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e-mail: issabekovdk@gmail.com**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED COMMENTARIES
ON AL-HIDAYA WRITTEN IN CENTRAL ASIA
AND THE MIDDLE EAST DURING THE 13TH–15TH CENTURIES**

This article presents a comparative analysis of the commentaries (shurūḥ) on al-Hidāya by Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghīnānī (d. 593 AH), produced in Central Asia and the Middle East during the 13th–15th centuries. The purpose of the study is to identify the methodological differences employed by scholars of these two regions while composing their commentaries, and to highlight the significance of these works for the development of Hanafi jurisprudence. The novelty of the research lies in its comprehensive examination of linguistic style, methodological approaches, and the use of sources, with particular attention to the interaction between Central Asian and Middle Eastern scholars in explaining disputed legal issues. Special emphasis is given to the identification of the main sources that influenced the commentators and to the chronological analysis of the transmission chains (isnāds) associated with al-Hidāya. The study also considers differences in the treatment of arguments from other madhabs, as well as the distinctive role of Central Asian jurists in shaping the Hanafi school in the Middle East. Methodologically, the research applies comparative and textual analysis in order to reveal the similarities and divergences in methodology and style. The findings demonstrate the intellectual interconnectedness between Central Asia and the Middle East, while underlining the richness and diversity of the Hanafi legal tradition. The article will be of interest to historians, orientalists, Islamic scholars, and a broad audience engaged in the study of Islamic civilization in Central Asia.

Keywords: al-Hidāya, Hanafi jurisprudence, commentaries, methodology, Central Asia, Middle East, al-Sighnāqī, al-Kurlānī.

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Ыстамбұл Мәрмара университеті, Ыстамбұл, Түркия
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«әл-Хидая» еңбегіне арналған жекелеген түсіндірмелердің
салыстырмалы талдауы**

Бұл мақала Бурхануддин әл-Марғинани (х. 593 ж. қайт.) жазған әл-Хидая кітабына арналған түсіндірмелерге (шурух) жасалған салыстырмалы талдауға арналған. Зерттеудің басты мақсаты – XIII–XV ғасырларда Орталық Азия мен Таяу Шығыста жазылған түсіндірмелердің әдістемелік айырмашылықтарын анықтау және олардың ханафилік құқықтық дәстүрдің дамуына қосқан үлесін көрсету. Жұмыстың ғылыми жаңалығы – тілдік стиль, қолданылған әдістер мен дереккөздерге жасалған кешенді талдауда, сондай-ақ даулы құқықтық мәселелерді түсіндіру барысында Орталық Азия мен Таяу Шығыс ғалымдарының өзара ықпалдастығын ашуда. Мақалада түсіндірме авторларына әсер еткен негізгі дереккөздер айқындалып, әл-Хидая еңбегіне қатысты риуаят тізбектеріне (иснадтарға) хронологиялық талдау жасалған. Сондай-ақ өзге мазһаб ғалымдарының дәлелдеріне деген көзқарастардағы ерекшеліктер және Орталық Азия фақиһтарының Таяу Шығыстағы ханафилік мектептің дамуына қосқан шешуші рөлі қарастырылады. Зерттеудің әдістемелік негізі салыстырмалы және мәтіндік талдау әдістеріне сүйенеді, бұл ғалымдардың көзқарастарындағы ұқсастықтар мен айырмашылықтарды ашуға мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеу нәтижелері Орталық Азия мен Таяу Шығыстың зияткерлік байланысын көрсетіп, ханафилік құқықтық дәстүрдің байлығы мен алуан түрлілігін айқындайды. Мақала тарихшыларға, шығыстанушыларға, исламтанушыларға және Орталық Азиядағы ислам өркениетінің тарихына қызығушылық танытқан кең аудиторияға арналған.

Түйін сөздер: әл-Хидая, фикһ, ханафи мазһабы, түсіндірмелер, әдіснама, Орталық Азия, Таяу Шығыс, әс-Сығнақи, әл-Курлани.

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Стамбульский университет Мармара, Стамбул, Турция
e-mail: issabekovdk@gmail.com**Сравнительный анализ отдельных комментариев к «Аль-Хидая»,
написанных в Средней Азии и на Ближнем Востоке в XIII–XV веках**

Данная статья посвящена сравнительному анализу комментариев (шурух) к труду аль-Хидая Бурхануддина аль-Маргинани (ум. 593 г.х.), созданных в Центральной Азии и на Ближнем Востоке в XIII–XV веках. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении методологических различий, использованных учёными этих регионов при составлении комментариев, а также в определении их значения для развития ханафитской правовой традиции. Новизна работы состоит в комплексном рассмотрении языкового стиля, исследовательских методов и источников, с особым акцентом на взаимодействии между учёными Центральной Азии и Ближнего Востока при объяснении спорных правовых вопросов. Особое внимание уделено выявлению основных источников, оказавших влияние на авторов комментариев, а также хронологическому анализу цепочек передатчиков (иснадов), связанных с трудом аль-Хидая. В статье также рассматриваются различия в отношении к доводам учёных других мазхабов, а также ключевая роль центральноазиатских факихов в развитии ханафитской школы на Ближнем Востоке. Методологическая база исследования основана на сравнительном и текстологическом анализе, что позволяет выявить как сходства, так и различия в подходах и стилях. Результаты исследования демонстрируют интеллектуальную взаимосвязь Центральной Азии и Ближнего Востока и подчеркивают богатство и разнообразие ханафитской правовой мысли. Статья будет полезна историкам, востоковедам, исламоведом, а также широкой аудитории, интересующейся исламской цивилизацией в Центральной Азии.

