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Why Are *Ḥāshiyas* Overlooked? Canonization Bias and the Invisibility of Intellectual Innovation in the Islamic Scholarly Tradition

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Abstract
The *ḥāshiya* remains underrepresented in the intellectual historiography of Islam because hierarchies of knowledge tend to place the *matn* (core text) and *sharḥ* (commentary) at the center of authority. In contrast, subsequent commentaries are relegated to derivative categories and judged against standards of originality rooted in individual authorship. This situation limits historiography's ability to recognize the transformations of knowledge that occur through the practice of commentary and intertextual relationships. This article analyzes the mechanisms behind the invisibility of the *ḥāshiya* and formulates patterns of intellectual innovation identifiable through intertextual reading. The study employs a library-based research methodology—integrating approaches from intellectual history, philology, discourse analysis, and intertextuality—to examine the *matn–sharḥ–ḥāshiya* corpus and relevant historiographical literature. The analysis focuses on textual relationships, responses to prior authorities, shifts in argumentative structures, concept reformulation, and the adaptation of ideas to different intellectual contexts. The findings indicate that the invisibility of the *ḥāshiya* arises from three interconnected mechanisms: a genre hierarchy that equates commentary with mere reproduction; the institutionalization of learning, which centers on canonical texts; and modern historiography, which prioritizes individual novelty as the benchmark for intellectual contribution. Intertextual analysis reveals patterns of innovation—such as resolving interpretive problems, selecting and synthesizing authorities, making argumentative corrections, reconstructing concepts, and recontextualizing knowledge—showing that *ḥāshiya*-based innovation is relational and cumulative, and thus ill-suited to evaluation through the paradigm of individual originality. These findings offer a historiographical framework that positions commentary networks as the locus of knowledge transformation, thereby broadening the understanding of the dynamics of Islamic intellectual production.

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Keywords: *Ḥāshiya*; Canonization; Epistemic Invisibility; Intertextuality; Islamic History

Abstrak

Ḥāshiya masih kurang terwakili dalam historiografi intelektual Islam karena hierarki pengetahuan cenderung menempatkan *matn* dan *sharḥ* sebagai pusat otoritas, sementara komentar lanjutan dipahami sebagai kategori derivatif dan standar orisinalitas yang berorientasi pada kepengarangan individual. Kondisi ini membatasi kemampuan historiografi dalam mengenali transformasi pengetahuan yang berlangsung melalui praktik komentar dan relasi antarteks. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis mekanisme pembentukan invisibilitas *ḥāshiya* serta merumuskan pola inovasi intelektual yang dapat diidentifikasi melalui pembacaan intertekstual. Kajian ini merupakan penelitian kepustakaan dengan pendekatan sejarah intelektual, filologi, analisis wacana, dan intertekstualitas terhadap korpus *matn–sharḥ–ḥāshiya* serta literatur historiografis yang terkait. Analisis diarahkan pada hubungan tekstual, respons terhadap otoritas terdahulu, perubahan struktur argumentasi, reformulasi konsep, serta penyesuaian gagasan terhadap konteks intelektual yang berbeda. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa invisibilitas *ḥāshiya* terbentuk melalui tiga mekanisme yang saling berkaitan, yaitu hierarki genre yang mengasosiasikan komentar dengan reproduksi, institusionalisasi pembelajaran yang memusatkan perhatian pada teks kanonik, dan historiografi modern yang mengutamakan kebaruan individual sebagai ukuran kontribusi intelektual. Pembacaan intertekstual memperlihatkan pola inovasi berupa penyelesaian problem interpretatif, seleksi dan sintesis otoritas, koreksi argumentatif, rekonstruksi konsep, serta rekontekstualisasi pengetahuan. Pola ini menunjukkan bahwa inovasi *ḥāshiya* bersifat relasional dan kumulatif, sehingga tidak tepat dinilai melalui paradigma orisinalitas individual. Temuan ini menawarkan kerangka historiografis yang menempatkan jaringan komentar sebagai lokus transformasi pengetahuan dan memperluas pemahaman tentang dinamika produksi intelektual dalam Islam.

Kata Kunci: *Ḥāshiya*; Kanonisasi; Invisibilitas Epistemik; Intertekstualitas; Sejarah Islam

Introduction

The Islamic scholarly tradition was built on a textual ecosystem characterized by layering, dialogue, and intertextuality; consequently, knowledge production unfolded through reading, commenting on, correcting, adapting, and expanding earlier works (Chande, 2023). *Sharḥ* (commentary) and *ḥāshiya* (super-commentary/marginal gloss) occupy strategic positions in this ecosystem, enabling ideas to be continuously negotiated across generations, disciplines, and scholarly communities. The *ḥāshiya* serves as a medium for scholars to test arguments, resolve conceptual issues, correct prior formulations, expand upon the methodological implications of a given opinion, and link various authorities within a single argumentative network (Çelik, 2022). Historiographical issues arise when intellectual creativity is measured primarily by categories such as individual originality, the creation of new theories, and rupture with preceding traditions. Thus, the study of the *ḥāshiya* must be framed as a means by which intellectual history determines which texts are deemed generative of knowledge, which forms of change are recognized as innovation, and whose authority secures a place in the canon's construction.

