

Kifayat Ullah  
**Al-Kashshāf**



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Al-Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite Exegesis of the Qur'ān

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To Kahkashan



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## Preface

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# Introduction

Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī is one of the last widely known and outstanding Ḥanafī Mu‘tazilite scholars who made important contributions in the fields of Qur’ānic exegesis, traditions, theology, jurisprudence, grammar, lexicography and literature. Mu‘tazilism continued to thrive in Khwārazm, at least until the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century, while in the rest of the Muslim world it had already declined.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī was born in 467/1075 at Zamakhshar in Khwārazm, and died in 538/1144 in Jurjāniyya, where he was buried. Al-Zamakhsharī travelled for purposes of education and visited Mecca twice and stayed there for a period of approximately twelve years. His first visit took place sometime between 500/1106 and 518/1124, and his second visit was in 526/1131 when he stayed for seven years, hence he was given the honorific title of *Jār Allāh* (Neighbor of God).

The biographical dictionaries mention that al-Zamakhsharī acquired his education from approximately eleven scholars, and studied exegesis, traditions, theology, jurisprudence, grammar, lexicography, and literature. These sources also identify about twenty-six of his students. In most of the cases they mention what students studied with or transmitted from al-Zamakhsharī, but in some cases information regarding their fields of study is not available. His command over Arabic was superb, and unparalleled. He was an outstanding scholar of his time who excelled in many sciences. He composed approximately fifty works during his lifetime.

In the year 512/1118 al-Zamakhsharī suffered a serious illness (*nāhika*) and warning (*mundhira*).<sup>2</sup> He made a covenant with God that if he were cured from the illness he would lead the life of guidance (*al-hudā*), desist from the desires (*al-hawā*) and devote his lifetime in pursuit of the readings of the Qur’ān, the tradition and jurisprudence.<sup>3</sup>

Primarily, al-Zamakhsharī’s fame rests upon the Qur’ān commentary of *al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq al-tanzīl wa ‘uyūn al-ghawāmiḍ fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*, which he began to write upon his arrival in Mecca in 526/1132, and completed in 528/1134. Al-Zamakhsharī’s commentary contains a quintessence of Mu‘tazilite

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1 W. Madelung, The Theology of al-Zamakhsharī,” *Actas del XII Congreso de la U.E.A.I. (Malaga, 1984)* (Madrid: Union Europeenne d’Arabisants et d’Islamisants, 1986), 485; W. Madelung, “The Spread of Maturidism and the Turks,” in *Actas IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos Coimbra-Lisboa* 1968 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 116.

2 Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Maqāmāt* (Miṣr: Maṭba‘a al-Tawfīq, 1906), 5.

3 Al-Zamakhsharī, *Maqāmāt*, 6–7.

doctrine which was adopted from the earlier Mu'tazilite exegetes; however, frequently he presented his own views. He mentions the views of both the schools – Baṣra and Baghdād, but does not associate himself to any one of them. He was familiar with the Mu'tazilite theology of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) and also studied the doctrine of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) which is evident in his Mu'tazilite creed *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*.<sup>4</sup>

Wilferd Madelung describes that, "For the Mu'tazilites, *al-Kashshāf* represents the peak of intellectual achievement in Qur'ān commentary."<sup>5</sup> According to Andrew Rippin, "The distinctiveness of al-Zamakhsharī's Qur'ān commentary lies in his Mu'tazilī theological leanings...The Mu'tazilī doctrines of the unity and justice of God and the consequent ideas of the human free will and the need to deanthropomorphize the Qur'ān become the prime themes of the distinctive passages of interpretation."<sup>6</sup>

Since its inception, *al-Kashshāf* has been subject to both explication and orthodox Sunnī criticism which centered on the basic principles of the Mu'tazilite theology. Those who have denounced and criticized *al-Kashshāf* include leading scholars of Sunnī orthodoxy. Yet, at the same time, al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* was cited, adopted, and commented upon by the orthodox community and there are an almost endless number of glosses, superglosses, and supercommentaries on it. The work by al-Bayḍāwī (d. ca 685/1286), *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* is the most famous attempt to distill the essence of al-Zamakhsharī's work while attempting to omit those views considered reprehensible to Sunnī orthodoxy. Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284) in his *Kitāb al-Intiṣāf min al-Kashshāf* refuted al-Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite interpretations. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) in his *Tafsīr al-kabīr*, Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344) in his *Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) in his *Muqaddima* and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) all criticized al-Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite views.<sup>7</sup>

Modern scholarship on al-Zamakhsharī is divided on the extent to which his *tafsīr* expresses Mu'tazilite doctrine and approach. One study by Lupti Ibrahim compares the significance of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī in Muslim theology and examines their works *al-Kashshāf* and *Anwār al-tanzīl* which represent the views of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites respectively. His study concludes that al-Zamakhsharī as a Mu'tazilite gives priority to reason over revelation,

<sup>4</sup> W. Madelung, "al-Zamakhsharī," *EI<sup>2</sup> Supplement*, 12:840 – 41.

