

# Major Shifts in Classical Tafsîr: From Early Exegesis to the Rise of al-Shurûḥ wa-l-Ḥawāshî

## Klasik Tefsirde Büyük Dönüşümler: Erken Dönem Tefsirinden Şerh-Haşiye Edebiyatının Doğuşuna

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the turning points in the historical development of Qur'anic exegesis, from its very beginning to the period of annotations and super-commentaries (*al-shurūḥ wa-l-ḥawāshî*) from the 6th/12th century onwards, using comparative analysis and descriptive content methods, focusing on subfields like the "Nishāpūr circle," the "al-Kashshāf tradition," and "al-Shurūḥ wa-l-Ḥawāshî" literature. To better understand the formation and transformation of classical tafsîr, however, it is essential to move beyond this simplistic view and trace the transformative paradigms. This study proposes an attempt at such a tracing process, which further and more specific studies should enrich. One of the key transformation points identified in this study is the contribution of al-Tabarî and his contemporaries, marking the end of the early period and the transition to comprehensive exegetical writing. The transformative impact of the Nishapuri circle of tafsîr can also be evaluated within this framework. The "al-Kashshāf tradition", an area whose significance has been somewhat understood in Turkish literature but has yet to be fully appreciated in international Qur'anic studies, is also brought to the forefront in this article for its transformative role. Moreover, the contributions of Mu'tazilite thought, particularly its influence on Sunni kalām and subsequently on the discipline of rhetoric, and the transformation of tafsîr in the sixth century of the Hijri with the influence of rhetoric are of particular important in the same context. Examining all of these major transformations from a panoramic perspective, this research engages critically with the corpus of Western Qur'anic studies and proposes enriching this body of work with the developments in Turkish tafsîr literature.

**Keywords:** Tafsîr, al-Kashshāf tradition, Nishapuri school, Mu'tazila, Rhetoric.

### Öz

Bu çalışma, Kur'an tefsirinin tarihsel gelişimindeki dönüşüm noktalarını başlangıcından 6./12. yüzyıldan itibaren şerh ve haşiyeler (eş-şurūḥ ve'l-havāshî) dönemine kadar incelenmekte, karşılaştırmalı analiz ve betimsel içerik yöntemlerini kullanarak, "Nişâbü'r çevresi", "el-Keşşâf geleneği" ve "eş-Şurūḥ ve'l-Havāshî" literatürü gibi alt alanlara odaklanmaktadır. Tefsir tarihinin doğrusal bir çizgi gibi ilerlediği varsayımına dayanan modern tefsir tarihi yazımı ağırlıklı olarak ahkâm (fıkhi tefsir), filolojik ve işâri (ezoterik/alegorik) tefsir gibi farklı tefsir yöntemlerini bağlantılı örneklerle vurgular. Ne var ki klasik tefsirin oluşum ve dönüşümünü daha iyi anlayabilmek için bu bakış açısının ötesine geçmek ve dönüştürücü paradigmalara izin sürmek önemlidir. Bu çalışma, daha ileri ve spesifik çalışmalarla zenginleştirilmesi gereken böyle bir izleme sürecine yönelik bir teşebbüs teklif etmektedir. Bu çalışmada tespit edilen temel dönüşüm noktalarından biri, erken dönemin sonunu ve kapsamlı tefsir yazımına geçişi işaret eden Taberî ve çağdaşlarının katkısıdır. Nişabur tefsir halkasının dönüştürücü etkisi de bu çerçevede değerlendirilebilir. Diğer taraftan önemi Türkçe literatürde belirli ölçüde kavranmış, ancak uluslararası Kur'an çalışmaları alanında henüz yeterince takdir edilmemiş bir alan olan "Keşşâf geleneği" de dönüştürücü rolüyle bu makalede ön plana çıkarılmaktadır. Dahası, Mu'tezile düşüncesinin özellikle Sünni kelam ve belagat disiplinine katkıları ve belagatin tefsir üzerindeki etkisiyle hicri altıncı asırda tefsirin geçirdiği dönüşüm de aynı kapsamda önem arz etmektedir. Tüm bu büyük dönüşümleri panoramik bir bakış açısıyla inceleyen bu araştırma, Batı Kur'an çalışmaları külliyyatına eleştirel bir yaklaşım getirmekte ve bu külliyyatın Türkçe tefsir literatüründeki gelişmelerle zenginleştirilmesini önermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tefsir, Keşşaf geleneği, Nişabur çevresi, Mutezile, Belagat.



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## INTRODUCTION

The history of tafsir, much like that of many other disciplines, has undergone significant turning points, transformations, developmental stages, and changes. Thus, viewing the history of tafsir as a linear and unproblematic progression is misleading. Nevertheless, this perspective often prevails in tafsir historiography, where it is commonly assumed that tafsir began during the Prophet's era, reached its pinnacle within the first two centuries, and later diversified into various forms.<sup>1</sup> However, framing the history of tafsir in such a manner poses significant scholarly challenges and fails to adequately trace its evolution into contemporary discourse. This paper, therefore, seeks to identify the key turning points and transformative moments in the historical trajectory of tafsir. While these points of change could be explored in more detail or from different perspectives than those presented here, this study does not claim to be exhaustive. Instead, it aims to propose a novel approach to the historiography of tafsir, emphasizing concepts of development and transformation. The analysis in this paper focuses exclusively on the transformations in tafsir during the classical and post-classical periods, deliberately excluding the contemporary era. This exclusion is due to the profound changes tafsir, like other Islamic sciences, has undergone in the modern period, a topic that would require a separate, dedicated study. Accordingly, this paper will examine tafsir's status from the beginning up to the late Ottoman period.

The first transformation of tafsir relates to its emergence, while the second transformation marks the transition to comprehensive text composition at the beginning of the 4th/10th century. Following this period, contributions from the Nishapuri school led to the establishment of certain frameworks within tafsir. The interaction of early Mu'tazilite thought with subsequent Sunni perspectives, along with the influence of rhetorical discipline, resulted in tafsir adopting a relatively new format by the 6th/12th century. This new format manifested itself in the post-classical period through the development of annotations and super-commentaries (al-shurūḥ wa-l-ḥawāshī) literature. The main outlines of this framework are discussed in this paper, although each stage will not be examined in exhaustive detail. The primary themes here are "transformation," "change," and "development." However, the debates within Western Qur'ānic studies regarding the emergence of tafsir, the profound relationship between Mu'tazilite thought and tafsir, and the tradition of annotations and super-commentaries are addressed in relatively greater detail. The reasons for the more in-depth treatment of these three topics stem from the complex literature associated with the first two aspects, while the third aspect has been largely overlooked by Western Qur'ānic studies.

