

Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr: An Investigation of al-Qushayrī's Major Qur'an Commentary

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Abstract

The mystic and scholar of Nishapur, Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, is widely acclaimed for his important treatise on the Sufi Path, *al-Risāla*, and his Sufi commentary of the Qur'an, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*. However, a commentary composed during his early career has been largely overlooked despite its wide attestation in the biographical literature. Called *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* or "the Major Commentary," this work may only survive in manuscript form. At the center of the present study are two manuscripts from Leiden and Istanbul that appear to partially preserve Qushayrī's earliest work of Qur'anic exegesis. By examining the various authorities cited in the text and cross-referencing relevant works, this study works to date the commentary of each text, to identify their respective commentarial influences and authorities, and to draw possible conclusions concerning how the manuscripts relate to one another and ultimately to Qushayrī, the alleged author.

Résumé

Le savant et mystique nishapurien Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī a été largement reconnu pour son important traité sur le cheminement soufi, la *Risāla*, et pour son commentaire mystique du Coran, les *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*. Cependant, un autre commentaire coranique, composé au début de sa carrière, a été souvent ignoré malgré son attestation dans la littérature biographique. Appelée *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, ou le « Commentaire Majeur », cette œuvre a survécu sous forme manuscrite. La présente étude se focalisera sur deux manuscrits de Leiden et Istanbul qui semblent avoir partiellement conservé le plus ancien traité de Qushayrī en exégèse coranique. En examinant les différentes autorités citées dans le texte et en le comparant avec d'autres ouvrages de référence, cette étude essaye de dater le commentaire de chacun des deux textes, d'identifier leurs influences respectives en matière d'exégèse et leurs autorités pour essayer de définir un ensemble de conclusions plausibles sur la façon dont chaque manuscrit se rapporte à l'autre et, enfin, à Qushayrī, leur auteur présumé.

Keywords

manuscripts, Nishapur, Qur'anic exegesis, Qushayrī, Sufism, *tafsīr*

Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) was a paragon of scholastic erudition and a master of the burgeoning Sufi tradition. His most famous works, the Sufi treatise *al-Risāla* and his mystical commentary of the Qur'an *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*, are testaments to his enduring legacy. They were,

after all, both begun in 437/1045–6 when Qushayrī was over sixty years old and writing with the maturity and wisdom of age. It is peculiar then that the earliest records of Qushayrī's life hardly name either work.¹ Even his grandson Abū l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā'īl al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134) makes no direct reference to either the *Risāla* or the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* in Qushayrī's biographical entry. It is not until the seventh/thirteenth century that chroniclers begin to include these texts when covering Qushayrī.² However, beginning with Fārisī the biographers do name a different composition called *al-Taḥṣīn al-kabīr*, an important, but overlooked commentary of the Qur'an.³ The *Taḥṣīn al-kabīr* is not only a major work from Qushayrī's corpus but also the product of a lively period of *taḥṣīn* production in Khurasan, especially in the city of Nishapur.⁴ An appreciation of its contents would provide valuable information for better

¹ These biographers, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), al-Bākhārī (d. 467/1075), al-Hujwīrī (d. ca. 465/1072–3 or 469/1076–7), and al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134), had all encountered Qushayrī at some point. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḥ madīnat al-salām wa-akhbār muḥaddithihā wa-dhikr quṭṭānīhā al-'ulamā' min ghayr ahlihā wa-wāridihā*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 12:366; 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Bākhārī, *Dumyat al-qasr wa-ʿuṣrat ahl al-ʿaṣr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnjī, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1993), 2:993–8; 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, ed. Valentin Alekseevich Zhoukovskii, 9th ed. (Tehran: Kitābkhanah-i Tahūrī, 1382/[2004]), 209–10; 'Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā'īl al-Fārisī, "*Kitāb al-Siyāq li-ta'riḥ Naysābūr*," in *The Histories of Nishapur*, ed. Richard Nelson Frye (London: Mouton & Co., 1965), fol. 49a–b.

² Al-Ṣarīfī (d. 641/1243), who produced a recension of Fārisī's biographical dictionary, mentions the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* in his biography of Fārisī, the last entry in the compilation, stating, "The *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* was read by [al-Fārisī] in the lands of India." Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) in *al-Kāmil fī l-ta'riḥ* mentions the *Risāla*. Al-Ṣarīfī, *al-Muntakhab min al-siyāq li-ta'riḥ Naysābūr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1409/1989), 493; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-ta'riḥ*, ed. 'Umar Tadmūrī, 11 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1417/1997), 8:245. It should be noted that earlier references are found outside of the *ṭabaqāt* genre. For instance, Abū Bakr Ibn 'Arabī (d. 543/1148) praises the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* (calling it *al-Laṭā'if wa-l-ishārāt*) in *Qānūn al-ta'wīl*. Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī, *Qānūn al-Ta'wīl*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sulaymānī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 207.

³ Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), Ṣarīfī, and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245) follow the report of Fārisī. Ibn 'Asākir and Ṣarīfī rely on a version of Fārisī's report that differs from that found in *Kitāb al-Siyāq*. al-Fārisī, "*Kitāb al-Siyāq*," fol. 49b; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabayīn kadhīb al-muftarī fī mā nusiba ilā al-imām Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid b. al-Ḥasan al-Kawtharī (Damascus: al-Qudsī, 1347/1928), 273; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'riḥ al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā et al., 19 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1412/1992), 16:148–9; Ṣarīfī, *al-Muntakhab*, 335; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Shāfi'iyya*, ed. Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Alī Najīb, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1413/1992), 2:364.

⁴ Claude Gilliot, "L'Exégèse du Coran en Asie Centrale et au Khorasan," *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999): 129–64; idem, "Works on *Hadīth* and its Codification, on Exegesis and on Theology, Part Two: Qur'anic Exegesis," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 4, ed. C.E. Bosworth and M.S. Asimov (Paris: UNESCO, 2000), 97–116; Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Taḥṣīn Tradition: The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Tha'labī* (d. 427/1035) (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–5, 28; idem, "The Last of the Nishapuri School of Taḥṣīn: Al-Wāhidī (d. 468/1076) and His Significance in the History of Qur'anic Exegesis," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 126.2 (2006): 225–7; and

understanding the formation of this important regional *tafsīr* tradition, one in which Sufism was visibly present.

Yet some confusion surrounds the title of the work. The phrase *al-tafsīr al-kabīr* may be read as a proper title, “The Major Commentary,” or more generically as “the great commentary.” Given the ambiguity, many later biographers took *al-tafsīr al-kabīr* to be a reference to Qushayrī’s *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*. However, a careful reading of an early report reveals the suggestion to be erroneous. It states, “[Qushayrī] composed the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* before [the year] 410 in appointed sessions.”⁵ The date 410/1019–20 is too early for the *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt* since Qushayrī states that he began that work in 437/1045–6.⁶ The *Tafsīr al-kabīr*, on the other hand, was written decades earlier when Qushayrī was in his thirties. The question remains then, what is this work called *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* and might some or all of it have survived in manuscript form? The following study seeks to answer these questions by examining two manuscripts that have been attributed to Qushayrī with three objectives in mind: 1) dating the texts; 2) determining their respective sources and influences; and, 3) speculating on their possible connection to Qushayrī.

The two manuscripts under examination are MS Leiden Or. 811 and MS Laleli 198. The first manuscript, MS Leiden Or. 811 (hereafter called the Leiden manuscript), is currently held in the Oriental collection of the Leiden University Library.⁷ It is part of the Warner Collection being one of some eight hundred manuscripts procured by Levinas Warner (d. 1665) during his residence in Istanbul. The second manuscript, MS Laleli 198 (hereafter the Laleli manuscript), was originally held at the Laleli mosque in Istanbul and is presently accessed at the Süleymaniye Library.⁸ Both manuscripts contain only a part of a larger Qur’an commentary. Moreover, each manuscript has previously received some degree of scholarly attention, but the question of authorship

Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur’an Scholar: Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and the Laṭā’if al-ishārāt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 12–4, 88–94.

⁵ *Ṣannafa al-tafsīr al-kabīr qabla al-‘aṣhar wa-arba’a-mi’a wa-rattaba al-majālis*. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tabyīn*, 273; and Ṣarīfīnī, *al-Muntakhab*, 335.

⁶ A consultation of the manuscripts confirms the date. The published editions of the *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*, all of which are based on Ibrāhīm Basyūnī’s 1968 edition, have the incorrect year of 434/1042–3. Qushayrī, *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*, MS Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 117, fol. 1b; Qushayrī, *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*, MS Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), Carullah Ef 119M, fol. 1b; and Qushayrī, *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm Basyūnī, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-‘Arabī, [1968–71]), 53–4.

⁷ Qushayrī (?), *al-Tafsīr al-Qushayrī*, Leiden University Library (Leiden), MS Oriental 811, 295 fols. I would like to thank Gerhard Böwering for directing me to this manuscript.

⁸ Qushayrī (?), *Ajzā’ tafsīr Qushayrī*, Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), MS Laleli 198, 312 fols. I thank Annabel Keeler for bringing this manuscript to my attention, as well as Kristin Sands who first recognized that the manuscript had been miscataloged as the *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*.

has not been rigorously interrogated nor have the texts been analyzed side-by-side. A review of the earlier studies is in order.