<sup>5</sup> Madelung, *Theology of al-Zamakhsharī*, 485.

<sup>6</sup> Rippin, "al-Zamakhsharī," *ER*, 16:554.

<sup>7</sup> Madelung, *Theology of al-Zamakhsharī*, 485.

whereas, al-Bayḍāwī as an Ashʿarite maintains that revelation has priority over reason.”<sup>8</sup>

Another study written by Fazlur Rahman, within the framework of the Muʿtazilites’ five principles, examines al-Zamakhsharī’s various techniques to substantiate his Muʿtazilite views, such as rational orientation, variant readings of the Qurʾān, support from the Prophetic traditions, usage of similitudes and parables, extension of certain words’ meanings and syntactical methods. He concludes that al-Zamakhsharī’s unshakable conviction in the Muʿtazilite theology is reflected in his tafsīr of *al-Kashshāf*.<sup>9</sup>

Michael Schub states that according to Henri Fleisch, al-Zamakhsharī’s concise grammatical magnum opus *al-Mufaṣṣal* deals with almost all of the topics included in Sibawayh’s *Kitāb*.<sup>10</sup> Schub’s main thesis is that al-Zamakhsharī significantly and extensively treats these topics covered in *al-Mufaṣṣal* in his commentary of *al-Kashshāf*. Al-Zamakhsharī is an excellent linguist who examines the Qurʾānic text in the light of relevant context and he evaluates various possible readings, or attempts a diachronic explanation. He is an innovative and critical analyst of textual material and does not hesitate to break with the accepted grammatical wisdom of his time. He concludes that al-Zamakhsharī provides many extra-linguistic bits of information which are potentially very illuminating. He is especially insightful in analyzing the syntactic problems. Although al-Zamakhsharī tends to look at verses of the Qurʾān bearing on theological issues through the Muʿtazilite perspective, his view of those verses containing grammatical problems is, generally speaking, scientific in that it is unbiased as to meaning.<sup>11</sup>

Andrew Lane argues in his study that “while al-Zamakhsharī may be well known for his ‘Muʿtazilite’ commentary on the Qurʾān, exegesis in general and Muʿtazilism in particular are hardly representative of his literary output... al-Zamakhsharī was neither a theologian nor even a religious scholar in the more limited sense of the word.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Lupti Ibrahim, *The Theological Questions at Issue between al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī with special reference to al-Kashshāf and Anwār al-tanzīl*. Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1977), v.

<sup>9</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Zamakhsharī kī tafsīr al-Kashshāf: ek taḥlīlī jāʾiza* (ʿAligarh: ʿAligarh Muslim University, 1982), 482–88.

<sup>10</sup> Henri Fleisch, *Traité de philologie arabe* (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1990), 1:40.

<sup>11</sup> Michael B. Schub, *Linguistic Topics in al-Zamakhsharī’s Commentary on the Qurʾān*. Ph.D. Dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 1–34.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew J. Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 46.

My book is divided into two parts. The first part, which consists of three chapters, deals with al-Zamakhsharī's biography, al-Kashshāf, and al-Zamakhsharī's methodology of *tafsīr*. The first chapter is devoted to the biography of al-Zamakhsharī, which provides information about his early life, education, teachers from whom he received his education and the fields of studies, his students, the works composed by him, his travels and visits to Mecca, and his intellectual crisis.

The second chapter deals with the transmission of *al-Kashshāf* after its completion, and its manuscripts. According to Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. 'Īsā b. Muṭayr al-Yamanī, Abū al-Ma'ālī Yaḥyā b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī al-Shaybānī, a *qāḍī* in Mecca, transmitted *al-Kashshāf* from al-Zamakhsharī to his nephew Abū al-Ma'ālī Mājid b. Sulaymān b. al-Fihri (d. 655/1257), who then transmitted it to others.<sup>13</sup>

