūd's mother and the teacher of his father. According to al-Kafawī, Ebu's-su'ūd referred to al-Tāshkandī as *ibn al-khāl* (maternal cousin). See *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, ff. 148r & 149v.

in 980/1572 during al-Tāshkandī's visit to Istanbul on his way back from Hajj. It was provoked, perhaps deliberately, when at a banquet prepared in his honour by Ebu's-su'ūd, al-Tāshkandī enquired about which one of the two scholars, al-Taftazānī or al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, Ebu's-su'ūd supported in his *tafsīr*. On learning it was al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, al-Tāshkandī challengingly asserted the correctness and predominance of al-Taftazānī's view, and that it had also been the view of earlier authoritative exegetes such as al-Bayḍāwī.¹³¹ Sensing an attack on *Irshād*, Ebu's-su'ūd defended al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's understanding of *tamthīl* as well as his application of it in his own *tafsīr*.¹³²

Ebu's-su'ūd's argument against al-Tāshkandī was largely predicated on the objections of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (see above) to analysing Q. 2:5 as a derivative analogical metaphor (*isti'āra taba'iyya tamthīliyya*). These two rhetorical devices, reasserted Ebu's-su'ūd, are mutually exclusive because *isti'āra taba'iyya* is a single word structure whereas *tamthīl* is grammatically composite.¹³³ Al-Tāshkandī, like al-Taftazānī, contended that a composite meaning could be extracted from a single word, for example: the condition of being alive is made up of a number of things (a body that grows, senses and voluntarily moves), all of which are aspects of the single idea of 'human being'.¹³⁴ Ebu's-su'ūd rejected al-Tāshkandī's approach as a form of philosophical deliberation (*baḥth falsafī*) inappropriate for the rhetorical analysis of the Qur'an. An interpretation of the Qur'an, maintained Ebu's-su'ūd, relies not on the logicians (*ahl al-mantiq*) who straddle between propositions and definitions, but on the rhetoricians (*arbāb al-balāgha*) because they delve into the 'special meanings' and the 'beneficial effects' of the Qur'an's language. The rhetoricians' linguistic approach, argued Ebu's-su'ūd, is the most appropriate for observing the grammatical indicators (*dalā'il*) of the Qur'an's inimitability and superior style, as attested by its linguistic structure.¹³⁵ The heated debate which continued for five hours found its way into the history of memorable disputations,¹³⁶ and motivated al-Tāshkandī to write an *apologia* for the role of logic and *kalām* in Qur'an hermeneutics - a rare instance of

131 al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2., f.149v.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid., f.149r.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid.

136 Ḥajji Khalifa entered it under a short section on famous intellectual debates, stating that this was commonly viewed as one of the greatest debates on al-Taftazānī and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. See *Kashf*, vol. 1, 221.

philosophical reflection on hermeneutic theory and practice in the post-classical period.¹³⁷

Ebu's-su'ūd's objection to al-Tāshkandī's 'philosophical' approach to interpretation could be perceived as reflecting a dimension of religious conservatism vis-à-vis philosophy. At a closer look, however, it conveys Ebu's-su'ūd's perception of a tension between the purposes of philosophical and rhetorical approaches to interpreting the Qur'an's eloquence. Two observations must be made first before explaining Ebu's-su'ūd's position. One is that al-Tāshkandī, according to al-Kafawī's account, was not contesting the relevance of rhetorical analysis. Nor was the earlier debate between al-Taftazānī and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī about the relevance of rhetorical analysis. Post-classical Qur'an exegesis between the fourteenth and sixteenth century in central Asia was, as already demonstrated, generally framed within the approach of 'Abd al-Qāhir and al-Zamakhsharī in which *balāgha* (the study of eloquence) became perceived as fundamental to understanding the Qur'an. This approach emphasized the rootedness of meaning in language as a medium between the interpreter and divine truths. Understanding the layers of signification in a text perceived as both poetic and true depended on the construal of a rational justification that is based on indicators (*qarīna*, *dalīl*) present in the linguistic structure for the departure from the 'real' lexical meaning to the 'real' abstract meaning. The rhetorical analysis is thus grounded in logic.¹³⁸ The second is that despite his objections to the logicians' philosophical approach, Ebu's-su'ūd is, nevertheless, faithful to this linkage between rhetoric and logic. The rhetorician, as he declared in the debate, is searching for grammatical indicators in the text which would justify the meanings he obtains. So, where does the tension lie if there is neither a question about the necessity of rhetorical interpretation nor of its need for a logical basis?

¹³⁷ The title of al-Tāshkandī's treatise is "*Risāla fī fann al-tafsīr wa-l-uṣūl wa-l-furū' wa-l-manṭiq wa-l-kalām*". See Ibid., vol. 1, 880. While still in Istanbul, he also wrote a supercommentary on al-Bayḍāwī's commentary on Sūrat al-An'ām (Q. 6) which he dedicated to Sultan Selīm II; see Ibid., vol. 1, 192. This treatise, too, could have been part of al-Tāshkandī's response to the debate as well as an aspect of his intellectual rivalry with Ebu's-su'ūd, replicating the latter's dedication of *Irshād* to Sultan Süleyman, Selīm's father.

¹³⁸ See 'Abd al-Qāhir's argument on the role of textual indicators in deducing meaning, *Dalā'il*, 263; see also, for example, al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's definition of *tamthīl* in *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt* where he refers to the syllogistic basis of this rhetorical device (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1985), 69.

In the debate, Ebu's-su'ūd seems to have been ultimately concerned about the relation between language and ideas: that is, the agreement (in the degree of complexity) between the ideas expressed and the grammatical structures expressing them. This theory of language, since 'Abd al-Qāhir, was explicated and exemplified by *tamthīl* which he considered a fundamental structure (*aṣl*) of discourse,¹³⁹ involving a comparison between two conditions. The more intellectually complex the comparison is, the more fundamental is the need for a sentence or more.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, the logician's approach, represented in the debate by al-Tāshkandī, is disproportionate: a single word in the text suffices as the substratum for a complex abstract meaning so long as it provides a logical linkage between text and meaning. The overemphasis on logic in the field of rhetoric has been associated with al-Sakkākī, who argued that all types of metaphor, including *tamthīl*, are word-based (*mufrad*).¹⁴¹ Al-Taftazānī, a prominent defender of al-Sakkākī's view, reiterates that *tamthīl* "does not require a composite grammatical structure."¹⁴² This instrumental approach to language appears to enlist the rhetorical devices in the service of logic.

A strand critical of al-Sakkākī's approach to metaphor and more faithful to 'Abd al-Qāhir's position on the necessity of agreement between form (language) and content (ideas) emerged in the supercommentaries of al-Qazwīnī and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, both of whom critiqued their predecessors for misrepresenting 'Abd al-Qāhir's approach, and particularly argued against the linguistic reduction of analogy to a single-word unit.¹⁴³ Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, for example, developed a cognitive argument to defend the necessity of agreement between grammatical structure and the ideas conveyed: the mind understands a composite idea in its totality without observing its parts unless the grammatical structure comprises the relevant words which draw attention to these parts.¹⁴⁴ This notwithstanding, the majority of Ottoman scholars sided with al-Taftazānī,¹⁴⁵ including Ṭāshkōprīzāde and al-Kafawī who recounts Ebu's-su'ūd's dispute with al-

139 'Abd al-Qāhir, *Asrār*, 27.

