

The Question of the Authorship of the Tafsîr Entitled *al-Akmal al- Aṭwal*

Abstract: This study examines the disputed authorship of the tafsîr entitled *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*. Its aim is to reassess information concerning the work's author in accordance with scientific and methodological criteria and to reach a definitive conclusion. The central problem addressed is the attribution of a tafsîr that does not belong to 'Umar al-Nasafi (d. 537/1142) to him and the scholarly problems resulting from this misattribution. Using a qualitative research method, the study compares *al-Akmal* with al-Nasafi's unquestionably authentic tafsîr *al-Taysîr*, focusing on their introductions in terms of language, style, source usage, and methodology. The findings reveal that al-Nasafi's exegetical approach in *al-Taysîr* is absent from *al-Akmal*, that the phrase *al-awwalu al-aṭwal* was misinterpreted, and that this error was perpetuated in manuscripts and later literature. Consequently, the study concludes that *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* does not belong to al-Nasafi.

Keywords: Tafsîr, al-Akmal al-Aṭwal, 'Umar al-Nasafi, al-Taysîr, Authorship Problem.

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el-Ekme'lü'l-Atvel Adlı Tefsirin Aidiyeti Meselesi

Öz: Bu araştırma, *el-Ekme'lü'l-atvel* adlı tefsirin tartışmalı aidiyetini konu edinmektedir. Araştırmanın gayesi, eserin müellifine dair bilgileri, bilimsel ve metodolojik kriterler çerçevesinde yeniden inceleyerek, kesin bir tespitte bulunmaktır. Araştırmanın problemi Ömer Neseff'e (ö. 537/1142) ait olmayan bir tefsirin ona izafe edilmesi ve bu nispetin ortaya çıkardığı sorunlar oluşturmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi benimsenerek *el-Ekme'l* ile aidiyet sorunu olmayan Neseff'in bir diğer tefsiri *et-Teysîr* mukaddime özelinde dil, üslup, kaynak kullanımı ve sistemleri itibarıyla mukayeseli bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir. Mukaddime özelinde yapılan bir incelemeyle eserin aidiyet sorunu giderilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre Neseff'in *et-Teysîr*'deki tefsir anlayışı, *el-Ekme'l* de yoktur. Araştırmada *et-Teysîr*'deki *el-evvelü'l-atvel* ifadesinin yanlış yorumlandığı, *el-Ekme'lü'l-atvel* adlı tefsirin yazma nüshalarının hatalı biçimde Neseff'e nispet edildiği, tabakat ve biyografi kaynaklarının da bu hatalı nispeti tekrarladığı tespit edilmiştir. Tüm bu hususların akademik çalışmalarda ve tefsirin neşrinde dikkate alınmadığı anlaşılmıştır. Sonuç olarak araştırma, *el-Ekme'l*'in Neseff'e ait olmadığını, buna mukabil başka bir müfessir/lere ait olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Keywords Anahtar Kelimeler: Tefsir, el-Ekme'lü'l-Atvel, Ömer Neseff, et-Teysîr, Aidiyet Problemi.

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Introduction

The ideas and works produced within the Islamic intellectual tradition have been preserved and transmitted to the present day by scholars over the course of centuries. However, this process of transmission -particularly during the copying of manuscript works- has at times given rise to ambiguities and doubts regarding the authorship of certain texts. In this respect, the omission of an author's name, the confusion of work titles, or the later interpolation of passages into a text have rendered the problem of attribution in manuscript literature a persistent and significant issue that continues to this day.

Clarifying the identity of an author cannot be regarded merely as a matter of historical curiosity; rather, it constitutes a scholarly responsibility that must be undertaken with a sense of trust and academic accountability.¹ Establishing the correct attribution of ideas and works to their respective authors is of paramount importance both for the sound transmission of the Islamic sciences and for ensuring scholarly reliability and integrity.² Indeed, a work or opinion incorrectly ascribed to an author not only undermines the proper transmission of the intellectual tradition but also obstructs an accurate understanding of the author's scholarly legacy.

Within this framework, critical edition studies conducted on manuscript works should be viewed not merely as exercises in textual criticism, but also as efforts to safeguard an intellectual trust and to uphold scholarly rigor. Particularly in disciplines such as tafsīr, ḥadīth, fiqh, and kalām, the reliability of the texts is directly contingent upon the sound determination of their attribution to their respective authors. Approached from this perspective of scholarly responsibility, one of the works in the tafsīr literature that necessitates serious examination with regard to the question of attribution is *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, a commentary attributed to 'Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), one of the prominent representatives of the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition, and which constitutes the focal point of the present study.³

In the Islamic scholarly tradition, the accurate determination of author-work attribution is of vital importance both for the sound classification of the literature and for the coherent reconstruction of a scholar's intellectual framework. Within this context, the tafsīr entitled *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, which is listed among the Qur'anic commentaries attributed to al-Nasafī, has been

¹ Okan Kadir Yılmaz, *İSAM Tahkikli Neşir Kılavuzu* (Istanbul: ISAM Publications, 2018), 131.

² Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ahmad al-Bardūnī et al. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyye, 1964), 1/3.

³ Najm al-Dīn 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2024).

ascribed to him not only in biographical and ṭabaqāt works,⁴ but also in more recent studies such as theses,⁵ articles,⁶ encyclopedia entries,⁷ and monographs.⁸ This widely held view, which appears to have become entrenched in the literature, has considerably strengthened the assumption that the work in question constitutes an integral part of al-Nasafî's tafsîr corpus.

However, when this work is examined alongside *al-Taysîr fî al-tafsîr* -which represents al-Nasafî's principal contribution to the tafsîr tradition and whose attribution to him is beyond any doubt- the existence of an organic link indicative of common authorship between the two texts becomes open to question. Accordingly, contrary to prevailing assumptions, the differences between the two works in terms of style, methodology, and content call into question the attribution of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to al-Nasafî.

This study aims to examine the origins of the erroneous attribution in question and the process through which it entered and became established in the scholarly literature. The central argument of the present research is that the expression *al-awwalu al-aṭwal*⁹ ("the first and the longer/more

⁴ Ismâ'îl Bâshâ b. Muḥammad Amîn, *Hadiyyat al-'arîfin asmâ' al-mu'allifin wa-âthâr al-muṣannifîn* (Istanbul: Wakâlat al-Ma'ârif, 1951), 1/783; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur Erster Supplementband* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937), 762; Khayr al-Dîn al-Ziriklî, *al-A'lâm* (Beirut: Dâr al-'Ilm li-al-Malâ'în, 2002), 5/60; Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsîr Tarihi Tabakâtü'l-Müfessirîn*, simplified by Abdülaziz Hatip (Istanbul: Semerkand Publications, 2014), 2/45-46; Âdil Nuwayhid, *Mu'jam al-mufasssîrîn min ṣadr al-Islâm wa-ḥattâ al-'aṣr al-hâḍir* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Nuwayhid al-Thaqâfiyya li-al-Ta'lîf wa-al-Tarjama wa-al-Nashr, 1409/1988), 1/399-400.

⁵ Şeyma Akıncı, *Ömer en-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisîr Adlı Tefsirinde İmam Mâtürîdî'nin Te'vilâtü'l-Kur'ân'ının Etkisi* (Istanbul: İstanbul 29 Mayıs University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2023), 10; Çağlar Yılmaz, *Ebu Hafṣ Ömer en-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisîr Fî't-Tefsirinde Sureler Arası Münasebet* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2022), 18; Ahmet Balaban, *Necmuddin Ömer b. Muhammed en-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisîr fî't-Tefsîr İsimli Eserinin Edisyon Kritiği ve Tahlili (Ali İmran Suresi)* (Istanbul: İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2018), 20.

