



Article

Mahmud Zamaxshariy's Scientific Heritage Study

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Abstract: This article is a thorough review of the life and scientific heritage of the outstanding scholar of Khorezm Mahmud Zamakhshari. Zamakhshari, known by the title "Jorullah" (Neighbor of Allah), was an influential Islamic ethicist, lexicographer, and religious scientist, heavily influenced by his teacher Abu Muzar. His writings have left an enduring legacy across several scholarly domains, particularly ethics, philosophy, and literature. Zamakhshari's main education stations, which he followed in the intellectual style of that time, were Mecca, where he settled for about 15 years, and had the chance to study with eminent teachers such as Abu Bakr Yabiriy Andalusy, and Basra. One of them is al-Ghazali or more prominently known for his work, *Navobigu-l-Kalim*, which is a collection of aphorisms portraying moral studies, spiritual pathways, and human life reflections. While Zamakhshari's contributions were significant, the proper titles of many of his works, as well as exact relationship among some of his treatises are still under philological debate. This uncertainty has been the source of continuous academic dispute. The goal of this article is to clarify the title and attribution of *Navobigu-l-Kalim*, as well as to explore its philosophical and ethical significance. It also aims to delve into the controversies regarding other ethical writings credited to Zamakhshari. The final conclusion of the research is that although the title "*Navobigu-l-Kalim*" is the most famous title of the book, it has been introduced in the world with different names by different sources. It also validates the attribution of this work to Zamakhshari and discusses its impact on generations to come. Based on an analysis of both manuscript and scholarship, this article sheds new light on the intricacies of titling Zamakhshari's works. These findings are significant as they clarify Zamakhshari's intellectual legacy and constitute an essential contribution to the study of Islamic ethics and Arabic literature, leading to proper attribution and analysis of Zamakhshari's works in future scholarship.

Keywords: Zamaxshariy, Maqomat, Atvoqu-z-zahab, Navobig'u-l-kalim, Nasoihu-s-sig'or, Nasoihu-l-kibor, ethics, wisdom, Abu Muzar, Sibavayh, Makka.

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1. Introduction

In Mahmud Zamakhshari first learned the sciences of lexicography, grammar (nahv), and adab (literature) in Khorezm from his teacher Abu Muzar Mahmud ibn Jarir Zobiyy Asbahani Khwarizmi Mu'tazili. Zamakhshari followed his teacher's path and was greatly influenced by him, which is why he also belonged to the Mu'tazila creed [1]. Mahmud Zamakhshari deeply loved and respected his teacher, remained loyal to him, and acknowledged his virtues. Zamakhshari, remembering his teacher Abu Muzar, included praise and admiration for him in his qasidas (odes). The scholar included in his divan a qasida consisting of sixty-one couplets dedicated to his teacher, which ends with the following lines:

"He was truly the unique one of his era, And eyes have never seen one like him after...".

The scholar also traveled to many lands of the East outside of Khorezm to master religious sciences. In particular, he traveled to Baghdad before the year 500 AH and studied the science of hadith from a group of scholars there. Around the year 515 AH, when he was nearly fifty years old, he traveled to Mecca to study the book “Kitab as-Sibawayh” under Abu Bakr Yabiriy Andalusi [2]. He stayed there for two years and mastered Sibawayh’s book completely and thoroughly. Zamakhshari gained much beneficial knowledge from this book. Afterwards, the scholar returned to his homeland, Khorezm. However, longing for Mecca burned in his heart, and in 526 AH, he returned once again [3]. He lived there for five years. Because he lived near Mecca, he was called “Jorullah” (the neighbor of Allah). Zamakhshari took pride in this title and even referred to himself by it in some of his books. For example, in “Rabi’ al-Abrar” and “Divan of Zamakhshari,” he attributed the epithet “Jorullah” to himself. When he was returning to his homeland in 531 AH, he visited Hijaz and Medina along the way and stayed in Baghdad for several months, where he left all his books and notebooks at the mausoleum of Abu Hanifa. In a letter to Hafiz Salafi, he wrote: “I brought all my books to the shrine of Abu Hanifa and left them there [4]. Nothing remained in my hands except the Book of Allah, which I kept as a guardian.”. When Zamakhshari returned to Khorezm, he remained there until his death, which occurred in the city of Jurjaniya (Urgench) on the eve of Arafah in 538 AH.

