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Influence of the Ottoman Tafsir Tradition in West Africa: An Analysis of the Role of Mollā al-Gūrānī's Ghāyat al-Amānī in Abdullah b. Fodio's Ḍiyā' al-Ta'wīl
Batı Afrika'da Osmanlı Tefsir Geleneginin Etkisi: Abdullah b. Fūdi'nin Ziyā'ü't-Te'vīl adlı Eserinde Molla Gürānī'nin Gāyetü'l-Emānī'nin Rolünün Analizi

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Abstract

The intellectual influence of the Ottoman Empire in West Africa has often been overlooked despite its vastness and significant contributions to Islamic studies. This study aims to shed light on this intersection by examining the relationship between Abdullah b. Fodio's (d. 1245/1829) *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl fī ma'ān al-tanzīl* and Mollā al-Gūrānī's (d. 893/1488) *Ghāyat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-Kalām al-Rabbānī*. Abdullah b. Fodio, a scholar of the renowned 19th-century Sokoto Caliphate, and Molla al-Gūrānī, a prominent 15th-century Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam, were both influential Qur'anic exegetes who held significant political roles during their respective periods. Despite recent studies on their individual works, the intersection between their writings demands further attention. Through content analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative analysis, this study explored the role al-Gūrānī's work played in the formation of Ibn Fodio's work's content and methodology. By delving into various themes of their works, we reveal that Ibn Fodio greatly benefited from al-Gūrānī's commentaries, considering them on par with those of renowned scholars such as Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148), al-Bayḏāwī (d. 685/1286), and al-Tha'ālibī (d. 875/1471). Ibn Fodio's tafsir adeptly incorporated al-Gūrānī's perspectives across various subjects and accorded significant value to his assessments of hadith authenticity. Nevertheless, Ibn Fodio, due to his distinct approach and priorities, selectively employed al-Gūrānī's work in matters relating to fiqh, despite citing his *istinbāṭ* of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. While Ibn Fodio benefited from al-Gūrānī's judgments on *qirā'āt*, he did not uniformly adopt his approach. Both scholars adhered to the Ash'arī theological tradition, resulting in doctrinal similarities, with Ibn Fodio occasionally directly quoting from al-Gūrānī's work. On *ishārī* exegesis, while neither of them subscribed to its excessive form, Ibn Fodio included some interpretations omitted by al-Gūrānī. We speculated that Ibn Fodio sought al-Gūrānī's work as a valuable source due to its richness, utilising it as a corrective tool for his other major sources, such as al-Bayḏāwī. By uncovering this link between Ibn Fodio and al-Gūrānī, this study contributes to the field of tafsir history, providing new insights into the intersection between the Ottoman tafsir tradition and the Sokoto tafsir tradition.

Keywords: Tafsir, al-Gūrānī, Abdullah b. Fodio, Ghāyat al-amānī, Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl.

Öz

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İslami ilimlere sağladığı önemli katkılara rağmen, onun Batı Afrika'daki ilmî etkisi genellikle göz ardı edilmiştir. Bu araştırma, 19. yüzyıl Sokoto Devleti alimi Abdullah b. Fûdî'nin (ö. 1245/1829) *Ziyâ'ü't-te'vîl* adlı eseri ile 15. yüzyılın önde gelen Osmanlı Şeyhülislamlarından Molla Gürânî'nin (ö. 893/1488) *Gâyetü'l-emânî* adlı eseri arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır. Kendi dönemlerinde siyasi roller üstlenen bu iki alimin kaleme aldıkları eserler üzerine birçok çalışma yapılmış olmasına rağmen, eserlerinin kesişme noktalarına daha fazla dikkat edilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmada içerik analizi, tematik analiz ve karşılaştırmalı analizler kullanılarak, Molla Gürânî'nin eserinin İbn Fûdî'nin eserinin içeriği ve metodolojisinin oluşumundaki rolü araştırılmıştır. Eserlerin çeşitli temalar çerçevesinde incelenmesi sonucunda, İbn Fûdî'nin Molla Gürânî'nin tefsirlerinden büyük ölçüde yararlandığı ve onu İbnü'l-Arabî (ö. 543/1148), Beyzâvî (ö. 685/1286) ve es-Se'âlibî (ö. 875/1471) gibi önemli müfessirler arasında zikrettiği ortaya çıkmıştır. İbn Fûdî, Molla Gürânî'nin çeşitli konulardaki düşüncelerini eserine alması ile birlikte onun rivayetlere yaptığı değerlendirmelere de büyük önem vermiştir. İbn Fûdî, kendi özgün yaklaşımı ve öncelikleri nedeniyle fikhî konularda Molla Gürânî'nin ahkâm ile ilgili görüşlerine sıklıkla yer vermezken fıkıh usulü ile ilgili istinbatlarını alıntılamıştır. Kırâat konusunda ise İbn Fûdî, Molla Gürânî'nin değerlendirmelerinden faydalanmış olmakla birlikte onun bilgiyi sunma şeklini benimsememiştir. Kalam konusuna gelince her iki âlimin de Eş'arî teolojik geleneğe bağlı kalması, tefsirlerinde doktrinel benzerliklere yol açmıştır. Bu bağlamda İbn Fûdî, bazen Molla Gürânî'nin eserinden doğrudan alıntılar yapmıştır. Son olarak, İşarî tefsir konusunda ise her ikisi de aşırı yorumu karşı tavır göstermiş olmakla birlikte İbn Fûdî, eserine, Molla Gürânî'nin yer vermediği bazı yorumları dâhil etmiştir. Ayrıca İbn Fûdî'nin Molla Gürânî'nin eserini zenginliği nedeniyle değerli bir kaynak olarak gördüğü ve onu Beyzâvî gibi diğer önemli kaynaklardaki bilgileri düzeltmek için kullandığı tahmin edilmektedir. İbn Fûdî ve Molla Gürânî arasındaki bu bağlantıyı ortaya koyan bu çalışma, Osmanlı tefsir geleneği ile Sokoto tefsir geleneği arasındaki kesişimi yeni bir perspektifle ele alarak tefsir tarihi alanına yeni bilgiler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tefsir, Molla Gürânî, Abdullah b. Fûdî, *Gâyetü'l-emânî*, *Ziyâ'ü't-te'vîl*.

Introduction

Tafsir, as a discipline, is largely characterised by its eclectic nature. Authors of tafsir works have predominantly relied on the accumulated body of knowledge within the field to produce their own interpretations, addressing the contemporary issues and contexts of their time and location. Consequently, it is often observed that many tafsir works are not inherently original, as authors have primarily gathered insights from their predecessors. In fact, it is common to find introductory notes from mufasssirrūn expressing their intention to build upon the interpretations of others.¹ However, it is essential to examine the identity of these “others,” as selecting specific areas to build upon and choosing references in these eclectic works represent the most distinctive aspects of their originality.

Understanding the significance of a particular mufasssirrūn within the context of tafsir history requires an exploration of the sources they employed and how they utilised the information within those sources. While certain tafsir works enjoy widespread popularity as prominent sources among subsequent scholars, others are overlooked despite the expertise of their authors. The utilisation of these lesser-known works as sources raises questions about the specific aspects that attracted the attention of later scholars. This is evident in Ibn Fodio’s reliance on al-Gūrānī’s Ghāyat al-amānī as a primary source, which piques curiosity not only due to the relative obscurity of al-Gūrānī’s work but also because of the geographical distance between Ibn Fodio and al-Gūrānī, implying limited exposure to the latter’s works.