The earliest manuscript was copied only four years after al-Zamakhsharī's death and fourteen years after he had finished the commentary in Mecca. *Al-Fihris al-shāmil* mentions 843 manuscripts, out of which 443 bear the date or century in which they were copied and they are available in various libraries and museums of the world.<sup>14</sup> Out of 443 dated manuscripts, Lane has analyzed 250 manuscripts most of which are in Istanbul. No other book in the history of *tafsīr* has been commented upon in the forms of *sharḥs*, *ḥāshiyas*, and *mukhtaṣars* more than *al-Kashshāf*. Ḥājji Khalifa (d. 1067/1657) in his *Kashf al-zūnūn* lists approximately fifty commentaries.<sup>15</sup> *Al-Fihris al-shāmil* mentions seventy-three *sharḥs*, *ḥāshiyas*, and *mukhtaṣars*.<sup>16</sup> According to Lane, more than eighty scholars have written *sharḥs*, *ḥāshiyas*, and *mukhtaṣars*. Some of these commentaries have been written by well-known scholars, while other scholars are known by the names on the manuscripts of the *sharḥs*, *ḥāshiyas*, and *mukhtaṣars* that have survived, although some works on the *Kashshāf* bear no name at all. The issue of *khalq al-Qur'ān* and scholars' opinions about *al-Kashshāf* are also discussed.

The third chapter describes al-Zamakhsharī's methodology of *tafsīr*. Despite the fact that his *tafsīr* follows the text of the Qur'ān from the beginning to the

13 Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn fī tā'rīkh al-balad al-amīn*, ed. Fu'ād Sayyid (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1967), 7:138–39.

14 *Al-Fihris al-shāmil li-l-turāth al-'Arabī al-Islāmī al-makhtūṭ: 'ulūm al-Qur'ān makhtūṭat al-tafsīr*, ed. Al-Majma' al-Malakī li-Buḥūth al-Haḍāra al-Islāmī ('Ammān: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, 1987), 2:368–510.

15 Muṣṭafā b. 'Abd Allāh Mullā Kātib al-Chelbī Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zūnūn 'an asāmi' al-kutub wa-al-funūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), 2: 1475–84.

16 *Al-Fihris al-shāmil*, 2:511–28.

end, and he uses some of the elements of a traditional Qur'ān commentary, such as “interpretation of the Qur'ān by means of the Qur'ān” (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-al-Qur'ān*), use of the *aḥādith*, and the variant readings of the Qur'ān (*qirā'āt*), his exegetical techniques differ from the standard format of traditional exegesis. The main characteristics of his *tafsīr* are: emphasis on the perspicuous (*muḥkam*) and ambiguous (*mutashābih*) verses, significance of science of expression (*‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*) and science of semantics and syntax (*‘ilm al-bayān*), question and answer format (*as’ila wa-ajwiba*), and extensive grammatical use. These components of exegesis are uniquely applied by him throughout *al-Kashshāf*.

The second part of the book consists of five chapters, and examines and analyzes al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Kashshāf*, within the context of the Mu‘tazilites’ five principles (*uṣūl al-khamsa*). Muḥammad b. Hudhayl b. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Makhūl al-‘Abdī al-‘Allāf Abū al-Hudhayl (d. 226/841) is purported to have been the first who created a reliable dogmatic framework and defined *al-uṣūl al-khamsa* “the five principles” of the Mu‘tazilites, which he developed in his *Kitāb al-Ḥujja*. He considered that these principles were indispensable for a Mu‘tazilite identity, and determined the structure of their theological works.<sup>17</sup> Later on, Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/913), and Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jubbā’ī (d. 303/915) formulated coherent theological frameworks. ‘Abd al-Salām Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī (d. 321/933) son of Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī further systematized and refined the theological doctrines. The last person, who developed independent theological views, was Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī; however, all the refinements centered within the context of the five principles of the Mu‘tazilites.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth chapter is a detailed analysis of the first fundamental principle: “the unity of God” (*al-tawḥīd*), which is the most important thesis of their doctrine and the source of the other principles. According to them, God is one and unique and He has no likeness and comparison with anyone. God is beyond time and place; He is not a body at all but only “something”, a being that cannot be perceived by the senses but is exclusively known through revelation or through reason. God is mentioned in the Qur’ān as: “There is no other like

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17 Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Mas’ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma‘ādin al-jawhar*, (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1965), 3:221–23; Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Malaṭī, *al-Tanbih wa-al-radd ‘alā ahl al-ahwā wa-al-bid’*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid b. al-Ḥasan al-Kawtharī (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1968), 38–39; Maymūn b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Baḥr al-kalām*, ed. Walī al-Dīn Muḥammad Ṣāleḥ al-Farfūr (Damascus: Maktaba Dār al-Farfūr, 2000), 227–28.

18 D. Gimaret, “Mu‘tazila,” *EF*, 7:783–93.

Him” (*laysa ka-mithlihi shay*’),<sup>19</sup> and “There is no one comparable to Him” (*walam yakun lahu kufuwan aḥad*).<sup>20</sup>

The Muʿtazilites deny God’s description anthropomorphically in any form, such as direction, place, image, body, face, hand, eye, domain, movement, extinction, change, or feeling.<sup>21</sup> They consider the anthropomorphic verses in the Qurʾān as allegorical or figurative expressions to symbolize God’s attributes and actions. They deal with such verses by the method of *taʾwīl* or metaphorical interpretation. This chapter also discusses the issues of createdness of the Qurʾān (*khalq al-Qurʾān*) and the vision of God (*ruʾyat Allāh*).