Some sub-sections of the topic I will address here have been the subject of various studies in the literature. Western researchers have developed markedly different approaches to the early stages of tafsir, leading to a substantial body of work on the subject. Broadly speaking, these can be categorized into two main groups: the revisionist school and the traditionalist school. Traditionalists argue that the Qur'ān was compiled and finalized shortly after the Prophet Muḥammad's death, with early Muslim communities preserving it faithfully. Scholars like M.A.S. Abdel Haleem and Harald Motzki emphasize the reliability of classical Islamic sources, for interpreting the Qur'ān and reconstructing its historical context.<sup>2</sup> Revisionists, however, challenge the traditional narrative, arguing that the Qur'ān's canonization took place much later, shaped by political and theological concerns of the 8th and 9th centuries.<sup>3</sup> Figures such as John Wansbrough and Patricia Crone propose that early Islamic literature, including the Qur'ān, reflects not historical fact but theological constructions meant to legitimize the Islamic faith.<sup>4</sup> The key difference between these views lies in their assessment of the reliability of early Islamic sources. Traditionalists trust the *isnād* system and classical *tafsir* for understanding the Qur'ān, while revisionists argue that the Qur'ān's historical and socio-political context must be critically examined, often drawing on non-Islamic sources to reconstruct early Islamic history.<sup>5</sup>

Although many have studied al-Ṭabarī and his exegesis, no research has focused on the transformation of tafsir during his generation, an area my work addresses. While scholars like Andrew Lane<sup>6</sup> and Kifayat Ullah<sup>7</sup> have studied al-Zamakhsharī's al-Kashshāf, the period of annotations and super-commentaries has only been touched on by Walid Saleh.<sup>8</sup> In Turkish scholarship, however, the annotations and super-commentaries on al-Bayḍāwī's Anwār al-Tanzīl have been

1 See. Taqī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddimah fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, ed. Fawwāz Aḥmad Zamarlī, (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1994), 18; Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-l-mufasssīrūn*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2005), 1: 43; İsmail Cerrahoğlu, *Kur'an Tefsirinin Doğuşu ve Buna Hız Veren Âmilleri*, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1968), 20.

2 Mun'im Sirry, *Controversies over Islamic Origins: An Introduction to Traditionalism and Revisionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), 106-109, 127-135.

3 Sirry, *Controversies*, 109-115.

4 Sirry, *Controversies*, 143-146, 161-171.

5 Sirry, *Controversies*, 185-207.

6 Andrew J. Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006.)

7 Kifayat Ullah, *Al-Kashshāf: Al-Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite Exegesis of the Qur'ān*, (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2017.)

8 Walid Saleh, "The Gloss as Intellectual History: The Ḥāshiyahs of al-Kashshāf" in *Oriens* 41 (2013) 217-259; "The Ḥāshiya of Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284) on al-Kashshāf of al-Zamakhsharī" in *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World: Studies Presented to Claude Gilliot on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday*, Edited by Andrew Rippin and Roberto Tottoli. (Leiden: Brill, 2015.)

studied extensively by Şükrü Maden,<sup>9</sup> and those on al-Kashshāf by Mesut Kaya<sup>10</sup> and Taha Boyalık.<sup>11</sup> Turkish scholarship is advanced in this field, and my work seeks to contribute to Western Qur'ānic studies by drawing on this rich body of Turkish research. Additionally, the influence of Mu'tazilī thought on tafsir remains understudied. While Tariq Jaffer examines its impact on al-Rāzī and post-classical Sunni theology,<sup>12</sup> little research has explored this influence before al-Rāzī, particularly in connection to rhetoric.

In this article, comparative textual analyses were conducted, and the documentation method was utilized to identify the turning points in the history of tafsir. Additionally, qualitative and quantitative studies carried out independently in the field to determine the transformations in tafsir history were examined using the descriptive content analysis method, aiming to identify general trends in this area. Specifically, relatively independent fields such as the "Nishāpūr circle," the "al-Kashshāf tradition," and "al-Shurūḥ wa-l-Hawāshī literature" were conceptualized as sub-research areas within the broader discipline of Tafsir. The findings of independent studies conducted in these fields were collectively evaluated and interpreted.

## 1. PREDECESSORS TO FORMAL TAFSİR AND FOUR STREAMS OF PRE-AL-ṬABARİ TAFSİR

After the generation first encountered the Qur'ān, interpreting it became increasingly difficult for later generations who faced it outside its historical context. The Qur'ān's references to events from the Prophet's lifetime were easily understood by his contemporaries, but as time passed, new generations without direct experience of these events struggled to comprehend them. This challenge in understanding the Qur'ān is exemplified by companions like Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687). In the following generation, figures such as Sa'īd b. Jubair (d. 94/713), Mujāhid (d. 103/721), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), and Qatada (d. 117/735) emerged as prominent scholars of tafsir. This scholarly tradition continued with figures like Muqātil (d. 150/767), Ibn Juraij (d. 150/767), and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zaid (d. 182/798), whose works survive today.

Following these early proponents, Qur'ānic studies up until the time of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) can be categorized into four main streams. **The first stream** is the philological commentary movement, where scholars like Zayd b. 'Alī (ö. 122/739) al-Farrā (d. 207/822), Abū 'Ubayda (d. 209/824), al-Quṭrub (ö. 210/825), al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (ö. 215/830) and Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) are prominent. These scholars focused only on the linguistic explanations of the Qur'ānic words in the texts they wrote. According to al-Nadīm (d. 385/995),<sup>13</sup> more than 200 texts were written during this period. Various factors contributed to the compilation of such a significant number of works in the field of philological exegesis. Firstly, the integration of non-Arabs into Muslim society and the evolving divergence between the Qur'ānic Arabic and the Arabic used in daily language prompted the need for these works. The extensive conquests by caliphs such as 'Umar and 'Uthmān rapidly expanded Muslim territories from the India-China borders to the coast of Spain. Consequently, there were significant migrations from these regions to the Hijāz and the Middle East, leading to the transformation of central settlements like Baṣra, Kūfa, and Baghdad into large cosmopolitan cities. This demographic shift caused the spoken language to diverge considerably from the Arabic of the Qur'ān. This linguistic divergence, perceived as a deterioration (laḥn), affected not only ordinary people but also those with high levels of knowledge and culture. As a result, many scholars endeavored to preserve the original language of the Qur'ān. Additionally, during the Abbasid period, the caliphs and other states patronized these scholars, hosting them in their palaces and fostering an environment conducive to scientific debates. This patronage may have encouraged the pursuit of such studies as a means to gain social and political status. Furthermore, the linguistic schools of Baṣra and Kūfa engaged in debates on whether to rely on the "qiyās" (syllogism) method or on narration (sama') in language studies. These debates led to highly productive discussions, which in turn accelerated the production of works within the scope of philological commentaries, such as *I'rāb al-Qur'ān* and *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*.

**The second stream** involves the collection of narrations by figures such as 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/826), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), and al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892). These scholars compiled only narrations related to Qur'ānic interpretation. While al-Bukhārī's 'Kitāb al-tafsir' in his ḥadīth collection includes some linguistic explanations, they are not its main focus. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who received tafsir lessons from teachers of the ahl al-ḥadīth tradition, showed particular interest in tafsir narrations, incorporating some into his 'al-Musnad'. Though his extensive tafsir work has been lost, his students and followers engaged in tafsir study and compilation. Quotations from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal found in the exegesis of al-Zajjāj (d. 311/933) and Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076) that are absent from 'al-Musnad' suggest parts of his tafsir circulated for some time. Alongside numerous but less rigorous Arabic studies on Aḥmad's tafsir, a recent, thorough doctoral thesis has been written in Turkish.<sup>14</sup>

9 Şükrü Maden, *Tefsirde Hâşiye Geleneği ve Şeyh-zâde'nin Envârü't-Tenzil Hâşiyesi*, (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2015.)