The prolific production and use of the *ḥāshiya* reveal an empirical tension regarding the marginal status often accorded to it in modern historiography. Catalogs of Islamic manuscripts demonstrate the vast number of commentaries and super-commentaries produced and copied since the post-classical period (Ruano, 2025), while Islamic educational traditions have made extensive use of the *ḥāshiya* in fields such as *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (legal theory), *tafsīr* (exegesis), *kalām* (theology), logic, and Arabic grammar (Elston, 2024). This material and pedagogical significance has not, however, been matched by commensurate representation of the *ḥāshiya* in modern bibliographies. Modern publishing trends that favor works easily positioned as authoritative texts, bibliographic classification practices that relegate commentaries to secondary status, and a legacy of periodization that associates the post-classical era with stagnation have collectively shaped an epistemic environment in which the contributions of *ḥāshiya* are difficult to recognize (Tiburcio, 2026). Evidence on the function of commentaries in transmitting knowledge does not, in itself, demonstrate the mechanisms of marginalization; the relationship between textual abundance, canonical selection, and intellectual visibility must be analyzed as a series of interconnected processes.

Existing scholarship has opened several important avenues of inquiry but has yet to produce a unified explanation of the mechanisms that transform the intellectual productivity of *ḥāshiya* into historiographical invisibility. Bano (2022) demonstrates the close relationship between textual transmission, educational practices, and the formation of scholarly authority within classical Islamic educational systems, but does not explain why texts central to transmission later came to occupy a subordinate position in constructing intellectual history. Ibrahim (2024) challenges the narrative of post-classical decline by emphasizing the complexity of Islamic knowledge production. Still, he does not identify how historiographical categories of originality and derivative works contribute to the invisibility of *ḥāshiya* innovations. Zhang (2021) highlights the influence of modern printing on the selection, standardization, and canonization of Islamic texts, yet fails to link these selection processes to the shift in the epistemic status of *ḥāshiya* and the diminished visibility of their innovations. Antaby (2026) illustrates the intense intellectual dynamics of the post-classical period through developments in logic and theology; while this study undermines the assumption that stagnation was a defining characteristic of the era, it does not elucidate how innovations emerging from commentary practices remain overlooked when historiography relies on units of analysis centered on individual works and primary authors.

Yusoff (2023) highlights the significant role of the commentary tradition within *madrasa* networks and pedagogical practices; while this contribution elucidates the circulation and social function of commentary texts, it stops short of linking them to the canonization processes that determine a work's visibility in the history of knowledge. Collectively, these five studies underscore the importance of

transmission, education, post-classical intellectual production, and textual materiality. However, they leave analytical questions unresolved about the interplay between textual hierarchies, criteria for innovation, canonization mechanisms, and epistemic invisibility. This gap is specific: existing literature explains why the *ḥāshiya* was produced, used, and circulated, but it lacks an adequate explanation of the mechanisms that prevent knowledge transformations within the *ḥāshiya* from being recognized historiographically as innovations.

This study examines how canonization mechanisms shape the epistemic hierarchy among the *matn* (core text), *sharḥ*, and *ḥāshiya*; how innovations emerging in the *ḥāshiya* lose visibility in historiography; and how a re-reading of this genre might alter our understanding of post-classical Islamic intellectual creativity. The study's objectives include analyzing the mechanisms of textual selection and hierarchization; identifying forms of innovation—such as conceptual modification, argumentative reconstruction, problem-solving, the synthesis of authorities, and methodological transformation; and explaining the relationship between these forms of innovation and their level of historiographical recognition. The study's initial argument rests on an epistemological proposition: the invisibility of the *ḥāshiya* is best understood as a consequence of knowledge-categorization frameworks that prioritize individual originality and a work's detachment from prior traditions, rather than as an indicator of low intellectual productivity. Canonization operates through textual selection, publishing practices, bibliographic classification, the construction of authorship, and historiographical habits that position the primary text as the locus of authority while relegating commentaries to a secondary layer (Aurell, 2022). Thus, the study's contribution is directed toward three key interventions: revising the historiographical understanding of post-classical Islamic innovation; formulating an understanding of innovation as a transformation of knowledge occurring through intertextual relations; and providing an analytical framework for interpreting the interplay between texts, canonization, and authority within the study of Islamic intellectual history.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method with an intellectual history design, integrating philological, intertextual, and critical discourse analyses to elucidate the mechanisms of canonization and the processes rendering intellectual innovations invisible within the *ḥāshiya* tradition. Primary data are restricted to *ḥāshiya* manuscripts in the fields of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and *kalām* from the classical period that exhibit evidence of transmission, usage, or intellectual influence; comparative data include the associated *matn* and *sharḥ*, colophon notes, marginalia, *ijāzah*s, ownership records, manuscript catalogs, and biographical and historiographical sources. Secondary data are utilized to establish the context regarding historiography, knowledge transmission, manuscript culture, and the formation of authority. Data collection involved searching catalogs and digital databases and

selecting a corpus based on chronological boundaries, transmission traceability, evidence of usage, and argumentative relevance; this was followed by documenting textual variants, intertextual relationships, codicological metadata, citation networks, and historiographical representations. Analysis was conducted through a *matn–sharḥ–ḥāshiya* comparison to distinguish between reproduction, clarification, critique, and conceptual innovation; the mapping of transmission and citation networks to reconstruct the distribution of authority; and a discourse analysis regarding the hierarchization, selection, attribution, and omission of *ḥāshiya* contributions.

