



# The Analysis of Mahmud Al-Zamakhshari's Works on Islamic Studies

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**Abstract:** The mentioned article is devoted to the Islamic studies of Mahmud al-Zamakhshari and the analysis of his religious and scholarly works. The author of the article provides information about the works of al-Zamakhshari and classifies them according to their thematic fields. The article gives a detailed account of such prominent works as al-Kashshaf, Nukat al-i'rab, Ruusul al-Mas'il, al-Fa'iq fi Gharib al-Ḥadith, Nawabigh al-Kalim, and Atwaquz zhab fi al-Mawa'iz wa al-Khuṭab. Furthermore, the author provides detailed descriptions of these works and examines the manuscript copies preserved in various libraries of the world

**Keywords:** Mahmud al-Zamakhshari, Commentary, al-Kashshaf, Nukat al-i'rab, Ruusul al-Mas'il, al-Fa'iq fi Gharib al-Ḥadith, Nawabigh al-Kalim, and Atwaquz zhab fi al-Mawa'iz wa al-Khuṭab

## Introduction

Since ancient times, many scholars from the Khorezm oasis have made significant contributions to world science and culture. Especially during the Middle Ages, this land produced outstanding figures such as Muhammad Musa al-Khwarizmi, Ibn Sina, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Abdallah al-Khwarizmi, Ibn Miskawayh, Abu Nasr al-Iraq, Abu Sahl al-Masihi, and Abu al-Khayr ibn al-Hammar, whose fame spread throughout both the Maghreb and the Mashriq. One of the great scholars born in Khorezm was Abu al-Qasim Mahmud al-Zamakhshari.

Al-Zamakhshari was one of the prominent scholars of his era, having written nearly ninety works in various fields of science. However, not all of them have survived to the present day. The number of his works is given differently in various sources. Researcher S. Saidjalolov, who analyzed Zamakhshari's writings, reports that Mahmud al-Zamakhshari authored 91 works.

## Methodology

Mahmud al-Zamakhshari mastered various fields of science, including Arabic morphology (*sarf*) and grammar (*nahw*), literary studies, lexicography, linguistics, geography, *arud* (prosody), logic, religious sciences, and Qur'anic exegesis. He authored

valuable works in nearly all of these disciplines. His contributions to Islamic studies can be classified into the following categories:

**1. Tafsir (Qur'anic Exegesis):**

- *Al-Kashshaf 'an haqā'iq at-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh at-ta'wīl* ("The Revealer of the Hidden Truths of Revelation and the Source of Opinions in Interpretation")
- *Nukat al-i'rāb fī gharīb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* ("Subtleties of Expressions in the Rare Usages of the Noble Qur'an")

**2. Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence):**

- *Ru'ūs al-masā'il* ("Fundamental Issues")
- *Mu'jam al-ḥudūd* ("Compendium of Legal Definitions")
- *Al-Minhāj fī al-uṣūl* ("A Guide on the Principles of Jurisprudence")
- *Ar-Rā'id fī 'ilm al-farā'id* ("Instructor in the Science of Inheritance Law")
- *Shaqā'iq an-Nu'mān* ("The Crimson Bouquet")
- *Shāfī al-'ay* ("The Cure for Ailments")
- *Ar-Risāla fī kalimat ash-shahāda* ("A Treatise on the Testimony of Faith")

**3. Hadith Studies:**

- *Al-Fā'iq fī gharīb al-ḥadīth* ("Clarification of Unfamiliar Expressions in Hadith")

**4. Didactics and Ethics:**

- *Rabī' al-abrār wa fuṣūṣ al-akhbār* ("The Springtime of the Righteous and the Essence of Reports")
- *'Atwāq adh-dhahab fī al-mawā'iz wa al-khuṭab* ("Golden Necklaces in Sermons and Admonitions")
- *An-Naṣā'ih al-kibār* ("Major Admonitions")
- *An-Naṣā'ih al-aṣ-ṣighār* ("Minor Admonitions")
- *Ar-Risāla 'an an-naṣīḥa* ("The Treatise on Advice")

"al-Kashshaf". The Qur'anic commentary entitled *Al-Kashshaf 'an haqā'iq at-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh at-ta'wīl*, commonly known in the Islamic world simply as *al-Kashshaf*, is regarded as the crown jewel of the scholar's intellectual heritage. This work has been universally acknowledged in the Muslim world as a philological tafsir of great scholarly value.

According to sources, al-Zamakhshari composed this rare masterpiece in two stages. In his youth, during his pilgrimage to Arabia, he began commenting on the *Surah al-Baqara* of the Qur'an and presented it to the Amir of Mecca. Only after fully mastering all the requirements of tafsir did al-Zamakhshari resume his exegetical work, successfully completing it during his second journey to Mecca between 1130 and 1134.