⁶ Ali Kürşat Turgut, "Ömer Nesefî'nin Matla'u'n-Nücûm ve Mecme'u'l-'Ulûm Adlı Eseri ve İlimler Tasnifi Geleneği Açısından Değeri", *Journal of Islamic Research* 32, no. 2 (2021), 313, 319; Ali Kaya, "Besmelenin Süre Muhtevasıyla Yorumu: Ömer Nesefî ve Bikâi Örneği", *Eskişeyni* 46 (2022), 344; Hacı Çiçek, "Ebû Hafṣ Necmüddîn Ömer En-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisîr fî't-Tefsîr'inde İsrailiyyâta Dair Bazı Rivayetler -Bakara Sûresi Örneği", *Dicle University Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 (2023), 584.

⁷ Aşş Hümeyra Aslantürk, "Nesefî, Necmeddin", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Publications, 2006), 32/572.

⁸ Aşş Hümeyra Aslantürk, *Ömer en-Nesefî ve Tefsirdeki Metodu* (Isparta: Fakülte Kitabevi, 2007), 45; Seyfullah Efe, *Klâsik Dönemde Sünnî-Şii Tefsîr Algısı (Nesefî-Râzî Örneği)* (Ankara: Akademisyen Publications, 2021), 20; Ömer Faruk Demireşik, *Selçuklu Müfessirleri (XI-XIV. YY)* (Istanbul: Erkam Publications, 2022), 416.

⁹ Abû Hafṣ Najm al-Dîn 'Umar al-Nasafî, *al-Taysîr fî al-tafsîr*, ed. Mâhir Edîb Ḥabbûsh et al. (Beirut: Dâr al-Lubâb, 2019), 1/414.

comprehensive one”), which appears in *al-Taysîr*—a work unquestionably authored by ‘Umar al-Nasafî himself—was later mistakenly interpreted as the title of an independent work. This misreading, when combined with the faulty cataloguing of the manuscript copies¹⁰ of the said tafsîr, was uncritically adopted by ʔabaqât authors and subsequently evolved into a persistent problem of attribution that has endured to the present day. In this respect, the objective of the study is not merely to offer a bibliographical correction of an authorial ascription. Rather, by adducing textual and context-based evidence, it seeks to demonstrate that *al-Akmal* cannot be attributed to al-Nasafî. On the contrary, the study aims to show that the work in question exhibits significant methodological and thematic divergences from *al-Taysîr*, which is al-Nasafî’s final tafsîr and whose attribution to him is beyond dispute.

Employing a qualitative research methodology, this study subjects *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* and al-Nasafî’s tafsîr *al-Taysîr* to a comparative analysis. Within the defined scope and limitations of the research, the investigation of authorship is conducted primarily through an examination of the works’ introductions (muqaddimât), while other points of divergence -such as language, style, and the use of sources- are addressed only in their main outlines. Prior to this, the study focuses on the historical trajectory and content analysis of the information provided on *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* in ʔabaqât works and in studies devoted to al-Nasafî. In this way, the research ultimately seeks to demonstrate that *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* is clearly incompatible with al-Nasafî’s established approach to tafsîr, thereby effecting a correction of a significant error in the history of Qur’anic exegesis. Although some earlier studies have touched upon the problem in question, they have not proposed a definitive resolution.¹¹ Indeed, in the existing biographical and academic literature, the work has continued to be regarded as directly attributable to al-Nasafî.¹² It is precisely this state of affairs that constitutes the originality of the present study. Accordingly, by advancing findings and conclusions that run counter to

¹⁰ ‘Umar al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* (Cairo: Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyye, 37); ‘Umar al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* (Cairo: Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyye, 38); ‘Umar al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, 1094-23179).

¹¹ Muhammet Çol, *Hanefî-Mâtürîdî Tefsir Geleneğinde Ömer en-Neseî* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Publications, 2024), 15-18; Ersin Çelik, “Ömer en-Neseî’nin Tefsir-i Neseî Adlı Farsça Eseri Bağlamında Klasik Dönem Kur’an Tercümelelerinde Tefsir Tercihleri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme”, *Journal of Islamic Sciences* 40 (2025), 191.

¹² İsmâ’îl Bâshâ, *Hadiyyat al-‘arîfîn*, 1/783; Brockelmann, *GAL*, 762; al-Ziriklî, *al-A’lâm*, 5/60; Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsir Tarihi*, 2/45-46; Nuwayhid, *Mu’jam al-mufasssîrîn*, 1/399-400; Akıncı, *Ömer en-Neseî’nin et-Teysîr Adlı Tefsirinde İmam Mâtürîdî’nin Te’vîlâtü’l-Kur’ân’ının Etkisi*, 10; Yılmaz, *Ebu Hafs Ömer en-Neseî’nin et-Teysîr Fi’t-Tefsirinde Sureler Arası Münasebet*, 18; Balaban, *Necmuddin Ömer b. Muhammed en-Neseî’nin et-Teysîr fi’t-Tefsir İsmi Eserinin Edisyon Kriğiği ve Tahlii (Ali İmran Suresi)*, 20; Turgut, “Ömer Neseî’nin Matla’u’n-Nücûm ve Mecme’u’l-’Ulûm Adlı Eseri ve İlimler Tasnifi Geleneği Açısından Değeri”, 313, 319.

entrenched assumptions, the study is expected to exert a broad impact on the existing literature.

1. al-Akmal al-Aṭwal in Ṭabaqāt Literature and Modern Studies

An examination of the ṭabaqāt and biographical sources reveals that there is no complete consensus among the authorities regarding the attribution of the tafsîr entitled *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to ‘Umar al-Nasafî. Building upon this ambiguity, it is primarily later bibliographical scholars and contemporary researchers who have expressed the view that the work belongs to al-Nasafî; no such attribution is encountered in earlier sources. Within this framework, Ismâ‘îl Bâshâ (1839–1920), in his biographical compendium *Hadiyyat al-ârifîn*, records the existence of a work entitled *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* ascribed to ‘Umar al-Nasafî.¹³ Similarly, Carl Brockelmann (1868–1956), in his standard reference work *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*, states that this tafsîr is attributable to al-Nasafî.¹⁴ Hayr al-Dîn al-Ziriklî (d. 1396/1976) likewise notes that al-Nasafî authored a work bearing the title *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*.¹⁵ Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen (1883–1971) also mentions the existence of a work by the author under this title,¹⁶ while ‘Âdil Nuwayhiđ (1923–1996) provides a more detailed account, reporting that, in addition to *al-Taysîr*, al-Nasafî possessed another tafsîr entitled *al-Akmal*, preserved in manuscript form and consisting of four volumes.¹⁷

When the approaches of authors who attribute the tafsîr entitled *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to ‘Umar al-Nasafî are examined, it becomes evident that no critical inquiry into the soundness of this attribution has been undertaken. The information provided by contemporary ṭabaqāt writers concerning this work appears to rely largely on mutual transmission rather than on independent investigation. For instance, Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, while presenting information on al-Nasafî, explicitly cites Hayr al-Dîn al-Ziriklî among his sources.¹⁸ It is highly probable that Ziriklî, in turn, incorporated this information into his work on the basis of a faulty classification found in the catalogues of Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya. Consequently, this chain of transmission closely parallels the rationale advanced by Dâr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya for publishing the work on the basis of manuscript copies preserved

¹³ Ismâ‘îl Bâshâ, *Hadiyyetü’l-ârifîn*, 1/783.

¹⁴ Brockelmann, *GAL*, 762.