Preceding Studies

The question of Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr* has not been entirely overlooked. In 1968 Rashid Ahmad (Jullandri) was the first scholar to investigate the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* in his dissertation at the University of Cambridge.⁹ Inspecting several manuscripts that had been cataloged as Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr*, he concludes that only the Leiden manuscript is authentic, being completely unaware of the Laleli manuscript. His criteria for the Leiden manuscript's authenticity rest mainly on dating and comparisons made with later commentaries, namely those of Qushayrī's son Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Raḥīm (d. 514/1120), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) and al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272). Ahmad pays special attention to frequent citations of an unspecified Abū 'Alī, who he presumes, on some occasions, to be Qushayrī's first Sufi master Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015).¹⁰ The study focuses on the (often spurious) identification of authorities cited in the work, many of whom are Mu'tazilis. While Ahmad's work is valuable for bringing the Leiden manuscript to light, his analysis is outdated. Scholarship on both Rāzī's *tafsīr*, which is critical to Ahmad's argument, and the Mu'tazila, whom he calls "free thinkers," has developed substantially since that time. Ahmad also criticizes the author for using "unauthentic traditions" and including "superfluous" material further revealing the study's subjective flaws.¹¹ Therefore, while Ahmad's study serves as a valuable reference point, it is still a "nebulous examination" that must be approached with caution.¹²

Gerhard Böwering has also recognized the importance of the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* in a number of his works. In his 1980 study of the mystical commentary of

⁹ The work, with various degrees of modification, has since been published on a number of occasions. The latest of these has excised most of the material concerning the *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. Rashid Ahmad, "Tafsīr in Sūfī literature with particular reference to Abu Al-Qasim al-Qushairī" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1968); Rashid Ahmad (Jullandri), "Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushairī as a Theologian and Commentator," *The Islamic Quarterly* 13 (1969): 16–69; Rashid Ahmad (Jullandri), *Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushairī as a Theologian and Commentator: A Critique of His Age and of His Work on the Qur'ānic Exegesis* (London: The Islamic Cultural Centre, 1969); Rashid Ahmad (Jullandri), *Qur'ānic Exegesis in Classical Literature with Particular Reference to Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushairī: A Critique of his age and his work on the Quranic Exegesis* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 2006). For the remainder of the study I cite only the article in *The Islamic Quarterly*.

¹⁰ Ahmad, "Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 38–9.

¹¹ Ibid., 44, 57.

¹² Gerhard Böwering, "Review of Richard Gramlich, *Das Sendschreiben al-Quṣayrīs über das Sufitum*," *Orientalia* 58.4 (1989): 571.

Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), Bowering alludes to Qushayrī's first commentary in passing.¹³ Then, in a review of Richard Gramlich's German translation of Qushayrī's *Risāla* Bowering specifically discusses the Leiden manuscript providing a brief description of it. This is also where Bowering first expresses his judgment on the authenticity of the manuscript: "It appears to this reviewer that ms. *Leiden* 1659, which cites 'our master (*ṣaykūnā*) Abū 'Alī' (ad-Daqqāq!),' forms part of the authentic work quoted by al-Quṣayrī's biographers as the Great Commentary (*At-tafsīr al-kabūr*)."¹⁴ Bowering raises the matter again in his article on Q. 24:35, the Light Verse.¹⁵ Finally, I have offered preliminary remarks concerning the Leiden manuscript (as well as the Laleli manuscript) in my analysis of Qushayrī's *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*.¹⁶ The present study is both an expansion of and corrective to my earlier findings. Altogether these few studies constitute the extent of research that has been conducted on the Leiden manuscript.

As for the Laleli manuscript the present investigation was started under the impression that the text had not previously been studied. However, shortly after presenting my initial findings at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, I learned of a 2006 dissertation in Arabic completed at Umm al-Qura University in Mecca entitled *al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr li-Imām 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, min awwal al-kitāb ilā nihāyat sūrat al-baqara dirāsāt^{an} wa-taḥqīq^{an}* ("Facilitation in the Art of Interpretation by the Leading Scholar 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī: A Study and Edition from the Beginning of the Book to the End of *Sūrat al-baqara*").¹⁷ In this important work the author 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī al-Maymūnī al-Muṭayrī has provided a study and partial edition of the Laleli manuscript where he argues for Qushayrī's authorship. His analysis, however, is far from comprehensive and the present examination endeavors to address several points lacking in his analysis. Maymūnī, for example, names the commentary in the Laleli manuscript *al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*. This title is incorrect and appears nowhere in

¹³ Gerhard Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 31 note 119.

¹⁴ Bowering, "Review of Richard Gramlich," 571. Leiden 1659 and Leiden Or. 811 are one and the same. Bowering uses the alternate catalog listing "ms. *Leiden* 1659" following the convention established by the *Catalogus Codicum Orientalium Bibliothecae Academiae Lugduno-Batavae*.

¹⁵ Gerhard Bowering, "The Light Verse: Qur'anic Text and Šūfī Interpretation," *Oriens* 36 (2001): 137.

¹⁶ Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 186–203.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Francesco Chiabotti for apprising me of this study. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī al-Maymūnī al-Muṭayrī, "*al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr li-Imām 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, min awwal al-kitāb ilā nihāyat sūrat al-baqara dirāsāt^{an} wa-taḥqīq^{an}*" (PhD diss., Umm al-Qura University, 1427/[2006]).

the manuscript. Maymūnī bases his assertion on a relatively late statement made by Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282).¹⁸ Unfortunately, Ibn Khallikān's statement has been proven to be inaccurate.¹⁹ The title *al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr* properly belongs to the Qur'an commentary of Qushayrī's son Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Raḥīm. Furthermore, Maymūnī is unaware of the Leiden manuscript or of the few studies on it. Nevertheless, Maymūnī's dissertation has laid valuable groundwork by delineating the contours of the Laleli manuscript. Both Maymūnī and Ahmad will be respectively referenced for their contributions during my treatment of the manuscripts.

The Historical Records

There are a few discernible, even if rudimentary, features that can be gleaned from the historical records about the *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. Fārisī's *Kitāb al-Sīyāq* states "[Qushayrī] composed the famous *al-tafsīr al-kabīr*."²⁰ First, this is the earliest source to claim that Qushayrī composed a work referred to as *al-tafsīr al-kabīr*. Second, the statement makes it clear that the commentary had obtained, or was perceived to have obtained, a degree of renown by Fārisī's lifetime.

Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), a contemporary of Fārisī, provides another clue. At the beginning of *al-Risāla al-laduniyya* Ghazālī groups an unspecified *tafsīr* by Qushayrī together with the commentaries of al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035) and al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) and then contrasts them with the thoroughly mystical *tafsīr* of al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021).²¹ Taking the intentional contrast into consideration, Ghazālī was likely not referring to the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*. The *tafsīr* being attributed to Qushayrī would have lacked the pervasive mysticism of Sulamī's *tafsīr*. The *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*, while distinct in certain ways, nonetheless has traceable connections to Sulamī's commentary and is decidedly mystical in nature.²² Therefore, the *tafsīr* mentioned by Ghazālī was

¹⁸ Maymūnī, "*al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*," 101; and Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, et al., 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), 3:225.

¹⁹ Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 176–8.

²⁰ *Ṣannafa al-tafsīr al-kabīr al-ma'rūf*. Fārisī, "*Kitāb al-Sīyāq*," fol. 49b. After *al-ma'rūf* and on the margin of the text is an illegible notation. This might be read as *sanna ٤١٠* meaning "the year 410," but this is unclear. The following line reads *ilā ghayr thālika* simply indicating that other works were composed in addition to *al-tafsīr al-kabīr*. Maymūnī was similarly unable to decipher the marginalia. Maymūnī, "*al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*," 75, 100.

²¹ Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, "*al-Risāla al-laduniyya*," in *Majmū'at rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2003), p. 223.

²² Süleyman Ateş, *İşâri Tefsîr Okulu* (Üsküdar, Istanbul: Yeni Ufuklar Neşriyat, 1998), 98–105; and Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 287–340.

likely the *Tafsīr al-kabīr*, which means it was perceived by Ghazālī as more akin to Thaʿlabī's *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān* and Mawārdī's *Nukat al-ʿuyūn* in its degree of spiritual exegesis than with Sulamī's *Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr*.

A generation later Ibn ʿAsākir provides a variant of the statement found in the *Kitāb al-Siyāq* that reads “[Qushayrī] composed *al-tafsīr al-kabīr* before 410 in appointed sessions.”²³ This report is also on the authority of Fārisī, meaning that the earlier *Kitāb al-Siyāq* is only a recension of a more complete work. In any event, Ibn ʿAsākir's report provides us with a timeframe for the *Tafsīr al-kabīr*'s composition. Qushayrī had composed, or at least had begun to compose, the commentary by the year 410/1019–20. Additionally the commentary appears to have been arranged and/or delivered in regularly scheduled sessions (*majālis*; sing. *majlis*).