The fifth chapter offers a comprehensive study of the second principle: “God’s justice” (*al-ʿadl*). The concepts of “grace” (*lutf*), the “best” (*aṣḥaḥ*), “guidance and going astray” (*hidāya wa iqlāl*), “sealing of the hearts” (*khatm al-qulūb*) and God does not will any evil but good (*anna Allāh lā yurīd sharr bal yurīd al-khayr*) are elaborated.

The sixth chapter describes the third principle: “the promise and the threat” (*al-waʿd wa al-waʿīd*). The concept of “constraint” (*iljāʾ*) which is intended to solve the issue of the discrepancy between what God wills people to do and what they actually do; and the concept of “the nullification and the atonement” (*al-iḥbāṭ wa al-takfīr*) which is related to obedience (*tāʿa*) and disobedience (*maʿ-ṣiya*) are discussed in detail. In addition, the viewpoints of the Muʿtazilites and al-Zamakhsharī with regard to “repentance” (*tawba*), “forgiveness” (*ghufrān*), and “intercession” (*shafaʿa*) are illustrated.

The seventh chapter illustrates the fourth principle: “the position between the two positions” (*al-manzila bayna al-manzilatayn*), literally meaning or commonly referred to as “the intermediate position between belief and unbelief.” The definition of “belief” (*īmān*), classification of sins into major (*kabāʾir*) and minor (*ṣaghāʾir*) are elaborated.

The eighth chapter deals with the fifth principle: “enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong” (*al-amr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*). The three main features of this principle: consistency in the Muʿtazilites’s views, homogeneity of the principle over space and time, and activism in varying

<sup>19</sup> Qurʾān, 42:11.

<sup>20</sup> Qurʾān, 112:4.

<sup>21</sup> Sabine Schmidkte, *A Muʿtazilite Creed of az-Zamahṣharī (d. 538/1144) [al-Minhāḡ fī usūl al-dīn]* ed. and trans. (Stuttgart: Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 51/4, Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft – F. Steiner, 1997), 16–18.



degrees,<sup>22</sup> as well as the two viewpoints for its implementation are elaborated in greater detail.

Finally, I have analyzed al-Zamakhsharī's interpretations in order to see whether and in what manner he defended some or all of the five principles of the Mu'tazilite theology. I selected those verses where anthropomorphisms need clarification as well as verses that are known to be points of contention between the Mu'tazilites and Sunnī orthodoxy.

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 224–26.



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## Part I: **Al-Zamakhsharī' Life and Works**



# Chapter 1 Al-Zamakhsharī's Biography

## 1 Al-Zamakhsharī's Early Life

Biographical dictionaries provide very little information about al-Zamakhsharī's life. Jane Dammen McAuliffe describes that, "The biographical material on al-Zamakhsharī strikes very few personal notes."<sup>1</sup> In this book, the information derived from more than twenty-five biographical sources, spans a period of eight centuries from Ibn al-Anbārī's (d. 577/1181) *Nuzhat al-alibbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-udabā'* to Khayr al-Dīn Ziriklī's (d. 1395/1976) *al-A'lām. Qāmūs tarājīm li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-al-nisā' min al-'Arab wa-al-musta'ribīn wa-al-mustashriqīn*.

Al-Zamakhsharī's full name is Maḥmūd b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. 'Umar, his *kunya* (patronymic) is Abū al-Qāsim and his *alqāb* (honorific titles) are *Jār Allāh* (neighbor of God), and *Fakhr Khawārm* (Glory of Khawārm). The *nisba* al-Zamakhsharī is derived from the place Zamakhshar in Khwārazm, where he was born on Rajab 27, 467/March 18, 1075.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Muqaddasī (d. 380/990) describes that, "Zamakhshar is a small city having a fortress, a ditch, a prison, and gates braced with iron, and bridges are raised every night, and a main street that crosses through the city. The mosque is very elegant which is at the end of the market."<sup>3</sup> Al-Sam'ānī (d. 562/1167) mentions that, "Zamakhshar is one of the big villages of Khwārazm which is equivalent to a small city."<sup>4</sup> Yāqūt (d. 626/1229) quotes al-Zamakhsharī that he said,

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1 Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51.

2 Jamāl al-Dīn 'Alī b. Yūsūf al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt 'ala anbā' al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 2005), 3:268; Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āt fī ṭabaqāt al-lughawiyyīn wa-al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Isā al-Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 1965), 2:279; 'Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965), 11:97; Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā b. Khalīl Ṭashkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda wa-misbāḥ al-siyāda fī mawḍu'at al-'ulum*, ed. Kāmil Kāmil Bakrī and 'Abd al-Wahhāb Abū al-Nūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1968), 2:98.