¹⁵ al-Ziriklî, *al-A’lâm*,

¹⁶ Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsir Tarihi*, 2/45-46. For an alternative evaluation of the exegetes belonging to the period of Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen in his study on the history of *tafsîr*, see: Mustafa Kılıçaslan and Bilal Deliser, “Tarihsel Arka Planlı Yüzyıl Okumaları -II: Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen’in Büyük Tefsir Tarihi/Tabakâtü’l-Müfessirîn Adlı Eserinin Dört, Beş ve Altıncı Tabakası”, *Dokuz Eylül University Journal of Theology* 62 (2025), 73-96.

¹⁷ Nuwayhiđ, *Mu’jam al-mufasssîrîn*, 1/399-400.

¹⁸ Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsir Tarihi*, 2/45-46.

in Egypt. Nevertheless, through this successive process of uncritical transmission, the mistaken attribution has come to be firmly entrenched in the literature. Indeed, in studies devoted to the author, the work is explicitly and unequivocally presented as belonging to al-Nasafi.

Contrary to later bibliographical studies, an examination of earlier *ṭabaqāt* works shows that no *tafsīr* entitled *al-Akmal* is mentioned as belonging to 'Umar al-Nasafi. For example, al-Qurashī (d. 775/1373), in *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, makes no reference to such a *tafsīr*.¹⁹ Likewise, İbn Qutlūbughā (d. 879/1474), while introducing al-Nasafi in *Tāj al-tarājim*, notes that the author refers in *al-Taysīr* to a "longer/more comprehensive *tafsīr*," yet he does not mention the title of this work.²⁰ According to our findings, the work indicated by Ibn Kutluboĝa and alluded to in *al-Taysīr* is not *al-Akmal*, but rather *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr*. Indeed, al-Nasafi himself explicitly states in *al-Taysīr* that his first extensive *tafsīr* was *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr*.²¹

At this point, other principal sources addressing al-Nasafi's scholarly legacy are likewise silent. Thus, al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) in *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*,²² Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) in *Lisān al-mizān*,²³ al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) in *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*,²⁴ Kātib Čelebī (d. 1067/1657) in *Kashf al-ẓunūn*,²⁵ and al-Laknawī (d. 1304/1886) in *al-Fawā'id al-bahiyya*²⁶ make no mention of such a work attributed to al-Nasafi. The fact that these authors—who occupy a central position particularly within the Ḥanafī *ṭabaqāt* tradition—failed to record a *tafsīr* of such considerable size allegedly authored by al-Nasafi raises serious doubts regarding the work's attribution.

In light of all this, it becomes clear that, despite the collective silence of the classical sources, the data relied upon by relatively later *ṭabaqāt* authors such as Ismā'īl Bāshā, Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, and 'Ādil Nuwayhiḍ ultimately derives from a faulty catalogue entry in *Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya*, and was transmitted without any critical examination of the isnād.

¹⁹ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍi'a fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyya* (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyya, 1332/1914), 1/394-395.

²⁰ Abū al-Fidā' Zayn al-Dīn Qāsim Ibn Kutlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, ed. Muhammad Khayrī Ramadan Yusuf (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1413/1992), 219-220.

²¹ al-Nasafi, *al-Taysīr*, 1/223, 12/71.

²² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt et al. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1405/1985), 20/126-127.

²³ Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Alamī li-al-Maṭbū'āt, 1390/1971), 4/327.

²⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1396/1976), 88.

²⁵ Muṣṭafā b. 'Abdallāh Kātib Čelebī, *Kashf al-ẓunūn 'an asāmī al-kutub wa-al-funūn* (Istanbul: Wakālat al-Ma'ārif, 1360/1941), 1/519, 668, 706, 756, 2/1356, 1602, 1686, 1687, 2054.

²⁶ Abū al-Ḥasanāt Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā'id al-bahiyya fī tarājim al-Ḥanafīyya* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1324/1906), 149-150.

The fact that the complete manuscript in question dates to a relatively late period (AH 1180) further appears to corroborate this assessment.²⁷

The problem of attribution concerning *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* has not remained confined to biographical sources alone; it has also permeated modern academic scholarship. Despite its contested authorship and the presence of strong evidence indicating that it does not belong to al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* has continued to be presented in contemporary studies -such as theses,²⁸ articles,²⁹ encyclopedia entries,³⁰ and monographs³¹- as though it were unquestionably a tafsîr authored by him, without being subjected to any critical inquiry regarding its attribution. An examination of these studies reveals that researchers have generally reached their conclusions without personally collating or critically examining the manuscript itself, relying instead on secondary transmissions found in ṭabaqât works and on bibliographical listings. At this point, it appears that the root of the problem lies in the uncritical adoption by researchers of information originating from a faulty catalogue entry, without subjecting its accuracy to scrutiny. Moreover, no evidence has been found to suggest that a content-based analysis of the manuscript of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* has been undertaken. Indeed, even in the published edition issued by Dâr al-Kutub al-İlmiyya, this issue is not addressed. Taken together, these factors suggest that, rather than corroborating the work's attribution to al-Nasafî, such practices have facilitated the repetition and wider dissemination of an existing error within the academic literature. On the other hand, this chain of uncritical acceptance within scholarly circles has also been reflected in the modern publication history of the work. A theoretical error embedded in the literature has thus been transformed into a printed reality through a problematic process of critical editing. It is further noteworthy that the work was published under al-Nasafî's name at a time when discussions concerning its attribution were still ongoing.³²

In the edition of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* published by Dâr al-Kutub al-İlmiyya, the

²⁷ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/65-66 (editor's introduction).

²⁸ Akıncı, *Ömer en-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisr Adlı Tefsirinde İmam Mâtürîdî'nin Te'vîlâtü'l-Kur'ân'ının Etkisi*, 10; Yılmaz, *Ebu Hafız Ömer en-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisr Fi't-Tefsirinde Sureler Arası Münasebet*, 18; Balaban, *Necmüddin Ömer b. Muhammed en-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisr fi't-Tefsir İsimli Eserinin Edisyon Kiriği ve Tahlili (Ali İmran Suresi)*, 20.

²⁹ Turgut, "Ömer Nesefî'nin Matla'u'n-Nücûm ve Mecme'u'l-'Ulûm Adlı Eseri ve İlimler Tasnifi Geleneği Açısından Değeri", 313, 319; Kaya, "Besmelenin Sûre Muhtevasıyla Yorumu: Ömer Nesefî ve Bikâi Örneği", 344; Çiçek, "Ebû Hafız Necmüddîn Ömer En-Nesefî'nin et-Teyisr fi't-Tefsîr'inde İsrailiyyâta Dair Bazı Rivayetler -Bakara Sûresi Örneği", 584.

³⁰ Aslantürk, "Nesefî, Necmeddin", 32/572.

³¹ Aslantürk, *Ömer en-Nesefî ve Tefsirdeki Metodu*, 45; Efe, *Klâsik Dönemde Sünnî-Şîî Tefsîr Algısı (Nesefî-Râzî Örneği)*, 20; Demireşik, *Selçuklu Müfessirleri (XI-XIV. YY)*, 416.