140 Ibid., 108.

141 A sympathetic commentator like al-Taftazānī notes al-Sakkākī's fascination with the concepts and terminology of *kalām*, see *al-Muṭawwal* (Lucknow: al-Maṭba' al-'ālī, 1878), 535; cf. Smyth, "The Canonical Formulation", footnote 20, 18.

142 al-Taftazānī, *al-Muṭawwal*, 620 ff.

143 al-Qazwīnī, *al-Idāh*, 231, 233 & 237; al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ḥāshīya 'alā al-Muṭawwal*, 379, 380-1, 383-7.

144 al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ḥāshīya 'alā al-Muṭawwal*, 380-1.

145 Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 222.

Tāshkandī.¹⁴⁶ Ebu's-su'ūd is one of few who defended al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. His studies with Müeyyedzāde who is intellectually associated with al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī could be the reason. More clues about Ebu's-su'ūd's stance in the debate can be garnered by examining *Irshād* - the main literary source for his approach to language, rhetoric and *tafsīr* - to which we turn our attention now.

The first case of an extensive *tamthīl* analysis in *Irshād* occurs in the course of his commentary on Q. 2:7 (God has set a seal on their [the disbelievers] hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering, and there awaits them a mighty chastisement). In the course of commenting on this verse, he offers the most detailed theoretical discussion in *Irshād* of this type of metaphor and of how it should be employed in analysing the meaning of Qur'anic discourse.¹⁴⁷ The subject of the analogy, here, is the condition of the heart which had undergone what made it resistant to beneficial aspects of religion. It is likened to the condition of a place ready-to-use for important purposes but then sealed and its utility prevented. Both sides of the comparison are composite (*murakkab*). Ebu's-su'ūd goes on to explain that the composite grammatical structure is partly explicit, partly implicit. The portrayal of the ready-to-use but sealed place (i.e. the object of the analogy) revolves around the image of sealing which is indicated in the word *khatama* ([he] sealed); the rest of the structure is implicit though clearly aimed at in the sentence and could be restituted by 'imagined' words that realise the full structure.¹⁴⁸ None of these words (whether employed explicitly or indicated implicitly) can individually achieve the analogy despite contributing to its composition. And, none of them is therefore transferred from their original meaning when considering this type of metaphor (i.e. *tamthīl*):

Rather, the figurative transference [of meaning] occurs in the *majmū'* (sum, total). And, given that the *majmū'* means the sum of the meanings of these words which are not metaphorically borrowed in the usual way here; and that the condition 'extracted' from these words together is not an original meaning for them; and that, accordingly, no transference from an original meaning takes place when the words signifying the condition [of the sealed place], object of the analogy, are used to represent the condition [of the resistant heart], subject of the analogy; this cannot, therefore, be classified as an *isti'āra* - a type of linguistic metaphor where one word is used for a meaning other than that for which it is normally used. That

146 In the end, it is one of Ṭāshkōprizāde's treatises that finally convinces al-Kafawī to side with al-Taftazānī, see *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, f. 150v.

147 Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol. 1, 65.

148 Ibid.

is why the early preeminent authors like al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qāhir and his peers considered *tamthīl* a type [of metaphor] in its own right.¹⁴⁹

Ebu’s-su‘ūd’s argument is remarkably faithful to ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s view that *tamthīl* involves no lexical transference (*isti‘āra*) in meaning neither of the word nor of the sentence. The analogy is essentially intellectual (*‘aqlī*) in that it resides in the mental image which obtains from the sum of all the words in the sentence structure.¹⁵⁰ ‘Abd al-Qāhir described it as the meaning of the meaning (*ma‘nā al-ma‘nā*), whereby the direct meaning of the words leads you to another intellectual meaning through the image.¹⁵¹ It is for this reason that Ebu’s-su‘ūd, like ‘Abd al-Qāhir, views *tamthīl* as an independent type of metaphor different from *isti‘āra*.¹⁵² And it is for this reason, too, that Ebu’s-su‘ūd parts with al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī’s acceptance of the term *‘isti‘āra tamthīliyya*¹⁵³ despite defending him in the debate with al-Tāshkandī and drawing on parts of his commentary on Q. 2:7.¹⁵⁴

In Ebu’s-su‘ūd’s analysis, the sentence is cumulative (*majmū‘*), and its meaning dependent on the structure (*tarkīb*) and needs a degree of intellectual processing before it is determined. Unlike a word, therefore, the sentence does not have an established ‘original meaning’ (*mawḍū‘*) that can be borrowed.¹⁵⁵ This is the reason why *tamthīl*, which is sentence-based, cannot be classified as an *isti‘āra*, as he categorically states elsewhere in *Irshād*.¹⁵⁶ Ebu’s-su‘ūd correctly concludes at the end of his interpretation of Q. 2:7 that this is the view of the early rhetorician ‘Abd al-Qāhir and the reason why he deemed *tamthīl* an independent type.¹⁵⁷ He explains that, conversely, those who accept that sentences

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

151 ‘Abd al-Qāhir, *Dalā’il*, 263.

152 Ebu’s-su‘ūd, *Irshād*, vol.1, 65.

153 al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Hāshiya ‘alā al-Kashshāf*, 155. Al-Sharīf admits that this term was coined by al-Sakkākī for his notion of a word-based *tamthīl*. However, it seems that in view of the currency it gained, al-Sharīf was not averse to using it interchangeably with *tamthīl* provided that it is understood as referring to composite borrowing.

154 The phrasing of some ideas here in *Irshād* is taken almost verbatim from parts of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī’s commentary on Q. 2:7. cf. al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Hāshiya ‘alā al-Kashshāf* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-bābī ḥalabī, 1966), 156-7; and *al-Hāshiya ‘alā al-Muṭawwal*, 389-390.