3 Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Bannā' al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rīfat al-aqlīm* (Beirut: Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1987), 230.

4 'Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), 3:181–82; 'Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fī tahdhīb al-ansāb* (Baghdād: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1970), 2:74; Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Abū Bakr Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1968), 5:168; Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥayyī al-Laknawī, *al-Fawā'id al-bahiyya fī tarājīm al-Ḥanafīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām al-Nu'mānī (Banāras: Maktabat Nadwat

“As far as my place of birth is concerned, it is one of the unknown villages of Khwārazm.”<sup>5</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī died on Dhū al-Ḥijja 8, 538/June 12, 1144 in Jurjāniyya, where he was buried. Jurjāniyya, also known as Gurganj, capital of Khurāsān is located on the bank of the Jayhūn River. It was ranked after Kath as the second principal city, and had four gates and a large palace near the Bāb al-Ḥajjāj, on the edge of a huge market place and consisted of an outer and an inner city.<sup>6</sup>

Although of Persian origin, al-Zamakhsharī's command over Arabic was superb, and unparalleled. He was always motivated in his scholarship to serve and promote the Arabic language. He always taught his students in Arabic, and used Persian only for those who were beginners in their studies.<sup>7</sup> Arabic was, in his view, the most perfect language which God had preferred to all languages as He preferred the Qur'ān and Islam over all scripture and religions.<sup>8</sup> He was a strong opponent of the *shu'ūbiyya*, who held the view that Persians were superior to the Arabs.<sup>9</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī was lame (*a'raj*) because one of his feet had been amputated. There are five different versions, which describe how this may have happened. According to the first version, when he was a small child, he fell from a roof (*saṭḥ*) and broke his foot. It became bent and was amputated.<sup>10</sup> The second version states that while he was traveling through Khwārazm, “he got frost-bite in an extreme cold weather” (*aṣābahu thalj kathīr wa-bard shadīd*) and his foot “fell off” (*saqaṭa*).<sup>11</sup> The third version mentions that his foot was stung by an

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al-Ma'arīf, 1967), 167–68; Muḥammad Bāqir b. Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn al-Khavānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamā wa-al-sādāt*, ed. Asad Allāh (Tehrān: Maktabat Ismāʿīliyyān, 1970), 8:119.

5 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Yaʿqūb b. ʿAbd Allāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ irshād al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), 3:147.

6 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Yaʿqūb b. ʿAbd Allāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957), 2:122; B. Spuler, “Gurgandj,” *IE²*, 2:1141.

7 Darwish al-Jundī, *al-Naẓm al-Qurʾān fī Kashshāf al-Zamakhsharī* (Cairo: Dār Nahḍa Miṣr lil-Ṭabʾ wa al-Nashr, 1969), 3.

8 Madelung, “al-Zamakhsharī,” *IE² Supplement*, 12:840–41.

9 Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 2:362.

10 ʿAbd al-Salām b. Muḥammad al-Andarāsbanī, “Fī Sirat al-Zamakhsharī Jār Allāh,” ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Yāfi, *Majallat Majmaʾ al-lughā al-ʿArabiyya bi-Dimishq*, 57/3 (1402/1982), 368.

11 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, 5:169; Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Fāsi, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn fī tāʾrīkh al-balad al-amīn* ed. Fuʾād Sayyid (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1967), 7:140–41; ʿAbd al-Ḥayyī b. Aḥmad Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab* (Beirut: Maktab al-Tijārī lil-Ṭabaʾ wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʾ, 1966), 4:119; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tāʾrīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr waʾl-aʿlām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1991–2000), 36:489.

insect and later it had to be cut off due to an abscess developing on the foot.<sup>12</sup> The fourth version describes that on his way to Bukhārā; he fell from his horse and broke his foot. Afterwards, it became so painful that he had the foot removed.<sup>13</sup> Finally, when al-Zamakhsharī was visiting Baghdād, Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Dāmaghānī (d. 540/1145), the Ḥanafite jurist asked him about his foot. He replied that the cause of his foot amputation was his mother's prayer. He narrated that when he was a small child he caught a sparrow and tied its foot with a piece of thread. The sparrow managed to escape and took refuge in a wall's hole. He tried to pull the bird out of the hole but its foot severed by the thread. His mother saw the incident and said, "May God sever your foot as you severed its foot." Al-Zamakhsharī concluded that, "My mother's benediction got me this." Al-Zamakhsharī got his amputated foot replaced by a wooden one, which he used to hide by wearing a long cloak, so that people would not consider him lame.<sup>14</sup> He always carried with him an official certificate (*maḥḍar*) signed by many witnesses who knew the circumstances and facts of his foot, to avoid suspicion or doubt of the people.<sup>15</sup> The reason that he had to carry an official certificate was that it might be suspected that his foot was amputated as punishment for some crime.