The *al-Kashshaf* is considered an exceptionally significant tafsir and continues to be taught at Al-Azhar University to this day. The way in which the verses are interpreted in terms of eloquence (*balāgha*) and clarity (*faṣāḥa*) reflects the author's profound knowledge and logical reasoning. Rare manuscripts of this work are preserved in many libraries worldwide, and numerous scholars have conducted extensive research on them. The German orientalist Carl Brockelmann notes that nearly one hundred manuscript copies of

*al-Kashshaf* exist in the world's collections, along with more than twenty commentaries and marginalia written on it. This attests to the immense fame of al-Zamakhshari's work.

The British orientalist Hamilton A. R. Gibb, in his work *Arabic Literature*, states: "Zamakhshari was above all famous for his tafsir. Centuries have passed, yet this commentary continues to be reprinted and has not lost its significance" .

Furthermore, Carl Brockelmann in his *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* provides valuable information about *al-Kashshaf*. According to him, nearly one hundred manuscript copies of the tafsir are preserved in major libraries and collections located in London, Manchester, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Leipzig, Milan, St. Petersburg, Peshawar, Calcutta, Raipur, Istanbul, Tunis, and Cairo. In addition, more than twenty commentaries on al-Zamakhshari's tafsir can be found in many cities. Such commentaries were authored by renowned scholars including Mahmud ibn Mas'ud al-Shirazi (d. 1310), Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Tayyibi (d. 1342), Muhammad al-Taftazani (d. 1389), and al-Jurjani (d. 1413).

The autograph manuscript of *al-Kashshāf* copied in Zamakhshari's own hand (1134) is preserved in the Tehran Library. In the Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, there are 14 manuscript and 10 lithographic copies of *al-Kashshāf*. In the library of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, there is one manuscript and 16 lithographic copies. The State Museum of Literature named after Alisher Navoi of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan also preserves one manuscript copy of *al-Kashshāf*.

None of the 14 manuscript copies of *al-Kashshāf* stored in the Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies are complete versions. Some contain the first part of the work, others the second or third, and some bring together different sections of the work within a single volume.

## Result and Discussion

All the lithographs kept in the library of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan were produced by the *Sharqiya* and *al-Kubra al-Amiriyya* publishing houses in Egypt. Of these, one was published in 1306 AH / 1888 CE, five in 1307 AH / 1889 CE, two in 1308 AH / 1890 CE, and six in 1318 AH / 1900 CE. The publication years of two lithographs remain unknown.

Another significant work of the scholar is *Nukat al-i'rāb fī gharīb i'rāb fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* ("The Subtleties of the Arabs' Eloquence in the Marvelous Expressions of the Qur'an"), which reveals the delicate aspects of Arabic grammar through the analysis of Qur'anic verses. This work exists in manuscript form, and Zamakhshari himself referred to it as *Nukat al-i'rāb fī gharīb al-i'rāb*. Some scholars of transmission and *tabaqāt* added the phrase *fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* to its title in their works.

This treatise is an important source for the study of subtle grammatical topics in linguistics. As for its structure, the scholar divided the work into chapters named after the surahs. The commentary begins with *al-Fātiḥa*, then continues with *al-Baqara*, followed by *Āl 'Imrān*, and so forth, concluding with *al-Ikhlāṣ*. However, Zamakhshari did not analyze all 114 surahs of the Qur'an. Since the work contains 68 chapters, it indicates that he studied

68 surahs, while the remaining 46 were not included. It appears that the scholar selected those surahs with the most delicate grammatical features.

The manuscript exists in a single copy, as noted by Brockelmann in his *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. This manuscript is preserved in the manuscripts collection of the *Dār al-Kutub wa al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya* Library in Cairo, in the tafsir section under number 898. It consists of 64 folios, amounting to 128 pages.

*Ru'ūs al-Masā'il* ("Principal Issues") is another work of Zamakhshari devoted to the science of fiqh, in which he discusses the legal differences between the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools. Qadi Ibn Khallikan in his *Wafayāt al-A'yān* listed *Ru'ūs al-Masā'il* among Zamakhshari's works.

In the introduction to this work, Zamakhshari states that his aim was to simplify the meanings of certain words found in hadith and to reveal their eloquence and rhetorical beauty. In the conclusion, he notes that the lexicon was completed in the year 516 AH, and it is also here that the title *Al-Fā'iq* is mentioned.