Ключевые слова: аль-Хидая, фикх, ханафитская школа, комментарии, методология, Центральная Азия, Ближний Восток, ас-Сыгнаки, аль-Курлани.

Introduction

Islam spread into Central Asia as early as the 7th–8th centuries CE, laying the foundations for a distinctive cultural and scholarly environment in the region. Cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand became prominent centers of Islamic learning, where theology and jurisprudence flourished. During this period, the Hanafi madhhab gained strong ground, and the works of its jurists achieved wide recognition not only in Central Asia but also across the broader Islamic world (Aydın, 2011: 365, 404), (Düzgün, 2011: 11).

A particularly influential work in the consolidation of the Hanafi legal tradition was *al-Hidāya* by Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghīnānī (d. 593 AH/1197 CE), which soon became one of the most authoritative and widely studied manuals of Islamic law. Shortly after its composition, *al-Hidāya* gave rise to numerous commentaries, written both in Central Asia and in the Arab regions. These *shurūḥ* not only preserved and transmitted the Hanafi tradition but also reflected the intellectual and cultural milieu in which they were produced (Mez, 1937: 172), (Ando, 1994: 259).

Despite the rich history of commentaries on *al-Hidāya*, their comparative study within a regional framework has remained largely unexplored. Most

scholarly works have focused on individual authors or general overviews, without systematically examining the methodological, stylistic, and structural differences between Central Asian and Middle Eastern scholars.

In our dissertation entitled “*Critical Edition of al-Isbijabi’s Commentary on al-Jami’ al-Saghir as an Example of Hanafi Legal Literature from Central Asia*”, we also addressed this issue in the context of the commentaries on *al-Jami’ al-Saghir* composed in Central Asia, since this work of Imam Muhammad al-Shaybani is one of the most important sources upon which *al-Hidāya* is built. Consequently, *al-Hidāya* can be regarded within the framework of the commentarial tradition on *al-Jami’ al-Saghir* as its continuation and the highest expression of this methodological heritage. Thus, the study of *al-Hidāya* constitutes an essential key to understanding the intellectual and methodological foundation upon which Hanafi jurisprudence was constructed, as well as to tracing the continuity between earlier works such as *al-Jami’ al-Saghir* and the later commentaries that shaped the mature legal system.

The main objective of this article is to demonstrate, through comparative analysis, the structural, methodological, stylistic, and source-based features of the commentaries on *al-Hidāya* authored in Central Asia and the Middle East between the 13th and

15th centuries, and to highlight their significance for the formation and development of the Hanafi legal tradition within diverse intellectual and cultural contexts.

Materials and Methods

The foundation of this study consists of the most significant works of the Hanafi commentary tradition on *al-Hidāya* by Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghīnānī, produced in Central Asia and the Arab regions between the 13th and 15th centuries. The main sources include *al-Kifāya fī Sharḥ al-Hidāya* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Kurlānī (d. 767/1366), *al-Nihāya fī Sharḥ al-Hidāya* by Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Sighnāqī (d. 714/1315), *Mīrāj al-dirāya* by Qiwām al-Dīn al-Kākī (d. 749/1348), *Ghāyat al-bayān* by Qiwām al-Dīn al-Itqānī (d. 758/1357), *al-ʿInāya* by Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384), *al-Bināya fī Sharḥ al-Hidāya* by Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr* by Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457), as well as *al-Ghāya fī Sharḥ al-Hidāya* by Shams al-Dīn al-Sarūjī (d. 710/1310). These works represent different stages in the evolution of Hanafi commentarial literature, ranging from early attempts at concise explanation and systematization to comprehensive encyclopedic compositions that incorporated a wide array of material in jurisprudence, legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and related disciplines.

The methodological basis of the research combines several approaches. First, comparative analysis was applied to identify similarities and differences in the structure, style, and argumentation of the commentaries. Second, textual analysis was employed to examine citation practices, patterns of referencing earlier authorities, and the logical structures of legal reasoning. In addition, a diachronic approach was used to trace the changing reception and interpretation of *al-Hidāya* over the 13th–15th centuries and to assess the extent to which political and cultural contexts shaped the selection of issues under discussion.

The combined use of these methods makes it possible to treat the commentaries on *al-Hidāya* as a unified body of Islamic legal thought while at the same time revealing their regional particularities. In this way, the study highlights the significance of Central Asia and the Arab regions in the development of the Hanafi school and demonstrates the contribution of their scholars to the shaping of legal interpretation.

Discussion

In general, the activities of Central Asian scholars in the Middle East significantly accelerated the development of Hanafi madrasas in the region. It is highly likely that the Hanafis, relying on the knowledge they had acquired in the madrasas of Bukhara and Samarkand, went on to establish Hanafi madrasas in Damascus. As reported by al-Maqrīzī and al-Nuʿaymī, the number of Hanafi madrasas in Damascus ranked second only to those of the Shāfiʿīs (al-Nuaymī, 1990: 15), (al-Maqrizi, 1997: 362–405).

When examining this issue, it becomes evident that many Central Asian scholars migrated to different parts of the Middle East, where they composed their renowned works, including commentaries on *al-Hidāya*. Scholars moved to Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia, and especially after the Great Seljuk Empire established political and military dominance in these areas, Hanafi scholars were appointed to key positions such as judges (qāḍīs), teachers (mudarris), preachers, and imams. This elevated their prestige and facilitated the growing influence of the Hanafi-Māturīdī tradition throughout the region.

Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Sighnāqī (d. 714/1315), the author of *al-Nihāya fī Sharḥ al-Hidāya*, received his education in Central Asia before migrating to the Middle East. He studied Islamic sciences under Fakhr al-Dīn al-Māymargī at the al-Muqtaḍī madrasa in Bukhara and the al-Mālikiyya al-ʿAbbāsiyya madrasa in Sarakhs. According to the introduction of *al-Nihāya*, al-Sighnāqī studied *al-Hidāya* in its entirety under Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī at the Badrīyāt madrasa and mosque in Marv (al-Sighnāqī, Ms.:5943), (Hallaf, 1985: 104–105). These accounts indicate that his initial intellectual foundation was firmly established in Central Asia, particularly among the Hanafis of Bukhara and Samarkand, where he also received authorization (ijāza) to transmit Hanafi traditions.

The same applies to his student, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Kurlānī al-Khwārizmī (d. 767/1366), who remained in Central Asia and taught at the al-Tanqīyya madrasa, where nearly one thousand students were educated (al-Sakhāwī, 1992: 196).

These madrasas likely shaped their scholarly outlooks, which later found reflection in their major works. Comparative analysis demonstrates similarities in the style and methodology of the *al-Hidāya* commentaries of al-Sighnāqī and his student al-Kurlānī, pointing to a close intellectual link between them. After completing his studies, al-Sighnāqī

moved to Baghdad and later taught in Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo. It is also reported that before teaching in Damascus, he had served as a teacher at the Mausoleum of Abū Ḥanīfa in Baghdad (Sönmez, 2017: 121). During his travels from Transoxiana to Cairo, al-Sighnāqī continued to engage in educational activities and became part of the scholarly transmission chains of many later scholars. According to Dr. Philip Brookmeyer, al-Sighnāqī entered the scholarly lineage of prominent Ottoman figures such as Kemāl Pāshāzāda (d. 940/1534) and Ḥasan Kāfī Akhiṣārī (d. 1025/1616) (Bruckmayr, 2011: 424).

After al-Sighnāqī's death in Marv, his students dispersed across various regions. Among them, perhaps the most prominent was Qiwām al-Dīn al-Kākī al-Bukhārī (d. 749/1348), whose transmission chain was followed by much of the subsequent Hanafi scholarly tradition. His successor in Cairo was Akmal al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384). Yet, the foundations of al-Kākī's scholarly outlook were established earlier in Central Asia, through the teaching of al-Sighnāqī in Tirmidh and of 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Bukhārī in the al-Muḥammadiyya madrasa in Bukhara. (Ridvanoğlu, 1996: 342)

Al-Kākī later became widely known in Cairo for transmitting al-Hidāya during his teaching at the Mārdinī Mosque. His scholarly lineage is represented through two principal chains: one linked to al-Sighnāqī and the other to 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Bukhārī (Kefevī, n.d.: fols. 274–275b). In addition, al-Kākī compiled a concise compendium (*mukhtaṣar*) on substantive law (*furū' al-fiqh*) within the framework of the four Sunni madhabs, entitled 'Uyūn al-Madhāhib al-Kāmilī, which he dedicated to al-Malik al-Kāmil Sha'bān ibn Muḥammad (d. 747/1346) (Bibliothèque nationale de France, n.d.: *MS Arabe 5137*, fol. 1b.). This work, shaped by local circumstances, incorporated the statements of the four Sunni imams, founders of the legal schools.

Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384) began his education in Anatolia, later continued in Aleppo, and, after 740/1339, moved to Cairo, where he studied under al-Kākī, Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344), and Maḥmūd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Iṣfahānī (d. 749/1348) (Kafes, 1994: 152–153). In jurisprudence, his transmission chain extended through al-Kākī back to Imām Abū Yūsuf. Both Abū Ḥayyān and al-Iṣfahānī were representatives of the Shāfi'ī school, the latter also being an Ash'arī theologian. They were primarily known as Qur'ān exegetes, linguists, and theologians rather than jurists, making it unlikely that al-Bābartī received

substantial legal training from them (Demirci, 2000: 509–510). His expertise in fiqh was primarily shaped by al-Kākī, whose opinions he frequently cites in his *al-'Ināya*. On 6 Shawwāl 743/1343, within the Mārdinī Mosque, al-Kākī granted al-Bābartī an *ijāza* to transmit the Hanafi tradition, which later positioned him as a central Hanafi authority in the Ottoman scholarly milieu (İbn Tolun, n.d.: MS no. 1924. 277a/b.).

The next scholar associated with al-Sighnāqī and his commentary on al-Hidāya is Qiwām al-Dīn al-Itqānī al-Fārābī (d. 758/1357). He was one of al-Sighnāqī's disciples and, while in Nishapur, studied Uṣūl of Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī under him (Al-Itqānī, 1999: 457). Before migrating from Central Asia, al-Itqānī also studied with several Hanafi scholars in his homeland, including Sharaf al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Jundī (d. 700/1301), Sharaf al-Dīn al-'Aqilī, Arshad al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī, and Aḥmad ibn As'ad al-Kharīf'ānī (8th/14th century) (Al-Itqānī, n.d.: MS no. 706. 1b–21.).