10 Mesut Kaya, *Tefsir Geleneğinde el-Keşşâf: Şerh ve Hâşiyeleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme*, (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2019.)

11 M. Taha Boyalık, *el-Keşşâf Literatürü: Zemaḥşerî'nin Tefsir Klasiğinin Etki Tarihi* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2019.)

12 Tariq Jaffer, *Rāzī: Master of Quranic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.)

13 See. Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. Işāq al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, Critical ed. İbrāhīm Ramaḍān, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1997), 52-57.

14 See. Abdülcabbar Adıgüzel, *Aḥmed b. Hanbel'de Tefsirin Mahiyeti ve Meşruiyeti Sorunu (The Nature and Legitimacy of Tafsir in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: A Problematic Inquiry)*, (PhD. Thesis), Marmara University, İstanbul, 2024.

**The third stream** consists of studies on the recitation of the Qur'ān (Qiraāt), which, while indirectly related to tafsīr, holds a significant albeit distant connection. **The fourth**, often underappreciated area in historiography, comprises discussions by fiqh and theology scholars on methodology. Within this framework, fiqh scholars deliberated on various issues such as the allocation of general words ('āmm) used in the Qur'ān, potential abrogations (naskh) of verses, and establishing hermeneutical links between the Qur'ān and the prophetic sunnah. Meanwhile, theologians engaged in discussions on identifying metaphors (majāz) within the Qur'ān and the conditions under which they apply.

## 2. INTEGRATION AND SYNTHESIS: THE GENERATION OF AL-ṬABARĪ

The convergence of these diverse fields into a unified discipline termed 'tafsīr is exemplified in al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) monumental tafsīr, *'Jāmi' al-bayān fī ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*. This work's title, meaning 'the book that includes all types of explanations in the interpretation of the Qur'ān,' reflects its comprehensive nature. However, it is important to recognize that this synthesis was not solely the personal achievement of al-Ṭabarī but rather a natural outcome of the scholarly conditions that had matured by his time. Indeed, contemporaries such as al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), Ibn Abī Ḥatīm (d. 327/938), and Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī (d. 322/934) produced texts with similar integrative characteristics. The works of this generation can be regarded as the initial formation of the 'science of tafsīr,' marking its transformation from a collection of particular elements into a comprehensive discipline. Therefore, we must inquire: why did this generation, living in the late third and early fourth centuries Hijri, choose to integrate the previously distinct fields of philological exegesis, narration interpretation, recitation studies, and methodological debates in kalām and fiqh into a unified tafsīr discipline? Conversely, why did their predecessors not accomplish this integration? This question invites a deeper exploration of the historical and intellectual developments that enabled al-Ṭabarī and his contemporaries to synthesize these fields in their works. By answering these questions, we will gain an understanding of the processes and conditions that led to the formation of tafsīr and its transformation into a comprehensive discipline.

My theory posits that fiqh (law) and kalām (theology) played significant roles as invisible actors in this transformation. Notably, this era witnessed the completion of the formation processes of all the major schools of law (fiqh.) Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and his contemporaries in Iraq, Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) and his students in Ḥijāz, al-Shāfi'ī in Egypt and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in Baghdad established the foundational schools of fiqh. These schools extended beyond jurisprudence; for instance, the theological thought of Abū Ḥanīfa and his followers later became known as the Māturīdī school of kalām. Similarly, the theological perspectives advocated by Mālik and subsequently Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal evolved into the kalām school called Ahl al-Ḥadīth. Concurrently, the views of scholars led by al-Shāfi'ī, such as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) and Ibn Kullāb al-Baṣrī (d. 240/854), gained prominence as the Ash'arī school. The Mu'tazila had also completed its development, even reaching the zenith of its theoretical influence. The opportunity for al-Ṭabarī and his contemporaries to compose such comprehensive commentaries arose from the fact that the formation of all these schools had been completed within or just before their lifetimes. Consequently, al-Ṭabarī authored his commentaries within the Shāfi'ī framework, al-Māturīdī within the Abū Ḥanīfa (ahl al-Ra'y) tradition, Ibn Abī Ḥatīm aligned with the Ahl al-Ḥadīth school, and Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī within the Mu'tazila tradition.

Each of these schools endeavored to formulate consistent methodologies for deriving religious knowledge (fiqh and kalām) from religious texts. Over time, each school refined and solidified its views. These efforts involved extensive discussions on the rules and frameworks governing the interpretation of religious texts, particularly the Qur'ān. David Vishanoff explores al-Shāfi'ī's hermeneutical project in considerable detail,<sup>15</sup> and Christopher Melchert has conducted a similar study on Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and some other thinkers.<sup>16</sup> Numerous other works, too many to enumerate here, also elucidate the hermeneutical extensions of fiqh and kalām activities during this period. What remains underemphasized in these studies is the notion that the fiqh and kalām debates of this period established the framework that enabled the exegetical activities of the subsequent period. The prevalent focus tends to be on the 'impact' of kalām or fiqh on tafsīr. However, the crucial point is not merely their direct influence or impact but rather their role in constructing the theoretical foundation that made such exegetical work possible. Subsequently, these 'interpretative frameworks' established by fiqh and kalām were succeeded by a new set of interpretative frameworks emerging within the discipline of rhetoric, notably during the al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1144) age. This transition instigated a profound transformation in tafsīr, representing a pivotal moment in its evolution.

## 3. TRANSITION AND EVOLUTION: THE NISHAPURĪ IMPACT

The activity of the Nishapurī school merits significant attention. Walid Saleh's studies have already elucidated the pivotal role of this school in the history of tafsīr. Obviously, the commentators of this school were primarily affiliated with the Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī tradition yet maintained close connections with the Hanafi-Māturīdī school, a sense allowed them the opportunity to adopt a more moderate approach, reconciling divergent perspectives and methodologies. Consequently, their works evolved into foundational texts for many subsequent commentaries. It is important to note that before the establishment of the Nishapur school, a method of interpretation emphasizing rational inquiry had already emerged in the Samarqa-

15 David R. Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics*, (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2011).

16 Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th–10th Centuries C.E.*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997).



nd region, particularly under figures such as al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) and Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/938). The Nishapur school appears to have continued and developed this intellectual trajectory. Within this framework, scholars from the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī and Shāfi‘ī-Ash‘arī traditions played a pivotal role in harmonizing the methods of *riwāyah* (narrative-based exegesis) and *dirāyah* (rational analysis) in a more balanced manner, producing works that exerted a profound influence on later exegetical traditions. Indeed, the exegetical work of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (ö. 150/767) —who presented transmitted materials without chains of transmission (*isnād*) and, as a result, faced criticism from the ḥadīth scholars of his time—was effectively rediscovered during this period by al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1035). This early tafsīr, which had been relatively overlooked until then, was thus reintegrated into the exegetical tradition with a significant impact on the broader literature.