Results and Discussion

The Canonization of Texts and the Formation of the Hierarchy of Islamic Scholarly Authority

The canonization of texts within the Islamic scholarly tradition is a selective process that transforms a work into a stable reference point for the production, transmission, teaching, and validation of knowledge. This definition distinguishes canonization from mere popularity, frequency of copying, or sustained use. A text becomes canonical when its usage gains legitimacy through a combination of pedagogical selection, scholarly authorization, affiliation with a school of thought (madhhab), repeated reproduction, and recognition within specific transmission networks (Oberauer, 2022). This framework also avoids the assumption that the *matn–sharḥ–ḥāshiya* system operated uniformly across the Islamic world from the outset. These three textual forms evolved at different times and with varying intensity depending on the discipline, school of thought, region, and intellectual milieu. A *matn* could gain authority as a concise formulation of a doctrine; a *sharḥ* could serve as an interpretive tool defining how that doctrine was read; and a *ḥāshiya* could gain authority through its critical response to the *sharḥ*.

Pedagogical selection is one of the initial mechanisms that transforms specific texts into shared references within the scholarly community. While the conciseness of a *matn* formulation certainly facilitates memorization, such pedagogical convenience only carries canonical consequences when the text is repeatedly used in instruction, serves as a basis for evaluation, and is situated within teacher-student transmission relationships (Ayyad, 2022). The history of Islamic educational institutions reveals organizational structures for teaching, the categorization of disciplines, defined roles for teachers and students, and institutional frameworks that enabled the sustained reproduction of specific materials (Umar et al., 2025). However, these mechanisms do not imply that every text taught automatically becomes canonical. The scholarly community selects texts based on decisions about which texts adequately represent a discipline or school of thought. When a particular *matn* is consistently used as a starting point for study, the *sharḥ* that elucidates its argumentative structure acquires a secondary pedagogical function. Repeated use crates a cumulative effect: the more generations study the same text, the more likely

it is to become a focal point for commentary and the stronger its standing as a shared reference.

Authorization through teacher-student relationships and the *ijāzah* reinforces the selection process by transforming pedagogical use into an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of transmission. The *ijāzah* cannot be treated as a universal mechanism with identical functions across all periods and disciplines; its significance depends on the type of knowledge, the relationship between the grantor and the recipient, and the teaching context. The *ijāzah* reveals who is authorized to transmit a work and the networks through which that legitimacy is passed on (Idriz, 2022). When a *matn* is taught by some scholars linked by scholarly ties and subsequently transmitted to students in different settings, the text acquires authoritative capital that transcends its internal content (Ally, 2026). Such networks render canonization a relational process: a text gains status through the actors who teach, validate, comment upon, and recommend it. Because scholars' networks are not monolithic, the canon itself is not necessarily singular. For instance, the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī traditions may develop distinct centers of reference; indeed, even within a single madhhab (school of thought), variations may emerge based on region and period.

The functional differentiation between *matn*, *sharḥ*, and *ḥāshiya* creates a hierarchy more complex than a simple primary-secondary sequence. The *matn* acquires referential authority when the scholarly community adopts it as a concise formulation to be mastered before further discussion (Abdullah, 2025). The *sharḥ* gains interpretive authority when its explanations become the primary medium for defining terms, constructing arguments, and guiding the reading of the *matn* (Nizamatdinov, 2026). The *ḥāshiya*'s position is not necessarily subordinate, as its authority can emerge through corrective or evaluative functions, or by resolving issues the *sharḥ* inadequately addresses (Kızılşeker, 2020). These distinctions highlight the need to differentiate between at least four dimensions of authority: referential, pedagogical, sectarian (madhhab), and interpretive. A single text may be dominant in one dimension without dominating others. Consequently, characterizing the *ḥāshiya* as a "subordinate layer" is valid only when the criteria used are clearly defined. In certain contexts, a *ḥāshiya* may serve as a more decisive interpretive reference than the *sharḥ* it comments on; thus, hierarchies must be reconstructed from usage practices rather than assumed from textual positioning.

Manuscript reproduction reveals how canonical status is maintained through the materiality of transmission. Copying cannot be treated simply as a measure of popularity, as the number of surviving manuscripts is influenced by the manuscript's age, storage conditions, collecting patterns, changes in ownership, and modern library selection policies (Shakir, 2026). Codicological evidence is most valuable when it links dates of copying, places of production, scribes' names, colophons, ownership records, *waqf* (endowments), and marginalia to the networks in which

the texts were used. The commentary tradition also demonstrates a close relationship between textual transmission and the production of knowledge. El-Rouayheb (2015) demonstrates how such texts record the exchange of ideas and the transmission of knowledge within networks of seventeenth-century Ottoman and Maghribi scholars. Such evidence highlights the importance of distinguishing between texts that were "widely copied" and those "recognized as authoritative references," as canonization results from transforming the transmission of material texts into authority acknowledged by the scholarly community.