155 Ebu’s-su‘ūd, *Irshād*, vol.1, 65.

156 Ibid., vol. 2, 278.

157 Ibid., vol.1, 65; cf. ‘Abd al-Qāhir, *Asrār*, 27.

do have an original lexical meaning consider *tamthīl* a type of composite borrowing which later rhetoricians called *isti'āra tamthīliyya*,¹⁵⁸ whereby the whole phrase or sentence (e.g. sealing a place) is directly borrowed for the subject of the analogy (the resistant heart).¹⁵⁹ This view is critically described by Ebu's-su'ūd as motivated by a reductionist approach to the classification of metaphor.¹⁶⁰ Ebu's-su'ūd's critique is aimed at later rhetoricians, possibly, including al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī who unequivocally explains *tamthīl* in terms similar to the 'reductionists': "if it is a case of *tamthīl*, what is borrowed is a composite structure [comprising] several words, some of which are articulated and the rest is intended in the will."¹⁶¹

To sum up, Ebu's-su'ūd's disagreement with al-Tāshkandī is over the reduction of rhetoric to a science serving the logician concerned with finding a linguistic anchor in the text for the ideas he garners from it, where the smallest grammatical unit (a word or preposition) would suffice as the substratum for a composite meaning. Against this position, both al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī and Ebu's-su'ūd emphasise, through *tamthīl*, that complex ideas are generated through composite syntactic (sentence) structures, hence asserting, more broadly, the relation between language and ideas. In view of that, interpreting the text requires analysing how the mode of expression constitutes the ideas expressed. Beyond this, however, the two seem to theoretically diverge. Ebu's-su'ūd regards the explanation which al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī espouses to be reductive at a different level. *Tamthīl* is more than al-Sharīf's definition of it as a simple process of transferring the meaning of a whole sentence. Rather, as Ebu's-su'ūd explains, *tamthīl* is the construction of an image (*taṣwīr bi-ṣūra*¹⁶²) without changing the signification of the words or the sentence they make up. In *tamthīl*, what is figurative is the image not the words. It is effective as a rhetorical device because the image guides us toward an abstract meaning which would have been otherwise concealed:

Tamthīl is a pleasant, subtle means to harnessing imagination for the mind so as to bring it out of a state of incomprehensibility. It is the most powerful instrument for making the unwitting idiot understand; and for curbing the hostility of the

158 Cf. Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol. 2, 278.

159 Ibid., vol.1, 65-6.

160 Ibid.

161 al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ḥāshīya 'alā al-Kashshāf*, 156-7; cf. Kemāl-pāshazāde's definition of *isti'āra tamthīliyya*, "Risāla fī taqṣīm al-majāz", 499.

162 See Ebu's-su'ūd's commentary on Q. 2:17, *Irshād*, vol. 1, 87; cf. his commentary on Q. 2:26, Ibid., 124.

unruly, defiant [person]. And why not, when it [*tamthīl*] lifts the veil away from aspects of the hidden intellectual meanings [*ma'qūlāt*] by featuring them as things clearly perceived through the senses [*maḥsūsāt*], hence, portraying the unknown as known and familiarising the unfamiliar?¹⁶³

The construction of the *tamthīl* image, accordingly, involves an intellectual and not a linguistic transference as the 'reductionists' contend; that is the transference of abstract meanings to perceptible ones. Interpreting *tamthīl* is the inverse of this. It requires analysing the things perceived through the senses and portrayed in the image in order to disclose the hidden abstract meaning. The difference between Ebu's-su'ūd and those he considers 'reductionists' is that their analysis stops at the sentence level. He, on the other hand, is concerned with the image because the image, not the words, is the locus of the 'real' meaning. Yet Ebu's-su'ūd is not only interested in the hermeneutic potential of the *tamthīl* image to make the 'idiot' comprehend, but also equally in its aesthetic qualities (pleasantness, subtlety), and its transformative psychological effect on the (unruly, defiant) recipient.

In this, Ebu's-su'ūd appears yet again more sharply attentive to 'Abd al-Qāhir than his predecessors including al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. He closely follows 'Abd al-Qāhir's approach to *tamthīl* as an 'artistic' type of metaphor that is more powerful than simple types of borrowing. This cannot be fully appreciated unless it is understood in light of Ebu's-su'ūd's commitment to 'Abd al-Qāhir's approach to the Qur'an as a miracle in its eloquence. In Ebu's-su'ūd's own terms, the Qur'an stands out as a brilliant linguistic construction (*mabnī 'alā nahjīn 'abqaryy*).¹⁶⁴ Yet while the Qur'an is an extraordinary phenomenon inimitable by human beings (*khārij 'an ṭawq al-bashar*), it employs the eloquent ways of the Arabic language.¹⁶⁵ In 'Abd al-Qāhir's work, the most eloquent forms of Arabic are those which construct aesthetically pleasing, intellectually stimulating and psychologically effective poetic imagery,¹⁶⁶ the most evocative of which is *tamthīl*,¹⁶⁷ for exactly the

163 Ibid., vol. 1, 87.

164 Ibid., vol. 1, 37.

165 Ibid., Ebu's-su'ūd's scattered discussion of the Qur'an's linguistic inimitability reflects the orthodox doctrine of *i'jāz* which matured at the hands of 'Abd al-Qāhir, but which also preserved the older idea of knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*) as a dimension of the Qur'anic miracle. For example, see his commentary on Q. 11:14, Ibid., vol. 3, 20; cf. 'Abd al-Qāhir, *Asrār*, 394.

166 See Kamal Abu Deeb's section on *tamthīl* in 'Abd al-Qāhir's work, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Surrey: Aris and Phillips, 1979), 274-282.

167 See 'Abd al-Qāhir's description of the powerful effect of the *tamthīl* image, *Asrār*, 115.

reasons which Ebu's-su'ūd iterate above: that it 'excites the imagination' because it harnesses those remote or hidden abstract meanings (the unfamiliar *ma'qūlāt*, as Ebu's-su'ūd puts it) by portraying them in the image of things we know with more certainty and intimacy through the senses (the familiar *maḥsūsāt*).¹⁶⁸ This intensifies the effective power of *tamthīl* because it forges a psychological/emotional bond with the abstract meaning by appealing to what we know as intimately as we know 'the beloved'.¹⁶⁹ That is why *tamthīl* is the noblest art of eloquence for 'Abd al-Qāhir,¹⁷⁰ and a most powerful rhetorical instrument for Ebu's-su'ūd.

This is revealing of how Ebu's-su'ūd attempts through his exegetical effort to revive the vigour and depth of 'Abd al-Qāhir's approach to rhetoric and poetic imagery, as attested in the case of *tamthīl*. But it is also quite significant in that it offers an instance against the view that post-classical rhetoric was mainly defined by the scholastic commentaries which 'displaced' the original works themselves, such as those of 'Abd al-Qāhir.¹⁷¹ Noteworthy is that Ebu's-su'ūd was not alone in critically engaging with later rhetoricians by a return to 'Abd al-Qāhir.¹⁷² But when compared to some of the key contributors to the *tamthīl* controversy, he reveals a more profound awareness of 'Abd al-Qāhir's subtle approach to *tamthīl*'s hermeneutic, artistic and aesthetic dimensions - an awareness honed through the sustained interaction between founding text and subsequent commentaries which that controversy exemplifies.

The *tamthīl* controversy brought back these rhetoricians not only to 'Abd al-Qāhir but also to al-Zamakhshari's *tafsīr* work *al-Kashshāf*. This is not surprising as it became evident in the course of tracing *Irshād*'s intellectual lineage that *al-Kashshāf* was central to *tafsīr* studies between the thirteenth and the sixteenth

168 This is the gist of 'Abd al-Qāhir's longer description of the effect of the *tamthīl* imagery, see *Ibid.*, 121-2.

169 *Ibid.*, 121.