The impact of al-Tha‘labī on commentators throughout the tradition is far more substantial than commonly recognized today. Saleh demonstrates that al-Tha‘labī’s influence surpasses even that of al-Ṭabarī,<sup>17</sup> a view with which I largely concur. Furthermore, the three distinct commentaries—long, medium, and short (al-Basīṭ, al-Wasīṭ and al-Wajīz)—authored by al-Tha‘labī’s student and eminent linguist, Abu al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076), became essential references for all post-Wāḥidī commentators. It can be argued, with some exaggeration, that al-Wāḥidī is the ubiquitous and foundational source for all subsequent commentators. The generation following al-Wāḥidī comprises the sixth-century commentators, including al-Zamakhsharī, Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah (d. 541/1147), ‘Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), and al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1154). During this period, tafsīr underwent the significant transformation previously discussed, influenced by the discipline of rhetoric.

The transformation in the 6/12 century is as significant and impactful as the changes instituted by al-Ṭabarī and his contemporaries in the early fourth century. To comprehend this, it is essential to briefly examine the interplay between tafsīr, theology, and rhetoric from the inception of this tradition.

#### 4. MU‘TAZILA AND RHETORIC: CATALYST FOR SUNNI RHETORICAL THOUGHT

Early Abbasid texts suggest rhetoric was viewed as harmony between words and meanings, as emphasized by scholars like Bishr b. al-Mu‘tamir (d. 210/825), Kulthum b. ‘Amr al-‘Attābī (d. 220/835)<sup>18</sup> and al-Jāḥiẓ, underscored the importance of proper word usage to preserve meaning.<sup>19</sup> According to al-Jāḥiẓ, the eloquent word is a concise one, but conciseness does not just mean using fewer words, and sometimes even if a man uses a book full of words, and yet, can still be considered concise. The important point is using the word properly: knowing where to extend and where to keep it short, and deciding which word to use and which one to shorten.<sup>20</sup> The reason why al-Jāḥiẓ and his predecessors show so much interest in harmony between word and meaning and the eloquent use of language should be the aim of justifying the claim that the Qur’ān cannot be a human word. This theme is evident in the endeavors of Abu al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 235/849), who sought to rationally establish the Qur’ān as the word of God. In a similar vein, al-‘Allāf endeavors to validate the Qur’ān’s divine nature, noting that despite the Qur’ān repeatedly challenging its adversaries to produce an equivalent text or identify any internal inconsistencies, they were unable to meet this challenge. Despite their considerable linguistic acumen and the fervent desire to refute the Qur’ān’s claims, they failed to discover any contradictions within it.<sup>21</sup> Al-Jāḥiẓ, on the other hand, vocally denounces the theory ascribed to his mentor, al-Nazzām (d. 231/845), who asserts that the Qur’ān’s uniqueness and its adversaries’ inability to produce a comparable text stem not from its literary inimitability, but rather from divine intervention. Moreover, alongside this critique, al-Jāḥiẓ champions the linguistic excellence and profundity of the Qur’ān, endeavoring to demonstrate, on a universal level transcending religious affiliation, that the Qur’ān cannot be construed as a human creation.<sup>22</sup>

The discipline of rhetoric initially focused on substantiating the Qur’ān’s divine origin. However, it did not take long for the effective and performative application of language in the interpretation of religious texts—naturally within the realm of rhetoric—to become intertwined with this pursuit. In this regard, exegetes from different schools began to implement the rules of this newly emerging discipline in their exegetical works. Because this field, namely rhetoric, had been built as a kind of common ground especially between Sunni and Mu‘tazilites thanks to its emphasis on the uniqueness of the Qur’ān, almost every school of theology acutely tried to exploit this field to justify their sectarian approaches. Being masters in rhetoric, the Mu‘tazilites, undoubtedly, had received the lion’s share until the balances began to change in favor of Sunni theology with ‘Abd al-Qāḥir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078), who established or made it fully-formed a Sunni-originated rhetoric discipline in his magnum opus: *Dalāil al-i jāz*. However, some Mu‘tazilite scholars had predicted this result at an early stage and started a kind of internal questioning process within their schools. One of the

17 Walid Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsir Tradition: The Qur’an Commentary of al-Tha‘labī*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 4; Walid Saleh, ‘The Last of the Nishapuri School of Tafsir: al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076) and His Significance in the History of Qur’anic Exegesis’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 126 (2006), 223-243.

18 Abū Hilāl b. ‘Abdullāh al-‘Askarī, *Kitāb al-sīnā ‘atayn*, Critical ed. ‘Alī al-Bijāwī – Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyya, 1952), 134.

19 Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, Critical ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn, (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1965), 1/94.

20 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, 1/91.

21 See. Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī jāz al-Qur’ān*, Critical ed. Amin al-Khūlī, (Cairo: n.d.) 17: 387.

22 See for example: al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, 4/90.

most obvious examples of this internal questioning is to be found in al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār's (d. 415/1025) *al-Mughnī*, in which he frequently got into an argument with the predecessors of his school, like al-Nazzām, al-Jāḥiẓ, and Mu'ammār b. 'Abbād (d. 215/830), and a considerable amount of these discussions are about Qur'ānic exegesis, more precisely, the use of linguistic rules in the interpretation.<sup>23</sup>

Among others, the metaphor was one of the most often appealed devices for passing over the literal meaning and reaching into the deeper or inner level in cases where the literal structure of the Qur'ān does not allow the main doctrines of a given school (Mu'tazila in this case) to flourish. Even though the classical Muslim scholars (*fuqahā*) almost unanimously declared that the significance of a text, that is, the goal to which all exegetical activity is directed, is to be found in the speaker's/writer's intended meaning,<sup>24</sup> they strived to designate some well-established rules for such a process, at least from the early fourth century onwards. But the Mu'tazila, as is well known, were prone to promoting 'non-literal' interpretations of God's words, as literal interpretation led to anthropomorphism.<sup>25</sup> Constituting the very notion of God and his attributes only from reasoning without any reference to the religious texts, Mu'tazila had to appeal to such a method to overcome the certain contradictions aroused frequently between Qur'ān and their doctrines. However, it was not easy for Mu'tazila to maintain this attitude after the rhetoric had turned into a Sunni discipline. In other words, it became exceedingly difficult for Mu'tazilite to use linguistics as a kind of instrument/mask to defend his principles through the interpretation of the Qur'ān. Because Sunni scholars examined the conditions under which and how to use the metaphor and determined the basic principles approximately.

In this context, it is pertinent to discuss the criteria established by al-Jurjānī regarding the use of mental metaphor (*majāz 'aqlī*). Metaphor, as commonly understood, is bifurcated into linguistic and mental components. The linguistic metaphor pertains to the relationship between words and their meanings, while the mental metaphor concerns the subject matter to which verbs or sentences are attributed. Here, the term 'mental metaphor' is employed in contradistinction to 'linguistic metaphor,' denoting a correlation between non-linguistic mental representations and linguistic representations, respectively.<sup>26</sup>

According to the Mu'tazila, verbs attributed to subjects that the mind deems impossible should be interpreted as metaphors. This principle extends to propositions concerning God, which, according to the Mu'tazila, can be comprehended directly through reason, both in terms of essence and attributes. For instance, just as the verb 'fall' in the phrase *jidāran yuridu an yanqaḍa* "A wall that wants to fall" (al-Kahf 18: 77) is metaphorically applied to the 'wall,' similarly, the term 'misleads' in the statement *yudillu man yashāu* "God misleads whomever He wills" (al-Ra'd 13:27; al-Naḥl 16:93; Fāṭir 36:8) should be construed as a metaphor. This is because, as we understand what a wall is capable of, we can likewise comprehend what God can and cannot do solely through reason, without recourse to religious texts.