The scientific heritage left to us by the scholar consists of such works that no one can ignore them. According to recent studies by our scholars, the number of his books has reached ninety [5]. His works include tafsir (Qur’anic exegesis), lexicography, metrics (aruz), as well as moral and poetic works, and a large divan of poetry. In his literary writings, he skillfully used styles such as insha (composition), saj’ (rhymed prose), nasr (prose), and tibatq (antithesis). Among such works are “Rabi’ al-Abrar,” “Muqaddimat,” “Asas al-Balagha,” and “Navobigu-l-kalim.” Each of these works holds literary and historical value. Reliable sources indicate that Zamakhshari never married and remained single throughout his life. In several of his couplets, he hinted at the superiority of celibacy over marriage [6]. For example, in “Navobigu-l-kalim,” which forms the basis of our research, the following wisdom is found:

“I do not know who is in greater hardship the one swimming among waves or the one living within marriage.”

However, some researchers, including Abdullah Nazir, who studied Zamakhshari’s “Ru’us al-Masa’il,” and Abu al-Amir Muhanna in the introduction to “Rabi’ al-Abrar,” state that Zamakhshari was married but had no children, presenting as proof two couplets expressing regret over marriage. Yet other researchers claim that these two couplets do not belong to Zamakhshari’s divan but were added later. From this, it follows that Zamakhshari likely never married [7].

Now, if we turn to the main object of our research the work “Navobigu-l-kalim”, it is a collection of wisdom and advice, demonstrating Zamakhshari’s sharp intellect, clarity of thought, and depth of knowledge. In this work, the scholar strives to reveal the essence and meaning of life, to elevate human spirituality, and to increase the number of virtuous people in society [8]. Through his wise and eloquent expressions, he penetrates deeply into the human heart, raising human emotions to the highest peak of spirituality and awakening the conscience. He calls people to firmly hold onto religion, to be virtuous, just, courageous, and pure-hearted, to respect and love others. He also warns against vices such as corruption, ignorance, laziness, envy, oppression, arrogance, and greed all of which lead humanity and society toward decline [9]. Therefore, as we can see, the work serves as a necessary guide and collection of moral instructions for every era. Indeed, without encouraging these virtues and forbidding these evils, it is difficult to imagine an educated and enlightened generation. Hence, the study of this work, which contains sermons and advice, expressed in brief but deeply meaningful phrases, and the transmission of our compatriot’s intellectual heritage to future generations, is an important task [10].

The treatise of the great scholar Jorullah Zamakhshari is not only an ethical work but also holds historical and religious value. Because it reflects the political, social, and religious events that occurred in the second half of the fifth and the first half of the sixth centuries (Hijri), as well as the scholar's critical attitude toward them. Through these details, one can grasp the advantages and shortcomings of that era, as well as understand the spirit of the time [11].

The attribution of this work to Zamakhshari is confirmed in historical, literary, and biographical sources, as well as in commentaries on the work and in Zamakhshari's own books. For instance, in two places in his famous tafsir "Al-Kashshaf," there is a reference such as "as stated in Navobigu-l-kalim." In "Rabi' al-Abrar," the title of the work is mentioned in fourteen places, and several aphorisms are quoted from it. However, in five of these instances, the expression "in Navobigu-l-kalim" is used, but the cited aphorisms are not actually from this book [12].

From this, we can conclude that in some cases, Zamakhshari used the phrase "Navobigu-l-kalim" to refer to the specific work, while in other instances, he used it in its literal sense, meaning "eloquent sayings." Similar ambiguity can also be found in the commentary "Hashiya 'ala Maqamat al-Zamakhshari," where the title of the work is mentioned eight times in three instances referring to the actual work, quoting several aphorisms from it, while in the remaining places, sayings are attributed to "Navobigu-l-kalim" that are not actually found in it. In two passages of "Asas al-Balagha," the scholar attributes this work to himself and cites quotations from "Navobigu-l-kalim." Thus, it becomes clear that this collection of wise sayings truly belongs to Mahmud Zamakhshari [13].

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology of this article is based on a historical and textual analysis. The main sources relied upon for this study are Mahmud Zamakhshari's literary and ethical works, especially those pertaining to "Navobigu-l-Kalim" under its various titles, as well as commentaries and citations in Islamic scholarly literature. The next few sections offer a detailed examination of the history of your earliest records and manuscripts to identify your possible regional and chronological variations in attribution and naming of zamakhshari's works. The study is based on the scholar's diwan, tafsir of the Qur'an, and his other works like Rabi' al-Abrar and Asas al-Balagha. Also, the research involves of secondary sources with the modern scholarly articles, books, and journal publications, which added to the intellectual climate of Zamakhshari's time as well as subsequently on later generations. A comparative analysis is then employed to resolve differences concerning the naming and attribution of his works, dealing with linguistic and historical particularities that may have led to the variations. A part of the research also consists of comparing biographical accounts of Zamakhshari with what he has left behind to determine whether certain themes emerge consistently or not in the literature. The article also employs a brief critical survey of some of the earlier academic disputes surrounding the veracity and value of 'Navobigu-l-kalim' (with the earlier debates on its ethical philosopher status) by incorporating various classical and recent academic vantage points and viewpoints to formulate a coherent critique of his intellectual legacy.