³² al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/38 (editor's introduction).

doubts concerning whether the text genuinely belongs to al-Nasafî have not been resolved, owing to the problems inherent in the manuscripts preserved at Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya and other principal manuscript witnesses, as well as to instances of negligence in the publication process itself.³³ On the contrary, the text has been presented as though it unquestionably belonged to al-Nasafî. In particular, the data contained within the published edition have not mitigated the attribution problem; rather, they have contributed to its further amplification. At this juncture, an examination of the Dâr al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya edition of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* shows that the taḥqîq process was based on manuscript copies housed at Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya (one complete and one incomplete) and at al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya (incomplete).³⁴ The complete manuscript adopted as the base text is dated AH 1180; however, due to the internal inconsistencies it contains and the doubts it raises regarding authorship, it undermines the overall reliability of the text. The other incomplete manuscripts employed in the edition do not provide a sufficient basis for comparison capable of either corroborating the complete manuscript or remedying its structural problems. Moreover, the assertion that the late manuscript dated AH 1180 would be treated as the principal witness, while simultaneously citing information in the colophon (farâgh record) of another manuscript dated AH 553, constitutes a significant methodological inconsistency in its own right.³⁵ Despite comparisons with other manuscript copies, the problem of attribution in the Dâr al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya edition of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* has not been meaningfully addressed or resolved. In our view, the failure to explicitly acknowledge the existence of the problem has, in turn, resulted in the absence of any substantive effort toward its resolution.

The most critical methodological shortcoming of the edition lies in the absence of a systematic comparison between the extant manuscripts and *al-Taysîr*—a work whose attribution to al-Nasafî is beyond any doubt. Indeed, the indicators observable within the internal structure of the manuscripts themselves, which render the work's attribution highly problematic, were not subjected to adequate scrutiny in the editorial process. In particular, while a substantial portion of the complete manuscript preserved at Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya diverges markedly from *al-Taysîr fî al-tafsîr* in terms of both content and style, certain sections toward the end of the work display a noticeable convergence with the text of *al-Taysîr*. Although the presence of references

³³ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/37, 41 (editor's introduction).

³⁴ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/65-66 (editor's introduction). For these manuscripts, see: 'Umar al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* (Cairo: Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyye, 37); 'Umar al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* (Cairo: Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyye, 38); 'Umar al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, 1094-23179).

³⁵ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 17/549.

to *al-Taysīr* in the final volumes of the edition may have created a misleading impression regarding the work as a whole, it is evident that no comprehensive, holistic comparison encompassing the entirety of the text was undertaken. Moreover, the confusion of attribution reflected in the manuscripts on which the edition is based suggests that both the editors responsible for the publication and those who subsequently employed these manuscripts in academic studies lacked sufficient familiarity with the Nasafian corpus and the author's distinctive stylistic and methodological features. In this context, the failure to detect the problems inherent in the manuscripts -and their uncritical transmission into both the published edition and the secondary literature- has facilitated the circulation of the text through a flawed chain of transmission, whereby it came to be attributed to al-Nasafī and accepted as such in scholarly discourse.

Another dimension of the issue concerns the academic studies conducted on *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* prior to its publication by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. In this regard, different sections of the manuscripts housed at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya and al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya were critically edited (*taḥqīq*) as master's theses at al-Azhar University by Ṣabāḥ Tantāwī, Ṣabrā al-Ḥusaynī, ʿAzza Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Maryam ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, and Hindiyya Aḥmad. All of these studies are based on the same manuscript witnesses that later served as the foundation for the Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya edition.³⁶ Consequently, the problems observed in the printed edition had already been replicated in these earlier works in exactly the same manner. The most striking example of this situation is the critical edition prepared by ʿAzza Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, which covers Sūrat al-Qalam and Sūrat al-Nās. In this study, the researcher characterizes the author of the work as an Ashʿarī and notes that the author transmits material from al-Zamakhsharī.³⁷ As is well known, ʿUmar al-Nasafī is one of the foremost representatives of Māturīdī kalām. The characterization of the author of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* as Ashʿarī therefore constitutes one of the clearest indications that the work cannot belong to al-Nasafī. Such statements fundamentally undermine the attribution of the text to ʿUmar al-Nasafī. In sum, these findings demonstrate that *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* does not belong to al-Nasafī, but rather that the work has been attributed to him as a result of an erroneous -whether inadvertent or deliberate- process of ascription.

The insufficiency of the bibliographical data concerning the work's attribution, together with the contradictions among them, renders a text-centered analysis unavoidable. In this vein, the following section of the study

³⁶ Aslantürk, "Nesefi, Necmeddin", 32/572.

³⁷ ʿAzza Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal taḥqīq wa-dirāsa li-tafsīr al-Nasafī min sūrat al-Qalam ilā nihāyat sūrat al-Nās* (Cairo: Al-Azhar University, Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Master's Thesis, 1992), 1-2, 4, 18, 19 (editor's introduction).

undertakes a comparative examination of *al-Taysir* -whose authorship by 'Umar al-Nasafi is beyond dispute- and *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* as published by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. This comparison, intended to test the existence of an authorial connection between the two works, will be conducted on the basis of an ambiguous reference found in verse 23 of Sūrat al-Baqara, as well as through an analysis of the introductory sections (*muqaddimāt*), which are considered to reflect most clearly the author's distinctive style and methodological approach.

2. al-Akmal al-Aṭwal and al-Taysir fī al-Tafsir in the Context of the Authorship Problem

2.1. An Ambiguous Reference in *al-Taysir*: al-Baqara 2/23

In *al-Taysir*—a work whose attribution is beyond dispute—al-Nasafi makes³⁸ references in various places to his other writings authored by his own hand. Among these references, *al-Ḥaṣā'il al-masā'il*, *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsir*, and *Mā warada min al-akhbār fī dhikr mi'rāj al-nabiyy al-mukhtār*³⁹ are particularly noteworthy. At this point, it is striking that although the author refers to *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsir*, which he composed prior to *al-Taysir fī al-tafsir*, he makes no explicit reference whatsoever to a tafsir entitled *al-Akmal*, which is later attributed to him. Nevertheless, certain statements in *al-Taysir* continue to raise questions in this regard. The most significant piece of evidence is embedded in al-Nasafi's explanation of the term *al-ityān* (الإتيان) in verse 23 of Sūrat al-Baqara. While elucidating this term, he says: “*al-ityān in the Qur'an has forty meanings. We enumerated them in our first and more extensive tafsir*” (وَالْإِيتْيَانُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ لِأَرْبَعِينَ مَعْنَى عَدَدْنَاهَا فِي تَفْسِيرِنَا الْأَوَّلِ الْأَطْوَلِ).⁴⁰ This remark lies at the heart of the ongoing debate, as it suggests the existence of an earlier, more comprehensive commentary, yet does not explicitly identify it with the work later known as *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*.

In some studies within the literature, the expression *al-awwalu al-aṭwal* (الأوّل الأطول) used by al-Nasafi has been construed as the title of a distinct work, and it has been argued that this designation refers directly to the tafsir known as *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*.⁴¹ However, there exist strong indications that this interpretation is untenable. Indeed, in the Manisa manuscript—regarded as the authorial copy of *al-Taysir*—the relevant phrase is recorded as *fī tafsirinā al-awwal wa'l-aṭwal*, with the conjunction *wāw* placed between the

³⁸ Çol, *Hanefî-Mâtürîdî Tefsir Geleneğinde Ömer en-Nesefî*, 19.

³⁹ al-Nasafi, *al-Taysir*, 1/223, 414, 5/12, 153, 7/211, 9/366, 12/71, 14/120.

⁴⁰ al-Nasafi, *al-Taysir*, 1/414.

⁴¹ Aslantürk, *Ömer en-Nesefî ve Tefsirdeki Metodu*, 45; Abū Ḥafṣ Najm al-Dīn 'Umar al-Nasafi, *al-Taysir fī al-tafsir*, ed. Muhammed Coşkun (Istanbul: Turkish Manuscripts Institution Publications, 2019), 1/598-599.

two adjectives.⁴² This conjunction clearly demonstrates that both descriptors (“first” and “long”) function as adjectival qualifiers of the word *tafsīr*. Consequently, the phrase does not denote an independent book title; rather, it signifies a descriptive reference to “our first and more extensive tafsīr.” The syntactic evidence provided by this construction thus indicates a characterization, not the naming of a separate work.

