



Robiya AZIMOVA^a 

^a*1st-Year Master's Student, Islamic Studies Program
International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
E-mail: azimorobiya@gmail.com*

Scientific Supervisor:

U. Palvanov

PhD, Associate Professor, ICESCO Chair for Islamic Studies, IIAU

THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ABU AL-BARAKAT AL-NASAFI'S WORK MADARIK AL-TANZIL IN QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS

Abstract. *This article presents a comprehensive scientific analysis of “Madarik al-tanzil wa haqa’iq al-ta’wil,” a Qur’anic exegesis authored by Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi (d. 710/1310). The research examines the reasons for the composition of the work, its methodological framework, the primary sources employed by the author, and its significance within Sunni theological tradition. In addition, the article explores the relationship between this tafsir and the exegetical works “al-Kashshaf” by Mahmud al-Zamakhshari and “Anwar al-tanzil wa asrar al-ta’wil” by Nasir al-Din al-Baydawi, highlighting their influence on its scholarly and methodological structure. The study also provides an overview of manuscript copies of the tafsir, as well as commentaries and marginal glosses written on it, and discusses its place in contemporary academic research across Uzbekistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia.*

Keywords: *Madarik al-Tanzil; Qur’anic exegesis; Transoxiana; Maturidism; Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah; manuscripts; commentary; marginal gloss; Islamic source studies.*

INTRODUCTION

Transoxiana (Mawarannahr) has historically been recognized as one of the leading centers of Islamic scholarship and intellectual development. Numerous distinguished scholars and eminent authorities in various fields of knowledge emerged from this region, which today forms part of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The city of Nasaf in Mawarannahr

corresponds to the modern city of Qarshi, and scholars born in this region were given the nisbah “al-Nasafi.” Among them are prominent figures such as Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi (d. 710/1310), Abu al-Mu’in al-Nasafi (d. 508/1115), Abu Hafs al-Nasafi (d. 537/1142), and Azizuddin al-Nasafi (617–704/1220–1305).

Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi, in particular, authored numerous works in the fields of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), theology (‘aqidah), and Qur’anic exegesis (tafsir). His notable works include “Madarik al-Tanzil,” “Kanz al-Daqa’iq,” “al-Wafi,” “al-Kafi,” “al-Manar,” “Kashf al-Asrar,” “Umdat al-‘Aqa’id,” and “al-I‘timad fi al-I‘tiqad,” all of which have preserved their scholarly value to the present day and continue to play an important role in academic research and traditional Islamic seminary (madrasa) curricula.

The aim of this article is to analyze the methodological and scholarly features of “Madarik al-Tanzil,” to examine its relationship with earlier tafsir works, to survey its manuscript tradition and the secondary literature written on it, and to assess its place in modern academic research.

METHODS

This study employs historical-analytical and source-critical methods. The primary source is the published critical edition of “Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqaiq al-Ta’wil” (al-Nasafi, 2018), supplemented by the scholarly monograph of Maxsudov (2014) and a range of academic dissertations and journal articles that have examined the work from philological, jurisprudential, and grammatical perspectives. The analysis proceeds thematically, examining the origin and purpose of the work, its methodological features and sources, its manuscript tradition, and the reception and academic study of the work in the contemporary period.

RESULTS

Nature and purpose of the work. Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi’s work in the field of Qur’anic exegesis, “Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqaiq al-Ta’wil” (The Meanings of Revelation and the Realities of Interpretation), is regarded as one of his major scholarly contributions. This work provides a complete commentary on the Holy Qur’an and is based on the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah. In modern editions, it consists of three volumes (al-Nasafi, 2018:1).

The work is considered an abridged version of Mahmud al-Zamakhshari's (d. 467–538/1075–1144) "al-Kashshaf" and Nasir al-Din al-Baydawi's (d. 685/1286) "Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil." Since it was written in accordance with the doctrinal views of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, certain Mu'tazilite interpretations found in "al-Kashshaf" regarding theological verses were omitted, and the work is instead grounded in Maturidi theology. The author himself explains the reason for composing the work as follows:

"A person requested me to compose a medium-sized work on interpretations (tafsir). The work was intended to encompass various aspects of grammatical analysis (i'rab) and Qur'anic readings (qira'at), to include the subtle dimensions of the science of rhetoric (badi') as well as allusive meanings, to be enriched with the views of scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, to be free from the false ideas of the people of innovation and misguidance, neither excessively lengthy in a way that would bore the reader nor so brief as to cause deficiency in conveying the necessary content. [...] I named this work 'Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqaiq al-Ta'wil' The Meanings of Revelation and the Realities of Interpretation" (al-Nasafi, 2018:28).

Methodological features. "Madarik al-Tanzil" is a medium-length tafsir in which a complete explanation of the Qur'an is presented. In this work, Hafiz al-Din al-Nasafi discusses the grammatical analysis (i'rab) of verses, the reasons for revelation (asbab al-nuzul), evidences related to revealed verses, refutations of deviant sects, and the pronunciation of words in different Qur'anic readings (qira'at). The work also incorporates rhetorical expressions and subtle hidden meanings within Qur'anic verses, similar to those found in "al-Kashshaf." He also made use of the question-and-answer method employed by Zamakhshari the style "in qila... qultu" (if it is said... I reply...) though unlike Zamakhshari's explicit presentation, Nasafi integrates such explanations within the commentary itself rather than presenting them separately.