## 2 Al-Zamakhsharī's Education

Al-Andarasbānī and Ṭashkubrīzāda mention that al-Zamakhsharī's father was a scholar (*imām*) in the village of Zamakhshar and he taught him the Qur'ān. His father wanted him to learn tailoring since he was handicapped. However, al-Zamakhsharī requested that he send him to Jurjāniyya for more education, to which he agreed. He studied and acquired knowledge from a number of scholars (*asātidha*, *shuyūkh*, *masahā'ikh*). In Jurjāniyya, the brother of Abū al-Faṭḥ b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥarith al-Bayyā'ī saw his good handwriting and employed him as his secretary.<sup>16</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī travelled to Bukhārā when he reached the age to acquire further knowledge, he continued studies outside of his village.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya*, 2:280.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt*, 3:268.

<sup>14</sup> Ṭashkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, 2:99; al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt*, 3:268; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 5:169–70; al-Fāsī, *ʿIqd al-thamīn*, 7:140–1; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 4:119.

<sup>15</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, 6:2688; al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt*, 3: 268; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 5:169; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 4:119.

<sup>16</sup> According to George Makdisi, "For the *madrassa* in eleventh-century Baghdād exercised an undeniably strong attraction, especially on those who had not the means for the leisure of

### 3 Al-Zamakhsharī's Teachers

All the biographical dictionaries and *ṭabaqāt* works mention that al-Zamakhsharī acquired his education from a number of scholars. However, most of the information available about these scholars is scanty. There are approximately eleven names which have been mentioned in the sources who were his teachers. Sometimes, information is available about the area of studies in which they were specialized, while in other cases it is not mentioned at all.

According to al-Andarabānī, al-Zamakhsharī, when he was already a famous authority on the Qur'ān exegesis, became associated with two prominent theologians of Khwārazm – Abū Manṣūr<sup>18</sup> and Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. al-Malāḥimī al-Uṣūlī (d. 536/1141), who was known as *farīd al-ʿaṣr* (unique in his time) in the field of theology. Al-Zamakhsharī studied theology with him. Besides being al-Zamakhsharī's teacher, Ibn al-Malāḥimī was also his student and studied with him exegesis.<sup>19</sup> The evidence of al-Zamakhsharī's close relationship with Ibn al-Malāḥimī is supported by the elegiac verses composed by him on the occasion of the latter's death.<sup>20</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī wrote a brief summary of his theological opinions entitled *Kitāb al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*. In his Mu'tazilite creed, he was largely influenced by the doctrine of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, which is supported by the text. Throughout the book, he usually refrains from expressing his own preference

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study. To devote oneself to study meant to sacrifice the opportunity of monetary gain from plying a trade or profession. Prior to the big *madrasas*, both needy professors and needy students had to gain their livelihood outside the field of education. The professor had to hire himself out as copyist for wages. Those with a handsome handwriting gained large sums of money as copyists. This profession was not by any means left to the very greatest calligraphers, such as the Ibn Muqlas and the Ibn al-Bauwābs; others, whose primary interest was elsewhere, but who had a certain talent for calligraphy, could at times gain enough to become rich. But the great majority could only eke out a living with this time-consuming job which, however, had the advantage of keeping them close to their primary interest in helping them to learn their texts," George Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24 (1961), 52.

17 Al-Andarabānī, *Sīrat al-Zamakhsharī*, 368; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 5:170; Ṭashkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, 2:100.

18 Al-Andarabānī mentions his name Imām Abū Manṣūr and "the Shaykh Abū Manṣūr master of theology and preacher of the people of the Khwārazm" (*al-Shaykh Abū Manṣūr ṣāhib al-uṣūl wa wā'iz ahl al-Khwārazm*). It seems that he is most likely the Shaykh al-Islām Abū Manṣūr Naṣr al-Ḥārithī, one of al-Zamakhsharī's teachers mentioned by his nephew. See al-Andarabānī, *Sīrat al-Zamakhsharī*, 368, 379; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, 6:2688.

19 Al-Andarabānī, *Sīrat al-Zamakhsharī*, 368, 379, 382; Ṭashkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda* 2:100.