Al-Itqānī's methodology of commentary differs significantly from that of al-Sighnāqī and al-Kurlānī, both in style and in the structure of legal reasoning. Although he studied directly under al-Sighnāqī, it appears that the greatest influence on his jurisprudential outlook came from al-Kharīf'ānī. In his work *Ghāyat al-bayān wa nādirat al-aqrān*, al-Itqānī explicitly names al-Kharīf'ānī among the transmitters of al-Hidāya. He labored on this work for 26 years, completing it in 747/1346 (Mahacheva, 2000: 81)

Unlike al-Sighnāqī and al-Kurlānī, al-Itqānī became known among Hanafi scholars as a staunch and combative defender of the madhhab. A striking example of this is his sharp rebuttal to Imām al-Ghazālī's criticism of Abū Ḥanīfa in al-Manḥūl fī al-uṣūl (Al-Lakhnawī, 1324: 50–52). After leaving Central Asia, al-Itqānī taught in Hamadan, Baghdad (at the Mashhad of Abū Ḥanīfa and the Ṣādiqiyya madrasa), and in Cairo (Mārdinī Mosque, Ibn Ṭulūn Mosque, and the Ṣarḥatmishiyya madrasa). (Al-Suyūṭī, 1967: 470), (Al-Qurashī, 1993: 128). In 747/1346 he moved to Damascus, where, following the death of Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347), he was appointed as a teacher at Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ẓāhiriyya. However, his stay in Damascus was short-lived: he accused a Shāfi'ī imam of invalidating the prayer by raising his hands after bowing, which provoked a sharp conflict. Consequently, in 751/1350 he was forced to leave Damascus and returned to Cairo, where he resumed teaching at the Mārdinī Mosque. Among his prominent students

was Ibn al-Shiḥna al-Ḥalabī al-Kabīr (d. 815/1412) (Madelung, 2003: 371).

Among the commentators on al-Hidāya are also Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451) and Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457). Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī was raised in a scholarly and religious household: his father, who served as a judge, took personal care of his education before entrusting him to teachers who instructed him in the various Islamic sciences. Al-ʿAynī studied with numerous distinguished hadith scholars and jurists. He received his early training at the Nūriyya Madrasa in Damascus, one of the most renowned centers for hadith studies. Later, in 783/1381, he traveled to Aleppo to further his studies, where he met the Hanafī jurist Jamāl al-Malāṭī (d. 803/1400), a disciple of al-Itqānī. Afterward, he moved to Jerusalem, where he studied extensively under ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Sayrāmī (d. 790/1388), a student of al-Kurlānī (Kefevī, n.d. Ms: 337a–364b). Together with his teacher, al-ʿAynī later settled in Cairo, where al-Sayrāmī welcomed him into the Ṣāḥiriyya Madrasa. Al-ʿAynī remained there until his teacher’s death, serving in various roles (Ibn Taghrībirdī, 1998: 172). In Cairo, he furthered his education with leading scholars of the time, including Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1403), Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404), and Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807/1405) (Koçkuzu, 1991: 271). These hadith scholars laid the foundations of his expertise in hadith, shaping al-ʿAynī’s development as a Hanafī scholar of hadith. Their influence is evident in his writings and even more so in those of his student, Ibn al-Humām, for both shared a similar approach in their commentaries on al-Hidāya. One of their shared principles was the preference for authentic hadith over inherited madhhab positions.

The exegetical style and methodology of al-ʿAynī and Ibn al-Humām in their commentaries on al-Hidāya are largely similar, perhaps because both scholars employed the same research approach in the fields of jurisprudence and hadith studies. Moreover, Ibn al-Humām’s teachers were closely connected to al-ʿAynī. For instance, Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn al-Kinānī (d. 829/1426), a disciple of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Sayrāmī and known by the epithet “Qārī al-Hidāya,” was one of Ibn al-Humām’s instructors. This title was given to him by al-Sayrāmī himself (Al-Sakhāwī, 1992: 109). In addition to al-Kinānī, Ibn al-Humām’s main teachers included Abū al-Walīd Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 815/1412), Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449). Ibn al-Humām pursued his studies in jurisprudence at the Barkūkiyya Madrasa, where

both al-Sayrāmī and al-Kinānī taught. He studied al-Hidāya with “Qārī al-Hidāya” for nineteen years. (Al-Sakhāwī, 1992: v.8, 131) Unfortunately, only one work of al-Kinānī has survived: *Fatāwā Qārī al-Hidāya*. This collection contains legal opinions on various issues but does not cover all areas of jurisprudence, addressing only certain topics. Consequently, it cannot be compared comprehensively with other commentaries. The manuscript consists of about forty folios, and numerous copies of it are preserved in Istanbul libraries (Süleymaniye Library, n.d. Manuscripts: Esad Efendi, no. 1064, Şehid Ali Paşa, no. 936, 947, 948, Ayasofya, no. 1423).

Among the most important commentaries on al-Hidāya are al-Bināya and *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr*. In these works, al-ʿAynī and Ibn al-Humām expressed their own views and preferences without falling into sectarian bias. Their methodology was characterized by the extensive use of Qurʾānic verses and hadiths, as well as a remarkable diversity of sources. Overall, an evaluation of the arguments employed and the conclusions reached shows that both scholars adopted a middle position between the “Ahl al-Ra’y” (the school of rational opinion) and the “Ahl al-Ḥadīth” (the school of tradition). Particularly noteworthy is that Ibn al-Humām engaged in wide-ranging discussions of contentious issues between different schools, making choices not only among the various opinions within the Ḥanafī school but also across the positions of other madhhabs.

This distinctive feature can also be observed in Shams al-Dīn al-Sarūjī (d. 710/1310), author of *al-Gḥāya fī Sharḥ al-Hidāya*. What unites these three scholars and distinguishes them from other commentators is their training in institutions where hadith studies were emphasized, and their recognized expertise in this field. For instance, Ibn al-Humām received multiple ijāzas from leading muḥaddiths to teach hadith (Şener, 1993: 23–24).