Primary sources employed. In composing this tafsir, Imam al-Nasafi relied not only on the two aforementioned works but also on several other authoritative sources (al-Nasafi, 2018, vol. I:16–17). These include: "al-Kitab" on grammar by Sibawayh (148–180/765–796); "Ma'ani al-Qur'an" by Yahya ibn Ziyad al-Farra' (144–207/761–822); "Ma'ani al-Qur'an" by Abu al-Hasan al-Akhfash (d. 215/830); "Ma'ani al-Qur'an wa I'rabuhu" by al-Zajaj (d. 311/923); "Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunnah" by Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 333/944); "al-Sihah" by al-Jawhari (d. 393/1003); "al-Mabsut" by Shams al-A'imma

al-Sarakhsi (d. 483/1090); “*Tabsirat al-Adilla fi Usul al-Din*” by Abu al-Mu’in al-Nasafi (438–508/1046–1115); “*Kashf al-Mu’dilat*” by al-Baqillani (d. 543/1148–49); “*al-Tibyan fi I’rab al-Qur’an*” by Abu al-Baqā’ al-‘Ukbari (538–616/1143–1219); as well as his own works “*al-Kafi*” and “*Kashf al-Asrar Sharh al-Manar*.”

Manuscript tradition. At present, manuscripts of “*Madarik al-Tanzil*” are preserved in the manuscript collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, where 14 copies are catalogued under the numbers 3146, 2583, 2820/I, 2245/II, 5113, 10938, 12811, 3130, 3282, 3961, 3117, 3281, 4762, 7883, and 2820/I (Maxsudov, 2014:76–77). In addition, copies of the work are preserved in several libraries of the Republic of Türkiye: a two-volume manuscript is kept in the Valiyyuddin Library under number 254; another copy is preserved in the Fayzullah Library under number 231; and a further copy is held in the Raghīb Pasha Library under number 229.

Commentaries and marginal glosses. Several commentaries (*sharh*) and marginal glosses (*hashiya*) have been written on “*Madarik al-Tanzil*,” some still preserved in manuscript form. These include: “*al-Talkhis li Madarik al-Tanzil*” by Abu Bakr Aydak al-Imadi (d. 793/1390–91); “*Mukhtasar Madarik al-Tanzil*” by ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Salihi al-‘Ayni (d. 893/1487–88); “*Hashiya ‘ala Madarik al-Tanzil*” by Ala’ al-Din al-Haddad al-Junburi (d. 923/1517–18); “*Hashiya ‘ala Tafsir al-Madarik*” by Jamal al-Din al-Kujrati (d. 1124/1712–13); “*al-Taysir wa al-Tashil li Fahm Madarik al-Tanzil*” by ‘Abd al-Hakim al-Afghani (d. 1326/1908–09); and “*Hashiya ‘ala Tafsir al-Nasafi li Surati Maryam*” by Mustafa al-Hakim al-Misri (d. 1341/1922–23).

Some commentaries have been studied and published in print. “*al-Tafsir al-Muzil li Mughlaqat Madarik al-Tanzil*” by ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Qandahari was published in Lahore in 1904. “*al-Iklil ‘ala Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqaiq al-Ta’wil*” by Muhammad ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Hindi (1252–1333/1836–1915), originally in nine volumes, was published in seven volumes in 2012 by Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah (Beirut). This commentary is particularly significant for providing extensive explanations of all Qur’anic verses and narrations found in “*Madarik al-Tanzil*.” “*Hashiya Khalil ‘ala Madarik al-Tanzil*” by Khalil ‘Abd al-Karim Konanj, focusing on rhetorical aspects and literary artistry, was published in 2015 by the Center for Scientific and Intellectual Studies (Türkiye). “*al-Kanz*

al-Jalil ‘ala Madarik al-Tanzil” by Ibrahim al-Janaji (1270–1352 AH), in six volumes, is preserved in the Azhar manuscript libraries in Egypt (al-Qorniy & al-‘Arfiy, 2023:79).

Contemporary academic research. Within this scholarly tradition, several doctoral dissertations have been conducted based on portions of the commentary. Studies covering Surah al-Ma’idah to the end of Surah al-An’am, from Surah al-Anfal to verse 28 of Surah Hud, from verse 25 of Surah Hud to the end of Surah al-Ra’d, and from the beginning of Surah Ibrahim to the end of Surah al-Nahl were submitted to the Department of Sharia and Islamic Studies at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, all defended in 2020. The portion from Surah al-Mu’minun to the end of Surah al-Shu’ara’ was studied in 2019 by Majid Ibrahim al-‘Abbas; the section from Surah al-Rum to the end of Surah al-Ahzab was studied in 2021 by Sana ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Najjar; and sections covering Surah Saba’ through Surah Ya-Sin, and Surah Ghafir through Surah Fussilat, were researched by Nasrin Burhan Bukhari and Du’a Saddam al-Sa’id (2020) respectively (al-Qorniy & al-‘Arfiy, 2023:79).