In *Al-Fā'iq fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, after each word he provides phonetic annotations to guide correct pronunciation. It is evident that the scholar employed the method of extended description (*tawṣīf*), which is considered one of the oldest and most reliable techniques in the tradition of Arabic lexicography.

Two manuscript copies of *Al-Fā'iq fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* are preserved in the Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan al-Biruni of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. In addition, lithographic editions of two volumes of this work are kept in the library of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.

The work *Nawābiḡ al-Kalim* ("Subtle Expressions") is a collection devoted to moral advice, serving the purpose of guiding individuals toward ethical perfection. Written during Zamakhshari's residence in Mecca, it is also known as *Al-Kalim al-Nawābiḡ*. One of its manuscript copies is preserved in the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad (No. 563), while others are kept in Berlin (No. 8676) and Leiden (Nos. 891 and 92). Composed in rhymed prose (*saj'*), the work consists mainly of wisdom sayings, counsel, and admonitions covering a wide range of topics. This work has been published several times in Arab countries.

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The ethical works of Mahmud Zamakhshari, which form an integral part of his scholarly legacy, hold exceptional significance. Among them is *Nawābiğ al-Kalim* ("Subtle Expressions"), a short treatise that is recognized not only in his own era but also today as a valuable source of ethical thought. It contains guidance and moral counsel related to education, spirituality, and personal development. The ethical views expressed in this work are noteworthy for being grounded in practical examples and for their multifaceted nature. Zamakhshari regarded human virtues as a divine blessing and sought to instill in people the fundamental quality of moral conduct.

It would not be wrong to say that this work serves to cultivate high human virtues, for this was precisely Zamakhshari's intent. Another remarkable contribution in this field is *Atwāq al-Dhahab fi al-Mawā'iz wa al-Khutab* ("Golden Necklaces in Admonitions and Sermons"), a unique source consisting of 100 essays based on moral counsel.

Mahmud Zamakhshari left us a rich and unique heritage in various fields. Among this legacy, works of educational and moral significance hold special importance. One such work is his philosophical-didactic treatise "*Atwaqu'z-Zahab fi'l-Mawa'iz wa'l-Khutab*" ("Golden Necklaces in Sermons and Admonitions"), created in the early 12th century. Zamakhshari composed this work in Mecca, and it was originally titled "*an-Nasa'ih as-Sighar*" ("Minor Admonitions"). The book, written in *saj'* (rhymed prose), consists of one hundred short discourses (*maqalat*).

According to Mirza Yusufkhon Ashtiyani, who wrote a commentary on the work, "Zamakhshari composed this book while circumambulating the Kaaba in Mecca. After each circumambulation of the Kaaba, he would write one discourse. Having completed one *maqala*, he would again circumambulate the Kaaba, and in this way, after making one hundred circumambulations, he wrote the one hundred discourses that make up '*Atwaqu'z-Zahab fi'l-Mawa'iz wa'l-Khutab*'".

In each discourse of this work, the scholar depicts the socio-political life of his time, urging people to be virtuous, well-mannered, and knowledgeable in science and crafts. He condemns tyrannical rulers and unjust officials while promoting ideas of justice and concern for the people. The work has been translated into several languages. For instance, the German orientalist Von Joseph Hammer translated it into German, publishing it alongside the Arabic text in Vienna in 1835, and later that same year it was reprinted in Leipzig. In 1863, Gustav Weil translated the work into German for the second time in Stuttgart. The French orientalist Barbier de Meynard also studied the work and published his French translation in Paris in 1876. A Turkish translation of the work was published in Constantinople in 1870.

Another aspect that highlights the universal value of this work is its wide dissemination across the world. Manuscripts of “*Atwaqu’z-Zahab fi’l-Mawa’iz wa’l-Khutab*” are preserved in the Arabic manuscripts collection of the British Museum in London (No. 1003), the National Library of Paris (No. 3973), the Vatican Library of Arabic Manuscripts (No. 1380), the Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg (No. 922), and the “Dar al-Kutub” Library in Cairo (No. 203). In addition, manuscript copies are also held in Turkey within the Suleymaniye Library collections, specifically in the Asir Efendi (Nos. 416, 417), Aya Sofya (Nos. 2911, 3780), Hafiz Efendi (No. 275-I), and Rashid Efendi (No. 715-3) collections.

At present, three lithographic copies of the work are preserved in the Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhon Beruni of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. These three copies are regarded as rare lithographs.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that Mahmud Zamakhshari left behind numerous invaluable works in various fields of science. He was productive not only in Arabic grammar but also in the field of Islamic studies. His work *al-Kashshaf* alone testifies to the great contribution he made to Islamic scholarship. The significance of Zamakhshari’s works in our time does not diminish but rather continues to grow.

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