170 *Ibid.*, 119.

171 Cf. Smyth's observation that 'Abd al-Qāhir is displaced by later commentators, "Controversy in a Tradition", 596.

172 For example, Kemālpāshazāde rejects al-Sakkākī's prescriptive approach to grammar (*naḥw*) which, he argues, is mainly concerned with the correctness of grammatical structure but not its effect on configuring the meaning. He dedicates a treatise aimed at reviving 'Abd al-Qāhir's comprehensive approach toward the science of meanings (*ma'ānī*) in which the study of form (grammatical structure) and content (meaning) should be entwined in order to analyse the effect of speech. See Ibn Kamāl Pāsha, "*Risāla fī bayān*", 179-193.

centuries, and that this largely contributed to the coalescence of the two disciplines of *tafsīr* and rhetoric in the post-classical period. The on-going rhetorical debates such as the one on *tamthīl* must have reciprocally influenced scholarly engagement with *al-Kashshāf* and its cleansed rendition by al-Bayḍāwī. The need for a new *tafsīr* that considers these two works in light of the intellectual elaboration of the key debates in the discipline of rhetoric and their influence on Qur'an commentary seems to have been the intellectual motive behind *Irshād*. Ebu's-su'ūd's autobiographical comment in the preface about his strong ambition to 'thread together' these two works in one work of *tafsīr*,¹⁷³ supplementing them with 'the precious insights' and 'subtle points' of other relevant (and later?) works is suggestive of this motive though not explicit.¹⁷⁴

To investigate the extent to which *Irshād* engages with al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī, and the degree to which this engagement reflects insights gained through later rhetorical debates such as that on *tamthīl*, the next section will provide a comparative analysis of these three exegetes' interpretations of Q. 33: 71-72, a passage from the Chapter of the Clans posing a noted exegetical challenge for rhetorical interpretation of the Qur'an.¹⁷⁵

4. Ebu's-su'ūd's Rhetorical Interpretation Compared to al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī

Whosoever obeys God and His Messenger has won a mighty triumph. We offered the trust (*amāna*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; and man carried it. Surely he is sinful, very foolish (Q. 33:71-72).

The keyword in the exegetical treatment of this passage is the word *amāna* (trust). Al-Zamakhsharī understands *amāna* contextually in light of the preceding verse on the triumph of the obedient (Q. 33:71).¹⁷⁶ He explains that the 'obedience' mentioned in Q. 33:71 is referred to as *amāna* (trust) in Q. 33:72 to mag-

173 Previously cited in Section 2 of this paper.

174 Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol. 1, 4.

175 See Ignaz Goldziher's discussion on Q. 33:71-72, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranlegung*, 2nd edition (Leiden: Brill, 1952), 133; Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Takhyyil and its traditions", in *God is Beautiful and He loves Beauty*, ed. Alma Giese and Christoph Bürgel (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 227-247, 230ff.

176 al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 5, 102.

nify the importance of obeying God. He then proposes two different interpretations of the response of the heavens, earth and mountains and what it means to ‘carry’ the trust in the sense of obedience to God. According to the first interpretation, the verse refers to the obedience of the cosmic bodies to God in the only way appropriate for them; that is as inanimate things they were unable to resist God’s will to create them. Inviting the cosmic bodies to carry the *amāna*, their refusal, and their fear of it should all be understood figuratively (as *majāz*). Similarly, ‘man carried it’ does not refer to his acceptance of a real offer to carry the *amāna*. Rather, his carrying of it refers to wrongfully withholding what is due to another because a trust could be conceived of as something or someone ‘riding’ the entrusted person until rightfully discharged. Al-Zamakhsharī adduces several examples of idiomatic expressions in support of this meaning. In the final paraphrase, the refusal of the cosmic bodies to carry the *amāna* means that they could not but discharge the trust (in their being involuntarily obedient to God), whereas man refused but to carry it without fulfilling it. Man is then described as foolish and ignorant for failing to do what would cause his eternal happiness even though he is capable of it.¹⁷⁷ According to this reading, al-Zamakhsharī considers the smaller units (e.g. refused, afraid) of the verse to be figurative (*majāz*) but their cumulative meaning to be real (*ḥaqīqa*).

The second interpretation proposed by al-Zamakhsharī shifts the attention from ‘carrying’ in the sense of non-fulfilment to carrying as indicative of the ‘immensity’ of man’s obligations and the heaviness of this burden—the burden which God’s largest, strongest, and hardest creations refrained from bearing and upholding autonomously, whereas man carried it despite his weakness and feeble power then failed to fulfil it. These inanimate bodies are personified in a style common to the Arabic language. The personification involves portraying (*taṣwīr*) the immensity, difficulty and heaviness of bearing and fulfilling the *amāna*. The portrayed image affects the soul of the hearer because it is more engaging and agreeable, and its meaning more accessible.¹⁷⁸

Al-Zamakhsharī’s analysis and terminology are unmistakably suggestive of the analogy-based metaphor (*tamthīl*). He, however, notes an incongruity between the nature of the image in this verse and the *tamthīl* image in the standard example (used by ‘Abd al-Qāhir) of the undecided person portrayed as moving one foot forward and another backward. Al-Zamakhsharī argues that this old

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 103.

analogy is straightforward, and based on two real and known conditions, however, the condition of offering the ‘trust’ to inanimate bodies, their refusal and fear of it is ‘*muḥāl*’ (impossible or absurd). The question, then, according to al-Zamakhsharī, is: “how could *tamthīl* be correctly constructed on the basis of what is impossible?”¹⁷⁹ He maintains that the object of the analogy (offering the ‘trust’ to cosmic bodies) is hypothetical (*mafrūd*), and that hypothetical things could be imagined in the mind (*tutakhayyal*) in the same way like verified things (*muḥaqqaqāt*). Al-Zamakhsharī seems to consider this verse still a type of *tamthīl* where the analogy is based on a hypothetically imagined condition in which the immensity and difficulty of the ‘trust’ is illustrated by imagining it as if it were offered, refused and dreaded by the cosmic bodies.¹⁸⁰

Both interpretations betray al-Zamakhsharī’s Mu‘tazilite anxiety about attributing action and free will to inanimate things. The first interpretation is reminiscent of a much earlier - and marginal - reading of ‘carrying the trust’ as signifying non-fulfilment of material debts.¹⁸¹ The second one better reflects al-Zamakhsharī’s engagement with ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s theory of metaphor. Interestingly, ‘Abd al-Qāhir precisely anticipated this type of theological concern but maintained in response that attributing action to inanimate things is common in the Qur’an,¹⁸² and fairly standard in Arabic as when someone says ‘my love brought me to you’ without actually ascribing free will to love.¹⁸³ This was apparently not a sufficient safeguard for al-Zamakhsharī against perceiving the depicted condition of cosmic bodies as true (like the movement of feet in the case of the undecided man). Al-Zamakhsharī, instead, analyses the image in this verse as based on a phantastically imagined (*tutakhayyal*) condition. He seems to be drawing here on another type of metaphor in ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s work known as *takhyyīl*.¹⁸⁴ ‘Abd al-Qāhir, however, distinguished clearly between *takhyyīl* and

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

181 See Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 310/922) citation of ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd’s opinion (d.32/653), *Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an tāwīl āyy al-Qur‘ān*, 1st edition, 24 vols., ed. ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 2001), vol. 19, 202.