In this line of reasoning, a principle, which occasionally draws objections from Sunni scholars, is operational. This principle is known as the analogies between the invisible/unknown and the visible (*qiyās al-ghāib 'alā al-shāhid*), and it holds a particularly prominent position within the field of Kalām. In confronting Sunni theology, which offered a critique of reason akin to that articulated by Kant, the Mu'tazila found themselves in a position reminiscent of the decline of modernism vis-à-vis postmodernism. Much like the impasse encountered by Cartesian reasoning, which sought to conclusively terminate metaphysical inquiry through unwavering self-assurance, Mu'tazilite reasoning, marked by its extreme confidence in reason, confronted a formidable challenge when attempting to delineate the concept of God through rational means and subjecting religious texts to hermeneutical scrutiny along this trajectory.

Sunni scholars, on the other hand, insisted on setting up the concept of God through religious texts and gave human reason only a regulatory role in this very field. The reaction of Sunni scholars in this direction dates to earlier times. For example, defining the 'ḥaqīqa' not as a certain way of using words, but as the true nature of things,<sup>27</sup> al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935) criticized the fact that Mu'tazila readily abandoned the true meaning and turned to metaphor in interpreting religious texts and emphasized that it was a theological, rather than a linguistic attitude. Indeed, some researchers, such as Heinrichs, believe that it is possible to return the truth-metaphor dichotomy to al-Ash'arī. Starting directly from some uses in al-Ash'arī's text, Heinrichs concludes in his informative and impressive article, that "the fluctuations in the use of the prepositions do seem to indicate that the process of forming an opposition between ḥaqīqa and majāz is still at an early stage in this text."<sup>28</sup>

At this point, al-Jurjānī's contribution to the rhetoric discipline manifests itself. Utilizing the concept of the possibility

23 See for example: al-Qādī, *al-Mughnī – al-Nazar wa al-Ma'arīf*, Critical ed. Ibrāhīm Madkour, (Cairo: n.d.) 12/333-355. In this example section, al-Qādī discusses with al-Jāḥiẓ and criticizes the evidence he produces from the verses.

24 Robert Gleave, *Islam, and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 3.

25 Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 32.

26 Daniel Casasanto, "The hierarchical structure of mental metaphors," ed. B. Hampe *Metaphor: Embodied Cognition and Discourse* (pp. 46-61). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 47.

27 Vishanoff, *The Formation of Islamic Hermeneutics*, 22. Cf: Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Al-Ḥasan Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, Critical ed. Daniel Giamert, (Beirut: Dār al-Mashreq, 1987), 26-27.

28 Wolfhart Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the ḥaqīqa-majāz Dichotomy," *Studia Islamica*, No. 59 (1984), pp. 111-140, 137.

(*imkān*) of Kalām tradition, al-Jurjānī limited the notion of 'mental metaphor' (*majāz 'aqlī*) within this framework and suggested that everything regarded as possible by the human mind can be evaluated in the scope of 'real meaning' in the language. Hence, it is not necessary to count the word 'mislead' as a metaphor in a sentence like "God misleads whomever He wills." On the contrary, since it is rationally 'possible' (*mumkin*) for God to mislead any human being, this statement must be understood in the true sense. Ultimately, we are not in a position to decide what God can/should or cannot/should not do. As a result, when deciding whether any expression is a metaphor, it should be examined whether it is rationally included in the realm of 'possibility' and whether it is used in the language.

## 5. NEW MU'TAZILITE WITHIN THE SUNNI RHETORICAL FRAMEWORK

From this point on, it was no longer easy for a Mu'tazilite commentator such as al-Zamakhsharī to insist on the classical Mu'tazilite attitude of his predecessors. Therefore, although he keeps a Mu'tazilite attitude in some classical and symbolic matters such as the vision of God (*ru'yat Allāh*), the creation of the Qur'ān (*Khalq al-Qur'ān*), etc., we see that he follows al-Jurjānī to a great extent when it comes to rhetoric-exegesis relations. In this context, it should be noted that Kifayat Ullah, in his book on al-Zamakhsharī and his exegesis,<sup>29</sup> considers him as a complete Mu'tazilite commentator, but this assessment, although overlaps with the common opinion, is not a careful one. Al-Zamakhsharī's widespread acceptance in Sunni intellectual circles is sufficient to show that he was different from the classical Mu'tazila. We know that his rhetorical practices were widely accepted and appreciated by the following generations. On the other hand, it is well-known that he contradicted the classical Mu'tazila scholars in the interpretation of some verses. For example, although al-Zamakhsharī, while interpreting the verse "When we want to annihilate the people of a town, we order the prominent ones, and they make mischief" (al-Isrā 17:16), considers the verb "we order" (*amarnā*) as a metaphor, he opposes his predecessors in the interpretation technique. In the exegesis of the same verse, al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār interprets the verb "we order" in a different way and argues that the sentence means: "We order them the truth, but they do it wrong."<sup>30</sup> This interpretation, approved by names such as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā<sup>31</sup> and even al-Ṭabarī,<sup>32</sup> is linguistically problematic for al-Zamakhsharī, although it is more fitting to Mu'tazilite principles.

While some of al-Zamakhsharī's interpretations were perceived as Mu'tazilite in nature and criticized by annotators such as Ibn al-Munayyir, other annotators regarded these same interpretations as being 'in accordance with Sunni thought.' For example, when al-Zamakhsharī defines 'true faith' (*al-īmān al-ṣaḥīḥ*), he asserts that a person who sins while having faith is a 'fāsiq'.<sup>33</sup> According to the Mu'tazila, individuals who commit major sins are considered neither 'believers' nor 'infidels,' but occupy an intermediate position (*al-manzila bayn al-manzilatain*) and are termed 'fāsiq.' Arguably, al-Zamakhsharī's interpretation aligns with this Mu'tazilite perspective. Consequently, Ibn al-Munayyir vehemently criticizes al-Zamakhsharī, stating, "Even if a believer commits a great sin, he is still called a believer. This is the truth, both in terms of language and Sharia."<sup>34</sup>

Another annotator of *al-Kashshāf*, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, on the other hand, instead of taking a strict and sharp stance like Ibn al-Munayyir, approaches the issue from a different angle. According to him, what offers al-Zamakhsharī about the definition of 'true faith' (*al-īmān al-ṣaḥīḥ*), is the legacy of the Salaf (the predecessors). Because they regarded faith as a synthesis of belief (*al-i'tiqād*), open acknowledgement (*al-iqrār*), and practice (*al-'amal*) and labelled those neglecting the first as 'hypocrite' (*munaḥḥiq*), the second as 'infidel' (*kāfir*), and the third as 'sinner' (*fāsiq*). By presenting it from the Salaf's perspective, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī embraces the view associated with the Mu'tazilis, as criticized by Ibn al-Munayyir.<sup>35</sup> At this juncture, al-Taftāzānī's critique of al-Zamakhsharī proves particularly intriguing. Al-Taftāzānī observes that al-Zamakhsharī's statements diverge from the view conveyed by the predecessors (salaf), as they (salaf) employed these terms specifically when defining 'perfect faith'.<sup>36</sup> However, what al-Taftāzānī fails to recognize (or perhaps intentionally overlooks) is that al-Zamakhsharī himself is not merely defining 'faith' but rather 'real faith.'