Next, biographical dictionaries relate that Qushayrī was associated with a number of exegetically-inclined Nishapuri scholars. The previously mentioned Sulamī served as Qushayrī's second master in *taṣawwuf* after the death of his first master Abū ʿAlī al-Daqqāq in 405/1015. An anecdote related in the biography of Thaʿlabī, relates that Qushayrī knew Thaʿlabī and his student al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076), both of whom are famous for their respective works in *tafsīr* and the Qurʾanic sciences.²⁴ Qushayrī had also studied with their revered predecessor in exegesis, Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 406/1016).²⁵ In fact, a number of his colleagues also composed Qurʾan commentaries, such as Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī (d. 438/1047), Abū ʿUthmān al-Ṣābūnī (d. 449/1057) and Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066), the last of whom compiled a *tafsīr* ascribed to the legal architect al-Shāfiʿī. Given the death dates of the most senior figures, it is clear that Qushayrī would have been exposed to the scholarly production of *tafsīr* from an early point in his career and the composition of the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* would have been a natural undertaking given this persistent exposure. The respective hermeneutical methods of these scholars would have also influenced Qushayrī during his composition of the commentary before and around 410/1019–20.

Lastly, Thaʿlabī's commentary *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān* contains an introduction that is an important reference for crosschecking names and references that appear in the manuscripts.²⁶ Since Thaʿlabī's *tafsīr* would have been

²³ *Ṣannaḥa al-tafsīr al-kabīr qabla al-ʿashar wa-arbaʿa-miʿa wa-rattaba al-majālis*. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn*, 273.

²⁴ Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition*, 33, 56–8.

²⁵ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿiyya*, 2:565.

²⁶ Al-Thaʿlabī, *Qurʾanic Commentary in the Eastern Islamic Tradition of the First Four Centuries of the Hijra: An Annotated Edition of the Preface to al-Thaʿlabī's "Kitāb al-Kashf wa-l-Bayān an Tafsīr al-Qurʾan"*, ed. Isaiah Goldfeld (Acre: Sruqy Printers and Publishers, 1984); and al-Thaʿlabī,

contemporaneous with the period of the *Tafsīr al-kabīr*'s supposed composition, the two works would likely have overlapping influences. In fact, Tha'labī's introduction goes so far as to list the "sources" of his *tafsīr* providing valuable chains of transmission. The many names enumerated in the introduction can be used to better identify similar names appearing in the Leiden and Laleli manuscripts.

The Leiden Manuscript

The Leiden manuscript contains a Qur'an commentary that covers verses Q. 57:21 to Q. 66:12 and consists of 295 hastily written folios. The handwriting is often difficult to read and is only partially dotted. The brief title page also bears text attributing the work to Qushayrī, but Qushayrī's name never appears elsewhere in the text. A colophon on folio 240b indicates that that portion of the manuscript was copied on 17 Jumāda al-Awwal, 535 (28 December, 1140) by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-...[Ba]sanī (?), a figure I have been unable to identify.²⁷ Dated notations appear abundantly throughout the manuscript, which is useful in establishing the text's provenance. Moreover, the commentary is divided into sessions (*majālis*; sing. *majlis*) indicating that each block of text was delivered for the specified session. This detail matches well the description given of the *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. The *majālis* format was also a common convention of delivery for scholars of Qushayrī's time and place.²⁸ Concerning the *majālis* of the Leiden manuscript, each session is numbered and dated with the copyist regularly denoting three items: 1) the year of the session; 2) the calendrical date for each session; and, 3) the day of the week. This information reveals that the *tafsīr* was delivered weekly every Tuesday from 2 Dhū al-Ḥijja, 413 to 19 Rābī' al-Awwal, 414 (25 February to 10 June in the year 1023). Also, the first labeled *majlis* is numbered 462 with the last ending sixteen weeks later with *majlis* 477. Thus, we further learn that the commentary was being gradually delivered over an extensive period of time. This begs the

Muqaddimat al-kashf wa-l-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān, ed. Khālid b. 'Awn al-'Anazī (Riyadh: Kunūz Ishbīlyā, 1429/2008).

²⁷ Ahmad reads the *nisba* as "al-Bustī," while Witkam has "al-...sani." Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 38; Jan Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden: Manuscripts, Volume 1, Manuscripts Or. 1—Or. 1000* (Leiden: Ter Lugt Press, 2007), 342.

²⁸ Especially important is the Sufi Abū Sa'd al-Khargūshī (d. 406/1015 or 407/1016), who is another teacher of Qushayrī and the author of another *majālis*-structured *tafsīr* called *Kitāb al-Lawāmi'*. Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, "Abū Sa'd al-Ḥargūshī and his *Kitāb al-Lawāmi'*. A Sufi Guide Book for Preachers from 4th/10th century Nishapur," *Arabica* 57 (2011), 506–9.

question how does this timeframe correlate with what is known concerning Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr*?

While the years 413–14/1023 come after Fārisī's reported date of 410/1019–20, the author would have begun the commentary well before the reported year of 410. Assuming consistent and accurate numbering, one can estimate that the first *majlis* would have taken place approximately nine years earlier, around 404/1014. Assuming consistency, the first *majlis* would have been on Tuesday 23 Shawwāl, 404 / 26 April, 1014.²⁹ This conjectural estimate aligns with the report that the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* was composed before 410 if that report is read to mean that the composition process was initiated before that year. Furthermore, the commentary's division into *majālis* also matches the descriptions found in the historical records.³⁰ Based on this evidence the Leiden manuscript continues to meet the criteria for the *Tafsīr al-kabīr*.

Ahmad follows the same line of inquiry before focusing on the identification of a commonly recurring name cited in the text, "Abū 'Alī." Ahmad argues that references to "Our master (*shaykhunā*) Abū 'Alī" usually refer to Qushayrī's first spiritual master Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq, a point with which Böwering concurs.³¹ However, Ahmad adds that not all of the appearances of Abū 'Alī refer to the Sufi shaykh. Instead he contends that the name sometimes refers to Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915–16) or Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987).³² Ahmad bases this on the fact that opinions given in the Leiden manuscript later appear in the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), where Rāzī gives the name of either Jubbā'ī or Fārisī instead of the more ambiguous Abū 'Alī. This point leads Ahmad to believe that Rāzī depended on the Leiden manuscript in composing the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*. His explanation that "a true 'Ālim, or Ṣūfī, is not bound to follow any theological school" is oblivious to Qushayrī's ardent advocacy of Ash'arism and to the divisive factional strife afflicting fifth/elev-enth century Nishapur.³³

But the issues surrounding Ahmad's conclusion are not limited to this oversight. In fact, citations made by Rāzī cannot be taken at face value. As Suleiman Mourad has shown, names appearing in the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* do not necessarily indicate that Rāzī had access to the commentaries of the persons named. While Rāzī did have direct access to some texts, like the *tafsīr* of al-Zamakhsharī

²⁹ Ahmad extrapolates a different beginning date of "the 25th Shawwāl 402/1011." It is unclear how he ascertained this date. Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 39.

³⁰ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabayīn*, 273; and al-Šarīfīnī, *al-Muntakhab*, 335.

³¹ Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 38–39; and Böwering, "Review of Richard Gramlich," 571.

³² Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 41–2.

³³ Ibid., 43.



Figure 1. MS Leiden Or. 811, fol. 1b

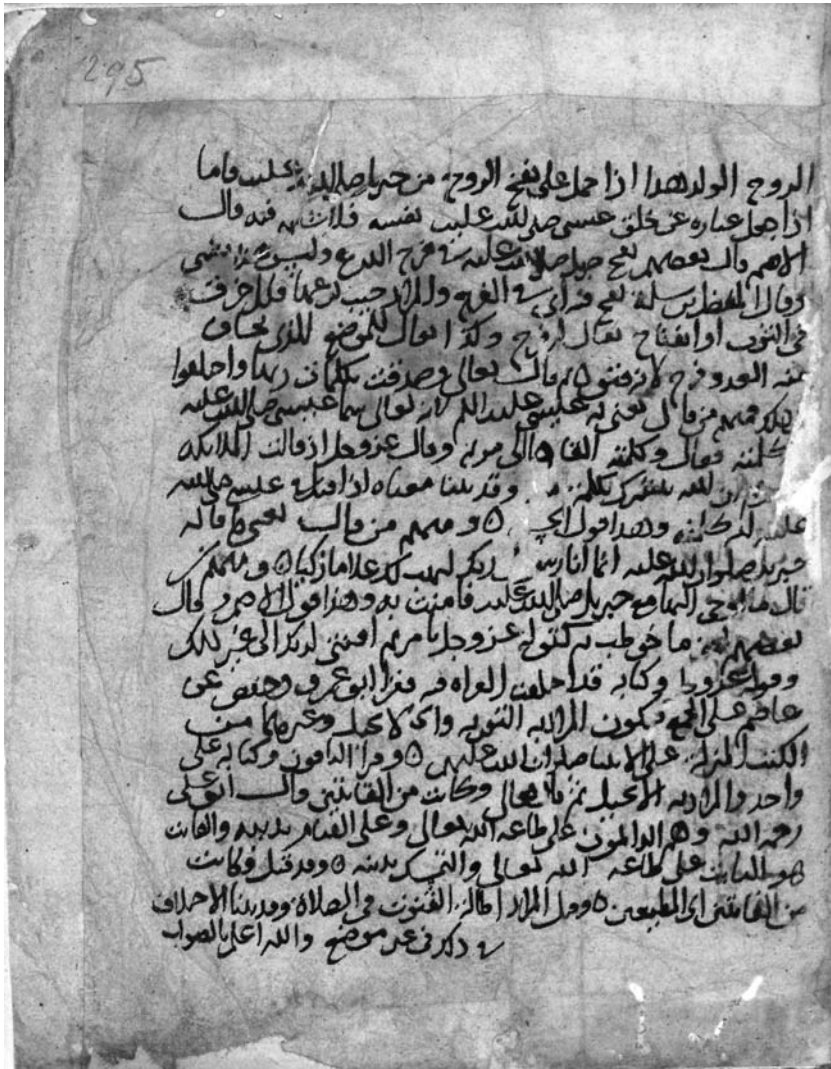


Figure 2. MS Leiden Or. 811, fol. 295a

(d. 538/1144), he also copied wholesale passages from other commentaries without providing any form of attribution, as was done with Wāḥidī's *Basīṭ*.³⁴ Thus, the “clarification” of Abū ‘Alī as either Jubbā’ī or Fārisī in the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* may merely be guesswork on the part of Rāzī. Furthermore, similarities with the Leiden manuscript do not necessarily mean that he depended on this specific text. It is just as possible that the Leiden manuscript and the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* share a common source or that Rāzī accessed a different recension.