182 ‘Abd al-Qāhir, *Asrār*, 386.

183 Ibid., 388. In his discussion on attributing actions to inanimate things, ‘Abd al-Qāhir explicitly criticises the excesses of the rationalists (the Mu‘tazilites) and the literalists (the anthropomorphist) who interpret the Qur’an in light of their theological concerns in a way detrimental to its meaning. See Ibid., 391-4.

184 Heinrichs concurs that al-Zamakhsharī treats this verse as an example of *takhyyīl*, and suggests that al-Zamakhsharī may have considered it a special case of *tamthīl*. See “Takhyyil and its traditions”, 230ff.

tamthīl. He applied the term *takhyyīl* to a type of imagery in Arabic poetry which has no true or verifiable meaning at any level, almost bordering on the absurd such as when the white hair of old age is portrayed as desirable in reality.¹⁸⁵ What distinguishes *tamthīl* from *takhyyīl*, in ‘Abd al-Qāhir, is not the plausibility of the image, but *tamthīl*’s reference, ultimately, to an abstract meaning which is true regardless of whether the image represents verifiable or hypothetical conditions. In fact, ‘Abd al-Qāhir emphasises that the less straightforward and more artistically unique¹⁸⁶ and composite the *tamthīl* image, the more effective it is.¹⁸⁷ These rhetorical aspects, however, are overtaken in al-Zamakhsharī by his theologically motivated concern to determine the plausibility and verifiability of the image.¹⁸⁸

Al-Bayḍāwī, on the other hand, drops the terminology associated with rhetorical analysis altogether, so terms like *tutakhayyal*, *taṣwīr*, and *tamthīl* are not employed in his interpretation of this verse. Nonetheless, he begins with al-Zamakhsharī’s contextual understanding of ‘*amāna*’ as obedience. He reproduces, with some minor emendations, al-Zamakhsharī’s paraphrase of the verse according to his second interpretation: that the ‘trust’ is so immense to the extent that if offered to these large cosmic bodies - and they had sense and perception - they would refuse it and dread bearing it; whereas man carried it despite his weakness and feeble power, and was described as ignorant because most people fail to fulfil this ‘trust’.¹⁸⁹ Al-Bayḍāwī then cites three other interpretations of the verse which can be summarised as follows:

185 ‘Abd al-Qāhir, *Asrār*, 267.

186 *Ibid.*, 122-3.

187 *Ibid.*, 139ff.

188 It has been suggested that ‘Abd al-Qāhir himself is motivated by theological concerns more than previously thought. The argument, however, is based on the obvious, that ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s work is informed by an underlying and broad theological claim that the Qur’an contains true meanings. See Margaret Larkin, *The Theology of Meanings: ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī’s Theory of Discourse* (New haven: The American Oriental Society, 1995), especially 164-171. Unfortunately, however, Larkin makes no effort to address Kamal Abu Deeb’s in-depth analysis of how ‘Abd al-Qāhir develops an advanced theory of poetic imagery that is unfettered by theology, see *Al-Jurjānī’s Theory of Poetic Imagery*.

189 Nāṣr al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl, al-ma’rūf bi-tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, 5 vols., ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar’ashlī (Beirut: Dār ihyā’ al-turāth, wa-mu’asasat al-tārīkh al-‘arabī, 1998), vol. 4, 240.

- i. The 'trust' signifies both the involuntary obedience in nature and the voluntary obedience of free-willed man. 'Offering it' means both willing it in nature and demanding it from the human being; and 'carrying it' means the betrayal of the trust by not rightfully discharging it (as in al-Zamakhshari's first interpretation).
- ii. Cosmic bodies were created with perception and the verse describes a real cosmic event.
- iii. The 'trust' could mean intellect (*'aql*) or obligation (*taklīf*). Accordingly, 'offering the trust' to the cosmic bodies would mean determining their suitability to bear it. Their refusal is involuntary due to their natural unpreparedness for this, whereas man's carrying of it means having the readiness and natural aptitude for it. He is sinful and ignorant because he normally succumbs to wrath and lust, which would make *'aql* a better interpretation of the trust in this case because one of its functions is to control these two powers, and the obligations (*takālīf*) are intended to help improve them and curb them.¹⁹⁰

Al-Bayḍāwī steers away from a figurative interpretation. In his rendition of al-Zamakhshari's paraphrase, he restitutes to the verse a conditional grammatical structure (i.e. if the cosmic bodies had sense and perception and were made that offer, they would have refused it) whereby the words would then be understood literally. All three further interpretations are also literal. Aside from the most literal one which assigns perception and will to cosmic bodies (ii), the other two interpretations (i & iii) are more subtle in the way they render a literal reading of the verse. By shifting the meaning of 'trust' away from only signifying the obedience expected from man (to include involuntary obedience (i), or mean intellectual ability (iii)), the verse no longer contains a personification, and the meaning of offering, refusing and dreading all become appropriate to inanimate things. What is obvious is that in al-Bayḍāwī's effort to produce a more orthodox commentary that incorporates the insights of an unorthodox exegete like al-Zamakhshari, 'Abd al-Qāhir's rhetorical approach is totally abandoned on this occasion. This is overturned in Ebu's-su'ūd who will foreground the verse as a case of *tamthīl*.

Ebu's-su'ūd follows al-Zamakhshari and al-Bayḍāwī in reading the 'trust' (*amāna*) in the sense of obedience in light of the previous verse. His interpretation, however, considerably develops this contextual linkage further:

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

After the great importance of obedience to God and his Prophet is clarified by explicating the painful chastisement for those who rebel against it [Q. 33:64-8],¹⁹¹ and the mighty triumph of those who observe it [Q. 33:71], the great importance and difficulty of the religious obligations [*takālīf*] which require this obedience are illustrated in what follows by way of analogy (*tamthīl*) [Q. 33:72]. It is then declared that their observance of obedience or neglect of it [Q. 33:73] comes after their acceptance of and commitment to [fulfil these obligations].¹⁹² (Emphasis added)