In examining al-Zamakhsharī's connection to Mu'tazila, it is essential to recognize that, while his work relates to Mu'tazila thought, he cannot be strictly classified as a theologian. His commentary does not stem from a theological perspective, as he emphasizes in its introduction, where he states that expertise in tafsir requires knowledge of rhetoric (*al-Bayān wa al-Ma'ānī*), not theology, jurisprudence, or other disciplines. Andrew Lane further notes<sup>37</sup> al-Zamakhsharī's lack of proficiency in areas beyond rhetoric and linguistics, underscoring that his expertise is confined to these fields, rather than extending to theological or other religious sciences.

Al-Zamakhsharī's work can be traced to three primary sources of influence. The first is the exegetical tradition of Nishapur, represented by figures such as al-Tha'labī (ö. 427/1035) and al-Wāḥidī (ö. 468/1076) as well as the influence of classical

29 Kifayat Ullah, *Al-Kashshāf*, 97-138.

30 Al-Qādī, *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*, ed. By 'Adnān Zarzūr, (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d), 2/461.

31 Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī al-Murtaḍā*, Critical ed. Muḥammad Abu al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Cairo: Maktabat 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1974), 1/1-5.

32 Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, Critical ed. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 2001), 14/527.

33 See. Abu al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqāiq al-tanzīl*, Critical ed. Māhir Adīb Ḥabbūsh, 10 Volumes, (İstanbul: Dār al-Lubāb, 2021), 1/78.

34 Nāṣir al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn al-Munayyir, *al-Intiṣāf fī mā taḍammanahū al-Kashshāf* (in *al-Kashshāf*) Critical ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd- 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad, (Riyād: Maktabat al- 'Ubaikān, 1998), 1/153-154.

35 See. Boyalık, "A Constitutive Work in the Qur'anic Exegesis Tradition of Sharh and Hashiya: Qutb al-Din al-Razi's Sharh Mushkilāt al-Kashshāf," *Nazariyat* 5/2 (November 2019): 143-166. p. 160.

36 Sa'd al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Taftāzānī, *Ḥāshiya al-Taftāzānī 'ala al-Kashshāf*, Critical ed. Muḥammad Fādil Jilānī, (İstanbul: Markaz Jilānī, 2021), 1/141.

37 See. Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary*, 46.



linguist commentators such as al-Farrā (ö. 207/822) and al-Zajjāj (ö. 311/923). The second is the art of balāghah (rhetoric), which saw significant advancement through the contributions of ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471-1078). The third is the theological framework of the Mu‘tazilah, with Zamakhsharī likely drawing on the works of scholars such as al-Ḥākim al-Jushamī (d. 494/1101) and al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025). However, this latter point requires further investigation. It is evident that the content of *al-Kashshāf* is not entirely Zamakhsharī’s original contribution. A comparison with the tafsirs of contemporaries such as ‘Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) and al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1154) reveals a notable degree of similarity in their content. This suggests that Zamakhsharī’s distinctive contribution lies in his successful integration of the linguistic and rhetorical legacy of the sixth Islamic century into Qur’ānic exegesis, positioning him as a key figure in this intellectual tradition. The question of Zamakhsharī’s sources and originality remains a highly specific area requiring further advanced studies. However, when considering the observation made by Andrew Lane—that, unlike his contemporaries, Zamakhsharī was not an expert in fields such as jurisprudence (fiqh) or theology (kalām), and that the influence of disciplines other than rhetoric in *al-Kashshāf* is minimal—the lasting impact of this work on the relationship between exegesis and rhetoric over the centuries becomes more understandable.

## 6. AL-KASHSHĀF TRADITION: ANNOTATIONS AND SUPER-COMMENTARIES (AL-SHURŪḤ WA-L-ḤAWĀSHĪ)

Despite its Mu‘tazilite perspective, *al-Kashshāf* gained broad acceptance, especially for its focus on the Qur’ān’s grammar and rhetoric, inspiring numerous Sunni and Shia commentaries.<sup>38</sup> Over the centuries, numerous annotations and super-commentaries on *al-Kashshāf* have emerged, reflecting scholars’ efforts to critique or expand al-Zamakhsharī’s interpretations. Key contributions from Mamlūk Egypt and the Ottoman Empire focused on clarifying linguistic nuances, addressing theological issues, and reconciling his Mu‘tazilite views with Sunni orthodoxy, highlighting al-Kashshāf’s enduring influence in tafsir.<sup>39</sup> The literature surrounding al-Kashshāf annotations and super-commentaries is extensive. Notable figures in this period include al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), whose *Anwār al-Tanzīl* provides valuable insights into the Qur’ān’s linguistic dimensions, and al-Taftāzānī (d. 799/1390), known for his *Sharḥ al-Kashshāf*, which illustrates the evolution of tafsir literature by integrating linguistic, rhetorical, and theological insights. Other important commentators such as Abū Ḥayyān (d. 654/1256), al-Jurjānī (d. 740/1340), Ṭaybī (d. 743/1343), Charpardī (d. ö. 746/1346) and Īcī (d. 756/1355) also contributed significantly to this expanding body of literature. This expansion of commentary was facilitated by the geographical spread of al-Kashshāf’s influence, particularly in regions like Egypt and the Levant, showcasing a rich multicultural dialogue. Scholars began to engage critically with previous annotations and super-commentaries, reflecting a more sophisticated understanding of the text and its implications. Early works such as Ibn al-Munayyir’s *al-Intiṣāf* sought to counter the Mu‘tazilite doctrines in al-Kashshāf, while scholars like al-Bayḍāwī and al-Taftāzānī further developed its linguistic aspects. In the Ottoman period, the tradition of writing glosses expanded significantly, with important contributions from scholars like Mullā Gurānī. Collectively, these works shaped the trajectory of Islamic exegesis, ensuring that al-Kashshāf remained a critical reference point for scholars across generations.