Patronage and institutional frameworks influence the continuity of a canon, but they do not determine it directly. Endowments (*waqf*), madrasas, libraries, scholarly positions, and ruler support provide the infrastructure that enables ongoing interaction among teachers, students, and manuscripts (Azmi & Marpaung, 2025). Educational institutions are not merely repositories for texts; their internal teaching structures help determine which texts are repeatedly studied and which occupy a peripheral position (Indah et al., 2025). Patronage does not always involve directly selecting a specific text; instead, its influence is best understood through the material conditions it creates that sustain scholarly networks. When an institution provides collections, teachers, teaching spaces, and funding for transcription, it is more likely to reproduce works that already have community legitimacy. This relationship explains why canonization must be understood as an institutional process involving the interplay between scholarly authority and material infrastructure.

The shift toward print culture created a new phase in the selection and stabilization of the canon, without necessarily causing the *matn–sharḥ–ḥāshiya* hierarchy. Print technology altered the conditions of text reproduction, expanded distribution, and gave editors and publishers a greater role in shaping the forms of works available to readers (Magadán-Díaz & Rivas-García, 2025). El Shamsy (2020) shows how print culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries transformed the Arab intellectual community's relationship with classical Islamic literature through editing and publishing. As a result, a process of re-canonization emerged: texts that previously held a certain status within manuscript culture could gain new visibility through printed editions. At the same time, other works might remain outside the publishing market.

Historical variations indicate that canonization did not produce a single hierarchy applicable throughout Islamic history. One discipline might position the *matn* at the center of the curriculum, while another accorded greater prominence to the *sharḥ* or *ḥāshiya* as sources of argumentation. Differences between legal schools (*madhāhib*) also resulted in distinct configurations of reference, as each community developed its own networks of scholars, introductory texts, and commentarial traditions. Regional variations reinforced this pattern through differences in educational institutions, patronage, libraries, and lines of transmission. This

framework positions canonization as a process of authority production unfolding through four intertwined mechanisms: selection, authorization, reproduction, and stabilization. This model illustrates why the hierarchy should not be interpreted as an inherent quality of the genres themselves; rather, it is the historical outcome of usage and legitimation—factors subject to change.

The Production of Discourse on *Ḥāshiya*: From Pedagogical Instrument to Secondary Intellectual Label

The term *ḥāshiya* refers to a form of writing that operates through its proximity to another text—specifically by providing glosses, clarifications, corrections, objections, reinforcements, or reorganizations of a given statement (Ahmed & Larkin, 2013). Robert Wisnovsky (2004) illustrates the diverse functions of commentaries, ranging from source identification and term clarification to substituting evidence, harmonizing theories, and even refutating arguments in the text being commented on. Asad Q. Ahmed (2013) further demonstrates—through the tradition of commentaries on *Sullam al-ʿUlūm*—that the lemmata within the text serve as focal points enabling philosophical elaboration, exploration, and debate; meanwhile, an analysis of the surrounding commentaries reveals the complexities of intertextuality, the interplay between criticism and defense of the text, and the significance of *taḥqīq* (critical verification) within the practice of commentary. These facts require three analytical categories: the *ḥāshiya*'s function as an intellectual practice, its textual position as a work dependent on another text, and the historiographical assessment of its intellectual value.

While the relationship between *matn*, *sharḥ*, and *ḥāshiya* creates a layered structure, these layers do not necessarily correspond to a hierarchy of intellectual quality. El Shamsy (2013) highlights the distinctive forms of legal reasoning and school-based authority structures inherent in the *ḥāshiya* genre. The textual position of a *ḥāshiya*—as a commentary upon a commentary—can signify relationality rather than inferiority. Relationality implies that an argument takes shape through dialogue with prior statements, whereas inferiority is a normative judgment implying that the work possesses lesser value.

This notion of secondary status becomes more pronounced when historiography adopts novelty as a primary metric for intellectual development. Historical narratives never merely arrange a sequence of events; the selection of turning points, periods of progress, and key figures determines which works are deemed representative of change. Saleh (2022) illustrates this issue through a study of the periodization of Sunnī exegesis: periodization is both a historical outcome of the discipline and a tool that shapes how a tradition's evolution is interpreted. The implications for the *ḥāshiya* are significant. If progress is mapped via the emergence of authors and works viewed as marking new beginnings, then works that operate primarily through responses to earlier texts are more readily categorized as part of a continuum. Consequently, the "secondary" category functions as a periodization

device: primary texts are positioned as agents of change, whereas commentaries are relegated to the status of reproductive products.

