

Qur'anic Interpretation in al-Andalus: Leading Scholars in Light of Academic Studies: An Analytical Statistical Study

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Abstract

This study looks at the tafsir (Qur'anic interpretation) science developed in al-Andalus, where many scholars were known for their writing ability, classification capabilities and teaching methods in cities such as Cordoba, Seville, and Granada. The research analyzes manuscripts and academic contributions from when the Muslims took control in 711 until Granada fell in 1492. In comparing Andalusian tafsir with that from the Mashreq area, it becomes apparent that the focus of the former is more on its reception and enhancement than on where it originates. While Andalusian tafsir began in the 3rd century, it gained attention and prominence under Ibn Atiyya during the 6th century and then matured with Ibn Atiyya and others like Baqi ibn Makhlad, Maki ibn Ab Talib al-Qaysi, and Ahmad ibn Muhammed al-Ghazali during the 7th and 8th centuries. The present study will discuss the most prominent exegetes of Andalusian tafsir and review some of the academic research concerning these persons. Of note is that Ibn Atiyya received the most attention from scholars, while there is still considerable room for additional study in the area of Andalusian tafsir.

Key words: Andalusian tafsir, Qur'anic interpretation, Islamic scholars, Manuscript studies, Academic research.

Introduction:

The science of Tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) is considered one of the most prominent transmitted sciences in which the scholars of Islamic Spain (Al-Andalus) excelled. They made significant contributions in authorship, classification, and the organization of scholarly sessions within educational institutions in Cordoba, Seville, Granada, and other cities. Researchers have paid particular attention to verifying these manuscripts and producing reliable editions. Moreover, scholars have diligently conducted studies on the most important works authored in this field, with each researcher focusing on a specific historical period, from the Islamic conquest to the era of the Emirate and the period of the Taifa kingdoms. Therefore, this study addresses the topic through statistical analysis and exploration, compiling the sources produced by Andalusian scholars from the Islamic conquest until the fall of Granada. It also includes graphical representations showing periods of high activity and highlights the extent to which academic studies have focused on the subject of Qur'anic interpretation (Goldziher, 2006).

1. The Science of Tafsir and Its Emergence in Al-Andalus:

The emergence of the science of Tafsir in Al-Andalus differs from its development in the Mashriq (the Islamic East). In the Mashriq, its emergence was one of birth and formation, whereas in Al-Andalus, it was more a matter of reception and addition. There was interaction and travel between Tafsir scholars in the Mashriq, the Maghreb, and Al-Andalus. To avoid confusion between these scholars, one researcher identified three criteria for classifying scholars of the Andalusian school (Meridi, 2021, p. 15):

- That the scholar was born in Al-Andalus.
- That the scholar grew up there and did not travel during his youth.
- That the scholar's initial education and early cultural formation took place in Al-Andalus. Later travels to other regions are not considered relevant (Meridi, 2021, p. 15).

On the other hand, the science of Tafsir in Al-Andalus emerged as a distinguished field in the 3rd century AH, then grew and developed in the 5th century AH. It reached its peak in the 6th century AH under the guidance of the leading Andalusian mufassir, Ibn 'Atiyya. It matured further during the 7th and 8th centuries AH, when distinctive features and trends in Andalusian Tafsir became apparent (Al-Mashini, 1986, p. 82).

2. The Most Prominent Tafsir Scholars in Al-Andalus:

- **Baqi ibn Makhlad:** Baqi ibn Makhlad ibn Yazid (Al-Humaydi, 1966, p. 177), the exemplary imam, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Andalusi al-Qurtubi, was a memorizer of hadith and the author of a Tafsir and Musnad unparalleled in their significance. He was born in Rumman in 201 AH and died in 276 AH. Baqi ibn Makhlad authored several works that were highly influential for subsequent generations, although many of them have not survived to the present day. These include his Qur'anic Tafsir, his Musnad on hadith, as well as a book on the legal opinions (fatwas) of the Companions and the Successors (Tabi'un). Ibn Hazm described his Tafsir by saying: "It is a book that I absolutely cannot find its equal in Islam, neither the Tafsir of Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari nor any other..." (Al-Waeli, 2020, p. 513)
- **Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi:** He is Abu Muhammad Makki ibn Abi Talib ibn Hamoush ibn Muhammad ibn Mukhtar al-Qaysi, the renowned reciter. He was born in 355 AH in Kairouan and died in 437 AH; he was buried in al-Rubd (Raqu', p. 197).