This study addresses the limited recognition of al-Gūrānī’s influence beyond the Middle East and Anatolia,² contrasting it with Ibn Fodio’s acknowledgement of al-Gūrānī’s work as a major source. The research aims to investigate why Ibn Fodio was drawn to this less popular work and challenges the notion of the Ottoman tafsir tradition’s lack of external influence. It examines the incorporation of al-Gūrānī’s work in Ibn Fodio’s methodology, contributing to understanding both scholars’ significance and shedding light on nuances in Ibn Fodio’s tafsir approach. The study will analyse their lives, their respective works, and the impact of al-Gūrānī’s work on Ibn Fodio’s methodology.

1. Overview of the lives and works of two authors.

1.1. Mollā al-Gūrānī

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ismā‘īl, commonly known as Mollā al-Gūrānī,³ was a prominent scholar and intellectual in the Ottoman Empire. Born in 813/1410,⁴ there is some debate regarding his birthplace; however, it is widely agreed that he was born within the borders of

¹ Relevant to this are some of the factors Koçyiğit mentioned as reasons why mufasssirrūn write tafsir works especially finding the existing ones insufficient and trying to gather the information in the old and new ones. For more details, see Hikmet Koçyiğit, ‘Müfessirleri Tefsir Yazmaya Sevk Eden Amiller’, *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 10 (2012), 122-124.

² For more details on his influence, see Sakıp Yıldız, Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri (Sahhaflar Kitap Sarayı, 1988), 313-330; Ziya Demir, *Osmanlı Müfessirleri (XII-XVI. yy. Arası)* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2007), 128-129.

³ His name has also been given as Sharaf al-Dīn and Shams al-Dīn. His cognomen, written as " الكوراني " in Arabic letters, has also been transcribed as Mollā Kurānī. For more details, see John R. Walsh, ‘Gūrānī’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (Brill, 24 April 2012); Yıldız, Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri, 19; M. Kâmil Yaşaroğlu, ‘Molla Gürānī’, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2020), 248-249.

⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm al-‘iqyān ft a ‘yān al-a ‘yān*, critical ed. Philip Hitti (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Ilmiyya, 1927), 38; Ibrāhīm Ḥasan al-Baqā‘ī, *Unwān al-zamān bi-tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān*, critical ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā‘iq al-Qawmiyya, 2009), 60; Yıldız, Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri, 25.

present-day Diyarbakır province in Turkey to a clan called Kūrān/Gūrān.⁵ During his educational journey, Molla al-Gūrānī pursued studies in renowned centres of learning such as Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo. He had the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge circles of distinguished scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1448).⁶ As a respected figure of his time, Molla al-Gūrānī became part of the inner circle of Sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir Jaqmāq (r. 1438-1453) and participated in scholarly gatherings held in the presence of the sultan.⁷ At the age of thirty, and initially a member of the Shāfi‘ī school, he was appointed to teach fiqh at the Barqūq Madrasa in Cairo.⁸

In 844 (1440), a sectarian dispute led him to be imprisoned or banished.⁹ However, subsequent to these ordeals, he met Mollā Yegān (d. 878/1473), a prominent scholar of the era, in Cairo or Aleppo. Mollā Yegān was on a mission to gather scholars around for the Ottoman under the leadership of Murād II (r. 1421-1451).¹⁰ Mollā al-Gūrānī accompanied Mollā Yegān to gain an audience with Murād II and earned his favour and patronage. Consequently, he became the teacher of Prince Mehmed, who would later become the conqueror of Constantinople, in the province of Manisa.¹¹ When Mehmed ascended to the throne as Sultan Mehmed II (al-Fātiḥ) (r. 1451-1481), Mollā al-Gūrānī was offered a position as a vizier, which he declined.¹² Instead, in 855(1451), he was appointed as the military judge (qāḍī-‘asker). He played an advisory role in the consultative council during the siege of Constantinople.¹³ Following the conquest of Constantinople, Molla al-Gūrānī’s tenure as qāḍī-‘asker ended. He was later appointed as the Qāḍī of Bursa but was subsequently dismissed.¹⁴ He then travelled to Cairo and Jerusalem, where he began writing his work, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, a book that would later be presented to Mehmed II.¹⁵

Upon regaining the confidence of Mehmed II, Molla al-Gūrānī returned to Anatolia in 862 (1458) and was reinstated as the Qāḍī of Bursa.¹⁶ In 867 (1463), he assumed the esteemed position of the Grand Muftī of Istanbul, and by 885 (1480), he ascended to become the fourth Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām, thereby attaining the highest religious authority within the empire.¹⁷ Mollā al-Gūrānī outlived his student-turned-patron, Mehmed II, and assisted in the ascension of his first son, Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), to the throne.¹⁸ Mollā al-Gūrānī died in (d. 893/1488).¹⁹

⁵ There are differing opinions regarding his place of birth. For a more comprehensive examination of the arguments supporting Diyarbakır in present-day Turkey, please refer to Yıldız, Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri, 20-23. See also Yaşaroğlu, ‘Molla Gürânî’, 249; al-Baqā’ī, ‘Unwān al-zamān’, 60.

⁶ Demir, *Osmanlı Müfessirleri*, 128-129; Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 31.

⁷ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 32.

⁸ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 33; Demir, *Osmanlı Müfessirleri*, 129.

⁹ For various accounts of the incident, see al-Baqā’ī, ‘Unwān al-zamān’, 61-62; Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 33-35.

¹⁰ Yaşaroğlu, ‘Molla Gürânî’, 249; Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 48-52.

¹¹ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 52-55.

¹² Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 60-61.

¹³ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 56-59.

¹⁴ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 64.

¹⁵ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 65.

¹⁶ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 66-67; al-Baqā’ī, ‘Unwān al-zamān’, 63; Yaşaroğlu, ‘Molla Gürânî’, 250.

¹⁷ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 68; Yaşaroğlu, ‘Molla Gürânî’, 250.

¹⁸ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 72-74.

¹⁹ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 88. al-Suyūṭī stated that he died in 894, see al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm al-‘iqyān*, 39.

Molla al-Gūrānī authored up to ten notable works in various Islamic sciences.²⁰ In the areas of Quranic sciences and tafsir, he is recognised for his books *Ghāyat al-amānī* and *Kashf al-asrār ‘an qirā’at al-a’immat al-akhyār*. While the former is a book of tafsir, on which our study is based, the latter focuses on qirā’at.²¹

1.1.1. His work: *Ghāyat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-Kalām al-Rabbānī*

After the conquest of Constantinople and his subsequent withdrawal from governmental duties, al-Gūrānī embarked on a journey to the Levant, Cairo and eventually arrived in Jerusalem. It was during this period, in the year 860(1456), that he began writing *Ghāyat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-Kalām al-Rabbānī*.²² While the author does not explicitly state other specific intentions for undertaking this work, he mentions a desire to rectify misinformation and misguided interpretations that had been introduced by certain “transgressors” concerning the Word of Allah.²³ In composing this tafsir, al-Gūrānī drew upon the works of al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Kushayrī (d. 465/1072), al-Bayḍāwī, al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310), and other scholars as his sources.²⁴

Gūrānī employed a unique system in which he provided annotations throughout the pages of the passages he had written.²⁵ Notably, his work frequently critiques the works of al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) and al-Bayḍāwī, making it perhaps the only comprehensive tafsir that criticises both scholars in all aspects.²⁶

Upon completing the work in 867/1463, al-Gūrānī presented it to his former student, now Sultan Mehmed II, who subsequently distributed the manuscript to various regions, including the Maghrib.²⁷ Despite al-Gūrānī’s position within the Ottoman elite and the potential significance of his work as one of the first comprehensive tafsir by an Ottoman scholar,²⁸ it remained relatively less-known for a considerable period.²⁹ The tafsir was eventually published in 1438/2018 in Saudi Arabia by a team of critical editors.³⁰ Subsequently, another edition, edited by Bahattin Dartma, was published in 2019 by the Ibn Haldun University Press in Turkey.³¹

²⁰ For a list of his works, see Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 90-91; Yaşaroğlu, ‘Molla Gürānī’, 250; Demir, *Osmanlı Müfessirleri*, 131; Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsir Tarihi* (Semerkand Yayıncılık, 2014), 2/216.