The concept of stagnation must also be situated within a specific historiographical history. Warscheid (2017) highlights the persistence of the "decline" narrative in historiography concerning early modern Muslim scholarship in the Maghreb, demonstrating the interconnections among French colonial discourse, nationalist historiography, and reformist discourse—all of which characterize the pre-colonial era as a period of deterioration. These findings alter how the relationship between Orientalism and the *ḥāshiya* is conceptualized. Orientalism should not be positioned as the sole agent behind the genre's negative image. A more rigorous approach involves identifying how certain strands of Orientalist historiography constructed narratives of progress and decline, how these narratives interacted with reformist or nationalist discourses, and how such categorizations influenced the selection of works deemed representative.

The category of positivism cannot fully explain the changing status of the *ḥāshiya*. Positivism possesses its own conceptual history and is not synonymous with modern historiography as a whole (Fillafer, 2021). A more pertinent issue is the emergence of historiographical standards that link advances in knowledge to new facts, new theories, individual authors, or clear ruptures with prior authorities. Such standards appear in various traditions of the history of science and intellectual history without necessitating the view that all modern thought is positivist. Calis (2022), for instance, proposes a more inclusive reading of post-classical philosophical commentaries by attending to the actual function of the texts, while Ahmed (2013) demonstrates how the commentary format itself can generate philosophical development.

The question of originality becomes particularly acute when linked to concepts of authorship and textual agency. A *ḥāshiya* typically exhibits explicit connections to earlier works through citations, attributions, objections, and responses (Kaya, 2015). Such criteria overlook forms of creativity that arise from internal transformations within an argumentative tradition. Ahmed (2013) illustrates how commentaries and glosses on logic texts can create space for debate, critique, defense, and the formulation of new theories. Similar patterns are evident in the evolution of other legal genres. Samy Ayoub (2023), for example, highlights the concept of "creativity in continuity" within *fiqh* treatises—creativity that emerges when a jurist maintains a connection to a legal school while formulating responses to social and legal changes.

The conception of commentary as a secondary activity is also perpetuated by the way intellectual history constructs representations of disciplinary development. Selecting monumental works, authors deemed founders, and texts easily positioned as turning points produces a non-neutral corpus. When commentaries serve merely as auxiliary sources for understanding a primary text, the "secondary" label gains

methodological legitimacy: research begins with the primary work, uses the commentary as an interpretive tool, and then relegates it to a supporting role. Recent developments indicate a shift in perspective. Yakubovych (2020) positions the gloss as a crucial element in the periodization of Ottoman *tafsīr*, while Dye (2021) highlights serious issues arising when the history of *tafsīr* is reconstructed solely from printed corpora; post-classical works and *ḥāshiya*s may be underrepresented in modern publications, despite evidence of their widespread use.

The formation of secondary categories is best understood as a multi-layered process linking relational textual forms with historiographical standards regarding change, authorship, and creativity. The status of the *ḥāshiya* as a text dependent on a *matn* or *sharḥ* is a structural fact; interpreting that position as a sign of inferiority is an epistemic construct that itself requires a history. This construct is reinforced when periodization frames monumental works as markers of progress, when individual authorship serves as the benchmark for intellectual independence, and when commentaries are read merely as transmissions of pre-existing content.

Intellectual Innovation in the *Ḥāshiya*: Negotiation of Meaning, Critique, and the Development of Knowledge

A study of *ḥāshiya* must distinguish a commentary's mere existence from the intellectual contributions it generates. The measure of innovation in this research is not absolute novelty that breaks with tradition, but rather traceable shifts in concepts, argumentative structures, textual interpretation, analytical procedures, or the application of scholarly tools to new issues. This framework allows creativity to be situated in the relationship between the inherited text and the commentator's intellectual activity. A new *ḥāshiya* qualifies as innovative if its intervention produces an intellectual shift identifiable by comparing the *matn*, the *sharḥ*, and subsequent commentaries. This criterion stems from the fact that the *ḥāshiya* tradition is not limited to explanatory functions but encompasses verification, correction, criticism, the rejection of specific opinions, and the development or refinement of discussions (Chizari, 2023).

Commentary formulas provide an initial clue for interpreting the intellectual activity within a *ḥāshiya*. Expressions such as *qīla*, *uʿturiḍa*, *wa-fīhi naẓar*, *al-aṣaḥḥ*, or *wa-laka an taqūl* do not in themselves indicate substantive criticism; their analytical value becomes apparent only when the formula is followed by changes to the reasoning, definitions, relationships between arguments, or the choice of conclusion. In *Ḥāshiyat al-Shihāb*, for instance, al-Khafājī (1999) does not merely relay existing opinions; in several instances, he employs the phrase "*wa-anā aqūl*" (and I say) to introduce his own explanations or interpretations after presenting prior views. This characteristic aligns with al-Majdhūb's (2011) findings regarding *Ḥāshiyat al-Shihāb*, which identify discussion, criticism, and *istidrāk* (supplementary critique or correction) as key features of the work. Consequently, the unit of analysis here is not the commentary formula in isolation, but the intellectual operation

performed after that formula. If a commentary merely repeats or relocates a legal premise without altering the structure of reasoning, it is best classified as transmission; however, if the commentary shifts the rationale, reconfigures the relationships between premises, or yields new interpretive consequences, its status moves toward argumentative or interpretive innovation.