20 Al-Andarabānī, *Sīrat al-Zamakhsharī*, 382.



with regard to the conflicting views of various schools on a question without ever entering the controversies. However, at some places when he indicates his opinion, it seems that he is in agreement with the views of Ibn al-Malāḥimī. The theologians most of the time mentioned by names are Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī and Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī – “the two *shaykhs*” (*al-shaykhān*), and Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār is referred to only once. Madelung states that,

Al-Zamakhsharī's attitude to the Mu'tazila and their schools thus seems well consistent with what is known of his career. He had most likely been a Mu'tazili from his youth. Then he was attracted by the teaching of al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī, representative of the Bahash-miyya, perhaps in particular because of al-Ḥākim's authority in Qur'ān exegesis. He probably visited Jishum, though apparently after al-Ḥākim's death, and received his works from a student of his. Later he became closely associated with Ibn al-Malāḥimī, the Kawāzamiān renewer of the doctrine of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. He was clearly impressed and influenced by his teaching. Yet he did not identify himself with it. In his theological compendium he rather lent support to a broadly based, catholic Mu'tazilism.<sup>21</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī studied *ḥadīth* with Abū al-Khaṭṭāb Naṣr b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Baṭīr al-Baghdādī (d. 494/1101), Abū Maṣṣūr Naṣr al-Ḥārithī, known as the *Shaykh al-Islām*,<sup>22</sup> and Abū Sa'd al-Shaqqānī or al-Shiqqānī who was a scholar. Biographical dictionaries do not provide much information about him.<sup>23</sup> Ibn al-Baṭīr was a famous *muhaddith*, and transmitted *aḥādīth* from Abū Muḥammad b. al-Bay', 'Umar b. Aḥmad al-'Ubkarī, Abū al-Ḥusayn b. Bishrān, Abū al-Ḥusayn b. Rizqwiyya, and Abū Bakr al-Munaqqī. Al-Zamakhsharī studied *ḥadīth* with him in Baghdād and transmitted from him.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Madelung, *Theology of al-Zamakhsharī*, 492–93.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Khallikān states that al-Zamakhsharī studied literature with al-Ḥārithī, while other sources mention that he studied *ḥadīth* with him. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, 6:2688; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 4:254; al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya*, 2:279; Ḥāfiẓ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1994), 2:315; Tāshkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, 2:98; al-Khavānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 8:119.

<sup>23</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, 6:2688; al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya*, 2:79; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 2:315; Tāshkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, 2:98; al-Khavānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 8:119.

<sup>24</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 4:192; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *al-'Ibar fī khabar man 'abar* ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munjid (Kuwait: Maṭba'at Ḥukūmat al-Kuwait, 1960–66), 4:106; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar al-a'lām al-nubalā*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt and Ibrāhīm al-Zaybaq (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1981–96), 19:46–48, 20:152; 'Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma'ārīf, 1966), 12:161; al-Fāsi, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* 7:138; Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ed. A. Meursinge (Leiden and Tehran: Arabic and Persian Text Series, 1839 and 1960), 41; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 2:315; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadhrāt al-dhahab*, 4:118.

Al-Andarasbānī mentions that al-Zamakhsharī and one of his students Abū al-Mu'ayyad al-Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Makkī revived the *ḥadīths* in Khwārazm. He states that,

He [al-Zamakhsharī] was the first to revive the science of Tradition (*ʿilm al-ḥadīth*) in Khwārazm and to make it flourish there. He brought the books of the Traditions from Iraq and “urged the people” (*hathth al-nās*) to study it. This science was spread out by him and after him by Akḥṭab al-khuṭabā’ (Abū al-Mu'ayyad al-Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Makkī).<sup>25</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī wrote four works on *ḥadīth*: *al-Fāʿiq fī gharīb al-ḥadīth*, *Mukhtaṣar al-Muwāfaqāt bayna ahl al-bayt wa al-ṣaḥāba*, *Mutashābih asmā’ al-ruwāt* and *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-ʿashara al-kirām al-barara*.

Abū Muḍar Maḥmūd b. Jarīr al-Ḍabbī al-Isfahānī (d. 507/1114) was actively responsible for introducing and spreading of Muʿtazilism throughout Khwārazm.<sup>26</sup> He was known as *farīd al-ʿaṣr* (unique in his time) and *waḥīd al-dahr* (incomparable in his era), a great scholar in the fields of lexicography, grammar, and medicine and an exemplary character in his virtues and moral excellence. He lived in Khwārazm for a long time and many people obtained and benefited from his knowledge and high moral standards. Al-Zamakhsharī was among those who not only studied literature, grammar, and lexicography with him, but also followed his school of thought.<sup>27</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī wrote fourteen titles on literature.

Al-Zamakhsharī studied grammar with ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭalḥa al-Yāburī (d. 518/1124) who was born in Yābur and stayed for sometime in Seville (*Ishbiliya*). He was a grammarian, theologian (*uṣūlī*), and jurist (*faqīh*). His important works

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<sup>25</sup> Abū al-Mu'ayyad al-Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Makkī was al-Zamakhsharī's favorite student and in the year 550/1155 he wrote a commentary on al-Zamakhsharī's *Unmūdḥaj* entitled *Kifāyat al-naḥw*. See al-Andarasbānī, *Sirat al-Zamakhsharī*, 379; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur Supplement*, (Leiden: Brill, 1936–1942), 1:285, 513, 549, 623; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, (Leiden: Brill, 1937–1942), 1:350.