²¹ A third work on tafsir, known as Ḥāshiya ‘alā-tafsīr al-qāḍī, has been attributed to him. See: Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsir Tarihi*, 2/216. However, it is important to note that Yıldız argued against the attribution of this work in his own study. For more details, see Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 92.

²² Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 65.

²³ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ismā‘īl Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-kalām al-rabbānī*, critical ed. Bahattin Dartma (Istanbul: Ibn Haldun University, 2019), 1/26.

²⁴ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 149-151.

²⁵ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 148.

²⁶ Bahattin Dartma, ‘Khaṣā’is al-kitāb’, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-kalām al-rabbānī*, 1/14.

²⁷ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 319.

²⁸ Yıldız’s claim of it being the first full Qur’an tafsir is erroneous (Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 11). Demir, on the other hand, compiled a comprehensive list of Qur’an tafsir by Ottoman mufasssırūn, where Shihāb al-Dīn al-Sīwāsī (ö. 860/1456 [?]) is ranked as the first and al-Gūrānī (ö. 893/1488) as the fifth. See: Demir, *Osmanlı Müfessirleri*, 109-164.

²⁹ For detailed analysis over the unpopularity of the work, see Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 318-319.

³⁰ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ismā‘īl al-Kūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-kalām al-rabbānī*, critical ed. Aḥmad b. Ya‘qūb al-Fāriḥ et al. (Riyad: Dār al-Ḥadārah, 2018).

³¹ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ismā‘īl Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī tafsīr al-kalām al-rabbānī*, critical ed. Bahattin Dartma (Istanbul: Ibn Haldun University, 2019).

1.2. Abdullah b. Fodio

Abdullah b. Fodio, also known as Abdullah Bayero, was the son of a Muslim cleric, Muhammad b. ‘Uthmān, whose nickname Fuduye³² has become an appellation for his sons who grew prominence.³³ Abdullah b. Fodio was a young brother to the renowned reformer ‘Uthmān b. Fodio (Usman Dan Fodio) (d. 1232/1817), who created the 19th century Sokoto Caliphate (1804-1903) that occupied a large part of Northern Nigeria, southern Niger and some parts of Cameroon today. Born between 1180 (1766) to a scholarly family, like his elder brother, he grew to be a prominent figure in West Africa during the 19th century. He showed a keen interest in knowledge from a young age. He received Quranic education from his father, and when he was 12 years old, his education was entrusted to his older brother ‘Uthmān.³⁴ Abdullah continued his studies with his uncles and various scholars in the region, showing a particular inclination towards Islamic sciences.³⁵

Abdullah b. Fodio is well-known for his involvement in political activities, although his political endeavours only spanned through his middle age, beginning in 1804 when he pledged allegiance to his older brother ‘Uthmān to establish a state, through unseating the Hausa leaders who were not committed to theocracy and social justice.³⁶ This led to ‘Uthmān to create an army that would wage a “jihad” to establish what will be known as one of the most significant Islamic states in West Africa.³⁷ During the Jihad, Abdullah led the first division of the army and achieved notable victories.³⁸ At a point, he grew disillusioned with the motives of some of his comrades and felt that the war had deviated from its original purpose of serving Allah. Consequently, he decided to embark on a pilgrimage and settle down in the Holy Land. However, he was persuaded by the people of Kano to stay and teach the people. He started authorship on governance as well as the teaching of tafsir.³⁹

After the consolidation of the state, Abdullah Fodio assumed a prominent position in the state. Being the most knowledgeable and one of the oldest lieutenants of ‘Uthmān, he was considered the vizier and actively participated in governing the state, particularly in Gwandu, the eastern province.⁴⁰

Abdullah b. Fodio’s intellectual and scholarly personality was highly esteemed. He is considered a gem of his time, and like his contemporaries, he ventured into various branches of Islamic sciences. He, however, stood out in the area of tafsir and Qur’anic sciences, producing three books on tafsir and three books on Qur’anic sciences. The number of these works written

³² The name of the Fulani language “fwdy” is written in different ways such as Fodio, Fūdīye, Fuduye, Fūdī. In this study, we preferred Fodio, which is used in Nigerian and English literature.

³³ Abdullah Ibn Fodio, *The Depository of Texts*, trans. Muhammad Shareef (Sankore’ Institute of Islamic-African Studies International, no date), 8.

³⁴ Ibn Fodio, *The Depository of Texts*, 11-13.

³⁵ For details about his teachers and their family ties, see Ibn Fodio, *The Depository of Texts*, 14-22.

³⁶ Abdullah Hakim Quick, *Aspects of Islamic Social Intellectual History in Hausaland: ‘Uthman Ibn Fudi, 1774-1804 C.E* (University of Toronto, Doctorate Dissertations, 1995), 42-73; Shehu Usman M Bugaje, ‘Foreward’, *A Revolution in History: The Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio* (London-New York: Mansell, 1986), i-v.

³⁷ For different perspectives on the Fodio’s movement and establishment of the state, see Umar Labdo, *Usman Danfodio The Great Reformer of West Africa* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2021), 45-56. Also see: Aliyu Abubakar, *al-Thaqāfa al-‘arabiyya fī nijrīya* (Kano: Darul Ummah Publishing Agency, 2014), 121-151.

³⁸ Ibn Fodio, *Tazyīn al-warakāt bi-jam’ ba’ d mā-lī min-l-abyāt*, critical ed. mar Muhammad Bawyi (Kano: Darul Ummah Publishing Agency, 2008), 93-95.

³⁹ Ibn Fodio, *Tazyīn al-warakāt*, 105-106.

⁴⁰ For information about the division of state responsibilities, see Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (Longmans, 1967), 40-42.

in Arabic, Hausa, Fulfude and Nupe languages is more than two hundred.⁴¹ His three tafsir works are *Diyā al-tawīl fī ma'ānī al-tanzīl*, *Kifāyat al-du'afā' al-Sūdān fī bayān al-tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, *Nayl al-sūl min tafāsīr al-Rasūl*; his works on Ulūm al-Qur'ān are *Miftāḥ al-tafsīr*, *Ṣulālat al-miftāḥ wa al-Farā'id al-jalīlah* and *Wasa'it al-fawā'id al-jamīlah*.

Abdullah b. Fodio died in 1245(1829) in Gwandu province of the Sokoto caliphate.⁴²

1.2.1. His work: *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl fī ma'ānī al-tanzīl*

Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl fī ma'ānī al-tanzīl is Abdullah b. Fodio's masterpiece completed on Sha'bān 12, 1231 (July 8, 1816), a decade after the consolidation of the Sokoto caliphate.⁴³ According to the author, he wrote this tafsir book in response to the demand for a comprehensive yet concise work that would cater to the needs of the people.⁴⁴ Consequently, the book focuses on the socio-cultural milieu of the Sokoto caliphate and Bilād al-Sūdān during that period. The author has included various canonical recitations in the book, giving priority to the Warsh (d. 197/812) riwāya from the qirā'a of Nāfi' (d. 169/785–6), as it was the prevalent recitation in the region. When discussing fiqh issues, the author also gives precedence to the popular opinions of the Mālikī school while acknowledging other schools' perspectives. This approach allows the author to reflect the socio-cultural context of the time. After completing the initial work, Ibn Fodio simplified it and produced another book called *Kifāyat al-du'afā' al-sūdān fī bayān-tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, which is based on the Warsh riwāya and the Mālikī madhab.⁴⁵

Ibn Fodio's *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl* was initially published in 1961 in Cairo under the patronage of Nigeria's Prime Minister, Ahmadu Bello (d.1966), who coincidentally happened to be a great-grandson of Abdullah b. Fodio's nephew. As of the time of writing this paper, we are not aware of any fully comprehensive tahqīq (critical edition) of the work.