To complicate matters even further, the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* is not entirely the work of Rāzī. The scholarship of Jomier and Gramlich indicate that Rāzī's commentary was penned by more than one hand, since the work was left unfinished at the time of Rāzī's death.³⁵ It is also unclear when the commentary for verses Q. 57:21 and Q. 66:12, the section covered in the Leiden manuscript, was composed for the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*.³⁶ A more careful understanding of the *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* is needed in order to properly appreciate the significance of the apparent points of correspondence between it and Leiden commentary.

Rāzī aside, Ahmad also turns to the seventh/thirteenth century *tafsīr* of Qurṭubī.³⁷ A reading of Qurṭubī's commentary reveals that the name Qushayrī is periodically quoted throughout the text. But as with Rāzī, the correlation between Qurṭubī's work and the Leiden manuscript is not straightforward. Sometimes Qurṭubī appears to be referring to Abū l-Qāsim Qushayrī and sometimes to his son Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Raḥīm. Ultimately, Ahmad identifies two passages from Qurṭubī's *tafsīr* that resonate with the Leiden manuscript, verses Q. 58:12 and Q. 60:1.³⁸ Investigating Qurṭubī further, I have found nine relevant occasions where “Qushayrī” is invoked.³⁹ Compared to the Leiden manuscript, similarities appear for five of them, twice for verse Q. 57:25

³⁴ Suleiman A. Mourad, “The Survival of the Mu‘tazila Tradition of Qur’anic Exegesis in Shī‘i and Sunnī *tafsīr*,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 12 (2010): 86–8, 101–4.

³⁵ Jacques Jomier, “Les Mafatih al-ghayb de l’Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi: quelques dates, lieux, manuscrits,” *Mélanges: Institut Dominicain d’Etudes Orientales du Caire* 13 (1977): 253–90; idem, “Qui a commenté l’ensemble des sourates *al-Ankabūt* à *Yāsīn* (29–36) dans ‘le Tafsīr al-kabīr’ de l’imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī?,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11.4 (1980): 467–85; and Richard Gramlich, “Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī's Kommentar zu Sure 18.9–12,” *Asiatische Studien* 1 (1979): 99–152.

³⁶ Frank Griffel, “On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18.3 (2007): 313–44, especially 325, 344. While aware of the authorship problem, Ahmad does not sufficiently engage it. Ahmad, “Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī,” 54 note 2.

³⁷ Ahmad, “Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī,” 39–41.

³⁸ Ibid., 40–1.

³⁹ The name Qushayrī is cited twice for verses Q. 57:25 and Q. 60:11 and once for verses Q. 58:12, Q. 60:1, Q. 65:1, Q. 66:6, and Q. 66:10. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Ḥafnāwī and Maḥmūd Ḥāmid ‘Uthmān, 10 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2002), 9:215–6, 248, 305, 319–20, 383, 420, 424. None of the passages remotely match the *Laṭā‘if al-ishārāt* except for a surface similarity under verse Q. 57:25. Qushayrī, *Laṭā‘if al-ishārāt*, 4:112.

and once for Q. 58:12, Q. 60:1 and Q. 66:10.⁴⁰ Although the exact wording differs, Qurṭubī and the Leiden manuscript report similar opinions. While far from definitive, it does not negate the possibility of Qushayrī's authorship of the Leiden manuscript.

The text of the Leiden manuscript discloses a number of significant names. These names, though, should not necessarily be considered sources. An important caution raised by Mourad, and variously expressed by others, bears reiterating:

... It is misleading to compile lists of names of early exegetes, grammarians, etc. quoted in later *tafāsīr*, especially whose works have been lost, and speculate that the later scholars must have possessed their works. Unless we have conclusive and corroborative proof that they did, such assumptions are untenable to say the least.⁴¹

The names cited throughout the Leiden manuscript are better understood as influences rather than sources in that the author of the commentary was interested in either reproducing their opinions or invoking their authority. These were persons and interpretations of value and are worth identifying in order to better understand the exegetical interests of the author.

Reading through the Leiden manuscript, two types of authorities emerge. The first are reports and explanations from the conventional Sunni informants of the earliest generations: the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and Successors (*tābi'ūn*) of the Prophet. The expected names of Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687–8), Mujāhid (d. 104–5/722–3), Qatāda (d. 117/735), and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 121/738) repeatedly appear.⁴² These same names are commonly cited in other encyclopedic commentaries, like those of al-Ṭabarī (d. 311/923) and Tha'labī.

The second set of authorities consists of latter-day scholars who lived after the era of the Companions and Successors. Several of them passed away as late as the early 400s/1000s when the commentary was reportedly being delivered. This group not only narrows the historical timeframe further, they also represent more specific intellectual and exegetical interests. For instance, al-Wāqidi (d. 207/822), a recognized authority of the early Muslim period, is cited several

⁴⁰ MS Leiden Or. 811, fols. 9b–10b, 47b, 119b, 290a–290b.

⁴¹ Mourad, "The Survival of the Mu'tazila Tradition," 88. Lane expresses similar caveats in his study of al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf*. Andrew J. Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī* (d. 538/1144) (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 181–6.

⁴² In addition to the following figures also appear with regularity: Ubayy b. Ka'b (d. ca. 19/640–35/656), Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/652–3), 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), 'Ā'isha (d. 58/678), al-Daḥḥāk (d. 64/684), 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar (d. 73/693), Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d. 94–5/711–12), 'Ikrima (d. 105/723–4), and al-Kalbī (d. 146/763).

times for historical material.⁴³ Among his works, is the enduring historical chronicle *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. Similarly, the above-mentioned exegete and historian Ṭabarī, cited as “Muḥammad b. Jarīr,” is explicitly invoked for the wide-ranging exegetical knowledge that he compiled. A comparative reading reveals that the Leiden manuscript is largely faithful to the text of Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr*.⁴⁴

From the discipline of philology, a number of names are regularly named. Al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) appears throughout with great frequency. Appearing less often, but still noticeably is the famous grammarian Sībawayh (d. ca. 160–75/776–91). Abū Ṭālib al-Mufaḍḍal b. Salama (d. 290–300/902–13),⁴⁵ who reportedly authored a voluminous work in the *ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān* genre entitled *Ḍiyā’ al-qulūb*, is occasionally quoted as well. The Ibādī scholar al-Mu‘arrij (d. after 204/819) is quoted rarely for concise lexicographical explanations.⁴⁶ While not overriding, a consistent interest in the philological approach is apparent in the text.

Turning to legalistic interpretations in the commentary, it is evident that the author is interested in reporting *ikhtilāf* or differences of opinion. In doing so, important legal personalities are invoked such as al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157/774), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) and his followers (*aṣḥābuhu*), Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796) and the people of Medina (*ahl al-madīna*), and then Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) and Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805). Of all of these legal authorities, the Shāfi‘is are called upon far more than the others possibly demonstrating a greater familiarity with or even proclivity for that *madhhab*. Notably Qushayrī was a devoted Shāfi‘ī in a city with a tightly-knit Shāfi‘ī faction.

Nevertheless, the Ḥanafī-Mu‘tazilī jurist Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣās (d. 371/980), who lived only a generation before, also has a prominent place in the Leiden manuscript. Jaṣṣās, who authored a well-known *aḥkām* commentary of the Qur’an, is called upon in the text in a number of places. Significant passages, ranging from a handful of lines to half a manuscript page, are reproduced verbatim.⁴⁷ The author of the Leiden manuscript evidently had access

⁴³ MS Leiden Or. 811, fols. 58b, 65b, 214b.

⁴⁴ Notable examples are found for verses Q. 58:13, Q. 58:22, Q. 64:9, and Q. 65:2. MS Leiden Or. 811, fols. 49b, 56a–b, 227b, 251a; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an ta’wīl āy al-Qur’ān*, ed. Maḥmūd Shākir, 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001), 28:27–8, 32–3, 137, 154.