He is considered one of the leading Tafsir scholars in Al-Andalus, as mentioned by Ibn Sa'id in his appendix to Ibn Hazm's response in the treatise on the virtues of the people of Al-Andalus. Ibn Sa'id counted Makki's works at seventy-seven in total. Makki ibn Abi Talib's Tafsir holds great scholarly value, especially in Al-Andalus and the Maghreb, as his extensive knowledge and culture made his work a key reference for Qur'anic interpretation in the region (Al-Mashini, 1986, p. 86).

His major work in Tafsir is entitled "*Al-Hidayah ila Bulugh al-Nihayah fi 'Ilm Ma'ani al-Qur'an wa Tafsirih wa Ahkamih wa Jumal min Funun 'Ulumih*" ("Guidance to Reach the Ultimate Goal in the Science of the Meanings of the Qur'an, its Exegesis, its Rulings, and a Summary of Its Related Sciences"). (Farhat, 1997, p. 100)

Makki relied on the Qur'an and Hadith as well as on Companions and their successors for his Tafsir. He used the Arabic language for interpreting Qur'anic words and how to derive meaning from them in order to understand them in context. As a way to derive the meanings of

Qur'anic words from the context in which they appear, Makki analyzed the Arabic vocabulary for its sources and different grammatical forms .

- **Abu Bakr ibn al-'Arabi:**He is the distinguished scholar, memorizer, and jurist Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ma'afri al-Andalusi al-Ishbili, known as Ibn al-'Arabi al-Maliki. He was born in Seville in 468 AH. He acquired his early education in his hometown and mastered the Qur'anic readings before moving to Cordoba. He also traveled to the Mashriq, where he studied under leading scholars and gained extensive knowledge. He later served as a judge in his homeland, restoring rights and resolving disputes (Al-Mashini, 1986, p. 20).

His book *Ahkam al-Qur'an* is considered one of the most important works of juridical Tafsir, especially among Maliki scholars. It is composed of four volumes and has been published in a critical edition edited by 'Ali Muhammad al-Bijawi. In his preface, al-Bijawi states: "Here I present this new edition, exerting fresh effort in editing, explanation, and verification, hoping that it will meet the esteem and interest with which researchers have always regarded this book."(Al-Mashini, 1986, p. 20)

The Primary Sources Used by Ibn al-'Arabi al-Maliki to Compile His Book *Ahkam al-Qur'an*:

Ibn al-'Arabi used a variety of sources for this work. He referred to Tafsir works based on transmitted narrations (Tafsir bi'l-Riwayah), and relied heavily on The Book of the Comprehensive Explanation of the Quran by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (died in 310 A.H.).(Al-Mashini, 1986)

Al-Qadi 'Abd al-Haqq ibn 'Atiyya:

Al-Qadi 'Abd al-Haqq was an Andalusian Maliki scholar born in Granada in 470 AH and raised in Granada with his father, a judge and hadith memorizer, as his mentor, who helped him grow up to become a scholar. He died in 542 AH.

The Tafsir of Ibn 'Atiyya, *The Radiant and Easy Path to Understanding the Holy Qur'an*, has a high status among all exegesis scholars. The author has shown meticulous craftsmanship in applying his extensive knowledge throughout the text, resulting in elegance, precision, and a great deal of respect among scholars. It has also been praised by a variety of scholars. The author utilizes a logical process of explaining a particular Qur'anic verse by stating the verse first, followed by a clear and coherent explanation that is free from ambiguity and speculation. He provides a careful balance of quoting and using available evidence in his writing while still providing opposing views at times. He uses poetic literature to illustrate meaningful explanations, relies upon knowledge of Arabic to explain various meanings, provides significant attention to grammatical issues, and has a diligent effort to authenticate hadiths.

There have been multiple editions of this book published: One by The Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, Ministry of Awqaf, Arab Republic of Egypt edited by Ahmad Sadiq 'Al-Mallah in two volumes (Volume One published 1974 CE and Volume Two published 1979 CE), an additional published edition by Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon edited by Abd Al-Salam 'Abd Al-Shafi Muhammad in six volumes (2001 CE), and a third published edition by The Ministry Of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of Qatar as edited by a group of scholars in ten volumes; this was published in 2015.