In Indonesia, academic studies include a bachelor’s thesis on “Jurisprudential Views of Imam al-Nasafi in His Tafsir Madarik al-Tanzil” (Istibsyaroh, 2021) and another on “The Methodology and Style of Imam al-Nasafi in Tafsir” (Mazwin, 2014). In Türkiye, Professor Muhammad Murtaza Chavush of Bingöl University completed a doctoral dissertation entitled “Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi and His Grammatical Method in His Work ‘Madarik al-Tanzil’” (Chavush, 2019). Additionally, Nuri Akyuz of Mardin Artuklu University wrote a master’s thesis on the poetry found in the tafsir. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, Maxsudov (2014) conducted research in his candidate dissertation (2008) entitled “Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi’s Role in the Science of Tafsir,” subsequently published as a monograph.

DISCUSSION

The analysis confirms that “Madarik al-Tanzil” occupies a distinctive position in the history of Sunni Qur’anic exegesis. Its methodological architecture combining grammatical precision, rhetorical sensitivity, jurisprudential orientation, and Maturidi theological grounding represents a purposeful synthesis of the preceding tafsir tradition within a specifically Sunni doctrinal framework. The conscious elimination of Mu‘tazilite

theological positions from “al-Kashshaf” and their replacement with Maturidi perspectives constitutes the work’s defining scholarly contribution to the Transoxianan exegetical tradition.

The richness of the manuscript tradition 14 copies in Tashkent alone (Maxsudov, 2014:76–77), multiple copies in Türkiye, and the large body of commentaries and marginal glosses produced over six centuries testifies to the sustained authority of the work within the Islamic scholarly world. The diversity of the contemporary academic reception dissertation research in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan confirms that the scholarly value of the work has not diminished but continues to generate productive research questions across multiple disciplinary perspectives: jurisprudential, grammatical, literary, and theological.

CONCLUSION

This article provides a scholarly analysis of “Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqa’iq al-Ta’wil” by Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi, a prominent exegete who emerged within the intellectual environment of Transoxiana. The findings indicate that this tafsir was developed on the basis of the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah and constitutes one of the key sources of the Maturidi school of Qur’anic exegesis (al-Nasafi, 2018; Maxsudov, 2014). The work demonstrates that the interpretation of Qur’anic verses is not limited to lexical and grammatical analysis, but is enriched with discussions of rhetoric (balaghah), Qur’anic readings (qira’at), reasons for revelation (asbab al-nuzul), and theological debates. Its relationship with “al-Kashshaf” and “Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta’wil” further enhances its scholarly value.

In conclusion, “Madarik al-Tanzil” represents a mature example of the tafsir tradition of Transoxiana and remains one of the fundamental works that has preserved its scientific and methodological significance to the present day. Future research should focus on critical editing of the remaining unedited commentary texts, comparative analysis of the tafsir methodology across the three related works (“al-Kashshaf,” “Anwar al-Tanzil,” and “Madarik al-Tanzil”), and the study of the work’s influence on later Hanafi-Maturidi exegetical traditions in Central Asia.

REFERENCES

1. al-Nasafi, A. B. (2018). *Madarik al-tanzil wa haqaiq al-ta'wil* [The meanings of revelation and the realities of interpretation] (Vols. 1–3). Dar Tahqiq al-Kitab.
2. al-Qorniy, A. M. O., & al-‘Arfiy, S. S. (2023). *Min awal Surat al-Mutaffifin ila al-aya 17* [From the beginning of Surah al-Mutaffifin to verse 17: Study and critical edition]. *Al-Buhuth al-Islamiyya*, (97), 71–112.
3. Chavush, M. M. (2019). *Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi ve “Medariku’t-Tenzil” adlı eserindeki nahiv yöntemi* [Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi and his grammatical method in “Madarik al-Tanzil”] [Doctoral dissertation, Bingöl University]. Türkiye National Thesis Centre. <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>.
4. Istibsyaroh, M. (2021). *Pandangan fikih Imam al-Nasafi dalam kitab tafsir Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqaiq al-Ta'wil (kajian ayat-ayat taharah)* [Jurisprudential views of Imam al-Nasafi in Madarik al-Tanzil: Study of the verses of purification] [Bachelor’s thesis, IAIN Ponorogo]. IAIN Ponorogo Electronic Theses Repository. <https://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/16752/>
5. Maxsudov, D. (2014). *Abul Barakot an-Nasafiy va uning “Madorik at-tanzil va haqoiq at-ta'vil” asari* [Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi and his work “Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqaiq al-Ta'wil”]. *Movarounnahr*.
6. Mazwin. (2014). *Metode dan corak tafsir Imam al-Nasafi* [Method and style of tafsir of Imam al-Nasafi] [Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Riau Sultan Syarif Kasim]. UIN Suska Repository. <https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/3924/>.