3. Results

Furthermore, it is observed that the name of the work appears in several different forms in various sources. Abdalqadir al-Baghdadi, in "Khizanat al-Adab," and Hajj Khalifa, in "Kashf al-Zunun," referred to it as "Navobigu-l-kalim." Meanwhile, Suyuti, Yaqut al-Hamawi, Tashkoprizoda, Safadi, and Maqarri called it "Al-Kalim an-Navobig" (with the words reversed). This variation is further supported by several commentators of the work, such as Nasir Zaydi and Domadzoda, who titled their commentaries "Sharh al-

Kalim an-Navobig.” Taftazani and Khivaqi referred to their commentaries simply as “Sharh an-Navobig.” Ibn Hanbali mentioned it as “Al-Mi’a an-Navobig.”

The results of these investigations indicate that the first and second titles are the most well-known, while the third is a shortened form of either of the first two. In the introduction to the work, the author himself used the title “Al-Kalim an-Navobig” and included the following phrase:

النوابغ الكلم هذه الهام السوابغ، النعم من منحتني مما ان اللهم

(“O Allah, among the perfect blessings You have granted me is the inspiration for these eloquent words.”) From this statement, it becomes clear that the true title of the work is “Al-Kalim an-Navobig.”

Nevertheless, on many manuscript and lithographic copies, the work is titled “Navobigu-l-kalim” (The Eloquence of Words). The reason for this is that the scholar himself used this title in other books as well. For instance, in “Rabi’ al-Abrar,” in the chapters “The Sky and Stars” and “The Mention of the Throne and the Chair,” he wrote: “As stated in Navobigu-l-kalim:

“الجزء خلف الشعرى احسن فما. الجزء بحسن الحسنة شيع”

Similarly, in “Asas al-Balagha,” under the entry “Jadb” (meaning “drought”), it says: “As stated in Navobigu-l-kalim: “اجدب رحله كان ادب كان من” and in the same book, under the section “Ruqn” (meaning “beautiful writing”):

“ترقين و طرس لا. تلقين و درس العلم”

From the information above, it can be concluded that both the first and second names are authentic titles of the work.

However, if we consider the fourth name, it literally means “One Hundred Aphorisms.” But this does not correspond to the actual content of the work, since the number of aphorisms in “Navobigu-l-kalim” is 291. Moreover, no manuscript or printed source has ever been found bearing that title [14].

Here, there is another debatable issue among researchers who have studied Zamakhshari’s scholarly heritage. The issue is as follows: Jorullah Khwarizmi had several works related to ethics, three of which have been published. These are “Maqamat,” “Atwaqu-z-Zahab,” and “Navobigu-l-Kalim.” In addition, some historical and biographical books that list the scholar’s works also mention two other titles “Nasoihu-s-Sig’or” and “Nasoihu-l-Kibor.” The question is whether these two are separate books or simply other names for the previously mentioned moral works.

Some scholars have considered these two to be independent works, while others have regarded them as alternative titles for the same books listed above. In particular, “Nasoihu-s-Sig’or” is considered by some to be the second name of “Navobigu-l-Kalim.” For example, Ibn Khallikan and Ibn Ammad included “Nasoihu-s-Sig’or” and “Nasoihu-l-Kibor” in their lists of Zamakhshari’s ethical works but did not mention the other three titles [H. Muhammad, 2018, 16]. Hence, “Maqamat,” “Atwaqu-z-Zahab,” and “Navobigu-l-Kalim” are not separate works but rather fall under these two titles. Yaqut al-Hamawi, Tashkoprizoda, Hajj Khalifa, Ismail al-Baghdadi, and Abdul-Fattah Abu Guddah listed all five names, implying that “Nasoihu-s-Sig’or” and “Nasoihu-l-Kibor” were separate works. However, Imam Suyuti and Abu al-Abbas al-Muqriy did not include “Nasoihu-s-Sig’or” or “Nasoihu-l-Kibor” in their lists of moral writings. Dauwudi, on the other hand, omitted “Navobigu-l-Kalim” entirely from his list. This confusion arises because in some sources, “Navobigu-l-Kalim” and “Nasoihu-s-Sig’or” (or another variant, “Nasoihu-s-Sug’ro”) are mentioned as being one and the same treatise. Such inconsistencies can even be found in manuscript sources. For instance, in the British Museum, the manuscript numbered 3733, titled “Navobigu-l-Kalim,” is catalogued under the name “Nasoihu-s-Sig’or.” However, Dr. Bahija Husayni from Baghdad University, who studied this manuscript, stated that this title is incorrect, and that it is in fact another name for “Atwaqu-z-Zahab,” which has since been forgotten. (“Atwaqu-z-Zahab” was mentioned earlier as one of Zamakhshari’s works on ethics.). Furthermore, on the first page of the manuscript numbered 563 in the Iraq Museum, it is written: “Navobigu-l-Kalim fi adabiyatihi wa yusamma Nasoihu-s-