This grammatical proof is further corroborated by comparative analyses of the content of the works in question. Notably, in the tafsīr published under the title *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* by Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya and attributed to al-Nasafī, no trace can be found—within the context of Q. 2/23—of the forty meanings of the term *al-ityān* to which al-Nasafī explicitly refers in *al-Taysīr*.⁴³ This fact strongly reinforces the conclusion that the “first and more extensive tafsīr” mentioned by al-Nasafī in *al-Taysīr* is not identical with the work currently published as *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*. Moreover, in the course of examining numerous manuscript copies of *al-Taysīr*, we have not encountered a single instance in which the expression *al-awwalu al-aṭwal* is recorded in the form *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*. This observation further indicates that the problem does not stem from a scribal error. Rather, the evidence points to a later misinterpretation of an adjectival phrase as a book title, which subsequently gave rise to an erroneous attribution in the scholarly tradition.

In addition to all these data, the references made by al-Nasafī himself within his own works regarding the identity of his first and extensive tafsīr constitute decisive internal evidence capable of settling the debate. In *al-Taysīr*, particularly in sections where he engages in technical and terminological analyses, the author explicitly refers readers to another of his works for detailed discussions of certain concepts. For instance, he states that nearly one hundred views concerning the terms *taqwā* and *muttaqī*, as well as approximately three hundred opinions related to the concept of *ni‘ma* (divine bounty), are presented in full detail in his tafsīr entitled *Baḥr ‘ulūm al-tafsīr ‘alā naḥw rusūm al-tazkīr*.⁴⁴ These explicit cross-references -made by the author himself and accompanied by the clear mention of the title- bring the discussion to a near-conclusive point. They demonstrate with a high degree of scholarly certainty that the comprehensive work al-Nasafī composed prior to *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr* is not *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, as commonly assumed in the literature, but rather *Baḥr ‘ulūm al-tafsīr*. The full substantiation of this conclusion through concrete evidence, however, is possible only by means of a comprehensive content-based analysis of *Baḥr ‘ulūm al-tafsīr* itself. From

⁴² ‘Umar al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr* (Manisa: Manisa Public Library, 45 HK 66/4), 1/83a-84b.

⁴³ al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 2/83-84.

⁴⁴ al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr*, 1/223, 12/71; Najm al-Dīn ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Kitāb Baḥr ‘ulūm al-tafsīr* (Istanbul: Süleymaniye Library, 00087), 269b-310a.

this perspective, a thorough examination of *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr* emerges as a matter of considerable scholarly importance.

Although this work -understood to have been composed prior to *al-Taysīr*- is not mentioned in the ṭabaqāt sources, the extant manuscript copies lack the relevant passage of Q. 2/23,⁴⁵ which explains the absence of a specific record concerning the term *taqwā*.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, with regard to the concept of *nī'ma* (divine bounty), it has been possible to identify a connection between the explanation of Q. 31:20 in Sūrat Luqmān and the discussion in Sūrat al-Fātiḥa. In this context, al-Nasafī's statement in *al-Taysīr*—"There are numerous views concerning outward and inward blessings. We mentioned these extensively as three hundred different opinions in our book entitled *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr 'alā naḥw rusūm al-tazkīr*, during the explanation of the phrase *ṣīrāṭ alladhīna an'amta 'alayhim*. Here, however, we will briefly cite some of them"—together with the views he subsequently presents, corresponds closely with the explanations found in the extant copies of *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr 'alā naḥw rusūm al-tazkīr*.⁴⁷

al-Nasafī's internal references within *al-Taysīr*, coupled with rigorous content analyses, demonstrate that the work he characterizes as his 'first lengthy *tafsīr*' is not *al-Akmal al-Aṭwal* -contrary to the prevailing scholarly consensus- but is instead *Baḥru 'ulūmi't-tafsīr*.⁴⁸ Given that the evidence supporting the attribution of *Baḥru 'ulūmi't-tafsīr* to al-Nasafī rests on a far more substantial foundation, the ascription of *al-Akmal* to him is rendered academically untenable.

2.2. A Comparative Analysis of the Introductions (Muqaddimāt) of *al-Akmal al-Aṭwal* and *al-Taysīr*

The stylistic features of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, which is attributed to 'Umar al-Nasafī, together with the historical and cultural data contained in the work, provide clear and concrete indications that render its attribution to al-Nasafī untenable. When examined specifically at the level of the muqaddima, the foremost obstacles emerge from the divergence and diversity of the subjects addressed. Moreover, references to later exegetes such as al-Zamakhsharī

⁴⁵ The discovery of the missing continuation of *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr*, which has survived only in an incomplete form, would eliminate the uncertainties surrounding the work and add a new dimension to studies on al-Nasafī.

⁴⁶ al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr*, 1/223.

⁴⁷ al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr*, 12/71-75; al-Nasafī, Kitāb Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr (Süleymaniye Library, 00087), 269b-310a.

⁴⁸ For further information on *Baḥr 'ulūm al-tafsīr*, see Muhammed Şerif Kahraman, "Necmeddīn en-Nesefī'nin (ö. 537/1142) 'Baḥru 'Ulūmi't-Tefsīr' Adlı Eseri", *Uluslararası Şeyh Şa'bân-ı Velî Sempozyumu "Mâverâünnehir" Bildiri Tam Metin Kitabı*, ed. Çiğdem Gülmez and Beyza Aybüke Deveci (Kastamonu: Kastamonu University Press, 2024), 313-324.

and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, as well as citations of the Kutub al-sitta, are particularly noteworthy. In addition to these elements, the inconsistencies among the manuscripts on which the Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya edition is based, the lack of coherence in the use of sources within the text, and especially the nature and manner of the citations themselves constitute significant areas of concern. At this point, the most concrete step toward clarifying the attribution of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* ascribed to al-Nasafī is a comparative analysis of its muqaddima alongside the introduction of *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr*, whose attribution to the author is beyond dispute. Indeed, a systematic comparison of the introductory sections of the two works would be instrumental in resolving the problem of authorship that forms the core subject of the present study, as the muqaddimāt most clearly reflect an author's intellectual orientation, methodological commitments, and stylistic identity.

2.2.1. Subjects Addressed

In the introduction of *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr*, al-Nasafī begins his exposition - following a convention widely observed in the composition of tafsīr works - with *ḥamdala* (praise of God) and *ṣalwala* (invocation of blessings upon the Prophet). In this opening section, the mufassir offers a detailed account of the motivations behind composing the commentary, the value of the work, and the nature of the scholarly task he undertakes. He presents the book to the reader as a beneficial source, refined in style, accessible in expression, and rich in subtle insights, while simultaneously outlining his method of composition. Throughout the muqaddima, al-Nasafī addresses a wide range of key concepts, from the names of the Qurʾān and the distinction between tafsīr and taʾwīl to *istiʿādha* and the basmala. He provides comprehensive explanations of the meanings of the terms "Allah" and "Qurʾān." Without disregarding the debates surrounding *tafsīr bi'l-raʾy*, he adduces evidence in support of the permissibility of deriving judgments, thereby pointing to both the possibility and the nature of sound exegesis. He then turns to the etiquette of Qurʾānic recitation, offering a detailed interpretation of *istiʿādha* and the basmala, including the semantic dimensions of the words they contain, before proceeding to discuss the juristic aspects of the basmala, defending the Ḥanafī position in this regard.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr*, 1/5-18, 19-66. These subjects addressed by al-Nasafī in the introduction to *al-Taysīr* share a common ground with the introductions of figures such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035), and al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076). Abū Maṣṣūr al-Samarqandī al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, ed. Ahmed Vanlıoğlu (Istanbul: Mizan Publishing, 2005), 1/3-4; ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1971), 1/5; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿAbdallāh al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hijr, 1422/2001), 1/3-134; Abū Ishāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. ʿĀshūr (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1422/2002), 1/73-87; Abū al-

This overall framework demonstrates that the muqaddima of *al-Taysir* presents a coherent structure in both content and style, one that faithfully reflects al-Nasafi's exegetical outlook. By contrast, the introduction of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* exhibits marked differences not only in the range of topics addressed but also in the manner in which these topics are presented.