2. The place of al-Gūrānī's *Ghāyat al-amānī* in Ibn Fodio's *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*

In Ibn Fodio's *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, Mollā al-Gūrānī's *Ghāyat al-amānī* holds a significant place among the sources used. Studies have shown that Ibn Fodio utilised over 45 sources for his work, including at least 13 tafsir works.⁴⁶ Out of these 13 works, four were particularly important and frequently cited: al-Tha'ālibī's *al-Jawāhir al-ḥisān fī tafāsīr al-Qur'ān*, al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār al-tanzīl*, Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 543/1148) *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, and Mollā al-Gūrānī's *Ghāyat al-amānī*. While al-Tha'ālibī's work was used in a more general manner, Ibn al-'Arabī's work was primarily referenced for jurisprudential matters, and both al-Bayḍāwī and Mollā al-Gūrānī were utilised in the areas like rhetoric, grammar, and recitation.⁴⁷ These

⁴¹ For a list of his Arabic works, see Abdullahi Bukhari, 'Abdullahi Ibn Fodiyo and His Scholarly Works' (Accessed 13 June 2023). For perspective on the number of works he authored, see. Ifeoluwa Siddiq Oyelami, *Abdullah b. Fūdī ve Ziyā'ü't-te'vīl fī meānī't-tanzīl adlı tefsiri* (Kayseri: Erciyes University, Masters Thesis, 2020), 28-32.

⁴² Oyelami, *Abdullah b. Fūdī ve Ziyā'ü't-te'vīl*, 19.

⁴³ Abdullah Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl fī ma'ānī al-tanzīl*, critical ed. Aḥmad Abū al-Su'ūd - 'Uthmān al-Ṭayyib (Cairo: Matba' al-Istiqāma, 1961), 4/302.

⁴⁴ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 1/7.

⁴⁵ For more information, see Ifeoluwa Siddiq Oyelami, 'Abdullah b. Fūdī ve Kifāyetü du'afā' i's-sūdān fī beyānī tefsiri'l-kur'ān adlı Tefsir Eseri', *Tefsir Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6/1 (30 April 2022), 271–291.

⁴⁶ Bello, *Abdullah b. Fūdī wa mu'allafātihi*, 77-80.

⁴⁷ Oyelami, *Abdullah b. Fūdī ve Ziyā'ü't-te'vīl*, 38-42. For details on the major source of Ibn Fodio, see Bello, *Abdullah b. Fūdī wa mu'allafātihi*, 77-78; Andrea Brigaglia, 'Batı Afrika'da Tefsir Çalışmaları ve İslami İlimler Tarihi', trans. İsmail Albayrak, *Tefsire Akademik Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Mehmet Akif Koç - İsmail Albayrak, 1 Volume (Otto, 2015), 2/316.

sources were utilised throughout the tafsir work, with instances where they were used consistently but not explicitly cited.

To illustrate this, let us examine the case of Sūrat al-Kahf. In Ibn Fodio's tafsir of this chapter, he cited ten works by their names or authors, including six tafsir works: al-Tha'ālibī (8), Ibn 'Atiyya (5), Ibn al-'Arabī (5), al-Gūrānī (4), al-Bayḍāwī (4), and al-Suyūfī (1). While Ibn 'Atiyya's work, not counted among his primary sources, was quoted more frequently than three out of the four primary sources,⁴⁸ it can be observed that there are numerous parallels between the statements used by Ibn Fodio and his primary sources within the same surah. Specifically, he sometimes utilised their words verbatim without explicitly mentioning their names. For example, he uses Ibn al-'Arabī's words to demonstrate that the verse “فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ”⁴⁹ is evidence of the permissibility of wakāla (appointing someone as an agent).⁵⁰ Similarly, he employs al-Gūrānī's words “(their words) was based on guess and this is not considered a lie” in the context of the verse “قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ”⁵¹ where the ashāb al-kahf (the people of the cave) were deliberating whether they had slept for a day or lesser.⁵²

To gain a deeper understanding of the impact of Mollā al-Gūrānī's writings on Ibn Fodio's works and to examine the underlying factors that influenced Ibn Fodio's selection of al-Gūrānī's work in different aspects of Quranic exegesis, the subsequent section will be dedicated to exploring how Ibn Fodio employed al-Gūrānī's work as a source in his own compositions. This section will be divided into distinct themes to facilitate a comprehensive analysis.

2.1. Riwāya

The incorporation of narrations from the Prophet, his companions, and the tābi'ūn in tafsir books is an indispensable component. These narrations provide invaluable insights into the contextual interpretation of the Qur'an. Given that the Prophet received the revelation, the ṣaḥāba witnessed the events surrounding it, and they transmitted their knowledge to their own students, who, like the previous generation, possessed a profound understanding of the language and cultural nuances. However, despite these advantages, these reports, which constitute the corpus of riwāya tafsir, can present challenges. They may have been fabricated or inaccurately attributed to a particular context.⁵³ Hence, when a mufassir retrieves such information from older sources, subjecting them to rigorous scrutiny is imperative. al-Gūrānī's meticulous examination of sources, including al-Bayḍāwī and al-Zamakhsharī, is highly regarded. Ibn Fodio utilised al-Gūrānī's critical analysis on authenticity and accurate application of narrations, citing him specifically, as illustrated in the examples that follow.

The historical context of the Quran holds immense significance and plays a pivotal role in comprehending the intent behind its verses. Therefore, ensuring the authenticity and accurate

⁴⁸ Ibn Fodio might have been quoting Ibn 'Atiyya through al-Tha'ālibī's al-Jawāhir, considering that the latter is regarded as an abridged version of the former. Cf. Brigaglia, 'Batı Afrika'da Tefsir Çalışmaları, 317. For more detailed information on al-Tha'ālibī's al-Jawāhir, see M. Suat Mertoğlu, 'SE'ĀLĪBĪ, Ebū Zeyd', *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2009), 239-240.

⁴⁹ al-Kahf 18/19.

⁵⁰ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 3/7. Cf. Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, critical ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 3/221.

⁵¹ al-Kahf 18:19.

⁵² Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 3/6. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/192.

⁵³ For details on the problem of transmitted tafsir, see Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-mufasssīrūn* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Wahbiyya, 1967), 1/112-120.

utilisation of historical reports is of utmost importance. al-Gūrānī displayed a critical approach toward al-Bayḍāwī and al-Zamakhsharī in terms of establishing and appropriately employing these reports in Quranic commentary.⁵⁴ It is possible that Ibn Fodio recognised this aspect of al-Gūrānī’s work and incorporated it into his own methodology. For instance, in the context of Isra 17:76, which states, “And verily they were about to frighten you so much as to drive you out from the land. But in that case, they would not have stayed (therein) after you, except for a little while,” Ibn Fodio quoted from al-Bayḍāwī, albeit with the phrase “qīla,” alluding to its weakness that the verse refers to the Jews who envied the Prophet and were displeased with his presence in Madina. Thus, they told him, “The Levant is the land of the Prophets; if you are truly a Prophet, then go there, and we will believe in you.”⁵⁵ However, after presenting this report, Ibn Fodio cited al-Gūrānī, who stated, “There is no basis for this story, and no one has reported it.”⁵⁶

Ibn Fodio’s citation of al-Gūrānī’s opinion regarding the Gharānīq event demonstrates his ability to blend the opinions of his sources, including al-Gūrānī while maintaining a balanced approach. The Gharānīq event is a controversial incident related to the revelation of Sūrat al-Najm 53:19-20: “أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ” (So have you considered al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā and the third one, Manāt, as well?). According to various sources, it is claimed that when the Prophet recited these verses to the polytheists of Makkah, Shaytan caused him to add an additional passage that praises the idols as beautiful and lofty birds, with the possibility of intercession from them.⁵⁷ Mufasssīrūn have discussed this incident as the sabab al-nuzūl for Sūrat al-Hajj 22:52, which states, “And We sent not before you any messenger or prophet except that when he spoke [or recited], Satan threw into it [some misunderstanding].” While these assertions have serious implications for the concept of prophethood, some mufasssīrūn like al-Zamakhsharī have commented on the verse, suggesting that the Prophet may have inadvertently praised the Makkan idols due to oversight or error, with Jibrīl later correcting him.⁵⁸ However, al-Bayḍāwī rejects this claim as unsupported by the muḥaqqiqūn (scholars of deep insight).⁵⁹