Another common trait among them is their consistent reference to hadith scholars when explaining al-Marghīnānī’s al-Hidāya, providing detailed analyses of the transmitted hadiths and their isnāds, and articulating their legal opinions on this basis. Al-ʿAynī in particular examined the hadiths cited in al-Hidāya from the perspective of hadith criticism. His critique was not limited to al-Marghīnānī himself; he also evaluated and corrected earlier commentators who had failed to recognize certain errors. His first such criticism was directed at ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Turkmānī (d. 750/1349), followed by al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384) (Aynī, 2009: v.1, 114).

Thus, the analysis of the works of al-‘Aynī, Ibn al-Humām, and al-Sarūjī demonstrates that their approach to interpreting *al-Hidāya* was deeply rooted in hadith scholarship. This allowed them to shed new light on al-Marghīnānī’s text while correcting the oversights of earlier commentators. Their methodology can be characterized as a deliberate balance between rational reasoning and textual tradition, which made their works influential not only among Ḥanafī jurists but also within broader scholarly circles.

We may now proceed to examine the methodological differences in the commentaries on *al-Hidāya*, highlighting how the approaches of various scholars reflected not only the legal tradition but also the intellectual debates of their time.

With regard to the methodology of writing commentaries on *al-Hidāya*, the study revealed that al-Sighnāqī and al-Kurlānī primarily compared their arguments with those of the Shāfi‘ī school. This indicates a form of intellectual rivalry between Ḥanafīs and Shāfi‘īs in Central Asia concerning the validity and persuasiveness of each school’s evidence. At the same time, it is noted that the number of Shāfi‘īs in Central Asia was significantly smaller than in Syria (al-Shām).

Some Ḥanafīs who migrated from Central Asia to the Middle East sought to emphasize the superiority of their school over others. For instance, al-Itqānī and al-Bābartī were strict adherents of the Ḥanafī tradition. This is clearly reflected in al-Bābartī’s treatise *al-Nukat al-Zarīfa fī Tarjīh Madhhab Abī Ḥanīfa* (Süleymaniye Library, n.d.:MS no. 1384, 204b–211a). A study of this work shows that al-Bābartī not only affirmed the superiority of the Ḥanafī school over others but also actively defended its positions on specific issues, often criticizing the views of the Shāfi‘īs. It should be noted that the period in which al-Bābartī lived was marked by intense intra-madhab and inter-madhab debates. Al-Bābartī himself stated that he composed this treatise in response to accusations directed against the Ḥanafī school (Inanir, 2013: 78). Significantly, in this treatise he openly asserts the superiority of the Ḥanafī school over the Shāfi‘ī school. However, in *al-Ināya* al-Bābartī does not criticize the Shāfi‘ī positions and instead follows a different path and methodology in clarifying legal questions.

At the same time, in his work *al-Ināya*, al-Bābartī, when addressing the issue of “the ruling on reciting *al-Fātiḥa* in prayer,” includes the opinions of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī and Imām Mālik. Yet, his way of discussing the same issue in *al-Nukat al-Zarīfa*

differs considerably from that in *al-Ināya*. For instance, in *al-Nukat al-Zarīfa*, al-Bābartī writes:

“*Al-Shāfi‘ī, may Allah have mercy on him, said: the recitation of al-Fātiḥa in prayer is an obligatory pillar (rukṇ), and each of the fourteen shaddas (consonantal doublings) is likewise a rukṇ. If any one of them is omitted, the prayer becomes invalid. Were it not for the teaching of Abū Ḥanīfa, may Allah have mercy on him, then all the prayers performed in the world would be invalid*” (Inanir, 2013: 80).

Here we see that al-Bābartī, by asserting that without the Ḥanafī school’s teaching many people’s prayers would be invalid, strongly defends the Ḥanafī position. However, in *al-Ināya* he generally limits himself to comparing Abū Ḥanīfa’s arguments and evidences with those of the Shāfi‘īs and Mālikīs, without sharply criticizing the latter. For example, in *al-Ināya* on a similar issue al-Bābartī writes:

“*Scholars have disagreed concerning what constitutes the rukṇ (pillar) of recitation. Thus, our scholars consider the recitation of at least one verse as a rukṇ; the Shāfi‘īs consider Sūrat al-Fātiḥa as the rukṇ; and the Mālikīs require al-Fātiḥa together with another sūrah. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: ‘The prayer of one who does not recite al-Fātiḥa and along with it another sūrah is invalid. The reason is clear. The answer is: the existence of a rukṇ can only be established through definitive (qat‘ī) proofs. A solitary report (khabar al-wāḥid) is not definitive proof, though it does necessitate action. Imām al-Shāfi‘ī (may Allah bless him) said: ‘Whoever does not recite al-Fātiḥa in his prayer has no prayer, and this is similar to the first statement. But we have the statement of Allah the Exalted: ‘So recite whatever is easy for you from the Qur’an’ (Sūrat al-Muzzammil, 73:20), (Al-Bābartī, 1970: 294).*