In the muqaddima of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, the tafsir is explicitly attributed to 'Umar al-Nasafi. This is followed by supplicatory formulae such as the basmala, *ḥamdala*, and *ṣalwala*. The purpose of composing the commentary and the methodological framework to be followed are stated explicitly. It is declared that the verses will be explained through recourse to lexicography, ḥadīth, grammatical analysis, variant readings, occasions of revelation, and juristic rulings. Moreover, in order to ensure scholarly reliability, it is emphasized that opinions will be ascribed to their respective proponents, ḥadīths to their transmitters, and that reports drawn from exegetes and historians will be cited only insofar as they are deemed necessary for elucidation. The introduction also records that the work was given the title *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*.⁵⁰

At this point, in comparison with the muqaddima of *al-Taysir fī al-tafsir*, the most striking feature of *al-Akmal*'s introduction is the breadth of topics brought into discussion and the systematic manner in which these topics are classified and examined under headings such as *bāb* and *faṣl*. While *al-Taysir* likewise addresses its subjects within an identifiable order, the classificatory scheme adopted in *al-Akmal* is markedly more rigid and methodical. Accordingly, the distribution of topics in the muqaddima of *al-Akmal* may be outlined as follows:

1. The superiority and merit of the Qur'ān, encouragement to learn it, and the virtue of those who recite it, listen to it, memorize it, and act in accordance with its rulings.
2. The etiquette of Qur'ānic recitation, modes of reading, recitational styles deemed reprehensible or forbidden, and the disagreements related to these matters.
3. The ethics of the Qur'ān and the people of knowledge, with warnings against ostentation and similar moral vices.
4. Matters to which the student of the Qur'ān must pay attention, and behaviors from which one must refrain in order to avoid heedlessness.
5. The science of *i'rāb al-Qur'ān*, its learning and teaching, and reports concerning the merit of reciting the Qur'ān with full grammatical inflection.
6. The science

Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Wāḥidī, *al-Tafsir al-basīṭ*, ed. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Fawzān et al. (Riyadh: Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, 1430/2009), 1/391-429; Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fī tafsir al-Qur'ān al-majīd*, ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), 1/45-49.

⁵⁰ al-Nasafi, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/73-84.

of tafsīr and reports regarding the virtue of exegetes. 7. The qualities of the Qur'ān memorizer and the characteristics of those who show enmity toward them. 8. The decorum of the Qur'ān reciter, and the reverence required during recitation and memorization. 9. The prohibition of interpreting the Qur'ān by mere personal opinion, together with the ranks and scholarly status of exegetes. 10. The explanation of the Qur'ān through the Sunnah and the reports transmitted in this regard. 11. Reports on learning the Book and the Sunnah, understanding them, and the ease of acting in accordance with the rulings of the Qur'ān. 12. The explanation and interpretation of the ḥadīth stating that “the Qur'ān was revealed in seven modes.” 13. The compilation of the Qur'ān, the process by which the codices were produced during the time of 'Uthmān, the destruction of other copies, and the Companions who memorized the Qur'ān. 14. The arrangement of the sūras and verses, their dotting and vocalization, the ḥizb and ta'shīr systems, and the numbers of verses and words. 15. The meanings of the terms sūra, verse, word, and letter. 16. The question of whether the Qur'ān contains loanwords of foreign origin. 17. The inimitability of the Qur'ān, the nature of its miraculous character, its conditions, and examples thereof. 18. The virtues of the sūras and warnings against fabricated reports transmitted in this context. 19. Refutations of unfounded claims about the Qur'ān, including the rebuttal of allegations concerning omission or addition in the 'Uthmānic codex. 20. The isti'ādha. 21. The basmala.⁵¹

When the introductions of *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr* and *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* -which is claimed to have been composed earlier- are compared in terms of their treatment of knowledge, the diversity of subjects addressed, and their principles of classification, substantial differences become apparent between the two works. Had *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* truly belonged to al-Nasafī, one would expect its muqaddima to exhibit at least a structural resemblance to that of *al-Taysīr*, whose attribution is beyond doubt. This expectation is further strengthened by the fact that al-Nasafī, in *al-Taysīr*, occasionally refers to his earlier tafsīr⁵² when refraining from extensive discussion for reasons of brevity—suggesting that an organic connection should exist between the two texts. However, it is difficult to maintain that such a connection exists in any substantive sense. Put more explicitly, although certain thematic overlaps can be identified between the introductions of *al-Taysīr* and *al-Akmal*, the pronounced structural divergences within the texts cast serious doubt on the claim that the two works are the product of the same authorial hand. Indeed, an examination of the preface of *al-Taysīr* reveals that the author does not address the subjects within such an extensive framework, nor does he employ

⁵¹ al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/73-355.

⁵² al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr*, 1/223, 12/71.

a systematic structure that aligns with the aforementioned points.

When the muqaddima of the work entitled *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* -published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya on the basis of manuscripts preserved at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya and attributed to ʿUmar al-Nasafī- is examined with due care, it becomes clear that, with the exception of the altered authorial attribution and the modified book title, the text is in fact the muqaddima of Kurtubī's celebrated tafsīr. In the introduction of al-Qurṭubī's commentary, the author is identified as "al-Shaykh, al-Faqīh, al-Imām, al-ʿĀlim, al-ʿĀmil, al-ʿAllāma, al-Muḥaddith Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr Farḥ al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Andalusī al-Qurṭubī," whereas in the introduction of *al-Akmal* this designation has been altered to "al-Shaykh, al-Imām, al-ʿAllāma, al-Muḥaddith, al-Ḥāfiẓ Najm al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī."⁵³ A similar intervention is observable in the naming of the work itself. In the passage of the muqaddima where the principle that the blessing of knowledge lies in attributing statements to their rightful authors is articulated—and where, on this basis, it is pledged that every opinion will be ascribed to its proponent and every ḥadīth to its compiler—the title of the work appears in al-Qurṭubī's text as *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān waʾl-mubayyin limā taḍammanahu min al-Sunna wa-Āy al-Furqān*. In the *al-Akmal* text, however, this title has been replaced with *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*.⁵⁴ Apart from these two modifications, all expressions, supplications, and methodological explanations in the muqaddima are virtually identical in both texts.

The root of this serious attribution problem lies in the condition of the manuscripts upon which the Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya edition is based. Yet, when the rigor of the editorial process and the gravity of the resulting picture are taken into account, it appears unlikely that these issues went unnoticed during publication. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that a deliberate choice was made in handling the text. Indeed, in the edition in question, an intensive *taḥqīq* effort is undertaken with respect to both the muqaddima and the body of the work, and the sources of transmitted opinions and reports are meticulously documented in the footnotes.⁵⁵ In a scholarly enterprise that demands such a high degree of critical scrutiny, the failure to recognize the muqaddima of *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*—one of the most famous and most frequently consulted works in the history of tafsīr—is difficult to explain in terms of accepted academic practice. That an editor

⁵³ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 1/1; al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/73.

⁵⁴ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 1/3; al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/84.