⁴⁵ Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufaṣṣirīn*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), 2:328–9.

⁴⁶ Qushayrī (?), *al-Taḥf al-Qushayrī*, MS Leiden Or. 811, fols. 17b, 31a, 226b.

⁴⁷ See the following seven examples: al-Qushayrī (?), *al-Taḥf al-Qushayrī*, MS Leiden Or. 811, fols. 75a, 140b, 242b, 243b, 246b, 249b, 271a; Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣās, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāhin, 1st ed., 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1415/1994), 3:575, 589, 606, 606–7, 608, 609, 621.

to and respect for this relatively recent legal *tafsīr*. It is not implausible to imagine that Qushayrī would have been familiar with this work. However, Jaṣṣāṣ's Ḥanafī and Mu'tazilī affiliations need to be adequately framed if Qushayrī is in fact the author of the Leiden commentary. Several possible explanations will be furnished below in the conclusion. At the very least, an interest for differences of opinion, both legal and theological, was a general concern for many scholars.

Scholastics aside, the commentary is not devoid of pietistic and mystical content either. While the substance of the *tafsīr* never approaches the level of mystical engagement found in Sulamī's earlier *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr* or Qushayrī's later *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*, a handful of spiritual paragons nevertheless speak in the Leiden manuscript. Two sections in particular are noteworthy. For the commentary on verse Q. 57:23 seven reports are given in quick succession. Each is related to the theme of renunciation (*zuhd*) in some way, which is significant since Qushayrī cites the very same verse in his treatment of *zuhd* in the *Risāla*.⁴⁸ The reports are from Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād (d. 187/803), Bishr b. Ḥārith al-Ḥafī (d. 226–7/840–2), 'Uthmān b. Salama, Bishr b. Ḥārith again, Yaḥyā b. Mu'adh (d. 258/872) twice, and Abū Muslim al-Iskandarānī. Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād, Bishr b. Ḥārith, and Yaḥyā b. Mu'adh are featured in the *ṭabaqāt* section of the *Risāla* and then quoted throughout the remainder of the treatise.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, none of sayings in the Leiden manuscript are in the *Risāla*. Yet one of the sayings of Bishr b. Ḥārith, "No one loves this world except that he does not love death. And no one renounces this world except that he loves death in order to meet his master," does appear verbatim in the *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'* of Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430/1038).⁵⁰ Qushayrī would have been familiar with that voluminous work because his son Abū Maṣṣūr 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 480/1087) reportedly copied the entire text.⁵¹ Furthermore, several of the hadiths cited in Qushayrī's *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* also appear in the *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*.⁵²

A similar case appears with the quotation of Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/861) near the end of the Leiden manuscript. Dhū al-Nūn, who is also noticeably present in Qushayrī's *Risāla*,⁵³ is quoted in the context of verse Q. 66:8 for his understanding of *al-tawba al-naṣūḥ* ("sincere repentance").⁵⁴ While the

⁴⁸ Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayrīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1385/1966), 1:293.

⁴⁹ For the biographies see al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayrīyya*, 1:57–9; 68–71; 91–2.

⁵⁰ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1409/1988), 8:348.

⁵¹ Fārisī, *Kitāb al-Siyāq*, fol. 43b; and al-Ṣarīfinī, *al-Muntakhab*, 317.

⁵² Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, 280–1.

⁵³ Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayrīyya*, 1:54–6.

⁵⁴ MS Leiden Or. 811, fol. 285b.

saying is not in the *Risāla* either, it is found in the collection *Shu‘ab al-īmān* by Qushayrī’s close colleague Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī.⁵⁵ The two of them travelled together through Iraq and the Hejaz studying hadith with the same teachers.⁵⁶ Qushayrī then may have been familiar with this particular report from Dhū l-Nūn as well. These spiritual sayings, found with Abū Nu‘aym and Bayhaqī, were clearly circulating in Qushayrī’s milieu and may well have fallen into his compositional purview if he were indeed the author behind the Leiden manuscript.

The author acknowledged and respected the exegetical authority of these ascetics and mystics enough to include them here. Their sayings were deemed to have interpretive value. Furthermore, the appearance of these specific personalities in the Leiden commentary represents a wider trend. These mystics, ascetics and sages were being brought together into the historical consciousness of the developing Sufi tradition. The trend is most visible in the *ṭabaqāt* genre of Sufi texts, Qushayrī’s *Risāla* included, but is nonetheless discernible here in select passages of a wide-ranging encyclopedic *tafsīr*.⁵⁷ The Leiden commentary, then, appears to have been influenced, even if in a limited fashion, by this concurrent development in Sufi literature.

Yet significant as all the above-mentioned personalities are, they are not the most striking authorities cited in the Leiden manuscript. In fact, there are five persons that are named with great frequency and at least four of them, as I will argue, may have been contemporaries with the author. The five figures are Abū ‘Alī, Abū l-Qāsim, *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh*, Abū Muslim, and al-Aṣamm. Even though Ahmad came to largely different conclusions in identifying these names, his analysis will nonetheless be helpful.

The first two names, Abū ‘Alī and Abū l-Qāsim, are of special importance because their names are regularly preceded by the title *shaykhunā* (“our master”) likely indicating that each had directly taught the author of the Leiden manuscript. Also, their names are often accompanied by the posthumous honorific *raḥimahu Allāh* (“may God have mercy on him”) possibly indicating that they had died recently (relative to the author) and/or that they had

⁵⁵ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-īmān*, ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd b. Basyūnī Zaghlūl, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1421/2000), 5:437, hadith 7185. The reports are largely identical except for the beginning where the Leiden manuscript reads “Sincere repentance is . . .” and al-Bayhaqī has “Three signs of repentance are . . .” Al-Bayhaqī also attributes the saying to Dhū l-Nūn.

⁵⁶ Ṣarīfīnī, *al-Muntakhab*, 104, 335.

⁵⁷ This development is more fully explored by Mojaddedi. Jawid A. Mojaddedi, “Legitimizing Sufism in al-Qushayrī’s *Risala*,” *Studia Islamica* 90 (2000): 37–50; and idem, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqāt Genre from al-Sulamī to Jāmī* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001).

earned the author's respect.⁵⁸ Taken altogether, I believe these names belong to Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015), Qushayrī's first Sufi master and eventual father-in-law, and Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 406/1016), another of Qushayrī's teachers who was known throughout Nishapur for his exegetical expertise. Ibn Ḥabīb also famously taught Tha'labī as evidenced by his profuse mention in the pedagogical chains of transmission in the Tha'labī's *tafsīr*.⁵⁹ While Ahmad admits the possibility of both these figures,⁶⁰ he further adds that at times Abū 'Alī instead refers to Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915–16), a leading Mu'tazili thinker, or Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987), an important grammarian who "was suspected of Mu'tazilism, and indeed commented upon the exegesis of the Mu'tazili Muḥammad al-Djubbā'ī in a (lost) work called *al-Tatabbu'*."⁶¹ As for Abū l-Qāsim, Ahmad favors the Mu'tazili scholar Abū l-Qāsim al-Ka'bī al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) over Ibn Ḥabīb.⁶² Ahmad's methodology, based on comparative readings with Rāzī's *tafsīr*, has already been problematized. The ascriptions made by the author of Rāzī's commentary, meaning either Rāzī or his student(s), are conjectural at best since the author likely did not have direct access to the actual texts by Jubbā'ī, Fārisī, or Ka'bī. Ahmad's argument is problematic even when he marshals the substance of their commentary for his argument. For example, he states that when an opinion attributed to Abū l-Qāsim in the Leiden manuscript and Ka'bī in Rāzī's *tafsīr* are in agreement, Rāzī writes that "Ka'bī on this point was with us." However, it is just as plausible, if not more likely, that this "agreeable" opinion was in fact the position of the Sunni-Shāfi'i exegete Ibn Ḥabīb and that Rāzī was wrong in assuming a Mu'tazili identity for the opinion.⁶³

For *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh*, Ahmad proposes the Shāfi'i Mu'tazili *qāḍī* 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1025). 'Abd al-Jabbār composed two commentaries *Bayān al-mutashābih fi l-Qur'ān* between 360/970 and 380/990 and then *Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-maṭā'in* sometime after 380/990 leaving at least two and a half decades for the works to disseminate and reach the author of the Leiden manuscript.⁶⁴ However, of the many passages attributed to *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh* that

⁵⁸ Admittedly, it is possible that a later hand added the honorifics.

⁵⁹ Tha'labī, *Qur'anic Commentary*, passim; and idem, *Muqaddimat al-kashf*, passim.

⁶⁰ Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," pp. 38–9; and Böwering, "Review," 571.

⁶¹ C. Rabin, "al-Fārisī, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, 12 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1954–2004; hereafter *El2*), 2:802–3.

⁶² Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 45–6.

⁶³ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁴ Margaretha T. Heemskerk, *Suffering in the Mu'tazilite Theology: 'Abd al-Jabbār's Teaching on Pain and Divine Justice* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 51 note 153; Margaretha Heemskerk, "'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, Brill Online Reference Works, 2010, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com>. On one occasion the name appears as *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh*

I checked, none correlates with the matching passages in these works. Once again, while the author of Rāzī's *tafsīr* may have believed he was dealing with 'Abd al-Jabbār's exegetical opinions, corroborating evidence is lacking.