When addressing the Gharānīq event, Ibn Fodio began by quoting the event with the phrase “qīla” to indicate its faultiness. He then states that “most” mufasssīrūn believe that Shaytan indeed cast the statement in the Prophet’s tongue, but the words were not the Prophet’s own.⁶⁰ Ibn Fodio proceeded to criticise the report, starting with al-Bayḍāwī’s rejection of it by the muḥaqqiqūn. He further quotes al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (ö. 544/1149) from his book, *al-Shifā*, who asserted the unauthenticity of the story based on the absence of any authentic hadith collection reporting it and the belief in the Prophet’s protection from such errors.⁶¹ Ibn Fodio added the

⁵⁴ Yıldız, *Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürani ve Tefsiri*, 213-216.

⁵⁵ Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl*, critical ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar’ashlī (Beirut: Dār Iḥya’ Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1998), 3/263.

⁵⁶ Ibn Fodio, *Diyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 2/260. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/164.

⁵⁷ “تِلْكَ الْغُرَانِيقُ الْعَالِيَةُ، وَإِنَّ شِفَاعَتَهُنَّ لَتُرْتَجَى” (These are beautiful and lofty birds and there is hope of intercession from them).

⁵⁸ Jār Allāh Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ‘an-ḥaqā’iq ghawāmiḍal-tanzīl wa-‘uyūnal-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*, critical ed. Alī Muḥammad Mu’awwad, ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd (Riyadh: Maktabat al-‘Ubaykan, 1998), 4/203-206.

⁵⁹ al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl*, 4/75.

⁶⁰ Ibn Fodio, *Diyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 3/95.

⁶¹ For a comprehensive analysis of the subject by al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, see ‘Iyāḍ Ibn Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, *al-Shifā’ bi ta’rīf ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā*, critical ed. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Shumunnī (Beirut: Muzīl al-khafā’ ‘an alfāz al-Shifā’, 1988), 2/124-135.

criticisms of Ibn ‘Atiyya and Ibn al-‘Arabī, who also challenged the report’s authenticity and raised theological implications.⁶²

Next, Ibn Fodio cited al-Gūrānī, who directed his criticism toward the mufassirūn, possibly referring to al-Zamakhsharī, who suggested that the Prophet made those statements due to oversight and error, with Jibrīl coming to correct him. al-Gūrānī, as quoted by Ibn Fodio, dismissed this as superstition and cast doubt on the authenticity of the report, arguing that if the Prophet indeed pronounced those words, it would have been a form of praise for the angels based on the context of the verse that discusses those who deny the Hereafter associating femininity with angels (إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيَسْمُؤْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةً الْأَنْثَى)⁶³.⁶⁴ While this statement of al-Gūrānī stands out among the various sources cited by Ibn Fodio in relation to this verse, Ibn Fodio concluded his commentary on the verse with the words of al-Qaṣṭalānī (d. 923/1517), who suggested that either the report is not authentic or those words were uttered by Shaytan himself, interpolating the Prophet’s recitation when he was silent.⁶⁵

Be that as it may, this analysis reveals Ibn Fodio’s recognition of al-Gūrānī’s expertise in hadith and tafsir, as he cited him alongside more prominent classical sources among the mufassirūn and muhadithūn. In certain instances, Ibn Fodio even relied on al-Gūrānī’s evaluations of hadiths. For instance, after quoting Ibn al-‘Arabī’s refutation of the notion that the Qur’an was initially revealed on the 15th night of Shaban, along with other virtues associated with that night, Ibn Fodio mentions that al-Gūrānī regarded the best available narration concerning this matter to be *mursal* in nature.⁶⁶

Based on our observation, it appears that Ibn Fodio has also largely benefited from al-Gūrānī’s approach in excluding fabricated narrations regarding the virtues of certain surahs and verses of the Quran. While Ibn Fodio’s other main sources, al-Bayḍāwī and al-Tha‘ālibī, included such fabricated narrations, al-Gūrānī purified his work from such reports.⁶⁷ Thus, Ibn Fodio followed al-Gūrānī’s legacy by only reporting surah virtues that are authentically reported. For example, at the end of Sūrat al- Mu’ mimūn, Ibn Fodio narrated a hadith that al-Gūrānī also mentioned:

“al-Tirmidhī has related on the authority of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (May Allah be pleased with him) saying: We heard a sound like the buzzing of bees. Then we waited a while. Then the messenger of Allah turned to face the qibla, raised his hands, and said: ‘O Allah, give us more (blessing) and do not give us less; honour us, and do not humiliate us. Give to us and do not deprive us, give precedence to us and do not give others precedence over us; be pleased with us and make us pleased.’ Then he said: ‘Ten verses have been revealed to me; whoever adheres to them will enter Paradise.’ Then he recited: ‘فَقَدْ أَقْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ...’ (Successful indeed are the believers...).”⁶⁸

The report could also be found in Ibn Fodio’s most cited source, al-Tha‘ālibī’s *al-Jawāhir al-ḥisān* as well as Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Aḥkām*.⁶⁹ However, Ibn Fodio used the exact words

⁶² Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 3/96.

⁶³ al-Najm 53/27.

⁶⁴ Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/386.

⁶⁵ For al-Qaṣṭalānī’s critiques, see Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. ‘Abd al-Malik al-Qaṣṭalānī, *Irshād al-sārī li sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-bukhārī* (Egypt: Al-Maṭba‘a al-Kubrā al-Amīriyya, 1323), 7/242-243, 362-363.

⁶⁶ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 4/93. Cf. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 4/117; Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 4/467.

⁶⁷ For details about Mollā al-Gūrānī’s scrutiny of faḍā’il al-suwar reports, see Yıldız, Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gūrānī ve Tefsiri, 193-196.

⁶⁸ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 3/117. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/430.

⁶⁹ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān*, 3/311; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tha‘ālibī, *al-Jawāhir al-ḥisān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, critical ed. ‘Alī Mu‘awwad, ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1997), 4/131.

of al-Gūrānī and added the citation of al-Tirmidhī, which was included in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s work but not in al-Gūrānī’s. The fact that Ibn Fodio excluded two narrations on the virtues of Sūrat al-Mu’immūn, which were mentioned by al-Bayḍāwī⁷⁰ but not included by al-Gūrānī, further highlights the influence of al-Gūrānī’s approach on Ibn Fodio’s careful selection of narrations. This demonstrates Ibn Fodio’s preference for relying on authentic and reliable narrations while excluding those that may be questionable or fabricated. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that al-Gūrānī’s influence played a role in shaping Ibn Fodio’s cautious approach to choosing narrations related to the virtues of surahs.

However, it is worth noting that Ibn Fodio included a statement on the virtues of Sūrat al-Fīl that is not present in al-Gūrānī’s *Ghāyat al-amānī*. Ibn Fodio quoted al-Tha‘ālibī, who cited al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), mentioning that a pious person said, “Whoever recites Sūrat al-Fātiha and Sūrat al-Inshirah in the first rak‘ah of the rakaṭayn al-fajr, and Sūrat al-Fātiha and Sūrat al-Fīl in the second rak‘ah, all enemies will fail against him, and Allah will not make a way for them against him.”⁷¹ In conclusion, it can be observed that Ibn Fodio’s careful selection of narrations regarding the virtues of surahs was influenced by al-Gūrānī’s approach. However, he also incorporated additional statements from other sources, such as al-Tha‘ālibī.