⁵⁵ For the critical edition sections in the preface of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, see al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/73-353.

could examine the lexical structure, sentence construction, citation patterns, and overall style of a text without identifying it as belonging to al-Qurṭubī is incompatible with basic standards of scholarly competence.

For this reason, it is highly probable that the problems concerning the attribution of the text were in fact detected during the editorial process conducted by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. Nevertheless, instead of addressing these findings explicitly and clarifying the matter, the attribution of the work to ʿUmar al-Nasafī was maintained—whether due to academic negligence or other motivating factors. Moreover, editorial choices such as erasing the title *al-Jāmiʿ* within the text and replacing it with *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* demonstrate that the issue cannot be explained away as a simple scribal error. Such interventions point rather to deliberate redirection or conscious disregard. At the same time, the problems surrounding the attribution of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to al-Nasafī are not limited solely to this edition by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. As has been shown throughout this study, a range of factors—including the data found in ṭabaqāt and biographical sources (particularly those based on the Egyptian manuscripts used for the edition), the assumption that an ambiguous reference in *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr* points to *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, and the uncritical perpetuation of this attribution in studies on al-Nasafī and *al-Taysīr*—necessitate a comprehensive re-examination of the issue. Within this framework, the attribution of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to al-Nasafī should be reconsidered not on the basis of isolated doubts, but through a systematic evaluation that brings together textual evidence, source usage, stylistic features, and historical context.

With the publication of the Dāruʾl-Kutubiʾl-ʿIlmiyya edition, the issue concerning the attribution of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to al-Nasafī has transcended being a mere error awaiting correction and has seemingly evolved into a deeply ingrained problem within the literature. Although objective evidence—such as references to al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī within the text, as well as stylistic and thematic discrepancies in the preface—renders such an attribution impossible, it is observed that these indicators were disregarded during the editorial process. It can be argued that this situation is driven by publishing strategies rather than academic concerns. Indeed, associating the name of a central authority like al-Nasafī with such a voluminous work can be viewed as a pragmatic choice aimed at enhancing the scholarly circulation and commercial value of the publication. Consequently, the desire to avoid the institutional and financial burdens of rectifying a long-standing error, combined with the strategy of capitalizing on the author's historical charisma, appears to have resulted in the marginalization of scientific data regarding the work's true authorship. Alongside all these considerations, no definitive conclusion has been reached as to who first initiated this misattribution of the work to al-Nasafī.

2.2.2. References to al-Zamakhsharī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

al-Aṭwal are examined within the framework of the attribution problem, the presence of elements incompatible with the scholarly tradition of the Transoxanian (Mā warā' al-nahr) milieu in which al-Nasafī lived -and with the methodology that the author himself clearly articulated in *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr*- becomes readily apparent. A significant portion of the references found in *al-Akmal* relies on a body of literature that either postdates al-Nasafī's lifetime or does not accord with his established exegetical style. This circumstance constitutes one of the most serious internal inconsistencies undermining the attribution of the work to al-Nasafī. In this respect, the strongest piece of evidence enabling us to articulate the attribution problem in unequivocal terms -on the basis of historical and chronological data- is the pervasive presence throughout the text of references to figures such as al-Zamakhsharī⁵⁶ (d. 538/1144) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī⁵⁷ (d. 606/1210), to whom al-Nasafī could not have referred. In other words, one of the most striking features of *al-Akmal* is the extent to which it appears to have been constructed through intensive engagement with influential later tafsīr works such as al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* and al-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. Such reliance, however, stands in clear contradiction with both al-Nasafī's biography and the established chronology of his writings —particularly with the dating of *al-Taysīr*, which is known with certainty to have been composed after his first tafsīr— thereby further reinforcing the conclusion that *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* cannot be attributed to al-Nasafī.

Although the fact that al-Nasafī and al-Zamakhsharī were contemporaneous mufasssirs might, in theory, suggest the possibility of intellectual interaction, this assumption largely loses its plausibility when the respective dates of composition of *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr* and *al-Kashshāf* are considered together. It is well established that *al-Taysīr* -whose attribution to al-Nasafī is beyond dispute- was completed in AH 523.⁵⁸ By contrast, al-Zamakhsharī composed *al-Kashshāf* three years later, in AH 526.⁵⁹ This chronological datum clearly demonstrates that *al-Kashshāf* had not yet been authored at the time al-Nasafī wrote *al-Taysīr*. Consequently, the notion that al-Nasafī -after completing his first and comprehensive tafsīr- could have made extensive and foundational use of a work that emerged only subsequently, namely *al-Kashshāf*, in another tafsīr attributed to him under the title *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, is incompatible with the basic logic of the process of authorship. This

⁵⁶ al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/442, 2/795, 9/101, 15/30-32.

⁵⁷ al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 2/817, 9/104.

⁵⁸ al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr*, 15/558; Çol, *Hanefî-Mâtürîdî Tefsîr Geleneğinde Ömer en-Nesefî*, 52.

⁵⁹ Ali Özek, "el-Keşşâf", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Publications, 2002), 25/329.

circumstance reveals that the references to al-Zamakhsharî found in *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* constitute one of the concrete indicators that render the work's attribution to al-Nasafî seriously problematic.

The same chronological inconsistency appears in an even clearer and indisputable manner with regard to the references to al-Râzî in *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*. Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî, who lived nearly a century after al-Nasafî, carried out his exegetical activity in the final period of his life and composed *Mafâtîḥ al-Ghayb* between AH 592 and 606.⁶⁰ By contrast, it is known that al-Nasafî died in AH 537. It is therefore chronologically impossible for al-Nasafî to have used as a source -or to have drawn directly or indirectly upon- a work whose composition began approximately seventy years after his death.

Accordingly, the references to al-Râzî identified in *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* do not represent a mere anachronism; rather, they constitute definitive and objective evidence that makes the attribution of the work to al-Nasafî impossible. This situation demonstrates, with no room for alternative interpretation, that the tafsîr in question does not belong to al-Nasafî. Rather, it was composed in a post-Râzî period by a later author thoroughly conversant with the exegetical traditions of *al-Kashshāf* and *Mafâtîḥ al-ghayb*.

2.2.3. References to the Kutub al-Sitta

The introductions of *al-Taysîr fî al-tafsîr* and *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* share certain similarities insofar as both employ Qur'ānic verses and transmitted reports, and both address historical themes commonly expected in tafsîr prefaces. Nevertheless, *al-Akmal* diverges markedly from *al-Taysîr* in its pronounced sensitivity to source attribution: it accords extensive and systematic prominence to Kutub al-sitta texts, foregrounds transmitters associated with the Ahl al-Ḥadîth,⁶¹ and subjects these reports to takhrîj and evaluations of authenticity in accordance with ḥadîth methodological criteria.⁶² In this respect, *al-Akmal* acquires a distinctive profile absent from *al-Taysîr*. Accordingly, when the muqaddima of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* is examined on the basis of the Dâr al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya edition -prepared from the manuscripts preserved at Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya and al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya- the density and regularity of references to the Kutub al-sitta become particularly conspicuous. At first glance, this pattern suggests that *al-Akmal* adopts a clearly defined approach to ḥadîth usage and applies it consistently.⁶³

However, this appearance assumes a different significance when juxtaposed

⁶⁰ Hatice Avcı, *Râzî Tefsirini Kültürel Antropolojik Okuma -Fâtîha ve Bakara Sûreleri Örneği-* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2020), 51.

⁶¹ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/79, 80, 89, 90, 95, 96, 100, 102.

⁶² al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/98, 100, 109, 136, 139.