Table1. Showing Academic Works on the Science of Tafsir in Al-Andalus

Tafsir Scholar	Author of Article	Title of Article	Journal and Year of Publication
Baqi ibn Makhlad	Ibrahim Mujahidi	Al-Hafiz Baqi ibn Makhlad al-Qurtubi and His Role in Establishing the School of Hadith in Al-Andalus	<i>Mediterranean History Journal</i> , Vol. 3, No. 2, December 2021
Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi	Abdul Karim Sa‘dudi; Lakhdar Haddad; Salihah Raqou‘; Nour Eddine Dreem; Ghania Bouhouch	Attention of Imam Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi to the Science of Waqf and Ibtida (A Study in the Book <i>Sharh Kalla wa Balla wa Na‘am</i>)	<i>Journal of Scientific Research and Islamic Studies</i> , Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 253–282, 30 September 2024
		Efforts of Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi in Qur’anic Readings – A Descriptive Analytical Study of His Book <i>Al-Kashf</i>	<i>Functional Language Journal</i> , Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 194–206, 17 June 2023
		Contributions of Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi to Phonetic and Recitational Studies Through His Books <i>Al-Ri‘ayah</i> and <i>Al-Kashf</i>	<i>Al-Tawasuliyya Journal</i> , Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 428–461, 25 June 2018
Abu Bakr ibn al-‘Arabi	Al-Sa‘id bin Muwayza; Muhammad Thabit Saber; Nasr Eddine Ajdir; Muhammad al-Dardari	Vocabulary in Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Tafsir <i>Ahkam al-Qur’an</i>	<i>Al-Wahat Journal for Research and Studies</i> , Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 181–198, 22 December 2021
		Conceptual Dialogues in Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Tafsir <i>Jami‘ Ahkam al-Qur’an</i>	<i>Al-Hikma Journal for Islamic Studies</i> , Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 61–73, 1 July 2017
		Ibn al-‘Arabi and His Usul Method in Critiquing Opinions Through His Book <i>Ahkam al-Qur’an</i>	<i>Journal of Jurisprudential and Legal Issues</i> , Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 83–110, 23 March 2020
Al-Qadi ‘Abd al-Haqq ibn ‘Atiyya	Ma‘ta Moulana Muhammad al-Wali; Taher Brahemi	Analytical Study of Criticism Terminology in Ibn ‘Atiyya – Through His Tafsir of Surat al-Baqarah	<i>Al-Mi‘yar Journal</i> , Vol. 27, No. 5, 2023

		Resolving Problems of Mutawatir Qur'anic Readings in Tafsir Works: A Case Study of Ibn 'Atiyya's <i>Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz</i>	<i>Al-Siyaq Journal</i> , Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 103–118, 6 July 2020
Abu 'Abd Allah al-Qurtubi	Fatiha Bouharoua; Sayed Ahmad Muhammad Abdullah; Muhammad Mridi	Principles of Tafsir Related to Qur'anic Readings and Their Applications According to Al-Qurtubi	<i>Bridges of Knowledge Journal</i> , Vol. 7, No. 1, 2021
		Semantic Study and Its Issues in Al-Qurtubi's Tafsir	<i>Al-Hikma Journal for Historical Studies</i> , Vol. 8, No. 1, 2021
Muhammad ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi	Baldhir Sadara; Amin Anqira; Najiba Abid; Am Na'il Barkani	Rhetoric and Its Sciences in the Maghreb Tafsirs: <i>Al-Tashil li 'Ulum al-Tanzil</i> by Ibn Juzayy – A Model	<i>Applied Linguistics Journal</i> , Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 237–253, 10 December 2018
		Guiding Qur'anic Readings in Legal Rulings Through <i>Al-Tashil li 'Ulum al-Tanzil</i> by Ibn Juzayy al-Gharnati (d. 741 AH)	<i>Al-Bahith Journal</i> , Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 129–148, 27 September 2021
		Features of Maqasid Tafsir in Ibn 'Atiyya's <i>Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz</i>	<i>Al-Shihab Journal</i> , Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 123–146, 12 November 2022
Athir al-Din Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi	Ya'qub al-Zahra; Somaya Ghoul; Faiza Harrizi	Exegetical and Methodological Foundations in <i>Al-Bahr al-Muhit</i> of Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi	<i>Al-Mi'yar Journal</i> , Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 128–158, 5 January 2019
		Grammatical Significance in <i>Al-Bahr al-Muhit</i> of Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi (d. 745 AH) – A Case Study of Surat al-Isra	<i>Scientific Research Notebooks</i> , Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 663–679, 1 June 2023