2.2. Qirā’āt

The examination and elucidation of different canonical recitations of the Qur’an hold significant importance in both al-Gūrānī’s *Ghāyat al-amānī* and Ibn Fodio’s *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*. It is noteworthy that both scholars have identified the exposition of qirā’āt as one of the principal objectives of their works. In his introductory note, al-Gūrānī states, “...in order to fully comprehend the meanings, I will mention the seven mutawātir qirā’āt...”⁷² Similarly, Abdullah b. Fodio mentions in his own introduction, “...that I should write a tafsir (...) and it will highlight the popular qirā’āt, starting with the qirā’a of Nāfi’ with the riwāya of Warsh, as it is the qirā’a of our region...”⁷³

The apparent similarity in style between the two scholars may lead one to surmise that Ibn Fodio simply copied the qirā’āt section of his work from al-Gūrānī, possibly with some alterations. However, a closer examination of their methodologies reveals that while there might have been some influence, particularly in uncovering the complementary meanings embedded in the various recitations, it is not necessarily pronounced in all aspects of Ibn Fodio’s qirā’āt analyses.

To start with the style, the styles employed by the two mufassir in relating the canonical recitations are very similar. They mention the names of the qirā’āt imams one after the other and state how they recite and, if necessary, the linguistic implications of the differences. They frequently state the difference that may be applicable among rāwīs (transmitters) too. As it is understood from Ibn Fodio’s introduction, Nāfi’’s recitation takes precedence in his listing because that is the qirā’a of the Bilād al-Sūdān. To a large extent, Nāfi’’s precedence is also a phenomenon in al-Gūrānī’s work, but it seems this is only based on the common order in qirā’āt studies.

While there are instances where Ibn Fodio’s grammatical analyses bear a resemblance to those of al-Gūrānī, it would be incorrect to assume that they were directly copied. Take, for

⁷⁰ See: al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl*, 4/97.

⁷¹ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 4/296. Cf. al-Tha‘ālibī, *al-Jawāhir al-ḥisān*, 5/628.

⁷² Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 1/26.

⁷³ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 1/7.

example, the second verse of Sūrat Ibrāhīm, where Ibn Fodio states that “(الله) is recited with *raf*’ by Nāfi’ and Ibn Amr, indicating that it is the *mubtada*’ (subject) with its *khavar* (predicate) being what is adjoined after it (i.e., Allah is to whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth).” He further explained that the rest of the *qirā’āt* imams recite (الله) with *jar*, indicating that it functions as an apposition, and what follows it is attributions (i.e., ...by the Will of their Lord, to the Path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy, Allah, the one to whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth).⁷⁴

In the commentary on this verse, al-Gūrānī introduces another possible grammatical interpretation of “الله” when recited with *raf*’, suggesting that it could also be a predicate with an implied subject (*mubtada*’ *maḥzūf*), and what comes after it is attributed to it (≈He is Allah to whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth).⁷⁵ However, Ibn Fodio did not include this explanation, nor did he mention the emphasis that the first verse should be recited with *al-waqf al-tām* (complete stop) because, unlike al-Gūrānī,⁷⁶ Ibn Fodio did not make *al-waqf wa al-ibtidā*’ a specific topic within his *qirā’āt* analyses.

A significant aspect of al-Gūrānī’s exegeses related to *qirā’āt*, which one would expect to find transferred into Ibn Fodio’s work, is criticisms directed towards al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī. However, it appears that Ibn Fodio intentionally avoided engaging in polemics and instead opted to incorporate the fundamental explanations that are evidently derived from al-Gūrānī’s work. For instance, Sakip Yıldız pointed out that al-Gūrānī’s *qirā’āt* commentary of the phrase “وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرَخِي”⁷⁷ serves as a critique of al-Zamakhsharī’s commentary who considered the recitation of “مُصْرَخِي” with a *kasra* on the *yā* as *ḍa’if* (weak), and he referred to the poem verse used to support it as unknown.⁷⁸ In contrast, al-Gūrānī offered the following explanation:

“Hamza recited it by placing a *kasra* on the silent *yā* (ي) based on the analogy that the addition (*idāfa*) of a vowel to a silent *yā* is similar to the *ya* of “غلامي” (ي in the word *ghulamī*). Therefore, when the *nūn* (ن) was omitted due to the *idāfa* and two silent letters combined, the second one received a vowel (*ḥaraka*) due to the impossibility of having a vowel on the first letter because of *i’rāb*. Additionally, *idghām* (merging of sounds) is possible when two silent letters meet. Thus, when a silent letter is given a vowel, it is typically assigned a *kasra* per the regular rule. This explanation has been reported by Arab linguists such as Quṭrub, al-Farrā’, and Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’.”⁷⁹

When Ibn Fodio was to explain this same word, he said:

“The majority recited *ya* with *fatha* while Hamza recited it with a *kasra*. based on the analogy that the *idāfa* of a vowel to a silent *ya* is similar to the *ya* of “ghulamī.” Therefore, when the *nūn* (ن) was omitted due to the *idāfa*, and two silent letters combined and the second one received a vowel *idghām* is possible.”⁸⁰

In this example, we can observe that Ibn Fodio relayed al-Gūrānī’s correction regarding al-Zamakhsharī’s statement, but he did not delve into it in detail. It is worth noting that there are other instances where al-Gūrānī remained silent about the mistakes made by al-Bayḍāwī and

⁷⁴ Ibn Fodio, *Diyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 2/195.

⁷⁵ Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/7.

⁷⁶ For relevant examples, see Bilici, *Ġāyetü’l-Emānī adlı tefsirinde Molla Gürānī’nin kiraatlere yaklaşımı*, 60-64.

⁷⁷ Ibrāhīm 14/22.

⁷⁸ Yıldız, Fatih’in Hocası Molla Gürānī ve Tefsiri, 285-286. Cf. al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 3/375-376.

⁷⁹ Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/18.

⁸⁰ Ibn Fodio, *Diyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 2/200.

In the context of discussing the “Arsh” (throne) of Allah in relation to the verse “إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ” إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ”⁹¹ both Ibn Fodio and al-Gūrānī interpret the istawā of Allah as the execution of His rulings on His creatures after creation.⁹² However, Ibn Fodio added a note from al-Gūrānī’s work, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, stating that the belief that “the throne of Allah is a body encompassing all other bodies” has no basis in Sharia. Instead, “what is established is that the throne of Al-Rahmān is a body of light over the heavens.”⁹³ Similarly, in the context of Sūrat al-Nisā 4:165, Ibn Fodio cited al-Gūrānī who had cited Abū Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935-6), stating that there is no “taklīf” (obligation or responsibility) before the sending of a messenger.⁹⁴

There are also instances where Ibn Fodio demonstrated a synthesis of al-Gūrānī and al-Bayḍāwī’s commentaries on kalām matters. In his commentary on Sūrat al-Nisā 4:137, he addressed the issue of repeated alternation between belief and disbelief. While al-Bayḍāwī emphasised that sincere establishment of faith would be acceptable and forgivable,⁹⁵ al-Gūrānī highlighted that this is a mockery of religion and the Messenger, stating that Allah would not guide them to forgiveness.⁹⁶ Ibn Fodio echoed their views but also cited the fact that repentance before death is accepted and that the cessation of disbelief leads to forgiveness of past sins.⁹⁷

Conclusively, on the issues of kalām, while Ibn Fodio did not extensively quote al-Gūrānī’s content directly, there are instances where he incorporated al-Gūrānī’s words or referenced him to support or clarify certain theological points in his own commentary. Moreover, both being adherents of the same school of theology, it is not unnatural to find so many parallels between their words even though Ibn Fodio did not quote him directly.