<sup>26</sup> Ibrahim, *Theological Questions*, 4; Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī, *Al-Zamakhsharī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1966), 48; Murtaḍa Āyat Allāh Zāda al-Shirāzī, *al-Zamakhsharī lughwīyyan wa-mufasssiran* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1977), 96.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Andarasbānī, *Sirat al-Zamakhsharī*, 368; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, 6:2687; al-Qifṭī, *Inbāḥ al-ruwāt*, 3:267; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, 5:168, 172; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, 36:489; Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar b. al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Wardī, *Tārīkh ibn al-Wardī* (Najaf: Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1969), 2:63; Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Muḥāsīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghribardī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa al-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, 2005), 5:274; al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya* 2:276; al-Dāwūdī, *Tabaqāt al-mufasssirin* 2:315; Ṭāshkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda*, 2:100; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadhrāt al-dhahab*, 4:119; al-Khavānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 8:119.

are *al-Mudkhal sharḥ Risāla ibn abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī*, *Sayf al-Islām ‘alā madhhab Mālik*, and *al-Radd ‘alā ibn Ḥazm*. Al-Fāsī states that al-Zamakhsharī traveled from Khawārazm to Mecca to study grammar with him. However, according to al-Suyūṭī, while in Mecca, al-Zamakhsharī studied *Kitāb Sibawayhi* with ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭalḥa al-Yāburī.<sup>28</sup> He also studied grammar with Abū Muḍar al-Ḍabbī.

Al-Zamakhsharī studied lexicography with Abū Maṣṣūr Mawḥūb b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Khiḍr al-Jawālīqī (d. 539/1144) and Abū Muḍar al-Ḍabbī. Abū Maṣṣūr b. al-Jawālīqī was a great scholar in a variety of sciences, and an associate of al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī. He taught philology at the Nizāmiyya after al-Tibrīzī. He learned *ḥadīth* from Abū al-Qāsim b. al-Baṣrī and Abū Ṭāhir b. Abū al-Saqr, and al-Kindī and Ibn Jawzī transmitted from him. He was trustworthy, pious, virtuous, and profoundly intelligent. He was prudent in his answers to questions and admired for his beautiful calligraphy. He had enormous knowledge in lexicography and grammar. Al-‘Imād al-Khaṭīb narrated that, “At that time, there were four grammarians in Baghdād: al-Jawālīqī, Ibn al-Shajarī, Ibn al-Khashshāb, and Ibn al-Dahhān.”<sup>29</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī studied lexicography with him. Al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248) mentions that Abū al-Yumn Zayd b. Ḥasan al-Kindī (d. 613/1217), one of Jawālīqī’s students, reported that al-Zamakhsharī “came to us in Baghdād in 533/1138, and I saw him with Jawālīqī twice – first time, studying books on lexicography, and second time, seeking *ijāza* (license) for them, because prior to that, he had neither visited him nor transmitted from him.”<sup>30</sup>

In the fields of grammar and lexicography he penned eight and five works respectively. However, no one is mentioned specifically as al-Zamakhsharī’s teacher in exegesis.

Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Muzaḥḥar al-Naysābūrī (d. 442/1051) was a man of letters, poet, writer, and teacher of the people of Khawārazm in his time. Yāqūt, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), al-Dāwūdī (d. 945/1538), Ṭāshkubrīzāda (d. 968/1561) and al-Khavānsārī (d. 1313/1895) mention that al-Zamakhsharī studied literature (*adab*) with him. Yāqūt even states that he was al-Zamakhsharī’s teacher before Abū Muḍar.

It seems that there is confusion in the name of Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Muzaḥḥar al-Naysābūrī and it cannot be established conclusively that he taught al-

<sup>28</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn*, 7:138; al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya*, 2:46; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Maḥarrī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghusn al-raṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1968), 2:648–49; al-Khavānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 8:126; ‘Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Mu’jam al-mu’allifīn: Tarājīm musannifīn al-kutub al-‘Arabiyya* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1983), 6:65.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Bughya*, 1:587, 2:29–31, 324, 308.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Qifṭī, *Inbāḥ al-ruwāt*, 3:270; al-Dhahābī, *Siyar* 20:153; al-Sam’ānī, *al-Ansāb*, 2:135–36; Ṭāshkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa’āda*, 2:98; H. Fleisch, “al-Djawālīqī,” *EF*, 2:490.