In general, in *al-Ināya*, al-Bābartī follows the method of al-Sighnāqī and al-Kurlānī, who presented a comparative analysis of the views and arguments of scholars from different schools. The main difference between al-Bābartī’s commentary and the explanations of al-Sighnāqī and al-Kurlānī lies in his tendency not to go into detail, often summarizing information that al-Sighnāqī presented more extensively. By contrast, al-Sighnāqī elaborates on disagreements in a question-and-answer format, analyzing them in detail and sometimes illustrating legal issues with narratives and reports from the Companions and the Successors. Moreover, in clarifying specific terms, al-Sighnāqī occasionally cites not only the opinions of Ḥanafī scholars but also those of the Mu‘tazilīs and Ash‘arīs, drawing

comparisons between them. (Al-Ṣighnāqī, 2017: 185, 214, 232). His approach demonstrates that he possessed knowledge not only in jurisprudence but also in tafsīr, grammar, and kalām. Both al-Kurlānī and al-Ṣighnāqī sometimes employed the statements of Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī to explain certain legal terms, which reveals their expertise in theology. In fact, their commentaries contain multiple references to al-Māturīdī's formulations. (Al-Ṣighnāqī, 2017: 63), (Al-Kurlānī, 2019: 461). This feature may be what distinguishes them from other commentators on *al-Hidāya* and reflects the tendency of Central Asian Ḥanafī scholars to incorporate theological discussions into their legal writings.

Among al-Kurlānī's students, Qiwām al-Dīn Amīr Kātib al-Fārābī al-Itqānī (d. 758/1357) stands out as a staunch adherent of the Ḥanafī school and a strong opponent of the Shāfi'īs. By order of the Sultan of Egypt, he was granted a special madrasa in Cairo where he taught Ḥanafī doctrine. It is likely that al-Bābartī, too, acted against the Shāfi'īs with the support of these rulers. Al-Bābartī maintained close ties with the Sultan of Egypt, al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (d. 802/1399). It is also worth noting that one of the leading Ḥanafī jurists of the time, Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭarsūsī (d. 758/1357), lived contemporaneously with al-Bābartī and al-Itqānī and authored the famous treatise *Tuhfat al-Turk fīmā yajibu an yu'mala fī l-mulk*, which likewise defended the superiority of the Ḥanafī school over the Shāfi'īs. (Kılıç, 2011: v.40, 114)

One of the reasons al-Itqānī moved from al-Shām to Egypt was his lack of sufficient support in the ongoing debates surrounding Ḥanafī jurisprudence. He was thus compelled to settle in Cairo, where he composed his commentary on *al-Hidāya*. According to the sources, al-Itqānī frequently cited the opinions of scholars from Bukhara, Samarkand, and Balkh, which directly demonstrates his attempt to bring the intellectual traditions of Central Asia into the scholarly circles of al-Shām. (Al-Itqānī, n.d.: Ms. no. 3706, 152–162) By contrast, in the case of al-Ṣighnāqī, who also moved first to al-Shām and later to Egypt, the sources do not indicate a similar pattern; rather, they show that al-Ṣighnāqī did not engage in harsh criticism of Shāfi'ī scholars. In the works of al-Ṣighnāqī and al-Kurlānī, I did not find strongly biased positions on particular issues. In controversial matters, both scholars present a range of opinions, including that of Imām al-Shāfi'ī, and ultimately state the view they considered most sound.

Even within the Ḥanafī school, al-Itqānī faced numerous objections and engaged in debates on certain issues. In addition to the criticisms he expressed orally and transmitted directly in his writings, some Ḥanafī scholars composed refutations of his views. Among these were Ibn Abī al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī (d. 792/1390) and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Kunawī (d. 771/1369), who produced an abridgment of al-Ṣighnāqī's *al-Nihāya* under the title *Khulāṣat al-Kunawī*.

With regard to the issue of *raising the hands* (*fī raf' al-yadayn*), al-Itqānī stands out by adding a statement not found in the works of other commentators on *al-Hidāya*. For example, in his *Ghāyat al-bayān wa-nādirat al-aqrān*, he writes:

“Following the Shāfi'ī school is only permissible when the imam being followed does not perform an act that invalidates the prayer. If such an act occurs, it is not acceptable—for example, raising the hands during bowing (*rukū'*) or upon rising from it... In all such cases, it is impermissible to follow him in prayer” (Al-Itqānī, n.d.: Ms. no. 869, 86).

Thus, it becomes evident that al-Itqānī, drawing on the practice of the Shāfi'ī school, introduced the condition that “raising the hands during bowing (*rukū'*) is impermissible”. However, further research shows that, according to other commentators on *al-Hidāya*, this issue was not regarded as a necessary condition for following a Shāfi'ī imam in prayer. (Al-Ṣighnāqī, 2017: 113)

Although al-Itqānī provides detailed accounts of various opinions within the Ḥanafī school, he also includes the views of the Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī traditions. Moreover, in some cases, he cites the individual opinions of other scholars. By comparison, al-Marghīnānī in his work mentions, alongside the Ḥanafī position, only those of the Shāfi'īs and Mālikīs, while the views of the Ḥanbalīs are entirely absent from *al-Hidāya*. Among the non-Ḥanafī schools, the Shāfi'īs receive the most frequent attention. In *Ghāyat al-bayān*, we find that whenever a Ḥanafī or Shāfi'ī opinion is presented, the Mālikī perspective is often added as well. (Al-Itqānī, n.d.: Ms. no. 96, 110a) However, al-Itqānī rarely develops the Mālikī arguments in as much detail as he does for the Shāfi'īs, especially by engaging with their proofs. He also occasionally refers to the opinions of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, though usually without extended analysis. For instance, citing the report of 'Ā'isha, he presents the view of the two Imāms (al-Imāmayn) that the recitation in the *kūsūf* (eclipse) prayer should be audible, and adds that Aḥmad ibn

Ḥanbal held the same position (Al-Itqānī, n.d.: Ms. no. 96, 110a).