2.4. Fiqh

The interpretation of verses related to jurisprudential issues is another area where the works of Ibn Fodio and al-Gūrānī intersect. It is worth noting that they may not have much in common in this particular area. al-Gūrānī was initially an adherent of the al-Shāfi‘ī school but later became a Hanafī.⁹⁸ On the other hand, Ibn Fodio followed the Mālikī school of thought. al-Gūrānī often cited the opinions of the Hanafī and Shāfi‘ī schools, while Ibn Fodio, influenced by Ibn al-‘Arabī,⁹⁹ cited the opinions of all four major schools of thought, occasionally even including the Dhāhirī school. However, he prioritised the Mālikī opinions.¹⁰⁰ Ibn Fodio’s other major source, *al-Jawāhir al-ḥisān*, is also inclined towards the Mālikī school. Nevertheless, this does not prevent him from utilising al-Gūrānī’s words in this area of exegesis.

Ibn Fodio has cited al-Gūrānī to establish some principles of uṣūl al-fiqh through istinbāt (derivation of laws). For example, al-Gūrānī commented on the verse “يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ” يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ”¹⁰¹ stating that while the report of a fasiq

⁹¹ al-A‘rāf 7/54.

⁹² Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 2/12. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 2/117.

⁹³ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 2/12-13. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 2/117.

⁹⁴ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 1/220. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 1/496.

⁹⁵ al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl*, 2/103.

⁹⁶ Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 1/483.

⁹⁷ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 1/214.

⁹⁸ Yaşaroğlu, ‘Molla Gūrānī’, 249. The claim that this was done at the request of Murad II (or that it ever happened) has been challenged by Aḥmad b. Ya‘qūb al-Fāriḥ, see al-Fāriḥ, ‘Al-Muqaddima’, 1/22.

⁹⁹ Oyelami, *Abdullah b. Fūdī ve Ziyā’ü’t-Te’vīl*, 127-128.

¹⁰⁰ He mentioned this objective in his introductory note, see Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 1/7. For examples of how he applied it, see Oyelami, *Abdullah b. Fūdī ve Ziyā’ü’t-te’vīl*, 102-108.

¹⁰¹ al-Ḥujurat 49/6.

individual cannot be relied upon, the report of a single just individual (khabar al-‘adl al-wāhid) can be trusted. Ibn Fodio quoted al-Gūrānī verbatim, saying, “The verse constitutes evidence for the rejection of the news of a fasiq person and the acceptance of the news from the single just person.”¹⁰² Undoubtedly, this legal maxim derived by al-Gūrānī from the verse is important in the discourse of khabar al-wāhid, which is widely discussed across different schools of thought. Similarly, when talking about the severity of flogging punishments in the context of the Sūrat al-Nūr 24/4, Ibn Fodio quoted Mollā al-Gūrānī’s commentary.¹⁰³

Meanwhile, Ibn Fodio did not heavily rely on al-Gūrānī’s work for verses of aḥkam (legal rulings). In cases where al-Gūrānī criticised his own sources, Ibn Fodio appeared to disregard or bypass these criticisms. An example of this can be seen in the context of Sūrat al-Mu’minūn 23/6, which prohibits extra-marital sexual relationships except with “righthand possess” (female slaves). Ibn Fodio quoted al-Gūrānī verbatim, where al-Gūrānī stated, “In this, there is an indication that it (legal sexual intercourse) is mubāḥ (permissible) and there is no reward or blame/punishment because of the hadith...”.¹⁰⁴ al-Gūrānī then went on to discuss the prohibition of mut‘a marriage, seemingly criticising al-Zamakhsharī’s interpretation that the verse is not evidence against mut‘a marriage because a woman married through mut‘a marriage, if valid, is considered one’s wife.¹⁰⁵ al-Gūrānī, without mentioning al-Zamakhsharī explicitly, stated, “and mut‘a marriage is not correct by consensus. There is no ground for counting the woman married through mut‘a marriage as a spouse.”¹⁰⁶ It is worth noting that Ibn Fodio did not include this part of al-Gūrānī’s commentary, but instead, he proceeded to discuss the rulings regarding sexual relationships with female slaves.¹⁰⁷

This demonstrates that while Ibn Fodio made use of al-Gūrānī’s work in matters of fiqh, he selectively incorporated certain aspects and disregarded or omitted others, particularly when it came to al-Gūrānī’s criticisms of his own sources. Moreover, Ibn Fodio’s having distinct approach and priorities in addressing legal issues made him not necessarily adopt much of al-Gūrānī’s commentaries in this aspect of his work.

2.5. Ishārī (allegorical) tafsir

Another aspect worth comparing between the works of the two exegetes is the use of ishārī (allegorical) exegesis. Allegorical commentaries on the Qur’an date back to the time of the ṣaḥāba.¹⁰⁸ Despite its reflective and moral teaching nature, there are instances where it is taken to extremes and the mufassir engaging in it interprets verses of the Qur’an accordingly. Hence, it is not uncommon to find a mufassir who, despite including some ishārī commentaries in their own work, criticises others that they consider extreme. This is the case with al-Gūrānī’s work against his major source, al-Bayḍāwī’s *Anwār al-tanzīl*.¹⁰⁹

Ibn Fodio’s reference to al-Gūrānī’s work regarding ishārī commentaries is significant because he adopted a more liberal approach in citing him. Sometimes, he quoted him, and at other times he did not. Sometimes, he cited al-Gūrānī’s criticisms, and sometimes he ignored

¹⁰² Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 4/129. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 5/31.

¹⁰³ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 3/119.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 3/103. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/398.

¹⁰⁵ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4/20.

¹⁰⁶ Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/398.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, 3/103.

¹⁰⁸ al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufasssīrūn*, 261-264.

¹⁰⁹ See: Ay, ‘Fatıha ve Bakara Sureleri Örneğinde Molla Gürani’nin Beydavi Eleştirisi’, 411-415; ‘Envârü’t-Tenzil’in Kaynakları ve Tefsir Yöntemi’, *İslam İlim Ve Düşünce Geleneğinde Kadi Beyzavi*, ed. Mustakim Arıcı (Ankara: İsam / İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2017), 369-370.

them while presenting exactly what had been criticised. An example of where he quoted al-Gūrānī's ishārī interpretation can be observed in the commentary of the last verse of Sūrat āl 'Imrān.¹¹⁰ Ibn Fodio stated:

“He (Gūrānī) said in *Ghāyat al-amānī*: And in mentioning the three, there is a reference to the three ranks expressed by the Sharī'a, the Ṭarīqa, and the Ḥaqīqa as if He (Allah) said: Be patient with the hardships of obedience and strive against the soul in breaking habitual actions, and stand in guard of secret in the pursuit of holiness, so that you may attain divine inspiration.”¹¹¹

On the other hand, Ibn Fodio has also cited al-Gūrānī's criticism in Sūrat al-Kahf 18:60,¹¹² which al-Bayḍāwī interpreted the “two seas” allegorically as representing Mūsā and Khidr. Using the “qīla” form to cite the interpretation, al-Bayḍāwī stated that Mūsā represents the river of exoteric knowledge (al-'ilm al-zāhir), while Khidr represents the river of esoteric knowledge (al-'ilm al-bāṭin).¹¹³ In response to this, al-Gūrānī declared that “the interpretation of the two rivers as Mūsā and Khidr is false.”¹¹⁴ Ibn Fodio quoted this criticism verbatim and noted that al-Gūrānī made this statement in *Ghāyat al-amānī*.¹¹⁵

In the case of the clause “فَأَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ” that appears in Sūrat al-Baqara 2/54, which means “execute yourselves” in reference to those who worshipped the calf among the followers of Prophet Mūsā, some mufassirūn like al-Bayḍāwī have proposed an ishārī interpretation of it as the “killing (suppression) of one's desires.” This interpretation is reinforced by the saying, “He who does not torture his soul will not enjoy it, and he who does not kill it will not give it life.”¹¹⁶ However, al-Gūrānī condemned this interpretation as incorrect. Nevertheless, Ibn Fodio did not quote al-Gūrānī's criticism of this interpretation, although he quoted (albeit with qīla) the ishārī commentary in the same manner as al-Bayḍāwī.¹¹⁷