Given *al-Kashshāf*’s adept integration of Sunni rhetorical principles into Qur’ānic interpretation, it garnered significant attention from subsequent commentators. Indeed, some Sunni scholars expressed concerns regarding *al-Kashshāf*’s effective rhetorical strategies, fearing that its success might obscure the underlying Mu‘tazila influence and lead individuals away from Sunni orthodoxy. Consequently, these scholars promptly embarked on the task of scrutinizing and critiquing the Mu‘tazila tenets present within *al-Kashshāf*, meticulously identifying and addressing them one by one. The instance of Ibn al-Munayyir, previously cited, serves as a pertinent illustration within this discourse. However, the scholarly interest in *al-Kashshāf* appears to transcend this particular concern. One and a half centuries after al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qādī Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī, an Ash‘arī theologian and Shāfi‘ī jurist residing in present-day Iran, undertook the task of recontextualizing *al-Kashshāf* from a Sunni vantage point. This endeavor culminated in the composition of his commentary titled *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-ta‘wīl*. While al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) characterizes this work as a mere abridgement of *al-Kashshāf*,<sup>40</sup> a sentiment echoed in numerous contemporary sources, I posit that such a portrayal is either inaccurate or, at the very least, insufficient, failing to duly recognize the original and substantive contributions encapsulated within al-Bayḍāwī’s commentary. Because al-Bayḍāwī’s scholarly enterprise transcended mere summarization of *al-Kashshāf*’s rhetorical techniques. He integrated subtle nuances drawn from Fahr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s commentary and other Sunni theological literature within a relatively short text. Consequently, while al-Bayḍāwī’s work is shorter in volume than *al-Kashshāf*, its content is considerably denser. It resembles a condensed compendium encompassing theology, jurisprudence, logic, philosophy, and linguistic analysis, with each line demanding extensive explication. This complexity elicited the composition of approximately four hundred annotations and super-commentaries on al-Bayḍāwī’s *Anwār al-tanzīl*. On the other hand, the corpus of annotations and super-commentaries directly addressing *al-Kashshāf* amounts to approximately eighty. While al-Bayḍāwī’s *Anwār al-tanzīl* diverges from a strict summarization of *al-Kashshāf*, it remains markedly influenced by it. Consequently, the roughly four hundred annotations and super-commentaries on *Anwār al-tanzīl* can be incorporated into the broader discourse surrounding *al-Kashshāf*. Thus, the total count of annotations and super-commentaries pertaining to *al-Kashshāf* would approximate five hundred, constituting what is termed the *al-Kashshāf* tradition. Regrettably, within contemporary Arab and Western academia, this tradition has largely

38 Boyalık, *el-Keşşâf Literatürü*, 29-35.

39 Boyalık, *el-Keşşâf Literatürü*, 43-45.

40 Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Bakr Al-Suyūṭī, *Nawāhid al-abkār wa shawārid al-aḥkār*, Critical ed. Aḥmad Ḥāj Muḥammad ‘Uthmān, -Pdh. Dissertation- (Mecca: Jāmi‘atu Umm al-Qurā, 2003), 13.



been overlooked except for a few excellent articles by Walid Saleh.<sup>41</sup> However, in Turkey, scholarly interest in this tradition has burgeoned in recent decades, resulting in a plethora of meticulous studies. Nonetheless, the predominance of Turkish-language publications renders these studies inaccessible to the global community of Qur'ānic researchers, who primarily rely on Arabic and English sources.

During the post-*al-Kashshāf* era, several notable independent commentaries emerged. Foremost among these is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) monumental work, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, alongside the commentaries by Ottoman scholars such as Ibn Kamal (d. 940/1534) and Abussu'ūd (d. 982/1574). Furthermore, the succinct *Tafsir al-Jalālayn*, a commentary that Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 864/1459) started to write but was completed by al-Suyūṭī after his death, despite its brevity, has garnered significant attention, being the focus of approximately thirty commentaries and annotations. The cumulative output of this period of commentary and annotation finds partial synthesis in the extensive commentary *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsir al-Qur'ān wa-l-thab' al-mathānī*, authored by Shehāb al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), a prominent scholar of the 19th century who is considered the last great representative of the classical Islamic Tafsir tradition. Al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī* encapsulates this tradition of annotations and super-commentaries and this is seemingly reflected in the depth of content within his work. However, as we have not yet fully comprehended the content of the annotations and super-commentaries, we are not in a position at this stage to determine how successfully al-Ālūsī's tafsir summarizes this tradition.

## CONCLUSION

The evolution of tafsir from its nascent stages to a sophisticated scholarly discipline represents a profound journey of intellectual and spiritual exploration within Islamic tradition. Initially rooted in the immediate context of the Prophet Muḥammad's lifetime, tafsir began as a practical endeavor to understand and apply the Qur'ān's teachings. Early interpreters, including the Prophet's companions, laid the groundwork for future exegetical efforts by compiling Ḥadīth and providing contextual explanations for Qur'ānic verses. The transformation of tafsir became more pronounced with the advent of scholars like al-Ṭabarī, whose monumental work, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, marked a significant milestone in Qur'ānic exegesis. Al-Ṭabarī's methodological approach, which combined narrations (riwāyah) and rational analysis (dirāyah), set a precedent for subsequent exegetes. His contribution highlighted the importance of integrating historical context, linguistic analysis, and theological insights, thereby enriching the interpretative process. An analogous situation can be observed in the works of another commentator's contemporary with al-Ṭabarī. The Nishapuri school of exegesis further advanced tafsir by introducing critical and systematic methods of interpretation. Scholars from this school, such as al-Tha'labī and al-Wāḥidī, emphasized the need for rigorous linguistic and philological analysis, which helped in clarifying the Qur'ān's meanings. Their work underscored the role of Arabic language mastery and rhetorical skills in producing nuanced and precise exegeses. A pivotal development in the history of tafsir was the interaction with Mu'tazilite thought. The Mu'tazilites, known for their rationalist approach to theology, influenced the incorporation of rationalist elements into tafsir. This period saw the emergence of scholars like al-Zamakhsharī, whose *'al-Kashshāf* became a cornerstone of rationalist exegesis. Although rational interpretation did not begin with Zamakhsharī and can be traced back to much earlier figures such as Māturīdī (d. 333/944) and even Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 209/824), this interpretative approach appears to have been established at the center of tafsir through the influence of Zamakhsharī and the use of rhetoric. Al-Zamakhsharī's work exemplified the integration of rhetorical analysis and theological reasoning, demonstrating how exegetical works could engage with contemporary intellectual currents. The *'al-Kashshāf* tradition represents a crucial phase in the history of tafsir, bridging classical exegesis with emerging interpretative trends. This tradition, often overlooked in Western academia, offers a rich repository of analytical tools and interpretative frameworks that continue to be relevant. Recognizing the contributions of this period enhances our understanding of the diverse methodologies that have shaped tafsir. In contemporary times, Western Qur'ānic scholarship has exhibited varied responses to traditional Islamic exegesis. While some scholars have tended to undervalue the rich tradition of Islamic tafsir, there is an encouraging trend of increased interest and engagement with classical exegesis. This renewed interest highlights the enduring significance of Islamic scholarly traditions and their potential to inform and enrich modern interpretative practices. The study of tafsir's evolution underscores the dynamic interplay between historical context, linguistic expertise, and theological reflection in shaping tafsir. By charting the transformative narratives within tafsir, this article illuminates the intellectual vibrancy and diversity of Islamic exegesis. It invites further exploration and appreciation of the rich heritage that continues to inform contemporary understandings of the Qur'ān. The ongoing dialogue between traditional and modern scholarship promises to deepen our insights into the Qur'ānic text, fostering a more nuanced and comprehensive engagement with its teachings.

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41 Walid Saleh, "The Ḥāshiyā of Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284) on al-Kashshāf of al-Zamakhsharī" in *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World: Studies Presented to Claude Gilliot on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday*, Edited by Andrew Rippin and Roberto Tottoli. (Leiden: Brill, 2015); "The Gloss as Intellectual History: The Ḥāshiyahs of al-Kashshāf" in *Oriens* 41 (2013) 217–259.