Sig'or," meaning, "The work Navobigu-l-Kalim is related to literature and is also called Nasoihu-s-Sig'or (Small Advices)." Similarly, in the catalog of the Dar al-Kutub in Egypt, the work is also listed as "Navobigu-l-Kalim" or "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or.". In the manuscript numbered 435, which we used for our research and is preserved in the Egyptian library, the stamp of the Riyadh University Manuscripts Collection appears on the first page, and in its catalog the title of the work is written as "Al-Kalim an-Navobig wa-n-Nas'h as-Sawobig," which differs from the titles found in other manuscripts. The catalog also lists other alternative titles of the work, including "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or" and "Navobigu-l-Kalim wa Jawami'u-l-Hikam." Similar situations can be found in the works and research of Uzbek literary scholars as well. For instance, in the Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan and in A. Rustamov's book "Mahmud Zamakhshari," as well as in several articles, "Navobigu-l-Kalim" and "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or" are mentioned separately [15].

In fact, as Dr. Bahija Husayni mentioned earlier, "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or" is the second name of Zamakhshari's ethical work "Atwaqu-z-Zahab." The work "Atwaqu-z-Zahab" was originally called "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or.". "Nasoihu-l-Kibor," on the other hand, is another title of Zamakhshari's moral work "Maqamat." There are several reasons to reach this conclusion. Firstly, on the manuscript copies of "Atwaqu-z-Zahab," including the one preserved in the Egyptian Library under number 1275, both on the cover and in the catalog, it is titled "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or li-Zamakhshari," though it is indeed "Atwaqu-z-Zahab." Likewise, in the manuscript preserved in the Raghbi Pasha Library under number 1057, it is stated on the first page that the work is "Atwaqu-z-Zahab" by Zamakhshari, and that it is also known by the name "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or." From page 198 of this manuscript, Zamakhshari's "Maqamat" is transcribed, titled "Nasoihu-l-Kibor." In addition, Hamza ibn Muhammad Wasim, one of the scholars who critically edited the commentary "Ni'amu-s-Sawobig" by Taftazani, addressed this issue in the introduction to his edition and stated the following: "Zamakhshari, in three places in 'Rabi' al-Abrar' and once in 'Al-Kashshaf,' cites wise sayings from 'Atwaqu-z-Zahab' and refers to them as 'Nasoihu-s-Sig'or.' Likewise, in two other places in 'Rabi' al-Abrar,' he says 'In Nasoih,' quoting one aphorism from 'Atwaqu-z-Zahab' and another from 'Maqamat.' Similarly, in several places in his commentary on 'Muqaddimat,' the scholar uses the name 'Nasoih.'"

From this, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

- When the scholar Jorullah Zamakhshari used the shortened term "Nasoih" without specification, he meant both of his works – "Atwaqu-z-Zahab" and "Maqamat."
- When he said "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or," he referred specifically to "Atwaqu-z-Zahab."
- And when he said "Nasoihu-l-Kibor," he referred specifically to "Maqamat."

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or" and "Nasoihu-l-Kibor" are not separate works by the scholar. Likewise, "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or" is not a second title of "Navobigu-l-Kalim." Therefore, the decision of Imam Suyuti and Abu al-Abbas al-Muqriy, who did not include "Nasoihu-s-Sig'or" and "Nasoihu-l-Kibor" in the list of ethical works, is correct. On the other hand, Ibn Khallikan and Ibn Ammad, who listed these two but omitted the other three, came closer to the truth, though the scholars who counted all five as separate works were mistaken. As we can see, there is still much work to be done in deeply studying the spiritual legacy left to us by Jorullah Zamakhshari. This shows that many tasks remain before philologists and literary scholars in this field.

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