Al-Itqānī's discussions reveal that he relied on a wide range of shar'ī evidences, making his work particularly rich in terms of legal argumentation. He frequently employed ḥadīths as proofs and examined reports cited in *al-Hidāya* as ḥadīths, demonstrating that some of them are not in fact authentic ḥadīths. For example, *al-Hidāya* mentions the report "The daytime prayer is recited silently" as evidence against Imām Mālik's view that the noon (*ṣuḥr*) and afternoon (*ʿaṣr*) prayers on 'Arafāt should be recited aloud. Al-Itqānī argued that this report is not a ḥadīth but rather a statement of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, recorded in al-Harawī's *al-Gharībayn fī al-Qur'ān wa al-ḥadīth* and al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Fā'iq fī gharīb al-ḥadīth*. (Al-Itqānī, n.d.: Ms. no. 96, 60b). Furthermore, when citing ḥadīths on specific issues, al-Itqānī often pointed out variations in their transmission. He also referred to ḥadīths not mentioned in *al-Hidāya*, providing isnād and textual criticism of those reports. (Al-Itqānī, n.d.: Ms. no. 96, 71b).

About a century later, another prominent Ḥanafī jurist, Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457), addressed this debate in a short treatise entitled *Risāla fī iqtida' al-ḥanafīyya bi al-shāfi'īyya* ("Treatise on Ḥanafīs Following Shāfi'īs") (Ibn al-Humām, n.d.: MS no. 1757/42, 207–209). In this work, Ibn al-Humām criticizes the conduct of certain Ḥanafīs who, unwilling to pray behind a Shāfi'ī imām serving at the time in the Maṣjid al-Ḥarām, would form separate congregations after the prayer (Ibn al-Humām, 1970: 257). Contrary to the positions of al-Bābartī and al-Itqānī, Ibn al-Humām maintained that such behavior was a manifestation of sectarian zeal. He argued that Ḥanafīs should still join the congregation in prayer even if the imām belonged to the Shāfi'ī school. On this matter, Ibn al-Humām echoed the view of the classical Ḥanafī jurist Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981), who likewise held that it was permissible for Ḥanafīs to pray behind an imām from another school (Ibn al-Humām, n.d.: MS no. 1757/42, 209).

Many sources report that Ibn al-Humām often adopted views that were at odds with the Ḥanafī school to which he nominally belonged. Ibn 'Ābidīn highlights this point, noting that Ibn al-Humām frequently held opinions contrary to his own madhhab, and in some cases preferred the views of Imām Mālik (Ibn 'Umar, 2009: 89). In his *Fath al-Qadīr*, Ibn al-Humām regularly selected between different madhhab opinions and elaborated on their theoretical foundations. (Koca, 2000: 87–89). For example,

he criticized certain explanations of al-Marghīnānī in the *Adab al-Qāḍī* section concerning the annulment of judicial rulings in disputed cases. According to al-Marghīnānī, a judge's decision could not be overturned if the disagreement traced back to the earliest generation of the Companions. However, if the disagreement emerged in later centuries, a ruling that contradicted the opinion of another authority could be annulled.

In this context, Ibn al-Humām cites the claim of some jurists that "a Ḥanafī judge may annul a ruling issued by a Mālikī or Shāfi'ī judge" (Ibn al-Humām, 1970: 302). Ibn al-Humām, however, rejects this view. He argues that Imām al-Shāfi'ī and Imām Mālik are universally recognized mujtahids, whose disagreements must be regarded as valid, and therefore the rulings based on their opinions should be accepted and not subject to annulment. According to him, all disputes among the four madhhabs fall into the category of *mukhtalaf fīh*, and any judicial decision issued in accordance with one of these views cannot be overturned. In this way, Ibn al-Humām provided a framework for judicial rulings that accommodates the diverse perspectives of different madhhabs. Moreover, in his work *Fath al-Qadīr* he presents several similar opinions that diverge from the mainstream Ḥanafī position, such as on the postponement of punishment during warfare, the expiation (*kaffāra*) for *ṣihār*, and the treatment of immovable property in war zones, among others (Ibn al-Humām, 1970: 153, 243, 317).

It is also worth mentioning the renowned work of the Ḥanafī jurist Shams al-Dīn al-Sarūjī (d. 710/1310) entitled *al-Ghāya fī Sharḥ al-Hidāya*. This commentary on *al-Hidāya* can be regarded as a kind of encyclopaedia of jurisprudence across the four Sunni madhhabs. However, it does not cover the entire text of *al-Hidāya*, but rather provides a selective commentary on certain topics. In terms of methodology, al-Sarūjī's work closely resembles the approaches of Ibn al-Humām and al-'Aynī in interpreting *al-Hidāya* (Al-Sarūjī, 1997: 35). Indeed, Ibn al-Humām, al-'Aynī, and other scholars frequently cited *al-Ghāya* in their writings. Among al-Sarūjī's most prominent teachers were Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Khilātī (d. 652/1254) and Abū al-Rabī Sulaymān b. Wuhaib (d. 677/1278), both of whom are mentioned in the transmission chain of *al-Hidāya* through Qāḍīkhān (d. 592/1196).