The case of Muḥammad al-Dasūqī exemplifies a form of innovation best described as internal normative reconstruction. Regarding various issues of *fiqh*, *Ḥāshiyat al-Dasūqī* does not simply reiterate al-Dardīr's exposition; rather, it selects opinions, corrects formulations, and clarifies the conditions for applying specific rulings. One instance appears in the discussion of oaths, where al-Dasūqī positions *ʿurf* (custom) as crucial in determining the meaning and consequences of an utterance. He explains that consideration must be given to the customs of the local population (*ʿādat ahl baladih*), and that such customs must be widely recognized among the people (Al-Dasūqī, 1998). He also comments on the phrasing regarding the status of an enslaved woman in the context of *taḥrīm al-ḥalāl* (declaring the lawful unlawful), stating, "*wa-al-ṣawāb ḥadhf al-amah*" (the correct approach is to omit the word *al-amah* [enslaved women]); in his assessment, an enslaved woman does not become *ḥarām* (forbidden) nor automatically emancipated in such a scenario unless there is an explicit intention to free her (Al-Dasūqī, 1998). This intervention demonstrates that al-Dasūqī's modifications go beyond merely adding information; they address the adequacy of legal formulations and the consequences of applying the law to concrete cases. His innovation lies in reconstructing the relationships between legal principles, the language of action, intention, and social custom. Thus, the *ḥāshiya* can be understood as a space for normative refinement operating from within the authority of the madhhab, rather than serving as a mere passive reproduction of inherited rulings.

The conceptual dimension is clearer in *Ḥāshiyat al-Bannānī ʿalā Sharḥ al-Maḥallī ʿalā Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ*—a commentary on *al-Maḥallī*'s commentary on Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ*. This structure lets readers follow three layers of argumentation: al-Subkī's propositions, *al-Maḥallī*'s elaborations, and al-Bannānī's interventions. The *hāshiya* text demonstrates al-Bannānī's engagement with *uṣūl* issues concerning linguistic expressions (*lafẓ*), the speaker's intent, and the scope of meaning. For example, on general expressions (*lafẓ ʿāmm*), he asks whether an expression's scope should be maintained by its established linguistic designation (*waḍʿ*) or limited by the speaker's intended meaning (Al-Bannānī, 2018). This shows that the *ḥāshiya*'s focus extends beyond the expression's form to the relationships among *waḍʿ*, intent (*qaṣd*), and the context that indicates meaning. Al-Bannānī's innovation is best understood as refining and testing conceptual tools already present in the *Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ* tradition, rather than creating an *uṣūl* theory entirely detached from the frameworks of al-Subkī and al-Maḥallī.

A reading of al-Khafājī offers a more compelling example of interpretive and argumentative innovation. When discussing the function of the letter *bā'* in the basmalah, for example, after presenting several reasons supporting its interpretation as *li-l-muṣāḥabah* (indicating accompaniment), al-Khafājī evaluates these arguments with the statement, "All that has been mentioned are merely persuasive points that are not conceded as valid"; he then raises objections to each point and proposes alternative reasoning (Al-Khafājī, 1999). Interventions of this kind show that the object of commentary extends beyond a verse's meaning to the strength of the argument linking linguistic analysis to exegetical conclusions. This pattern is evident in the discussion regarding the repetition of the term *iḥdāhumā* in Qur'an 2:282. Al-Khafājī questions the rationale behind this usage by citing al-Ghaznawī's response to a previously posed query: the reiteration of *iḥdāhumā* addresses the term's inherent ambiguity—since either of the two women could be the one who forgets or the one who reminds, the phrasing conveys a broader meaning without specifically designating one individual over the other (Al-Khafājī, 1999). Thus, an examination of the *ḥāshiya* reveals that the expansion of exegesis is achieved by re-evaluating the interplay between syntactic structure, rhetorical (*balāghah*) considerations, and the soundness of the arguments underpinning earlier interpretations.

A comparison of al-Dasūqī, al-Bannānī, and al-Khafājī reveals three distinct mechanisms of innovation. Al-Dasūqī operates through normative reconstruction: he aligns school rules with intent, custom, and specific case configurations, achieving greater precision in applyinglegal provisions. Al-Bannānī demonstrates a conceptual orientation: his interventions address the relationships between wording, intent, and the tools of *uṣūl* reasoning, allowing inherited categories to acquire clearer operational boundaries. Al-Khafājī operates within an interpretive-argumentative realm, scrutinizing the validity of the link between linguistic structure and exegetical conclusion. These patterns of intervention suggest that creativity within the *ḥāshiya* tradition is best understood as "relational creativity." Authors do not work in a vacuum; rather, their intellectual identities are shaped through their engagement with authoritative texts—a relationship that does not negate the author's agency. Al-Khafājī, for instance, explicitly marks the transition from reporting the views of others to expressing his own voice through the phrase "*wa-anā aqūl*" (and I say); al-Dasūqī signals critical assessment via formulations such as "*wa-al-ṣawāb*" (and the correct view is); meanwhile, the *Ḥāshiyat al-Bannānī* tradition demonstrates how a commentary can engage in *uṣūl* debates by examining the conceptual details underlying the propositions of the *matn*.