It is important to note that both al-Gūrānī and Ibn Fodio have an inclination towards tasawwuf, although al-Gūrānī's tasawwuf is not as pronounced as Ibn Fodio's, who is a member of the Qadiriyya ṭarīqa.¹¹⁸ However, it appears that both scholars are critical of the excesses of Sufism, and this is reflected in Ibn Fodio's citation of al-Gūrānī to condemn the extremism of some mutasawwifūn in the context of his exegesis on the verse “O messengers! Eat from what is good and lawful, and act righteously. Indeed, I fully know what you do.”¹¹⁹ Ibn Fodio stated, “He (Gūrānī) said in this [verse] is a negation of monasticism which was invented by the Christians and some of the ignorant mutasawwifūn of our time.”¹²⁰

3. Discussion

¹¹⁰ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

(O believers! Patiently endure, persevere, stand on guard, and be mindful of Allah, so you may be successful)

¹¹¹ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 1/161. Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 1/390.

¹¹² وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتْنِهِ لَا آْبِرْخُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا

(And when Moses said to his young assistant, “I will never give up until I reach the junction of the two seas, even if I travel for ages.”)

¹¹³ al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl*, 3/286.

¹¹⁴ Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 3/215-6.

¹¹⁵ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 3/17.

¹¹⁶ al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl*, 1/81.

¹¹⁷ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 1/31.

¹¹⁸ Abdullah b. Fodio translated a poem, authored by his brother 'Uthmān b. Fodio, as a tribute to the esteemed Qādiriyya Ṣūfī ṭarīqa founder 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, from the Fulani language into Arabic. See: Ibn Fodio, *Tazyīn al-warakāt*, 77-80.

¹¹⁹ al-Muminūn 23: 51; “يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ”.

¹²⁰ Cf. Mollā al-Gūrānī, *Ghāyat al-amānī*, 1/413.

We have examined the lives and tafsir works of al-Gūrānī and Ibn Fodio, both of whom were renowned scholars and influential figures of their respective eras and territories. One notable aspect is that Ibn Fodio chose al-Gūrānī as one of his main sources, which is remarkable considering that al-Gūrānī's work is believed to have limited popularity beyond a certain region. Interestingly, none of the researchers studying al-Gūrānī's work has documented Ibn Fodio as one of the mufasssīrūn influenced by al-Gūrānī.¹²¹ However, based on our analysis thus far, it becomes evident that there is a significant intersection between these two scholars.

Bruce Hall and Charles Stewart, who extensively researched manuscripts from West Africa (where the Sokoto Caliphate existed), could not locate a single copy of al-Gūrānī's work, even when they had noted that it was studied by Abdullah b. Fodio.¹²² The intriguing aspect regarding Ibn Fodio's selection of al-Gūrānī's work as a source lies in the shared experiences of both individuals, who served as esteemed advisors and military officers under prominent conquerors of their respective periods. However, the absence of any laudatory remarks for al-Gūrānī within Ibn Fodio's work indicates that this shared characteristic does not hold substantial weight in his decision. Consequently, one can speculate that Ibn Fodio believed al-Gūrānī's work to provide more accurate information compared to the work of al-Bayḍāwī, which he also utilised.

In conclusion, Ibn Fodio's selection of al-Gūrānī's work as a valuable source can be attributed to its extensive content and scholarly significance. Ibn Fodio regarded al-Gūrānī's work on par with renowned scholars such as Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Bayḍāwī, and al-Thaʿālibī, quoting them with equal importance and even expressing a preference for al-Gūrānī's opinions in certain instances. Throughout his tafsir, Ibn Fodio extensively relied on al-Gūrānī's work, incorporating it alongside the works of other scholars while also offering his own interpretations. Notably, al-Gūrānī's assessments of hadiths proved valuable to Ibn Fodio, as he rarely disagreed with al-Gūrānī regarding the authenticity of narrations. However, in terms of interpretation, Ibn Fodio sometimes challenged al-Gūrānī's views, particularly when they conflicted with the historical context of the surah.¹²³ Despite similarities in their approach to citing canonical recitations, al-Gūrānī and Ibn Fodio diverged in their priorities and emphases. al-Gūrānī is characterised by correcting the mistakes of other scholars, while Ibn Fodio primarily aimed to elucidate the meaning of the Warsh/Nāfi' recitations. The citation of al-Gūrānī in matters of jurisprudence, particularly in *usul al-fiqh* and *fiqh*, further illustrates Ibn Fodio's utilisation of his work. However, it should be noted that this study did not observe a consistent preference for al-Gūrānī's opinions in cases of differences of opinion. Ultimately, it can be inferred that Ibn Fodio derived significant benefit from al-Gūrānī's work, possibly using it to rectify mistakes in his other sources, particularly al-Bayḍāwī. Meanwhile, contrary to claims that Ibn Fodio might have accessed al-Bayḍāwī's works through al-Gūrānī's.¹²⁴ Some of the examples used in this study confirm that he had access to both since there is the inclusion of unique content from each author.

Regarding the transmission of al-Gūrānī's work to Sudan, it is possible that the book found its way there through the Maghrib region, where it was sent during the time of Mehmed II. The heritage connection between the Maghrib and Sūdān regions is well known. Also, it might have arrived via Egyptian routes or during the Hajj pilgrimage. However, it should be

¹²¹ Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 3/109.

¹²² Bruce S. Hall - Charles C. Stewart, 'The Historic "Core Curriculum" And The Book Market In Islamic West Africa', *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade*, ed. Graziano Krätli, Ghislaine Lydon (Brill, 2010), 117.

¹²³ See for instance Ibn Fodio, *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*, 3/112.

¹²⁴ Brigaglia, 'Batı Afrika'da Tefsir Çalışmaları ve İslami İlimler Tarihi', 317.

noted that Ibn Fodio himself never performed Hajj, and the closest person to him who did was his teacher, Jibrīl b. ‘Umar.¹²⁵

Conclusion

After studying the works of Abdullah b. Fodio and the potential connection with al-Gūrānī, it can be affirmed that al-Gūrānī is indeed a significant source of tafsir, exerting influential effects across centuries. The relationship between the two exegetes should not be seen as a one-way influence but rather as an intersection between the Ottoman tafsir tradition and the Sokoto tafsir tradition. Abdullah b. Fodio not only established the tafsir tradition in Sokoto but also produced what can be considered the first independent tafsir work in present-day Nigeria.

The importance of al-Gūrānī’s *Ghāyat al-amānī* in offering corrections to the mistakes of previous exegetes holds a central position in Ibn Fodio’s *Ḍiyā’ al-ta’wīl*, and it is plausible that this could have been a motivating factor in his choice of al-Gūrānī’s work as a source. Regardless of the reasons, it is evident that Ibn Fodio held a great respect for al-Gūrānī not only as a mufassir but also as a muḥaddith, even though he did not directly quote from al-Gūrānī’s hadith work, which might not have been accessible to him.

Thus, while this study aimed to establish the significance of al-Gūrānī in the history of West African tafsir, it also raises further questions for future research in the fields of tafsir history and the history of Islamic literature. The exploration of these topics can shed more light on the interconnections and influences within the realm of Islamic scholarship.

¹²⁵ Isma’il A.B. Balogun, ‘The Life and Work of the Mujaddid of West Africa, ‘Uḥmān B. Fūdī Popularly Known as Usumanu Ḍan Fodio’, *Islamic Studies* 12/4 (1973), 287.

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Etik Beyan / Ethical Statement:

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