Ebu's-su'ūd's contextual analysis of Q. 33:72 goes beyond the simple lexical linkage established by his two predecessors between verses Q. 33:72 and Q. 33:71, whereby they read the word 'trust' (*amāna*) as signifying obedience. In his above paraphrase, 'obedience' is more than the meaning of the 'trust', which he proposes to read more specifically as the religious obligations (*takālīf*) requiring obedience: it is developed into a broader contextual theme linking Q. 33:72 to a number of preceding verses, and carried forward to his interpretation of the next and final verse of the Chapter of the Clans Q. 33:73 (That God may chastise the hypocrites, men and women alike, and the idolaters, men and women alike; and that God may turn again unto the believers, men and women alike. God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate), as outlining the consequence of observing or neglecting obedience to God.¹⁹³ But it is in Q. 33:72, as Ebu's-su'ūd explains, that obedience is exemplified and elucidated by way of *tamthīl*, the analogy-based metaphor. *Tamthīl* is, henceforth, not a second interpretation as in al-Zamakhsharī but the very mode in which the verse illustrates the contextual theme of obedience underpinning this whole section of the Chapter of the Clans. Not surprisingly, Ebu's-su'ūd offers no alternative interpretations for this verse.¹⁹⁴ And, although he does incorporate elements of his predecessors' inter-

191 The verses are as follows: "God has cursed the unbelievers, and prepared for them a Blaze [64], therein to dwell for ever; they shall find neither protector nor helper [65]. Upon the day when their faces are turned about in the Fire they shall say: Ah, would we had obeyed God and the Messenger! [66] They shall say, Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and great ones, and they led us astray from the way [67]. Our Lord, give them chastisement twofold, and curse them with a mighty curse!" [68]" (Emphasis added)

192 Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol. 4, 436-7.

193 Ibid., 438.

194 Some of the other interpretations in al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī are relegated by Ebu's-su'ūd to the end of his discussion not of this verse but the next (Q. 33:73) and cited as unnamed opinions. Ibid., 438-9.

pretations (e.g. al-Bayḍāwī's third interpretation of *amāna* as signifying *takālīf*), his approach is quite different from that of his predecessors in that it is entirely focused on systematically analysing the *tamthīl* image. He breaks up the image into constituent parts each representing a different but related idea in the following manner:

- The religious obligations (*takālīf*) are represented as the 'trust' to alert attention that these are protected duties which God entrusted to those who are legally accountable, obligating them to observe these duties obediently and compliantly, and to be careful and perseverant in fulfilling them, and to perform them without missing any requirements;
- And the weighing of religious obligations against the aptitude of the heavens and other cosmic bodies is represented as an 'offer' made to them so as to reveal the great extent of care for these obligations, and to depict the desire that the cosmic bodies do accept them;
- And the natural inaptitude of the cosmic bodies to accept the offer as their refusal and fear of these obligations in order to intensify awe of them and cultivate a sense of their great importance;
- And [the possibility of] accepting the offer as 'carrying' so as to exemplify the difficulty associated with these obligations by representing them as comparable to the heavy bodies which [in order to be carried] require the strongest and greatest physical force which the likes of cosmic bodies have.¹⁹⁵

The 'meaning' (*al-mā'nā*) of all this is that: "the 'trust' is so immense to the extent that if these large cosmic bodies, a model of strength and toughness, were entrusted with observing religious obligations - and they had sense and perception - they would refuse and dread bearing it."¹⁹⁶ This interpretation is very close to al-Bayḍāwī's paraphrase which is itself based on al-Zamakhsharī's second interpretation. What marks Ebu's-su'ūd's approach is his method of analysis. He distinguishes this *mā'nā* as the 'intended' (*maqṣūd*) but not the explicit meaning expressed in the verse because "speech was diverted from its ordinary ways of expression to the mode of *tamthīl* by portraying (*taṣwīr*) the hypothetical in the image (*bi-ṣūrat*) of the actual."¹⁹⁷ The upshot of this distinction is that the meaning of the verse could not be fully grasped unless the image (*ṣūra*) generated by *tamthīl* is analysed. This is why Ebu's-su'ūd is most interested in the image when

195 Ibid., 437.

196 Ibid.

197 Ibid.

dealing with this verse; and that, following ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s approach to *tamthīl*, he treats the image as a complex idea that is the sum of several ideas which must first be interpreted individually before the overall (and intended) meaning is reached. His analysis appears organised in a manner resonating with al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī’s cognitive argument in support of *tamthīl*’s composite structure: that the different parts of a complex idea can be observed only when there are relevant words in the sentence drawing attention to them. As evident in his above treatment, Ebu’s-su’ūd expends his effort on explaining, one by one, the words and phrases which represent and draw attention to the different ideas constituting the analogy. His overall interpretation is the meaning (*al-ma’nā*) culminating from interpreting the meaning of these parts. This unmistakably corresponds to ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s idea of *ma’nā al-ma’nā*.

Ebu’s-su’ūd’s approach stands in contrast to that of al-Bayḍāwī; for whereas the latter presents this interpretation at the start of his commentary as if it were a readily available paraphrase, Ebu’s-su’ūd establishes it as the result of a careful examination of the levels of meaning in the structure of the verse. Moreover, he diverges from both his predecessors in shifting the focus of the interpretation from ‘man’, his carrying of the trust and non-fulfilment of it, to the sequence of the cosmic bodies. The statements that ‘Man carried it [the trust]’ and that ‘he is sinful, very foolish’ do not constitute part of Ebu’s-su’ūd’s analysis of the *tamthīl* image, but are discussed separately afterwards. The underlying reason is that *tamthīl* involves a contraction of the analogy where one side of the comparison (e.g. difficulty of religious obligations) is dropped and substituted by the other side (e.g. the cosmic bodies and their responses to the offer) – a point which Ebu’s-su’ūd had previously explained in relation to the case of the sealed heart. On the other hand, the comparison between ‘man’ and ‘the cosmic bodies’ in carrying the trust is explicit in the structure of the verse, thus, not part of the *tamthīl* image. Nevertheless, Ebu’s-su’ūd’s brief interpretation of man’s carrying of the trust, and his foolishness and sinfulness, is predicated upon the meaning of the image.¹⁹⁸ This meaning is then carried forward to the interpretation of the next verse (Q. 33:73) where the theme of obedience is considerably reemphasised and extended.¹⁹⁹

In conclusion, the overall meaning Ebu’s-su’ūd finally reaches is not substantively different from that of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī. Yet his application of rhetorical analysis, as illustrated above, marks his approach as noticeably more

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 438.

systematic in method and coherent in style. Remarkable too is the consistency between his theory and application of *tamthīl*. Conceptualising *tamthīl* as an intellectual rather than a linguistic metaphor (see Section 3 above), Ebu's-su'ūd is primarily concerned with the ideas constituting the image where the intended (intellectual) meaning subsists, and not with the lexical and/or grammatical analysis of the sentence. Not only that, but his method is revealing of the cognitive and psychological effects of the different parts of the image which, for example: alert attention to the protected status of religious obligations; exemplify their difficulty; reveal the extent of care for them; and increase awe of them and cultivate a sense of their great importance (See translation above). Grasping the effect of the image is not superfluous, but contributes to the intelligibility of meaning and its psychological effectiveness. This is so, as Ebu's-su'ūd maintains, because through the image the intended meaning is more effectively actualised and clarified, and, thus, why the mode of *tamthīl* rather than ordinary speech is employed.²⁰⁰ Analysis of this mode is then necessary for understanding the ideas it embodies, their effect on shaping the meaning, and their impact on the hearer.