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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Tefsir tarihi alanındaki akademik araştırmalarda bu disiplinin tarihi süreç içerisinde geçirdiği dönüşümler ve uğradığı kavşak noktaları çoğunlukla dikkate alınmamakta ve başlangıçtan itibaren bütün tarihi süreç düz bir çizgi şeklinde tasavvur edilmektedir. Buna karşılık bu çalışma, tefsirin tarihsel süreçteki dönüşüm noktalarını incelemekte, Hz. Peygamber döneminden başlayarak 6./12. Yüzyıldan itibaren yazılan şerh ve haşiye literatürüne kadar geçen dönemde bu dönüşümlerin izini sürmektedir. Tefsir tarihinin doğrusal bir çizgi gibi ilerlediği varsayımına dayanan çağdaş tefsir tarih yazımı ağırlıklı olarak ahkâm tefsiri, filolojik tefsir, işârî tefsir gibi farklı tefsir yöntemlerinin ve bu yöntemlere ait örneklerin tanıtılması ile ilgilenmektedir. Takdir edileceği üzere bu çerçeve ile sınırlı bir tarih yazımı anlayışı, tarihsel sürecin önemli detaylarını fark etme olanağı sağlamayacaktır. Dolayısıyla klasik mirasın oluşum ve dönüşüm sürecini daha yakından ve detaylıca inceleyebilmek ve klasik tefsir metinlerinin tarihsel süreçte birbirleri ile olan etkileşimini daha gerçekçi bir düzeyde kavrayabilmek için bu naif anlayışın dışına çıkarak dönüştürücü paradigmalardan izini sürmeye çalışmak gerekmektedir. Bu çalışma, daha ileri ve spesifik çalışmalarla zenginleştirilmesi gereken böyle bir iz sürümü teşebbüsü teklif etmektedir. Çalışmada tespit edilen temel dönüşüm noktalarından biri, tefsir tarihinde erken dönem sonlandırıp kuşatıcı tefsir yazımına geçişi temsil eden Taberî ve çağdaşlarını katkısıdır. Bu dönem öncesinde tefsirin tikel unsurları sayılabilecek filoloji, kıraat, rivayet gibi alanlar görece bağımsız bir şekilde derleniyorken, Taberî ve kuşağının hamlesi ile bu tikel unsurlar bütüncül bir disiplinin kurucu parçaları olarak işlev görmeye başlamıştır. Bu kuşağın kendilerinden önceki kuşakların aksine böylesine bütüncül metinler yazabilmeleri muhtemelen fıkıh ve kelim alanlarında ekollerin (mezheplerin) tefsiri (nas yorumunu) ilgilendiren pek çok usul konusunda kendi pozisyonlarını yeterince pekiştirmiş olmaları idi. Bu sebeple bu dönemin müfessirleri, önceki kuşakların yaptığı gibi tefsirin tikel unsurlarına yoğunlaşmak yerine, bütün bu unsurları birleştirip küllî değerlendirmeler yapmaya yöneldiler. Bu durumu özellikle Taberî'nin ve Mâtürîdî'nin metinleri üzerinden doğrulamak mümkündür. Yine Nişabur çevresinde yaşayan müfessirlerin kendilerinden sonraki literatürü derinden etkileyen fakat çağdaş literatürde yeterince üzerinde durulmayan dönüştürücü etkisi de bu çerçevede değerlendirilebilir. Özellikle rivayet ile dirayet enstrümanlarını mutedil bir tavırla dengeleme konusunda Sa'lebî ve Vâhîdî gibi Nişabur müfessirlerinin sonraki dönem üzerinde belirgin etki sahibi olduğunu ifade etmek mümkündür. Diğer taraftan önemi Türkçe literatürde belirli ölçüde kavranmış ve kimi çalışmalara konu edilmiş olmakla birlikte uluslararası Kur'an çalışmaları alanında henüz yeterince takdir edilmemiş bir alan hüviyetinde olan "Keşşâf geleneği" ve bu geleneğin dönüştürücü rolü de bu makalede ön plana çıkarılmıştır. Zemahşerî'nin el-Keşşâf isimli önemli tefsiri her ne kadar çağdaşları ile benzer özellikler taşısa ve bu yönüyle (orijinal bir metin olmaktan ziyade) hicri altıncı asır İslam eğitim kurumlarında tedris edilen bilgi seviyesini yansıtır olsa da, sonraki nesil bilginler tarafından, belagatin tefsire tatbik edilmesi konusunda çağdaşlarından daha başarılı ve etkili görülmüştür. Bu açıdan el-Keşşaf ve onun etrafında yazılmış önemli metinlerden biri olan Envarü't-tenzîl (Beyzâvî tefsiri) üzerinde yoğunlaşan bu şerh-haşiye edebiyatı kendine özgü nitelikleri ile müstakil çalışmaları hak etmektedir. Mu'tezile düşüncesinin özellikle Sünnî kelâmı ve ardından belagat disiplini etkileyen katkıları ve hicri altıncı asırda tefsirin belagat etkisiyle geçirdiği dönüşüm de yine bu kapsamda önem arz etmektedir. Belagat disiplini derli toplu olarak tasnif edilmiş edebî sanatların pek çoğu aslında erken dönemlerden itibaren Mu'tezile bilginlerinin yoğun olarak ilgilendikleri konular arasındaydı. Bu yönüyle belagat bir bakıma Mu'tezili tefsir anlayışını enstrümanı olarak işlev görmekteydi. Ancak Abdülkâhir el-Cürcânî ile sünnî bir kimlik kazanan bu disiplin, Cürcânî sonrası dönemde tefsirde daha geniş etki alanı bulmuş görünmektedir. Şerh, haşiye, ihtisar, talika gibi yazım türlerinin ağırlık kazandığı bu "Keşşâf sonrası" aşama aslında Kelâm, İslâm Felsefesi ve Tasavvuf gibi bütün alanlarda dönüşümlerin yaşandığı müteahhirun dönemine tekabül etse de, tefsirde bu dönüşümlerin en belirgin olanı, belagat uygulamalarının tefsire etkili bir şekilde taşınmış olmasıdır. Bu durum Keşşaf sonrası tefsiri bütün yönleri ile etkilemiş görünmektedir. Bu araştırma bütün bu dönüşümleri panoramik bir bakışla incelerken İslâm tefsir geleneği üzerine özellikle batı Kur'an araştırmaları literatüründe oluşmuş olan birikimle eleştirel bir etkileşim içermekte, bu literatürün halihazırda Türkçe literatürde kesb edilmiş olan gelişmelerle zenginleştirilmesini önermektedir. Çağdaş dönemde tefsirin geçirdiği dönüşüm klasik dönemdeki bütün bu dönüşümlerden bağımsız pek çok dinamik ile de ilişkili olduğu ve spesifik çalışmaları gerektirdiği içim, bu çalışmanın kapsamı dışında tutulmuştur. Ancak tabiatıyla çağdaş tefsir tarih yazımı alanındaki çalışmaların bu dönemi de dikkate almaları gerekmektedir.