There are other possibilities like the exegete *qāḍī* al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) who authored a Qur'an commentary and met Qushayrī. Yet, upon further inspection, the opinions of Māwardī and of *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh* do not noticeably align. Alternatively, *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh* may refer to the Ash'ari theologian *qāḍī* Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). The biographical records state that while Qushayrī never met Bāqillānī he had carefully studied his books, which might explain why *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh* never bears the title *shaykunā* since they never came into contact. Admittedly, a verse-by-verse Qur'an commentary is not mentioned in the biographies of Bāqillānī, but he did pen several significant works concerning the Qur'an.⁶⁵ Ultimately, until further evidence can be found the identity of the Leiden manuscript's *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh* remains indeterminate.

The fourth name that appears with regularity in the Leiden manuscript is Abū Muslim. Neither the introduction to Tha'labī's *tafsīr* nor the scholastic orbits of Qushayrī bear mention of an Abū Muslim. However, in biographical treatments of exegetical scholars a potential Abū Muslim does appear, Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī (d. 322/934), a Mu'tazili grammarian who "composed a great commentary (*tafsīr^{an} kabīr^{an}*) in twenty volumes."⁶⁶ The title of this commentary has been given as either *Jāmi' al-ta'wīl li-muḥkam al-tanzīl* or *Sharḥ ta'wīl al-qur'ān wa-tafsīr ma'ānihi*.⁶⁷ Ahmad, again following Rāzī, draws the same conclusion that the Abū Muslim of the manuscript is the same as the Mu'tazili Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī.⁶⁸ A further examination of Abū Muslim's exegetical opinions can now be done given recent publications, though these works are

al-Mu'tamid (or *al-Mu'tamad*). While Ahmad dismisses *al-Mu'tamad* as a scribal error, it may refer to a *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh* who authored a text entitled *al-Mu'tamad* or it may be an allusion to one of 'Abd al-Jabbār's works *Kitāb al-ʿitimād* or *Kitāb al-ʿumad*. 'Abd al-Jabbār's student Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī authored a commentary on *Kitāb al-ʿUmad* called *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad*. Heemskerck, *Suffering*, 39, 46.

⁶⁵ Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *al-Intiṣār li-l-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Umar Ḥasan al-Qayyām, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1425/2004); Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥammad b. 'Uwayḍa, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1429/2008).

⁶⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, trans. Bayard Dodge (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1998), 76; Dawūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 2:213; al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ed. Albert Meursing (Tehran: M.H. Asadi, 1960), 32; Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Murtaḍā, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, ed. Susanna Diwald-Wilzer (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1987), 91. Suyūṭī and Dāwūdī provide a significantly later death date of 459/1067, which would make Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī contemporaneous with the Leiden manuscript commentary, but this date appears erroneous.

⁶⁷ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967; hereafter GAS) 1:43; and Etan Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Tāwūs & his Library* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 204, 330.

⁶⁸ Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 43.

not without issue since they, like Ahmad, depend on the collected attestations found in later commentarial texts.⁶⁹ The implications of Abū Muslim's probable presence in the Leiden manuscript are discussed in the conclusion.

Ahmad proposes two possibilities for Aṣamm: the hadith scholar 'Aqaba b. 'Abd Allāh al-Aṣamm and the Mu'tazili 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Kaysān al-Aṣamm (d. 200–1/816–17).⁷⁰ Interestingly Ahmad errs against the Mu'tazili choice. A consultation of Tha'labī's introduction, however, proves Ahmad's assessment wrong. In this case a Mu'tazili presence is undeniable. First, Tha'labī speaks of a commentary from the companions (*aṣḥāb*) of Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Kaysān al-Aṣamm making it more likely that the author of the contemporaneous Leiden manuscript had access to this work.⁷¹ Second, I found some noteworthy correspondences between Tha'labī's *tafsīr* and the Leiden manuscript. For the explanation of *al-quḍūs* (Q. 59:23), the Leiden manuscript provides al-Aṣamm's explanation as "it is the name of God, mighty and glorified is He, in the Scriptures."⁷² Almost the same line is given by Ibn Kaysān in Tha'labī's commentary for the same verse, but in reference to a different divine name, *al-muḥaymin*.⁷³ More compelling is the commentary attributed to al-Aṣamm for Q. 65:12 where the explanation provided by Tha'labī matches almost perfectly what is given in the Leiden manuscript.⁷⁴ For this case, there is enough evidence to indicate that the author of the Leiden commentary was indeed accessing the Mu'tazili *tafsīr* of Ibn Kaysān al-Aṣamm in some way.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ See for example volume two of the series *Mawsū'at tafsīr al-Mu'tazila* and the study by Kirmānī. In these works the exegetical opinions attributed to Abū Muslim have been gathered from primarily three later Qur'an commentators: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 459–60/1066–7), and Abū 'Alī al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1154). Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Kaysān al-Aṣamm, *Tafsīr Abī Bakr al-Aṣamm wa-yalīhi tafsīr Abī Muslim Muḥammad b. Baḥr al-Isfahānī*, ed. Khidr Muḥammad Nabḥā, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2007), 2: 21–5; and Muḥammad Riẓā Ghiyāṣī-yi Kirmānī, *Barrasī-yi ārā' va nazarāt-i tafsīrī-yi Abū Muslim Isfahānī* (Qom: Ḥuẓūr, 1378 [1999]).

⁷⁰ Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 44–5.

⁷¹ Tha'labī, *Qur'anic Commentary*, 49; idem, *Muqaddimat al-kashf*, 96; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:614–5; and Josef van Ess, "al-Aṣamm, Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Kaysān," in *El2*, 12:88–90.

⁷² *Huwa ism Allāh 'azza wa-jalla fi l-kutub*. MS Leiden Or. 811, fol. 103a.

⁷³ *Huwa ism min asma' Allāh fi l-kutub*. Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. 'Ashūr, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1422/2002), 9:287.

⁷⁴ MS Leiden Or. 811, fol. 266b; and Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*, 9:342.

⁷⁵ Not utilizing Tha'labī's *tafsīr*, I had previously argued for the great Shāfi'i hadith transmitter Abū l-'Abbās Muḥammad al-Aṣamm of Nishapur (d. 346/957). He appears in the earliest biographies of Qushayrī and his colleagues in that they heard hadiths from the *aṣḥāb al-Aṣamm* ("the followers of al-Aṣamm"). Abū l-'Abbās al-Aṣamm also reportedly taught the *tafsīr* of al-Farrā' (d. 207/822). This argument has proven incorrect in light of Tha'labī's *tafsīr*. For al-Qushayrī's connection to the *aṣḥāb al-Aṣamm* see Fārisī, "*Kitāb al-Siyāq*," fol. 49b.

Based upon this preliminary investigation of the manuscript, one cannot entirely discredit the possibility of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's authorship. In certain respects, the Leiden manuscript may well represent a surviving fragment of Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. The division into sessions, the dating of the text, and the strong correspondence between the names in manuscript with Qushayrī's scholarly world support the case. The matter, of course, is far from definitively settled and there is a remarkably different second manuscript to consider.

The Laleli Manuscript

The Laleli manuscript consists of the beginning of the commentary until verse Q. 6:20. It is 312 folios mainly written in black ink with red ink occasionally used to denote new verses. Red underlining is further used to mark new interpretations possibly indicating that the text was reviewed or studied after its writing. However, unlike the Leiden manuscript, the Laleli manuscript provides no dates. Nor is there is a colophon. Moreover, there is no evidence that the manuscript is divided into sessions, as one might expect of Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. The only indication of authorship is the initial line of the text that attributes the commentary to Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī.⁷⁶ This ascription, while promising, is far from a definitive determinant.

Regardless, Maymūnī, the only scholar to have previously studied the Laleli manuscript, confidently affirms Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's authorship. First, he points to the descriptions provided by Fārisī, Ibn Khallikān, Subkī, and Ṭāshköprüzāde as evidence that the Laleli manuscript, which is extensive, must be the great commentary (*al-tafsīr al-kabīr*) attributed to Qushayrī.⁷⁷ Second he uncritically accepts the initial line's claim of authorship as true without entertaining the possibility of erroneous emendation or interpolation.⁷⁸

Fortunately, Maymūnī's third and final piece of evidence has greater weight. Doing for the Laleli manuscript exactly what Ahmad did for the Leiden manuscript, Maymūnī compares the commentary with the citations of Qushayrī found in Qurṭubī's *tafsīr*. He is able to identify several passages also found in the Laleli manuscript noting nonetheless that some of the references in

⁷⁶ *Qāla al-Imām al-Ustādh Zayn al-Islām Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī*; MS Laleli 198, fol. 1a, 1b.

⁷⁷ Ibn Khallikān's erroneous reporting has already been discussed. Unaware of this, Maymūnī insists on calling the commentary by the name mistakenly given by Ibn Khallikān, *al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*.

⁷⁸ Maymūnī, "*al-Taysīr*," 104.