This is really the core of Ebu's-su'ūd's stance in the controversy on *tamthīl*, which he expressed both in his debate with al-Tāshkandī and in *Irshād*; that form (mode of expression) and content (ideas) are organically related. It is also why he insisted that a rhetoric which enables the understanding of the Qur'an and the appreciation of its eloquence should be focused on analysing how this relationship is constitutive of meaning and its effect, and not on merely establishing a logical linkage between text and idea. In this, Ebu's-su'ūd is drawing on the intellectual trajectory of earlier rhetoricians such as al-Qazwīnī, but especially al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī who defended and further explicated 'Abd al-Qāhir's theory of metaphor against the dominant influence of al-Sakkākī. To achieve this task of rhetorical interpretation, Ebu's-su'ūd creatively synthesises aspects of the two authoritative commentaries of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī to provide the grounds on which he legitimates the retrieval of 'Abd al-Qāhir's original approach, and to masterfully illustrate its exegetical potential in a way that these two exegetes could not do.

Turning back to the broad aim of this paper which is to gain an insight into post-classical *tafsīr*, a few preliminary remarks are due on the formal characteristics of *Irshād* as a Qur'an commentary from that period. Measured against Nor-

²⁰⁰ Ibid. Ebu's-su'ūd's full comment is as follows: “*ṣurifa al-kalām ‘an sananih bi-taṣwīr al-mafrūd bi-ṣūrat al-muḥaqqaq rawm^m li-ziyādat taḥqīq al-ma‘nā al-maqsūd bi-l-tamthīl wa-tawdīḥih.*”

man Calder's description of the classical *tafsīr* genre,²⁰¹ it is needless to say that *Irshād* preserves the regular format of lemma and comment in interpreting the Qur'an *ad seriatim*. Apart from that, however, it differs from classical commentaries in two major ways.

The first is the near absence of named exegetical authorities. A linked feature is that the exegetical discussion in *Irshād* does not revolve around selecting or assessing other opinions. As shown above, the two past exegetes central to *Irshād*, al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī, are only identified in the preface and not in the actual *tafsīr*; and their interpretations not cited but reworked and synthesised in a way that serves Ebu's-su'ūd's approach. In brief, the sense of an exegetical community in conversation which pervades classical *tafsīr* texts is absent from *Irshād*. One of the striking features of *Irshād* in this respect is how Ebu's-su'ūd's exegetical voice is distinctly foregrounded and autonomous – perhaps the mark of the unprecedented authority which evolved with the role of Shaykh al-Islam in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Secondly, the simultaneous recourse of the classical tradition to various scholastic disciplines (law, theology, prophetic history, Sufism, rhetoric, syntax, lexis, and allegory) in interpreting the Qur'an, is substituted in Ebu's-su'ūd by an approach which gives primacy to rhetoric. Most notably, law, of which Ebu's-su'ūd's was the highest authority of his time, does not constitute a key discipline against which he formally measures the Qur'an.²⁰² To be conceded, however, is that his interpretative choices can still be coloured by his juristic outlook, which cannot be missed, for example, in his redirection of the meaning of *amāna* from obedience generally to *takālif* more specifically. Comparing Ebu's-su'ūd with al-Zamakhsharī, theological preoccupations do not govern his exegetical effort. This emerges clearly, for instance, in the way Ebu's-su'ūd's rhetorical analysis of the *tamthīl* image in Q. 33:72 displaces the theological concern which distracted al-Zamakhsharī from examining the image itself to digressing on whether *tamthīl* could portray an implausible condition. It would be reasonable to claim that if *al-Kashshāf* is a figurative interpretation of the Qur'an that aligns the text with Mu'tazilī theology, Ebu's-su'ūd's *Irshād* is an interpretation of the Qur'an's figures of speech.

201 For a definition of the formal characteristics of the classical *tafsīr* genre, see Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr", especially 101-6.

202 For example, his commentary on the *wuḍū'* verse (Q. 5:6) is notably brief in light of the myriad aspects of prayer and purity laws that could be expounded upon in connection with this verse. See *Irshād*, vol. 2, 14-17.

In this light, *Irshād* appears to represent a turning in the post-classical period toward a specialised form of *tafsīr*. The Islamic disciplines in this later stage had achieved a greater stability: the need for proving their instrumentality to the Qur'an, or for substantiating their claims by harnessing the meaning of this divine text had likely diminished, thus overshadowing the ideological goal and permitting a growing focus on the rhetorical and poetic appreciation of the Qur'an as evident in *Irshād*.

5. Re-contextualising Irshād: The convergence of intellectual aspiration and political will

There are several indications in the sources that there was an aspiration in the sixteenth century for the Ottomans to produce a formal work of *tafsīr*. Süleyman I appears to have taken a special interest in the production of a work of *tafsīr* by a Shaykh al-Islam. Already mentioned is that Kemālpāshazāde, one of the most influential holders of this office, worked until his death in 940/1534 on a *tafsīr* work which he never completed. But while there is no evidence that he undertook the task as a result of a formal assignment, Fenārīzāde Muḥyiddīn, the Shaykh al-Islam succeeded by Ebu's-su'ūd, was paid a high daily stipend of two hundred dirhams to teach Qur'an commentary and compose a *tafsīr* work.²⁰³ Like Kemālpāshazāde, Fenārīzāde Muḥyiddīn failed to complete the work before he died in 954/1548. The demanding office of Shaykh al-Islam, and the positions of military judgeship which normally precede it, seem to have hindered the completion of these works of *tafsīr*.²⁰⁴ In his preface to *Irshād*, Ebu's-su'ūd makes a point of how his administrative duties as judge prevented him from fulfilling his enduring aspiration to compose a *tafsīr* work, but that following his appointment as Shaykh al-Islam, he realised that his life might end before he could have ample time for completing the *tafsīr*.²⁰⁵ Soon after, he embarked on composing *Irshād*,²⁰⁶ seizing the chance to write whenever he could.²⁰⁷

203 al-Kafawī, *Katā'ib*, vol. 2, f. 251v; Cf. Ṭāshkōprīzāde, *al-Shaqā'iq*, 229.

204 The lamentation that Ottoman scholars would have composed great works had they not been encumbered by office is a recurrent literary motif in historical biographies, reflecting a certain general discontent with the material legacy of Ottoman religious thought. A good example is the aforementioned Khwājazāde, an influential scholar perceived as surpassing Persian, Turkish and Arab scholars of his time but who has left a small number of works. Ṭāshkōprīzāde notes that Khwājazāde lamented that public office wasted many a great talent including his own. See *al-Shaqā'iq*, 81.

205 Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol.1, 5. For a translation of parts of Ebu's-su'ūd's account, see Imber, *Ebu's-su'ūd*, 18-19.

206 Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol.1, 6.

207 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manẓūm*, 444.