Like Ibn al-Humām and al-'Aynī, al-Sarūjī, in his commentary on *al-Hidāya*, does not adopt a partisan stance but rather engages with the opinions of scholars from different madhhabs. Moreover, he

supports the Ḥanafī position concerning hadith and responds to criticisms directed against the school in this field. (Özel, 2000: 441–442). As for the sources used in *al-Ghāya*, what distinguishes this work is its extensive reliance on hadith literature: from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to the *Muwaṭṭaʿ* of Imām Mālik, citing nearly forty-two works in total. In addition, al-Sarūjī draws upon fifty-three Ḥanafī legal texts. From other madhhabs, he incorporates works such as *al-Zāhira* (Mālikī), *al-Majmūʿ* (Shāfiʿī), *al-Mughnī* (Ḥanbalī), and Ibn Ḥazm's *al-Muḥallā* (Ẓāhirī).

Al-Bābartī's teacher, Qiwām al-Dīn al-Kākī (d. 749 H.), in his concise work on Islamic jurisprudence entitled '*Uyūn al-Madhāhib al-Kāmilī*', written about the four schools of law, states that his aim was to make it easier for people to follow these four madhhabs and to find the opinions they sought without difficulty (Al-Kākī, 2004: 13). In this book, al-Kākī explains the principles of the four madhhabs in the manner of a commentary, presenting their views consistently in every branch of fiqh, without giving preference to any one of them. It is also reported that in his commentary on al-Marghīnānī's (d. 593 H.) famous work, entitled *Mī'rāj al-Dirāya ilā Sharḥ al-Hidāya*, al-Kākī similarly compiled the opinions of the four madhhabs. The work employs a question-and-answer method and at times compares the text of al-Hidāya, which is based on *Bidāyat al-Mubtadī*, with the statements of Imām Muḥammad's *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḡhīr*. Furthermore, at the end of the book, although absent from the original *al-Hidāya*, a section on the law of inheritance (*farā'id*) was added on the basis of al-Qudūrī's *al-Mukhtaṣar*. In some manuscript copies, this section appears as an independent treatise (Süleymaniye Library, Fātiḥ Collection, MS no. 1903/2, fols. 310–343).

Research Results

The study has shown that a common feature of the three scholars, al-'Aynī, Ibn al-Humām, and al-Sarūjī, is the similarity of their methodology in their commentaries on *al-Hidāya*. Although they belonged to the Ḥanafī school, they demonstrated tolerance toward the views of other madhhabs. This characteristic is largely explained by the scholarly environment of the madrasas of the Middle East, where special emphasis was placed on ḥadīth studies, and many issues were approached primarily through the perspective of ḥadīth without prejudice.

A comparison of the works of al-Sighnāqī and al-Kurlānī revealed no evidence of harsh criticism or prejudice toward other madhhabs. Both scholars

presented different opinions, including that of Imām al-Shāfiʿī, and ultimately formulated the view they considered most correct, relying on the arguments of Ḥanafī authorities.

By contrast, the works of al-Bābartī and al-Itqānī display more polemical positions. However, their approach did not amount to blind adherence to their school. On the contrary, they compared Ḥanafī opinions with those of other madhhabs in order to demonstrate the soundness of the Ḥanafī method.

In general, the commentaries on *al-Hidāya* written by Central Asian scholars display significant similarities in structure, style, sources, and intellectual content. This phenomenon can be explained by the influence of their teachers and the scholarly environments in which these works were produced, and it is particularly evident when comparing al-Sighnāqī's *al-Nihāya* with al-Kurlānī's *al-Kifāya*.

Conclusion

The presented research demonstrates that the commentaries on *al-Hidāya* composed in Central Asia represent vivid evidence of the preservation and further development of the Ḥanafī tradition, as well as its ongoing dialogue with other schools of law.

Of particular importance is the observation that scholars such as al-'Aynī, Ibn al-Humām, and al-Sarūjī displayed a remarkable degree of methodological openness. While firmly rooted in the Ḥanafī madhhab, they consistently engaged with the views of other schools and assessed them without prejudice. This approach reflects the intellectual environment of the madrasas of the Middle East, where the study of hadith strongly influenced the formation of legal thought and where controversial issues were often addressed through the lens of hadith studies, with an emphasis on clarity and fairness rather than polemics.

Similarly, al-Sighnāqī and al-Kurlānī, representatives of the Central Asian scholarly tradition, did not resort to harsh criticism of other madhhabs. Their approach was to present differing opinions, including that of Imām al-Shāfiʿī, and to ultimately favor the position they found most convincing within the framework of Ḥanafī methodology.

By contrast, al-Bābartī and al-Itqānī illustrate a more polemical tendency characteristic of their era, when both intra- and inter-madhhab debates became increasingly pronounced. Yet their polemical writings should not be regarded as mere sectarian zeal. On the contrary, their efforts aimed at affirming the authority of the Ḥanafī school by comparing its posi-

tions with those of other legal traditions and demonstrating its methodological soundness.

Taken as a whole, the commentaries on *al-Hidāya* produced by Central Asian scholars reveal strong structural, stylistic, and methodological similarities. This phenomenon can be explained by the dual influence of their teachers and the broader scholarly environments in which they were trained. Such parallels are especially evident when comparing al-Sighnāqī's *al-Nihāya* and al-Kurlānī's *al-Kifāya*.

In conclusion, the study of these commentaries not only highlights the continuity of the Ḥanafī tradition but also shows its adaptability to diverse intellectual and cultural contexts. These findings deepen our understanding of how Ḥanafī legal thought developed in Central Asia and the Middle East, while also pointing to promising avenues for future research — particularly regarding the role of these commentaries in the transmission of Islamic knowledge in Transoxiana, the Mamluk realm, and the Ottoman Empire.

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Received May 1, 2025
Accepted November 30, 2025