Figure 3. Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), MS Laleli 198, folios 1b–2a



Figure 4. Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), MS Laleli 198, fol. 212b

Qurṭubī are indeed references to the son Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī.⁷⁹ In fact, when passages appear in both Abū Naṣr and the Laleli manuscript, Maymūnī takes this to be a sign of the son depending on the commentary of the father, thus reinforcing that the Laleli manuscript must be Qushayrī's work. This correlation, while more substantive and promising than the preceding points, is not free of suspicion. It is just as likely that the author of the Laleli manuscript and Abū Naṣr were independently drawing upon similar sources and the correspondence with Qurṭubī merely demonstrates a degree of regional-historical exegetical sharing or cross-pollination. If the case is to be made, further evidence is required.

Taking another approach, Maymūnī examines the content of the commentary to situate the Laleli manuscript in its theological context, providing us with valuable information concerning the author's theological predilections. As Maymūnī demonstrates with quotations from the text, the author actively refutes the positions of the Qadariyya or Mu'tazila, the anthropomorphic Mujassima, and the Shia.⁸⁰ In fact, the Mu'tazila are "othered" by his language, in that their opinions are compartmentalized with phrases like "*qālat al-Mu'tazila*."⁸¹ The author's non-identification with the Shia is also made apparent in his defense of the caliphate of Abū Bakr indicating instead a broad *ahl al-sunna* orientation.⁸²

Examining the names quoted in the Laleli manuscript, the figures cited differ significantly from those in the Leiden manuscript. As expected the names of Companions and Successors appear routinely, but some of the most prominent names from the Leiden manuscript, particularly Abū 'Alī, *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, and Abū Muslim are nowhere to be found. Abū l-Qāsim does appear once as "Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥabīb" at the end of the manuscript.⁸³ His date of death, 406/1016, is our first clue towards dating the commentary; the Laleli commentary must have been produced during or after Ibn Ḥabīb's lifetime. While Aṣamm never appears in the manuscript, Ibn Kaysān does, who was also positively identified in the Leiden manuscript.

There are several other familiar names that occur in the Laleli manuscript. The well-known Ṭabarī is variously invoked as Ibn Jarīr, Muḥammad b. Jarīr and Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī throughout the text. Representing philosophical perspectives, Zajjāj, Sibawayh, and Mu'arrij are also cited. Yet the overlap with the Leiden manuscript is relatively small and even then some of the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 104–8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 56–62.

⁸¹ MS Laleli 198, fol. 21a.

⁸² Maymūnī, "*al-Taysir*," 62; and MS Laleli 198, fol. 287b.

⁸³ MS Laleli, 198, fol. 311b.

naming conventions differ, as in how each manuscript refers to Aṣamm and Ṭabari. On this front alone, there is reason to suspect that the two manuscripts contain different commentaries.

But as with the Leiden manuscript, the Laleli manuscript does contain legal discussions. The range of these discussions, however, is noticeably more restricted. Opinions are largely confined to Shāfiʿī and the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*, with much less attention given to reporting *ikhtilāf*. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣās, who was so prominent in the Leiden manuscript, is entirely absent in the Laleli text. In fact, the emphasis is reversed. Whereas the Leiden manuscript offered more legal and theological material than philological, the Laleli manuscript is overwhelmingly philological in bent.

Substantively speaking, matters of grammar, lexicography and variant readings of the Qurʾan (*qiraʾāt*), including anomalous (*shādhdh*) readings, appear with great frequency. As mentioned, Zajjāj, Sībawayh, and Muʿarrij are quoted, but a host of other grammarians and philologists join them: Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. ca. 170/786), al-Kisāʿī (d. ca. 189/805), Qutrub (d. 206/821), al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822) and al-Akhfash [al-Awsaṭ] (d. 215/830). There are later authorities as well whose dates of death reinforce the minimum lateness of the commentary: namely Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889),⁸⁴ al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faḍl al-Bajalī (d. 282/895–6), the aforementioned Zajjāj (d. 311/923), and Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 328/940). Several of these figures also appear as “sources” in Thaʿlabī’s *tafsīr*. For example, Thaʿlabī cites Ibn Qutayba for both *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qurʾān* and *Taʾwīl mushkil al-Qurʾān*.⁸⁵ Cross-referencing these works, it is apparent that the vast majority of the citations in the Laleli manuscript are indebted to Ibn Qutayba’s *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qurʾān*.⁸⁶ Only in one instance is there a one-word explanation that matches the *Taʾwīl mushkil al-Qurʾān*.⁸⁷ A similar case is found with the oft-cited Akhfash. Many of his quotations, though not all, appear as restatements or direct copies from his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*.⁸⁸ In fact, the Laleli manuscript bears a striking similarity to Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī’s philological commentary

⁸⁴ Ibn Qutayba appears as al-Qutaybī, which is a convention echoed in Thaʿlabī’s *tafsīr*. Thaʿlabī, *Qurʾanic Commentary*, 58–60; and idem, *Muqaddimat al-kashf*, 122–3, 125.

⁸⁵ Thaʿlabī, *Qurʾanic Commentary*, 58–60; and idem, *Muqaddimat al-kashf*, 122–3, 125.

⁸⁶ MS Laleli 198, fols. 78a, 109a, 141a, 247a, 271a, 293b; and Ibn Qutayba, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Saqr (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1378/1958), 53, 32, 90, 134, 140, 145.

⁸⁷ MS Laleli 198, fol. 303b; and Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl mushkil al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Saqr, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1939/1973), 573. No correspondence was identifiable for several references. MS Laleli 198, fols. 260b, 276b, 311a.

⁸⁸ For examples see: MS Laleli 198, fols. 129b, 133a, 160a, 267a, 269a, 270a, 301b; Akhfash al-Awsaṭ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, ed. Hudā Maḥmūd Qirāʾa, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1411/1990), 1:178, 183–4, 208, 269, 271, 289. Notably Thaʿlabī mentions a *Gharīb* work by Akhfash al-Awsaṭ instead of *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*. Thaʿlabī, *Qurʾanic Commentary*, 57; and idem, *Muqaddimat al-kashf*, 119–20.

al-Taysīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr in its approach. A cursory comparison, however, reveals that they are different texts.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, a genealogical connection cannot be discounted and is entertained in the conclusions below.

Despite differences with the Leiden manuscript, Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's authorship of the Laleli manuscript is not necessarily precluded. Other key names appear in addition to Ibn Ḥabīb that strengthen the case. The Ash'ari theologian and Qushayrī's teacher Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) is quoted nine times in the commentary. This is significant because Ibn Fūrak authored a Qur'an commentary.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, the only known manuscript of Ibn Fūrak's *tafsīr* covers *sūrat al-Mu'minīn* (Q. 23) to the end of the Qur'an while the Laleli manuscript runs from the beginning of the Qur'an to the first few verses of *sūrat al-An'ām* (Q. 6:20). But consulting Ibn Fūrak's other texts, other important connections were found. In one place Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) is actually reporting the opinion of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935–6)⁹¹ and cites an opinion that corresponds closely with a statement given in Ibn Fūrak's *Mujarrad maqālāt shaykh Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*.⁹² In another place Ibn Fūrak cites his teacher al-Bāhili who is a little-known but important figure bridging Ash'arī with the generation of Ibn Fūrak, Abū Ishāq Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) and Bāqillānī, who were all in turn influential for Qushayrī.⁹³ Affirming Maymūnī's findings, there is a decisive Ash'arism expressed in the commentary, which bolsters the case for Qushayrī's authorship given his deep investment with that theological school.

Lastly, there are two Sufi connections to consider. The mystic Abū Bakr al-Warrāq (d. ca. 280/893), who is treated in Qushayrī's *Risāla*, is included once in the Laleli manuscript.⁹⁴ The inclusion is like those made to Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī and Bishr b. Ḥārith in the Leiden manuscript. But the Laleli manuscript also mentions twice a critical figure, the Sufi master Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021).⁹⁵ Not only do we know that Qushayrī studied directly under Sulamī after 405/1015, but Sulamī had a considerable influence on Qushayrī's writings, more than any other Sufi writer. That the Laleli manuscript's author draws upon Sulamī speaks more pointedly to Qushayrī's possible authorship.

⁸⁹ Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī, *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr*, MS Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), Feyzullah Efendi 89, 232 folios.

⁹⁰ Tha'labī, *Qur'anic Commentary*, 51; and idem, *Muqaddimat al-kashf*, 101.

⁹¹ MS Laleli, 198, fols. 2b, 18b.

⁹² Ibid., fol. 2b; and Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt shaykh Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, ed. Daniel Gimaret (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1987), 63.

⁹³ His *nisba* appears as al-Bahālī in the manuscript. MS Laleli, 198, fol. 18b. Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, 140–1.

⁹⁴ MS Laleli, 198, fol. 108b; and Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, 1:128.

⁹⁵ MS Laleli, 198, fols. 78a, 187b.

In sum, all of the above mentioned authorities found in the Laleli manuscript predate Qushayrī by at least a generation: Ibn Fūrak died in 406/1015, Ibn Ḥabīb in 406/1016, and Sulamī in 412/1021. Given these dates and the absence of later authorities, it is unlikely that the commentary was written much later than a century afterwards. A timeframe as early as the 410s–20s/1020s is within the realm of possibility.