Ebu's-su'ūd's keenness on producing a formal *tafsīr* work rather than a book of *fiqh* is noteworthy. According to an anecdote cited by Colin Imber, when Ebu's-su'ūd was once asked if he would compose a book on important legal questions, his response was that he felt shame before the Ḥanafī jurist Ibn al-Bazzāz (d. 827/1424) and his legal compendium, *al-Bazzāziyya*.²⁰⁸ Imber suggests that Ebu's-su'ūd may have considered his juristic abilities inadequate. While this may be so, Ebu's-su'ūd's response also discloses his perception of the adequacy and great accomplishment of the juristic tradition more generally. In comparison, his aspiration to compose a new *tafsīr* work seems to convey the opposite. That is, not only his self-confidence as exegete but also his view of the inadequacy of the *tafsīr* genre and the exigency of the task – a task encoded in the full title of *Irshād*: “Guiding the sound mind to the benefits of the Noble Book”. The key term in this title is ‘benefits’, *mazāyā* (sing. *maziyya*), a word at the heart of the endeavour of rhetoric as an Islamic discipline since ‘Abd al-Qāhir who defined it as the aspect of beauty that resides in the meaning rather than the wording of eloquent speech.²⁰⁹ The ‘mind’, the second key term in the title, must exert its utmost in contemplating the meaning of the sentence before it is able to elucidate, prove and identify the linguistic indicators of such benefits (*mazāyā*) of speech.²¹⁰ Accomplishing a *tafsīr* which revives the purpose of rhetoric as ‘Abd al-Qāhir envisaged it, and which restores to the *tafsīr* tradition a literary purpose by composing a rhetorical Qur’an commentary for an Ottoman scholarly milieu with an evolving interest in rhetoric and Qur’an exegesis, appears to have been the intellectual aspiration behind *Irshād*.

Further impetus came from Süleyman I. The Sultan’s interest in *tafsīr* may have developed under Ebu's-su'ūd's influence. One piece of evidence is his previously cited 1565 decree, which gave precedence to *tafsīr* books, designating almost third of the order list to the subject (twelve out of a total of thirty nine texts). Also, it was earlier in that year that the Sultan, too eager to wait, requested to see a copy of whatever had been completed of *Irshād*.²¹¹ He, then, issued the imperial order summoning a college teacher from Rhodes by the name of Badr al-Dīn to assist Ebu's-su'ūd in the final stage.²¹² On completion, Ebu's-

208 Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf*, vol. 1, 242; Imber, *Ebu's-su'ūd*, 20.

209 ‘Abd al-Qāhir, *Dalā'il*, 64.

210 *Ibid.*, 65.

211 ‘Alī b. Bālī, *al-‘Iqd al-manzūm*, 444.

212 The *fermān* dated 17th Rajab 972/1565 is cited in Ahmed and Filipovic, “The Sultan’s Syllabus”, footnote 28, 193-4.

su'ūd befittingly dedicated *Irshād* to the Sultan.²¹³ The Sultan's "ardent desire" to see *Irshād*,²¹⁴ and his warm reception of the completed work,²¹⁵ not to mention the efforts of Fenārīzāde Muḥyiddīn who may have been formally assigned to write a *tafsīr work* and the 1565 decree, suggest that his was an active involvement that goes beyond a personal religious and/or intellectual interest cultivated under Ebu's-su'ūd's influence.

With the Ottomans' success in extending their power and authority over the Arab Muslim world in the early sixteenth century, including Mecca and Medina, the Ottoman Sultan became the "Servant of the Two Noble Sanctuaries",²¹⁶ a title laden with religious meaning which not only reinforced the Ottomans' Caliphal claim, but also anchored the religious identity of their rule in the site of Islam's origins. The Ottomans were initially perceived by their new Arab subjects as 'bad, cruel and ignorant Muslims'.²¹⁷ However, over the next few decades, they made considerable efforts toward constructing the legitimacy of their political authority in religious terms. It is during the long reign of Süleyman I (1520-1566), and with the help of Ebu's-su'ūd as Shaykh al-Islam, that the Sultan's role as defender of *shari'a* and Sunni Islam was articulated and asserted.²¹⁸ In the hands of Ebu's-su'ūd, the role of Shaykh al-Islam reached its zenith as a religious office with extended administrative responsibilities for ensuring the conformity of government to *Shari'a* on behalf of the Sultan.

Against this backdrop, encouraging the composition of *Irshād* could be thus conceived as an effort to extend and maintain control over the very meaning of the divine book and, hence, over not only the geographical realms of Islam but also the very realm of its religious truth, the Qur'an. Ebu's-su'ūd's dedication at the outset of *Irshād* in which he enumerates Süleyman I's many claims to sovereignty (e.g. his claim to the universal vicegerency of God, to the greater tradition of caliphate, and to the superior imamate),²¹⁹ is a literary expression of that

213 Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol. I, 4.

214 'Alī b. Bālī, *al-'Iqd al-manzūm*, 444.

215 See note 27 above.

216 P.M. Holt, *Studies in the History of the Near East* (New York: Routledge, 1973), 228.

217 For a summary of the Egyptian historian Ibn Iyās's impression of the Ottomans immediately after they conquered Egypt, see Michael Winter, "Historiography in Arabic During the Ottoman period", in Roger Allen and D.S. Richards, eds., *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 171-188, 172.

218 Imber, *Ebu's-su'ūd*, 106-110.

219 Ebu's-su'ūd, *Irshād*, vol. I, 4.

extension. With a work of Qur'an interpretation composed by the highest religious authority, the Shaykh al-Islam himself, the Ottomans would become defenders of the birthplace, the law and the central book of Islam.

Guiding the Sound Mind: Ebu's-su'ud's Tafṣīr and Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an in the Post-Classical Period

Abstract ■ The overarching aim of this paper is to gain an insight into the post-classical *tafṣīr* tradition, which remains largely neglected by contemporary *tafṣīr* scholarship. The paper focuses on Ebu's-su'ud's (d. 982/1574) Qur'an commentary *Irshād al-'aql al-salīm ilā mazāyā al-kitāb al-karīm* (Guiding the sound mind to the benefits of the Noble Book), a work highly praised in the biographical and bibliographical literature for its rhetorical interpretations, and ranked with the commentaries of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī. The paper investigates both the text of *Irshād* and the context of its production, particularly the intellectual debates located at the intersection of rhetoric and Qur'an exegesis which shaped the exegetical concerns of sixteenth century Ottoman scholars like Ebu's-su'ud. The problem of the analogy-based metaphor (*tamthīl*), and its classification as a type of a word-borrowing (*isti'āra*) provides the anchoring for the textual and contextual study in this paper. Examples from *Irshād*, which illustrate how Ebu's-su'ud theorises and applies *tamthīl* as a hermeneutic tool, are closely examined and compared to earlier commentaries. In conclusion, the paper reflects on the characteristics of *Irshād* as a post-classical *tafṣīr* work, and offers some observations on its intellectual and political significance in the sixteenth century Ottoman world.

Keywords: Ebu's-su'ud, Qur'anic Studies, Ottoman History, the Post-classical Period, Rhetoric, 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Tafṣīr*, *Tamthīl*, *Balāgha*

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