Epistemic Invisibility and a Re-reading of Islamic Intellectual History

Intellectual contributions in *ḥāshiya* can become invisible when their material existence does not continue into recognition, attribution, and placement in the history of scientific development. This study uses the term epistemic invisibility to

describe a situation in which an intellectual intervention appears in a manuscript, catalog, or edition but is not recognized in proportion as knowledge production. This understanding is different from marginalization, which refers to social or institutional position (Fluit, Cortés-García, & von Soest, 2024), subordination, which refers to hierarchical relations (Chou et al., 2021), and underrepresentation, which refers to inequality of representation in the corpus (Shahbazi et al., 2023). Indicators of epistemic invisibility can be traced through four stages: the work is difficult to find in bibliographic tools; its identity and textual relations are not adequately identified; the commentary's content is used without attribution to the commentator's intellectual work; and the contribution does not appear in the historiographic narrative.

The manuscript catalog shows concretely how initial identification can influence the likelihood of a *ḥāshiya* entering research. The British Library record for Or 14509, for example, includes the title *Ḥāshiyah ʿalā Sharḥ al-Kashshāf* and groups it under Islamic theology and Qur'anic hermeneutics. However, the Scope and Content column does not describe the work's content (B. Library, 2026a). Alternatively, 3125 is also recorded as *Ḥāshiyah ʿalā Sharḥ al-Sullam al-Murawniq*, with ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Saʿīdī as author and Islamic philosophy as subject. Still, the available catalog view does not describe the text's argumentation or intellectual structure (B. Library, 2026c). These two examples do not prove cataloging failure in general, but point to a more specific methodological problem: a title, author attribution, and subject classification do not, by themselves, make a manuscript's intellectual contribution readable. A methodological contrast appears in the Catalog of Manuscripts of Ayasofya Libraries published by the Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation in 2025, which according to the publisher's official statement uses more detailed bibliographic and codicological descriptions, including author's name, type of script, writing surface, ink, decoration, various *quyūd* such as ownership records (*tamallukāt*), endowments (*waqfiyyāt*), *ijāzah* and *samāʿāt*, as well as reproduction of the beginning and end of the text (incipit and explicit) (Foundation, 2025). These different levels of description suggest that bibliographic visibility varies and, as a methodological issue, can influence the extent to which a manuscript is recognized, prioritized, and further researched.

Cataloging issues become more complex when a work's identity depends on layered relationships with previous texts. The Yale record for *Ḥāshiyah ʿalā Ḥāshiyat al-Kāshī ʿalā al-Sharḥ al-Masʿūdī* by Shāh Ḥusayn al-ʿAjamī shows that modern catalog identifications do not fully match the manuscript's nomenclature: the catalog titles come from slips added by a modern hand. In contrast, the manuscript contains other formulations of the list. Contents, folio 37v, and colophon folio 39r; the catalog even notes possible confusion with Mullā Ḥanafī's *al-Risālah al-Ḥanafīyah* and states that the text appears to be just an extract (Y. U. Library, 2026). This case shows the mechanism of invisibility at the level of attribution: the problem

is not the absence of a work, but rather the instability of bibliographic identity, which can make it difficult for researchers to link manuscript witnesses, authors, objects of commentary, and text transmission. Situations like this also show why the unit "work" is not always a single stable title. *Ḥāshiya* should be read as relational objects whose identities are shaped through networks of text, copying, ownership, and use. A catalog approach that searches only for titles or authors risks missing relationships that determine intellectual value.

The materiality of manuscripts demonstrates why page structure must be treated as historical evidence rather than mere decoration to be disregarded. Serikoff and Frantsouzoff (2020) identify ruling, page layout, quire organization, dimensions, script, binding, and traces of ownership history as essential components of the codicological study of Arabic manuscripts. This is concretely illustrated in the British Library's catalog entry for Or 2519—a composite codex in Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew—which not only identifies the textual content but also records leaf and writing-area dimensions, line counts, ruling, script types, quire structures, physical condition, and provenance information for specific sections (B. Library, 2026b). Consequently, the size of marginal writing cannot serve as direct evidence of low intellectual status; its epistemic significance can only be determined through its spatial relationship with the lemma, reference marks, changes of hand, ink, writing-area boundaries, and patterns of supplementation. From a codicological perspective, the margin itself is an integral part of the page layout and can accommodate various forms of supplementary material (Pimpinelli, 2024).

Editorial practice thus emerges as a crucial stage, as modern editions involve more than merely transferring words from manuscript to printed page. Through the history of Arabic publishing, El Shamsy (2020) demonstrates that nineteenth- and twentieth-century editors played an active role in determining which classical works were discovered, edited, published, and ultimately incorporated into the modern canon. He further shows that many works had to be sought out among scattered manuscripts, restored from damage, and reconstructed before they could circulate as printed books. These findings necessitate understanding the manuscript-to-print transition as an editorial process rather than a mere technological shift. When a *ḥāshiya* is published alongside the *matn* and *sharḥ*, the inter-layer relationships remain visible; however, when the commentary is relegated to footnotes, separated from the lemma, or abridged, its form of readability is transformed. Conversely, printing can enhance visibility when a commentary—previously confined to a few manuscripts—attains wide distribution. Its epistemic impact therefore hinges on editorial decisions, witness selection, layout, and publication objectives.