The table is an important means of understanding modern academic works related to the Tafsir science in al-Andalus, indicating continued scholarly interest in some of the more well-known Andalusian mufasssiron (i.e., Baqi ibn Makhlad, Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi, Ibn al-'Arabi, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Juzayy). In addition, it demonstrates the range of topic areas

explored within these works, which can be grouped into common categories: (1) Qur'anic interpretation based on meaning and ruling, methodology, (2) language and grammar, (3) Qur'anic readings, and (4) legal and usul methodology. Through the listing of authors, article title(s), journal(s), and year(s) of publication, this table provides researchers with access to modern sources and academic references found throughout the body of research. Moreover, it demonstrates the development of scholarly interest in the past and present, highlights the different dimensions of the work of Andalusian mufassirun, presents a holistic perspective of their contributions to Qur'anic heritage and illustrates the importance of Andalusian heritage in today's Qur'anic studies.

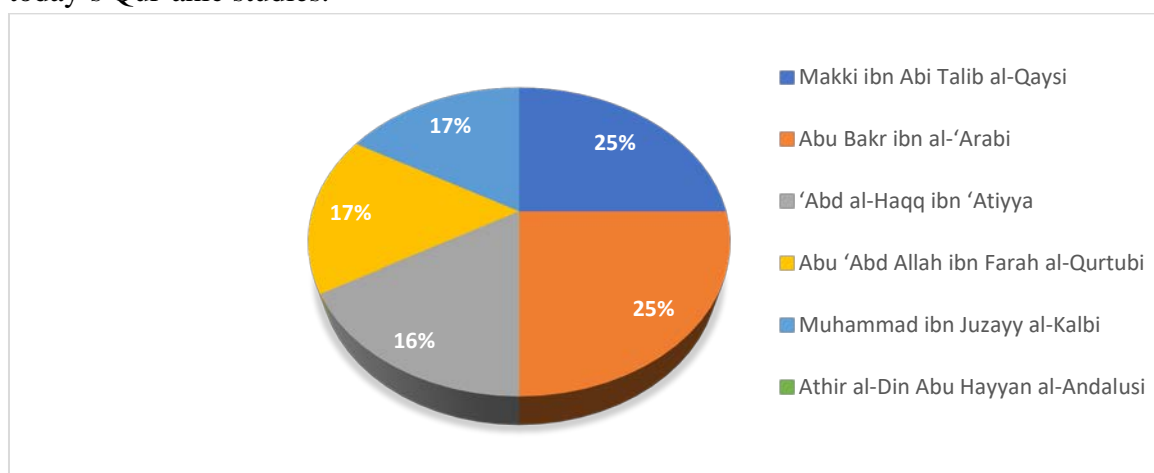


Figure 1: Studies that addressed Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi

Among the academic studies that addressed Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi:

- A master's thesis by Najwa Manaa, titled *The Foundations of Interpretation according to Makki ibn Abi Talib al-Qaysi*, University of Algiers 1, 2005–2016.
- A master's thesis by Muhammad Ahmad Taher Ghazlan, titled *The Method of Imam Makki ibn Abi Talib in the Qur'anic Readings through his Tafsir (Al-Hidaya)*, University of Islamic Sciences, Jordan, 2011.

From this table, we observe that the largest number of articles focused on the Tafsir of Ibn 'Atiyya, while the field of research in Qur'anic interpretation remains limited compared to other studies.

Conclusion:

Through this study, we observe that the topic of Qur'anic interpretation is an important subject in the history of Islamic West during the Islamic era, as many scholars made significant contributions to Tafsir and left important works, some of which remain in manuscript form. In this study, we selected models of prominent scholars of Tafsir and compiled a count of the studies they published in the national articles portal, which amounted to sixteen articles, along with two studies at the master's level.

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