⁶³ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/76, 79, 89.

with *al-Taysir*, whose attribution to al-Nasafî is beyond dispute. Although *al-Akmal*'s introduction explicitly emphasizes that opinions will be ascribed to their proponents and that ḥadīths will be attributed to their respective compilers⁶⁴ -and although this principle is largely observed in practice-comparison with *al-Taysir* reveals a clear inconsistency. Put more plainly, *al-Taysir* does not employ such a reference system. This discrepancy points to significant problems in terms of historical context and patterns of source usage.

This tension cannot be reduced to a mere technical difference between two texts. Rather, when the period in which al-Nasafî lived and the Transoxanian (Mā warā` al-nahr) Ḥanafî-Mâtūrîdî scholarly milieu to which he belonged are taken into account, it becomes evident that the Kutub al-sitta -centered and Ahl al-Ḥadīth- oriented reference system observed in *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* is historically incongruent. During that period, the systematic classification of reports according to the works of al-Bukhārî, Muslim, and the other compilers of the Kutub al-sitta, and the construction of citations on that basis, had not yet become an established method within Ḥanafî tafsîr and ḥadīth literature. Such an approach to transmitted reports crystallized more clearly at a later stage among Ḥanafî traditionists and attained an institutional character particularly in the Mamlūk period, with the emergence of Ḥanafî scholars who explicitly adopted Kutub al-sitta-centered ḥadīth usage.⁶⁵

As a mufassir affiliated with the Transoxanian (Mā warā` al-nahr) Ḥanafî tradition, al-Nasafî does not adopt in *al-Taysir fî al-tafsîr* a methodology centered on the classificatory principles of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth-oriented ḥadīth corpora. Rather, he adheres to the established mode of transmitting reports that had become customary within the tafsîr writing tradition. In this context, while composing *al-Taysir*, al-Nasafî takes earlier foundational exegetes such as Taberî and Sa`lebî as primary points of reference, presenting transmitted materials not through direct citation of ḥadīth collections, but within the continuous stream of reports as preserved in the tafsîr literature.⁶⁶ By contrast, the reference system observed in *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* -which is based on direct recourse to major ḥadīth sources such as the Kutub al-sitta - is incompatible with al-Nasafî's well-known exegetical methodology.⁶⁷ Had *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* genuinely belonged to al-Nasafî, one would expect this

⁶⁴ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/83-84.

⁶⁵ Yasir Beyatlı, "Hanefî Mezhebinin Tarihî Seyrinde Bir Merhale: Memlûk Hanefîliği," in *Memlûkler Döneminde İlim Geleneği (13.-14. Yüzyıllar)*, ed. Halil İbrahim Hañcabay et al. (Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, 2023), 163; Çol, *Hanefî-Mâtürîdî Tefsir Geleneğinde Ömer en-Neseî*, 26, 74-75, 241.

⁶⁶ Çol, *Hanefî-Mâtürîdî Tefsir Geleneğinde Ömer en-Neseî*, 40-47.

⁶⁷ al-Nasafî, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/79, 80, 89, 90, 95, 96, 100, 102.

approach to have been maintained, at least in some form, in *al-Taysīr*, which represents a later and methodologically more mature phase of his scholarly production. However, the fact that *al-Taysīr*—widely regarded as al-Nasafī’s mature work—deliberately avoids such a ḥadīth reference system clearly indicates that the pattern of source usage adopted in *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* cannot be attributed to al-Nasafī.

The in-depth analyses conducted above, focusing specifically on the muqaddima in relation to the question of attribution, demonstrate on the basis of concrete evidence that this text cannot be ascribed to ‘Umar al-Nasafī. This conclusion, in turn, renders the issue of identifying the work’s actual author all the more significant. It should first be noted that no information has been found as to who attributed this tafsīr to al-Nasafī, for what reasons, or with what intentions. Nevertheless, it has become apparent that the tafsīr in question is not the product of a single authorial hand.

Accordingly, while the introductory sections of the work largely parallel Kurtubī’s *al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*,⁶⁸ a substantial portion of the text appears to be a synopsis of Fahreddin er-Rāzī’s *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. Put differently, much of *al-Akmal* effectively constitutes an abridgment (*mukhtaṣar*) of al-Rāzī’s tafsīr, making it highly plausible that the work belongs to an exegete who directly summarized al-Rāzī’s commentary.⁶⁹ In the final sections of the text, however, a verbatim correspondence with *al-Taysīr* is observed,⁷⁰ further reinforcing the conclusion that *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* is a composite work formed through layered accretions rather than a unified tafsīr authored by al-Nasafī.

Conclusion

This study has addressed the question of the attribution of the tafsīr entitled *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to ‘Umar al-Nasafī through a multi-dimensional approach grounded in manuscript description, content analysis, and comparative reading. The evidence obtained demonstrates conclusively that the work does not correspond—in terms of language, style, or methodology—to *al-Taysīr fī al-tafsīr*, al-Nasafī’s magnum opus, nor to his other known writings. In particular, the internal textual criticism conducted on the structure of the work reveals that *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* is not an original composition by a single

⁶⁸ al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 1/1-246; al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 1/73-296.

⁶⁹ There is a profound correlation between *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* and the tafsīr titled *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* by al-Rāzī, whose authorship is undisputed. However, due to the constraints necessitated by the scope of this research, a detailed analysis of this relationship will not be conducted. For an exemplary usage, see al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 16/187-190; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. al-Ḥasan al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb: al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Beirut: Dāru Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1420), 29/460-461.

⁷⁰ al-Nasafī, *al-Akmal al-aṭwal*, 17/459.

author, but rather exhibits a composite character. The verbatim borrowings from al-Qurtubî's tafsîr in the introductory sections and the abridged use of al-Râzî's text in subsequent parts constitute decisive proof that attributing this compilation to al-Nasafî is untenable. Conversely, by confirming the existence of an independent work entitled *Baħr 'ulūm al-tafsîr*, whose presence is indicated in *al-Taysîr* but has remained marginal in the literature, the study corrects prevailing perceptions regarding the Nasafian corpus.

The findings further indicate that the roots of the attribution problem lie in a bibliographical misjudgment compounded by an academic shortcoming. The issue originated with the erroneous cataloguing of a manuscript in Cairo and the misinterpretation of the phrase *al-awwalu al-aṭwal* in *al-Taysîr*. This initial mistake, however, was perpetuated without critical scrutiny in Egypt-based academic studies, in ṭabaqāt and bibliographical works, and most notably in the 2024 edition, where no comparison with *al-Taysîr* was undertaken—ultimately giving rise to a widely disseminated error.

In conclusion, the doubts concerning the attribution of *al-Akmal al-aṭwal* to 'Umar al-Nasafî have been superseded by a definitive conviction that the work does not belong to him. Although it remains undetermined who first initiated this chain of errors, it has become clear that utilizing this work as an independent and original authority in the field of tafsîr is incompatible with scholarly criteria due to its compilatory nature. The work can only be evaluated as data within the context of textual history research and literary criticism. Therefore, it is essential for both researchers working on this text and historians of tafsîr to take into account this problem of authorship, noting that the work is a compilation assembled from various commentaries and has been misattributed to the wrong individual. Observing this distinction will significantly enhance the scientific accuracy of the findings and the reliability of evaluations regarding the history of tafsîr.

Consequently, further studies on *al-Akmal al-Aṭwal* ought to prioritize tracing the chronological origins of its misattribution in the literature. It is also imperative to conduct an intertextual analysis to determine whether the extensive sections abridged from Râzî were derived directly from his original work or via intermediate sources. Clarifying these issues remains essential to understanding the process by which *al-Akmal* was attributed to al-Nasafî and its subsequent integration into the exegetical tradition.

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