Moreover, the names of Ibn Fūrak, Ibn Ḥabīb and Sulamī further localize the text to Nishapur, or at least Khurasan, since they all spent a significant amount of time there. Finally, given the scholars cited, the commentary also exhibits a predilection for, or at least a passive acceptance, of Ash‘arism, Shāfi‘ism and Sufism in addition to its consciously philological hermeneutics. All of these were important aspects of Qushayrī’s own scholarly identity. And although the Laleli manuscript lacks the dated sessions found in the Leiden manuscript, such notations may have been excised by a later copyist. But ultimately caution must be taken in the absence of definitive evidence. Possibility, after all, does not speak to probability.

Speculative Conclusions

Several Mu‘tazili authors appear in both the Leiden and Laleli manuscripts. Their inclusion as exegetical voices is not implausible. Qushayrī, immersed in the apologetics and polemics of speculative theology (*kalām*), would have been familiar with some, if not all, of these figures. Qushayrī demonstrates this in *Shikāyat ahl al-sunna* where at one point he challenges Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī.⁹⁶ Thus, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that Qushayrī could have cited the likes of Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī or qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār. Moreover, the *tafsīr* genre was not as polemically charged as the *kalām* discourse. The citation of an authority in a *tafsīr* did not necessarily entail an endorsement of their theology. More often than not, scholars were cited *because* of their differences of opinions. This is especially true with encyclopedic Qur’an commentaries where anthologizing a plethora of interpretations is an organizing principle. As the preceding manuscript descriptions have shown, both the Leiden and Laleli manuscripts fall into the encyclopedic category. Lastly, scholars were more often than not cited for their particular expertise in a discipline, rather than as a representative of a certain school or movement. Figures like Ibn Kaysān al-Aṣamm, Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī and Mu‘arrij were referenced in

⁹⁶ Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qāhir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā. 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999) 2:298–9.

the manuscripts for their philological interpretations, not theological ones. Likewise, the Ḥanafī Jaṣṣāṣ was clearly invoked for his juristic *aḥkām*-oriented exegesis and not his Muʿtazilī orientation.

But if the kinds of sources do not necessary preclude Qushayrī's authorship, what sort of conclusions can be drawn? The prospects for Qushayrī's authorship seem promising if each manuscript is considered individually. The Leiden manuscript's division into sessions and clear, reconcilable dates are strong arguments for it being Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. Furthermore, key figures seem to be regularly quoted, i.e. Abū 'Alī (al-Daqqāq) and Abū l-Qāsim (Ibn Ḥabīb). The Laleli manuscript presents a regionally consistent set of authorities (Ibn Fūrak, Ibn Ḥabīb, and Sulamī) that place it in a historical and regional setting that is very Nishapuri, if not "Qushayrian," in character. And both works have interesting correspondences with Qurṭubī that 1) further the argument that each is possibly the work of Qushayrī, and 2) that each appears related to the *tafsīr* of Qushayrī's son Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Raḥmān.

A problem arises, however, when the two texts are placed side by side. Neither commentary looks directly related to the other. Authorities cited in both manuscripts do not appear with the same frequency, other authorities appear in only one text and not the other, works heavily quoted in one are entirely absent in the other, and the emphasis laid on various exegetical approaches differs dramatically. In an attempt to formulate a feasible relationship between these manuscripts and Qushayrī, I offer a series of speculative possibilities but no definitive conclusions.

Scenario One: The Leiden and Laleli manuscripts are, in fact, both authentic preserves of Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. The differences in sources and style between them may reflect Qushayrī's own change in style as time passed during the many years of the commentary's delivery. The Laleli manuscript, being the beginning of the *tafsīr*, would have been begun before 410/1019–20 (perhaps as early as 404/1014 if calculated back from the known session numbers) while the Leiden manuscript, covering Q. 57:21 to Q. 66:12, was delivered in 413–14/1023. The two sections, after all, would have been separated by eight to nine years leaving ample time for Qushayrī to expand and further develop his interpretive approach and delivery style. Thus, the authorities found in the Leiden manuscript, but not in the Laleli manuscript would represent new exegetical voices that Qushayrī encountered and adopted during the interim, like the works of Jaṣṣāṣ, Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī, and *Qāḍī al-Quḍāh*. But this would also entail Qushayrī becoming disinterested in the exegetical opinions of Ibn Fūrak, Ibn Qutayba and various other grammarians.

Scenario Two: The Leiden manuscript, because of its dating and structure is Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr* while the Laleli manuscript is an entirely separate

commentary composed by Qushayrī. This latter commentary may have been composed after the Leiden manuscript of 413–14/1023, but before the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, which was begun in 437/1045–6. With more than twenty years separating the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* and the *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, the Laleli manuscript may well represent the continued exegetical activity of Qushayrī, who was accustomed to delivering Qurʾan commentary in weekly sessions. As generations passed, memory of the Laleli commentary may have been conflated with the earlier *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. This interim *tafsīr* may have then been the inspiration or basis for Abū Naṣr's *al-Taysīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr*, which echoes its philological proclivities.

Scenario Three: The Leiden manuscript is the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* given its precise dating and structure, while Laleli manuscript may be the work of one of Qushayrī's sons. His eldest son Abū Saʿd ʿAbd Allāh (d. 477/1084) and the above mentioned fourth son Abū Naṣr ʿAbd al-Raḥīm were noted for their work in *tafsīr*. In fact, the Laleli manuscript may be a variation of *al-Taysīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr* since, according to Ahmad's study, "Abū Naṣr's Tafsīr *al-Taysīr* is itself a selection of his own larger commentary."⁹⁷ But it is somewhat peculiar that neither son would have quoted their father in any form in the Laleli commentary.

Scenario Four: Despite the precise dating of the Leiden manuscript, it may be the work of one of Qushayrī's colleagues, while the Laleli manuscript is Qushayrī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr* given its similarities his son Abū Naṣr's commentary. Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī, Abū ʿUthmān al-Ṣābūnī, and Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī are just some of Qushayrī's Nishapuri colleagues who were remembered for their work in *tafsīr*. Circulating in the same pedagogical and social circles as Qushayrī, scholars such as these would have been likely exposed to the same set of exegetical authorities. Rather than being the work of Qushayrī, the Leiden manuscript may be the preserve of one of their works or the work of another contemporary.

Scenario Five: Neither commentary is the work of Qushayrī and they are in fact the product of two different exegetes. In fact, given the *possible* abundance of Muʿtazili authorities in the Leiden manuscript (Ibn Kaysān al-Aṣamm, *qāḍī* ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī, Abū l-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī), that *tafsīr* may have been composed by an author more sympathetic to Muʿtazili personalities, or at least one who was less critical of them than Qushayrī was. The Laleli manuscript, with its overriding philological concern, may have been the work of any number of scholars.

Taking into consideration these possibilities I will venture some tentative evaluations. Given the stark difference between the two manuscripts I am not inclined to see them as two parts of the same work, even if we entertain that

⁹⁷ Ahmad, "Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushairī," 41.

their respective dates of composition were set some time apart. The division into sessions of one and the lack thereof in the other should not be so easily dismissed. Nor can the differences in sources between the two be easily explained away. In fact, because the Laleli manuscript explicitly cites Sulamī, Ibn Fūrak, and Ibn Ḥabīb, I believe the text to be an actual work composed by Qushayrī, either the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* or a later commentary. As for the Leiden manuscript, more work needs to be done on its content and sources. Far too many ambiguities remain. As such, I would argue that either Scenario Two or Scenario Four are the most likely.

Something must also be said concerning the uniqueness of each manuscript. What is to be made of the fact that each manuscript seems to be the only preservation of that particular segment of a Qur'an commentary? Two points warrant emphasis. First, our present knowledge of the surviving manuscript tradition remains incomplete. While thousands of manuscripts in many of the major libraries and archives are finally being properly cataloged, there are countless others that remain miscataloged or completely undocumented. There may indeed be other manuscripts waiting to be identified that preserve the same commentary or commentaries found in the Leiden and Laleli manuscripts. At the very least, these two manuscripts can now be better situated within the wider manuscript tradition and in fact may prove useful in future efforts to identify other commentaries. Second, the survival of at least these two manuscripts, the Leiden and Laleli, is nonetheless a testament that the exegesis contained within had held some degree of importance, at least for a time, for several generations. That both these works have a Nishapuri, or at least Khurasani character is also significant because they are further evidence for the major role that the city and region played for the development of the *tafsīr* tradition. Whoever their respective authors may be, the two texts appear to have at least been influenced by the exegetical circles of the area.

Nevertheless, in the end I must reiterate that the preceding study is intended as a preliminary investigation. Further work is certainly required. With the cited authorities of the two manuscripts enumerated, the contents of each manuscript need to be closely analyzed and exhaustively cross-referenced with the relevant works of predecessors, contemporaries and historical successors. Until this substantial work is done, the question of authorship cannot be definitively answered. Nevertheless, important groundwork for undertaking these future endeavors has been laid and the fog of previous studies has hopefully been adequately dissipated. Composed by Qushayrī or not, the Leiden and Laleli manuscripts are promising texts in-and-of-themselves. They testify to the fluorescence of exegetical activity in Khurasan in the fifth/eleventh century and to the intersection of various religious traditions, including Sufism, theology, law and philology, in the developing *tafsīr* tradition.