Selecting a corpus turns disparities in bibliographic visibility into disparities in historiographical opportunity. Research based on works with stable titles, clear attributions, available editions, and established bibliographies finds it easier to build a corpus than research that requires reconstructing relationships between

manuscripts and commentaries. This issue is evident in the evolution of Islamic book studies, which increasingly treat the manuscript as a complex object linking paleography, codicology, library history, bibliography, the history of ideas, and the history of reading. Rambach (2019) emphasizes the book's dual nature as both a material object and a text, while developments in manuscript studies highlight the importance of ownership, reading, and transmission records in reconstructing a work's life cycle. The consequences for the *ḥāshiya* are clear: a work known only by its title may appear in bibliographic lists without becoming an object of analysis, whereas a work with rich metadata is more easily discovered, compared, and traced. This imbalance subsequently shapes research bibliographies and determines which texts become available for historiography. The cycle is cumulative: initial visibility increases research opportunities; research boosts citation frequency; citations reinforce legitimacy; and legitimacy increases the likelihood that the work will be selected again.

The relationship between intellectual engagement and historiographical recognition is crucial to explaining the invisibility of the *ḥāshiya*. A commentary can serve as an argumentative tool for readers without becoming an agent of intellectual development. This pattern differs from total neglect, as the content of a *ḥāshiya* remains usable for understanding the *matn*, *sharḥ*, law, exegesis, logic, or specific concepts. Issues arise when the arguments are not attributed to the commentator's conceptual work. Indeed, the post-classical commentary tradition reveals a complex interplay between text, reading, and the transformation of arguments; Wisnovsky (2004) highlights the vastness of the post-classical Arabic philosophical commentary tradition as a vital field of intellectual history, demonstrating that commentaries cannot be adequately understood as mere passive reproductions. When historiography treats primary texts as the units of change, contributions emerging from commentaries may be absorbed into the authority of the text being commented upon.

This body of evidence indicates that the epistemic invisibility of the *ḥāshiya* is neither solely the result of its "secondary" label nor an automatic consequence of its marginal format, manuscript culture, or print technology. Several observable mediations shape the mechanism: metadata determines discoverability; attribution instability can hinder the linking of manuscript witnesses; manuscript layout dictates the relational information available to readers; editorial decisions govern readability; corpus selection determines which works are analyzed; citation practices dictate attribution; and historiography subsequently transforms the selected corpus into a narrative of intellectual evolution. A codicological perspective underscores the need to read manuscripts as artifacts, while the history of print reveals editors' active role in shaping the modern canon. Consequently, the neglect of the *ḥāshiya* should be understood as a cumulative effect of the infrastructure of knowledge production.

Conclusion

The canonization of the Islamic scholarly tradition operates through text selection, genre hierarchization, educational transmission patterns, cataloging practices, and editorial biases that prioritize the foundational text as the authoritative unit; consequently, the *ḥāshiya* is relegated to a supplementary layer, even though its commentary network embodies active knowledge production. An intertextual reading reveals five modes of innovation: conceptual modification that sharpens or shifts meanings; argumentative reconstruction that reconfigures premises; problem-solving through responses to textual and intellectual issues; authority synthesis via the negotiation of diverse opinions; and methodological transformation through altered approaches to the object of study. Innovation often becomes invisible when contributions are dispersed across commentaries and scholarly traditions, difficult to attribute to a single author, separated from the foundational text by modern editions, and inadequately documented in historiography. These findings necessitate that the intellectual history of Islam expand its unit of analysis from individual works to the ecology of commentaries and intertextual networks, while also fostering relational philology, metadata-based cataloging, multi-layered critical editions, and digital mapping. Study limitations—including manuscript selection and availability, disparities in disciplinary, temporal, and regional coverage, and restricted archival access—constrain the scope for generalization. Future agendas should examine cross-disciplinary and cross-regional patterns, explore unmapped manuscripts, chart scholar networks, and develop digital analyses to investigate authorship attribution, textual relationships, and the distribution of authority.

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Author Contribution Statement

MR contributed to formulating the research idea, developing the methodology, data collection and analysis, interpreting results, and drafting and revising the manuscript. SM contributed to data collection, data analysis and interpretation, literature review, and critical review of the manuscript. SI contributed to the literature review, data processing and interpretation, substantive review, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript and are responsible for the integrity and accuracy of the article's entire content.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest—financial, professional, personal, or institutional—that could influence the research process, the interpretation of results, or the presentation of the article. The authors conducted the entire research and publication process independently, free from interests that might compromise scientific objectivity.

AI Usage Statement

The authors used Grammarly to enhance language quality, correct grammar, and assist with formatting, and utilized Maktabah al-Shāmilah to consult *turāth* sources. The authors generated, verified, and substantiated all results, findings, concepts, analyses, ideas, interpretations, and conclusions in this article. No scientific content within the article was generated by artificial intelligence (AI).

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